

My Life

By Leon Trotsky

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Chapter 6: The Break

The political development of Russia, beginning with the middle of the last century, is measured by decades. The sixties after the Crimean war were an epoch of enlightenment, our short-lived eighteenth century.

During the following decade the intelligentsia were already endeavoring to draw practical conclusions from the theories of enlightenment. The decade began with the movement of going down to the people with revolutionary propaganda; it ended with terrorism.

The best elements of that generation went up in the blaze of the dynamite warfare. The enemy had held its positions. Then followed a decade of decline, of disenchantment and pessimism, or religious and moral searchings.

Under the veil of reaction, however, the forces of capitalism were blindly at work. The nineties brought with them workers' strikes and Marxist ideas. The new tide reached its culmination in the first decade of the new century in the year 1905.

The year 1891, memorable for the crop failure and the famine, marks the official date of the political breaking-point in the country. The new decade centered around the labour question. Pope Leo the thirteenth issued his encyclical dealing with the condition of the working man.

The political shift in the direction of action cropped up first of all in the midst of the intelligentsia. More and more frequently and decisively did the young Marxists resort to action. At the same time the dormant populist movement began to show signs of awakening.

In 1893 the first legally printed Marxist work, written by Struve, made its appearance. I was then in my fourteenth year, and still very remote from these matters. In 1894 Alexander the third died. As was usual on such occasions, the liberal hopes sought support from the heir to the throne.

He replied with a kick. The young Czar described their aspirations for a constitution as "nonsensical dreams". This speech was published in the press. The word-of-mouth report was that the paper from which the Czar had read his speech said groundless dreams but in his agitation the Czar had expressed himself more harshly than he intended.

I was fifteen at the time. I was unreservedly on the side of the nonsensical dreams, and not on that of the Czar. Vaguely I believed in a gradual development which would bring backward Russia nearer to advanced Europe. Beyond that my political ideas did not go.

In Saint Petersburg, in Moscow, in Kiev, there were already in existence at that time numerous socialist circles in the educational institutions. In 1895 Friedrich Engels died. Secret reports were read at meetings held in his memory by student groups in the various cities of Russia.

I was then in my sixteenth year. But I did not know even the name of Engels, and could hardly say anything definite about Marx. As a matter of fact, I probably had never heard of him. My political frame of mind while at school was vaguely oppositionist, but no more than that.

In my day, revolutionary questions were still unknown among the students. It was whispered that certain groups met at the private gymnasium maintained by the Czech, Novak; that there had been arrests; that Novak, who was our instructor in athletics, had been dismissed and replaced by an army officer.

In the environment surrounding the home of the Sclipentzers there was dissatisfaction, but the regime was held to be unshakeable. The boldest dreamed of a constitution as possible only after several decades. When I returned to the village after my graduation from school, bringing with me dim democratic ideas, Father, immediately alert, remarked with hostility: "This will not come to pass even in three hundred years".

He was convinced of the futility of all reformists' efforts and was apprehensive for his son. In 1921, when he came to me in the Kremlin, after having escaped the Red and White perils with his life, I jestingly asked: "Do you remember what you used to say that the Czarist order was good for another three hundred years?"

The old man smiled and replied in Ukrainian: "This time let your truth prevail". In the early nineties Marxism was victoriously marching upon the populist movement. Publications of all kinds were filled with echoes of this ideological struggle.

Everywhere there were references to the self-confident young people who called themselves materialists. I encountered all this for the first time in 1896. The question of personal morals, so intimately connected with the passive ideology of the eighties, touched me in a period when "self-perfection" was to me not so much a matter of theory as an organic demand on my spiritual growth".

The problem of "self-perfection", however, quickly became bound up with the question of my outlook on the world in general, which led, in turn, to the fundamental dilemma: populism or Marxism? The conflict of these trends engrossed me, but several years later than the general break in the intellectual concepts of the country.

But the time I was approaching the alphabet of economic sciences, and was raising the question in my mind as to whether Russia must go through the state of capitalism, the Marxists of the older generation had already succeeded in finding a path to the working man and in becoming social democrats.

I faced the first crossroads on my path, poorly equipped politically even for a seventeen year old boy of that period. Too many questions confronted me all at once, without the necessary sequence and order. Restlessly I cast about me. One thing is certain: even then life had stored within my consciousness a considerable load of social protest.

What did it consist of? Sympathy for the down-trodden and indignation over injustice. The latter was perhaps the stronger feeling. Beginning with my earliest childhood, in all the impressions of my daily life human inequality stood out in exceptionally coarse and stark forms.

Injustice often assumed the character of impudent licence; human dignity was under heel at every step. It is enough for me to recall the flogging of peasants. Even before I had any theories, all these things imprinted themselves deeply on me and piled up a store of impressions of great explosive force.

It was perhaps because of this that I seemed to hesitate for a while before reaching the great conclusions which I was impelled to draw from the observations of the first period of my life. There was also another side to my development.

When one generation succeeds another, the dead cling to the living. That was the case with the generation of Russian revolutionists whose early youth developed under the weight of the atmosphere of the eighties.

In spite of the large perspectives held out by the new doctrines, the Marxists in reality remained imprisoned by the conservative mood of the eighties, displaying an inability to take bold initiatives, remaining inactive when confronted by obstacles, shoving the revolution into the indefinite future, and inclining generally to regard socialism as a task for centuries of evolution.

To my lot fell the most stagnant years. One heard almost no conversation on political topics. Big questions were evaded. It was the same at school. And even afterwards, when my revolutionary ideas were already taking shape, I would catch myself in an attitude of mistrust of action by the masses, taking a bookish, abstract and therefore sceptical view of the revolution.

I had to combat all this within myself, by my thinking, my reading, but mainly by means of experience, until the elements of psychic inertia had been conquered within me. There is no evil without good. Perhaps the fact that I had consciously to overcome within me the reverberations of the eighties enabled me to approach fundamental problems of mass action in a more serious, concrete and profound manner.

I neglected my studies. The store of knowledge which I had brought from Odessa enabled me, however, to retain some how my official lead as a star student. More and more frequently I played truant. Once the inspector called on me at home to ascertain the cause of my non-attendance.

I felt humiliated beyond words. But the inspector was courteous. Under my mattress were several illegal political pamphlets. In Nikolayev I met, in addition to the young people who were drawn toward Marxism, several former exiles who were under police surveillance.

These were secondary figures of the period of the decline of the populist movement. At that time Social Democrats were not yet returning from exile, they were going into it. There was an odour of putrefaction emanating from populism.

Marxism repelled by its so-called "narrowness". Burning with impatience I tried to grasp the ideas instinctively, but they were not so easy to master. I found no one about me to offer sure guidance. Every new conversation, moreover, forced me to come to the bitter, painful and desperate conclusion that I was ignorant.

I swallowed books, fearful that my entire life would not be long enough to prepare me for action. My reading was nervous, impatient and unsystematic. I threw myself upon the history of the French Revolution by Mignet.

My striving for a system became tense, sometimes savage. At the same time, I would be repelled by marxism partly because it seemed a completed system. I began to read newspapers with a political mind.

It was from the newspaper that I first formed a picture of the political life of western Europe, especially of the parliamentary parties. Meanwhile my relations with my family were growing worse. I left home and went to live with Shvigovsky, who was now leasing another garden within a more spacious cottage.

here six of us led a communal life. I began to give private lessons. We led a spartan existence, without bed-linen, and got along on stews which we prepared ourselves. In town it was rumored that we had joined a secret organization. We read without method, argued without restraint, we peered into the future passionately, and were happy in our own way.

After a while we organized a society for the distribution of useful books among the people. We collected dues and bought cheap editions, but were unable to disseminate them. I wrote a polemical article for a populist periodical in Odessa, taking issue with the first Marxist journal.

The article had more epigraphs, quotations and venom than it had content. I mailed the article and a week later made a trip to find out its fate. The editor, through large glasses, eyed with sympathy an author whose head displayed an enormous mop of hair but whose face did not show a trace of beard.

The article never saw the light. No one was the loser least of all myself. When the board of directors of the public library raised the annual fee from five to six roubles, we perceived an attempt to get away from democracy, and sounded an alarm.

For several weeks we did nothing except prepare for a general meeting of the library members. We emptied all our democratic pockets, collecting roubles and half-roubles, and with this fund registered more radical members. Victory was ours along the entire front. We restored the five rouble fee and elected a new board.

Cast about for activities, we decided to organize a university on a basis of mutual instruction. There were about twenty students. My department was sociology. I began to write a play. Our play was full of social tendencies, against a background of the conflict of generations.

The work on the play was no mean task. At times we wrote together, driving and correcting each other; at other times we divided the acts into sections, and each of us would devote his day to the preparation of a scene or a monologue.

Chapter Seven: My First Revolutionary Organization

Father wanted me to become an engineer, whereas I hesitated between pure mathematics and Revolution, which little by little was taking possession of me. I did nothing about registering for the course in mathematics in the University.

I was looking for something. What was I trying to find? Actually, it was myself. I made casual acquaintances among workers, obtained illegal literature, tutored some private pupils, and engaged in arguments with the Marxists.

With the last autumn steamer, I left for Nikolayev, and resumed my quarters with Shvigovsky in the garden. We discussed the latest numbers of the radical magazines and argued about Darwinism; we were vaguely preparing, and also waiting.

What was it in particular that impelled us to start the revolutionary propaganda? It is difficult to say. The impulse originated in us. In the intellectual circles in which I moved, nobody did any actual revolutionary work. We realized that between our endless tea-table discussions and revolutionary organization there was a vast gulf.

We knew that any contacts with workers demanded secret, highly "conspiratory" methods. Apparently there had been some change in the air which brought us abruptly onto the road of revolutionary propaganda. The change did not actually take place in Nikolayev alone, but throughout the country, especially in the capitals.

In 1896, the famous weavers' strikes broke out in Saint Petersburg. This put new life into the intelligentsia. The students gained courage, sensing the awakening of the heavy reserves. In February, 1897, a woman student, Vetrova, burned herself to death in the Peter-Paul fortress. This tragedy, which has never been fully explained, stirred everyone deeply.

Disturbances took place in the university cities; arrests and banishments became more frequent. We must find workers, not wait for anybody or ask anybody, but just find workers, and set to it. From that

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day we plunged headlong into the work. We had no older men to direct us. Our own experience was inadequate. But not once did we run into difficulties or get confused. In 1897, the number of workers in the Nikolayev plants amounted to 8,000, in addition to which there were 2,000 workers in various trades.

The intellectual level of the workers was comparatively high, as were their earnings. The illiterates were few. The place that the revolutionary organizations came to hold later was then filled to some extent by religious sects which engaged in successful warfare with the official religion.

In the absence of political disorders, the secret police of Nikolayev were slumbering peacefully. We shook up the police only after we had shaken up the workers. The workers streamed toward us as if they had been waiting for this.

They all brought friends; some came with their wives, and a few older men joined the groups with their sons. We never sought them out; they looked for us. Young and inexperienced leaders that we were, we were soon overwhelmed by the movement we had started.

As many as twenty and twenty-five or more of the workers gathered at our secret reading and discussions, held in houses, in the woods, or on the river. The predominating element was composed of highly skilled workers who earned fairly good wages.

They already had an eight hour day at the Nikolayev shipbuilding yards; they were not interested in strikes; what they wanted was justice in social relations. The workers were simply breaking away from orthodoxy.

Many of the workers were so infected by the new ideas that they began to compose verses. A young labourer, Yefimov, a blond giant with blue eyes was not only literate but really well read. He lived in the slums of the town. I found him in an eating-place patronized by tramps.

He worked in the harbour as a longshoreman; he neither smoked nor drank. He was reserved and well-mannered. He soon confided in me that he had been introduced to some members of the secret society of Narodovoltzi, and he offered to put me in touch with them.

The Narodovoltzi avoided meeting us, giving Yefimov some vague excuse. There were many other interesting figures, too many to enumerate. There was the fine younger generation that had been trained in the technical school of the shipyards, and was very cultured.

A mere suggestion from the instructor was enough to enable them to grasp the whole trend of his thought. We found the workers more susceptible to revolutionary propaganda than we had ever in our wildest dreams imagined.

The amazing effectiveness of our work fairly intoxicated us. From revolutionary tales, we knew that the workers won over by propaganda were usually to be counted in single numbers. A revolutionary who converted two or three men to socialism thought he had done a good piece of work, whereas, with us, the number of workers who joined or wanted to join the groups seemed practically unlimited.

The only shortage was in the matter of instructors and in literature. The teachers had to snatch from each other in turn the single soiled copy of the Communist Manifesto by Marx and Engels. Soon we began to produce a literature of our own; this was, properly speaking, the beginning of my literary work, which almost coincided with the start of my revolutionary activities.

I wrote proclamations and articles. At that time we didn't even know of the existence of typewriters. I printed the letters with the utmost care, considering it a point of honor to make them clear enough so that even the less literate could read our proclamations without any trouble.

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It took me about two hours to a page. Sometimes I didn't even unbend my back for a week, cutting my work short only for meetings and study in groups. But what a satisfied feeling I had when I received the information from mills and workshops that the workers read voraciously the mysterious sheets printed in purple ink, passing them about from hand to hand as they discussed them!

They pictured the author as a strange and mighty person who in some mysterious way had penetrated into the mills and knew what was going on in the workshops, and twenty-four hours later passed his comments on events in newly printed handbills.

At first we printed the proclamations in our rooms at night. Everything was very crude, but the police of Nikolayev were not more experienced than we were. Later on, we transferred the printing-press to the apartment of a middle-aged worker who had lost his sight through an accident in one of the shops.

He placed his apartment at our disposal unhesitatingly. He would say with a low laugh, "Everywhere is prison for a blind man". We worked at night. We cooked our revolutionary brew on his iron stove, pouring it out on a tin sheet.

Two of the workers, a young boy and girl, would watch reverently as I pulled the freshly printed sheets off the hectograph, and then would exchange glances. Word of mouth propaganda never gave me the same satisfaction as the printed bills did at that time.

My knowledge was inadequate, and I didn't know how to present it effectively. We made no real speeches in the full sense of the word. When I talked to the groups it wasn't so bad. As a rule, however, the revolutionary work went on at full speed.

The pamphlets were circulated in no time, and increased our authority in labour circles. We called our organization the South Russian Workers' Union, intending to include workers from other towns. I drafted our constitution along Social Democrat lines.

The whole town was alive with talk about revolutionaries who were flooding the mills with their handbills. Our names were on every tongue. Still the police delayed. They refused to believe that "those young brats from the garden" were capable of carrying on such a campaign.

They suspected that there were more experienced leaders behind us, probably old exiles. This gave us two or three additional months in which to work. Finally our movements were so closely watched that the police couldn't help but discover one group after another.

So we decided to leave Nikolayev for a few weeks, to put the police off our track. At the same time, we firmly resolved not to hide in case of wholesale arrests, but to let ourselves be taken, so that the police could not say to the workers: "Your leaders have deserted you."

On the twenty-eighth of January, 1898, there were mass arrests. Altogether, over two hundred people were taken. The police applied the scourge. One of those arrested, a soldier named Sokolov, was driven to throw himself from the second floor of the prison; he was merely badly bruised. Another, Levandovsky, went insane. There were still other victims.

A few of those on whom we were relying deserted us, and even in some instances betrayed us. The Nikolayev organization was hard hit, but it did not disappear. Others soon replaced us. Both the revolutionaries and the police were growing in experience.

Chapter 8: My First Prisons

During the raids of January, 1898, I was arrested, not in Nikolayev but on the estate of a wealthy landowner, Sokovnin, where Shivgovsky had found a job as a gardener. I had stopped off there on the way from Yanovka to Nikolayev with a large brief-case filled with manuscripts, drawings, letters, and all manner of other “illegal” material.

The old prison in Nikolayev had no decent accommodation for political prisoners, especially for so many of them. I was put into the same cell with a young bookbinder named Yavitch. A straw mattress was spread on the floor for us to sleep on at night, and was taken away at six o'clock in the morning. It was torture to get up and dress ourselves.

Yavitch and I talked about the past and hoped wonderingly about our future. I began to teach him something about the sciences. Three weeks passed in this way. Then there was a change. With all my belongings, I was summoned to the prison office and moved to the prison at Kherson.

My cell was roomy, but it had only a narrow window that did not open, and was protected by heavy iron bars through which little light could enter. My isolation was absolute and hopeless. There was no walking, nor were there any neighbours.

Prisoner's stew was given to me one a day, for dinner. A ration of rye bread with salt was breakfast and supper. I had long discussions with myself as to whether I should increase my morning portion at the expense of the evening one.

For three months I had to wear the same underwear, and I had no soap. The vermin were eating me alive. The solitude was unbroken, worse than any I ever experienced afterward, although I served time in nearly twenty prisons.

I didn't have even a book, a piece of paper or a pencil. The cell was never aired. Biting off a piece of prison bread, I would compose verses while I walked on the diagonal. I turned the populist song “Dubinushka” into a proletarian “Machinsushka” and I composed a revolutionary “Kamarinsky”.

There were times, however, when I was sick with loneliness. All that time, I must explain, we had not yet begun to refuse to give evidence, as we did a few years later. The prison was overcrowded after the thoroughgoing spring arrests.

During the first few months of my stay in the prison in Odessa, I received no books from the outside, and so I had to be content with the prison library, which was made up mostly of conservative historical and religious magazines covering several years.

I studied them insatiably, all the advantages of the orthodox church service, and the best arguments against Catholicism, Protestantism, Tolstoyism and Darwinism. Through my sister, who had come from the country, I managed to get four copies of the Bible in different languages.

So I read the Gospels, verse by verse. In a few months, I made excellent progress in this way. I must admit that my linguistic talents are very mediocre. Echoes of what was taking place in the outside world reached us in bits.

