

International Internal Discussion Bulletin

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Call for the Twelfth World Congress, Sixth Since Reunification, of the Fourth International

[The following motion was adopted by the May 1982 meeting of the International Executive Committee of the Fourth International.]

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1. The International Executive Committee (IEC) opens the written pre-World Congress discussion period preparatory to the Twelfth World Congress, Sixth Since Reunification, of the Fourth International, which is called for autumn 1983.

2. The subjects which the IEC prioritizes for that written discussion are:

a) those proposed for the agenda of the World Congress by this IEC

b) those which the last World Congress decided to take a final vote on at this World Congress.

In the first category are placed:

- The world political situation and the tasks for building the Fourth International in the coming period, including the turn and youth;

- Balance sheet of political revolution and counterrevolution in Poland;

- Balance sheet of revolution in Central America and Caribbean;

- Questions of building a revolutionary workers International and the emergence of new leaderships;

- Balance sheet of the activities of the IEC, United Secretariat, Bureau, and international campaigns.

In the second category are placed the documents on which the Fifth World Congress Since Reunification, Eleventh World Congress, has taken indicative votes:

- Dictatorship of the proletariat and socialist democracy

- Indochinese revolution

3. The *International Internal Discussion Bulletin* containing the written contributions for the pre-World Congress discussion will be published under the responsibility of the United Secretariat in French, English and Spanish, the French section, the Spanish and Mexican sections and the SWP of the U.S. being in charge of the material publication as a courtesy to the United Secretariat. The *IIDBs* will be published once a month, with the possibility of this frequency being reexamined by the United Secretariat, if the volume of submissions makes this necessary. Each issue will be grossly equivalent to a French *Inprecor* issue, i.e., approximately 290,000 characters. The proposed maximum length per contribution — others than line resolutions — will be approximately 6 pages of French *Inprecor*, i.e., 50,000 characters.

4. Contributions to the *IIDB* are normally submitted to the United Secretariat for its approval by leadership of sections or sympathizing organisations, by members of the IEC, or by international tendencies. In the case of contributions from individual comrades, these should be submitted first to the leadership of the section or sympathizing organisations of which they are members. The national leadership should consider whether the contribution in question belongs in the international discussion bulletin or whether it would be more appropriate to publish it in the internal bulletin of the section (which is normally circulated internationally as well). The national leadership should make a recommendation to the United Secretariat along these lines, which the United Secretariat can take into account in making a decision on the contribution.

5. Line resolutions are to be published, translated and mailed to the sections four months before the date for the World Congress. The deadline for submission of line resolutions to the United Secretariat is set at six months before the date set for the World Congress. The deadline for submission of other contributions to the United Secretariat is four months before the date set for the World Congress. Translation, publication and mailing of such documents to the sections is to be completed within two months of the receipt of the documents. Publication of documents received after the deadlines set above cannot be guaranteed.

6. If the deadlines for handling bulletins set above are not adhered to, the World Congress is to be postponed until at least three months after these conditions are met.

7. All sections, except those working under extremely repressive conditions, will hold congresses to elect their delegates to the World Congress after discussion and vote on the line documents.

8. The contents of *IIDBs* (list of articles accepted for publication) is decided by the United Secretariat.

In order not to hold up publication of the bulletins on a monthly schedule, the United Secretariat Bureau can make decisions on the contents of particular issues.

9. The IEC puts the United Secretariat in charge of proposing concrete rules for sections' representation to the World Congress, based on the general rules which guided delegates' designation at the two preceding congresses.

Celebrating the October Revolution

[The following two articles appeared in the November 1981 *International Socialist Review*, monthly supplement to the *Militant*.]

On the Fourth Anniversary of the Russian Revolution

by V.I. Lenin

Reprinted below is an article by V.I. Lenin, central leader of the Russian Bolshevik Party. It was written on the occasion of the fourth anniversary of the Russian revolution, and first appeared in the October 18, 1921, edition of 'Pravda,' the Bolshevik newspaper.

The fourth anniversary of October 25 (November 7)¹ is approaching.

The farther that great day recedes from us, the more clearly we see the significance of the proletarian revolution in Russia, and the more deeply we reflect upon the practical experience of our work as a whole.

Very briefly and, of course, in very incomplete and rough outline, this significance and experience may be summed up as follows.

The direct and immediate object of the revolution in Russia was a bourgeois-democratic one, namely, to destroy the survivals of medievalism and sweep them away completely, to purge Russia of this barbarism, of this shame, and to remove this immense obstacle to all culture and progress in our country.

And we can justifiably pride ourselves on having carried out that purge with greater determination and much more rapidly, boldly and successfully, and, from the point of view of its effect on the masses, much more widely and deeply, than the great French Revolution over one hundred and twenty-five years ago.

Both the anarchists and the petty-bourgeois democrats (i.e., the Mensheviks² and the Socialist-Revolutionaries³, who are the Russian counterparts of that international social type) have talked and are still talking an incredible lot of nonsense

1. Under Czarism Russia used the old Byzantine calendar which was thirteen days behind the Gregorian calendar used by the rest of Europe. After the October revolution Russia went over to the more modern calendar.

2. Mensheviks — the minority faction of the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party after the split with the Bolsheviks in 1903. Believed that the working class must support the liberal bourgeoisie to overthrow Czarism and establish a democratic republic.

3. Social Revolutionary Party — formed in 1900 and emerged in 1902-03 as the political expression of all the earlier populist currents. It had the most influence among the peasantry before the 1917 revolution.

about the relation between the bourgeois-democratic revolution and the socialist (that is proletarian) revolution. The last four years have proved to the hilt that our interpretation of Marxism on this point, and our estimate of the experience of former revolutions were correct. We have consummated the bourgeois-democratic revolution as nobody had done before. We are advancing towards the socialist revolution consciously, firmly and unswervingly, knowing that it is not separated from the bourgeois-democratic revolution by a Chinese Wall, and knowing too that (in the last analysis) *struggle alone* will determine how far we shall advance, what part of this immense and lofty task we shall accomplish, and to what extent we shall succeed in consolidating our victories. Time will show. But we see even now that a tremendous amount — tremendous for this ruined, exhausted and backward country — has already been done towards the socialist transformation of society.

Let us, however, finish what we have to say about the bourgeois-democratic content of our revolution. Marxists must understand what that means. To explain, let us take a few striking examples.

The bourgeois-democratic content of the revolution means that the social relations (system, institutions) of the country are purged of medievalism, serfdom, feudalism.

What were the chief manifestations, survivals, remnants of serfdom in Russia up to 1917? The monarchy, the system of social estates, landed proprietorship and land tenure, the status of women, religion, and national oppression. Take any one of these Augean stables, which, incidentally, were left largely uncleansed by all the more advanced states when they accomplished *their* bourgeois-democratic revolutions one hundred and twenty-five, two hundred and fifty and more years ago (1649 in England); take any one of these Augean stables, and you will see that we have cleansed them thoroughly. In a matter of *ten weeks*, from October 25 (November 7), 1917 to January 5, 1918, when the Constituent Assembly was dissolved, we accomplished a thousand times more in this respect than was accomplished by the bourgeois democrats and liberals (the Cadets⁴) and by the petty-bourgeois

4. Cadets (Constitutional-Democratic Party) — the chief party of the liberal bourgeoisie in Russia.

democrats (the Mensheviks and the Socialist-Revolutionaries) during the eight months they were in power.

Those poltroons, gas-bags, vainglorious Narcisuses and petty Hamlets brandished their wooden swords — but did not even destroy the monarchy! We cleansed out all that monarchist muck as nobody had ever done before. We left not a stone, not a brick of that ancient edifice, the social-estate system (even the most advanced countries, such as Britain, France and Germany, have not completely eliminated the survivals of that system to this day!), standing. We tore out the deep-seated roots of the social-estate system, namely, the remnants of feudalism and serfdom in the system of land-ownership, to the last. "One may argue" (there are plenty of quill-drivers, Cadets, Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries abroad to indulge in such arguments) as to what "in the long run" will be the outcome of the agrarian reform effected by the Great October Revolution. We have no desire at the moment to waste time on such controversies, for we are deciding this, as well as the mass of accompanying controversies, by struggle. But the fact cannot be denied that the petty-bourgeois democrats "compromised" with the landowners, the custodians of the traditions of serfdom, for eight months, while we completely swept the landowners and all their traditions from Russian soil in a few weeks.

Take religion, or the denial of rights to women, or the oppression and inequality of the non-Russian nationalities. These are all problems of the bourgeois-democratic revolution. The vulgar petty-bourgeois democrats talked about them for eight months. In not a *single* one of the most advanced countries in the world have *these* questions been *completely* settled on *bourgeois-democratic* lines. In our country they have been settled completely by the legislation of the October Revolution. We have fought and are fighting religion in earnest. We have granted *all* the non-Russian nationalities *their own* republics or autonomous regions. We in Russia no longer have the base, mean and infamous denial of rights to women or inequality of the sexes, that disgusting survival of feudalism and medievalism, which is being renovated by the avaricious bourgeoisie and the dull-witted and frightened petty bourgeoisie in every other country in the world without exception.

All this goes to make up the content of the bourgeois-democratic revolution. A hundred and fifty and two hundred and fifty years ago the progressive leaders of that revolution (or of those revolutions, if we consider each national variety of the one general type) promised to rid mankind of medieval privileges, of sex inequality, of state privileges for one religion or another (or religious ideas", "the church" in general), and of national inequality. They promised, but did not keep their promises. They could not keep them, for they were hindered by their "respect" — for the "sacred right of private property". Our proletarian revolution was not afflicted with this accursed "respect" for

this thrice-accursed medievalism and for the "sacred right of private property".

But in order to consolidate the achievements of the bourgeois-democratic revolution for the peoples of Russia, we were obliged to go farther; and we did go farther. We solved the problems of the bourgeois-democratic revolution in passing, as a "by-product" of our main and genuinely *proletarian-revolutionary*, socialist activities. We have always said that reforms are a by-product of the revolutionary class struggle. We said — and proved it by deeds — that bourgeois-democratic reforms are a by-product of the proletarian, i.e., of the socialist revolution. Incidentally, the Kautskys, Hilferdings, Martovs, Chernovs, Hillquits, Longuets, MacDonalds, Turatis and other heroes of "Two-and-a-Half" Marxism⁵ were incapable of understanding *this* relation between the bourgeois-democratic and the proletarian-socialist revolutions. The first develops into the second. The second, in passing, solves the problems of the first. The second consolidates the work of the first. Struggle, and struggle alone, decides how far the second succeeds in outgrowing the first.

The Soviet system is one of the most vivid proofs, or manifestations, of how the one revolution develops into the other. The Soviet system provides the maximum of democracy for the workers and peasants; at the same time, it marks a break with *bourgeois* democracy and the rise of a *new*, epoch-making *type* of democracy, namely, proletarian democracy, or the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Let the curs and swine of the moribund bourgeoisie, and of the petty-bourgeois democrats who trail behind them, heap imprecations, abuse and derision upon our heads for our reverses and mistakes in the work of building up *our* Soviet system. We do not forget for a moment that we have committed and are committing numerous mistakes and are suffering numerous reverses. How can reverses and mistakes be avoided in a matter so new in the history of the world as the building of an unprecedented *type* of state edifice! We shall work steadfastly to set our reverses and mistakes right and to improve our practical application of Soviet principles, which is still very, very far from being perfect. But we have a right to be and are proud that to us has fallen the good fortune to *begin* the building of a Soviet state, and thereby to *usher in* a new era in world history, the era of the rule of a *new* class, a class which is oppressed in every capitalist country, but which everywhere is marching forward towards a new life, towards victory over the bourgeoisie, towards the dictatorship of the proletariat, towards the emancipation of mankind from the yoke of capital and from imperialist wars.

The question of imperialist wars, of the international policy of finance capital which now dominates the whole world, a policy that must *inevita-*

5. The Two-and-a-Half International — was founded in Vienna in 1921 at a conference of centrist parties and groups which, under pressure of the revolutionary-minded masses, temporarily seceded from the Second International and returned to it in 1923.

bly engender new imperialist wars, that must inevitably cause an extreme intensification of national oppression, pillage, brigandry and the strangulation of weak, backward and small nationalities by a handful of "advanced" powers — that question has been the keystone of all policy in all the countries of the globe since 1914. It is a question of life and death for millions upon millions of people. It is a question of whether 20,000,000 people (as compared with the 10,000,000 who were killed in the war of 1914-18 and in the supplementary "minor" wars that are still going on) are to be slaughtered in the next imperialist war, which the bourgeoisie are preparing, and which is growing out of capitalism before our very eyes. It is a question of whether in that future war, which is inevitable (if capitalism continues to exist), 60,000,000 people are to be maimed (compared with the 30,000,000 maimed in 1914-18). In this question, too, our October Revolution marked the beginning of a new era in world history. The lackeys of the bourgeoisie and its yes-men — the Socialist-Revolutionaries and the Mensheviks, and the petty-bourgeois, allegedly "socialist," democrats all over the world — derided our slogan "convert the imperialist war into a civil war." But that slogan proved to be the *truth* — it was the only truth, unpleasant, blunt, naked and brutal, but nevertheless the *truth*, as against the host of most refined jingoist and pacifist lies. Those lies are being dispelled. The Brest peace⁶ has been exposed. And with every passing day the significance and consequences of a peace that is even worse than the Brest peace — the peace of Versailles — are being more relentlessly exposed. And the millions who are thinking about the causes of the recent war and of the approaching future war are more and more clearly realising the grim and inexorable truth that it is impossible to escape imperialist war, and imperialist peace (if the old orthography were still in use, I would have written the word *mir* in two ways, to give it both its meanings)⁷ which inevitably engenders imperialist war, that it is impossible to escape that inferno, *except by a Bolshevik struggle and a Bolshevik revolution.*

Let the bourgeoisie and the pacifists, the generals and the petty bourgeoisie, the capitalists and the philistines, the pious Christians and the knights of the Second and the Two-and-a-Half Internationals vent their fury against that revolution. No torrents of abuse, calumnies and lies can enable them to conceal the historic fact that for the first time in hundreds and thousands of years the slaves have replied to a war between slave-owners by openly proclaiming the slogan: "Convert this war between slave-owners for the division of their loot into a war of the slaves of all nations against

the slave-owners of all nations."

For the first time in hundreds and thousands of years that slogan has grown from a vague and helpless waiting into a clear and definite political programme, into an effective struggle waged by millions of oppressed people under the leadership of the proletariat; it has grown into the first victory of the proletariat, the first victory in the struggle to abolish war and to unite the workers of all countries against the united bourgeoisie of different nations, against the bourgeoisie that makes peace and war at the expense of the slaves of capital, the wage-workers, the peasants, the working people.

This first victory is *not yet the final victory*, and it was achieved by our October Revolution at the price of incredible difficulties and hardships, at the price of unprecedented suffering, accompanied by a series of serious reverses and mistakes on our part. How could a single backward people be expected to frustrate the imperialist wars of the most powerful and most developed countries of the world without sustaining reverses and without committing mistakes! We are not afraid to admit our mistakes and shall examine them dispassionately in order to learn how to correct them. But the fact remains that for the first time in hundreds and thousands of years the promise "to reply" to war between the slave-owners by a revolution of the slaves directed *against* all the slave-owners *has been completely fulfilled* — and is being fulfilled despite all difficulties.

We have made the start. When, at what date and time, and the proletarians of which nation will complete this process is not important. The important thing is that the ice has been broken; the road is open, the way has been shown.

Gentlemen, capitalists of all countries, keep up your hypocritical pretence of "defending the fatherland" — the Japanese fatherland against the American, the American against the Japanese, the French against the British, and so forth! Gentlemen, knights of the Second and Two-and-a-Half Internationals, pacifist petty bourgeoisie and philistines of the entire world, go on "evading" the question of how to combat imperialist wars by issuing new "Basle Manifestos" (on the model of the Basle Manifesto of 1912).⁸ *The first Bolshevik revolution has wrested the first hundred million people of this earth from the clutches of imperialist war and the imperialist world. Subsequent revolutions will deliver the rest of mankind from such wars and from such a world.*

Our last, but most important and most difficult task, the one we have done least about, is economic development, the laying of economic foundations for the new, socialist edifice on the site of the dem-

6. Brest peace — the peace treaty imposed on Russia by Germany in early 1918. It placed especially hard conditions on Russia.

7. In Russian, the word *mir* has two meanings (world and peace) and had two different spellings in the old way of spelling.

8. Basle Manifesto — the manifesto against imperialist war adopted unanimously by a congress of the Second International in Basle, Switzerland in 1912. When World War I broke out in 1914, the leaders of the Second International (Karl Kautsky, etc.) who had voted for the manifesto consigned it to oblivion and supported their own imperialist governments.

olished feudal edifice and the semi-demolished capitalist edifice. It is in this most important and most difficult task that we have sustained the greatest number of reverses and have made most mistakes. How could anyone expect that a task so new to the world could be begun without reverses and without mistakes! But we have begun it. We shall continue it. At this very moment we are, by our New Economic Policy,⁹ correcting a number of our mistakes. We are learning how to continue erecting the socialist edifice in a small-peasant country without committing such mistakes.

The difficulties are immense. But we are accustomed to grappling with immense difficulties. Not for nothing do our enemies call us "stone-hard" and exponents of a "firm-line policy." But we have also learned, at least to some extent, another art that is essential in revolution, namely, flexibility, the ability to effect swift and sudden changes of tactics if changes in objective conditions demand them, and to choose another path for the achievement of our goal if the former path proves to be inexpedient or impossible at the given moment.

Borne along on the crest of the wave of enthusiasm, rousing first the political enthusiasm and then the military enthusiasm of the people, we expected to accomplish economic tasks just as great as the political and military tasks we had accomplished by relying directly on this enthusiasm. We expected — or perhaps it would be truer to say that we presumed without having given it adequate consideration — to be able to organise the state production and the state distribution of products on communist lines in a small-peasant country directly as ordered by the proletarian state. Experience has proved that we were wrong. It appears that a number of transitional stages were necessary — state capitalism and socialism — in order to *prepare* — to prepare by many years of effort — for the transition to communism. Not directly relying on enthusiasm, but aided by the enthusiasm engendered by the great revolution, and on the basis of personal interest, personal incentive and business principles, we must first set to work in

9. New Economic Policy — initiated at the Tenth Congress of the Russian Communist Party in 1921 to revive the economy after the civil war. Was adopted as a temporary measure allowing a limited revival of free trade inside the Soviet Union and foreign concessions alongside the nationalized and state-controlled sectors of the economy.

this small-peasant country to build solid gangways to socialism by way of state capitalism. Otherwise we shall never get to communism, we shall never bring scores of millions of people to communism. That is what experience, the objective course of the development of the revolution, has taught us.

And we, who during these three or four years have learned a little to make abrupt changes of front (when abrupt changes of front are needed), have begun zealously, attentively and sedulously (although still not zealously, attentively and sedulously enough) to learn to make a new change of front, namely, the New Economic Policy. The proletarian state must become a cautious, assiduous and shrewd "businessman," a punctilious *wholesale merchant* — otherwise it will never succeed in putting this small-peasant country economically on its feet. Under existing conditions, living as we are side by side with the capitalist (for the time being capitalist) West, there is no other way of progressing to communism. A wholesale merchant seems to be an economic type as remote from communism as heaven from earth. But that is one of the contradictions which, in actual life, lead from a small-peasant economy via state capitalism to socialism. Personal incentive will step up production; we must increase production first and foremost and at all costs. Wholesale trade economically unites millions of small peasants: it gives them a personal incentive, links them up and leads them to the next step, namely, to various forms of association and alliance in the process of production itself. We have already started the necessary changes in our economic policy and already have some successes to our credit; true, they are small and partial, but nonetheless they are successes. In this new field of "tuition" we are already finishing our preparatory class. By persistent and assiduous study, by making practical experience the test of every step we take, by not fearing to alter over and over again what we have already begun, by correcting our mistakes and most carefully analysing their significance, we shall pass to the higher classes. We shall go through the whole "course," although the present state of world economics and world politics has made that course much longer and much more difficult than we would have liked. No matter at what cost, no matter how severe the hardships of the transition period may be — despite disaster, famine and ruin — we shall not flinch; we shall triumphantly carry our cause to its goal.

How Lenin Saw the Russian Revolution

by Doug Jenness

In October 1917, the councils of workers and peasants of Russia, under the leadership of the Bolsheviks, took governmental power and began carrying out the greatest revolution of this century. In the nineteenth century, revolutionists admired and absorbed the lessons, and even the language, of the French Revolution of 1789. They compared and contrasted their own revolutions to that great historic watershed.

Similarly, for more than sixty years, revolutionists of our century have drawn inspiration and learned from the first successful proletarian revolution. We have turned to the Russian revolution to learn how to lead the working class to power in our countries. Where the masses have overturned capitalist rule in such countries as Cuba, Nicaragua, Grenada, and Vietnam, revolutionaries study how the Bolsheviks in power handled some of the problems they face.

World-wide, the working class is indebted to the Russian revolution in another way. The October victory altered the relationship of class forces between the imperialist rulers and the toiling masses in favor of the latter. The failure of the imperialist powers to overturn the basic social conquests of the Russian workers and reinstitute capitalism on Russian soil remains a fact of momentous historical importance.

It is precisely because of this change in the relationship of forces made possible by the Russian people that imperialism has not been able to crush the Chinese, Cuban, and Indochinese revolutions, which at crucial moments have received military and economic aid from the Soviet workers state.

On this sixty-fourth anniversary of the October revolution, we are publishing an article Lenin wrote in 1921 to celebrate the revolution's fourth anniversary.

Lenin was the central leader of the Bolshevik party and of the Soviet workers state in its early revolutionary years. The best place to learn the lessons of Bolshevism — to understand how the Bolshevik party was trained, carried through the October revolution, and led the organization of the world's first workers state — is Lenin's writings and speeches.

In this anniversary article, Lenin explains how the Russian revolution combined both the bourgeois-democratic and the socialist revolutions. He indicates that, with the workers and peasants wielding governmental power, the bourgeois-democratic revolution was carried through more thoroughly than in any country ever before. And that, to consolidate this achievement, they had to go further and begin the socialist revolution.

The relationship between the bourgeois-democratic and socialist revolutions in Russia had been debated among Russian Marxists since the turn of the century.

The program of the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party, adopted at its second congress in 1903, called for the overthrow of capitalism and explained, "A necessary condition for this social revolution is the dictatorship of the proletariat. . . ." It also indicated that "on the way to achieving" this "ultimate aim" the Social Democrats had to undertake certain immediate tasks. The most important of these was to overthrow the tsarist autocracy and convoke a constituent assembly, freely elected by the entire people.

At the 1903 congress, there were no fundamental differences on the program expressed by the two principal factions, the Bolsheviks and Mensheviks.

But the 1905 revolution in Russia revealed deep differences between the Bolsheviks and Mensheviks over the class forces that would carry through the bourgeois-democratic revolution and the relationship of this revolution to the socialist revolution.

Two Approaches

Reviewing the different approaches in a polemic with Karl Kautsky in November 1918, Lenin wrote:

"The Russian revolution is a bourgeois revolution, said all the Marxists of Russia before 1905. The Mensheviks, substituting liberalism for Marxism, drew the conclusion from this that, hence, the proletariat must not go beyond what was acceptable to the bourgeoisie and must pursue a policy of compromise with it. The Bolsheviks said that this was a bourgeois-liberal theory. The bourgeoisie, they said, was trying to bring about the reform of the state on bourgeois, *reformist*, not revolutionary lines, while preserving the monarchy, landlordism, etc., as far as possible. The proletariat must carry through the bourgeois-democratic revolution to the end, not allowing itself to be 'bound' by the reformism of the bourgeoisie. The Bolsheviks formulated the relation of *class* forces in the bourgeois revolution as follows: the proletariat, joining to itself the peasantry, will neutralize the liberal bourgeoisie and utterly destroy the monarchy, medievalism, and landlordism.

"The alliance between the proletariat and the peasantry *in general* reveals the bourgeois character of the revolution, for the peasantry in general are small producers who stand on the basis of commodity production. Further, the Bolsheviks then added, the proletariat will join to itself *the entire semi-proletariat* (all the toilers and exploited), will neutralize the middle peasantry and *overthrow* the bourgeoisie; this will be a Socialist revolution, as distinct from a bourgeois-democratic revolution (see my pamphlet *Two Tactics*, published in 1905 and reprinted in *Twelve Years*, St. Petersburg, 1907)." (*The Proletarian Revolution and the Rene-*

gade Kautsky)

The course projected by the Bolsheviks gave an accurate portrayal of the line of march the Russian workers would follow and how the revolution would unfold. It armed them to participate effectively in the class struggle and to assume a leadership role in the revolution. In October 1917, the alliance between the proletariat and the peasantry *in general* overthrew the capitalist government and proceeded to smash all the remnants of the monarchy, medievalism, and landlordism. Governmental power gave the working class and the poor peasants an effective instrument to lead the revolution in their interests.

As Lenin explained in a report to the Eighth Congress of the Russian Communist Party in March 1919, ". . . our revolution was largely a *bourgeois* revolution until the Poor Peasants' Committees were set up, i.e., until the summer and even the autumn of 1918. We are not afraid to admit that. We accomplished the October Revolution so easily because the peasants as a whole supported us and fought the landowners for they saw that as far as they were concerned we would go the limit. . . . But from the moment the Poor Peasants' Committees began to be organized, our revolution became a *proletarian* revolution. . . . And only when the October revolution began to spread to the rural districts and was consummated, in the summer of 1918, did we acquire a real proletarian base; only then did our revolution *become a proletarian revolution in fact*, and not merely in our proclamations, promises and declarations." (*Speeches at Party Congresses: 1918-1922*)

The developments in the countryside that Lenin describes here coincided with the outbreak of the civil war, which saw the rich peasants and the capitalists going over to the counterrevolution. By the fall of 1918, virtually all industry had been nationalized.

Lenin explained that ". . . if the Bolshevik proletariat had tried at once, in October-November 1917, without waiting for the class differentiation in the rural districts, without being able to *prepare* for it and bring it about, to 'decree' a civil war or the 'introduction of Socialism' in the rural districts, had tried to do without a temporary bloc (alliance) with the peasants in general, without making a number of concessions to the middle peasants, etc., that would have been a Blanquist distortion of Marxism, an attempt of the minority to impose its will upon the majority; it would have been a theoretical absurdity, revealing a failure to understand that a general peasant revolution is *still* a bourgeois revolution, and that *without a series of transitions, of transitional stages*, it cannot be transformed into a Socialist revolution in a backward country." (*The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky*)

Lenin commented further on the nature of the Russian revolution in an April 15, 1919, article, "The Third International and Its Place in History." He wrote, "I have had occasion more than once to say that it was easier for the Russians than for

the advanced countries *to begin* the great proletarian revolution, but that it will be more difficult for them *to continue* it and carry it to final victory, in the sense of the complete organization of a socialist society.

"It was easier for us to begin, firstly, because the unusual — for twentieth-century Europe — political backwardness of the tsarist monarchy gave unusual strength to the revolutionary onslaught of the masses. Secondly, Russia's backwardness merged in a peculiar way the proletarian revolution against the bourgeoisie with the peasant revolution against the landowners. That is what we started from in October 1917, and we would not have achieved victory so easily if we had not. As long ago as 1856, Marx spoke, in reference to Prussia, of the possibility of a peculiar combination of proletarian revolution and peasant war. From the beginning of 1905 the Bolsheviks advocated the idea of a revolutionary-democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry." (*Lenin Collected Works*, Vol. 29)

Revolutionary-Democratic Dictatorship

The 1905 revolution included both a massive upsurge of the working class and peasant uprisings. These powerful struggles posed for the first time the real possibility of overthrowing the monarchy and establishing a new government. This gave impulse to the debate among Russian socialists as to what kind of government should replace the autocracy. The Mensheviks argued that the Social Democrats should not participate in a provisional revolutionary government in the event the monarchy was overturned. For the party of the working class to raise the possibility of its participation in such a government, according to the Mensheviks, would pose the question of the socialist revolution, which was premature in Russia.

They argued that the Social Democrats should pressure the capitalist parties to take their rightful place as leaders of the bourgeois-democratic revolution.

Lenin rejected this approach as "tail-ending" the bourgeoisie. He countered by stating, "Marxism teaches the proletariat not to keep aloof from the bourgeois revolution, not to refuse to take part in it, not to allow the leadership of the revolution to be assumed by the bourgeoisie but, on the contrary, to take a most energetic part in it, to fight resolutely for consistent proletarian democracy, to fight to carry the revolution to its completion." (*Two Tactics of Social-Democracy in the Democratic Revolution*)

The class forces that the Bolsheviks saw could carry through the democratic revolution most resolutely were the working class in alliance with the revolutionary peasantry as a whole. Thus, they proposed that the monarchy be replaced with a *revolutionary* government to achieve the goals of the *bourgeois-democratic* revolution, in which the *workers* and *peasants* would exercise political power and repress their oppressors. This was the revolutionary-democratic dictatorship of the proletaria-

riat and peasantry.

