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A SHORT HISTORY OF THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

from 1905 to the present day

by

R. PAGE ARNOT

VOLUME ONE

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VOLUME ONE

From 1905 to February 1917

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY

I. THE EXPANSION OF RUSSIA

RUSSIA, or, to be precise, the name Russ, emerges into history in the ninth century, when the semi-legendary Viking chief, Rurik, set up his rule amongst a Slav population. During the Middle Ages, Russia was cut off from the rest of Christendom, partly by the different form of its religion (derived, like the later Tsardom, from the Byzantine Empire, and true heir to its stiffness and servility), and partly through its almost complete subjection to the Mongol or Tartar invaders who had carried forward the conquests begun by Genghiz Khan in the early thirteenth century. By the sixteenth century the Tartar invaders had been repelled or subdued and communications were opened up between Ivan the Terrible, Tsar of Muscovy, and Queen Elizabeth of England. Under the eighteenth-century rulers, from Peter the Great, who had laid the foundations of absolute monarchy after the model of Louis XIV of France and wrested the hegemony of Eastern Europe from the Swedes, to Catherine II, whose generals Potemkin and Souvaroff broke the power of the Ottoman Empire, the might and the bounds of the Russian Empire were enormously extended and many non-Russian peoples were brought within its territories. Poland was partitioned.

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Courland and Lithuania were absorbed, Moslem Khanates in the east and south-east were conquered, the territories of the northern and western shores of the Black Sea were taken from the Turks, while year after year saw a steady extension eastwards into Siberia, along the northern march of the Chinese Empire, which continued into the nineteenth century until the sea was reached and Vladivostock founded on the shores of the Pacific. Still Russia had remained as it were on the outskirts of Europe—untouched by the influence of the Crusades or the Renaissance, and immune from the effects of any later development of merchant capital or industrial capitalism—when the wars of the French Revolution and the disastrous invasion of the French in 1812 made the Tsar the leader of the continental monarchies, a position which was signalled by his headship of the Holy Alliance. From this time onwards, the strength of Russia began to give anxiety to the other Powers of Europe, and, though the help of the Tsar ("The Gendarme of Europe") was gratefully accepted for the crushing of the revolutionary movements of 1848, the policy of the other Powers was largely affected by this growing fear. The Crimean War was an attempt to curb the Russian expansion; and the British Cabinets right up to 1890, or even later, were continually nervous of the proximity of Russia to Afghanistan, which seemed to them to threaten the safety of the British Empire in India. In Persia, too, the southward thrust of the Russian influence caused a continual anxiety which finally led to the Anglo-Russian Agreement of 1907 ("The Partition of Persia") over the demarcation of spheres of influence in that country.

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It has often been said that the motive of the Tsarist territorial expansion was the desire for a warm-water seaport (the Baltic and White Sea are ice-bound in winter), and that the founding of Vladivostock, the thrust toward the Persian Gulf, and the continual yearning for the possession of Constantinople and the Straits, are thus explicable. In the Secret Treaty between the Tsar and the Allies of March 1915, Constantinople was bargained for as the price of Russian support for British and French claims in the Near East; and, as late as the autumn of 1916, a speaker in the Duma roused imperialist enthusiasm by his cry that "the Shield of Oleg was still stretched out over Constantinople." It was nearly a thousand years since the unforgotten Viking Oleg had hung his buckler upon the gates of Byzantium.

2. THE EXTENT OF RUSSIA

By the twentieth century, Russia (or, rather, the Russian Empire) covered that greater portion of the North European plain which is watered by the greatest European rivers—the Dnieper and Don flowing into the Black Sea, the Volga flowing into the Caspian Sea, while into the Arctic flow the Pechora and the Northern Dwina, into the Baltic the Niemen, and, in Russian Poland, the Vistula.

Beyond the Urals, whose low hills mark the end of the plain of North Europe, lay a vast region then called Siberia, or Russia-in-Asia, whose first features seen by the traveller eastwards were also rolling plains, divisible into treeless fertile steppe in the southern belt, taiga or dense forest in the middle belt, and tundra or frozen

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plain north of the Arctic circle. These plains are watered by three of the greatest rivers of the world, all flowing north into the Arctic Ocean—the Ob, the Yenisei, and the Lena. Beyond these Siberian plains great ranges of mountains, the Altai Mountains, the Yablonoi, and several other ranges, run for over a thousand miles before the valley of the Amur River is reached and the coastal plain of the Pacific Ocean; in much the same way as the Canadian forests and prairies, watered by great rivers, also flowing into the Arctic, run westward on for a thousand miles and more, until the Rocky Mountains cut off the coastal strip.

Besides this easily definable stretch of the earth's surface, with its extensions into the northern peninsulas of Murman, Taimur, and Kamchatka, there are to be included two other regions, each lying to the south. The Caucasus, the loftiest mountain range in Europe, straddles between the landlocked Caspian and the Black Sea and gives its name to the region through which its mountain rivers flow—North Caucasus and Transcaucasus, in which latter lay the ancient kingdoms of Georgia and Armenia, as well as the great oil-bearing region of Azerbaijan around the city of Baku.

The other main region, separated from Siberia and European Russia by semi-deserts, inhabited by nomad tribes, Kalmucks and Kirghiz and others, was the land lying north of India and Afghanistan, and at that time called Turkestan, or Russian Turkestan (to distinguish it from Chinese Turkestan, which lay on its eastern border). Turkestan, like Egypt, would have been desert but for its two rivers, known to the ancient Greeks as

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the Oxus and the Jaxartes, and now called the Syr a² the Amu, which keep the desert sands at bay and flow to an inland sea. Here, as in the valleys of the Nile, of the Indus, and of Mesopotamia, had been one of the old river civilisations of the world, going back for thousands of years, with cities of ancient names—Merv, Bokhara, Samarkand—that could challenge the renown of Memphis or Babylon, Damascus or Ur of the Chaldees.

Out of a total population of some 130 millions, nearly 92 millions formed at least four distinct groups of Slavonic-speaking peoples, namely, the Great Russians, the Ukrainians or Little Russians, the Byelorussians or White Russians, and the Poles, of whom the Great Russians were in a majority of 55 millions. The remaining one-third of the empire consisted among others of Georgians, Uzbeks, and Finns. Altogether nearly one hundred languages were spoken between the Baltic and the Pacific—but the dominant language, and the sole medium of education, religion, instruction, and administration, was Russian.

A similar medley existed of religious beliefs, including Christian, Moslem, Jewish, Buddhist, and Shamanist, with a similar predominance on the part of the Russian State Church—the Orthodox (Greek) Faith—which persecuted all other forms of religious belief or unbelief.

We may reckon, then, all the Russias as falling into four parts, to wit, European Russia, the Caucasus, Siberia, and Midmost Asia. For a fifth part, the Grand Duchy of Finland, though subjected to Russification, nevertheless remained peculiar, with its own language, religion, and separate administration. Of these four,

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European Russia was the homeland: the others were colonies of Russian capitalism.

As regards population, the greatest density was in the Western Gubernias (meaning government, or, as we should say, province). For instance, in the kingdom of Poland, according to the 1897 census, the density per square verst was 84 (the verst equals two-thirds of a mile). In European Russia, this figure sank to 22 to the square verst. But in Midmost Asia it was only 2.5 to the square verst, while in Siberia it was 0.5.

Thus Russia, containing one-twelfth of the population of the globe, at the same time was in the heartland of the Old World, the huge block of Asia-Europe. It stood north of the mountain building centres in the High Pamirs, the Hindu Kush, and the Himalayas, from which radiate our more recent geological formations. Its soil was rich: and its subsoil was even richer. Its natural resources of all kinds were on a scale unequalled outside North America. This, then, was the ground, this the history and geography, of the land in which in the twentieth century there began the RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

3. THE TSARDOM

In the early nineteenth century it was often said that there existed two Russias. One was the Russia of the peasants, serfs tied to the soil, "souls" owned by their lord. On their lord's land for part of the week, on their own patch for another part, they conducted a primitive agriculture under the loose organisation of the village mir, somewhat like the English manor of the Middle Ages, or some village communities of India at the

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present day. Not until 1861¹ were they released from this serfdom. They were almost all unable to read or write, and were intensely ignorant and pious. Their conditions of housing and sanitation, their miserable means of existence, often accentuated by famine and disease, brought a high mortality, only "compensated" for by an extreme fecundity which made their birth-rate by far the highest in Europe. Russian literature, especially in Nekrassov and Tolstoi, echoes with the rage and despair of the peasantry. It is important to note that the so-called "emancipation" of the peasants was due to three economic causes: (a) the requirements of up-to-date large-scale landlords for "proletarianised" peasants, i.e. peasants who were not tied to the land and could serve modern processes; (b) the requirements of industry in the towns for free labourers; (c) the financial needs of Tsardom, which wanted to tax the small land-worker, and particularly to sell him vodka (which was a State monopoly, and from which Tsardom drew 40 per cent of its revenue). These in turn suggest to us what were the conditions of the peasantry in this period.

But the immediate political cause for the decree of 1861 was the succession of peasant revolts. Of these the revolt of Stenka Razin, a kind of Robin Hood, has been celebrated in song. But the greatest was the revolt headed by Pugachev in the reign of the Empress Catherine II. A big portion of the Urals and the lower Volga was held by Pugachev, whose prowess had a fascination for Pushkin, greatest of Russian poets. These

¹ It should be noted that the emancipation of the serfs (at a heavy price to themselves) followed hard on the Crimean War, the election of a Duma on the Russo-Japanese War, the Socialist proletarian Revolution on the first world war.

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peasant revolts were growing in numbers and intensity from 1840 onwards. An official remark is recorded (attributed to Tsar Alexander II, "the Liberator") that it was "necessary to liberate the peasants from above lest they liberate themselves from below." This "liberation from above" meant: (1) the best land was retained by the landlords; (2) in addition, they held the waters and meadows, to which *otrezki* (or "carved off" portions) the peasants must have access, and for this they had to pay, either in kind or with labour service; (3) the peasants had to *compensate* the landlords for their liberation and settlement—and the total exacted amounted in the end to more than twice the market value of the land.

On top of this Russia of the peasants was superimposed another Russia, of officials and functionaries, of landlords and rich merchants, of law-courts and *gendarmerie* and secret police and spies. This was the Government of Russia which seemed in some aspects to be a survival from the monarchies of the seventeenth century and in others to be an actual example of the fabled despotisms of the Orient. The Tsar was the head of this system, and to him, as autocrat or absolute monarch, fell the final responsibility. Against this absolute power there had been in 1825 a rebellion of army officers, aristocrats tinged with Western ideas (the Dekabrists), but, after the cruel suppression of this attempt, Tsardom under Nicholas I (1825-1855) seemed stronger than ever. In the latter half of the nineteenth century there developed a revolutionary movement whose early aspects, portrayed in such writers as Turgenev and Tolstoi, are best represented first by Alexander Herzen and later

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by N. G. Chernishevsky. By 1890, or a few years earlier, it was possible to divide the revolutionaries (as apart from those nobles and landowners who had imbibed "Liberal" ideas) into two main groups—those who based their doctrines on Marx (these were as yet very few), and those groups which were afterwards known, from the Russian word *narod*, or people, as Narodniki. It was the last of these, or a section of them, who pursued the policy of personal terrorism and endeavoured to alter the Tsarism by their *attentats* with revolver or bomb on the lives of the Tsar and his higher officials.

In many instances they were successful, the most notable being the assassination of Tsar Alexander II in 1881. But the net result was a stiffening of the despotism, an ever more savage repression by hanging, flogging, and transportation to Siberia of revolutionaries of every shade of opinion. The Okhrana, or secret police, were enormously developed in State and Church, and in every stratum of society, until it became dangerous for a man to whisper his thoughts to his neighbour. This spy system, it appears, is the means always employed by a tyranny to maintain itself in power, and has not been unknown in other countries. But in Russia the Okhrana became so powerful and all-embracing that at last it could be accurately described as a vast secret society which permeated and poisoned the whole of Russian social life. The very Ministers of the Crown were also under continual surveillance through what was called the Cabinet Noir, or Black Bureau, a postal censorship from whose operations not even the members and relatives of the Royal Family were exempt. The existence of this Cabinet Noir was never proved—it had been

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described in the Duma as a myth—until 1917, when it was found that it had been in continuous operation from as far back as the time of Catherine II.

Before the development of Fascism, it was hard for an untravelled Englishman to grasp what it was like to live under the rule of the Tsar. In January 1917, at the moment before the hour of destiny struck, there were only two great empires where the civil population were deprived of all normal rights. Neither in the Russian Empire nor in the Indian Empire had the citizens any right to take part in the passing of laws, in their amendment or repeal. They could not even freely discuss affairs of State: for newspapers had to go through a strict Press control, and meetings similarly could only be held under the supervision of the officials. It was not theirs to reason why. "The Little Father," as the Tsar was called, together with the vast irresponsible bureaucracy, claimed to do all the thinking that was necessary.

The social basis of this autocracy in the nineteenth century was the feudal landlord class. The autocrat was at once the head of all the landlords, and himself the biggest landlord. Above was privilege, below was serfdom. But this serf society was even harsher than the serfdom of England in the Middle Ages. For in England a serf, though unfree, could not be bought or sold like a slave; but in Russia he could be bartered for a leash of hounds. With the passing of the centuries the feudal repression of the whole people became more and more intolerable. Every movement, whether of the peasantry, or of the intelligentsia, or of the subject nationalities (e.g. the Polish risings of 1848 and 1863,) was more and

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more savagely repressed. Above the palaces and police stations were written up the words "No Change."

4. THE COMING OF CAPITALISM

In the later nineteenth century this human society, thus governed, began to undergo a profound social change which was finally to bring about the downfall of the "unaltering" Tsardom. This change can be described as the coming of capitalism, accompanied by its gravediggers. Capitalist industry—that is, modern large-scale machine industry—developed with enormous speed in the towns, largely with the aid of foreign capital, and the need for an urban proletariat—the destined gravediggers—was met by emigration from the villages. These urbanised peasants often returned to their villages, bringing with them disrupting and novel ideas acquired in their factory life. Thus, on the one hand, the town proletariat arose amid conditions unparalleled except at the worst times of the English industrial revolution a century or more ago; and, on the other hand, the spirit of discontent thus engendered was spread amongst the peasants.

