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The Formation of Russian Marxism (complete version)

Tuesday 17 August 2010, by [ROUSSET Pierre](#) (Date first published: 1 November 1988).

When this document was first posted online, the whole ending part and appendices was missing. It is now complete and a number corrections has also been introduced. It happens that the caracter recognition program sometimes quite freely and creatively interpret what it reads and I am not sure that all corrections were yet made...

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Note to our readers

The *Working Papers* of the International Institute for Research and Education - Number 2 (WPIIRE n°2) includes the detailed outline and notes of two lectures presented at the 13th session of our international school (fall 1988), on the formation of Russian Marxism and Leninism, up to 1917.

The name "Leninism" is used for the sake of convenience, despite its questionable connotations ("Leninism" was established as a label after 1924 and not for very good reasons...). The term "Bolshevism" is no longer well-known among activists and is not especially clarifying because of its meaning ("majority" - often in minority).

Our goal is to publish a *Notebook for Study and Research* in the "lecture" series, perhaps in

1989 [1]. This is why we are sending you this *Working Paper* now: for comments, suggestions and criticisms, to help transform the oral reports into a written and more elaborate form.

I would have preferred to send you a first draft of the future *Notebook* itself, rather than the existing outline/notes of the lectures. But additional sources, deeper work, and many modifications will obviously have to be introduced before such a draft is ready. Rather than wait for months before initiating an exchange on this question, it seems better to begin with the existing outline/notes: in spite of some unevenness in the treatment of various parts of the lectures, the outline is often detailed enough to allow such an exchange of views to take place.

These lectures never intended to offer a full picture of the formation of Russian Marxism: by necessity first of all, due to the grave unevenness in the assimilation of sources (see the introduction of the first lecture on its own limits); by choice, also: the lectures were too centered on a number of issues and never aimed at presenting a full analysis of three decades of complex history.

This will still be true for the *Notebook*. Of course, the scope of issues treated in it will widen somewhat. For example, more attention will have to be given to 1914-1917. More references will be introduced on the question of Lenin's conceptions of the party and the actual process of building the RSDWP and, later, Bolshevik Party. But this important theme was treated by other lecturers, in other lectures, in various sessions of the school. It will also be the topic of at least one other *Notebook*. So, I do not intend to develop this question extensively myself.

The first report on Russian Marxism in this school was given six years ago. Since then, it has changed a lot. The outlines/notes reproduced in this *Working Paper* number 2 have been reworked several times, from one to another session of the school. In the process, one report became two reports, sometime overlapping with one another. I could never take the time to homogenize better the treatment of the various parts of the reports and balance them better. You'll find some irritating repetitions in the outlines at their present and unfinished stage of elaboration.

There are many references, in the outline, to "reading materials" (R.M.) distributed to participants in the school. The numbering of the R.M. is the one of the 13th session (the numbering of both the cycles and the R.M. is different from previous sessions). The reading material is composed of documents and extracts of studies related to the topic of the lectures. A number of those to which this *Working Paper* is sent already have copies of the reading material of one of the last sessions.

It can be sent to those who do not have it and wish to see it.

Some bibliographical references are in the outlines. They were introduced for various reasons, including to make known the publication of recent articles by comrades in our international press. In these outlines, I did not intend to present a bibliography as such, even a short and basic one. This will have to be done for the *Notebook*. So, do not be surprised if many very important classical and contemporary works are not mentioned at all in the outlines.

Except for a few clarifications, and for corrections in spelling and grammar - thanks to John Barzman -, the following two outlines are the ones distributed to participants of the 13th session of the school. They bare the style of the oral.

Despite all these imperfections, we hope that the publication of *Working Paper* number 2 will initiate some critical and fruitful exchanges.

Thanks in advance for your comments.

Pierre Rousset

The Formation of Russian Marxism and the 1905-1907 Revolution

International Institute for Research and Education

Session 13

Cycle 2

3 October 1988

Outline of report

Introduction

+ *Place of the reports on Russia in the session. Importance of the topic. Limits of the reports*

* Cycle 2: beginning of the century. Russia and Germany. The foundation of the Comintern. The central character of the Russian experience: cycle 2 prepares all the following cycles.

* The Russian revolution is the **reference shared** by the largest number of revolutionary currents: knowing it enables to dialogue (and polemicize) in reference to it.

* A very rich history. No ambition to grasp it all. Four reports on Russian Marxism this week, the first two offer a general framework of analysis, the last two center on a specific issue.

Agenda:

+ Monday: from the 19th to the 20th century: 1905-1907. General framework, methodological and historical issues. The crystallization of Russian Marxist tendencies.

+ Tuesday: 1907-1914-1917. The maturation of Leninism. A more detailed discussion of the political lines projected by Lenin and Trotsky.

+ Wednesday: Lenin, the Russian revolution and the theory of the state in revolutions [2].

+ Thursday: Lenin and the question of the party (by Francois Vercammen).

* A word on the lecturer and the first two lectures. I have a specific interest: the first example of a revolution in a "backward" country (other axes of study are, of course, as well legitimate: forms of workers' struggles, etc.). **After** I have been working on **dependent countries today**, I felt the need to go beyond the usual (for us) centers of interests concerning the Russian revolution, i.e. the combination of true lessons: the "permanent revolution" is discovered and verified (a lesson for the Third World) - once this is underlined, the other lessons are usually studied mainly in relation to future West European experiences (workers' councils, etc.).

= The main goals:

* To offer a (disputable) framework of analysis of the **process of formation of Leninism** (and of **elements** of the formation of **Trotsky's thought**),

* To open some not-so-common (for us) fields of reflection (especially the **peasant** question in the Russian revolution).

* To relate the study of the Russian revolution more closely to contemporary concerns about revolutionary processes in dependent countries.

* **A first warning:** the report has changed significantly since its first delivery. It will continue to change in the future. The main reason: the lecturer's limits and the gaps in his knowledge (of Russian realities, other currents: Populists, Mensheviks, etc.). Leninism was shaped in relation to realities and in mutual influence/confrontation with other currents. The main confrontation was not between Lenin and Trotsky, but rather (depending on the period) between SDs and Populists, Bolsheviks and Mensheviks, etc. Some of the "others" (Populists, Plekhanov.. .) are introduced in this report (at least since 1985) but still much too superficially.

* **A second warning:** this question (Leninism) was part of many polemics before, including at the last Fourth International (FI) World Congress. Here and there, I will stress elements of judgment on these discussions; but my reports are not ("factionally") obsessed by them.

* History should not be "official" nor "factional" and there is room for a variety of interpretations (even among FI "majority" members) (see the document of the last World Congress on this: R.M. B, cycle 3, and R.M. A, cycle 6) [[determines the expansion of given RoP \(here capitalist\)](#)]

2. - This expansion of RoP (here capitalist) -> determines the nature of the revolution (here bourgeois)

3. - This coming revolution (here bourgeois) -> determines its natural leading class (here the bourgeoisie)

All these three points lead to ->

4. **the political conclusion:** the limited role assigned to the Marxist proletarian party at this historical juncture and the perspective of the two different revolutions (bourgeois and proletarian), separated by a historical period of capitalist development.

+ the problem is that the actual course of the Russian revolution contradicted the deterministic rigid character of all these four mechanistic relations. One key aspect of the history of Russian Marxism is then: how and when each of its components have escaped from/broken with this mechanistic-evolutionist conception of history - or have failed to do so. How they applied a dialectical approach to Russian realities shaped by uneven and combined development.

* In studying this history, one must avoid to oversimplify things.

+ Evolutions were not predetermined: many Bolsheviks ultimately became Mensheviks, and vice versa, between (1903) 1905 and 1917.

+ Evolutions were not linear. In fact the mainstream Mensheviks (and Plekhanov) **regressed** after the experience of 1905-1907.

+ Evolutions were not homogeneous (in all fields of theory and practice).

Trotsky understood more fully and earlier than others the historical dynamic of the Russian revolution - but he failed in building its party. Why? It is dangerous to turn the often-heard formula into "the whole truth": "Trotsky was right on general strategy, Lenin was right on party building". There is - of course - a link between the strategic perspective and the type of party one builds.

Neither Lenin, nor Trotsky were 100% right – or wrong.

2 - On social formations, multilinear history

* For the background of this question: see last year's report and Stephanie Coontz's reports. Let's first come back on the Russian dimension of this issue, when Marx was still alive.

Marx and the populists

* The importance (and heterogeneity) of the Populist current: a powerful revolutionary tradition of the mid-19th century. A wing: integrate the Second International (together with the Russian Marxists). The need to take seriously this tradition, in spite of the present derogative connotation of the "populist" label.

* Why was Marx so interested? He thought that the European revolution might begin in Russia. This was already a "non-linear-evolutionist" idea.