Lenin wrote, ". . . such a victory will assume the form of a dictatorship, i.e. it is inevitably bound to rely on military force, on the arming of the masses, on an uprising, and not on institutions established by 'lawful' or 'peaceful' means. It can only be a dictatorship, for the introduction of the reforms which are urgently and absolutely necessary for the proletariat and the peasantry will call forth the desperate resistance of the landlords, the big bourgeoisie and tsarism. Without a dictatorship it will be impossible to break down that resistance and to repel the counterrevolutionary attempts. But of course it will be a democratic, not a socialist dictatorship." (*Two Tactics*)

Lenin described the revolution that would bring the revolutionary-democratic dictatorship into being as a "people's revolution." "Social Democracy," he said, "has justly fought and continues to fight against the bourgeois-democratic abuse of the word 'people.'" The revolutionary workers party, he explained, "must present to the whole of the people the tasks of a democratic revolution as widely and as boldly as possible." (*Two Tactics*)

The Bolsheviks also explained that a victory for the democratic revolution in Russia was connected to the proletarian revolution in Europe. "Such a victory," Lenin wrote, "will enable us to rouse Europe, and the socialist proletariat of Europe will then throw off the yoke of the bourgeoisie and in turn help us to carry out a socialist revolution." (*Two Tactics*)

'Uninterrupted Revolution'

Lenin believed that the revolutionary-democratic dictatorship would create the most favorable circumstances for the working class to make the transition toward the socialist revolution. In an article, "Social Democracy's Attitude Toward the Peasant Movement," written two months after *Two Tactics*, Lenin explained:

"... from the democratic revolution we shall at once, and precisely in accordance with the measure of our strength, the strength of the class-conscious and organized proletariat, begin to pass to the socialist revolution. We stand for uninterrupted revolution. We shall not stop half-way. If we do not now and immediately promise all sorts of 'socialization,' that is because we know the actual conditions for that task to be accomplished, and we do not gloss over the new class struggle burgeoning within the peasantry, but reveal that struggle. . . .

"To try to calculate *now* what the combination of forces will be within the peasantry 'on the day after' the revolution (the democratic revolution) is empty utopianism. . . . [W]e shall bend every effort to help the entire peasantry achieve the democratic revolution, *in order thereby to make it easier* for us, the party of the proletariat, to pass on as quickly as possible to the new and higher task — the socialist revolution." (*Collected Works*, Vol. 9)

The formation of workers councils, called soviets, during the 1905 revolution gave a glimpse of

how the revolutionary-democratic dictatorship might emerge.

Lenin, in an article, "Our Tasks and the Soviet of Workers' Deputies," written in November 1905, drew special attention to the soviets as "the embryo of a *provisional revolutionary government*."

"I think," he proposed, "the Soviet should proclaim itself the provisional revolutionary government of the whole of Russia as early as possible, or should *set up* a provisional revolutionary government (which would amount to the same thing, only in another form)." (*Collected Works*, Vol. 10)

Dual Power

In 1917, after the February insurrection, the Soviets were again established. The authority of these organizations among the masses led Lenin to characterize the situation as one of "dual power."

"What is this dual power?" he wrote in early April. "Alongside the Provisional Government, the government of the *bourgeoisie*, another government has arisen, so far weak and incipient, but undoubtedly a government that actually exists and is growing — the Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies.

"What is the class composition of this other government? It consists of the proletariat and the peasants (in soldiers' uniforms). What is the political nature of this government? It is a revolutionary dictatorship, i.e., a power directly based on revolutionary seizure, on the direct initiative of the people from below, and *not on a law* enacted by a centralized state power." (*Collected Works*, Vol. 24)

Following the February 1917 revolution, many of the older Bolshevik leaders adapted to the Mensheviks who were carrying out a bourgeois-liberal line and supporting the Provisional Government. This put these "old Bolsheviks" in the position of giving *de facto* critical support to the capitalist provisional government.

Lenin fought this tendency toward opportunism. He opposed supporting the Provisional Government and called for the soviets to take power.

He explained:

"The revolutionary-democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry has already been realized, but in a highly original manner, and with a number of extremely important modifications. . . .

"According to the old way of thinking, the rule of the bourgeoisie could and should be *followed* by the rule of the proletariat and the peasantry, by their dictatorship.

"In real life, however, things have *already* turned out *differently*; there has been an extremely original, novel and unprecedented *interlacing of the one with the other*. We have side by side, existing together, simultaneously, *both* the rule of the bourgeoisie (the government of Lvov and Guchkov) and a revolutionary-democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry, which is *voluntarily* ceding power to the bourgeoisie, volun-

tarily making itself an appendage of the bourgeoisie." (*Collected Works*, Vol. 24)

Worker-Bolsheviks Were Ready

While many of the "old Bolsheviks" took opportunist positions, the majority of worker-Bolsheviks did not. It was this fact that made it possible for Lenin to win a majority for his line at the April 1917 party conference without a great deal of difficulty.

In the *History of the Russian Revolution*, Leon Trotsky explains:

"Already at the beginning of the war, when the government dealt the party a heavy blow by arresting the Bolshevik faction of the Duma, Lenin, speaking of the further revolutionary work, had demanded the education by the party of thousands of class-conscious workers, from among whom in spite of all difficulties a new staff of leaders will arise."

"Although separated from these workers by two war fronts, and almost without communication, Lenin had never lost touch with them. 'Let the war, jails, Siberia, hard labor, shatter them twice, ten times, you cannot destroy that stratum. It is alive. It is imbued with revolutionism and anti-chauvinism.'"

This point helps underline the fact that Lenin approached the question of the Russian revolution from the standpoint of a party leader and builder. His writings reflect the collective experience and discussions of the Bolshevik party. They are stamped by the objective of arming the party to effectively participate in the class struggle and prepare for the revolution.

Transitional approach

At every stage, the Bolsheviks had to weigh their general conceptions of the revolution with the living reality of the struggle and determine the most effective slogans and arenas of party work.

The kind of party that Lenin sought to build was totally interconnected with his conception of the

revolution. The Bolsheviks were a revolutionary workers party armed with the Marxist program. They participated in the mass organizations of the working class, in bourgeois elections, and other arenas, with the sole objective of preparing the working class to take power.

For example, Lenin explained that the work of party members in the trade unions was to educate the workers around the broad social and political issues. "It cannot be too strongly maintained," he wrote in 1902, ". . . that the Social Democrats' ideal should not be the trade union secretary, but *the tribune of the people*, who is able to react to every manifestation of tyranny and oppression, no matter where it appears, no matter what stratum or class of the people it affects; . . . who is able to take advantage of every event, however small, in order to set forth *before all* his socialist convictions and his democratic demands, in order to clarify for *all* and everyone the world-historic significance of the struggle for the emancipation of the proletariat." (*What Is to Be Done?*)

Lenin's writings on the relationship between the democratic and socialist revolutions in Russia also demonstrate how he applied a transitional approach. The Bolsheviks, starting from the objective needs of the working class, sought to develop slogans that would help bridge the struggle from one level of consciousness to the next and lead it along the road toward socialist revolution.

As Lenin points out in his fourth anniversary article, the Bolsheviks never saw the struggle for immediate and democratic demands as the struggle for "reforms." Rather, struggles around such demands were seen as part of preparing and mobilizing the masses to take political power and, after seizing power, to use it to lead the revolution forward.

The October revolution testifies that Lenin's view of the dynamics of the Russian revolution and the kind of vanguard party it required effectively armed the Bolsheviks to carry through their historic task.

The Debate Over the Character and Goals of the Russian Revolution

by Ernest Mandel

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The November 1981 issue of *International Socialist Review* carried an article by Doug Jenness centered around the idea that in the 1905-1917 period, there had been two different concepts of the Russian revolution among Russian socialists. In the present article we defend the traditional analysis by Leon Trotsky and the Fourth International, according to which there were three — and not two — basically dif-

ferent strategies proposed by Russian socialists in that period.

Russian society entered a deep political and social crisis in the 1870s. The populists of *Narodnaya Volya* (People's Will) were organizing to overthrow tsarism. In 1882, they killed Tsar Alexander II who, twenty years earlier, had freed Russian peasants from serfdom, but burdened them in exchange

with a terrible economic taxation.

The international workers movement, which was beginning to include some Russian emigré activists, took an interest in Russia and tried to obtain more information on the social conditions and political struggles of this far-away country. As a result, the movement was drawn into the debates on the nature of the coming Russian revolution — which revolutionaries considered inevitable — and the perspectives it would open up for Europe and the world.

The positions of Marx and Engels

Vera Zasulich, one of the main figures of Russian populism, invited Marx to take a stand on Russia's future. After some hesitation,¹ he arrived at an unambiguous position: Russia could "leap over the stage of capitalism."

In a March 8, 1881, letter to the Russian revolutionary, and again in the preface to the second Russian edition of *The Communist Manifesto*, published in 1882, Marx stated:

(a) That his thesis on the inevitable emergence of capitalism only applied to Western societies;

(b) That Russia had the possibility of avoiding "the terrible evils of capitalism" if its revolution could triumph in time;²

(c) That the starting point of the collectivist, noncapitalist evolution of Russian industrialization could be the collective property of the village community (the *obschina*);

(d) That this contingency would only be realized if the advance of private property and capitalism, which was under way since the abolition of serfdom in 1861, had not yet reached the stage of decisively dissolving the village community;

(e) That a second condition for the realization of this noncapitalist development in Russia was the victory of the revolution in the West, and the aid which the Western proletariat could thereby extend to the Russian masses in modernizing and industrializing Russia.

Through this analysis, Marx provided support to the revolutionaries of *Narodnaya Volya*. He believed that Plekhanov's group in Geneva, which originated in a split from the populists, had committed a mistake in attacking them. Engels maintained this position several years after Marx's death. He kept up a lively correspondence with populists like Nikolai Danielson and Lavrov, and showed a great deal of sympathy for them.³

Nevertheless, toward the end of the 1880s, and into the early 1890s, Engels changed his position; or, more accurately, he noted that history had now answered Marx's question and had done so in the negative. The delay of the revolution had opened the way to a process of capitalist development in Russia, which was ruthlessly destroying the basis for the survival of the village community:

"Remember that our author [Marx] had said in his letter on Zhukovsky [the letter to the editorial board of *Otshestvennie Zapiski* mentioned in footnote 2] that the peasant *obschina* was doomed if the evolution begun in 1861 continued.

1. There are several successive drafts of the letter to Vera Zasulich in the *Collected Works of Marx and Engels*.

2. Earlier, in 1877, Marx had already written Mikailovsky, at that time the editor of the review *Otshestvennie Zapiski* (*Annals of the Fatherland*), that Russia had the "greatest opportunity ever presented by history to any nation" to avoid the evils of capitalism.

3. See Marx's letter to Jenny Longuet of April 11, 1881. See also Engels's letter to Vera Zasulich of April 23, 1885.

To my mind, this is exactly what is happening" (letter to N. Danielson, March 15, 1892).

Engels therefore believed that capitalist development had become inevitable in Russia and would lead to the emergence of a modern proletariat as the only fully revolutionary class, and the only class capable of introducing socialism in Russia. By the same token, he now gave his full support to the first nucleus of Russian Marxists around Plekhanov. All these positions were spelled out in his postscript to *Sozialismus Russland* (January 1894).

The polemic between the Russian populists and Marxists

Narodnaya Volya had given birth to several populist organizations, and then to the Social Revolutionary Party (SRP), which was clearly derived from populism. The SRP was to remain the largest and most influential organization in Russia until 1917.⁴ It differed from the newly formed Russian social democracy, which was officially established as a party in 1898, on a series of analytical and political points.

The SRP believed capitalism could not develop extensively in Russia due to the narrowness of the domestic market. Consequently, it did not believe the proletariat would play a leading role in the coming Russian revolution, and instead attributed this role to the peasantry. It rejected the idea that the peasantry, which was now involved in petty commodity production and aspired to individual ownership of the land, could not form a social force fighting for a socialist society. Its platform therefore advocated the socialization of land and an immediate transition to an agrarian socialism (communism). However, under the pressure of its own peasant base, it gradually abandoned the last point and adopted a program for dividing up the land.

The Russian Marxists, backed up by the Western Marxists, launched a sustained polemic against these populist theses. They stated that capitalist development had become irreversible and prevalent in Russia. Along with capitalist development would come the development of the proletariat and its party, Russian social democracy, which was a part of international social democracy. Like its counterparts, Russian social democracy should struggle for the overthrow of capitalism through the dictatorship of the proletariat and collective ownership of the means of production.

With this goal in mind, the proletariat had to be organized completely independently of all other classes. Flowing from this analysis, the Russian Marxists viewed the populists, the SRP, as objectively bourgeois-democratic and nonproletarian because they lumped together working-class, peasant, semiproletarian plebeian, and urban petty-bourgeois forces.

Moreover, the populists opposed political support for the bourgeois liberal opposition movement, which they characterized as an internal quarrel within the ruling classes. By contrast, the Marxists favored critical support and even temporary agreements with bourgeois liberal opposition movements, while maintaining the political independence of the proletariat and warning the working masses that the liberal

4. We shouldn't forget that even after the October revolution, during the elections to the Constituent Assembly, the SRP still received an absolute majority of votes and seats. It is true that in the cities it was beaten by the Bolshevik Party, and its overall majority reflected mainly the overwhelming weight of the peasantry in Russia. It is also true that it had already split two ways: the right SRs ferociously opposing the seizure of power by the soviets, and the left SRs supporting and even joining, temporarily, a coalition government with the Bolsheviks. The coalition was broken by the left SRs when the Brest Litovsk peace treaty was signed.

bourgeoisie was incapable of waging a consistent, radical, and thorough struggle against absolutism.

The Marxists drew this position from an estimate that can be seen in the following quote from the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party (RSDLP) program adopted at the Second Congress (1903) and drafted by Plekhanov and Lenin:

"On the way to achieving their common ultimate aim, which is conditioned by the dominance of the capitalist mode of production throughout the civilised world, the Social Democrats of the different countries are obliged to undertake different immediate tasks, both because this mode of production has not developed everywhere to the same degree and because its development in the different countries is coming to fruition under a variety of socio-political circumstances.

"In Russia, where capitalism has already become the dominant mode of production, there are still very many survivals from the old pre-capitalist order, which was based on the enslavement of the working masses by the landlords, the state or the sovereign. Hindering economic progress to a very considerable extent, these survivals inhibit an all-round development of the class struggle of the proletariat, and contribute to the maintenance and consolidation of the most barbarous forms of exploitation of the many millions of peasants by the state and the property-owning classes, and to keeping the entire people in ignorance and deprived of rights.

"The most important of all these survivals and the mightiest bulwark of all this barbarism is the Tsarist autocracy. By its very nature it is inimical to all social progress and cannot but be the most malevolent enemy of all the proletariat's strivings for freedom.

"Therefore, the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party takes as its most immediate political task the overthrow of the Tsarist autocracy and its replacement by a democratic republic."

In other words, the program of the RSDLP, the Russian Marxists, distinguished *two stages of the Russian revolution*:

- An immediate stage, which was the democratic (or bourgeois-democratic) revolution, whose goal was the overthrow of the tsarist autocracy and not of capitalism. In fact, the goal of the democratic revolution was to be *the unfettered development of capitalism*, and simultaneously the maximum development of the proletariat, the proletarian class struggle, and the proletarian party.

- A subsequent stage, that of the social revolution leading to the dictatorship of the proletariat, the overthrow of capitalism, and the construction of a socialist society.

The tasks of the first stage were democratic tasks — the bourgeois-democratic republic and the agrarian revolution. The tasks of the second stage were socialist tasks.

The great majority of Russian Marxists — especially Plekhanov, Lenin, Martov, Axelrod, and Trotsky — agreed on that distinction until 1904, despite their differences on the organizational question, which had divided them at the Second Congress of the RSDLP in 1903. This was clearly reflected in the political debates at the Second Congress, especially those on the agrarian question. Here are a few particularly telling interventions:

- *Lenin*: "We are pursuing in the countryside two aims which are different in kind: first, we want to secure freedom for bourgeois relations; secondly, we want to wage the proletarian struggle."

- *Trotsky*: "Our general minimum programme represents the maximum that we can demand of the capitalist order. Our agrarian programme calls for clearing feudal hindrances from the path of this capitalist order as a whole. . . . We approach the Polish peasants with the gener-

al-democratic part of our programme, we approach the rural poor with our propaganda for socialism."

- *Lenin*: "Comrade Lieber has forgotten the difference between the democratic and the socialist parts of the programme. What he has taken for 'meagreness' is the absence of anything socialistic in the democratic programme. . . . Only the Socialist-Revolutionaries, with their characteristic lack of principle, are capable of confusing, and constantly do confuse, democratic and socialist demands. The Party of the proletariat, however, is in duty bound to separate and distinguish between them in the strictest fashion."

- *Plekhanov*: "Such a movement in favour of redistribution would certainly be a movement in the bourgeoisie's favour. We are, of course, not obliged actively to set forth a programme for the bourgeoisie, but if, in the struggle against survivals of serfdom relations, the peasantry should take that path, then it would not be for us to hold back this progressive movement."⁵

The same clarity prevailed concerning the need to support the political struggle of the liberal bourgeoisie against the absolutist autocracy. The Second Congress of the RSDLP adopted two resolutions on this issue; the one submitted by Starover and endorsed by Trotsky stated:

"The party does not refuse to enter, and should the need arise will enter, through its central institutions, into temporary agreements with liberal or liberal-democratic trends."

The other, submitted by Plekhanov and endorsed by Lenin, stated:

"Social Democracy must support the bourgeoisie insofar as it is revolutionary or even merely oppositional in its struggle against tsardom."

Both resolutions stressed the limited and inadequate character of the bourgeois opposition.⁶ The party program also included similar formulations.

At first, the differences between Bolsheviks and Mensheviks seemed limited to organizational problems; at the Second Congress of the RSDLP some Mensheviks even adopted a more "extremist" (in reality a half-economist, half-workerist) position toward the liberal bourgeoisie than the Bolsheviks.

The differences between Bolsheviks and Mensheviks after 1905

But it rapidly emerged that deep differences on *what tactic was appropriate for the Russian revolution* also divided Bolsheviks and Mensheviks. The Russian revolution of 1905, its aftermath, and the Unity Congress of the RSDLP in Stockholm, clarified the matter.

Both the Mensheviks and the Bolsheviks agreed on *the bourgeois nature of the coming Russian revolution* in a two-fold sense:

- The immediate tasks of the revolution would be the overthrow of the tsarist autocracy and the elimination of semifeudal survivals in the countryside. These were obviously historical tasks of the bourgeois-democratic revolution and not of the socialist revolution;

- The victory of the Russian revolution would lead to an accelerated and unfettered development of capitalism in Russia, and not to the socialization of the economy.

But from these premises, the Mensheviks drew the conclu-

5. See the official record of the *Second Congress of the RSDLP*, translated from the Russian by Brian Pearce, English edition, London: New Park Publications, 1978, pp. 273, 254-255, 256-257, 267.

6. *Ibid.*, pp. 19-20.

sion that the revolution could succeed only under the leadership of the bourgeoisie. On the one hand, the party of the proletariat would have to drive the bourgeoisie forward with a sword to its back and force it to carry out the revolutionary work it hesitated to perform. In addition, the party of the proletariat would have to fight for the broadest political and economic reforms on behalf of the proletariat (the eight-hour day, compulsory education for all children with free lunches served in the schools, etc.). But this oppositional work would have to keep within the bounds of reason and moderation, lest the bourgeoisie prematurely desert the revolutionary camp and go over to the counterrevolution, which would doom the revolution to failure.

Lenin advocated a position diametrically counterposed to that of the Mensheviks. He reminded them that even the French revolution of 1789 had only been able to accomplish its historical tasks because the Jacobin petty bourgeoisie had successively driven out of power the various fractions of the bourgeoisie which, fearful of the people, had been prepared to capitulate to the counterrevolution or avoid the necessary radical measures. He recalled the revolution of 1848 in which the German bourgeoisie had behaved in an even more counterrevolutionary fashion, leading the revolution to defeat, which led Marx to note that the further east one went, the more cowardly the bourgeoisie became.

All this led to the conclusion that in Russia, where capitalism was far more developed in 1905 than in Germany in 1848, not to mention France in 1789, the bourgeoisie would be absolutely incapable of leading a radical democratic and agrarian revolution and moreover did not aspire to do so. This meant that under bourgeois leadership, the Russian revolution was doomed to fail. It could triumph only with the equivalent of a Jacobin leadership and a Jacobin dictatorship.

In the context of Russian society in 1905, given the social classes existing in the country at that time, this could only mean an alliance between the proletariat and the peasantry: the democratic dictatorship of the workers and peasants.

Two key questions — the one strategic, the other tactical — crystallized the differences between the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks on the nature and perspectives of the Russian revolution. The Mensheviks tended more and more to reduce the content of the democratic (bourgeois-democratic) revolution to strictly political questions: free elections, parliamentary representation, democratic freedoms, etc. By contrast, Lenin believed *the agrarian question* was the key question of the democratic revolution. Because the bourgeoisie feared a radical agrarian revolution — a generalized uprising of the peasantry, a revolutionary takeover of the land by the peasants — it refused to take up a determined struggle against the autocracy, the army, and the state apparatus, which in the last analysis were the guardians of *all* private property. Any conciliationist approach toward the liberal bourgeoisie necessarily involved *both* the rejection of a radical and persistent struggle for land *and* the rejection of a radical and persistent struggle for freedom.

Given their reductionist conception of the democratic revolution, the Mensheviks, after a few hesitations, began leaning more and more toward a *political bloc with the bourgeois parties*. Lenin rejected such a bloc with all his might, because he considered it would constitute an insurmountable obstacle to launching a successful agrarian revolution.

But Lenin and the Bolsheviks did not change their position on the perspective opened by a victory of the Russian revolution. For them, what was always involved was opening the way to the unfettered development of capitalism in Russia, and not initiating a socialized and collectivized econ-

omy (these days, we would say: not establishing a transitional society between capitalism and socialism). This appears clearly in Lenin's speech to the Fifth Congress (London) of the RSDLP on May 12, 1907:

"Speaking objectively, from the point of view not of our desires, but of the present economic development of Russia, the basic question of our revolution is whether it will secure the development of capitalism through the peasants' complete victory over the landowners or through the landowners' victory over the peasants. A bourgeois-democratic revolution in Russia's economy is absolutely inevitable. No power on earth can hinder it. But this revolution is possible in either of two ways: in the Prussian, if one might say so, or in the American way. This means the following; the landlords may win, may foist compensation payments or other petty concessions on the peasants, may unite with a handful of the wealthy, pauperise the masses, and convert their own farms into Junker-type, capitalist, farms. Such a revolution will be bourgeois-democratic but it will be to the least advantage of the peasants — to their least advantage from the angle of the rapidity of capitalist development. Or, on the contrary, the complete victory of the peasant uprising, the confiscation of all landed estates and their equal division will signify the most rapid development of capitalism, the form of bourgeois-democratic revolution most advantageous to the peasants" (*Collected Works* [C.W.], Vol. 12, p. 465).

The resolution is unambiguous: development of capitalism in the American way; the most rapid development of capitalism; it is clear and obvious. Many such quotations can be found in Lenin's writings between 1905 and 1916, especially in *Two Tactics of Social Democracy in the Democratic Revolution* (1905):

"It means that the democratic reforms in the political system, and the social and economic reforms that have become a necessity for Russia, do not in themselves imply the undermining of capitalism, the undermining of bourgeois rule; on the contrary, they will, for the first time, really clear the ground for a wide and rapid, European, and not Asiatic, development of capitalism; they will, for the first time, make it possible for the bourgeoisie to rule as a class" (C.W., Vol. 19, p. 48).

And in his January 3, 1911, letter to Gorky, he wrote:

"There is capitalism and capitalism. There is Black-Hundred-Octoberist capitalism and Narodnik ('realistic, democratic,' full of 'activity') capitalism. The more we expose capitalism before the workers for its 'greed and cruelty,' the more difficult is it for capitalism of the first order to persist, the more surely is it bound to pass into capitalism of the second order. And this just suits us, this just suits the proletariat. . . .

"There is practically no Octoberist capitalism left in Western Europe; practically all capitalism is democratic. Octoberist capitalism has gone from Britain and France to Russia and Asia. *The Russian revolution and the revolutions in Asia* [are] the struggle for ousting Octoberist capitalism and replacing it by democratic capitalism. And democratic capitalism [is] the last of its kind. It has no next stage to go on to. The next stage is its death" (C.W., Vol. 34, pp. 438-439, emphasis added, E.M.).

The insurrection, the government, the state

Social democracy and revolutionary-bourgeois (i.e., peasant) democracy together must carry to the end the bourgeois revolution against the bourgeoisie, in order to allow the unfettered development of capitalism in Russia. That, in a few words, was the position of Lenin and the Bolsheviks in the 1905 Russian revolution and from then until after the Febru-

rary 1917 revolution, i.e., until the April Theses were formulated.

Unlike the Mensheviks, Lenin, in line with his own position, called for Social Democratic participation in a revolutionary insurrectional government, and even for an insurrectional process culminating in a revolutionary government under Social Democratic leadership:

"(1) that in order to complete the revolution, the urgent task now confronting the proletariat is, jointly with the revolutionary democrats, to help to unite the insurrection, and to set up an organ that will unite it, in the shape of a provisional revolutionary government . . ." (C.W., Vol. 10, p. 155).

Did the idea of the seizure of power by a revolutionary government dominated by social democracy contradict the position on the bourgeois nature of the revolution and its tasks? Did it contradict Lenin's obstinate and frequent refusal to confuse, i.e., to *combine*, the democratic tasks and the socialist tasks, the minimum program and the maximum program?

In our opinion, there was no such contradiction in Lenin's mind, i.e., subjectively. This is why *all* these positions of Lenin are often stated *at the same time* in the same writing, the same article, the same report, the same brochure. Nor does the contradiction exist from the point of view of formal logic. One can be for the seizure of power by a *provisional* government and at the same time stress the fact that this government will be precisely . . . provisional, i.e. that it will have to give up or lose power later on, given the bourgeois character of the revolution.

This emerges from Lenin's analogy with the *Jacobins'* rule during the French revolution. In the Marxist tradition, the function of Danton, Marat, and Robespierre was to push the revolution forward to its ultimate, to push it to a point where the bourgeoisie neither wanted to nor could go. But after successfully carrying out this task, the *Jacobins* were condemned to lose power. What was on the historical agenda in France was the development of capitalism, not the development of an egalitarian society based on small private property, the utopia desired by the *Jacobins*, much less the construction of a socialist society.

This emerges even more clearly from the very formulas Lenin used in relation to the "democratic dictatorship of the workers and peasants," in which he stressed the transitional, provisional character of this dictatorship, of this government:

"In plain and simple Russian, an organ of power of the people which temporarily assumes the duties of a government that has collapsed is called a provisional revolutionary government. *Such a government is bound to be provisional, for its authority expires with the convocation of a constituent assembly representing the whole people.*" (C.W., Vol. 10, p. 67, emphasis added).

This is obvious from Lenin's stress on the fact that the *political* counterrevolution, the "political restoration," would be inevitable unless the socialist revolution triumphs in the West. This is also obvious from Lenin's stress on the *bourgeois character* of the state that would emerge from the victory of the Russian revolution:

"A bourgeois revolution is a revolution which does not depart from the framework of the bourgeois, i.e. capitalist, socio-economic system. A bourgeois revolution expresses the needs of capitalist development, and, far from destroying the foundations of capitalism, it effects the contrary — it broadens and deepens them. . . . Since the rule of the bourgeoisie over the working class is inevitable under capitalism, it can well be said that a bourgeois revolution expresses the interests not so much of the proletariat as of the bourgeoisie.

"But it is quite absurd to think that a bourgeois revolution does not at all express proletarian interests. This absurd idea boils down either to the hoary Narodnik theory that . . . we do not need bourgeois political liberty; or to anarchism, which denies any participation of the proletariat in bourgeois politics, in a bourgeois revolution and in bourgeois parliamentarism." ("Two Tactics," C.W., Vol. 9, p. 49).

Lenin insisted so strongly on this point that not only did he radically reject any notion of "revolutionary communes," any notion of a state (in contrast to an insurrection) based on soviets, but he went so far as to state:

"The real task the Commune had to perform was primarily the achievement of the democratic and not the socialist dictatorship, the implementation of our 'minimum programme'" (C.W., Vol. 9, p. 141).

All these positions therefore were *logically* consistent. But were they consistent from the point of view of *the dialectic of social classes engaged in struggle?*

That is another question altogether, one which Trotsky (and history) basically answered in the negative.

