Trotsky Leon

Our Revolution: Essays on Working-Class and International Revolution, 1904-1917

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Содержание

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PREFACE

The world has not known us Russian revolutionists. The world has sympathized with us; the world abroad has given aid and comfort to our refugees; the world, at times, even admired us; yet the world has not known us. Friends of freedom in Europe and America were keenly anxious to see the victory of our cause; they watched our successes and our defeats with breathless interest; yet they were concerned with material results. Our views, our party affiliations, our factional divisions, our theoretical gropings, our ideological constructions, to us the leading lights in our revolutionary struggles, were foreign to the world. All this was supposed to be an internal Russian affair.

The Revolution has now ceased to be an internal Russian affair. It has become of world-wide import. It has started to

influence governments and peoples. What was not long ago a theoretical dispute between two "underground" revolutionary circles, has grown into a concrete historical power determining the fate of nations. What was the individual conception of individual revolutionary leaders is now ruling millions.

The world is now vitally interested in understanding Russia, in learning the history of our Revolution which is the history of the great Russian nation for the last fifty years. This involves, however, knowing not only events, but also the development of thoughts, of aims, of ideas that underlie and direct events; gaining an insight into the immense volume of intellectual work which recent decades have accumulated in revolutionary Russia.

We have selected Leon Trotzky's contribution to revolutionary thought, not because he is now in the limelight of history, but because his conceptions represent a very definite, a clear-cut and intrinsically consistent trend of revolutionary thought, quite apart from that of other leaders. We do not agree with many of Trotzky's ideas and policies, yet we cannot overlook the fact that these ideas have become predominant in the present phase of the Russian Revolution and that they are bound to give their stamp to Russian democracy in the years to come, whether the present government remains in power or not.

The reader will see that Trotzky's views as applied in Bolsheviki ruled Russia are not of recent origin. They were formed in the course of the First Russian Revolution of 1905, in which Trotzky was one of the leaders. They were developed

and strengthened in the following years of reaction, when many a progressive group went to seek compromises with the absolutist forces. They became particularly firm through the world war and the circumstances that led to the establishment of a republican order in Russia. Perhaps many a grievous misunderstanding and misinterpretation would have been avoided had thinking America known that those conceptions of Trotzky were not created on the spur of the moment, but were the result of a life-long work in the service of the Revolution.

Trotzky's writings, besides their theoretical and political value, represent a vigor of style and a clarity of expression unique in Russian revolutionary literature.

M.J. Olgin.

New York, February 16th, 1918.

LEON TROTZKY
BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

Trotzky is a man of about forty. He is tall, strong, angular; his appearance as well as his speech give the impression of boldness and vigor. His voice is a high tenor ringing with metal. And even in his quiet moments he resembles a compressed spring.

He is always aggressive. He is full of passion, – that white-hot, vibrating mental passion that characterizes the intellectual Jew. On the platform, as well as in private life, he bears an air of peculiar importance, an indefinable something that says very distinctly: "Here is a man who knows his value and feels himself chosen for superior aims." Yet Trotzky is not imposing. He is almost modest. He is detached. In the depths of his eyes there is a lingering sadness.

It was only natural that he, a gifted college youth with a strong avidity for theoretical thinking, should have exchanged, some twenty years ago, the somber class-rooms of the University of Odessa for the fresh breezes of revolutionary activity. That was the way of most gifted Russian youths. That especially was the way of educated young Jews whose people were being crushed under the steam-roller of the Russian bureaucracy.

In the last years of the nineteenth century there was hardly enough opportunity to display unusual energy in revolutionary

work. Small circles of picked workingmen, assembling weekly under great secrecy somewhere in a backyard cabin in a suburb, to take a course in sociology or history or economics; now and then a "mass" meeting of a few score laborers gathered in the woods; revolutionary appeals and pamphlets printed on a secret press and circulated both among the educated classes and among the people; on rare occasions, an open manifestation of revolutionary intellectuals, such as a meeting of students within the walls of the University – this was practically all that could be done in those early days of Russian revolution. Into this work of preparation, Trotzky threw himself with all his energy. Here he came into the closest contact with the masses of labor. Here he acquainted himself with the psychology and aspirations of working and suffering Russia. This was the rich soil of practical experience that ever since has fed his revolutionary ardor.

His first period of work was short. In 1900 we find him already in solitary confinement in the prisons of Odessa, devouring book after book to satisfy his mental hunger. No true revolutionist was ever made downhearted by prison, least of all Trotzky, who knew it was a brief interval of enforced idleness between periods of activity. After two and a half years of prison "vacation" (as the confinement was called in revolutionary jargon) Trotzky was exiled to Eastern Siberia, to Ust-Kut, on the Lena River, where he arrived early in 1902, only to seize the first opportunity to escape.

Again he resumed his work, dividing his time between

the revolutionary committees in Russia and the revolutionary colonies abroad. 1902 and 1903 were years of growth for the labor movement and of Social-Democratic influence over the working masses. Trotzky, an uncompromising Marxist, an outspoken adherent of the theory that only the revolutionary workingmen would be able to establish democracy in Russia, devoted much of his energy to the task of uniting the various Social-Democratic circles and groups in the various cities of Russia into one strong Social-Democratic Party, with a clear program and well-defined tactics. This required a series of activities both among the local committees and in the Social-Democratic literature which was conveniently published abroad.

