Deutscher

THE PROPHET ARMED

TROTSKY
1879
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TROTSKY: 1879–1921

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1954

OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS

NEW YORK AND LONDON

unconscious autobiographical streak runs through his scores of published volumes, through his innumerable articles and essays not reprinted in book form, and through some of his unpublished writings. Wherever he went he left footprints so firm that nobody could later efface or blur them, not even he himself, when on rare occasions he was tempted to do so.

A biographer is not usually expected to apologize for narrating the life of a political leader who has himself written an autobiography. I feel that this case may be an exception to the rule, for after a close and critical examination I still find Trotsky's *My Life* as scrupulously truthful as any work of this kind can be. Nevertheless, it remains an apologia produced in the middle of the losing battle its author fought against Stalin. In its pages the living Trotsky wrestled with his tomb-robbers. To wholesale Stalinist denigration he responded with a peculiar act of self-defence which savoured of self-glorification. He did not and could not satisfactorily explain the change in the climate of the revolution which made his defeat both possible and inevitable; and his account of the intrigues by which a narrow-minded, 'usurpatory', and malignant bureaucracy ousted him from power is obviously inadequate. The question which is of absorbing interest to the biographer is: to what extent did Trotsky himself contribute to his own defeat? To what extent was he himself compelled by critical circumstances and by his own character to pave the way for Stalin? The answer to these questions reveals the truly classical tragedy of Trotsky's life, or rather a reproduction of classical tragedy in secular terms of modern politics; and Trotsky would have been more than human if he had been able to reveal it. The biographer, on the other hand, sees Trotsky at the climax of his achievement as being as guilty and as innocent and as ripe for expiation as a protagonist in Greek drama. This approach, presupposing sympathy and understanding, is, I trust, as free from denunciation as from apologetics.

In *My Life* Trotsky sought to vindicate himself in terms imposed upon him by Stalin and by the whole ideological situation of Bolshevism in the 1920s, that is, in terms of the Lenin cult. Stalin had denounced him as Lenin's inveterate enemy, and Trotsky was consequently anxious to prove his complete devotion to, and his agreement with, Lenin. His devotion to

Lenin after 1917 was undoubtedly genuine; and the points of agreement between them were numerous and important. Nevertheless, Trotsky blurred the sharp outlines and the importance of his controversies with Lenin between 1903 and 1917, and also of later differences. But another and much stranger consequence of the fact that Trotsky made his apologia in terms of the Lenin cult was that in some crucial points he belittled his own role in comparison with Lenin's, a feat extremely rare in autobiographical literature. This applies especially to the account of the part he played in the October uprising and in the creation of the Red Army, where he detracted from his own merits in order not to appear as Lenin's detractor. Free from loyalties to any cult, I have attempted to restore the historical balance.

Finally, I have paid special attention to Trotsky the man of letters, the pamphleteer, the military writer, and the journalist. Most of Trotsky's literary work is now wrapt in oblivion and inaccessible to a wider public. Yet this is the writer of whom Bernard Shaw, who could judge Trotsky's literary qualities only from poor translations, said that he 'surpassed Junius and Burke'. 'Like Lessing', Shaw wrote of Trotsky, 'when he cuts off his opponent's head, he holds it up to show that there are no brains in it; but he spares his victim's private character. . . . He leaves [his victim] without a rag of political credit; but he leaves him with his honour intact.'[1] I can only regret that considerations of space and composition have not allowed me to show this side of Trotsky's personality in greater detail; but I hope to return to it in *The Prophet Unarmed.*

I. D.

October 1952

[1] *The Nation*, London, 7 Jan. 1922.

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From none of these classes could there come an immediate threat to the throne. Each class hoped that its claims would be met and its wrongs redressed by the monarch himself. In any case, no class was in a position to air its grievances and make its demands widely known. None could rally its members and muster its strength in any representative institution or political party. These did not exist. State and Church were the only bodies that possessed a national organization; but the function of both, a function which had determined their shape and constitution, had been to suppress not to express social discontent.

Only one group, the intelligentsia, rose to challenge the dynasty. Educated people in all walks of life, especially those who had not been absorbed in officialdom, had no less reason than had the peasantry to be disappointed with the Tsar—the Emancipator. He had first aroused and then frustrated their craving for freedom as he had aroused and deceived the muzhiks' hunger for land. Alexander had not, like his predecessor Nicholas I, chastised the intelligentsia with scorpions; but he was still punishing them with whips. His reforms in education and in the Press had been half-hearted and mean: the spiritual life of the nation remained under the tutelage of the police, the censorship, and the Holy Synod. By offering the educated a semblance of freedom he made the denial of real freedom even more painful and humiliating. The intelligentsia sought to avenge their betrayed hopes; the Tsar strove to tame their restive spirit; and, so, semi-liberal reforms gave way to repression and repression bred rebellion.

Numerically the intelligentsia were very weak. The active revolutionaries among them were a mere handful. If their fight against the ruler of ninety million subjects were to be described as a duel between David and Goliath, that would still exaggerate their strength. Throughout the 1870s, this classical decade of the intelligentsia's rebellion, a few thousand people at the most were involved in the peaceful, 'educational and propagandist' phase of the *Narodnik* (Populist) movement; and in its final, terroristic phase less than two score men and women were directly engaged. These two score made the Tsar a fugitive in his own realm, and kept the whole might of his empire in check. Only against the background of a discontented but mute

nation could so tiny a group grow to so gigantic a stature. Unlike the basic classes of society, the intelligentsia were articulate; they had the training indispensable for an analysis of the evils that plagued the nation; and they formulated the programmes that were supposed to remedy those evils. They would hardly have set out to challenge the ruling power if they had thought that they were speaking for themselves alone. They were at first inspired by the great illusion that they were the mouth-piece of the nation, especially of the peasantry. In their thoughts their own craving for freedom merged with the peasants' hunger for land, and they called their revolutionary organization *Zemlya i Volya*—Land and Freedom. They eagerly absorbed the ideas of European socialism and strove to adjust them to the Russian situation. Not the industrial worker but the peasant was to be the pillar of the new society of their dreams. Not the publicly owned industrial factory but the collectively owned rural commune—the age-old *mir* which had survived in Russia—was to be the basic cell of that society.

The 'men of the 1870s' were foredoomed as precursors of a revolution. No social class was in fact prepared to support them. In the course of the decade they gradually discovered their own isolation, shed one set of illusions only to adopt another, and tried to solve dilemmas, some peculiar to their country and generation and some inherent in every revolutionary movement. At first they attempted to move the peasantry to action, either by enlightening the muzhiks about the evils of autocracy, as did the followers of Lavrov, or by inciting them against the Tsar, as Bakunin had urged them to do. Twice in this decade men and women of the intelligentsia abandoned homes and professions and tried to settle as peasants among the peasants in order to gain access to their mind. 'A whole legion of socialists', wrote a general of the gendarmerie, whose job it was to watch this exodus, 'has taken to this with an energy and a spirit of self-sacrifice, the like of which cannot be found in the history of any secret society in Europe.' The self-sacrifice was fruitless, for the peasantry and the intelligentsia were at cross purposes. The muzhik still believed in the Tsar, the Emancipator, and received with suspicious indifference or outright hostility the words of *Narodnik* 'enlightenment' or 'incitement'. Gendarmerie and police rounded up the idealists who had 'gone to the people';

the courts sentenced them to long terms of imprisonment, hard labour, or deportation.

The idea of a revolution through the people was gradually replaced by that of a conspiracy to be planned and carried out by a small and determined minority from the intelligentsia. The forms of the movement changed accordingly. The exodus of the intelligentsia to the countryside had been spontaneous; it had not been guided from any centre. The new conspiracy required a strictly clandestine, closely knit, strongly led, and rigidly disciplined organization. Its leaders—Zhelyabov, Kibalchich, Sofia Perovskaya, Vera Figner, and others—were not at first inclined to terroristic action; but the logic of their position and the events drove them that way. In January 1878 a young woman, Vera Zasulich—one day she was to influence the chief character of this book—shot General Trepov, head of the gendarmerie in Petersburg, in protest against his maltreatment and humiliation of a political prisoner. At her trial horrible abuses of which the police had been guilty were revealed. The jury were so shocked by the revelations and so moved by the sincere idealism of the defendant that they acquitted her. When the police attempted to seize her outside the court, a sympathetic crowd rescued her and enabled her to escape. The Tsar ordered that henceforth military tribunals, not juries, should try political offenders.

Zasulich's unpremeditated deed and the response it evoked pointed the way for the conspirators. In 1879, the year in which this narrative begins, the party of *Land and Freedom* split. One group of members, bent on pursuing terroristic attempts until the overthrow of autocracy, formed themselves into a new body, the *Narodnaya Volya*, the *Freedom of the People*.[1] Their new programme placed far greater emphasis on civil liberties than on land reform. Another and less influential group, setting no store by the terroristic conspiracy, broke away to advocate *Black Partition* (*Chornyi Peredel*)—an egalitarian distribution of the land. (From this group, headed by Plekhanov, who presently emigrated to Switzerland, was to come the first Marxist and Social Democratic message to the revolutionaries in Russia.)

The year 1879 brought a rapid succession of spectacular

[1] *Narodnaya Volya* is often translated as the *Will of the People*. *Volya* means in fact both 'will' and 'freedom' and can be translated either way.

suicide. Its leaders had expected that their deed would become the signal for a nation-wide upheaval, but they failed to evoke any response and the nation maintained silence. Those directly and indirectly connected with the conspiracy died on the gallows, and no immediate successors came forward to continue it. It was revealed once again that, despite its discontent, the peasantry was in no revolutionary mood: to the peasants the assassination of Alexander II was the gentry's revenge on the peasants' benefactor.

The new Tsar, Alexander III, abolished most of his predecessor's semi-liberal reforms. His chief inspirer was Pobedonostsev, his tutor and the Procurator of the Holy Synod, in whose sombre and shrewd mind were focused all the dread and fear of revolution felt by the ruling class. Pobedonostsev egged on the Tsar to restore the unimpaired 'domination of the father over his family, of the landlord over his countryside and of the monarch over all the Russias'. It became an offence to praise the previous Tsar for the abolition of serfdom. The gentry's jurisdiction over the peasantry was restored. The universities were closed to the children of the lower classes; the radical literary periodicals were banned; the nation, including the intelligentsia, was to be forced back into mute submission.

Revolutionary terrorism proved itself impotent, and thus another *Narodnik* illusion was dispelled. An attempt to assassinate Alexander III—Alexander Ulyanov, Lenin's elder brother participated in it—failed. The survivors of the *Freedom of the People* languished in prisons and in places of exile, cherished their memories and were lost in confusion. Characteristic of the time was the repentance of one of the *Narodnik* leaders, Tikhomirov, who came out, in western Europe, with a confession under the title 'Why have I ceased to be a revolutionary?' Some former rebels found an outlet for their energies and talents in industry and commerce, which were now expanding at a quicker tempo than before. Many found their prophet in Leo Tolstoy, who rejected with disgust the evils of autocracy but preached that they should not be resisted with force. Tolstoy's doctrine seemed to give a moral sanction to the intelligentsia's disillusioned quiescence.

In *My Life* Trotsky ascribes his political indifference to this general mood. The explanation is only in part correct. The

disguised as labourers working in the garden; but these could only report that Shvigovsky kept serving his visitors apples and endless cups of tea and having harmless and cranky discussions with them.[1]

These, we know, were years of revolutionary revival. In March 1895 the Minister of the Interior, Durnovo, wrote to Pobedonostsev that he was alarmed by the new trends, especially among students who had zealously and with no expectation of reward taken to lecturing on all sorts of social themes. In the Minister's eyes this idealistic disinterestedness augured nothing good. All the repressive legislation of previous years had failed to make the schools and universities immune from subversive influences. For years now the ministry had been appointing professors over the heads of the faculties, dismissing suspects, and promoting obedient nonentities. Scholars of world fame such as D. Mendeleyev, the chemist, I. Mechnikov, the biologist, and M. Kovalevsky, the sociologist, had been found disloyal and dismissed or forced to resign their chairs. The eminent historian Klyuchevsky had had to recant his liberal opinions. The works of John Stuart Mill, Herbert Spencer, and Karl Marx had been forbidden. Students' libraries and clubs had been closed; and informers had been planted in the lecture halls. Entry fees had been raised fivefold to bar academic education to children of poor parents. Yet in spite of everything resurgent rebellion stalked the universities. At the end of 1895 and at the beginning of 1896 students were asked to take an oath of loyalty to the new Tsar, Nicholas II. In Petersburg, Moscow, and Kiev most students refused. The Tsar's coronation (during which thousands of onlookers were trampled upon, maimed, and killed in a stampede for which the police were blamed) was followed, in May 1896, by a strike of 30,000 Petersburg workers, the first strike on this scale.[2]

In these events the influence was already felt of the Union of Struggle for the Emancipation of the Working Class recently founded by Lenin, Martov, and Potresov. The revived movement was wholly influenced by the Marxists—the *Narodniks* scarcely took part in it. The new socialism relied primarily on the industrial worker. It repudiated terrorism. It recognized

[1] G. A. Ziv, *Trotsky, Kharakteristika po Lichnym Vospominanyam*, p. 8.
[2] Sibiryak, *Studencheskoye Dvizhenie v Rosii.*

For a time Bronstein proudly described himself as a Benthamist and had no inkling how ill his infatuation fitted any revolutionary, whether *Narodnik* or Marxist. Of Marx himself and of the lesser lights of the Marxist school he had not even a smattering of knowledge. A more cautious or reflective young man would have sat back, listened to the arguments, perhaps gone to the sources and weighed the pros and cons before he committed himself. (It was in this manner that Lenin first approached the teachings of Marx.) But Bronstein was precocious and had a volatile and absorptive mind. He had, 'like richly intellectual people who can think rapidly, a wonderful gift of bluff. He could catch so quickly the drift of an opponent's thought, with all its . . . implications, that it was very difficult to overwhelm him with mere knowledge.'[1] From school he had brought the self-confidence of the brilliant pupil and the habit of outshining his fellows. The last thing he would do when buttonholed by his new associates and urged to take sides was to plead ignorance. He did take sides; and, incapable of lukewarm reserve, he dashed headlong into the fray.

He made his choice instinctively. The *Narodnik* outlook appealed to him precisely through that which distinguished it from the Marxist. The Marxists insisted that all social phenomena are directly or indirectly determined by society's economic condition. The *Narodniks* did not altogether reject this view—they had twenty years earlier been the pioneers of historical materialism in Russia. But they did not dwell on it with the same implacable emphasis; and many of them accepted the so-called subjectivist philosophy, which stressed the supremacy of the 'critical mind' and of the will of the individual. This philosophy accorded well with the traditions and the legends of a party which had refused to defer its assault on Tsardom until the economic conditions had 'ripened' or until the mass of the people had been aroused, and which had sent out its lonely fighters and martyrs, its strong-minded and strong-willed conspirators, to hunt down, bomb in hand, the Tsar, his ministers, and his governors. To the young Bronstein Marxism seemed narrow and dry as dust—an offence to the dignity of man, whom it portrayed as the prisoner of economic and social circumstances,

[1] Max Eastman, *Leon Trotsky, The Portrait of a Youth*, p. 68; A. G. Ziv, op. cit., pp. 9–12; L. Trotsky, op. cit., vol. i, chapters vi–vii.

the plaything of anonymous productive forces. This, he himself was to say later, was a simplification and a parody of Marxism; and, at any rate, no other modern political creed was to inspire as many people as Marxism would with the will and determination to fight, to suffer, and to die for their cause.[1] But the parody was not altogether unreal. Many of those who professed Marxism were indeed adopting the dry and quietist parody as their creed. The first version of Marxism which the young Bronstein encountered was probably of that sort. Against this the attraction of the romantic *Narodnik* tradition was overwhelming. It held up inspiring examples to imitate, the memory of heroes and martyrs to cherish, and a plain, unsophisticated promise for the future. It offered glories in the past and it seemed to offer glories in the future. It only seemed so. In its decay, the *Narodnik* movement was incapable of repeating its past exploits, incapable, at any rate, of repeating them with the old, pure, and heroic illusions. But even while the sun of that great romantic movement was setting, it cast a purple afterglow on to the Russian skies. The eyes of the young Bronstein were filled with that glow.

Having thrown himself into the controversy he was Sokolovskaya's most bitter antagonist. Into their relationship there crept an ambivalent emotion almost inevitable between two young and close political opponents of different sex, meeting regularly in a tiny group, attracted and repelled by each other and incapable of escaping from each other. Sokolovskaya, several years older than Bronstein—six according to some, ten according to others—had, of course, a wider and more serious political experience than had the pupil of the top form of the *Realschule*. Modest, firm in her convictions, and altogether free from vanity, she would stubbornly explain her views and keep her temper even when her adolescent opponent was making her the butt of his jibes. The situation took on a farcical twist. Everybody in the orchard was a little infatuated with the girl; and some of the boys wrote love poems. The great 'isms' and problems, the budding love and the rhymes all became mixed up—and the more perverse grew the discussions. 'You still think

[1] In his late years, Trotsky often compared Marxism with Calvinism: the determinism of the one and the doctrine of predestination of the other, far from weakening or 'denying' the human will, strengthened it. The conviction that his action is in harmony with a higher necessity inspires the Marxist as well as the Calvinist to the highest exertion and sacrifice.

you are a Marxist?' Bronstein teased her, 'How on earth can a young girl so full of life stand that dry, narrow, impractical stuff!'—'How on earth', Sokolovskaya would answer, 'can a person who thinks he is logical be contented with a headful of vague idealistic emotions?' Or Bronstein would mock at her girlish sentimentality which scarcely harmonized with her adherence to Marxism, that 'doctrine for shopkeepers and traders'.[1]

Yet her arguments were beginning to find their way to his mind. His inner confidence was shrinking. All the more 'relentless' was he in debate, and all the more boorish were his jibes. On the last day of December 1896 the group met for a discussion and celebration of the New Year. Bronstein came and, to the surprise of his friends, declared that he had been won over to Marxism. Sokolovskaya was elated. Toasts were drunk to the rapid emancipation of the working classes, to the downfall of Tsarist tyranny, and so on. When Bronstein's turn came, he stood up, lifted his glass, and turning towards Sokolovskaya, without apparent reason or provocation, burst out: 'A curse upon all Marxists, and upon those who want to bring dryness and hardness into all the relations of life!' The young woman left the orchard swearing that she would never shake hands with the brute. Soon afterwards she left the town.[2]

The new year had come, and the group had not yet gone beyond talk. Bronstein wrote a polemical article against Marxism, 'more epigrams, quotations, and venom than content' and sent it off to a periodical with *Narodnik* leanings. The article never appeared. Jointly with Sokolovskaya's brother, he was writing a drama on the Marxist-*Narodnik* controversy, but got stuck after the first or second act. The play was intended to show the *Narodnik* in a favourable light and to contrast him with the Marxist. As the plot was unfolding the authors noticed with astonishment that it was the Marxist who was shaping into the attractive character: he was almost certainly endowed with some of Sokolovskaya's features. The group also staged a 'revolt' in the local public library, the board of which had intended to raise readers' fees. The 'orchard' rallied the 'public', brought

[1] G. A. Ziv, op. cit., p. 15; M. Eastman, op. cit., p. 46.

[2] These incidents are related by both Eastman and Ziv. In *My Life* Trotsky omits them; but as in his preface to Eastman's book he confirms its factual accuracy, he thereby also testifies to the truthfulness of these stories, for which Ziv is the original source.

in new subscribers and overthrew the board at an annual meeting—no small event in the dormant town.[1]

Bronstein now neglected his school work; but he had learned enough to graduate in the summer of 1897 with first-class honours. However, his father sensed that something had gone wrong. On a vacation at Yanovka Lyova had talked about freedom and the overthrow of the Tsar. 'Listen, boy. That will never happen, not even in 300 years!' the farmer replied, wondering where his son had picked up such ideas. Soon he was on the track of Lyova's new associates and briskly ordered him to keep away from Shvigovsky's orchard. Lyova now asserted his 'critical mind' and 'free will'. He was free, he said, to choose his own friends; but as he would not submit to paternal authority he would not go on living on his father's money. He gave up his allowance, took up private tutoring, and moved from his comfortable lodgings to Shvigovsky's hut, where six students, some tubercular, had already been living. The change was exhilarating; freedom at last! Gone was the neat and dutiful bourgeois son, the object of admiration and envy to other boys' parents. His place was taken by a real *Narodnik*, who, like the pioneers of old, 'went to the people' to become one of them, lived in a little commune where everybody dressed like a farm labourer, put his few *kopeyeks* into the pool, drank the same thin soup, and ate the same *kasha* from a common tin bowl.

Old Bronstein sometimes came from Yanovka to see whether Lyova, weary of privation and discomfort, might not mend his ways. There was no sign of this. One of Shvigovsky's lodgers, later a well-known communist editor, was to remember the 'big, whiskered farmer . . . coming into the hut at dawn and standing over him aggressive and implacable. "Hello!" he shouts with a loud voice like a bugle: "You, too, ran away from your father?" '[2] Angry scenes alternated with half-hearted reconciliation. The father, seeing the ruin of his fond hopes for Lyova, was inconsiderate and impatient. The son, humiliated in front of his comrades, among whom he aspired to be the leading light, reacted with vehemence and disrespect. On both sides came into play the same temperaments, the same sense of righteousness, the same stubbornness, the same pride, and the same bugle-like voices. When Lyova entered the University of

[1] L. Trotsky, loc. cit.

[2] M. Eastman, op. cit., p. 55.

Odessa to study mathematics, it seemed that things might yet be patched up: even pure mathematics was in his father's eyes preferable to playing in obscure company at the overthrow of the Tsar. At the university Lyova began to show an exceptional gift for his subject.[1] But the university could not compete in attraction with Shvigovsky's orchard; nor could calculus get the better of revolution. His stay in Odessa was brief, but long enough for him to make contact with revolutionaries there and to get from them clandestine papers and pamphlets, with which he returned in triumph to Nikolayev.

Then came the turbulent spring of 1897. In March a student-girl imprisoned for her political convictions in the Peter–Paul fortress in St. Petersburg committed suicide by burning herself in her cell. The event provoked a storm of protests and demonstrations in the universities. In reprisal the authorities deported large numbers of undergraduates. New protests and demonstrations followed. Even 'police-ridden' Odessa was astir. Students coming from Kiev brought fresh excitement and indignation to Shvigovsky's orchard. This, Bronstein and his friends felt, was the time to pass from words to deeds.

'Bronstein . . . suddenly called me aside and proposed in great secrecy that I join a working-men's association, organized by himself', writes Ziv, then a student of medicine just arrived from Kiev. 'The *Narodnik* idea, Bronstein said, had been discarded; the organization was planned to be social democratic, although Bronstein avoided using this term . . . and proposed to call it the *Southern Russian Workers' Union*.' 'When I joined the organization', Ziv goes on, 'everything had already been arranged. Bronstein had already established his contacts with the workers and also with revolutionary circles in Odessa, Ekaterinoslav, and other towns. . . .'[2]

About 10,000 workers were employed in the docks and factories of Nikolayev, mostly skilled and well-paid craftsmen with enough leisure to read books and newspapers. So far, however, they had had no organization, not even a trade union. The

[1] Eastman quotes a prominent Russian technician, one of Trotsky's university colleagues, who, even after the revolution, regretted the loss to science of so exceptionally gifted a mathematician. Ibid., p. 59.

[2] A. G. Ziv, op. cit., p. 18. About this time social democratic groups were reviving or being formed in most towns in the south. See M. N. Lyadov, *Kak Nachynala Skladyvatsia R.K.P.* (*Istorya Ross. Sots.-Dem. Rab. Partii*), pp. 310 ff.

working-class quarters were teeming with religious sects opposed to the Orthodox Church. These sectarians Bronstein approached. He quickly saw which of them were concerned with religious dogma mainly and which were more preoccupied with the political implications of their opposition to Greek Orthodoxy. Among the latter he recruited the first members of the South Russian Workers' Union. He grouped them in small circles which met regularly to discuss current events and read clandestine papers. Before the year was out the Union counted about 200 members. From a contemporary Russian report, published after their arrest, we have a detailed view of the organization. Its members were locksmiths, joiners, electricians, seamstresses, and students, most of them in their early or middle twenties but some well over forty.[1] Among the founding members was also Sokolovskaya. Unmindful of the New Year's Eve scene, she returned to the orchard as soon as she had learned about the new beginning.

The name of the organization was evidently borrowed from another which had existed a quarter of century before and had had its centre in Odessa. The old South Russian Workers' Union, founded by a student, E. O. Zaslavsky, had been *Narodnik* in character and followed Lavrov's educational-propagandist line. It had been, as far as can be ascertained, roughly of the same size as its successor. In 1875 it was routed out by the police. Its leaders were tried by the Senate and most of them were convicted to forced labour. Zaslavsky and some of his associates died in prison. One of the founders, N. P. Shchedrin, was twice condemned to death and twice had his sentence commuted to life-long forced labour. For many years the prisoner was chained to his wheel-barrow, until his mind became deranged; then he was transferred to the Schlusselburg fortress, where for another fifteen years he was subjected to the sort of torture of which Dostoyevsky's *Notes from the House of the Dead* perhaps gives an idea. The legend of this martyrdom lived on in southern Russia; and it was probably as a tribute to it that Bronstein called his organization the South Russian Workers' Union. He himself assumed his first pseudonym—Lvov.

[1] *Rabocheye Delo, Organ Soyuza Russkikh Sotsial-Demokratov*, Geneva, 1 April 1899, pp. 150–2, gave a long and detailed list of the arrested members of the Union, with data about age, occupation, &c.

one-sidedness that secured its rapid success. If two groups, each advocating another 'ism', had come out and tried in competition with each other to win the workers, the result would have been confusion and failure. Only within a broader and more firmly established movement could the differences be seriously fought out. All the same, the Union of Nikolayev became known to the leaders of more advanced groups in other centres, who were preparing to call a Congress and to found the Social Democratic Workers' Party. They wondered whether to invite the Nikolayev group to send its delegate: would his age not detract from the solemnity of the occasion? Before the doubt was resolved the Nikolayev group was in prison.[1]

The success of this first venture demonstrated to the young revolutionary the 'power of the written word'. The town was astir with rumour; the Union, admired or feared, was a factor to be reckoned with; and friend and foe imagined it to be much stronger than it was. All this was the effect of his, Bronstein's, written word. The belief in the power of the word was to remain with him to the end. In every situation he would turn to it as to his first and his last resort; and throughout his life he would wield that power sometimes with world-shaking effect, and sometimes with lamentable failure. In this small fraternity of rebels he also first tried out his oratory; but the first attempt ended in humiliation and tears. It was one thing to speak sharply and bitingly in argument and quite another to make a set speech. 'He quoted Gumplowitz and . . . John Stuart Mill . . . and he got himself so terribly wound up in a sliding network of unintelligible big words and receding hopes of ideas that his audience sat bathed in sympathetic perspiration, wondering if there was any way under the sun they could help him to stop. When he finally did stop and the subject was opened for general debate, nobody said a word. Nobody knew what the subject was.' The speaker 'walked across the room and threw himself face down in the pillow on the divan. He was soaking with sweat, and his shoulders heaved with shame and everybody loved him.'[2]

In this small group none of Bronstein's qualities, good or bad,

[1] L. Trotsky, *Pokolenie Oktyabrya*, p. 20; M. N. Lyadov, *Kak Nachala Skladyvatsia RKP*, p. 324; Akimov, *Materialy dla Kharakteristiki Razvitya RSDRP*, pp. 39, 75.

[2] M. Eastman, op. cit., p. 70; Ziv relates that Bronstein carefully studied the techniques and tricks of polemics in Schopenhauer's *The Art of Debating*.

escaped his comrades. Their recorded observations agree with one another in almost everything except the emphasis. Sokolovskaya, who was to become his wife and whom he was to abandon, recollected after nearly thirty years that he could be very tender and sympathetic but also very assertive and arrogant; in one thing only he never changed, in his devotion to the revolution. 'In all my experience I have never met any person so completely consecrated', she said. His detractor speaks with more emphasis about his self-centredness and domineering temper: 'Bronstein's Ego', writes Ziv, 'dominated his whole behaviour', but, he adds, 'the revolution dominated his Ego.' 'He loved the workers and loved his comrades . . . because in them he loved his own self.' Having cheerfully given up the comforts of a settled life and the prospects of a good career he could not see how others could behave differently. When Ziv, anxious to finish his university course, began to neglect the group, Bronstein gave him a telling though tactful admonition. He presented Ziv with a picture on which he wrote a dedication: 'Faith without deeds is dead.'[1]

The hero who inspired him more than anybody else was Ferdinand Lassalle, the founder of the first mass movement of German socialism. In those days Lassalle's influence on European socialism was very strong—later the disclosure of his ambiguous political dealings with Bismarck dimmed the lustre. That the young Bronstein should have been so strongly impressed by Lassalle was due to an indubitable affinity. Lassalle, too, had been the son of a wealthy Jewish family and had abandoned his class to strive for the emancipation of the workers. He had been one of the greatest orators and one of the most colourful and romantic characters of his age. His meteoric career had come to a tragic end: he found his death in a romantic duel. As the founder of the first modern Labour party—the first not only in Germany—he had made history. The greatness, the brilliance, and the drama of such a life could not but stir the young Bronstein's imagination. He spoke about his hero with rapturous admiration; he swore to follow in his footsteps; and, if we are to believe Ziv, he boasted that he would become the Russian Lassalle. The young man was not addicted to modesty, false or real. He hid neither his faults nor his pretensions.

[1] M. Eastman, op. cit., p. 87; A. G. Ziv, op. cit., pp. 12, 19–21.

rail to Irkutsk, where they were separated and dispatched in different directions. The Bronsteins were sent down the Lena river on a large barge, which was crowded with Skoptsy,[1] dressed in white clothes, chanting prayers, and dancing wildly. The Bronsteins were ordered to disembark in the village of Ust-Kut, which during the gold rush on the Lena had served as a base for east Siberian settlers. The gold-diggers had by now moved farther east and north, and Ust-Kut was a god-forsaken place with about a hundred peasant huts, dirty and plagued by vermin and mosquitoes. The inhabitants, sick with unfulfilled dreams of wealth, were madly addicted to *vodka*. Here the Bronsteins stayed for a time, during which he studied *Das Kapital*, 'brushing the cockroaches off the pages' of Karl Marx. Later they obtained permission to move to another place, 150 miles farther east, where he worked as book-keeper for an illiterate millionaire peasant-merchant. His employer conducted business over a vast area and was the uncrowned ruler of its Tunguz inhabitants. Bronstein watched this huge capitalist enterprise growing on virgin Siberian soil—he would cite it in the future as an illustration of that combination of backwardness and capitalist development which was characteristic of Russia. Sociological observation and attentive book-keeping did not go well together, and an error in the accounts cost Bronstein his job. In the middle of a severe winter, with temperatures about ninety degrees below freezing-point, the Bronsteins went on sledges back to Ust-Kut. With them was their baby daughter, ten months old, wrapped in thick furs. At the stops the parents had to unwrap the baby to make sure that in protecting her from freezing to death they had not suffocated her.

From Ust-Kut they moved to Verkholensk, half-way on the road to Irkutsk, in the mountains towering over the Baikal Lake. There they occupied a little house and settled down in relative comfort. Verkholensk was one of the oldest eastern Siberian settlements—thirty-five years earlier Polish insurgents had been

[1] The Skoptsy were a persecuted sect of fanatics who castrated themselves to live in saintliness ('Holy eunuchs'). They lived in communes and were mostly gardeners, dressed in white, and spent night hours in prayer. The sect based itself on Isaiah: 'For thus saith the Lord unto the eunuchs that keep my sabbaths, and choose the things that please me, and take hold of my covenant; even unto them will I give in mine house and within my walls a place and a name better than of sons and of daughters.' (lvi. 4, 5.) According to legend, some of the Tsars (e.g. Alexander I) belonged to the sect.

engrossed in local affairs and ambitions. National co-ordination and leadership were needed. Bronstein was not the first to advance this idea. Abroad older Marxists, Plekhanov, Lenin, Martov, and others were expounding it in the newly-founded *Iskra* (*The Spark*). But *Iskra*, the first issue of which had appeared in Germany a few months before, had not yet reached the exiles at Verkholensk. Bronstein set down his views in an essay which was widely circulated and hotly debated in the Siberian colonies. The biographical interest of this now little-known essay lies in the fact that in it he expounded broadly a view of the organization and the discipline of the party identical with that which was later to become the hall-mark of Bolshevism, and which he himself then met with acute and venomous criticism.[1]

The revolutionary movement, so he argued in 1901, would be a Frankenstein monster, unless it came under the rule of a strong Central Committee which would have the power to disband and expel any undisciplined organization or individual. 'The Central Committee will cut off its relations with [the undisciplined organization] and it will thereby cut off that organization from the entire world of revolution. The Central Committee will stop the flow of literature and of wherewithal to that organization. It will send into the field . . . its own detachment, and, having endowed it with the necessary resources, the Central Committee will proclaim that this detachment is the local committee.' Here, one might say, was in a nutshell the whole procedure of purge, expulsion and excommunication, by which he himself was eventually to be 'cut off from the entire world of revolution'. Yet, it was true that at this time the revolutionary movement in Russia could not advance a single step without national integration and discipline and that a national leadership was sometimes bound to impose this discipline sternly on reluctant groups.[2] When Bronstein first formulated this view, he brought down upon himself the very charges with which he

[1] See his *Vtoroi Syezd RSDRP* (*Otchet Sibirskoi Delegatsii*), p. 32. He quoted his Siberian essay in 1903 in an appendix to his report to the Siberian Union on the second congress of the party, in which he tried to explain why he sided with the Mensheviks against the Bolsheviks, despite the views he had advocated in Siberia. The Siberian Union at first was, like the South Russian Union, 'economist' in character; and only in 1902 did it recognize the supremacy of revolutionary politics over economics and join, under Bronstein's influence, the *Iskra* organization. Later it was affiliated with the Mensheviks.

[2] L. Martov, *Istorya Ross. Sotsial-Demokratii*, pp. 62–72.

work, in the moral and political climate to which the poet or the novelist gives his individual expression, and in the effect which the literary work, in its turn, has on that climate.

But there was nothing in this of the vulgar Marxism which pretends to discover an economic or political class-interest hidden in every poem or play or novel. He was also exceptionally free (quite exceptionally for a man of 20–22 years) from the sectarian attitude which may induce a revolutionary to denounce any spiritual value which he cannot fit to his own conception and for which he has therefore no use. In the young Marxist this attitude is usually a symptom of inner uncertainty: he has not genuinely assimilated his new-found philosophy; the principles he professes are up to a point external to his thinking; and he is an historical materialist from duty rather than from natural conviction. The more fiercely he denounces anything that seems to contradict his ill-digested philosophy, the easier is his conscience, the more gratified is his sense of duty. In the young Bronstein it was therefore a sign of how intimately he had made the Marxist way of thinking his own, and a measure of his confidence in it, that he was singularly free from that dutiful sectarianism. He usually paid generous tribute to the talent or genius of a writer whose ideas were remote from or directly opposed to the doctrines of socialism. He did so not merely from fairness but from the conviction that the 'spiritual estate of man is so enormous and so inexhaustible in its diversity' that only he who 'stands on the shoulders of great predecessors' can utter a truly new and weighty word. The twenty-one-year-old writer insisted that revolutionary socialism was the consummation, not the repudiation, of great cultural traditions—it repudiated merely the conservative and conventional conception of tradition. He was not afraid of finding that Socialist and non-Socialist views might overlap or coincide and of admitting that there was a hard core, or a grain, of truth in any conception which as a whole he rejected.[1]

His first literary essay, a critical obituary on Nietzsche,

[1] He concluded an essay on Gogol, 'the founder of the Russian novel' as follows: 'If Gogol tried to weaken the social significance of his own writings . . . let us not hold this against him. If in his publicist writings he tried to appeal to the petty minds—let us forgive him this! And for his great inestimable artistic merits, for the loftily humane influence of his creative work—eternal, inextinguishable glory to him!' *Sochinenya*, vol. XX, p. 20.

appeared in the *Eastern Review*, in several instalments, in December 1900, a month or two after his arrival in Siberia. He could have chosen no subject more embarrassing than the work of Nietzsche whose hatred of socialism was notorious and whose cult of the Superman was repugnant to the Socialist. Bronstein began his obituary with an apology for its critical tenor: 'We ought to behave dispassionately towards the personalities of our . . . adversaries, and we ought to . . . pay due tribute to their sincerity and other individual merits. But an adversary—sincere or not, alive or dead—remains an adversary, especially if he is a writer who survives in his works. . . .' He showed how the idea of the Superman grew out of normal bourgeois morality and in what way it was opposed to that morality. Nietzsche, he held, generalized and drew to its last logical, or rather illogical, conclusion the contempt of the masses which was deeply rooted in normal bourgeois thinking. To prove this point, the critic showed how many of Nietzsche's views were either implied or expressly stated in the writings of Herbert Spencer, that representative philosopher and sociologist of the Victorian middle class. The idea of the Superman was opposed to bourgeois morality only as the excess is opposed to the norm. The immoral Superman stood in the same relation to the virtuous middle class in which the medieval *Raubritter* (with his maxim: Rauben ist keine Schande, das tuhn die Besten im Lande) had stood to the feudal lord. Nietzsche's ideal was the rapacious bourgeois freed from inhibition and stripped of pretences. Despite this, the Socialist could not but admire the brilliant originality with which Nietzsche had shown how brittle were the normal workaday ethics of the middle class.[1]

To this issue Bronstein returned in an essay on Ibsen, in whom he saw the immortal artist at loggerheads with the false moralist.[2] 'The historian of European social thought will never forget the slaps, those truly glorious slaps, which Ibsen has inflicted on the well washed, neatly brushed, and shiningly complacent physiognomy of the bourgeois philistine.' In *An Enemy of the People*, for instance, Ibsen had shown how subtly, without committing a single act of violence, a bourgeois democracy could isolate and destroy a heretic ('as effectively as if they had deported him to Siberia'). But the Socialist cannot approve the

[1] L. Trotsky, *Sochineniya*, vol. xx, pp. 147–62. [2] Ibid., pp. 181–95.

from the ashes and 'as passionate, as full of faith and as militant as ever, confidently knocks at the gate of history'. On his way he meets the philistine, whose strength lies in numbers and undiluted vulgarity and who is 'armed to the teeth by an experience which does not range beyond the counter, the office desk, and the double bedroom'. To the mockery of the philistine and to his pseudo-realistic conservatism ('There is nothing new under the moon'), the optimist who looks to the future replies:

Dum spiro spero! . . . If I were one of the celestial bodies, I would look with complete detachment upon this miserable ball of dust and dirt. . . . I would shine upon the good and the evil alike. . . . But I am a *man*. 'World history which to you, dispassionate gobbler of science, to you, book-keeper of eternity, seems only a negligible moment in the balance of time, is to me everything! As long as I breathe, I shall fight for the future, that radiant future in which man, strong and beautiful, will become master of the drifting stream of his history and will direct it towards the boundless horizon of beauty, joy and happiness! . . .

The nineteenth century has in many ways satisfied and has in even more ways deceived the hopes of the optimist. . . . It has compelled him to transfer most of his hopes to the twentieth century. Whenever the optimist was confronted by an atrocious fact, he exclaimed: What, and this can happen on the threshold of the twentieth century! When he drew wonderful pictures of the harmonious future, he placed them in the twentieth century.

And now that century has come! What has it brought with it at the outset?

In France—the poisonous foam of racial hatred; in Austria—nationalist strife . . .; in South Africa—the agony of a tiny people, which is being murdered by a colossus; on the 'free' island itself—triumphant hymns to the victorious greed of jingoist jobbers; dramatic 'complications' in the east; rebellions of starving popular masses in Italy, Bulgaria, Rumania. . . . Hatred and murder, famine and blood. . . .

It seems as if the new century, this gigantic newcomer, were bent at the very moment of its appearance to drive the optimist into absolute pessimism and civic nirvana.

—Death to Utopia! Death to faith! Death to love! Death to hope! thunders the twentieth century in salvoes of fire and in the rumbling of guns.

—Surrender, you pathetic dreamer. Here I am, your long awaited twentieth century, your 'future'.

—No, replies the unhumbled optimist: You—you are only the *present*.

. . . . . .

After four and a half years of prison and exile Bronstein longed for a scene of action broader than the Siberian colonies. In the summer of 1902, the underground mail brought him a copy of Lenin's *What is to be done?* and a file of *Iskra*. He read these with mixed feelings. Here he found ideas on the shape and character of the party, ideas which had been maturing in him, set out with supreme confidence by the brilliant émigré writers. The fact that he had in his backwater reached the same conclusions independently could not but give him a thrill and confirm him in his self-reliance. But he was intensely restless: he could no longer bear the sight of the muddy, cobble-stoned, narrow streets of Verkholensk. Even the arguments within the colonies of deportees and his literary successes with the *Eastern Review* filled him with boredom. If only he could get away to Moscow or Petersburg . . . and then perhaps to Geneva, Munich, or London, the centres where the intellectual weapons of the revolution were being forged. . . .

He shared his impatience and his secret ambition with his wife. Alexandra had no doubt that her husband was destined to greatness, and that at twenty-three it was time for him to do something for immortality. She urged him to try to escape from Siberia and in doing so she shouldered the burden of a heavy sacrifice. She had just given birth to their second daughter and was now undertaking to struggle for her own and her children's lives, unaided, with no certainty of a reunion. In her own conviction she was, as his wife and as a revolutionary, merely doing her duty; and she took her duty for granted without the slightest suggestion of melodrama.[1]

On a summer night in 1902, Bronstein, hidden under loads of hay in a peasant cart rumbling along bumpy Siberian fields, was on his way to Irkutsk. In his bed, in the loft of his house at Verkholensk, there lay the dummy of a man. Next evening the police inspector who came, as usual, to check whether the Bronsteins were in, climbed a ladder to the loft, glanced at the bed and, satisfied that everything was in order, went away. In

[1] L. Trotsky, *Moya Zhizn*, vol. i, p. 157; Ziv, op. cit., p. 42; M. Eastman, op. cit., pp. 142–3.

the meantime the fugitive, supplied by his friends at Irkutsk with new, respectable-looking clothes, boarded the Trans-Siberian railway.

Before he left Irkutsk his comrades provided him with a false passport. He had to inscribe hastily the name he was to assume, and he scribbled that of one of his former jailors in the Odessa prison. In this hazardous escape did the identification with his jailor perhaps gratify in the fugitive a subconscious craving for safety? It may be so. Certainly the name of the obscure jailor was to loom large in the annals of revolution: it was—Trotsky.[1]

The journey west was unexpectedly quiet. The passenger killed time reading Homer's hexameters in a Russian translation. He alighted at Samara on the Volga, where *Iskra's* organization had its Russian headquarters. He was heartily welcomed by Kzhizhanovsky-Clair, the prominent technician, Lenin's friend and future chief of the Soviet *Gosplan* (State Planning Commission). Bronstein's literary reputation had preceded him, and Kzhizhanovsky-Clair nicknamed him *The Pen* (*Piero*) and sent a glowing report on his talents and activities to *Iskra's* headquarters in London. Straightway Bronstein was sent to Kharkov, Poltava, and Kiev to inspect groups of Socialists. He found that most of the groups persisted in their local patriotisms and refused to co-operate with one another or to submit to any central authority. With a report to this effect he returned to Samara. There an urgent message from Lenin was awaiting him: The Pen was to report as soon as possible at *Iskra's* foreign headquarters.

[1] Ziv, op. cit., pp. 25–26; M. Eastman, op. cit., p. 143. In his autobiography Trotsky does not mention the bizarre origin of his pseudonym. As if a little ashamed of it, he merely says that he had not imagined that Trotsky would become his name for the rest of his life.

CHAPTER III

At the Door of History

EARLY one morning, almost at dawn, in October 1902, the fugitive from Siberia knocked violently at a door in London, at 10 Holford Square, near King's Cross. There, in one room and a kitchen, lived Vladimir Ilyich Lenin and his wife, Nadezhda Konstantinovna Krupskaya—Mr. and Mrs. Richter to their lower-middle-class neighbours. The early hour was hardly suitable for a visit, but the caller was too full of the importance of his mission and too impatient and self-confident to think of the minor courtesies. He had travelled in feverish excitement from Irkutsk to London, stealing across frontiers and surmounting all obstacles on the way. In Vienna he had roused the famous Victor Adler, the founder of the Austrian Socialist Party, from a Sunday rest and got from him the help and the money he needed for the rest of his journey. In Zurich he had knocked, in the middle of the night, at the door of Paul Axelrod, the veteran of Russian Marxism, in order to introduce himself and make arrangements for the last lap. Now, at his final destination, alone in the grey mist of an early London morning, with only a cabman waiting behind him for the fare—the passenger had no money—he expressed his inner agitation by his loud knocking. He was indeed 'knocking at the door of history'.

Krupskaya, guessing a countryman in the early and noisy visitor, and a little worried lest her English neighbours might be annoyed by this instance—not the only one—of the extravagant behaviour of the foreigners in the house, hurried out to meet the newcomer. From the door she exclaimed: 'The Pen has arrived!' Lenin, she later recollected, 'had only just awakened and was still in bed. Leaving them together I went to see to the cabman and prepare coffee. When I returned I found Vladimir Ilyich still seated on the bed in animated conversation with Trotsky on some rather abstract theme. But the cordial recommendations of the "young eagle" and this first conversation made Vladimir Ilyich pay particular attention to the

newcomer.'[1] The visitor was to remember the 'kindly expression on Lenin's face . . . tinged with a justifiable amazement'.

Breathlessly the visitor made his report on the political trends and moods among the Siberian exiles; on the impressions he had formed from his recent trip to Kiev, Kharkov, and Poltava; on the reluctance of local groups there to consider themselves as parts of an integrated national movement; on the work at Samara headquarters; on the degree of reliability of the clandestine channels of communication; on defects in the arrangements for illegal frontier crossings; and on much more. Lenin, who had recently been exasperated by the unbusiness-like and muddled communications that had been reaching him from the underground in Russia, was delighted to obtain from the young man an unusual amount of precise and definite information, to listen to his 'lucid and incisive' remarks and to find in him a convinced adherent of the idea of a centralized party.[2]

Anxious to examine him more closely, Lenin took him for long walks and talks, in the course of which he showed him London's historical and architectural landmarks. But Trotsky—so he began to be called—was so full of the clandestine struggle in Russia that his mind was closed to anything that had no direct bearing on it. He noticed the peculiar mannerism Lenin used in trying to acquaint him with some of the landmarks: 'This is *their* Westminster' or 'This is *their* British Museum', he would say, conveying by the inflection of his voice and by implication both his admiration for the genius embodied in the grand buildings and his antagonism to the ruling classes, to whose spirit and power those buildings were a monument. Trotsky was eager to return from these digressions to topics nearer to his heart: In what way did the *Iskra* men propose to weld the disconnected groups into a centralized party? How were they faring in the campaign against the Economists, who were trying to keep the movement within the bounds of non-political trade unionism? How would they counter the attempts just begun by others to revive a *Narodnik*-like terrorist party? What were they going to do to combat Peter Struve's 'legal

[1] N. K. Krupskaya, *Memories of Lenin*, p. 60.

[2] Lenin, *Sochineniya*, vol. xxxiv, pp. 89–92; Krupskaya, loc. cit.; L. Trotsky, *Moya Zhizn*, vol. i, chapter xi.

who had only recently left Russia. Most of the editors were living in London, in the borough of St. Pancras; Plekhanov and Axelrod lived in Switzerland, but Plekhanov made frequent trips to London. From this group, especially from Lenin's home, ran all the threads to the underground movement in Russia, whose agents appeared at Holford Square with messages and went back with instructions. Thus, the young Trotsky found himself transferred from Verkholensk straight into the directing centre of Russian socialism and placed under the constant influence of outstanding and contrasting personalities.

Zasulich and Martov shared with him their home, their meals, and their thoughts. It was Vera Zasulich who had, the year before Trotsky's birth, fired at General Trepov, and had unwittingly inspired the *Freedom of the People* to follow her example. After the jury acquitted her she escaped abroad, kept in touch with Karl Marx, and, although she did not accept his teaching without mental reservations, became one of the founders of the Russian Marxist school. Disregarding Marx's doubts, she was among the first to proclaim that the proletarian socialism he had advocated for western Europe would suit Russia as well.[1] She was not only a heroic character. Well read in history and philosophy, she was essentially a heretic, with a shrewdly feminine mind working by intuitive impulses and flashes rather than by reasoning. In all the portraits of her drawn by contemporaries, we also find the comic touches of the old-style Russian Bohemian. 'She wrote very slowly, suffering truly all the torments of literary creation'; and as she wrote or argued she paced thoughtfully up and down her room, with her slippers flapping, rolling cigarettes, chain-smoking, throwing butts on the window sills and tables, scattering ash over her blouse, arms, and manuscripts or into her cup of tea, and sometimes over her interlocutor. To the young Trotsky she was the heroine of a glorious epic—he had come to stay under one roof with the living legend of revolution.