Nevertheless, as we stress the contradictory aspect of Lenin's position, we must at the same time stress its contradictory effects, which were not all negative.

By educating his faction, and then his party, in the spirit of a clear-cut distinction between "minimum program" and "maximum program," in the spirit of limiting the "first stage" of the revolution to purely democratic tasks, in the spirit of Social Democratic participation in a provisional revolutionary government, Lenin facilitated the confusion in the first weeks of the February revolution, when *all* the Bolshevik leaders and *all* the Bolshevik cadres favored "critical" support to and even collaboration with the provisional coalition government and rejected as "utopian," "semi-anarchist," etc., any notion of a seizure of power by the working class, of a "workers government," let alone the dictatorship of the proletariat based on the soviets.

But, by educating his faction, and then his party, in the spirit of a *necessary seizure of power*, Lenin facilitated the "turn" towards a Soviet regime that was first made spontaneously by the vanguard working-class cadres, and later by the adoption by the party of the same turn to the dictatorship of the proletariat. The education in the spirit of strict class independence did the rest. The correct education given on these two points outweighed the erroneous dogma of the "two stages," of the separation between the "minimum program" and the "maximum program," of the counterposition of the "democratic dictatorship" to the dictatorship of the proletariat, of the soviets as "non-party" insurrectional organs in which the Social Democrats could be active but which could not be "substituted" for the "provisional" revolutionary government or the state emerging from the revolution. The soviets became organs of power, neither provisional nor bourgeois: organs of the dictatorship of the proletariat, the foundation of a new state, a non-bourgeois state, a workers state.

Trotsky's original position

Beginning in 1904, Trotsky developed an entirely new and original position on character and perspectives of the Russian revolution. He and his supporters alone defended that position against both the Mensheviks and Bolsheviks. The argument was presented in a small brochure published on the eve of the events of January 1905; then in *Results and Prospects*, published in 1906; in a less well-known article in the Polish social-democratic review *Przegląd Social-Demokratyczny* in 1908; and in his book *1905*, published in 1909.

His position flowed from his discovery of the law of *uneven and combined development*, undoubtedly his fundamental contribution to Marxism.

Starting from the position shared by all Marxists that the Russian revolution had to solve the tasks of the bourgeois-democratic revolution, above all the conquest of political democracy and the conquest of the land, Trotsky immediately posed a question that Plekhanov and Lenin had either not, or only insufficiently, formulated: *In what concrete national and international social and economic context would this revolution unfold? What would its main driving forces be? What would be the relationship of forces between the social classes involved in the revolution?*

Trotsky answered: The particularities of uneven and combined development in Russia have caused the growth of the proletariat to considerably outdistance that of the Russian bourgeoisie because the proletariat is the product not only of the "organic" development of Russian capitalism, but also of the intervention of foreign capital and above all of the role of the state in stimulating industrialization. Paradoxically, because of its high degree of concentration in large industries, the Russian proletariat, which emerged in a "backward" country, was more militant and more advanced in many ways than the proletariat of far more-developed countries.

In the first place, this meant that insofar as the proletariat already had its own independent organizations and already acted as an independent force on the political scene, the bourgeoisie as a whole would go over to the counterrevolution, even more because of its fear of the proletariat than of peasant uprisings. Therefore no alliance with the bourgeoisie or with bourgeois parties could lead to the victory of the revolution. There were no differences between Lenin and Trotsky on this point.⁷ Together, both opposed the Mensheviks.

Another consequence of Trotsky's analysis was the recognition that a revolutionary victory won under the leadership of the proletariat, at the head of all the oppressed classes of the nation, could not be confined to winning the goals of the bourgeois-democratic revolution alone. It was inconceivable a proletariat as centralized, as united, as conscious, as militant as the Russian proletariat, would accept being exploited by capitalist bosses *after having armed itself and taken power at the head of an insurrection* (there was of course no difference between Lenin and Trotsky on the necessity of such an insurrection).

The proletariat, having insured the victory of the agrarian revolution (the conquest of the land by the peasants), would move on to initiate the collectivization and confiscation of large capitalist property too, without interruption, without demobilization and without discontinuity.

In this sense, the revolution would be permanent, the conquest of the historical objectives of the bourgeois-democratic revolution *would, in real life, combine* with the conquest of the historical objectives of the socialist revolution without an intermediate period of capitalist development.

Would the Russian proletariat, being a small minority in a sea of peasant petty commodity producers, be able to keep power after having taken it? Trotsky answered no. It could remain in power only if the Russian revolution triggered a

socialist revolution in the West. On this issue, and contrary to a longstanding myth, Trotsky's position *was not original* but was shared by Kautsky, Rosa Luxemburg, and Lenin. What is even more surprising, Lenin and the other leaders of the Marxist left stated that *even the bourgeois-democratic revolution was doomed to retreat* (that is, doomed to a *political* victory of reaction) if there were no socialist victory in the West:

"The only complete guarantee against restoration in Russia (after a victorious revolution in Russia) is a socialist revolution in the West. There is and can be no other guarantee. Thus, from this aspect, the question is: how can the bourgeois-democratic revolution in Russia facilitate, or accelerate, the socialist revolution in the West? The only conceivable answer to this is: if the miserable Manifesto of October 17 gave a powerful impetus to the working-class movement in Europe, then the *complete* victory of the bourgeois revolutions in Russia will almost inevitably (or at all events, in all probability) arouse a number of such political upheavals in Europe as will give a very powerful impetus to the socialist revolution" (C.W., Vol. 10, p. 334).

What political forms would the proletariat, at the head of the entire nation, have to use to accomplish the historical tasks of the bourgeois-democratic revolution in Russia? Since the bourgeoisie was doomed to go over to the camp of the counterrevolution, there were only two possibilities: either the alliance between a peasant political force (or political forces) and the party of the proletariat, or the conquest of power by the proletariat (led by its party) supported by the peasantry.

The first possibility was rejected by Trotsky because of the peasantry's inability to constitute an autonomous political force in the course of a revolution. Only the second variant remained: the Russian revolution could only succeed through the establishment of a dictatorship of the proletariat leading the peasantry. The law of uneven and combined development implied that the proletariat could take power in a backward country before it did so in the most advanced countries. Trotsky formulated this prediction as early as 1906. Subsequent events are well known.

The differences between Lenin and Trotsky

The differences between Lenin and Trotsky on the perspectives of the Russian revolution therefore basically concerned four points:

1. The impossibility for Russia, given the existing social and economic context, to undergo modernization and industrialization through a "rapid development of capitalism," and especially through "American-style" development of agriculture. To believe such an outcome possible, as Lenin persistently did until 1916, was to underestimate the weight of imperialism, of the world market (which left no room for a second America!), and of the agrarian crisis in Russia itself, which could no longer be solved in a capitalist framework.

We should draw attention to the fact that the only Marxist who took a few timid steps in the same direction and startled all the Russian Marxists, beginning with Lenin himself, was Kautsky.⁸ In his balance sheet of the Russian revolution, Kautsky argued that, in order to resolve the agrarian question, the large industrial monopolies would have to be confiscated along with the large landed estates. But Lenin did not

7. "It must be agreed that Trotsky's amendment is not Menshevik, that it expresses the 'very same', that is, Bolshevik, idea. But Trotsky has expressed this idea in a way that is scarcely better" ("Objections to Trotsky's Amendments to the Bolshevik Resolution on the Attitude Towards Bourgeois Parties," at the Fifth Congress of the RSDLP) (C.W., Vol. 12, p. 479).

8. Under the influence of the Russian revolution Kautsky adopted the most advanced positions of his career between 1906 and 1909, especially in his commentaries on the Russian revolution and in his work *Der Weg zur Macht*.

follow him on this road,⁹ and Kautsky himself quickly took fright at his own boldness and from 1910 onward retreated to more traditional centrist positions.

2. The impossibility for the peasantry to constitute a political party or force that would be independent both of the bourgeoisie and the working class. Trotsky was certain that this was impossible. By contrast, Lenin was certain that the revolutionary peasantry had to *take political power*:

"But how can a peasant revolution win if the revolutionary peasantry does not seize power? Plekhanov has reduced his own arguments to absurdity. Having stepped on to a slope, he irresistibly rolls down. First he denied that it was possible for the proletariat to seize power in the present revolution. Now he denies that it is possible for the revolutionary peasantry to seize power in the present revolution. But if *neither* the proletariat *nor* the revolutionary peasantry can seize power, then, logically, that power *must remain in the hands of the tsar and of Dubasov*. Or should the Cadets take power? But the Cadets do not want to seize power themselves, for they are in favour of retaining the monarchy, the standing army, the Upper Chamber and all the other delights" (C.W., Vol. 10, p. 340-341).

To those who claimed there were no "revolutionary bourgeois democrats" in Russia to lead the revolution with the representatives of the proletariat, Lenin answered no less clearly:

"Unless the activities of the worker democrats and bourgeois democrats are co-ordinated, the bourgeois-democratic revolution cannot be successful. This is gospel truth. . . .

"It seems to you that there are no revolutionary bourgeois democrats in Russia, that the Cadets are the only, or at all events, the main force of bourgeois democracy in Russia. But it seems so to you only because you are short-sighted. . . . There are revolutionary bourgeois democrats in Russia, and there must be, so long as there is a revolutionary peasantry, which by thousands of millions of threads is also bound up with the poorer classes in the towns" (C.W., Vol. 10, p. 260 and 263).

Moreover, Lenin tended to give concrete content to the algebraic formula "revolutionary bourgeois democrats" leading the peasantry; it meant the *Trudoviks* (Kerensky's party) and SRs. See the May 11, 1906, article "The Peasant, or 'Trudovik,' Group and the RSDLP":

"Today there is nothing more important for the success of the revolution than this organisation, education and political training of the revolutionary bourgeois democrats. The socialist proletariat, while ruthlessly exposing the instability of the Cadets, will do everything it can to promote this great work" (C.W., Vol. 10, p. 413).

3. The capacity of the Russian proletariat to begin to resolve the socialist tasks of the revolution. For Trotsky, that capacity was obvious. It appeared in all the great workers' struggles (especially the mass strikes, the 1905 general strike, and the formation of soviets). For Lenin, that capacity did not exist:

"Finally, we will note that the resolution, by making implementation of the minimum programme the provisional revolutionary government's task, eliminates the absurd and semi-anarchist ideas of giving immediate effect to the maximum programme, and the conquest of power for a socialist revolution. The degree of Russia's economic development (an

objective condition), and the degree of class-consciousness and organisation of the broad masses of the proletariat (a subjective condition inseparably bound up with the objective condition) make the immediate and complete emancipation of the working class impossible. Only the most ignorant people can close their eyes to the bourgeois nature of the democratic revolution which is now taking place; only the most naïve optimists can forget how little as yet the masses of the workers are informed about the aims of socialism and the methods of achieving it" (C.W., Vol. 9, p. 28-29).

For Lenin, therefore, the "self-limitation of the proletariat," that is the refusal to move beyond the realization of the most radical bourgeois-democratic demands, even while the Social Democrats might participate in a revolutionary insurrectional government, correspond to an objective necessity. Only through prolonged experience with political democracy, through prolonged mass educational and organizational work that would coincide precisely with the "unfettered development of capitalism," could the proletariat acquire the capacity to accomplish the tasks of the socialist revolution.

4. Logically, Lenin's position led to *counterposing* the formula "democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry" to the formula "dictatorship of the proletariat." *The two formulas were not mere slogans but encapsulated the strategic perspectives of the revolution*: the character of the state and society that would emerge from the revolutionary victory:

"Without a dictatorship it is impossible to break down that resistance and repel counter-revolutionary attempts. But of course it will be democratic, not a socialist dictatorship. It will be unable (without a series of intermediary stages of revolutionary development) to affect the foundations of capitalism. At best, it may bring about a radical redistribution of landed property in favour of the peasantry, establish consistent and full democracy, including the formation of a republic, eradicate all the oppressive features of Asiatic bondage, not only in rural but also in factory life, lay the foundation for a thorough improvement in the conditions of the workers and for a rise in their standard of living, and — last but not least — carry the revolutionary conflagration into Europe. Such a victory will not yet by any means transform our bourgeois revolution into a socialist revolution; the democratic revolution will not immediately overstep the bounds of bourgeois social and economic relationships; nevertheless, the significance of such a victory for the future development of Russia and of the whole world will be immense" (C.W., Vol. 9, p. 56-57).

And even more sharply and precisely:

"This means: not the socialist dictatorship of the proletariat, but the democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry" (C.W., Vol. 11, p. 374).

Clearly then the Russian Marxists were divided between *three*, not *two*, conceptions of the Russian revolution, its perspectives, and the strategic tasks it implied.¹⁰

The verdict of the 1917 revolution

Lenin explicitly changed his position on three of these four issues in his April Thesis of 1917; and now in fact stood for the same positions Trotsky had defended since 1904-1906:

1. Contrary to what he previously contended, he now

9. Kautsky, "The Motor Forces and Perspectives of the Russian Revolution," *Die Neue Zeit*, 1906. Lenin himself noted that this article went much further than even the most extreme Bolsheviks (C.W., Vol. 11, p. 369). Kautsky excluded, however, any realization of the socialist program by the Russian revolution.

10. Comrade Trotsky admirably summarized his position on the existence of *three*, not *two*, conceptions of the Russian revolution in his document, "Three Conceptions of the Russian Revolution," appended to his book, *Stalin*.

argued that the experience of all modern revolutions had demonstrated the peasantry's inability to form a political force independent of the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. All illusions about an independent role of the *Trudoviks* (Kerensky!) or the SRs disappeared. These parties emerged as tail-enders of the bourgeoisie, just as incapable of carrying out a radical agrarian revolution as the bourgeois liberals. Insofar as one wing of the SRs participated in the revolutionary victory, it did so under the leadership of the Bolsheviks and the proletariat, not as a force wielding equal power alongside the proletariat, and even less as the major force involved:

"We know from our own experience — and revolutions all over the world confirm it if we take the modern epoch of, say, a hundred and fifty years — that the result has always been the same everywhere: the petty bourgeoisie in general, and the peasants in particular, have failed in all their attempts to realise their strength, and to direct economics and politics their own way. They have had to follow the leadership either of the proletariat, or the capitalists — there is no middle way open to them. Anyone who thinks of a middle way is an empty dreamer" ("Speech to the Congress of Transport Workers," March 27, 1921. *C.W.*, Vol. 32, p. 277-278).

2. Contrary to what he previously contended, the socialist revolution was fully on the agenda even before the agrarian revolution was accomplished. Let us not forget that Lenin began his speech to the Second Congress of the soviets, the very congress which took power, with these words: "We will now proceed to the construction of socialism." The fact that in the beginning, the revolutionary government was content to establish workers control over industry rather than nationalize it, no longer had anything to do with any belief in the "socialist immaturity" of the proletariat. It had to do only with scheduling the socialist tasks of the revolution in a chronologically and economically rational way.

Many more quotations could be produced. It is enough to note that in a March 7, 1918, document (*C.W.*, Vol. 27, p. 89-90), Lenin explicitly characterized the October revolution as a socialist revolution.

3. Contrary to what he previously contended, the state that issued from the revolution was now clearly presented as a workers state, as the dictatorship of the proletariat, and not as a bourgeois state. This is why all Lenin's writings after the polemics around the April Theses and, understandably, all references to the October revolution after its victory, never mention the "democratic dictatorship of the workers and peasants" but always speak of "the dictatorship of the proletariat." The same applies to the documents of the Communist International on the Russian revolution.

In his report on the Russian revolution of 1905, delivered in January 1917, Lenin still stated that this revolution: "was a *bourgeois-democratic* revolution in its social content, but a *proletarian* revolution in its methods of struggle. It was a bourgeois-democratic revolution since its immediate aim, which it could achieve directly and with its own forces, was a

democratic republic, the eight-hour day and confiscation of the immense estates of the nobility" (*C.W.*, Vol. 23, p. 238-239).

But a few weeks later, in his "Letters from Afar," he already saw in the soviets the "*embryo of a workers government*," and proclaimed the necessity for a state like that of the Paris Commune, that is for a workers state (*C.W.*, Vol. 23, 295-342). While he still maintained in that text that this would not yet be the dictatorship of the proletariat but the "democratic dictatorship of the workers and peasants," he abandoned the formula in the April Theses and "codified" the dictatorship of the proletariat in *State and Revolution*.

It is clear that in Lenin's mind, as well as Trotsky's, "democratic dictatorship of the workers and peasants" and "dictatorship of the proletariat" were antithetical formulas and mutually exclusive. The one implied a bourgeois state, the other a workers state. By April 1917, Lenin had decided in favor of the workers state.

On March 8, 1918, Lenin characterized the Russian state as issuing from a revolution in the course of which "the workers created their own state" (*C.W.*, Vol. 27, p. 126). On March 9 of the same year, he formulated his position even more clearly:

"The Revolution of October 25 (November 7), 1917 in Russia brought about the dictatorship of the proletariat, which has been supported by the poor peasants or semi-proletarians" (*C.W.*, Vol. 27, p. 153).

The only issue on which Lenin did not take a stand after April 1917 was the objective impossibility of a long period of capitalist economic growth in Russia "on the European and not the Asiatic model." But here too, everything he had written about imperialism, about the First World War, about its objective consequences, and especially *The Imminent Catastrophe and the Means to Conjure It*, clearly indicate the direction in which he was heading. At any rate, the "unfettered development" of capitalism occurred neither between 1906 and 1914, nor between February and October 1917, much less after October 1917.

It was the dictatorship of the proletariat supported by the peasantry that made it possible to carry out the agrarian revolution, the main task of the bourgeois-democratic revolution in Russia. This was the verdict of history. Only if one reduces, in Menshevik fashion, the tasks of that revolution solely to the overthrow of absolutism (and not even to the complete conquest of freedom since the standing army still stood and there was no Constituent Assembly and no emancipation of the oppressed nationalities) can one claim that the "democratic stage" was realized in February 1917.

In reality, the tasks of the democratic revolution were accomplished only after the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat, *after* the conquest of power by the soviets, *after* the creation of a workers state. And they were accomplished in the closest combination with a whole series of tasks (not all, of course) that were already socialist in nature.

January 1, 1982

Our Political Continuity with Bolshevism

by Doug Jenness

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Our November 1981 issue celebrated the 64th anniversary of the Russian revolution by featuring Lenin's complete 1921 article, "Fourth Anniversary of the October Revolution." This was the first time it had been run in the *Militant or International Socialist Review*. We accompanied Lenin's article with a brief description of the Bolsheviks' political strategy of the Russian revolution, around which the party was built, which made possible the victory in October.

In the April 1982 issue of the *ISR*, Ernest Mandel takes issue with our description. Mandel offers his own interpretation of Lenin's strategy, counterposing it positively to the pre-1917 positions of the Mensheviks and negatively to the pre-1917 views of Leon Trotsky.

The result is an erroneous presentation of the Bolshevik strategy and a distorted picture of the differences in the Russian workers movement leading up to the 1917 revolution.

This remains an important question today. It cannot be dismissed merely as history, since it bears directly on the question: What is the *revolutionary continuity* of Marxist strategy that has guided communists since 1847? Does it remain valid today? Arriving at correct answers to these questions is indispensable if the international workers' movement is to lead its allies in overturning the old ruling classes, abolishing capitalist exploitation and all the forms of oppression bred and perpetuated by it, and preventing the imperialists from blowing up the world in pursuit of profits.

What is the historic line of march of the working class in its struggle for the world socialist revolution? That question is necessarily posed by any discussion of Lenin's strategy, since it was the Bolshevik Party that led the workers and peasants in the first successful socialist revolution in world history.

Russia at the turn of the century was a country, as Lenin put it, "where modern capitalist imperialism is enmeshed . . . in a particularly close network of pre-capitalist relations." A feudal monarchy still governed the country, and many remnants of serfdom and medievalism existed in the countryside. The peasantry remained a large majority of the population, while the working class, concentrated in cities such as St. Petersburg and Moscow, was a small minority. ("Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism," *Collected Works of Lenin [CW]*, Vol. 22, 1916, p. 259).

The central question facing Russian Marxists was how to chart a course toward a revolution of the toilers that would bring down the tsar, abolish semifeudal oppression of the peasant masses, help to impel the socialist revolution in Western Europe, and culminate in the expropriation of the capitalist exploiters. In other words, in a country where most tasks of the bourgeois revolution were still unfulfilled, what strategy and what class alliances were necessary to

build a bridge to the socialist revolution? Solving that problem, both in theory and practice, was what Russian Marxists set out to do.

Russian opponents of tsarist autocracy had been grappling with how to make a revolution there for several decades before the Bolsheviks and Mensheviks, as separately defined currents, appeared on the scene. There was an especially important debate between the narodniks (the Russian term for populists) and the Marxists. From Mandel's description of this debate, however, one might draw the incorrect impression that Marx and Engels, in the 1870s and 1880s, adapted to populism. It is important to be clear on this, since Lenin consciously and explicitly rooted himself in the continuity of Marx and Engels's writings.

Mandel asserts that "after some hesitation," Marx — in correspondence with populist leader Vera Zasulich in 1881 — "arrived at an unambiguous position: Russia could 'leap over the stage of capitalism.'" "Through this analysis," Mandel says, "Marx provided support" to the narodniks against a current evolving away from populist positions. In the late 1880s and early 1890s, following Marx's death, Engels drew the conclusion that history was not bearing out Marx's 1881 hypothesis. Only then did Engels finally throw in his lot with the first nucleus of Russian Marxists. This, in a nutshell, is Mandel's account.

The record shows that Marx and Engels's views on the development of Russian society and their relations with the emerging revolutionary movement there were quite a bit richer and more complex. In fact, they provide a model both of a materialist analysis of a concrete social and economic situation and of how proletarian revolutionists approach fighters struggling against oppression who show potential to evolve toward scientific communism.

Did Marx and Engels adapt to populism?

Throughout their political lives in the nineteenth century, Marx and Engels regarded tsarist Russia as the bastion of reaction in Europe. Moreover, until the Crimean War of 1853-56, they considered revolutionary prospects in Russia to be quite far off. As a result of the tsarist regime's defeat in that war and worsening economic and social conditions, however, the Russian peasants stepped up their struggles. Despite efforts by the tsar in the 1860s to contain these struggles, including a decree of "emancipation" from serfdom that in reality preserved the peasants' bondage to the landlords, the unrest in the countryside could not be permanently quelled. By the 1870s a revolutionary democratic movement — the populists — had arisen in Russia, aiming to overthrow the tsarist autocracy.

Marx and Engels welcomed these revolutionary

developments in Russia, recognizing in them a potentially powerful ally of the workers and peasants of Western Europe, whose struggles had always occurred in the menacing shadow of the tsarist armies.

"There is another great power which, ten years ago, most powerfully checked the revolutionary current [throughout Europe]," Marx wrote in 1858. "We mean Russia. This time, combustible matter has accumulated under her own feet, which a strong blast from the West may set on fire" (*Karl Marx: A Biography*, Progress Publishers, p. 342).

Not only did Marx greet the development of the populist movement in the 1870s as a breach in "the deathly quiet of Russia at home," but many populists also became interested in socialism and were influenced by Marx and Engels's writings. They organized the translation of a number of them into Russian, including *Capital*.

Industrialization in Russia at this time was only in its infancy, and the working class was very small. No organized working-class movement had yet emerged. Many populists developed the idea that the peasantry could be the social basis for a transition to socialism. They pointed to the communal ownership of land, still existing in the rural areas throughout Russia, as the basis for "peasant socialism."

Since Marx and Engels recognized the international significance of the developing Russian revolutionary movement, they took a special interest in the issues it was discussing. Both learned the Russian language in order to read the literature and correspond with Russian revolutionary democrats. Their goal was to influence and win a generation of revolutionary fighters to scientific socialism.

In 1879 the principal populist organization, Land and Liberty (*Zemlya i Volya*), split in two; the majority formed the People's Will (*Narodnaya Volya*), the minority the General Redistribution (*Chernyi Peredel*). All attempts to reunify the two populist factions failed. The principal leadership of the latter group — Georgi Plekhanov, Vera Zasulich, and Pavel Axelrod — subsequently evolved toward Marxism, and in 1883, the year Marx died, established Russia's first Marxist organization, the Emancipation of Labor group.

Marx had no opportunity to learn first hand about the evolution of the political views of the General Redistribution. Based on the information he did have, he sharply reproached it for its initial anarchist-leaning opinions. Recognizing the centrality of the revolutionary democratic tasks of the Russian revolution, Marx criticized the General Redistribution for being "against all political-revolutionary action" and instead proposing that Russia somehow "somersault into the anarchist-communist-atheist millenium." He considered its decision to establish its base of operations in Geneva — a stronghold of Bakunin's anarchism — to be a retreat from revolutionary activity inside Russia. (*Marx and Engels Selected Correspondence*, Progress Publishers, 1880, p. 313).

Marx and Engels respected the courage and dedication of many of the fighters in the People's Will group, but they disagreed with its conspiratorial methods and utopian conceptions of the revolution.

Despite these differences, Marx and Engels kept up their correspondence and meetings with leaders of both groups. Following Marx's death, Plekhanov's

group continued its political evolution, coming over to scientific socialism. Engels greeted their development with enthusiasm in an April 1885 letter to Vera Zasulich. "I am proud to know that there is a party among the youth of Russia which frankly and without equivocation accepts the great economic and historical theories of Marx," he wrote, "and has definitely broken with all the anarchist and also the few existing Slavophil traditions of its predecessors. . . . It is an advance which will be of great importance for the revolutionary development of Russia" (*Marx and Engels Selected Correspondence*, p. 361).

At the same time, Engels never gave up trying to influence figures in the populist movement; he continued to meet and correspond with them for the rest of his life.

The peasant communes

In the 1870s and early 1880s, Marx and Engels considered the prospect of a revolution in Russia to be very possible. Unlike the narodniks, however, they approached this prospect from the standpoint of proletarian revolutionists. And they made their views known to figures in the populist movement.

Marx and Engels noted the uneven economic development between Western Europe, where industrial capitalism was far more advanced, and Russia, where communal landholdings still existed on a national scale and modern capitalist development was just beginning to get under way. If a proletarian revolution in Europe could make the more developed productive forces of the West available to the peasants of Russia, then it was possible that communal property, instead of being carved up into privately-owned plots as capitalist relations penetrated the countryside, could instead be used by a revolutionary government in Russia to develop the economy in the interests of the exploited producers. Only under these circumstances, Marx and Engels said, could Russia move toward socialism, bypassing the type of capitalist development (and attendant ills) that had occurred in Western Europe. Given these conditions, the remnants of communal property could enable progress on the basis of collective labor, the highest form of social organization.

In 1875, Engels, in a polemic with Pyotr Tkachov, a Russian populist, wrote:

"It is clear that communal ownership in Russia is long past its period of florescence and to all appearances is moving towards its disintegration. Nevertheless, the possibility undeniably exists of raising this form of society to a higher one, if it should last until circumstances are ripe for that, and if it shows itself capable of development in such manner that the peasants no longer cultivate the land separately, but collectively; of raising it to this higher form without it being necessary for the Russian peasants to go through the intermediate stage of bourgeois small holdings.

"This, however, can only happen if, before the complete break-up of communal ownership, a proletarian revolution is successfully carried out in Western Europe, creating for the Russian peasant the preconditions requisite for such a transition, particularly the material conditions which he needs if only to carry through the revolution necessarily connected there-

with of his whole agricultural system.”

To make crystal clear that his point of departure was entirely different from that of the narodniks, Engels explained that, “It is, therefore, sheer bounce for Mr. Tkachov to say that the Russian peasants, although ‘owners,’ are ‘nearer to socialism’ than the propertyless workers of Western Europe. Quite the opposite. If anything can still save Russian communal ownership and give it a chance of growing into a new, really viable form, it is a proletarian revolution in Western Europe” (“On Social Relations in Russia,” *Marx and Engels Selected Works (MESW)*, Vol. 2, p. 395).

Marx detailed the same position in a letter the same year to *Otechestvenniye Zapiski*, a populist journal, and in the 1881 letter to Zasulich, mentioned above.

Marx and Engels concisely summarized their views on this question in their jointly-authored preface to the 1882 Russian edition of the *Communist Manifesto*. “If the Russian Revolution becomes the signal for a proletarian revolution in the West, so that both complement each other,” they wrote, “the present Russian common ownership of land may serve as the starting-point for a communist development (emphasis added)” (*MESW*, Vol. 1, p. 100-101).

Neither a Russian revolution nor a proletarian revolution in the West occurred at that time, however. So, as Marx and Engels had foreseen under such circumstances, the destruction of communal property continued under the onslaught of capitalist economic development in Russia.

Until his death in 1895, Engels continued to follow the evolution of the economic and class structure in Russia — the structure that a popular revolution would inherit. In an 1894 postscript to his article, “On Social Relations in Russia,” he noted that “the development of capitalism and the dissolution of the village community in Russia have both taken enormous strides forward.”