It was in connection with this work that Trotzky's first pamphlet was published and widely read. It was entitled: *The Second Convention of The Russian Social-Democratic Labor Party* (Geneva, 1903), and dealt with the controversies between the two factions of Russian Social-Democracy which later became known as the Bolsheviki and the Mensheviki. Trotzky's contribution was an attempt at reconciliation between the two warring camps which professed the same Marxian theory and pursued the same revolutionary aim. The attempt failed, as did many others, yet Trotzky never gave up hope of uniting the alienated brothers.

On the eve of the Revolution of 1905, Trotzky was already a revolutionary journalist of high repute. We admired the vigor of his style, the lucidity of his thought and the straightness of his

expression. Articles bearing the pseudonym "N. Trotzky" were an intellectual treat, and invariably aroused heated discussions. It may not be out of place to say a few words about this pseudonym. Many an amazing comment has been made in the American press on the Jew Bronstein "camouflaging" under a Russian name, Trotzky. It seems to be little known in this country that to assume a pen name is a practice widely followed in Russia, not only among revolutionary writers. Thus "Gorki" is a pseudonym; "Shchedrin" (Saltykov) is a pseudonym. "Fyodor Sologub" is a pseudonym. As to revolutionary writers, the very character of their work has compelled them to hide their names to escape the secret police. Ulyanov, therefore, became "Lenin," and Bronstein became "Trotzky." As to his "camouflaging" as a Russian, this assertion is based on sheer ignorance. Trotzky is not a genuine Russian name – no more so than Ostrovski or Levine. True, there was a Russian playwright Ostrovski, and Tolstoi gave his main figure in *Anna Karenin* the name of Levine. Yet Ostrovski and Levine are well known in Russia as Jewish names, and so is Trotzky. I have never heard of a Gentile bearing the name Trotzky. Trotzky has never concealed his Jewish nationality. He was too proud to dissimulate. Pride is, perhaps, one of the dominant traits of his powerful personality.

Revolutionary Russia did not question the race or nationality of a writer or leader. One admired Trotzky's power over emotion, the depth of his convictions, the vehemence of his attacks on the opponents of the Revolution. As early as 1904, one line

of his revolutionary conceptions became quite conspicuous: *his opposition to the liberal movement in Russia*. In a series of essays in the Social-Democratic *Iskra* (*Spark*), in a collection of his essays published in Geneva under the title *Before January Ninth*, he unremittingly branded the Liberals for lack of revolutionary spirit, for cowardice in face of a hateful autocracy, for failure to frame and to defend a thoroughly democratic program, for readiness to compromise with the rulers on minor concessions and thus to betray the cause of the Revolution. No one else was as eloquent, as incisive in pointing out the timidity and meekness of the Zemstvo opposition (Zemstvo were the local representative bodies for the care of local affairs, and the Liberal land owners constituted the leading party in those bodies) as the young revolutionary agitator, Trotzky. Trotzky's fury against the wavering policy of the well-to-do Liberals was only a manifestation of another trait of his character: *his desire for clarity in political affairs*. Trotzky could not conceive of half-way measures, of "diplomatic" silence over vital topics, of cunning moves and concealed designs in political struggles. The attitude of a Milukov, criticizing the government and yet willing to acquiesce in a monarchy of a Prussian brand, criticizing the revolutionists and yet secretly pleased with the horror they inflicted upon Romanoff and his satellites, was simply incompatible with Trotzky's very nature and aroused his impassioned contempt. To him, black was always black, and white was white, and political conceptions ought to be so clear

as to find adequate expression in a few simple phrases.

Trotzky's own political line was the Revolution – a violent uprising of the masses, headed by organized labor, forcibly to overthrow bureaucracy and establish democratic freedom. With what an outburst of blazing joy he greeted the upheaval of January 9, 1905 – the first great mass-movement in Russia with clear political aims: "The Revolution has come!" he shouted in an ecstatic essay completed on January 20th. "The Revolution has come. One move of hers has lifted the people over scores of steps, up which in times of peace we would have had to drag ourselves with hardships and fatigue. The Revolution has come and destroyed the plans of so many politicians who had dared to make their little political calculations with no regard for the master, the revolutionary people. The Revolution has come and destroyed scores of superstitions, and has manifested the power of the program which is founded on the revolutionary logic of the development of the masses… The Revolution has come and the period of our infancy has passed."

The Revolution filled the entire year of 1905 with the battle cries of ever-increasing revolutionary masses. The political strike became a powerful weapon. The village revolts spread like wild-fire. The government became frightened. It was under the sign of this great conflagration that Trotzky framed his theory of *immediate transition from absolutism to a Socialist order*. His line of argument was very simple. The working class, he wrote, was the only real revolutionary power. The bourgeoisie was weak