This Russian capitalism has several distinctive features. In the first place, it arose in what had been, and remained, a predominantly agrarian country. Russia was an ocean of agriculture wherein were towns, scattered islands of capitalist industry. Secondly, this capitalist industry began full-fledged. There was no question of small-scale beginnings, of following the gradual upward curve of English capitalist industry in the manner of the eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century cotton mills of

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Lancashire. Capitalist growth was sudden, large-scale, tumultuous. The Russian capitalists began where the British capitalists left off; or, rather, since in very many cases it was British capital that was invested in the new Russian industries, this foreign capital, at the highest point of its development, was bodily transferred into Tsarist Russia.

Thus, for the most part, the new mills and factories produced on a large scale, and this from the very beginning. The textile mills of Morozov at Ivanovo-Voznesensk, in the Moscow province, were unparalleled in contemporary Lancashire. The workers in the Russian mills and factories found themselves confronted from the beginning by large-scale concentration of capital, and they themselves, therefore, came to represent a concentrated labour force whose very conditions of production made them ripe for labour organisation. Consequently, the last years of the century were marked by labour disputes, demands for improvement of conditions, an increase in the miserable wages, reduction in the extraordinarily long hours of labour. Strikes broke out, and, despite extraordinarily harsh repression, spread from town to town, and broke out again and again on an ever-increasing scale. Not only a working class, but a working-class movement, had come into existence.

The direction of this movement was determined by the influence of the Socialists. Apart from the earlier Narodniki, who also called themselves Socialists, groups of intellectuals had been formed in the eighties, and scientific Socialism, as set forth in the writings of Marx and Engels, had been assiduously studied. In 1883 George Plekhanov, then an exile in Switzerland,

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founded the "Emancipation of Labour Group," which was able to publish some of the writings of Marx and Engels but was unable to carry on successful organising activities. In 1888 this group formed the Russian Social Democratic League, to unite Russian Social-Democrats living abroad—Social-Democrat being the name commonly used by all European parties that based their programme on the teachings of Marx and Engels. Now in the nineties, following on these earlier groups, there were founded within Russia, in several of the large towns, newer groups which presently combined their studying of Socialism with propaganda amongst small circles of factory workers; and from propaganda they passed to agitation. This constituted, as it were, a marriage of Socialism with the working-class movement, and from the moment that marriage was solemnised in the great strikes of the years 1895 to 1896, the future Russian Revolution was already conceived.

Thus the coming of capitalism had brought to the old Russia a powerful solvent. The whole class structure of society had become diversified and complicated. There were the new and modern classes of capitalism—*bourgeoisie* and *proletariat*. There were the old pre-capitalist classes—*landlords* (lately serf-owners), *peasantry* (lately serfs). Most numerous of all, and most diversified, there was the class of *petty bourgeoisie*¹ which from a historic standpoint could be described as being both capitalist

¹ This term petty-bourgeois (*klein-Burger* in German, but *not* small-burgess or small-burgher in English) is both untranslatable and indefinable, except by using a multitude of words and examples. The reader must take it on trust as equivalent to "small-producer," and gather its fuller meaning with each instance of its use.

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and pre-capitalist. It should be noted that from an economic standpoint the term petty bourgeoisie, in its widest application, covers also the peasantry of a country. Moreover, not one of these classes was homogeneous. The working class itself was made up of all sorts. There was the factory proletariat; there were the workers for small industry, skilled, semi-skilled, and unskilled; seasonal workers in the towns, seasonal workers in the village; etc., etc. Scores of separate nationalities, Jews and Georgians, Poles and Latvians, added to the diversity. Hence there were the numerous trends within the working class, leading, as will be seen later, to frequent differences and struggles inside the party of the working class.

Furthermore, since 1861 there had been great changes in the peasantry. Under the impact of capitalism in the villages the peasantry had been differentiated into rich peasants, called kulaks (the Russian word *kulak* means fist; a greedy, grasping fist); middle peasants; and poor peasants, together with whom can be reckoned landless peasants and semi-proletarians of the village.

Thus, by the time Nicholas II ascended the throne and proclaimed that the autocracy was unalterable the solid feudal basis on which he thought to stand was no longer there. The molecules were astir within the foundation-stones of that basis. Russia had already become a capitalist society, albeit with very marked and strong remains of feudalism.

To this population, mainly composed of proletariat and peasantry, the various parties maintained distinctive attitudes. The Narodniki, the representatives of peasant Socialism, thought that the man of the future was the

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muzhik, the Russian peasant. They could not believe that Russia would become capitalist; was becoming, indeed, had become, capitalist. The Social-Democrats, on the other hand, considered that the man of the future was the worker. Therefore the Social-Democrats concentrated all their attention and activities on the working class.

“When the advanced representatives of this class will have mastered the ideas of scientific Socialism, the idea of the historical rôle of the Russian worker, when these ideas become widespread and when durable organisations arise amongst the workers which will transform the present sporadic economic war of the workers into a conscious class struggle—then, the Russian *workers* will rise at the head of all the democratic elements, overthrow absolutism, and lead the *Russian proletariat* (side by side with the proletariat of all countries) *along the straight road of open political struggle towards the victorious Communist Revolution.*”

The writer of these words, then twenty-four years old, was a junior barrister, recently come to the capital of Russia from Kazan, on the Volga, by name Vladimir Ilyitch Ulianov, afterwards to be known as Lenin.

CHAPTER II

THE BOLSHEVIKS

I. LENIN

VLADIMIR ILYITCH ULIANOV (LENIN), creator of the Bolsheviki Party, leader of the Russian Revolution, founder of the Communist International, was born at Simbirsk, on the middle Volga, on April 23rd, 1870. His father, Ilya Ulianov, was an inspector of elementary schools; his mother was called Maria Blank. All their children were revolutionaries.

Lenin, the second son, at the age of seventeen learned that his brother Alexander Ulianov had been arrested in St. Petersburg, charged with a conspiracy to assassinate Tsar Alexander III, and executed.

At, or near, Kazan, on the Volga, Lenin studied law and took his degree. At Kazan he studied something else—the writings of the founders of scientific Socialism, Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, and attained a rare mastery of their teachings. Thus equipped, after some little practice of law on the Volga, he went in 1893 to St. Petersburg, where he joined in the circles of Social-Democrats there, and from the beginning took an active and leading part. It was under the stimulus of his ardour and grasp of Socialism that in 1896 the St. Petersburg League of Struggle for the Emancipation of the Working Class was formed. It was at his instance that the young

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Socialist intellectuals not only explained the teachings of Marx and Engels, but plunged into agitation.

The workers in a factory were discontented. Why? Theirs might seem a relatively small complaint: they had not, in the Russian winter, any facilities for hot water at this factory. Lenin, whose vision already extended to the future of the human race, set himself to draft a leaflet expressing this need and demand for hot water. It was the same thing as well-intentioned middle-class people in England were doing: and yet, it was not the same thing. For this Archimedes, who saw in the worker the man of the future, was feeling for the fulcrum whereby to shift the world.

Revolutionary work was bound up with a thousand such simple welfare measures as these—ordinary economic demands.

But there were some who thought that all the workers had to do was to stick to their economic demands. Politics was a matter not for the lower classes, but for "their betters." Therefore they denied the need for an independent workers' party in Russia, at the very same time as many of the trade union leaders in Britain, themselves Liberals, were against an independent Labour standpoint. They opposed the revolutionary struggle of the working class for the overthrow of Tsardom. They preached "pure and simple" trade unionism. Let the Liberal capitalists take the Labour movement under its wing as regards politics. Economic demands were enough for the workers. The system of such a way of thinking came to be called "Economism." Against this Lenin fought as vigorously as he had combated the Narodniki.

Some others who had also argued against the Narodniki's

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dream of a jump from peasant petty production to "peasant Socialism" carried their argument to the point of becoming advocates of capitalism. Of these the best known was Peter Struve. He claimed at that time to be a Socialist; but in fact he represented the Liberal capitalists. The capitalists at this time were trying to make their weight felt, and were ready to make play with the powerful engine of thought called Marxism against the reactionary-romantic attitude of the Narodniki, which damned capitalism and all its works and hoped it would never take root in Russia. Peter Struve,¹ on the other hand, tended to praise capitalism and all its works; and he, with his followers, received the name of Legal Marxists. With them the revolutionary Socialists (the Social-Democrats) had been in alliance, as against the Narodniki, but the alliance was short-lived, and changed into struggle against Legal Marxism. Lenin, even while the alliance subsisted, had severely criticised the standpoint of Struve.

Thus, in the tremendous task of carrying on the workers' struggle under the police repression of Tsardom, there was added, thus early, the burden of struggle against false and misleading policies within the working-class movement. After a severe illness in the spring of 1895, Lenin went abroad for four months, made the acquaintance of the exiled leaders of the Emancipation of Labour Group, and stimulated them to new publishing activities. He studied the Socialist movement as it

¹ Peter Struve later became a Liberal; then, before 1914, became leader of the Right Wing of the Liberals; after 1917 a counter-revolutionary "minister" of the monarchists in the Civil War; and is now an *émigré*, still writing against Lenin in a magazine published under the wing of London University.

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existed then in Western Europe, visited Germany, Switzerland, and France, where, in Paris, he met Laura, the daughter of Karl Marx, and her husband Paul Lafargue.

In December 1895, Lenin was arrested (for being a Socialist), imprisoned for fourteen months, and then, in February 1897, exiled to Siberia. Siberia, to Western ears, had, up to 1914, only one meaning. It was a place of exile. From the year of the Dekabrist rising up to 1885, 773,000 persons had been exiled to Siberia: and long before 1825 the tale of the Siberian exiles had been known in Western Europe, as witness Macaulay's famous reference to the journey of Elizabeth from Tobolsk to Moscow in the book *The Exiles of Siberia*. Many friends of Pushkin were sent there. Several of the best-known Russian authors were exiled there, notably Chernishovsky, the revolutionary-democratic writer who was flung out into the icy wastes of the far north-east. Like his predecessors, and like nearly all the outstanding revolutionaries up to 1917, Lenin had also to undergo exile. The official document has been preserved, and runs as follows:

“The Police Department informs Vladimir Ilyitch Ulianov, junior barrister, that, in accordance with His Majesty's order of January 29th, 1897, resulting from his conviction of a crime against the State, he, Ulianov, is to be exiled to Eastern Siberia, under police surveillance, for a period of three years, until January 29th, 1900.”

In Siberia, near Minussinsk, on the upper waters of the great River Yenisei, Lenin spent his years of exile,

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studying, working (together with his wife, Nadezhda Krupskaya, he translated the Webbs' *History of Trade Unionism*), analysing the lessons of the past, planning for the future.

After his term in Siberia, Lenin went abroad, where he was to spend the rest of his life up to the Revolution of 1905, a period of five and a half years, and then, after a short interval, up to the Revolution of 1917. He lived in Germany, in Switzerland, in France, in England,¹ and in what was then Austrian Galicia. He worked ceaselessly. His work and his life, the creation of the party, the preparation for revolution, are so bound up together that it is impossible to separate them.

To the party we must now, therefore, turn.

2. WHO WERE THE BOLSHEVIKS?

'The name "Bolshevik" was born in London. Its birthplace was a historic accident. In the summer of 1903, a congress of the Russian Social-Democrats, begun in Brussels, was, owing to police interference, transferred

¹ Lenin came to London in April 1902. He spent much of his time in the Reading Room of the British Museum. In her memoirs, his wife tells how Lenin also studied living London: "He loved going long rides about the town, on top of an omnibus. He liked the movement of this huge commercial city. The quiet squares, the detached houses with their separate entrances and shining windows adorned with greenery, the drives frequented only by highly polished broughams were much in evidence—but, tucked away near by, the mean little streets inhabited by the London working people, where lines of washing hung across the street and pale children played in the gutter—these sights could not be seen from the bus-top. In such districts, we went on foot, and, observing these howling contrasts in richness and poverty, Ilyitch would mutter through clenched teeth and in English: 'Two nations!'"—*Memories of Lenin*, by N. K. Krupskaya (Martin Lawrence, 1930).

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to the capital of the British Empire. The Congress lasted three weeks or more. During its sessions, the main questions of the Russian revolution were thrashed out. In the divisions of opinion, those who supported the standpoint of Lenin were in a majority. They came to be called the "Bolsheviki" for the simple reason that the Russian word for majority is *bolshinstvo*, and "Bolsheviki" literally means majorityites, or, as the French say, *majoritaires*. Similarly, the minority came to be called "Mensheviki," from the Russian word *menshinstvo*, meaning minority. —

At this Congress, then, Bolshevism emerged as a trend of political thought. The understanding of its origin and development is the clue to the history of the Russian Revolution.

How did Bolshevism arise?

Lenin, nearly seventeen years later, in his "*Left-Wing*" *Communism, an Infantile Ailment*, gives the following account:

"Bolshevism arose in 1903 on the very firm foundation of Marxian theory. And the correctness of this—and only this—revolutionary theory has been proved not only by the experience of all countries during the entire nineteenth century, but particularly by the experience of the wanderings and vacillations, the mistakes and disappointments of revolutionary thought in Russia. For almost half a century—approximately between the forties and nineties of last century—advanced thinkers in Russia, under the oppression of an unprecedented, savage, and reactionary Tsarism, sought eagerly for the correct revolutionary theory,

following each and every 'last word' in Europe and America in this sphere with astonishing diligence and thoroughness. Russia achieved Marxism as the only correct revolutionary theory, virtually through *suffering*, by half a century of unprecedented torment and sacrifice, of unprecedented revolutionary heroism, incredible energy, devoted searching, study, testing in practice, disappointments, checking, and comparison with European experience."