“There continues this accelerated transformation of Russia,” he wrote, “into an industrial capitalist state, the proletarianization of a large part of her peasantry, and the destruction of the old communist community.” Engels wasn’t sure “whether this community is still sufficiently intact to become, when the occasion arises, and in combination with a revolution in Western Europe, the starting point for communist development as Marx and I had still hoped in 1882.”

“This much, however, is certain,” he said. “If anything of this community is to be salvaged, the first requirement is the overthrow of the tsarist despotism, a revolution in Russia. The Russian revolution will not only wrest the greater part of the nation, the peasants, from their isolation in the villages, constituting their *mir*, their universe; it will not only lead the peasants out into the large arena, where they will come to know the outside world and with it their own selves, their own condition, and the means of escape from their present misery — the Russian revolution will also give a fresh impulse to the labor movement in the West, creating for it new and better conditions for struggle and thereby advancing the victory of the modern industrial proletariat, a victory without which present-day Russia, whether on the basis of the community or of capitalism, cannot achieve a socialist transformation of society” (*MESW*, Vol. 2, p. 407-

410).

Mandel states that in this 1894 postscript Engels had changed his earlier opinion and come to the conclusion “that capitalist development had become inevitable in Russia.” This is misleading, as the above passage from that article makes clear. Engels had not fundamentally altered the point of view that he and Marx had expressed 12 years earlier. As they had foreseen at that time, in the absence of a successful revolution, the forward march of capitalist relations in Russia had continued, and Engels, in the closing decade of the nineteenth century, took this fact into account in pointing to the most likely course of development.

These statements by Marx and Engels on the peasant communes in Russia were continually referred to and quoted by both sides in the debates between the populists and the Marxists.

Alexi Voden, a Russian socialist who visited with Engels in 1893, wrote that Engels had told him that he expected Voden to raise “the ‘usual’ question on the idea of Marx’s letter to *Otechestvenniye Zapiski* and wondered what was not clear in that letter, since Marx had clearly stated his own and Engels’s conviction that it was important that the achievement of power by Social-Democracy in the West should coincide with the political and agrarian revolution in Russia.”

According to Voden’s account, Engels added that he “wished that the Russians — and not only the Russians — would not pick quotations from Marx or from him, Engels, but would think as Marx would have thought in their place, and that it was only in that sense that the word ‘Marxist’ had any *raison d’etre*. . . .”

Engels also told Voden that “the most necessary thing of all for the Russian Social-Democrats was to work seriously on agrarian problems in Russia” (*Reminiscences of Marx and Engels*, Foreign Language Publishers, p. 328-329).

So, Mandel’s account turns out to be misleading on several counts: 1) what changed over the 1880s and 1890s were not Marx and Engels’s basic views but their judgment on the degree of expansion of capitalism in Russia and dormancy of the European revolution, which they had taken into account from the outset as key factors in determining the direction of Russian social and economic development; 2) Marx and Engels’s analysis did not “provide support” to the populists against proletarian communism, no matter how some populists tried to misuse it; 3) Marx’s initial circumspection about the General Redistribution was based not on his adaptation to the populists, but on the group’s initial anarchist tendency to downplay the political struggle in Russia and its revolutionary-democratic axis; and 4) Engels welcomed their evolution to communist positions only shortly after Marx’s death, while continuing his efforts to influence Russian revolutionists still in the camp of the populists.

A post-1917 aside

As an aside, it should be noted that a development to a certain extent analogous to what Marx and Engels suggested as a possibility for Russia at the end of the 1880s occurred following the 1917 proletarian

revolution. Some of the former tsarist colonies on Russia's eastern border were overwhelmingly peasant in composition and dominated by precapitalist economic and political relations — medievalism and landlordism. While communal property did not predominate, they were extremely backward, even more backward than Afghanistan today, and there was virtually no working class or capitalist industry. They established peasant soviet republics that developed close links with the Russian workers state and became part of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics in 1922. They did not go through capitalist development, and will not unless a counterrevolution overthrows state property in the USSR.

This experience, along with the new rise of the colonial revolution inspired by the Russian revolution, led Lenin to draw some further conclusions about prospects for the road forward in economically backward countries throughout the world. In reporting to the Second Congress of the Communist International in 1920 on the "Draft Theses on the National and Colonial Questions," he stated:

"... are we to consider as correct the assertion that the capitalist stage of economic development is inevitable for backward nations now on the road to emancipation and among whom a certain advance towards progress is to be seen since the war? We replied in the negative. If the victorious revolutionary proletariat conducts systematic propaganda among them, and the Soviet governments come to their aid with all the means at their disposal — in that event it will be mistaken to assume that the backward peoples must inevitably go through the capitalist stage of development.

"Not only should we create independent contingents of fighters and party organizations in the colonies and the backward countries, not only at once launch propaganda for the organization of peasants' Soviets and strive to adapt them to the precapitalist conditions," Lenin said, "but the Communist International should advance the proposition, with the appropriate theoretical grounding, that with the aid of the proletariat of the advanced countries, backward countries can go over to the Soviet system and, through certain states of development, to communism, without having to pass through the capitalist stage" (*The National Liberation Movement in the East*, Lenin, Progress Publishers, p. 287).

Lenin, like Marx and Engels before him, recognized that unevenness in economic development could lead to unanticipated and particular combinations of social relations as society advanced on a world scale. And this was, if anything, becoming more accentuated by imperialism.

Where Mandel says Lenin went wrong

Mandel says Lenin's strategy was wrong on many points. He claims that Lenin dumped these erroneous positions in favor of correct ones following the February 1917 revolution. Lenin's alleged errors are:

- The "erroneous dogma" of dividing the Russian revolution into two distinct stages. The first was the democratic revolution aimed at overthrowing tsarist autocracy and eliminating semifeudal survivals in the countryside. "The goal of the democratic revolution was to be the *unfettered development of capital-*

ism," Mandel says, "and simultaneously the maximum development of the proletariat, the proletarian class struggle, and the proletarian party." [Note: Throughout this article all emphases in quotes are those of the person quoted, unless otherwise indicated.]

The second stage was "that of the social revolution leading to the dictatorship of the proletariat, the overthrow of capitalism, and the construction of a socialist society."

- The Bolsheviks were educated in "the spirit of limiting the 'first stage' of the revolution to purely democratic tasks." Lenin favored the "self-limitation of the proletariat, that is the refusal to move beyond the realization of the most radical bourgeois-democratic demands."

He favored seizure of power by a provisional revolutionary government and participation of the revolutionary workers party in this government; but this government would be "provisional, i.e., that it will have to give up or lose power later on, given the bourgeois character of the revolution."

- "Lenin's obstinate and frequent refusal to confuse, i.e., to *combine*, the democratic tasks and the socialist tasks, the minimum program and the maximum program."

- Lenin radically rejected "any notion of 'revolutionary communes,' any notion of a state (in contrast to an insurrection) based on soviets."

- Lenin "had either not, or insufficiently" dealt with the "main driving forces" of the revolution and "the relationship of forces between the social classes involved in the revolution."

- Lenin held an exaggerated view of the role that the peasantry would play in the revolution. He was "certain that the revolutionary peasantry had to *take political power*," that it would establish its own political party, and that it would wield "equal power alongside the proletariat."

- Lenin erroneously counterposed the revolutionary democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry to the dictatorship of the proletariat.

- Lenin "had either not, or only insufficiently," dealt with the "concrete national and international social and economic context" in which the democratic revolution would unfold in Russia.

- By "persistently" believing that Russia would go through a rapid growth of capitalism, and especially through American-style development of agriculture, Lenin underestimated "the weight of imperialism, of the world market (which left no room for a second America!), and of the agrarian crisis in Russia itself. . . ."

- Lenin's "erroneous dogma" disarmed the Bolshevik party following the February revolution, "when *all* the Bolshevik leaders and *all* the Bolshevik cadres favored 'critical support' to and even collaboration with the provisional coalition government."

- For Lenin, "The capacity of the Russian proletariat to begin to resolve the socialist tasks of the revolution . . . did not exist."

That's quite a list! If the reader did not know the outcome of the October 1917 revolution, he or she could quite justifiably conclude, part way through Mandel's article, that the Bolsheviks, allegedly educated in an "erroneous dogma" for at least a dozen

years, were going to make a mess of it, that the whole affair would end in disaster.

But that is not what happened. The Bolshevik party *did* lead the Russian revolution, *did* establish a workers and peasants government, which *did* carry through the democratic revolution and *did* complete the transition to a workers state. How could a party so mistraigned on such fundamental questions reorient itself so quickly? How could it lead this revolution to victory? Was it really all with the efforts of a single person, Lenin, who fortunately came to his senses in the clutch?

The answer requires examining the Bolsheviks' true positions, the positions that made possible the October Revolution, which are not the ones Mandel claims the Bolsheviks held.

Importance of the democratic revolution

When Lenin became a Marxist in the early 1890s, he did precisely as Engels had suggested to Voden. He approached the strategy for the Russian revolution by thinking "as Marx would have thought," applying that method to the concrete reality of social relations in Russia. And he began "to work seriously on agrarian problems in Russia," doing an exhaustive study of the question.

Lenin's first major works included *What the Friends of the People Are* (1894) and the *Development of Capitalism in Russia* (1899). From a standpoint converging with Plekhanov's Emancipation of Labor group, Lenin described the expansion of capitalism in the cities and countryside, as well as the corresponding growth of the working class as growing layers of the peasantry began to be proletarianized.

Unlike the populists, for whom the peasantry was the principal force for a socialist revolution, Lenin's point of departure was the need to build an independent Marxist workers party capable of leading the working class in the fight for democracy and socialism in Russia.

From the beginning, Lenin emphasized the enormous importance of the fight for democracy — above all, the agrarian question — and its relationship to the struggle against capitalism.

"In Russia, the relics of medieval, semifeudal institutions," he wrote in 1894, "are still so enormously strong (as compared with Western Europe), they are such an oppressive yoke upon the proletariat and the people generally, retarding the growth of political thought in all estates and classes, that one cannot but insist on the tremendous importance which the struggle against all feudal institutions, absolutism, the social-estate system, and the bureaucracy has for the workers.

"The workers must be shown in the greatest detail what a terribly reactionary force these institutions are, how they intensify the oppression of labor by capital, what a degrading pressure they exert on the working people, how they keep capital in its medieval forms, which, while not falling short of the modern, industrial forms in respect of the exploitation of labor, add to this exploitation by placing terrible difficulties in the way of the fight for emancipation. The workers must know that unless these pillars of reaction are overthrown, it will be utterly impossible for them to wage a successful struggle against the bour-

geoisie. . . ."

Lenin went on to explain that it was "the direct duty of the working class to fight side by side with the radical democracy [peasantry] against absolutism and the reactionary social estates and institutions — a duty which the Social-Democrats must impress upon the workers, while not for a moment ceasing also to impress upon them that the struggle against all these institutions is necessary only as a means of facilitating the struggle against the bourgeoisie, that the worker needs the achievement of the general democratic demands only to clear the road to victory over the working people's chief enemy, over an institution that is purely democratic by nature, *capital*, which here in Russia is particularly inclined to sacrifice its democracy and to enter into alliance with the reactionaries in order to suppress the workers, to still further impede the emergence of a working-class movement" ("What the Friends of the People Are," *CW*, Vol. 1, 1894 p. 290-292).

And in Lenin's article, "Tasks of the Russian Social Democrats," published four years later in 1898, he wrote:

"The object of the practical activities of the Social-Democrats is, as is well known, to lead the class struggle of the proletariat and to organize that struggle in both its manifestations: socialist (the fight against the capitalist class aimed at destroying the class system and organizing socialist society), and democratic (the fight against absolutism aimed at winning political liberty in Russia and democratizing the political and social system of Russia).

"We said *as is well known*," Lenin continued. "And indeed, from the very moment they appeared as a separate social-revolutionary trend, the Russian Social-Democrats have always definitely indicated this object of their activities, have always emphasized the dual manifestation and content of the class struggle of the proletariat and have always insisted on the inseparable connection between their socialist and democratic tasks . . ." (*CW*, Vol. 2, 1898, p. 328).

These extensive quotations from Lenin's early works present the general framework in which he was to view the combined tasks of the working class in the Russian revolution through the October 1917 revolution. This outline acquired more flesh as the Russian toilers, and the Marxist movement along with them, went through the experiences of the Russo-Japanese war, the 1905 revolution, and the first worldwide imperialist war. But the central elements were already there in the 1890s: combining the democratic and socialist tasks of the working class; the alliance of the working class with the revolutionary peasantry; the necessity for proletarian leadership; and the irreversible tendency for bourgeois political forces to ally with the autocracy against the peasantry and proletariat.

A prolonged capitalist stage?

In Mandel's opinion, Lenin saw the "goal of the democratic revolution" in Russia to be a "prolonged" period of "unfettered capitalist development." And the author of *Imperialism* didn't even know that there was "no room for a second America" in the world! This is dead wrong.

In order to illustrate Lenin's "unambiguous" sup-

port of a prolonged capitalist stage, Mandel offers several quotations from the Bolshevik leader. He quotes Lenin speaking before the delegates at the Fifth Congress of the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party (RSDLP) in May 1907.

“. . . the basic question of our revolution is whether it will secure the development of capitalism through the peasants' complete victory over the landowners or through the landowners' victory over the peasants. A bourgeois-democratic revolution . . . is possible in either of two ways: in the Prussian, if one might say so, or in the American way.

"This means the following; the landlords may win, may foist compensation payments or other petty concessions on the peasants, may unite with a handful of the wealthy, pauperise the masses and convert their own farms into Junker-type, capitalist, farms. Such a revolution will be bourgeois-democratic but it will be to the least advantage of the peasants — to their least advantage from the angle of the rapidity of capitalist development.

"Or, on the contrary, the complete victory of the peasant uprising, the confiscation of all landed estates and their equal division will signify the most rapid development of capitalism, the form of bourgeois-democratic revolution most advantageous to the peasants" (CW, Vol. 12, 1907, p. 465).

Lenin's point was as simple as it is correct. The complete elimination of the remnants of medievalism and serfdom, together with the overturn of the autocracy, would create the best conditions for the development of capitalism, especially in agriculture. That is a basic precept of historical materialism, nothing more.

By the "American way," Lenin was making an historical analogy to the policy in the United States in the nineteenth century whereby the government distributed millions of acres of public land to homesteaders. This facilitated the rapid development of capitalist agriculture in the United States, which in turn fostered a large internal market and the optimum conditions for industrial development, as well.

In Russia, Lenin argued, nationalizing the land and confiscating the landed estates would create the best conditions for free farmers upon a free soil.

Contrary to Mandel, however, Lenin's recognition of the ABCs of the laws of development of human history did *not* mean that he either proposed or expected a "prolonged" stage of rule by the bourgeoisie, or that the Bolsheviks were proved wrong on this score in 1917. Lenin, in fact, drew the opposite conclusion in a November 1918 polemic with Karl Kautsky, the prominent leader of the Second International who took a centrist position at the outbreak of World War I and attacked the Soviet government in Russia. This is what Lenin had to say (remember, this is a *full year after* the October 1917 revolution):

“. . . already the 1905 Revolution revealed that the vast majority of the peasants in Russia, members of village communes as well as homestead peasants, were in favor of nationalization of all the land. The 1917 Revolution confirmed this, and after the assumption of power by the proletariat this was done.

"The Bolsheviks remained loyal to Marxism," Lenin said, "and never tried (in spite of Kautsky, who, without a scrap of evidence, accuses us of doing so) to

'skip' the bourgeois-democratic revolution. The Bolsheviks, first of all, helped the most radical, most revolutionary of the bourgeois-democratic ideologists of the peasants, those who stood closest to the proletariat, namely, the Left Socialist-Revolutionaries, to carry out what was in effect nationalization of the land. On October 26, 1917, i.e., on the very first day of the proletarian, socialist revolution, private ownership of land was abolished in Russia.

"This laid the foundation, the most perfect from the point of view of the development of capitalism (Kautsky cannot deny this without breaking with Marx), and at the same time created an agrarian system which is the *most flexible* from the point of view of the transition to socialism" ("Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky," CW, Vol. 28, 1918, p. 314-315).

The October Revolution, Lenin says, created the foundation for "the most perfect" development of capitalism in the countryside. (Mandel cannot deny this without breaking with Marx and Lenin.) That's what the Bolsheviks, for years, had been pointing out would be possible if the workers and peasants could overthrow the autocracy and establish a revolutionary dictatorship, a workers and peasants government.

The fact that the Russian revolution would be a bourgeois-democratic revolution neither meant that the bourgeoisie would lead it or support it, nor that the government issuing from it would put the bourgeoisie in power. Lenin pointed out before 1905, and it became even clearer during World War I, that the bourgeoisie would actively oppose a decisive victory of the democratic revolution. He pointed out repeatedly that the *bourgeois revolution* in Russia was of a particular variety, that is, it was a *peasant revolution*. Only the peasantry, with the support and leadership of the working class, which at the same time was waging its own struggle against the capitalists, could carry this revolution through in the most complete way.

"Marxism teaches the proletariat not to keep aloof from the bourgeois revolution," Lenin wrote in 1905, "not to be indifferent to it, not to allow the leadership of the revolution to be assumed by the bourgeoisie but, on the contrary, to take a most energetic part in it, to fight most resolutely for consistent proletarian democratism, for the revolution to be carried to its conclusion" (CW, Vol. 9, 1905, p. 52).

Lenin correctly insisted on drawing a distinction between the peasant democratic revolution and the proletarian socialist revolution, since this was necessary to determine how the revolutionary workers party should participate in the class struggle, what slogans it should advance, and what alliances it should build at different junctures in the revolutionary struggle.

Lenin defended this fundamental Bolshevik proposition, too, in his 1918 polemic against the centrist Kautsky.

"It was the Bolsheviks who strictly differentiated between the bourgeois-democratic revolution and the socialist revolution: by carrying the former through, they opened the door for the transition to the latter. This was the only policy that was revolutionary and Marxist" (CW, Vol. 28, 1918, p. 312).

Peasant revolution in Russia

To dissolve the peasant revolution into the socialist revolution, Lenin argued, would mean not recognizing the necessity of establishing a worker-peasant alliance, thus missing the opportunity to forge the class alliance required for victory.

Lenin had studied closely Marx and Engels's analysis of the German revolution of 1848 and the conclusions they had drawn from that experience. Lenin referred to this in an article on Karl Marx written for the *Granat Encyclopedia* in 1913. Pointing to Marx's assessment of how the German bourgeoisie had betrayed both the proletariat and the peasantry in the 1848 revolution, Lenin quoted Marx's appraisal eight years later of how the German revolution could triumph next time.

"The whole thing in Germany will depend on the possibility of backing the proletarian revolution by some second edition of the Peasant War," Marx had written to Engels in an 1856 letter (*CW*, Vol. 21, 1913, p. 77).

This was precisely the course that the 1905 revolution had shown for Russia: the combination of a proletarian revolution and a peasant war. Based on this experience, the Bolsheviks confirmed the strategy they had developed even prior to the 1905 upheaval and developed it further.

The revolution to bring down the tsar and wipe out feudal remnants in the countryside, Lenin pointed out time and again, would unite broad sectors of the population; this included sectors which do not have identical class interests, such as the workers and poor peasants, and even some who have conflicting class interests, such as the rich exploiting peasants and the exploited toilers of town and country.

In his principal work on the class relations in the Russian revolution, *Two Tactics of Social Democracy in the Democratic Revolution*, written in July-August 1905 as a polemic against Menshevik (and later Stalinist) leader A.S. Martynov, Lenin stated:

"The absence of unity on questions of socialism and in the struggle for socialism does not preclude singleness of will on questions of democracy and the struggle for a republic. To forget this would be tantamount to forgetting the logical and historical differences between a democratic revolution and a socialist revolution. To forget this would be tantamount to forgetting the character of the democratic revolution as one of the *whole* people . . ." (*Two Tactics*, Progress Publishers, p. 70).

The most favorable relation of class forces carrying through the democratic revolution, Lenin said, would be a "revolutionary-democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry." This, he said, would create the best possible conditions for completing the democratic revolution in the most thorough fashion and for opening the road for the socialist revolution. Such a revolutionary dictatorship pushes forward the democratic revolution "and strives to give it forms most advantageous to the proletariat; consequently, it strives to make the utmost of the democratic revolution to order to attain the greatest success in the proletariat's further struggle for socialism" (*Two Tactics*, p. 73).

This was contrary to the Menshevik view, which didn't see the bourgeois revolution in Russia as a

peasant revolution, but as a revolution that would put the bourgeoisie in power, that would establish a period of capitalist rule. For the Mensheviks, the role of the working class was to help put the bourgeoisie in power. The role of the peasants was to help the workers do this.

Since the bourgeoisie must lead the revolution, the Mensheviks argued, the proletariat must temper its militancy and subordinate the fight for its own class interests and those of the rural poor, since this would frighten the bourgeoisie and cause them to recoil from their necessary revolutionary role.

"One side says: advance the revolution to its consummation despite resistance or passivity on the part of the inconsistent bourgeoisie," Lenin wrote in *Two Tactics*, referring to the Bolshevik position.

"The other side says: do not think of independently advancing the revolution to completion, for if you do, the inconsistent bourgeoisie will recoil from it.

"Are these not two diametrically opposite paths? Is it not obvious that one set of tactics absolutely excludes the other, that the first tactics is the only correct tactics of revolutionary Social-Democracy? . . ." (*Two Tactics*, p. 87).

"Self-limitation" of the working class

Mandel argues that the Bolsheviks' distinction between the democratic and socialist revolutions, between the peasant and proletarian revolutions, led Lenin to advocate that the working class limit its objectives and not attempt to carry through the socialist revolution. According to Mandel, Lenin insisted that if, indeed, the workers assumed the leadership of a revolutionary government, they would "have to give up or lose power later on, given the bourgeois character of the revolution." Mandel puts "self-limitation of the proletariat" between quotation marks, as if this were something that Lenin actually said.

This is pure invention. In fact, it is totally contrary to the entire thrust of what Lenin wrote throughout his political life. Lenin always stressed that, as the revolution unfolded, the working class should go as far as it could in pushing the democratic revolution through to its completion and beginning the socialist revolution. Not only did he place no *limits* on the struggle to do this, but the object of Bolshevik strategy was precisely to prepare the workers to accomplish as much as possible.

Lenin did not place any arbitrary time schedule on the transition from the democratic to the socialist revolution. He did not refer to a prolonged, protracted, or lengthy transition. Neither did he talk about the working class limiting, self-limiting, or restraining itself.

Lenin didn't view the transition from the standpoint of predicting clock time or calendar time (as Mandel might have us think), but according to political time, i.e., the class relationship of forces, the strength and resoluteness of the revolutionary workers party, the organization and independence of the rural poor, and the thoroughness of the democratic revolution.

Here are just a few of many statements reflecting this:

• "The more complete, determined, and consistent the bourgeois revolution, the more assured will the

proletariat's struggle be against the bourgeoisie and for socialism" (*Two Tactics*, p. 37).

- "The working class and its class-conscious representatives are marching forward and carrying this struggle forward, not only unafraid of bringing it to completion, but striving to go far beyond the uttermost limits of the democratic revolution" (*Two Tactics*, p. 107).

- The revolutionary workers party says to the working class, "you must strive to extend the framework and the content of your class struggle so as to make it include not only all the aims of the present democratic Russian revolution of the whole people, but the aims of the subsequent socialist revolution as well" (*Two Tactics*, p. 104).

- "The revolution must be taken *very much further* than its direct, immediate and already fully-matured bourgeois aims, if those aims are really to be achieved, and if even minimum bourgeois conquests are to be irreversibly consolidated" (CW, Vol. 15, 1908, p. 59).

- "... the bourgeoisie as a whole is incapable of waging a determined struggle against the autocracy; it fears to lose in this struggle its property which binds it to the existing order; it fears an all-too-revolutionary action of the workers, who will not stop at the democratic revolution but will aspire to the socialist revolution..." (CW, Vol. 8, 1905, p. 511).

Of course Lenin correctly recognized, as Grenada's Prime Minister Maurice Bishop has put it, that making the socialist revolution is not like making a cup of instant coffee. How quickly the workers could move toward measures to expropriate the capitalists would depend on the concrete conditions and relationship of class forces at the time of the revolution. (And unlike today, Lenin was writing at a time when no socialist revolution had yet triumphed anywhere in the world, or could depend on support from an existing workers state.)

The Bolsheviks urged the proletariat and rural poor to organize themselves independently, in order to be in the best position to take advantage of whatever situation they might face to advance their own class interests. The Bolsheviks also sought to steal the vanguard workers against anarchist or ultraleft political currents that ignored this reality of the class struggle in Russia; it seems to be this latter aspect of Bolshevik policy that Mandel refers to as "self-limitation."

Lenin himself faced somewhat similar arguments, and he answered them in *Two Tactics*. "Replying to the anarchists' objection that we are putting off the socialist revolution, we say: we are not putting it off, but are taking the first step towards it in the only possible way, along the only correct path, namely, the path of a democratic republic" (*Two Tactics*, p. 16).

So, the proletarian party must know how to lead the workers and their exploited allies in deepening the revolution, advancing their class consciousness and self-confidence, and crossing the bridge from the democratic to the socialist revolution at whatever pace the class struggle allows.

Lenin explained this point very clearly in his 1905 article, "Social Democracy's Attitude Toward the Peasant Movement":

"... from the democratic revolution we shall pass at once, and precisely in accordance with the measure

of our strength, the strength of the class conscious and organized proletariat, begin to pass to the socialist revolution. We stand for uninterrupted revolution. We shall not stop half-way.

"If we do not now and immediately promise all sorts of 'socialization'," Lenin said, "that is because we know the actual conditions for that task to be accomplished, and do not gloss over the new class struggle burgeoning within the peasantry, but reveal that struggle. . . ."

"To try to calculate *now* what the combination of forces will be within the peasantry 'on the day after' the revolution (the democratic revolution) is empty utopianism. . . . We shall bend every effort to help the entire peasantry achieve the democratic revolution, *in order thereby to make it easier* for us, the party of the proletariat, to pass on as quickly as possible to the new and higher task — the socialist revolution" (CW, Vol. 9, 1905, p. 237).

Who confuses what

As we've seen, Mandel also comments on "Lenin's obstinate and frequent refusal to confuse, i.e., to *combine*, the democratic tasks and the socialist tasks"

But it's Mandel who is confused, not Lenin. A baker who didn't know how to combine flour and eggs couldn't make a cake, that's true. But the baker wouldn't have any better luck by thinking that eggs and flour are the same thing!

The Bolsheviks did obstinately refuse to *confuse* the democratic and socialist tasks of the revolution, correctly so. To have done otherwise would have been to confuse the key strategic class alliance necessary, first, to bring down the tsarist regime and landlordism and, then, to lead the revolution forward toward expropriating the capitalists. This is what Lenin explained in the very last paragraph of *Two Tactics*:

"At the head of the whole people, and particularly of the peasantry — for complete freedom, for a consistent democratic revolution, for a republic! At the head of all the toilers and the exploited — for socialism! Such in practice must be the policy of the revolutionary proletariat, such is the class slogan which must permeate and determine the solution of every tactical problem, every practical step of the workers' party during the revolution" (*Two Tactics*, p. 97).

But this did not mean that Lenin, who Mandel will admit had some acquaintance with the dialectical method, erected a wall between the democratic and socialist revolutions. Just the opposite, Lenin saw the democratic and socialist tasks as being intertwined.

"Like everything else in the world," he wrote, "the revolutionary-democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry has a past and a future. Its past is autocracy, serfdom, monarchy, and privilege. In the struggle against this past, in the struggle against counter-revolution, a 'single will' of the proletariat and the peasantry is possible, for here there is unity of interests.

"Its future is the struggle against private property, the struggle of the wage-worker against the employer, the struggle for socialism. Here singleness of will is impossible. Here the path before us lies not from autocracy to a republic, but from a petty-bourgeois democratic republic to socialism.

"Of course, in actual historical circumstances, the elements of the past become interwoven with those of the future; the two paths cross. Wage-labor with its struggle against private property exists under autocracy as well; it arises even under serfdom. But this does not in the least prevent us from logically and historically distinguishing between the major stages of development.

"We all contrapose bourgeois revolution and socialist revolution; we all insist on the absolute necessity of strictly distinguishing between them; however, can it be denied that in the course of history individual, *particular* elements of the two revolutions become interwoven?" (*Two Tactics*, p. 71).

So much for Lenin's "obstinate" refusal to recognize that the democratic and socialist tasks are combined!

Weight of the agrarian question

Mandel contends that Lenin exaggerated the independent role of the peasantry in the revolution by predicting that it would wield "equal power alongside the proletariat."

What are the facts?

Lenin was always clear that the working class had to assume the vanguard role in the democratic and socialist revolutions in Russia.