and incapable of adroit resistance. The intellectual groups were of no account. The peasantry was politically primitive, yet it had an overwhelming desire for land. "Once the Revolution is victorious, political power necessarily passes into the hands of the class that has played a leading rôle in the struggle, and that is the working class." To secure permanent power, the working class would have to win over the millions of peasants. This would be possible by recognizing all the agrarian changes completed by the peasants in time of the revolution and by a radical agrarian legislation. "Once in power, the proletariat will appear before the peasantry as its liberator." On the other hand, having secured its class rule over Russia, why should the proletariat help to establish parliamentary rule, which is the rule of the bourgeois classes over the people? "To imagine that Social-Democracy participates in the Provisional Government, playing a leading rôle in the period of revolutionary democratic reconstruction, insisting on the most radical reforms and all the time enjoying the aid and support of the organized proletariat, – only to step aside when the democratic program is put into operation, to leave the completed building at the disposal of the bourgeois parties and thus to open an era of parliamentary politics where Social-Democracy forms only a party of opposition, – to imagine this would mean to compromise the very idea of a labor government." Moreover, "once the representatives of the proletariat enter the government, not as powerless hostages, but as a leading force, the divide between the minimum-program and the maximum-

program automatically disappears, collectivism becomes the order of the day," since "political supremacy of the proletariat is incompatible with its economic slavery." It was precisely the same program which Trotzky is at present attempting to put into operation. This program has been his guiding star for the last twelve years.

In the fall of 1905 it looked as if Trotzky's hope was near its realization. The October strike brought autocracy to its knees. A Constitution was promised. A Soviet (Council of Workmen's Deputies) was formed in Petersburg to conduct the Revolution. Trotzky became one of the strongest leaders of the Council. It was in those months that we became fully aware of two qualities of Trotzky's which helped him to master men: his power as a speaker, and his ability to write short, stirring articles comprehensible to the masses. In the latter ability nobody equals him among Russian Socialists. The leaders of Russian Social-Democracy were wont to address themselves to the intellectual readers. Socialist writers of the early period of the Revolution were seldom confronted with the necessity of writing for plain people. Trotzky was the best among the few who, in the stormy months of the 1905 revolution, were able to appeal to the masses in brief, strong, yet dignified articles full of thought, vision, and emotion.

The Soviet was struggling in a desperate situation. Autocracy had promised freedom, yet military rule was becoming ever more atrocious. The sluices of popular revolutionary movement were

open, yet revolutionary energy was being gradually exhausted. The Soviet acted as a true revolutionary government, ignoring the government of the Romanoffs, giving orders to the workingmen of the country, keeping a watchful eye on political events; yet the government of the old régime was regaining its self-confidence and preparing for a final blow. The air was full of bad omens.

It required an unusual degree of revolutionary faith and vigor to conduct the affairs of the Soviet. Trotzky was the man of the hour. First a member of the Executive Committee, then the chairman of the Soviet, he was practically in the very vortex of the Revolution. He addressed meetings, he ordered strikes, he provided the vanguard of the workingmen with firearms; he held conferences with representatives of labor unions throughout the country, and – the irony of history – he repeatedly appeared before the Ministers of the old régime as a representative of labor democracy to demand from them the release of a prisoner or the abolition of some measures obnoxious to labor. It was in this school of the Soviet that Trotzky learned to see events in a national aspect, and it was the very existence of the Soviet which confirmed his belief in the possibility of a revolutionary proletarian dictatorship. Looking backward at the activities of the Soviet, he thus characterized that prototype of the present revolutionary government in Russia. "The Soviet," he wrote, "was the organized authority of the masses themselves over their separate members. This was a true, unadulterated democracy, without a two-chamber system,

without a professional bureaucracy, with the right of the voters to recall their representative at will and to substitute another." In short, it was the same type of democracy Trotzky and Lenin are trying to make permanent in present-day Russia.

The black storm soon broke loose. Trotzky was arrested with the other members of the "revolutionary government," after the Soviet had existed for about a month and a half. Trotzky went to prison, not in despair, but as a leader of an invincible army which though it had suffered temporary defeat, was bound to win. Trotzky had to wait twelve years for the moment of triumph, yet the moment came.

In prison Trotzky was very active, reading, writing, trying to sum up his experience of the revolutionary year. After twelve months of solitary confinement he was tried and sentenced to life exile in Siberia: the government of the enemies of the people was wreaking vengeance on the first true representatives of the people. On January 3, 1907, Trotzky started his trip for Obdorsk, in Northern Siberia on the Arctic Ocean.

He was under unusual rigid surveillance even for Russian prisons. Each movement of his and of his comrades was carefully guarded. No communication with the outer world was permitted. The very journey was surrounded by great secrecy. Yet such was the fame of the Soviet, that crowds gathered at every station to greet the prisoners' train, and even the soldiers showed extraordinary respect for the imprisoned "workingmen's deputies" as they called them. "We are surrounded by friends on

every side," Trotzky wrote in his note book.

In Tiumen the prisoners had to leave the railway train for sleighs drawn by horses. The journey became very tedious and slow. The monotony was broken only by little villages, where revolutionary exiles were detained. Here and there the exiles would gather to welcome the leaders of the revolution. Red flags gave touches of color to the blinding white of the Siberian snow. "Long live the Revolution!" was printed with huge letters on the surface of the northern snow, along the road. This was beautiful, but it gave little consolation. The country became ever more desolate. "Every day we move down one step into the kingdom of cold and wilderness," Trotzky remarked in his notes.

It was a gloomy prospect, to spend years and years in this God forsaken country. Trotzky was not the man to submit. In defiance of difficulties, he managed to escape before he reached the town of his destination. As there was only one road along which travelers could move, and as there was danger that authorities, notified by wire of his escape, could stop him at any moment, he left the road and on a sleigh drawn by reindeer he crossed an unbroken wilderness of 800 versts, over 500 miles. This required great courage and physical endurance. The picturesque journey is described by Trotzky in a beautiful little book, *My Round Trip*.