The bearers of the Marxian theory had for many years taken the name of Social-Democrats. From the time, in 1883, when the first group of Russian Social-Democrats was formed, it took the most part of twenty years of struggle to form the *Social-Democratic Labour Party*. There was, first of all, a long gestation period of ten years when there was as yet no Labour movement in Russia, though the labourers were not seldom out on strike. This was the period of the rise and consolidation of the theory and the programme of Social-Democracy.

Then in the years 1894 to 1898 Social-Democracy appeared as a social movement, a rising of the masses of the people and as a political party. This was the period of childhood and adolescence. At the end of this period, in 1898, a Congress of Social-Democrats in Minsk (now capital of Byelorussia) formed the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party. But as all the participants in the Congress were immediately arrested by the police, who at the time raided every active centre, the newly formed party organisation was annihilated.

From 1897 onwards had come a stage of confusion, disintegration, wavering. The great strikes of 1895-6

had brought the close attentions of the police upon the Social-Democrats, and especially upon the "St. Petersburg League of Struggle for the Emancipation of the Working Class" and similar leagues in a dozen other cities of Russia. The revolutionary Marxists were hunted out and sent to prison and Siberia. The adherents of "Economism" were, therefore, left in a favourable position for the spread of their doctrines. Their credo was spread widely: and the refutation of it by Lenin had to come from remote Siberia. Hence the confusion period lasted on for a couple of years.

Out of the struggles of these closing years of the nineteenth century there came full clarity with what Soviet historians call "The *Iskra* Period." *Iskra* (the Russian word meaning "spark") was the name of the newspaper issued in Switzerland and in London from the end of 1900 to 1903, under the editorship mainly of Lenin. *Iskra*, in its opening declaration by Lenin, set itself the goal of bringing about unity of ideas amongst Russian Social-Democrats as the preliminary to effective organisation. "Before we can unite," wrote Lenin, "and in order that we may unite, we must first of all firmly and definitely draw the lines of demarcation." *Iskra* was to be fully Marxist: and it waged a consistent struggle against all the lukewarm "revised versions" of Marxism then current both in Russia and in the rest of Europe. *Iskra* also gathered together the Social-Democratic groups inside Russia and guided the organisation of the Second Congress of the party. It was at this Second Congress in the summer of 1903 in London that the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party was constituted, and its programme adopted. It was also at this

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Congress and as a result of its discussions that the Bolsheviks got their name and Bolshevism was born. Open and clear struggle for the revolutionary theory and practice of Marxism, of scientific Socialism, as first taught by Marx and Engels: open, straightforward fight against all distortions, wavering, back-sliding, all that would weaken or defeat the advance of the working class; this had characterised *Iskra* and the earlier writings and activities of Lenin, this was to characterise the Bolsheviks thenceforward. The details of those struggles are of the greatest interest to the student. Without an understanding of them there is no understanding of the revolution. Here it is only possible to present these struggles (including those immediately before and after the 1903 Congress) in the very broadest outline.

3. THE ENEMIES OF BOLSHEVISM

The first struggle was against the *Narodniki*. It was against the confusion of petty-bourgeois democracy with Socialism. The point on which the controversy turned in 1894, when Lenin wrote his famous pamphlet *Who are These "Friends of the People?"* was whether or not capitalism was likely to develop in Russia—that is, whether Socialism was likely to come through class struggles within a developed capitalist society. To-day the question seems to us incredible, but it is incredible to us largely because of the struggle that took place then, largely because Lenin, in his *History of the Development of Capitalism in Russia*, a work of immense scholarship and grasp of economic theory, completed by him in his

Siberian banishment, disposed for ever of the Narodnik Economic theory.

The second was the struggle against *opportunism*, which from this London Congress of 1903 was to assume the form of *Menshevism*. This was in no sense a purely Russian question. It came to be of international extent. It covered a whole epoch of history. Representing essentially the influence exerted upon the working-class movement by other classes, especially by the bourgeoisie, it had been seen in germ from 1870 onwards, and had been criticised by Marx and by Engels. After the death of Engels in 1895, opportunism received its theoretic "justification" from the publications of the German, Eduard Bernstein. The struggle between Bolshevism and Menshevism was the struggle between two tendencies in the international Socialist movement, between revolutionary Socialism and opportunist Socialism.

How did opportunist Socialism originate? Lenin, writing in 1913 on *The Historical Destiny of the Teaching of Karl Marx* (the main thing in the teaching is "the elucidation of the world-wide historical rôle of the proletariat as the builder of a Socialist society"), divided world history into three main periods since the *Communist Manifesto* of 1848, to wit: from the 1848 Revolution to the Paris Commune of 1871; from the Paris Commune to the Russian Revolution of 1905; from 1905 onwards. In the first period Marx's teaching was only one of many streams or fractions in Socialism: and only at the end of this period of storm and revolution does pre-Marxian Socialism expire. "The second period (1872-1904)," he wrote, "is distinguished from the first by its 'peaceful' character, by the absence of

revolutions. . . . The West enters into a phase of 'peaceful' preparation for the epoch of future transformations. . . . The teaching of Marx gains a complete victory. . . . The theoretical victory of Marxism forces its enemies to *disguise themselves* as Marxists. Liberalism, rotten to the core, tries to revive itself in the form of Socialist *opportunism*." He goes on to say. "The period of preparation of the forces for great battles is interpreted by them as the renunciation of these battles. Improvements in the position of the slaves, enabling them to carry on a fight against wage-slavery, is explained by them in the sense that the slaves are selling their liberty rights for a penny. In a cowardly fashion they preach "social peace" (i.e. peace with slave-ownership), renunciation of the class struggle, etc. They have many adherents among Socialist parliamentarians, the various officials in the Labour movement, and the "sympathising intellectuals."

From the late nineties onwards, the struggle developed inside the Second International (founded in 1889 on the basis of Marx's teachings) and within the parties of the Second International. The Bolsheviks played their part in this struggle, both nationally and internationally, from 1903 onwards. Indeed, within Russia the issues had been joined several years earlier. Lenin, dealing in 1907 with the struggle during the preceding dozen years in Russian Social-Democracy, concluded that "Legal Marxism," "Economism," "Menshevism," were different manifestations of the same historic tendency.

"The 'Legal Marxism' of Struve (1894), and the like, was the *reflection of Marxism in bourgeois literature*.

‘Economism’ as a distinct tendency in the Social Democratic movement in 1897 and the following years, in reality put into practice the programme of the *bourgeois-liberal* credo: economic struggle for the workers—political struggle for the Liberals. ‘Menshevism’ is not merely a tendency in literature, not merely a tendency in Social-Democratic work; it is an organised faction which, during the first period of the Russian Revolution (1905-1907), pursued a distinct policy *which virtually subordinated the proletariat to bourgeois liberalism.*”

The main question in which this subordination of the proletariat appeared was the *prerequisites and perspectives of the revolution*. The prerequisites had already been part of the controversy with the Narodniki, both as regards the social and economic conditions of Russia and the fight for the recognition of the worker as the man of the future; the working class as the class which would lead all the others, or, as the scientific description runs, the fight for the hegemony of the proletariat. The new question which arose in the acutest way at and after this 1903 London Congress was twofold: first, the question of the character of the revolution and its driving-forces, and, secondly, the fight for a party which, in its tactics, organisation, and programme, would be capable of carrying through the revolution.

First let us take the question of the character and driving-forces of the revolution then approaching, the Revolution of 1905. A clear distinction has to be drawn between two kinds of revolution—the one, the bourgeois revolution against feudalism or medievalism; the other,

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the proletarian revolution against capitalism or imperialism. We may find examples of both in the history of France. The great French Revolution of 1789 onwards was an example of the first kind—the bourgeois type of revolution. The Paris Commune of 1871 was an example of the second type of revolution. ♡

This distinction was already clear to most of those present at this London Congress in 1903. They knew the historic distinction which put in one class the English Puritan Revolution of the mid-seventeenth century, the American Revolution of 1776 onwards, the great French Revolution of 1789, and the successive similar bourgeois revolutions that occurred right through the nineteenth century and on into the twentieth. They knew; too, that in those countries where the bourgeois revolution had already been carried through (e.g. America, France, England), the prospect that confronted the proletariat and the masses of the people was a proletarian Socialist revolution.

But the problem for Russia, as for other countries, was that since the revolutions of the eighteenth century and early nineteenth there had come into existence a new class, the proletariat. What part was this class to play in a revolution which in its content, by common agreement, would be *bourgeois-democratic*? With sterile dogmatism, those who were afterwards to be known as the “Mensheviks” reached the conclusion that if the content was bourgeois-democratic, then the leading driving-force must be the bourgeoisie. That is to say, the Russian capitalists must lead, and the Russian proletariat must give their support in the struggle to abolish Tsardom and to end the survivals of medievalism.

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The Bolsheviks, on the other hand, said that it was necessary for the proletariat, as the only class revolutionary to the end, to lead the masses of the Russian people in the struggle against absolutism. Though it would not be the proletarian Socialist revolution, nevertheless the proletariat alone could lead this revolutionary fight for freedom. Why? Because the development of capitalism, the development of the capitalist class in struggle with the working class, meant that the Russian capitalists would compromise with Tsardom in their fear that "the revolution would go too far," and therefore that in fact the revolution would be defeated.

The Menshevik argument then went that even on the assumption that the proletariat must lead, it should lead in conjunction with the bourgeoisie in order to have all enlightened forces arrayed against Tsardom: for Tsardom would be backed not only by the landlords, but also by the masses of ignorant and backward peasantry.

The Bolsheviks denied this, and answered: It is precisely the ignorant and backward peasantry who, because of their terrible conditions, extreme exploitation, age-long misery, can become allies of the proletariat led by the proletariat. The proletariat as the *leading driving-force*, united with the vast masses of peasantry, can crush the resistance of the autocracy and neutralise this compromising bourgeoisie.

From this it can be seen that the debate of these three weeks in London and after, summing up a debate that had gone on for years in the underground organisations, was concerned with the highest question of strategy; and the strategy of revolution is much more complex and more dynamic than the strategy of military or naval

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war. Even in the extremely simplified presentation given above, it should be clear that the strategy of revolution compared to the strategy of ordinary warfare is as mathematics compared to arithmetic.

Consequent on this main question was the question of the party. Lenin had already, as the result of his experiences of the struggle of the nineties, demanded in his writings in the *Iskra* and in his manual of revolution, *What Is To Be Done*, the building of a party of professional revolutionaries:

“ I used to work in a circle that set itself great and all-embracing tasks; and every member of that circle suffered to the point of torture from the realisation that we were proving ourselves to be amateurs at a moment in history when we might have been able to say, paraphrasing a well-known epigram: ‘ Give us an organisation of revolutionaries and we shall overturn the whole of Russia ! ’ And the more I recall the burning sense of shame I then experienced, the more bitter are my feelings towards those pseudo-Social-Democrats whose teachings bring disgrace on the calling of a revolutionary, who fail to understand that our task is not to degrade the revolutionaries to the level of an amateur, but to exalt the amateur to the level of a revolutionary.”

Naturally this was not a question of the same urgency for those whose policy “ virtually subordinated the proletariat to bourgeois liberalism.” For subordinates in a revolution do not have the responsibility of leadership, and have not, therefore, the same concern in the creation

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of a vanguard party of a particular quality, capable of carrying through the revolution.

Actually, it was on this question of the party, and particularly the organisational structure of the party, that Bolsheviks split from Mensheviks. The membership rule, as proposed by Lenin, ran as follows: "A member of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party is one who recognises its programme and supports it materially as well as *by personal participation in one of the organisations of the party.*" For the phrase italicised, Martov, supported by Trotsky, proposed an amendment which would have opened the door to all elements of confusion, wavering, opportunism. It would have made *all and sundry* members of the party, so that it would have been difficult to distinguish the doers from the talkers. "Our task," said Lenin in his reply to Martov and Trotsky, "is to safeguard the consistency, the steadfastness, the purity of our party. We must strive to raise the calling and significance of a party member higher, higher, and still higher—and that is why I am opposed to Martov's formula" (speech of August 15th, 1903).

Within a few months after this 1903 Congress, the Menshevik splitters were doing their utmost to nullify the main decisions of the Congress, and had plunged into a fierce faction fight against the Bolsheviks. Lenin in January 1904 had to draft an open letter to the members of the party which posed the question whether it was to be a real party or a mere clique, and ended with sharp denunciation of the minority in the words:

"Down with disrupters !

"Long live the party of the proletariat, the party that is able in practice to obey the decisions of the party

Congress and to respect party discipline and organisation !

“Down with pharisaic talk !”

The third struggle was against what may best be described by the somewhat cumbrous name of *petty-bourgeois revolutionariness*. This petty-bourgeois revolutionariness borrows something from anarchism, and has as its basis, not the proletariat, but the small proprietor and his like in capitalist countries.

Lenin very clearly defined this petty-bourgeois revolutionariness, this other enemy of Bolshevism inside the working-class movement.

“For Marxians,” he wrote, “it is well-established theoretically—and the experience of all European revolutions and revolutionary movements fully confirms—that the small owner (the social type which, in many European countries, is very numerous and widespread), who, under capitalism, is constantly oppressed and suffering, and whose conditions of life often take a sharp and rapid turn for the worse, moves easily when faced with ruin to extreme revolutionism, but is incapable of displaying consistency, organisation, discipline, and firmness. The petty-bourgeois, ‘gone mad’ from the horrors of capitalism, is a social phenomenon which, like anarchism, is characteristic of all capitalist countries. The weakness of such revolutionism, its futility, its liability swiftly to transform itself into obedience, apathy, phantasy, and even into a ‘mad’ infatuation with some bourgeois ‘fashionable’ tendency—all this is a matter of common knowledge. But a mere recognition in the

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abstract, a theoretical recognition of these truths, does not at all free revolutionary parties from old mistakes which always appear unexpectedly in a somewhat new form, in new trappings, in more or less original surroundings. . . .

“Anarchism was often a kind of punishment for the opportunist sins of the working-class movement. Anarchism and opportunism were two deformities, one complementary to the other” (*“Left-Wing” Communism*).