Martov was only a few years older than Trotsky. He, too, was a Jew. The descendant of an old family of great Hebrew scholars—his real name was Zederbaum—he had been one of the initiators of the Bund, the Jewish Socialist party; but then he abandoned the idea of a separate Jewish Labour party, and,

[1] *Perepiska K. Marxa i F. F. Engelsa s Russkimi Politicheskimi Deyatelami*, pp. 240–2.

as we have seen, had sat at the veterans' feet with the same feelings which animated Trotsky now. But their apprenticeship had come to an end; and, as often happens, the pupils were more acutely aware of this than the masters. The whole work now centred on *Iskra*, and as editors and contributors the veterans, with the exception of Plekhanov, were more or less ineffectual. They wrote rarely and not very well; and they took little or no part in organizing the clandestine movement in Russia. Lenin and Martov shared day-to-day editorial duties; and Lenin, assisted by Krupskaya, bore the brunt of the drudgery that had to be done in order to keep and develop the contacts with Russia.[1] Inevitably, the veterans felt that they were being by-passed.

The jealousies were focused in the antagonism between Plekhanov and Lenin, each of the two being the most assertive man in his group. This antagonism had appeared at the moment of *Iskra*'s foundation, and it had grown since. Lenin was acquiring confidence in his own ideas and methods of work, and he did not conceal it. Plekhanov treated him with patronizing irony or with schoolmasterly offensiveness. Some months before Trotsky's arrival, in May 1902, Lenin had written to Plekhanov: 'You have a fine idea of tact. . . . You do not hesitate to use the most contemptuous expressions. . . . If your purpose is to make mutual work impossible, then the way you have chosen will very rapidly help you to succeed. As for our personal relations . . . you have finally spoilt them, or more exactly, you have achieved their complete cessation.'[2] This rift had since been patched up by Zasulich and Martov. But clashes recurred and the latest was connected with Trotsky's work for *Iskra*. 'Once [Lenin] returned from an editorial meeting', writes Krupskaya, 'in a terrific rage. "A damned fine state of affairs", he said, "nobody has enough courage to reply to Plekhanov. Look at Vera Ivanovna [Zasulich]! Plekhanov trounces Trotsky, and Vera just says 'Just like our George. All he does is to shout.'" "I cannot go on like this", Lenin burst out.'[3]

[1] In a hostile memoir, written in 1927, Potresov admitted: 'And yet . . . all of us who were closest to the work . . . valued Lenin not only for his knowledge, brains, and capacity for work but also for his exceptional devotion to the cause, his unceasing readiness to give himself completely, to take upon himself the most unpleasant functions and without fail to discharge them with the utmost conscientiousness.' A. N. Potresov, *Posmertnyi Sbornik Proizvedenii*, p. 299.

[2] *The Letters of Lenin*, pp. 155–6.

[3] Krupskaya, op. cit., p. 65.

lending support to the Tsar's 'civilizing mission' in Turkey, why 'do not they call for a crusade against the barbarians . . . of Tsardom?' The semi-liberal opposition, 'that lawful opposition to a lawless government' was already, and would remain for many years, the favourite butt of his irony.[1] In the *Zemstvos*, whose function it should be to judge the actions of the administration, the 'defendant in fact assumes the role of the presiding judge and arrogates the right to adjourn the court at any moment'. Tsardom was offering the *Zemstvos* 'the *knout* wrapped in the parchment of Magna Charta', and the *Zemstvos* were contented. What do they understand by freedom—'freedom from political freedom?' 'One may confidently say that if Russian freedom were to be born from the *Zemstvos*, it would never come to life. Fortunately Russian freedom has more reliable parents: the revolutionary proletariat and the inner, self-destructive logic of Russian absolutism.' 'Many political trends will succeed one another, many "parties" will emerge and fade, each pretending to improve upon the Social Democratic programme and tactics, but the future historian will say: these trends and these parties were only insignificant, secondary incidents in the great struggle of the awakened working class . . . already advancing with clumsy but faithful steps on the road of political and social emancipation.'[2]

In a similar vein he wrote about the Tsar's attempts to force the Russian language on the Finns and to destroy their autonomy; the expulsion of Maxim Gorky from the Imperial Academy; the futility of the newly formed Social Revolutionary party, reverting to *Narodnik* terrorism; or the attempt by the police to set up puppet clandestine organizations to compete with the real underground. His attacks on the terrorism of the Social Revolutionaries, especially one made after the execution of a young student Balmashev, who had killed Sypiagin, the Minister of the Interior, provoked indignant protests from Liberals and Socialists. The Liberal intelligentsia had much more sympathy with the terrorists than had the Marxists. But

[1] *Iskra*, no. 28, 15 November and no. 29, 1 December 1902. It is noteworthy that as early as March 1901 Trotsky wrote in the *Eastern Review*: 'Pure liberalism with all its Manchester symbols of faith has faded in our country before it has blossomed: it did not find any social ground for itself. It was possible to import Manchester ideas . . . but it was impossible to import the social environment which produced those ideas.' *Sochinenya*, vol. xx, pp. 85–86. [2] *Iskra*, no. 29, 1 December 1902.

even Socialists held that Trotsky's polemics were too vehement and that he ought to have written with more respect or warmth about the executed Social Revolutionary.[1]

Only nine months were to elapse between his arrival in London and the opening of the second congress of the Russian Social Democratic party. In this short time his reputation was established firmly enough to allow him, at the age of twenty-three, to play a leading role at the congress, in the momentous split between Bolsheviks and Mensheviks. This was perhaps due more to his lecturing and speech-making than to his writing. No sooner had he arrived in London than Lenin and Martov pitted him in debate against venerable old *Narodnik* and anarchist émigrés in Whitechapel. The novice was pleasantly surprised at the ease with which he swept the floor with his grey-bearded opponents. After that he toured the Russian colonies in western Europe. Contemporaries have described the first sudden and irresistible impact of his oratory, the élan, the passion, the wit, and the thunderous metallic voice, with which he roused audiences and bore down upon opponents. This appears all the more remarkable as only a few years before he could only stammer in blushing perplexity before a tiny, homely audience and as he had spent most of the time since in the solitude of prison and exile. His oratory was quite untutored: he had hardly yet heard a single speaker worthy of imitation. This is one of those instances of latent unsuspected talent, bursting forth in exuberant vitality to delight and amaze all who witness it. His speech, even more than his writing, was distinguished by a rare intensity of thought, imagination, emotion, and expression. The rhetoric which often spoilt his writing made his speaking all the more dramatic. He appeared, as it were, with the drama in himself, with the sense of entering a conflict in which the forces and actors engaged were more than life-size, the battles Homeric, and the climaxes worthy of demi-gods.[2]

[1] In the summer of 1902, Miliukov, the future leader of the Constitutional Democrats, paid a visit to *Iskra*'s editors in London, praised *Iskra* but objected to its campaign against terrorism. 'Why', he said, 'let there be another two or three such attempts on the Tsar's ministers and we are going to get a constitution.' The moderate constitutionalist often regarded the terrorist as a useful agent for exerting pressure on the Tsar. N. Alexeyev in *Proletarskaya Revolutsia*, no. 3, 1924.

[2] In August 1902, just before his flight from Siberia, he had written in the *Eastern Review*: 'The laws of social life and the principles of party . . . are also a force

prayers and to read, instead of the Bible, Russian radical literature.[1] She was at this time studying the history of art at the Sorbonne. She was to remain his companion for the rest of his life and to share with him to the full triumph and defeat. Sokolovskaya, however, remained his legal wife and bore his name. To all three the legal niceties of their connexion did not matter at all—like other revolutionaries they disregarded on principle the canons of middle-class respectability. At heart, perhaps, Trotsky never quite freed himself from a qualm over the manner of his separation from Sokolovskaya; and this, more than alleged reluctance to expatiate on his private life, may explain why in his autobiography he devoted no more than a single sentence to the whole affair. As an émigré he himself could not do much for his wife and two children. His parents, who in 1903 went to Paris for a reconciliation, took care of the children, helping to bring them up. As far as we know, the question of a reunion between Trotsky and his first wife never arose. When he and Sedova returned to Russia there was no suggestion of discord. Ties of respect and of a high-minded friendship were to bind the three of them to the end; and eventually his political fortunes affected with equal tragedy both the women and the children of both.

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While he was working and lecturing in France, Switzerland, and Belgium, there came from clandestine headquarters in Russia insistent demands that he should be sent back. The Russian underground and the émigré centre competed intensely for personnel. Trotsky knew nothing of these demands. When old Leon Deutsch learned about them, he used all his influence to prevent Trotsky's return. With the burden of his own thirteen years of hard labour in Siberia still on his mind, he pleaded with the editors of *Iskra* to leave the 'Benjamin' abroad, so that he might widen his education, see the world, and develop his talents. Deutsch found an ally in Lenin, who was reluctant to lose his contributor. Lenin wrote back to Russia that Trotsky was showing no desire to return. This was a subterfuge by which Lenin hoped to put off Russian headquarters, and Krupskaya leaves no doubt that it was Lenin who decided against sending Trotsky back. Thus, Trotsky's fate was settled for the

[1] Eastman, op. cit., p. 153.

time being: he would stay abroad for the forthcoming congress of the party.[1]

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In July 1903 the congress was at last convened in Brussels. This was actually to be the foundation assembly—the so-called first congress of 1898 had been a meeting at Minsk of eight people only, who were soon arrested, and had left nothing behind except a stirring *Manifesto*, written by Peter Struve. Only now, in 1903, had the network of clandestine organizations become close enough, and the contacts of *Iskra* with it solid enough, for everybody to feel that the time had come to form a regular party with a well-defined constitution and an elected leadership. It was taken for granted that that leadership would remain with the *Iskra* team, which alone had supplied the organizations with a political idea and alone had co-ordinated their activities. For the whole team the congress was a solemn occasion. To the veterans it was the materialization of a dream long cherished in prisons, and in places of deportation and exile.

It was also taken for granted that the *Iskra* men would appear at the congress as a single body, bound by solidarity in ideas, in achievement, and in the aspiration to leadership. Before the congress there was some discord over the drafting of a programme, but this was easily settled. Opposition was expected from two groups: from the Economists, who would fight a rearguard skirmish against the triumphant advance of revolutionary politics; and from the Jewish Bund, claiming for itself a special status within the party. These two groups were in a minority, and all *Iskra* men were united against them. Just before the opening of the congress the editors of *Iskra* began to wrangle over the manner in which the leading bodies of the party should be set up; but this seemed a minor detail of organization.

At the beginning of July forty-four delegates with voting rights, and fourteen with consultative voice, met at the Socialist *Maison du Peuple* in Brussels. Trotsky arrived from Geneva to represent, together with another delegate, the *Siberian Social Democratic Workers' Union*.[2] Seated in a drab warehouse in the

[1] N. Krupskaya, *Memories of Lenin*, p. 60; Lenin, *Sochinenya*, vol. xxxiv, p. 114.

[2] In *My Life* he describes humorously how he and Dr. Ulyanov, Lenin's younger brother, at a small station near Geneva, hurriedly boarded an express train for Brussels after the train had begun to move, and how the station-master stopped the train to take the strange passengers off the buffers. Trotsky travelled on a false Bulgarian passport as Mr. Samokovlieff. These precautions were intended to keep the Russian secret police in the dark. But the *Okhrana* had its agents among the delegates, and the Belgian police closely watched the congress and its participants. Trotsky describes, in the style of a good film scenario, his race with a police agent through the empty streets of Brussels in the middle of the night. Finally, the congress was transferred to London.

back of the *Maison du Peuple*, the delegates listened in exaltation to Plekhanov's opening speech. By their presence, they felt, they were creating a landmark in the history of that submerged Russia which had for more than three-quarters of a century struggled against the Tsars and was now heading for the final battles. Neither the humble setting of the congress, nor its obscurity from the world, could, in the eyes of the participants, deprive the moment of its historic consequence.

The first controversy on the floor concerned the Bund. The Jewish organization demanded autonomy within the party, with the right to elect its own central committee and to frame its own policy in matters affecting the Jewish population. It asked further that the party should recognize the Bund as its sole agency among the Jewish workers. It urged the party that it should advocate not merely equal rights for Jews, as it had done, but that it should acknowledge the right of the Jews to 'cultural autonomy', their right, that is, to manage their own cultural affairs and to maintain their own schools in the Jewish (Yiddish) language. On behalf of the *Iskra* men, Martov, who had been one of the Bund's founders, indignantly repudiated these demands. Trotsky repeated the repudiation even more vehemently. The debate was taking place only a few months after the great pogrom of the Jews at Kishynev. Jewish susceptibilities and suspicions were aroused; and they were indirectly reflected in the Bund's attitude.[1] The non-Jewish spokesmen of *Iskra* kept in the background in order to spare those susceptibilities; and so the rebuff to the Bund came from the Jews. Martov tabled the motion against the Bund; and only Jewish delegates put their signatures to it. Trotsky himself spoke on behalf of the *Iskra*ites of Jewish origin, and, making the most

[1] An illuminating account of the mood among Jewish socialists after the pogrom is found in the correspondence of Y. M. Sverdlov, the future Soviet President, in *Pechat i Revolutsia*, vol. ii, 1924. See also Medem, op. cit., vol. ii, pp. 29–32.

of this circumstance, he lashed the delegates of the Bund into a fury. They protested vehemently against his speech, suggested that he was out to affront the Jews, and appealed to the chairman to protect them. When the chairman found Trotsky's remarks unexceptionable, the Bundists tabled a motion censuring the chairman.

This was one of the stormiest scenes at the congress, and one of the very rare occasions on which Trotsky referred to himself as a Jew and spoke on a specifically Jewish issue That he was doing so only to refute Jewish demands must have seemed almost caddish to the highly-strung delegates of the Bund. He pleaded, however, that more than a Jewish issue was at stake. Claiming for itself autonomy within the party, with the right to elect its own Central Committee, the Bund was, in fact, setting a precedent for others: if the party had granted such privileges to the Bund it could not later refuse them to other groups. It would then have to abandon the idea of an integrated organization and to transform itself into a loose federation of parties and groups. In short, the Bund was trying by devious means to induce the *Iskra* men to abandon their guiding principle and the practical work they had done to put it into effect. The other demand that the Bund be recognized as the party's sole agency among Jewish workers amounted to a claim that only Jews were entitled to carry the Socialist message to Jewish workers and to organize them. This, Trotsky pointed out, was an expression of distrust in the non-Jewish members of the party a challenge to their internationalist conviction and sentiment. 'The Bund', Trotsky exclaimed amid a storm of protests, 'is free not to trust the party, but it cannot expect the party to vote no confidence in its own self.'[1] The party as a whole could not renounce its right to address the Jewish toiling masses without yielding to Jewish separatism. The Bund's demand for 'cultural autonomy' sprang from the same separatism, confronting with its claims first the party and then the state and the nation. Socialism was interested in sweeping away barriers between races, religions, and nationalities—it could not turn its hand to putting up such barriers. He granted the Jews the right to have schools in their own language, if they so desired. But these, he added, should not be outside the national educational system,

[1] *Vtoroi Syezd RSDRP*, pp. 52–55.

and Jewish cultural life at large should not be centred on and closed in itself. He tabled a motion to this effect, supplementing Martov's general resolution. Both resolutions were carried by an overwhelming majority.[1]

Like Martov, Axelrod, Deutsch, and other Socialists of Jewish origin, Trotsky took the so-called assimilationist view, holding that there was no future for the Jews as a separate community. The ties that had kept the Jews together were either those of religion, which, according to the prevalent Socialist conviction, were bound to dissolve; or those of a semi-fictitious nationalism culminating in Zionism. The Bund was strongly opposed to Zionism, for it conceived the future of the Jews to lie in the countries of the so-called diaspora. But, Trotsky argued, in its opposition to Zionism the Bund absorbed from the latter its nationalist essence.[2] He saw the solution of the Jewish problem not in the formation of a Jewish state, still less in the formation of Jewish states within the non-Jewish ones, but in a consistently internationalist reshaping of society. The premiss for this was mutual unreserved confidence between Jews and non-Jews, whether in the party or in the state. To this attitude he was to adhere till the end of his life—only the impact of Nazism was to induce him to soften a little his hostility towards Zionism.[3] He would not grant the tragic truth contained in the Jews' distrust of their gentile environment. Neither he nor any other Socialist could imagine even in a nightmare that the working classes of Europe, having through generations listened to the preachings of international solidarity, would, forty years later, be unable or unwilling to prevent or stop the murder of six

[1] Ibid., p. 198.

[2] Some time after the congress Trotsky published in *Iskra* a bitter attack on Zionism. The occasion was a conflict between the original Zionists who were led by Theodore Herzl and those Zionists who, led by Max Nordau, were prepared to abandon Palestine for Uganda as a Jewish homeland. Herzl tried to buy the land of Palestine from the Sultan, while Nordau conducted a campaign for the acquisition of Uganda. A fanatical follower of Herzl made an attempt on Nordau's life. Trotsky wrote in this connexion about Herzl as a 'shameless adventurer' and about 'the hysterical sobbings of the romanticists of Zion'; and he saw in the conflict the bankruptcy of Zionism. (*Iskra*, no. 56, 1 January 1904.)

[3] In an interview with the American-Jewish *Forward* (28 January 1937) Trotsky stated that after the experience of Nazism, it was difficult to believe in the 'assimilation' of the Jews, for which he had hoped. Zionism by itself, he went on, would not solve the problem; but even under Socialism, it might be necessary for the Jews to settle on a separate territory.

million Jewish men, women, and children in Hitler's gas chambers. To this problem the formulas of the Bund could, of course, provide no answer. Trotsky came out as a Jew against Jewish separatism, because his vision of the future was as remote from mid-century European 'civilization' as heaven from earth.

The next dispute at the congress was between the *Iskra* men and the Economists. The Economists protested against the supremacy which revolutionary politics had gained in the mind of the party over trade unionism and the struggle for reforms. They also objected to the centralized organization in which they, the Economists, were reduced to impotence. Their spokesmen, Martynov and Akimov, upbraided *Iskra* for its dictatorial, 'Jacobin-like' attitude.[1] It should be noted that this is the first time the charge appears in the records. The *Iskra* men answered the critics in unison. Trotsky spoke against the Economists with an aggressive zeal which earned him the epithet of 'Lenin's cudgel'.[2] The struggle for small economic gains and reforms, he said, made sense only in so far as it helped to muster the forces of the working classes for revolution. 'The Social Democratic Party, as it struggles for reforms, carries out a fundamental reform of itself—a reform in the minds of the proletariat, which is being prepared for a revolutionary dictatorship.' The ruling classes, in any case, agree to reforms only when they are confronted by a threat of revolution, and so the supremacy of revolutionary politics was needed even in the struggle for reforms.[3] He defended the centralistic mode of organization, saying that the party needed strict statutes, enabling the leadership to keep out noncongenial influences. Ridiculing the charges of Jacobinism, he said that the statutes should express '*the leadership's organized distrust*' of the members, a distrust manifesting itself in vigilant control from above over the party.[4]

This idea was soon to become Lenin's exclusive property, the hallmark of Bolshevism. Trotsky, we remember, had advocated it as early as in 1901; and this idea was still *Iskra*'s common property. It summed up, to quote the most authoritative Menshevik historian, the reaction of all forward-looking Socialists against the 'shapelessness and federative looseness' of the move-

[1] *Vtoroi Syezd RSDRP.*, p. 137.
[2] N. K. Krupskaya, op. cit., p. 70.
[3] *Vtoroi Syezd RSDRP.*, pp. 136–7.
[4] Ibid., p. 168.

ment.[1] But this was the last time that all *Iskra* men, including the future Mensheviks, were in complete accord in defending this idea, although perhaps none of them spoke for it as vigorously as Trotsky did. None of them would have been more surprised than he if he had been told that a few sessions later he would angrily renounce his own words. It was, generally speaking, not Lenin but the future leaders of Menshevism, especially Plekhanov, who at this congress, during the debate on the programme, spoke with the greatest determination for proletarian dictatorship. Plekhanov urged the delegates to adopt formulas that left no doubt that in a revolutionary situation they would not shrink from the destruction of parliamentary institutions or from restricting civil liberties. *Salus revolutionis suprema lex esto*—Plekhanov used these words as his text when he argued that if, after the overthrow of Tsardom, a constituent assembly hostile to the revolutionary government were to be elected, that government should, after the manner of Cromwell, disperse the assembly. It was on this principle that Lenin and Trotsky acted in 1918, unmoved by the vituperation of an old and sick Plekhanov. The latter now also pleaded that the revolutionary government should not abolish capital punishment—it might need it in order to destroy the Tsar. These views evoked one single protest from an obscure delegate and gave rise to a feeble doubt in a few others, but they were generally received with acclamation.

Behind the scenes, however, the solidarity of the *Iskra* men was beginning to vanish. The discord did not at first appear over any problem of policy, not even over the famous paragraph 1 of the statutes, on which they were eventually to divide, but over a matter in which no principle of policy or organization was involved. Lenin proposed to reduce the number of *Iskra*'s

[1] L. Martov, *Istorya Rossiiskoi Sotsial-Demokratii*, pp. 62–72. Martov describes how much the concept of a centralized organization was then 'in the air'. The idea was first formulated in detail not by Lenin but by an underground worker in Petersburg, who wrote a letter to Lenin about this, and who after the split joined the Mensheviks. In the year before the congress a scheme of organization similar to Lenin's was proposed to *Iskra* by Savinkov, who later left the Social Democrats to form the Social Revolutionary Party. Even after the split Martov wrote: 'In the problem of organization we are first of all adherents of centralism, which as revolutionary social democrats we must be.' Ibid., p. 11. See also Lenin, *Sochinenya*, vol. vi, pp. 205–24, Martov's preface to Cherevanin, *Organizatsionnyi Vopros*, and V. L. Akimov, *Materialy dla Kharakteristiki Razvitya RSDRP*, p. 104.

editors from six to three. The three editors were to be: Plekhanov, Martov, and himself. Axelrod, Zasulich, and Potresov were to be left out. Historians of the opposed schools are eager retrospectively to read into this proposal profound, far-reaching intentions, baleful or benign, according to the viewpoint. In its actual setting, Lenin's intention was simple. He was seeking to make the editorial work of *Iskra* more efficient than it had lately been. As the board of six had tended to divide equally, he had, in order to break the deadlock, proposed Trotsky's appointment; but, since Plekhanov's objections had ruled this out, he now tried to achieve his purpose by reducing, instead of increasing, the number of editors. The three whom he was proposing had been *Iskra*'s real pillars. Zasulich, Axelrod, and Potresov had contributed very little—none of them was a fluent writer—and had done even less in the work of administration and organization.[1] On grounds of efficiency alone, Lenin's proposal was justified. But considerations of efficiency clashed, as they often do, with acquired rights and sentiment. Lenin had his qualms before he decided on this step; Plekhanov had little or no scruple. To Trotsky this attempt to eliminate from *Iskra* Axelrod and Zasulich, two of its founders, seemed 'sacrilegious'; he was shocked by Lenin's callousness.

This narrow issue at once became entangled with other and wider questions. *Iskra*'s editorial board was to remain, as it had been, the party's virtual leadership. A central committee, to be elected at the congress, was to operate in Russia. But, working underground and exposed to arrest, it could not secure continuity in leadership—only an émigré centre, such as the editorial board, could do that. Lenin further proposed the election of a Council which was to act as arbiter between the central committee and the editorial board. That Council was to consist of five members: two from *Iskra*, two from the central committee, and a chairman who was to be elected by congress. It was a foregone conclusion that Plekhanov would be the chairman; and so *Iskra*'s editorial board was sure to wield the decisive influence in the Council. It was because of this scheme

[1] Explaining in a letter to his follower his own motives, Lenin stated that to the 45 issues of the 'old' *Iskra* Martov had contributed 39 articles, Lenin 32, Plekhanov 24; Zasulich had written only 6 articles, Axelrod 4, and Potresov 8. Lenin, *Sochinenya*, vol. xxxiv, p. 164.

that Lenin brought upon himself the charge that he was seeking to dominate the party. Yet, as events showed, the scheme by itself could not give Lenin more influence than he had had under the old dispensation. If it tended to accord a privileged position to any single person then that person was Plekhanov, Lenin's future enemy. All that was to be achieved was the elimination of the least effective members of the old team, in the first instance of Axelrod and Zasulich. Lenin was willing to pay these veterans the homage they had well deserved; but he was not prepared to do so in a manner that would have interfered with the effective conduct of business, the brunt of which he himself had anyhow borne. The two veterans, not unnaturally, were shocked. Martov was anxious to soothe them. Trotsky, not well informed about the inner workings of the team, could not understand Lenin's motives. He sensed a sinister conspiracy.

While behind the scenes the initiated whispered about the 'family scandal', the statutes of the party came up for debate in full session. The *Iskra* team had discussed them before the congress and had noticed a difference between Lenin and Martov. Lenin's draft ran as follows: 'A member of . . . the Party is any person who accepts its programme, supports the Party with material means, and *personally participates* in one of its organizations.' Martov's draft was identical with Lenin's, except that where Lenin demanded that a member should 'personally participate' in one of the party's organizations, Martov required him more vaguely to 'co-operate personally and regularly under the guidance of one of the organizations'. The difference seemed elusively subtle. Lenin's formula pointed towards a closely-knit party, consisting only of the actual participants in the clandestine bodies. Martov's clause envisaged a looser association, including those who merely assisted the underground organization without belonging to it. When the two formulas were first compared, the difference did not seem important; and Martov was prepared to withdraw his draft.[1] There seemed to be no reason why the party should split over two words of a paragraph in its rules and regulations.

In the meantime the personal clashes connected with Lenin's editorial scheme generated behind the scenes ill feeling and

[1] Pavlovich, *Pismo k Tovarishcham o Vtorom Syezde*, p. 5.

bitterness which caused the protagonists to approach one another with petulance and growing suspicion.[1] Martov, Trotsky, and others angrily assailed Lenin for his rudeness and lust for power, while Lenin could not see why this abuse should be heaped on him when all he had done was to suggest a workable and self-explanatory plan for *Iskra*'s overhaul. Each side began to scent intrigue and machination in every move made by the other. Each side was on the look-out for the traps that the other was laying for it. Each began to rehash old and half-forgotten differences; and although these had seemed puny only yesterday, they now appeared meaningful and portentous. In this mood the antagonists faced one another when the congress moved on to examine the statutes. There could be no question now of patching up the different formulas and submitting only one draft. On the contrary, the author of each draft was bent on bringing out the most deeply hidden implications of his clause, on making them as explicit as possible, on impressing the bewildered delegates with the gulf, the unbridgeable gulf, between the alternatives; and on emphasizing and over-emphasizing the practical consequences that the adoption of the one clause or the other would entail. Martov and Lenin, the two friends and comrades, confronted each other as enemies. Each spoke as if in a trance; each wondered at his own strange behaviour; each was surprised and bewildered by it; yet neither was capable of pausing and retracing his steps.[2]

The mood of the chief protagonists communicated itself to the delegates. The congress was split. Instead of founding one party it gave birth to two. At this moment, Plekhanov, the future irreconcilable enemy of the Bolshevik revolution, was Lenin's closest ally; while Trotsky was one of Lenin's most vocal opponents. He charged Lenin with the attempt to build up a closed organization of conspirators, not a party of the working

[1] The *Iskra* men held their closed sessions outside the congress. At one of these, when the division first became apparent, Trotsky presided because the opponents could not agree on any other chairman. Trotsky, *Moya Zhizn*, vol. i, chapter xii.

[2] In a letter to Potresov, Lenin wrote shortly after the Congress: 'And now I am asking myself: for what reason should we part to become life-long enemies? I am reviewing all the events and impressions of the congress, I am aware that often I acted and behaved in terrible irritation, 'madly', and I am willing to admit this my guilt to anybody—if one can call guilt something that was naturally caused by the atmosphere, the reactions, the retorts, the struggle, etc.' Lenin, *Sochineniya*, vol. xxxiv, p. 137.

class. Socialism was based on confidence in the workers' class-instinct and in their capacity to understand their historical mission—why then should the party not open its gates wide to them, as Martov advised? Lenin, surprised to see his 'cudgel' turning against him, made repeated attempts to detach Trotsky from Martov. In full session he mildly and persuasively appealed to Trotsky, saying that from lack of experience Trotsky was confusing the issues and misinterpreting the differences. In the working class, too, he went on, there was confusion, wavering, and opportunism; and if the party were to open its gates as widely as Martov urged it to do, then it would absorb into its ranks all those elements of weakness. They should organize only the 'vanguard of the proletariat', its most class-conscious and courageous elements. The party must lead the working class; it could not, therefore, be as broad as the class itself.

This argument failed to persuade Trotsky. Lenin then met him outside the conference hall and for hours tried to answer charges and to explain his behaviour. Later he sent his followers and his own brother to 'bring over Trotsky'.[1] All was in vain. Trotsky was stiffening in hostility.

The congress adopted by a majority Martov's draft of the statutes. But this majority included the delegates of the Bund and the Economists, who, having been defeated by the votes of all *Iskra* men, were about to leave the congress and secede from the party. After their secession Lenin presented his scheme for the overhaul of *Iskra*'s staff. Trotsky countered the scheme with a motion emphatically confirming in office the old editorial board.[2] This time Lenin won with a majority of only two votes. With the same majority the congress elected Lenin's candidates to the Central Committee. The opposition abstained from voting. Thus it came about that Lenin's followers were labelled *Bolsheviki* (the men of the majority), while his opponents were described as *Mensheviki* (the men of the minority). The leaders of the minority, shocked and almost horror-stricken by the audacity with which Lenin had deprived Axelrod and Zasulich of their status in the party, announced that they would boycott the newly elected Central Committee and *Iskra*. Martov at once resigned from the editorial board. Lenin denounced this as intolerably anarchic behaviour. He was determined to enforce

[1] L. Trotsky, loc. cit.

[2] *Vtoroi Syezd RSDRP*, p. 364.

the authority of the newly-elected bodies: he insisted that, however narrow the margin by which they had been chosen, they constituted the legitimate leadership: in any democratic body, the majority, be it ever so slight, is the repository of constitutional power. The congress broke up in uproar and chaos.

In spite of its outwardly fortuitous character, this division initiated a long and irreversible process of differentiation, in the course of which the party of the revolution was to become separated from the party of the moderates. In western Europe the most moderate elements in the Labour movements were already frankly describing themselves as reformists, opposed to revolution. It was natural that such a division should appear in Russia as well. But under Tsarist autocracy even the most moderate of Socialists could not openly constitute themselves into a party of reform: the parliamentary democratic setting for this was lacking. They went on to profess, more or less sincerely, revolutionary socialism and Marxist orthodoxy. This, even more than the bewildering circumstances of the split, concealed its true nature. The division assumed an involved, irrational, and befogged aspect. What Trotsky saw in 1903 was two groups professing the same principles of policy and organization. He perceived nothing that would cause them to drift apart, except Lenin's ruthlessness in dealing with comrades, with such exalted comrades as Axelrod and Zasulich. This superfluous split, he reasoned, could not but become a source of weakness to the party and the working class.

On the face of things this was quite true. So far the protagonists were divided only by a difference in temper, although every one of them would soon try to rationalize this difference into a deeper controversy over ideas and conceptions. But the difference in temper was not without significance. In his 'disrespect' for the veterans, Lenin had shown that he would subordinate every sentiment, no matter how praiseworthy, and every other consideration to higher requirements of policy and organization. If the founding fathers of the party had to be sacrificed to efficiency, he would sacrifice them. An underground movement, assailing the ramparts of Tsardom and savagely persecuted, could not afford to give honorary sinecures even to those who had started the movement. This was, of course, a

. . . we do not think that we have thereby blotted our revolutionary record. . . . The confirmation of the old editorial board of *Iskra* had been taken for granted. . . . The next day, comrades, we were burying *Iskra*. . . . *Iskra* is no longer, comrades. About *Iskra* we can speak only in the past tense, comrades.

Echoing Martov, he wrote that Lenin, impelled by a yearning for power, was imposing upon the party a 'state of siege' and his 'iron fist'.[1] 'We suffered defeat because fate has decreed victory not for centralism but for [Lenin's] self-centredness.' Like a new Robespierre, Lenin was trying to 'transform the modest Council of the party into an omnipotent Committee of Public Safety'; and, like Robespierre, he was preparing the ground for the 'Thermidorians of socialist opportunism'.[2] For the first time, Trotsky now made this significant analogy, to which, throughout his life, in different contexts and changed circumstances, he would come back over and over again. What he now intended to convey was this: Robespierre's terror brought about the Thermidorian reaction, which was a setback not merely to the Jacobins but to the French Revolution at large. Similarly, Lenin was carrying the principle of centralism to excess, and in doing so he would not only bring discredit upon himself, but provoke a reaction against the principle of centralism, a reaction which would favour the opportunists and the federalists in the movement. In a postscript Trotsky added mockingly that he had not intended to compare Lenin with Robespierre: the Bolshevik leader was a mere parody of Robespierre, whom he resembled as 'a vulgar farce resembles historic tragedy'.[3] Once he had made up his mind against Lenin he did not mince his words. He attacked with all his intensity of feeling and with all the sweep of his invective.

The leaders of the minority, the Mensheviks, carried out their threat to boycott the Central Committee and *Iskra*. Trotsky, among others, ceased to contribute. In September 1903 the Mensheviks assembled in Geneva to decide on the forms of further action: how far should they carry the boycott? Should they incur the risk of expulsion, and, if expelled, form a rival party? Or should they conduct themselves so as to remain within the party and try to unseat Lenin at the next congress?

[1] N. Trotsky, *Vtoroi Syezd RSDRP* (*Otchet Sibirskoi Delegatsii*), pp. 20–21.
[2] Ibid., p. 30. [3] Ibid., p. 33.

men of the intelligentsia into reliable leaders of an immature and timid labour movement. But Lenin was merely trying to force the pace of history: for to be in possession of a proletarian doctrine, such as Marxism, 'was no substitute for a politically developed proletariat'.[1] Lenin distrusted the masses and adopted a haughty attitude towards their untutored activities, arguing that the workers by themselves could not rise from trade unionism to revolutionary socialism, and that socialist ideology was brought into the Labour movement 'from outside', by the revolutionary intelligentsia. This, Trotsky wrote, was the theory of an 'orthodox theocracy'; and Lenin's scheme of organization was fit for a party which would *substitute* itself for the working classes', act as proxy in their name and on their behalf, regardless of what the workers felt and thought.

To this 'substitutism' (*zamestitelstvo*), as Trotsky called it, to this conception of a party acting as a *locum tenens* for the proletariat, he opposed Axelrod's plan for a 'broadly based party', modelled on European social democratic parties.[2] 'Lenin's methods lead to this: the party organization [the caucus] at first substitutes itself for the party as a whole; then the Central Committee substitutes itself for the organization; and finally a single "dictator" substitutes himself for the Central Committee. . . .'[3] 'The party must seek the guarantee of its stability in its own base, in an active and self-reliant proletariat, and not in its top caucus, which the revolution . . . may suddenly sweep away with its wing. . . .' After an ironical travesty of Lenin's 'hideous, dissolute, and demagogical' style,[4] and after some ridicule directed at Lenin's attempt to impose discipline on the party, Trotsky asked: 'Is it so difficult to see that any serious group . . . when it is confronted by the dilemma whether it should, from a sense of discipline, silently efface itself, or, regardless of discipline, struggle for survival—will undoubtedly choose the latter course . . . and say: perish that "discipline", which suppresses the vital interests of the movement.' History will not say that discipline should have prevailed even if the world had to perish; it will eventually vindicate those who had 'the fuller and the deeper understanding of the tasks of revolution'.[5]

The most curious part of the pamphlet is its last chapter on

[1] N. Trotsky, *Nashi Politicheskye Zadachi*, p. 23. [2] Ibid., p. 50.
[3] Ibid., p. 54. [4] Ibid., p. 75. [5] Ibid., p. 72.

'Jacobinism and Social Democracy'.[1] At the congress, Trotsky refuted the charge of Jacobinism when the Economists levelled it against *Iskra* as a whole. Now he turned the charge against Lenin. Lenin faced it almost with pride: 'A revolutionary Social Democrat', he rejoined, 'is precisely a Jacobin, but one who is inseparably connected with the organization of the proletariat and aware of its class interests.' Trotsky elaborated the charge in the light, as the pamphlet shows, of his recent detailed study of the French Revolution; and he pointed towards the future drama of the Russian Revolution. The characters of the Jacobin and of the Social Democrat, he stated, are mutually exclusive. The French Revolution, because of the limitations of its epoch, could establish only a bourgeois society with bourgeois property as its basis. Jacobinism (that 'maximum of radicalism of which bourgeois society has been capable') strove to perpetuate a fleeting, quasi-egalitarian climax of the revolution, which was incompatible with the fundamental trend of the time. This was a foredoomed Utopia: history would have had to stop in its course in order to save Jacobinism. The conflict between Jacobinism and its age explains the Jacobin mentality and method of action. Robespierre and his friends had their metaphysical idea of Truth, their *Verité*; but they could not trust that their *Verité* would win the hearts and the minds of the people. With morbid suspicion they looked round and saw enemies creeping from every crevice. They had to draw a sharp dividing line between themselves and the rest of the world, and they drew it with the edge of the guillotine. 'Every attempt to blur [this division] between Jacobinism and the rest of the world threatened to release inner centrifugal forces. . . .' His political instinct suggested to Robespierre that only through a permanent state of siege could he prolong the ephemeral climax of the revolution. 'They spared no human hecatomb to build the pedestal for their Truth. . . . The counterpart to their absolute faith in a metaphysical idea was their absolute distrust of living people.'

From the Jacobin, Trotsky went on, the Social Democrat differed in his optimism, for he was in harmony with the trend of his age. At the threshold of the twentieth century, with the growth of modern industry and of the working classes, socialism

[1] Ibid., pp. 97–107.

was no longer Utopia. The Social Democrat and the Jacobin stand for 'two opposed worlds, doctrines, tactics, mentalities. . . . They were Utopians; we aspire to express the objective trend. They were idealists . . . we are materialists . . . they were rationalists, we are dialectitians. . . . They chopped off heads, we enlighten them with class consciousness.'

Trotsky did not deny that there were similarities between the Jacobin and the Social Democrat. Both were irreconcilable: the Jacobin fought against *moderantisme*; the Socialist is opposed to reformist opportunism. But the Social Democrat had no use for the guillotine. 'A Jacobin tribunal would have tried under the charge of moderation the whole international Labour movement, and Marx's lion head would have been the first to roll under the guillotine.'[1] 'Robespierre used to say: "I know only two parties, the good and the evil citizens"; and this aphorism is engraved on the heart of Maximilian Lenin', whose 'malicious and morally repulsive suspiciousness is a flat caricature of the tragic Jacobin intolerance. . . .' (In the same passage he described Lenin as 'an adroit statistician and slovenly attorney'.)

A clear-cut choice—this was Trotsky's conclusion—must be made between Jacobinism and Marxism. In trying to combine them, Lenin was virtually abandoning socialism and setting himself up as the leader of a revolutionary wing of bourgeois democracy. This was the gravamen of Trotsky's accusation that Lenin was changing from a Socialist into a radical bourgeois politician, because only a bourgeois politician could distrust the working classes as intensely as Lenin did.[2] Lenin's followers went even farther and frankly envisaged their 'dictatorship over the proletariat' and when one read how some Bolsheviks (here Trotsky quoted their leaflets published in the Urals) were advocating the need for an absolutely uniform party, 'one felt a shiver running down one's spine'.

He wound up his argument with the following plea against uniformity:

The tasks of the new régime will be so complex that they cannot be

[1] N. Trotsky, *Nashi Politicheskye Zadachi*, p. 95.

[2] Trotsky here quoted Axelrod, who had compared Lenin's evolution to Struve's. In this pamphlet Trotsky also gave eulogistic sketches of the Menshevik leaders, especially of Axelrod and Martov, describing the former as 'a great Marxist and penetrating political mind' and the latter as the 'Dobrolyubov of his generation'.

solved otherwise than by way of a competition between various methods of economic and political construction, by way of long 'disputes', by way of a systematic struggle not only between the socialist and the capitalist worlds, but also between many trends inside socialism, trends which will inevitably emerge as soon as the proletarian dictatorship poses tens and hundreds of new . . . problems. No strong, 'domineering' organization . . . will be able to suppress these trends and controversies. . . . A proletariat capable of exercising its dictatorship over society will not tolerate any dictatorship over itself. . . . The working class . . . will undoubtedly have in its ranks quite a few political invalids . . . and much ballast of obsolescent ideas, which it will have to jettison. In the epoch of its dictatorship, as now, it will have to cleanse its mind of false theories and bourgeois experience and to purge its ranks from political phrasemongers and backward-looking revolutionaries. . . . But this intricate task cannot be solved by placing above the proletariat a few well-picked people . . . or one person invested with the power to liquidate and degrade.[1]

Among the writings that came from Trotsky's prolific pen in the course of four decades, this is perhaps the most amazing document, not least because it contains so odd an assortment of great ideas and petty polemical tricks, of subtle historical insights and fustian flourishes. Hardly any Menshevik writer attacked Lenin with so much personal venom. 'Hideous', 'dissolute', 'demagogical', 'slovenly attorney', 'malicious and morally repulsive', these were the epithets which Trotsky threw at the man who had so recently held out to him the hand of fellowship, who had brought him to western Europe, who had promoted him and defended him from Plekhanov's aspersions. Marxists, to be sure, especially the Russian ones, were wont to state their views with ruthless frankness. But, as a rule, they refrained from personal mud-slinging. Trotsky's offence against this rule cannot be explained merely by youthful ebullience—he now exhibited a characteristic of which he would never quite free himself: he could not separate ideas from men.

Nor did he support his accusations by any fact that would give them weight in the historian's eye. Lenin had so far not expelled a single member from the party. All he had done was to insist on the validity of the mandate which the congress had given him, and to warn the opposition that, if they persisted in

[1] Ibid., p. 105.

obstructing the formal decisions of the congress and boycotting the elected leadership, he would have to take action against them. In so doing, he behaved as any leader of any party would have behaved in the circumstances.[1] Since, through a series of accidents and personal shifts the Mensheviks had first recaptured *Iskra* and then virtually ousted Lenin from leadership, his formal predominance lasted a very short time, in the course of which he did nothing to implement his warnings to the opposition. Once the opposition was on top, its leaders confronted Lenin with exactly the same warning, although, as they had not been elected at a congress, they had less right to do so.[2]

Trotsky knew all this and he said as much in his pamphlet. His accusations were therefore based merely on inferences and on one point of theory. Lenin had argued that, historically, the revolutionary intelligentsia played a special role in the Labour movement, infusing it with the Marxist outlook, which the workers would not have attained by themselves. Trotsky saw in this view a denial of the revolutionary capacities of the working class and an aspiration of the intelligentsia, whose mouthpiece Lenin was, to keep the Labour movement under their tutelage. Implied in this he saw a design for a Jacobin-like, or, as we would now say, a totalitarian dictatorship. Yet many socialist writers had stressed the special role of the intelligentsia in the Labour movement; and Lenin had in fact drawn his view from Kautsky, the recognized authority on Marxist theory.[3] Both factions, Mensheviks as well as Bolsheviks, were led by intellectuals: at the recent congress only three workers had appeared

[1] When Rosa Luxemburg attacked Lenin in the *Neue Zeit* and then in *Iskra* (no. 69, 10 July 1904), she criticized him for transplanting European, German, and British (Fabian) models of organization to Russia. In the German Social Democratic Party centralism was upheld by the moderate leaders against the revolutionary wing. Karl Kautsky (*Iskra*, no. 66, 15 May 1904) criticized Lenin on the same ground, saying that what was meat for Europe was poison for Russia. The Russian Social-Revolutionaries, future enemies of Bolshevism, warmly approved Lenin's attitude (see 'Evolutsia Russkoi Sots. Mysli' in *Vestnik Russkoi Revolutsii*, no. 3). It can be seen from this how unhistorical is the view, held by both Bolsheviks and many of their critics, that the brand of centralism which Lenin represented in 1903 was the exclusive feature of Bolshevism, its exclusive virtue or its original sin.

[2] Parvus, who stood nearer to the Mensheviks than to the Bolsheviks (see next chapter), criticized the Mensheviks for adopting the dictatorial methods of organization which they attributed to Lenin. Parvus, *Rossya i Revolutsia*, pp. 182 ff.

[3] Lenin, *Sochinenya*, vol. v (*Chto Delat?*), pp. 354–5; K. Kautsky in *Neue Zeit*, no. 3, 1901.

among the several scores of delegates. There was no reason therefore why the odium of voicing the aspirations of the intellectuals should fall only on Lenin. In Lenin's conception of the revolutionary régime, as he had developed it so far, there was not a single point on which Trotsky could base his indictment. Now and for many years to come Lenin held that a revolutionary government in Russia would be formed by a coalition of parties, and that the Socialists could not even aspire to hold a majority of seats in it.[1] The idea of a monolithic state had not even occurred to him. Trotsky himself would presently come much nearer to this idea than Lenin: against Lenin he would soon begin to advocate the proletarian dictatorship as the direct objective of revolution in Russia, which need not necessarily have meant a monolithic state, but which inevitably implied an approximation to it. Briefly, neither in fact nor in theory could Trotsky find any important premiss for his anticipatory portrait of Lenin as the Russian Robespierre, drawing by the guillotine a line of division between his party and the world. It required a volatile and irresponsible imagination in the pamphleteer to show his adversary in so distorting a mirror.

And yet this was the faithful mirror of the future, although the Russian Robespierre shown in it was to be not so much Lenin as his successor, at this time still an unknown Caucasian Social Democrat. So faithful indeed was this mirror of the future that in it one finds, in confused assortment, all the elements of the drama of the Russian Revolution. There is, first of all, the dilemma between the bourgeois democratic and the socialist objectives of the revolution, a dilemma which was often to recur. There is further the conflict of the two souls, the Marxist and the Jacobin, in Bolshevism, a conflict never to be resolved either in Lenin, or in Bolshevism at large, or even in Trotsky himself. Much as Trotsky now pressed for a clear-cut choice between Marxism and Jacobinism, circumstances would not permit Lenin or Trotsky to make that choice. Moreover, the mirror showed in advance the stages through which, in its 'substitutism', the party of the revolution would move: 'The caucus substitutes itself for the party; then the Central Committee for the caucus; and finally a dictator substitutes himself for the Central Committee.' These are in fact headings for several

[1] Lenin, *Sochinenya*, vol. viii, pp. 262–3; see next chapter.

yet remote chapters in the annals of the revolution. Here again, Trotsky could have no inkling that one day he himself would go much farther than Lenin in preaching and glorifying that 'substitutism', before he would shrink in horror from its consummation. And then there is the grim picture of that consummation: the image of the morbidly suspicious dictator, 'invested with the power to degrade and liquidate', who sees enemies creeping from every crevice around him, and who, sparing no human hecatomb, struggles to perpetuate a climax of the revolution and hermetically separates the revolution from the rest of the world. And, as in the prelude to classical tragedy, the omens appear which seem to point to Trotsky's own fate: He makes the plea for the free competition of ideas and trends, a plea he will repeat, almost in the same words, before the tribunals of Bolshevism twenty years later. He now confidently believes that 'a working class capable of exercising its dictatorship over society will tolerate no dictator over itself'; and he is unaware that he begs the gravest question of all: what will happen if, after the revolution, the working class is not capable of exercising its dictatorship over society? He trusts that history will eventually vindicate those who have 'the fuller and the deeper understanding' of the needs of their epoch, an assurance which he will go on expressing all his life, up to the moment when the rusty axe of an assassin cleaves his brain. And, finally, as if in premonition of that moment, he feels 'a cold shiver running down his spine' at the mere thought of what might become of Lenin's party.