It was in this Ostiak sleigh, in the midst of a bleak desert, that he celebrated the 20th of February, the day of the opening of the Second Duma. It was a mockery at Russia: here, the representatives of the people, assembled in the quasi-Parliament

of Russia; there, a representative of the Revolution that created the Duma, hiding like a criminal in a bleak wilderness. Did he dream in those long hours of his journey, that some day the wave of the Revolution would bring him to the very top?

Early in spring he arrived abroad. He established his home in Vienna where he lived till the outbreak of the great war. His time and energy were devoted to the internal affairs of the Social-Democratic Party and to editing a popular revolutionary magazine which was being smuggled into Russia. He earned a meager living by contributing to Russian "legal" magazines and dailies.

I met him first in 1907, in Stuttgart. He seemed to be deeply steeped in the revolutionary factional squabbles. Again I met him in Copenhagen in 1910. He was the target of bitter criticism for his press-comment on one of the Social-Democratic factions. He seemed to be dead to anything but the problem of reconciling the Bolsheviki with the Mensheviki and the other minor divisions. Yet that air of importance which distinguished him even from the famous old leaders had, in 1910, become more apparent. By this time he was already a well-known and respected figure in the ranks of International Socialism.

In the fall of 1912 he went into the Balkans as a war correspondent. There he learned to know the Balkan situation from authentic sources. His revelations of the atrocities committed on both sides attracted wide attention. When he came back to Vienna in 1913 he was a stronger internationalist and a

stronger anti-militarist than ever.

His house in Vienna was a poor man's house, poorer than that of an ordinary American workingman earning eighteen dollars a week. Trotzky has been poor all his life. His three rooms in a Vienna 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. Trotzky engaged in housework, while the two light-haired lovely boys were lending not inconsiderable assistance. The only thing that cheered the house were loads of books in every corner, and, perhaps, great though hidden hopes.

On August 3, 1914, the Trotzkys, as enemy aliens, had to leave Vienna for Zurich, Switzerland. Trotzky's attitude towards the war was a very definite one from the very beginning. He accused German Social-Democracy for having voted the war credits and thus endorsed the war. He accused the Socialist parties of all the belligerent countries for having concluded a truce with their governments which in his opinion was equivalent to supporting militarism. He bitterly deplored the collapse of Internationalism as a great calamity for the emancipation of the world. Yet, even in those times of distress, he did not remain inactive. He wrote a pamphlet to the German workingmen entitled *The War and Internationalism* (recently translated into English and published in this country under the title *The Bolsheviki and World Peace*) which was illegally transported into Germany and

Austria by aid of Swiss Socialists. For this attempt to enlighten the workingmen, one of the German courts tried him in a state of contumacy and sentenced him to imprisonment. He also contributed to a Russian Socialist daily of Internationalist aspirations which was being published by Russian exiles in Paris. Later he moved to Paris to be in closer contact with that paper. Due to his radical views on the war, however, he was compelled to leave France. He went to Spain, but the Spanish government, though not at war, did not allow him to stay in that country. He was himself convinced that the hand of the Russian Foreign Ministry was in all his hardships.

So it happened that in the winter 1916-1917, he came to the United States. When I met him here, he looked haggard; he had grown older, and there was fatigue in his expression. His conversation hinged around the collapse of International Socialism. He thought it shameful and humiliating that the Socialist majorities of the belligerent countries had turned "Social-Patriots." "If not for the minorities of the Socialist parties, the true Socialists, it would not be worth while living," he said once with deep sadness. Still, he strongly believed in the internationalizing spirit of the war itself, and expected humanity to become more democratic and more sound after cessation of hostilities. His belief in an impending Russian Revolution was unshaken. Similarly unshaken was his mistrust of the Russian non-Socialist parties. On January 20, 1917, less than two months before the overthrow of the Romanoffs, he wrote in a local

Russian paper: "Whoever thinks critically over the experience of 1905, whoever draws a line from that year to the present day, must conceive how utterly lifeless and ridiculous are the hopes of our Social-Patriots for a revolutionary coöperation between the proletariat and the Liberal bourgeoisie in Russia."

His demand for *clarity* in political affairs had become more pronounced during the war and through the distressing experiences of the war. "There are times," he wrote on February 7, 1917, "when diplomatic evasiveness, casting glances with one eye to the right, with the other to the left, is considered wisdom. Such times are now vanishing before our eyes, and their heroes are losing credit. War, as revolution, puts problems in their clearest form. For war or against war? For national defense or for revolutionary struggle? The fierce times we are living now demand in equal measure both fearlessness of thought and bravery of character."

When the Russian Revolution broke out, it was no surprise for Trotzky. He had anticipated it. He had scented it over the thousands of miles that separated him from his country. He did not allow his joy to overmaster him. The March revolution in his opinion was only a beginning. It was only an introduction to a long drawn fight which would end in the establishment of Socialism.