Ideas are handed down from generation to generation, although, like grandmother's pillows and covers, the reek of staleness. Even those who are obliged to change the substance of their opinions force them into ancient moulds.

The revolution in industry has been much more far-reaching than it has in ideas, where piece-work is preferred to new structures. That is why the French parliamentarians of the petty bourgeoisie could find

no better way of creating moral ties to hold the people together against the disruptiveness of modern relations than to put on white aprons and arm themselves with a pair of compasses or a plumb-line.

As the prison rules demanded that a prisoner give up his old exercise book when he was given a new one, I got for my studies on Freemasonry an exercise-book with a thousand numbered pages, and entered in it, in tiny characters, excerpts from many books and writings on the materialist conception of history.

At that time I was still comparatively ignorant of the basic literature of the Marxists. I did not absorb historical materialism at once. The dialectic method revealed itself to me for the first time not as abstract definitions but as a living spring which I had found in the historical process as I tried to understand it.

Meanwhile, the tide of revolution was beginning to rise all through the country. The student movement vented itself in demonstrations. The Social Democracy was getting stronger, and was becoming an integral part of the labour movement.

Revolution was no longer a privileged avocation in intellectual circles. The number of workers arrested was increasing. For the first time I heard of Lenin, and studied his book on the development of Russian capitalism, which had just appeared, from cover to cover.

We were sent away from the Moscow prison in the summer. There were interludes in other prisons. It wasn't until the autumn of 1900 that we reached our place of banishment.

Chapter 9: My First Exile

The exiles exchanged letters with each other, some of them so long that they were really theoretical treatises. The aristocracy among the exiles was made up of the old Populists who had more or less succeeded in establishing themselves during the long years they had been away.

The young Marxists formed a distinct section by themselves. It was not until my time the striking workers, often illiterates who by some freak of fate had been separated from the great mass, began to drift to the north.

For them, exile proved an invaluable school for politics and general culture. Intellectual disagreements were made the more bitter by squabbles over personal matters, as is natural where a great many people are forcibly confined.

In exile, as in prison, only hard intellectual work could save one. The Marxists, I must admit, were the only ones who did any of it under these conditions. Soon after our arrival at Ust-Kut, I began to contribute articles to an Irkutsk newspaper - the Eastern Review. It was a provincial organ within the law, started by the old Populist exiles, but occasionally it fell into the hands of Marxists.

I began as a village correspondent, and I waited anxiously for my first article to appear. The editor encouraged my contributions, and I soon began to write about literature, as well as about public questions.

I wrote about the peasantry, about the Russian classic authors, about Ibsen, Hauptmann and Nietzsche; de Maupassant, Andreyev and Gorky. I sat up night after night scratching up my manuscripts, as I tried to find the exact idea or the right word to express it. I was becoming a writer.

Since 1896, when I tried to ward off revolutionary ideas and the following year, when I had done the same to Marxist doctrines even though I was already carrying on revolutionary work, I had travelled far. At the time of my exile, Marxism had definitely become the basis of my philosophy.

During the exile, I tried to consider, from the new point of view I had acquired, the so-called “eternal” problems of life - love death, friendship, optimism, pessimism, and so forth. In different epochs, and in varying social surroundings, man loves and hates and hopes differently.

In my literary articles written in this period, I developed virtually one theme only: the relations between the individual and society. At time, official or so-called “legal” Russian Marxism was in the throes of a crisis.

I could see then from actual experience how brazenly new social requirements create for themselves intellectual garments from the cloth of a theory that was intended for something quite different. The greater part of the Russian intelligentsia was stagnating in Populist theories with their rejection of capitalist development and idealization of peasant communal ownership of land.

And capitalism in the meantime was holding out to the intelligentsia the promise of all sorts of material blessings and political influence. The sharp knife of Marxism was the instrument by which the bourgeois intelligentsia cut the Populist umbilical cord, and severed itself from a hated past.

It was this that accounted for the swift and victorious spread of Marxism during the latter years of the nineteenth century. As soon as Marxism had accomplished this, however, it began to irk this same intelligentsia. Its dialectics were convenient for demonstrating the progress of capitalist methods of development, but finding that it led to a revolutionary rejection of the whole capitalist system, they judged it an impediment and declared it out of date.

At the turn of the century, at the time when I was in prison and exile, the Russian intelligentsia was going through a phase of wide-spread criticism of Marxism. They accepted its historical justification of capitalism, but discarded its rejection of capitalism by revolutionary means.

In this roundabout way the old Populist intelligentsia, with its archaic sympathies, was slowly being transformed into a liberal bourgeois intelligentsia. European criticisms of Marxism now found a ready hearing in Russia, irrespective of their quality.

Bourgeois public opinion, in its formative years, needed inflexible norms, not only to protect it against the tyrannies of the autocratic bureaucracy, but against the wild revolutionism of the masses. Russian liberalism came very late. Much stronger measures were needed to resist the revolutionary masses.

In the early years of this century, Russia was a vast laboratory of social thinking. My work on the history of freemasonry had fortified me in a realization of the subordinate place of ideas in the historical process.

Now it was no longer a question of pure scientific study, but the choice of a political path. The revision of Marxism that was going on in all directions helped me as it did many another young Marxist - it helped us to make up our minds and sharpen our weapons.

We needed Marxism, not only to rid ourselves of Populism, but actually to begin a stout war against capitalism on its own territory. We were becoming proletarian revolutionaries. During this same period, we met with a great deal of criticism from our left.

In one of the northern colonies lived an exile called Makhaisky, whose name soon became generally known. Makhaisky began as a critic of Social Democratic opportunism. His first essay, devoted to an exposure of opportunism of the German Social Democracy, had a great vogue among the exiles.

His second essay criticised the economic system of Marx and ended with the amazing conclusion that Socialism is a social order based on the exploitation of workers by a professional intelligentsia. The third essay advocated the rejection of political struggle, in the spirit of anarchist syndicalism.

Makhaisky's work gave me a powerful inoculation against anarchism, a theory very sweeping in its verbal negations, but lifeless and cowardly in its practical conclusions. The first time I ever met a living anarchist was in the Moscow transfer prison.

He was a village school-teacher, Luzin, a man reserved and uncommunicative, even cruel. In prison he always preferred to be with the criminals and would listen intently to their tales of robbery and murder. He avoided discussions of theory.

Luzin tried to win the workers over, and we carried on a concealed warfare which was not devoid of hostility. While hot discussions were seething in the far-flung, snow-covered Siberian exile colonies - discussions of such things as the differentiation of the Russian peasantry, the English trade unions, the relationship between the categorical imperative and the class interests, and between Marxism and Darwinism - a struggle of a special sort was taking place in government spheres.

In February, 1901, the Holy Synod excommunicated Leo Tolstoy. The edict was published in all the papers. Tolstoy was accused of six crimes - 1. "He rejects the personal living god glorified by the holy trinity." 2. "He denies Christ as the God-man risen from the dead." 3. "He denies the Immaculate Conception and the virginity, before and after the birth, of the God-mother." 4. "He does not recognize life after death and retribution for sins." 5. "He rejects the benefaction of the Holy Ghost", and 6. "He mocks at the sacrament of the Eucharist."

We read the list of Tolstoy's heresies over and over again, each time with fresh astonishment, and said to our selves: No, it is we who rest on the experience of man, it is we who represent the future, while those men at the top are not merely criminals but maniacs as well. We were absolutely sure that we would get the better of that lunatic asylum.

The old structure of the state was cracking all through its foundations. The students were still the ringleaders in the struggle, and in their impatience began to employ the methods of terrorism. Arguments about the use of terrorist methods began.

After individual vacillations, the Marxist section of the exiled went on record against terrorism. The chemistry of high explosives cannot take the place of mass action, we said. Individuals may be destroyed in a heroic struggle, but that will not rouse the working class to action.

Our task is not the assassination of the Czar's ministers, but the revolutionary overthrow of Czarism. While my theoretical views were formed in prison, my political self-determination was achieved in exile. Two years had passed in this way.

A movement begun underground was now walking the streets of the cities. In some districts, the peasantry was beginning to stir. Social Democratic organizations sprang up even in Siberia. They got in touch with me, and I wrote proclamations and leaflets for them.

After a three years' interval, I was rejoining the ranks for active struggle. The revolutionary movement had spread far and wide, but it still lacked unity. Every district and every town was carrying on its individual struggle.

The necessity for creating a centralized party was engaging the minds of many revolutionaries. I devoted an essay to this, and copies of it were circulated throughout the colonies; it was discussed with avidity.

Chapter 10: My First Escape

To speed my escape, we decided to kill two birds with one stone. A peasant friend agreed to drive me out of Verkholensk, together with a woman translator of Marx. I got into the railway carriage in safety. I was following the Siberian line toward the West. The station police let me pass with indifference.

In Samara, I joined the Iskra organization under the name of Pero. The organization was building up the party all over again. Wholesale arrests destroyed an incipient organization which was not rooted firmly enough throughout the country.

After this, the revolutionary movement continued to grow in scattered centres, maintaining its provincial character. Simultaneously, its intellectual level showed signs of lowering. The social democrats, in their effort to win the masses, let their political slogans recede into the background.

Most of the adherents of the Iskra still belonged to the intelligentsia. They fought for the control over local Social Democratic committees, and for a party congress which would insure a victory of the ideas and methods of the Iskra.

At the request of the Samara organization, I visited Kharkoff, Poltava and Kiev, to meet a number of revolutionaries who had already joined the Iskra or who had still to be won over. But it was obvious that a single trip to the provinces could achieve nothing; it was persistent work that was needed.

Meanwhile Lenin, with whom the Samara bureau kept up a lively correspondence, urged me to hasten my departure for abroad. To avoid meeting the station-police a second time, I decided to board the train at the last possible moment.

I reached the frontier zone without any trouble. After I had changed my money, I found that I shouldn't have enough to reach my destination, which was Zurich. I bought a ticket to Vienna, and decided that there I would arrange for the next lap.

Chapter 11: An Émigré for the First Time

I arrived in London from Zurich by way of Paris, in the autumn of 1902. My destination was Lenin's house. I had been instructed before I left Zurich to knock on the door three times. From a bridge, Lenin pointed out Westminster and some other famous buildings.

I don't remember the exact words he used, but what he conveyed was: "this is their famous Westminster" and "their" referred of course not to the English but to the ruling classes. I told him all about our Siberian discussions, especially on the question of a centralized organization; about my essay on the subject; about the violent encounters I had had with the old Populists in Irkutsk, where I had stayed for a few weeks. Lenin knew how to listen.

"And how did you fare in questions of theory?" I told him how we, as a group, had studied his book: "The Development of Capitalism in Russia," in the transfer prison in Moscow, and how in exile we had worked on Marx's "Capital", but had stopped at the second volume.

I mentioned, during our conversation, that the Siberian exiles had been greatly impressed by the enormous amount of statistical data analyzed in Lenin's book on Russian Capitalism. "Well it was not done all at once, you know", he answered, as if somewhat embarrassed.

I intended to return illegally to Russia for revolutionary work some time later. I took to studying the published issues of the Iskra, and the review of Zarya, which came from the same offices. These were brilliant periodicals, combining scientific profundity with revolutionary passion.

Soon I began to write for the Iskra. At first it was only short notes, but a little later I wrote political articles and even editorials. At the same time, too, I gave a public lecture in Whitechapel. One Sunday I went with Lenin to a Social Democratic meeting in a church, where speeches alternated with the singing of hymns.

Everybody rose and sang: "Lord Almighty, let there be no more kings or rich men!" I could scarcely believe my eyes or ears. When we came out of the church, Lenin said: "There are many revolutionary and socialistic elements among the English proletariat, but they are mixed up with conservatism, religion, and prejudices, and can't somehow break through to the surface and unite."

The intellectual centre of the Social Democracy at that time was Germany, and we watched intently the struggle then going on between the "orthodox" Marxists and the "revisionists". Soon, I had to leave for the continent.

After my "test" public appearance in Whitechapel, I was sent on a lecture tour of Brussels, Liege and Paris. From Paris, I was soon summoned by cable to London. They were planning to smuggle me over to Russia again, as reports there complained about wholesale arrests and the shortage of men, and demanded my return.

I returned to Paris, where, unlike London, the Russian student colony was very large. The revolutionary parties were fighting each other bitterly to win over the mass of the students. In Paris I learned to appreciate painting, as well as nature.

From Paris, I went on a lecture tour of the Russian student colonies in Brussels, Liege, in Switzerland, and in some German towns.

Chapter 12: The party Congress and the Split

The political leader of the Iskra was Lenin. He was firmly entrenched in the present but was always trying to pierce a veil of the future. Later on, the split at the Second Congress of the party, the Iskra adherents were divided into two groups - the "hard" and the "soft". Although no marked differences really existed, there was a difference in point of view, in resoluteness and readiness to go on to the end.

Lenin was "hard" and Martov "soft". Lenin concentrated all connections with Russia in his own hands. The secretary of the editorial board was his wife. She was at the very center of all the organization work; she received comrades when they arrived, instructed them when they left, established connections, supplied secret addresses, wrote letters, and coded and decoded correspondence.

The day set for the congress was drawing near, and eventually it was decided to transfer the editorial board to Geneva, in Switzerland, where living was cheaper and contact with Russia easier. Lenin agreed to this with a heavy heart.

Much time was given to the consideration of the proposed constitution, since one of the important points in the scheme of organization was the relationship to be established between the central organ - the Iskra, and the central committee which was to function in Russia.

Lenin's schemes of organization aroused certain doubts in me. But nothing was farther from my mind than the thought that the congress would blow up on those very questions. I was made the delegate of the Siberian Union, with which I had been closely associated during my exile.

The congress opened in Brussels at the headquarters of a labour co-operative society in the Maison du Peuple. The Police Department in Brussels were surprised to see such an influx of foreigners, and suspected ten men of an anarchist conspiracy.

As the congress progressed, the differences between the fore most adherents of the Iskra came to a head. The division between the “hard” and the “soft” was apparent. At first, the disagreements centered about the first paragraph of the constitution: the question of who was to be considered a member of the party.

Lenin insisted on identifying the party with the underground organization. Martov wanted to consider as members also those who worked under the direction of the underground organization. The difference was of no immediate practical importance.

Nevertheless the two divergent tendencies were unmistakable. Lenin wanted clear cut, perfectly definite relationships within the party. Martov tended toward diffuse forms. The grouping of the members determined the whole subsequent course of the congress, and, among other things, the composition of the directing centres of the party.

Lenin left the meeting, banging the door behind him. That was the only time I ever saw him lose his self-control during the bitter struggle inside the party. The differences all came to the surface at the congress itself.

The split came unexpectedly for all the members of the congress. Lenin, the most active figure in the struggle, did not foresee it, nor had he ever desired it. Both sides were greatly upset by the course of events. After the congress, Lenin was sick for several weeks with a nervous illness.

The idea of a split within the board seemed nothing short of sacrilegious to me. Revolutionary centralism is a harsh, imperative and exacting principle. It often takes the guise of absolute ruthlessness in its relation to individual members, to whole groups of former associates.

It is only the most impassioned, revolutionary striving for a definite end that can justify such a personal ruthlessness. Lenin believed that Axelrod and Zaslitch were becoming an impediment for the future. This led him to conclude that they must be removed from their position of leadership.

I could not agree. My whole being seemed to protest against this merciless cutting off of the older ones when they were at last on the threshold of an organized party. My break with Lenin occurred on what might be considered “moral” or even personal grounds.

At bottom, the separation was of a political nature and merely expressed itself in the realm of organization methods. I thought of myself as a centralist. At the time of the London Congress in 1903, revolution was still largely a theoretical abstraction to me.

All Lenin needed was to be convinced that the older ones were incapable of assuming direct leadership of the militant organization of the proletarian vanguard in the revolution which was clearly approaching. Whatever I may say about it, the second congress was a landmark in my life, if only because it separated me from Lenin for several years.

As the result of the split at the second congress of the Russian Social Democratic Party, the two factions came to be known as “Bolsheviks”, meaning “of the majority”, and “Mensheviks”, meaning “of the minority”.

Chapter 13: The Return To Russia

I spent the whole year of 1904 arguing with the leading group of Mensheviks on questions of policy and organization. The arguments were concentrated on two issues: the attitude toward liberalism and that toward the Bolsheviks.

In September, I formally renounced my membership in the minority; I had ceased being an active member in April of that year. Even at the time of the party congress, the entire southern part of Russia was in the throes of a great strike. Peasant disturbances grew more and more frequent.

The universities were seething. The fundamental questions of the revolution came swiftly to the front. Abstractions were beginning in my eyes to acquire actual social flesh. In 1904, I put forward the question, "What next?" and answered it in this way: the way out can be opened only by means of a general strike, followed by an uprising of the proletariat which will march at the head of the masses against liberalism.

On the morning of January 23, 1905, I returned to Geneva from a lecture tour. On January 22, 1905, great masses of workers in Saint Petersburg, carrying church banners and the portrait of the Czar, marched. Now no one could deny that the general strike was the most important means of fighting.

From Munich, I went to Vienna. The famous underground printing-press was then in operation in Kiev, and, despite the many raids and arrests on every hand, managed to keep going for several years under the very nose of the chief of the secret police.

I wrote a number of leaflets for this press, which printed them clearly, an extraordinary thing in those underground conditions. The party, like the revolution, was still young at that time, and one was struck by the inexperience and lack of finish revealed both by the members and by their actions in general.

In St. Petersburg I lived officially on the passport of a land owner named Vikentiev. In revolutionary circles I was known as Peter Petrovitch. I was not formally a member of either of the two factions. Russia, I wrote then, is facing a bourgeois-democratic revolution. The basis of the revolution is the land question.

Power will be captured by the class or the party which will lead the peasantry against Czarism and the landowners. Neither the liberals nor the democratic intelligentsia will be able to do so; their historical time has passed.