But in a country where the working class was a small minority and the peasantry a big majority, it was absolutely essential for the working class to forge an alliance with the peasantry. Lenin and the Bolsheviks charted a course to do this, developing and enriching their position with each new experience of the class struggle.

In 1899, in a draft program for the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party, Lenin explained that "a working-class party cannot, without violating the basic tenets of Marxism and without committing a tremendous political mistake, *overlook* the revolutionary elements that exist among the peasantry and not afford those elements support. . . ."

"Two basic forms of the class struggle are today intertwined in the Russian countryside: 1) the struggle of the peasantry against the privileged landed proprietors and against the remnants of serfdom; 2) struggle of the emergent rural proletariat against the rural bourgeoisie. For Social-Democrats the second struggle, of course, is of greater importance; but they must also indispensably support the first struggle *to the extent that it does not contradict* the interests of social development.

"It is no accident that the peasant question has always occupied and continues to occupy such a prominent place in Russian society and in the Russian revolutionary movement; this fact is a reflection of the great significance still retained by the first of the two forms of struggle" (*CW*, Vol. 4, 1899, p. 251-252).

The differences on the agrarian question between the Bolsheviks and all the opportunist and conciliationist currents in the workers movement were at the center of the divergent strategies they projected for the Russian revolution.

This was apparent by 1903 at the time of the Social Democratic Party's second congress, where the split between the Bolsheviks and Mensheviks occurred. Mandel states that "At first, the differences . . . seemed limited to organizational problems." He

quotes extensively from the discussion on the agrarian question at the congress to show the broad political agreement by "the great majority of Russian Marxists."

It may have seemed to many participants at the congress that the differences were limited to organizational questions — and it may seem so to some today — but that's not how Lenin saw it.

Writing about the congress six months later, Lenin answered the Menshevik leader Martov, who was attempting to paper over the political differences at the congress. Lenin stated:

"The inconsistency of principle of the anti-*Iskraists* and the 'Centre' was also clearly brought out by the debate on the agrarian program, which took up so much time at the congress . . . and raised quite a number of extremely interesting points. As was to be expected, the campaign against the program was launched by Comrade Martynov . . ."¹

The opposition to the agrarian program that Lenin helped draft was one of the more substantial, representing 40 percent of the congress. The heart of the disagreement was over the proposal defended by Lenin that the working class ally with the peasantry *as a whole* in the struggle against the autocracy and the remnants of serfdom. The opposition argued that agricultural workers and poor peasants would not join with rich farmers in the fight against their common enemy — landlordism, medievalism, and autocracy. They reduced the agrarian program of the workers party to the class struggle of farm workers against capitalist farmers.

Lenin noted that "their failure to grasp the importance of the peasant movement, their failure to grasp that it was not overestimation, but, on the contrary, underestimation of its importance (and a lack of forces to utilize it) that was the weak side of our Social-Democrats at the time of the first famous peasant revolts [1902]: ("Two Steps Backward, One Step Forward," *CW*, Vol. 7, 1904, p. 231-232).

In the debate at the congress itself, Lenin argued: "We are pursuing two qualitatively different aims in the countryside: firstly, we want to achieve freedom [from feudal and semi-feudal restrictions] for bourgeois relations; secondly, we want to conduct the proletarian struggle. . . . [I]t is our task to show the peasants where the revolutionary proletarian task of

1. The delegates at the 1903 Congress included supporters of *Iskra* edited by Plekhanov, Martov, and Lenin; anti-*Iskraists* primarily around the economist newspaper *Rabocheye Dyelo*, of which Martynov was one of the editors; and a middle group — the centre — that wavered between the other two groups.

On most questions of program, including the agrarian program, most *Iskraists* voted together. However, on decisive votes on the nature of the party, the *Iskraists* divided; the majority becoming the Bolsheviks and the minority blocking with the anti-*Iskraists* and the Centre to become the Mensheviks. After the Congress the Menshevik *Iskraists* openly retreated from the program they had voted for at the Congress.

Trotsky was an *Iskraist* who at first went with the Mensheviks and broke with them in 1904 over their political direction. Lenin, while criticizing Trotsky's support to the Mensheviks at the Congress, praised his arguments in the debate on the agrarian question ("One Step Forward, Two Steps Backward," *CW*, Vol. 7, 1904, p. 238).

the peasant proletariat begins. . . .”

Lenin disagreed with the opportunist opposition's concentration on the backwardness of the peasantry. "In 1852 Marx said that the peasants had judgement as well as prejudices," Lenin pointed out. "And now, when we point out to the poor peasants the cause of their poverty, we may count on success" (CW, Vol. 6, 1903, p. 495).

The program adopted at the 1903 congress called for the convocation of peasant committees to struggle for the abolition of all remnants of serfdom. Just before the congress, Lenin wrote that the peasants "will unavoidably and inescapably remain miserable slaves until they take their destiny into their own hands, until they take their first and most important step and achieve the establishment of *peasant committees* for real and not sham emancipation of the peasantry" (CW, Vol. 6, 1903, p. 349).

While the Mensheviks abandoned this demand, it remained a part of the Bolsheviks' program through the October 1917 revolution. Committees of the poor peasants, which the Bolsheviks helped launch, were a crucial instrument beginning in the summer and fall of 1918 for the struggle against exploitation, and for deepening the class struggle in the countryside and the socialist course of the revolution in general.

It was only a matter of months following the 1903 congress that many Mensheviks like Axelrod and L. Martov, who had voted with the Bolsheviks on the overall program, including the section on the agrarian question, openly adopted or conciliated with the opportunist views of those who had opposed the program at the congress. These differences became even more clear during the 1905 revolution and its aftermath.

Lessons of 1905 revolution

The 1905 revolution combined the largest proletarian uprising since the Paris Commune in 1871 with the most massive peasant revolt in Russia in 130 years. This experience offered an unprecedented opportunity to test in real life the role that different social forces would play in the Russian revolution and to see the forms the struggle might take.

The 1905 revolution underlined for Lenin the correctness of the Bolsheviks' emphasis on the democratic struggle and the weight of the peasantry in the Russian revolution. In a 1909 article he observed that "the alliance of proletarian and peasant forces" was "a characteristic feature of the whole of the first period of the Russian revolution, of all the great events of 1905-07" (CW, Vol. 15, 1909, p. 333).

In the aftermath of this experience Lenin wrote or completed four book-size works, as well as many articles, speeches, and resolutions, on the agrarian question.

Lenin's political strategy started from the unshakable conviction that only working-class leadership could carry the democratic revolution and the worker-peasant alliance to victory.

"Our Party," he wrote in 1909, "holds firmly to the view that the role of the proletariat is the *role of leader* in the bourgeois-democratic revolution; that *joint actions* of the proletariat and the peasantry are essential to carry it through to victory; that unless *political power is won* by the revolutionary classes,

victory is impossible" (CW, Vol. 15, 1909, p. 379).

This statement captures the essence of the class alignment that Lenin proposed for the Russian revolution.

He explained that the independent policy of the working class was necessary "to split the peasantry away from the liberals, rid it of their influence, rally the peasantry behind it in the struggle and thus bring about an 'alliance' *de facto* — one that emerges and becomes effective, when and to the extent that the peasantry are conducting a revolutionary fight" (CW, Vol. 15, 1908, p. 58).

To pursue any other policy, Lenin insisted, was to give up the fight for proletarian leadership of the democratic revolution, abandoning the peasantry to the bourgeois betrayers and thereby abandoning any perspective of a thoroughgoing revolution.

"In a word," Lenin wrote in *Two Tactics*, "to avoid finding itself with its hands tied in the struggle against the inconsistent bourgeois democracy, the proletariat must be class-conscious and strong enough to rouse the peasantry to revolutionary consciousness, guide its assault, and thereby independently pursue the line of consistent proletarian democraticism."

Lenin continued: "Only the proletariat can be a consistent fighter for democracy. It can become a victorious fighter for democracy only if the peasant masses join its revolutionary struggle. If the proletariat is not strong enough for this the bourgeoisie will be at the head of the democratic revolution and will impart an inconsistent and self-seeking nature to it." To ignore the centrality of the alliance with the peasantry is "playing into the hands of the bourgeois democrats," he said (*Two Tactics*, p. 47).

Thus, while Lenin always recognized the indispensable need for the proletariat's *political* leadership in the revolution, he correctly did not attempt to assign some *a priori* weight — one quarter, equal, or three-quarters — to the peasantry's role in the worker-peasant alliance in order to insure its *victory*. He did not exclude, however, the possibility that the social composition of the workers and peasant dictatorship would "lead to the participation, or even predominance, within it of the most heterogeneous representatives of revolutionary democracy" (CW, Vol. 8, 1905, p. 291).

Lenin's view was that the peasantry's relative weight in the worker-peasant alliance would be determined by the class struggle. He had no blueprint detailing every feature of the revolution. His was a strategic approach designed to arm the revolutionary workers party to vigorously pursue the fight for a worker-peasant alliance and use it as a battering ram to bring down tsarism and open the road to the socialist revolution. Toward this goal the Bolsheviks aimed to bring to bear the greatest possible mobilization of the revolutionary peasantry.

Lenin and the Bolsheviks used many formulations to describe the relationship between the proletariat and the peasantry, including the proletariat "allies to itself," "leads," or carries out "joint actions" with the mass of the peasantry.

Mandel insists that Lenin's position necessarily assumed that the peasantry had to build its own "independent" party and play an "independent" role. This Mandel considers to be unrealizable.

Lenin took up this very argument in a 1908 polemic with Martov and Trotsky.

"A 'coalition' of classes *does not at all* presuppose either the existence of any particular powerful party, or parties in general. This is only confusing classes with parties. A 'coalition' of the specified classes *does not in the least* imply either that one of the existing bourgeois parties will establish its sway over the peasantry or that the peasants should form a powerful independent party! Theoretically this is clear because, first, the peasants do not lend themselves very well to party organization; and because, secondly, the formation of peasant parties is an extremely difficult and lengthy process in a bourgeois revolution, so that a 'powerful independent' party may emerge only towards the end of the revolution."

Then Lenin went on to explain that "The experience of the Russian revolution shows that 'coalitions' of the proletariat and the peasantry were formed *scores and hundreds of times*, in the most diverse forms, without any 'powerful independent party' of the peasantry. Such a coalition was formed when there was 'joint action,' between, say, a Soviet of Workers' Deputies and a Soviet of Soldiers' Deputies, or a Railwaymen's Strike Committee, or Peasants' Deputies, etc. All these organizations were mainly *nonparty*; nevertheless, every joint action between them undoubtedly represented a 'coalition' of *classes*."

"In the course of this," Lenin continued, "a peasant party took shape as an idea, in germ, coming into being in the form of the Peasant Union of 1905 or the Trudovik group of 1906 — and *as* such a party grew, developed and constituted itself, the coalition of *classes* assumed different forms, from the vague and unofficial to definite and official political agreements."

Lenin added that three calls for insurrection issued during the revolution were signed by workers' parties, unions, and the peasant organizations. "That was a fully constituted political coalition of parties and non-party organizations!" he said. "That was the 'dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry' *proclaimed* in the form of a threat to tsarism, in the form of a call to the whole people, but not yet realized!" (CW, Vol. 15, 1909, p. 371-372).

Mandel charges Lenin with "illusions about an independent role of the *Trudoviks* (Kerensky!) or the SRs [Socialist-Revolutionaries]."

This is false. Lenin's approach was not based on the possible evolution — either positive or negative — of the particular parties or their leaders. It was based on the living experience of the class struggle. On that basis, Lenin concluded that the peasantry would establish its own organizations or find some organizational expression to fight for its revolutionary demands. In 1905 this took the form of the Soviets of Peasant Deputies, the Trudoviks, and the Peasant Union. In 1917 it took the form of the Soviets of Soldiers Deputies, the Congresses of Peasant Deputies, and the left-wing of the Socialist Revolutionary Party.

That's what happened. So Mandel's argument is not with Lenin, it's with the *facts*.

Lenin, however, never believed that the peasantry could offer an *independent class program* for the Rus-

sian revolution. Only the Marxist program of the Russian working class could ensure the completion of the democratic revolution and its growing over to the socialist revolution.

Nor did Lenin have any illusions about the petty-bourgeois misleaders of the peasant organizations or their program. He observed in 1907 that:

"No one at this stage can tell what forms bourgeois democracy in Russia will assume in the future. Possibly, the bankruptcy of the Cadets may lead to the formation of a peasant democratic party, a truly mass party, and not an organization of terrorists such as the Socialist-Revolutionaries have been and still are. It is also possible that the objective difficulties of achieving political unity among the petty bourgeoisie will prevent such a party from being formed and, for a long time to come, will keep the peasant democracy in its present state as a loose, amorphous, jelly-like Trudovik mass."

So much for "illusions" in the Trudoviks!

Lenin continued, "In either case our line is one: to hammer out the democratic forces by merciless criticism of all vacillations, by uncompromising struggle against the democrats joining the liberals, who have proved their counterrevolutionariness" (CW, Vol. 13, 1907, p. 121-122).

Does Mandel agree with this line? The problem is not Lenin's alleged "illusions" in the Trudoviks, but Mandel's lightminded dismissal of the strategic and tactical problems that a revolutionary workers party had to confront in Russia in order to lead the workers and peasants to victory.

This was a life-or-death question for the Russian revolution, however. It was a very practical question for the Bolsheviks in the Duma, for example. When it was possible and served the interests of advancing the class struggle, the Bolsheviks correctly established blocs with the Trudoviks to get candidates elected, and they formed voting blocs in the Duma on particular measures.

Lenin, who followed the speeches and votes in the Duma closely, wrote many articles showing that, in spite of differences, the Trudovik peasant deputies were closer to the Bolsheviks than to the liberal Cadets, or even the Trudovik intellectuals (Kerensky!), on the agrarian questions.

The Mensheviks, who formed a bloc with the liberal bourgeoisie, repudiated this policy of "left-blocs" pursued by the Bolsheviks following the defeat of the 1905 revolution. During that period of reaction and repression, many opponents of tsarism, including the Mensheviks, contended that the peasants had become too disillusioned to be counted on in the next revolution. Lenin noted that on their faces "a contemptuous grimace appears whenever someone talks about some peasant democracy or other, but [that their] mouths water at the mere sight of the 'enlightened' liberals."

The Bolsheviks, in marked contrast, developed their strategy on the premise that the peasantry would again emerge as a major revolutionary force, as it had during the 1905 revolution. "We must know," Lenin wrote, "that the certain sign of a genuinely widespread rise in the social tide, of a genuinely approaching revolutionary crisis, will inevitably be, in Russia of today, a movement among the peasantry" (CW, Vol. 15, 1908, p. 275).

This was vindicated many times over by the 1917 revolution, and the Bolsheviks codified these lessons on the centrality of the worker-peasant alliance at the Second and Fourth congresses of the Communist International. Far from Lenin having an exaggerated view of the role of the peasantry, it is Mandel who downgrades the revolutionary continuity of Marxism on this key question of revolutionary strategy.

Soviets as an 'embryo' of revolutionary gov't

One of Mandel's more amazing claims is that, before the February 1917 revolution, Lenin "radically" rejected "any notion of a state (in contrast to an insurrection) based on the Soviets."

The facts show otherwise. Not only did Lenin not "radically" reject this proposition, he did not reject it at all. In fact, he returned many times to the experience of 1905 to show how the soviets had been an embryonic revolutionary government.

In November 1905, a month after the workers formed the first soviet in Russia, Lenin wrote his first major article on the soviets. "I believe", he wrote, "that politically the Soviets of Workers' Deputies should be regarded as the embryo of a provisional revolutionary government."

It "must proclaim itself the provisional revolutionary government, or form such a government, and must by all means enlist to this end the participation of new deputies not only from the workers, but, first of all, from the sailors and soldiers, who are everywhere seeking freedom; secondly from the revolutionary peasantry, and thirdly from the revolutionary bourgeois intelligentsia" (CW, Vol. 10, 1905, p. 21-23).

Lenin, in fact, polemicized against the Mensheviks, who *did* deny that the soviets had this potential. In a 1906 polemic, for example, he wrote, "The organs of authority that we have described [Soviets of Workers', Soldiers', Railwaymen's and Peasants' Deputies] represented a dictatorship in embryo, for they recognized *no* other authority, *no* law and *no* standards, no matter by whom established" (CW, Vol. 10, 1906, p. 244).

In the same article he noted that the Bolsheviks regarded the soviets "as embryonic organs of revolutionary state power that united the proletariat with the revolutionary democrats" (CW, Vol. 10, 1906, p. 252).

A revolutionary dictatorship — or state power — based on the soviets, which united the working class and peasantry. That, Lenin said, would be the revolutionary-democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry.

In 1907 Lenin wrote, "In all the embryonic organs of revolutionary power (the Soviets of Workers' Deputies, the Soviets of Peasants' and Soldiers' Deputies, etc.) representatives of the proletariat were the main participants, followed by the most advanced of the insurgent peasantry" (CW, Vol. 12, 1907, p. 459).

Lenin returned to this theme once again in January 1917, just one month before the outbreak of the Russian revolution, in a speech to Swiss socialists looking back on the lessons of the 1905 revolution. He explained that "In several cities these *Soviets of Workers' Deputies* began more and more to play the part

of a provisional revolutionary government, the part of organs and leaders of the uprising. Attempts were made to organize Soviets of Soldiers' and Sailors' Deputies and to combine them with the Soviets of Workers' Deputies.

"For a time several cities in Russia became something in the nature of small local 'republics.' The government authorities were deposed and the Soviet of Workers' Deputies actually functioned as the new government. Unfortunately, these periods were all too brief, the 'victories' were too weak, too isolated" (CW, Vol. 23, 1917, p. 248).

Finally, referring back to the debate between the Bolsheviks and Mensheviks in 1905, Lenin pointed out in 1920 that:

"... the Bolsheviks emphasized that the Soviets of Workers' Deputies were *actually an embryo of a new revolutionary power*, as was literally said in the draft of the Bolshevik resolution (p. 92 of my *Report*). The Mensheviks acknowledged the importance of the Soviets; they were in favor of 'helping to organize' them, etc., but they did not regard them as embryos of revolutionary power, did not in general say anything about a 'new revolutionary power' of this or some similar type, and flatly rejected the slogan of dictatorship" (CW, Vol. 31, 1920, p. 343).

How could Mandel have overlooked Lenin's unambiguous statements that the soviets could become the basis of a revolutionary dictatorship of the exploited classes, of a new state power? It makes no sense, unless you accept Mandel's erroneous view that Lenin somehow thought that the workers and peasants would make the revolution — with soviets if they were available — but that in a historic act of "self-limitation," the workers would have "to give up or lose power [to the liberal bourgeoisie] later on," in order to make way for the stage of prolonged capitalist development.

This view turns Lenin into a Menshevik. But that, according to Mandel's version, is Lenin's position.

Evidently anticipating that this assertion will strike many readers as outlandish, Mandel assures us that there is no contradiction either "in Lenin's mind" or "from the point of view of formal logic." Mandel's "formal logic" is hard to follow, and none of us will ever know what was "in Lenin's mind." But we do know about Lenin's *writings* and *actions*, and these *are* in contradiction with Mandel's rendering of Bolshevism on this question.

International context

Following up the lead left by Marx and Engels, Lenin saw — well before 1905 — that the Russian revolution could be the prologue to the socialist revolution in Western Europe. At the same time, he took note after the 1905 revolution of how that uprising had inspired a series of democratic revolutions in the East — Persia, China, and Turkey. Even before World War I, Lenin was describing the overall international situation as an era of proletarian and democratic revolutions and explaining the interconnectedness of this world revolutionary process. He saw the Russian revolution in this context.

Yet Mandel claims that Lenin "had either not, or only insufficiently" dealt with the "concrete national and international social and economic context" of the

volution.

Mandel makes no effort to bolster this assertion, he simply states it, lumping Lenin together with Plekhanov on this score.

In particular, Mandel makes no reference to Lenin's views during the period when the international situation had the greatest repercussions for the Russian revolution — World War I.

While the Bolsheviks' strategic approach to the Russian revolution didn't change during World War I, concrete shifts in the class struggle inside Russia and worldwide — which Mandel says Lenin "undere-estimated" — did influence how the Bolsheviks assessed the prospects for revolution in Russia and their international ramifications.

"The imperialist war," Lenin pointed out, "has linked up the Russian revolutionary crisis, which stems from a bourgeois-democratic revolution, with the growing crisis of the proletarian socialist revolution in the West. This link is so direct that no individual solution of revolutionary problems is possible in any single country — the Russian bourgeois-democratic revolution is now not only a prologue to, but an indivisible and integral part of, the socialist revolution in the West.

"In 1905, it was the proletariat's task to consummate the bourgeois revolution in Russia so as to kindle the proletarian revolution in the West. In 1915, the second part of this task has acquired an urgency that puts it on a level with the first part" (CW, Vol. 21, 1915, p. 379).

The war divided the revolutionary movement in Russia between the "chauvinist revolutionaries," who desired revolution the better to defeat Germany, and the "proletarian revolutionaries," who wanted a revolution in Russia for the sake of the proletarian revolution in the West.

The Russian liberals, who gave their full and unconditional support to the imperialist war, were clearly shown to have taken the path of counter-revolution. "The facts have shattered the view held by our opportunists that Russian liberalism is still a motive force of a revolution in Russia," Lenin concluded (CW, Vol. 21, 1915, p. 318).

Lenin noted that "The war crisis has strengthened the economic and political factors that are impelling the petty bourgeoisie, including the peasantry, to the left. Herein, lies the objective foundation of the full possibility of victory for the democratic revolution in Russia" (CW, Vol. 21, 1915, p. 418).

He pointed out that the deepening differentiation of the peasantry had enhanced the class struggle in the countryside, as well. The antagonism between the peasants and the landlords was becoming more acute, and the rural poor were drawing closer to the urban workers. All these factors pointed to an even closer relationship between the peasants and the workers and an even greater intertwining of the democratic and proletarian revolutions.

Acknowledging the initial patriotism of the peasant masses, Lenin was confident that "With the return of the soldiers from the field of slaughter . . . sentiment in the rural areas will undoubtedly turn against the tsarist monarchy" (CW, Vol. 21, 1915, p. 318).

In March 1917, one week after the tsar had been toppled by the workers' uprising, Lenin wrote:

"It was natural that the revolutionary crisis should

have broken out first of all in tsarist Russia, where the disorganization was most appalling and the proletariat most revolutionary (not by virtue of any special qualities, but because of the living traditions of 1905).

"This crisis was precipitated by the series of extremely severe defeats sustained by Russia and her allies," Lenin wrote. "They shook up the old machinery of government and the old order and roused the anger of all classes of the population against them; they embittered the army, wiped out a very large part of the old commanding personnel, composed of die-hard aristocrats and exceptionally corrupt bureaucratic elements, and replaced it by a young, fresh, mainly bourgeois, commoner, petty-bourgeois personnel.

"Those who, grovelling to the bourgeoisie or simply lacking backbone, howled and wailed about 'defeatism,'" Lenin said, "are now faced by the fact of the historical connection between the defeat of the most backward and barbarous tsarist monarchy and the beginning of the revolutionary conflagration" (CW, Vol. 23, 1917, p. 300-301).

Lenin pointed out that both World War I and the Balkan Wars (1912-1913) that preceded it had intensified the imperialist pressure on oppressed nations, as well, creating an explosive situation. This was of decisive importance in the Russian empire, where the majority of the population were part of nations oppressed by the tsar's regime. Lenin recognized the revolutionary significance of the struggle of the oppressed nations and defended the Marxist program of the right to self-determination, including the right to separation.

In several theses drawn up in October 1915, Lenin reiterated the Bolsheviks' position that it was permissible for Social Democrats to participate in a provisional revolutionary government with the democratic petty bourgeoisie. But "not with the revolutionary chauvinists," he stated unequivocally.

"If the revolutionary chauvinists won in Russia," he said, "we would be opposed to a defence of their 'fatherland' in the present war. Our slogan is: against the chauvinists, even if they are revolutionary and republican. . . ."

Then he answered the question as to what the revolutionary workers party would do if the revolution placed power in its hands during the war. Contrary to Mandel's assertions, Lenin did not say: self-limit yourself, turn it over to the bourgeoisie to govern during an extended stage of capitalist development.

Lenin's answer was: "We would propose peace to all the belligerents on the condition that freedom is given to the colonies and all peoples that are dependent, oppressed and deprived of rights. Under the present governments, neither Germany, nor Britain and France would accept this condition. In that case, we would have to prepare for and wage a revolutionary war, i.e., not only resolutely carry out the whole of our minimum program, but work systematically to bring about an uprising among all peoples now oppressed by the Great Russians, all colonies and dependent countries in Asia (India, China, Persia, etc.), and also, and first and foremost, we would raise up the socialist proletariat of Europe for an insurrection against their governments and despite the social-chauvinists. There is no doubt that a victory of the proletariat in Russia would create extraordinarily

favorable conditions for the development of the revolution in both Asia and Europe. *Even* 1905 proved that" (CW, Vol. 21, 1915, p. 403).

This is the same answer the Bolsheviks gave two years later when they won the majority in the soviets and led the workers and peasants to power.

Yet Mandel would have us believe that "until after the February 1917 revolution, i.e., until the April Theses were formulated," the Bolsheviks were committed to a strategy that the revolutionary dictatorship "will have to give up or lose power later on, given the bourgeois character of the revolution!"

That wasn't Lenin's position — in 1905, 1915, or 1917.

Did Lenin dump his perspectives in 1917 ?

Mandel claims that after the February 1917 revolution, Lenin dumped the strategy of the revolutionary democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry and rearmed the Bolshevik party with a new strategy. Only this, Mandel says, made the October Revolution possible.

But an obvious question is posed: Where did Lenin write that he was dumping the Bolsheviks' pre-1917 strategy? Where did he ever say that the party had held an incorrect orientation for more than two decades?

Since Mandel offers no evidence that Lenin ever made any such statements, the reader can only assume that the old position just faded away without comment, that Lenin dropped the Bolsheviks' strategy for the Russian revolution without explaining why. Perhaps Lenin was embarrassed, or trying to cover his tracks, or just didn't think the change was important. Maybe it took minds more acute than Lenin's following his death to even ascertain the change. Maybe Lenin maneuvered and deceived the party and the working class for the only time in his life.

None of these possible explanations hold up very well. All are highly uncharacteristic of Lenin, who was very frank when correcting errors and adopting new policies, and considered it important to be so.

Any reader who is inspired — and many will be — to go back to Lenin's writings in 1917 and after can check for themselves what he had to say. They will discover that Mandel chose to ignore what Lenin actually wrote.

Lenin's response to the February revolution and his proposals for what the working class should do are outlined clearly in a series of letters, articles, and resolutions written in March and April 1917. The major documents are: "Letters from Afar," "The Tasks of the Proletariat in the Present Revolution (April Theses)," "The Dual Power," "Letters on Tactics," and "The Tasks of the Proletariat in our Revolution (Draft Platform for the Proletarian Party)".

In the first of the "Letters on Tactics," which was written a few days *after* the April Theses, Lenin explained his approach in some detail. He defined the situation as "a period of *transition* from the first stage of the revolution to the second. . . ."

"What, then, is the first stage?"

"It is the passing of state power to the bourgeoisie. Before the February-March revolution of 1917, state power in Russia was in the hands of one old class,

namely, the feudal landed nobility, headed by Nicholas Romanov.

"After the revolution, the power is in the hands of a *different* class, . . . namely, the *bourgeoisie*.

"The passing of state power from one *class* to another is the first, the principal, the basic sign of a *revolution*, both in the strictly scientific and in the practical political meaning of that term.

"To this extent, the bourgeois, or the bourgeois-democratic, revolution in Russia is *completed*.

"But at this point we hear a clamour of protest from people who readily call themselves 'Old Bolsheviks' [the letter was a polemic against Bolshevik leader Kamenev and his supporters]. Didn't we always maintain, they say, that the bourgeois-democratic revolution is completed only by the 'revolutionary-democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry'? Is the agrarian revolution, which is also a bourgeois-democratic revolution completed? Is it not a fact, on the contrary, that it has *not even* started?"

"My answer is: the Bolshevik slogans and ideas *on the whole* have been confirmed by history; but *concretely* things have worked out *differently*; they are more original, more peculiar, more variegated than anyone could have expected."

The war, as Lenin had explained in his first "Letter from Afar," had accelerated the revolutionary process in Russia and shaped its contours somewhat differently than could have been anticipated a decade earlier. Nonetheless, the Bolsheviks' strategic orientation, while algebraic as all strategies and programs must be, was generally confirmed and it served as the indispensable guide for determining what to do in 1917.

Lenin's "Letter on Tactics" continued by criticizing "those 'Old Bolsheviks' who more than once already have played so regrettable a role in the history of our Party by reiterating formulas senselessly *learned by rote* instead of *studying* the specific features of the new and living reality.