History seemed to him to have fulfilled what he had predicted in 1905 and 1906. The working class was the leading power in the Revolution. The Soviets became even more powerful than

the Provisional Government. Trotzky preached that it was the task of the Soviets to become *the* government of Russia. It was his task to go to Russia and fight for a labor government, for Internationalism, for world peace, for a world revolution. "If the first Russian revolution of 1905," he wrote on March 20th, "brought about revolutions in Asia, – in Persia, Turkey, China, – the second Russian revolution will be the beginning of a momentous Social-revolutionary struggle in Europe. Only this struggle will bring real peace to the blood-drenched world."

With these hopes he went to Russia, – to forge a Socialist Russia in the fire of the Revolution.

Whatever may be our opinion of the merits of his policies, the man has remained true to himself. His line has been straight.

THE PROLETARIAT AND THE REVOLUTION

The essay *The Proletariat and the Revolution* was published at the close of 1904, nearly one year after the beginning of the war with Japan. This was a crucial year for the autocratic rulers of Russia. It started with patriotic demonstrations, it ended with a series of humiliating defeats on the battlefields and with an unprecedented revival of political activities on the part of the well-to-do classes. The Zemstvos (local elective bodies for the care of local affairs) headed by liberal landowners, conducted a vigorous political campaign in favor of a constitutional order. Other liberal groups, organizations of professionals (referred to in Trotzky's essay as "democrats" and "democratic elements") joined in the movement. The Zemstvo leaders called an open convention in Petersburg (November 6th), which demanded civic freedom and a Constitution. The "democratic elements" organized public gatherings of a political character under the disguise of private banquets. The liberal press became bolder in its attack on the administration. The government tolerated the movement. Prince Svyatopolk-Mirski, who had succeeded Von Plehve, the reactionary dictator assassinated in July, 1904, by a revolutionist, had promised "cordial relations" between government and society. In the political jargon, this

period of tolerance, lasting from August to the end of the year, was known as the era of "Spring."

It was a thrilling time, full of political hopes and expectation. Yet, strange enough, the working class was silent. The working class had shown great dissatisfaction in 1902 and especially in summer, 1903, when scores of thousands in the southwest and in the South went on a political strike. During the whole of 1904, however, there were almost no mass-manifestations on the part of the workingmen. This gave an occasion to many a liberal to scoff at the representatives of the revolutionary parties who built all their tactics on the expectation of a national revolution.

To answer those skeptics and to encourage the active members of the Social-Democratic party, Trotzky wrote his essay. Its main value, which lends it historic significance, is the clear diagnosis of the political situation. Though living abroad, Trotzky keenly felt the pulse of the masses, the "pent up revolutionary energy" which was seeking for an outlet. His description of the course of a national revolution, the rôle he attributes to the workingmen, the non-proletarian population of the cities, the educated groups, and the army; his estimation of the influence of the war on the minds of the raw masses; finally, the slogans he puts before the revolution, – all this corresponds exactly to what happened during the stormy year of 1905. Reading *The Proletariat and the Revolution*, the student of Russian political life has a feeling as if the essay had been written *after* the Revolution, so closely it follows the course of

events. Yet, it appeared before January 9th, 1905, i.e., before the first great onslaught of the Petersburg proletariat.

Trotzky's belief in the revolutionary initiative of the working class could not be expressed in a more lucid manner.

The proletariat must not only conduct a revolutionary propaganda. The proletariat itself must move towards a revolution.

To move towards a revolution does not necessarily mean to fix a date for an insurrection and to prepare for that day. You never can fix a day and an hour for a revolution. The people have never made a revolution by command.

What *can* be done is, in view of the fatally impending catastrophe, to choose the most appropriate positions, to arm and inspire the masses with a revolutionary slogan, to lead simultaneously all the reserves into the field of battle, to make them practice in the art of fighting, to keep them ready under arms, – and to send an alarm all over the lines when the time has arrived.

Would that mean a series of exercises only, and not a decisive combat with the enemy forces? Would that be mere manœuvers, and not a street revolution?

Yes, that would be mere manœuvers. There is a difference, however, between revolutionary and military manœuvers. Our preparations can turn, at any time and independent of our will, into a real battle which would decide the long drawn

revolutionary war. Not only can it be so, it *must* be. This is vouched for by the acuteness of the present political situation which holds in its depths a tremendous amount of revolutionary explosives.

At what time mere manœuvers would turn into a real battle, depends upon the volume and the revolutionary compactness of the masses, upon the atmosphere of popular sympathy which surrounds them and upon the attitude of the troops which the government moves against the people.

Those three elements of success must determine our work of preparation. Revolutionary proletarian masses *are* in existence. We ought to be able to call them into the streets, at a given time, all over the country; we ought to be able to unite them by a general slogan.

All classes and groups of the people are permeated with hatred towards absolutism, and that means with sympathy for the struggle for freedom. We ought to be able to concentrate this sympathy on the proletariat as a revolutionary power which alone can be the vanguard of the people in their fight to save the future of Russia. As to the mood of the army, it hardly kindles the heart of the government with great hopes. There has been many an alarming symptom for the last few years; the army is morose, the army grumbles, there are ferments of dissatisfaction in the army. We ought to do all at our command to make the army detach itself from absolutism at the time of a decisive onslaught of the masses.

Let us first survey the last two conditions, which determine the course and the outcome of the campaign.