The Bolsheviks took over the struggle against the party which, more than any other, expressed the tendencies of petty-bourgeois revolutionariness, namely, the Socialist Revolutionary Party of Russia—descendants of the Narodniki. It was this party, commonly called the S.R.s, which rejected Marxism and therefore took no trouble to make a scientific estimate of the class forces, who were deaf to the old words of wisdom, “Look before you leap.” It was this party which practised individual terror and attempts at assassination which the Marxists, on the grounds of expediency, had rejected.

In an article appearing in *Iskra* in 1902, Lenin wrote:

“The Social-Revolutionaries have included terrorism in their programme, preaching it in its modern form as a method of political struggle, and have thus done the most serious harm to the movement by destroying the indissoluble connection between Socialist work and the mass of the revolutionary class. No verbal assurances or invocations can disprove the unquestionable fact that modern terrorism as it is practised and preached by the Social-Revolutionaries is not in any way linked with work among the masses,

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for the masses, and together with the masses; that the organisation of terroristic acts by the party, distracts the very scanty organisational forces we have from their difficult and by no means completed task of organising a revolutionary *workers'* party; that *in practice* the terrorism of the Socialist-Revolutionaries is nothing more than fighting in *single combat*, the sort of fighting that has been wholly condemned by the experience of history."

But the tendency towards petty-bourgeois revolutionariness was not limited to this particular party; it was to emerge, from time to time, within the organisations calling themselves Marxist. The peculiarity of the struggle after this 1903 London Congress was that in the ranks of the Mensheviks there were found some who were afterwards to be characterised as the "Left,"¹ and who were always capable, like Trotsky, of finding leftist phrases to defend an opportunist position. As early as 1904 Lenin began to use the term "Balalaykin"—the type of artful twaddling lawyer in the satires of Saltykov-Shredin—to describe Trotsky and his phrase-mongering.

Thus, outside the ranks of the Social-Democrats, petty-bourgeois semi-anarchist revolutionariness appeared chiefly in the S.R. Party. Inside the ranks of the Social-Democrats it appeared, to begin with, as a variety of Menshevism.

¹ Inside the Social-Democratic parties of Europe, the *Right* or *Right-Wing* signified the opportunists and the *Left* the revolutionary Socialists. In addition, the semi-anarchists were placed in quotation marks as "*Left*" and the same notation was used for those who use revolutionary phrases to justify a Right-Wing policy. In the Second International and after, the Bolsheviks regarded themselves as the true *Left*.

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4. MIRRORS OF THE REVOLUTION

Up till 1917, the movements, controversies, and personalities just described remained largely unknown to English readers. They were "underground" movements. The "old mole" of revolution was working in the earth fast enough; but there was little visible. Nevertheless, the Russian Revolution, in many of its aspects, was clearly mirrored to the West by three great writers—Tolstoi, Chekhov, and Gorky. From these it was possible to behold, not only proletariat and peasantry, but intellectuals and bourgeoisie, together with Poles, Finns, and other subject nationalities, all expecting the coming of revolution as the only way out of the prison of people that was called the Russian Empire.

Count Leo Tolstoi (1828-1910), one of the greatest figures of world literature, was born into the class of serf-owning landlords, into the world of the isolated Russian village. His adult life witnessed the dissolution of that village world under the impact of capitalism. His writings are an imperishable record of the misery, poverty, and helpless anger of the peasantry, a trumpet-tongued protest against their oppression. Yet at the same time he remains the aristocratic landlord who neither sees, nor even wishes to see, the way out of that misery through class struggle and revolution, but seeks out of the traditional past to find a solution and a method. Therefore, Tolstoi presents a contradiction. But this contradiction itself mirrors the confused and contradictory life of Russia, especially of the peasantry, in the epoch from the reform of 1861 up to 1904. Tolstoi carries on his remarkable fearless protest against the

social lies and insincerity of the Tsardom, a voice of health against social decay; and at the same time, in a kind of intellectual hysteria, beats his breast and declares: I am wicked; I will mortify the flesh; I will eat no more meats. The fierce critic of capitalist exploitation, of the farce of justice, of the brutality of the Government, the man who challenged this growth of riches together with poverty and degradation and torture of the masses, at the same time gave out the slogan, "Resist not evil." He penetrates below the shams of social life with the most sober realism, laying facts bare; and at the same time offers the solution of a new purified religion which could only end in paralysing the revolutionary activity of the peasants.

But here Tolstoi faithfully expressed the contemporary peasantry of Russia. Without any love of social science he exhibits the peculiarity of the bourgeois democratic revolution maturing in Tsarist Russia as a *peasants'* democratic revolution. For a whole generation and more the peasants dreamed as Tolstoi dreamed. Naïvely they hoped for the ending of the oppression by the landlords, Tsarist officials, capitalists, moneylenders. They thought of a peasants' Socialism which, because the peasantry are a class deriving from the feudal era, approached in some of its aspect to the feudal Socialism described by Marx and Engels in the 1848 *Manifesto of the Communist Party*.

"Feudal Socialism," wrote Marx and Engels, "half lamentation, half lampoon; half echo of the past, half menace of the future; at times, by its bitter, witty, and incisive criticism, striking the bourgeoisie to the very

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heart's core, but always ludicrous in its effect, through total incapacity to comprehend the march of modern history. . . ."

But the biting words of the same *Manifesto*, on Christian Socialism, still more closely apply to Tolstoi's outlook.

"Nothing is easier than to give Christian asceticism a Socialist tinge. Has not Christianity declaimed against private property, against marriage, against the State? Has it not preached, in place of this, charity and poverty, celibacy and mortification of the flesh, monastic life and Mother Church? Christian Socialism is but the holy water with which the priest consecrates the heart-burnings of the aristocrat" (*Manifesto of the Communist Party*, 1847-8).

In another aspect, Tolstoi and that peasantry whom he mirrored represented that critical Utopian Socialism which, while it most valuably criticises existing society, and has therefore the most enlightening effect on the working class and on the masses, inculcates universal ascetism and social levelling in its crudest form. To this end, it rejects all political and especially all revolutionary action.

"They wish to attain their ends," wrote Marx and Engels, "by peaceful means, and endeavour, by small experiments, necessarily doomed to failure, and by the force of example, to pave the way for the new social gospel" (*Manifesto of the Communist Party*).

We shall see that the significance of this fantastic aloofness from the political struggle, mirrored in the

actions of the peasantry, lasted only until the Revolution of 1905. Thereafter, the epoch mirrored by Tolstoi had come to an end and a new stage was to begin.

What Tolstoi was able to do for the peasantry and for the whole of Russian life, Anton Chekhov (1860-1904) did for the middle classes. Chekhov, a doctor by profession, son of a small trader and grandson of a serf, was in his origin typical of the classes whose features he portrayed and typical also in his atmosphere of pessimism. He is at once more restricted and more widespread than Tolstoi. Tolstoi portrays on his gigantic canvas a scene which is specifically Russian, or, at any rate, East European and Asiatic, a scene reproducible in the Balkans and in every country in which society after centuries of mediævalism is buffeted and shaken by the impact of capitalism. Chekhov, without himself necessarily knowing it, portrayed something common to the whole of Europe and America when he describes the middle classes, and especially the intelligentsia, that section whose culture, artistic or scientific, enables them only to put their talents at the service of the ruling class, whichever it may be, and in whom any awakening to the condition of society is accompanied by an agony of helplessness.

With remarkable insight and correctitude, Bernard Shaw described his war-time play, *Heartbreak House*, as "an English phantasia on a Russian theme." Just as Shaw in this *Heartbreak House*, his bitterest and in some ways his deepest play, describes the world of the middle-class intelligentsia of which he is himself a part, so, too, Chekhov described the world to which he belongs.

Though Chekhov resigned in indignant protest from

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the Russian Academy when Tsar Nicholas II cancelled the election of Maxim Gorky to it in 1901, and in other ways showed himself as a humane spirit, he, like the intelligentsia he portrays, remained only a passenger on the vessel.

The last of this great trio, Maxim Gorky (1868-1936), is at once valid for the Russian scene, like Tolstoi, and for the international arena, like Chekhov. In his earlier writings, from 1892 onwards, he portrays chiefly, not the working class, but that semi-proletariat which, though existing in other countries, was a specific feature of the development of capitalism in Tsarist Russia. The millions of landless, or practically landless, peasants roaming about the countryside, moving north and south with the change of seasons like migratory fowls, turning from this job to that, a semi-proletariat, was a feature described by Lenin in his *History of the Development of Capitalism in Russia*. The early Gorky might serve as a documentation of these pages of Lenin. But with the development of the working-class struggles Gorky develops. At first a rebel against society, he becomes, in his *The Stormy Petrel* in 1901, the year of his first imprisonment, a revolutionary; in 1905 completed the process of development. In his unforgettable *Mother*, and thereafter to the end of his life, Gorky portrays the life strivings of that Russian working class, brother to the working class in each country. He becomes a member of the Bolshevik Party and a figure of world literature, and at the same time the foremost representative in the world of the revolutionary literature of the working class of all countries.

CHAPTER III

THE REVOLUTION OF 1905

I. THE RUSSO-JAPANESE WAR

IN THE LAST DECADE of the nineteenth century there had been significant developments in the relations of the great Powers and also in the foreign policy of Tsardom. In the eighties, the policy of Bismarck had been to bind Italy, Austria, and Germany together in the Triple Alliance and at the same time by the "re-insurance policy" to keep on sufficiently good terms with Russia, so as to prevent any counter-alliance being built. Bismarck was able to count on the British Government's nervousness about Afghanistan as a means of keeping it aloof from Tsardom; and upon the Tsar's repugnance to the French Republican form of government, as a safeguard against any Franco-Russian alliance. The successors of Bismarck were not able to continue this policy, and this, coupled with the need of the Tsars for financial aid, began to make Russian overtures to France possible. In 1892, the Tsar made a visit of ceremony to the French naval base of Cherbourg and the Dual Entente of Republican France and Autocratic Russia was initiated. The cement of this alliance was to be the aid of the French Bourse to the impoverished coffers of the Russian State. Britain maintained her aloofness for more than another decade, until the growing power of

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German capitalism began to be felt as a menace which demanded the abandonment of the old policy of "splendid isolation." Meantime, Tsarist expansion in the Far East had been proceeding apace, and had penetrated into the Northern Provinces of China. The Trans-Siberian Railway had been opened in 1897, and a line was run down through Manchuria to Port Arthur. The Boxer rising in China in 1900, suppressed with great barbarity by a joint expeditionary force of the European Powers under the command of the German Field-Marshal Count von Waldersee, gave the desired opportunity to the Tsar to seize Port Arthur and instal a Russian garrison. This predatory act clashed with the interests of the new Power in the Far East, Japan. Port Arthur had already been a bone of contention. When Japan, five years earlier, as the result of its successful war with China, had emerged as a new Power, the Treaty of Shimonsheki had not only reft Korea from the Chinese Empire and set it up as a nominally independent State, but had given over Port Arthur to occupation by the Japanese. This booty was taken from them. Russia, Germany, and France jointly compelled Japanese withdrawal from Port Arthur on the pretext of maintaining the territorial integrity of China. And now the Tsar held Port Arthur. It was only two years since Tsar Nicholas had issued his famous Peace Rescript which summoned the Sovereign States of the world to maintain peace, and led to the establishment of nothing more than the Hague Court. The Apostle of Peace had become the Provocator of War; and it was in this sense that the Japanese Government interpreted it. Port Arthur, however, from the point of view of the Tsar, was only a

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stepping-stone. With Manchuria already in his grasp, there should now be no difficulty in passing on to the seizure of Korea. Here the predatory policy of Tsardom received a stimulus from the personal rapacity of the Romanoffs. Fabulous tales were being told at the Russian Court of the natural wealth of Korea in minerals and timber. Huge concessions for the exploitation of these resources were negotiated, and the Romanoff family was to have the lion's share of the fat dividends that would result. Despite the warnings of Witte, the Finance Minister, and General Kuropatkin, the greed of Nicholas drove ahead with a "forward policy" that was bound to end in war.

Japan began to prepare both militarily and diplomatically. On the other side of the world it found an ally. Britain, dismayed at the conspicuous isolation in which she found herself at the time of the Boer War (1899-1902), was similarly casting about for an ally. The diplomatic policy of more than three generations was abandoned, and Britain concluded her first military and naval alliance. The Treaty of 1902 between Britain and Japan stipulated that if either of those "High Contracting Parties" were attacked by more than one Power, the other "High Contracting Party" must come to its assistance. The Alliance was for a term of ten years, and thereafter renewable. It was to last until 1922. In its opening years, the Anglo-Japanese Alliance prevented any repetition of the coercion exercised against Japan by Russia, Germany, and France in 1895.

Meanwhile, there was yet another reason impelling Tsardom towards the adventure of a foreign war. This was the growing revolutionary unrest within Russia, due

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to the growing misery of the vast mass of the population. After the economic crisis in 1900 the number of strikes amongst the workers became greater in number, more widespread, and more political in their quality. At the same time the peasantry was in a state of profound unrest. The influx of peasantry into the towns to find work in the rapidly expanding capitalist industry was stopped by the economic crisis of 1900. With this "natural overflow" dammed up, the village was more and more whelmed in the swamp of poverty and ruin. This, in turn, hindered the development of the home market, so that it became clear that the further growth of industry depended on the abolition of the survivals of feudalism which bore so heavily upon the peasants. The result was that the Liberal bourgeoisie also had begun to take up an attitude of extremely sharp opposition to Tsardom, while the intelligentsia reflected this in a still sharper form. In the case of the students, the most advanced section of the intelligentsia, a revolutionary spirit developed and was further influenced by the growing revolutionary movement of the working class. All these sections of the population in the winter of their discontent looked to revolution as the sun that would bring them the glorious summer. The extent of this can be measured by the renewal and increase of revolutionary activities and organisations. Amongst the groups which made up the Social-Revolutionary organisation, the terrorist section became active, and in 1902 assassinated the Home Secretary Sipyagin. His successor Plehve, who intensified the repression and endeavoured to distract the masses from the revolutionary path by stirring up pogroms against the Jews,

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met with the same fate in 1904. The Social-Democrats, too, were growing at enormous speed. At the International Socialist Congress, held in Paris in 1900, they could report the existence of only six committees and three groups, all in European Russia. After the Second Congress of 1903, according to incomplete data given by the newspaper *Iskra*, there were already thirty-nine committees and eleven groups in European and Asiatic Russia. Under all these circumstances, a war with Japan might have the effect of damping down the revolutionary unrest within Russia: and it appears that this was one of the calculations of the Tsar's Government.