+ See how Marx works: he learns Russian, he tries to grasp the historical reality and opens "hypothesis of work" (the "First Draft" of his letter to Vera Zasulich) this is a "scientific" approach as against a "definitional" approach (Russia is pre-capitalist, so it is feudal – which is here true, but in an original way -, it is feudal, so the coming future is the unavoidable bourgeois revolution...).

* The "multilinear" approach of Marx is explicit in his conclusions: See the "First Draft" (RM E of cycle 1, p.20). the Reply (p.34), the "Letter to the Editorial Board..." (p.39), the "Preface" to the Second Russian edition of the Manifesto... (p.42). **History is "open"**: there is at least two possible lines of development in the coming period (capitalist or socialist).

* This is precisely at the core of the People's Will argumentation: either the socialist revolution now (before the consolidation of the bourgeoisie) or in a far away future (after a broad industrialization). People's Will presents an explicitly dialectical conception of historical determinism.

* The discussion centers on the specificities of the **Russian social formation**, and especially:

+ The central role of the **Tsarist State** in this social formation (because of the late character of Russian feudalism, its role in the process of industrialization and toward the bourgeoisie).

+ The possible role of the **village community** (the Commune) in a socialist alternative to classical capitalist development.

See also: Perry Anderson on the complexity of this social formation (in *Lineages of the Absolutist State*).

+ First conclusions:

* A critical evaluation of the Populist legacy was necessary (see below).

* The 1917 revolution is a different one than the one discussed then (it came after the development of imperialism and after some significant industrialization). This is important: the working class did play a role in it — as well as the peasants. History followed a **third path** (neither the pre-industrial socialist revolution, nor classical capitalism) which was very difficult to foresee in Marx's time (before imperialism).

* Nevertheless, very important **methodological issues** were clarified in this discussion which could

have greatly helped the Russian Marxist to avoid a (deadly dangerous for them) evolutionist-mechanistic understanding of their own revolution.

* Even if in a different context, the question raised by Marx and Engels on the possibility of integrating the peasant commune into a socialist dynamic proved to be an essential one. For decades, it was ignored by all components of the RSDLP. As far as I can see, it is only in 1923 that Lenin featly understood the importance of this issue – somewhat too late.

- Marx's legacy on these issues was buried, nearly for good.

C/ The relevance of the discussion on uni/multi-linear histories

See: last year's outline and the attached schemas.

* The Unilinear schema... and the problem posed by the possible existence of a "regional" MoP (the "Asiatic" mode): it means that for a similar level of development of productive forces (even if in different setting: rice culture) there can be two different modes of production.

It also means that one needs a concret socio-economico-historical answer to the question: "why did capitalism mature in Western Europe?" Compare the two diagrams of the 1987 outline (beware that they must be faulty for a specialist...).

*** Historical determinations versus mechanistic economic determinations.**

- The rediscovery of Marx's research. Marx's schema and today's elaborations: the need to locate the internal factors of revolutionary change in each social formation (and not only the impact of the Western and capitalist world).

+ Elements of reflection

* The question is not simply a question of "skipping over" stages or "catching back" more advanced countries. We are confronted to **different types of social formations**, even if they are in present times largely integrated in the same network of world relations. *See* Trotsky's presentation of the "law" of uneven and combined development (RM A, cycle 3, p. 42-43). The need to integrate into this methodological key tool (the comprehension of uneven and combined development) the issue raised by the existence of various lines of development in long history.

* Russia at that time and even more today's dependent countries are very **modern**, contemporary social formations (including in the way they reintegrate and make use of old structures). It is why they cannot follow the path of West European countries (and not only because of outside imperialist pressure) (*See:* Cycle 3 for present dependent countries). This has long range implications. The revolutionary dialectic in these countries is deeply shaped by their originality, not only in the struggle for power, but after the victory as well, in the transition itself.

* I am still not sure what Russia was at that time. Certainly not an "imperialist country" in its conceptual meaning (Lenin qualified it like that once or twice – Mandel too, and I repeated it obediently in 1973-1975). My present working hypothesis (drawn from Shanin): the two "backward" European Powers were evolving at the turn of the century in two opposite directions. Germany was becoming a modern imperialist country, Russia was becoming a modern dependent country. This process of dependency was cut short by the victory of the revolution. At that time Russia was still in a transitional stage (which would explain the complexity of the characterization of this society).

* The originality of each society reflects the outcome of a given history. Immediate, contemporary,

modern and long history combine in this outcome. Each of these historical fields are of importance for revolutionary politics (see last year's outline). Concrete does not mean simple! Remember here Trotsky's polemic against Stalin (see Stephanie's reports, R.M. A of cycle 3 p. 44, and the 1987 outline on historical materialism).

* The need to understand the complexity of the process of internationalization of Marxism. A word on the "sources" of Marxism in West European history. Rooted Marxism and mass-based CPs will necessarily be somewhat different in different countries/regions. Incarnated Marxism cannot be "universal". A word on the function of an International in this framework.

* **Consequence:** Marxism had to penetrate Russia (and to internationalize the thinking of the Russian revolutionaries), but it had also to integrate the Russian realities (and thereby, to "nationalize" itself). Plekhanov was the main figure to attempt this dual task, in the 19th century. His legacy proved a central issue in the process of evolution of Russian Marxism in the 20th century.

D/ Plekhanov's Legacy and the Deferential Lenin

* One key to the **origins** of Russian Marxism is that it formed in an open polemic against the Populists (remember that Plekhanov broke with them in 1879).

* The first Russian Marxists (Plekhanov, Zasulich, Axelrod, etc.) introduced significant and very positive elements in the Russian revolutionary movement as:

+ An attempt to build a workers' party in backward Russia. This might have been the most "unorthodox" aspect of Plekhanov's political action, in contradiction to the opinion of most West European Marxists of the time.

+ An attempt to develop a systematic class analysis of the "people" (but... the people - plebeians -, as opposed to the establishment, exist: the "commoners". Lenin often used the "people" notion).

+ A criticism of the Utopian element in Populist socialism (once the Tsarist State is broken and democracy established, the People can freely choose their economic system).

+ A criticism of the traditional populist tactic of terrorism (but wings of the Populist movement had a more dialectical policy, giving central importance to urban insurrection after hopes of a rural upsurge faded).

+ Etc.

* Russian Marxism crystallized and strengthened at a time of **deep decline** for the populists, of near total **disintegration of rural struggles**, of a first wave of significant **industrialization**. All this must have convinced the Russian Marxist of the correspondence between their vision of the future and the powerful laws of historical development at work under their eyes.

+ But, as we already saw, **Russian Marxists also rejected Marx's approach** of the Russian issue and its methodological implications. The letters of Marx were not published by them - and were "forgotten". When these documents were first rediscovered (1910s), the question was raised: Was Marx already senile? Marx was not an Orthodox enough Marxist. This had deep consequences:

* Plekhanov tried to integrate the notion of an Asiatic Mode of Production (see diagram 3, last year's outline). But, in Russia, Plekhanov developed a **unilinear-evolutionist conception**: Russia had to pass through determined stages of (economic) development. Russia was "backward" and had to catch up. Capitalism is the (only) road to Progress. The first revolution will be bourgeois. With

political freedom and industrialization, the proletariat will build itself as a class. This done, the socialist revolution will come on the agenda. The two revolutions cannot be bound together (see R. M. A. and "Socialism and the Political Struggle", *Selected Philosophical Works* Vol. 1, pp. 96- 101).

The only "open questions" were the question of **rhythms** (it could happen much quicker than in the West) and **how** the proletariat could help to make it quicker. In such a framework, the **peasant commune** was seen only (it was - also) as **reactionary** (because its struggle was a brake to the free development of capitalism in the countryside).

Lenin's major initial work was precisely a polemic on these issues against the Populists ("The Development of capitalism in Russia"). My present assessment is that his "blind spot" on the revolutionary potential of the commune is linked to his "economism" of the time and proved to be one key factor of political confusion in the history of the SDs (remember that the name "social democrats" had a different meaning at that time than now - it included the revolutionary Marxists).

* Nevertheless, among the first Russian Marxists, there was a **perception** of the originality of the situation (due to the extreme weakness of the Russian bourgeoisie). So, a **common understanding** formed: the proletariat will have to gain "hegemony" over the revolutionary movement to give an impulse to the bourgeois revolution - and help the Russian bourgeoisie carry out its own revolution.

This could have been (and has been for Lenin) the point of departure of a more general reassessment of perspectives, theory, strategy. Unfortunately, it is precisely on this issue that the mainstream Mensheviks regressed after the defeat of the 1905 revolution.

* The legacy of Plekhanov was then contradictory, I think. There were both progressive elements in the way he introduced Marxism in Russia (and tried to apply it to Russia) and a retreat from the more dialectical historical materialism of Marx (linked to the general evolution of orthodox European Marxism at that time).