We cannot reconstruct in any detail the mental process by which he arrived at this view of the future. The circumstance that he had lacked any solid factual premiss for his conclusions indicates that the process was one of imaginative perception, not of reasoning. We can only trace some of the external stimuli to which his imagination responded. In a general manner, the comparison between Bolsheviks and Jacobins had already been made by some of the Mensheviks. Plekhanov, even while he was Lenin's ally, had said about the latter: 'Of such stuff the Robespierres are made.' The *obiter dictum* was repeated by others, first in whispers and then publicly. But hardly anybody, not even its author, meant it literally—it was received as one of Plekhanov's polemical *bon mots*. Trotsky took the saying literally,

or at any rate seriously enough to plunge into the history of Jacobinism and to explore it avidly with an eye to the parallel. His imagination, inflamed by the Jacobin tragedy and overflowing with the freshly absorbed images, projected these upon the groups and individuals with whom he was in daily contact and—upon Russia's indefinite future. In the light of a strictly rational analysis, this projection may have been gratuitous and erratic. A cooler and better disciplined mind would not have lent itself to such visionary anticipations. But Trotsky was possessed of a sixth sense, as it were, an intuitive sense of history, which singled him out among the political thinkers of his generation, sometimes exposed him almost to derision, but more often found triumphant, if much delayed, vindication.

Behind his polemical pursuits and imaginative projections there was the pent-up emotion of the romantic revolutionary, who, much as he himself may have argued about the need for a closely-knit and disciplined party, broke into individualistic protest against the reality of that party as soon as he was confronted by it. His inclinations, his tastes, his temperament revolted against the prosaic and business-like determination with which Lenin was setting out to bring the party down from the clouds of abstraction to the firm ground of organization. Trotsky's present protest was little different from that which, as a boy of seventeen, he had, with so much ill temper, thrown at Sokolovskaya, the first Marxist he had met: 'A curse upon all of you who want to bring dryness and hardness into all the relations of life!' The cry into which he had burst at Shvigovsky's orchard on the last night of 1896, reverberated in his anti-Leninist philippic of 1904.

scholarly Marxist books.[1] Under the pen-name Parvus he contributed to Kautsky's *Neue Zeit*, the most important and sophisticated Socialist periodical in Europe, and to many other Socialist newspapers. He also published his own review *Aus der Weltpolitik*, in which, as early as 1895, he forecast war between Russia and Japan and foresaw that out of that war would develop the Russian revolution—the prophesy was much quoted in 1904–5, when it came true. In the German party Parvus stood on the extreme left, sharply opposed to the reformist trend and disdainful of the pretences of Marxist orthodoxy with which some of the leaders still covered their reconciliation with the established order. Shrewd and militant, he searched for ways and means to bring about the regeneration of the revolutionary spirit in German socialism.

The reformist leaders viewed him with fear and that special irony which is reserved for immigrants seeking to mend the ways of their adopted country.[2] Parvus compensated himself with more biting criticism and adopted, in his turn, a patronizing attitude towards his original countrymen: to the Russians in exile he eagerly pointed out their eastern 'backwardness and parochialism' and he tried to teach them western political manners. Despite these droll postures, the Russians regarded him as a sort of guide to world politics and economics. He contributed to *Iskra*, first under the pen-name Molotov and then as Parvus. His essays usually appeared on *Iskra's* front page—the editors gladly relegated their own writings to make room for him. They respected his massive knowledge, gifts, and judgement. But they were also apprehensive of a streak of unreliability in him. There was something Gargantuan or Falstaffian about him and his (to quote Trotsky) 'fat, fleshy, bulldog-like head'. For many years, however, nothing seemed to justify the apprehension: there was no distinct instance of misdemeanour on Parvus's part, nothing, at any rate, that

[1] His books were translated into Russian. One of them, *The World Economy and the Agricultural Crisis*, was reviewed with great admiration by Lenin in 1899. 'Parvus deals primarily with the development of the world market', Lenin wrote, 'and describes . . . the recent phases of this development connected with the decline of England's industrial predominance.' 'We strongly recommend . . . Parvus's book.' Lenin, *Sochinenya*, vol. iv, pp. 51–52.

[2] The irony gave way to enormous respect as soon as the immigrant had begun to conform. Towards the end of his life Parvus was the brain behind Ebert, the President of the Weimar Republic.

of the cultural unification of nations; they have increased the political conflicts between states . . . and enhanced the power of states and governments . . .—the stronger the power of governments, the easier do the states clash in arms.' These ideas were to become for Trotsky axioms from which he would argue all his life.

Russia's expansion in Asia and conflict with Japan, Parvus held, were partly brought about by domestic pressures: Tsardom was seeking in external conquest an escape from internal weakness. But more important were the external pressures to which Russia was subjected. In the worldwide struggle between capitalist nation-states only the great modern powers acted with independence; and even an empire as vast as the Tsar's, was, because of its industrial backwardness, merely 'a pensioner of the French Bourse'. 'The war has started over Manchuria and Korea; but it has already grown into a conflict over leadership in east Asia. At the next stage Russia's entire position in the world will be at stake; and the war will end in a shift in the political balance of the world.'

Parvus concluded his analysis as follows: 'The worldwide process of capitalist development leads to a *political upheaval* in Russia. This in its turn must have its impact on the political development of all capitalist countries. The Russian revolution will shake the bourgeois world. . . . And the Russian proletariat may well play the role of the vanguard of social revolution.'[1]

Thus already in 1904 Parvus viewed the approaching revolution not as a purely Russian affair but as a reflection in Russia of worldwide social tensions; and he saw in the coming Russian upheaval a prelude to world revolution. Here were the main

[1] *Iskra*, no. 82, 1 January 1905. In the same series Parvus wrote: 'One must reach the paradoxical conclusion that the most decisive subjective factor of historical development is not political wisdom but political stupidity. Men have never yet been able fully to benefit from the social conditions they themselves have created. They always think that they are far ahead, whereas they are far behind the objective historical process. . . . History has often led by the noses those who have thought that they could keep her in check.' 'The capitalist order in Europe has long since been an obstacle to Europe's economic, political, and cultural development. It survives only because the popular masses have not yet become sufficiently aware of their tragic condition. The political energy of the proletariat is not concentrated enough, the socialist parties lack decision and courage. One can imagine such a turn of events that the Social Democratic Party will bear the political guilt for the survival of the capitalist order.' To contemporaries this seemed a far-fetched prophesy.

elements for the theory of permanent revolution. Yet, Parvus had so far spoken only about a 'political upheaval' in Russia, not about a 'social' or Socialist revolution. He apparently still shared the view, then accepted by all Marxists, that the Russian revolution by itself would, because of the country's semi-feudal and backward outlook, be merely bourgeois in character. Trotsky would be the first to say that the revolution would of its own momentum pass from the bourgeois to the Socialist stage, and establish a proletarian dictatorship in Russia, even before the advent of revolution in the West.

Not only were Parvus's international ideas and revolutionary perspectives becoming part and parcel of Trotsky's thinking, but, also, some of Trotsky's views on Russian history, especially his conception of the Russian state, can be traced back to Parvus.[1] Parvus developed the view that the Russian state, a cross between Asian despotism and European absolutism, had formed itself not as the organ of any class in Russian society, but as a military bureaucratic machine designed primarily to resist pressure from the more highly civilized West.[2] It was for this purpose that Tsardom had introduced elements of European civilization into Russia, especially into the army. 'Thus came into existence the Russian state organism: an Asian absolutism buttressed by a European type of army.' It was enough, he remarked, to cast a glance at the line of Russian frontier fortresses to see that the Tsars had intended to separate Russia from the West by a sort of Chinese wall. Some of these theories, as they were developed and refined by Trotsky, became the objects of heated historical and political disputes twenty years later.

Parvus's influence on Trotsky is felt also in the style and manner of exposition, especially in the characteristic sweep of historical prognostication. This is not to say that Trotsky played the literary ape to Parvus. He absorbed the influence naturally and organically because of his intellectual and literary affinity with Parvus, an affinity which was not lessened by contrasts in character and temperament.

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During his first stay in Munich, towards the end of September

[1] In part, however, the original source of the views on Russian history held by both Trotsky and Parvus is the liberal historian P. Miliukov.

[2] *Iskra*, no. 61, 5 March 1904.

as before, although Trotsky may have consoled himself with the illusion that the Mensheviks had accepted his advice. At any rate, the formal decision to disband the Menshevik organization freed him from the group discipline by which he had been bound. Martov soon reported to Axelrod that Trotsky had at last 'calmed down', 'softened', and that he had resumed writing for *Iskra*—Trotsky's first contribution since the clash with Plekhanov did indeed soon appear in the paper.[1] As usual, personal resentments, pretensions, and political motives were so mixed up that it is well-nigh impossible to disentangle them. We cannot say whether Trotsky 'calmed down' because the Mensheviks seemed to yield to him on a matter of principle, or because they gave him some satisfaction for Plekhanov's rebuff, or for both these reasons. He was not now one of *Iskra's* policy-makers and editorial writers; he contributed a political note-book, which appeared on one of the back pages. But *Iskra* was still the Mensheviks' militant paper, and so to outsiders Trotsky remained a Menshevik.

. . . . . .

His differences with the Mensheviks were not really settled and news from Russia presently widened them. The Russo-Japanese war had taken a turn disastrous for Russia; and cracks were showing in the edifice of Tsardom. In July, the Minister Plehve, the inspirer of the Tsar's Far Eastern policy, was assassinated by Sazonov, a social revolutionary.[2] Plehve had banned and dispersed the *Zemstvos*, which were the strongholds of the Liberal and semi-Liberal gentry. His successor, Svatopolk-Mirsky, tried to appease the opposition and allowed the *Zemstvos* to hold a national convention in November 1904. The convention was followed by a long sequence of political banquets held in many towns. At these the Liberal leaders of the gentry and of the middle classes voiced their demands; but side by side with them there also appeared, for the first time, workers and members of the Socialist underground. Although all of them still spoke in unison against the government, the banquets afforded a glimpse of a deep division in the

[1] *Iskra*, no. 75, 5 October 1904. (Trotsky's only contribution in the interval had appeared in a discussion sheet published in June as a supplement to *Iskra*.)

[2] Azev, the *agent-provocateur* whom Plehve himself had employed to disrupt the clandestine terrorist organization, helped in preparing the assassination.

democracy; but they were betraying their own principle. 'We have no democratic traditions; these have to be created. Only the revolution can do that. The party of democracy cannot but be the party of the revolution.'[1] Neither the Liberal intelligentsia nor the middle classes but the Socialist factory workers would deal the decisive blow to Tsardom.

The whole brochure is permeated with a triumphant sense of the imminence of the revolution. 'Barristers are demonstrating in the streets, political exiles are protesting in newspapers against their banishment, . . . a naval officer opens a public campaign against the naval department. . . . The incredible becomes real, the impossible becomes probable.'[2] So close a premonition of approaching events can hardly be found in the writings of any other émigré. The others were so immersed in their internecine struggles and so engrossed in manœuvring against one another, with the intention, no doubt, of securing for the party the best possible vantage-point in a revolution, that they almost missed the advent of the revolution. Because he stood almost alone, Trotsky turned his undivided attention to developments in Russia. He was, as Lunacharsky put it, less of an émigré than were other Socialists, who had, in varying degrees, lost contact with their country.[3] His sceptical friends shrugged their shoulders at his triumphant heralding of the upheaval not less than at the vehemence of his anti-Liberalism.

He saw the revolution developing from a general strike. This was a novel concept: the labour conflicts in Russia had so far been on a local scale; and even the industrial countries in the West, with their old trade unions, had not yet any real experience of a general strike. In *My Life* he says that he had mooted this idea since 1903, although he finally adopted it only in 1904.[4] He now sketched a 'plan of action' which he summed up as follows:

> Tear the workers away from the machines and workshops; lead them through the factory gate out into the street; direct them to neighbouring factories; proclaim a stoppage there; and carry new masses into the street. Thus, moving from factory to factory, from workshop to workshop, growing under way and sweeping away police

[1] L. Trotsky, *Sochinenya*, vol. ii, book 1, p. 30. [2] Op. cit., p. 3.
[3] A. Lunacharsky, *Revolutsionnye Siluety*, pp. 20–25.
[4] L. Trotsky, *Moya Zhizn*, vol. i, chapter xiii; *Sochinenya*, vol. ii, book 1, p. 521.

> obstacles, haranguing and attracting passers-by, absorbing groups that come from the opposite direction, filling the streets, taking possession of the first suitable buildings for public meetings, entrenching yourselves in those buildings, using them for uninterrupted revolutionary meetings with a permanently shifting and changing audience, you shall bring order into the movement of the masses, raise their confidence, explain to them the purpose and the sense of events; and thus you shall eventually transform the city into a revolutionary camp—this, by and large, is the plan of action.[1]

This was indeed the picture of the revolution which was to materialize both in October 1905 and in February 1917. The 'plan of action' was not modelled on any precedent: in the French Revolution the industrial-proletarian element had been absent. The picture sprang from a fervent revolutionary imagination, in which romanticism was curiously blended with realism. Some parts of this brochure read like passages from Trotsky's own histories of 1905 and 1917, only that the events are described here in the future tense; and even the watchwords are those that would resound in 1905 and 1917: 'End the war', and 'Convoke a constituent assembly!'[2]

Finally, he surveyed the social forces that were coming into action. 'The town will be the main arena of revolutionary events.'[3] But the urban proletariat alone will not decide the issue. The peasantry represented 'a major reservoir of potential revolutionary energy'.[4] It is 'necessary to carry the agitation into the countryside, without a day's delay and without missing a single opportunity'.[5] Far from calling the urban proletariat, as his later critics say, to brave Tsardom single-handedly and court defeat, he strongly underlined the dangers of isolation that threatened the working class.[6] He analysed the role of the army, composed of peasants, and urged Socialists to watch soberly what was going on in the barracks. When ordered to fire at crowds, soldiers preferred to shoot into the air; the morale of the army was under a strain:

> Our ships are slow. Our guns do not fire far enough. Our soldiers are illiterate. Our N.C.O.s have neither map nor compass. Our soldiers go barefoot, naked and hungry. Our Red Cross steals. Our supply services steal. Rumours about this reach the army and

[1] L. Trotsky, *Sochinenya*, vol. ii, book 1, p. 51.
[2] Ibid. and *passim*. [3] Op. cit., p. 50.
[4] Op. cit., p. 20 and *passim*. [5] Op. cit., p. 52. [6] Op. cit., p. 46.

are avidly absorbed. Every such rumour corrodes like a sharp acid the rust of official indoctrination. Years of our peaceful propaganda could not achieve what one day of war does.

On the decisive day the officers should not be able to rely on the soldiers. . . . The same soldier who yesterday fired his shots in the air, will tomorrow hand over his weapon to the worker. He will do so as soon as he has gained the confidence that the people is not out merely to riot, that the people knows what it wants and can fight for what it wants. . . . We must develop the most intense agitation among the troops so that at the moment of the [general] strike every soldier sent to suppress the 'rebels' should know that in front of him is the people demanding the convocation of the constituent assembly.[1]

The Menshevik publisher was still withholding Trotsky's brochure from the press when news arrived of the first act of revolution in Russia. On 9/23 January 1905 the workers of Petersburg marched in an enormous but peaceful procession to the Tsar's Winter Palace. They were led by Father Gapon, a prison chaplain and a protégé of Zubatov, the chief of the gendarmerie, who had set up his own Labour organization to combat clandestine socialism. The demonstrators, carrying the Tsar's portraits, holy icons, and church banners, hoped to submit to the Tsar a petition, in which they humbly and plaintively begged him to redress their grievances. The Tsar refused to receive the petitioners and ordered the troops guarding the Winter Palace to fire into the crowd. Thus he ignited the revolutionary explosion.

The news found Trotsky in Geneva, whither he had just arrived from a lecturing tour. His forecasts, which he had in vain been trying to publish, began to come true. Full of hopeful excitement, he returned to Parvus in Munich, the galley proofs of the brochure in his pocket. Parvus read the proofs and was so impressed that he decided to put the weight of his authority behind Trotsky's views. He wrote a preface to the brochure and urged the Mensheviks to publish it. In his preface he stated a conclusion which Trotsky still hesitated to draw. 'The revolutionary Provisional Government of Russia', Parvus wrote, 'will be the government of a workers' democracy. . . . As the Social Democratic party is at the head of the revolutionary movement . . . this government will be social democratic . . . a coherent

[1] L. Trotsky, *Sochinenya*, vol. ii, book 1, p. 50.

gusting to all liberal pundits. One day of revolution was enough, one magnificent contact between the Tsar and the people was enough for the idea of constitutional monarchy to become fantastic, doctrinaire, and disgusting. The priest Gapon rose with his idea of the monarch against the real monarch. But, as behind him there stood not monarchist liberals but revolutionary proletarians, this limited 'insurrection' immediately manifested its rebellious content in barricade fighting and in the outcry: Down with the Tsar. The real monarch has destroyed the idea of the monarch. . . . The revolution has come and she has put an end to our political childhood.[1]

At this stage problems of revolutionary technique acquired 'colossal importance'. 'The proletarians of Petersburg have shown great heroism. But the unarmed heroism of the crowd could not face the armed idiocy of the barracks.' Henceforth scattered efforts would lead to nothing—the movement must culminate in an all-Russian insurrection. The revolution must arm itself. Some people held that insurgents had no chance against a government armed with modern weapons; an English writer, for instance, believed that if Louis XVI had had a few batteries of machine-guns the French Revolution would not have occurred. 'What pretentious nonsense it is', Trotsky observed, 'to measure the historical chances of revolution by the calibre of weapons and guns. As if weapons and guns had command of men, as if men did not wield the weapons and guns.'[2] He granted that workers by themselves, even if armed, could not conquer in a rising—they must bring the army over to their side. But to be able to achieve this, they must first arm themselves and impress by their own determination the Tsar's vacillating soldiers. He developed this idea in passages which were in part instructions on how the workers should arm themselves and in part descriptive images illustrating the process by which the Tsar's troops would go over to the insurgent people. These anticipatory scenes again read like pages from his own histories of the revolution, written after the event. He concluded with an appeal to his own comrades framed in Dantonesque style: All that you needed, he said, in order to rise to the opportunity, was 'a few very simple qualities: freedom from organizational routine and from the miserable

[1] Loc. cit. [2] Op. cit., p. 60.

revolution only in so far as they follow the proletariat. . . . Neither the peasantry, nor the middle class, nor the intelligentsia can play an independent revolutionary role in any way equivalent to the role of the proletariat. . . . Consequently, the composition of the Provisional Government will in the main depend on the proletariat. If the insurrection ends in a decisive victory, those who have led the working class in the rising will gain power.[1]

Abroad, Parvus, too, advocated armed insurrection; and Lenin, of course, did likewise. The Mensheviks bided their time, saying that an armed rising, like a revolution at large, could not be organized—it would come of its own accord with the growth of popular revolt. Behind this expectant Menshevik attitude was a hardening conviction that the leadership in the Russian revolution belonged not to socialism but to liberalism. In the issue of *Iskra* in which Trotsky wrote that 'apart from social democracy there is nobody on the battlefield of the revolution', capable of leadership, Martov insisted that it was the historical mission of the middle classes to bring about a radical democratization of Russian society. 'We have the right to expect', these were Martov's words, 'that sober political calculation will prompt our bourgeois democracy to act in the same way in which, in the past century, bourgeois democracy acted in western Europe, under the inspiration of revolutionary romanticism.'[2]

Trotsky countered Martov's view with a critique of the Liberal attitude as it was expressed by such bodies as the Association of Industrialists of Moscow, the Iron and Steel Industries of Petersburg, the provincial banks, the employers of the Urals, the sugar-mill owners of the Ukraine, the national congresses of surgeons, actors, criminologists, &c. He did not deny that the middle classes were constrained by autocratic rule, and that their interest in economic progress and free trade induced them to demand political freedom. He even said that 'the liberal régime becomes a class necessity for capital', and that 'the urban merchant has shown that in opposition he is not inferior to the "enlightened landlord" '.[3] But he added that in their demands the middle classes merely echoed the workers; and they were inhibited by the fear of revolution. 'For the proletariat

[1] *Iskra*, no. 93, 17 March 1905. [2] Ibid.
[3] L. Trotsky, *Sochinenya*, vol. ii, book 1, pp. 71, 79.

ing to each social group in its own idiom, with an extraordinary ease and *élan*. In his diatribes against liberalism he turned towards the intelligentsia and the advanced workers. In his 'Open Letter to Miliukov' he spoke to an academic public. Soon after his return to Russia he wrote peasant proclamations, which Krasin published, putting under them the signature of the Central Committee. In these proclamations Trotsky had before his eyes a primitive, illiterate mass of farm labourers, such as he could remember from his father's farm, a crowd in which a few individuals might be able to read his words aloud to the rest. He framed his appeal in the simplest terms and in the rhythm of a Slavonic folk-rhapsody, with characteristic refrains and evocations. The words and the rhythm were as if designed for recital by a semi-agitator, semi-bard in a village. Yet, he spoke to the muzhiks with the same logic and sweep with which he addressed his academic adversary. In the whole revolutionary literature written for or by peasants, there are very few, if any, documents which could compare, in folk style and directness of appeal, with a proclamation in which Trotsky related to the peasants the January massacre in Petersburg. He described how the workers had marched 'peacefully and calmly' to the Tsar's palace with the Tsar's pictures, icons, and church banners:

'What did the Tsar do? How did he answer the toilers of St. Petersburg?

'Hearken, hearken peasants. . . .

'This is the way the Tsar talked with his people. . . .

'All the troops of Petersburg were raised to their feet. . . . Thus the Russian Tsar girded himself for the talk with his subjects. . . .

'200,000 workers moved to the palace.

'They were dressed in their Sunday best, the grey and old ones and the young; the women went along with their husbands. Fathers and mothers led their little children by their hands. Thus the people went to their Tsar.

'Hearken, hearken peasants!

'Let every word engrave itself on your hearts. . . .

'All the streets and squares, where the peaceful workers were to march, were occupied by troops.

' "Let us through to the Tsar!", the workers begged.

'The old ones fell on their knees.

'The women begged and the children begged.

Trotsky wrote. '2500 *dvorniks* met to discuss their needs. The *dvorniks* do not wish to serve any longer as tools of police violence.' They put forward their demands and refused to sign a thanksgiving address to the Tsar, because in the Tsar's Manifesto 'freedom had been given but not yet proven'. 'Many sins and crimes', Trotsky wrote, 'weigh on the conscience of the Petersburg *dvorniks*. More than once have they, on police orders, manhandled honest workers and students. . . . The police have bullied them, and the people have come to hate them. But the hour of universal awakening has come. The Petersburg *dvornik* is opening his eyes. Good morning to you, Petersburg *dvornik*.'

Thus he spoke to every class of society, from the highest to the humblest, in its own language, but always in his own voice. The Russian Revolution never had, and never would have, another mouth-piece with such a variety of accent and tone.

. . . . . .

During his stay in Kiev he shifted from one secret lodging to another, precariously concealing his identity under the mask of 'Ensign Arbuzov'. The 'ensign' looked respectable, even elegant; but he was strikingly busy, received odd visitors, was closeted with them for hours, or pored over piles of newspapers, books, and manuscripts. Some of his hosts took fright and he had to move out. Others sheltered him with courage and good humour. In *My Life* he describes how, posing as a patient, he found asylum in an ophthalmic hospital. The doctor in charge of the ward and some of his assistants were in the secret. An unsuspecting nurse conscientiously and tenderly struggled with the odd patient, urging him to take eye-drops and foot-baths and to stop reading and writing.

After he had moved to Petersburg, Krasin found him accommodation in the home of Colonel Littkens, the chief medical officer of the Imperial Military Academy, where Krasin, too, had his secret meeting-place with members of the underground. The colonel's sons were engaged in clandestine work, and he himself was a 'sympathizer'. In his home Trotsky and Sedova lived as the landowning family Vikentiev, escaping for a time the *Okhrana's* attention. Sedova, however, was arrested at a May Day demonstration; and the *agent provocateur* planted in the clandestine organization was on Trotsky's track. Trotsky

hurriedly left for Finland, which was then part of the Tsarist empire but enjoyed much greater freedom than Russia. Amid the lakes and pine woods of the Finnish countryside, in a hotel called *Rauha* (Peace) he meditated, studied, wrote, and kept in touch with Krasin, until in the middle of October the news of a general strike in Petersburg broke into the quiet deserted hotel 'like a raging storm through an open window'. On 14 October, or at the latest on the 15th, he was back in the Russian capital.

. . . . . .

The strike had begun with a printers' demand for shorter hours and higher wages; it then spread rapidly to other industries and from Petersburg to the provinces, assuming a markedly political character and taking by surprise the leaders of the Socialist underground. The workers clamoured for constitutional freedom as well as for better wages and shorter hours. As the strike developed there sprang into being an institution bred in the bone of the Russian Revolution: the first Council, or Soviet, of Workers' Deputies. The Soviet was not a Bolshevik invention. On the contrary, the Bolsheviks, led in Petersburg by Bogdanov and Knuniants-Radin, viewed it with suspicion as a rival to the party. Only in the first week of November (the third week, in the new-style calendar) when the Soviet was already at the peak of its strength and influence, did Lenin try from Stockholm to induce his followers to approach the Soviet in a more co-operative spirit.[1] The nucleus of the Soviet was set up by the strikers from fifty printing shops, who elected delegates and instructed them to form a council. These were soon joined by delegates of other trades. Paradoxically, the idea itself had, indirectly and unwittingly, been suggested by the Tsar who, after the events of January, had appointed a commission under a Senator Shydlovsky to investigate the causes of the trouble. The commission had ordered the workers to elect their representatives from the factories in order to voice grievances. The strikers in October followed this precedent. When the Soviet first met, on 13 October, only delegates of one district (the Neva district) attended. A stimulus was needed to induce other

[1] Lenin wrote a letter to this effect to the Bolshevik *Novaya Zhizn* (*New Life*), appearing in Petersburg, but the paper failed to publish the letter—it first saw the light in *Pravda* thirty-five years later—on 5 November 1940.

districts to join in. That stimulus was provided by the Mensheviks, who would one day bitterly oppose the institution to which they now acted as godfathers.

The Soviet instantaneously gained an extraordinary authority. This was the first elective body which represented the hitherto disfranchised working classes. Under a government which held in supreme contempt the very principle of popular representation, the first institution embodying that principle at once tended morally to overshadow the existing administration. The Soviet at once became a revolutionary factor of the first magnitude.

For the first time Trotsky appeared at the Soviet, assembled at the Technological Institute, on 15 October, the day of his return from Finland, or the day after. Deputies from several districts were present—about 200,000 people, nearly 50 per cent. of all workers in the capital, had taken part in the election. Later, after further elections, the number of deputies grew and varied from 400 to 560. The Soviet had just decided to publish its own paper, *Izvestya* (*Tidings*); and it negotiated with the municipal council for accommodation and facilities for work. In the halls and corridors of the Technological Institute there was an air of feverish agitation: strikers were coming and going, deliberating and waiting for instructions—a foretaste of the Soviet of 1917.

The Socialist parties and groups, however, were not yet agreed in their attitude towards the Soviet. The Mensheviks and Social Revolutionaries had decided to send their representatives immediately. The Bolsheviks were reluctant to follow suit and demanded that the Soviet should accept the party's guidance beforehand—only then were they prepared to join. Trotsky, invited by Krasin to a meeting of the Bolshevik Central Committee, urged its members to join the Soviet without any preliminary condition. No party or group, he pleaded, could aspire to exclusive leadership. The Soviet should be a broad representative body embracing all shades of working-class opinion, for only then would it be able to provide a united leadership in the general strike and in the revolutionary situation that might develop from it.

This wrangle was still on when on 17 October the Tsar, frightened by the general strike, issued a Manifesto promising a

social demands as well, directed against the middle classes more than against Tsardom.

The fervour of the working class, hot and impulsive, outstripped even that of the Socialist leaders. The leaders counted the ranks, laid plans, and marked time-tables. They expected the struggle to reach its climax by 9 January 1906, the anniversary of the march to the Winter Palace.[1] But all phases and dates were unexpectedly advanced by the impetuous temper of the masses, easily inflamed by provocation and stampeded into action. Yet the helplessness of the masses was as great as their self-confidence; and the outcome could only be disastrous. The working class was unarmed; and it could not get arms, in sufficient quantity, until the army itself was in rebellion. Even in conditions ideal for a revolution, it takes time before the prevalent rebellious mood seeps through to the barracks. The mood in the Russian army depended on the state of mind of the peasantry. Only in 1906 did rural Russia become seriously restive. By that time the revolution in the towns had been reduced to cinders; and it had been put down by the uniformed sons of the peasants, who, if the urban movement had been less hasty, might have joined it. The revolution squandered its reserves piecemeal. The working class lacked experience in insurrection. The Socialist parties were too weak to curb the workers' impatience. And the basic fact behind all this was that the old order was not yet quite at the end of its strength; it was still capable of dividing the forces that might have converged on it.

The Soviet of Petersburg, the hub of this foredoomed revolution, was from the first placed in the very middle of all the cross currents; and it was constantly torn between courage and caution, between the volcanic heat of its surroundings and its political judgement. The Soviet elected its Executive on 17 October. On that Executive sat, among others, three representatives of the Bolsheviks, three of the Mensheviks, and three of the Social Revolutionaries. The chief Bolshevik spokesmen were Knuniants-Radin and Sverchkov. (Sverchkov later wrote

[1] In his letter from Stockholm, which was published by *Pravda* only in 1940, and which we have already quoted, Lenin wrote: 'On the anniversary of the great day of 9 January, let there not remain in Russia even a trace of the institutions of Tsardom.' Lenin, *Sochinenya*, vol. x, p. 11. Others hardly reckoned on such rapid and radical results. On another occasion Lenin wrote that it would be best to delay insurrection till spring 1906. (Ibid., vol. xxxiv, p. 311.)

Manifesto, Trotsky urged the Soviet to call off the general strike. Its continuance offered no prospect of further success and might lead to more bloodshed. The Soviet unanimously accepted this view, and on 21 October the strike came to an end. The Soviet then announced that a solemn funeral of workers who had been killed during the strike would take place on 23 October. On the 22nd it was learned that General Trepov was preparing the gendarmerie to suppress the demonstration, and that the *Okhrana* was scheming a pogrom of Jews. The same night Trotsky stood before the Soviet, pleading for the cancellation of the funeral. 'The Soviet declares [ran a motion he submitted]: the proletariat of Petersburg will give the Tsarist government the last battle not on a day chosen by Trepov, but when this suits the armed and organized proletariat.'[1] The Soviet swallowed its pride and cancelled the funeral of its martyrs. There was anguish in this humiliation: would the proletariat be able to give battle on the day chosen by itself only if it had armed and organized itself? And how was it to be armed? On the same day the Soviet resolved to organize fighting squads, whose immediate task was to prevent the pogrom. Later, at the trial of the Soviet, conclusive evidence was to be produced that the pogrom had indeed been planned and that only the Soviet's action had averted it. But the fighting squads, even the one that guarded the Soviet, were at best armed with revolvers; and most had only sticks and pieces of iron. This call to arms was, nevertheless, to be one of the main counts in the indictment of the Soviet.[2]

The Soviet maintained a vigorous political initiative, however. The October Manifesto had promised freedom of the press; but the pseudo-liberal Prime Minister Witte ordered the censorship to function as before. In reply, the compositors and the printers, encouraged by the Soviet, declared that they would neither set nor print newspapers and books submitted to the censors; and, by forcing the hands of the government, the publishers, and the writers, they gave Russia her first taste of a free press. Then a clamour rose for the eight-hour day; and under the auspices of the Soviet the workers themselves began to introduce it in the workshops. Towards the end of October

[1] L. Trotsky, *Sochineniya*, vol. ii, book 1, p. 284.
[2] See Chapter VI, and Sverchkov, *Na Zarie Revolutsii*, p. 200.

the final trial of strength. He submitted a motion proposing that 'the Soviet of Workers' Deputies temporarily elect a new chairman and continue to prepare for an armed rising'. The Soviet accepted Trotsky's recommendation and elected a three-headed Presidium, consisting of Yanovsky (this was Trotsky's cover name), Sverchkov, and Zlydniev. The preparations for the rising which Trotsky had mentioned had so far been less than rudimentary: two delegates had been sent to establish contact with provincial Soviets. The sinews of insurrection were lacking. The government was determined not to leave the Soviet time for further preparation. Soon a police detachment was posted outside the doors of the Free Economic Society, where the Soviet held its sessions.

It was clear that the days of the Soviet were numbered, and henceforward its activity had mainly a demonstrative character. It was designed to impress on the people the principles and methods of revolution. When Trotsky proposed to the Soviet to stop the enforcement of the eight-hour day, he said: 'We have not won the eight-hour day for the working class, but we have succeeded in winning the working class for the eight-hour day.' And, indeed, a short time before the demand for the eight-hour day had seemed unreal to the Russian, and even to the western European, worker. Yet this claim was to head the list of the Russian workers' demands from now until 1917. Similarly, it was Trotsky's fate in 1905 not to win a proletarian insurrection but to win the proletariat for insurrection. On every occasion he explained why a general strike, which some expected miraculously to overthrow Tsardom, could achieve no fundamental change in society unless the strike led to insurrection; and he went on to explain what was needed to ensure the success of insurrection. He would expound this lesson even from the dock; and the events of the next few months and years would help to drive it home. Those who think of a revolution as a cleverly engineered conspiracy and fail to see behind it the long and slow accumulation of grievances, experiences, and tactical ideas in the minds of the people, may think little of such revolutionary pedagogics; they may regard the Soviet's insurrectionary resolutions as empty threats, which in the short run they were. But the test of the Soviet's and of Trotsky's method lay in the future. The revolution of February 1917 was

CHAPTER VI

'Permanent Revolution'

THE liquidation of the Soviet was a political event of the first magnitude; and the Soviet's chief spokesman was an important prisoner of state. Political uncertainty still filled the air. In the prisons, first in Kresty and then in the Peter-Paul fortress, the members of the Soviet were accorded every privilege. Nominally they were kept in isolation; but their cells not being locked, they were free to meet one another, to take walks in the courtyard, to receive books, and under the slightest disguise to engage in intensive political activity.[1]

It was not clear at first whether in its coup against the Soviet the government had not over-reached itself. Petersburg protested through strikes, and Moscow through a general strike, which led to ten days fighting at the barricades. Even after the suppression of the rising in Moscow, the revolution seemed only half defeated. Throughout December and January revolts were flaring up in Siberia, in the Baltic provinces, in the Caucasus; and punitive expeditions were busy quelling them. In March the elections to the first Duma, boycotted by the Socialists, brought a reverse to the government and striking success to the Constitutional Democrats. It was still doubtful whether the trial of the Soviet would take place at all. The authorities, at any rate, were in no hurry to fix its date. Later it was planned to open the trial on 12 June 1906. In the summer, however, the Tsar recovered confidence, dismissed the semi-Liberal Witte, stopped the talks on the formation of a Constitutional Democratic ministry which were in progress, dispersed the Duma, and appointed Stolypin as Prime Minister. The trial became the object of a tug-of-war in the administration; and it was adjourned from month to month till the end of September. The adherents of unmitigated autocracy planned to use the case in order to demonstrate to the Tsar that Witte's weak

[1] The usual prison discipline was so much relaxed that Rosa Luxemburg, herself just released from a prison in Warsaw, was able to pay a 'secret' visit to Parvus and Deutsch in the Peter-Paul fortress. She does not seem to have met Trotsky on this occasion.

Marxian conception of land rent. Whatever the truth, some of his political writings of this year were of greater weight and originality than any work of his on land rent was likely to be. We may leave aside his *Mr. Struve in Politics*, a brochure, published under the pen-name N. Takhotsky, which gained great popularity. This was another broadside against liberalism, mordantly effective but adding little to a familiar stock of arguments. More important was the *History of the Soviet* (*Istorya Sovieta Rabochikh Deputatov*), a work written by several hands and edited by Trotsky. He conceived the idea of it as soon as the doors of the prison had closed behind him; and he contributed a chapter summing up the Soviet's role:

> Urban Russia [so he concluded] was too narrow a base for the struggle. The Soviet tried to wage the struggle on a national scale, but it remained above all a Petersburg institution. . . . there is no doubt that in the next upsurge of revolution, such Councils of Workers will be formed all over the country. An All-Russian Soviet of Workers, organized by a national congress . . . will assume the leadership. . . History does not repeat itself. The new Soviet will not have to go through the experiences of these fifty days once again. Yet from these fifty days it will be able to deduce its entire programme of action. . .: revolutionary cooperation with the army, the peasantry, and the plebeian parts of the middle classes; abolition of absolutism; destruction of the military machine of absolutism; part disbandment and part overhaul of the army; abolition of the police and of the bureaucratic apparatus; the eight hour day; the arming of the people, above all, of the workers; the transformation of the Soviets into organs of revolutionary, urban self-government; the formation of Peasant Soviets to be in charge of the agrarian revolution on the spot; elections to the Constituent Assembly. . . . It is easier to formulate such a plan than to carry it out. But if victory is destined for the revolution, the proletariat cannot but assume this role. It will achieve a revolutionary performance, the like of which the world has never seen.
>
> The history of these fifty days will be a pale page in the great book of the proletariat's struggle and victory.[1]

This was indeed the programme for 1917. However, these writings were merely sketches and essays preparatory to his chief work of this period, *Itogi i Perspektivy—Dvizhushchie Sily Revolutsii* (*The Balance and the Prospects—the Moving Forces of the*

[1] L. Trotsky, *Sochinenya*, vol. ii, book 1, p. 206.

made revolution impossible. On the contrary, it made it inevitable.

One outcome of this trend was that Russia entered the twentieth century with an extremely feeble urban middle class. The Russian town itself was the product of the last few decades. Under Peter the Great, the city dwellers were only 3 per cent. of the total population. After the Napoleonic wars they formed 4½ per cent., and even towards the end of the nineteenth century only 13 per cent. The old Russian town, unlike its European counterpart, had been not a centre of industry and commerce but a military administrative unit or a fortress. (Moscow had been the Tsar's village.) The Russian town—like the Asian—did not produce; it merely consumed. It neither accumulated wealth nor evolved a division of labour. Thus were aggravated all the cruel handicaps which Russia's severe climate and enormous spaces had imposed upon the growth of her civilization. In the middle of the nineteenth century, capitalism found in Russia not the urban handicraft from which, in the West, modern industry had sprung, but rural cottage craft. This fact had one striking political consequence, already noted by Parvus: Russia possessed no social class comparable to that concentrated mass of urban craftsmen who had formed the backbone of the French middle class and had made the great French Revolution. Russia's four million craftsmen (*kustari*) were scattered over the country-side.

Even the advance of modern industry did not significantly strengthen the middle class, because Russian industry was, in the main, fostered by foreign investment. In their own countries, the Western bourgeoisie had rallied to the banner of liberalism. In Russia, they were interested mainly in the security of their investments, which seemed best guaranteed by 'strong', that is absolutist, government. Thus, the economic preponderance of the state, the numerical weakness of the middle classes, the predominance of foreign capital in industry, the absence of a middle-class tradition—all combined to make Russian bourgeois liberalism stillborn. Yet modern industry, which did not significantly enhance the middle class, brought the proletariat to the fore. The more belatedly Russian industry expanded, the more readily did it adopt the most advanced forms of organization that had elsewhere been developed slowly and laboriously. The

if it succeeded, would end in the seizure of power by the proletariat. 'Every political party deserving the name aims at seizing governmental power in order to put the state at the service of the class whose interests it expresses.'[1] The Mensheviks argued that in backward Russia, 'unripe' for socialism, the workers must help the bourgeoisie to seize power. Against this Trotsky boldly declared: 'In a country economically backward, the proletariat can take power earlier than in countries where capitalism is advanced. . . . The Russian revolution produces conditions, in which power may . . . pass into the hands of the proletariat before the politicians of bourgeois liberalism have had the chance to show their statesman-like genius to the full.'[2] He brushed aside arguments based on familiar Marxist texts about the sequence of bourgeois and Socialist revolutions: 'Marxism is above all a method of analysis of social relations, not of texts.'

His critics were soon to accuse him of wanting Russia to 'jump over' the bourgeois phase of development, and of advocating a policy which would oppose the industrial workers, a small minority, to the rest of the nation. Trotsky tried to forestall these criticisms. He did not gainsay, he stated, the bourgeois character of the Russian Revolution, in this sense at least, that its immediate task was to free Russia from the dead weight of her feudal past, to accomplish that is, what the bourgeoisie had accomplished in England and France. But he insisted —and in this he differed from other Socialists—that the revolution would not stop at this. Having uprooted the feudal institutions, it would proceed to break the backbone of capitalism and to establish a proletarian dictatorship.[3] He did not rule out a governmental coalition of Socialists and representatives of the peasantry; but to the latter he assigned the role of junior partners. The representatives of the workers 'will give content to the policy of the government and will form a homogeneous majority in it'.[4]

Was this, then, to be a dictatorship of a minority? More by implication than explicitly, he envisaged that the revolution itself would indeed be carried out by the workers alone. It was in the towns that the old order must be overthrown; and there

[1] L. Trotsky, *Itogi i Perspektivy*, p. 34.
[2] Ibid., pp. 34–35.
[3] Ibid., pp. 39–40.
[4] Ibid., p. 40.

the industrial proletariat would be master. 'Many layers of the toiling mass, especially in the country, will be drawn into the revolution and for the first time obtain political organization only after . . . the urban proletariat has taken the helm of government.'[1] But even though the overthrow of the old order and the seizure of power would be the work of a minority, the revolution could not survive and consolidate itself unless it received the genuine support of the majority, i.e. of the peasants. '*The proletariat in power will appear before the peasantry as its liberator.*'[2] It would, among other things, sanction the seizure of the large estates by the peasants. The French peasant had followed Napoleon, because the latter guaranteed his smallholding against the émigré landlord. For the same reason the Russian peasant would back a proletarian government. That government, therefore, would and would not represent the rule of a minority. The proletarian minority would form its core and in all important matters hold the initiative. But it would rule in the interest, and enjoy the willing support, of an overwhelming majority.

His conception of the peasantry's place in the revolution—in a sense the crux of 'Trotskyism'—was to be the centre of many controversies. The stock accusation levelled against Trotsky is that he 'underrated' the revolutionary potentiality of the Russian peasantry, and denied the possibility of an 'alliance' between it and the proletariat. For this charge no support can be found in his own words. We have seen how emphatically he stated that 'the proletariat in power will appear before the peasantry as its liberator'. In insisting that the Socialists would not merely expropriate the landlords but sanction the seizure of their land by the peasants, he went farther than most Russian Socialists had so far gone. The Mensheviks held that the municipalities should take over the gentry's land. Most Bolsheviks, especially Lenin, advocated, in general terms, nationalization, but not partition of the land.[3] If the 'alliance' with the peasantry is to be understood as the

[1] Ibid., p. 41.
[2] Ibid., p. 42.
[3] Of the now known Bolshevik leaders only Stalin pleaded in 1906 that the party should pronounce itself in favour of the sharing out of the large estates among the peasants. J. Stalin, *Sochinenya*, vol. i, pp. 214–35, 236–8. See also I. Deutscher, *Stalin, a Political Biography*, pp. 82–83.

Bolsheviks understood it in and after 1917, then Trotsky certainly stood for it in 1906.

Yet it is true that he did not consider the peasants, any more than other small proprietors or the petty bourgeoisie at large, as an independent revolutionary force. He saw them as an amorphous, scattered mass, with narrow local interests, incapable of co-ordinated national action. It was the peasantry's fate that its rebellions, even in the rare cases when they were successful, led to the rise of new oppressive dynasties or were exploited by other classes. In modern society, the peasants were politically even more helpless than before: 'the history of capitalism is the history of the subordination of the country to the town.'[1] In the town there were only two poles of independent power, actual or potential: the big bourgeoisie, with its concentrated wealth, and the proletariat, with its concentrated capacity to produce wealth. The peasants, despite their far greater numerical strength, had to follow either the one or the other. On the scales of a parliamentary election, the vote of one peasant weighs as much as does the vote of one worker. In revolutionary situations this equality is illusory. A thousand railwaymen on strike are politically more effective than a million scattered villagers. The role of modern social classes is determined not by numbers, but by social function and specific weight. The proletariat must win the support of the peasantry—without this it cannot hold power. But the only way for it to attract the mass of small rural proprietors is to show vigour and determination in the contest for power. The weak are attracted by the strong.

This view, so explicitly stated, marked a radical departure from the then accepted Marxist notions, even though it had been strongly implied in Marx's own writings. (Trotsky's aversion to 'analysis of texts' prevented him from dabbling in helpful quotations.) It was a common Marxist notion that the working class could not and ought not to try to seize power before it had become a majority of the nation. It was also a deep-seated illusion of popular socialism that in modern countries the industrial working class would gradually expand into a majority, as it had done in England.[2] With this illusion Trotsky

[1] L. Trotsky, *Itogi i Perspektivy*, p. 43.

[2] In the foreword to his *Works*, written in 1946 (*Sochinenya*, vol. i, pp. xiv–xv),

broke radically: the revolution, he wrote, would conquer long before the majority of the nation had become transformed into proletarians.[1]

His appraisal of the peasantry was no less sharply opposed to current opinion. The Mensheviks tended to view the small rural proprietor as a prop of reaction. Their hope was in a coalition between the working class and the Liberal bourgeoisie. Lenin, on the contrary, reckoned with the muzhiks' revolutionary energy; but, unlike Trotsky, he would not prejudge its potentialities. He kept his mind open and waited to see whether the peasantry would not form its own revolutionary party, with whom the Socialists would have to deal as with an equal partner. At the beginning of 1905, to the amusement of Plekhanov, Trotsky, and Martov, Lenin approached with intense curiosity and exaggerated hope the enigmatic figure of Gapon. He wondered whether that priest, the son of a Cossack, who had led the workers of the capital to the Winter Palace and thereby helped to open the sluices for the revolution, was not the harbinger of an independent and radical peasant movement.[2] Lenin's formula of a 'democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry' seemed broader and more cautious than Trotsky's 'proletarian dictatorship', and better suited for an association of Socialists and agrarian revolutionaries. In 1917 events in Russia were to confirm Trotsky's prognostication. In the twenties, however, the problem was to be posed anew in connexion with Communist policy in China; and nearly half a century after Trotsky had formulated his view, it would be posed over and over again by the revolutions in Asia, in which the relation between the urban and the rural elements would be more intricate and blurred than it was in Russia.

So far we have dealt with the domestic aspect of the revolution. Its international and domestic aspects were, in Trotsky's view, closely interwoven. Although the peasants would by

Stalin stated that in the era of 1905 he 'accepted the thesis familiar among Marxists, according to which one of the chief conditions for the victory of the socialist revolution was that the proletariat should become the majority of the population. Consequently in those countries in which the proletariat did not yet form the majority of the population, because capitalism had not sufficiently developed, the victory of socialism was impossible.'

[1] L. Trotsky, op. cit., p. 55.

[2] Lenin, *Sochinenya*, vol. viii, pp. 384–8; Trotsky, *Sochinenya*, vol. ii, book 1, pp. 54–57; see also Parvus on Gapon, *Iskra*, no. 85 (27 January 1905).

themselves be unable 'to squeeze out the workers',[1] a conflict between the two classes was looming ahead, a conflict in which the proletariat might forfeit the position of acknowledged leader of the nation. As long as the revolution was engaged in breaking the rule and the power of the landlord, it would have the entire peasantry on its side. But after that—'two major features of the proletarian policy, its *collectivism* and its *internationalism*, would meet with [the peasants'] opposition'.[2] Thus, in spite of its initial strength the new régime would discover its weakness as soon as it had carried the revolution, in the country as well as in town, from the bourgeois to the socialist phase. It would then be compelled to seek salvation in international revolution. Russia's industrial poverty and backwardness would anyhow prove formidable obstacles to the building of a Socialist economy; and only with the help of the Socialist West could these obstacles be broken and removed. Finally, the hostility of a Conservative Europe would force the Russian revolution to carry the struggle beyond Russia's frontiers.

Without the direct state support of the European proletariat, the working class of Russia will not be able to remain in power and transform its temporary rule into a stable and prolonged socialist dictatorship. . . .[3]

This will from the very outset impart an international character to the development of the events and open the broadest perspectives: *the working class of Russia, by leading in the political emancipation will rise to a height unknown in history, gather into its hands colossal forces and means and become the initiator of the liquidation of capitalism on a global scale. . . .*[4]

If the Russian proletariat, having temporarily gained power, does not carry the revolution of its own initiative on to the ground of Europe, then the feudal and bourgeois reaction will force it to do so.[5]

It will be precisely the fear of the proletarian rising which will force the bourgeois parties, voting prodigious sums for military expenditure, solemnly to demonstrate for peace, to dream of international chambers of conciliation and even of the organization of the United States of Europe—all miserable declamation, which can neither do away with the antagonism of the powers, nor with armed conflicts. . . . European war inevitably means European revolution.[6]

[1] L. Trotsky, *Itogi i Perspektivy*, p. 42.
[2] Ibid., p. 46.
[3] Ibid., p. 71.
[4] Ibid., p. 73 (Trotsky's italics).
[5] Ibid., p. 74.
[6] Ibid., p. 77.