War broke out in February 1904. Japanese destroyers torpedoed several warships at Port Arthur and blockaded that port. In the first land conflict, the battle of the Yalu River, the Japanese were victorious. The Russian Commander-in-Chief, Kuropatkin, was forced to withdraw up the South Manchurian railway line, and the siege of Port Arthur by land was begun. It was clear at the outset, therefore, that, though the Tsardom had been provoking war, it was not ready for war. Not only had it not sent the requisite number of troops to the Far East in time, but the quality of the troops was inferior. The Japanese Army had been regarded with contempt. The most skilled and seasoned troops had been kept behind to be used against the internal enemy in the event of a revolutionary outbreak. The siege of Port Arthur was followed by the Battle of Liaoyang, in which the Russians were heavily defeated, although by this time they actually outnumbered the Japanese. The fall of Port Arthur was imminent, and a little later, on January 2nd, 1905, this huge citadel with 50,000 troops

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was surrendered to the Japanese. The series of land battles ended with the Battle of Mukden—a crushing defeat, with the loss of thousands of troops.

On sea, the Tsarist Navy fared no better. After the initial success of the Japanese Navy, the Russian ships in the Far East were, one after another, sunk or bottled-up in various ports. Accordingly, in the autumn of 1904, the Baltic Fleet under the command of Admiral Rozhestevensky set forth on a voyage round the Cape of Good Hope to the theatre of war. At the Dogger Bank, in the North Sea, Admiral Rozhesteveñsky encountered the English fishing fleet and, mistaking them for Japanese destroyers, attacked the fishermen. The indignation in England was widespread; newspapers demanded that the British Navy should immediately blockade the Tsar's Baltic Fleet in the Spanish coaling station of Vigo Bay. Delcassé, the Foreign Minister of the French Republic, strove his utmost to prevent a clash between Russia and Britain. Eventually it was agreed that Tsardom would pay heavy compensation. After this sorry beginning, the Baltic Fleet continued its long six months' voyage around the Cape of Good Hope, and eventually arrived, in the late spring, in the Sea of Japan, where, in the Straits of Tsushima, it was immediately annihilated by the British-trained Japanese warships. There was consternation throughout all the patriotic classes in Russia, and the Japanese Admiral Togo became the hero of the hour in England. It was the first large-scale war since the Franco-Prussian War of 1871. It was the first war which approximated, at any rate on the Japanese side, to the technique of the war of 1914-18. Russian losses were 400,000 killed

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and wounded. Tsardom was heavily defeated and its defeat brought matters to a head inside Russia; and the war had not ended when the Russian Revolution broke out.

2. 1905-1907

Three weeks after the fall of Port Arthur on January 2nd, 1905, thousands of the workers of St. Petersburg, led by Father Gapon, went in a procession, bearing religious emblems, to petition their "Little Father," the Tsar, in the Winter Palace. The Winter Palace stands on the left bank of the Neva, facing the Fortress of St. Peter and St. Paul, within whose dank cells were confined prisoners for twenty years and more. A little farther down the left bank stood the Admiralty. As the peaceful procession passed behind the Admiralty and was reaching the great square, the officers gave orders to fire, and the Cossacks charged the unarmed workers—men, women, and children. There had been no prohibition of the procession; no warning had been given. One thousand were killed and two thousand wounded. The indignation of the workers of St. Petersburg, and, as the news spread, of all Russia, was indescribable. A shudder passed over Europe and the civilised world at the news of the massacre, but those who had thought to cow the masses by these means found that, instead, they had unleashed the Russian Revolution.

To understand how it was that so many workers of St. Petersburg had come forward in this peaceful and semi-religious procession, headed by a priest, it is necessary to go back a little. The strikes and general industrial unrest from the crisis year of 1900 onwards

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were frequently led by Social-Democrats—a fact which greatly troubled the Tsar's police. To counter the influence of the revolutionaries, the police in those years had conceived the idea of organising "mutual aid" societies for working men—the Zubatov Unions—by which they hoped to be able to keep hold on the workers, and to transfer their activities from subversive to constitutional ends. In this they were encouraged by the landowning nobility around the Tsar, who controlled the Ministry of the Interior and cared little for the interests of the manufacturers—though their Cossacks were always available for the capitalists if matters came to strike action. For a considerable period these police unions had some vogue, particularly as the workers tended to transform them into fighting bodies. It was a police organisation of this kind that was founded in 1904 by the priest George Gapon. The workers joined it in large numbers and their pressure pushed on their leaders. In January a strike movement had begun at the Putlov Armament Works and spread rapidly. Gapon could think of nothing better than to propose a personal presentation of a petition to the Tsar by a procession to the Winter Palace, and, despite the advice of the Bolsheviks, the majority of the loyal and God-fearing workers followed Gapon's lead. The petition began as follows:

"We, workers, inhabitants of St. Petersburg, have come to Thee. We are unfortunate, reviled slaves. We are crushed by despotism and tyranny. At last, when our patience was exhausted, we ceased work and begged our masters to give us only that without which life is a torment. But this was refused. Everything

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seemed unlawful to the employers. We here, many thousands of us, like the whole of the Russian people, have no human rights whatever. Owing to the deeds of Thy officials we have become slaves."

The demands were for amnesty, civil liberty, normal wages, land to be gradually transferred to the people, a Constituent Assembly by universal and equal suffrage, and ended with the words:

"Sire, do not refuse aid to Thy people! Throw down the wall that separates Thee from Thy people. Order and swear that our requests will be granted and Thou wilt make Russia happy; if not, we are ready to die on this very spot. We have only two roads; freedom and happiness, or the grave."

The massacre shattered the naïveté and simple trust in their rulers shown by many of the people. Within a few months the numbers of revolutionary Social-Democrats grew into thousands, and those thousands were leading two or three millions of proletarians. At first the movement took the form of a series of strikes unparalleled in their magnitude and acuteness. The average number of strikers in the ten years preceding had been 43,000 a year, or a total of 430,000. In January 1905 alone there were 440,000 strikers—more in one month than in the whole of the preceding decade. From economic strikes—that is, strikes with a purely economic aim—they developed in the course of the year to political strikes, and from political strikes into insurrection. This was the first time in history that the mass political strike had played such a big part in a revolution. In the whole

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of 1905 the number of strikers rose to 2,800,000, which was twice the total number of factory workers in Russia at that time. This revealed the enormous latent energy residing in the working class.

The strike movement of the workers roused the peasants. Already in the five years 1900 to 1904 there had been 670 uprisings of peasants, of which 441 were directed against the landlords and 196 against the Government authorities. In 1905, the ferment aroused amongst the peasantry by the workers led to revolutionary risings of peasants to a total number of *three thousand*. It recalled the rising of the peasants during the great French Revolution, when the châteaux were burned. In Russia in 1905, 2,000 mansions of the landlords were destroyed in these risings. Two or three million proletarians were now joined by fifty to a hundred million peasants. The peasant movement reacted on the army and navy so that some of the armed forces began to fight on the side of the people. "In this manner a colossal country, with a population of 130,000,000, went into revolution. Thus slumbering Russia became transformed into a Russia of the revolutionary proletariat and the revolutionary people" (Lenin).

When the revolution spread to the armed forces, the Tsar, who in his diaries had noted with indifference the massacre of Bloody Sunday, now became really alarmed. The first of these mutinies took place on the Black Sea cruiser *Prince Potemkin*. The mutiny, which has been made the theme of Eisenstein's famous film *Potemkin*, arose in this way. On a hot June day in 1905, the meat for the sailors turned out to be crawling with maggots. The sailors protested. The officers, some of whom were

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getting a rake-off on the food supplies, instructed the ship's surgeon, who pronounced that the meat would do well enough to make soup for the sailors. Headed by Matushensko, some of the sailors refused the soup and began to behave mutinously. The officer commanding thereupon picked out a score or more of sailors, some of whom were entirely innocent of the whole affair, and ordered them to be shot. The firing squad refused to shoot, and within a short time the officers had been thrown overboard and the cruiser *Potemkin* hoisted the Red Flag. The mutineers issued a manifesto addressed "To the civilised world," with the slogans "Down with the autocracy"; "Long live the Constituent Assembly." Accompanied by some other ships which joined in the mutiny, the *Potemkin* steamed for Odessa, where there was a strike in order "to protect the revolutionary people." There was, however, no plan of action, and eventually the *Potemkin* sailed for a Rumanian port, where it was interned. Some of the mutineers escaped to Europe; those who returned to Russia were shot or sent to Siberia.

Every fresh wave of strikes in 1905, every upsurge of peasant risings, was followed or accompanied by risings in the armed forces. Of these, perhaps the most remarkable was the mutiny of the Black Sea Fleet at Sevastopol at the end of November. This was near the apex of events, and the following incident is illustrative of the temper of the sailors. On the morning of November 24th, 1905, a company of sailors, in full war kit, was posted at the gate of the naval barracks. Rear-Admiral Pissarevsky, in a loud voice, gave the order: "Permit no one to leave the barracks! In case of disobedience,

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shoot!" A sailor named Petrov stepped forth from the ranks of the company that had received the order, loaded his rifle in view of all, and with one shot killed Lieutenant-Colonel Stein of the Brest-Litovsk Regiment, and with another wounded Rear-Admiral Pissarevsky. The command was given: "Arrest him!" Nobody budged. Petrov threw his rifle to the ground and exclaimed: "Why don't you move? Take me!" He was arrested. The sailors, who rushed from every side, angrily demanded his release, and declared that they vouched for him. Excitement ran high. "Petrov, the shot was an accident, wasn't it?" asked one of the officers, trying to find a way out of the situation. "What do you mean, an accident? I stepped forward, loaded, and took aim. Is that an accident?" "They demand your release. . . ." And Petrov was released. The sailors, however, were not content with that; all officers on duty were arrested, disarmed, and taken to company headquarters. Sailor delegates, about forty in number, conferred the whole night. The decision was to release the officers, but never to permit them to enter the barracks again.

Even in the middle of 1906 there could occur the great mutinies at Sveaborg in Finland and Kronstadt. Lenin comments on the mutinies in his lecture on the 1905 Revolution as follows:

"It is characteristic that the leaders of the movement came from those elements in the army and the navy which had been recruited mainly from among the industrial workers, and possessed most technical training, for instance, the sappers. The broad masses,

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however, were still too naive, their mood was too passive, too good-natured, too Christian. They flared up rather quickly; any case of injustice, excessively harsh conduct on the part of the officers, bad food, etc., was enough to call forth revolt. But there was no persistence in their protest; they lacked a clear perception of aim; they lacked a clear understanding of the fact that only the most vigorous continuation of the armed struggle, only a victory over all the military and civil authorities, only the overthrow of the Government and the seizure of power over the whole State, could guarantee the success of the revolution.

“The broad masses of the sailors and soldiers were easily roused to revolt. But with equal light-heartedness they foolishly released the arrested officers. They allowed themselves to be pacified by promises and persuasions on the part of their officers; in this way the officers gained precious time, obtained reinforcements, broke the ranks of the rebels, and then the most brutal suppression of the movement and the execution of the leaders followed.”

The effect of the *Potemkin* mutiny, coming so near to the disastrous battle of Tsushima, roused the whole population to demands, to which the Tsar reluctantly had to pay heed. On August 19th, 1905, the Tsar issued a ukase proclaiming what was afterwards called the Bulygin Duma, or Parliament, with powers that were purely advisory. It was too late; and the concession which the Tsar found almost too hard to grant was too small for the people to accept. The strike movement

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developed and became more intense. The peasant movement followed. Renewed mutinies broke out in the army and navy. October and then December marked the climax of the revolutionary struggle. On October 20th there began at Moscow a railway strike which presently spread over the whole of the railway and telegraph system, and then developed into a political general strike. The Government was paralysed. Workers took and exercised the freedom they had so long sought. Open meetings were held, with open discussions, and political freedom of the Press was won by simply ignoring the censorship. Whereas previously no publisher dared print anything without referring to the authorities, now in these climax months of the Russian Revolution no publisher dared send copy to the authorities and the authorities dared not take measures against this. For the first time in Russian history, revolutionary papers appeared freely. In St. Petersburg, three daily Social-Democratic papers were being published.

The Tsar was compelled to yield. The Bulygin Duma was never to see the light of day. A new manifesto was issued by the Tsar on October 30th announcing the creation of a Duma which would possess legislative powers. But now this was not enough for the workers, though for the Liberals and the opportunists, who had been willing to accept the farcical Bulygin Duma, it fulfilled most of what they wanted.