The process of **formation of Leninism** is, then, in part, a **process of self-assertion** in relation to Plekhanov (a politico-generational issue) and of break with "**Plekhanovism**" (a politico-methodological issue). Many important issues began to be discussed, such as: how to "professionalize" the life of the party, to make it more efficient, as against the loose organizational traditions of an older and more "theoreticist-programmatist" generation.

Trotsky was probably more at ease than Lenin, as far as theoretical innovations were concerned: he was younger, had not been as personally and deeply involved in the polemics against the Populist Utopia (although he had, himself, been a young populist), and had, according to Löwy, been influenced at an early stage by a more unorthodox dialectical Marxist thinker, Labriola. This may be a good explanation for why Trotsky developed a fully dialectical understanding of the coming historical process of the Russian revolution so early. But he had deep personal ties to the Master (Plekhanov) and West European figures. He was less ready than Lenin to break, and this might have been a reason for his initial "Menshevism": a protest against Lenin's harsh criticism of the figures of the older generation.

Lenin and, perhaps even to a greater extent, Trotsky (as an individual figure in the European movement) viewed Kautsky as a master and necessary ally. They were blind to Kautsky's evolution. By 1914 though, the formation of Leninism meant **an open break with "Kautskyism"**.

To sum up: the formation of Leninism meant a break with the main Russian and the main West European Marxist traditions of the early 20th century... No small matter.

II/ The first turning point: the 1905-1907 revolution

Introduction

I think that we can say that Leninism, as a doctrine, began to form with the experience of the 1905-1907 revolution. Before, Lenin was, with Martov among others, a central figure of the "second generation" of SD cadres: the "Old Man's (Plekhanov) boys". He did not defend a general line of his own. Before 1904-1905, there were no clear **strategic** differences inside the RSDLP.

We know now that the 1903 debate on organization had a strategic dimension (the nature of the party to build). But, at the time, it was not consciously linked to the issues discussed later.

Moreover, we should be careful not to draw a-posteriori this link in a too simplistic way. In 1906 the Mensheviks did accept Lenin's "centralist" formulas which were rather usual and not so innovative, after all. Lenin himself significantly modified his conceptions on organization after the 1905-1907 experience. Quite a number of Bolshevik hard-liners of 1903 ended up elsewhere in 1917 and Mensheviks of 1903 became Bolsheviks one day or another. Trotsky himself was still a Menshevik before 1905-1907.

The organizational debate was of course revealing **an emerging generation gap**, and was a straight confrontation on the question of the **party's functioning** (as a whole and especially as far as its leadership was concerned). These two issues are crucial the history of a revolutionary party.

I think that the originality of Lenin as a cadre was already notable: the way in which he was systematically drawing the implications of the political analysis in terms of goals, tasks and policies. This is one of the most substantial element of the debate on organization over Article One of the constitution (each member of the party was to be personally active in and under the control of a collective unit, according to Lenin — he was defeated on this issue) and the functioning of the leadership: to put an end to the "family"-style tradition by reducing the number of members of the Editorial Board from 6 to 3, introducing more objective and functional rules and ways of operating (it is on this last issue that the split occurred). Clearly, Lenin wanted to "professionalize" a party condemned to face extremely harsh conditions of struggles.

On the organizational issues, see the coming report of Francois (one can also refer to three recent articles in our international press. Two articles of Paul Le Blanc: "Luxemburg and Lenin on Revolutionary Organization's, *International Marxist Review* vol.2, no 3, summer 1987, and Salah Jaber "Nationalisme et internationalisme dans la conception du parti ouvrier revolutionnaire", *Quatrième Internationale* no 25, septembre 1987 - to be published soon (?) in *IMR*).

According to Shanin, Lenin was still in the narrow orthodoxy of the time, as far as the rural question was concerned (when he drafted the 1903 agrarian program). I have a doubt, here. My guess is that the originality of Lenin was expressing itself here too, at least in the way he took this issue **seriously**, while for many SDs at that time, it was better to stay away from the reactionary petty-bourgeois influence of the peasant's demands.

See: "To the Rural Poor", by Lenin (written under the impact of the 1902 revival of rural struggles) - which contains a class analysis and addresses the rural poor/proletariat in priority, but also contains many demands to gain the support of the middle peasants.

The way Lenin took seriously the agrarian question is, I think, part of a more general features of Lenin's approach to the role of the proletariat in the revolution: the need for the proletariat to take actively the lead of the struggle of all exploited and oppressed classes/social layers — by

understanding and backing their own set of demands in the democratic revolution.

Trotsky's originality is manifest in 1904 in the way he met and (briefly) collaborated with the unorthodox Parvus in Germany (Parvus who unfortunately turned out quite bad after the 1905-1907 defeat).

But a test of history (a revolution) was still needed for the issue of the strategy of the Russian revolution to become central. On the eve of the 1905 revolution, the political disputes hardened, between Bolsheviks and Mensheviks, taking new contents. The impact of the 1905-1907 revolution was to be tremendous. It first helped to bring back together all components of the SDs (and of the revolutionary movement). Later, especially with the defeat) it gave way to deeper divergences.

A/ 1905-1907: A 20th century revolution in a "backward" country

* It combined a political crisis of the autocratic regime, opened by the defeat of the Russian army at the hands of the Japanese, and a multi-faceted social explosion. This revolutionary crisis expressed the set of contradictions at work in the Russian social formation in the new century and the impact of the imperialist dominated world. Some of the most modern classes were in the forefront of the struggle (the young urban proletariat). The Russian-Western Old Power / Eastern-Japan New Power confrontation in the Far-East was announcing the coming upheaval in the Orient (the Russian defeat by a non-Western army had a tremendous impact in Asia).

* The struggles reached unprecedented levels. In the towns, the working-class mobilization shifted from monarchist deference to political and economical strikes, to the general strike (the biggest in the world at that time!), to the constitution of the Soviets (Councils), and to insurrectional developments.

The peasantry rose, in many provinces, giving way to a broad range of struggles, to elements of rural village self-defense and guerilla war. The "ethnic peoples" from the "periphery" of the Empire (notably in Europe) were often at the vanguard of the struggle. Each social layer, each political movement was tested in life in a full-scale revolutionary crisis.

* For the first time in Russia, the dialectic of revolutionary struggles expressed itself concretely. More than a simple process of "extension" of the revolution from the proletariat to the petty-bourgeoisie and from the towns to the countryside, there was a process of confluence and interrelation between proletarian, peasant, ethniconational, social and political struggles. Old ideas were put to the test and new problems emerged. Under the pressure of events, SDs (and revolutionaries, more generally) closed ranks. Factional conflicts were temporarily forgotten. But, with the growing complexity of the situation, the decline of urban struggles and eventually the defeat of the revolution, the time came for on-the-spot reassessments of the political line, for assimilating the lessons of this major experience for introducing new ideas.

At that point, factional divisions reappeared, in a new context, and deepened as never before.

* One of the main reason for this was that the 1905-1907 revolution challenged aspects of the old schemas of what was to be. No current could simply continue business as usual, be content with doing "more of the same". Partial -- open or hidden - reassessments led to a thorough recomposition inside the SD movement, and eventually to the 1912 split. We might say that the crystallization of Leninism proper (as a doctrine, differentiated from the history of Lenin himself) really began in 1905 - and this is true for Menshevism proper and the original thinking of Trotsky too. 1905-1907 represents, in this respect, a new beginning - "*une experience fondatrice*" as we say in French (a founding, constituent, experience) - but it was still only the beginning of a long succession of

reevaluations.

B/ The composition of forces in the revolution

This is one of the key issue for any revolutionary movement-

1. The working class at the forefront of the urban struggles

One striking feature of 1905 was, of course, the central role played, in the urban centers by the working-class mobilizations and the emergence of the Soviets. The revolution was already, in this respect, proletarian. During the peak of the Soviets' activities, even the Mensheviks began to speak in the language of Trotsky's permanent revolution.

For the Bolsheviks, as well as for Trotsky, this experience reinforced their hopes in the capacity of the working class to lead the democratic revolution (we shall see that the Mensheviks drew a different conclusion).

We can stress here some of the features of the 1905-1907 struggles which influenced the post-revolutionary reevaluations and contributed to shape the policies of various wings of the SDs up to 1917. It is perhaps necessary to begin with a sector which did not mobilize sufficiently, as such, to have a significant impact:

2. The weakness of the women's movement

See: the attached extract of Shanin's book, in appendices below.

During 1905-1907, women did mobilize, but in fragmented way. Women's organizations emerged among "professionals" and in some villages, but did not last long. Wage-earning women were not involved in the central proletarian sectors (metal industry, railways), but mainly in personal services, which were not unionized. Nevertheless, the need to organize them began to be felt, because they were also massively represented in industrial sectors such as textile. The issue was objectively raised by the popular upsurge of 1905-1907, but, except perhaps in some localities, a women's movement as such did not crystallize, did not build up a sufficient relationship of force to break through male indifference, and did not introduce into the common struggle its own demands and forms of organization.