Not for a moment did Trotsky imagine, however, that the Russian Revolution could survive in isolation for decades. It may therefore be said, as Stalin was to say twenty years later, that he 'underrated' the internal resources and vitality of revolutionary Russia. The miscalculation, obvious in retrospect, is less surprising when one considers that the view expressed by Trotsky in 1906 was to become the common property of all Bolshevik leaders, including Stalin, in the years between 1917 and 1924. Hindsight, naturally, dwells on this particular error so much that the error overshadows the forecast as a whole. True enough, Trotsky did not foresee that Soviet Russia would survive in isolation for decades. But who, apart from him, foresaw, in 1906, the existence of Soviet Russia? Moreover, Trotsky himself, indirectly and unknowingly, provided in advance the clue to his own error—it is found in his appraisal of the Russian peasantry. Its political helplessness and lack of independence best account for the survival of a collectivist régime in a country in which the individualistic peasantry formed the overwhelming majority, and also for the forcible and relatively successful imposition of collectivism upon it.

In apparent contradiction of his own view, Trotsky then stated that the proletarian régime would break down as soon as the muzhiks turned against it. This error, if an error it was, was intimately bound up with his conception of the revolution, as he stated it in 1905–6. It did not occur to him that a proletarian party would in the long run rule and govern an enormous country against the majority of the people. He did not foresee that the revolution would lead to the prolonged rule of a minority. The possibility of such a rule was implicit in his theory; but its actuality would still have appeared to him, as to nearly all his contemporaries, incompatible with socialism. In fact, he did not imagine, in spite of all he had written about Lenin's 'Jacobinism', that the revolution would seek to escape from its isolation and weakness into totalitarianism.

If the trend of his thought is considered as a whole, then it may be said that hardly ever has any political prophecy appeared to be alternately so brilliantly confirmed and so utterly confounded and then in a way confirmed again by the onrush of new historical cataclysms. This is especially true of that part of Trotsky's prognostication in which he spoke about the im-

The sentiment of the anti-Tsarist public expressed itself in a thousand incidents. 'On the benches of the defendants there constantly appeared newspapers, letters, boxes with sweetmeats, and flowers. No end of flowers! In their buttonholes, in their hands, on their knees, and all over the dock—flowers. The presiding judge has not the courage to remove this fragrant disorder. In the end, even the officers of the gendarmerie and the clerks, altogether "demoralized" by the atmosphere in the hall, carry the flowers from the public to the dock.'[1] At one moment the defendants rose to pay homage to the memory of one of them who had been executed before the trial. The attorneys and the public, too, rose to their feet; and so did the embarrassed officers of the gendarmerie and the police. The aftermath of the revolution was still in the air.

'We have decided to take part in the present extraordinary trial only because we think it necessary . . . to explain publicly the truth about the activity and the significance of the Soviet.' Thus Zlydniev, on behalf of all accused, stated at the opening of the proceedings. The defendants so conducted themselves that they aroused respect, and at times a grudging sympathy, even among their enemies. The police brought against some of the members of the Soviet—Trotsky was not among them—the charge that they had embezzled funds collected from workers. The charge brought forth such a hail of protests from factories and was so effectively exploded in the court that the prosecution itself dismissed it as slanderous. So striking was the evidence that the Soviet had had overwhelming popular support for the general strikes and demonstrations it had called, that the prosecution could not base its case on these activities and concentrated instead on the count of insurrection.[2]

On 4 October Trotsky rose to speak on this subject. He modelled his speech on the pleas which Marx and Lassalle had made when in 1848 they had been confronted with identical charges, but on this occasion he perhaps surpassed his masters. He began with the statement that the issues of republic and

[1] L. Trotsky, *Sochinenya*, vol. ii, book 2, p. 141.

[2] A contemporary correspondence from Petersburg in *The Times* stated: 'The remarkable feature about the revolutionary gathering [of October 1905] was its perfect organization. . . . On the other hand, the procession of the "Whites" was a mere rabble of butchers' boys, shopkeepers, beadles, and a few enthusiasts.' *The Times*, 1 November 1905.

insurrection had never figured on the Soviet agenda, so that in strict law the charge was groundless; but that this was so only because the Soviet had taken its own attitude in these matters for granted and had had no need to discuss them. He at once took the bull—the problem of political force—by the horns:

> Did the Soviet . . . consider itself justified in using force and repressive measures in certain instances? To this question, posed in this general form, my answer is: Yes. . . . In the conditions created by a political general strike, the essence of which was that it paralyzed the mechanism of government, the old governmental force that had long outlived its day and against which the political strike was directed, proved itself completely incapable of undertaking anything. Even with the barbarous means which alone were at its disposal, it was not in a position to maintain and regulate public order. In the meantime the strike had thrown hundreds of thousands of workers from the factories into the street and had awakened them to public political life. Who could take over the direction of those masses, who could carry discipline into their ranks? Which organ of the old governmental power? The police? The gendarmerie? . . . I find only one answer: nobody, except the Council of Workers' Deputies.'[1]

The Soviet could not but begin to assume quasi-governmental functions. It refrained from coercion, however, and preferred to act by persuasion. The prosecution had produced in its evidence only a few minute, comic rather than tragic, cases of violence. The defence might plead that the Soviet had acted within the limits permitted by the Tsar's own Manifesto; but it preferred frankly to proclaim its democratic, republican conviction. Let the court decide whether the freedom promised in the Manifesto was for monarchists only or for republicans and Socialists as well. 'Let the Manifesto now proclaim to us through the court's verdict: you have denied my reality, but I do exist for you as well as for the whole country.' Otherwise the defendants would be convicted for their beliefs not for their deeds.

Trotsky then went on to prove that, in certain circumstances, insurrection which the court considered illegal must develop from the general strike, which the court held to be legal. Insurrection had in a sense begun with the general strike. The strike had paralysed the existing government and required another

[1] L. Trotsky, op. cit., pp. 163–4.

government to step into its place. Something like dual power had come into existence. The prosecution professed to defend the existing order against the Soviet. Yet this order, in so far as it was expressed in the Tsar's Manifesto, had itself been the product of a general strike—it was in response to the October strike that the Tsar had proclaimed it. The legal as well as the real basis under the old order had been shattered. Two governments had in fact existed, each struggling to assert itself, each endeavouring to win the army for itself. Their collision was inevitable. 'Did the workers of Petersburg become aware of this? Yes. Did the proletariat, did the Soviet, believe the open clash of these two powers to be unavoidable? Yes.' And not only they—the middle classes, too, realized this and in many cases demonstrated their sympathy for the Soviet. It was the old government not the Soviet that represented anarchy and bloodshed. It was a requirement of order that the old government be overthrown; and only insurrection could overthrow it.

What was the nature of the insurrection? Trotsky asked. The Russian code, which was a hundred years old, had known only the notion of a conspiracy against the government, staged in secret by a handful of rebels. This had, indeed, been the only form of rising possible in bygone times. The new insurrection was a popular rising, never envisaged by the code. The law was lagging behind the times; and it did not give the prosecution even technical ground for the charge against the Soviet.

> And yet our activity was revolutionary! And yet we did prepare ourselves for an armed rising! A rising of the masses is not made, gentlemen the judges. It makes itself of its own accord. It is the result of social relations and conditions and not of a scheme drawn up on paper. A popular insurrection cannot be staged. It can only be foreseen. For reasons that were as little dependent on us as on Tsardom, an open conflict had become inevitable. It came nearer with every day. To prepare for it meant for us to do everything possible to reduce to a minimum the number of victims of this unavoidable conflict.

The Soviet tried to organize the masses and to explain to them the meaning of events. It was not preparing an insurrection; it was preparing itself for an insurrection. True, the masses had no arms. But—'no matter how important weapons may be, it is not in them, gentlemen the judges, that great power resides.

No! Not the ability of the masses to kill others, but their great readiness themselves to die, this secures in the last instance the victory of the popular rising. . . .' For only when the masses show readiness to die on the barricades can they win over the army, on which the old régime relies. The barricade does not play in revolution the part which the fortress plays in regular warfare. It is mainly the physical and moral meeting-ground between people and army. 'It serves the insurrection, because, by hampering the movement of troops it brings these into close contact with the people. Here on the barricade, for the first time in his life, the soldier hears honest, courageous words, a fraternal appeal, the voice of the people's conscience; and, as a consequence of this contact between soldiers and citizens, in the atmosphere of revolutionary enthusiasm, the bonds of the old military discipline snap. . . .'

Having thus defined the place of insurrection in the revolution, he returned to the attack on the government. The rulers, he said, were trying to prolong their domination by means of assassination and pogroms; the hooligans of the Black Hundreds had been taking their cue from the police and gendarmerie; and the Tsar himself had been their protector.[1] Trotsky quoted revelations made in the first Duma by the Liberal Prince Urusov, who had related the following boast of one of the leaders of the gendarmerie: 'We can make a pogrom whenever it suits us, a pogrom of ten people, if we wish, or of ten thousand.'

> The prosecution does not believe in all this. It cannot believe, for otherwise it would have to turn the accusation against those whom it now defends, and to acknowledge that the Russian citizen who arms himself with a revolver against the police acts in self-defence. . . . We had no doubt that behind the façade of the Black Hundreds was the powerful fist of the ruling clique. Gentlemen the judges! this sinister fist we see even now in front of us!

The prosecution is asking you to recognize that the Soviet armed the workers for the direct struggle against the existing 'form of

[1] The programme of the Black Hundreds ran:
'1. The good of the Fatherland lies in the unshakable conservation of Orthodoxy and of the unlimited Russian autocracy. . . .
'2. The Orthodox Christian Church must have the predominant and dominating position in the state.
'3. Russian autocracy has sprung from popular reason; it has been blessed by the Church and justified by history.'

even for a moment—they were invariably stolen. Then, on 13 October, something like a bombshell exploded in the court-room. One of the defence counsel received a letter from Lopukhin, a recently dismissed director of the police department, who asked to be called as witness. A semi-Liberal official, Lopukhin had conducted a special inquiry into the obscure activities of his own department; and he forwarded to the court a copy of the report he had submitted to Stolypin, the new Minister of the Interior. He wished to testify that the year before Petersburg had escaped a bloody pogrom only thanks to measures taken by the Soviet. He wished to bear witness that the leaflets inciting to the pogrom had been printed at the headquarters of the political police, in the offices of one of its chiefs who had just testified before the court that he had never seen them. He further revealed that the political police itself had organized the gangs of the Black Hundreds, that General Trepov was actually in command of those gangs; and that the commandant of the Imperial Court personally submitted to the Tsar regular reports on these activities. The defence asked that Witte, the former Prime Minister, Durnovo, the former Minister of the Interior as well as Lopukhin be summoned to the witness-stand. The request was refused on the pretext that the cross-examination had been concluded. To allow the erstwhile chief of the police department to give evidence for the defendants and to implicate the Imperial Court would have brought the Tsar's wrath upon the magistrates. But their refusal to call the witnesses effectively exposed the political character of the trial and much beside. The defendants and attorneys decided to boycott further proceedings.

On 2 November the verdict was delivered before an empty court-room. The members of the Soviet were declared not guilty on the chief count, that of insurrection. But Trotsky and fourteen others were sentenced to deportation to Siberia for life and loss of all civil rights.

. . . . . .

The convicts, dressed in grey prison clothes, started on their journey at dawn on 5 January 1907. They had been kept in the dark about the date of their departure and about their destination; and they were awakened for the journey just after they had gone to sleep, having spent most of the night at a

After more than three weeks, the convicts reached Tobolsk, where they were put up for a few days in the local prison. Here they were told that the goal of their journey was the penal colony at Obdorsk, lying in the mountains over the estuary of the river Ob, just on the Polar Circle, nearly 1,000 miles from any railway and 500 from a telegraph station. The route from Tobolsk to Obdorsk led northwards, along the river Ob, through Samarovo and Berezov, across barren, empty, snow- and ice-bound *tundra* and *taiga*, where for hundreds of miles there was no human settlement, except a few scattered Ostyak huts or tents. Horses could still be used on part of the road, but farther on the horse was replaced by the reindeer. Here the finality of his severance from civilization came upon the deportee with a shock. From the Tobolsk prison, on 29 January, Trotsky wrote to his wife about the sudden and sharp longing that had overcome him 'for the light of an electric street lamp, for the clangour of a tramway' and—characteristically—'for the loveliest thing the world can offer, the smell of the printing ink of a fresh newspaper'.

So far he had not yet thought of trying to escape, even though before departing from Petersburg he had prudently concealed a false passport and money in the sole of his boot. For one thing, political convicts now refrained from escaping *en route* so as not to get the escort into trouble. For another, he reflected whether, having been so much in the public eye, it was not too risky for him to make the attempt: the escaping deportee, if caught, was automatically punished with three years' hard labour. Enough that when he was writing to Sedova about the place of his deportation, he still expected her to join him there with their baby son, born while he was in prison awaiting trial. He attempted to cheer up Sedova and wrote that Obdorsk had a healthy climate, was inhabited by a thousand people, and that he would have chances of earning a living there. He also urged her to bring or send to Obdorsk books and papers, no end of books and papers. In this mood, bracing himself for a long wait beyond the Polar Circle, not without melancholy, he started out from Tobolsk towards Samarovo and Berezov, the next halting-places.

Galloping at full speed, the convoy traversed a vast area, where typhus was raging and Ostyaks in their huts were dying

CHAPTER VII

The Doldrums: 1907–1914

THE year 1907 was the year of the Tsar's revenge. With the *coup* of 3 June autocracy was fully re-established, and Stolypin's reign of terror began. The second Duma was dispersed. A new law disfranchised the bulk of the people; and only after that was a new Duma elected. The Social Democratic deputies to the second Duma were deported to Siberia. The revolutionary parties were crushed, their clubs and newspapers suppressed, and thousands of their members massacred. Courts martial and the gallows dominated the political scene. Even moderate Liberals, who only recently had hoped to come to terms with the Tsar, were victimized and humiliated. Miliukov complained bitterly: 'We were invited to assume office as long as we were thought to have the red forces behind us.... We were respected so long as we were regarded as revolutionaries. But since we have turned out to be a strictly constitutional party, we have been found useless.'

The influence of socialism, so recently still overwhelming, shrank and dwindled. In 1905 everybody seemed in sympathy with socialism; now nearly everybody abjured it. Those who stood by it were a mere handful; even they could not withstand the all-pervading disillusionment and confusion. The Socialists were being driven back into the underground from which they had so hopefully emerged. But how much easier it had been for them before 1905 to band together in small clandestine circles than now, with defeat in their hearts, to re-descend into the underground. They seemed back where they had started, but without the original faith and courage. Some were reluctant to resume the clandestine struggle and hoped to work in the open, within such limits as the régime of 3 June would permit. Others, disdainful of any adjustment to triumphant counter-revolution, made desperate attempts to continue a war *à outrance* from the underground, and most of these boycotted the few social and political institutions which existed precariously in the open. The first attitude, that of the so-called 'liquidators', was prevalent among the Mensheviks, although some

Menshevik leaders, especially Plekhanov and Martov, were convinced of the need for clandestine organization. The 'boycotters' were strong among the Bolsheviks; but they were opposed by Lenin, who endeavoured to combine clandestine and open forms of activity.

In the recovery of Tsardom Trotsky saw a mere interval between two revolutions. He insisted, as much as did Lenin, on the necessity for the movement to rebuild its clandestine organization; and he also urged the underground workers to 'infiltrate' every open institution, from the Duma to the trade unions, in order to preach their views inside. He was therefore opposed to both liquidators and boycotters and went on expounding the idea of permanent revolution with an optimism and ardour uncommon in those years of depression.[1]

Nevertheless, the years between 1907 and 1914 form in his life a chapter singularly devoid of political achievement. 'During the years of reaction', he wrote later, 'the greater part of my work consisted in interpreting the revolution of 1905 and paving the way for the next revolution by means of theoretical research.'[2] He did indeed interpret the revolution of 1905, or rather he repeated his earlier interpretation. But of the new 'theoretical research' there is little evidence in his writings, which consisted of brilliant journalism and literary criticism, but did not include a single significant work on political theory. Yet even in this somewhat apologetic retrospect Trotsky does not claim any practical revolutionary achievement to his credit. In these years, however, Lenin, assisted by his followers, was forging his party, and men like Zinoviev, Kamenev, Bukharin and, later, Stalin were growing to a stature which enabled them to play leading parts within the party in 1917. To the stature which Trotsky had attained in 1904–6 the present period added little or nothing.

Stalin, in the days before he began opposing Trotsky with nothing but preposterous calumny, made a remark which offers a clue to this chapter. Trotsky's strength, Stalin said, reveals itself when the revolution gains momentum and advances; his weakness comes to the fore when the revolution is

[1] See his editorial statements in the Viennese *Pravda*, nos. 1, 4, 5; 'Letter to Russian Workers—*Vivos Voco*' in no. 6; and '*Chto-zhe dalshe?*', Supplement to *Pravda*, no. 17.

[2] L. Trotsky, *Moya Zhizn*, vol. i, p. 251.

defeated and must retreat.[1] There is some truth in this. Trotsky's mental and moral constitution was such that he received the strongest impulses from, and best mobilized his resources amid, the strains and stresses of actual upheaval. On a gigantic stage, which dwarfed others, he rose to the giant's stature. Amid the roar and din of battle, his voice attained full power; and when he faced multitudes in revolt, absorbing from them their despair and hope and imparting to them his own enthusiasm and faith, his personality dominated men and, within limits, events. When the revolution was on the wane, however, he was out of his element and his strength sagged. He was equal to herculean, not to lesser, labours.

. . . . . .

On his return from the far north, Trotsky stopped for a few days in Petersburg, and then, before the police were on his track, crossed into Finland. A new stream of revolutionary émigrés was moving westward, and Finland was their first halting-place. The chief of the police at Helsinki, a Finnish patriot, was only too glad to offer shelter to the Tsar's enemies. Lenin and Martov had already arrived there. They warmly welcomed Trotsky and congratulated him on his behaviour in the dock. His sojourn in Finland lasted a few weeks, during which he prepared for publication a description of his escape from the *tundra*. At the end of April, he was in London to attend a congress of the party.

This was in many respects a strange assembly. Attended by about 350 delegates—nearly ten times as many as in 1903—it was the last congress of the united party. The delegates, although they met on the eve of Stolypin's *coup d'état*, had no clear awareness that the revolution had suffered defeat. On the contrary, the party still seemed to them to be at the zenith of its strength. Its membership was still nominally very large, and not only did Bolsheviks and Mensheviks work together, but even the Polish and the Latvian parties had joined the Russian mother-party—hitherto they had kept aloof so as not to become identified with either of its two factions. The party was, however, so poor that it had to borrow money from a liberal English business man to enable the congress to proceed in a Brotherhood Church in London.

[1] Stalin, *Sochineniya*, vol. vi, pp. 329–31.

The great issues of the revolution—the economic trends, the alignment of the classes, and the historical perspectives—were thrown open to a prolonged and thorough debate, which lasted three weeks. 'The speeches of the leaders lasted for hours . . . it might have been a gathering of academicians. . . .'[1] For the first time Trotsky had the opportunity to expound the theory of permanent revolution before a gathering of this sort. He strongly criticized the Mensheviks for their inclination to coalesce with the Constitutional Democrats; and he advocated a bloc of workers and peasants.[2] Rosa Luxemburg, representing the Polish Social Democratic Party, endorsed the theory of permanent revolution. Lenin twice emphatically acknowledged that in advocating an alliance of workers and peasants Trotsky was on common ground with the Bolsheviks. Once again Lenin hoped to win Trotsky over, and once again he failed. For the moment Trotsky was keeping aloof from both factions, and to both he preached unity. 'Here comes', he said, 'Martov . . . and threatens to raise between the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks a Marxist wall bristling with guns.' . . . 'We are not afraid . . .', replies the Bolshevik, and threatens to fortify himself behind a deep moat. 'Comrade Martov, you are going to build your wall with paper only, with your polemical literature —you have nothing else to build it with.'[3] In this Trotsky was, of course, wrong: the 'wall' separating the two factions was of much more solid stuff than he imagined, and Martov and Lenin had a prescience of the ultimate irreconcilability of their political methods. 'If you think', Trotsky further pleaded, 'that a schism is unavoidable, wait at least until events, and not merely resolutions, separate you. Do not run ahead of events.'

There was in his attitude towards both wings of the party a certain intellectual superciliousness, for he looked at both through the prism of his theory of permanent revolution. Both Lenin and Martov agreed that the Russian revolution would be merely bourgeois democratic; both were therefore in his eyes wrong, and the views of neither would withstand the test of events.[4] In strict theory, this was true enough; but the

[1] A. Balabanoff, *My Life as a Rebel*, p. 88.

[2] *Pyatyi Syezd RSDRP*, pp. 272–3, 417–18, 420–4. [3] Ibid., pp. 54–55.

[4] Shortly after the congress, Trotsky wrote in the *Przegląd Socjal-Demokratyczny* (Rosa Luxemburg's Polish paper) that 'while the anti-revolutionary aspects of Menshevism are already revealing themselves fully, the anti-revolutionary features of Bolshevism strongly threaten to come to light only in the case of a revolutionary victory'. Trotsky hoped, however, that a new revolution would compel both factions to revise their views and would thus bring them closer together, just as the events of 1905 had done. See *Die Russische Revolution 1905*, p. 231.

strictly theoretical viewpoint was not necessarily the most realistic. Whatever the formulas, the party of the revolution was constituting itself under Lenin's inspiration and the potential party of reform under Martov's. With his gaze fixed on wide horizons, Trotsky failed to see this division taking place before his very eyes. His own theory should have prompted him to come closer to the Bolsheviks; but the ties of personal friendship and the dead weight of his old controversy with Lenin held him closer to the Mensheviks.

At the congress in London a new issue brought back the old exacerbation. In committee, delegates discussed the guerilla activities and 'expropriations' in which the Bolshevik fighting-squads had been engaged, especially in the Caucasus. The Mensheviks angrily denounced these activities as a relapse into the old *Narodnik* terrorism, if not outright banditry; and they persuaded the congress, at which Lenin otherwise commanded a majority, to ban them. Throughout this discussion Lenin's attitude was ambiguous. Apparently he still intended to use the fighting squads for a few raids on Russian treasury transports, in order to obtain the money the party needed for its work under the terror of counter-revolution. Throughout the congress, an unknown Caucasian delegate, closely connected with the Bolshevik fighting-squads, Djugashvili-Ivanovich—he had not yet assumed the cover name Stalin—sat in silence, waiting for the result of the controversy and for Lenin's instructions. The records of the congress say nothing about the course of this controversy; only fragmentary reminiscences, written many years after, are available. But there is no doubt that Trotsky was, with Martov, among those who sharply arraigned the Bolsheviks; and some time after the congress he went so far as to carry the denunciation into the columns of the Western European Socialist press. He must have vented his indignation in the lobbies of the congress or in committee. Thus Lenin's earlier acknowledgement of the *rapprochement* in their basic views and his renewed attempt to win over Trotsky led to nothing, and towards the end of the congress were succeeded by bitter invective. Trotsky

still cast his vote now for a Bolshevik and now for a Menshevik motion; but on several occasions he burst out against Lenin with ill feeling for which the records offer no explanation.[1]

The quarrel over the fighting-squads was superseded by a wider controversy concerning the character of the movement. The so-called liquidators tried to justify their opposition to clandestine work as part of an endeavour to reform Russian socialism in a European spirit. European Socialist parties, they argued, worked in the open, and so should the Russian organization. The argument appealed to a sentiment which had been strong in all sections of the party because, since the days of the struggle against the *Narodniks*, all Marxists had seen their mission as the 'Europeanization' of Russian socialism. But now each faction gave a different meaning to the term. The liquidators saw the essence of European socialism in its democratic mass organizations, the open work of its growing parliamentary representations, the peaceful bargaining of the trade unions: briefly, in its reformist practice. To the Bolsheviks 'Europeanization' meant what at the beginning it had meant to the party as a whole: the transplantation to Russia of Marxist proletarian socialism, the combined product of German philosophy, French socialism, and English political economy. But they could not see how they could go beyond that and imitate the open and lawful methods of western socialism; the Russian police state, especially under Stolypin, refused to allow even a Liberal party to exist openly, let alone a Socialist. If socialism did no more than what the law allowed, the law dictated by triumphant autocracy, it would in effect efface itself.

Trotsky glorified the underground struggle, its heroism and its martyrdom, with all the romantic zest peculiar to him. But he also responded keenly to the watchword of Europeanization. What he meant by it he never made quite clear. For him it summed up an emotional and cultural attitude rather than a clear-cut political concept. It expressed in a positive form his dislike of the 'dryness and hardness' of the clandestine organization, as Lenin conceived it. He knew that under Tsardom a

[1] Shortly after the congress Lenin wrote to Maxim Gorky (who had been present at the congress and tried to reconcile Lenin with Trotsky), that Trotsky behaved 'like a poseur'. Lenin, *Sochinenya*, vol. xxxiv, p. 335. See also *Pyatyi Syezd, RSDRP*, pp. 506, 602, 619, and Medem, op. cit., vol. ii, pp. 187–9.

broadly based, open Labour movement was a castle in the air. But, yearning for the best of both worlds, he wanted to see the broad democratic and tolerant spirit of western socialism infused into the Russian underground. He wanted the clandestine organization to give that scope to the 'self-activity' (*samodeyatelnost*) of the rank and file, which the western Labour parties seemed to provide. Yet any clandestine movement is of necessity narrow and rigid in comparison with any party which works in the open. It cannot in truth be broadly based; it cannot really afford to relax the discipline which its leadership imposes on the members; it cannot leave to the rank and file that freedom of initiative and 'self-activity' which may exist (or merely appear to exist) in a normal party. Lenin had reason on his side when he insisted that to 'Europeanize' the Russian party, even in the sense in which Trotsky and not the liquidators wanted it, would have meant wrecking the party.

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From nobody did the cry for Europeanization come more naturally than from Trotsky. More than any other émigré he was a 'European'. Most émigrés lived in their closed circles, immersed in Russian affairs, unaffected by life in the countries of their residence. Not so Trotsky. With the adaptability and mental receptiveness of the wandering Jew—although these are by no means exclusively Jewish qualities—he felt at home in most European countries, was passionately absorbed in their affairs, spoke and wrote in their languages, and participated in their Labour movements.

In the summer of 1907, after the congress, he went from London to Berlin, where Sedova with their baby son was waiting for him. There he was warmly welcomed by the intellectual *élite* of German socialism. His fame had gone ahead of him: his conduct in the Soviet and in the dock had aroused admiration, and his essays had been translated and published in German periodicals. Parvus, who had also escaped from Siberia, introduced him to Karl Kautsky, then at the height of his influence as the spiritual guide of European socialism, the 'Pope' of Marxism. Trotsky often recollected the exultation of this visit and the 'other-worldly impression' which the 'white-haired and bright-eyed' Kautsky made on him. It could not have entered his mind that one day Kautsky would be the most severe critic

Trotsky's. They, too, cherished the party's unity; they, too, represented an intellectual and revolutionary brand of Marxism, opposed to the empirical reformism which emanated from the German trade unions. Of all the personalities of European socialism, nobody was in origin, temperament, and political and literary gifts more akin to Trotsky than Rosa Luxemburg—not for nothing was Stalin to denounce her posthumously, in 1932, as a 'Trotskyist'. They found themselves in agreement at the recent congress in London and again at the congress of the International at Stuttgart, where Luxemburg spoke for the anti-militarist left. Like Trotsky, she rejected the general Menshevik conception of the revolution, but viewed with suspicion the work of the Bolsheviks. Like Trotsky, she wanted to see the Russian movement 'Europeanized', while she herself tried to breathe into the German party something of the Russian revolutionary idealism. They sometimes met at Kautsky's home, but they remained aloof from each other, perhaps because of their extraordinary affinity. Agreeing so closely, they may have had little to say to each other. Nor did Karl Liebknecht's passionate and sincere yet unsophisticated idealism attract Trotsky, to his regret in later years. Franz Mehring, whose political temperament was to flare up during the First World War, was now immersed in historical and philosophical work which was a little remote from the issues agitating Trotsky.

For the next seven years, till the outbreak of the First World War, Trotsky settled in Vienna. 'His house in Vienna', writes a Russo-American Socialist who visited him there in 1912, 'was a poor man's house, poorer than that of an ordinary working man.... His three rooms in a ... working-class suburb contained less furniture than was necessary for comfort. His clothes were too cheap to make him appear "decent" in the eyes of a middle-class Viennese. When I visited his house, I found Mrs. Trotsky engaged in housework, while the two light-haired lovely boys were lending not inconsiderable assistance. The only things that cheered the house were loads of books in every corner.'[1] The visitor received perhaps an exaggerated impression of poverty. The Trotskys were better off than most émigrés, even though they lived very modestly and at times, as we shall see, did suffer

[1] See M. J. Olgin's 'Biographical Notes' in the American edition of Trotsky's *Our Revolution*, p. 18.

vigilant watching over their own purity. . .', at the price, that is, of an orthodoxy in rebellion opposed to official orthodoxy. Thus they came to develop 'that zeal for the letter, which can sometimes be observed in our intellectuals of the most extreme wing'. It was the misfortune of the intelligentsia that they had always had to act as proxy for undeveloped and passive social forces. Here Trotsky set in a long historical perspective the phenomenon of 'substitutism' about which he had first written in his polemics against Lenin in 1904.[1] He now saw the intelligentsia's 'substitutism' running like a thread through Russian history. First, the leaders of the Decembrist rising of 1825 represented the ideas of an as yet unborn middle class. Then the *Narodniks* tried to speak for a mute and dumb peasantry. Lastly the Marxist intellectuals set themselves up as the spokesmen of a weak, only just awakening industrial working class. To all of them the idea of the class was more important than the class itself. He rounded off this gloomy survey in a more hopeful tone, saying that the revolution of 1905–6 had set in motion the mass of the workers and that henceforward nobody could act as their proxy: this was the end of substitutism.[2]

We shall see later whether or to what extent this optimistic conclusion was justified; substitutism was to reassert itself with unparalleled strength after the revolution, and the idea of the class was then to become for a long time more important than the class itself. Some of the other long trends of Russian history, which Trotsky grasped here with such mastery, were also to come overwhelmingly to the surface after the revolution. What is at this stage of our narrative more relevant is the self-revealing acuteness with which Trotsky contrasted the 'sunlit zone of European ideology', 'the vaulting arcs' and 'the gothic spires and lacework' of western civilization with the barbarous 'log cabin' of Russian history. This contrast was greatly overdrawn, not in historical perspective, where it was broadly true, but in its concluding and contemporary part. The lacework façade of European civilization before 1914 concealed processes of self-destruction and inner decay which were presently to manifest themselves in a succession of world wars, in the paroxysms of Fascism and Nazism and in the impotence and deterioration of the western European Labour movement. On

[1] See Chapter III.

[2] L. Trotsky, *Sochinenya*, vol. xx, pp. 327–42.

the other hand, Trotsky did not do justice to the creative energies with which nineteenth-century and contemporary Russia was boiling over, the energies with which his own personality and activity were merged. He sometimes seemed to view Russia's past and present almost as a vacuum. This was the weakness underlying his call for Europeanization and also the flaw in his attitude towards Bolshevism. It was Lenin's strength that he took Russian reality as it was, while he set out to change it. Lenin's party had its roots deep in Russian soil; and it absorbed all that that soil could yield in revolutionary strength and harshness, in world-shaking courage and in primitive crudity. Bolshevism had its thinkers, its Lenin and Bukharin and others, who drew from European socialism whatever could be transplanted to Russia; but it also had its tough committee-men, its Stalins, who worked in the depths of a semi-European and semi-Asiatic proletariat, and to whom Europeanization meant little.

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Trotsky did not and could not really abandon the humble Russian 'log cabin'. In October 1908 he began to edit the so-called Viennese *Pravda*. An insignificant paper, published since 1905 by Spilka, a small Ukrainian Menshevik group, *Pravda* was completely run down, and its publishers hoped that Trotsky would put new life into it. The first few issues he edited still bore the imprint of the Ukrainian group; but at the end of 1908, the group disbanded itself and left Trotsky as *Pravda's* sole master. For lack of money, he published it very irregularly—only five issues appeared in the first year of his editorship.[1] But it was less difficult to bring out the paper than to transport it clandestinely to Russia. The editor often appealed to readers for help, complaining that 'several *poods*' of the paper got stuck on the Russian frontier and could not be forwarded because of the lack of fifty roubles; that manuscripts for a new issue had piled up on his desk and he could not send them to the printers; or that *Pravda* was compelled to stop correspondence with readers in Russia because it could not afford the postage.[2] Trotsky's

[1] At this time this was the lot of all émigré publications, and most of them appeared even more rarely. N. Popov, *Outline History of the C.P.S.U.*, vol. i, p. 233. Trotsky's *Pravda* is commonly referred to as the Viennese *Pravda*, to distinguish it from the Bolshevik *Pravda* which began to appear much later. The Viennese *Pravda* was at first published in Lvov, in Austrian Galicia, and only in November 1909, with its sixth issue, was it transferred to Vienna.

[2] *Pravda*, nos. 3 and 5.

Constituent Assembly. The team included the Menshevik Victor Kopp, one day to make his mark as a subtle and adventurous diplomat: in 1922 he prepared behind the scenes the Russo-German treaty of Rapallo; and in the 1930s he secretly explored for Stalin the chances of agreement with Hitler.

The most original character in this pléiade was Adolphe Yoffe. A young, able but neurotic intellectual of Karaite[1] origin, Yoffe was sharing his time between academic work, contributions to *Pravda*, and psychoanalysis. Through Yoffe, Trotsky met Alfred Adler (whose patient Yoffe was), became interested in psychoanalysis, and reached the conclusion that Marx and Freud had more in common than Marxists were prepared to admit.[2] In Vienna Yoffe struggled desperately with recurrent nervous breakdowns; and the contributions which he produced with painful effort needed much editorial rewriting. Trotsky did his best to befriend him and to boost his self-confidence. In 1917 Yoffe was one of the chief actors in the October insurrection and later in the peace negotiations of Brest Litovsk. (In his private papers Trotsky remarked that the revolution 'healed Yoffe better than psychoanalysis of all his complexes'.)[3] Yoffe was to repay Trotsky's friendship with boundless devotion, and in 1927 he committed suicide in protest against Trotsky's expulsion from the Bolshevik party.

On the whole, *Pravda* was not one of Trotsky's great journalistic ventures. He intended to address himself to 'plain workers' rather than to politically-minded party men, and to 'serve not to lead' his readers.[4] *Pravda*'s plain language and the fact that it preached the unity of the party secured to it a certain popularity but no lasting political influence. Those who state the case for a faction or group usually involve themselves in more or less complicated argument and address the upper and medium layers of their movement rather than the rank and file. Those who say, on the other hand, that, regardless of any differences, the party ought to close its ranks have, as Trotsky had, a simple case, easy to explain and sure of appeal. But more

[1] The Karaites were a sect which abandoned rabbinical Jewry in the middle ages to return to the pure Gospel.

[2] After the revolution Trotsky appealed to Bolshevik scholars to keep an open mind to what was new and revealing in Freud. *Sochinenya*, vol. xxi, pp. 423–32.

[3] *The Trotsky Archives.*

[4] *Pravda*, no. 1.

its authority behind the paper, to pay Trotsky a regular subsidy (150 roubles a month) and to support him in every other way. Trotsky's Bolshevik brother-in-law, Kamenev, was delegated to serve on *Pravda* as the Central Committee's liaison officer. The appointment was calculated to smooth co-operation, for Kamenev had sincerely striven to overcome the division inside the party.

It is easy to imagine the jubilation with which Trotsky announced all this in *Pravda*.[1] A few weeks later, however, he had to record that the attempt at reconciliation had broken down, because—so he himself stated—the Mensheviks had refused to disband their faction. This could not have greatly surprised him; he had known all along their utter reluctance to come to terms with the Bolsheviks, who had in the meantime suspended their separate publication. This was the occasion on which Trotsky, the champion of unity, should have spared the offenders against unity no censure. Yet in *Pravda* he 'suspended judgement' and only mildly hinted at his disapproval of the Mensheviks' conduct.[2] In vain did Kamenev urge him to take a firmer attitude. Trotsky resented this as an infringement of his editorial independence and an attempt to use *Pravda* for Bolshevik purposes. There followed the inevitable bickerings, and in no time all the émigré colonies were seething with intrigue.

The Paris conference had resolved to disown the two extreme wings of the party, the liquidators and the boycotters. The Mensheviks had undertaken to have no truck with the former, the Bolsheviks with the latter. Lenin could easily keep his part of the undertaking. He had, anyhow, expelled the chief boycotters, Bogdanov and Lunacharsky, from his faction. The Mensheviks, on the other hand, found it almost impossible to live up to their obligation. The liquidators' attitude was too common in their ranks for them to dissociate themselves from it in earnest. If they were to expel those who had turned their backs on the underground struggle, they would merely have destroyed their own influence and helped Bolshevism to ascendancy. This they refused to do. The issue then presented itself in this form. Those who were opposed to clandestine work, argued the Bolsheviks, had no place in a party staking its future on that work. The Mensheviks—that is, the anti-liquidators

[1] *Pravda*, no. 10. [2] *Pravda*, no. 12.

among them—replied that there should be room in the party for dissenters. The general principle that dissent was permissible was not questioned by Lenin. He merely argued that this particular dissent could not be tolerated, because the opponents of clandestine work could not be effective clandestine workers. Since, from one angle, this difference could be seen as a conflict between the upholders of discipline and the defenders of the right to dissent, Trotsky took his stand against the disciplinarians. Having done so, he involved himself in glaring inconsistencies. He, the fighter for unity, connived in the name of freedom of dissent at the new breach in the party brought about by the Mensheviks. He, who glorified the underground with zeal worthy of a Bolshevik, joined hands with those who longed to rid themselves of the underground as a dangerous embarrassment. Finally, the sworn enemy of bourgeois liberalism allied himself with those who stood for an alliance with liberalism against those who were fanatically opposed to such an alliance.

So self-contradictory an attitude brought him nothing but frustration. Once again to the Bolsheviks he appeared not just an opponent, but a treacherous enemy, while the Mensheviks, though delighted to oppose to Lenin a man of Trotsky's radicalism and record, regarded him as an unreliable ally. His long and close association with Martov made him turn a blind eye more than once on Menshevik moves which were repugnant to him. His long and bitter quarrel with Lenin made him seize captiously on every vulnerable detail of Bolshevik policy. His disapproval of Leninism he expressed publicly with the usual wounding sarcasm. His annoyance with the Mensheviks he vented mostly in private argument or in 'querulous' letters, with which he bombarded Martov and Axelrod. Consequently, he appeared in public not quite the same man as he was in private. The longer this state of affairs lasted, the more did he become Martov's political prisoner. Martov's correspondence throws an instructive light on this:

> I have answered him [Trotsky] with a more ironical than angry letter [Martov wrote on one occasion], although I admit that I have not spared his *amour propre*. I have written him that he can escape nowhere from the liquidators and ourselves, because it is not his magnanimity that compels him to defend the right of the liquidators to remain in the party . . . but the correct calculation that Lenin

order to approach, on behalf of the Mensheviks, the trustees of the fund.[1] Trotsky certainly hoped to repair *Pravda*'s finances should he succeed in helping the Mensheviks to repair theirs. Kautsky apparently favoured the plan, but the attitude of the other trustees was uncertain; and one of them, Zetkin, was friendly to the Bolsheviks. In great secrecy, Axelrod and Trotsky met Kautsky. 'Only on Tuesday', Axelrod reported to Martov, 'K[autsky] had an opportunity to suggest to me and T[rotsky] that we meet him somewhere for a preliminary private talk. . . . Haase chose as meeting place a restaurant, where one might hope that we would not be detected by other delegates, especially by those close to Zetkin and Luxemburg. . . . The next day, after K[autsky] had talked with Z[etkin] about a joint meeting with us, he and Haase asked me and T[rotsky] not to mention our conversation to Z[etkin]. . . .'[2] Ironically, most of the money deposited had been obtained by the Bolsheviks through the raids and expropriations which Trotsky and the Mensheviks had so indignantly denounced. But the delicate manipulation designed to expropriate the Bolsheviks with the assistance of the senior German trustee, yielded nothing, and the envoys left Germany without the golden fleece.

Early in 1912, the schism was brought to its conclusion. At a conference in Prague Lenin proclaimed the Bolshevik faction to be the Party.[3] The Mensheviks and a few Bolshevik splinter groups coalesced against him under the so-called Organization Committee. In *Pravda* Trotsky denounced Lenin's venture with much sound and fury.[4] His anger rose to the highest pitch in April, when the Bolsheviks began to publish in Petersburg a daily called *Pravda*. This was an outrageous plagiarism, clearly calculated to exploit for the Bolsheviks the goodwill of Trotsky's paper. He thundered against the 'theft' and 'usurpation', committed by 'the circle whose interests are in conflict with the vital needs of the party, the circle which lives and thrives only through

[1] In *My Life* Trotsky relates that he was to address the congress on the persecution of the Finns by the Tsar. During the congress came the news of the assassination of Stolypin in Kiev by Bagrov, an *agent-provocateur*. The Germans were afraid that the appearance of a Russian revolutionary on their platform might provoke diplomatic complications and repressive measures, and so Bebel induced Trotsky to give up his intention of addressing the congress.

[2] *Pisma Axelroda i Martova*, p. 217; Lenin, *Sochinenya*, vol. xviii, pp. 193–4.

[3] Apart from the Bolsheviks, a Menshevik splinter group led by Plekhanov participated in the conference.

[4] *Pravda*, no. 24.

chaos and confusion'. He called upon the editor of the Bolshevik paper to change its name within a given time; and he threatened meaningfully: 'We wait quietly for an answer before we undertake further steps.'[1] He apparently sent a similar ultimatum directly to the Bolshevik editorial offices. He had no inkling that the man who set up the rival paper in Petersburg and issued its first copy was the little-known Bolshevik Joseph Djugashvili, the man who would in the future similarly expropriate him of glories greater than the editorship of *Pravda*—of the titles of the leader of the revolution and the founder of the Red Army.

Yet it would be wrong to blame the plagiarism on to Stalin alone. Lenin wholeheartedly approved it; and in a letter to Petersburg he wrote: 'I advise you to answer Trotsky in the column "Answers to Readers" as follows: "To Trotsky in Vienna: We shall leave your quibbling and pettifogging letters without reply."'[2] One can easily guess how Lenin justified the plagiarism to himself: the Central Committee had subsidized *Pravda*; the title and the goodwill of the paper belonged to the party, not to Trotsky; and since the Bolsheviks were the party, they were entitled to appropriate the paper's name. This was a lame excuse, even though such quarrels over titles occurred in all émigré groups. Trotsky threatened to take further steps; but it seems that he took none, and he ceased to publish his *Pravda*, while the Bolshevik paper under its stolen name embarked on a long and famous career. In 1922, when *Pravda* celebrated its tenth anniversary, Trotsky took part in the celebration and contributed an article in which he did not even hint at the paper's origin.

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The fact that Socialists could now openly publish dailies in Petersburg (the Mensheviks were publishing *Luch*—*The Torch*—which counted Trotsky among its contributors) showed a significant change in Russia. The years of reaction were over; the terror had spent itself; the Labour movement was experiencing a new revival; and, willy-nilly, Tsardom had to put up with it. A new generation of revolutionaries was coming of age and flocking into the few openly existing workers' clubs and trade unions and into the clandestine organizations. The new

[1] *Pravda*, no. 25. (From now on all references to *Pravda* are to the Bolshevik paper, unless it is stated otherwise.)

[2] Lenin, *Sochinenya*, vol. xxxv, p. 17.

situation provided the protagonists with new arguments. The liquidators pointed to the government's growing tolerance as proof that it was possible to Europeanize the party and to lead it out of the recesses of the underground. In the years of the terror their argument had sounded unreal; now it was based on facts. Yet the political revival also brought new vigour into the clandestine organization, and the young revolutionaries who were now entering it were not content with that cautious expression of opposition which the police tolerated in the legal clubs and trade unions. The government itself was the more inclined to put up with legal forms of opposition the more it was afraid of the illegal ones. This gave the Bolsheviks a powerful argument: we must, they said, intensify our clandestine efforts even if only to gain more elbow-room for open work.[1]

In these circumstances, Trotsky set out to pursue once again the will-o'-the-wisp of unity. He induced the Organization Committee to convene in Vienna a conference of all Social Democrats for August 1912. He hoped that the rise of the revolutionary temper in Russia would now, as in 1905, help to bring about a reconciliation. This was not to happen. In 1905 the strong tide of revolutionary events could still stop or delay incipient schism. In 1912 the cleavage had become so wide that the new political revival could only widen it further. Moreover, Lenin was now reaping the fruits of his labours: his men led the Social Democratic underground, while Menshevism was a farrago of weak and disconnected groups. The Leninists refused to attend the conference in Vienna; and so Mensheviks, ultra-left Bolsheviks, boycotters, the Jewish Bund, and Trotsky's group came together and formed a confederation, known in the annals of Russian socialism as the August Bloc. Trotsky was that bloc's chief mouthpiece, indefatigable at castigating Lenin's 'disruptive work'. There is no reason to doubt the sincerity of the apologia in which he claimed that he had never intended to turn the conference against the Bolsheviks, and that only Lenin's refusal to attend it or to countenance any attempt to re-establish unity had driven him into his anti-Bolshevik position. This apologia is amply borne out by the private correspondence of the Menshevik leaders; but it also shows how thoroughly Trotsky had misjudged the outcome of a decade of controversy.

[1] F. Dan, *Proiskhozhdenie Bolshevisma*, pp. 440–2.

European politics. Through the Balkan prism he saw the alignment of the great powers as it was to appear in 1914; and he saw it with great clarity, dimmed only by the wishful belief that the French, Austrian, and German Socialists, the latter with their 'eighty-six dailies and millions of readers', would defend to the end 'the cause of culture and peace against the onslaught of chauvinist barbarism'.[1]

Back in Vienna, he was soon again engrossed by the party cabal, protesting in private letters against the undisguised relish of his Menshevik friends at their separation from the Bolsheviks and against the ascendancy of the liquidators in the August Bloc. He quietly resigned from one Menshevik paper and growled against another, to which he continued to contribute. He was too much attached to the Mensheviks to part company and too restive to stay with them. 'Trotsky', Martov sneered in a private letter, 'while he was in the Balkans missed the evolution of the entire [August] Bloc'; the Mensheviks had in the meantime finished with talk of unity and with that 'empty, verbal conciliationism' which had been in vogue in the dubious hey-day of the Bloc. 'I think', Martov added, and he repeated this advice right and left, 'that we ought to show him [Trotsky] our "teeth" (of course, in the softest and politest manner).'[2]

It was therefore without regret that Trotsky again left Vienna to watch the second Balkan war. This time Serbia and Greece defeated Bulgaria, and Trotsky, the supposed enemy of the Bulgarians, turned into their defender. He described the plunder and violence of which the new victors were guilty; he visited the territories they annexed, and depicted the political unsettlement, the human misery, and the ethnographical nonsense entailed by hostilities 'conducted in the manner of the Thirty Years War' and by the shifting of frontiers and populations. He wrote a study of Romania, a classic of descriptive reporting, reprinted many times after 1917. 'Whereas Bulgaria and Serbia', he summed up, 'emerged from Turkish domination as primitive peasant democracies, without any survivals of serfdom and feudalism, Romania, in spite of decades of spurious constitutionalism, even now keeps its peasantry in the grip of

[1] L. Trotsky, *Sochinenya*, vol. vi, p. 302.
[2] *Pisma Axelroda i Martova*, pp. 262 ff. and 274.

Faces are bloated, and, despite honest looks, unpleasant.' And he copied with approval a remark made by a 'doctor friend', who was his guide through the Dobrudja: 'Watching the life of the Skoptsy you become convinced . . . that sex is a social principle, the source of altruism and of every sort of human nobility.'[1]

The 'doctor friend' and guide was Christian Rakovsky, whom Trotsky had met many times before in western Europe and in the Balkans. Their friendship now acquired an intimacy which was to outlast war, revolution, triumph and defeat, exile, and even purges—this was perhaps the only lasting and intimate friendship in Trotsky's life. Six or seven years older than Trotsky, Rakovsky was to play in the Russian Revolution a role reminiscent of that played by Anacharsis Cloots in the French. Like Cloots, he was an aristocrat, a thinker, and a citizen of the world; and, also like Cloots, he adopted the country of the revolution as his own and sided with the radical wing in the revolution. Even now, in 1913, he had behind him an astonishing career. The scion of a great Bulgarian landed family of northern Dobrudja, he had become a Romanian citizen when his native land was annexed by Romania in 1878. At the age of fifteen he was, as a Socialist, expelled and barred from all schools in Bulgaria. His family sent him abroad to study medicine. He graduated at the University of Montpellier; and his doctorial thesis on 'The Causes of Crime and Degeneration' earned him high repute in the medical profession. Then he studied law at another French university. In 1893, when he was twenty, he represented the Bulgarian Socialists at the congress of the International in Zürich, where he came under Plekhanov's influence and was befriended by Jules Guesde, the eminent French Marxist, and by Rosa Luxemburg. In the next year he engaged in Socialist activity in Berlin, which was still living in the aftermath of Bismarck's draconian anti-Socialist laws, and he was expelled from Germany. Thereafter he appeared at every important Labour gathering on the Continent. In 1905 he returned to Romania. As a defender of the peasants he drew upon himself the landlords' hatred, and was persecuted and finally expelled on the ground that he was a Bulgarian citizen, although he had in the meantime served as medical officer in

[1] Loc. cit.

internationalism, and anti-militarism until the first day of war, when the International crumbled.