Only the Social Democracy, acting through workers, can make the peasantry follow its lead. The immediate task of the Social Democracy will be to bring the democratic revolution to completion. But once in control, the proletariat party will not be able to confine itself merely to the democratic programme; it will be obliged to adopt Socialist measures.

How far it will go in that direction will depend not only on the correlation of forces in Russia itself, but on the entire international situation as well.

Hence, the chief strategic line of action consequently demands that the Social Democracy, while fighting liberalism for the leadership of the peasantry, shall also set itself the task of seizing the power even during the progress of the bourgeois revolution.

The question of the general prospects of revolution was most intimately bound up with tactical problems. The central political slogan of the party was the demand for a constituent assembly. But the course of the revolutionary struggle raised the question of who would summon the constituent assembly, and how.

From the prospect of a popular uprising directed by the proletariat, there followed logically the creation of a provisional revolutionary government. The leading role of the proletariat in the revolution was bound to secure it a decisive part in the provisional government.

The question caused animated discussions in the upper circles of the party. I wrote theses in which I argued that a complete victory of revolution over Czarism would mean either a proletariat in power, supported by the peasantry, or a direct step toward such power.

The environment in which I lived in Finland, with its hills, pine-trees and lakes, its transparent autumn air, and its peace, was scarcely a reminder of a permanent revolution.

Chapter 14: The Year 1905

The October strike did not develop according to plan. It began with the printers in Moscow, and then subsided slowly. An accidental strike that was already in its last gasps suddenly spread to the railways and went off at a gallop.

After October 10 of that year, the strike, now with political slogans, spread from Moscow throughout the country. No such general strike had ever been seen anywhere before. In many towns there were clashes with the troops.

But, taken by and large, the October events remained on the plane of a political strike and never took on the character of an armed uprising. The most important part of the Russian revolution of 1905 was, of course, in the slogan of the peasantry: "Give us land".

I arrived in Saint Petersburg when the October strike was at its peak. The wave of strikes was sweeping farther and farther, but there was a danger that the movement, not being controlled by a central organization, would die down without any results.

I came from Finland with a plan for an elected non-party organization, with delegates who represented each a thousand workers. In the Soviet I was known by the name of Yanovsky, after the village in which I was born. In the press I wrote as Trotsky. I had to work for three newspapers.

I took over the tiny Russian Gazette and transformed it into a fighting organ for the masses. Within a few days the circulation rose from thirty thousand to one hundred thousand. A month later it reached the half million mark. We were finally extricated by the government raid.

On November 13, in alliance with the Mensheviks, we had started a big political organ, *Nachalo*, the beginning. The paper's circulation was jumping by leaps and bounds. Besides the Russian Gazette and *Nachalo*, I also wrote editorials for the *Izvestia - The News*, the official soviet organ, as well as numerous appeals, manifestoes and resolutions.

In his memoirs, Witte wrote afterward that in 1905 "the vast majority of people seemed to go mad". Revolution appears to a conservative as collective madness only because it raises the "normal" insanity of social contradictions to the highest possible tension.

The insane majority puts the strait-jacket on the sane minority. Thanks to this, history keeps moving along. A revolutionary chaos is not at all like an earthquake or a flood. In the confusion of a revolution, a new order begins to take shape instantly; men and ideas distribute themselves naturally in new channels.

Revolution appears as utter madness only to those whom it sweeps aside and overthrows. All the elements that go to make a successful revolution were there, but they did not mature. On October 18, the day after the promulgation of the manifesto, tens of thousands of people were standing in front of the University of Saint Petersburg, aroused by the struggle and intoxicated with the joy of their first victory.

Trotsky, Leon (1930) *My Life*. Marxists Internet Archive.

I shouted to them from the balcony not to trust an incomplete victory, that the enemy was stubborn, that there were traps ahead; I tore the Czar's manifesto into pieces and scattered them to the winds. But such political warnings only scratch the surface of mass consciousness. The masses need the schooling of big events.

The partial victory of the October strike had for me a tremendous theoretical as well as political importance. It was not the opposition of the liberal bourgeoisie, not the elemental risings of the peasantry or the terrorist acts of the intelligentsia, but the strike of the workers that for the first time brought Czarism to its knees.

The revolutionary leadership of the proletariat revealed itself as an incontrovertible fact. I felt that the theory of permanent revolution had withstood its first test successfully. Revolution was obviously opening up to the proletariat the prospect of seizing the power.

The years of reaction which soon followed failed to make me move from this position. I also drew my conclusions about the West. If the young proletariat of Russia could be so formidable, how mighty the revolutionary power of the proletariat of the more advanced countries would be!

All our estimates and slogans of 1905 were based on the assumption of a victorious revolution, and not of a defeat. We achieved neither a republic nor a transfer of land, nor even an eight-hour day. The defeat of the revolution blanketed all prospects not merely those which I had been expounding.

The question was not of the dates of revolution but of the analysis of its inner forces and of foreseeing its progress as a whole. What were the relations between Lenin and me during the revolution of 1905? Since his death, the official history has been revised, and for 1905 as well, a struggle has been established between the powers of good and evil.

Lenin took no active part in the work of the Soviet, and he never spoke there. He influenced its policies through the representatives of the Bolshevik faction. Out of this struggle for the methods and traditions of 1905, came my book, at first entitled "Russia in the Revolution", and later reprinted many times in various countries under the title of "1905".

After the October revolution, this book was regarded as the official text-book of the party, not only in Russia, but among the communist parties in the West as well. Only after Lenin's death, when a carefully prepared campaign was started against me, did this book of mine on 1905 come under fire.

At first the attack was confined to a few captious remarks, which were sorry and trivial. But gradually the criticism became more daring; it grew and multiplied, became more involved and arrogant, and seemed all the noisier because it had to silence its own distress.

In this way was created the legend of the struggle of Lenin's and Trotsky's policies during the revolution of 1905. The revolution of 1905 made a break in the life of the country, in the life of the party, and in my own life.

The break was in the direction of greater maturity. Never in my later life, did I come into such intimate contact with the plain workers as in Nikolayev. The principal types of the Russian proletariat impressed themselves on my consciousness forever.

In prison, I had to start my revolutionary education almost from the abc's. Two and a half years in prison and two years in exile in Siberia gave me the theoretical foundations for a revolutionary view of life. My first stay abroad was my school for political education.

Under the guidance of distinguished Marxist revolutionaries, I was learning to understand events in a wide historical perspective and in their international connection. Toward the end of my foreign stay, I cut myself adrift from both of the leading groups - the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks.

Trotsky, Leon (1930) My Life. Marxists Internet Archive.

I came to Russia in February of 1905; the other leaders did not come until October and November. Among the Russian comrades, there was not one from whom I could learn anything. On the contrary, I had to assume the position of teacher myself.

The theoretical foundations laid in prison and in exile, the political method assimilated abroad, now for the first time found practical application in war. I was confident in the face of events. I understood their inner mechanism, or at least so I believed.

I visualized their effects on the minds of the workers, and envisaged, in its main features, the next day to come. In October, I plunged headlong into the gigantic whirlpool, which, in a personal sense, was the greatest test for my powers.

Decisions had to be made under fire. I can't help noting here that those decisions came to me quite obviously. I did not turn back to see what others might say, and I very seldom had opportunity to consult with anybody; everything had to be done in such a hurry.

Without thinking about it there was too little time left for self-examination I organically felt that my years of apprenticeship were over, although not in the sense that I stopped learning. No the urge and willingness to learn I have carried through my whole life in all their first intensity.

But in the years that followed I have been learning as a master learns, and not as a pupil. At the time of my second arrest I was 26. And the acknowledgement of my maturity came from old Deutsch, who, in prison, solemnly foreswore calling me "youth", and addressed me by my full name.

No great work is possible without intuition that is, without that subconscious sense which, although it may be developed and enriched by theoretical and practical work, must be ingrained in the very nature of the individual.

Neither theoretical education nor practical routine can replace the political insight which enables one to apprehend a situation, weigh it as a whole, and foresee the future. This gift takes on decisive importance at a time of abrupt changes and breaks the conditions of revolution.

The events of 1905 revealed in me, I believe, this revolutionary intuition, and enabled me to rely on its assured support during my later life. I must add here that the errors which I have committed, however important they may have been for some of them were of extreme importance always referred to questions that are not fundamental or strategic, but dealt rather with such derivative matters as organization and policy.

I cannot, in the appreciation of the political situation as a whole and of its revolutionary perspectives, accuse myself of any serious errors of judgement. In Russian life, the revolution of 1905 was the dress rehearsal for the revolution of 1917.

That was its significance in my personal life as well. I took part in the events of 1917 with absolute resolution and confidence, because they were merely a continuation and development of the revolutionary activity which had been interrupted by the arrest of the Saint Petersburg Soviet on December 3, 1905.

The arrest took place a day after we had published our so-called financial manifesto, which proclaimed that the financial bankruptcy of Czarism was inevitable, and issued a categorical warning that the debts incurred by the Romanovs would not be recognized by the victorious nation.

"The autocracy never enjoyed the confidence of the people", said the manifesto of the Soviet of Workers' delegates, "and was never granted any authority by the people. WE have therefore decided not to allow the repayment of such loans as have been made by the Czarist government when openly engaged in a war with the entire people."

Trotsky, Leon (1930) My Life. Marxists Internet Archive.

The French Bourse answered our manifesto a few months later with a new loan of three-quarters of a million francs. The liberal and reactionary press poured sarcasm over the important threat of the Soviet against the Czar's finances and the European bankers.

It is wrong to say, as some do, that the October revolution does not recognize any obligations: its own obligations the revolution recognized to the full. The obligation that took upon itself on December 2, 1905, it carried out on February 10, 1917.

In this respect, as in others, the year 1905 was a preparation for the year 1917.

Chapter 15: Trial, Exile, Escape

The second prison cycle began. It was much easier to bear than the first, and the conditions were infinitely more tolerable than those of eight years before. I was in the "Kresty" prison for a short time, and finally in the House of Preliminary Detention. Before we were sent to Siberia we were moved to a transfer-prison.

Altogether, I was in prison for fifteen months. Each prison had its peculiar features to which one had to adapt oneself. But it would be too dull to dwell on them, for, different as they were, prisons are really all alike. Again I entered on a period of systematic scientific and literary work.

I studied the theory of rent and the history of social relations in Russia. My studies of the social history of Russia were embodied in an article, "The Results of the Revolution and Its Prospects", which represents, for that period, the most finished statement in proof of the theory of permanent revolution.

After our transfer to the House of Preliminary Detention, lawyers were allowed to visit us. Marxist publishing enterprises took a new lease on life. The new conditions made it possible to return to militant political writing.

I wrote a great deal in prison. The lawyers would carry my manuscripts out in their brief-cases. Taking it all in all, I can hardly complain about my life in prison. It was a good school for me. I left the hermetically sealed cell of solitary confinement in the Peter-Paul fortress with a tinge of regret; it was so quiet there, so eventless, so perfect for intellectual work.

The House of Preliminary Detention was, on the contrary, filled with people and bustle. The factional disagreements in the party were sharply renewed after the defeat in December. The high-handed dissolution of the Duma raised all the problems of the revolution anew.

I made them the subject of a pamphlet on tactics, which Lenin published through a Bolshevik publishing house. In prisons, the factional relations had not yet reached the acute state which they had in the world outside, and we were able to publish a collective work dealing with the St Petersburg Soviet in which some of the Mensheviks still appeared as contributors.

The trial of the Soviet of Workers' Delegates opened on September 19, 1906. All the police of Saint Petersburg were mobilized. About four hundred witnesses were called; and more than two hundred witnesses came and offered evidence.

The most essential facts about the trial I related in my book "1905". During the intervals of the trial the old folks looked at me happily. My mother was sure that I would not only be acquitted, but given some mark of distinction. I tried to persuade her to prepare for a sentence of hard-labour.

We were deprived of all civic rights and sentenced to enforced settlement in exile. This was a comparatively mild punishment. We were expecting hard-labour. We were all to be sent to the village of Obdorsk, far within the Arctic circle.

Trotsky, Leon (1930) My Life. Marxists Internet Archive.

I escaped and visited Lenin in Saint Petersburg. It was necessary to fight the sceptics, to review the experience of 1905 theoretically, to educate the rank-and-file for a new turn of the tide, or for a second revolution. Lenin spoke approvingly of my work in prison. As we parted, he gave me some address in Helsingfors which proved invaluable to me.

The friends to whom Lenin directed me helped me to establish myself with my family in a comfortable little place in Oglbu, near Helsingfors, where some time afterward Lenin also came to stay. I stayed several weeks in Oglbu with my wife and infant son, who had been born while I was in prison.

On a Scandinavian steamer, I set forth on a new foreign exile which was to last for ten years.

Chapter 16: My Second Foreign Exile – German Socialism

The party congress of 1907 held its meetings in a socialist church in London. The second Duma was still alive in Saint Petersburg. The revolution was subsiding, but it was still arousing great interest, even in English political circles.

On one of the first days of the congress, I was stopped in the church vestibule by a tall, angular man with a round face and high cheek-bones, who wore a round hat. "I am your admirer", he said, with an amiable chuckle. He was Maxim Gorky, and this was the first time I ever saw him. We went about London together.

At the London Congress I renewed acquaintance with Rosa Luxemburg, whom I had known since 1904. She was a little woman, frail, and even sickly looking, but with a noble face, and beautiful eyes that radiated her intelligence. She captivated me by the sheer courage of her mind and character.

Her style, which was at once precise, intense and merciless, will always be the mirror of her heroic spirit. Hers was a many-sided nature, rich in subtle shadings. My relations with Rosa were not marked by any personal friendship; our meetings were too brief and too infrequent.

I admired her from a distance. And yet, I probably did not appreciate her enough at that time. On the question of the so-called permanent revolution, Rosa took the same stand as I did. At the congress I had occasion to set forth again my view of the working class part in the bourgeois revolution, and, in particular, of its relationship to the peasantry.

From London, I went to Berlin to meet my wife, who was to come from Saint Petersburg. There still hovered over the congress of the Socialist International the echo of the storms of the Russian revolution of 1905. Every one tried to keep in line with the left flank. But one noticed already a disappointment with revolutionary methods.

Russian revolutionaries still aroused interest, but there was a touch of irony in it, as if people were saying: "Here they are, back again". In October of 1907, I was already in Vienna. Soon my wife came with our child. While we were waiting for a new tide of revolution, we took up our quarters outside the city, at Hitteldorf. We had a long wait.

We were carried away from Vienna seven years later by a different tide that one which soaked the soil of Europe with blood. The correspondence between Marx and Engels was one of the books that I needed most, and one that stood closest to me. It supplied me with the greatest and most unfailing test for my own ideas as well as for my entire personal attitude toward the rest of the world.

Their attitude to men and ideas was mine. I guessed what they did not express, shared their sympathies, was indignant and hated as they did. Marx and Engels were revolutionaries through and through. Pettiness was incompatible not only with their personalities, but with their presences.

They may pass deadly criticism on a man, but they will never deal in tittle-tattle. They can be ruthless, but not treacherous. For outward glamour, titles, or rank they have nothing but a cool contempt. The Austrian intelligentsia believed neither in revolution nor in war. They wrote about war and revolution in their May-day manifestos, but they never took them seriously.

There was less nationalism in Berlin than there was in Austria. For us Russians,, the German Social Democracy was mother, teacher, and living example, We idealized it from a distance. In Berlin, I attended two of the weekly meetings of the left-wingers.

The principal figure at these gatherings was Franz Mehring. I met Kautsky for the first time in 1907. With what I already knew of Kautsky from his books, this served to complete a very charming personality. After he had accepted Marxism as a complete system, Kautsky popularized it like a school-teacher.

Kautsky's friendship with Rosa Luxembourg coincided with the best period of his intellectual activity. But soon after the 1905 revolution, appeared the first signs of a growing coolness between them. Kautsky warmly sympathized with the Russian revolution, and could interpret it fairly well from afar.

But he was by nature hostile to a transfer of revolutionary methods to German soil. When I came to his house before the demonstration in Teptow Park, I found Rosa engaged in a heated argument with him. Kautsky wanted to remain an onlooker, whereas Rosa was anxious to join the demonstration.

The antagonism between them burst out in 1910 over the question of the struggle for suffrage in Prussia. Then came the war. Kautsky was adapting himself to the war the same way that he had been adapting himself to peace. But Rosa showed how she interpreted loyalty to her ideas.

Karl Liebknecht was a man of action. His was an impulsive, passionate and heroic nature; he had, moreover, real political intuition, a sense of the masses and of the situation, and an incomparable courage of initiative. He was a revolutionary.

What a group of philistines and shallow vulgarians were they, who, under my own eyes, looked down ironically at Liebknecht! At the Social Democratic congress at Jena, in the early part of September, 1911, I was asked at Liebknecht's suggestion to speak of the tyrannies of the Czarist government in Finland.

When the Czech trade-unions opposed the German leadership, the Austrian Marxists advanced, against the split in the trade organizations, arguments which skillfully counterfeited internationalism. There was plenty of evidence that the rank and file of the Czech party were more radical than the Austro-German party, and that the legitimate dissatisfaction of the Czech workers with the opportunist leadership of Vienna would be cleverly utilized by Czech chauvinists.

On the way from Vienna to the congress at Copenhagen, I suddenly met Lenin on his way from Paris. We had to wait about an hour, and a significant conversation took place there. I argued that if any one was to blame for the secession of the Czech trade-unions, it was first of all the Vienna leaders, who made high-sounding appeals to fight to the workers of all countries, including the Czechs, and then always ended in deals behind the scenes with the monarchy.

On the question of the Czech trade-unions, the Russian delegation voted at the congress for the Vienna resolution as opposed to the one moved by Prague. I tried to move an amendment but with no success.