The workers were determined on the eight-hour day, but it became more and more clear that the eight-hour day and the democratic republic could only be won by force of arms. Meantime the workers had found a new revolutionary form. In the month of June, in the textile

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town of Ivanovo-Voznessensk, the first Soviet was formed. The Russian word "soviet" means council, but the meaning it has come to acquire is derived from the circumstances of its birth as an offspring of revolution. Other towns followed suit. In September, various trades in Moscow formed their trade Soviets. In October, in the middle of the political general strike, there was formed a St. Petersburg Soviet of Workers' Deputies. This metropolitan Soviet lived for fifty days—from October 26th to December 16th. It took charge of the strike. On November 1st it proclaimed the freedom of the Press. On November 13th it proclaimed the eight-hour day. It supported the postal and telegraph strike; it organised the strike in November in defence of the arrested Kronstadt sailors and of revolutionary Poland, where martial law had been declared. It helped to create trade unions, to organise support for the unemployed, and finally, on December 14th, it issued the famous Finance Manifesto, in which it called upon the workers and the people to refrain from paying taxes, and warned foreign capitalists that if the revolution triumphed all Tsarist foreign debts would be repudiated. In its brief life it had three chairmen: Zborovsky, Nossar, and, in its last seven days, Trotsky. But the St. Petersburg Soviet, under Menshevik leadership, failed to follow up its bold programme with the necessary preparations for insurrection. By their very nature, Soviets were born to be organs of insurrection and of revolutionary Government. To them the well-known teachings of Marx on the art of insurrection applied. If they did not take the offensive, they were bound to lose. When the Government found that the Soviet was passive as regards the organisation of

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armed force, it arrested its chairman, Nossar, on December 9th. A few days later all its members were arrested. When the news reached Moscow of the arrest of the St. Petersburg Soviet, the Moscow Soviet of Workers' Deputies, together with the Moscow Committee of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party (strongly under Bolshevik influence) and the S.R.s, decided on December 19th to call an immediate political general strike. On December 20th, 100,000 workers ceased work. The next day the strikers numbered 150,000. The day after, on December 22nd, an armed struggle began. Cossacks fired on the crowds; barricades were thrown up; the Government brought in machine guns and artillery. For six days the struggle went on while reinforcements of troops were being gathered together and sent from St. Petersburg and Warsaw. Altogether the insurrection lasted nine days. On January 1st, when it was realised that the Government were too strong, the strike was called off. The rising in Moscow was followed by risings in other towns. The significance of the Moscow rising was that a small force of not more than 8,000 organised and armed workers had resisted the Government for nine days. It was an augury for the future. It was possible only because of the support of the mass of the people.

With the quelling of the December rising in Moscow the revolution began to subside, but the vanguard of the working class for another two years endeavoured to stem the retreat and prepare for a new offensive. By one means or another—by parliamentary struggle in the Duma and outside it, by legal and illegal struggles, by boycott of the Duma and by participation in it—they

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continued the fight. It was not until the dissolution of the first Duma and the defeat of the Kronstadt and Zveaborg mutinies in the summer of 1906 that the Tsar's Government dared to apply martial law freely. The second Duma, with restricted powers, was summoned in the early spring of 1907 and was also dissolved. Only in late 1907 was the Tsar able to promulgate a third electoral law by which he secured a Duma that was to his liking.

Liberation movements amongst the oppressed nationalities had swelled the tide of revolution. The Tsardom took every precaution; for example, 400,000 Russian troops were thrown into Poland; nevertheless, the liberation movements continued. In Latvia and Esthonia there was a rising against Tsarism and against the Baltic barons. Here it was almost a regular war that was carried on between the numerous punitive expeditions sent into the countryside by the Tsar and the resisting agricultural population. In the Caucasus, the Georgian peasantry, under the leadership of the Social-Democrats, drove out the Tsar's officials and police, and it demanded huge military forces sent from the centre of Russia before the rising in the Caucasus was crushed. In Finland the struggle for national emancipation was in the foreground. The Tsar, in October 1905, was compelled to grant national autonomy, and a Finnish Parliament, elected by universal suffrage. Naturally these concessions were restricted in subsequent years.

Throughout Europe and America, when it was heard that the Tsar had been compelled to grant an amnesty, to yield concession after concession, and to summon a Duma, it began to be thought that an age-long tyranny

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had come to an end. The situation in 1906 had some historical resemblance to the summoning of the Long Parliament by Charles I. The dependence of the Tsar upon the Duma for some of his revenue raised a mirage of "constitutional monarchy." But their dreams came to naught. What actually happened was that before the Duma met in the spring of 1906 the British Foreign Office approved the flotation on the London Stock Exchange of a gigantic Russian loan, and so enabled the Tsar to snap his fingers at the Duma. This was the first occasion on which the Stock Exchange had handled Tsarist bonds. The loan was followed by the Anglo-Russian partition of Persia, negotiated in 1907 by the Liberal Foreign Secretary, Sir Edward Grey. Thus it helped to build the Triple Entente of Russia, France, and Britain, and to prepare for the coming world war. This was its external effect.

Inside Russia, the money thus acquired was used to re-establish the shaken autocracy and to crush both the constitutional and the revolutionary movement. By 1907 Tsarism was victorious. An era of repression set in.

But the effect of the years of revolution from 1905 to 1907, this flood-tide of the struggle for a democratic republic that began in earnest with the Bolsheviks and was to go on right up to March 1917, was by no means negative. The peoples and the parties learned a lesson. "As regards teaching the masses and leaders, classes and parties, the fundamentals of political science," says Lenin, "one month of this period was equivalent to a whole year of 'peaceful,' 'constitutional' development. Without the 'general rehearsal' of 1905, the victory of

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the October Revolution of 1917 would have been impossible."

The effect outside the Tsar's dominions was incalculably great. What no previous movement had achieved in Europe was accomplished by the 1905 Revolution. The East began to awake. In Persia in 1906, in the Ottoman Empire of the Turks in 1908, in China in 1907, and then on a greater scale in 1912, revolution began. In India, the repercussions of 1905 initiated a movement towards liberation of a kind never known before. The Marquess Curzon, then Viceroy of India, wrote a State-Paper in which he drew a parallel between the dangers confronting the Tsardom and the similar dangers that confronted the similar despotism in Hindustan.

The Labour Party, like the other parties of Western Europe and America, collected money to help the Russian revolutionaries; and the author has seen the letter in which Oulyanov (Lenin) acknowledged the receipt of this effort of solidarity and friendship. But this was thirty years ago.

CHAPTER IV

YEARS OF REACTION

I. "STOLYPIN'S NECKTIE"

TSARISM WAS VICTORIOUS. From 1907 onwards, an era of repression set in. Not at any time during the Tsardom had there been such savage and violent terror. The "Black Hundreds"—corps of what would now be described as "Black and Tans"—were organised and let loose on the unhappy peoples of Russia. Regular punitive expeditions were dispatched to several parts of the country. Whole villages were massacred. All that was lacking was bombing aeroplanes. Pogroms were stirred up against the Jewish population. Siberia was the lightest fate that befell the revolutionaries, many of whom found that their struggle for a democratic republic had served to fasten "Stolypin's Necktie" round their throats.

Under this "strong rule" of Stolypin, the Tsar's Prime Minister, the Government of Russia plunged deeper and deeper into repression and relied more and more on secret police and *agents provocateurs*. The opposition and revolutionary parties were honeycombed with Tsarist spies: countermining inside the armed forces was carried on by the Socialists. This, of course, was not unique; for Governments of other countries have done and are doing the same thing. What was remarkable was the extent to which these Tsarist practices were revealed

after the revolution—and in some instances before. Particularly shocking for a Western world which had forgotten the story of Sergeant Sullivan in Ireland was the case of Azeff. Azeff was an *agent provocateur* in the ranks of the terrorist section of the Social-Revolutionaries. He betrayed hundreds to the gallows and to Siberia. At the same time, to avoid the suspicion that might arise out of his own freedom from arrest, he participated actively in terrorist attempts, and in this way betrayed also his own masters to their death. It was Azeff who organised the assassination of Plehve, the Minister at the head of the police, and of the Grand Duke Sergius, uncle of the Tsar. In the conditions of the Russian Revolution, such an abyss of double-crossing treachery was found to be possible.

But the Tsardom, though victorious, had been compelled to move further and further away from the pre-capitalist mode of life in Russia. More and more rapid became the development along bourgeois lines, to which the parties of the bourgeoisie responded by making their opposition ever milder and more "constitutional." The old feudal autocracy was becoming transformed into a bourgeois monarchy which camouflaged its absolutism under "constitutional" forms. The Third Duma, elected under an astonishingly reactionary electoral law, was the outward sign of an alliance between the upper ranks of the commercial and industrial bourgeoisie and the Black Hundred landlords and Tsarism. The autocracy had been forced along the path of capitalist development; but at the same time strove to keep up the power and the incomes of the landlords; and was therefore balancing between the landlords and the representatives

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of capital. But all were at one in their attack upon the Social-Democratic proletariat and the Democratic peasantry. This was clear, for example, in the agrarian policy of Tsardom. The "positive" side of Stolypin's measures was his new land law, by which the old land tenures were broken down, capitalist farming fostered, and the creation of the kulaks within the village stimulated in order to make of them a social support for Tsardom. With this the illusions that had persisted up to 1905 were shattered, the issues of class struggle became clearer and sharper, and were seen inside every village.

2. LESSONS OF DEFEAT

Thought shall be harder
Heart the keener,
Mood shall be more
As our might lessens.

Song of the Fight at Maldon.

All the opposition and revolutionary parties had been defeated. The result, said Lenin, was "depression, demoralisation, splits, discord, renegacy, and pornography instead of politics." What were the main parties? First, the Cadets, the party of the Liberal capitalists, headed by Paul Miliukoff, with the Octobrists, another capitalist party, on the right of them. Second, there were the variously named descendants of the Narodniks, of which the best known were the Social Revolutionaries (called the S.R.s, or the Essers). Although the S.R.s, founded in 1901, were an affiliated party of the International Socialist Congress, it had been established by Lenin years earlier that they were Socialist only in name,

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and that they really represented the democratic standpoint of the peasantry and the petty-bourgeoisie generally. This use of the name "Socialist" should surprise no one who recalls that various capitalist parties in France have found it expedient to include the word "Socialist" as part of their official designation. Thirdly, there was the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party, which emerged from the years of revolution in two main fractions (Bolshevik and Menshevik) and in three national groupings, the Polish and Lithuanian Social-Democracy, the Lettish Social-Democratic Party, and the Jewish Party (usually referred to as the Bund). In the years of revolution the party had been able to come out into the open, and for a time had been united. Lenin was able in 1905 to return to Russia and to meet some of the leading fighters of the party in the course of the daily work and in conferences and congresses. It was at one of these conferences, held in Finland in 1905, that a young Georgian Bolshevik who had been in correspondence with Lenin first met him. Twenty years later he described how unexpectedly modest, comradely, unassuming, and simple he had found the personality of Lenin. His account of how he first got into touch with Lenin is also interesting. He says:

"I first made the acquaintance of Lenin in 1903. It is true that this was not a personal acquaintance. It was an acquaintance established by correspondence. But this made an ineradicable impression upon me which has never left me all the time I have been working for the party. At that time I was in exile in Siberia. My introduction to the revolutionary activity of

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Lenin at the end of the nineties, and especially after 1901 after the publication of *Iskra*, convinced me that Lenin was a man out of the ordinary. At that time I did not regard him merely as a leader of the party but as practically its creator, because he alone understood the internal substance and the urgent needs of the party. Whenever I compared him with the other leaders of our party it always seemed to me that Lenin's comrades-in-arms—Plekhanov, Martov, Axelrod, and others—were a head shorter than Lenin, that compared with them Lenin was not merely one of the leaders but a leader of a superior type, a mountain eagle, who knew no fear in the struggle and who boldly led the party forward along the unexplored paths of the Russian revolutionary movement. This impression was so deeply ingrained in my mind that I felt that I must write about him to one of my intimate friends who was then in exile abroad, and to ask him to give me his opinion of Lenin. After a short time, when I was already in exile in Siberia (this was at the end of 1903), I received an enthusiastic letter from my friend and a simple but very profound letter from Lenin, to whom it appears my friend had communicated my letter. Lenin's letter was a relatively short one, but it contained a bold, fearless criticism of the practical work of our party and a remarkably clear and concise outline of a whole plan of work of the party for the immediate period. Lenin alone was able to write about the most complicated things so simply and clearly, so concisely and boldly—so that every sentence seems not to speak, but to ring out like a shot. The simple and bold letter still more strengthened me

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in my opinion that in Lenin we had the mountain eagle of our party. I cannot forgive myself for having burnt Lenin's letter as I did many others, as is the habit of an old underground worker.

"From that time my acquaintance with Lenin began."

This young Georgian Bolshevik was Joseph Vissarionovich Djughashvili, now most widely known under his name of Stalin, who had already suffered imprisonment more than once. He was to work in the closest conjunction with Lenin until his death, and thereafter to carry on the work of Lenin.

In April 1906 a united Congress of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party was held at Stockholm.¹ In the illusions of constitutional progress that were then widespread in Russia the Congress tended towards a line of least resistance and the Mensheviks turned out to be in a majority. A year later the illusions were falling away, the difficulties were beginning to be appreciated. The Fifth Congress of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party, held in London in 1907, found the Bolsheviks once more in the majority. From this time onward for ten years there was no congress of the party. During this period there were meetings of the Central Committee and Conferences gathered together and organised under the most difficult circumstances, involving the heaviest casualties. On the one hand there were the repeated arrests and imprisonment or banishment to Siberia. For example, J. V. Stalin, in the short

¹ This was the Fourth Congress. The Third Congress, held in London in May 1905, had been attended only by the Bolsheviks.

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period between 1900 and 1914, was eight times sentenced to lengthy imprisonment and exile—from which he six times escaped. But there were casualties of another sort—those who, demoralised by the difficulties, put forward false policies for the working class and developed into enemies of the party from within. Against these Lenin and the Bolsheviks carried out an unremitting struggle.