Compared to most later revolutionary struggles, this appears as one of the main weaknesses of the Russian 1905-1907. It certainly weighed heavily - although negatively - in the political reevaluations of the 1910 and the evolution of the SDs - including the Bolsheviks. The women's movement as such only really began to crystallize, it seems, in 1917.

Interestingly enough, nevertheless, when Lenin conceived of the mobilization and armament of the whole people, he explicitly included women, as shown in his February 1917 "Letters from Afar" (see tomorrow's report). This is probably linked to his understanding of revolutionary struggle as a **global** (and political) popular upheaval - proletarian revolutionaries having to address all layers of society, and mainly all layers of the commoners - the "have-nots" (see below point 4).

3. The national question

Many of the nationalities and ethnic peoples of the Russian Empire mobilized in 1905-1907, often in a very radical way. These struggles raised many key issues for later revolutionary struggles. They concertized the decisive importance of the national question in the struggle for the downfall of the **Tsarist order**. The class divisions inside the oppressed nationalities expressed crudely in some

cases, via a direct competition between political forces (SDs versus bourgeois movements, for example) for the leadership of the national liberation movement. Even if most national struggles occurred in "European" Russia (like the Polish, etc.), non-European populations also began to move against the Russian State. This was all the more so in that the crisis had been initiated by a war in the Asian Far East.

From this experience, Lenin again began to reflect on the question, to focus more attention on Asia, looking at the Sun Yatsen experience in China (the republican revolution of 1911).

4. The rural struggles

Even if unevenly, depending on regions, these struggles were very broad.

A definition of peasantry as different from American farmers (!): family work, relative importance of subsistence production, predominance of human labor over capital and machines.

The peasantry did not offer a global alternative project of society. Nevertheless, the peasantry did not blindly "follow" the town. In 1905-1907, beyond regional differences, the peasantry expressed a real consciousness of its own interests, combined with its own "vision" of the world and its own aspirations.

The peasantry had its own rhythms of mobilization, linked among other things to the agrarian cycle. It followed those who defended what it wanted - and withdrew its support when they stopped doing so (see the elections to the first Duma). The peasantry intervened as an autonomous component of the overall revolutionary movement. It did not disappear. It did not present the image of an amorphous mass, only able to react to actions engaged by urban forces.

As early as 1906, Lenin asked for a modification of the RSDLP's agrarian program, a program he had himself contributed to write few years earlier. He corrected the picture of the rural world he presented in his classical polemic against the Populist, at the end of the 19th century.

5. The liberal bourgeoisie, the intelligentsia and the haves-not.

As a social class, the bourgeoisie was essentially absent from the struggles.

Liberal-bourgeois political currents were quickly paralyzed and sought a compromise with the regime.

The intelligentsia was deeply divided.

The "haves" expressed fear in the face of the irruption on the historical scene of the people, all the "have-nots", speaking for themselves in front of the "haves". The social gap between rich and poor expressed itself sharply - frightening even sectors of the intelligentsia.

Conclusion: 1905 as a "Founding Experience" or 'What is to Be Learnt?'

A "founding experience" ("expérience fondatrice", in French) for a generation of activists - the generation of Lenin, Martov, Trotsky.

The **combination** of political and social forces appeared in real scale, natural scale. The process at work was more one of convergence of struggles than simple extension from an initial center. The **social dynamic** (radicalism of the poor and oppressed, political pole represented by the proletariat)

of the struggles emerged: the revolutionary spirit. the appearance of new "possibles".

See Lenin: "Two Tactics...", the change of style between the beginning and the end. The texts of the end of 1905 and 1906... the theme of the uninterrupted revolution and the socialist perspective (see R.M. A).

The gap between the previous **framework of thinking** and **political practice**, on the one hand, and the new **tasks** weighed on all Russian political currents.

Lenin learnt then to learn from experience: he was often the first among the Bolsheviks to "turn" on many issues, finding himself more than once in a minority in his own faction.

Divisions were expressed quickly on tactical issues (how far should one go?). But lasting divisions were expressed in the contradictory lessons drawn by the various currents and leaders from the 1905-1907 revolution. What ought to be learnt from history – and from this extraordinary experience? This was of course a central question not only for the SDs, not only for the revolutionaries, but for all social and political actors: the Stolypin attempt at "revolution from above" came as an answer to this question – and provoked as many disputes in the ruling milieu as there were among revolutionaries.

Some reevaluations came immediately – and began as early as 1904. Others would take shape during the following years, during the period of revolutionary setbacks.

III/ Positions and first evolutions

A/ The regime

1. The nobility: less and less enlightened.
2. The attempt at revolution from above: Stolypin, his reforms – and his assassination. An interesting evolution (see in some present dependent countries).
3. The evolution of the political regime (the Dumas) and the dark period of reaction.

B/ The Populist movement

The crisis of the populist movement: political and accidental factors (the core of the leadership is broken).

C/ In the Social Democracy (SD)

The main strategic positions:

1. The regression of the Mensheviks: moderate the proletariat to avoid frightening the bourgeoisie. A dead-end: how can you in a revolutionary situation?
The recession on the four equations of the most mechanistic conceptions of "Plekhanovism".

Warning: a left argument (principled struggle against any participation in a bourgeois government) covers a right-wing policy (abstentionism). It is not the last time that such a combination of "left" principles with opportunist policies appears in the international revolutionary movement.

2. *Lenin: the break with 3 of the 4 mechanistic "equations"* is then made, deepened or maintained.

It is a **radical** break on which a truly revolutionary perspective is built.

Lenin's answer to the "left" argument of the Mensheviks: the party which leads and insurrection finds itself in power.

But his vision of the "possibles" is still limited by his "economistic evolutionism". In the economic field, only capitalism can develop.

3. Trotsky: his systematic introduction of a very dialectical conception of the Russian revolutions: the radical break with the four equations.

Trotsky's answer to Lenin: the proletariat in power will implement its own politics!
The extraordinary clarity of Trotsky's vision of the historical dynamic of the coming Russian revolution: compare his 1905 with what happened in 1917... (look at the quotes of his 1905-06 writings in his 1938 text, at the end of R.M. A).

The importance of the dark period of reaction (1907-1912)

For the split in the RSDLP leadership (*beware*: at the grass-roots, unity was often maintained... up to 1917).

The deep meaning: the crystallization of ultra-left and reformist currents in the RSDLP.

The political problem:

* **Trotsky as a conciliator**, in spite of his clarity concerning the materialist-historical method (including on the question of the state) which allow him to describe so well the overall historical dynamic of the revolution. Why so? It is not only a "blind spot" on the question of the party! It expresses a "fatalist" and "sociologist", "catastrophist" conception of the process of permanent revolution, at that time (an "historical objectivism" - which we know well ourselves).

* **The efficiency of Lenin**, as **political leader** imposes itself during the dark years. In spite of the confusion in his vision of historical perspectives (the existence of this confusion is confirmed *a-posteriori* by his evolution in 1914-1917, see tomorrow's lecture). At the root of Lenin's efficiency: his clarity regarding the socio-political dialectic of the revolution.

The importance of the 1912-1914 period

The revival of workers' struggles and the new revolutionary dynamic.

The revival of the "proletarian hope" for the coming revolution and the rebuilding of the party's roots in the mass movement.

The preparation of the party for the new stakes, helping to face the disaster of 1914 and to keep a certain continuity of organization and mass dynamic from 1914 to 1917.

First conclusions

A/ Trotsky and Lenin: some key and complementary **methodological clarifications**: the methodology of historical materialism (Trotsky), the political methodology (Lenin): his attention to all struggles and popular movements (his "populist" sensitivity), his capacity to **integrate** strategy, tactics, organization in a set of decisions, in a concrete line.

These **two dimensions** (personalized by Trotsky and Lenin) are integral elements of the question of the permanent revolution!

B/ A word on the question of Lenin's DDPP (democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry):

- In Trotsky: DoP (dictatorship of proletariat), governmental alliances, progressivism of the socio-economical measures (his theory is not ultra-left: *see* R.M. A, cycle 3. pp. 45- 46).
- In Lenin: a situation of dual power (without the name - something important to remember - see tomorrow's lecture) of a very specific type.
DDPP = social alliances in power under proletarian hegemony (this is the goal, refer for example to the 1909-1910 texts, R.M. A, pp. 56-66 and 67-74) backed by the people in arms;
the bourgeoisie is nevertheless dominant in the economy.

Lenin shaped this vision quite **early** (see the "Sketch of a provisional revolutionary government", R.M. A, p. 22, written in June-July 1905)

The "way out" from the DDPP (the growing over):

In Trotsky: the **internal dynamic** of the Russian revolution **initiates** the process of growing over and the backing received from the European revolution **consolidates** this process.