Chapter 17: Preparing for a New Revolution

Shortly after my arrival abroad I toured the Russian and student colonies with two lectures: "The Fate of the Russian Revolution" and "Capitalism and Socialism: Social Revolutionary Prospects." The first lecture aimed to show that the prospect of the Russian Revolution as a permanent revolution was confirmed by the experience of 1905.

The second lecture connected the Russian with the world revolution. In October of 1908, I began to publish in Vienna a Russian paper, Pravda - The Truth a paper with an appeal to the masses of workers. The paper was published for three and a half years as a bi-monthly, but even at that it involved a great deal of work.

My chief contributor to the Pravda was A.A. Joffe, who later became a well-known Soviet diplomatist. The Vienna days were the beginning of our friendship. Joffe was a man of great intellectual ardour, very genial in all personal relations, and unswervingly loyal to the cause.

He gave to the Pravda both money and all his strength. Through Joffe, I became acquainted with the problems of psychoanalysis, which fascinated me, although much in this field is still vague and unstable and opens the way for fanciful and arbitrary ideas.

My other contributor was a student named Skobelev, who later became the minister of labour in Kerensky's government. We met in 1917 as enemies. In connection with the activities of the Pravda, Joffe went to Russia for revolutionary work.

He was arrested in Odessa, spent a long time in prison, and was later exiled to Siberia. He was not set free until February, 1917, a result of the revolution of that month. In the October revolution which followed, he played one of the most active parts.

In the darkest days of the reaction, Joffe and I were confidently waiting for a new revolution, and we pictured it in the very way in which it actually evolved in 1917. In 1909, writing in the Polish magazine of Rosa Luxemburg, I characterized the revolutionary relationship between the working class and the peasantry in the following words:

"Local cretinism is the historical curse of the peasant movements. It was on the circumscribed political intelligence of the peasant who while in his village plundered his landlord in order to seize his land, but then, decked out in a soldier's coat, shot down the workers, that the first wave of the Russian revolution, 1905, broke.

The events of that revolution may be regarded as a series of ruthless object-lessons by means of which history is hammering into the head of the peasant the consciousness of the ties which connect his local demand for land with the central problem of the state power."

During the years of the reaction I studied the questions of trade and industry both on a world scale and a national scale. I was promoted by a revolutionary interest, I wanted to find out the relationship between the fluctuations of trade and industry, on the one hand, and the progressive stages of the labour movement and revolutionary struggle, on the other.

I was still living in the little Bohemian town of Hirschberg when the New York stock exchange suffered the "Black Friday" catastrophe. This was the harbinger of a world crisis which was bound to engulf Russia as well, shaken to her foundations as she was by the Russo-Japanese war, and by the ensuing revolution.

Under such conditions, only an industrial revival can close the ranks of the proletariat, pour fresh blood into its veins, restore its confidence in itself and make it capable of further struggle. I was still hoping that the new revolution would force the Mensheviks to follow a revolutionary path.

Trotsky, Leon (1930) My Life. Marxists Internet Archive.

In September 1912, I was on my way to the East, believing that war was not only probable but inevitable. A sense of the tragedy of history, which words cannot suggest, was taking possession of me; a feeling of impotence before fate, a burning compassion for the human locust.

War was declared two or three days later. The years 1912-13 gave me a close acquaintance with Serbia, Bulgaria, Romania and with war. In many respects, this was an important preparation not only for 1914, but for 1917 as well.

G. Rakovsky is, internationally, one of the best-known figures in the European socialist movement. A Bulgarian by birth, Rakovsky comes from the town of Kotel, in the very heart of Bulgaria, but he is a Romanian subject by dint of the Balkan map, a French physician by education, a Russian by connections, by sympathies and literary work.

In 1913, Rakovsky was the organizer and leader of the Romanian Socialist party, which later joined the Communist International. The party was showing considerable growth. Rakovsky edited a daily paper, which he financed as well.

Every week he spent three days in Bucharest, writing articles, directing the sessions of the Central Committee, and speaking at meetings and street demonstrations. The years of my second foreign exile were years spent in writing for the Russian democratic press.

I made my debut in the *Kievskaya Mysl* with a long article on the Munich journal, *Simplicissimus*, which at one time interested me so much that I went through all its issues from the very first one. In the South of Russia, the *Kievskaya Mysl* was the most popular radical paper of the Marxist hue.

A paper like it could exist only in Kiev, with its feeble industrial life; its underdeveloped class contradictions, and its long-standing traditions of intellectual radicalism. My earnings in the *Kievskaya Mysl* were quite enough for our modest living.

But there were months when my work for the *Pravda* left me no time to write a single paying line. The crisis set in. My wife learned the road to the pawn-shops, and I had to resell to the booksellers books bought in more affluent days.

There were times when our modest possessions were confiscated to pay the house-rent. We had two babies and no nurse; our life was a double burden on my wife. But she still found time and energy to help me in revolutionary work.

Chapter 18: The Beginning of the War

The people whose lives, day in and day out, pass in a monotony of hopelessness are many; they are the mainstay of modern society. The alarm of mobilization breaks into their lives like a promise; the familiar and long-hated is overthrown, and the new and unusual reigns in its place.

Changes still more incredible are in store for them in the future. For better or worse? For the better, of course what can seem worse to Popischil than "normal" conditions? War affects everybody, and those who are oppressed and deceived by life consequently feel that they are on an equal footing with the rich and powerful. No wonder that in history war has often been the mother of revolution.

And yet how different were the attitudes of the ruling classes to the one and to the other! Like revolution, war forces life, from top to bottom, away from the beaten track. But revolution directs its blows against the established power.

War, on the contrary, at first strengthens the state power, which, in the chaos engendered by war, appears to be the only firm support and then undermines it. Hopes of strong social and national

Trotsky, Leon (1930) *My Life*. Marxists Internet Archive.

movements, whether it be in Prague or in Trieste, in Warsaw or Tiflis, are utterly groundless at the outset of war.

What attitude toward the war did I find in the leading circles of the Austrian Social Democracy? Some were quite obviously pleased with it, and spoke abusively of Serbians and Russians, making little distinction between the governments and the people.

These were really nationalists, barely disguised under the veneer of a socialist culture which was now melting away as fast as it could. On the first of August, Germany declared war against Russia. On the very eve of the war, I published an article in the Kampf magazine, showing the futility of individual terrorism.

On August 11, I wrote: "Only an awakening of the revolutionary socialist movement, an awakening which will need to be very warlike from the start, will lay the foundations for a new International. The years to come will be the period of social revolution."

I entered actively into the life of the Swiss Socialist party. I carried away from every party meeting a double store of assurance in the rightness of my stand. I found my first support in the workers' union. In the labour strata of the Swiss Socialist party, Internationalism was regarded with almost boundless sympathy.

By agreement with the directorate of the union, in the early days of September I drafted a manifesto against war and socialist patriotism. This was probably the first internationalist document on behalf of a labour organization after the outbreak of the war.

I was quite used to hearing that the productive forces of Russia were not sufficient for the conquest of power by the working class. But I did not imagine that such a view could come from a revolutionary politician of a progressive capitalist country.

When the German and French socialist newspapers had made clear the picture of the moral and political catastrophe of official socialism, I put aside my diary to write a political pamphlet on the subject of war and the international.

I added a preface to the pamphlet in which I emphasized even more energetically my view that the present war was nothing but an uprising of the productive forces of capitalism on a world scale, against private property on the one hand and state boundaries on the other.

The booklet, "The War and the International", like all my other books, had its own peculiar destiny, first in Switzerland, then in Germany and France, later in America, and finally in Soviet Russia. From the very moment that I began to think for myself, I was an intuitive and then a conscious materialist.

I not only never felt the necessity of other worlds, but I could not find any psychological contact with the people who managed to recognize both Darwin and the Holy Trinity at the same time. Later on, in France, I came unexpectedly across a report in the French papers that one of the German courts had sentenced me in a state of contumacy to imprisonment for the Zurich pamphlet. From this I concluded that the pamphlet hit the mark.

After the October revolution, an enterprising New York publisher brought out my German pamphlet as an imposing American book. According to his own statement, President Wilson asked him by telephone from the White House, to send the proofs of the book to him; at that time, the President was composing his Fourteen points, and, according to reports from people who were informed, could not get over the fact that a Bolshevik had forestalled him in his best formulas.

Within two months the sales of the book in America reached 16,000 copies. The American press raised a furious campaign against me and the book instantly disappeared from the market. In the Soviet Republic, my Zurich pamphlet had by that time gone through several editions, serving as a text-book for the study of the Marxist attitude toward the war.

It disappeared from the “market” of the Communist International only after 1924, the year when “Trotskyism” was discovered. At present, the pamphlet is still under a ban, as it was before the revolution.

Chapter 19: Paris and Zimmerwald

On November 19, 1914, I crossed the French frontier as a war-correspondent for the *Kievskaya Mysi*. It would give me a chance to get closer to the war. Paris was sad; in the evening the streets were lost in pitch-black darkness.

In the boundless chaos that was enveloping Europe, with silence from the masses of workers, deceived and betrayed by the Social Democracy, the engines of destruction were developing their automatic power. Capitalist civilization was reducing itself to an absurdity while it strove to break the thick skulls of men.

At the time when the Germans were nearing Paris and the bourgeois French patriots were deserting it, two Russians set up a tiny daily paper published in Russian. Its object was to explain current events to the Russians whom fate had isolated in Paris, and to see that the spirit of international solidarity was not utterly extinguished.

My family came to France in May, 1915. We settled down in Svres, in a little house lent to us for a few months by a young friend of ours, an Italian artist, Ren Parece. Our boys went to the school in Sevres. The number of women in black was growing constantly, the school-children were losing their fathers.

The French Socialist party was in a state of complete demoralization. Pierre Renaudel found himself for a time the “leader” of the Socialist party. There were elements of opposition scattered about, in the party and in the syndicates, but they showed few signs of life.

The outstanding figure among the Russians in Paris without a doubt was Martov, the leader of the Mensheviks, and one of the most talented men I have ever come across. Martov’s first reaction to events was nearly always revolutionary, but before he could put his ideas on paper, his mind would be besieged by doubts from all sides.

His rich, pliant, and multiform intelligence lacked the support of will. On August 4, 1915, I wrote in the *Nashe Slovo*: “and in spite of everything, we meet the bloody anniversary with out mental distress or political skepticism. In the midsts of the greatest catastrophe we revolutionary internationalists have held to our standards of analysis, criticism, and forethought.

We have refused to view things through the “national” spectacles that the general staffs have been offering us, not merely cheaply but even with a bonus attached. We have continued to see things as they are, to call them by their real names, and to foresee their logical consequences.”

Our critical view-point enabled us, first of all, to see the war in clearer perspective. Each side, as everybody knows, was counting on an early victory. In opposition to this view, we reiterated day in day out in our paper that the war, regardless of the official prophesies, would be hopelessly protracted and that all Europe would emerge from it utterly broken.

We definitely foresaw the coming world-dictatorship of the United States. "Imperialism", we wrote for the hundredth time on September 5, 1916, "by virtue of this was, has placed its stakes on the strong; they will own the world."

In the summer of 1915 there arrived in Paris the Italian deputy Morgari, the secretary of the Socialist faction of the Rome parliament, and a naïve eclectic, who had come to secure the participation of French and English socialists in an international conference.

On one of the Grands Boulevards, we held a meeting attended by a few socialist deputies who for some reason thought themselves "lefts", and Mogari. As long as the conversation held to pacifist talk, and to representing generalities about the necessity of restoring international connections, everything went smoothly.

The days of the conference, September 5 to 8, were stormy ones. The revolutionary wing, led by Lenin, and the pacifist wing, which comprised the majority of the delegates, agreed with difficulty on a common manifesto of which I prepared the draft.

Lenin was on the extreme left at the conference. The French delegates noted in their report the value of the *Nashe Slovo* in establishing a contact of ideas with the international movement in other countries. Liebknecht himself was not in Zimmerwald; he had been imprisoned in the Hohenzollern army before he became a captive in prison.

Liebknecht sent a letter to the conference in which he proclaimed his abrupt about-face from pacifism to revolution. His name was mentioned on many occasions at the conference. It was already a watchword in the struggle that was rending world-socialism.

The conference at Zimmerwald gave to the development of the anti-war movement in many countries a powerful impetus. But, in the meantime, clouds were gathering overhead, and during 1916 they grew very dark. The reactionary *La Liberté* was publishing, as advertisements, anonymous communications accusing us of being Germanophiles.

We were constantly receiving anonymous letters containing threats. Both the accusations and the threats clearly had their source in the Russian embassy. Suspicious-looking persons were always prowling about our printing works.

Chapter 20: My Expulsion from France

Certain French newspapers recently reported that the order for my expulsion from France is still in force today, after thirteen years. There is significance in the fact that one of the two police inspectors who were conducting me from Paris to Irun in the autumn of 1916 explained to me: "Governments come and go, but the police remain."

Gradually, it became apparent that the cause was a malicious frame-up organized by the Russian secret police in France. The French government closed down the *Nashe Slovo*, and the minister of the interior, Malvy, signed the order, previously prepared by the prefect of police, expelling me from France.

I was informed that I was being expelled from France to any other country I might choose. I was also informed that England and Italy declined the honor of having me as a guest. My only choice was to go back to Switzerland. But the Swiss legation flatly refused to issue a visa to me.

I could get to Holland and Scandinavia only through England, but the English government refused me the right of passage. Spain was the only country left. Arguments with the Paris police continued for about six weeks. Detectives followed me wherever I went; they stood on guard outside my home and the offices of our paper, never once letting me out of their sight.

Trotsky, Leon (1930) *My Life*. Marxists Internet Archive.

Chapter 21: Through Spain

IN a prison in Madrid! I had never dreamed of such a thing. The police agent informed me that I was to leave for Cadiz that same evening, and asked if I wanted to pay for my railway ticket. But I had no desire to go to Cadiz and I firmly refused to pay for the ticket. It was enough that one had to pay for accommodation in the prison.

And so, in the evening, we left Madrid for Cadiz. The travelling costs were at the expense of the Spanish king. But why Cadiz? Again I looked at the map. Cadiz is the farthest extremity of the southwestern peninsula of Europe.

I was permitted to stay in Cadiz until the next boat arrived for New York. This was a considerable victory. For a few weeks after this I was under the observation of the Cadiz police. But this was a perfectly peaceful, paternal sort of observation, quite unlike the one in Paris.

I worked in the library on the history of Spain, memorized Spanish conjugations, and renewed my stock of English words in preparation for going to America. The boat for New York sailed from Barcelona. I managed to wrest permission to go there to meet my family. We went sightseeing in Barcelona, accompanied by detectives.

The police put me and my family on board the Spanish Transatlantic Company's steamer *Monserrat*; which delivered its live and dead cargo at New York after seventeen days. Seventeen days!

Chapter 22: New York

Here I was in New York, city of prose and fantasy, of capitalist automatism, its streets a triumph of cubism, its moral philosophy that of the dollar. New York impressed me tremendously because, more than any other city in the world, it is the fullest expression of our modern age.

Of the legends that have sprung up about me, the greater number have to do with my life in New York. In New York, where I stayed for two months, the newspapers had me engaged in any number of occupations, each more fantastic than the one before.

But my only profession in New York was that of a revolutionary socialist. I wrote articles, edited a newspaper, and addressed labour meetings. In one of New York's libraries I studied the economic history of the United States assiduously.

Since that time the problem of "America versus Europe" has been one of my chief interests. If one is to understand the future destiny of humanity, this is the most important of all subjects. The day after I arrived in New York I wrote in the Russian paper, the *Novy Mir* - The New World:

"I left Europe wallowing in blood, but I left with a profound faith in a coming revolution." Ten days later I addressed the international meeting of welcome". I lectured in Russian and German in various sections of New York, Philadelphia and other near-by cities.

My apartment, at eighteen dollars a month, was equipped with all sorts of conveniences that we Europeans were quite unused to: electric lights, gas cooking, bath, telephone, automatic service-elevator, and even a chute for the garbage.

During those months America was busily getting ready for war. As ever, the greatest help came from the pacifists. It is well-known that pacifists think of war as an enemy only in time of peace. Madame Kolontay was in America at that time, but she travelled a great deal and I did not meet her very often.

During the war, she veered sharply to the left, without transition, abandoning the ranks of the Mensheviks for the extreme left wing of the Bolsheviks. Her knowledge of foreign languages and her temperament made her a valuable agitator.

In ideas the Socialist party of the United States lagged far behind even European patriotic socialism. Old Eugene Debs stood out prominently among the older generation because of the quenchless inner flame of his socialist idealism.

Although he was a romantic and a preacher, and not at all a politician or a leader, he was a sincere revolutionary; yet he succumbed to the influence of people who were in every respect his inferiors. I joined the editorial board of the *Novy Mir* at the very outset.

The paper was the headquarters for internationalist revolutionary propaganda. The ideas of the *Novy Mir* found their way out into the wider circles of American workers. Among the American workers, the connections and influence of the Socialist party as a whole, and our revolutionary wing in particular, were less effective.

We decided to begin establishing a militant Marxist weekly. The preparations for it were in full swing when the Russian revolution intervened! After the mysterious silence of the cables for two or three days, came the first confused reports of the uprising in Petrograd.

The cosmopolitan working-class in New York was all excited. The American press was in a state of utter bewilderment. Journalists, interviewers, reporters, came from all sides to the offices of the *Novy Mir*. For a time our paper was the centre of interest of the New York press.

Meetings, extraordinary for their size and enthusiasm were held all over New York. Everywhere, the news that the red flag was flying over the Winter Palace brought an excited cheer. Not only the Russian immigrants, but their children, who knew hardly any Russian, came to these meetings to breathe in the reflected joy of the revolution.