On the one side the “liquidators,” mostly Mensheviks, adopted an open anti-party attitude. They would have nothing to do with a revolutionary and illegal party, still less with “underground” revolutionary activities. They wanted to restrict working-class activities solely to what was legally permissible under Stolypin—i.e. to hoist the white flag and make peace with Stolypin. Against the Menshevik “liquidators” the Bolsheviks strove to maintain the revolutionary party, with its revolutionary slogans of democratic republic, confiscation of the landlords’ estates, and the eight-hour day. How far the “liquidators” were ready to go in their abandonment of the fundamental programme and tactical principles of the party may be judged from the standpoint of Noah Jordania, leader of the Caucasian Mensheviks. He advocated a “union of the forces of the bourgeoisie and of the proletariat,” and demanded that the proletariat should not “allow its uncompromising spirit to enfeeble the general movement.” He was against the principle of the hegemony of the proletariat, writing: “The thesis regarding the leading rôle of the proletariat in the bourgeois revolution is borne out neither by the theories of Marx nor by the historical facts.” And again he wrote: “The less intense the class

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war between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, the more victorious will be the bourgeois revolution, provided, of course, that other conditions are equal." On this, Stalin, writing in June 1910, made the following comment:

"The principle, borne out by the whole experience of our revolution, namely, that the triumph of the revolution is based on the class struggle of the proletariat, leading the poor peasants against the landlords and the liberal bourgeoisie—this principle has remained for our author a book with seven seals. It is in 'the union of the forces of the proletariat with the forces of the bourgeoisie' that Comrade Jordania sees 'the only pledge of the triumph of the revolution.' The moderate Cadet bourgeoisie and its moderate Monarchist constitution are what will save our revolution, it appears. . . . In a word, in place of the leadership of the proletariat with the following of the peasants, we have the leadership of the Cadet bourgeoisie, leading the proletariat by the nose. Such are the 'new' tactics of the Tiflis Mensheviks. It is not, in our opinion, necessary to expose this puerile liberal trash in detail. All that is required is to note that the 'new' tactics of the Tiflis Mensheviks amount to a liquidation of the tactics of the party which have been corroborated by the revolution, a liquidation demanding the transformation of the proletariat into the tail-end of the moderate Cadet bourgeoisie."

On the other side were the "Leftists" of several varieties, notably the Otzovists who wished to recall the Duma

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deputies, to boycott the Duma, and not to have anything to do with any form of legal activity. These "Leftists," types of the revolutionaries of the "frenzied petty-bourgeoisie," were incapable of understanding the changes that had taken place in the relation of class forces and in the conditions of their struggle, and were therefore incapable of making the requisite change in tactics. The Bolsheviks ruthlessly exposed and expelled these revolutionary phrase-mongers who refused to understand the necessity of retreat, or how to retreat, or how to carry on work in the most reactionary parliaments, insurance societies, trade unions, etc.

The Bolsheviks retreated in good order with the least loss, the least demoralisation, and in the best condition to renew work on the broadest scale and to make ready for the time of a revolutionary offensive. The Mensheviks retreated into the Slough of Despond, amid the marsh frogs of liberal reformism. The Otzovists simply refused to retreat because they did not understand the necessity for it: and in this way these and other "Leftists" became a great hindrance to the preparations for a new offensive.

It was from amongst the Otzovists and their associates that there developed at this time a philosophic tendency away from Marxism and towards idealism, a tendency dubbed by Lenin "God-creating." Against this "God-creating" as put forward by Bogdanov and Lunacharsky, Lenin strove with might and main. He himself undertook the gigantic task of generalising all the most important achievements of science from the time of Engels onwards, while criticising most comprehensively the anti-materialist trends amongst

the Marxists. This is the subject matter of his *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism*, his chief work in the domain of materialist philosophy.

The third enemy during these years was Trotsky, who, without avowing himself either a "liquidator" or a "Leftist," took up the cudgels indifferently on behalf of one or other against Lenin and the Bolsheviks, an attitude which was met by Lenin with attack after attack. For Lenin, Trotsky was an "intolerable phrasemonger," a representative of "the worst remnants of factionalism," one who was "deceiving the workers in a most unprincipled and shameless manner." As late as 1914, Lenin, who had contemptuously characterised Trotsky in all the years of his activity as a "habitual deserter," was writing of these "deserters" that they "declare themselves to be above factions for the simple reason that they 'borrow' ideas from one faction one day and from another faction another day. Trotsky was an ardent *Iskra*-ist in 1901-3, and Ryazanov described the part he played at the Congress of 1903 as that of 'Lenin's truncheon.' At the end of 1903 Trotsky was an ardent Menshevik, i.e. one who deserted the *Iskra*-ists for the *Economists*. . . . In 1904-5 he left the Mensheviks and began to vacillate, at one moment collaborating with Martynov (the *Economist*) and at another proclaiming the absurdly 'Left' theory of 'permanent revolution.'¹ In 1906-7 he drew nearer to the Bolsheviks, and

¹ Using, and misunderstanding, a passage of Marx, Trotsky in 1905 put forward his "theory of permanent revolution" The Mensheviks were for an alliance of proletariat and bourgeoisie, with the bourgeoisie leading. The Bolsheviks were for an alliance of proletariat and peasantry, with the proletariat leading. Trotsky, bent on going one better than the Bolsheviks, proposed to leave out the peasantry. Thus, against the Bolshevik 1905

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in the spring of 1907 he declared his solidarity with Rosa Luxemburg. During the period of disintegration, after long 'non-factional' vacillations, he again shifted to the Right, and in August 1912 entered into a *bloc* with the 'liquidators.' Now he is again abandoning them, repeating, however, what *in essence* are their pet ideas. . . . Trotsky has never yet held a firm opinion of any serious question relating to Marxism; he always manages to 'creep into the chinks' of this or that difference of opinion and desert one side for the other. At this moment he is in the company of the Bundists and the 'liquidators'" (Lenin, Vol. IV, *Selected Works*, pp. 207 and 286).

There is a romantic and at the same time philistine outlook which thinks of the Russian Revolution only in terms of its highlights and would ignore the bitter struggles of the period of reaction and of the years that followed up to 1917. In the difficult conditions of these years, the Bolsheviks alone remained true to the party, to the working class, and to the programme of the revolution which had been worked out in the years up to 1903 and later. It was precisely in those years of reaction that the Bolshevik Party was remade, until it became the instrument that could lead the revolution. It was the reforging of the sword. These were years of the furnace

slogan of "Revolutionary-Democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry," Trotsky put out the slogan, "No Tsar, but a Workers' Government." This slogan, and the "theory" behind it, did not consider the small peasantry as a revolutionary force. It is obvious that had it been possible to carry out these ideas, they would have led to disaster. It was not political independence but mere political bravado, and hence Lenin calls this Trotsky theory not merely "Left," but *absurdly* "Left."

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and the anvil until the weapon was fully tempered and true.

3. YEARS OF REVIVAL

In January 1912, at Prague, there was held a conference of the party at which the Central Committee was re-established, the "liquidators" finally expelled, and new guidance given to the party. The Conference resolution showed that the Tsarist land policy had not relieved peasant conditions, but had seriously worsened them. "Russification" of the subject nationalities, especially of the more cultured Poles and Finns, was being pushed forward, the economic boom was being largely nullified in its effects by the huge taxes and by the corruption of the bureaucratic machine, while the rising cost of living increased the misery of the mass of the population. Because of this the mass of the people had begun to see through the Duma and the main Duma parties. The result was the beginning of a political revival, shown in strikes of workers and also of students. The Conference concluded that the task of the democratic revolution in Russia was still the winning of power by the proletariat, leading the peasantry. It is of interest to quote the operative clauses of the resolution of this Conference, which marked the final break with the Mensheviks.

" 1. Prolonged work of Socialist training, organisation, and consolidation of the advanced masses of the proletariat, is, as heretofore, first and foremost on the order of the day.

" 2. Intensified work must be carried on to restore

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the underground organisation of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party which, more extensively than heretofore, takes advantage of all legal possibilities, which is capable of leading the economic struggle of the proletariat, and is the only party capable of leading its ever-increasing political activities.

“3. It is necessary to organise and expand systematic political agitation, to give all possible support to the incipient mass movement, and to secure its expansion under the banner of the full, uncurtailed slogans of the party. The republican propaganda against the policy of the Tsarist monarchy must be specially pushed forward also to counter-balance the widespread propaganda for curtailing the slogans and for confining the work to the limits of existing ‘legality.’ ”

The Conference decided to create a daily workers' paper. On April 22nd, 1912, there appeared for the first time the *Pravda*, which in 1937 held its twenty-fifth anniversary. On the first editorial board were Stalin and Molotov. Lenin contributed regularly from where he was living in Austrian Poland. The feature of the new revolutionary daily was the way in which it was sustained by collections in the workshops. No matter under what sweated conditions, the Russian factory workers gladly gave their kopeks for the *Pravda*.

Between 1912 and 1914, the result of the Prague Conference showed itself in the local trade unions (national trade unions were forbidden by Tsarist law) and friendly societies: all unions, with the exception of the printers, had become Bolshevik.

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The revival of the movement inside Russia which had begun with the street demonstrations of students and workers on the death of Leo Tolstoi at the end of 1910, and developed very slowly at first, had become more marked in the spring of 1912. A strike broke out in the Lena goldfields against the terrible conditions prevailing amongst the goldminers in that frozen territory, thousands of miles east of St. Petersburg. The strike was peaceful, but the Government instructed the police to end the strike. The strike committee was arrested. The workers decided to petition for the release of the strike committee, and marched in procession to the local prosecutor for this purpose. They were met on the way by a company of troops under the command of Police Captain Treshchenko. Without warning, the troops opened fire on the unarmed workers, killing two hundred and seventy and wounding two hundred and fifty. The news of this shooting (on April 17th, 1912) roused the workers throughout Russia. There were protest strikes in all the chief towns, and, on the first of May, gigantic demonstrations.

That year nearly three-quarters of a million workers came out on strike. There were mutinies of the troops in Turkestan and attempted mutinies in the Baltic Fleet and the Black Sea Fleet. The mass meetings, strikes, and demonstrations were held under the revolutionary slogans of the Bolsheviki. It was the definite revival of the revolutionary movement.

It was, at the same time, the complete answer to the Right "liquidators," to the "Leftists," and to Trotsky. Trotsky at this time had formed the "August Bloc," composed of all the various grouplets both Right and

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“ Left ”) who came together, not on a basis of principle, but solely on the basis of opposition to Lenin and the Bolshevik Party. The “ August Bloc ” ignominiously collapsed within eighteen months. Trotsky was furious. In a letter to the Menshevik Chkheidze he denounced Lenin as “ that professional exploiter of the backwardness of the Russian working-class movement,” and declared “ the whole edifice of Leninism at the present time is built up on lies and falsifications and bears within it the poisoned seed of its own putrefaction.” It was the venomous language of a defeated and contemned factionalist; and history had already shown that “ hell hath no fury like a Trotsky scorned.”

In the same year, under the extremely reactionary system of the Duma elections (the Fourth Duma), the Bolsheviks won all the six purely labour *curiæ*, or electoral colleges. The half-dozen Bolshevik members carried on what may be regarded as a model of revolutionary parliamentarism. Parliamentary work and strike work and all other forms of agitational activity were combined, in contrast to the rigid separation which had tended to characterise France and Britain.

The strike wave mounted still higher in 1914. In St. Petersburg, hundreds and thousands of workers came out in sympathetic strikes in solidarity with the strikers out in the Baku oilfields. When Poincaré, the President of the French Republic, visited the Tsar's capital in July 1914, he found barricades in the streets. The war mobilisation of August 1914 and the torrent of jingoism that accompanied it came none too soon for the Tsardom.

CHAPTER V

THE IMPERIALIST WORLD WAR

I. ORIGIN OF THE WAR

IN THE FIRST DAYS OF AUGUST 1914 there began the war between the coalition headed by Britain (the Triple Entente of Russia, France, Britain) and the coalition headed by Germany. Before it ended, twenty millions of mankind had been killed or wounded. Known at the time as "The War to end War," it is often nowadays significantly described as "The first Imperialist World War." As early as 1906 the British Liberal Ministers, following up the Entente Cordiale concluded between France and Britain in 1904, had authorised military conversations between the French and British General Staffs as to their common action in France and Belgium against the German army. These, like the later Anglo-German Naval Treaty of 1935, were to be strictly "non-committal" as regards general foreign policy. But there already existed the Dual Alliance of the Tsardom and France, also directed against the power of German capitalism. The European conflict, for which the diplomats and military staffs were preparing, could not be split in two. Consequently, it was only a matter of time before there came into existence an effective Triple Entente against the Triple

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Alliance headed by Germany. From 1907 onwards, the European Powers were rushing towards war; and one sign of this headlong rush was the armaments race. Europe became a powder magazine. The assassination in June 1914 of the heir to the throne of the Hapsburgs was only the igniting spark: it was capitalism itself which had become an explosive mixture.

What was the attitude of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party (the Bolsheviks)? Their attitude had already been discussed beforehand, together with the Socialist Parties of other countries. All the chief Socialist Parties of the world from 1889 onwards (or after 1889 as they came into existence) had been associated together in the Second International. It was called the Second International to distinguish it from the First International, the International Working Men's Association which existed from 1864 to 1874 under the leadership of Karl Marx and Frederick Engels. Every three years or so, from 1889 onwards, the Socialist Parties came together in an International Socialist Congress to work out a common line, which then became the most authoritative expression of Socialist policy.

On the question of war, as the menace of war between the Triple Alliance and Triple Entente became more threatening, the policy had thrice been affirmed—at the International Socialist Congress of Stuttgart (1907), Copenhagen (1910), Basel (1912). This policy, accepted unanimously, signed for by the leaders of the parties, binding equally on the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party, the British Labour Party, the Socialist Party of France, etc., etc., and also upon the trade unions attached or affiliated to those parties, laid down

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in its operative clause the following as the duties of the working class and its representatives:

- (1) To prevent war breaking out.
- (2) If war nevertheless broke out, to oppose it.
- (3) To utilise the crisis arising from war to bring about the downfall of capitalist class rule.

In the last days of July 1914, the Socialist Parties made attempts to prevent war. When war broke out, the leaders of the parties went back on their pledged word. Instead of opposing the war, they split the working class and helped the capitalist Governments of Europe to drive the workers into the slaughter-house. It was the greatest betrayal of Socialism, of the interests of the working class, and of the whole of mankind.