"The revolutionary-democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry' has *already* become a reality [here Lenin added a footnote: "In a certain form and to a certain extent"] in the Russian revolution, for this 'formula' envisages only a *relation of classes*, and not a *concrete political institution implementing* this relation, this co-operation. 'The Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies' — there you have the 'revolutionary-democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry' already accomplished in reality.

"This formula is already antiquated. Events have moved it from the realm of formulas into the realm of reality, clothed it with flesh and bone, concretized it and thereby modified it."

Note that Lenin does not say the Bolsheviks' formula of the revolutionary-democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry was proven wrong or was unconfirmed. No, Lenin says it has been "accomplished in reality."

Mandel may disagree with Lenin's conclusion. That's certainly his right. But it would be outrageous to conclude that Lenin did not mean what he said.

Lenin went on to say that, "A new and different task now faces us: to effect a split *within* this dictatorship between the proletarian elements (the anti-defencist, internationalist, 'Communist' elements, who

stand for a transition to the commune) and the *small-proprietor* or *petty-bourgeois* elements (Chkheidze, Tsereteli, Steklov, the Socialist-Revolutionaries and the other revolutionary defencists who are opposed to moving towards the commune and are in favor of 'supporting' the bourgeoisie and the bourgeois government).

"The person who *now* speaks only of a "revolutionary-democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry" is behind the times, consequently, he has in effect *gone over* to the petty bourgeoisie against the proletarian class struggle; that person should be consigned to the archive of 'Bolshevik' pre-revolutionary antiques (it may be called the archive of 'Old Bolsheviks'). . . .

"For the present, it is essential to grasp the incontestable truth that a Marxist must take cognizance of real life, of the true facts of *reality* and not cling to a theory of yesterday, which, like all theories, at best only outlines the main and the general, only *comes near* to embracing life in all its complexity."

Lenin put the old formulation in the archives not because it had been proven wrong, but precisely because it had been realized. The *general* formulation has been replaced by a *concrete* political institution — the workers' and peasants' soviets — which expressed it "in a certain form and to a certain extent." Lenin discontinued using the more general, algebraic formula in favor of the new, more concrete demand for a government of the Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Soviets.

"According to the old way of thinking," Lenin continued, "the rule of the bourgeoisie could and should be *followed* by the rule of the proletariat and the peasantry, by their dictatorship.

"In real life, however, things have *already* turned out *differently*; there has been an extremely original, novel and unprecedented *interlacing of the one with the other*. We have side by side, existing together, simultaneously *both* the rule of the bourgeoisie (the government of Lvov and Guchkov) and a revolutionary-democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry, which is *voluntarily* ceding power to the bourgeoisie, voluntarily making itself an appendage of the bourgeoisie" (CW, Vol. 24, April 1917, p. 43-46).

The capitalist provisional government was continuing the imperialist war effort — in the name of defending the revolution. And the Menshevik-SR leadership of the Soviets was strongly supporting this policy. Lenin's and the Bolsheviks' position since 1914 had been to oppose the imperialist war effort and to argue that a defeat of the Russian imperialists was a lesser evil for the working class of Russia.

The dual power

A key characterization of the situation in Russia following the February revolution was the coming into existence of what the bourgeois press, with regret, first termed "dual power." Lenin had begun explaining the significance of this situation with his first "Letter from Afar." In "The Dual Power," written in mid-April about the same time as the "Letters on Tactics," Lenin pointed out that "The highly remarkable feature of our revolution is that it has brought about a *dual power*. This fact must be grasped first and foremost: unless it is understood, we cannot ad-

vance" (CW, Vol. 24, April 1917, p. 38).

How would this dual power be resolved? In the tasks adopted by the April Bolshevik congress, which Lenin drafted, he explained that "The dual power merely expresses a *transitional* phase in the revolution's development, when it has gone further than the ordinary bourgeois-democratic revolution, *but has not yet reached* a 'pure' dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry" (CW, Vol. 24, April 1917, p. 61).

In the "Letters on Tactics," Lenin had posed the question: ". . . are we not in danger of falling into subjectivism, of wanting to arrive at the socialist revolution by 'skipping' the bourgeois-democratic revolution — which is not yet completed and has not yet exhausted the peasant movement?"

He answered, "I might be incurring this danger if I said: 'No tsar, but a *workers* government.' But I did *not* say that, I said something else. I said that there *can be no* government (barring a bourgeois government) in Russia *other than* that of the Soviets of Workers', Agricultural Laborers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Deputies. I said that power in Russia now can pass from Guchkov and Lvov *only* to these Soviets. And in these Soviets, as it happens, it is the peasants, the soldiers, i.e., petty bourgeoisie, who predominate, to use a scientific, Marxist term, a class characterization, and not a common, man-in-the-street, professional characterization" (CW, Vol. 24, April 1917, p. 48).

In other words, a soviet government would be one in which the peasants preponderated. But this, Mandel has informed us, is impossible, which even Lenin had come to realize by April 1917. Yet here is Lenin continuing to advocate a provisional revolutionary government in which the representatives of the peasantry would initially hold the majority.

During the entire eight months of preparation for the October insurrection, Lenin continually emphasized that the Bolsheviks were not proposing the immediate institution of socialism. Rather, they proposed implementing a far-reaching agrarian program, including nationalization of the land; taking over the banks; and imposing workers control over the industrial and commercial capitalists.

These measures, Lenin explained in the April Theses, "do not in any way constitute the 'introduction' of socialism. . . ." They were "steps toward socialism" (CW, Vol. 24, April 1917, p. 74).

Were the Bolsheviks disarmed?

Mandel asserts that as a result of their longstanding strategic orientation, the Bolsheviks were unprepared for and politically disarmed during and immediately following the February 1917 revolution. Fortunately, in the first three weeks after Lenin's return to Russia, the Bolsheviks were able to make a rapid turnabout.

If this were actually true, it would have been quite astonishing. The Bolsheviks — disoriented on the place of the democratic tasks in the revolution, on the weight and role of the peasantry, on the perspective of establishing a worker-peasant alliance on the governmental level — turned on a dime and scrapped what they had supported, voted for, and campaigned around for a decade and a half.

As has already been shown, however, the Bolsheviks didn't abandon their strategy, but saw it confirmed and realized by the unfolding revolution.

What about Mandel's charge that "all the Bolshevik leaders and all the Bolshevik cadres favored 'critical' support to and even collaboration with the provisional coalition government" and rejected "any notion of a seizure of power by the working class"? Mandel says this alleged universal confusion flowed inevitably from Lenin's "erroneous dogma" on the revolutionary democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry.

Once again, the facts reveal something quite different. They show that: 1) the Bolsheviks were *not* unanimous in their approach to the capitalist provisional government; and 2) these differences inside the party revealed a current, based in the working class, that strongly opposed the Provisional Government and its imperialist war policy and another current that favored conciliation with the Mensheviks, particularly on the decisive war question.

When the February revolution began, all the central Bolshevik leaders were in exile or prison. Thus, how to respond inside Russia was initially up to younger and less experienced leaders. Before the Provisional Government was established, the leaders on the spot issued a manifesto that was published in *Izvestia*, the organ of the soviets.

It called on the workers and soldiers to organize around the Soviet of Workers' Deputies "to create a 'provisional revolutionary government.'" This government would, among other things, "enter into negotiations with the proletariat of the belligerent countries against their oppressors and enslavers . . . and for the termination of the bloody human slaughter which has been imposed on the enslaved peoples" (*The Bolshevik Revolution*, Vol. 1, 1917-1923, Carr, Penguin Books, p. 83).

When Lenin, still in Switzerland, learned of this manifesto from an abridged version in a German newspaper, he immediately sent a telegram hailing it to the Bolshevik paper *Pravda* in Petrograd. In his "Letters from Afar," Lenin singled out for special praise the statement's position against the imperialist war.

The main leaders in Petrograd — Shlyapnikov, Zalutsky, and Molotov — started to republish *Pravda* on March 5. According to historian E.H. Carr, "The views expressed in the first seven numbers of the new *Pravda* were broadly those of the party manifesto. It denounced the existing Provisional Government as 'a government of capitalists and landowners', and thought that the Soviet should convene a constituent assembly to establish a 'democratic republic.' On the issue of the war, it published on 10 March 1917 a resolution of the bureau [of the Bolshevik Central Committee] advocating a transformation of the imperialist war into a civil war for the liberation of the peoples from the yoke of the ruling classes, though it still refrained from the explicit advocacy of national defeatism" (*The Bolshevik Revolution*, Vol. 1, 1917-1923, Carr, p. 84).

Then, in mid-March, older party leaders — Kamenev, Stalin, and Muranov — returned and took over the reins of *Pravda*. The line toward the coalition government and the war immediately changed. Criti-

cism of the class-collaborationist leadership of the soviets and of the liberal leadership of the Provisional Government was dropped.

A prowar proclamation issued by the Petrograd Soviet under the leadership of the Mensheviks and SRs was published on the front page of *Pravda*. It announced that "we should stoutly defend our own liberty" and that "the Russian revolution will not flinch before the bayonets of the aggressors."

This was followed by a whole-hearted endorsement of national defense by Kamenev. He stated in a signed article that "When army faces army, it would be the most insane policy to suggest to one of these armies to lay down its arms and go home. This would not be a policy of peace but a policy of slavery, which would be rejected with disgust by a free people" (Carr, p. 86).

Kamenev and Stalin also favored pursuing discussions aimed at unification with the Mensheviks.

This radical shift in line hardly received a unanimous response among Bolsheviks in Petrograd. Marcel Leibman, in *Leninism Under Lenin*, quotes from Shlyapnikov's memoirs:

"The whole of the Tauride Palace, from the members of the Committee of the Duma to the Executive Committee [of the Soviets], the heart of revolutionary democracy (i.e., the moderate majority in the Soviets, M.L.) was full of the news — the victory of the moderate, reasonable Bolsheviks over the extremists."

"On the other hand," Leibman says, "some of the Bolshevik militants were indignant at the tone adopted by the editors of *Pravda*. The Petersburg section even called for Kamenev's expulsion, and in the Vyborg quarter [strongest fraction of worker-Bolsheviks] Stalin's expulsion was demanded as well."

Leibman includes a footnote indicating that "What was published in *Pravda* was extremely interesting, but of no less importance was what was *not* published there. When Alexandra Kollontai brought to Petrograd, in the last days of March, the first two of Lenin's *Letters from Afar*, . . . the editorial board hesitated for several days before publishing only one of them — and then suppressed the passages in which Lenin opposed any agreement with the Mensheviks" (*Leninism Under Lenin*, Marcel Leibman, Merlin Press, 1975, p. 123).

During this period, Iakov Sverdlov, who was to play a key role in organizing the Bolshevik party from April 1917 until his death from influenza in March 1919, also opposed the capitalist Provisional Government. In an unpublished manuscript *Iakov M. Sverdlov and the Organization of the Russian Revolution* (1978), Prof. Charles Duval reports that when Sverdlov was freed from internment in Siberia in March, he spent a few days in Krasnoïarsk, where he participated in party and soviet meetings. On March 22 in the Krasnoïarsk Soviet, dominated by conciliatory Social-Democrats, Sverdlov, according to Duval:

" . . . accused the Mensheviks and SRs of promising everything to the people and delivering nothing and predicted that they would eventually turn against the revolution. He argued that the Menshevik and SR idea of 'civil peace' retarded the development of the revolution. He supported instead the soviets as the key to a victorious proletarian revolution and the only organs acceptable to the Bolsheviks as legitimate

sources of power. The majority in the Krasnoïarsk Soviet remained unmoved by his appeal, however, and endorsed the new government with the standard socialist formula: 'in so far as it follows a course satisfying the demands of the working class and the revolutionary peasantry.'

Kamenev, Stalin, et al. did not deduce their conciliationist line from traditional Bolshevik formulations such as the revolutionary democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry. Rather, they cloaked their conciliationist line in these and other revolutionary formulations, as centrists always do.

In fact, their line had nothing in common with the positions adopted by the Bolshevik Party congresses and carried in its press since 1903. In particular, it would be hard to find any questions that the Bolsheviks were better armed against than conciliationism toward the Mensheviks and opposition to defending the imperialist government's war. This was the opposite of the Mensheviks' line, which was followed out to its logical capitulationist conclusion in February 1917. Moreover, as already indicated, Lenin had explained explicitly in 1915 that the Bolsheviks would give no support whatever to any provisional government of the social chauvinists.

The fact that some Bolshevik leaders accepted a conciliationist course and abandoned the Bolshevik line on the war testifies to the profound pressures on the party, especially on those sectors most removed from the working class.

It is true that many of the Bolsheviks who were attempting to apply the party's revolutionary Marxist positions did not see the unfolding events and way forward as clearly as Lenin. They were open to the explanations he offered when he returned, however, *because of*, not *in spite of*, their absorption of the Bolshevik strategy. Lenin helped clarify and give leadership to a struggle that was already taking place inside the party. If this had not been the case, there is no way that the proletarian wing could have won a majority in the party in the first three weeks after Lenin's return.

The program of the Bolsheviks, hammered out and tested by experience for nearly two decades, prepared the majority of the party to orient itself correctly to the events of 1917. Any other explanation borders on attributing supernatural qualities to Lenin as a leader — the better to differentiate oneself from the line of march and strategic orientation that he had imbued the Bolsheviks with for a decade and a half.

From October 1917 to October 1918

In October 1917 the workers and peasants resolved the question of dual power through their soviets by establishing a revolutionary dictatorship, the dictatorship of the proletariat and poor peasantry, a workers and farmers government. This government immediately called "for a just, democratic peace," began to implement a radical agrarian program, and took the first steps toward expropriating the bourgeoisie and establishing a workers state.

Mandel says that the dictatorship of the proletariat, i.e., a workers state, was established with the October Revolution. To back up this opinion, he presents statements by Lenin describing the October Revolution as "socialist" and the new government as "the dictator-

ship of the proletariat supported by the poor peasants."

Lenin and other Bolsheviks at this time used many different formulations to characterize the soviet government: "workers and peasants government," "socialist republic of soviets," "dictatorship of the proletariat," "dictatorship of the proletariat and poor peasantry," "people's government," and so on.

The name officially adopted on October 26 for the Council of Peoples' Commissars, on Lenin's proposal, was the Provisional Workers and Peasants Government; in January the "provisional" was dropped by the Third All-Russian Congress of Soviets following the dispersal of the Constituent Assembly.

But the label, while important, is not the main point. What's key is the class composition and direction of the government, the tasks before it, and the transitional struggle necessary to accomplish those tasks.

The new government established in October 1917 was independent of the capitalist class, but at the same time stood on the capitalist economic foundations it inherited. That's not only what the Provisional Workers and Peasants Government inherited, but what it stood on to begin with and for some months after coming to power. The capitalist class still owned most of the means of production, and the class struggle in the countryside between the capitalist farmers and the great mass of poor peasants, semiproletarians, and rural workers had only begun.

Using this governmental power, the workers and peasants carried out a struggle to wrest control of the economy from the capitalists and to consolidate their power in the countryside. This involved nationalizing the banks, abolishing commercial secrecy, countering capitalist sabotage, and establishing workers' control over production. These measures prepared the way for expropriating the capitalists and beginning to institute workers management of industry.

By the end of the first year of the revolution, a monopoly of foreign trade had been established, most capitalist industry had been expropriated, and big strides had been made in the development of workers control.

Workers control: schedules vs. class struggle

Mandel contends that "The fact that in the beginning, the revolutionary government was content ["content" is a strange choice of words to describe the transitional struggle of the working class] to establish workers control over industry rather than nationalize it, no longer had anything to do with the belief in the 'socialist immaturity' of the proletariat. It had to do only with scheduling the socialist tasks of the revolution in a chronologically and economically rational way."

Contentedly "scheduling tasks" in neat chronological order totally abstracts the transition of a capitalist state to a workers state from the living class struggle. Workers control is a *necessary* form of *struggle* by the working class — not a state of contentedness or "rational" scheduling. It is necessary not primarily because of the "socialist immaturity" of the workers, but to strengthen their hand against the capitalist class and prepare the way for expropriation

and workers management. It is a key way that workers increasingly curb the prerogatives of the capitalists, while simultaneously building their own self-confidence and political class consciousness.

Lenin put it this way in the report to the November 1918 Soviet congress: "We did not decree socialism immediately throughout industry, because socialism can only take shape and be consolidated when the working class has learnt how to run the economy and when the authority of the working people has been firmly established. Socialism is mere wishful thinking without that. That is why we introduced workers' control, appreciating that it was a contradictory and incomplete measure, but an essential one so that workers themselves might tackle the momentous tasks of building up industry in a vast country without and opposed to exploiters. And comrades, everyone who took a direct, or even indirect, part in this work, everyone who lived through all the oppression and brutality of the old capitalist regime, learned a great deal" (*On Workers' Control and the Nationalization of Industry*, Progress Publishers, Lenin, 1918, p. 198).

Notice that Lenin talks about living through "oppression and brutality" and "learning" and "establishing authority," *not* about "scheduling tasks."

A transition also took place in the countryside. In looking back over the first year of the revolution, Lenin wrote that "The victorious Bolshevik revolution meant the end of vacillation, meant the complete destruction of the monarchy and of the landlord system (which had *not* been destroyed before the October Revolution). We carried the *bourgeois* revolution to its conclusion. The peasants supported us *as a whole*. Their antagonism to the socialist proletariat could not reveal itself all at once. The Soviets united the peasants *in general*. The class divisions among the peasants had not yet matured, had not yet come into the open.

"That process took place in the summer and autumn of 1918. The Czech counter-revolutionary mutiny roused the Kulaks. A wave of kulak revolts swept over Russia. The poor peasants learned, not from books or newspapers, *but from life itself*, that their interests were irreconcilably antagonistic to those of the kulaks, the rich, the rural bourgeoisie. Like every other petty-bourgeois party, the 'Left Socialist-Revolutionaries' reflected the vacillation of the people, and in the summer of 1918 they split: one section joined forces with the Czechs . . . while the other section . . . remained with the Bolsheviks."

Lenin went on to say that ". . . it is only now, in the summer and autumn, of 1918, that the rural districts *themselves* are passing through the *October* (i.e., proletarian) Revolution. Things are beginning to change. The wave of kulak revolts is giving way to a rise of the poor, to a growth of the 'Poor Peasants Committees.'"

So the dictatorship of the proletariat — that is, if it is defined to mean the establishment of a state based on state property rather than capitalist private property — was not accomplished in one fell swoop in October 1917. It was a process, a transition, that required a massive struggle by the working class and the poor peasantry.

"If the Bolshevik proletariat had tried at once, in October-November 1917," Lenin wrote, "without

waiting for the class differentiation in the rural districts, without being able to *prepare* it and bring it about, to 'decree' a civil war or the 'introduction of socialism' in the rural districts, had tried to do without a temporary bloc [alliance] with the peasantry in general, without making a number of concessions to the middle peasants, etc., that would have been a *Blanquist* distortion of Marxism, an attempt by the *minority* to impose its will upon the majority; it would have been a theoretical absurdity, revealing a failure to understand that a general peasant revolution is *still* a bourgeois revolution, and that without a *series of transitions, of transitional stages*, it cannot be transformed into a socialist revolution in a backward country" ("The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky," *CW*, Vol. 28, 1918, p. 302-305).

Echoing the concluding paragraph of *Two Tactics* written 13 years earlier, Lenin added that, "With all the peasants right through to the end of the bourgeois-democratic revolution; and with the poor, the proletarian and semi-proletarian section of the peasants, forward to the socialist revolution! This has been the policy of the Bolsheviks, and it is the only Marxist policy" (*Ibid.*, p. 311).

Fifteen years later, Leon Trotsky explained in a similar way how the transition to a workers state in Russia took place. Looking back at the experience of the 1917-1918 revolution, he wrote in 1933:

"Not only up to the Brest-Litovsk peace [March 1918] but even up to autumn of 1918, the social content of the revolution was restricted to a petty-bourgeois agrarian overturn and workers' control over production. This means that the revolution in its actions had not yet passed the boundaries of bourgeois society. During this first period, soldiers' soviets ruled side by side with the workers' soviets and often elbowed them aside.

"Only toward the autumn of 1918," Trotsky wrote, "did the petty-bourgeois soldier-agrarian elemental wave recede a little to its shores, and the workers went forward with the nationalization of the means of production. Only from this time can one speak of the inception of a real dictatorship of the proletariat. But even here it is necessary to make certain large reservations. During those initial years, the dictatorship was geographically confined to the old Moscow principality and was compelled to wage a three-years' war along all the radii from Moscow to the periphery. This means that up to 1921, precisely up to the NEP [New Economic Policy], that is, what went on was still the struggle to establish the dictatorship of the proletariat upon the national scale" ("The Class Nature of the Soviet State," *Writings of Leon Trotsky 1933-34*, Pathfinder Press, p. 106).

Thus, Mandel creates a tangle of confusion in the concluding paragraph of his article when he asserts:

"In reality, the tasks of the democratic revolution were accomplished only after the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat, *after* the conquest of power by the soviets, *after* the creation of a workers state. And they were accomplished in the closest combination with a whole series of tasks (not all, of course) that were already socialist in nature."

Let's look at this paragraph more closely, starting from the bottom and working our way up.

1) Mandel says that the tasks of the democratic revolution were accomplished in combination with

beginning to carry out the socialist tasks. Correct. The Bolsheviks had foreseen both the primacy of the democratic tasks in the first stage of the revolution and their intertwining with socialist tasks as the class struggle deepened. The concrete form that this process would take was given, as it could only have been, by the concrete combination of domestic and international class relations that determined the framework of the revolution during its first years.

2) The democratic tasks were completed only "after the creation of a workers state." Wrong. At least using the scientific criteria for a workers state that Marxists have used since the 1930s, based on our analysis of the bureaucratic degeneration of the Soviet workers state — criteria we learned with the aid of Trotsky. According to those criteria — state property, economic planning, and a monopoly of foreign trade — a workers state did not come into existence in Russia until at least the autumn of 1918, as Trotsky explained in the 1933 article. This was well after the major tasks of the revolution had been accomplished.

3) The democratic tasks were accomplished only "after the conquest of power by the soviets." Yes and no. As Lenin explained in his April 1917 "Letter on Tactics," the toppling of the tsar in February and consequent "passing of state power to the bourgeoisie" meant that "To this extent, the bourgeois, or the bourgeois-democratic, revolution in Russia is completed." But the central democratic tasks, such as the agrarian reform and self-determination of the nations oppressed by Russia, were not and could not have been completed until after the conquest of power by the soviets. (We'll see what Lenin had to say about this question on the fourth anniversary of the October Revolution a little bit later in this article.)

4) The democratic tasks were completed only "after the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat." That depends. If by the "dictatorship of the proletariat" Mandel means a workers state, which is how our movement has used the term since the 1930s, then the answer is provided by point 2) above; if he means by it the conquest of power of the soviets in October 1917, which is how the term was often used prior to the 1930s, then the answer is provided in point 3) above.

So Mandel's concluding flourish doesn't tell us much. It certainly doesn't throw into question the fundamental revolutionary continuity of Bolshevik strategy before, during, and after 1917, and the fact that this leadership and strategy were responsible for the October victory.

Peasant representation in the government

How were the peasants represented in the new revolutionary government that came to power in October? Did they play any independent role?

By the time of the October insurrection, the Bolsheviks were a majority in the All-Russian Soviets of Workers and Soldiers Deputies, but not in the peasants' soviets where the Socialist Revolutionaries (SRs) still dominated.

At the All-Russian Soviet Congress meeting on October 25, the Bolsheviks expressed agreement with a proposal to form a government that would include not only the Bolsheviks, but also the Mensheviks, Social-

ist Revolutionaries, and Left Socialist Revolutionaries. The Mensheviks and SRs, however, with the exception of the Left SRs, rejected this proposal and walked out of the soviets. For the Bolshevik leaders, this final act of betrayal and display of allegiance to the exploiters shut the door to any coalition with the right Menshevik and SR leaders.

The new Central Executive Committee elected by the October Congress of the Soviets included 62 Bolsheviks, 19 Left SRs, 6 Menshevik-Internationalists, and 4 independent socialists.

About three weeks later the All-Russian Congress of Peasants Deputies was held. All attempts by the Right SRs to prevent the congress from meeting and the peasant delegates from coming into contact with the Bolsheviks failed. The Bolsheviks successfully established a coalition with the Left SRs who held a majority at the congress. Without this coalition, the Bolsheviks had only 11 percent of the delegates. A union was established between the Central Executive Committee and the Peasants Congress, and the CEC was expanded to include 100 delegates from the Peasants Congress. This even included some Right SRs and Mensheviks.

At this point, the Left SRs agreed to serve on the Council of People's Commissars. Several were appointed to head up Commissariats and more to other governmental posts, thus establishing a Bolshevik-Left SR coalition government. The third Congress of Soviets in January elected a Central Executive Committee that included 160 Bolsheviks and 125 Left SRs.

The Left SR commissars resigned in March 1918 over opposition to the Brest-Litovsk pact that ended the war with Germany, as well as disagreements flowing from the developing class struggle and social differentiations in the countryside. The SRs remained on the CEC until July, however, when several Left SR leaders participated in the assassination of the German ambassador and an attempted coup. The Committees of Poor Peasants were being established in the countryside at the Bolsheviks' initiative during this same period, and the Bolsheviks were gaining a growing base among the poor peasants and even layers of the middle peasants.

So, at least through the first phase of the revolution, the coalition between the working class and the peasantry existed both as a coalition of soviets and of parties. This runs contrary to Mandel's unqualified assertion that the peasants would not be able to exercise any independent, organized role in a revolutionary government.

Moreover, the Bolsheviks' efforts to forge a coalition with the Left SRs played a *crucial* role in the first months of the revolution, when the Bolsheviks remained a small minority among the peasants. It bought the proletariat time to win the support of more and more poor peasants, and at least a wait-and-see attitude among many middle peasants, through the revolutionary government's policies of ending the war and carrying through the agrarian reform.

What happened subsequently also followed the general pattern anticipated by the Bolshevik strategy. As the class struggle deepened and the socialist course of the revolution advanced, the peasantry po-

larized between the poor and landless layers and the kulaks who exploited labor, with the middle peasants pulled in both directions. On the political and organizational level, these class differentiations were reflected by the desertion of growing numbers of SR leaders to the camp of the capitalist counterrevolution, while those most firmly based on the rural poor remained with the government and eventually joined the Communist Party of their own free will and political conviction.

The solidity of the worker-peasant alliance that resulted from this course by the Bolsheviks remained the bedrock of the survival of the soviet regime.

Verdict of history

Mandel argues that the Bolsheviks' positions on the relationship between the democratic and socialist revolutions, and the role of the peasantry in them, were proven wrong by history, and that Lenin recognized this just in the nick of time in early 1917.

But Mandel, as we've already seen in several cases, ignores and contradicts what Lenin himself said about this in retrospect. Let's look at a few more examples.

In 1918 Karl Kautsky, a prominent leader of the Second International who pursued a centrist course during World War I, wrote a book entitled, *The Dictatorship of the Proletariat*, attacking the Russian revolution and the Bolsheviks' policies. He rehashed positions that had been debated before 1917 by the Mensheviks and Bolsheviks.

Lenin responded with the pamphlet, "The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky," which has been referred to previously in this article. Lenin wrote:

"The Russian revolution is a bourgeois revolution, said all the Marxists of Russia before 1905. The Mensheviks, substituting liberalism for Marxism, drew the following conclusion from this: the proletariat therefore must not go beyond what is acceptable to the bourgeoisie and must pursue a policy of compromise with them. The Bolsheviks said this was a bourgeois-liberal theory. The bourgeoisie were trying to bring about the reform of the state on bourgeois, reformist, not revolutionary lines, while preserving the monarchy, the landlord system, etc., as far as possible.

"The proletariat must carry through the bourgeois-democratic revolution to the end, not allowing itself to be 'bound' by the reformism of the bourgeoisie," Lenin said. "The Bolsheviks formulated the alignment of class forces in the bourgeois revolution as follows: the proletariat, winning over the peasants, will neutralize the liberal bourgeoisie and utterly destroy the monarchy, medievalism and the landlord system.

"It is the alliance between the proletariat and the peasants in general that reveals the bourgeois character of the revolution," Lenin emphasized, "for the peasants in general are small producers who exist on the basis of commodity production. Further, the Bolsheviks then added, the proletariat will win over the entire semi-proletariat (all the working and exploited people), will neutralize the middle peasants and overthrow the bourgeoisie; this will be a socialist revolution, as distinct from a bourgeois-democratic revolution (See my pamphlet *Two Tactics*, published in

1905 and reprinted in *Twelve Years*, St. Petersburg, 1907)" (CW, Vol. 28, 1918, p. 295).