Chapter 23: IN a Concentration Camp

After the usual delays and arguments, the Russian Consul-General ordered that papers be issued to me for the passage back to Russia. Everything was in good order. On April 3, British Officers came aboard our boat and demanded that I, my family, and five other passengers leave the boat.

The police left my wife and children in Halifax; the rest of us were taken by train to Amherst, a camp for German prisoners. And there, in the office, we were put through an examination the like of which I had never before experienced.

Not until the next morning did the camp commander, Colonel Morris, in answer to our repeated demands and protests, tell us the official reason for the arrest: "You are dangerous to the present Russian government", he said briefly.

No written orders for our arrest were ever produced. For Colonel Morris, the Russian revolution simply did not exist. The Amherst concentration camp was located in an old and very dilapidated iron-foundry that has been confiscated from its German owner.

About eight hundred of us lived in these conditions. In spite of the heroic efforts of the prisoners to keep themselves physically and morally fit, five of them had gone insane. We had to eat and sleep in the same room with these madmen.

Our relations with the German prisoners became clearly defined according to their reaction to the fact that we had been arrested as revolutionary socialists. The officers immediately set us down as enemies; the rank-and-file, on the other hand, surrounded us with an ever increasing friendliness.

The whole month I was there was like one continuous mass meeting. I told the prisoners about the Russian revolution, about Liebknecht, about Lenin, and about the causes of collapse of the old international, and the intervention of the United States in the war.

Besides these speeches, we had constant group discussions. Our friendship grew warmer every day. The relations between the rank and file and the officers were hostile. The officers ended by complaining to the camp commander, Colonel Morris, about my anti-patriotic propaganda.

The British Colonel forbade me to make any more public speeches. But this did not happen until the last few days of our stay at the camp, and served only to cement my friendship with the sailors and workers, who responded to the colonel's order by a written protest bearing five hundred and thirty signatures.

I must admit that even today the secret machinery of our arrest and our release is not clear to me. The British government must have put me on its black-list when I was still active in France. It did everything it could to help the Czar's government oust me from Europe.

On the twenty ninth of April came the hour for our release from the concentration camp. The Commander told us that we were to sail on a Danish boat for Russia. Our fellow prisoners gave us a most impressive send-off.

One of the prisoners delivered a short speech acclaiming the Russian revolution and cursing the German monarchy.

Chapter 24: In Petrograd

The journey from Halifax to Petrograd passed monotonously, like going through a tunnel - and it really was a tunnel into the revolution. We were given a tremendous welcome at the Finnish terminal in Petrograd.

The Petrograd garrison was enormous, but it was no longer solid in its allegiances. The soldiers sang revolutionary songs as they marched, and sported red ribbons on their tunics. It all seemed as incredible as a dream.

The war had become impossible, but the liberals had not yet begun to understand that, nor had the leaders of the so-called "revolutionary democracy". They were mortally afraid to let go of the skirts of the Entente.

One had to approach the Russian revolution from the world point of view, rather than from that of Russia, to avoid getting lost in complexities. With my wife and children I found with great difficulty a room in the Kiev Hostelry.

After the July days, of which I will say more later, the streets of the capital teemed with slander against the Bolsheviks. I was arrested by Kerensky's government and, two months after my return from exile, found myself once again in the familiar Kresty prison.

After my release from the prison of the "revolutionary democracy", we settled down in a little apartment,, rented from the widow of a liberal journalist, in a big bourgeois house. Preparations for the October revolution were in full swing.

Trotsky, Leon (1930) My Life. Marxists Internet Archive.

I was made chairman of the Petrograd Soviet. The press attacked me in every conceivable way. The looting of the rich wine stores of the capital by the rabble of the streets was beginning. Then the civil war began. Life was a whirl of mass meetings.

When I arrived in Petrograd, I found all the revolutionary orators either hoarse or voiceless. The revolution of 1905 had taught me to guard my voice with care, and thanks to this, I was hardly ever out of the ranks.

Meetings were held in plants, schools, and colleges, theatres, circuses, streets, and squares. I usually spoke in the Circus in the evening, sometimes quite late at night. My audience was composed of workers, hard-working mothers, street urchins - the oppressed under-dogs of the capital.

Every square inch was filled, every human body compressed to its limit. No speaker, no matter how exhausted, could resist the electric tension of that impassioned human throng. They wanted to know, to understand, to find their way.

Leaving the Modern Circus was even more difficult than entering it. The crowd was unwilling to break up its new-found unity; it would refuse to disperse. When I found myself outside the gate, the Circus followed me. The street became alive with shouts and the tramping of feet.

My connection with the Modern Circus ended only in February, when I went to Moscow.

Chapter 25: Concerning Slanderers

When I arrived in Petrograd in the early part of May, 1917, the campaign about the "sealed car" in which Lenin had made his way through Germany was in full blast. The new Socialist ministers were in alliance with Lloyd George, who had refused to let Lenin pass into Russia.

The first all-Russian congress of Soviets was then in session. I summed up the whole campaign in a pamphlet, "To the Slanderers," and sent it to the printers. A week later, the July days were upon us, and on the 23rd of July I was imprisoned by the Provisional government on the charge of being in the service of the German Kaiser.

The accusation was soon lost in the larger events that swallowed up not only the investigators but all of old Russia. The only evidence against me that the court examiner produced was the allegation that I together with Lenin had passed through Germany in a sealed car.

Chapter 26: From July to October

When the calamity that the Bolsheviks had warned against came, the Bolsheviks were made the scapegoats. They were hounded furiously. During the session in the Taurid Palace on July 3, I learned of the demonstration of the machine-gun regiment and its appeal to other troops and to factory-workers.

The demonstration had been spontaneous, at the initiative of the masses, but next day it went farther, now with the participation of our party. The Taurid Palace was over run by the people. They had only one slogan: "Power to the Soviets."

Delegation after delegation demanded, in the name of the demonstrators, that the Executive Committee take the power. Bolsheviks spoke one after another in support of the delegations of workers and soldiers. Bolsheviks were being beaten down in the streets and killed.

General arrests, followed by beatings, were the order of the day. Many of our sympathizers and half-friends turned their backs on us. The situation in the ruling circles of the party was bad. Lenin was away. The Bolshevik faction in the Central Executive Committee felt orphaned in the Taurid Palace.

It sent a delegation to ask me if I would speak to them about the situation, although I was not yet a member of the party; my formal joining had been delayed until the party congress, soon to meet. I agreed readily of course.

The press was conducting an exceptionally venomous and dishonest campaign against the Bolsheviks, a campaign surpassed in this respect only by Stalin's campaign against the opposition a few years later. I wrote in those days: "Hounded, persecuted, slandered, our party never grew as rapidly as it is growing now. And this process will spread from the capitals to the provinces, from the towns to the country and the army. Our party will be transformed in the fire of persecution into a true leader of all the oppressed, downtrodden, deceived and hounded masses."

Chapter 27: The Deciding Night

The twelfth hour of the revolution was near. The chief of the machine gun company came to tell me that his men were all on the side of the Bolsheviks. On the 24th, there was difficulty at the telephone exchange. Military students had entrenched themselves there, and under their protection the telephone operators went into opposition to the Soviet and refused to make our connections.

This was the first, sporadic instance of sabotage. The Military-Revolutionary Committee sent a detachment of sailors to the telephone exchange, and the detachment placed two small guns at the entrance. The telephone service was restored. Thus began the taking over of the organs of administration.

The decisive movement was close at hand. It was obvious that there could now be no turning back. All is well. It could hardly have been better. Now I may leave the telephone. I sit down on the couch. The nervous tension lessens. A dull sensation of fatigue comes over me.

Next morning I pounced upon the bourgeois and Menshevik Populist papers. They had not even a word about the uprising. The citizen of Petrograd was rubbing his frightened eyes under a new regime. Was it really possible that the Bolsheviks had seized the power?

A delegation from the municipal Duma called to see me, and asked me a few intimitable questions: "Do you propose military action? If so, what, and when?" The Duma would have to know this "not less than twenty-four hours in advance." What measures had the soviet taken to ensure safety and order? And so on, and so forth...

The government was still in session at the Winter Palace, but it was no more than a shadow. Politically, it had ceased to exist. While they were preparing for the struggle, the working class had been seized by an indescribable enthusiasm, but when we stepped over the threshold of power, this unthinking enthusiasm gave way to a disturbed thoughtfulness.

Ahead of us there was probably the greatest resistance from the old world; there were struggle, starvation, cold, destruction, blood and death. "Will we overcome this?" many asked themselves.

Chapter 28: "Trotskyism" in 1917

In New York, at the beginning of March, 1917, I wrote a series of articles dealing with the class forces and perspectives of the Russian revolution. Both Lenin and I, though we were writing in different parts of the world and were separated by an ocean, gave the same analysis and the same forecast.

On everyone of the principal questions, such as the attitude toward the peasantry, toward the bourgeoisie, the Provisional government, the war, and the world revolution, our views were completely identical.

Not one of those leaders of the party who were in Russia had any intention of making the dictatorship of the proletariat the social revolution the immediate object of his policy. A party conference which met on the eve of Lenin's arrival and counted among its numbers about thirty Bolsheviks showed that none of them even imagined anything beyond democracy.

The membership of the party, like the working class as a whole, was moving spontaneously toward the fight for power. There was no other path for either the party or the country. Stalin preferred to withdraw into the background. He never made any public appearance to defend Lenin's views; he merely stood back and waited.

During the most responsible months of the theoretical and political preparation for the uprising, Stalin simply did not exist, in the political sense. Two months before the October revolution, I wrote: "To us internationalism is not an abstract idea existing only to be betrayed on every opportune occasion, but is a real guiding and wholly practical principle. A lasting, decisive success is inconceivable for us without a revolution in Europe."

I concluded my article with the words: "A permanent revolution versus a permanent slaughter, that is the struggle, in which the stake is the future of man". To Lenin, when he surveyed the past development of the party as a whole, Trotskyism was no hostile and alien current of Socialist thought, but on the contrary the one that was closest to Bolshevism.

Chapter 29: In Power

In the life of the country and in the life of the individual, those were extraordinary days. In social passions, as well as in personal powers, tension reached its highest point. The masses were creating an epoch, and their leaders felt their steps merging with those of history.

The pressure of events was so terrific, and the work to be done so clear before us, that the most important decisions came naturally, as a matter of course, and were received in the same spirit. The path had been predetermined, all that was required was to indicate the work.

Marxism considers itself the conscious expression of the unconscious historical process. But the "unconscious" process, in the philosophical sense of the term not in the psychological coincides with its conscious expression only at this highest point, when the masses, by sheer elemental pressure, break through the social routine and give victorious expression to the deepest needs of historical development.

The creative union of the conscious with the unconscious is what one usually calls "inspiration". Revolution is the inspired frenzy of history. Every real writer knows creative moments, when something stronger than himself is guiding his hand; every real orator experiences moments when some one stronger than the self of his every-day existence speaks through him. This is "inspiration".

It derives from the highest creative effort of all one's forces. The unconscious rises from its deep well and bends the conscious mind to its will, merging it with itself in some greater synthesis. The utmost spiritual vigor likewise infuses at times all personal activity connected with the movement of the masses.

After the seizure of power, I tried to stay out of the government, and offered to undertake the direction of the press. It was quite possible that the nervous reaction after the victory had something to do with that; the months that had preceded it had been too closely tied up with preparatory work for the revolution.

One thing coincided with the other, and this only added to my desire to retire behind the scenes for a while. Lenin would not hear of it, however. He insisted that I take over the commissariat of the interior, saying that the most important task at the moment was to fight off a counter-revolution.

My Marxist education changed my attitude to that of an active internationalism. My life in so many countries, my acquaintance with so many different languages, political systems and cultures only helped me to absorb that internationalism into my flesh and blood.

The principal tasks were to develop the October revolution further, extend it to the entire country and beat off the fight of counter-revolution. These problems we were solving outside of the departments, and my collaboration with Lenin was most intimate and continuous at all times.

During that first period, the decrees were really more propaganda than actual administrative measures. Lenin was in a hurry to tell the people what the new power was, what it was after, and how it intended to accomplish its aims.

Lenin's conviction of continuity in the work that he was doing was very strong. As a great revolutionary, he understood the meaning of historical tradition. It was impossible to tell in advance whether we were to stay in power or be overthrown. And so it was necessary, whatever happened, to make our revolutionary experience as clear as possible for all men.

That was why Lenin insisted impatiently on the earliest possible publication of the classics of socialism and materialism in Russian translation. He was anxious to have as many revolutionary monuments erected as possible, even if they were of the simplest sort.

Everything had to proceed from the beginning. There were no "precedents", since history had none to offer. At the proper moment, Lenin would announce his resolutions, always with an intentional sharpness; after that the debates would cease or else would give way to practical suggestions. In the end, Lenin's "points" were usually taken as the basis of the decree.

Besides other qualities, a great creative imagination was necessary to guide this work. One of the most valuable powers of such an imagination is the ability to visualize people, objects, and events as they really are, even if one has never seen them.

Lenin's strength was chiefly this power of realistic imagination. In the meantime, practical problems especially problems of civil war, food-supply and transport were coming more and more urgently to the fore. Now, as the People's Commissary for foreign affairs, I had to watch the reaction of the capitalist world toward the revolution.

It is quite unnecessary to say that no greetings reached us from anywhere. The rest of the world not only those countries engaged in war, but the neutral ones as well echoed, in their respective languages, the sentiments of the ruling classes of the old Russia which we had overthrown.

Chapter 30: In Moscow

The signing of the Brest-Litovsk peace treaty divested my withdrawal from the commissariat for foreign affairs of any political significance. Chicherin had meanwhile arrived from London to succeed me. Lenin expressed the wish that I take charge of military operations.

Was I prepared to do military work? Of course not. My army-service years I had spent in prison, in exile, and abroad. But the psychology of an army, in its barracks, trenches, battles, hospitals, and the like, deeply stirred my interest. This was later very useful.

In capitalist countries the problem is that of maintaining the existing army - strictly speaking, of maintaining a political cover for a self-sustaining system of militarism. I felt uncertain about my military work, but consented to take over only because there was no one else to do it.

The change in my work coincided with the change of the seat of the government. The transfer of the central government to Moscow was, of course, a blow to Petrograd. There was almost general opposition to the transfer. The majority feared chiefly the bad effect of the transfer on the Petrograd workers.

In the end, resistance broke down and the majority of the Central Committee voted for the transfer. The government actually left for Moscow on March 12, 1918. To soften the impression that we were demoting the October capital, I remained in Petrograd for another week or two.

I arrived in Moscow the day after I was appointed war commissary. With its medieval wall and its countless gilded cupolas, the Kremlin seemed an utter paradox as a fortress for the revolutionary dictatorship. Until March 1918, I had never been inside the Kremlin, nor did I know Moscow in general.

The musical clock on the Spassky tower was rebuilt. Now the old bells, instead of ringing out "God Save the Czar", slowly and pensively rang out the "International", at quarter-hour intervals. There were so many new things, things utterly strange to Lenin and I, to prepare for. We had no time to get used to anything.

The lower ranks of the old staff were retained at their posts. They received us a little fearfully. The regime here had been a stern one, dating from the days of serfdom, and the service had passed from father to son.

The entire staff of attendants was soon dissolved. The young ones quickly adapted themselves to the new conditions. In Moscow we discovered a government that had authority, doubtful as it was, over the main section of the Soviet territory.

A special commission was set up, with me as chairman, to regulate relations with the Moscow Soviet of Commissaries. The Moscow period, for the second time in Russian history, became one of gathering the state together and of creating organs of administration. Step by step, chaos yielded to order.

The war commissariat, where most of my work was done, was situated outside of the Kremlin. When, much later, the revolution had settled down a little, I devoted my evenings to theoretical and literary work. Gradually military affairs absorbed most of my time, the more so because I had myself to start with the abc's.

In the technical sphere and in that of operations, I saw my task chiefly as a matter of putting the right man in the right place, and then letting him exercise his abilities. My political and organization work in creating the army merged completely with the work of the party. Success would never have been possible in any other way.

Among the party workers at the war Commissariat I found the army doctor Skylansky. I chose Skylansky as my deputy. I never had any occasion to regret it afterward. The duty of deputizing for me involved great responsibility because I was at the front most of the time.

Trotsky, Leon (1930) My Life. Marxists Internet Archive.

In my absence, Skylansky presided over the Revolutionary War Council, directed all the current work of the commissariat, which consisted chiefly of attending to the needs of the front, and finally represented the war commissariat on the Council of Defense, of which Lenin was chairman.

Skalansky's youthful abilities irritated not a few mediocre worthies; Stalin stirred them up behind the scenes. Attacks against Skylansky were made surreptitiously, and especially when I was away. Lenin knew Skylansky well, through the Council of Defense, and always defended him with great zeal.

The war department was almost free from the personal cliques and squabbles that affected the other departments so gravely.

Chapter 31: Negotiations at Brest-Litovsk

The decree that announced our willingness to make peace was passed by the Congress of Soviets on October 26, when only Petrograd was in our hands. I appealed to all workers, soldiers and peasants. It was a categorical appeal: "When we overthrew our bourgeoisie, it was not to make our army shed its blood at the order of a foreign bourgeoisie."

On November 22, we signed an agreement for a truce along the entire front, from the Baltic to the Black Sea. Once more we invited the Allies to join us in the peace negotiations. No reply was forthcoming. The peace negotiations began on December 9, six weeks after the adoption of the decree of peace, which left the countries of the Entente sufficient time to determine their attitude on this question.

At the outset, our delegation made a formal declaration stating the principles of a democratic peace. The governments of the quadruple alliance "subscribed" to the democratic formula of peace - no annexations, no indemnities, and self-determination of the peoples.