In Lenin: the irruption of class struggle inside the peasantry (changing of alliances) and the European revolution (helped by the Russian revolution) **initiates** the process of growing over from the dual power situation. This is the **goal**. The beginning of the dynamic of growing over depends in part on an **external factor**.

Lenin's perspective was a revolutionary one (see his "active" behavior aimed at bringing the revolutionary process as far as possible, opposed to the "passive" behavior of the Mensheviks). But Trotsky's understanding proved most correct, as far as the dynamic of growing over is concerned (see the historical test of 1917-1919).

C/ A word again on the dialectic of politics

- *The role of the programme:* the historical compass, continuity and class point of view...
- The role of theory: to offer methodological tools, analytical tools and systematized lessons from history...
- *The role of principles:* personal and collective coherence of the revolutionary militant...
- *The role of strategy:* the political compass allowing the existence of a long-term process of accumulation of forces - accumulation of political, organizational, social and, at a certain point military forces; including long-term alliances)...
- *The role of tactics:* determination of the next possible step. How to choose a tactic?: the need here to combine goals and concrete analysis of the concrete situation. Tactics cannot be simply deduced from principles, programmes, or strategy...
- *The role of the organization:* the capacity to integrate these various questions (fields), where the concrete analysis of the concrete situation can be done (in a collective and militant way) - the organisation being a key element in the concrete situation itself...

Continuity, flexibility, organization and capacity to integrate concrete analysis in revolutionary politics – all these are precious elements of Leninism.

RUSSIAN MARXISM -2- WWI, 1917 REVOLUTION AND LENINISM

Introduction

= The follow-up of yesterday's lecture. The same goals and limits.

= Again: a limited choice of topics, a very schematic report, the search for "lessons".

= It introduces a number of issues we shall come back to in cycle 3 (comparative studies of Third World revolutions) and cycle 5 (problems of the transition). Some "red threads": economics and politics in the socialist revolution, social alliances and the agrarian question, national-democratic slogans and stages in the process of permanent revolution. The Russian revolution as a necessary background (its historical place) and a key experience in clarifying a number of basic concepts related to the struggle for power (dual power, DoP, state...).

= A question: how ought one understand Trotsky's clarity, concerning the overall process of the revolution – and Lenin's revolutionary efficiency ? What lessons can we draw from an answer to this question?

I/ An assessment of Lenin's and Trotsky's positions before the outbreak of WWI

= Summary conclusions from yesterday's lecture.

A/ More convergences than commonly acknowledged: roots of their common stand in 1917.

= A fight for power (the main difference with the Mensheviks).

= A fight around "bourgeois-democratic" slogans (not "socialist" ones).

= The democratic revolution against the autocratic state and... against the policy of the liberal bourgeoisie.

= A fight for proletarian leadership.

= The need for a workers and peasants' alliance (for the revolution has to have a majority).

*Note : on this, see Trotsky's fundamental position in his major works of the time 1905, *Results and Prospects, Our Differences*:*

+ *"It goes without saying that the proletariat must fulfil its mission, just as the bourgeoisie did in its own time, with the help of the peasantry and the petty-bourgeoisie. It must lead the countryside, draw it into the movement, make it vitally interested in the success of its plans. But, inevitably, the proletariat remains the leader. This is not the 'dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry', it is the dictatorship of the proletariat supported by the peasantry"* (written in July 1905 and quoted again in 1909) (R.M. A, p.96-97. see also p. 104).

+ Trotsky recognized the need to include in the revolutionary government representatives of the peasantry and urban petit-bourgeoisie (R.M. A, cycle 3. p. see also Lenin about Trotsky, R.M. A pp. 62-63). To gain hegemony does not necessarily imply to have an absolute majority. *Note*: it is unfortunate that Lenin does not elaborate here his answer to Trotsky's argument that the proletarian forces must be in majority in the revolutionary government).

= The importance of the development of **class struggle in the countryside** and of the **European revolutions** for the initiation of the socialist "growing over" of the Russian revolution (Lenin) or for its consolidation (Trotsky): the two key issues after the victory of the democratic revolution: dialectic of the Russian and European revolutions, evolution of the alliance policy in the countryside.

B/ Different strengths and weaknesses

= **Trotsky's main strength**: the clarity of his understanding of the dialectic of history (law of combined and uneven development) in the 20th century. So: he understood the revolution's inner growing over dynamic. **His main weakness**: his "social-revolutionary fatalism", which is then an element of his vision of the dialectic of history. In spite of the radical break with the "economist determinist" conceptions of the orthodoxy of the time, this "social-fatalism" introduces an element of "all powerful-evolutionism", feeding his "conciliationist" standpoint in the SD movement. This may also partially explain Trotsky's other limitations like the absence of an active policy toward the peasantry: if the objective laws of history are so powerful, one is less compelled to translate goals into tasks!

= **Lenin's main strength**: his understanding of the dialectics of politics (concrete character of politics, strategy and tactics, centrality of the organization). So: he can translate each "perspective" into a goal, each goal into tasks. **His main weakness**: still limited by Plekhanov's first mechanistic relation of determination (the absolute economico-political limitation of the inner dynamic of the Russian revolution). This partially explains the confusion in his power formula (DDPP and...which state ?).

= **Lenin's general superiority as revolutionary leader**: "Leninism".

= **Learn from both**: the historical dynamic of the revolution in (most) backward countries (Trotsky) and the concrete content of the process of permanent revolution (Lenin).

C/ Some common limitations

= Both: **blind about Kautsky's evolution**, including on the question of the state. Why? The factional pressure for "international conciliationism", the influence of the orthodoxy of the time, the fact that the discussion on the bourgeois (semi) democratic state is not directly relevant to "their" Russian state?

= On the **rural question**: An "overoptimistic" (rapid development of class struggle in the countryside between landless/poor peasants and rich peasants) and "over-pessimistic" (the peasants against Red power as soon as the Tsarist state is overthrown) vision of the dynamic of the rural

world after victory.

= **Methodologically**: a difficulty in clarifying the dialectic between objective and subjective factors in historical materialism. The consequence, for Lenin, of his remaining "economism" (the first causal determination: the level of development of the productive forces), and for Trotsky of its "social-fatalism".

II/ The reevaluations imposed by the outbreak of the war and the capitulation of Kautsky

= A great shock. See Francois reports.

= The question of imperialism and war.

= The question of war and revolutionary perspectives in Europe.

= **A general reevaluation** for both Lenin and Trotsky.

Neither a simple continuity of their thoughts, before and after 1917, nor a total change of framework.

= Three key dates in the evolution of Russian Marxism: 1905-1914-1917 (not only two) (Paul [Le Blanc] will say: this is still too restrictive, and he will be right, of course).

A/ Lenin deepens his theoretical and political vision.

= The integration of a systematic analysis of **imperialism** (Bukharin) and its political implications (*Imperialism, Highest Stage of Capitalism*: 1916).

= A deeper understanding of **dialectics**. It is said that the "Philosophical Notebooks" are far superior to *Materialism and Empirico-criticism*... After the outbreak of the war, Lenin (in Bern) studied **Hegel**. It is then that he broke with Plekhanov in the field of **philosophy** and clarified the dialectic between objective and subjective factors in human history (with a **non-positivistic** understanding of the difference between the laws of evolution in the natural sciences and in historical materialism). He integrated a much more dialectical understanding of the relations between "cause" and "effect". Lenin achieved in the field of philosophy (theory) what he achieved before in the field of politics. See: Löwy "De la Grande Logique de Hegel à la gare finlandaise de Péetrograd", in *Dialectical et Révolution — essai de sociologie et d'histoire du marxisme*.

= The *national and international dialectic* of revolutionary struggles: a political and revolutionary approach of the national question in Russia and Europe — then Asia. (Here again: the originality of Lenin).

= A first attempt to analyze the roots of reforming (the question of the labor aristocracy: see other lectures).

= The integration at the center of his thought of a clear understanding of the issue of the state in the revolution See below.

Conclusion: a truly general reassessment.

= For Trotsky: a process of rupture with his conciliationism and with his "social-revolutionary fatalism". It is a process, from 1914 to 1917.

B/ Lenin and "State and Revolution"

= *Refer to*: Francois's report on the Second International, Salvatori and Sawyer's studies in R.M.C.

= *Lenin's writings on the state before 1917.*

* Sawyer's approach too simplified.

See: the 1905 text on the Soviet (R.M. A) (but compare it to the other article on the soviets dated 25 November 1905...) and the few texts where he analyses the Paris Commune's lessons in relation to the state (See his introduction to Marx's Letters on the Commune dated 5 February 1907,, and the pro-Bebel report on the German SDP's congress dated 16 November 1910). Take note of the period in which these two texts are written (thinking through the lessons of 1905-1907).