Of the great European nations, Russia was the only one that had participated but little in the peaceful progress of the preceding era. Her economic advance, indubitable though it had been, was insignificant in comparison with the accumulation of wealth in western Europe. It had, at any rate, been insufficient to implant in the nation habits of peaceful bargaining and compromise and to foster belief in a gradual progress from which all classes would benefit. Parliamentarianism, and all the institutions for social conciliation and arbitration which usually cluster around it, had taken no roots in Russian soil. Class struggle, in its most violent and undisguised form, had been raging from one end of the empire to the other; and Tsardom had not left the workers and peasants even the illusion that it was allowing them any influence on the nation's destinies. In the Socialist International, the Russian party had been almost the only one to treat the revolutionary traditions and watchwords with passionate seriousness and not as a matter of mere decorum.

In 1914 the Russian émigrés, with few exceptions, watched with horror the cataclysm engulfing the International; and they could hardly believe their eyes when they saw the leaders of European socialism throwing to the winds all their solemn anti-militarist resolutions and internationalist oaths and calling their working classes to fight for their emperors and to hate and kill the 'enemy'. At first, most Russian émigrés—Bolsheviks, Mensheviks, and Social Revolutionaries alike—denounced this conduct as a betrayal of socialism. Later many of them had second thoughts, but many went even farther: the slaughter of the next few years, in which millions of people laid down their lives to wrest a few yards of land from the enemy, taught them to despise and hate the humanitarian façades and shams of the European body politic. They concluded that if civilized governments in pursuit of their national power-politics found it possible to exterminate millions of people and to maim scores of millions, then it was surely the Socialists' duty to shrink from no sacrifice in the struggle for a new social order that would free mankind from such folly. The old order was giving them a lesson in ruthlessness. The 'Gothic lace-work' of European civilization

had been torn to pieces and was being trampled into the mud and blood of the trenches.

. . . . . .

The outbreak of war found Trotsky in Vienna—he had just returned from Brussels where, together with Martov and Plekhanov, he had made a last appeal to the Bureau of the International asking it to intervene in the internal feud of the Russian party. In the morning of 3 August he went to the editorial offices of the Viennese *Arbeiterzeitung*. The news of the assassination of Jaurès by a French chauvinist had just reached Vienna. The diplomatic chancelleries were exchanging the last notes, designed to shift the blame for the war on to the enemy. General mobilization was on foot. On his way to the Socialist editorial offices, Trotsky watched vast crowds carried away by warlike hysteria and demonstrating in the fashionable centre of the city. At the *Arbeiterzeitung* he found confusion. Some editors were ready to support war. His friend Friedrich Adler spoke with disgust about the rising flood of chauvinism. On Adler's desk lay a pile of xenophobe pamphlets and next to it another pile of jubilee badges prepared for a congress of the Socialist International convened to meet in Vienna on 15 August—the International was to celebrate the twenty-fifth anniversary of its foundation. The congress was now cancelled, and the treasurer of the Austrian party was lamenting the 20,000 crowns he had wasted on preparations. The old Victor Adler despised the chauvinist mood invading his own entourage, but he was too sceptical to resist. He took Trotsky to the chief of the political police to inquire how, in view of the expected state of war between Austro-Hungary and Russia, he proposed to treat the Russian émigrés. The chief of the police answered that he was preparing to intern them. A few hours later, Trotsky and his family boarded a train for Zürich.

Neutral Switzerland became the refuge of Russian revolutionaries who had lived in Germany and Austria. To Zürich went Karl Radek, expelled from Germany for anti-militarist propaganda; Bukharin, who had been detained for a short time in Vienna; while Lenin, still jailed by the Austrians in Galicia, was to arrive a little later. The country's neutrality allowed the Swiss Socialist party to view with tolerance and even friendliness the internationalist propaganda of the Russians. In a workers'

excellent vantage-point. He was also anxious to join Martov, who was then editing in a spirit of undiluted opposition to war a Russian paper in Paris, *Golos* (*The Voice*). He had last seen Martov in Brussels, in the middle of July, where they went together to obtain from the Executive of the International a verdict against Lenin's schismatic activities; and jointly with Plekhanov they had then composed a manifesto to Russian Socialists. How remote and irrelevant all this seemed only a few months later! The leaders of the International, whom, as the highest authorities in socialism, they had solicited to intervene against Lenin, were now branded as 'social-chauvinists and traitors' by Martov and Trotsky as well as by Lenin. Plekhanov had in the meantime patriotically extolled the war on the ground that the Hohenzollerns and the Habsburgs, not the Romanovs, were the arch-enemies of progress and socialism. It seemed that the old divisions had been effaced and superseded by new ones. Lenin, who had never abandoned a secret yearning for political reunion with Martov, the friend of his youth, stated: 'The Parisian *Golos* is at present the best socialist newspaper in Europe. The more often and the more strongly I dissented from Martov, the more categorically must I say that he is now doing exactly what a social democrat ought to do.'[1] The founder of Menshevism warmly reciprocated: he welcomed the appearance of Lenin's *Social Democrat* and agreed that the old controversies had lost all significance.[2] Events were to show that this was not so and that a reunion was, after all, impossible. But at the moment Trotsky rejoiced at its prospect.

In Paris he divided his time between work for Martov's paper and *Kievan Thought* and contacts with anti-militarist groups in the French Socialist party and trade unions. Almost from the day of his arrival he had to defend himself against charges of pro-Germanism, which emanated mostly from Alexinsky, a former Bolshevik deputy to the Duma, now a violent anti-Bolshevik and supporter of war. (The same ex-Bolshevik was in 1917 to spread the accusation that Lenin was a German spy.) A curious circumstance gave colour to the insinuations: a man bearing the name Nicholas Trotsky stood at the head of an Austrian-sponsored Union for the Liberation of the Ukraine,

[1] Lenin, *Sochinenya*, vol. xxi, p. 21, and *Golos*, no. 38, 27 October 1914.
[2] *Golos*, no. 52, 12 November 1914.

two years before he had refused to contribute to their papers and to speak for them at the Bureau of the Socialist International; and that he was now refusing to represent them at a planned conference of allied Socialists in London. This repudiation of the August Bloc was Trotsky's first and decisive step on the road that was to lead him into the Bolshevik party.[1]

Other ties of old political connexions and friendship were snapping as well. The most painful to Trotsky personally was his break with Parvus, who had just declared his solidarity with the official German Socialist leaders in support of the war and was, in addition, engaged in vast commercial operations in the Balkans to his own and the German government's profit. The metamorphosis of this Marxist writer, who had so brilliantly analysed the obsolescence of the nation-state and expounded internationalism, into a 'Hohenzollern socialist' and a vulgar war-profiteer, was indeed one of the most startling changes that men were undergoing in those days. To Trotsky this was a severe blow: his and Parvus's names had been coupled in the joint authorship of the 'permanent revolution'; and since 1904 Parvus had participated in most of Trotsky's journalistic and political ventures. On Parvus Trosky must have fixed his fondest expectations, hoping that alongside Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht, he would defy the chauvinism triumphant in the German party.

More in grief than in anger, Trotsky wrote 'An Obituary on a Living Friend', in which, even across the gulf now yawning between them, he paid sad homage to Parvus's wasted greatness.

> To turn away for a moment from the figure which now appears under so well merited a pseudonym in the Balkans, the author of these lines considers it a matter of personal honour to render what is due to the man to whom he has been indebted for his ideas and intellectual development more than to any other person of the older generation of European social democrats. . . . Even now, I see less reason than ever to renounce that diagnosis and prognosis, the lion's share of which was contributed by Parvus.

Trotsky generously recalled how much he and others had

[1] *Nashe Slovo*, no. 13, 14 February 1915; *Pisma Axelroda i Martova*, pp. 315–17. The occasion of Trotsky's statement was a speech which Larin, still a Menshevik, made at a national convention of the Swedish Socialist party. Larin had referred to Trotsky, Plekhanov, and Axelrod as the three leaders of the so-called Organizational Committee.

have been published, Trotsky says that Chicherin's correspondence from London was written in a vaguely social-patriotic spirit, but was so uncommonly subtle and original that he, Trotsky, was glad to have it in the paper.[1] Later in the war Chicherin was interned in Britain as an anti-war propagandist.

From Sweden and Denmark Alexandra Kollontai and Moissei Uritsky, both former Mensheviks, disgusted with 'social-patriotism' and rapidly evolving towards Bolshevism, contributed more or less regularly. Kollontai was to be Commissar of Social Welfare in Lenin's first government, while Uritsky—he had worked for the Viennese *Pravda* too—was to become one of the foremost Bolshevik leaders in 1917. The list of contributors included Theodore Rothstein, the Anglo-Russian historian of Chartism and future Soviet Ambassador in Persia; Radek, Rakovsky, and Maisky the future Soviet Ambassador in London. Rarely has any paper had so brilliant a galaxy of contributors.

The members of the editorial team were at one in their opposition to war and 'social-patriotism'; but, apart from this, they represented various shades of opinion. The editorial conferences, which took place every morning in the printing shop, developed into lively disputes which in their turn were reflected in the columns of the paper. As is usual in cases in which outward agreement conceals differences in frame of mind and approach, the controversies were involved and seemingly irrelevant; and often they degenerated into bitter wrangling. We might well ignore these wranglings were it not for the fact that they manifested the re-alignment of groups and individuals who were soon to come forward as leaders of great parties and mass movements. Next to Lenin's *Social Democrat*, Trotsky's paper was at this juncture the most important laboratory of the revolution. The issue passionately debated in it concerned the demarcation line that was to be drawn between the internationalists and the social-patriots. Where, how firmly, with what degree of finality should it be drawn? In their attempts to answer this question groups and individuals either drew closer to, or drifted away from, one another, until eventually some of those who at first seemed of one mind found themselves on different sides of that line.

[1] *The Trotsky Archives.*

In the middle of this dispute there occurred the one great event of those days in which Trotsky played a central part. On 5 September 1915 there assembled at Zimmerwald, a little village in the Swiss mountains outside Berne, an international conference of Socialists, the first to take place since the outbreak of war. The initiative came from Italian Socialists who had had no intention of convening the gathering in defiance of the pre-war International. Earlier in the year an Italian Socialist deputy, Ordino Morgari, went to Paris to request the president of the International, the Belgian Socialist Vandervelde, to convene a session of the Executive. 'As long as German soldiers are billeted in the homes of Belgian workers', Vandervelde replied, 'there can be no talk of convening the Executive.' 'Is the International then a hostage in the hands of the Entente?' asked Morgari. 'Yes, a hostage!' replied Vandervelde. Morgari then asked for a conference at least of the Socialist parties of neutral countries. When Vandervelde rejected this suggestion too, the Italian deputy approached Martov, Trotsky, and Swiss Socialists with the proposal to convene a conference independently of the old International. Thus came into being the movement which was to become the forerunner of the Third International.[1]

Thirty-eight delegates from eleven countries, belligerent and neutral, assembled at Zimmerwald to reassert their international solidarity.[2] The German delegation was headed by several influential deputies of the Reichstag and brought greetings from the imprisoned Karl Liebknecht. The French delegation was less impressive, for the anti-militarist groups in the French party were weak and only a few syndicalist leaders arrived. Lenin represented the Bolsheviks, Axelrod the Mensheviks. Rakovsky and Kolarov came from the Balkans, and there were Polish, Swiss, Dutch, Italian, and other delegates. In normal times a gathering of this sort would not have been considered very representative; but in the days when it was a crime for

[1] Trotsky described the preliminaries to the Zimmerwald conference in *Nashe Slovo*, no. 109, 10 May 1916.

[2] Before the opening of the conference the Russians met to discuss their representation. *Nashe Slovo* sent three delegates: Martov, Trotsky, and Manuilsky, representing the three attitudes among the editorial staff. Lenin questioned their credentials and Martov and Manuilsky resigned in favour of Trotsky. The conference admitted Trotsky and accorded him full voting rights, but only against Lenin's protests. Trotsky related this with mild resentment in *Nashe Slovo*, no. 212, 9 October 1915.

citizens of belligerent countries to be in contact with one another, the mere fact that well-known labour leaders 'shook hands across the barbed wire and bleeding trenches' was an unheard-off challenge to all warring governments.

The participants in the conference were, however, less united in purpose than their resolutions implied. The majority were pacifists, eager to reassert their faith, but not inclined to go farther. A minority, grouped around Lenin, who for the first time now came forward as the protagonist of an international and not merely of a Russian trend in socialism, urged the conference to adopt a defeatist attitude towards all warring governments, to call upon the peoples to 'turn the imperialist war into civil war', and to proclaim the need of a new International. This the majority refused to do. On most points Trotsky was in agreement with the minority, although he would not endorse Lenin's revolutionary defeatism. (It was, he wrote, in the interest of socialism that the war should end 'without victors and vanquished'.) He held, moreover, that these differences should be transcended so as to enable the conference unanimously to condemn the war. In this everybody concurred, and Trotsky was asked to draw up a statement of principles, which was soon to become famous as the Zimmerwald Manifesto. In it he stirringly described the plight of embattled Europe, placing the responsibility on the capitalist order, the governments, and the self-betrayed Socialist parties; and he called upon the working people to recover from their intoxication with chauvinism and to put an end to the slaughter. Rousing though it was, the Manifesto was vague in its conclusions. It did not call for civil war that would put an end to the imperialist war; and it did not envisage the new International. The conference adopted the Manifesto unanimously, but Lenin's group placed its reservations on record. Finally, an international committee was elected which, although it was not yet nominally opposed to the second International, was nevertheless to become the nucleus of the third.

Only good luck enabled Trotsky safely to return to France. On the frontier his luggage was opened for examination, and in it he carried all the Zimmerwald documents. An inspector picked them up, but seeing on top of them a sheet of paper with a conspicuous, patriotic inscription *Vive le Tsar!*, he did not bother to examine them further. At Zimmerwald during the sessions,

while he had been covering sheets of paper with doodles, Trotsky had copied those words from an article by Gustave Hervé, the French semi-anarchist turned patriot. In Paris the censorship suppressed reports of the conference. 'All the same, the conference has taken place; and this is a momentous fact, Mr. Censor', Trotsky wrote in *Nashe Slovo*. 'The French press has written more than once that Karl Liebknecht has saved Germany's honour. The Zimmerwald conference has saved the honour of Europe.' 'An obtuse professor', Trotsky went on, 'had written in *Journal des Debats* that the conference had no significance and that it gave comfort to Germany; an equally obtuse professor across the Rhine had written that it was of no significance and that it gave comfort to the Entente. If the conference was so impotent and insignificant, why have your superiors banned every mention of it? And why, despite all the banning, have you yourselves had to begin to discuss it? You shall still discuss it, gentlemen. . . . No force will delete it from the political life of Europe.'[1] The article was more than usually mutilated by the censor, the white gaps taking more space than the printed matter.

Almost since the beginning of his stay in Paris, Trotsky, at first jointly with Martov and then alone, kept in touch with small French anti-militarist groups, mainly syndicalist, headed by Alfred Rosmer, Pierre Monatte, Bourderon, and Merrheim, who were later to found the French Communist party. Trotsky attended regularly the weekly meetings of these groups, which were closely watched by the police. He gave them the benefit of his political experience, and explained to them the background of the war and the developments in foreign Labour movements; he inspired their policy and brought them into the Zimmerwald movement. He thus acted as godfather to the French Communist party, with which he was to maintain close ties in later years.

In addition to these activities he kept up his correspondence for *Kievan Thought*, which earned him his livelihood. *Kievan Thought* supported the war, and so in his articles he had to tack about cautiously to avoid a breach with the paper. The Kievan editor was only too glad to publish the Paris correspondent's denunciations of German imperialism, but his criticisms of the

[1] *Nashe Slovo*, no. 218, 19 October 1915.

Almost from the first weeks of hostilities he forecast, against prevailing expert opinion, the prolonged and bloody stalemate of trench warfare, and ridiculed the hopes which Clausewitz's German epigones were placing on the offensive power of their army.[1] He did not share, however, the characteristically French illusions of a purely defensive strategy and a war of attrition. He pointed out that their conception of defence would impel the French repeatedly to undertake the most costly and futile offensives, and that a war of attrition would be more, not less, bloody than ordinary warfare. He explained the military stalemate as the result of an equilibrium between the economic resources of the hostile coalitions. This approach, which we can only baldly summarize here, enabled him over the first three years of the war to forecast with rare accuracy the course of successive military operations. With the prospect of a relentless strategic deadlock he connected the vistas of revolution, for he expected that the stalemate of trench warfare would drag on almost indefinitely, sap the foundations of the old society, and drive the peoples to despair and revolt. Sometimes, it is true, he expected a development of strategy and technology which would break the stalemate, but not before very late in the war; and he came close to adumbrating the invention of the tank.[2] Yet, on the whole, the nightmare, for so long only too real, of the self-perpetuating mutual slaughter of equally balanced forces overshadowed his military thinking; and it would still do so even in the last year of the war, when, as we shall see later, it would cause him to make important errors of judgement.

Even while he was surveying with detachment the course of hostilities and eagerly absorbing military theories, his mind was gripped by the tragedy of Europe, bleeding and distraught.

[1] L. Trotsky, *Sochinenya*, vol. ix, pp. 7–15.

[2] On one occasion he forecast that after the war the military leaders would forget or neglect this new weapon which would decide the outcome of the war. He thus came very near to predicting the neglect of the tank by the British and French General Staffs on the eve of World War II. Ibid., p. 190. In a sarcastic aside he dismissed in advance the illusion of a Maginot Line as it was beginning to emerge from the French experience in World War I. 'The triumph of the French [in defence] is so evident that not only military experts bow to it, but also . . . pacifists. One of them . . . has reached the happy conclusion that war can be eliminated altogether if the boundaries of states are reinforced by continuous trenches and demarcated by a powerful electric current. Poor, scrofulous pacifist who seeks a shelter in the trenches.' Loc. cit.

This preoccupation with the 'human factor' in war lifts his military writings far above the professional level. For example, his essay 'Barbed Wire and Scissors' is a technical study of trench warfare and, at the same time, an intuitive and imaginative reconstruction of its psychological impact on the huge armies involved in it. It is almost incredible that the author of this essay had never even seen a trench—so intimately did he penetrate its strange atmosphere, foreshadowing much of what writers like Remarque, Zweig, Hasek, Sherriff, Barbusse, Gläser, and others were to write after the war in autobiographical novels and plays.

If the fate of Trotsky's writings, we repeat, and the extent to which they are read or ignored had not been so inseparably bound up with his political fortunes and with the sympathies and antipathies that his mere name evokes, he would have had his niche in literature on the strength of these writings alone. This is especially true of his descriptive pieces. In these he usually narrates the adventures of a single soldier, revealing through them some significant aspect of the war. In 'The Seventh Infantry Regiment in the Belgian Epic', for instance, which he wrote at Calais in February 1915, he describes the experiences of De Baer, a student of law at the University of Louvain, in whom he focuses the whole drama of invaded and occupied Belgium. He follows the young lawyer from the outbreak of the war through the confusion of mobilization, through battles, retreats, encirclements, and escapes, through a sequence of strange yet quite normal scenes, in which we see and feel the elemental upsurge of patriotism in the invaded people, their sufferings, their unwitting, often accidental heroism, a heroism in which the tragic and the comic are intertwined, and, above all, the boundless absurdity of war. The student De Baer goes through appalling torments in the trenches; then he is detailed to a court martial to act as defending counsel for fellow soldiers; he returns to the trenches and unknowingly distinguishes himself in battle and is decorated with much pomp and solemnity. After that, almost alone of his encircled company, he survives without a scratch, and loses only his spectacles in the fray. Sent to a hospital in France, he is found to be too short-sighted to be a soldier, and is released. Thrown out by the military machine in a foreign country, he finds no employment; and, when the author meets him, he is starving and in rags. Because of its great realistic simplicity, the story reads like a modernized fragment of *War and Peace*. The author makes no propaganda; his hero is no proletarian; the patriotic feelings of the invaded Belgians, in seeming contradiction with the writer's political views, are described with such warm sympathy that the story might fit excellently into a patriotic anthology of Belgian martyrdom; all the more effectively does he expose the absurdity of war.

'From a Notebook of a Serb' is written in a similar vein. There the epic of another small nation, first flattered, then exploited, and then trampled on by the great powers, is brought into focus in the adventures of Todor Todorovich, a Serbian peasant from the Austrian-ruled Banat who has deserted from the Austrian army. Todor Todorovich plods alongside the retreating Serbian army, through burning villages and ice-bound mountains. Frequently he is in danger of being shot either as a deserter and Serbian traitor by the Austrians or as an Austrian spy by the Serbs. Each time he has a tragi-comic escape and trudges on to stare at scenes of Dantesque horror, until he becomes almost a symbol of man, forlorn amid the primordial savagery which has burst through the thin crust of civilization.[1]

In other essays such as 'The Psychological Puzzles of War' Trotsky tried to feel himself into the condition in which the European mind would emerge from the holocaust. He guessed that the man of the trenches would not easily adjust himself to 'normal' society:

> . . . the present disaster will, in the course of years, decades, and centuries, emit a sanguinary radiation, in the light of which future generations will view their own fate, just as Europe has hitherto sensed the radiation of the great French Revolution and of the Napoleonic wars. Yet how small were those events . . . in comparison with what we are performing or experiencing now, and especially with what we are heading for. The human mind tends to banality; only slowly and reluctantly does it clamber up to the height of these colossal events . . . it strives unwittingly to belittle for itself their

[1] Op. cit., pp. 87–112. 'Where is the modern Swift to place before bourgeois Europe his satirical mirror?' Trotsky asked in *Nashe Slovo* (16 May 1916), describing satirically how the embassies, general staffs, and academies of Germany and France tried to exploit, each for its own patriotic purposes, an anniversary of Cervantes.

of the Russian labour movement . . . '.[1] Now Trotsky still tried to find mitigating circumstances for Chkheidze's behaviour; but with Vera Zasulich he broke with a heavy heart as he had broken with Parvus.[2] More than once he had to ask himself what had caused the old guard to abandon their principles, and whether Lenin had not been right all along in spurning them and going his way.

In his autobiography Trotsky describes his evolution towards Bolshevism as a process in which of his own accord he was drawing closer and closer to Lenin, and he does no justice to the influence which some of his contributors had on him. The truth which emerges from the pages of *Nashe Slovo* is that he was prodded and pushed that way by the pro-Bolsheviks on his staff, who, although they were men of much smaller stature, were quicker in grasping the trend of the realignment and urged him to abandon his old loyalties and to draw conclusions from the new situation.[3]

> One ought not to and one need not (wrote one of them) share the sectarian narrow-mindedness of [Lenin's group] . . . but it cannot be denied that . . . in Russia, in the thick of political action, so-called Leninism is freeing itself from its sectarian features . . . and that the workers' groups connected with *Social Democrat* (Lenin's paper) are now in Russia the only active and consistently internationalist force. . . . For those internationalists who belong to no faction there is no way out but to merge with the Leninists, which in most cases means joining the Leninist organization. . . . There exists, of course, the danger that through such a merger we shall forfeit some valuable features . . . but the spirit of the class struggle, which lives not in literary laboratories but in the dust and tension of mass political strife, will brace itself and boldly develop.[4]

Another writer, himself a former Menshevik, tried to explain why the founding fathers of Russian socialism had turned into

[1] This letter to Chkheidze was found in the archives of the Russian police in 1921. Olminsky, who was in charge of the party archives, wrote to Trotsky asking him whether the letter should be published. Trotsky advised against publication, saying that it was impolitic to revive old controversies, especially as he did not think that he was always wrong in what he had written against the Bolsheviks. See Trotsky's letter to Olminsky of 6 December 1921 in the *Trotsky Archives*.

[2] *Nashe Slovo*, no. 58, 9 March 1916.

[3] When Trotsky was writing his autobiography, in 1929, most of his former pro-Bolshevik contributors to *Nashe Slovo* had sided with Stalin against him.

[4] *Nashe Slovo*, no. 15, 19 January 1916.

Differences on broader issues still separated Trotsky from Lenin. There was, first, the disagreement over revolutionary defeatism. 'The revolution is not interested in any further accumulation of defeats', Trotsky wrote, while Lenin expounded the view that Russia's military defeat would favour revolution. On the face of it, two extremely opposed views seem to clash here; and so the Stalinist historians present the story. Actually the difference was one of propagandist emphasis, not of policy. Both Lenin and Trotsky urged Socialists to turn the war into a revolution and to spread their ideas and views among workers and in the armed forces, even if this should weaken their country militarily. Both agreed that the fear of national defeat should not deflect the Socialist from doing his duty. For all the provocative emphasis which Lenin gave to his defeatism, he did not ask his followers to engage, or to encourage others to engage, in sabotage, desertion, or other strictly defeatist activities. He merely argued that although revolutionary agitation would weaken Russia's military strength, Russian Socialists were bound in duty and honour to take this risk in the hope that German revolutionaries would do the same so that in the end all the imperialist governments would be vanquished by the joint efforts of the internationalists. The defeat of any one country would thus prove only an incident in the revolution's advance from country to country. Trotsky, and with him many of Lenin's own followers, refused to tie the fortunes of revolution so exclusively to defeat.[1] It was enough, Trotsky argued, to preach and prepare revolution, no matter what the military situation. Each attitude had, from the viewpoint of those who held it, its advantages and disadvantages. Trotsky's non-defeatism did not in advance expose the internationalist to the charge that he was giving aid and comfort to the enemy. Lenin's attitude, for all its obvious tactical inconvenience, was better calculated to make the revolutionary immune from warlike patriotism and to erect an insurmountable barrier between him and his adversaries. In 1917 these two shades of opposition to war merged without controversy or friction in the policy of the Bolshevik party.

Another controversy concerned the 'United States of Europe'. Although this has come to be regarded as a hallmark of Trotskyism, Lenin had included it in his own theses on Socialist war

[1] *Nashe Slovo*, no. 68, 21 March 1916; *Sotsial-Demokrat*, no. 50.

policy as early as September 1914.[1] 'The United States of Europe' epitomized the unshakeable hope of both Lenin and Trotsky that at the end of the war the whole of Europe would be engulfed by proletarian revolution. Lenin, nevertheless, raised objections to the manner in which Trotsky advanced the idea, because at one moment Trotsky seemed to imply that revolution could break out in Russia only simultaneously with a European upheaval. Such a view, Lenin pointed out, might be an excuse for quietism and might lead the Socialists of any country to wait passively until 'the others begin'. Or it might contain the pacifist illusion that the United States of Europe could be erected on a capitalist, instead of a Socialist, foundation. The revolution, Lenin wrote, might well develop and succeed in Russia before it did so in the rest of Europe, because 'the unevenness of economic and political development is an ineluctable law of capitalism'. For this criticism Trotsky had given some grounds when, carried away by the grandiose vista of a unified Socialist continent, he had argued that the war 'breaking up the nation-state, was also destroying the national basis for revolution'.[2] If the whole trend of Trotsky's reasoning is kept in mind, the interpretation which Lenin gave to these words appears incorrect, since Trotsky had argued all along that the Russian revolution would be the first to conquer and that it would then stimulate revolutions elsewhere.

To Lenin's criticism Trotsky replied: 'That no country should in its struggle idly wait for the others to begin is a basic idea which it is useful to repeat. . . . Without waiting for the others we have to begin the struggle on our national ground, fully confident that our initiative would give a fillip . . . to other countries.'[3] He went on to develop an argument which contained the seeds of a controversy not with Lenin but with Lenin's successor. It was true, Trotsky wrote, that capitalism had developed 'unevenly'; and so the revolution was likely to win in a single country first. Yet 'the unevenness of the development is itself uneven.' Some European countries had advanced, economically and culturally, more than others; but Europe, as a whole, had progressed further than Africa or Asia and was riper for Socialist revolution. There was, therefore, no

[1] Lenin, *Sochinenya*, vol. xxi, p. 4. [2] *Nashe Slovo*, no. 29, 24 February 1915.
[3] Ibid., no. 87, 12 April 1916.

peasant.[1] In an essay written for *Zukunft*, an American-Jewish Socialist monthly, Trotsky made this point even more explicit: 'The peasant masses will rise in the villages and, not waiting for a decision of the Constituent Assembly, they will begin to expel the big landlords from their estates. All efforts to put an end to class warfare . . . will lead to nothing. The philistine thinks that it is the revolutionaries who make a revolution and who can call it off at any point as they wish.'[2]

Thus, separated by an ocean and a continent from the scene of events, through the haze of confused and contradictory reports, he firmly grasped the direction in which things were moving, formulated the problems of the revolution, and unhesitatingly pointed to those whom he now considered to be its enemies, even if only yesterday they had been his friends. The question which he still had to answer was: Which was the real party of the revolution, *his* party?

Having drawn with so much foresight and precision the image of the revolution, he threw over that image, however, a veil of dream and fantasy. He fondly cherished his hope for the insurrection of the European proletariat, and he saw the Petrograd rising as a mere prelude to it. This hope underlay all his ideas; it was to give him wings in his ascendancy; and its frustration was subsequently to break and crush him. Through the pages of *Novyi Mir* we can watch Trotsky in the first of his many wrestlings with illusion. Just before he left New York he tried to answer critics who fervently held that Russia, even while she was governed by Prince Lvov, must be defended against invasion by the Kaiser's troops. Trotsky, even now, persisted in opposition to war:

'The Russian revolution [so he answered the critics] represents an infinitely greater danger to the Hohenzollern than do the appetites and designs of imperialist Russia. The sooner the revolution throws off the chauvinist mask, which the Guchkovs and Miliukovs have forced upon her, and the sooner she reveals her true proletarian face, the more powerful will be the response she meets in Germany and the less will be the Hohenzollern's desire and capacity to strangle the Russian revolution, the more will he have of his own domestic trouble.

'But what will happen [the critic asks] if the German proletariat fails to rise? What are you going to do then?

[1] Op. cit., pp. 17–20. [2] Op. cit., pp. 27–28.

'You suppose, then, that the Russian revolution can take place without affecting Germany . . .? But this is altogether improbable.

'Still, what if this were nevertheless to be the case?

'Really, we need not rack our brains over so implausible a supposition. The war has transformed the whole of Europe into a powder magazine of social revolution. The Russian proletariat is now throwing a flaming torch into that powder magazine. To suppose that this will cause no explosion is to think against the laws of historical logic and psychology. Yet if the improbable were to happen, if the conservative, social-patriotic organization were to prevent the German working class from rising against its ruling classes in the nearest future, then, of course, the Russian working class would defend the revolution arms in hand . . . and wage war against the Hohenzollern, and call upon the fraternal German proletariat to rise against the common enemy. . . . The task would be to defend not the fatherland but the revolution and to carry it to other countries.'[1]

Thus, every time he tried to answer the question: 'What happens if there is no revolution in Germany?' he actually dodged it. He seemed to be getting away from his dream only to plunge back into it, and to throw away his hope only in order to embrace it again. He saw no prospect, no hope, no life beyond European revolution.

. . . . . .

On 27 March Trotsky, his family, and a small group of other émigrés, having the day before been given a boisterous farewell by a multilingual gathering of Socialists, sailed from New York on board the Norwegian ship *Christianiafjord*. For the first time in his life he travelled 'respectably', having obtained without difficulty all the necessary documents, the Russian entry permit and the British transit visa; and he expected plain sailing. All the greater was the surprise, when, on 3 April, the *Christianiafjord* dropped anchor at Halifax, Nova Scotia, and the British naval police forcibly removed him and his family from the ship, carried him away to a camp for German prisoners of war at Amherst, and placed his wife and children under close surveillance. The other Russian émigrés who had accompanied him were also prevented from continuing the voyage. They had all refused to tell the British interrogating officer what were

[1] Op. cit., pp. 17–20.

their political views and what they intended to do in Russia. This, they claimed, was no business of the British naval police.

From the camp, Trotsky cabled protests to the Russian government and to the British Prime Minister; but his messages, confiscated on the spot, never reached their destination. All the same, the internment became a political scandal. The Menshevik Executive of the Petrograd Soviet demanded Trotsky's release: 'The revolutionary democracy of Russia', it stated, 'impatiently awaits the return of its fighters for freedom and calls to its banners those who, by their lifelong efforts, have prepared the overthrow of Tsardom. Yet, the English authorities allow some émigrés to pass and hold up others. . . . The English government thereby intervenes intolerably in Russia's domestic affairs and insults the Russian revolution by robbing her of her most faithful sons.' Meetings of protest were held all over Russia; and Miliukov, the Foreign Minister, asked the British Ambassador that Trotsky be released. Two days later, however, he cancelled the request, knowing full well that he had nothing to expect from Trotsky but enmity.[1] Meanwhile, as the internment dragged on for nearly a month, Trotsky raged, protested, and hurled insults at the camp administration. There were at Amherst 800 German prisoners, sailors of sunken submarines. Trotsky addressed them, explaining to them the ideas of Zimmerwald, and telling them of the fight against the Kaiser and the war, which Karl Liebknecht had been waging in Germany. The camp resounded with his speeches, and life in it changed into a 'perpetual meeting'.[2] On the insistence of the German officers, the commandant of the camp forbade Trotsky to address the prisoners. 'Thus', Trotsky mocked, 'the English colonel immediately sided with Hohenzollern patriotism.' More than 500 sailors signed a protest against the ban. Finally, after much bungling and intrigue, Miliukov was compelled to renew the demand for Trotsky's release. On 29 April Trotsky left Amherst, followed to the gates of the camp by cheering German sailors and by the sounds of the *Internationale* played by their orchestra.

[1] Sir George Buchanan, *My Mission to Russia*, vol. ii, p. 121; Trotsky, *Sochinenya*, vol. iii, book 1, pp. 35 ff.

[2] Trotsky described his experience in a brochure *V Plenu u Anglichan* which he published immediately after his return to Petrograd (*Sochinenya*, vol. iii).

oppressed classes against their rulers'.[1] These words jarred on the ears of the Socialist ministers, who had committed themselves to continuing the war and calming the raging elements of revolution. 'I cannot conceal', Trotsky went on, 'that I disagree with much that is going on here. I consider this participation in the Ministry to be dangerous. . . . The coalition government will not save us from the existing dualism of power; it will merely transfer that dualism into the Ministry itself.' This was indistinguishable from what the Bolsheviks were saying—they, too, dwelt on the division of power between the Soviets and the government. As if wary of hurting his old friends, Trotsky then struck a more conciliatory note: 'The revolution will not perish from a coalition Ministry. But we must remember three commands: distrust the bourgeoisie; control our own leaders; and rely on our own revolutionary strength. . . .' He spoke in the first person plural—'we must', 'our strength'—as if to identify himself, in his manner, with his former comrades. But in the matter of his speech he was irreconcilable: 'I think that our next move will be to transfer the whole power into the hands of the Soviets. Only a single power can save Russia.' This again sounded like Lenin's slogan. He concluded a long and brilliant argument with the exclamation 'Long live the Russian revolution, the prologue to world revolution', and the audience was captivated if not by his ideas then by the sincerity and eloquence with which he expounded them.[2]

One after another the ministers rose to reply. Chernov promised that the Socialists would make their influence felt in the government, but for this they needed the Soviet's wholehearted support. Tseretelli dwelt on the dangers to which the Soviets would be exposed if they refused to share power with the bourgeoisie. Skobelev admonished his 'dear teacher': in the middle of a revolution 'cool reason was needed as much as a warm heart'. The Soviet voted confidence in the new ministry. Only the extreme left minority voted against it.

The political group which greeted Trotsky as its proper chief was the Inter-Borough Organization, the *Mezhrayonka* as it was briefly called. He had inspired this group from abroad since its formation in 1913 and contributed to its publications. The group did not aspire to form a party. It was a temporary association

[1] L. Trotsky, *Sochinenya*, vol. iii, book 1, pp. 45–46. [2] Sukhanov, loc. cit.

of neither-Bolsheviks-nor-Mensheviks, who persisted in opposition to war, Prince Lvov, and the 'social patriots'. Its influence was confined to a few working-class districts in Petrograd only; and even there it was swamped by the rapid growth of Bolshevism. To this small group adhered, however, men who had in the past been eminent either as Mensheviks or as Bolsheviks and who were presently to rise again. Most of them, Lunacharsky, Ryazanov, Manuilsky, Pokrovsky, Yoffe, Uritsky, Volodarsky, had written for Trotsky's papers. A few others, like Karakhan and Yureniev, later became leading Soviet diplomats. Together they formed a brilliant political *élite*, but their organization was too weak and narrow to serve as a base for independent action. When Trotsky arrived, the group was discussing its future and contemplating a merger with the Bolsheviks and other Left groups. At public meetings its agitators were insistently asked in what they differed from the Bolsheviks and why they did not join hands with them. To this question they had, in truth, no satisfactory answer. Their separation from the Bolsheviks had resulted from the long and involved feud in the old party; it reflected past not present differences.[1]

On 7 May the Bolsheviks and the Inter-Borough Organization arranged a special welcome for Trotsky; and on 10 May they met to consider the proposed merger. Lenin arrived, accompanied by Zinoviev and Kamenev; and here Trotsky saw him for the first time since their not very friendly meeting at Zimmerwald. Of this conference we have only a fragmentary but informative record in Lenin's private notes. Trotsky repeated what he had said at the reception in his honour: he had abandoned his old attitude and no longer stood for unity between Bolsheviks and Mensheviks. Only those who had completely broken with social patriotism should now unite under the flag of a new International. Then he apparently asked whether Lenin still held that the Russian Revolution was merely bourgeois in character and that its outcome would be 'a democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry', not proletarian dictatorship.[2] It seems that he was not clearly aware of the radical re-orientation which Lenin had just carried

[1] Sukhanov, op. cit., vol. iv, p. 365; Trotsky, *Sochinenya*, vol. iii, book 1, p. 47; See also Yureniev's report in *6 Syezd RSDRP*.

[2] *Leninskii Sbornik*, vol. iv, pp. 300–3.

through in the Bolshevik party. Lenin had spent the month before Trotsky's arrival in an intense controversy with the right wing of his party, headed by Kamenev; and he had persuaded the party to abandon the 'old Bolshevik' view on the prospects of the revolution. It may be assumed that this was explained to Trotsky there and then. If nobody else, then his brother-in-law Kamenev must have told him that Lenin's Bolshevik opponents, indeed Kamenev himself, had reproached Lenin with having taken over lock, stock, and barrel the theory of 'permanent revolution', and with having abandoned Bolshevism for Trotskyism.

In truth, the roads of Lenin and Trotsky, so long divergent, had now met. Each of them had reached certain conclusions to which the other had come much earlier and which he had long and bitterly contested. But neither had consciously adopted the other's point of view. From different starting-points and through different processes their minds had moved towards their present meeting. We have seen how the events of the war had gradually driven Trotsky to take the view that the breach in the Labour movement could not be healed; that it was wrong and even pernicious to try to heal it; and that it was the duty of the revolutionary internationalists to form new parties. Long before the war, Lenin had arrived at this conclusion, but only for the Russian party. The war had induced him to generalize it and to apply it to the international Labour movement. In Lenin's reasonings and instinctive reactions his Russian experience was the primary factor, although it alone did not determine his attitude. Trotsky had, on the contrary, proceeded from the international generalization to the application of the principle to Russia. Whatever the processes by which they arrived at the common conclusion, the practical implications were the same.

A similar difference in approach and identity in conclusion can be seen in their evaluation of prospects. In 1905–6 Trotsky had foreseen the combination of anti-feudal and anti-capitalist revolutions in Russia and had described the Russian upheaval as a prelude to international socialist revolution. Lenin had then refused to see in Russia the pioneer of collectivist socialism. He deduced the character and the prospects of the revolution from Russia's historic stage of development and from her social structure, in which the individualistic peasantry was the largest element. During the war, however, he came to reckon

with Socialist revolution in the advanced European countries and to place the Russian Revolution in this international perspective. What now seemed decisive to him was not that Russia was not ripe for socialism, but that she was part of Europe which he thought to be ripe for it. Consequently, he no longer saw any reason why the Russian Revolution should confine itself to its so-called bourgeois objectives. The experience of the February régime further demonstrated to him that it would be impossible to break the power of the landlords without breaking and eventually dispossessing the capitalist class as well; and this meant 'proletarian dictatorship'.[1]

Although the old differences between Lenin and Trotsky had evaporated, the position of the two men was very different. Lenin was the recognized leader of a great party, which, even though a minority in the Soviets, had already become the rallying ground for all proletarian opposition to the February régime. Trotsky and his friends were a pleiade of brilliant generals without an army. As an individual, Trotsky could make his voice heard from the platforms of the revolution; but only a massive and well-disciplined party could now transform words into lasting deeds. Each side needed the other, though in different degrees. Nothing suited Lenin better than to be able to introduce the pleiade of gifted propagandists, agitators, tacticians, and orators, headed by Trotsky, into the 'general staff' of his party. But he was proud of the party he had built and aware of the advantages it held. He was determined that Trotsky and Trotsky's friends should join *his* party. Inside it, he was willing to accord them every democratic right, to share with them his influence, and, as the record shows, to allow himself to be outvoted on important occasions. But he was not prepared to scrap his party and to merge it with minor groups into a new body. To do so he would have had either to indulge in make-believe or to pay a needless tribute to the vanity of others.

At the meeting of 10 May he asked Trotsky and Trotsky's friends to join the Bolshevik party immediately. He offered them positions on the leading bodies and on the editorial staff of *Pravda*.[2] He put no conditions to them. He did not ask Trotsky

[1] Lenin, *Sochinenya*, vol. xxiv, pp. 214–16, 274–5, 276–9, and *passim*.

[2] Even earlier, Lenin had proposed to the Bolshevik Central Committee that

urged the sailors to keep their tempers and to refrain from vengeance; but he also did his best to kindle their revolutionary ardour.

Towards the end of May the Socialist ministers indicted the sailors before the Soviet, and Trotsky came out to defend them. He did not condone their excesses, but he pleaded that these could have been avoided if the government had not appointed as commissars discredited and hated men. 'Our socialist ministers', he exclaimed, 'refuse to fight against the danger of the Black Hundreds. Instead, they declare war on the sailors and soldiers of Kronstadt. Yet should reaction rise and should a counter-revolutionary general try to throw a noose around the neck of the revolution, your Black Hundred commissars will soap the rope for all of us, while the Kronstadt sailors will come and fight and die with us.'[1] This phrase was much quoted later when the sailors of Kronstadt actually defended Kerensky's government against General Kornilov's mutiny. Trotsky also wrote for the sailors the fiery manifesto in which they appealed against the Ministry of War to the country—this was Kerensky's first setback since he had become Minister of War. Henceforward the sailors faithfully followed Trotsky, guarded him, almost idolized him, and obeyed him whether he called them to action or exhorted them to curb their tempers.[2]

In these days, too, he established his platform in the Cirque Moderne, where almost every night he addressed enormous crowds. The amphitheatre was so densely packed that Trotsky was usually shuffled towards the platform over the heads of the audience, and from his elevation he would catch the excited eyes of the daughters of his first marriage, who attended the meetings. He spoke on the topics of the day and the aims of the revolution with his usual piercing logic; but he also absorbed the spirit of the crowd, its harsh sense of justice, its desire to see things in sharp and clear outline, its suspense, and its great expectations. Later he recollected how at the mere sight of the multitude words and arguments he had prepared well in advance receded and dispersed in his mind and other words and arguments, unexpected by himself but meeting a need in his listeners, rushed up as if from his subconscious. He then listened

[1] Trotsky, *Sochinenya*, vol. iii, book 1, pp. 52 ff.
[2] F. F. Raskolnikov, *Kronstadt i Piter v 1917 godu*, p. 77.

to his own voice as to that of a stranger, trying to keep pace with the tumultuous rush of his own ideas and phrases and afraid lest like a sleepwalker he might suddenly wake and break down. Here his politics ceased to be the distillation of individual reflection or of debates in small circles of professional politicians. He merged emotionally with the warm dark human mass in front of him, and became its medium. He became so identified with the Cirque Moderne that when he went back to the Tauride Palace or the Smolny Institute, where the Soviet sat, and assailed his opponents or argued with them, they shouted at him: 'This is not your Cirque Moderne', or 'At the Cirque Moderne you speak differently.'[1]

. . . . . .

At the beginning of June the first All-Russian Congress of the Soviets assembled in Petrograd; and it was in session for three weeks. For the first time the parties and their leaders confronted one another in a national forum, the only national elected body then existing in Russia. The moderate Socialists commanded about five-sixths of the votes. They were led by civilian intellectuals, but in their ranks military uniforms and peasant *rubakhas* were most conspicuous. On the extreme left, among the 120 members of the opposition, workers from the great industrial centres were predominant. The Congress reflected a division between the military and rural elements of the provinces and the proletarian elements of the cities. A few days before, a municipal election in Petrograd had revealed a significant shift. The Cadets, dominant in the government, had suffered a crushing defeat in their 'safest' boroughs. The Mensheviks had polled half the votes. The working-class suburbs had solidly voted for the Bolsheviks. The Mensheviks came to the Congress as the hopeful victors of the day. The Bolsheviks brought with them a new confidence in their future victory.[2]

The spokesmen of the Left opposition used against the majority the latter's own success. Prince Lvov and the Cadets, they said, had a negligible following. The moderate Socialists represented the nation's overwhelming majority. Why then did they content themselves with the roles of ministerial hewers of wood and drawers of water for the Cadets? Why did they

[1] Trotsky, *Moya Zhizn*, vol. ii, pp. 15–16; John Reed, *Ten Days that Shook the World*, p. 17.

[2] Sukhanov, op. cit., vol. iv, pp. 204–5.

of the whole assembly. The whole Congress, without difference of faction, stormily acclaimed Trotsky for several minutes.'[1] On the next day Miliukov declared that he had not described Lenin or Trotsky as German agents—he had merely said that the government ought to imprison them for their subversive activity.[2]

This was the last occasion on which the Congress so unanimously acclaimed Trotsky. As the debates went on, the gulf between the parties became fixed. Tempers rose during a controversy over the last Duma. That Duma had been elected in 1912 on a very limited franchise; it had functioned as the Tsar's consultative assembly, not as a real parliament; and its great majority had consisted of the Tsar's underlings. The Cadets pressed for the revival of the Duma, which they hoped to use as a quasi-parliamentary base for their government. The Mensheviks and Social Revolutionaries laid before the Soviet a vague resolution, which Martov wittily paraphrased as follows: 'The Duma no longer exists, but a warning is hereby issued against any attempts to put it out of existence.'[3] Lunacharsky moved that the Duma should be buried as a relic of a shameful past. Trotsky seconded him with a scathing speech. When at one of the next sittings he rose again and as usual began his address with the word 'Comrades', he was interrupted by an outcry: 'What sort of comrades are we to you?' and 'Stop calling us comrades!' He stopped, and he moved closer to the Bolsheviks.[4]

The main issue which occupied the Congress was the condition of the army. Since the overthrow of Tsardom the Russian fronts had been inactive. Pressed by the western allies, the government and the General Staff were preparing a new offensive for which they were anxious to obtain the Soviets' approval. The General Staff was also pressing for a revision of the famous Order No. 1, the Magna Charta of the soldiers' freedom. In this debate Trotsky made his chief speech, in which he warned the government that after the prodigious losses the army had suffered and after the disruption of its supply services by inefficiency, profiteering, and corruption, the army was incapable of further fighting. The offensive would end in disaster; the attempt to reimpose the old discipline would lead

[1] *Novaya Zhizn*, 6 June 1917.
[2] *Rech*, 7 June 1917.
[3] *Pervyi Vseros. Syazd Sovietov*, pp. 295–8.
[4] Ibid., p. 352.

nowhere. 'Fortunately for Russia's whole history, our revolutionary army has done away with the old outlook of the Russian army, the outlook of the locust . . . when hundreds of thousands used to die passively . . . without ever being aware of the purpose of their sacrifice. . . . .Let this historical period which we have left behind be damned! What we now value is not the elemental, unconscious heroism of the mass, but a heroism which refracts itself through every individual consciousness.'[1] At present the army had no idea to fight for. 'I repeat, that in this same army, as it has emerged from the revolution . . . there exist and there will exist ideas, watchwords, purposes capable of rallying it and of imparting to this our army unity and enthusiasm. . . . The army of the great French revolution consciously responded to calls for an offensive. What is the crux of the matter? It is this: no such purpose that would rally the army exists now. . . . Every thinking soldier asks himself: for every five drops of blood which I am going to shed today will not one drop only be shed in the interest of the Russian revolution, and four in the interest of the French Stock Exchange and of English imperialism?'[2] If only Russia disentangled herself from the imperialist alignments, if only the power of the old ruling classes was destroyed and a new democratic government established by the Soviets, then 'we should be able to summon all European peoples and tell them that now a citadel of revolution has risen on the map of Europe'.[3]

He then resumed his ever-recurring dialogue with the sceptic who did not believe that 'the revolution would spread and that the Russian revolutionary army and Russian democracy would find allies in Europe': 'My answer is that history has given no guarantee to us, to the Russian revolution, that we shall not be crushed altogether, that our revolutionary will is not going to be strangled by a coalition of world capital, that world imperialism will not crucify us.' The Russian Revolution represented so great a danger to the propertied classes of all countries that they would try to destroy it and to transform Russia into a colony of European or, what was more probable, of American capital. But this trial of strength was still ahead, and the Soviets were in duty bound to be ready for it. 'If . . . [revolutionary] Germany does not rise, or if she rises too feebly, then we shall move

[1] *Pervyi Vseros. Syezd Sovietov*, p. 353. [2] Ibid., p. 354. [3] Ibid., pp. 356 ff.

our regiments . . . not in order to defend ourselves but in order to undertake a revolutionary offensive.' At this point the powerful peroration was interrupted by an anonymous voice from the floor: 'It will be too late, then'. Before the year was out, the anonymous voice was proved right. But in the Trotsky who addressed the Congress the features can be clearly discerned of the man who was not only to confront, without any armed strength behind him, the diplomacy of the Hohenzollerns and the Habsburgs, but also to create the Red Army.