We have just gone through the period of "political renovation" opened under the blare of trumpets and closed under the hiss of knouts, – the era of Svyatopolk-Mirski – the result of which is hatred towards absolutism aroused among all the thinking elements of society to an unusual pitch. The coming days will reap the fruit of stirred popular hopes and unfulfilled government's pledges. Political interest has lately taken more definite shape; dissatisfaction has grown deeper and is founded on a more outspoken theoretical basis. Popular thinking, yesterday utterly primitive, now greedily takes to the work of political analysis. All manifestations of evil and arbitrary power are being speedily traced back to the principal cause. Revolutionary slogans no more frighten the people; on the contrary, they arouse a thousandfold echo, they pass into proverbs. The popular consciousness absorbs each word of negation, condemnation or curse addressed towards absolutism, as a sponge absorbs fluid substance. No step of the administration remains unpunished. Each of its blunders is carefully taken account of. Its advances are met with ridicule, its threats breed hatred. The vast apparatus of the liberal press circulates daily thousands of facts, stirring, exciting, inflaming popular emotion.

The pent up feelings are seeking an outlet. Thought strives to turn into action. The vociferous liberal press, however, while

feeding popular unrest, tends to divert its current into a small channel; it spreads superstitious reverence for "public opinion," helpless, unorganized "public opinion," which does not discharge itself into action; it brands the revolutionary method of national emancipation; it upholds the illusion of legality; it centers all the attention and all the hopes of the embittered groups around the Zemstvo campaign, thus systematically preparing a great debacle for the popular movement. Acute dissatisfaction, finding no outlet, discouraged by the inevitable failure of the legal Zemstvo campaign which has no traditions of revolutionary struggle in the past and no clear prospects in the future, must necessarily manifest itself in an outbreak of desperate terrorism, leaving radical intellectuals in the rôle of helpless, passive, though sympathetic onlookers, leaving liberals to choke in a fit of platonic enthusiasm while lending doubtful assistance.

This ought not to take place. We ought to take hold of the current of popular excitement; we ought to turn the attention of numerous dissatisfied social groups to one colossal undertaking headed by the proletariat, – to the *National Revolution*.

The vanguard of the Revolution ought to wake from indolence all other elements of the people; to appear here and there and everywhere; to put the questions of political struggle in the boldest possible fashion; to call, to castigate, to unmask hypocritical democracy; to make democrats and Zemstvo liberals clash against each other; to wake again and again, to call, to castigate, to demand a clear answer to the question, *What are you*

going to do? to allow no retreat; to compel the legal liberals to admit their own weakness; to alienate from them the democratic elements and help the latter along the way of the revolution. To do this work means to draw the threads of sympathy of all the democratic opposition towards the revolutionary campaign of the proletariat.

We ought to do all in our power to draw the attention and gain the sympathy of the poor non-proletarian city population. During the last mass actions of the proletariat, as in the general strikes of 1903 in the South, nothing was done in this respect, and this was the weakest point of the preparatory work. According to press correspondents, the queerest rumors often circulated among the population as to the intentions of the strikers. The city inhabitants expected attacks on their houses, the store keepers were afraid of being looted, the Jews were in a dread of pogroms. This ought to be avoided. *A political strike, as a single combat of the city proletariat with the police and the army, the remaining population being hostile or even indifferent, is doomed to failure.*

The indifference of the population would tell primarily on the morale of the proletariat itself, and then on the attitude of the soldiers. Under such conditions, the stand of the administration must necessarily be more determined. The generals would remind the officers, and the officers would pass to the soldiers the words of Dragomirov: "Rifles are given for sharp shooting, and nobody is permitted to squander cartridges for nothing."

A political strike of the proletariat ought to turn into a political

demonstration of the population, this is the first prerequisite of success.

The second important prerequisite is the mood of the army. A dissatisfaction among the soldiers, a vague sympathy for the "revoluters," is an established fact. Only part of this sympathy may rightly be attributed to our direct propaganda among the soldiers. The major part is done by the practical clashes between army units and protesting masses. Only hopeless idiots or avowed scoundrels dare to shoot at a living target. An overwhelming majority of the soldiers are loathe to serve as executioners; this is unanimously admitted by all correspondents describing the battles of the army with unarmed people. The average soldier aims above the heads of the crowd. It would be unnatural if the reverse were the case. When the Bessarabian regiment received orders to quell the Kiev general strike, the commander declared he could not vouch for the attitude of his soldiers. The order, then, was sent to the Cherson regiment, but there was not one half-company in the entire regiment which would live up to the expectations of their superiors.

Kiev was no exception. The conditions of the army must now be more favorable for the revolution than they were in 1903. We have gone through a year of war. It is hardly possible to measure the influence of the past year on the minds of the army. The influence, however, must be enormous. War draws not only the attention of the people, it arouses also the professional interest of the army. Our ships are slow, our guns have a short range,

our soldiers are uneducated, our sergeants have neither compass nor map, our soldiers are bare-footed, hungry, and freezing, our Red Cross is stealing, our commissariat is stealing, – rumors and facts of this kind leak down to the army and are being eagerly absorbed. Each rumor, as strong acid, dissolves the rust of mental drill. Years of peaceful propaganda could hardly equal in their results one day of warfare. The mere mechanism of discipline remains, the faith, however, the conviction that it is right to carry out orders, the belief that the present conditions can be continued, are rapidly dwindling. The less faith the army has in absolutism, the more faith it has in its foes.