* Nevertheless, Sawyer does raise a real issue. These are the only two really clear texts written before 1917 on this matter I have found... in 22 volumes and a half! Other writings all silent on the matter when they should not be so: on the Commune's lessons (23 March 1908); on Marx's legacy of the 1848-1871 period (1 March 1913); the necrology on Bebel (8 August 1913); etc.

* Most important: silence on the Kautsky-Pannekoek dispute... (seen apparently as a minor issue dividing the Left in its fight against the Right in European Social-Democracy). We now know how important this debate was. Remember that 1912 is the peak of the crisis of the RSDLP: Lenin had other preoccupations, I guess...

* The inner inconsistency of Lenin's position before 1917: the **dictatorship** is proletarian and peasant, the *political leadership* is proletarian, the **state** is bourgeois, the bourgeoisie is the (economically) dominant class... and, in the Republic, there is the people in arms (presented as a **basic "democratic" demand** by the Bolshevik faction!).

= Lenin **knows** about the "Paris Commune's Lessons" but **does not integrate** them systematically in his analysis. Why ? The factional dynamic (the need to win over Kautsky to his own side in the Russian fights). The specificity of the Russian state and the absence of a reformist danger in its traditional European form (integration into the state, electoralist perspectives...). The wrongly formulated understanding of the division between East (Russia) and West (Germany) at that time. The consequence of Lenin's "economic limitations"... *Whatever the reasons*: it is a very important point to remember when we read the pre-1917 Lenin: the author of 'State and Revolution' is not yet born !

= *Note*: Trotsky had a much clearer approach on the place of the state in the revolution (in the dialectic of the social formation), already in his 1905 writings (See: R.M. A, cycle 3, pp. 18- 22). But Trotsky too is "unclear" on the Pannekoek-Kautsky dispute, as far as I know. Why?

= **The turn: the end of 1916, the beginning of 1917.**

+ The history of Lenin's reactions to Bukharin's article on the state in the proletarian revolution. The initial two criticisms (1. No to the destruction of the state machine, 2. Economic centralization is not the only function of the DoP).

The "rediscovery" of Marx's and Engels's writings on the destruction of the bourgeois state machine (which confirms that Lenin had earlier been influenced by the dominant thinking of the time in Europe about the conquest of the state machine). His new assessment of Bukharin's article. His discovery of the importance of the Pannekoek-Kautsky dispute.

+ See Sawyer's article (R.M. C), Cohen's biography of Bukharin, Lenin's letters in *Collected works* 23, 35, 41.

Conclusions:

+ There is a new and key clarification operated by Lenin on the question of the state in the proletarian revolution in late 1916 and early 1917. It is very important to understand the formation of his thought. Before 1914, Lenin's thinking centered around the issue of the struggle for power and its **socio-political content**. So: the DDPP *as a formula of class alliance in the dictatorship*. After 1916 Lenin put another dimension at the center of his analysis of the struggle for power: *the state, its apparatuses, its class nature and form*.

+ Most of the reevaluation work on this topic was done **before** February 1917. This clarification is not the result of the practical confrontation with the situation of dual power. It is the result of the overall evolution of Lenin's thinking after the outbreak of WWI.

+ This explains, together with the need to fight Kautsky, the form given to the book *State and Revolution* (return to the classics) and its importance, its urgency (written in the midst of the revolutionary months!): it was a necessary clarification work for the Russians too...

+ This is also key in understanding the clarity of Lenin's approach to the situation created in Russia by the February revolution.

C/ The Letters from Afar and the April Theses.

= See R.M. B.

= The importance of *Letters from Afar*: written "from afar" (Lenin is under no "pressure" and has to read the events through sketchy news).

Nevertheless: so quickly and so clearly written (it confirms the depth of Lenin's understanding of the revolutionary process at that time). (Löwy and Paul feel that I underestimate the importance of the clarification in Lenin's perspectives immediately after February).

The *Letters from Afar* are much more developed than the "Theses". They deserve to be systematically utilized.

= One should never forget the context: it is an unforeseen development (the liberal bourgeoisie dismissing the Tsar). It was not the realization of the "Two Tactics..." projection. It was an unhopd for gift for the Mensheviks.

= The first letter.

+ "such unexpected and specific combinations of forms of struggle and alignment of forces of the contestants" (p.1). "an extremely unique historical situation" (p.4). Look at the causes: war, the Franco-British imperialist plot, the experience accumulated by the mass movement...). A "combination of a number of factors" (p.1).

+ The "initial stage" of the second revolution "completed in a few days" (p. 1). The political camps, these three fundamental political forces" (p. 2-3). These two governments the one of "capitalist landlords and bourgeoisie" and "side by side with this government" the "workers' government" (p.5).

+ "The conflict of these three forces determines the situation that has now arisen, a situation that is *transitional* from the first stage of the revolution to the second" (p. 5).

+ So the tasks: to organize, to convince, to rely on allies (agrarian semi-proletariat and part of the small peasants). The independent organization of the poor peasants. To go forward.

= **The second letter.**

+ The "**proletarian republic, backed by the rural workers and the poorest section of the peasants and town dwellers**: the only answer to the crisis (p.9).

+ An internationalist solution to the crisis.

+ "the formation of a *workers' militia*, or *workers' home guard*, extending to the whole people, to all men and women" (p. 12), A "Supervisory Committee's of "solid proletarian supervision over the Provisional government's. (p.11). The dynamic of arming the people and of general proletarian control.

= **The third Letter.**

+ "the February-March Revolution was merely the *first stage* of the revolution. Russia is passing through a peculiar historical moment of transition to that next stage of the revolution, or, to use Skovbelev's expression, to a 'second revolution" (p.13). The main characteristic and originality of the situation.

+ Central tasks: the *organization of the proletariat*, which must lead the entire vast mass of urban and rural poor, the semi-proletariat and small proprietors"(p. 14). "Organization is the slogan of the moment". The function of the Soviet of Workers' Deputies: "They must be regarded as organs of insurrection, of revolutionary rule". Note that Lenin is quoting here an article he wrote in 1915 (p. 15). "We need revolutionary *government*, we need (for a certain transitional period) a *state* " (p. 16).

+ *The central themes of the coming work State and Revolution are already present in this letter*: the Paris Commune lessons. Break down the old state machine and build up a qualitatively new one. This dynamic is already engaged in the first stage of the revolution: "the workers have smashed the old state machine. It will be more correct to say: *have begun* to smash it" (p. 17) (this confirms that for Lenin the two stages in the revolution are part of the very same revolutionary process, and not two separate revolutions). Contradictory to the main pre-1914 works, the conditions to pass from the first to the second stage of the revolution are only of a subjective character (class consciousness, class organization, class struggle) and not economic (a new development of productive forces). All this shows that the themes of *State and Revolution* were already clarified before February 1917, and it shows their importance for Lenin.

Remember the context (war and revolution), so the topic of the studies: the State **in the revolution**.

+ Consequence: In relations to the state power: it is already an anti-capitalist revolution (proletarian). In relations to socio-economic demands, it is not yet a socialist one. A dichotomy.

So: the meaning of the formula of DDPPP: with the poor peasants. "**It is not a matter of finding a theoretical classification**" but to approach the tasks (guide to action) in relation to the demands and alliances (p.18).

+ **Conclusions**: Clarity flows from the introduction into the analysis of the "lessons of the Paris Commune" on the state in the revolution. This announces the characterization of the October 1917

soviet power as the DoP. The need to differentiate two levels of analysis of the revolutionary process (the state level and the socio-economic one). The need to characterize both the leading class of the revolutionary process (the proletariat) and the social bloc which insure the majority base of the revolution.

= The Fourth and Fifth Letters

+ An internationalist fight for peace. To implement such an internationalist peace program, the "political power must be in the hands of *the workers and poorest peasants*, not the landlord and capitalists" (p.22).

+ The DDPP and the social alliance between the proletariat and the peasantry: the confiscation of the landed estates (and the nationalization of the land, if...). "(8) In connection with such a peasant revolution, and on its basis, the proletariat can and must, in alliance with the poorest section of the peasantry, take further steps toward control of the production and distribution of the basic products, toward the introduction of 'universal labor service', etc. These steps are 'dictated, with absolute inevitability, by the conditions created by the war, which in many respects will become still more acute in the post-war period. In their entirety and in their development these steps will mark the *transition to socialism*, which cannot be achieved in Russia directly, at one stroke, without transitional measures, but is quite achievable and urgently necessary as a result of such transitional measures. (9) In this connection, the task of immediately organizing special Soviets of Workers' Deputies in the *rural districts*, i.e., Soviets of agricultural *wage-workers separated* from the Soviets of the other peasant deputies, come to the forefront with extreme urgency" (p. 25).