At this Congress he had his last clash with Plekhanov. They addressed each other frigidly as 'Citizens', not 'Comrades'. Plekhanov had reached the extreme of his warlike mood, and even the Mensheviks were so embarrassed by his chauvinist outbursts that they kept aloof from him. But the Congress paid a warm tribute to Plekhanov's past merits, only to be treated by him to a hackneyed patriotic sermon. Trotsky aggressively reproached him for this, and Plekhanov replied haughtily, comparing himself now with Danton and now with Lassalle and contrasting the disheartened and dejected armies of the Russian Revolution with the armies of Cromwell and of the Jacobins, whose 'spirits soared when they drank the sap of revolution'. Little did the sick veteran imagine that it was his younger and much snubbed opponent who was destined for the role of the Russian Danton, destined to make the Russian armies 'drink the sap of revolution'.

Through the greater part of the proceedings, the majority treated lightly the Bolsheviks and their associates. When Tseretelli, pleading for the coalition government, challenged the delegates to say whether there was a single party in Russia prepared alone to shoulder responsibility for government, Lenin interrupted from the floor to say that his party was prepared for that. The majority drowned Lenin's words in hilarious laughter. The delegates from the provinces were not aware that in Petrograd the opposition's influence was already growing like an avalanche. Lenin was eager to impress them and to show them that Petrograd demanded an end to the coalition and the formation of a Socialist ministry, that is of a ministry consisting only of the moderate Socialists. Despite his statement from the floor of the Congress, which was a declaration of principle, not of immediate purpose, Lenin did not yet aim at the overthrow

of the government. Still less did he favour a coalition between the moderate Socialists and his own party. As long as the Bolsheviks were a minority in the Soviets, he urged his followers not to play at seizing power but 'patiently to explain their attitude to the masses', until they gained the majority. This was the crux of his Soviet constitutionalism. In the meantime, the Bolshevik slogan was not 'Down with the government', but 'Down with the ten capitalist ministers!' Overcoming the forebodings in his own Central Committee, Lenin was in great secrecy preparing a monster demonstration under this slogan for 10 June. Trotsky, dispelling his friends' misgivings, induced the Inter-Borough Organization to join in the demonstration. But on 9 June, when *Pravda* made an open call to the workers and the garrison, the Executive of the Congress banned the demonstration.

Neither Lenin nor Trotsky wished to defy the ban. They decided to submit to the decision of the majority, to cancel the demonstration, and to explain their attitude in a special manifesto. This was an anxious moment. Would the workers and soldiers take note of the cancellation? If so, would they not misunderstand the party's attitude? Would their urge for action not be chilled? Lenin drafted an explanatory statement, but as his followers and he himself were not pleased with it he gladly adopted another text, submitted by Trotsky; and this was read out at the Congress in the name of the entire opposition. Trotsky, not yet a member of the party, also composed for the Bolshevik Central Committee a manifesto on the subject.[1]

On 10 June Petrograd remained calm. But the leaders of the Soviet majority decided to call another monster demonstration on 18 June, hoping to turn it into a manifestation in favour of their policies. On the appointed day, 500,000 workers and soldiers marched past the stands on which the Congress had assembled *in corpore*. To the dismay of the moderate Socialists, all the banners in the procession had Bolshevik slogans inscribed on them: 'Down with the ten capitalist ministers!', 'Down with the war!', and 'All power to the Soviets!' The march-past was concluded peacefully. There were no riots and no clashes, but for the first time the anti-Bolshevik parties

[1] Lenin, *Sochinenya*, vol. xxv, pp. 60–61; Trotsky, *Sochinenya*, vol. iii, book 1, p. 137; and *Lénine*, pp. 66–69.

gauged the impression which Bolshevik policies and slogans had made on the masses.

In this early period of his activity—it was only the second month after his return—Trotsky's personality had already acquired a fresh and immense lustre. Lunacharsky writes that 'under the influence of Trotsky's dazzling success, and of the enormous scope of his personality many people who were close to Trotsky were even inclined to see in him the genuine first leader of the Russian revolution. Uritsky . . . said once to me and, it seems, to Manuilsky: "Well, the great revolution has come, and you see that, although Lenin has so much wisdom, he begins to grow dim beside the genius of Trotsky."' This opinion, Lunacharsky goes on, was incorrect, not because it exaggerated Trotsky's gifts and his power, but because the scope of Lenin's political genius had not yet revealed itself. 'It is true that in this period . . . Lenin was dimmed a little. He did not speak publicly very often and he did not write very much. He directed mainly the work of organization in the Bolshevik camp, while Trotsky thundered at the meetings.' In 1917, however, the revolution was made as much at mass meetings as within the narrower compass of the party.[1]

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For the beginning of July the Bolsheviks convened the sixth national congress of their party. This was to be the occasion on which the Inter-Borough Organization was to join their ranks. There was no longer any talk about changing the party's 'label'. For a time the majority of the Inter-Borough Organization resisted; and on its behalf Yureniev still warned members against 'the bad organizational manners' of the Bolsheviks and their inclination to work through narrow secretive caucuses. Trotsky headed the minority which was impatient for the merger. He pleaded that with their emergence from the twilight of clandestinity and the awakening of the broad popular movement, the Bolsheviks had largely rid themselves of their old habits, and that what was left of these would best be overcome in a common, openly working party. Assisted by Lunacharsky, he converted the majority to this view.[2] But before the merger had taken place, the country was shaken by the crisis of the July days.

[1] Lunacharsky, op. cit., pp. 25–28.

[2] Trotsky, *Sochinenya*, vol. iii, book 1, pp. 145–9.

party was among the most important motives which guided Trotsky's conduct at the conference table.[1] It now seemed as if his efforts had not been quite fruitless. Peace demonstrations and strikes had at last begun in the enemy countries; and from Berlin and Vienna came loud protests against Hoffmann's attempt to dictate terms. The Soviets, so Trotsky concluded, must not accept these terms. They must go on biding their time and try to establish between themselves and the central powers a state which would be neither war nor peace. With this conclusion he reached the Smolny, where he had been eagerly and tensely awaited.

His return coincided with the conflict between the Soviet government and the Constituent Assembly, at last convoked. Against the expectations of the Bolsheviks and their associates, the Right Social Revolutionaries commanded a majority. The Bolsheviks and the Left Social Revolutionaries decided to disperse the Assembly; and they did so after the latter had refused to ratify Lenin's decrees on land, peace, and the transfer of power to the Soviets. The dispersal was at first justified by the specious argument that the elections had been held under an obsolete law, so construed under Kerensky as to give undue weight to the well-to-do minority of the peasantry. The paradox which made it possible for the Bolsheviks to emerge as the majority in the Soviets and remain a minority in the Assembly has been discussed in a previous chapter. The real reason for the dispersal was that the rule of the Assembly was incompatible with the rule of the Soviets. Either the Assembly or the October Revolution had to be undone. Trotsky was wholeheartedly for the dispersal, and he repeatedly defended the deed in speech and writing, assuming unqualified moral responsibility for it.[2] Since 1905–6 he had stood for proletarian dictatorship in Soviet form, and when he had to choose between that dictatorship and parliamentarianism he knew no hesitation. In the event itself, however, he played no role. The Assembly was dispersed on 6 January before his return to Petrograd. When he arrived, on the 7th, he and Lenin had a moment of anxiety

[1] See Trotsky's preface to *Mirnye Peregovory v Brest Litovske*.

[2] See the chapter on the Constituent Assembly in *The Defence of Terrorism*, pp. 41–45. Also *Tretii Vseross. Syezd Sovietov*, pp. 17, 69–70.

because the adherents of the Assembly seemed on the point of organizing a strong popular protest against the dispersal. But the protest fizzled out inconsequentially—only much later, during the civil war, was a 'movement for the Constituante' started on the Volga.[1]

On 8 January, two days after the dispersal of the Assembly, the Central Committee was completely absorbed in the debate on war and peace; and in order to sound the party's mood it conducted the debate in the presence of Bolshevik delegates who had arrived from the provinces for the third Congress of Soviets. Trotsky reported on his mission and presented his conclusion: neither war nor peace. Lenin urged the acceptance of the German terms. Bukharin spoke for 'revolutionary war' against the Hohenzollerns and Habsburgs. The vote brought striking success to the adherents of revolutionary war, the Left Communists as they were called. Lenin's motion for immediate peace received only fifteen votes. Trotsky's resolution obtained sixteen. Thirty-two votes were cast in favour of Bukharin's call for war.[2] Since outsiders had taken part, however, the vote was not binding on the Central Committee.

The whole Bolshevik party was soon rent between those who advocated peace and those who stood for war. The latter had behind them a large but confused majority and they were powerfully reinforced by the Left Social Revolutionaries, none of whom favoured peace. But the war faction was not sure of its case. It was stronger in voicing opposition to the peace than in urging resumption of hostilities.

At the next session of the Central Committee, on 11 January, the war faction bitterly attacked Lenin. Dzerzhinsky reproached him with timidly surrendering the whole programme of the revolution, as Zinoviev and Kamenev had surrendered it in October. To accept the Kaiser's *Diktat*, Bukharin argued, would

[1] Antonov-Ovseenko describes this incident almost humorously. Lenin had received a report that the Right Social Revolutionaries were leading a demonstration 100,000 strong to the Tauride Palace. Trotsky's wife had seen the demonstrators and estimated their number at 20,000. Lenin and Trotsky nervously ordered Antonov-Ovseenko to disperse the demonstration if need be. Antonov led a regiment to the Tauride Palace but found nobody to disperse. 'The adherents of the Assembly had come, had made a glorious noise, and had disappeared like Chinese shadows. There had been no more than 5,000 demonstrators in all.' Antonov-Ovseenko, *Zapiski o Grazhdanskoi Voinie*, vol. i, pp. 18–19.

[2] *Protokoly Tsen. Kom.*, p. 200.

be to stab in the back the German and Austrian proletariat—in Vienna a general strike against the war was just in progress. In Uritsky's view, Lenin approached the problem 'from a narrow Russian and not from an international standpoint', an error of which he had been guilty in the past. On behalf of the Petrograd organization, Kossior repudiated Lenin's attitude. The most determined advocates of peace were Zinoviev, Stalin, and Sokolnikov. As in October, so now, Zinoviev saw no ground for expecting revolution in the West; he held that Trotsky had wasted time at Brest; and he warned the Central Committee that Germany would later dictate even more onerous terms. More cautiously, Stalin expressed the same view. Sokolnikov, arguing that the salvation of the Russian Revolution was the overriding consideration, foreshadowed in a curious epigram a distant future change in the party's outlook. 'History clearly shows', he said, 'that the salt of the earth is gradually shifting eastwards. In the eighteenth century, France was the salt of the earth, and in the nineteenth—Germany. Now it is Russia.'[1]

Lenin was sceptical about the outcome of the general strike in Austria, to which Trotsky and the war faction attached so much importance; and he drew a graphic picture of Russia's military impotence. He admitted that what he advocated was a 'shameful' peace, implying the betrayal of Poland. But he was convinced that, if his government refused that peace and tried to wage war, it would be wiped out and another government would accept even worse terms. He disavowed, however, the cruder arguments of Stalin and Zinoviev about the sacred egoism of the Russian Revolution. He did not ignore the revolutionary potentialities of the West, but he believed that the peace would hasten their development. The West was merely pregnant with revolution, while the Russian Revolution was already 'a healthy and loudly crying infant' whose life must be safeguarded.

For the time being, Trotsky's formula provided a meeting point for the opposed factions, although each at heart accepted only that part of the formula that suited its purpose. The war faction adopted it because it made peace impossible, while Lenin and his group saw in it a means of keeping the war faction at bay. Lenin was willing to let Trotsky try his hand once again

[1] *Protokoly Tsen. Kom.*, p. 206.

ambiguity of that decision: the vote for 'neither war nor peace' had made no provision for the contingency which was uppermost in Lenin's mind. But their private arrangement, too, was ambiguous, as it turned out later. Lenin was under the impression that Trotsky had promised to sign the peace as soon as he was confronted with an ultimatum or a threat of a renewed German offensive. Trotsky held that he had obliged himself to accept the peace terms only after the Germans had actually launched a new offensive; and that even then he had committed himself to accept such terms only as the Central powers had so far offered, not the even worse terms which they dictated later.

By the middle of January Trotsky was back at the conference table in Brest. In the meantime the strikes and peace demonstrations in Austria and Germany had been suppressed or had come to a standstill; and his adversaries met him with new self-confidence. In vain did he, discarding formality, ask that German and Austrian Socialists be invited to Brest.[1] In vain did he ask for permission for himself to go to Vienna to contact Victor Adler, who had protested in the Austrian parliament against General Hoffmann's conduct at Brest. He was allowed, however, to pay a brief visit to Warsaw, where he was warmly acclaimed for his defence of Poland's independence.

Ukraine and Poland came to the fore in this part of the discussions. Behind the scenes Kühlmann and Czernin prepared a separate peace with the Ukrainian *Rada*. At the same time the Bolsheviks strenuously fostered a Soviet revolution in the Ukraine: the *Rada*'s writ still ran in Kiev, but Kharkov was already under a Soviet government; and a representative of the latter accompanied Trotsky on his return to Brest. Among the Ukrainian parties a curious reversal of attitudes occurred. Those who, under the Tsar and Kerensky, had stood for union or federation with Russia were now bent on separation. The Bolsheviks who had encouraged separatism now called for federation. Separatists became federalists and vice versa, not from motives of Ukrainian or Russian patriotism, but because they desired to separate from, or to federate with, the system of government prevalent in Russia. From this reversal of attitudes the central powers hoped to benefit. By appearing as the protectors of Ukrainian separatism, they hoped to lay hands on the Ukraine's food and raw materials, of which they stood in desperate need; and also to turn the argument about self-determination against Russia. The *Rada*, weak, lacking self-confidence, on the verge of collapse, tried to lean on the central powers, despite the oath of loyalty it had sworn to the Entente. The *Rada*'s delegation consisted of very young, half-baked politicians—'*Bürschchen*', to quote Kühlmann[1]—who had just emerged from the backwoods and were intoxicated by the roles assigned to them in the great diplomatic game.

[1] The German government had just refused the Social Democratic leaders permission to go to Stockholm, whence they had intended to get in touch with the leaders of the Russian Revolution.

Even at this stage, Trotsky did not object to the *Rada*'s participation, but he served notice that Russia would recognize no separate agreements between it and the central powers. He also warned Kühlmann and Czernin that they overrated the strength of Ukrainian separatism. Then Lubinsky, the *Rada*'s delegate, launched a violent attack against Trotsky and the Soviet government, accusing them of trampling on the rights of the Ukraine and forcibly installing their own government in Kharkov and Kiev. 'Trotsky was so upset that it was painful to see', Czernin noted in his diary. 'Unusually pale, he stared fixedly in front of him. . . . Heavy drops of sweat trickled down his forehead. Evidently he felt deeply the disgrace of being abused by his fellow citizens in the presence of the enemy.'[2] Trotsky later denied that he was so greatly embarrassed, but Czernin's account seems credible. Trotsky certainly realized that his adversaries had succeeded up to a point in confusing the issue of self-determination. At heart he may have wondered whether the *Rada*'s spokesman was not justified in claiming that the Ukrainian Soviets were not representative of the Ukrainian people.[3] Not that Trotsky himself would have scrupled greatly about imposing Soviet rule on the Ukraine: the revolution could not be consolidated in Russia without its being extended to the Ukraine, which was wedged in deeply between northern and southern Russia. But here for the first time the interest of

[1] *Erinnerungen*, p. 531.

[2] Czernin, op. cit., p. 246.

[3] This is inferred from a private message from Trotsky to Lenin, found in the *Trotsky Archives* at Harvard and written towards the end of the civil war. In that message Trotsky bluntly stated that the Soviet administration in the Ukraine had from the beginning been based on people sent from Russia and not on local elements. He then asked for a radical break with this method of government.

the revolution clashed with the principle of self-determination; and Trotsky could no longer evoke that principle with quite the same clear conscience with which he had evoked it hitherto.

He returned to the attack with the question of Poland, and asked why Poland was not yet represented at Brest. Kühlmann made the appearance of a Polish delegation dependent on Russia's prior recognition of the existing Polish administration. 'We have been asked again', Trotsky said, 'whether or not we acknowledge Poland's independence. . . . The question so posed is ambiguous. Do we acknowledge Ireland's independence? Our government does . . . but for the time being Ireland is still occupied by the British. We recognize that every human being has the right to food . . . which is not the same as recognizing the hungry man as sated.'[1] The recognition of Poland's right to independence did not imply the admission that she was independent under German-Austrian tutelage. Then Radek came forward with a telling indictment of German-Austrian domination of his native country: he spoke of the forced deportation of hundreds of thousands of Polish labourers to Germany; the appalling conditions in which this had taken place; political oppression; the imprisonment or internment of Polish political leaders of all parties, including the internment of Radek's old adversary Pilsudski, then commander of a Polish legion which had fought on Germany's and Austria's side, and Poland's future dictator.

In the middle of these exchanges, on 21 January, Trotsky received a message from Lenin about the downfall of the *Rada* and proclamation of the Soviet government all over the Ukraine.[2] He himself got in touch with Kiev, checked the facts, and notified the central powers that he no longer recognized the *Rada*'s right to be represented at the conference.

These were his last days at Brest. The mutual charges and recriminations had reached a point where the negotiations became barren and could not be much prolonged. In the intervals between the sessions he refreshed himself by writing *From February to Brest Litovsk*, one of his minor classics, a preliminary sketch for the monumental *History of the Russian Revolution* which he was to produce fifteen years later during his exile on Prinkipo Island. At last he sent a letter to Lenin in which he wrote: 'We

[1] *Mirnye Peregovory*, p. 162. [2] Lenin, *Sochinenya*, vol. xxvi, p. 464.

the central powers were still ready to applaud Trotsky with a 'well roared, lion'. This, they hoped even now, was Trotsky's final roar, after which would come the whimper of surrender. Only gradually did the import of his statement dawn upon them, and then they became breathlessly aware that they were witnessing an act which in its tragic pathos, was unique in history.[1]

We are withdrawing from the war [Trotsky went on]. We announce this to all peoples and governments. We are issuing an order for the full demobilization of our army. . . . At the same time we declare that the terms proposed to us by the governments of Germany and Austro-Hungary are in fundamental conflict with the interest of all peoples. They are repudiated by the toiling masses of all countries, including the Austro-Hungarian and the German peoples. The peoples of Poland, Ukraine, Lithuania, Kurland, and Estonia feel in them the violence inflicted upon their aspirations. To the Russian people these terms are a permanent threat. The popular masses of the whole world, guided by political consciousness or moral instinct, repudiate them. . . . We refuse to endorse terms which German and Austro-Hungarian imperialism is writing with the sword on the flesh of living nations. We cannot put the signature of the Russian revolution under a peace treaty which brings oppression, woe, and misfortune to millions of human beings.[2]

'When the echoes of Trotsky's powerful voice died away', writes the historian of Brest Litovsk, 'no one spoke. The whole conference sat speechless, dumbfounded before the audacity of this *coup de théâtre*. The amazed silence was shattered by an ejaculation of Hoffmann: "*Unerhört*", he exclaimed, scandalized. The spell was broken. Kühlmann said something about the necessity of calling a plenary session of the conference, but this Trotsky refused, saying that there remained nothing to discuss. With that the Bolsheviks left the room, and in gloomy silence, still scarcely believing what they had heard and wholly at a loss as to what to make of it, the delegates of the Central Powers dispersed.'[3]

However, before the delegations had dispersed, something

[1] On the next day, Krüge, the chief German legal expert, told Yoffe that he had looked for historical precedents and found only one—in the remote antiquity of the wars between Persia and Greece. See Yoffe's memoir appended to *Mirnye Peregovory*, p. 262.

[2] *Mirnye Peregovory*, pp. 207–8.

[3] Wheeler-Bennett, op. cit., pp. 227–8.

happened, the full significance of which Trotsky missed—something which confirmed Lenin's worst fears. Kühlmann declared that in view of what had taken place, hostilities would be resumed, because Russia's demobilization was of no legal consequence—only her rejection of the peace mattered. Trotsky treated this as an empty threat; he did not believe, he replied, that the German and Austrian peoples would allow their governments to continue a war so obviously devoid of any defensive pretext. Kühlmann himself gave Trotsky some reason for dismissing the threat when he inquired whether the Soviet government was at least prepared to enter into legal and commercial relations with the central powers and in what way they could keep in touch with Russia. Instead of answering the query, as, from his own standpoint he ought to have done—this might have entailed a commitment by the central powers to respect the state of 'neither war nor peace'—Trotsky haughtily refused to discuss it.

He stayed on at Brest for another day and got wind of a quarrel between Hoffmann, who insisted on the resumption of hostilities, and the civilian diplomats, who preferred to accept the state of neither war nor peace. On the spot the civilians seemed to have carried the day. Trotsky was therefore returning to Petrograd confident and proud of his achievement. At this moment, the man stands before our eyes in all his strength and weakness. 'Single-handed, with nothing behind him save a country in chaos and a régime scarce established, [he] . . . who a year before had been an inconspicuous journalist exiled in New York, [had fought] successfully the united diplomatic talent of half Europe.'[1] He had given mankind the first great lesson in genuinely open diplomacy. But at the same time he allowed himself to be carried away by his optimism. He underrated his enemy and even refused to listen to his warning. Great artist that he was, he was so wrapped up in himself and in his ideal and so fascinated by the formidable appeal of his own work that he lightly overlooked its deficiencies. While Trotsky was still on his way to Petrograd, General Hoffmann, backed by Ludendorff, Hindenburg, and the Kaiser, was already issuing marching orders to the German troops.

The German offensive began on 17 February, and it met with

[1] Wheeler-Bennett, op. cit., p. 166.

for his own proposal, but for Lenin's. With the majority of one vote the peace faction won. The new majority asked Trotsky and Lenin to frame the message to the enemy governments. Later that night the Central Committees of the two ruling parties, the Bolshevik and the Left Social Revolutionary, met; and at this meeting the war faction once again had the upper hand. But in the government the Bolsheviks outvoted their partners; and on the next day, 19 February, the government formally sued for peace.

Four days of suspense and panic passed before the German answer reached Petrograd. In the meantime nobody could say whether or on what terms the central powers would agree to reopen negotiations. Their armies were on the move. Petrograd was exposed. A committee of revolutionary defence was formed in the city, and Trotsky headed it. Even while they were suing for peace, the Soviets had to prepare for war. Trotsky turned to the allied embassies and military missions to inquire whether, if the Soviets re-entered the war, the western governments would help them. He had made such soundings before, but without effect.[1] But this time the British and the French seemed more responsive. Three days after he had sent off the request for peace, Trotsky reported to the Central Committee (in Lenin's absence) an Anglo-French suggestion for military co-operation. To his mortification, the Central Committee rejected this out of hand and so repudiated his action. Both factions turned against him: the adherents of peace—because they feared lest the acceptance of allied help compromise the chances of separate peace; and the adherents of war—because the same motives of revolutionary morality, by which they were actuated in opposing a compact with Germany, militated also against co-operation with 'the Anglo-French imperialists'. Trotsky then declared that he was resigning from the Commissariat of Foreign Affairs. He could not stay in office if the party did not see that a Socialist government

[1] Colonel Robins relates that in January Trotsky proposed that American officers should go to the front and help to stop the leakage of Russian goods to Germany and to remove stocks of raw materials to the interior of the country. Trotsky then said that even if they signed a separate peace, the Soviets had no interest in strengthening Germany. Hard, *Raymond Robins' Own Story*, pp. 64–65. 'The Allied and American Governments', this is Robins's comment, 'rather than admit the existence of Trotsky, let the Germans do all the grabbing of Russian raw materials on the Russian frontier.' Ibid., pp. 70–71.

Bolshevism. This view does not do full justice to the leaders of the war faction. It is true that Lenin's political originality and courage rose in those days to the height of genius and that events—the crumbling of the Hohenzollern and Habsburg dynasties and the annulment of the treaty of Brest before the end of the year—vindicated him. It is also true that the war faction often acted under confused emotional impulses and presented no consistent policy. But at their best its leaders argued their case very strongly and realistically; and much of their argument, too, was confirmed by events. The 'respite' which Lenin obtained was, in truth, half-illusory. After the signing of the peace, the Kaiser's government did all it could to strangle the Soviets. It could not, however, do more than its involvement in the gigantic struggle on the western front allowed it to do. Without a separate peace in the West it could not have done much more even if the Soviets had not accepted the *Diktat* of Brest. Bukharin and Radek, when they argued against Russia's surrender, pointed to this circumstance as to one which severely restricted Germany's freedom of action. In this respect the inner story of the war, when it was revealed, proved their judgement to have been more correct than Lenin's. The occupation of the Ukraine and of parts of southern Russia alone tied down a million German and Austrian troops. If Russia had refused to sign the peace, the Germans might, at the most, have tried to seize Petrograd. They could hardly have risked a march on Moscow.[1] If they had seized both Petrograd and Moscow, the Soviets, whose chief strength lay in the two capitals, would have found themselves in an extremely dangerous, perhaps fatal, crisis. But this was not the point at issue between Lenin and the war faction, for Lenin, too, repeatedly stated, with curious confidence, that the loss of the one or the two capitals would not be a mortal blow to the revolution.[2]

The other argument advanced by the leaders of the war faction that the Soviets would have to build up a new army on the battlefields, in the process of the fighting, and not in the

[1] Ludendorff states that a deep German offensive was 'out of the question'—only 'a short energetic thrust' had been planned. *Meine Kriegserinnerungen*, p. 447.

[2] Stalin alone held that the surrender of any capital would mean the decay, the 'rotting' of the revolution; and in this, as an advocate of peace, he was in a way more consistent than Lenin. *Protokoly Tsen. Kom.*, p. 248.

barracks during a calm respite, was, paradoxically, realistic. This was how the Red Army was eventually built up; and Bukharin's and Radek's speeches at the seventh congress of the party anticipated on this point the military policy which Trotsky and Lenin were to adopt and pursue in the coming years.[1] Precisely because Russia was so extremely war weary, she could not raise a new army in relatively calm times. Only severe shocks and the ineluctable necessity to fight, and to fight at once, could stimulate the energies hidden in the Soviet régime and bring them into play. Only thus could it happen that a nation which had under the Tsar, Prince Lvov, and Kerensky been too exhausted to fight, went on fighting under Lenin and Trotsky in civil wars and wars of intervention for nearly three years.

The weakness of the war faction lay not so much in its case as in its lack of leadership. Its chiefs were Bukharin, Dzerzhinsky, Radek, Yoffe, Uritsky, Kollontai, Lomov-Oppokov, Bubnov, Pyatakov, Smirnov, and Ryazanov. All were eminent members of the party. Some of them had great intellectual gifts and were brilliant spokesmen and pamphleteers. Others were courageous men of action. Yet none of them possessed the indomitable will, the moral authority, the political and strategic talents, the tactical flexibility, and the administrative capacity required of a leader in a revolutionary war. As long as the war faction had no such leader, it represented merely a state of mind, a moral ferment, a literary cry of despair, not a policy, even though at first a majority of the party was drawn into the ferment and echoed the cry of despair. The leadership of the war faction was vacant, and the faction cast inviting glances at Trotsky. Incidentally, in their ranks were many of his old friends who had joined the Bolshevik party together with him. On the face of it, there was little to prevent him from responding to their expectations. Although he held that Lenin's policy, like that of the adherents of war, had its justification, he did not conceal his inner revulsion against it. All the more astounding was it that at the most critical moments he threw the weight of his influence behind Lenin.

He shrank from assuming the leadership of the war faction because he realized that this would have transformed at a

[1] *Sedmoi Syezd RKP*, pp. 32–50, 69–73 and *passim*.

stroke the cleavage among the Bolsheviks into an irretrievable split and, probably, into a bloody conflict. He and Lenin would have confronted each other as the leaders of hostile parties, divided not over ordinary differences but over a matter of life and death. Lenin had already warned the Central Committee that if they outvoted him once again in the matter of peace, he would resign from the Committee and the government and appeal against them to the rank and file.[1] At this time Trotsky was Lenin's only possible successor as the chief of the government. But as chief of a government committed to wage a most dangerous war in desperate conditions, he would have had to suppress the opposition to war, and almost certainly to take repressive action against Lenin. Both factions, aware of these implications, refrained from uttering plain threats. But the unspoken threats were there—in the undertones of the debate. It was in order to stop the party drifting towards a civil war in its own ranks that at the crucial moments Trotsky cast his vote for Lenin.[2]

Some analogy to the situation which was likely to arise if Trotsky had acted otherwise may be found in the three-cornered struggle which developed between the Commune of Paris, Danton and Robespierre during the French Revolution. In 1793 the Commune (and Anacharsis Cloots) stood, as Bukharin and the Left Communists were to do, for war against all the anti-revolutionary governments of Europe. Danton advocated

[1] *Protokoly Tsen. Kom.*, pp. 247–8.

[2] Twenty years later, during the purge trials, Bukharin was charged with having attempted at the time of the Brest crisis to stage a coup against Lenin and to arrest him. This version, designed to make credible the charge about Bukharin's plot against Stalin, must be dismissed. But the leaders of the war faction must have considered at one point what they would do if they obtained a majority in the Central Committee. They would then have had to form a government without Lenin and, if Lenin persisted in opposing war, they might have had to arrest him. In 1923 Zinoviev claimed that Bukharin and Radek seriously discussed this with the Left Social Revolutionaries. Radek denied the allegation, saying that they had only joked about Lenin's arrest. Col. Robins, a completely disinterested witness, who kept in close touch with the Bolshevik leaders, described, as early as in 1920, a scene between Radek and Lenin, in which Radek is alleged to have said that if there were 500 courageous men in Petrograd, they would imprison Lenin and make possible a revolutionary war. Lenin replied that he would first imprison his interlocutor (Hard, *Raymond Robins' Own Story*, p. 94). If any serious conspiracy against Lenin had been afoot, Radek would hardly have hastened to give Lenin advance notice of it. But although this dialogue was in fact jocular, the logic of the situation gave it a serious undertone.

war against Prussia and agreement with England, where he hoped that Fox would replace Pitt in office. Robespierre urged the Convention to wage war against England; and he strove for an agreement with Prussia. Danton and Robespierre joined hands against the Commune, but, after they suppressed it they fell out. The guillotine settled their controversy.

Trotsky, who so often looked at the Russian Revolution through the prism of the French, must have been aware of this analogy. He may have remembered Engels's remarkable letter to Victor Adler, explaining all the 'pulsations' of the French Revolution by the fortunes of war and the disagreements engendered by it.[1] He must have seen himself as acting a role potentially reminiscent of Danton's, while Lenin's part was similar to Robespierre's. It was as if the shadow of the guillotine had for a moment interposed itself between him and Lenin. This is not to say that, if the conflict had developed, Trotsky, like Danton, would necessarily have played a losing game; or that Lenin was, like Robespierre, inclined to settle by the guillotine an inner party controversy. Here the analogy ceases to apply. It was evident that the war party, if it won, would be driven to suppress its opponents—otherwise it could not cope with its task. A peaceable solution of the crisis in the party was possible only under the rule of the adherents of peace, who could better afford to tolerate opposition. This consideration was decisive in Trotsky's eyes. In order to banish the shadow of the guillotine he made an extraordinary sacrifice of principle and personal ambition.

To Lenin's threat of resignation he replied, addressing himself more to the advocates of war than to Lenin: 'We cannot wage revolutionary war with a split in the party. . . . Under these conditions our party is not in a position to wage war, especially as those who stand for war do not want to accept the material means for waging it [i.e. assistance from the western powers].'[2] 'I shall not take upon myself the responsibility of voting for war.' Later he added: 'There is a lot of subjectivism in Lenin's attitude. I am not sure that he is right, but I do not want to do anything that would interfere with the party's unity. On the contrary, I shall help as much as I can. But I

[1] K. Marx and F. Engels, *Selected Correspondence*, pp. 457–8.

[2] *Protokoly Tsen. Kom.*, p. 248.

cannot stay in office and bear personal responsibility for the conduct of foreign affairs.'[1]

The leaders of the war faction did not share Trotsky's fears. Dzerzhinsky, already the head of *Cheka*,[2] held that the party was strong enough to stand the split and Lenin's resignation. Lomov-Oppokov, leader of the Bolsheviks in Moscow, appealed to Trotsky not to let himself be 'intimidated' by Lenin's ultimatums—they could take power without Lenin.[3] In the course of the debate, however, the gravity and urgency of Trotsky's argument so impressed some of the advocates of war, Dzerzhinsky and Yoffe, that they retraced their steps. Lenin obtained seven votes for peace. This was still a minority of the Central Committee. But as Trotsky and three leaders of the war faction abstained, and only four voted against Lenin, the peace terms were accepted. The three leaders of the war faction who abstained, Yoffe, Dzerzhinsky, and Krestinsky, issued a solemn statement saying that they could not contemplate 'a war to be fought simultaneously against German imperialism, the Russian bourgeoisie, and a section of the proletariat headed by Lenin'; and that a split would be such an unmitigated disaster that the worst peace was preferable.[4] But the irreconcilable adherents of war, Bukharin, Uritsky, Lomov, Bubnov (and Pyatakov and Smirnov, who were present at the session) denounced the decision in favour of peace as a minority opinion; and in protest against it they resigned from all responsible offices in party and government. In vain did Lenin try to dissuade them from taking this step. Trotsky, having brought about the defeat of the Left Communists, now showed them his sympathy and affection, and wistfully remarked that he would have voted differently had he known that they were going to resign.[5]

The peace faction had won, but its conscience was troubled. No sooner had the Central Committee, on 23 February, decided to accept the German terms than it voted unanimously to

[1] *Protokoly Tsen. Kom.*, p. 251.

[2] *Cheka*—Extraordinary Commission for Struggle against the Counter-revolution, the predecessor of G.P.U. [3] Ibid., p. 250. [4] Ibid., p. 253.

[5] At the same session, a curious scene took place. Lenin assured his defeated opponents that they had every right to conduct an agitation against the peace. Against this Stalin remarked that since they had been so undisciplined as to resign from their posts, the leaders of the war faction automatically placed themselves outside the party. Both Lenin and Trotsky strongly protested against Stalin's statement, and Stalin had to withdraw it. Ibid., pp. 254–5.

start immediate preparations for future war. When it came to the appointment of a new delegation for Brest Litovsk, a tragi-comic scene took place: every member of the Committee dodged the dubious honour; none, not even the most ardent advocate of peace, was eager to place his signature under the treaty. Sokolnikov, who eventually headed the new delegation, threatened to resign from the Central Committee when his candidature was proposed; and only Lenin's good-tempered persuasion induced him to yield.[1] This matter having been settled, Trotsky asked—amid Stalin's sneers, for which Stalin later apologized—that the Central Committee take cognizance of his resignation from the Commissariat of Foreign Affairs, which was already virtually under Chicherin's management. The Central Committee appealed to Trotsky to stay in office until the peace was signed. He only agreed not to make public his resignation until then and declared that he would not appear any more in any governmental institution. Prompted by Lenin, the Committee obliged him to attend at least those sessions of the government at which foreign affairs were not under debate.[2]

After all the recent exertions, triumphs, and frustrations Trotsky's nerves were frayed. It looked as if his performance at Brest had been wholly wasted; and this was indeed what many thought and said. Not without reason, he was blamed for having lulled the party into false security by his repeated assurances that the Germans would not dare to attack. Overnight the idol became almost a culprit. 'On the evening of 27 February', writes M. Philips Price, 'the Central Soviet Executive met at the Tauride Palace, and Trotsky addressed them. . . . He had disappeared for some days, and no one seemed to know what had happened to him. That night, however, he came to the Palace . . . hurled the darts of eloquent scorn against the Imperialisms of the central powers and of the allies, upon whose altar the Russian Revolution was being sacrificed. When he had finished, he retired again. Rumour had it that he was so overcome with mortification that he broke down and wept.'[3]

. . . . . .

On 3 March Sokolnikov, making it abundantly clear that the

[1] Ibid., pp. 259–66. [2] Ibid., p. 268.

[3] M. Philips Price, op. cit., p. 251. See also I. Steinberg, *Als ich Volkskommissar war*, pp. 208–13.

Soviets were acting under duress, signed the treaty of Brest Litovsk. In less than a fortnight, the Germans seized Kiev and vast parts of the Ukraine, the Austrians entered Odessa, and the Turks Trebizond. In the Ukraine the occupying powers crushed the Soviets and reinstalled the *Rada*, only to overpower shortly thereafter the *Rada* too, and to place *Hetman* Skoropadsky at the head of their puppet administration. The momentary victors showered upon Lenin's government demands and ultimatums, each more humiliating than the preceding. Most galling was the ultimatum demanding that the Soviets sign an immediate peace with 'independent Ukraine'. In the Ukraine the people, especially the peasants, were putting up a desperate resistance to the occupying forces and their Ukrainian tools. By signing a separate treaty with the latter, the Soviets could not but appear to disavow the whole Ukrainian resistance. At the Central Committee Trotsky demanded the rejection of the German ultimatum. Lenin, always with the idea of future revenge in his mind, was determined to drain the cup of humiliation. But at every German provocation the opposition to peace rose again in the party and in the Soviets. The treaty of Brest had not yet been ratified and ratification was still uncertain.

On 6 March an emergency congress of the party met at the Tauride Palace to decide whether to recommend ratification to the forthcoming Congress of the Soviets. The proceedings were held in strict secrecy, and the records were published only in 1925. The atmosphere was heavy with dejection. The delegates from the provinces found that, in expectation of a German attack, governmental offices were preparing to evacuate Petrograd, a move from which Kerensky's government had shrunk. The Commissars were already 'sitting on their bags and cases' —only Trotsky was to stay behind to organize the defence. The delegates reported a general slump in the party's popularity.[1] Only recently the clamour for peace had been so powerful as to destroy the February régime and to lift the Bolsheviks to power. But now, when the peace had come, the party responsible for it was the first to be blamed.

At the congress, Trotsky's activity was inevitably the pivot of

[1] 'The local organizations', says the official record, 'were weak and disorganized, and the congress reflected the condition of our entire party, of the entire working class, of the whole of Russia.' *Sedmoi Syezd RKP*, pp. 4–5.

debate. In a most incisive speech Lenin urged ratification of the peace. The main burden of his argument was against the war faction, but he also castigated Trotsky's 'great mistake' and wishful belief that the Germans would not attack, the belief which had underlain 'neither war nor peace'.[1] The war faction jumped to Trotsky's defence. 'Even the chauvinist German press', Radek said, 'had to admit that the proletariat of Germany was against Hindenburg and for Trotsky. Our policy at Brest Litovsk has not failed; it has not been an illusion but a policy of revolutionary realism.'[2] It was much better for the Soviets to have concluded peace only after the German offensive, because nobody could doubt that they acted under external compulsion. But then Radek voiced the war faction's disappointment with Trotsky: 'One may reproach Trotsky only for this, that having achieved so much at Brest he then joined the other side. . . . For this we have a right to reproach him; and we do so.'[3]

Trotsky once again, and more explicitly, justified his behaviour. Bukharin, Radek, and their friends, he said, saw in war the only salvation and so they were 'obliged, infringing upon formal party considerations, to pose the issue on a knife-edge. . . . With a weak country behind us, with a passive peasantry, with a sombre mood in the proletariat, we were further threatened by a split in our own ranks. . . . Very much was at stake on my vote. . . . I could not assume responsibility for the split. I had thought that we ought to retreat [before the German army] rather than sign peace for the sake of an illusory respite. But I could not take upon myself the responsibility for the leadership of the party. . . .[4]

This, as far as the records show, was the only time he openly stated that he had shrunk from superseding Lenin as the leader of the party. 'The danger of the split', he added, 'will have neither disappeared nor lessened if European revolution is further delayed.'[5] He admitted that he had misjudged German intentions, but he reminded Lenin that they had both agreed on breaking off the negotiations. He had, he said, a profound respect for Lenin's policy, but not for the manner in which Lenin's faction was putting its case before the country. They fostered apathy and defeatism, which were demoralizing the working

[1] Ibid., p. 22. [2] Ibid., p. 71. [3] Ibid., p. 72. [4] Ibid., p. 83. [5] Ibid., p. 84.

listening to the debates and, pointing at the Ambassador, poured out his detestation of the Kaiser and of German imperialism, the Congress applauded his courage. At heart Trotsky must have done the same. Kamkov was, after all, only repeating what he himself had done at Brest; and from the lips of Kamkov and Spiridonova the echoes of his own voice seemed to come back to him. It was only a few months since he had publicly, solemnly, and confidently vowed that the Bolsheviks would defend the honour of the revolution 'to the last drop of blood', and expressed the hope that the Left Social Revolutionaries would do likewise. It was an even shorter time since he had begged his comrades rather to declare that they had come before their time and go under in unequal struggle than wash their hands of the fate of the Ukraine. He had in the meantime followed Lenin, hoping that this might be the way to save the revolution. But at heart he could not condemn those who did not do so.

He was therefore acting a grimly paradoxical part when, on 4 July, he asked the Congress to authorize an emergency order which, as Commissar of War, he was about to issue.[1] The order was designed to impose severe discipline on Russian partisan detachments which threatened to disrupt the peace by self-willed attacks on German troops. The text ran as follows: 'These are my orders: all agitators who, after the publication of this order, continue to urge insubordination to the Soviet government are to be arrested, brought to Moscow, and tried by the Extraordinary Tribunal. All agents of foreign imperialism who call for offensive action [against Germany] and offer armed resistance to Soviet authorities are to be shot.'

He argued the need for this order with perfect logic. He was not going to discuss, he said, which was the right policy: peace or war. On this the previous Congress of Soviets, constitutionally the supreme authority in the state, had spoken the last word. What he was arguing was that nobody had the right to arrogate to himself the functions of the government and take war into his own hands. The agitation against peace, conducted among Red Guards and partisans, had assumed dangerous forms. Commissars who had stood for peace had been assassinated; commissions of inquiry sent from Moscow had been fired

[1] Trotsky, *Kak Vooruzhalas Revolutsia*, vol. i, pp. 266–74.

days later Tukhachevsky captured Simbirsk and announced this in a laconic message to Trotsky: 'Order carried out. Simbirsk taken.' At the beginning of October the whole of the Volga region was again under Soviet rule.

This victory had an electrifying effect, especially because it coincided with a grave political crisis. In Moscow, a Social Revolutionary, F. Kaplan, had just made an attempt on Lenin's life. Another Social Revolutionary assassinated Uritsky in Petrograd. In retaliation, the Bolsheviks proclaimed the Red Terror and ordered the shooting of hostages. During these events Trotsky was recalled to Moscow. He found Lenin recovering from his wound; and, having reassured Lenin and the Executive of the Soviets about the prospects of the campaign, he returned to the front. About the same time the Right Social Revolutionaries tried to reassemble the dispersed Constituent Assembly and to form a rival government at Samara, under the protection of the Czechs and Kolchak. The Social Revolutionaries wielded considerable influence among the Volga peasants; and even a mere symbolic revival of the Constituent Assembly threatened to embarrass the Bolsheviks. By recapturing the Volga region, the Red Army eliminated this threat. The movement for the Constituante, cut off from its peasant following, was reduced to impotence. The Social Revolutionaries found themselves at the mercy of Kolchak, who presently proclaimed himself dictator ('Supreme Ruler'), dispersed the rump Assembly, executed some of its leaders, and compelled others to seek refuge in Soviet territory. Thus the adherents of the Assembly were crushed between the millstones of the Soviets and the White Guards.[1]

Finally, the victory on the Volga gave a powerful stimulus to the growth of the Red Army. Peril had shaken the Soviets from complacent indolence; victory gave them confidence in their own strength. The work of preliminary organization carried on in the Commissariat of War began to yield results: commanding staffs had been set up; recruiting centres were functioning; a rough framework for an army was ready.

At the end of September Trotsky returned to Moscow and reorganized the Supreme War Council into the Revolutionary War Council of the Republic. The body had to decide on

[1] V. Tchernov, *Mes Tribulations en Russie.*

matters of military policy.[1] Under it were the Revolutionary War Councils of fourteen armies, each Council consisting of the commander of the army and two or three commissars. Trotsky himself presided over the War Council of the Republic. His deputy, who managed the Council's day-to-day work while Trotsky was inspecting the fronts, was E. M. Sklyansky. Trotsky himself paid generous tribute to the talents, energy, and industry of his deputy, describing him as the Carnot of the Russian Revolution. The histories of the civil war written during the Stalin era hardly ever mention Sklyansky, even though he had not been involved in the struggle between Trotsky and Stalin and died in 1925. But Lenin's published correspondence and, even more, the unpublished records leave no doubt about Sklyansky's crucial role in the conduct of military affairs. His was one of the extraordinary careers of the time. As a young graduate of the medical faculty of Kiev, he had been drafted before the revolution into the army as a doctor and soon became prominent in the clandestine military organization of the Bolsheviks. Trotsky met him only in the autumn of 1917; and he was so impressed by Sklyansky's 'great creative *élan* combined with concentrated attention to detail' that he appointed him as his deputy.[2]

The other members of the Council were Vatzetis, who had just been appointed Commander-in-Chief; I. N. Smirnov and A. Rosengoltz, the commissars who had served with Vatzetis on the Volga; Raskolnikov who commanded the Red flotilla at Kazan; and Muralov and Yureniev. Thus the victors of Kazan were now placed at the head of military affairs.

With their help Trotsky set out to overhaul and centralize the southern front. It was in the south that the White Guards now had their main strongholds. The strongest Bolshevik force in the south was Voroshilov's Tenth Army. But Voroshilov was refusing to overhaul his troops according to Trotsky's uniform pattern. The conflict had been brewing for some time. Stalin had spent most of the summer at Voroshilov's headquarters at Tsaritsyn and had lent his support to Voroshilov. Somewhat

[1] The Revolutionary War Council should not be confused with the Council of Workers' and Peasants' Defence (where Lenin presided, with Trotsky as his deputy), which co-ordinated military and civilian policies.

[2] Trotsky, *Sochinenya*, vol. viii, pp. 272–81.