We ought to make use of this situation. We ought to explain to the soldiers the meaning of the workingmen's action which is being prepared by the Party. We ought to make profuse use of the slogan which is bound to unite the army with the revolutionary people, *Away with the War!* We ought to create a situation where the officers would not be able to trust their soldiers at the crucial moment. This would reflect on the attitude of the officers themselves.

The rest will be done by the street. It will dissolve the remnants of the barrack-hypnosis in the revolutionary enthusiasm of the people.

The main factor, however, remain the revolutionary masses. True it is that during the war the most advanced elements of the masses, the thinking proletariat, have not stepped openly to the front with that degree of determination which was required

by the critical historic moment. Yet it would manifest a lack of political backbone and a deplorable superficiality, should one draw from this fact any kind of pessimistic conclusions.

The war has fallen upon our public life with all its colossal weight. The dreadful monster, breathing blood and fire, loomed up on the political horizon, shutting out everything, sinking its steel clutches into the body of the people, inflicting wound upon wound, causing mortal pain, which for a moment makes it even impossible to ask for the causes of the pain. The war, as every great disaster, accompanied by crisis, unemployment, mobilization, hunger and death, stunned the people, caused despair, but not protest. This is, however, only a beginning. Raw masses of the people, silent social strata, which yesterday had no connection with the revolutionary elements, were knocked by sheer mechanical power of facts to face the central event of present-day Russia, the war. They were horrified, they could not catch their breaths. The revolutionary elements, who prior to the war had ignored the passive masses, were affected by the atmosphere of despair and concentrated horror. This atmosphere enveloped them, it pressed with a leaden weight on their minds. The voice of determined protest could hardly be raised in the midst of elemental suffering. The revolutionary proletariat which had not yet recovered from the wounds received in July, 1903, was powerless to oppose the "call of the primitive."

The year of war, however, passed not without results. Masses, yesterday primitive, to-day are confronted with the most

tremendous events. They must seek to understand them. The very duration of the war has produced a desire for reasoning, for questioning as to the meaning of it all. Thus the war, while hampering for a period of time the revolutionary initiative of thousands, has awakened to life the political thought of millions.

The year of war passed not without results, not a single day passed without results. In the lower strata of the people, in the very depths of the masses, a work was going on, a movement of molecules, imperceptible, yet irresistible, incessant, a work of accumulating indignation, bitterness, revolutionary energy. The atmosphere our streets are breathing now is no longer an atmosphere of blank despair, it is an atmosphere of concentrated indignation which seeks for means and ways for revolutionary action. Each expedient action of the vanguard of our working masses would now carry away with it not only all our revolutionary reserves, but also thousands and hundreds of thousands of revolutionary recruits. This mobilization, unlike the mobilization of the government, would be carried out in the presence of general sympathy and active assistance of an overwhelming majority of the population.

In the presence of strong sympathies of the masses, in the presence of active assistance on the part of the democratic elements of the people; facing a government commonly hated, unsuccessful both in big and in small undertakings, a government defeated on the seas, defeated in the fields of battle, despised, discouraged, with no faith in the coming day, a government

vainly struggling, currying favor, provoking and retreating, lying and suffering exposure, insolent and frightened; facing an army whose morale has been shattered by the entire course of the war, whose valor, energy, enthusiasm and heroism have met an insurmountable wall in the form of administrative anarchy, an army which has lost faith in the unshakable security of a régime it is called to serve, a dissatisfied, grumbling army which more than once has torn itself free from the clutches of discipline during the last year and which is eagerly listening to the roar of revolutionary voices, – such will be the conditions under which the revolutionary proletariat will walk out into the streets. It seems to us that no better conditions could have been created by history for a final attack. History has done everything it was allowed by elemental wisdom. The thinking revolutionary forces of the country have to do the rest.

A tremendous amount of revolutionary energy has been accumulated. It should not vanish with no avail, it should not be dissipated in scattered engagements and clashes, with no coherence and no definite plan. All efforts ought to be made to concentrate the bitterness, the anger, the protest, the rage, the hatred of the masses, to give those emotions a common language, a common goal, to unite, to solidify all the particles of the masses, to make them feel and understand that they are not isolated, that simultaneously, with the same slogan on the banner, with the same goal in mind, innumerable particles are rising everywhere. If this understanding is achieved, half of the

revolution is done.

We have got to summon all revolutionary forces to simultaneous action. How can we do it?

First of all we ought to remember that the main scene of revolutionary events is bound to be the city. Nobody is likely to deny this. It is evident, further, that street demonstrations can turn into a popular revolution only when they are a manifestation of *masses*, i.e., when they embrace, in the first place, the workers of factories and plants. To make the workers quit their machines and stands; to make them walk out of the factory premises into the street; to lead them to the neighboring plant; to proclaim there a cessation of work; to make new masses walk out into the street; to go thus from factory to factory, from plant to plant, incessantly growing in numbers, sweeping police barriers, absorbing new masses that happened to come across, crowding the streets, taking possession of buildings suitable for popular meetings, fortifying those buildings, holding continuous revolutionary meetings with audiences coming and going, bringing order into the movements of the masses, arousing their spirit, explaining to them the aim and the meaning of what is going on; to turn, finally, the entire city into one revolutionary camp, this is, broadly speaking, the plan of action.