+ **conclusions:** the introduction of a program of transitional demands (breaking the traditional division between the minimum and maximum program earlier found in Lenin and most other Marxists of the time) linked to an analysis of the **process of transition from the democratic to the socialist stages of the revolution** (what we call the process of growing over of the revolution). The program will be developed in the *Impending Catastrophe and How to Combat It*. An attempt to project the evolution of class alliances in this framework (the alliance with the poor peasants). Thus, a succession of tasks and alliances and the need to combine tasks and alliances (the land reform with the peasantry and the separate organization — specific alliance with the poorest sector of the peasantry and rural wage-workers): because we are faced with a process of growing over and not simply two different stages, well separated from each other.

= The April Theses

+ Remember the context: Lenin returning and isolated in the Bolshevik leadership. A fight over orientation in the Bolshevik party. So: "personal theses" (p.26).

+ The "Theses" give a synthesis of what is developed in the "Letters from afar". Against any "putschist" ambiguity: the recognition that the party is in a minority. The method: to **win over the majority**, the need to explain and convince, relying on on the people's needs (their experience) for doing so.

+ "(5) Not a parliamentary republic (...) but a republic of Soviets of Workers'. Agricultural Laborers' and Peasants' Deputies throughout the country, from top to bottom" (p.28).

+ The transitory theme of workers' control: "(8) It is not our *immediate* task to "introduce socialism, but only to bring social production and the distribution of products at once under the control of the Soviets of Workers' Deputies (p.29).

+ The scope of the **modifications** proposed by Lenin in relation to the traditional program of the party (which shows that it is **more** than a simple adaptation to the new situations: "(9) Party tasks: a) immediate convocation of a Party congress, b) Alternation of the Party Programme, mainly: 1.- On the question of imperialism and imperialist war 2.- On our attitude towards the state and our demand for a "commune state" (note'. i.e., a state of which the Paris Commune was the prototype); 3.- Amendment of our out-of-date minimum programme, c) Change of Party's name (note: ... We must call ourselves the *Communist Party*)" (p.29). We see here explicitly the introduction and clarification of key issues in the party programme: imperialism, the state...

+ **Conclusions:** There are important modifications (including programmatic ones), but it is clear that the essential clarifications for Lenin were done before February. There are also important elements of continuity in Lenin's thinking (the social-correlation of forces which allows the victory of the revolution, for example). It is an evolution of Lenin's own thinking confronted with a new historical experience (the war) and not a sudden shift to adopt Trotsky's thinking.

Even if the essential breakthrough has occurred then, the evolution of Lenin's thinking continues, as shown on the occasion of the inner party struggle.

D/ Some aspects of the political struggle inside the Bolshevik Party.

= Only very briefly. Read the texts... Take note, among other points, of:

= 1. The introduction of the concept of Dual Power

See the article p. 33-36.

+ A *fundamental question*: "The basic question of every revolution is that of state power (...) 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 advance". And a new concept: "Nobody previously thought, or could have thought, of dual power" (p.32).

+ The notion of **dual power** has something to do with the necessity to change the old formulas: "We must know how to supplement and amend old 'formulas', for example those of Bolshevism" (p.32). See on this later.

+ If dual power can vary a lot in its forms (we shall see many of them), in content it proved in Russia and in later revolutions to be a key concept to analyze the struggle for power and its process in the proletarian revolution.

+ In Russia, concerning the form of dual power, a choice had to be made at a given time between the Soviets (local constituencies when the Bolsheviks were slow to win the majority) and the factory councils (where the Bolsheviks majority quicker). But in term of **class alliances and national representativity**, in a country like Russia, the Soviets were a superior form than the factory councils. It may therefore not be a simple "accident" of concrete history that they eventually expressed so clearly the nature of the new socio- political revolutionary power.

+ For *other forms* of dual power: see cycle 3

= 2. To gain a majority for the revolution.

+ Study in the text the way Lenin approaches the necessity to gain a majority for the revolution (at least in the active centers of the revolutions, urban and military, but also by capturing the dynamic of the rural upsurges).

= 3. The withering away of the concept of DDPP.

+ One can find, in *Letters from afar*, *Dual Power* and the *Letters on Tactics*, apparently differing judgments on the old formula of DDPP; and we have seen how it could be replaced by the formulas of DDPPP or DoP. Let's try to analyze a key passage of *Letters on Tactics* to understand Lenin's approach at that time.

+ A central argument is that the **formula was in essence true but was concretized in an unforeseen way**: "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 forms anyone could have expected". "This formula (DDPP) 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 (...) The revolutionary 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'.

+ These **modifications are not of secondary importance**: "those who do not assimilate them are politically doomed: The person who *now* speaks only of a "revolutionary democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry" is behind times, consequently, he has in effect *gone over* to the petty-bourgeoisie against the proletarian class struggle; that person should be consigned to the archives of 'Bolshevik' prerevolutionary antiques (it may be called the archive of 'old Bolsheviks')".

+ There is a **general question method** involved concerning how revolutionary politics has to be rooted in real life, always partially unforeseen by theory: "... 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 its complexity. "Theory, my friend, is green, but green is the eternal tree of life". Relate this point to the conclusion of the introductory lecture on historical materialism (the conclusions on theory, program, strategy and tactic).

+ **The process of revolutionary struggles is different than foreseen** : "According to the old way of thinking, the rule of bourgeoisie could and should *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*." Relate this with what we looked at earlier in the report: the clarification of the process of transition, of growing over, between the two stages of the revolution (a point he thought before he was in deep disagreement with Trotsky). Behind this very important question, we find, I think, the result of Lenin's break with his previous "economist-determinist" pre-1914 limitation (see the first report on the formation of Russian Marxism). This will be very clear when we deal with the question of the "completion" of the bourgeois revolution.

+ **The tasks precisely determined by the concrete situation**. It is the root of the need for political flexibility: tasks do not flow from the abstract schema, but grow out of evolving concrete reality. "To ignore or overlook this fact [the originality of the concrete situation] would mean taking after 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".

= At that point we are apparently faced with a contradictory assessment by Lenin. On one hand, the DDPP is seen as an essentially correct formula, even if concretized in an unforeseen manner. On the other hand, this formula is so

antiquated, the those who stick to it are passing over to the petty bourgeoisie! We can give to this apparent confusion at least three non-contradictory explanations:

+ A "pedagogical" or "polemical" one: Lenin, having to fight its own tradition in the party, maintains a formal link with his old positions.

+ We can also think that Lenin has not yet completely finalized his process of clarification and continues marginally to think his new politics in his old conceptualization.

+ But we can also think that the old Leninist concept of DDPP was **related to different aspects of the revolutionary process, some where the prospect proved to be correct, and others incorrect**. I shall try to show how. It is quite important to understand the elements of continuity and discontinuity in Lenin's thinking, before 1914 and after 1917.

+ For Lenin, **as a general formula of class alliances, the DDPP proved essentially correct**: revolutionary-democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry' has *already* become a reality (notes: 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 cooperation. The Soviet of Workers and Soldiers' Deputies' — there you have the revolutionary-democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry already accomplished in reality". This point is quite important - including to understand why the soviet form of power proved more appropriate in Russia than the factory council form (see the point made earlier on that).

+ **But insofar as the DDPP is integrated into a rigid schema of the succession of stages in the revolution, it is no good at all**. It is very clear in Lenin's answer to Kamenev's critiques (for Kamenev, Lenin's scheme is wrong 'in as much as it proceeds from the assumption that the bourgeois democratic revolution is *completed*'). The question of 'completion' of the bourgeois democratic revolution is *stated* wrongly'. The question is put in an abstract, simple, so to speak one-color, way which does not correspond to the objective reality". This "prevents one from seeing the exceedingly complex reality, which is at least two-colored.(...) Indeed, reality shows us both the passing of power into the hands of the bourgeoisie (a 'completed' bourgeois revolution of the usual type) and, side by side with the real government, the existence of a parallel government which represents the 'revolutionary-democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry' (...). Is this reality covered by comrade Kamenev's old-Bolshevik formula, which says that 'the bourgeois - democratic revolution is not completed'? It is not, the formula is obsolete. It is no good at all. It is dead. And it is no use trying to revive it."

+ **On this quite important question, the legacy of pre-1914 Leninism is ambivalent**. Lenin accepts that the formula of Kamenev concerning the "completion of the bourgeois revolution" is an "old Bolshevik" one. But in relation to the formula of the DDPP itself he remind his readers of a quote from *Two Tactics* (July 1905) already used again in his article *Twelve Years* (end of 1907). "Like everything else in the world, the revolutionary-democratic (dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry has a past and a future. Its past is autocracy, serfdom, monarchy, and privilege... Its future is the struggle against private property, to the struggle of the wage-worker against the employer, the struggle for socialism...". And Lenin adds: "Comrade Kamenev's mistakes is that even in 1917 he sees only the *past* of the revolutionary-democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry. As a matter of fact, its *future* has already begun".