Army. The Tsaritsyn group did not forgive Trotsky this humiliation.[1]

Trotsky spent the rest of the autumn and the beginning of the winter at the southern front. In the meantime, his opponents in Moscow, especially Stalin and Zinoviev, worked against him and tried, not without some success, to influence Lenin. Trotsky later recounted that, while he was at the front, Menzhinsky, the future chief of the G.P.U., warned him about the 'intrigue'. Menzhinsky said that Stalin tried to persuade Lenin that Trotsky was gathering around him elements hostile to Lenin. Trotsky frankly put the question to Lenin; and he relates that Lenin, embarrassed, did not deny the fact of the intrigue, but assured Trotsky of his complete confidence in Trotsky's loyalty. All the same, Lenin refused to become involved in the quarrel and exerted himself to compose it. Some time later he suggested that Okulov, the man whom Trotsky had left at Tsaritsyn to keep an eye on Voroshilov, should be recalled. Trotsky refused and this time brought matters to a head: he asked that Voroshilov be deposed from his command and transferred to the Ukraine, and that new commissars should be appointed to the Tenth Army. Lenin yielded, and Voroshilov had to go.

The Tsaritsyn group sought to revenge itself. It whispered that Trotsky was the friend of Tsarist generals and the persecutor of Bolsheviks in the army. The accusation found its way into the columns of *Pravda*, which was under Bukharin's editorship. On 25 December 1918 *Pravda* published a scathing attack on Trotsky by a member of Voroshilov's staff.[2] This coincided with a new attempt of the Left Communists to achieve a revision of military policy. Having failed in their opposition to the employment of officers, the Left Communists shifted their ground and demanded that the commissars should hold all commanding posts and that the officers should serve under them as mere consultants. The whispering campaign against Trotsky became

[1] In the anniversary report, mainly devoted to argument against the critics of centralization, Trotsky gave a deliberately exaggerated account of the Red Army's strength, saying that *The Times* of London, which estimated the army's establishment at half a million men, greatly underrated it. In truth, the establishment was still only 350,000 men. *Kak Vooruzhalas Revolutsia*, vol. i, pp. 332–41; *Pyat Let Vlasti Sovietov*, p. 156.

[2] The article bore the title: 'It 's High Time!' and was signed by Kamensky.

even deadlier: it was said that he delivered Communists and commissars to the firing squad. The accusation was brought before the Politbureau and the Central Committee by Smilga and Lashevich, two members of the Committee, who held important political posts in the army. (Lashevich, it will be remembered, had been in conflict with Trotsky because of the speech about 'squeezing the officers like lemons'.) The cases of the commissar Panteleev, who had been court martialled and shot at Svyazhsk, and of two other commissars, Zalutsky and Bakaev, who were said to have narrowly escaped execution, were brought to the notice of the Central Committee.

Trotsky replied to these charges in a confidential letter to the Committee.[1] He made no apology for the shooting of Panteleev, who had been court martialled for plain desertion; but he added that as far as he knew this was the only case of the sort which had occurred. More recently there was a misunderstanding in connexion with his order that the commissars should keep a register of officers' families in order that officers should know that if they committed treason their relatives might be victimized. On one occasion several officers went over to the White Guards; and it turned out that the commissars had not bothered to keep a register of their families. Trotsky then wrote that Communists guilty of such neglect deserved to be shot. Smilga and Lashevich apparently thought that it was at them that Trotsky had aimed his threat. Trotsky explained that this was preposterous. Smilga and Lashevich knew that he valued them as the best commissars in the army. He had uttered the threat 'as a general remark', aimed at nobody in particular.

On internal evidence, Trotsky's explanation seems to be true. His opponents did not support their charges by any specific instances, except the case of Panteleev. Nevertheless, Trotsky's orders were full of such blood-curdling threats; and although he may have uttered them merely to discipline his subordinates, they blotted his reputation; and the charges connected with them were levelled against him by Stalin's followers long after the civil war.

Trotsky asked the Central Committee to define its attitude towards his military policy and to remonstrate with *Pravda* for

[1] The letter bears no date but from inner evidence it is clear that it was written towards the end of December 1918. It has not been published. *The Trotsky Archives.*

having printed the accusation without prior investigation. He himself replied in *Pravda* with an attack on 'conceited, semi-educated party quacks', who spread distrust and hostility towards the officers. 'The general public knows almost every case of treason . . . but even in narrower party circles all too little is known about those professional officers who have honestly and willingly given their lives for the cause of the Russia of workers and peasants.'[1] The public should, of course, be informed about the instances of treason; but it should also know how often entire regiments perished because they were commanded by amateurs incapable of understanding an order or reading a map. He firmly rejected the new proposals that the officers should be mere consultants to the commissars. The idea was militarily worthless; and it was 'calculated to satisfy vindictive cravings'. The purpose of the Red Terror was not to exterminate or to degrade the intelligentsia, but at the most to intimidate it and so to induce it to serve the workers' state.

He took up this subject in a 'Letter to a Friend', which appeared in *Voennoe Delo* (*Military Affairs*) in February 1919.[2] The letter reveals the bitterness of the controversy. He wrote with scorn about the 'new Soviet bureaucrat', 'trembling over his job', who looked with envy and hatred at anybody superior to him in education or skill. Unwilling to learn, he would never see the cause of his failings in himself, but was always on the look-out for a scapegoat, and always ready to cry treason. Conservative, sluggish, and resenting any reminder that he ought to learn, this bureaucrat was already a baleful 'ballast' in the new state. 'This is the genuine menace to the cause of communist revolution. These are the genuine accomplices of counter-revolution, even though they are not guilty of any conspiracy.' The revolution would be an absurdity if its only result were to be that a few thousand workers should get government jobs and become rulers. 'Our revolution will fully justify itself only when every toiling man and woman feels that his or her life has become easier, freer, cleaner, and more dignified. This has not yet been achieved. A difficult road lies between us and this our essential and only goal.'[2]

This in a nutshell is the *leitmotif* of Trotsky's later struggle

[1] *Pravda*, 31 December 1918; *Kak Vooruzhalas Revolutsia*, vol. i, pp. 154–61.
[2] Trotsky, op. cit., vol. i, pp. 170–2.

Voroshilov's attacks. He reproached himself for having treated Voroshilov too leniently, for 'every discontent in the army is armed discontent'. Even in the civilian Bolshevik organization, he wrote, the margin of permissible controversy was narrow, from the moment when the party had passed from debate to action. The margin must be even narrower in the army; he must exact formal discipline. With much warmth he then recounted some of his conflicts with commanders and commissars, whom he had had to arrest and punish for breaches of discipline, but who, he hoped, would realize the need for this and would face him without bitterness in the future. Finally, he demanded a formal inquiry into the charges about the shooting of commissars.[1] He implied that Lenin and Zinoviev were not fully aware of the appalling conditions at the front. The attitude of the opposition resulted from weariness and strained nerves; and he was afraid that the party leadership, too, might succumb to this mood.

For the moment the matter was closed. The Left Communists, defeated at the congress, could not repeat their challenge. Their resentment still simmered; but in the subsequent crises of the civil war the need for discipline, centralization, and expert military leadership was generally accepted as a matter of course. However, the opposition in the party hierarchy, led by Stalin and Zinoviev, was as strong as ever—it merely shifted its ground from the issues hitherto debated to strategy and operational plans.

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The strategy of the civil war was determined by the fact that the Red Army fought on fronts with a circumference of more than 5,000 miles. Even a numerous, well-equipped, and superbly trained army could not hold all these fronts simultaneously. The war consisted of a series of deep thrusts by the White Guards now from this and now from that part of the outer fringe into the interior and of corresponding, even deeper, Red counter-thrusts. After the defeat of the Czech Legion, three major campaigns formed the climaxes of the civil war in 1919: Kolchak's offensive, undertaken from Siberian bases, towards the Volga and Moscow, in the spring; Denikin's advance from

[1] A commission of inquiry was formed, but apart from the notorious case of Panteleev, no evidence was brought to support the charges. It seems that the commission's verdict was made public, but I have not been able to trace it.

rein to Red Guards and partisans. At first Trotsky proposed firm action, and suggested to Moscow that the three commissars be removed from the Ukraine and replaced by convinced disciplinarians. He even complained about the 'softness' of his friend Rakovsky, who headed the Soviet Ukrainian government; and he asked that either S. Kamenev or Voroshilov should be appointed commander of the Ukrainian front, with a categorical assignment to subdue the guerrillas.[1]

From Moscow no reply came at first. The longer Trotsky stayed in the Ukraine, however, the more he felt himself overwhelmed by the prevalent chaos. He came to think that the military disorder could not be overcome before the economic and political condition of the country had become more normal. He could not, he reported to Moscow, centralize and discipline troops whom he was unable to feed, clothe, and arm. 'Neither agitation nor repression can make battleworthy a barefoot, naked, hungry, lice-ridden army.'[2] He asked for supplies from Russia, but in vain. In addition, the Ukrainian peasantry showed utter hostility towards the Soviets; and the Bolshevik leaders on the spot were half-resigned to defeat. The reshuffling of commanders he himself had proposed could not remedy these conditions. In the meantime Lenin began to urge him with increasing impatience to carry out the proposed change in the Ukrainian command.

At the beginning of July Trotsky returned to Moscow. This was the lowest point in his fortunes during the civil war. He admitted that he had misjudged the position on the eastern front when he opposed the pursuit of Kolchak. Now he had to answer strictures on his management of the Ukrainian front. In addition, the Commander-in-Chief whom he had promoted and backed had become the victim of scathing attacks. Stalin pressed for Vatzetis's dismissal and even charged him with treason. He proposed that Kamenev, the victor over Kolchak, whom Trotsky had so recently demoted, should be appointed Commander-in-Chief. Stalin himself, incidentally, had just successfully directed the defence of Petrograd against Yudenich;

[1] Trotsky believed that Voroshilov had in the meantime become a convinced adherent of his policy (cable of 17 May sent from Kharkov to the Central Committee. *The Trotsky Archives*). Now it was Lenin who denounced Voroshilov for 'pilfering' army stocks, &c. (Lenin's cable to Trotsky of 2 June).

[2] Message of 1 July 1919.

their perilous assignments, they ought to know the place they occupied in the affairs of the world. Lucidly, simply, without a trace of condescension, he surveyed the international scene. They should also see their own role against the background of world history, in the long perspective of mankind's slow, painfully slow, yet inspiring progress 'from the dark animal realm' to undreamt-of summits of civilization, towards which socialism was leading them. He turned his listeners' minds back to primitive man, who 'hobbling and limping, wandered through sleepy forests and who, gripped by superstition, created for himself little gods and tsars and princes'. Then man 'replaced the many gods by one God and the many little tsars and princes by one Tsar'. 'But he has not stopped at this. He has renounced tsars and gods and has made an attempt to become free master of his own life. . . . We are participants in this unprecedented historic attempt.' 'These hundreds of thousands of years of man's development and struggle would be a mockery if we were not to attain . . . a new society, in which all human relations will be based on . . . co-operation and man will be man's brother, not his enemy.' He then spoke about 'history's enormous furnace', in which the Russian national character was remoulded and freed from its langour and sluggishness. 'This furnace is cruel . . . tongues of flame lick and scorch us, but [they also] . . . steel our national character.' 'Happy is he', Trotsky exclaimed, 'who in his mind and heart feels the electrical current of our great epoch.'[1]

It was in the grimmest of moods that the Politbureau met on 15 October. At Orel the battle still swayed; and on its outcome hung Moscow's fate. There seemed to be little hope for Petrograd's defence. Under so gloomy an aspect did the situation present itself to Lenin that he proposed to abandon Petrograd and to gather all available strength around Moscow. He reckoned even with the possibility of Moscow's fall and with a Bolshevik withdrawal to the Urals.

Against this proposal Trotsky vigorously protested: Petrograd, the cradle of the revolution, must not be abandoned to the White Guards. The surrender of that city might have a disastrous effect on the rest of the country. He proposed that he himself should go to Petrograd to take charge of its defence.

[1] Trotsky, *Pokolenie Oktyabrya*, pp. 157–67.

whose enemy he had been supposed to be: 'In our commissars . . . we have a new communist order of Samurais, the members of which have enjoyed no caste privileges and could die and teach others to die for the cause of the working class.' He praised lavishly the commanders of the victorious armies, those who had been Tsarist generals and those who had risen from the ranks and had in civilian life been metal-workers or barbers. With especial warmth he spoke of the achievements of three army commanders: Frunze, the worker, Tukhachevsky, the Guard officer, and Sokolnikov, the revolutionary journalist. Then he outlined the prospect of the abolition of the standing army and of its transformation into a democratic militia inspired by the Socialist ideal, the militia of which Jaurès had once dreamt.[1] He had a few friendly words even for the Mensheviks who had, in the last emergency, rallied to the defence of the Soviets and were present at this congress. 'We appreciate very highly', he said, 'the fact that other parties, too, parties belonging to the opposition . . . have mobilized a certain number of their workers for the army. They have been received there as brothers.' A few months earlier he had threatened the Mensheviks that they would be 'crushed to dust' if they obstructed defence. But now he addressed himself to Martov, who had congratulated the Bolsheviks on their military and diplomatic successes. He expressed 'real joy . . . without any *arrière pensée* and without a trace of irony', because 'Martov has spoken about *our* army and *our* international struggle—he has used the word *we*, and in so doing he has added political and moral strength to our cause.'

Like other Bolsheviks, Trotsky looked forward to appeasement in domestic policy, which would allow the parties at least of the Socialist opposition to resume open activity. The curtailment of the powers of the *Cheka* and the abolition of the death penalty in January 1920 were intended as first steps in that direction. But these sanguine hopes were not to materialize.

The horrors of war had not yet receded into the past.[2]

[1] See 'Note on Trotsky's Military Writings', pp. 477 ff.

[2] Material for this and the next chapter has been drawn, *inter alia*, from Bubnov, Kamenev, Eideman, *Grazhdanskaya Voina*, vols. i–iii; Kakurin, *Kak Srazhalas Revolutsia*, vols. i–ii; and Frunze, *Sobranie Sochineniy*, vols. i–iii.

could not fail to see that its only salvation was a continent-wide federation of Soviet republics; and once Germany had acceded to that federation 'Soviet Italy and Soviet France will join a month earlier or a month later'.[1]

In the first week of March 1919 a significant event occurred within the walls of the Kremlin. In an old, imperial court of justice, Lenin opened a meeting of about two score of delegates from various foreign Left Socialist groups. The arrival of those delegates was in a sense the first breach in the blockade. Most of them had had to steal across frontiers: some of the expected delegates had been prevented by their governments from leaving their countries; others had been arrested *en route*. Having for a long time been completely cut off from the West, the Bolsheviks listened eagerly to what the delegates reported on the state of affairs abroad. The reports were confused and contradictory; but on balance they seemed to justify the expectation of early revolution.

The purpose of the conference was not quite clear. It was either to proclaim the foundation of the Third International or to make preliminary arrangements for this. The Bolsheviks were inclined to form the new International there and then, but they waited to hear the opinion of foreign delegates. The most important of these, the Germans, held that the groups represented at the conference were, apart from the Russian party, too weak to constitute themselves as a fully fledged International. However, an Austrian delegate who, after an adventurous journey, arrived in the middle of the debate, gave a startling description of Europe seething with revolution; and he passionately called on the conference to raise at once the banner of the new International. The conference responded: it constituted itself as the foundation congress of the Communist International. Thus, fathered by wish, mothered by confusion, and assisted by accident, the great institution came into being.

Its birth coincided with the ebbing away of revolution in Europe. The January rising in Berlin had been crushed; its reluctant leaders Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht had been assassinated. This was a turning-point in European history, for none of the waves of revolution that came in the following

[1] Loc. cit.

years equalled in impetus and impact the wave of 1918. The Bolshevik leaders failed to recognize the turning-point for what it was. The defeat of the January rising in Berlin seemed to them an episodic reverse, very much like their own setback in July 1917, to be followed by an aggravation of social strife. Greeting the foreign delegates in the Kremlin, Lenin told them: 'Not only in Russia, but even in the most advanced capitalist countries of Europe as, for instance, in Germany, civil war has become a fact. . . . Revolution has begun and is gaining strength in all countries. . . . The Soviet system has won not merely in backward Russia, but even in Germany, the most developed country of Europe, and also in England, the oldest capitalist country.'[1] Lenin was given to this illusion not less than Trotsky, although Trotsky, with his foible for indulging in breath-taking predictions, made the blunder appear even more egregious.

It is doubtful whether Lenin and Trotsky would have founded the International at this stage if they had had a clearer perception of the condition of Europe. They would, in any case, have gone on advocating the idea of the new International, as they had done since 1914. But it is a far cry from advancing an idea to imagining that it has become reality. In the period of Zimmerwald and Kienthal both Trotsky and Lenin had contemplated the new International not as a body representing a revolutionary minority and competing with the old 'social patriotic' International, but as an organization leading the majority of workers and replacing the old International. Trotsky had explicitly argued that, if they remained in a minority, the revolutionary Marxists might have to return to the old International and act as its left wing.[2] Nothing had been further from his thoughts or Lenin's than the intention of giving an assortment of small political sects the high-sounding label of the International.

And yet this was what they did in March 1919. Most of the delegates who constituted themselves the founding fathers of the Comintern represented small Marxist or pacifist sects nesting in the nooks and crannies of the European Labour movements. This might not have mattered in a truly revolutionary situation, for, in such a situation the extreme 'sect' as a rule, rises rapidly to influence and leadership. The Bolsheviks were not quite

[1] Lenin, *Sochinenya*, vol. xxviii, pp. 433–4.

[2] See above, p. 235.

'Colonial slaves of Africa and Asia! The hour of proletarian dictatorship in Europe will strike for you as the hour of your own emancipation.' From earlier classical statements of Marxist policy, the manifesto differed mainly in its emphasis on proletarian dictatorship, on the role of a revolutionary party, and in its aggressive opposition to bourgeois democracy. But if these were differences of emphasis rather than principle the idea of an alliance between Socialist revolution in the West and the colonial peoples of the East was quite new; it bore the hallmark of the Third International. Nevertheless, the manifesto was addressed primarily to Europe:

> The whole bourgeois world charges the communists with the destruction of freedom and political democracy. The charge is untrue. Assuming power, the proletariat only discovers the full impossibility of the application of . . . bourgeois democracy, and it creates the conditions and the forms of a new and higher workers' democracy. . . . The wailings of the bourgeois world against civil war and Red Terror are the most prodigious hypocrisy known in history. . . . There would have been no civil war if cliques of exploiters, who had brought mankind to the brink of perdition, had not resisted every step forward made by the toilers, if they had not organized conspiracies and assassinations and called in armed assistance from outside. . . . Never artificially provoking civil war, the Communist Parties strive to shorten as much as possible the duration of such war . . ., to diminish the number of its victims and, above all, to secure victory to the working class.

Far from forming a group of conspirators or from renouncing the patrimony of European socialism, the International prided itself on inheriting 'the heroic efforts and the martyrdom of a long line of revolutionary generations from Babeuf to Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg'.[1]

Not a month passed from the issue of this manifesto before revolution had gained important footholds in central Europe: Hungary and Bavaria were proclaimed Soviet republics. Bolshevik hopes soared: from Munich and Budapest the revolution would surely spread at once to Berlin and Vienna. The news reached Trotsky while he was mounting an offensive in the foothills of the Urals; and there, on the marches of Asia, he greeted the promise of the revolution's salvation coming from

[1] Trotsky, *Sochinenya*, vol. xiii, pp. 38–49.

the West. In 'Reflections on the Course of the Proletarian Revolution', written under the fresh impression of these events, he remarked: 'Once the Church used to say: *Ex Oriente Lux*. . . . In our epoch, indeed, the revolution has begun in the east'; but 'the revolution which we live through is a proletarian one, and the proletariat is strongest, most organized, most enlightened in the old capitalist countries'. Yet he had a foreboding about the strange course of events. Hungary had been the most backward land in the Austro-Hungarian empire. Bavaria was the most retrograde province of Germany. In both countries the peasants, not the workers, predominated; and both had traditionally been regarded as ramparts of reaction. Why was it that the revolution obtained footholds there and not in the centres of proletarian socialism?

He answered his own question, saying that although the proletariat was weak in the backward countries, the ruling classes there were weaker still. 'History has moved along the line of least resistance. The revolutionary epoch has made its incursion through the least barricaded gates.' The suggestive metaphor suggested more than Trotsky himself intended. He had no doubt that the revolution would advance to the heart of the fortress: 'To-day Moscow is the centre of the Third International. To-morrow—this is our profound conviction—the centre will shift westwards, to Berlin, Paris, London. The Russian proletariat has welcomed with joy the envoys of the world's working classes within the walls of the Kremlin. With even greater joy will it send its own envoys to the second congress of the Communist International to one of the western European capitals. An international congress in Berlin or in Paris will mean the full triumph of proletarian revolution in Europe and consequently all over the world. . . . What happiness it is to live and fight in such times!'[1]

Barely three months later the great prospects and hopes had gone with the wind. Soviet Bavaria had succumbed to the troops of General Hoffmann, Trotsky's adversary at Brest. White Terror reigned over the ruins of Soviet Hungary. The workers of Berlin and Vienna viewed with apathy the suppression of the two Communes. Germany and Austria, indeed the whole of Europe, seemed to be finding a new conservative

[1] Op. cit., pp. 14–30.

not merely to wait there for new developments in Europe, but to embark upon an intense activity in the east.

In a tone of disillusionment with the recently formed International, Trotsky suggested that a body directing the revolution in Asia might soon be of much greater importance than the Executive of the Comintern. The Red Army might find the road to India much shorter and easier than the road to Soviet Hungary. A 'serious military man' had suggested to him a plan for the formation of an expeditionary cavalry corps to be used in India. Trotsky repeated that the revolution's road to Paris and London might lead through Kabul, Calcutta, and Bombay. With the utmost urgency he made the following proposals: an industrial base should be built up in the Urals to make the Soviets independent of the strategically vulnerable Donetz Basin; a revolutionary academy should be opened in the Urals or in Turkestan; political and military staffs should be set up to direct the struggle in Asia; technicians, planners, linguists, and other specialists should be mobilized for this work, particularly from the Ukrainian Communists, who, having lost the Ukraine, should now help the revolution to establish itself in Siberia.[1]

These proposals bore little relation to what could and had to be done immediately to ward off a military débâcle. Together with this memorandum Trotsky forwarded two other messages with detailed proposals for the overhaul of the southern front. To these, it may be surmised, the Politbureau immediately devoted closer attention than to the suggested 'Asian reorientation'.[2] Nor was this train of thought firmly rooted in Trotsky's own mind. It came as an impetuous reflex of his own brain in response to an exceptional set of circumstances; and the reflex ran counter to the principal, European, direction of his thought. It is, nevertheless, instructive as a pointer towards the future. In milder form the circumstances which gave rise to these suggestions—Russia's severance from the West and the abeyance of revolution in Europe—would persist after the end of intervention and civil war; and the reaction to them would follow broadly the lines suggested by Trotsky. The centres of

[1] *The Trotsky Archives.*

[2] The influence of Trotsky's ideas may, of course, be traced in the work of the second congress of the Comintern and in the congress of the eastern peoples at Baku which took place a year later.

Soviet power would shift eastwards, to the Urals and beyond. Only Stalin, not Trotsky, was to become the chief agent and executor of this momentous shift, which could not but entail an 'orientalization' of the revolution's mental and political climate, an orientalization to which Trotsky was not assimilable. The road of the revolution to Peking and Shanghai, if not to Calcutta and Bombay, was to prove shorter than that to Paris and London and certainly easier than the road to Berlin or even to Budapest. It is a tribute to the fertility of Trotsky's mind that in a single side-flash it opened vistas upon the future which far surpassed the comprehension of most contemporaries.

Before the year 1919 was out, the Bolsheviks again hopefully faced west. The Ukraine and the southern provinces of European Russia were again under their control. The White Armies awaited the *coup de grâce*. The opposition of western European labour was at last seriously hampering British and French intervention. Only relations with Poland were in suspense. Poland was egged on by France to act as the spearhead of the anti-Soviet crusade. But Pilsudski, who already ruled Poland but not yet as dictator, adopted an ambiguous attitude. He cherished the ambition of conquering the Ukraine, where the Polish landed gentry had possessed vast domains, and setting up a Polish-Ukrainian federation under Polish aegis. But he hung fire as long as the Bolshevik forces were engaged against the White Guards, for he knew that Denikin's or Yudenich's victory would mean an end to Poland's independence. In strict secrecy from the French, who were arming and equipping his army, he concluded an informal cease-fire with the Bolsheviks. For a moment it seemed that the cease-fire would lead to an armistice and peace. In November 1919 the Politbureau deliberated over the terms of a settlement proposed by the Poles. It found the terms acceptable, and it commissioned Trotsky and Chicherin to work out the details.[1]

So confident were the Bolshevik leaders in the approach of peace that they put on a peace footing those of their armies which were not engaged in combat and transformed them into labour armies. On 16 January 1920 the Entente lifted the blockade from Russia; and immediately the Central Executive of the Soviets decreed the reforms already mentioned—the abolition of the death penalty and the curtailment of the *Cheka*'s powers. A few days later, however, on 22 January, Trotsky communicated to the Politbureau his apprehension that Pilsudski was preparing for war.[1] With Lenin's encouragement, he proceeded to strengthen the Red Armies on the Polish front.[2]

[1] See the excerpts from the records of the Politbureau, session of 14 November 1919, in *The Trotsky Archives*.

At the beginning of March the Poles struck. From the Urals, where he had been inspecting the labour armies, Trotsky rushed to Moscow. The peace reforms were stopped or annulled. The country was once again in a warlike spirit.

In view of what happened later, it ought to be underlined that at this juncture Trotsky stood for a policy of the strong arm towards Poland. For many months Chicherin had in vain addressed secret peace offers to Warsaw, urging a settlement of frontier disputes extremely favourable to Poland. Pilsudski ignored the advances and kept Polish opinion in the dark about them. Chicherin continued to make conciliatory proposals even after the beginning of the Polish offensive. His policy, however, aroused opposition within the Commissariat of Foreign Affairs, especially from Litvinov, his deputy. Trotsky intervened and firmly sided with Litvinov. He urged the Politbureau to stop the overtures. Pilsudski saw in them merely signs of Soviet weakness; and, as they had been made secretly, they failed to move Polish opinion towards peace. Trotsky demanded a return to open diplomacy which should enable the Polish people to see who was responsible for the outbreak of hostilities. Pilsudski settled this controversy, for shortly thereafter he found a pretext for breaking off negotiations, invaded the Ukraine, and seized Kiev. On 1 May 1920 Trotsky appealed to the Red Army to inflict upon the invader a blow 'which would resound in the streets of Warsaw and throughout the world'.

The Polish invasion stirred Russia deeply. For the first time the Bolsheviks now called for national not for civil war. To be sure, to them this was a struggle against 'Polish landlords and capitalists', a civil war in the guise of national war. But whatever their motives, the conflict let loose patriotic instincts and chauvinist emotions beyond their control. To the Conservative

[1] Trotsky's message to Zinoviev, Lenin, and Krestinsky in *The Archives*.
[2] Messages from the second half of February in *The Archives*.

elements in Russia this was a war against a hereditary enemy, with whose re-emergence as an independent nation they could not reconcile themselves—a truly Russian war, even though waged by Bolshevik internationalists. To the Greek Orthodox this was a fight against a people incorrigible in its loyalty to Roman Catholicism, a Christian crusade even though led by godless Communists. Some of those Conservative elements had at heart been in sympathy with the White Guards. But now that the White Guards had gone down in ruin, they were on the look-out for a pretext which would allow them to climb on the Soviet band-wagon without loss of patriotic and Greek Orthodox 'face'. The Polish invasion provided it. General Brusilov, Commander-in-Chief under the old régime, headed the movement of conversion. He placed himself at Trotsky's services and called upon all good Russians to follow in his footsteps. Thus, in addition to its revolutionary overtones, the war acquired its nationalist undertones. Pilsudski's troops did much to whip up the anti-Polish sentiment. Their behaviour in occupied Ukraine was overbearing; they began to establish the Polish landlords on their former domains; and they marked their victories by the shooting of prisoners of war and by pogroms.

To be carried on a tide of national unity was for the Bolsheviks a novel and embarrassing experience. Trotsky exerted himself to assert the party's internationalist outlook. He welcomed Brusilov's demonstration of solidarity with the Red Army; but he publicly repudiated Brusilov's chauvinist and anti-Catholic tone.[1] When the rumour spread that Brusilov would lead the Red armies against the Poles, Trotsky denied this and emphasized that the Polish front was under the command of Tukhachevsky and Yegorov, whose loyalty to the internationalist idea of the revolution had been tested in the civil war. At the height of hostilities, he publicly ordered the closing down of *Voennoe Delo* (*Military Affairs*), the periodical of the General Staff, because in an article on Pilsudski it had used language 'insulting the national dignity of the Polish people'. He further ordered an inquiry into the matter, so that the culprits 'should never again be entrusted with any work enabling them to influence the mind of the Red Army'.[2] (The incident has re-

[1] Trotsky, *Sochinenya* vol. xvii, book 2, pp. 407–8.
[2] *Kak Vooruzhalas Revolutsia*, vol. ii, book 2, p. 153.

Comintern tried to hit back at British positions in Asia, especially in Persia and Afghanistan, as Trotsky had suggested in the previous year. But before long British official policy wavered again: Labour's opposition to intervention had risen to a high pitch; and the Red Army's pursuit of the Poles had in any case exposed once more the futility of intervention. On 11 July Lord Curzon, the British Foreign Secretary, offered his government's mediation between the Soviets and Poland and also between the Soviets and that remnant of Denikin's army which, under Baron Wrangel, had entrenched itself in the Crimea.

Throughout June and July the Politbureau and the Commissariat of Foreign Affairs tried to grasp the trend of British policy. Trotsky repeatedly intervened in the debate and found himself in opposition to the majority view. Of this controversy there is a vivid account in Trotsky's confidential messages to Chicherin, Lenin, and other members of the Politbureau, and in Lenin's laconic remarks, in his own handwriting, found in *The Trotsky Archives*. In a memorandum of 4 June, Trotsky insistently urged the adoption of a conciliatory attitude towards Britain. He argued that British policy by no means followed a single line set on intervention, and that it was in the Soviet interest to keep it fluctuating. Soviet attempts to stage anti-British revolts in the Middle East, let alone a Soviet expedition to the Middle East, would tend to consolidate British policy in extreme hostility towards the Soviets. Last August he himself had set great store by the revolutionary movements in Asia; but now, in the light of fresh information, he argued that in the Middle East, at any rate, these movements lacked inherent strength.[1] The Bolsheviks ought to further revolutionary propaganda and clandestine organization, but avoid any steps which might involve them in risky military commitments. At best they could use the threat of revolution in the Middle East as a bargaining counter in diplomatic exchanges with Britain. But they ought to use every opportunity to impress the British with their desire to reach agreement over the East.

On the margin of this document Lenin remarked with some irony that Trotsky, like Krasin, was mistaken about British

[1] Trotsky added that even in Soviet Azerbaijan, in the Caucasus, which had a numerous industrial working class and old ties with Russia, the Soviet régime did not stand on its own feet.

But the Red Army still rolled on; and Moscow was all exultation.

At this stage of the campaign, from the middle of July to 7 August, the second congress of the Communist International was in session in Petrograd and Moscow. During the past year the European Labour movements had swung towards the International: leaders of great and old Socialist parties now almost humbly knocked at its doors. The congress discussed the terms of membership, the famous '21 Points', formulated by Lenin and Zinoviev, the tasks of the Communist parties, the fate of the colonial nations, and so on. But the debates were dominated by the thrilling expectation of the military *denouement* in Poland which would give a new and mighty impulse to European revolution. In front of a large war map Lenin daily gave the foreign delegates his optimistic comment on Tukhachevsky's advance.

At the beginning of the congress, Trotsky made a brief appearance in order to endorse the '21 Points' in the debate. He came back just before the end of the congress—the Red Army now stood at the very gates of Warsaw—to present the Manifesto he had written on behalf of the International. The delegates greeted him with a tributary roar of applause. In a crescendo of resounding phrases and images he surveyed the international scene in the first year of the Versailles Peace. He angrily denounced the 'Babylon' of decaying capitalism and tore the 'mask of democracy' from its face. 'German parliamentary democracy', he stated, 'is nothing but a void between two dictatorships.'[1] The delegates listened to him in breathless suspense; and the magic of his words and images was heightened as the battle, of which they thought him to be the inspirer, mounted to its climax. Yet Trotsky refrained from boasting, and in the manifesto he made no reference to the Red Army's victories. The delegates did not even notice his reticence. They could not guess what tense apprehension was hidden behind his self-confident appearance and resounding language. In this assembly, where even the most prudent men were carried away by joyous excitement, he alone refused to celebrate the victory, as the architect of which he was being acclaimed.[2]

[1] Trotsky, *Pyat Let Kominterna*, p. 89.

[2] Addressing the party cells of the Military Academy and of other schools,

Pilsudski's military party did its utmost to disrupt the parleys with Russia.[1] In Moscow, too, views were divided. The majority of the Politbureau favoured a renewal of hostilities. Some of those who did so expected that Pilsudski would not keep the peace anyhow; others craved for revenge. The General Staff discussed a new offensive. Tukhachevsky was confident that next time he would hold his victory parade in Warsaw. Trotsky relates that Lenin was at first inclined towards war, but only half-heartedly. At any rate, Trotsky insisted on peace and on the loyal observance of the provisional treaty with Poland; and once again he found himself in danger of being outvoted and reduced to dutiful execution of a policy he abhorred. From this he at last shrank. He declared that the differences went so deep that this time he would not feel bound by any majority decision or by Politbureau solidarity, and that, if outvoted, he would appeal to the party against its leadership. He used a threat similar to that which Lenin had, with overwhelming effect, used in the controversy over Brest; and he, too, achieved his purpose. In comparison with that controversy the roles were indeed curiously reversed. But the sequel was in a way similar, for now Lenin deserted the war faction and shifted his influence to back Trotsky. Peace was saved.[2]

The differences had gone deep. Yet it is doubtful whether any single Bolshevik leader, including Trotsky, was or could be aware of their full historic import, on which only the events of the middle of this century have thrown back a sharp, illuminating light.

It had been a canon of Marxist politics that revolution cannot and must not be carried on the point of bayonets into foreign countries. The canon was based on the experience of the French Revolution which had found its fulfilment and also its undoing in Napoleonic conquest. The canon also followed from the fundamental attitude of Marxism which looked to the working classes of all nations as to the sovereign agents of socialism and certainly did not expect socialism to be imposed upon peoples from outside. The Bolsheviks, and Trotsky, had often said that the Red Army might intervene in a neighbouring country, but

[1] An authoritative description of this tug-of-war was given by J. Dabski, the chief of the Polish peace delegation at Riga, in his memoirs.

[2] Trotsky, *Moya Zhizn*, vol. ii, pp. 193–4.

only as the ally and auxiliary of actual popular revolution, not as an independent, decisive agent. In this auxiliary role Lenin wished the Red Army to help the Soviet revolution in Hungary, for instance. In this role, too, the Red Army or the Red Guards had sporadically intervened in Finland and Latvia to assist actual Soviet revolutions which enjoyed popular backing and which were defeated primarily by foreign, mostly German, intervention. In none of these instances did the Red Army carry the revolution abroad. In the Polish war the Bolsheviks went a step farther. Even now Lenin had not become plainly converted to revolution by conquest. He saw the Polish working classes in potential revolt; and he expected that the Red Army's advance would act as a catalyst. But this was not the same as assisting an actual revolution. Whatever Lenin's private beliefs and motives, the Polish war was Bolshevism's first important essay in revolution by conquest. True, the Politbureau embarked on it in the heat of war, under abundant provocation, without grasping all the implications of its own decision. But this is the way in which great fateful turns in history occur: those who initiate them are often unconscious of what it is they initiate. This in particular is the manner in which revolutionary parties begin to throw overboard their hallowed principles and to transform their own character. If the Red Army had seized Warsaw, it would have proceeded to act as the chief agent of social upheaval, as a substitute, as it were, for the Polish working class. It will be remembered that in his youthful writings Trotsky had berated Lenin for 'substitutism', i.e. for a propensity to see in the party a *locum tenens* of the working class.[1] And here was indeed an instance of that substitutism, projected on the international scene, except that an army rather than a party was to act as proxy for a foreign proletariat.

This was all the more strange as in the course of two decades Lenin had fervently inculcated into his disciples and followers an almost dogmatic respect for the right of every nation, but more especially of Poland, to full self-determination. He had parted with comrades and friends who had been less dogmatic about this. He had filled reams with incisive argument against those Poles—Rosa Luxemburg, Radek, and Dzerzhinsky—who, as internationalists, had refused to promote the idea of a

[1] See above, pp. 90–7.

Polish nation-state, while Poland was still partitioned. Now Lenin himself appeared to obliterate his own efforts and to absolve the violation of any nation's independence, if committed in the name of revolution.

Lenin grew aware of the incongruity of his role. He admitted his error.[1] He spoke out against carrying the revolution abroad on the point of bayonets. He joined hands with Trotsky in striving for peace. The great revolutionary prevailed in him over the revolutionary gambler.

However, the 'error' was neither fortuitous nor inconsequential. It had had its origin in the Bolshevik horror of isolation in the world, a horror shared by all leaders of the party but affecting their actions differently. The march on Warsaw had been a desperate attempt to break out of that isolation. Although it had failed it was to have a deep influence on the party's outlook. The idea of revolution by conquest had been injected into the Bolshevik mind; and it went on to ferment and fester. Some Bolsheviks, reflecting on the experience, naturally reached the conclusion that it was not the attempt itself to carry revolution abroad by force of arms but merely its failure that was deplorable. If only the Red Army had captured Warsaw, it could have established a proletarian dictatorship there, whether the Polish workers liked it or not. It was a petty bourgeois prejudice that only that revolution rested on solid foundations which corresponded to the wishes and desires of the people. The main thing was to be better armed and better prepared for the next venture of this kind.[2]

We shall discuss in the next chapter the domestic experiences of the Bolsheviks which fed and reinforced this trend of thought. Here it is enough to say that the trend showed itself in the attitude of those members of the Politbureau who favoured a renewal of hostilities with Poland. Yet the old Bolsheviks could develop such views only privately and tentatively. They were not in a

[1] Klara Zetkin, *Reminiscences of Lenin*, pp. 19–21.

[2] The party historian N. Popov writes: 'Trotsky was opposed to the advance on Warsaw, not because he considered our forces insufficient . . . but because of a Social-Democratic prejudice that it was wrong to carry revolution into a country from the outside. For these same reasons Trotsky was opposed to the Red Army aiding the rebels in Georgia in February 1921. Trotsky's anti-Bolshevik, Kautskyist reasoning was emphatically rejected by the Central Committee, both in July 1920 in the case of Poland and in February 1921 in the case of . . . Georgia.' (*Outline History of the C.P.S.U.*, vol. ii, p. 101.)

position to state them in a more formal manner or elevate them to a principle. It was in the nature of such views that they did not lend themselves to public statement; and the Marxist tradition could not be openly flouted. That tradition was so much alive in all Bolshevik leaders that it inhibited the working of their own minds and prevented them from pursuing the new line of thought to its conclusion. Even three decades later Stalin would never admit that he favoured revolution by conquest, even though he had already practised it on a vast scale. How much more difficult was it for Bolsheviks to admit the fact even to themselves in 1920!

Yet an idea which is in the air soon finds a mouthpiece. Shortly after the Polish war, Tukhachevsky came forward as the advocate of revolution by conquest. He had not lived down the defeat on the Vistula, the only setback—and what a setback—he had suffered since his meteoric rise. He had come to Bolshevism only in 1918 as a young officer, and now, at the age of twenty-six, he was the most brilliant and famous general of the Red Army. He was unquestionably devoted to the Soviets, but he was the revolution's soldier, not a revolutionary. He was not inhibited by the party's traditions; and he drew his inspiration from Napoleon rather than from Marx. He did not understand why the Bolsheviks should go on mouthing anathemas against carrying revolution on the point of bayonets. He expounded his views in essays and lectures at the Military Academy and argued that it was both possible and legitimate for the Red Army to impose revolution on a capitalist country 'from without'.[1] Somewhat later he even proposed the formation of an international General Staff of the Red Army, which would direct revolutionary military activities in all countries. Intellectually impulsive, original, and courageous, he openly attacked the party's taboo. But he presented his case in so extreme a form that it did not gain much support. Other leaders of the civil war were inclined to accept his argument, properly diluted. There was, at any rate, a logical link between Tukhachevsky's view and their insistence that the Red Army should adopt an expressly offensive military doctrine.[2]

Trotsky struggled against this new mood. In the aftermath of

[1] M. Tukhachevsky, *Voina Klassov*, see, in particular, his essay 'Revolution from Without', pp. 50–60.

[2] See the 'Note on Trotsky's Military Writings'.

the Polish war, he warned against the temptation to carry revolution abroad by force of arms. The warning runs indeed like a red thread through his writings and speeches of this period.[1] His rational opposition to revolution by conquest was in a sense merely the obverse side of his almost irrational belief in the craving of the western working classes for revolution and in their ability to make it. He was so unshakably confident that the proletarians of Europe and America were already impelled by their own circumstances to follow in the footsteps of Bolshevism that he was firmly convinced of the absolute harm latent in any attempt to make the revolution for them or to probe and prod them with bayonets. He saw the world pregnant with socialism; he believed that the pregnancy could not last long; and he feared that impatient tampering with it would result in abortion. The solidarity which the Russian Revolution owed to the working classes of other countries, he maintained, should express itself mainly in helping them to understand and interpret their own social and political experience and their own tasks, not in trying to solve those tasks for them. In one controversy he angrily remarked of anyone who thought of replacing revolution abroad by the Red Army's operations that 'it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck and he cast into the sea'.[2]

Yet such was the strength of the new Bolshevik proclivity that it could not be altogether suppressed. It soon manifested itself again in the Red Army's invasion of Georgia..

Up to February 1921 Georgia had been ruled by a Menshevik government, with which the Soviets had signed a treaty during the Polish war. Nearly the whole of the Caucasus was already under Soviet control; and Menshevik Georgia was a thorn in its flesh. The claim of the Georgian Mensheviks to independent nationhood was rather spurious: before the October Revolution they themselves had ardently advocated Georgia's unity with Russia and had asked only for a degree of local autonomy. Their present separatism was a convenient pretext. The mere existence of Menshevik Georgia made it more difficult for the Bolsheviks to consolidate their régime in the rest of the Caucasus; and the Bolsheviks had not forgotten that the Georgian

[1] *Kak Vooruzhalas Revolutsia*, vol. iii, book 2, pp. 114, 124, 142–3, 206, 225–7 and *passim*.

[2] Trotsky, op. cit., p. 225.

Mensheviks had meekly submitted to the successive occupation of their country by the Germans and then by the British, and had severely suppressed the Georgian Bolsheviks. Nevertheless the Soviet government had solemnly committed itself to respect Georgia's independence, and it had recognized the Menshevik government. The Politbureau hoped that Georgia would eventually find the pull of the Soviet Caucasus irresistible, that its Menshevik rulers would not be able to govern the country in opposition to all its neighbours, and that the scene would thus be set for their overthrow by native revolutionary forces. Consequently, the Politbureau was inclined to wait patiently until the experiment had run its course.

Trotsky was therefore greatly surprised when, in the middle of February 1921, during an inspection in the Urals, he learned that the Red Army had marched into Georgia. He was on the point of leaving for Moscow to attend a session of the Central Committee; and before his departure he got in touch with Sklyansky and inquired who had issued the marching orders and why. It turned out that the invasion was a bolt from the blue to the Commander-in-Chief as well. Trotsky suspected that the adventure had been irresponsibly staged behind the back of the General Staff and of the Politbureau; and he intended 'to raise the matter in full session of the Central Committee' and to bring to book the presumed adventurer.[1] But the marching orders had been issued, with the Politbureau's approval, by the Revolutionary War Council of the Caucasus, on which Ordjonikidze, Stalin's friend and himself a Georgian, served as chief commissar. The Politbureau had considered the matter in Trotsky's absence. Stalin and Ordjonikidze had reported that a Bolshevik insurrection had, with strong popular backing, broken out in Georgia; that the outcome was in no doubt; and that the Red Army would merely shorten the struggle. The Politbureau, which naturally treated Stalin and Ordjonikidze as experts on Georgian affairs, accepted their advice.

The rising in Georgia did not, however, enjoy the popular backing claimed for it; and it took the Red Army a fortnight of heavy fighting to enter Tiflis, the Georgian capital. Like the other small border nations, the Georgians had long memories of

[1] *The Trotsky Archives.*

the eyes of the world he therefore bore a major share of responsibility for the invasion of Georgia.

In the Politbureau's behaviour over Poland and Georgia Trotsky saw mistakes, into which the party had blundered as if in a fit of absent-mindedness. He set his face against both 'mistakes', but he saw no inner connexion and no deeper significance in them. Up to a point he was right, because the party as a whole had entered the road of revolutionary conquest neither consciously nor deliberately. The invasion of Georgia was its only successful step on that road, and there was no lack of mitigating circumstances. Georgia had, after all, been part of Russia: it could not survive as a little 'bourgeois island' in the Soviet Caucasus. Yet there was an inner connexion between the Polish and the Georgian ventures, for both marked the initiation of a new current in Bolshevism.

The revolutionary cycle, which the First World War had set in motion, was coming to a close. At the beginning of that cycle Bolshevism had risen on the crest of a genuine revolution; towards its end Bolshevism began to spread revolution by conquest. A long interval, lasting nearly a quarter of a century, separates this cycle of revolution from the next, which the Second World War set in motion. During the interval Bolshevism did not expand. When the next cycle opened, it started where the first had ended, with revolution by conquest. It is a commonplace in military history that there exists a continuity between the closing phase of one war and the opening phase of the next: the weapons and the ideas on warfare invented or formed towards the end of one armed conflict dominate the first stage of the next conflict. A similar continuity may be seen to exist between the two cycles of revolution. In 1945–6 and partly even in 1939–40 Stalin began where he, and in a sense he and Lenin, had left off in 1920–1. Trotsky did not live to witness the momentous chapter which Stalin's revolutionary conquest has since written in modern history. His attitude towards the early symptoms of the trend was inconclusive. He was for revolution and against conquest; but when revolution led to conquest and conquest promoted revolution, he was confronted with a dilemma which, from his viewpoint, admitted no satisfactory solution. He did not press his opposition to revolutionary conquest to the point of an open breach. On the other hand, he

CHAPTER XIV

Defeat in Victory

At the very pinnacle of power Trotsky, like the protagonist of a classical tragedy, stumbled. He acted against his own principle and in disregard of a most solemn moral commitment. Circumstances, the preservation of the revolution, and his own pride drove him into this predicament. Placed as he was he could hardly have avoided it. His steps followed almost inevitably from all that he had done before; and only one step now separated the sublime from the sinister—even his denial of principle was still dictated by principle. Yet in acting as he did he shattered the ground on which he stood.

Towards the end of the civil war he initiated courses of action which he and the Bolshevik party could carry through only against the resistance of the social classes which had made or supported the revolution. The Bolsheviks had denounced bourgeois democracy as a sham concealing the inequality of the social classes and the predominance of the bourgeoisie. But they had pledged themselves to uphold proletarian democracy, guaranteeing freedom of expression and organization to the working class and the poor peasantry. No Bolshevik leader had repeated that pledge so often and so ardently as Trotsky. None repudiated it now as plainly. The paradox is all the more striking because at the same time he was unaffectedly opposed to carrying revolution abroad on the bayonet's point. Such opposition was consistent with the principle of proletarian democracy. If the working class of any country was to be its own master, then it was preposterous and even criminal to try to impose on it any social order 'from without'. But this argument applied *a fortiori* to the Russian working class: it, too, should have been master in its own country. Yet the policies which Trotsky now framed were incompatible with that *samodeyatelnost*, that political self-determination of the working class, which he had indefatigably preached for twenty years and which he was to preach again during the seventeen years of his open struggle against Stalin.

He promoted the new policies at first with Lenin's consent.

But as he proceeded, he found Lenin and most of the Bolsheviks arrayed against him and invoking the principle of proletarian democracy. His own ideas now bore the clear hallmark of that 'substitutism', which he himself had once denounced as the chief vice of Bolshevism, indeed, as the hereditary vice of Russian revolutionary politics. For, in his view, the party, informed by the proper understanding of the 'tasks of the epoch' and of its own 'historic mission', was to substitute that understanding and that mission for the wishes and strivings of the broad social forces which it had led in the revolution. Thus Trotsky now began to resemble that caricature of Lenin which he himself had once drawn.[1]

What accounted for this extraordinary transformation? What was it that made the armed and victorious prophet of revolution contradict the tenor of his own prophecy? Before an answer can be attempted, the economic and social condition of Russia must be briefly surveyed, for it was to that plane that the drama had now shifted.

. . . . . .