On December 28, a huge demonstration was held in Petrograd, in honor of democratic peace. Though the masses mistrusted the German reply, they accepted it as a great moral victory for the revolution. At the meeting of the Brest-Litovsk conference of February 7, I remarked, referring to the past: "We are inclined to regret the premature compliments paid us by the official German and Austro-Hungarian press. This was quite unnecessary for the successful progress of peace negotiations."

The Vienna Arbeiter-Zeitung wrote eloquently on December 15 that "the duel between Trotsky and Cuchanan is the symbol of the great struggle of our day, the struggle between the proletariat against capital."

"Trotsky", wrote the Hapsburg Marxists, "is the authorized representative of the peaceful will of the Russian working class that is trying to break the iron-gold chain with which it has been bound by English capital."

The feigned friendliness of relations gave way to an official formality. This was all the more opportune since we had to pass from academic preliminaries to the concrete questions of a peace treaty. I was considerably and quite unpleasantly agitated when I went to my first meeting with the diplomats.

This was the first time that I had come face to face with this social circle. My impressions of that first meeting were something like this: men rate others cheaply and rate themselves not much dearer. The circumstances of history willed that the delegates of the most revolutionary regime ever known to humanity should sit at the same diplomatic table with the representatives of the most reactionary caste among all the ruling classes.

We had to bow to an ultimatum, and so we remained at Brest-Litovsk. The negotiations dragged on. The intervals between the meetings were frequent and sometimes lasted for several days. The Austrians began to delay the negotiations when they struck their difficulties with the Ukrainian delegation.

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Not a trace of the clumsy compliments which the officially inspired German press had indulged toward the Bolsheviks was left as the negotiations drew to their close. To make use of my free time, I began dictating from memory to a staff of stenographers, a historical sketch of the October revolution.

From a few sessions there grew a book intended primarily for foreign workers. The necessity of explaining to them what had happened was most imperative; Lenin and I had discussed this necessity more than once but no one had any time to spare.

We made it quite clear to our partners at Brest-Litovsk that with us it was not a matter of a hypocritical disguise for a back-stairs deal, but a question of the principles governing mutual relations with peoples. In a society based on classes every government rests on force.

The only difference was that the German delegation applied repression to protect big property-owners, whereas we did it in defense of the workers. For a few minutes, the peace conference was transformed into a Marxian propagandist class for beginners.

“The thing that surprises and repels the governments of other countries,” I said, “is that we do not arrest strikers, but capitalists who subject workers to lock-outs; that we do not shoot peasants who demand land, but arrest the landowners and officers who try to shoot the peasants.”

I said “we members of the Russian delegation do not belong to the diplomatic school, but consider ourselves rather as soldiers of the revolution” and consequently preferred the rough language of the soldier.

“We are revolutionaries”, I explained to Khlmann, “But we are realists too, and we prefer to talk plainly about annexations rather than to substitute pseudonyms for real names.” I still remember the intonation of Khlmann’s voice when he said that Germany was sincerely anxious to restore friendly relations with its powerful eastern neighbour.

The word “powerful” was uttered in a tone of mockery so provocative that even Khlmann’s allies winced. Less than nine full months after this, on October 3, 1918, I said at a meeting of the All Union Central Executive Committee, “No one of us has any feeling of malicious joy because Germany is now passing through a terrible catastrophe.”

It is unnecessary to adduce proofs that the major part of this catastrophe was prepared by German diplomacy, military as well as civil, at Brest-Litovsk. It would be difficult to exaggerate the extent of the disagreements between the German diplomacy and the high command.

I made an attempt toward the end of January - though I did not hope for success - to obtain permission from the Austrian government to visit Vienna for a talk with the representatives of the Austrian proletariat.

The Austrian Social Democracy was, I think, more frightened than any one else at the idea of such a visit. Of course, my application was refused, for the quite incredible reason that I had no authority to carry out such negotiations.

At that time revolutionary Soviet detachments were victoriously advancing through the Ukraine, fighting their way through to the Dnieper. On February 7, I called the attention of the delegates of the Central Powers to the telegram from Lenin informing us that the Soviet troops had occupied Kiev on January 29; that the government of the Rada, now deserted by every one, was already in hiding; that the Central Executive Committee of the Soviets of the Ukraine had been proclaimed the supreme power in the country and had taken its seat at Kiev.

The German government, rather than the German high command, had already decided by that time to occupy the Ukraine with German troops.

Trotsky, Leon (1930) My Life. Marxists Internet Archive.

Chapter 32: Peace

All through the autumn, delegates from the front appeared daily before the Petrograd Soviet to say that unless peace was signed by November 1, the soldiers themselves would come from the trenches to make peace in their own way.

This became the slogan at the front. Soldiers left the trenches in droves. The October revolution gave a temporary check to this, but not for long. Thanks to the February revolution, the soldiers had discovered that they had been ruled by the Rasputin gang, which had dragged them into a heinous and futile war; they saw no reason for continuing it because they were asked to do so by a certain young lawyer named Kerensky.

They wanted to get back to their homes, their families, the land, and the revolution, which had promised them land and freedom but so far had done nothing but keep them in cold and verminous holes at the front.

Kerensky took offense to the soldiers, workers and peasants, and called them "mutinous slaves." He failed to understand one little thing - that revolution consists in exactly this: in slaves mutinying and refusing to be slaves.

When I was crossing the front line for the first time on my way to Brest-Litovsk, our sympathizers in the trenches could not muster up much of a protest against the monstrous demands of Germany because the trenches were almost deserted.

It was obvious that going on with the war was impossible. On this point, there was not even a shadow of disagreement between Lenin and me. It was necessary to give the European workers time to absorb properly the very fact of the Soviet revolution, including its policy of peace.

Even in Germany, people were talking about the Bolsheviks working hand in hand with the German government. I insisted that before signing a separate peace we must at all costs give the workers of Europe a striking and incontestible proof of the deadly enmity existing between us and the German ruling classes.

The difficulties of the question were further aggravated by the inner state of the party. The prevalent attitude in the party, at least among its leading elements, was that of irreconcilable hostility to signing the Brest-Litovsk peace terms.

The stenographic reports of the negotiations published in our press intensified this mood; it found its most acute expression in the "left" communist group, which put forward a slogan of revolutionary war. The first discussion of the differences before a wider audience took place on January 21, at the meeting of the active party workers.

At this time our own party, no less than the workers of western Europe, was much in need of some visual demonstration of the actual state of things. It was at this decisive session of January 22, that the Central Committee adopted my proposals: to delay negotiations; in the event of a German ultimatum, to declare war at an end, but to refuse to sign peace; to act, thereafter, according to the demands of circumstance.

Cable dispatches from Brest-Litovsk were regarded as safe from listening-in or tapping. But we had every reason to believe that the Germans at Brest-Litovsk were reading our correspondence over the direct wire; we had enough respect for their technical resourcefulness to believe this.

Khlmann spoke with complete assurance of the necessity of accepting the de facto peace. Echoes of this reached us at once. All of our delegation returned to Moscow under the impression that the Germans would not start an offensive. Lenin was very pleased with the result.

Trotsky, Leon (1930) My Life. Marxists Internet Archive.

However, two days before the expiration of the week fixed for the German reply, the Germans announced that from midnight of February 18 they would consider themselves in a state of war with Russia.

At the meeting of the Central Committee on February 17, Lenin put the preliminary question to a vote: "If the German offensive becomes a fact, and no revolutionary upheaval takes place in Germany, are we still to sign peace?"

On February 21, we received new terms from Germany, framed, apparently, with the direct object of making the signing of peace impossible. By the time our delegation returned to Brest-Litovsk, these terms, as is well known, had been made even harsher.

All of us, including Lenin, were of the impression that the Germans had come to an agreement with the Allies about crushing the Soviets, and that a peace on the western front was to be built on the bones of the Russian revolution.

If this was true, it was obvious that no concessions from us would have been of any use. I was very sceptical about the possibility of securing peace even at the price of complete capitulation. But Lenin decided to try the capitulation idea to the utmost.

If the surrender should fail to obtain peace for us, I reasoned, we would straighten out our party front in armed defense of the revolution through us by the enemy. On the twenty-second of February, at the meeting of the Central Committee, I reported that the French military mission had conveyed the French and English offers to help us in a war with Germany.

I expressed myself as in favor of accepting the offer, on condition, of course, that we be completely independent in matters of foreign policy. The Central Committee adopted my resolution by six votes against five.

On March 3, our delegation signed the peace treaty without even reading it. On March 22, the treaty was ratified by the German Reichstag. Lenin generally considered occasional differences of opinion with me as not worth mentioning. But more than once he spoke of "the tremendous propagandist importance of the Brest-Litovsk negotiations".

Chapter 33: A Month at Sviyazhsk

The spring and summer of 1918 were unusually hard. All the aftermath of the war was then just beginning to make itself felt. At times, it seemed as if everything was slipping and crumbling, as if there were nothing to hold on to, nothing to lean upon.

One wondered if a country so despairing, so economically exhausted, so devastated, had enough sap left in it to support a new regime and preserve its independence. There was no food. There was no army. The railways were completely disorganized. The machinery of state was just beginning to take shape. Conspiracies were being hatched everywhere.

In the West, the Germans occupied Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, White Russia and a large section of Great Russia. The left Socialist Revolutionists wanted to force us into a war with Germany. The civil-front was taking more and more the shape of a noose closing ever tighter about Moscow.

Could much more be needed to overthrow the revolution? Its territory was now reduced to the size of the ancient Moscow principality. It had hardly an army. It was surrounded by enemies on all sides. The fate of the revolution was being decided here at Sviyazhsk.

And here, at the most critical moment, it rested on a single battalion, on one company, on the courage of one commissary. In short, it really was hanging by a thread. And thus it went, day in and day out. Despite all this, the revolution was saved.

What was needed for that? Very little. The front ranks of the masses had to realize the mortal danger in the situation. The revolution was still very irresponsible; the October victory had been won very easily. At the same time the revolution had not removed, by a single stroke, all the hardships that had fostered it.

The propaganda throughout the country was being fed by telegrams from Sviyazhsk. The Soviets, the party, the trade-unions, all devoted themselves to raising new detachments, and sent thousands of communists to the Kazan front.

Most of the youth of the party did not know how to handle arms, but they had the will to win, and that was the most important thing. They put backbone into the soft body of the army. The enemy knew where to strike and almost always did so with certainty. Treason had nests among the staff and the commanding officers; in fact, everywhere.

Soon after my arrival, I visited the front-line batteries. The more hopeless the military situation of the revolution, the more active the treason. It was necessary, no matter what the cost, to overcome as quickly as possible the automatic inertia of retreat, in which men no longer believe they can stop, face about, and strike the enemy in the chest.

I brought about fifty young party men from Moscow with me on the train. Sviyazhsk was open to attack.

While I was making the rounds of the staff quarters at three o'clock in the morning, on the most critical night at Sviyazhsk, I heard a familiar voice from the staff-room saying: "He will play this game until he is taken prisoner, and will ruin himself and all of us. You mark my words".

I stopped at the threshold. There, facing me, were two young officers of the general staff, sitting at a table and pouring over a map. The man who was speaking stood with his back to me, bent over the table. He must have read something like alarm on his companions' faces, for he turned sharply around toward the door.

It was Blagravov, former lieutenant in the Czar's army, a young Bolshevik. An expression of mingled terror and shame seemed to freeze on his face. As a commissary, it was his duty to keep up the morale of the specialists attached to the army.

Instead of that, here he was, at this critical moment, stirring them against me and actually suggesting that they desert! I had caught him red-handed, and I could scarcely believe my eyes or ears. He was dismissed from his post and sent to do less responsible work.

The fate of the revolution was trembling in the balance between Sviyazhsk and Kazan. No retreat was open, except into the Volga. I boarded a torpedo boat. The flotilla set out in battle formation with lights out, like a thief in the night.

Once past the headland, we entered the reach. Beyond us, on the opposite shore, the lights of Kazan were visible. Heavy firing was going on behind us, from above and below. Our night raid, as we soon learned through our reconnaissance men, had cracked the White resistance.

The prosperous classes began to flee in hordes from Kazan. The workers' districts lifted their heads again. A revolt broke out in the powder-works. An aggressive spirit became apparent among our troops. The month at Sviyazhsk was crammed full of exciting episodes.

It was the first time that war had unrolled before me so intimately. This was a small war; on our side, there were only about 25,000 to 30,000 men engaged. But the small war differed from a big one only in scale. It was like a living model of a war. That is why its fluctuations and surprises were felt so directly. The small war was a big school.

The tribunals demonstrated to everyone that revolution, when threatened by mortal danger, demands the highest sacrifice. Propaganda, organization, revolutionary example and repression produced the necessary change in a few weeks.

A vacillating, unreliable and crumbling mass was transformed into a real army. Our artillery had emphatically established its superiority. Our flotilla controlled the river. Our airmen dominated the air. No longer did I doubt that we would take Kazan.

Suddenly, on September 1, I received a code telegram from Moscow: "Come at once. Vladimir Ilyich wounded, how dangerously not yet known." I left at once. The mood of the party circles in Moscow was sullen and dismal, but they were absolutely unshakable.

Kazan was taken on September 10. Things were improving all along the line. The Fifth army was now headed by Ivan Nikitich Smirnov. Smirnov represented the most complete and finished revolutionary type; he had entered the ranks thirty years before.

In the darkest years of the reaction, Smirnov went on digging underground passages. When they caved in, he did not lose heart but began all over again. "A Fifth-army man", in the lexicon of the revolution, carries a special meaning; it denotes a true revolutionary, a man of duty and, above all, a scrupulous one.

One good worker joined another. Under fire, men learned in a week. The army was taking shape magnificently. The lowest ebb of the revolution - the moment of the fall of Kazan - was now behind us. Along with this, a tremendous change was taking place in the peasantry. The revolution was again advancing.

Chapter 34: The Train

Now it is time to speak of the "train of the Predrevoyensoviet" - the train of the Chairman of the Revolutionary Military Council. The train linked the front with the base, solved urgent problems on the spot, educated, appealed, supplied, rewarded, and punished.

An army cannot be built without reprisals. Masses of men cannot be led to death unless the army command has the death-penalty in its arsenal. Upon the ashes of the great war, the Bolsheviks created a new army.

The strongest cement in the new army was the ideas of the October revolution, and the train supplied the front with this cement. Every regiment, every company, comprises men of different qualities. The intelligent and self-sacrificing are in the minority.

At the opposite pole is an insignificant number of completely demoralized skulkers, and the consciously hostile. Between these two minorities is a large middle group, the undecided, the vacillating. And when the better elements have been lost in fighting or shoved aside, and the skulkers and enemies gain the upper hand, the unit goes to pieces.

In such cases, the large middle group do not know whom to follow and, in the moment of danger, succumb to panic. For two and a half years, except for comparatively short intervals, I lived in a railway coach that had formerly been used by one of the ministers of communication.

The car was fitted out from the point of view of ministerial comfort, but it was scarcely adapted to work. The train was continually being reorganized and improved upon, and extended in its functions. Its sections included a secretariat, a printing-press, a telegraph station, a radio station, an electric-power station, a library, a garage, and a bath.

The train was so heavy that it needed two engines. Later it was divided into two trains. During the years of 1922 to 1924, that is, before repressions were begun against the opposition, the military publishing house managed to bring out five volumes of my works relating to the army and the civil war.

I haven't the exact figures of the total distance covered by the train during the civil war. One of the notes to my military books mentions 36 trips, with a total run of over 105,000 kilometres. The greatest number of trips was in 1920, the last year of the war.

My trips to the southern front were especially frequent, because all during that period it was the most stubborn, dangerous and extended of all the fronts. The work of the train was all bound up with the building-up of the army, with its education, its administration, and its supply.

Even after defeats and retreats, the flabby, panicky mob would be transformed in two or three weeks into an efficient fighting force. It needed good commanders, a few dozen experienced fighters, a dozen or so communists ready to make any sacrifice, boots for the barefooted, a bath-house, an energetic propaganda campaign, food, underwear, tobacco and matches.

The train took care of all this. The actual material resources of the train were slight in comparison with the needs of the army, but they were constantly being replenished. A telegraph station was in operation on the train. We made our connections with Moscow by direct wire, and my deputy there, Sklyansky, took down my demands for supplies urgently needed for the army.

On all of my trips, I was accompanied by the chief workers in all the principal departments of the army, especially in those connected with the supply service. No matter how poor the organs of the local administration might be, they always managed to squeeze a little tighter and cut down some of their own needs to contribute something to the army.

Gradually, more or less efficient machinery for a centralized supply service for the front and the armies was established. The supply of rifles and cartridges was most difficult of all. Not a carload of cartridges could be sent anywhere without the special authorization of the Commander-in-chief.

The supply of munitions was always as taut as a string. Some times the string would break, and then we lost men and territory. Without constant changes and improvisations, the war would have been utterly impossible for us.

The train initiated these, and at the same time regulated them. As the civil war has demonstrated, we did achieve the principal thing - victory. Kiev and Vyatka, Siberia and the Crimea would complain of their difficult positions and would demand, in turn or at the same time, that the train hasten to their rescue.

We always had a stock of telephone apparatus and wires. A wireless aerial had been arranged over a particular car in our train, so that we could receive radio messages from the Eiffel Tower, from Nauen, and from other stations, thirteen in all, with Moscow, of course, foremost.

The train was always informed of what was going on in the rest of the world. The more important telegraphic reports were published in the train newspaper. These articles were simultaneously transmitted to Moscow by direct wire, and radioed from there to the press of the entire country.

The arrival of the train put the most isolated unit in touch with the whole army, and brought it into the life not only of the country but of the entire world. Rumours and doubts were dispelled, and the spirit of the men grew firm.

The change of morale would last for several weeks, sometimes until the next visit of the train. In the intervals, members of the Revolutionary Military Council of the front or the army would make similar trips, but on a smaller scale.