Alone of the leading parties of the Second International, the Russian Social-Democratic Party (Bolsheviks) remained true to the principles of Socialism, opposed the war, and, when the war crisis came, utilised it to bring about the downfall of capitalist class rule. Within Russia the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party suffered great losses. The legal Labour Press was completely destroyed. The majority of the trade unions were closed down. Renewed imprisonment and banishment to Siberia was the lot of the party members. Nevertheless, the party members did their duty as set forth in the International Socialist Congress resolutions. On August 8th, 1914, in the Duma, they declared against the war, refused to vote for the war credits (in contrast to the German Social-Democrats and the British Labour Party), and demonstratively walked

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out of the Duma in order to make their protest more striking. The Mensheviks at first wavered, under the pressure of the Bolsheviks. Later, on receipt of an appeal from the Belgian Émile Vandervelde (then Chairman of the Second International and a member of the Belgian War Cabinet), in which he asked Bolsheviks and Mensheviks to support Tsardom, the Mensheviks swung over and wrote in response, "We declare to you that in our activities in Russia we shall not hinder the prosecution of the war." They did more than that: they assisted the Tsar. The Bolsheviks, on the other hand, replied re-asserting their intention to be true to the decisions of the International. The Bolsheviks soon paid the penalty. In mid-November the Bolshevik members of the Duma, together with many others, were arrested, tried, and banished to Eastern Siberia. Nevertheless, the few who remained continued the work under the tenfold increased oppression of Tsardom.

Abroad, where nearly all the one-time internationalists were now turned nationalist, the difficulties were enormous. It was a struggle against fearful odds. The torrent of jingoism, of chauvinism, seemed to be sweeping everything away. Lenin, almost single-handed (Stalin and other leading Bolsheviks were immured in Siberia beyond the Arctic Circle), undertook the uphill task of rebuilding revolutionary Socialism throughout Europe and throughout the world. Working with concentrated energy against the tremendous war machinery of the warring capitalist Powers (in which were now included the one-time opponents of the capitalist Governments), Lenin, then in Geneva, set himself to explain what had happened and what had to be done. He put

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the essence of working-class Socialist policy into a single slogan:

Transform the Imperialist War into Civil War!

At first, amid the thunder of the guns, Lenin's voice was heard by hundreds only, then by thousands, and at last by scores of millions.

2. THE CHARACTER OF THE WAR

On what analysis did Lenin and the Bolsheviks base the slogans that eventually were borne to millions? Clearly the war did not bear the character ascribed to it by the propaganda of the wavering Powers. It was not a war of defence—least of all in the case of Britain. It was not a war for civilisation and culture—when Tsardom was one of the Allies. It was not a war for the liberation of small nationalities—for the iron heel of Prussian militarists in Belgium was offset by the iron heel of British militarists in Ireland, Egypt, and India. All such descriptions of the war, on both sides, were merely means of deceiving the people.

When the war was analysed, it was found to be of an *imperialist character*. There had been wars in the past, especially in the period 1789 to 1871, of a *national* character for the purpose of abolishing national oppression and creating national capitalist States out of the separate feudal States; wars of liberation in which Marxists had supported the oppressed against the oppressors. There might be wars of a *class* character, in which Marxists would support, for example, a Socialist State against capitalist aggressors. For Marxists have never been pacifists. But the only element of *national*

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war in 1914-18 was in the struggle of Serbia against the Austro-Hungarian monarchy; and this alone was such a subordinate factor that the war as a whole had to be classed as *imperialist*.

But what is "imperialism"? The answer to this was given by Lenin in his war-time book *Imperialism: the Highest Stage of Capitalism*. There Lenin proved that imperialism, so far from being a mere policy of big Powers towards colonies, was actually the capitalist system in its latest stage, the stage of *monopoly capitalism*. Capitalism, from its first beginnings in England four centuries ago, had gone through many stages of development. In the nineteenth century, or at any rate in the first three-quarters thereof, capitalism as a mode of production had been marked by unrestricted competition. The beginning of trusts and combines was the sign of a great change which matured with the opening of the twentieth century. By the twentieth century, capitalism was marked by the growth of monopolies (the big banks, the big trusts); by the fusion of monopolist banking capital and monopolist industrial capital into finance capital; by the export of capital as well as the continuing export of goods; by the internationalisation of economic life (international trusts like Standard Oil or Unilever); by the partition of almost the entire globe into colonies of the big Powers; by the productive forces of world capitalism outgrowing the narrow confines of the national States; by the full ripening of the objective conditions for the transition to Socialism.

The essence of the war was a struggle of the big imperialist Powers over colonies and for the plunder of the defeated side. It was a predatory war, a war of grab.

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It was precisely the type of war foreseen by the International Socialist Congress resolutions which gave the outline of the slogan: "Transform the Imperialist War into Civil War." This meant that the revolutionary working class in each country must be for the defeat of its own Government.

A further analysis by Lenin dealt with the collapse of the Second International. It was, he said, the collapse of Socialist opportunism. Opportunism had grown up especially in the twenty years that had elapsed since the death of Engels, in a relatively "peaceful" epoch of development of the Labour movement. This epoch taught the working class how to use parliamentary institutes, how to build mass trade unions and political parties; but at the same time in this epoch grew up the tendency to repudiate the class struggle and to preach class harmony, to recognise capitalist patriotism, etc., etc. And what in essence was this opportunism? It was the influence of the capitalist class *inside* the Labour movement. And what were the channels of this influence? Certain sections of the working class, such as the aristocracy of labour, which got its "whack" out of the plunder of the colonies, the bureaucracy of the movement, and petty-bourgeoisie within the Socialist Parties — these were the channels.

The war crisis had revealed the real nature of opportunism as an accomplice of the bourgeoisie against the proletariat. This applied not only to the open opportunists supporting the war, whom Lenin described as having turned from "Social-Democrats" into "Social-Chauvinists," but also to the Social-Democratic *Centre*, such as Karl Kautsky, who for many years had

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been regarded as the leading theoretician of the Second International. The Centrists, under a cover of hypocritical phrases, had also rolled down into opportunism. Kautsky set himself to explain away all "awkwardness" in the situation: the Second International, he discovered, was an instrument of peace-time, and not of war-time, in which latter it was unable to function. Kautsky pretended to be anti-war: but in practice shielded and supported the war-mongers as against the true Left. Lenin criticised Kautsky with the utmost scorn. At the close of an article written in March 1916 on "Right of Nations to Self-Determination," Lenin adds the following postscript:

"In the latest issue of *Die Neue Zeit*, dated March 3rd, 1916, Kautsky openly extends a Christian hand of reconciliation to the representative of the filthiest German chauvinism, Austerlitz. He rejects the freedom of secession for the nations oppressed by the Austria of the Hapsburgs, but accepts it for *Russian* Poland, thus rendering lackey's service to Hindenburg and Wilhelm II. A better self-exposure of Kautskyism could not be desired!" (Lenin, *Selected Works*, Vol. V, p. 281).

Thus, the prevalence of opportunism meant that the Second International had collapsed because it was rotten to the core. A new international had to be built, an international not of words but of deeds. Lenin issued the call for the building of a *Third International*.

Lenin also warned the workers against bourgeois pacifism, the preaching of peace in the abstract. This applied to all the varieties of pacifism such as that of the

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bourgeois Liberals, or of the Christian pacifists, or of Social-Democrats who adopted bourgeois pacifism and clothed it with Marxist phrases. All were forms of deception of the working class. In March 1915 he wrote :

“ Propaganda of peace at the present time, if not accompanied by a call for revolutionary mass action, is only capable of spreading illusions, of demoralising the proletariat by imbuing it with belief in the humanitarianism of the bourgeoisie ” (*Lenin, Selected Works*, Vol. V, p. 135).

The propāganda of the Bolshevik standpoint was conducted as a bitter struggle against opportunists of all countries, both *Social-Chauvinists* and *Centrists*. Against the Russian Centrists, the struggle was particularly fierce. We may take as an example the opening of a polemical article written in August 1915 by Lenin :

“ A revolutionary class in a reactionary war cannot but desire the defeat of its Government. This is an axiom. It is disputed only by the conscious partisans, or the helpless satellites of the Social-Chauvinists. To the former, for instance, belongs Semkovsky of the Organisation Committee (No. 2 of its *Izvestia*) ; to the latter belong Trotsky and Bukvoyed,¹ and in Germany, Kautsky. To desire Russia's defeat, Trotsky says, is ‘ an uncalled-for and unjustifiable concession to the political methodology of social-patriotism which substitutes for the revolutionary struggle against the war, and the conditions that cause it, what, under

¹ The pseudonym of D. B. Ryazanov.

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present conditions, is an extremely arbitrary orientation towards 'the lesser evil' (Nashe Slovo No. 105). This is an example of the high-flown phraseology with which Trotsky always justifies opportunism" ("Defeat of One's Own Government in the Imperialist War," Lenin, *Selected Works*, Vol. V, p. 142).

Then, later, there came a new growth of "Leftism," of semi-anarchist phrase-mongering. A bitter struggle had to be conducted by Lenin, especially in the latter part of the war, against Bukharin, Radek, and Pyatakoff, who wished to abolish the Marxist "right of nations to self-determination." They argued that it was impossible under imperialism; or that, if it were possible after the social revolution, then it was unnecessary!

Meantime, parallel with this huge task of propaganda and agitation, Lenin and his comrades were striving to bring together the threads of an anti-chauvinist revolutionary International.

At Zimmerwald, in Switzerland, in September 1915, there assembled a mixed grouping, out of which the Bolsheviks were able to form a Zimmerwald Left. At a subsequent meeting in Kienthal in April 1916, this Zimmerwald Left was able to exercise greater influence on the decisions, and from this time onwards the Zimmerwald Left is to be regarded as the nucleus of the future *Third International*.

3. THE WAR AND ITS EFFECT.

The Tsardom was already in a rotting condition when the imperialist world war broke out in 1914. The military

history of the war brought the defeat of the Tsardom, and therefore had a bearing on the internal condition of Russia. The blockade of Russia began in 1914 with the stoppage of German imports and the closing of every other means of ingress except what little could filter through the Trans-Siberian Railway, or come down the single track line from Murmansk. Then was seen the difference between an industrialised manufacturing country and an agricultural, raw-materials country forced to import its manufactured goods. It was an engineers' war. This meant that Russia was counted out in the second round. Her mere weight of men and initial reserves of ammunition had made possible the inroad into East Prussia, and, after this had been repulsed by Hindenburg at Tannenberg and the Masurian Lakes, the push in the spring into Galicia, with the capture of Lemberg and Przemysl; but by the late spring of 1915 the ammunition of Russia was exhausted, her armaments were defective, her organisation in pieces, and her peasant conscripts, in many cases, had not even the rifles wherewith to defend themselves against the exterminating fire of the German and Austrian battalions. Her bolt was shot. The degree of disorganisation almost exceeds belief. It is on record that on single-track lines the railway trucks which had delivered their loads were actually derailed in order to enable later trains to be brought to the terminus. The great retreat of the summer and early autumn of 1915 dealt a final blow to the prestige of the Tsardom. For a period, a renaissance of nationalist enthusiasm amongst the manufacturing classes brought forward the production of munitions of war, but this was accomplished at the expense of other

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forms of manufacture essential for home production. Russia had been exhausted before. The net result of this final effort was to make recovery from that exhaustion impossible.

By the end of 1916, Tsardom had made very slight gains on the Caucasus front against the Turks and had sustained extremely serious reverses on the western front. The strategy of the Austrian Conrad von Hoetzendorf, supported by the German General Staff, had proved far superior to that of the Tsarist generals; while the Tsarist inferiority in all military matters other than strategy has already been noted. The huge area of Poland, together with Lithuania and Courland, was lost. Nor was this loss compensated for by large gains on the part of Russia's Allies. True, the British and Japanese had seized the German colonies and had taken lower Mesopotamia from the Turks. But Germany and her Austro-Hungarian ally held practically the whole of Serbia, Montenegro, Belgium, Rumania, part of France, and the greater part of Poland. So favourable was the position that in December 1916 the German Government put out peace proposals: and could do so partly because they must have been aware of pro-German influences at the Court of Tsar Nicholas II.

4. NICHOLAS THE SECOND

Throughout the war, and throughout the twenty years preceding the war, the Tsar of All the Russias was Nicholas Romanoff. His father, the sot Alexander III, would have gone down to history as the lowest of the Romanoff dynasty, had he not been succeeded by

Nicholas. For Nicholas was not even a sot; and, apart from a certain relish for cruelty, he appeared to be almost without characteristics. Hence Lenin refers to him as "the dull-witted and bloodthirsty Nicholas."

In the Romanoff family, closely interbred with the other royal families of Europe, the malady of hæmophilia had appeared: and the Tsarevitch, the heir to the throne, was affected. The bigoted and superstitious Tsarina, on behalf of her son, had recourse to quacks and miracle-mongers, and presently came to place her chief trust in a dirty profligate monk called Gregory Râsputin, who claimed wonder-working powers. There have been examples in the past, in the monarchies of the Middle Ages and earlier, when such a creature as Rasputin could play a rôle. But it was in the twentieth century that this illiterate blackguard, lecher, and charlatan came to be the power behind the throne. Under his influence, Ministers were appointed or dismissed: and among his selections were the pro-German Stürmer and the notorious Protopopov.

During the latter part of 1916 it began to be suspected that the circle around Rasputin was in secret contact with the German General Staff. The leaders of the main Duma parties became fretful, and began to sound the Allied embassies as to the desirability of a change of Ministers in order to ensure a more vigorous prosecution of the war. But this was only a ripple on the surface. In the depths below, it was the masses of the people, and above all the working class and the peasantry, who had to bear the brunt of the war and the terrible conditions of Tsardom in the winter of 1916-17. So far there was little indication of anything stirring in the depths. But

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the hunger and suffering of the millions was clearly approaching a point where it would be unendurable.

The day of revolution drew nearer. The embassies of the Entente became anxious, and Lord Milner, considered to be the ablest member of the War Cabinet, was sent over in the winter of 1916-17 to examine the situation and report. It was just at this moment that the assassination of Rasputin, the favourite of the Empress, by certain noblemen had flared out over the dark sky of Russia like a presaging comet. Lord Milner returned to report that there was no danger of revolution.

.

Within a few weeks of that the Tsar had abdicated and revolution had begun.

FINIS

NOTE .

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