From the end of 1919 Trotsky devoted only a minor part of his attention to military affairs. The issue of the civil war was no longer in doubt; and in the latter part of 1920 he kept somewhat aloof from the conduct of military policy because of his differences with the Politbureau over the Polish war. But even earlier he had become absorbed in the problems of economic reconstruction. He entered this new field with the impetuous self-confidence which success at the Commissariat of War had given him; and he was inclined to apply there the methods and solutions which he had worked out and tested in the military field. On 16 December 1919 he submitted to the Central Committee a set of propositions ('Theses') on the economic transition from war to peace. Among the measures which he proposed, militarization of labour was the most essential. He had written this paper only for the members of the Central Committee, hoping to start a discussion in their closed circle. By mistake Bukharin at once published the paper in *Pravda*. The indiscretion gave rise to an extremely tense public controversy which lasted until the spring of 1921.[2]

The years of world war, revolution, civil war, and intervention

[1] See above, pp. 90–7.

[2] Trotsky, *Sochinenya*, vol. xv, pp. 10–14, 36.

had resulted in the utter ruin of Russia's economy and the disintegration of her social fabric. From a ruined economy the Bolsheviks had had to wrest the means of civil war. In 1919, the Red Army had already used up all stocks of munitions and other supplies. The industries under Soviet control could not replace them by more than a fraction. Normally southern Russia supplied fuel, iron, steel, and raw materials to the industries of central and northern Russia. But southern Russia, occupied first by the Germans and then by Denikin, was only intermittently and during brief spells under Soviet control. When at last, at the end of 1919, the Bolsheviks returned there for good, they found that the coal-mines of the Donetz valley were flooded and the other industries destroyed. Deprived of fuel and raw materials, the industrial centres of the rest of the country were paralysed. Even towards the end of 1920, the coal-mines produced less than one-tenth and the iron- and steel-works less than one-twentieth of their pre-war output. The production of consumer goods was about one-quarter of normal. The disaster was made even worse by the destruction of transport. All over the country railway tracks and bridges had been blown up. Rolling stock had not been renewed, and it had only rarely been kept in proper repair, since 1914. Inexorably transport was coming to a standstill. (This, incidentally, was one of the contributory causes of the Red Army's defeat in Poland. The Soviets had enlisted five million men, but of these less than 300,000 were actually engaged in the last stages of the Polish campaign. As the armies rolled onward, the railways were less and less capable of carrying reinforcements and supplies over the lengthening distances.) Farming, too, was ruined. For six years the peasants had not been able to renew their equipment. Retreating and advancing armies trampled their fields and requisitioned their horses. However, because of its technically primitive character, farming was more resilient than industry. The muzhik worked with the wooden *sokha*, which he was able to make or repair by himself.

The Bolsheviks strove to exercise the strictest control over scarce resources; and out of this striving grew their War Communism. They nationalized all industry. They prohibited private trade. They dispatched workers' detachments to the countryside to requisition food for the army and the town-

dwellers. The government was incapable of collecting normal taxes; it possessed no machinery for doing so. To cover government expenses, the printing-presses produced banknotes day and night. Money became so worthless that wages and salaries had to be paid in kind. The meagre food ration formed the basic wage. The worker was also paid with part of his own produce, a pair of shoes or a few pieces of clothing, which he usually bartered away for food.

This set of desperate shifts and expedients looked to the party like an unexpectedly rapid realization of its own programme. Socialization of industry would have been carried out more slowly and cautiously if there had been no civil war; but it was, in any case, one of the major purposes of the revolution. The requisitioning of food, the prohibition of private trade, the payment of wages in kind, the insignificance of money, the government's aspiration to control the economic resources of the nation, all this looked, superficially, like the abolition of that market economy which was the breeding-ground of capitalism. The fully grown Communist economy about which Marxist text-books had speculated, was to have been a natural economy, in which socially planned production and distribution should take the place of production for the market and of distribution through the medium of money. The Bolshevik was therefore inclined to see the essential features of fully fledged communism embodied in the war economy of 1919–20. He was confirmed in this inclination by the stern egalitarianism which his party preached and practised and which gave to war communism a romantic and heroic aspect.

In truth, war communism was a tragic travesty of the Marxist vision of the society of the future. That society was to have as its background highly developed and organized productive resources and a superabundance of goods and services. It was to organize and develop the social wealth which capitalism at its best produced only fitfully and could not rationally control, distribute, and promote. Communism was to abolish economic inequality once for all by levelling up the standards of living. War communism had, on the contrary, resulted from social disintegration, from the destruction and disorganization of productive resources, from an unparalleled scarcity of goods and services. It did indeed try to abolish inequality; but of

necessity it did so by levelling down the standards of living and making poverty universal.[1]

The system could not work for long. The requisitioning of food and the prohibition of private trade for the time being helped the government to tide over the direst emergencies. But in the longer run these policies aggravated and accelerated the shrinkage and disintegration of the economy. The peasant began to till only as much of his land as was necessary to keep his family alive. He refused to produce the surplus for which the requisitioning squads were on the look-out. When the countryside refuses to produce food for the town, even the rudiments of urban civilization go to pieces. The cities of Russia became depopulated. Workers went to the countryside to escape famine. Those who stayed behind fainted at the factory benches, produced very little, and often stole what they produced to barter it for food. The old, normal market had indeed been abolished. But its bastard, the black market, despoiled the country, revengefully perverting and degrading human relations. This could go on for another year or so; but, inevitably the end would be the breakdown of all government and the dissolution of society.

Such was the situation to which Trotsky bent his mind towards the end of 1919. To cope with it one of two courses of action had to be taken. The government could stop the requisitioning of food from the peasant and introduce an agricultural tax, in kind or money. Having paid his taxes, the peasant could then be permitted to dispose of his crop as he pleased, to consume it, sell it, or barter it. This would have induced him to grow the surpluses for urban consumption. With the flow of food from country to town restored, the activity of the state-owned industries could be expected to revive. This indeed would have been the only real solution. But a reform of this kind implied the revival of private trade; and it could not but explode the whole edifice of war communism, in the erection of which the Bolsheviks took so much pride.

The alternative was to look for a solution within the vicious circle of war communism. If the government was to go on requisitioning food and enforcing the ban on trade, it had to

[1] The reader will find a detailed and instructive account of war communism in E. H. Carr, *The Bolshevik Revolution*, vol. ii.

with his attempt to introduce this extreme form of compulsion of labour. The army was to become permeated with the spirit of civilian citizenship. Its detachments were to be organized on the basis of productive units. On the other hand, civilian labour was to be subjected to military discipline; and the military administration was to supply manpower to industrial units. The Commissariat of War was to assume the functions of the Commissariat of Labour.[1]

Lenin wholeheartedly supported Trotsky's policy. He clung to war communism, which could be made to work, if at all, only on condition that the measures proposed by Trotsky were successful. Nor did Lenin object to the assumption by the Commissariat of War of the responsibility for the supply of industrial labour. Lenin had had to build up the civilian branches of his administration from scratch; and, after the years of civil war, most of them were still in a rudimentary stage. The Commissariat of War had absorbed the best men; it had had first claim on the government's resources; it was directed by the most clear-headed administrator. Its machinery, formidable and highly efficient, was the most solid part of Lenin's administration, its real hub. It seemed a matter of administrative convenience to switch the Commissariat to civilian work.

No sooner had these proposals become known than they let loose an avalanche of protests. At conferences of party members, administrators, and trade unionists, Trotsky was shouted down as the 'new Arakcheev', the imitator of that ill-famed general and Minister of War who, under Alexander I and Nicholas I, had set up military farming colonies and ruled them with a rod of iron. *Arakcheevshchina* had ever since been the by-word for grotesque flights of military-bureaucratic fancy over the field of economic and social policies. The cry of protest rose in the Bolshevik newspapers. It came from Trotsky's old associates, Ryazanov and Larin, from the eminent Bolsheviks Rykov, Miliutin, Nogin, Goltzman, and from others. Weariness of civil war and impatience with the architect of victory mingled in these protests. As usually happens in a time of reaction from the tensions and sacrifices of war, people were willing to cover with

[1] On 27 December 1919 it was announced that the government had formed a Commission on Labour Duty, over which Trotsky presided.

was his Chief of Staff; Pyatakov was his representative in the Urals; and Stalin was chief commissar of the Ukrainian labour army. The organization maintained military discipline; and each labour army regularly reported its successes and failures on the 'fronts'. (It was Trotsky who first systematically applied military terms, symbols, and metaphors to civilian economic matters and thus introduced a fresh, vivid style in the Russian language, a style which later became ossified into a bureaucratic mannerism and spread to other languages.) Views about the economic efficiency of the labour armies were divided—it could, at any rate, not have been lower than that of civilian labour at the time. The Bolsheviks acclaimed the labour armies, especially after Trotsky had gone to some length to mollify the trade unions and had appealed to the labour armies for friendly co-operation with them.

He brought to this work his moral passion and theatrical *élan*, which led him, however, to exaggerate the significance of what he did and to cast a false glamour over what were at best sad expedients. This, for instance, is how he wrote in one of his Orders to the Labour Armies:

> Display untiring energy in your work, as if you were on the march or in battle. . . . Commanders and commissars are responsible for their detachments at work as in battle. . . . The political departments must cultivate the spirit of the worker in the soldier and preserve the soldier in the worker. . . . A deserter from labour is as contemptible and despicable as a deserter from the battlefield. Severe punishment to both! . . . Begin and complete your work, wherever possible, to the sound of socialist hymns and songs. Your work is not slave labour but high service to the socialist fatherland.[1]

On 8 February he departed with his staff for the Urals, on the first inspection of the labour armies. In *En Route*, the paper published on his train, he thus addressed his staff:

> The old capitalist organization of labour has been destroyed irrevocably and for ever. The new socialist organization is only beginning to take shape. We must become conscious, self-sacrificing builders of the socialist economy. Only on this road shall we find a way out, salvation, warmth, and contentment. We must begin from the foundations. . . . Our train is proceeding to the northern

[1] *Pravda*, 16 January 1920.

can help.' That way lay further disruption, further shrinkage of the labour force and final economic and political degradation.[1]

At the Central Committee his arguments carried no conviction. Lenin was not prepared to stop the requisitions. The reform Trotsky proposed looked to him like a leap in the dark. The government, he held, had already shown too much haste in preparing the transition to peace: Trotsky himself had just warned the Central Committee that Poland was about to attack. It seemed safer to stick to an established policy rather than tamper with the army's food supplies, which had, after all, been secured by the requisitions. Nor was that all. Lenin and the Central Committee had not yet lived down the illusions of war communism. They still hoped that the system, having rendered valuable service in war, would be even more useful in peace. Trotsky proposed to throw the economy back on to the treacherous tides of a free market. This was what the Mensheviks demanded. Did Trotsky agree with them? had he become a free trader? he was asked.[2] He was told that the party had advanced towards an organized and controlled economy and that it would not allow itself to be dragged back.

The Central Committee rejected his proposals. Only more than a year later, after the failure of war communism had been demonstrated with tragic conclusiveness, did Lenin take up the same proposals and put them into effect as the New Economic Policy (N.E.P.). This was then and still is hailed as a stroke of Lenin's genius, a rare feat of courageous, undogmatic statesmanship. In the light of the facts it seems that the feat was at least overpraised; and that when Trotsky later reproached Lenin and the Central Committee for initiating the most important changes in economic policy when these were overdue by a year or two, the stricture was not quite

[1] Trotsky, *Sochinenya*, vol. xvii, book 2, pp. 543–4. It is not clear, however, whether Trotsky was aware that his proposals, if accepted, would necessarily lead to the winding up of the policies of war communism, including those he himself advocated. In later years he argued that he had stood for militarization of labour only in the context of war communism. At the tenth congress of the party, however, when N.E.P. was introduced, he insisted that his labour policies retained their validity and that they were not necessarily connected with war communism. See *Desyatyi Syezd RKP*, p. 191, and *Moya Zhizn*, vol. ii, chapter xxxviii.

[2] *Desyatyi Syezd RKP*, loc. cit.

move towards it by cautious, well-measured steps. In the past Russia had always advanced by violent leaps and bounds; she would continue to do so. Compulsion of labour was, of course, unthinkable under fully fledged socialism; but it '*would reach the highest degree of intensity during the transition from capitalism to socialism*'. He urged the congress to approve disciplinary measures, 'the severity of which must correspond to the tragic character of our economic situation': 'deserters from labour' ought to be formed into punitive battalions or put into concentration camps.[1] He also advocated incentive wages for efficient workers and 'Socialist emulation'; and he spoke of the need to adopt the progressive essence of 'Taylorism', the American conception of scientific management and organization of labour, which had been abused by capitalism and rightly hated by the workers, but of which socialism could and should make rational use. These were then startling ideas. At the congress a minority denounced them and indignantly resisted the disciplinarian trend of Trotsky's policy. That minority consisted of the 'libertarians', the 'ultra-lefts', the 'democratic centralists', led by Osinsky, Sapronov, and Preobrazhensky, men with whom Trotsky would one day join hands against Stalin. Now he was their chief antagonist, and he swayed the congress.[2]

Soon afterwards he again expounded and elaborated his policy at a congress of trade unions. He demanded that the unions should discipline the workers and teach them to place the interest of production above their own needs and demands. The Central Council of trade unions was already split into two groups: one supported his 'productionist' attitude; the other, led by Tomsky, felt that the trade unions could not help defending the 'consumptionist' claims of the workers. Trotsky argued that the workers must first produce the resources from which their claims could be met; and that they should remember that they were working for the workers' state, not for the old possessing classes. Most Bolshevik trade unionists knew from experience that such exhortations did not impress hungry men. But since the party had endorsed Trotsky's policy, they could not oppose him in public. At the congress the Mensheviks became the mouthpieces of discontent. They attacked the labour armies. They denied the government the right to conscript

[1] Trotsky, *Sochinenya*, vol. xv, p. 126. [2] *Devyatyi Syezd RKP*, pp. 81–4, 123–36.

workers and deprive them of the freedom to defend their interests. They argued that compulsory labour was inefficient. 'You cannot build a planned economy', exclaimed Abramovich, the Menshevik, 'in the way the Pharaohs built their pyramids.'[1] Abramovich thus coined the phrase, which years later Trotsky was to repeat against Stalin. The Mensheviks were on strong ground; and the fact that their record in the revolution had been poor, even odious, could not detract from the logic and truth of their argument. Trotsky himself could not at heart contradict them when they argued that the wastage of the industrial labour force could not be stopped as long as the peasants were not allowed to sell their crops freely.[2]

His answer to the criticisms was little better than a piece of brilliant sophistry. Its historical interest lies in the fact that this has been perhaps the only frank attempt made in modern times to give a logical justification of forced labour—the actual taskmasters and whippers-in do not bother to produce such justifications. The crux of Trotsky's argument was that under any social order 'man must work in order not to die'; that labour was therefore always compulsory; and that Communists should approach the matter without cant, because they were the first to organize labour for the benefit of society as a whole. He came to deny by implication the significance of the differences in form and degree in which the natural compulsion of labour manifested itself under different social systems. Man had worked as slave, serf, free artisan, independent peasant, and free wage-earner. The natural compulsion of labour had been aggravated or softened by social relations. Man had fought against slavery, serfdom, and capitalism in order to ease it. The Russian Revolution had promised to ease it radically by means of rational economic organization. It was not the revolution's fault that, because of inherited poverty and the devastation of several wars and of blockade, it could not honour its promise. But the Bolsheviks need not have expressly repudiated that promise. This was what Trotsky appeared to do when he told the trade unions that coercion, regimentation, and militarization of labour were no mere emergency measures, and that the workers' state

[1] *Tretii Vserossiskii Syezd Profsoyuzov*, p. 97.

[2] The case for a change in policy which anticipated the N.E.P. was made at the congress by the Menshevik Dallin. Ibid., p. 8.

dismissed its leaders and appointed others who were willing to do his bidding. He repeated this procedure in unions of other transport workers. Early in September he formed the *Tsektran*, the Central Transport Commission, through which he brought the whole field of transport under his control. The Politbureau backed him to the hilt as it had promised. To observe electoral rights and voting procedures in the unions seemed at that moment as irrelevant as it might seem in a city stricken with pestilence. He produced results and surpassed expectations: the railways were rehabilitated well ahead of schedule—'the blood circulation of the economic organism was revived'—and he was acclaimed for the feat.[1]

But no sooner had the Polish war been concluded than the grievances and dissensions exploded anew and with greater force than before. He himself provoked the explosion. Flushed with success, he threatened to 'shake up' various trade unions as he had 'shaken up' those of the transport workers. He threatened, that is, to dismiss the elected leaders of the unions and to replace them by nominees who would place the nation's economic interest above the sectional interests of the workers. He grossly overstepped the mark. Lenin now bluntly dissociated himself from Trotsky and persuaded the Central Committee to do likewise. The Committee openly called the party to resist energetically 'militarized and bureaucratic forms of work': and it castigated that 'degenerated centralism' which rode roughshod over the workers' elected representatives. It called on the party to re-establish proletarian democracy in the trade unions and to subordinate all other considerations to this task.[2] A special commission was formed to watch that these decisions were carried out. Zinoviev presided over it, and, although Trotsky sat on it, nearly all its members were his opponents.[3] As a finishing stroke, the Central Committee forbade Trotsky to speak

[1] For the famous Order no. 1042 concerning the railways see op. cit., pp. 345–7. Later in the year Trotsky was placed at the head of special commissions which took emergency action to rehabilitate the industries of the Donetz valley and of the Urals.

[2] See the report of the Central Committee in *Izvestya Tsentralnovo Komiteta RKP*, no. 26, 1920, and G. Zinoviev, *Sochinenya*, vol. vi, pp. 600 ff.

[3] The Commission consisted of Zinoviev, Tomsky, Rudzutak, Rykov, and Trotsky. Later Shlyapnikov, Lutovinov, Lozovsky, and Andreev were co-opted. Of these only Andreev, who thirty years later was still a member of Stalin's last Politbureau, shared Trotsky's view.

frustration of the popular hopes aroused by the revolution. For the first time since 1917 the bulk of the working class, not to speak of the peasantry, unmistakably turned against the Bolsheviks. A sense of isolation began to haunt the ruling group. To be sure, the working class had not come to regret the revolution. It went on to identify itself with it; and it received with intense hostility any openly counter-revolutionary agitation. 'October' had so deeply sunk into the popular mind that Mensheviks and Social Revolutionaries now had to preface their criticisms of the government with an explicit acceptance of the 'achievements of October'. Yet the opposition to current Bolshevik policies was just as intense and widespread. The Mensheviks and Social Revolutionaries, who in the course of three years had been completely eclipsed and had hardly dared to raise their heads, were now regaining some popular favour. People listened even more sympathetically to anarchist agitators violently denouncing the Bolshevik régime. If the Bolsheviks had now permitted free elections to the Soviets, they would almost certainly have been swept from power.[1]

The Bolsheviks were firmly resolved not to let things come to that pass. It would be wrong to maintain that they clung to power for its own sake. The party as a whole was still animated by that revolutionary idealism of which it had given such abundant proof in its underground struggle and in the civil war. It clung to power because it identified the fate of the republic with its own fate and saw in itself the only force capable of safeguarding the revolution. It was lucky for the revolution—and it was also its misfortune—that in this belief the Bolsheviks were profoundly justified. The revolution would hardly have survived without a party as fanatically devoted to it as the Bolsheviks were. But had there existed another party equally devoted and equally vigorous in action, that party might, in consequence of an election, have displaced Lenin's government without convulsing the young state. No such party existed. The return of Mensheviks and Social Revolutionaries would have entailed the undoing of the October Revolution. At the very

[1] Many Bolshevik leaders explicitly or implicitly admitted this. See Lenin, *Sochinenya*, vol. xxxii, pp. 160, 176, 230 and *passim*; Zinoviev in *Desyatyi Syezd RKP*, p. 190. In a private letter to Lunacharsky (of 14 April 1926) Trotsky describes the 'menacing discontent' of the working class as the background to the controversy of 1920–1. *The Trotsky Archives*.

least it would have encouraged the White Guards to try their luck once again and rise in arms. From sheer self-preservation as well as from broader motives the Bolsheviks could not even contemplate such a prospect. They could not accept it as a requirement of democracy that they should, by retreating, plunge the country into a new series of civil wars just after one series had been concluded.

Nor was it by any means likely that a free election to the Soviets would return any clear-cut majority. Those who had supported Kerensky in 1917 had not really recovered from their eclipse. Anarchists and anarcho-syndicalists, preaching a 'Third Revolution', seemed far more popular among the working class. But they gave no effective focus to the opposition; and they were in no sense pretenders to office. Strong in criticism, they possessed no positive political programme, no serious organization, national or even local, no real desire to rule a vast country. In their ranks honest revolutionaries, cranks, and plain bandits rubbed shoulders. The Bolshevik régime could be succeeded only by utter confusion followed by open counter-revolution. Lenin's party refused to allow the famished and emotionally unhinged country to vote their party out of power and itself into a bloody chaos.

For this strange sequel to their victory the Bolsheviks were mentally quite unprepared. They had always tacitly assumed that the majority of the working class, having backed them in the revolution, would go on to support them unswervingly until they had carried out the full programme of socialism. Naïve as the assumption was, it sprang from the notion that socialism was the proletarian idea *par excellence* and that the proletariat, having once adhered to it, would not abandon it. That notion had underlain the reasoning of all European schools of Socialist thought. In the vast political literature produced by those schools the question of what Socialists in office should do if they lost the confidence of the workers had hardly ever been pondered. It had never occurred to Marxists to reflect whether it was possible or admissible to try to establish socialism regardless of the will of the working class. They simply took that will for granted. For the same reason it had seemed to the Bolsheviks as clear as daylight that the proletarian dictatorship and proletarian (or Soviet) democracy were only two complementary and

inseparable aspects of the same thing: the dictatorship was there to suppress the resistance of the propertied classes; and it derived its strength and historic legitimacy from the freely and democratically expressed opinion of the working classes. Now a conflict arose between the two aspects of the Soviet system. If the working classes were to be allowed to speak and vote freely they would destroy the dictatorship. If the dictatorship, on the other hand, frankly abolished proletarian democracy it would deprive itself of historic legitimacy, even in its own eyes. It would cease to be a proletarian dictatorship in the strict sense. Its use of that title would henceforth be based on the claim that it pursued a policy with which the working class, in its own interest, ought and eventually must identify itself, but with which it did not as yet identify itself. The dictatorship would then at best represent the idea of the class, not the class itself.

The revolution had now reached that cross-roads, well known to Machiavelli, at which it found it difficult or impossible to fix the people in their revolutionary persuasion and was driven 'to take such measures that, when they believed no longer, it might be possible to make them believe by force'. For the Bolshevik party this involved a conflict of loyalties, which was in some respects deeper than any it had known so far, a conflict bearing the seeds of all the turbulent controversies and sombre purges of the next decades.

At this cross-roads Bolshevism suffered a moral agony the like of which is hardly to be found in the history of less intense and impassioned movements. Later Lenin recalled the 'fever' and 'mortal illness' which consumed the party in the winter of 1920–1, during the tumultuous debate over the place of the trade unions in the state. This was an important yet only a secondary matter. It could not be settled before an answer had been given to the fundamental question concerning the very nature of the state. The party was wholly absorbed in the controversy over the secondary issue, because it was not altogether clearly aware of the primary question and was afraid to formulate it frankly in its own mind. But as the protagonists went on arguing they struck the great underlying issue again and again and were compelled to define their attitudes.

It is not necessary here to go into the involved and somewhat technical differences over the trade unions, although the fact

that the drama of the revolution revealed itself in a seemingly dry economic argument significantly corresponded to the spirit of the age.[1] Suffice it to say that, broadly speaking, three attitudes crystallized. The faction led by Trotsky (and later by Trotsky and Bukharin) wanted the trade unions to be deprived of their autonomy and absorbed into the machinery of government. This was the final conclusion which Trotsky drew from his conflicts with the trade unions. Under the new dispensation, the leaders of the unions would, as servants of the state, speak for the state to the workers rather than for the workers to the state. They would raise the productivity and maintain the discipline of labour; they would train workers for industrial management; and they would participate in the direction of the country's economy.

At the other extreme the Workers' Opposition, led by Shlyapnikov and Kollontai, protested against the government's and the party's tutelage over the unions. They denounced Trotsky and Lenin as militarizers of labour and promoters of inequality. In quasi-syndicalist fashion they demanded that trade unions, factory committees, and a National Producers' Congress should assume control over the entire economy. While Trotsky argued that the trade unions could not in logic defend the workers against the workers' state, Shlyapnikov and Kollontai already branded the Soviet state as the rampart of a new privileged bureaucracy.

Between these two extremes, Lenin, Zinoviev, and Kamenev spoke for the main body of Bolshevik opinion and tried to strike a balance. They, too, insisted that it was the duty of the trade unions to restrain the workers and to cultivate in them a sense of responsibility for the state and the nationalized economy. They emphasized the party's right to control the unions. But they also wished to preserve them as autonomous mass organizations, capable of exerting pressure on government and industrial management.

Implied in these attitudes were different conceptions of state and society. The Workers' Opposition and the so-called *Decemists* (the Group of Democratic Centralism) were the stalwart defenders of 'proletarian democracy' *vis-à-vis* the dictatorship.

[1] A detailed account of the debate can be found in Deutscher, *Soviet Trade Unions* (*Their place in Soviet labour policy*), pp. 42–59.

They were the first Bolshevik dissenters to protest against the method of government designed 'to make the people believe by force'. They implored the party to 'trust its fate' to the working class which had raised it to power. They spoke the language which the whole party had spoken in 1917. They were the real Levellers of this revolution, its high-minded, Utopian dreamers. The party could not listen to them if it was not prepared to commit noble yet unpardonable suicide. It could not trust its own and the republic's fate to a working class whittled down, exhausted, and demoralized by civil war, famine, and the black market. The quixotic spirit of the Workers' Opposition was apparent in its economic demands. The Opposition clamoured for the immediate satisfaction of the workers' needs, for equal wages and rewards for all, for the supply, without payment, of food, clothing, and lodging to workers, for free medical attention, free travelling facilities, and free education.[1] They wanted to see fulfilled nothing less than the programme of full communism, which was theoretically designed for an economy of great plenty. They did not even try to say how the government of the day could meet their demands. They urged the party to place industry, or what was left of it, once again under the control of those factory committees which had shown soon after the October Revolution that they could merely dissipate and squander the nation's wealth. It was a sad omen that the people enveloped in such fumes of fancy were almost the only ones to advocate a full revival of proletarian democracy.

Against them, Trotsky prompted the party to cease for the time being the advocacy and practice of proletarian democracy and instead to concentrate on building up a Producers' Democracy. The party, to put it more plainly, was to deny the workers their political rights and compensate them by giving them scope and managerial responsibility in economic reconstruction. At the tenth congress (March 1921), when this controversy reached its culmination, Trotsky argued:

> The Workers' Opposition has come out with dangerous slogans. They have made a fetish of democratic principles. They have placed the workers' right to elect representatives above the party, as it were, as if the party were not entitled to assert its dictatorship even if that dictatorship temporarily clashed with the passing moods of

[1] *Desyatyi Syezd RKP*, p. 363; A. M. Kollontai, *The Workers' Opposition in Russia.*

> the workers' democracy. . . . It is necessary to create among us the awareness of the revolutionary historical birthright of the party. The party is obliged to maintain its dictatorship, regardless of temporary wavering in the spontaneous moods of the masses, regardless of the temporary vacillations even in the working class. This awareness is for us the indispensable unifying element. The dictatorship does not base itself at every given moment on the formal principle of a workers' democracy, although the workers' democracy is, of course, the only method by which the masses can be drawn more and more into political life.[1]

The days had long passed when Trotsky argued that the Soviet system of government was superior to bourgeois parliamentarianism because under it the electors enjoyed, among other things, the right to re-elect their representatives at any time and not merely at regular intervals; and that this enabled the Soviets to reflect any change in the popular mood closely and instantaneously, as no parliament was able to do. His general professions of faith in proletarian democracy now sounded like mere saving clauses. What was essential was 'the historical birthright of the party' and the party's awareness of it as the 'indispensable unifying element'. Euphemistically yet eloquently enough he now extolled the collective solidarity of the ruling group in the face of a hostile or apathetic nation.

Lenin refused to proclaim the divorce between the dictatorship and proletarian democracy. He, too, was aware that government and party were in conflict with the people; but he was afraid that Trotsky's policy would perpetuate the conflict. The party had had to override trade unions, to dismiss their recalcitrant leaders, to break or obviate popular resistance, and to prevent the free formation of opinion inside the Soviets. Only thus, Lenin held, could the revolution be saved. But he hoped that these practices would give his government a breathing space—his whole policy had become a single struggle for breathing spaces—during which it might modify its policies, make headway with the rehabilitation of the country, ease the plight of the working people, and win them back for Bolshevism. The dictatorship could then gradually revert to proletarian democracy. If this was the aim, as Trotsky agreed, then the party must reassert the idea of that democracy at once and

[1] *Desyatyi Syezd RKP*, p. 192. See also p. 215.

initiate no sweeping measures suggesting its abandonment. Even though the régime had so often had recourse to coercion, Lenin pleaded, coercion must be its last and persuasion its first resort.[1] The trade unions ought therefore not to be turned into appendages of the state. They must retain a measure of autonomy; they must speak for the workers, if need be against the government; and they ought to become the schools, not the drill-halls, of communism. The administrator—and it was from his angle that Trotsky viewed the problem—might be annoyed and inconvenienced by the demands of the unions; he might be right against them in specific instances; but on balance it was sound that he should be so inconvenienced and exposed to genuine social pressures and influences. It was no use telling the workers that they must not oppose the workers' state. That state was an abstraction. In reality, Lenin pointed out, his own administration had to consider the interests of the peasants as well as of the workers; and its work was marred by muddle, by grave 'bureaucratic distortions', and by arbitrary exercise of power. The working class ought therefore to defend itself, albeit with self-restraint, and to press its claims on the administration. The state, as Lenin saw it, had to give scope to a plurality of interests and influences. Trotsky's state was implicitly monolithic.

The tenth congress voted by an overwhelming majority for Lenin's resolutions. Bolshevism had already departed from proletarian democracy; but it was not yet prepared to embrace its alternative, the monolithic state.

. . . . . .

While the congress was in session the strangest of all Russian insurrections flared up at the naval fortress of Kronstadt, an insurrection which, in Lenin's words, like a lightning flash illumined reality.

The insurgents, sailors of the Red Navy, were led by anarchists. Since the end of February they had been extremely restless. There had been strikes in nearby Petrograd; a general strike was expected; and Kronstadt was astir with rumours of alleged clashes between Petrograd workers and troops. The crews of the warships were seized by a political fever reminiscent of the excitement of 1917. At meetings they passed resolutions demanding freedom for the workers, a new deal for the peas-

[1] *Desyatyi Syezd RKP.*, pp. 208 ff.

ants, and free elections to the Soviets. The call for the Third Revolution began to dominate the meetings, the revolution which was to overthrow the Bolsheviks and establish Soviet democracy. Kalinin, President of the Soviet Republic, made a flat-footed appearance at the naval base; he denounced the sailors as 'disloyal and irresponsible' and demanded obedience. A delegation of the sailors sent to Petrograd was arrested there.

Soon the cry 'Down with Bolshevik tyranny!' resounded throughout Kronstadt. The Bolshevik commissars on the spot were demoted and imprisoned. An anarchist committee assumed command; and amid the sailors' enthusiasm the flag of revolt was hoisted. 'The heroic and generous Kronstadt', writes the anarchist historian of the insurrection, 'dreamt of the liberation of Russia. . . . No clear-cut programme was formulated. Freedom and the brotherhood of the peoples of the world were the watchwords. The Third Revolution was seen as a gradual transition towards final emancipation; and free elections to independent Soviets as the first step in this direction. The Soviets were, of course, to be independent of any political party—a free expression of the will and the interests of the people.'[1]

The Bolsheviks denounced the men of Kronstadt as counter-revolutionary mutineers led by a White general. The denunciation appears to have been groundless. Having for so long fought against mutiny after mutiny, each sponsored or encouraged by the White Guards, the Bolsheviks could not bring themselves to believe that the White Guards had no hand in this revolt. Some time before the event, the White émigré press had indeed darkly hinted at trouble brewing in Kronstadt; and this lent colour to the suspicion. The Politbureau, at first inclined to open negotiations, finally resolved to quell the revolt. It could not tolerate the challenge from the Navy; and it was afraid that the revolt, although it had no chance of growing into a revolution, would aggravate the prevailing chaos. Even after the defeat of the White Guards, numerous bands of rebels and marauders roamed the land from the northern coasts down to the Caspian Sea, raiding and pillaging towns and slaughtering the agents of the government. With the call for a new revolution bands of famished Volga peasants had overrun the *gubernia* of Saratov, and later in the year Tukhachevsky had to

[1] Alexander Berkman, *Der Aufstand von Kronstadt*, pp. 10–11.

employ twenty-seven rifle divisions to subdue them.[1] Such was the turmoil that leniency towards the insurgents of Kronstadt was certain to be taken as a sign of weakness and to make matters worse.

On 5 March Trotsky arrived in Petrograd and ordered the rebels to surrender unconditionally. 'Only those who do so', he stated, 'can count on the mercy of the Soviet Republic. Simultaneously with this warning I am issuing instructions that everything be prepared for the suppression of the mutiny by armed force. . . . This is the last warning.'[2] That it should have fallen to Trotsky to address such words to the sailors was another of history's ironies. This had been his Kronstadt, the Kronstadt he had called 'the pride and the glory of the revolution'. How many times had he not stumped the naval base during the hot days of 1917! How many times had not the sailors lifted him on their shoulders and wildly acclaimed him as their friend and leader! How devotedly they had followed him to the Tauride Palace, to his prison cell at Kresty, to the walls of Kazan on the Volga, always taking his advice, always almost blindly following his orders! How many anxieties they had shared, how many dangers they had braved together! True, of the veterans few had survived; and even fewer were still at Kronstadt. The crews of the *Aurora*, the *Petropavlovsk*, and other famous warships now consisted of fresh recruits drafted from Ukrainian peasants. They lacked—so Trotsky told himself—the selfless revolutionary spirit of the older classes. Yet even this was in a way symbolic of the situation in which the revolution found itself. The ordinary men and women who had made it were no longer what they had been or where they had been. The best of them had perished; others had become absorbed in the administration; still others had dispersed and become disheartened and embittered. And what the rebels of Kronstadt demanded was only what Trotsky had promised their elder

[1] See the correspondence between S. Kamenev, Shaposhnikov, and Smidovich with the commander of the Saratov area, and Tukhachevsky's report to Lenin of 16 July 1921. *The Trotsky Archives*. And here is a characteristic message sent to Lenin from Communists in the sub-Polar region on 25 March 1921: 'The Communists of the Tobolsk region in the North are bleeding white and sending their fiery farewell greetings to the invincible Russian Communist Party, to our dear comrades and our leader Lenin. Perishing here, we carry out our duty towards the party and the Republic in the firm belief in our eventual triumph.' Ibid.

[2] Trotsky, *Sochinenya*, vol. xvii, book 2, p. 518.

battle which in cruelty was unequalled throughout the civil war. The bitterness and the rage of the attackers mounted accordingly. On 17 March, after a night-long advance in a snowstorm, the Bolsheviks at last succeeded in climbing the walls. When they broke into the fortress, they fell upon its defenders like revengeful furies.

On 3 April Trotsky took a parade of the victors. 'We waited as long as possible', he said, 'for our blinded sailor-comrades to see with their own eyes where the mutiny led. But we were confronted by the danger that the ice would melt away and we were compelled to carry out . . . the attack.'[1] Describing the crushed rebels as 'comrades', he unwittingly intimated that what he celebrated was morally a Pyrrhic victory. Foreign Communists who visited Moscow some months later and believed that Kronstadt had been one of the ordinary incidents of the civil war, were 'astonished and troubled' to find that the leading Bolsheviks spoke of the rebels without any of the anger and hatred which they felt for the White Guards and interventionists. Their talk was full of 'sympathetic reticences' and sad, enigmatic allusions, which to the outsider betrayed the party's troubled conscience.[2]

. . . . . .

The rising had not yet been defeated when, on 15 March, Lenin introduced the New Economic Policy to the tenth congress. Almost without debate the congress accepted it. Silently, with a heavy heart, Bolshevism parted with its dream of war communism. It retreated, as Lenin said, in order to be in a better position to advance. The controversy over the trade unions and the underlying issue at once died down. The cannonade in the Bay of Finland and the strikes in Petrograd and elsewhere had demonstrated beyond doubt the unreality of Trotsky's ideas: and in the milder policies based on the mixed economy of subsequent years there was, anyhow, no room for the militarization of labour.

The controversy had not been mere sound and fury, however. Its significance for the future was greater than the protagonists

[1] Trotsky, *Sochinenya*, vol. xvii, book 2, p. 523.

[2] André Morizet, *Chez Lénine et Trotski*, pp. 78–84 and V. Serge, *Mémoires d'un Révolutionnaire*, chapter iv, describe the Kronstadt period from the standpoint of foreign Communists in Russia. Both writers accepted the party's case, although both sympathized with the rebels.

themselves could suppose. A decade later Stalin, who in 1920–1 had supported Lenin's 'liberal' policy, was to adopt Trotsky's ideas in all but name. Neither Stalin nor Trotsky, nor the adherents of either, then admitted the fact: Stalin—because he could not acknowledge that he was abandoning Lenin's attitude for Trotsky's; Trotsky—because he shrank in horror from his own ideas when he saw them remorselessly carried into execution by his enemy. There was hardly a single plank in Trotsky's programme of 1920–1 which Stalin did not use during the industrial revolution of the thirties. He introduced conscription and direction of labour; he insisted that the trade unions should adopt a 'productionist' policy instead of defending the consumer interests of the workers; he deprived the trade unions of the last vestige of autonomy and transformed them into tools of the state. He set himself up as the protector of the managerial groups, on whom he bestowed privileges of which Trotsky had not even dreamt. He ordered 'Socialist emulation' in the factories and mines; and he did so in words unceremoniously and literally taken from Trotsky.[1] He put into effect his own ruthless version of that 'Soviet Taylorism' which Trotsky had advocated. And, finally, he passed from Trotsky's intellectual and historical arguments ambiguously justifying forced labour to its mass application.

In the previous chapter we traced the thread of unconscious historic continuity which led from Lenin's hesitant and shamefaced essays in revolution by conquest to the revolutions contrived by Stalin the conqueror. A similar subtle thread connects Trotsky's domestic policy of these years with the later practices of his antagonist. Both Trotsky and Lenin appear, each in a different field, as Stalin's unwitting inspirers and prompters. Both were driven by circumstances beyond their control and by their own illusions to assume certain attitudes in which circumstances and their own scruples did not allow them to persevere—attitudes which were ahead of their time, out of tune with the current Bolshevik mentality, and discordant with the main themes of their own lives.

[1] At the beginning of 1929, a few weeks after Trotsky's expulsion from Russia, the sixteenth party conference proclaimed 'Socialist emulation', quoting *in extenso* the resolution written by Trotsky and adopted by the party in 1920. The author's name was not mentioned, of course.

It was only under the threat of the total decomposition of the revolution and of the Russian body politic that Trotsky advanced the idea of complete state control over the working classes. His alert, restless, experimenting mind boldly sought a way out in contradictory directions. In each direction it moved to the ultimate limit, while the main body of Bolshevik opinion marked time. He proposed the New Economic Policy when the party was still rigidly committed to war communism. Then his thought switched in the opposite direction, explored it to the end and reached the alternative conclusion: that the only remedy for the ills of war communism was cast iron discipline of labour. By now the main current of Bolshevik opinion had slowly moved towards the New Economic Policy, which it had compelled him to abandon. It was his clear, consistent, and swift logic—the logic of the great administrator impatient of confusion and bungling—that defeated Trotsky. His mind fixed on his objective, he rushed headlong into controversy, impetuously produced arguments and generalizations, and ignored the movement of opinion until he overreached himself and aroused angry resentment. The self-confident administrator in him got the better of the sensitive political thinker and blinded him to the implications of his schemes. What was only one of many facets in Trotsky's experimental thinking was to become Stalin's alpha and omega.[1]

In his aberration Trotsky remained intellectually honest—honest to the point of futility. He made no attempt to conceal his policy. He called things by their names, no matter how unpalatable. Accustomed to sway people by force of argument and appeal to reason he went on appealing to reason in a most unreasonable cause. He publicly advocated government by coercion, that government which can never be publicly advocated and is practised only *sub silentio*. He hoped to *persuade* people that they needed no government by persuasion. He told them that the workers' state had the right to use forced labour; and he was sincerely disappointed that they did not rush to enrol in the labour camps.[2] He behaved thus absurdly because before

[1] It was probably with these incidents in his mind that Lenin in his last will remarked on Trotsky's 'too far-reaching self-confidence and a disposition to be too much attracted by the purely administrative side of affairs'.

[2] It is a moot point to what extent Trotsky was led astray by his habit of applying European standards to Russia. It was one thing for a government to direct labour in an industrialized country and to shift workers, say, from Manchester to Birmingham or from Stuttgart to Essen, and quite another to direct Ukrainian peasants or Petrograd workers to factories and mines in the Urals and in Siberia, or in the Far North. Direction of labour in a more or less uniform industrial environment may involve a minimum of compulsion. It required a maximum in Russia.

his mind's eye he had no cold machine of coercion slowly and remorselessly grinding its human material, but the monumental and evanescent outlines of a 'Proletarian Sparta', the austere rigours of which were part of the pioneering adventure in socialism. The very absurdity of his behaviour contained its own antidote. In his candour he gave the people ample notice of the danger threatening them. He indicated the limits to which he was prepared to go. He submitted his policies to public control. He himself did everything in his power to provoke the resistance that frustrated him. To keep politically alive he needed broad daylight. It took Stalin's bat-like character to carry his ideas into execution.

The Bolshevik party still defended the principle of proletarian democracy against Trotsky; but it continued to depart from it in practice.

It was only in 1921 that Lenin's government proceeded to ban all organized opposition within the Soviets. Throughout the civil war the Bolsheviks had harassed the Mensheviks and Social Revolutionaries, now outlawing them, now allowing them to come into the open, and then again suppressing them. The harsher and the milder courses were dictated by circumstances and by the vacillations of those parties in which some groups leaned towards the Bolsheviks and others towards the White Guards. The idea, however, that those parties should be suppressed on principle had not taken root before the end of the civil war. Even during the spells of repression, those opposition groups which did not plainly call for armed resistance to the Bolsheviks still carried on all sorts of activities, open and clandestine. The Bolsheviks often eliminated them from the Soviets or reduced their representation by force or guile. It was through the machinery of the Soviets that Lenin's government organized the civil war; and in that machinery it was not prepared to countenance hostile or neutral elements. But the government still looked forward to the end of hostilities when it would be able to respect the rules of Soviet constitutionalism and to readmit

regular opposition. This the Bolsheviks now thought themselves unable to do. All opposition parties had hailed the Kronstadt rising; and so the Bolsheviks knew what they could expect from them. The more isolated they themselves were in the nation the more terrified were they of their opponents. They had half-suppressed them in order to win the civil war; having won the civil war they went on to suppress them for good.

Paradoxically, the Bolsheviks were driven to establish their own political monopoly by the very fact that they had liberalized their economic policy. The New Economic Policy gave free scope to the interests of the individualistic peasantry and of the urban bourgeoisie. It was to be expected that as those interests came into play they would seek to create their own means of political expression or try to use such anti-Bolshevik organizations as existed. The Bolsheviks were determined that none should exist. 'We might have a two-party system, but one of the two parties would be in office and the other in prison'—this dictum, attributed to Bukharin, expressed a view widespread in the party. Some Bolsheviks felt uneasy about their own political monopoly; but they were even more afraid of the alternative. Trotsky later wrote that he and Lenin had intended to lift the ban on the opposition parties as soon as the economic and social condition of the country had become more stable. This may have been so. In the meantime, however, the Bolsheviks hardened in the conviction, which was to play so important a part in the struggles of the Stalinist era, that any opposition must inevitably become the vehicle of counter-revolution. They were haunted by the fear that the new urban bourgeoise (which soon flourished under the N.E.P.), the intelligentsia, and the peasantry might join hands against them in a coalition of overwhelming strength; and they shrank from no measure that could prevent such a coalition. Thus, after its victory in the civil war, the revolution was beginning to escape from its weakness into totalitarianism.

Almost at once it became necessary to suppress opposition in Bolshevik ranks as well. The Workers' Opposition (and up to a point the *Decemists* too) expressed much of the frustration and discontent which had led to the Kronstadt rising. The cleavages tended to become fixed; and the contending groups were inclined to behave like so many parties within the party. It would

have been preposterous to establish the rule of a single party and then to allow that party to split into fragments. If Bolshevism were to break up into two or more hostile movements, as the old Social Democratic party had done, would not one of them —it was asked—become the vehicle of counter-revolution?

In the temper of the party congress of 1921 there was indeed something of that seemingly irrational tension which had characterized the congress of 1903. A split similarly cast its shadow ahead—only the real divisions were even more inchoate and confused than in 1903. Now as then Trotsky was not on the side of the controversy to which he would eventually belong. And now as then he was anxious to prevent the split. He therefore raised no objection when Lenin proposed that the congress should prohibit organized groups or factions within the party; and he himself disbanded the faction he had formed during the recent controversy.[1] This was not yet strictly a ban on inner party opposition. Lenin encouraged dissenters to express dissent. He liberally invited them to state their views in the Bolshevik newspapers, in special discussion pages and discussion sheets. He asked the congress to elect the leaders of all shades of opposition to the new Central Committee. But he insisted that opposition should remain diffuse and that the dissenters should not form themselves into solid leagues. He submitted a resolution, one clause of which (kept secret) empowered the Central Committee to expel offenders, no matter how high their standing in the party. Trotsky supported the clause, or, at any rate, raised no objection to it; and the congress passed it. It was against Shlyapnikov, Trotsky's most immitigable opponent, that the punitive clause was immediately directed; and against him it was presently invoked. It did not occur to Trotsky that one day it would be invoked against himself.

The arrangement under which opposition was permitted provided it remained dispersed could work as long as members of the party disagreed over secondary or transient issues. But when the differences were serious and prolonged it was inevitable that members of the same mind should band together. Those who, like the Workers' Opposition, charged the ruling group with being

[1] Among the leaders of the faction were, apart from Trotsky and Bukharin, Dzerzhinsky, Andreev, Krestinsky, Preobrazhensky, Rakovsky, Serebriakov, Pyatakov and Sokolnikov.

pectations, the 'advanced, civilized' West had turned its back on the revolution; and for decades Bolshevism had to entrench itself in its native environment in order to transform it. The brand of socialism which it then produced could not but show the marks of its historic heritage. That socialism, too, was to rise rough and crude, without the vaulting arches and spires and lacework of which Socialists had dreamt. Hemmed in by superior hostile forces, it soon delivered itself up to the new Leviathan-state—rising as if from the ashes of the old. The new state, like the old, was to protect and starve the nation, retard and accelerate its growth, and efface the human personality, the revolutionary-proletarian personality. It was another of history's ironies that Trotsky, the hater of the Leviathan, should have become the first harbinger of its resurrection.

When he was still at the threshold of his career, Trotsky wrote: 'A working class capable of exercizing its dictatorship over society will tolerate no dictator over itself.'[1] By 1921 the Russian working class had proved itself incapable of exercising its own dictatorship. It could not even exercise control over those who ruled in its name. Having exhausted itself in the revolution and the civil war, it had almost ceased to exist as a political factor. Trotsky then proclaimed the party's 'historical birthright', its right to establish a stern trusteeship over the proletariat as well as the rest of society. This was the old 'Jacobin' idea that a small virtuous and enlightened minority was justified in 'substituting' itself for an immature people and bringing reason and happiness to it, the idea which Trotsky had abjured as the hereditary obsession of the *Decembrists*, the *Narodniks*, and the Bolsheviks. This 'obsession', he himself had argued, had reflected the atrophy or the apathy of all social classes in Russia. He had been convinced that with the appearance of a modern, Socialist working class that atrophy had been overcome. The revolution proved him right. Yet after their paroxysms of energy and their titanic struggles of 1917–21 all classes of Russian society seemed to relapse into a deep coma. The political stage, so crowded in recent years, became deserted and only a single group was left on it to speak boisterously on behalf of the people. And even its circle was to grow more and more narrow.

[1] See above, p. 96.

When Trotsky now urged the Bolshevik party to 'substitute' itself for the working classes, he did not, in the rush of work and controversy, think of the next phases of the process, although he himself had long since predicted them with uncanny clear-sightedness. 'The party organization would then substitute itself for the party as a whole; then the Central Committee would substitute itself for the organization; and finally a single dictator would substitute himself for the Central Committee.'

The dictator was already waiting in the wings.

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