All my work on the train, literary and otherwise, would have been impossible without my assisting stenographers and my younger assistant. They worked all day and all night in the moving train, which disregarded all rules of safety in the fever of war.

Part of the train was a huge garage holding several automobiles and a gasoline tank. This made it possible for us to travel far away from the railway line. A squad of picked sharpshooters and machine-gunners occupied the trucks and light cars.

The train was not only a military-administrative and political institution, but a fighting institution as well. In many of its features it was more like an armoured train than a staff headquarters on wheels. All the crew could handle arms. They all wore leather uniforms, which always made them look heavily imposing.

Altogether, the train lost about fifteen men over a period of two-and-a-half years. The news of the arrival of the train would reach the enemy lines as well. There people imagined a mysterious train infinitely more awful than it really was. But that only served to increase its influence on morale.

The train earned the hatred of its enemies and was proud of it. The train crew performed many other tasks besides their special duties. They lent their help in time of famine, during epidemics of disease, in propaganda campaigns, at international congresses.

The Crimean campaign was actually the last campaign of the civil war. A few months later, the train was disbanded.

Chapter 35: The Defense of Petrograd

There were sixteen armies fighting on the revolutionary fronts of the Soviet Republic. Each of the armies had its own clear-cut, though ever-changing, physiognomy. The Seventh army held the western approaches to Petrograd.

It was discovered that the chief of the staff of the Seventh army, Colonel Lundkvist, was transmitting all information to the Whites. There were other conspirators working hand-in-glove with him. This shook the army to its very core.

In Lenin's opinion, there was only one thing to do: abandon Petrograd and shorten the front line. When I arrived in Moscow, I firmly opposed this plan. I decided that we save Petrograd at any cost and found support first of all among the citizens of Petrograd.

I believe that Stalin also supported my stand. Several times during those twenty-four hours I attacked Lenin, until he said at last: "Very well, let us try!" During the course of the year 1918, the Allies were forcing a civil war on us, but now it was 1919 and Germany had long since been defeated.

Yet the Allies continued to spend hundreds of millions to spread death, famine, and disease in the country of the revolution. All through Europe and the rest of the world the news spread that the Red Petrograd had fallen.

In Petrograd I found the leaders in a state of utmost demoralization. Everything was slipping. The troops were rolling back and breaking up into separate units. The commanding officers looked to the communists.

Exceptional measures were necessary; the enemy was at the very gates. Everyone expected an early surrender of the city to the Whites, and so people were afraid of becoming too conspicuous. But as soon as the masses began to feel that Petrograd was not to be surrendered, in the streets and squares the spirit changed at once.

The more courageous and self-sacrificing lifted up their heads. Detachments of men and women, with trenching-tools on their shoulders, filed out of the mills and factories. The workers of Petrograd looked badly then: their faces were grey from undernourishment, their clothes were in tatters, their shoes were gaping with holes.

“We will not give up Petrograd, comrades!”

“No, we won’t give up”, the high pitched voices of the women cried in answer, and they grasped their spades like rifles. The whole city was divided into sections, controlled by staffs of workers. The whole southern part of the city was transformed into a fortress.

Barricades were raised on many of the streets and squares. A new spirit was breathing from the workers’ districts to the barracks, the rear units, and even to the army in the field. Once more the fate of Petrograd was hanging by a thread, and we had to break the inertia of retreat, instantly and at any cost.

When a man is in charge of a whole army, has he the right to expose himself to the danger of actual fighting? My answer is that there are no absolute rules of conduct, either in peace or in war. Everything depends on circumstances.

Officers who accompanied me in my trips along the front frequently would remark: “In the old days, even divisional commanders never poked their noses into places like these”. The bourgeois journalists wrote of this as a “pursuit of self-advertisement”.

In point of fact, the conditions under which the Red army was created, its personal composition, and the very nature of the civil war demanded exactly this sort of behaviour. Everything was built up anew - discipline, fighting tradition, and military authority.

It was necessary to win authority in the eyes of the soldiers. Where tradition is lacking, a striking example is essential. Personal risk was the unavoidable hazard on the road to victory. The commanding staff, which had been drawn into a series of failures, needed to be shaken up, refreshed and renewed.

The rank-and-file of the Red army got some heartier food, changed their linen and boots, listened to a speech or two, pulled themselves together, and became quite different men.

Young workers and peasants, military students from Moscow and Petrograd, were utterly reckless with their lives. They advanced against machine-gun fire and attacked tanks with revolvers in their hands. The general staff of the Whites wrote of the “heroic frenzy” of the Reds.

IN the preceding days hardly any prisoners had been taken; White deserters were rare. Now the number of deserters and prisoners suddenly increased. On October 24, when I realized the bitterness of the struggle, I issued an order: “Woe to the unworthy soldier who raises his knife over a defenseless prisoner or deserter!”

Our advance continued. The Estonians and the Finns were no longer thinking of intervention. The routed Whites were rolled back in two weeks to the Estonian frontier, completely demoralized. Fourteen thousand Whites were stricken with typhus and poured into the camp hospitals.

Trotsky, Leon (1930) My Life. Marxists Internet Archive.

For us, the tasks of education in socialism were closely integrated with those of fighting. Ideas that enter the mind under fire remain there securely and forever. In Shakespeare, tragedy alternates with comedy, for the same reason that in life the sublime is mingled with the petty and vulgar.

The saving of the Red Peterograd mean an invaluable service to the world proletariat, and consequently to the Communist International. Today it is difficult to describe, or even to recall, the outburst of joy over the victory before Petrograd, rejoicing that was all the greater because we had just begun to win decisive successes on the southern front as well.

The revolution was again holding its head high. I was infinitely pleased with the award of the decoration of the Red Flag to my train as a whole. In the striking change that came over the front, the members of our train played a most important part.

Chapter 36: The Military Opposition

The foundation for the successful upbuilding of the Red army was the proper relationship between the proletariat and the peasantry throughout the country. I had to deal with the problems of rural life more closely and directly than anyone else, because the army was being raised chiefly from among the peasants, and carried on its work in constant touch with peasant life.

I explained the importance of the peasant to Stalin. There was fighting within the party, often very bitter. The work was too new, the difficulties much too great. The old army was still breaking up and sowing hatred of war over the country at the time when we were obliged to raise new regiments.

The Czar's officers were being driven out of the old army; we had to enroll these very officers as instructors for the Red army. In a short time, we had to go from voluntary enlistment to conscription. On the military question, the opposition assumed a more or less definite form during the first months of the organizing of the Red army.

Its fundamental ideas found expression in a defense of the electoral method and in protest against enlistments of experts, the introduction of military discipline, the centralizing of the army, and so on. The opposition insisted that a centralized army was characteristic of a capitalist state; revolution had to blot out not only positional war, but a centralized army as well.

The communists adapted themselves to the military work with some difficulty. I telegraphed Lenin: "Only communists who know how to obey should be sent here, the ones who are ready to suffer hardships and are prepared to die. Feather-weight agitators are not wanted here."

The military oppositionists included, for example, Pyatakov, the present director of the State Bank. He usually joined every opposition, only to wind up as a government official. In the Ukraine, he enjoyed considerable influence, not by accident but because he is a fairly well-educated Marxist, especially in the realm of economics, and is undoubtedly a good administrator, with a reserve of will.

In the early years, Pyatakov showed revolutionary energy, but it later changed to a bureaucratic conservatism. All the best elements of the military opposition were soon drawn into the work. The red army was winning on all the fronts, and the opposition eventually melted away.

As a rule, the Bolsheviks who were patriots during the war were democrats after the February revolution, and are today followers of Stalin's national socialism. After the October revolution, Voroshiov became the natural centre of the opposition of non-commissioned officers and irregulars against a centralized military organization.

Stalin stayed in Tsaritsin for a few months, shaping his intrigue against me with the aid of the home-bred opposition of Voroshilov and his closets associates. It was impossible to get executions of an order in

Tsaritsin. It was impossible to find out what was going on there. It was even impossible to get an answer to an inquiry.

Lenin knew Stalin better than I did, and obviously suspected that the stubbornness of Tsaritsin was being secretly staged by Stalin. I put the question to Voroshilov: how did he regard the orders from the front and the high command?

He opened his heart to me: Tsaritsin thought necessary to execute only such orders as is considered right. I retorted that if he did not undertake to carry out the orders and military tasks exactly and absolutely as they were given to him, I would immediately send him under convoy to Moscow for committal before the revolutionary tribunal.

Most of the communists in the Tsaritsin army supported me with utter sincerity, not merely out of fear. I visited all the units and encouraged the irregulars among whom there were many excellent soldiers who needed only proper leadership. With this, I returned to Moscow.

As soon as Lenin fell ill, Stalin with the help of his allies had Tsaritsin renamed Stalingrad. The mass of the people had not the ghost of an idea what the name meant. Stalin was appointed a member of the Revolutionary Military Council of the Southern Front. In Tsaritsin things did not improve a bit.

On December 14 I telegraphed Lenin from Kursk: "It is necessary to send a new Revolutionary Military Council with a new commander to Tsaritsin, and to transfer Voroshilov to the Ukraine." The proposal was accepted without opposition. But matters in the Ukraine did not improve either.

Even as it was, the anarchy that reigned there had made regular military work difficult, and now Voroshilov's opposition, with Stalin again behind him, made the work quite impossible. On January 10, 1919, I transmitted the following message to Syerdlov, then chairman of the Central Executive Committee: "I must categorically state that the Tsaritsin policy, which led to the complete disintegration of the Tsaritsin army, cannot be tolerated in the Ukraine. The line pursued by Stalin, Voroshilov and Co. means the ruin of the entire enterprise".

What was going on in the Ukraine was simply a repetition of the practices against which I had fought in Tsaritsin. It is no wonder that my military work created so many enemies for me. I did not look to the side, I elbowed away those who interfered with military success, or in the haste of the work trod on the toes of the unheeding and was too busy even to apologize.

The dissatisfied and those whose feelings had been hurt found their way to Stalin, for he had nourished hurts. Stalin generally gave his support to people who existed politically only through the grace of the government apparatus.

When I went to Moscow later for a short visit, I went as usual first to Lenin. "All trifles", he kept repeating, although not in a very convincing way. Stalin was obviously sowing trouble. Not until much later did I realize how systematically he had been doing that. For Stalin never did any serious work.

"Stalin's first quality is laziness", Bukharin had once told me, "and his second is an implacable jealousy of anyone who knows more or does things better than he".

Chapter 37: Disagreements Over War Strategy

The fate of the revolution depended on the course of military operations. As time went on, the Central Committee of the party was more and more absorbed in the problems of war, among them, the questions of strategy.

The chief commanding posts were occupied by military experts of the old school who lacked an understanding of social and political conditions. The experienced revolutionary politicians who comprised the Central Committee of the party lacked military knowledge.

The strategic conceptions on a large scale were usually the result of collective work, and, as always in such cases, gave rise to dissension and conflict. The first acute argument in the Central Committee took place in the summer of 1919, apropos of the situation on the eastern front.

I considered the southern front far more important and dangerous than the eastern. Later on this was fully confirmed. Out of these small episodic disagreements the intrigue was weaving its nets. On July 4, 1919, Stalin, writing from the South, was trying to scare Lenin with the dangers of the military direction.

“The whole question now is,” he wrote “whether the Central Committee can find enough courage to draw the proper conclusions. Has the Central Committee sufficient character and firmness?” The tone proves that Stalin had raised the question more than once, and just as many times had met with Lenin’s opposition. I was ignorant of all this at the time.

But I sensed intrigue afoot. Being without time or desire to go into the matter, I offered my resignation to the Central Committee, so as to make an end of it. My resignation was declined. Although he was carrying on an intrigue behind the scenes, and accusing Lenin of lack of courage and firmness, Stalin did not have spirit enough to go into open opposition to the Central Committee.

In spite of the careful preparation for our operations and the concentration of forces and technical means, we had no success. We were expending our time and energy and managing only to drive all those capable of bearing arms directly into the White army.

The plan that I advocated from the outset was exactly the opposite. I demanded that with our first blow we cut the volunteers off from the Cossacks, and leaving the Cossacks to themselves, concentrate all our strength against the volunteers.

In this section of the country which divides the northern Caucasus from the Ukraine, the peasants and workers were wholly on the side of the Red army. We wasted several months, suffered many needless losses and lived through some very menacing weeks.

The strategic disagreements about the southern front were most closely related to the question of appreciation or “under-appreciation” of the peasantry. Lenin began to believe that it was necessary to shorten the front line by surrendering Petrograd.

This was probably the only occasion when Stalin supported me against Lenin; and he himself abandoned his obviously mistaken plan a few days later. Undoubtedly the most violent disagreement of all, had to do with the fate of the Polish front in the summer of 1920.

To draw the conclusion from this what we wanted a war with Poland, or were even preparing it, is to lie in the face of facts and common sense. We strained every effort to avoid that war. We spared no measure to achieve this end.

The secret of that cleverness was very simple: it was merely that we were trying with all our might to secure peace, even at the price of the greatest concessions. The Polish government consciously and Trotsky, Leon (1930) My Life. Marxists Internet Archive.

determinedly began the war in spite of our indefatigable efforts to preserve peace, efforts that made of our foreign policy a combination of patience and pedagogical persistence.

We sincerely wanted peace. We could wage that war only because the great mass of the people had been watching our diplomatic duel continuously, and were thoroughly convinced that the war had been forced on us; in this they were absolutely right.

Again I had to make the rounds of armies and cities, mobilizing men and resources. We recaptured Kiev. Then our successes began. The Poles were rolled back. A point of view that the war which began as one of defense should be turned into an offensive and revolutionary war began to grow and acquire strength.

The unknown quantity was the attitude of the Polish workers and peasants. There were high hopes of an uprising of the Polish workers. At any rate, Lenin fixed his mind on carrying the war to an end, up to the entry into Warsaw to help the Polish workers overthrow Pilsudski's government and seize the power.

I demanded an immediate conclusion of peace, before the army should grow too exhausted. But it was decided to continue the offensive. The events of war and those of the revolutionary mass movement are measured by different yardsticks.

Where the action of armies is measured by days and weeks, the movement of the masses of people is usually reckoned in months and years. If this difference in tempo is not taken fully into account, the gears of war will only break the teeth of the revolutionary gears, instead of setting them in motion.

Though Lenin formally defended the continuation of the war, this time he did it without his former conviction and insistence. My firm belief in the necessity of concluding peace, even if it were a harsh one, made its impression on Lenin.

The Poland of Pilsudski came out of the war unexpectedly strengthened. On the contrary, the development of the Polish revolution received a crushing blow. Lenin was as much of a genius as a man can be. But he was not an automatic reckoning machine that makes no mistakes.

He made them less often than any one else in his position would, but he made them all the same, and grave ones, at that, in accord with the titanic scope of all of his work.

Chapter 38: The Transition to the New Economic Policy, And My Relations With Lenin

Now I am approaching the last period of my collaboration with Lenin. In most cases, the decisions that Lenin and I arrived at independently of each other were identical in all essentials. A few words would bring about a mutual understanding.

Many a time Stalin disagreed with me on some question of great importance, but as soon as they learned that Lenin shared my opinion they lapsed into silence. In this book my disagreements with Lenin assume an importance that they never actually had.

There are two reasons for this: our disagreements were the exception and as such attracted attention; after Lenin's death they were magnified to astronomic proportions and became an independent political factor in no way connected with either of us.

Now I will mention another disagreement that set us against each other for a couple of months at the close of 1920, on the very eve of the transition to the New Economic Policy. My stand at the time was one of "under-appreciation of the peasantry", and one almost hostile toward the New Economic Policy.

I spent the winter months of 1919-20 in the Urals directing the economic work. Lenin telegraphed me a proposal that I take charge of transport and try to lift it by emergency measures. I replied stating my acceptance.

From the Urals I brought with me a store of economic observations that could be summed up in one general conclusion: war communism must be abandoned. Early in 1920, Lenin came out firmly against my proposal. It was rejected in the Central Committee by a vote of eleven to four.

The subsequent course of events proved the decision of the Committee to be a mistake. For the entire year following, the economic life of the country struggled along a blind alley. My quarrel with Lenin grew out of this blind alley. When the change to the market system was rejected, I demanded that the "war" methods be applied properly and with system, so that real economic improvements could be obtained.

In the system of war communism in which all the resources are, at least in principle, nationalized and distributed by government order, I saw no independent role for trades-unions. Every day I went from the war commissariat, whose operations destroyed the railways, to the commissariat of transport, where I tried not only to save the railways from final collapse, but to raise them to a higher level of efficiency.

The year of work in transport was a year in school for me. All the fundamental questions of socialist organization of economic life found their most concentrated expression in the sphere of transport. Extensive preparatory work was set on foot to standardize the transport system, which, before the revolution, had been controlled equally by the state and by private companies.

In the spring and summer of 1920, the transport system began to recover from its paralysis. Lenin never missed an occasion to remark the restoration of the railways. But the working masses, who had gone through three years of civil war, were more and more disinclined to submit to the ways of military rule.

At the tenth congress, quite against Lenin's will, Stalin was put forward as a candidate for the post of the general secretary of the party.

Chapter 39: Lenin's Illness

I took my first leave in the spring of 1920, before the second congress of the Communist International, and spent about two months near Moscow. After the years of strain I felt the need of rest. Lenin began to spend a great deal of his time in a village near Moscow. His health continued to grow worse.

The doctors found no organic disorders, however, and prescribed a prolonged rest. Lenin settled down permanently in a Moscow village. And it was there that he had his first stroke, early in May. When Lenin's sudden turn of health became known more widely, it was like a shift in the revolution itself.

Was it possible that Lenin could fall ill and die like anyone else? I could not help firmly believing that he would overcome it all, would rise and recover. This was the sentiment of the entire party. Those who for a long time had been preparing to become my opponents - Stalin above all - were anxious to gain time.