Notice that Lenin says nothing here about the Bolsheviks' pre-1917 positions having been wrong. To the contrary, he uses essentially the same formulations to defend those positions, and he explicitly urges people to read *Two Tactics*, which contains the most complete presentation of these positions. "The question which Kautsky has so tangled up was fully explained by the Bolsheviks as far back as 1905," Lenin continued. "Yes, our revolution is a bourgeois revolution as long as we march with the peasants as a whole. This has been as clear as clear can be to us; we have said it hundreds and thousands of times since 1905, and we have never attempted to skip this necessary stage of the historical process or abolish it by decrees. . . .

"Beginning with April 1917, however, long before the October Revolution, that is long before we assumed power, we publicly declared and explained to the people: the revolution cannot now stop at this stage, for the country has marched forward, capitalism has advanced, ruin has reached fantastic dimensions, which (whether one likes it or not) will demand steps forward, to socialism. For there is no other way of advancing, of saving the war-weary country and of alleviating the sufferings of the working and exploited people.

"Things have turned out just as we said they would," Lenin said. "The course taken by the revolution has confirmed the correctness of our reasoning. First, with the 'whole' of the peasants against the monarchy, against the landowners, against medievalism (and to that extent the revolution remains bourgeois, bourgeois-democratic). Then, with the poor peasants, with the semi-proletarians, with all the exploited, against capitalism, including the rural rich, the kulaks, the profiteers, and to that extent the revolution becomes a socialist one. To attempt to raise an artificial Chinese Wall between the first and second, to separate them by anything else than the degree of preparedness of the proletariat and the degree of its unity with the poor peasants, means to distort Marxism dreadfully, to vulgarise it, to substitute liberalism in its place" (CW, Vol. 28, 1918, p. 300-301).

(Note the striking parallel to the following passage from *Two Tactics* written 13 years earlier: "The proletariat must carry the democratic revolution to completion, allying to itself the mass of the peasantry in order to crush the autocracy's resistance by force and paralyze the bourgeoisie's instability. The proletariat must accomplish the socialist revolution, allying to itself the mass of the semi-proletarian elements of the population, so as to crush the bourgeoisie's resistance by force and paralyze the instability of the peasantry and the petty bourgeoisie" (*Two Tactics*, 1905, p. 85).

Contrary to Mandel, Lenin says in 1918 that "Things have turned out just as [the Bolsheviks] said they would." The revolution "confirmed the correctness of our reasoning." And Lenin, correctly, never changed his mind as to this judgment.

The social crisis and economic ruin caused by the imperialist war, the development of capitalism in Russia over the dozen years since 1905, the relations among the various classes and political forces in the aftermath of the February revolution — by April

1917 these concrete factors had filled in the variables in the Bolsheviks' "algebraic" strategy, and in October the equation was led to a solution in struggle. A workers and farmers government was established, and a whole new stage of the revolution was opened, leading toward the expropriation of the capitalists and the struggle to deepen, defend, and extend the socialist revolution.

Lenin commented further on the experience of the Russian revolution in an April 1919 article, "The Third International and Its Place in History."

He wrote, ". . . Russia's backwardness merged in a peculiar way the proletarian revolution against the bourgeoisie with the peasant revolution against the landowners. That is what we started from in October 1917, and we would not have achieved victory so easily then if we had not. As long ago as 1856, Marx spoke, in reference to Prussia, of the possibility of a peculiar combination of proletarian revolution and peasant war. From the beginning of 1905 the Bolsheviks advocated the idea of a revolutionary-democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry" (CW, Vol. 29, 1919, p. 310).

Of all the wonders to behold! Lenin harks back to the very formula that Mandel says "facilitated the confusion" of the Bolsheviks in the first weeks after February, a formula Mandel tells us Lenin had thrown on the scrap heap in April 1917, the formula encapsulating Lenin's "erroneous dogma." But here, two years later, this same formula turns up again in an article by Lenin. And Lenin clearly refers to it as an affirmation of the Bolsheviks' strategic line on the relationship of the peasant and proletarian revolutions, that is, the democratic and socialist revolutions.

In a 1920 article on "A Contribution to the History of the Question of the Dictatorship" (CW, 1920, Vol. 31, p. 340), Lenin again refers back with approval to *Two Tactics* and other pre-1917 writings of the Bolsheviks.

Finally, in 1921, on the fourth anniversary of the revolution, Lenin summarized the experience of the October Revolution. He explained that the Mensheviks and SRs "have talked and are still talking an incredible lot of nonsense about the relation between the bourgeois-democratic revolution and the socialist (that is proletarian) revolution. The last four years have proved to the hilt that our interpretation of Marxism on this point, and our estimate of the experience of former revolutions were correct.

"We have consummated the bourgeois-democratic revolution as nobody had done before," Lenin said. "We are advancing towards the socialist revolution consciously, firmly and unswervingly, knowing that it is not separated from the bourgeois-democratic revolution by a Chinese Wall, and knowing too that (in the last analysis) *struggle alone* will determine how far we shall advance . . ." (CW, Vol. 33, 1921, p. 51).

The Bolsheviks' communist strategy was "proved to the hilt." That's how Lenin saw the verdict of history.

Trotsky's position

Mandel not only argues that Lenin scrapped the Bolsheviks' "erroneous dogma" in 1917, but that in doing so he came over to "the same positions Trotsky

had defended since 1904-1906." According to Mandel, it was these "entirely new and original" positions of Trotsky that the judgment of history upheld against Lenin's pre-1917 strategy (and as we have seen his post-April 1917 judgment on this strategy.)

What were Trotsky's positions? How did they differ from those of Lenin and the Bolsheviks?

Trotsky was in basic agreement with the Bolsheviks on the question of what approach the working class should take toward the liberal bourgeoisie. He agreed with the Bolsheviks that the bourgeoisie would cling ever more closely to the old order as the revolution advanced, and that the working class should not look to it for leadership or view it as a reliable or strategic ally. The working class must assume the vanguard political role in the Russian revolution.

Trotsky had initially lined up with the Mensheviks following the split in the Russian Social Democracy at the 1903 RSDLP Congress, but he broke with them over this question one year later in 1904. This was a key dividing line between class struggle and class collaboration, between reform and revolution in the Russian workers' movement. Trotsky placed himself in the camp of the revolution and remained there, despite serious errors and vacillations, through 1917, when he came over all the way to Bolshevism.

Trotsky's pre-1917 differences with the Bolsheviks were fundamental, however. He had broken with the Bolsheviks at the 1903 Congress, and he maintained a centrist position in the social democracy throughout the next 14 years.

Mandel lists what he considers to be four of Trotsky's differences with the Bolsheviks during these years. On all of them, Mandel says, Trotsky was right against Lenin.

- Trotsky disagreed with what Mandel claims to be the Bolsheviks' view of a prolonged capitalist stage during which Russia would undergo modernization and industrialization through a "rapid development of capitalism."
- Trotsky recognized "the capacity of the Russian proletariat to begin to resolve the socialist tasks of the revolution," while "for Lenin, that capacity did not exist."
- Trotsky defended "the impossibility for the peasantry to constitute a political party or force that would be independent both of the bourgeoisie and the working class," while Lenin "was certain that the revolutionary peasantry had to *take political power*."
- Trotsky counterposed the formula of the "dictatorship of the proletariat" to the Bolsheviks' "revolutionary-democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry." "The two formulas," Mandel writes, "were not mere slogans but encapsulated the strategic perspectives of the revolution."

The first two differences pointed to by Mandel simply repeat his erroneous view of Lenin's positions. As this article has already established, the Bolsheviks recognized that the completion of the bourgeois-democratic revolution was an essential task of the proletariat and would create the best conditions for the development of capitalism, but they were not fighting in order to open a prolonged stage of capitalist development and rule.

Lenin's transitional strategy — following the course originally proposed by Marx and Engels in the

Communist Manifesto — was aimed at mobilizing the working class and peasants to carry the democratic revolution as far as they could. This included, from the outset of the revolution, taking up tasks that would open the road to the socialist revolution. It was through the revolutionary struggle to complete the democratic revolution, the Bolsheviks argued, that the working class would develop its capacity to carry out the socialist revolution.

There was no decisive difference between Trotsky and the Bolsheviks over these points. Instead, the difference was over the relationship between the democratic-peasant revolution and the proletarian-socialist revolution, and the alignment of classes necessary to connect and carry through these revolutions. This difference over fundamental strategy was reflected in the disagreement between Trotsky and the Bolsheviks on the role and weight of the peasantry in the revolution. On this decisive question, Mandel takes the side of Trotsky against Lenin and argues that Trotsky was proven right in 1917.

This article has already described where the peasants fit into the Bolshevik strategy for the revolution and how this orientation was confirmed in 1917. Let's now examine Trotsky's position.

The major presentation of Trotsky's orientation appears in *Results and Prospects*, which was published in 1906. This was Trotsky's balance sheet on the political lessons of the 1905 revolution, in which he had played a leadership role in Petrograd.

There, like the Bolsheviks, Trotsky explained that the working class must assume the leadership of the revolution and chart a course independent of and in opposition to the liberal bourgeoisie. He agreed with the Bolsheviks that the working class must have the support of the peasantry if the revolution were to succeed. He also recognized the differentiations within the peasantry that would, as the revolution advanced, impel the most exploited layers to move closer to the working class. And he correctly recognized that the international extension of the Russian revolution would be decisive to its consolidation and survival.

Where Trotsky differed with the Bolsheviks was on his insistence that the peasants had no independent role of any sort to play in the revolution, as well as his assessment of the slim prospects for any durable worker-peasant alliance.

Lenin recognized that class differentiations within the peasantry, as well as its vacillations between the proletariat and bourgeoisie conditioned by its intermediate position in society, made the formation of mass peasant organizations and an independent movement of peasants difficult. He recognized that the peasantry would ultimately either look to the historic solutions of the proletariat or to those of the bourgeoisie for a road forward out of the dead-end of tsarist society.

From Lenin's perspective of building a vanguard working-class party capable of leading the toilers in a successful revolution, however, all this only underlined the importance of the working class charting a course toward the peasantry that could maximize support from the broadest possible layers in the countryside and maximize the possibility of welding and preserving a worker-peasant alliance. That was the

aim of Bolshevik strategy.

Trotsky, however, concentrated primarily on the backwardness of the peasants, downplaying the prospective role they would play in the revolution and emphasizing the limits and problems involved in political organization in the countryside. Unlike the Bolsheviks, he did not propose an active policy for the working class and its vanguard party aimed at attempting to surmount these obstacles in order to forge an alliance with the peasants.

While the Bolsheviks' policy was always to fight for the leadership of the peasantry as the only way to carry the revolution through to the end, they did not exclude that the peasantry through its own organizations would play a major or even dominant role in the initial stage of a revolutionary government. If such a situation did develop, the Bolsheviks argued that it would be permissible, depending on the circumstances, for the revolutionary workers party to participate in it "for the purpose of waging a relentless struggle against all counter-revolutionary attempts and of defending the independent interests of the working class" (CW, Vol. 8, 1905, p. 397).

Trotsky argued, however, that while "revolutionary representatives of non-proletarian social groups" should be in the government, "the whole problem consists in this: *who will determine the content of the government's policy, who will form within it a solid majority?*"

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

This means, Trotsky said, "that the representative body of the nation, convened under the leadership of the proletariat, which has secured the support of the peasantry, will be nothing else than a democratic dress for the rule of the proletariat."

A government that was only "democratic dress" for the rule of the proletariat was not what the Bolsheviks were fighting for. The proletariat had to fight for the leadership of the peasantry and for a revolutionary government with other exploited producers to carry out the democratic revolution and begin the socialist revolution.

Continuing with Trotsky's *Results and Prospects*: "But is it not possible that the peasantry may push the proletariat aside and take its place? This is impossible. All historical experience protests against this assumption. Historical experience shows that the peasantry are absolutely incapable of taking up an *independent* political role."

Yes, historical experience shows that the peasantry can't "push the proletariat aside and take its place." Whereas the Bolsheviks paid close attention to every expression of independent organization and mobilization by the peasants, however, Trotsky be-

littled them on the grounds that historically the peasants are incapable of playing an independent role. While it is true, as Lenin recognized, that the peasantry has no historic program independent of the bourgeoisie or the working class, it does not at all follow — as Trotsky suggests — that the peasantry cannot form independent organizations and that the peasant revolution plays no independent role in modern revolutions. History shows the opposite.

Trotsky asks in *Results and Prospects*, “Does the fact of the rise and development first of the peasant union and then of the Group of Toil (Trudoviki) in the Duma run counter to these and subsequent arguments?” He answers, “Not in the least.”

“The radicalism and formlessness of the Group of Toil was the expression of the contradictoriness in the revolutionary aspirations of the peasantry. During the period of constitutional illusions it helplessly followed the ‘Cadets’ (Constitutional Democrats). At the moment of the dissolution of the Duma it came naturally under the guidance of the Social-Democratic Group. The lack of independence on the part of the peasant representatives will show itself with particular clearness at the moment when it becomes necessary to show firm initiative, that is, at the time when power has to pass into the hands of the revolutionaries.”

For Trotsky, the lack of “firm initiative,” the lack of “independence,” and the “formlessness” of the peasant organizations thrust forward by the 1905 revolution is simply proof that the peasantry cannot play any independent or decisive role in the revolution.

Trotsky, unlike Lenin, did not see the revolutionary possibilities inherent in the peasant organizations created in 1905, for example. He did not treat them as embryos of a possible mass peasant party or mass organization, as the Bolsheviks did. Trotsky, unlike the Bolsheviks, did not chart a course toward seeking out joint actions with the peasant organizations and struggling in that way to divide them from the liberal capitalist parties. Trotsky did acknowledge that “The Russian bourgeoisie will . . . have to surrender the revolutionary hegemony over the peasants. In such a situation, created by the transference of power to the proletariat, nothing remains for the peasantry to do but to rally to the regime of workers’ democracy.”

But then, expressing his usual estimation of the peasants’ role in the revolution, he commented that, “It will not matter much even if the peasantry does this with a degree of consciousness not larger than that with which it usually rallies to the bourgeois regime.”

Continuing, Trotsky stated, “From what we have said above, it will be clear how we regard the idea of a ‘proletariat and peasant dictatorship.’ It is not really a matter of whether we regard it as admissible in principle, whether ‘we do or do not desire’ such a form of political cooperation. We simply think that it is unrealisable — at least in a direct immediate sense.

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

The Permanent Revolution, Pathfinder Press, 1906, p. 69-74).

But the Bolsheviks proved that this course was not only “admissible in principle,” but even more important, that it was “realisable.” That was the basis of their strategic line of march that successfully led to taking power. It was the basis of their decision on the eve of the insurrection in 1917 to adopt the Socialist Revolutionary Party’s agrarian program. It was at the heart of their decision to sign the peace agreement at Brest-Litovsk in 1918, ending, as quickly as possible, the slaughter of Russian soldiers, the majority of whom were from the peasantry. It remained the backbone of their policy through the formation of the Committees of Poor Peasants, the civil war, the launching of the New Economic Policy, and the generalization of all these experiences by the Communist International.

Lenin’s response

Lenin strongly disagreed with Trotsky’s approach to the peasantry. In a 1909 polemic with Menshevik leader Martov, Lenin wrote,

“. . . the most fallacious of Trotsky’s opinions that Comrade Martov quotes and considers to be ‘just’ is . . . : ‘even if they [the peasantry] do this [support the regime of working class democracy] with no more political understanding than they usually support a bourgeois regime.’

“The proletariat cannot count on the ignorance and prejudices of the peasantry as the powers that be under a bourgeois regime count and depend on them,” Lenin said, “nor can it assume that in time of revolution the peasantry will remain in their usual state of political ignorance and passivity. The history of the Russian revolution shows that the very first wave of the upsurge at the end of 1905, at once stimulated the peasantry to form a political organization (the All-Russian Peasant Union) which was undoubtedly the embryo of a distinct peasant party [brackets in original]” (*CW*, Vol. 15, 1909, p. 374).

(It’s ironic that Mandel, more than three decades after the Chinese revolution, should still be defending the view that there cannot be peasant parties and peasant organizations and that a peasant revolution cannot play any independent role in a social revolution. In China a peasant army headed by a peasant party and with a petty-bourgeois Stalinist leadership made a revolution that opened the door to historic conquests, however badly deformed, of the Chinese proletariat — that is, the establishment of the Chinese workers state.)

The practical political consequences of Trotsky’s pre-1917 position can be demonstrated by the scant attention he paid to the question of peasant organizations in his principal pre-1917 writings on the perspectives of the Russian revolution, 1905² and *Re-*

2. The 1971 English-language edition of *1905* by Vintage includes the major part of a German edition of *1905* that was written in 1908-09. It also includes the following: “The Proletariat and the Russian Revolution” (1908); “Our Differences” (1909); “The Struggle for Power” (1915); “On the Special Features of Russia’s Historical Development” (1922). In addition, it includes Trotsky’s speech on the relationship of social democracy to the bourgeois parties at the 1907 congress of the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party.

sults and Prospects. Trotsky has little to say about the need to establish peasant committees or other organizations of the rural toilers. Nor does he say much about those that the peasants did form in 1905, the role these organizations played, and what they showed about how the worker-peasant alliance could be built in practice.

This was a decisive point of contention between the Bolsheviks and Mensheviks. Lenin, writing about the 1905 Bolshevik and Menshevik conventions, points out: "The 'peasant question' was presented in entirely different ways by the [Bolshevik] Party Congress and the [Menshevik] Conference. The [Bolshevik] Congress drew up a resolution on the 'attitude to the peasant movement'; the [Menshevik] Conference — on 'work among the peasants.'

"In the one case prominence is given to the task of guiding the entire revolutionary-democratic movement in the general national interests of the struggle against tsarism," Lenin said. "In the other case the question is reduced to mere 'work' among a particular section of society. In the one case, a central practical slogan for our agitation is advanced calling for the immediate organization of revolutionary peasant committees in order to carry out all democratic changes. In the other, a 'demand for the organization of committees' is to be presented to a constituent assembly" (*Two Tactics*, 1905, p. 75-76).

Trotsky certainly never held the Menshevik position that the formation of peasant committees should be put off to a decision of a constituent assembly. Nevertheless, he placed little emphasis on them. This is not surprising, given his view that an independent peasant movement was impossible.

Whereas Lenin's articles are peppered with phrases about the proletariat "leading" the peasantry, carrying out "joint actions" with it, and forming "alliances" and "coalitions" with peasant organizations, Trotsky's writings during this period focus on the proletariat "emancipating the peasantry," "winning support" from the peasantry, and establishing its "dominance" and "hegemony." Behind what might seem simply to be a difference of vocabulary or style was a more profound divergence over the proletariat's political approach toward the peasant masses and the role and weight of the peasant revolution in the struggle to bring down tsarism and open the socialist revolution.

In 1909 Trotsky defended his position in an article entitled, "Our Differences," which appeared in a Polish Social Democratic journal. He charged the Bolsheviks with favoring "self-limitation" by the working class after a revolutionary victory. (By the way, Mandel's quotation marks around "self-limitation," which the reader would logically assume is quoted from Lenin, is in fact taken from this article by Trotsky. It is not and never was Lenin's term. It's a charge — and a false one — by Trotsky.)

Trotsky wrote, "the objection might be raised that I am imagining a situation in which the dictatorship of the workers is unlimited, whereas in fact what we are talking about is the dictatorship of a coalition between the proletariat and the peasantry. Very well, let us take this objection into account.

"We have just seen how the proletariat, despite the best intentions of its theoreticians, must in practice

ignore the logical boundary line which should confine it to a democratic dictatorship. Lenin now proposes that the proletariat's political self-limitation should be supplemented with an objective antisocialist 'safeguard' in the form of the muzhik [peasant] as collaborator or co-dictator.

"If this means that the peasant party, which shares power with the social-democrats, will not allow the unemployed and the strikers to be maintained at state cost and will oppose the state's opening of factories and plants closed down by the capitalists," Trotsky said, "then it also means that on the first day of the coalition, that is, long before the fulfillment of its tasks, the proletariat will enter into the conflict with the revolutionary government. This conflict can end either in the repression of the workers by the peasant party, or in the removal of that party from power. Neither solution has much to do with a 'democratic' dictatorship by a coalition" ("Our Differences" in 1905, p. 315-316).

The Russian revolution itself proved Trotsky wrong on this point. As described earlier in this article, the Soviet government, established in October 1917, was a two-class government, a coalition of the Bolsheviks and the Left SRs. Trotsky's 1933 article, mentioned earlier, affirmed this.

Rather than suppressing or limiting the demands of the working class, this government was the instrument used by the workers and poor peasants for carrying through the expropriation of the capitalists and deepening the class struggle between the exploiters and the exploited in the countryside.

In the process, the Bolsheviks strengthened their own base among the rural proletariat and poor farmers and divided the Left SRs between those committed to traveling the socialist course being charted by the exploited and those who recoiled from this course and deserted to the camp of the exploiters, the camp of the counterrevolution. The Russian working class would have had a much weaker and more tenuous alliance with the peasantry at the outset of the civil war had the Bolsheviks tried to *skip over* rather than *go through* this coalition with a party initially much more firmly based in the countryside.

Trotsky missed this transitional character of the alliance of the working class and the revolutionary peasantry. While he, like Lenin, correctly saw the class lines within the peasantry that would inevitably surface as the revolution deepened, Trotsky lacked a transitional strategy capable of simultaneously galvanizing the broadest layers for the democratic revolution against the old order, while preparing the proletariat to maintain the strongest possible alliance with the rural poor and middle peasants to open the road to the socialist revolution.

The dispute in 1915-17

The outbreak of World War I in August 1914 accelerated the crisis of the imperialist system and opened the road to proletarian revolutions and wars of national liberation. It raised all the stakes for the working class and its vanguard organizations and intensified the conflicts between the revolutionary and opportunist wings of social democracy organized in the Second International.

In a series of 1915 articles in the Paris-based *Nashe*

Slovo, which he coedited with Martov, Trotsky drew the opposite conclusion from Lenin's as to the effect on the peasantry of World War I and the economic changes in Russia since 1905. In the process, Trotsky deepened his error on the role of the peasantry in the Russian revolution. Trotsky stated:

"The experience of the Russian revolution and of the reaction tells us that now, to an *even smaller* extent than in 1905, can we hope for an independent, and *still less* decisive role to be played by the peasantry. In so far as the peasantry has remained in the grip of 'estate' and feudal slavery, it continues to show in its elemental opposition to the old regime all those features of economic and ideological disunity and political immaturity, cultural backwardness and helplessness, which always and in every movement paralyze its social energy and oblige it to come to a standstill at the point where really revolutionary action begins. (emphasis added)

"In so far as the peasantry has made economic and cultural progress in this period," Trotsky argued, "such progress has proceeded entirely along the line of bourgeois development and is therefore associated with a further development of class contradictions within the peasantry itself.

"This means that for the industrial proletariat it is now — immeasurably more so than in 1905 — a question of attracting to its side the proletarian and semi-proletarian elements of the countryside, rather than the peasantry as an 'estate.' The revolutionary movement thus necessarily acquires, in these circumstances, a very much less 'national,' very much more 'class' character than it had even in 1905" ("The Military Catastrophe and the Political Prospects," to be included in a forthcoming Pathfinder Press collection of Trotsky's writings during World War I).

Trotsky, here, has gone further than in *Results and Prospects*. While in the 1906 article he correctly recognized that "the fate of the most elementary revolutionary interests of . . . the peasantry as a whole, as an estate, is bound up with the fate of the entire revolution, i.e., with the fate of the proletariat" (*Results and Prospects*, p. 71), nine years later he explicitly rejected an orientation based on an alliance of the working class and the peasantry as a whole.

Yet it was precisely this strategy, advocated and carried out by the Bolsheviks, that was borne out by the October Revolution, as Lenin explained time and again after 1917.

Lenin read Trotsky's *Nashe Slovo* articles and was quite sharp in his criticism of them. In his article "On the Two Lines in the Revolution," Lenin wrote:

"To bring clarity into the alignment of classes in the impending revolution is the main task of a revolutionary party. . . . This task is being wrongly tackled in *Nashe Slovo* by Trotsky," Lenin said, "who is repeating his 'original' 1905 theory and refuses to give some thought to the reason why, in the course of ten years, life has been bypassing this splendid theory."

Lenin continued:

"The peasantry, [Trotsky] asserts, are divided into strata, have become differentiated; their potential revolutionary role has dwindled more and more; in Russia a 'national' revolution is impossible; 'we are living in the era of imperialism,' says Trotsky, and

'imperialism does not contrapose the bourgeois nation to the old regime, but the proletariat to the bourgeois nation.'"

Lenin drew quite different conclusions from Trotsky's about the changes in Russian politics since 1905. He stressed not only the growing class differentiations inside the peasantry, but also the growing potential for a general peasant revolution against tsarism and landlordism.

"The differentiation of the peasantry has enhanced the class struggle within them; it has aroused very many hitherto politically dormant elements," Lenin wrote. "It has drawn the rural proletariat closer to the urban proletariat." On this, Lenin had no fundamental disagreement with Trotsky's *Nashe Slovo* articles. But Trotsky was blind to the other side of the Russian political reality, which would be critical to the next necessary stage of revolutionary development.

"However, the antagonism between the peasantry, on the one hand, and the [old order], on the other, has become stronger and more acute," Lenin pointed out. "This is such an obvious truth that not *even* the thousands of phrases in scores of Trotsky's Paris articles will 'refute' it."

In fact, Lenin said, by insisting that the peasantry *won't* play a decisive role as a revolutionary force, Trotsky ended up giving aid and comfort to the petty-bourgeois misleaders of the workers and peasants who sought to ensure that the peasants remained quiescent. "Trotsky is in fact helping the liberal-labor politicians in Russia," Lenin wrote, "who by 'repudiation' of the role of the peasantry understand a 'refusal' to raise up the peasants for the revolution!" (CW, Vol. 21, 1915, p. 419-420).

By dismissing this alliance between the working class and the peasantry as a whole, Trotsky tended to dissolve the democratic-peasant revolution into the class struggle of the working class against the capitalists. Far from promoting the prospects of socialist revolution, however, Trotsky's lack of a transitional approach actually left the proletariat without a guide as to how to advance along their historic line of march toward the expropriation of the exploiters.

Lenin had pointed to this error in 1909 when he wrote that "Trotsky's major mistake is that he ignores the bourgeois character of the revolution and has no clear conception of the transition from this revolution to the socialist revolution" (CW, Vol. 15, 1909, p. 371).

Lenin's 1915 answer to Trotsky's *Nashe Slovo* articles, however, did present a clear strategy for this transition.

"The proletariat," Lenin wrote, "are fighting, and will fight valiantly, to win power, for a republic, for the confiscation of the land, i.e., to win over the peasantry, make full use of their revolutionary powers, and get the 'non-proletarian masses of the people' to take part in liberating bourgeois Russia from *imperial-feudal* 'imperialism' (tsarism).

"The proletariat will at once utilize this ridding of bourgeois Russia of tsarism and the rule of the landowners," Lenin said, "not to aid the rich peasants in their struggle against the rural workers, but to bring about the socialist revolution in alliance with the proletarians of Europe" (CW, Vol. 21, 1915, p. 420).

Trotsky was not convinced by Lenin on this question, however. Their differences on the role that a peasant revolution would play as an ally of the proletariat widened, if anything, right up to the eve of the February 1917 revolution. Here, for example, is what Trotsky had to say on January 9, 1917, in an article published in New York commemorating the twelfth anniversary of the 1905 revolution:

"If a 'national' revolution was a failure twelve years ago, there is still less hope for it at present. It is true in the last years that the cultural and political level of the peasantry has become higher. However, there is less hope now for a revolutionary uprising of the peasantry as a whole than there was twelve years ago. The only ally of the urban proletariat may be the proletarian and half-proletarian strata of the village" ("The Lessons of the Great Year," *Our Revolution*, Trotsky, 1918, p. 176-7).

Two lines of the revolution

Mandel opens his article by stating that his aim is to demonstrate that "there were three — and not two — strategies proposed by Russian socialists" prior to 1917: those of the Bolsheviks, the Mensheviks, and Trotsky.

A correct and more useful approach to this question was presented by Lenin in his 1915 article, "On the Two Lines of the Revolution," where he took up Trotsky's *Nashe Slovo* articles. Lenin anchored the disputes in the Russian workers movement not in the clash of divergent conceptions or theories but of social classes.

"The experience of the 1905 Revolution and of the subsequent counter-revolutionary period in Russia teaches us that in our country two lines of revolution could be observed," Lenin wrote, "in the sense that there was a struggle between two classes — the proletariat and the liberal bourgeoisie — for leadership of the masses."

Lenin continued: "The Bolsheviks helped the proletariat consciously to follow the first line, to fight with supreme courage and to lead the peasants. The Mensheviks were constantly slipping into the second line; they demoralized the proletariat by adapting its movement to the liberals . . ." (*CW*, Vol. 21, 1915, p. 416).