The starting point ought to be the factories and plants. That means that street manifestations of a serious character, fraught with decisive events, ought to begin with *political strikes of the masses*.

It is easier to fix a date for a strike, than for a demonstration of the people, just as it is easier to move masses ready for action than to organize new masses.

A political strike, however, not a *local, but a general political strike all over Russia*, – ought to have a general political slogan. This slogan is: *to stop the war and to call a National Constituent Assembly*.

This demand ought to become nation-wide, and herein lies the task for our propaganda preceding the all-Russian general strike. We ought to use all possible occasions to make the idea of a National Constituent Assembly popular among the people. Without losing one moment, we ought to put into operation all the technical means and all the powers of propaganda at our disposal. Proclamations and speeches, educational circles and mass-meetings ought to carry broadcast, to propound and to explain the demand of a Constituent Assembly. There ought to be not one man in a city who should not know that his demand is: a National Constituent Assembly.

The peasants ought to be called to assemble on the day of the political strike and to pass resolutions demanding the calling of a Constituent Assembly. The suburban peasants ought to be called into the cities to participate in the street movements of the masses gathered under the banner of a Constituent Assembly. All societies and organizations, professional and learned bodies, organs of self-government and organs of the opposition press ought to be notified in advance by the workingmen that they are

preparing for an all-Russian political strike, fixed for a certain date, to bring about the calling of a Constituent Assembly. The workingmen ought to demand from all societies and corporations that, on the day appointed for the mass-manifestation, they should join in the demand of a National Constituent Assembly. The workingmen ought to demand from the opposition press that it should popularize their slogan and that on the eve of the demonstration it should print an appeal to the population to join the proletarian manifestation under the banner of a National Constituent Assembly.

We ought to carry on the most intensive propaganda in the army in order that on the day of the strike each soldier, sent to curb the "rebels," should know that he is facing the people who are demanding a National Constituent Assembly.

EXPLANATORY NOTES

"*The hiss of the knout*" which ended the era of "cordial relations" was a statement issued by the government on December 12, 1904, declaring that "all disturbances of peace and order and all gatherings of an anti-governmental character must and will be stopped by all legal means in command of the authorities." The Zemstvo and municipal bodies were advised to keep from political utterings. As to the Socialist parties, and to labor movement in general, they were prosecuted under Svyatopolk-Mirski as severely

as under Von Plehve.

"*The vast apparatus of the liberal press*" was the only way to reach millions. The revolutionary "underground" press, which assumed towards 1905 unusual proportions, could, after all, reach only a limited number of readers. In times of political unrest, the public became used to read between the lines of the legal press all it needed to feed its hatred of oppression.

By "*legal*" *press*, "*legal*" *liberals* are meant the open public press and those liberals who were trying to comply with the legal requirements of absolutism even in their work of condemning the absolutist order. The term "legal" is opposed by the term "revolutionary" which is applied to political actions in defiance of law.

Dragomirov was for many years Commander of the Kiev Military region and known by his epigrammatic style.

THE EVENTS IN PETERSBURG

This is an essay of triumph. Written on January 20, 1905, eleven days after the "bloody Sunday," it gave vent to the enthusiastic feelings of every true revolutionist aroused by unmistakable signs of an approaching storm. The march of tens of thousands of workingmen to the Winter Palace to submit to the "Little Father" a petition asking for "bread and freedom," was on the surface a peaceful and loyal undertaking. Yet it breathed indignation and revolt. The slaughter of peaceful marchers (of whom over 5,000 were killed or wounded) and the following wave of hatred and revolutionary determination among the masses, marked the beginning of broad revolutionary uprisings.

For Trotzky, the awakening of the masses to political activity was not only a good revolutionary omen, but also a defeat of liberal ideology and liberal tactics. Those tactics had been planned under the assumption that the Russian people were not ripe for a revolution. Trotzky, a thorough revolutionist, *saw* in the liberal movement a manifestation of political superstitions. To him, the *only* way to overthrow absolutism was the way of a violent revolution. Yet, when the liberals proudly asserted that the revolutionary masses of Russia were only a creation of the overheated phantasy of the revolutionists, while the movement of the well-to-do intelligent elements was a flagrant fact, the Social-Democrats had no material proofs to the contrary, except

sporadic outbursts of unrest among the workingmen and, of course, the conviction of those revolutionists who were in touch with the masses. It is, therefore, easy to understand the triumph of a Trotzky or any other Socialist after January 9th. In Trotzky's opinion, the 9th of January had put liberalism into the archives. "We are done with it for the entire period of the revolution," he exclaims. The most remarkable part of this essay, as far as political vision is concerned, is Trotzky's prediction that the left wing of the "Osvoboshdenie" liberals (later organized as the Constitutional Democratic Party) would attempt to become leaders of the revolutionary masses and to "tame" them. The Liberals did not fail to make the attempt in 1905 and 1906, but with no success whatever. Neither did Social-Democracy, however, completely succeed in leading the masses all through the revolution, in the manner outlined by Trotzky in this essay. True, the Social-Democrats were the party that gained the greatest influence over the workingmen in the stormy year of 1905; their slogans were universally accepted by the masses; their members were everywhere among the first ranks of revolutionary forces; yet events developed too rapidly and spontaneously to make the leadership of a political organization possible.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.