But Lenin recovered. In July, he was on his feet again, and although he did not officially return to work until October, he kept his eye on everything and studied everything. During those months of convalescence, among the things that engaged his attention was the trial of the Socialist-Revolutionists.

My first meeting with Lenin after his recovery was during the trial of the Socialist-Revolutionists. In October, Lenin officially returned to work. Among the some odd-dozen jobs that I was directing as part of the party work was the anti-religious propaganda, in which Lenin was very much interested.

While convalescent, he had somehow learned that Stalin was manoeuvring against me. Because of his enormous ambition and envy, Stalin could not help feeling at every step the intellectual and moral inferior of Lenin.

Trotsky, Leon (1930) My Life. Marxists Internet Archive.

Judged by some of his casual remarks, which at the time seemed accidental but actually were not, Stalin was trying to find in me support against Lenin, whose control he found so irksome. At every attempt of this sort, I instinctively drew away from him and walked on.

I believe that the sources of his cold and at first cowardly but thoroughly treacherious hatred of me are to be found in this. There is no doubt that in routine work it was more convenient for Lenin to depend on Stalin rather than me.

I had my own views, my own ways of working, and my own methods of carrying out a decision once it had been adopted. Lenin knew this well enough, and respected it. When he needed men to carry out his instructions, he turned to someone else.

In certain periods, especially when Lenin and I had had a disagreement, this probably made his assistants believe that they were particularly close to him. Lenin needed practical and obedient assistants. I was unsuited to the role.

In the interval between his first and second strokes, Lenin could work only half as much as before. He kept pondering from all points of view how the work would go on without him, and after him. The central committee of the union of educational workers sent a delegation to Lenin and me with the request that I take over the commissariat of education in addition to my other duties.

The organizational Bureau meant the very heart of Stalin's apparatus. Lenin came to know Stalin really only after the October revolution. He valued his firmness and his practical mind, which is three-quarters cunning. And yet at every step, Lenin struck at Stalin's ignorance, at his very narrow political horizon, and his exceptional moral coarseness and unscrupulousness.

Stalin was elected to the post of general secretary of the party against the will of Lenin, who acquiesced only so long as he himself headed the party. But after his stroke, when he returned to work with his health undermined, Lenin applied himself to the entire problem of leadership.

Lenin was now preparing not only to remove Stalin from his post of general secretary, but to disqualify him before the party as well. He was systematically preparing to deliver at the twelfth congress a crushing blow at Stalin as personifying bureaucracy, the mutual shielding among officials, arbitrary rule and general rudeness.

Lenin's wife said in 1927 that if he had been alive he would probably have been doing time in a Stalin prison. I think she was right. For the thing that matters is not Stalin, but the forces that he expresses without even realizing it.

It turned out that Stalin had betrayed Lenin's confidence; in order to ensure himself support in Georgia, acting behind Lenin's back and without the knowledge of the entire Central Committee, he had carried out an organized coup d'état there against the best section of the party, shielding himself falsely behind the authority of the Central Committee.

As Lenin's illness made it impossible for him to meet with other comrades, Stalin had taken advantage of this and had surrounded himself with misinformation. It is hard to say what shocked Lenin most - Stalin's personal disloyalty or his rough and bureaucratic policy on the national question.

Lenin was getting ready for the struggle, but he was afraid that he would not be able to speak at the congress, and this worried him. Stalin had been trying to isolate Lenin from all sources of information. Stalin stood at the helm of the apparatus.

The second chapter of the revolution had begun - the fight against Trotskyism. In reality, it was a fight against the ideological legacy of Lenin.

Chapter 40: The Conspiracy of the Epigones

It was the early weeks of 1923, and the twelfth congress was drawing near. There remained little hope that Lenin could take part in it. Stalin knew that a storm was menacing him from Lenin's direction, and tried in every way to ingratiate himself with me.

In his feigned attempts at friendliness, he seemed even more alien than in his frank exhibitions of enmity, the more so because his motives were so obvious. In the meantime, Lenin's condition took a sharp turn for the worse.

To operate with abstract moral criteria in politics is notoriously hopeless. Political morals proceed from politics itself, and are one of its functions. Only a politics that serves a great historical task can ensure itself morally irreproachable methods.

On the contrary, the lowering of the level of political aims inevitably leads to moral decline. The chief difficulty that the conspirators faced was that of coming out openly against me before the masses of the people.

Stalin, beyond the narrow circle of the old Bolsheviks, was almost unknown. In the final analysis, the fate of personal authority is determined by the deeper processes going on in the masses. During the rising tide of the revolution the slanders against the Bolshevik leaders only strengthened the Bolsheviks.

The conspiracy could under no circumstances pit itself against me. It could pit against only Lenin. But for this it was necessary that Lenin himself could no longer oppose the conspiracy. Lenin was laid up at Gorki; I was in the Kremlin.

The epigones were widening the circle of the conspiracy. At first they proceeded cautiously and insinuatingly, adding to their praise ever larger doses of poison. Only after a deeper sounding of their ground, and a further occupying of positions, did they grow bolder.

They undertook not to engage in polemics against one another and at the same time to seek opportunities to attack me. In this war a special "careerism" was developed, which later on received unashamed the name of "anti-Trotskyism".

Lenin's death freed the conspirators and allowed them to come out into the open. The members of the party who raised their voices in protest against this conspiracy became the victims of treacherous attacks, made for reasons entirely remote and frequently invented.

From the end of 1923, the same work was carried on in all the parties of the Communist International; certain leaders were dethroned and others appointed in their stead solely on the basis of their attitude toward Trotsky.

A strenuous artificial selection was being effected, a selection not of the best but of the most suitable. The general policy became one of a replacement of independent and gifted men by mediocrities who owed their post entirely to the apparatus.

It was as the supreme expression of the mediocrity of the apparatus that Stalin himself rose to his position.

Chapter 41: Lenin's Death and the Shift of Power

I was often asked, even now I am still asked: "How could you lose power?" In most instances, the question covers a naïve conception of letting some material object slip from one's hand, as if losing power were the same thing as losing a watch or a note-book.

But as a matter of fact, when the revolutionaries who directed the seizure of power begin at a certain stage to lose it, the fact in itself signifies either a decline in the influence of certain ideas and moods in the governing revolutionary circles, or the decline of revolutionary mood in the masses themselves.

In the country itself, processes were shaping themselves that one may sum up under the general name of reaction. These extended, in varying degree, to the working class as well, including even its party. Lenin's illness and the expectation of his return to the leadership made the temporary situation indefinite, and it lasted, with an interval, for over two years.

If the revolution had been in the ascendancy, the delay would have played into the hands of the opposition. But the revolution on the international scale was suffering one defeat after another, and the delay accordingly played into the hands of the national reformism by automatically strengthening the Stalin bureaucracy against me and my political friends.

Stalin not only remained the general secretary, contrary to Lenin's wish, but had been given unheard-of powers by the apparatus. Stalin is gifted with practicality, a strong will, and persistence in carrying out his aims.

His political horizon is restricted, his theoretical equipment primitive. His ignorance of foreign languages compels him to follow the political life of other countries at second-hand. His mind is stubbornly empirical and devoid of creative imagination.

To the leading group of the party he always seemed a man destined to play second and third fiddle. And the fact that today he is playing first is not so much a summing-up of the man as it is of this transitional period of political backsliding in the country.

Stalinism is above all else the automatic work of the impersonal apparatus on the decline of the revolution. Lenin died on January 21, 1924. Death was for him merely a deliverance from physical and moral suffering.

He must have felt it intolerably humiliating to be so utterly helpless, and especially to lose his power of speech while he was still fully conscious. In my mind I went through all the stages of my life; my meetings with Lenin, our disagreements, polemics, our renewed friendliness, our fellowship of work.

I knew only too well Lenin's attitude toward Marx, an attitude made up of a disciple's grateful love and of the pathos of distance. Marx and Lenin, so closely linked historically and yet so different, were to me the two unsurpassable summits of man's spiritual power.

With that rudeness characteristic of Stalin, without even being consulted about it, Skiyansky was transferred to economic work. Not many weeks later a cable informed us that Skylansky had been drowned in some American lake while boating. Life is inexhaustible in its cruel inventions.

A campaign against Trotskyism burst forth simultaneously on all platforms, in all pages and columns, in every crack and corner. Slander poured forth in a cold lava stream. It pressed down automatically on the consciousness, and was even more devastating to the will.

The masses were stunned, puzzled, and overawed. Thanks to its sheer bulk, the campaign of ignorant lies took on political potency. It overwhelmed, oppressed, and demoralized the masses. The party found itself condemned to silence.

Trotsky, Leon (1930) *My Life*. Marxists Internet Archive.

A regime was established that was nothing less than a dictatorship of the apparatus over the party. In other words, the party was ceasing to be a party. The slander kept up incessantly in the newspapers, it howled and shrieked, drowning its contradictions and superficiality in its own noise. It succeeded by sheer volume alone.

The life of the party seemed to be split in half: the inner, hidden life and the outward life for show only, and the two lives were in absolute contradiction to each other. Slander becomes a force only when it meets some historical demand.

There must have been some shift, I reasoned, in social relations or in the political mood, if slander could find such an endless market.

Chapter 42: The Last Period of Struggle Within the Party

In January, 1925, I was relieved of my duties as the People's Commissary of War. I yielded up the military post without a fight, with even a sense of relief. I was made chairman of the Concessions Committee in May, 1925, head of the electro-technical board, and chairman of the scientific-technical board of industry.

The selection of these posts was made behind my back and determined by certain specific considerations: to isolate me from the party, to submerge me in routine, to put me under special control, and so on.

I was taking a rest from politics and concentrating on questions of natural science and technology. I made public reports on matters connected with my new activity, and published books and pamphlets. The Stalin apparatus followed on my heels.

Every practical step that I took gave rise to a complicated intrigue behind the scenes; every theoretical conclusion fed the ignorant myth of "Trotskyism". It is no exaggeration to say that much of the creative activity of Stalin and his assistant Molotov was devoted to organizing direct sabotage around me.

Zinoviev and Kamenev soon found themselves in hostile opposition to Stalin; when they tried to transfer the dispute from the trio to the Central Committee, they discovered that Stalin had a solid majority there.

In Russia, the reaction against October was proceeding a full speed. The party apparatus more and more was lining itself up with the right wing. My wife and I decided to take a trip to Berlin. For a few weeks I was under medical observation in a private clinic in Berlin.

In search of the roots of my mysterious high temperature, doctors shunted me from one to the other. I immersed myself in the German press, from which I had been almost completely cut off ever since August 1914.

It was really my first opportunity to listen to the entire range of German republican politics. I must confess that I did not find anything unexpected there. And yet it was very instructive to view it at close range.

The general strike in England in May 1926, proved to be a great event not only in English life, but also in the inner life of our party. England's fate after the war was a subject of absorbing interest. I thought it probable that in England, of all places, the fight in the coal industry would lead to a general strike.

From this I assumed that the essential contradiction between the old organizations of the working class and its new historical tasks would of course be revealed in the near future. During the winter and spring of 1925, while I was in Caucasus, I wrote a book on this - "Wither England?"

The book passed safely by the censors and was published exactly as it had been written. A little later, it also appeared in English. The official leaders of British Socialism treated it as the fantasy of a foreigner who did not know British conditions, who could dream of transferring the "Russia" general strike to the soil of the British Isles.

But within a few months the strike of the coal miners became a general strike. I had not expected such an early confirmation of my forecast. I eagerly gathered and collated in the clinic all the information about the course of the general strike and especially about the relations between the masses and their leaders.

Upon my return to Moscow, I demanded an immediate breaking up of the bloc with the British General Council. Events just as significant were taking place in Poland at the same time. Then came the staggering events in China.

The Chinese Communist party was forced against its will to join the bourgeois Kuomintang party and submit to its military discipline. The creating of Soviets was forbidden. The Communists were advised to hold the agrarian revolution in check, and to abstain from arming the workers without the permission of the bourgeoisie.

Long before Chiang Kalshek crushed the Shanghai workers and concentrated the power in the hands of a military clique, we issued warnings that such a consequence was inevitable. But for the millions, the significant thing was not our forecast, but the fact of the crushing of the Chinese proletariat.

After the defeat of the German revolution in 1923, after the break-down of the English general strike in 1925, the new disaster in China would only intensify the disappointment of the masses in the international revolution.

And it was the same disappointment that served as the chief psychologic source for Stalin's policy of national-reformism. At present there are thousands of young revolutionaries who are augmenting their political experience by studying theory in prisons and the exile of the Stalin regime.

The pressure of material force has always played, and still plays, a great role in humanity's history, sometimes it is a progressive role, more often a reactionary one; its character depends on what class applies the force, and to what end.

The masses were showing signs of uneasiness. They joined in the demonstrations with minds that were profoundly disquieted. And above the alarmed and bewildered people, two active groups were rising - the opposition and the apparatus.

As volunteers in the fight against the "Trotskyists", notoriously non-revolutionary and sometimes sheer fascist elements in the streets of Moscow were now coming to the aid of the apparatus. A similar demonstration took place in Leningrad.

Stalin bureaucrats saw their real enemy not in the oppositionists of the second draft, but in the main group of the opposition, linked to me.

Chapter 43: The Exile

My wife and I were exiled to Central Asia. The New York Times found a chief cause for rejoicing on New Year's Day in the successful elimination of Trotsky from the Communist Party, declaring flatly that "the ousted opposition stood for the perpetuation of the ideas and conditions that have cut off Russia from Western civilization".

Most of the great European newspapers wrote similarly. At any rate, the mouthpieces of reaction in Europe are one in their conclusion that Trotsky, and not Stalin, is their chief communist enemy.

Chapter 44: The Deportation

In October, a rigorous change in our situation took place. Communication with our personal and political friends ceased abruptly; letters and telegrams no longer reached us. The Moscow telegraph office, as we learned through special channels, accumulated several hundred telegrams for me, especially telegrams on the anniversary of the October revolution.

The ring around us was closing tighter and tighter. On December 16, a special representative of the G P U, handed me an ultimatum: I must stop directing the opposition; if I did not, measures would be taken "to isolate me from political life."

The demand that I abstain from political activity was a demand that I renounce the struggle for the interests of the international proletariat, a struggle which I had been waging continually for thirty two years, throughout all of my conscious life.

The attempt to represent this activity as "counter-revolutionary" came from those whom I charged, before the international proletariat, with violating the fundamental principles of the teachings of Marx and Lenin, with infringing on the historical interests of the world revolution, with renouncing the traditions and precepts of October, and with unconsciously, but all the more menacingly, preparing the Thermidor.

For six years we had been living in the U.S.S.R under the conditions of a growign reaction against October, and, consequently, of a clearing of the way for the Thermidor. The most obvious and complete expression of this reaction within the party was the savage persecution and routing of the left wing in the party organization.

Thousands of irreproachable Bolshevik-Leninists whose services to the October revolution and the international proletariat far surpassed the service of those who have imprisoned and banished them, are in the same situation, or worse.

The sorry threat to change these conditions for me in the direction of further isolation was nothing but the decision of the Stalin faction to substitute prison for exile. As early as 1924 it was formed in prospect, and had been carried out gradually step by step, so that the oppressed and deceived party might imperceptibly grow accustomed to the Stalin methods, whose rudeness and disloyalty had now ripened into poisoned bureaucratic dishonesty.

Our connections with the outside world had been completely broken off, including the secret ones with Moscow. We were guided wholly by a conviction of the profound vitality and elasticity of the Soviet regime. Our course is one of inner reform.

We learned from the newspapers of new arrests of several hundred people, including 150 of the so-called "Trotskyist centre". The published names included all old party members, leaders in the October revolution.

The newspapers brought to us echoes of the great new campaign against the Trotskyists. Between the lines was visible a struggle in the upper groups over the question of my deportation.

Chapter 45: The Planet Without a Visa

We found ourselves in Constantinople, first in the consulate building, and then in a private apartment. An endless stream of rumours, suppositions and plain inventions about our destiny poured over us through the newspapers.

We sailed from Odessa for Turkey on the night of February 10. The democratic and Social Democratic press derived malicious satisfaction from pointing out the fact that a believer in the revolutionary dictatorship was obliged to seek asylum in a democratic country.

In the meantime, voices were raised in the Social Democratic press insisting on the necessity of granting me the right to asylum. One of the Social-Democratic Lawyers, Rosenfeld, acting on his own initiative, took it upon himself to intercede on my behalf with a view to securing my admission to Germany.

I received a communication that the German government had refused my application for admission. I learned that Stalin proposed on December 16 that I renounce my political activity. Stalin, by diplomatic means, demanded that the Social Democratic government refuse me admission to Germany - presumably in the name of the interests of the proletarian revolution.

The right to asylum, as everyone knows, is a sacred and imprenable principle. But Norway and France refused me asylum too. Where then is the country in which this right to asylum exists? Perhaps England? My application for a visa to England was flatly refused.

The Labour government refused the visa, despite the protests of the Liberals. On many sides it has been explained to me that my disbelief in democracy is my greatest sin. But why should I believe that the much more important question - the trial between the rich and poor - will be decided with strict observance of the forums and rituals of democracy?

The working class of Russia, under the leadership of the Bolsheviks, made an attempt to effect a reconstruction of life that would lay the foundations for a higher culture. That was the sense of the October revolution.

To be sure, the problem it has set itself has not yet been solved. But in its very essence, this problem demands many decades. Moreover, the October revolution should be considered the starting point of the newest history of humanity as a whole.

One must express amazement at that fact that a backward and isolated Russia twelve years after the revolution has been able to ensure for the masses of the people a standard of living that is not lower than that existing on the eve of the war.

The revolution was an experiment in a new social regime. I appraise my fate objectively and live it subjectively. Since my exile, I have more than once read mummings in the newspapers on the subject of the "tragedy" that has befallen me. I know no personal tragedy.