There were two class lines: 1) organize the proletariat, in alliance with the peasantry, to take power, or 2) support the liberal bourgeoisie. The Bolsheviks followed the former course, the Mensheviks the latter.

"Only these trends — the Bolshevik and the Menshevik," Lenin continued, "manifested themselves in the politics of the masses in 1904-08, and later in 1908-14. Why was that? It was because only these trends had firm class roots — the former in the proletariat, the latter in the liberal bourgeoisie."

Trotsky's "new and original position" was not one of the trends reflected in the Russian masses. Why was that?

"From the Bolsheviks, Trotsky's original theory has borrowed their call for a decisive proletarian revolutionary struggle and for the conquest of political power by the proletariat," Lenin explained, "while from the Mensheviks it has borrowed 'repudiation' of the peasantry's role" (*CW*, Vol. 21, 1915, p. 419).

Trotsky's perspectives didn't represent a trend

rooted in one of the fundamental classes. Rather, it was a centrist amalgamation of the positions of the two principal trends. In relation to these two class lines of the revolution, Trotsky stood closer to the Bolsheviks than to the Mensheviks on the key question of the vanguard role of the working class and opposition to the liberal bourgeoisie.

During the 1905 revolution and its immediate aftermath, Trotsky was drawn closer to the Bolsheviks; there was a convergence in action. Trotsky collaborated with the Bolsheviks in the soviets and made a bloc with them against the Mensheviks on the defense policy for the October 1906 trial of the workers deputies to the Soviet, in which Trotsky was the leading defendant.

In November 1905, when the bourgeois liberal journal *Nasha Zhizn* (Our Life) attempted to pit Trotsky's view of the Russian revolution against that of the Bolsheviks, the Bolsheviks' organ, *Novaya Zhizn* (New Life), defended him. It argued that the *Nasha Zhizn* report "is of course sheer nonsense. Comrade Trotsky said that the proletarian revolution, without standing still at the first stage, by pressing hard upon the exploiters, can continue on its road, while Lenin pointed out that the political revolution is only the first step. The publicist of *Nasha Zhizn* would like to perceive a contradiction there. . . ."

"The whole misunderstanding comes, first, from the fear with which the name alone of the socialist revolution fills *Nasha Zhizn*," the Bolshevik paper pointed out, "secondly, out of the desire of this paper to discover some sort of sharp and piquant difference of opinion among the social democrats and, thirdly, in the metaphorical expression of Comrade Trotsky: 'at one fell swoop.'"

"In No. 10 of *Nachalo* [The Beginning], Comrade Trotsky explains his ideas quite unequivocally: 'The complete victory of the revolution signifies the victory of the proletariat,' writes Comrade Trotsky. 'But this victory in turn signifies the further uninterruptedness of the revolution. The proletariat realizes the fundamental tasks of democracy and the logic of its immediate struggle for the safeguarding of political domination causes purely socialist problems to arise at the given moment. Between the minimum and maximum program of the social democracy, a revolutionary continuity is established. This is not one 'blow,' it is not one day and not a month, it is a whole historical epoch. It would be absurd to want to determine its duration in advance'" (*The Stalin School of Falsification*, Trotsky, Pathfinder Press, 1905, p. 325).

At the united congress of the RSDLP in London in 1907, Lenin also noted a convergence in Trotsky's position with that of the Bolsheviks.

"I shall only note," Lenin told the delegates, "that is his book *In Defense of the Party* Trotsky expressed, in print, his solidarity with Kautsky [while Kautsky was still a revolutionist], who wrote about the economic community of interests between the proletariat and the peasantry in the present revolution in Russia. Trotsky acknowledged the permissibility and usefulness of a Left bloc [with the peasants] against the liberal bourgeoisie. These facts are sufficient for me to acknowledge that Trotsky has come closer to

s. Quite apart from the question of 'uninterrupted revolution', we have here solidarity on fundamental points in the question of the attitude towards bourgeois parties" (CW, Vol. 12, 1907, p. 470).

On at least one occasion following this 1907 convention, Lenin seriously probed the possibility of a political rapprochement with Trotsky. Trotsky rebuffed this 1909 probe, however, and moved toward establishing his own faction in the RSDLP. Political differences between Trotsky and the Bolsheviks remained from this time up to the eve of the February 1917 revolution.

Trotsky not only disagreed with the Bolsheviks on the role of the peasant movement, he also differed with Lenin's view that the political differences between the Bolsheviks and Mensheviks were a genuine reflection of different class forces.

In 1910 Trotsky and Martov wrote articles for Kautsky's paper, *Die Neue Zeit*, explaining their views of the differences in the Russian social democracy to their German cothinkers. Trotsky argued that the Russian working class was still politically immature compared to Western Europe and that the conflicts in the Russian social democracy were a result of the adaptation of the Marxist intelligentsia to this backwardness. Neither the Mensheviks nor Bolsheviks "have struck deep roots in the proletariat," he contended. These factors, Trotsky said, offered the explanation for the "sectarianism, intellectualist individualism, ideological fetishism" allegedly racking Russian Social Democracy.

Lenin responded with an article that Kautsky did not publish. Lenin pointed out that:

"The crux of the matter is not whether the theoretical formulations of the differences [in Russian social democracy] have penetrated 'deeply' into this or that stratum of the proletariat, but the fact that the economic conditions of the Revolution of 1905 brought the proletariat into hostile relations with the liberal bourgeoisie — not only over the question of improving the conditions of daily life of the workers, but also over the agrarian question, over all the political questions of the revolution, etc.

"To speak of the struggle of trends in the Russian revolution," Lenin said, "distributing labels such as 'sectarianism', 'lack of culture', etc., and not to say a word about the fundamental economic interests of the proletariat, of the liberal bourgeoisie and of the democratic peasantry, means stooping to the level of cheap journalists" (CW, Vol. 16, 1910, p. 375).

Standing on the political middle ground between the Mensheviks and Bolsheviks, Trotsky attempted to build political and organizational bridges between these two opposing organizations, to unite these conflicting expressions of the class struggle. The most serious attempt at this took the form of the so-called August Bloc formed in 1912 by conciliationists such as Trotsky and a few dissident Mensheviks and Bolsheviks.

Trotsky's failure to recognize the need to build the Bolshevik Party in this period was not only or primarily a weakness on the "organizational question" narrowly construed. Though closer politically to the Bolsheviks, Trotsky's conciliationism toward the Mensheviks reflected his *political* differences with Bolshevism. Trotsky didn't join the Bolsheviks because he *didn't agree* with the Bolsheviks.

Defeatism in World War I

The outbreak of World War I drew an unbridgeable gulf between Trotsky and social-patriots of all stripes. It also brought to the fore further differences between the Bolsheviks and Trotsky. The war accelerated the pressures on the toiling classes, initially retarding but before long heightening the prospects for revolution in Russia. Lenin pointed to the effects of the war on the peasants, particularly on those in uniform fighting and dying on the front.

A central axis of the Bolsheviks' proletarian internationalist position against the war was to call on the working class in all imperialist countries, including Russia, to turn the imperialist war into a civil war. Depending on the particular circumstances, the Bolsheviks said, the working class should do everything possible to carry out revolutionary work aimed at overthrowing their own government and bringing the workers and peasants to power.

The military defeat of the imperialist government in one's own country, Lenin argued, would facilitate such a social revolution. That had been shown in life by the defeat of the tsarist army in the war with Japan, which helped spark the 1905 revolution.

"Wartime revolutionary action against one's own government indubitably means, not only desiring its defeat," Lenin wrote in 1915, "but really facilitating such a defeat." Lenin added the following clarification: "(Discerning reader': note that this does not mean 'blowing up bridges,' organizing unsuccessful strikes in the war industries, and in general helping the government defeat the revolutionaries)" (CW, Vol. 21, 1915, p. 275).

This has remained the position of proletarian revolutionists in imperialist countries toward wars waged by "their" governments from that time to today.

Lenin's revolutionary defeatism was part and parcel of the Bolsheviks' general strategy for the Russian revolution; it was interconnected with their view of the peasant question and the weight and place of the democratic revolution. The military defeats of the tsarist army in World War I, which led to the February revolution and the overthrow of the tsar, confirmed the Bolsheviks' course.

Trotsky, however, had a different approach, an incorrect one. While he fought the chauvinist capitulation of the majority of the Second International, he also polemicized against the Bolsheviks' defeatist position. Trotsky dealt with this question at length in the same 1915 articles where he explained the diminishing prospects of the peasants playing a role as an ally of the working class in the Russian revolution. He made several points:

- "To the same extent that defeat, all other things being equal, shatters a given state structure, so does the victory of the other side, which is implied by this defeat, strengthen the state organization of that other side. And we do not know of any European social and state organism which it is in the interest of the European proletariat to strengthen, nor do we assign to Russia the role of the state chosen to have its interests subordinated to those of the development of other European peoples."

- "Defeats disorganize and demoralize the ruling reaction, but at the same time war disorganizes the whole of social life, and above all the working class."

• “A revolution which grows out of a defeat inherits an economy disordered to the utmost by war, exhausted state finances, and extremely strained international relations.”

• . . . while war may give an impetus to revolution, it may at the same time create a situation such as will make extremely difficult the social and political utilization of a victorious revolution” (“The Military Catastrophe and the Political Prospects,” Trotsky, 1915).

In another 1915 article, Trotsky went so far as to label the Bolsheviks’ defeatist position “a fundamental connivance with the political methodology of social patriotism.” (June 1915 letter to the editorial board of *Kommunist*.)

Trotsky’s alternative slogan was, “Neither victory, nor defeat.”

Lenin sharply attacked Trotsky for having “completely lost his bearings on a simple issue. It seems to him that to desire Russia’s defeat means desiring the victory of Germany.” But the defeatist demand, Lenin countered, is profoundly internationalist, indeed the only truly proletarian internationalist position, since “in all imperialist countries the proletariat must now desire the defeat of its own government” (CW, Vol. 21, 1915, p. 276).

Trotsky’s opposition to the Bolsheviks’ revolutionary strategy against the war was reflected on the international level, where he continued to pursue a course of conciliation toward the opportunists.

There were essentially three currents in the international movement.

One was the outright social patriots, such as the majority of German and French social democratic leaders, who openly supported their own imperialist governments, voted for war credits, and participated in war cabinets. In Russia this was the position of right-wing SR and Menshevik leaders, and it became the position of a big majority of the leaderships of these parties following the February 1917 revolution.

The second trend was represented by the opportunists, most prominent of whom was Kautsky. They opposed the war, voted against war credits, and called for international solidarity of the working class. However, they refused to break with the Second International or link up the antiwar struggle with the revolutionary struggle in their own countries. Martov and other “Menshevik-Internationalists” represented this current in Russia.

The third trend converged around the revolutionary communist policy put forward most consistently by Lenin and the Bolsheviks. From the very outset Lenin called for the formation of a new, third international, and he attacked not only the social patriots, but the opportunists who gave them cover.

From the beginning of the war, Trotsky strongly opposed the social patriots. He differed with the Bolsheviks not only on the question of defeatism, however, but also on the necessity of breaking with the Kautskyists in order to move toward a new revolutionary international. Trotsky held a centrist position between the Bolsheviks and the Kautskyists.

As the imperialist slaughter dragged on, the internationalist position won increasing support among socialists. This laid the basis for the conference in Zimmerwald, Switzerland, in September 1915, that brought together social-democratic opponents of the

war. It was attended by 38 delegates from 11 European countries.

Two principal political currents waged a political struggle at this conference — the proletarian communists led by Lenin and the “vacillating, near Kautskyites” (as Lenin characterized the right wing at the conference).

The Bolsheviks, represented by Lenin and Zinoviev, and a handful of international supporters fought for a resolution, drafted by Lenin, that explicitly attacked both the social patriots and the opportunists, favored defeatism, and called for turning the imperialist war into a civil war (See CW, Vol. 21, 1915, p. 345-348). The right wing strongly disagreed with these points.

Trotsky, whose *Nashe Slovo* articles opposing defeatism had appeared only a few weeks before the conference, also disagreed with the Left Zimmerwaldists on other points. He also disagreed with the Zimmerwald right, however. Holding the middle ground, Trotsky was designated to draft a compromise manifesto, which was adopted unanimously. It has become widely known as the Zimmerwald Manifesto, despite the fact that it had, according to Lenin, “inconsistency, timidity and a failure to say everything that ought to be said.”

“Our non-agreement, the non-agreement, not only of our Central Committee but of the entire international Left-wing section of the Conference, which stands by the principles of revolutionary Marxism, is openly expressed in a special resolution, a separate draft manifesto, and a separate declaration on the vote for a compromise manifesto,” Lenin stated. “We did not conceal a jot of our views, slogans, or tactics.

“A German edition of our pamphlet, *Socialism and War* [written by Lenin and Zinoviev in preparation for the conference — see CW, Vol. 21, p. 295-338], was handed out at the Conference. We have spread, are spreading, and shall continue to spread our views with no less energy than the manifesto will.

“It is a fact that this manifesto is a step forward towards a real struggle against opportunism, towards a rupture with it,” Lenin said. “It would be sectarianism to refuse to take this step forward together with the minority of German, French, Swedish, Norwegian, and Swiss socialists, when we retain full freedom and full opportunity to criticize inconsistency and to work for greater things” (“The First Step,” CW, Vol. 21, 1915, p. 387).

The Zimmerwald Left remained an organized international current. It distributed the Zimmerwald Left Manifesto and other resolutions as widely as possible and briefly published its own organ. It continued to participate in the Zimmerwald organization, and at the April 1916 conference held in Kienthal, Switzerland, the Zimmerwaldists — under the impetus of the Bolshevik-led left wing — took an even bigger step in breaking with the opportunists. It was the work done by the Zimmerwald Left that assembled the first nuclei of the Third International, which was formally established in early 1919.

Why Trotsky didn’t join the Bolsheviks

Despite Trotsky’s agreement with many of the Bolsheviks’ positions, his differences on key questions of strategy for the Russian revolution prevented him

from joining. This was not an error, in the sense that simply out of mistaken *organizational* conceptions Trotsky did not join a party that *politically* he should have been part of. To the contrary, Trotsky's centrist position on the organizational level reflected his political centrism.

But the clear logic of Mandel's article is that since Trotsky was correct on the basic political strategy for the revolution, he should have been inside the organization that was assembling the cadres capable of leading the workers to power, fighting there to win it to his program and away from that fought for by Lenin.

Mandel actually makes this explicit in a recent article, "The Need for a Revolutionary International," coauthored with John Ross in the Spring 1982 *International Marxist Review*, a magazine published in Britain.

Mandel and Ross declare that Trotsky made a "disastrous mistake" when "not merely did he not join the Bolsheviks, which was the biggest mistake of his entire life, but when he did not build up a serious force in Russia of any major dimensions.

"In consequence Trotsky entered the Russian Revolution with an excellent programme, and some brilliant cadres, but with an organization (the *Mezh-rayoutsi*) so small that it could never have built even in the revolutionary conditions of Russia a party capable of taking power in 1917" (Spring 1982, *International Marxist Review*, p. 50).

The point is unambiguous. Trotsky's error was not that he didn't become a Leninist, but that he didn't join the Bolshevik Party in order to fight for his "excellent program," or in the words of Mandel's *ISR* article, his "entirely new and original position."

But adjectives like "excellent," "new," or "original" shouldn't weigh heavily in the balance for Marxists. The decisive question is whether or not a position is correct, whether or not it serves to chart a course for the working class and its allies to take and hold political power. Trotsky's pre-1917 strategy, insofar as it differed from the Bolsheviks', was wrong.

What if Trotsky *had* joined the Bolshevik Party and won major parts of it away from Lenin's strategy to his own political perspectives? That would have greatly increased the likelihood that the party would have failed to take power in October 1917, and that the Russian workers and peasants would have gone down to defeat. It was Lenin's strategy that built the party that led the workers to victory.

Mandel argues that Lenin came over to Trotsky's pre-1917 strategy for the Russian revolution, while Trotsky came over to Lenin's view of party organization. But this is not true. In fact, it makes no sense at all. How can a historical materialist explain this supposed complete dichotomy between program and strategy, on the one hand, and their organizational expression, on the other?

When Trotsky joined the Bolshevik Party in the summer of 1917, he became a Leninist and remained one for the rest of his life.

Mandel tends to artificially separate the "excellent program," i.e., Trotsky's, from the excellent organization, i.e., the Bolsheviks', as if the Bolsheviks' revolutionary proletarian strategy was not what ultimately determined the organizational character of their party. This is the opposite of Lenin's view.

The Bolsheviks' strategy for the revolution can't be divorced from the kind of party they built, any more than Trotsky's "new and original position" can be separated from his organizational conciliationism toward the opportunists and his other errors on the organization question.

The differences between Lenin and Trotsky on the question of the Russian revolution cannot be divorced from the overall living process of building a proletarian revolutionary party. They cannot be reduced to a conflict between two "theories" of the revolution. To understand the differences, it is necessary to descend from the realm of ideas and "brilliant cadres" to that of classes and their alignment, conflicts, and relations. That's where both strategies and organizations *come from*, not vice versa.

Lenin's strategy was not the idea of one individual, but the generalized lessons from the collective revolutionary activity of a party that was part of the Russian working class, as well as from the previous historical experiences summed up by the Marxist movement. The positions of the Bolsheviks were continually being tested, modified, and retested in the class struggle by worker-Bolsheviks. The collective determination and testing of positions was directed toward leading the day-to-day work of the party — its fractions in the factories, its Duma fractions, its underground cells, its exile organizations, its blocs with peasant organizations, its defense cases, its election campaigns, and its press.

The party was a "single great . . . mechanism," as Lenin put it. Party literature "must become *part* of the common cause of the proletariat, "a cog and a screw" of this mechanism, Lenin said. This was the Bolshevik approach to all party activity (*CW*, Vol. 10, 1905, p. 45).

The activity of the party was directed toward advancing the political consciousness of the working class, of helping to lead it from one stage of the class struggle to the next. It was preeminently a transitional approach to party building. And nothing shows this more clearly than the approach that the Bolsheviks developed to the relationship between the democratic and socialist revolutions.

The historical record clearly shows that it was the strategy of Bolshevism that was confirmed in the Russian revolution, and that became the programmatic basis of the Communist International. It was not a fusion of one part Bolshevism with one part Trotsky's pre-1917 centrism.

"Discovering" a new law

Mandel claims that the view of the Russian revolution that Trotsky began developing in 1904 "flowed from his discovery of the law of uneven and combined development, undoubtedly his fundamental contribution to Marxism." Later Mandel states that this law "implied that the proletariat could take power in a backward country before it did so in the most advanced countries."

The biggest problem with this is that no fact or action "flows from" or "is implied by" any law of historical materialism.

Mandel argues that a *fact* — that is, that the working class could take power in a backward country before it did in an advanced country — was "implied" by the law of uneven and combined development. If

things should be called by their proper names, then this statement should be labeled a serious concession to idealism and antimaterialism. Historical laws and theories can be applied to political situations to help analyze them and to anticipate the contours of future development. But no facts are implied by historical laws. None at all.

In 1847, when the petty bourgeois socialist Pierre Joseph Proudhon argued that economic competition at a particular historical stage is the necessary result of "the theory of the reduction of general expenses," Marx retorted: "For M. Proudhon, the circulation of the blood must be a consequence of Harvey's theory." (William Harvey was a British physician who first sought to explain the circulation of blood in the human body) (*MECW*, Vol. 6, p. 194).

Both Trotsky and Lenin examined the economic and social relations in Russia and the world from the standpoint of Marxism and historical materialism, and they drew certain conclusions about strategy. But nothing could be deduced from the law of uneven and combined development to prove that Lenin or Trotsky was correct. Before 1917 Trotsky did not describe or generalize the law of uneven and combined development any differently than Lenin. Trotsky did not use the name "uneven and combined development" to describe this basic law of historical materialism until 1930 in the first chapter of his *History of the Russian Revolution*.

While it is true that Trotsky was the first Marxist to give the law of uneven and combined development its name and to elaborate it as a fundamental law of historical evolution, Trotsky, unlike Mandel, claimed no more in using this tool than to be scientifically systematizing one law on the basis of the historical materialist method that he had learned from the study of Marx and Engels's writings.

Trotsky would have been the first to ridicule the notion that he discovered the law of uneven and combined development. He considered this to be an integral part of historical materialism as developed by Marx and Engels. "The unevenness of capitalist development . . . were as well known to Marx and Engels as they are to us," he said in 1926 ("Speech to the Fifteenth Congress," *The Challenge of the Left Opposition 1926-27*, Pathfinder Press, p. 152).

If Marx and Engels did not recognize unevenness in historical development and the combined character of social formations, then what was historical materialism before Trotsky's "discovery"? A theory of unvarying, uniform, and strictly sequential development? A scheme imposed on human history, rather than a scientific generalization of its laws of development drawn from the dialectic of its concrete unfolding? That's what bourgeois opponents and social-democratic revisionists of scientific socialism have claimed, but never Marxists.

How could Marx and Engels, at the very beginning of their political lives, have understood the class struggle in their own native Germany otherwise? Despite its low level of industrial development and small industrial proletariat compared to other major Western European nations, they nonetheless predicted in the *Communist Manifesto* that Germany had the greatest revolutionary potential in the late 1840s—precisely because of the social contradictions created by its backwardness in the context of an

expanding world capitalist system.

Moreover, Marx and Engels explained the theoretical basis for such a conclusion one year earlier in 1846 in their very first work outlining much of historical materialism, *The German Ideology*:

"It is evident that large-scale industry does not reach the same level of development in all districts of a country," Marx and Engels wrote. "This does not, however, retard the class movement of the proletariat, because the proletarians created by large-scale industry assume leadership of this movement and carry the whole mass along with them, and because the workers excluded from large-scale industry are placed by it in a still worse situation than the workers in large-scale industry itself."

Applying this to capitalist development on a world scale, they continued:

"The countries in which large-scale industry is developed act in a similar manner upon the more or less non-industrial countries, insofar as the latter are swept by world intercourse [economic trade and social relations] into the universal competitive struggle. . . .

"Thus all collisions in history have their origin, according to our view, in the contradiction between the productive forces and the form of intercourse. Incidentally, to lead to collisions in a country, this contradiction need not have necessarily reached its extreme limit in that particular country," Marx and Engels wrote. "The competition with industrially more advanced countries, brought about by the expansion of international intercourse, is sufficient to produce a similar contradiction in countries with a less advanced industry (e.g., the latent proletariat in Germany brought into more prominence by the competition of English industry)" (*Marx and Engels Collected Works* (MECW), Vol. 5, p. 74-5).

Of course, the massive expansion of world capitalism and the emergence of imperialism since the *German Ideology* was written have greatly magnified and transformed the processes that Marx and Engels were pointing to. Can it be denied, however, that they took the uneven and combined development of the world capitalist system into account from the outset in developing their historical materialist outlook and its programmatic and strategic conclusions?

Lenin, too, discerned unevenness and combination in historical and political developments, and examples have already been cited in this article.

It is ludicrous to believe that a Marxist committed to building a proletarian party and making a socialist revolution in a country such as Russia could have been oblivious to its contradictory social and economic conditions — the most backward political forms and agrarian relations, combined with industrialization and a growing modern proletariat. Lenin analyzed these aspects of Russian society at great length, and integrated them into his strategy for the Russian revolution.

In the late 1920s, when Stalin, in an attempt to deify Lenin and to justify his own personality cult, developed the notion that Leninism is a superior kind of Marxism peculiar to the imperialist epoch, Trotsky responded:

"In essence the singling out of Leninism as a special kind of Marxism peculiar to the age of imperialism was necessary for the revision of Marxism, something

Lenin in fact fought against throughout his life. Inasmuch as the central idea of this latest revision of Marxism was the reactionary idea of national socialism (the theory of building socialism in one country), it was necessary to demonstrate or at least proclaim that Leninism had taken a new position on this central question of Marxist theory and politics in opposition to the Marxism of the preimperialist era."

Trotsky continued: "We have already heard [from Stalin] that Lenin supposedly discovered the law of uneven development, that there could have been no question of such a thing in the time of Marx and Engels. That is precisely the absurdity that the Thomas Aquinases of our day call on us to have faith in" (emphasis added, *The Challenge of the Left Opposition* (1928-9), Trotsky, p. 402).

Finally, Mandel asserts that discovering the law of uneven and combined development was Trotsky's "fundamental contribution" to Marxism. Regardless of how one weighs this contribution, would it be greater than other important contributions such as applying, defending, or passing Bolshevism on to a new generation after Lenin's death?

In the face of the massive use of state power by the Stalinist bureaucracy to break the revolutionary continuity of Marxism, Trotsky taught us to be Bolsheviks and to read Lenin, Marx, and Engels. During this struggle against the reversal of Bolshevism, he analyzed the degeneration of the Soviet workers state. He taught us what was progressive and required defending — state property, planning and the monopoly of foreign trade — and what was reactionary and needed to be removed — the parasitic bureaucratic caste that had usurped governmental power from the workers and farmers.

Marx, Engels, and Lenin did not live to see this new phenomenon, but Trotsky did. His analysis built on the Marxist theory of the state and of government, enriched it, and made an indispensable contribution to the transitional program and the communist strategy for the world socialist revolution in all three of its sectors. It has been incorporated into the revolutionary continuity of Marxism.

In the 1920s and 1930s, Trotsky developed and enriched the transitional method and Leninist strategy of party building that he had learned as a Bolshevik. He also made important contributions to the Marxist understanding of fascism, the colonial revolution, and of the national question, including its application to the oppression of Blacks in the United States.

Trotsky's principal contributions to the Marxist movement, to the working-class movement, were made *after* he had become a Leninist. They were made *because* he had dumped the worst of his pre-1917 positions, not in continuity with them. After the death of Lenin, Trotsky became the foremost proponent of the revolutionary continuity of Marxism and of Leninism and helped build an international organization of cadres to defend and apply that continuity in the developing class struggle.

The proletariat's line of march

As indicated at the beginning of this article, the question of what strategy helped lead the Russian

workers to power is of decisive importance, since it determines where proletarian revolutionists today should look for our own continuity — with the pre-1917 Trotsky, or with Lenin and the Bolsheviks.

It is Bolshevism, it is Leninism that represents our continuity with Marxism. The Leninist strategy for the revolutionary workers party in Russia was firmly rooted in the generalizations drawn by Marx and Engels in their writings from the experience of the working class. The basic rudiments of the Bolsheviks' strategy for the Russian revolution, in fact, come straight from the *Communist Manifesto*, written by Marx and Engels in December-January 1847-48. If we substitute "Russia" for "Germany" in the last section of the *Manifesto*, it reads as follows:

"In Russia they [the Communists] fight with the bourgeoisie whenever it acts in a revolutionary way, against the absolute monarchy, the feudal squirearchy, and the petty bourgeoisie.³

"But they never cease, for a single instant, to instill into the working class the clearest possible recognition of the hostile antagonism between bourgeoisie and proletariat in order that the Russian workers may straightaway use, as so many weapons against the bourgeoisie, the social and political conditions that the bourgeoisie must necessarily introduce along with its supremacy, and in order that, after the fall of the reactionary classes in Russia, the fight against the bourgeoisie itself may immediately begin.

"The Communists turn their attention chiefly to Russia, because that country is on the eve of a bourgeois revolution that is bound to be carried out under more advanced conditions of European civilization, and with a much more developed proletariat, than that of England was in the seventeenth, and of France in the eighteenth century, and because the bourgeois revolution in Russia will be but the prelude to an immediately following proletarian revolution" (*MESW*, Vol. 1, p. 137).

This was the general approach of the Bolsheviks in Russia. It wasn't new or original, but it did the job.

3. By "petty bourgeoisie," Marx and Engels are not referring here to the peasantry, but to what Engels describes in another 1847 article as "the poor burghers, especially those of the small provincial towns," who as a layer "clings to the existing state of things and supports the nobility with the whole weight of its inertia." He distinguished explicitly between them and "the peasants and the propertyless classes" in Germany. ("The Constitutional Question in Germany," *MECW*, Vol. 6, p. 82-3.)

In other writings in 1847, Marx and Engels also differentiated between this layer, primarily a hangover from the feudal period, and the more modern urban middle class — small artisans, shopkeepers, etc. — which they considered an ally of the workers in the democratic revolution, although an inconsistent and vacillating one. For example, Engels writes that a key "task of the German democratic press" is "to reveal the oppression of the proletarians, small peasants and urban petty bourgeoisie, for in Germany these constitute the 'people', by the bureaucracy, the nobility, and the bourgeoisie." The democratic press should also show "how not only political but above all social oppression has come about, and by what means it can be eliminated," Engels wrote, and "that the conquest of political power by the proletarians, small peasants and urban petty bourgeoisie is the first condition for the application of these means." ("The Communists and Karl Heinzen," *MECW*, Vol. 6, p. 294.)