See on that last week's report on the formation of Russian Marxism (here: above).

= Seen retrospectively, I think that we can say that the situation after the victory of the democratic insurrection was seen by Lenin, before 1914, under the formula of DDPP, as **protracted dual power** of a special type (the proletariat at the helm of a political dictatorship, the bourgeoisie consolidating itself is the dominant economic class, the rural petty-bourgeoisie being torn apart by its internal differentiations and the class struggle between the rural wage-workers and poorest peasants on one hand, the rich peasants and new rural capitalists on the other). But the concepts needed to explicitly think this situation as such, were not yet formulated — to begin with this very concept of dual power. The "economic-determinist" limitation and the non-integration of the "Lessons of the Paris Commune" concerning the state in the overall analysis of the revolutionary process in Russia also hindered the full understanding of the situation of dual power and its inner dynamic. The form of dual power that can be reconstructed from Lenin's writings of 1905-1910 corresponds in some aspects and differs in others from the one which actually emerged from the Russian revolution.

= We can say that the DDPP was not a rigorous concept:

+ As a popular formula for "workers' and peasants' government", underlining class alliances, the DDPP (or DDPPP) gave way, in 1917, to the slogan of all power to the Soviets (the reality). As a concept, it dissolved itself into the one of dual power and gave way to the formula of Dictatorship of the Proletariat. A new set of concepts, born from the theoretical clarification introduced since 1914 and rooted in the experience of 1917, have been elaborated.

+ During the following years, Lenin will use **various formulas** to describe the Soviet regime, depending on which concrete question he wants to deal with. Lenin never thought that one should speak always in the wooden tongue of concepts. But the use of the specific formula of DDPP disappears.

+ In **programmatic** documents, the conceptual definition (its fundamental class characters) of Soviet power is Dictatorship of the proletariat. This is clear in the Bolshevik Party documents (see p. 61 and 71, for example) and in the documents of the Third International. And... read again *State and Revolution* !

+ In major polemics and analysis, the **new set of concepts** elaborated in 1914-1917 is used by Lenin in an efficient way. See for example the quotes from *The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky*, pp. 63-70 of the R.M.B. Take note again of the dichotomy between the rhythms of evolution of the revolutionary struggles and transformations in the state (qualitative change: October 1917, establishment of the DoP) and in the countryside's socio-economic developments (the "peasant October": summer 1918... and we shall see that even this date is not obviously such a clear turning point toward the deepening of the class struggle in the countryside).

= 4. Implications and conclusions.

+ **To learn better from Lenin's** pre-1914 writings and the pre-war experience of the RSDLP and Bolshevik movement, it is important to take into account the various clarifications and reorientations operated by Lenin and the Bolshevik Party in 1914-1917. These writings and this experience are very rich and worth studying. But the lessons we can draw from them are enlightened by the major experiences of the war and the revolution.

+ **The same is true for Trotsky.** Much can be learnt from his pioneer work in the elaboration of the theory of the Permanent Revolution. But to draw on these lessons profitably, we have to take into account his later evolution: the break not only with "conciliationism" in itself (which allowed him to fully engage in the revolutionary struggle of 1917), but the criticism of the roots of this conciliatory policy: the "social-revolutionary fatalism" characterizing Trotsky's pre-war **general** approach. *See the previous report on the formation of the Russian Marxism (above).*

+ The set of concepts we are using (dual power/breakdown of the bourgeois state and establishment of the DoP/process of economic revolutionary transformations, consolidation of the dictatorship and its social alliances) is not specifically coming from Trotsky. Originally, in essence it comes from Marx and Engels and the early experience of proletariat revolutionary struggles (*see previous reports*). And **it became a constitutive element of Leninism** through the experience of the war and the revolution (before becoming a constitutive element of the Third International's conceptions).

= We have now tested the utility of this conceptualization of the revolutionary process in two ways:

1. - We have seen two weeks ago (in the report on the state and the revolution) that it helped to approach two essential aspects of the state (an instrument of class rule and a specific social body) and the dialectic between economy and politics in the proletarian revolution.

2.- We have seen now that this set of concepts is rooted in that experience of the major proletarian struggle of the 19th century (The Paris Commune) and the first victorious revolution of the 20th century (the Russian revolution).

+ Because of that, it is an integral part of the legacy of revolutionary Marxism, of Leninism and of the Third International. This is all the more important because this legacy is the most broadly accepted by many revolutionary currents in the present world. It is a **common point of reference** accepted by most of these contemporary currents. Relying on it strengthens our capacity to dialogue with these currents, which in itself is very positive.

= We shall see in the coming cycle if it is useful in the analysis of post-WWII revolutionary experiences. And more precisely, we shall see that this conceptualization helps to fight **both** opportunist deviations (focussing on the need to break down the bourgeois state and build a new one, showing the importance of this turning point in a revolutionary struggle) and ultra-left ones (allowing one to approach socio-economic transformations as a process, because the class nature of the dictatorship does not depend on the scope of the socio-economic measures immediately taken at the time of victory).

III/ SOME ADDITIONAL NOTES ON THE DIALECTIC OF THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

A/ An original and complex revolutionary process.

= The need to look behind the oversimplified pictures to think of the lessons.

*** 1. A convergence of struggles:**

* The image: from the town to the countryside (the contrary of the image of the Chinese revolution).

* The reality: At least four dialectical combinations of struggles:

a. Workers and soldiers.

b. Soldiers and peasants (the composition of the army, the rural unrest)

c. Russian
and nationalities.

d. Russian revolution and evolution of the war situation in Europe.

*** 2. The determining role played by the war situation in the revolutionary process.**

The war situation explains:

+ the unforeseen originality of the situation
(the Kerensky government and the form of the dual power situation).

+ the centrality of the "Peace" slogan, its unifying character.

+ how a number of strategic goals were fulfilled like arming the masses and key aspects of the way the workers and peasants alliance was sealed (in both cases: the role of the soldiers in a war-time standing army in decomposition, after being defeated).

+ the special place of the soldiers' Soviets.

+ the reactions of the European powers and the central issues of the conditions for peace; the type of diplomatic space of which the revolution could avail itself; etc.

= Conclusion: can we then speak of a Russian "model" of the revolution or can we "only" look for lessons?

* *There are very important lessons:*

+ Those
we looked at here (dialectic of history in a backward country and the process of permanent revolution, dialectic of politics and the formation of Leninism, economy

and politics in the proletarian revolution, etc.).

+ Others which can also be looked at (forms of organizations of the Russian revolution like Soviets, Red Guards, factory committees, peasant movements, etc.), national question, etc.

+ More lessons on the agrarian question (see below).

= There are lessons and they are essential

* *But is there a "model" (= a blueprint to be applied elsewhere) when the situation was so "original" (Lenin) and the World War framework so important? Can the **real** path of the Russian revolution be separated from this war context? I do not think so. Think of it. We shall come back on this question the third week of this cycle.*

B/ Lenin and the agrarian question.

= 1. The paradoxical outcome of the Bolsheviks' rural policies.

* On one hand: a big success prepared by decades of political attention given to the rural question: the capacity to understand the dynamic of agrarian struggles in 1917 and the way to consolidate the workers and peasants alliance in the framework of the immediate struggle for power.

This was not obvious at all: the 1917 Bolshevik policy toward the peasantry ("stealing the program of the SR") has been one of the questions subject to most attack by other Marxists: see below Rosa's polemic.

* On the other hand; a big failure. The Bolsheviks had not been able to build a solid organization in the rural areas before 1917. Up to then the SR kept their unique position as against other currents. And even after (1918), the Bolshevik largely failed to root deeply.

= We shall try to look for an explanation of this ambivalent result. But this is just a first attempt to do so. Still quite superficial. Nevertheless, it is very important to try answer this problem: it is surely rich in lessons...

= 2, Strong points in Lenin's traditional approach:

* a. The importance given to this question (Remember: already in 1902: To the Rural Poor). The political practitioner's point of view.

* b. Very significant elements of analysis still useful today:

+ The dual implications of the development of capitalist relations/market economy: modernization and increasing social contradictions (impoverishment of broad layers).

+ The existence of a **dual combined process** of expansion of capitalist relations and of subordination (so crystallization) of pre-capitalist forms.

+ The **dominance** of the capitalist mode of production is not measured only

through the extension of wage labor.

+ The **complexity** and **concrete character** (specific combinations) of the socio-economic structures, the importance of transitory forms of socio-economic relations. So, the complexity of the action program. So: the need to differentiate the analysis of the dominant mode of production in the country and the concrete set of social relations in a given locality.

* c. A **political continuity**: the peasant will decide through **their** struggles. The centrality of the call for **self-organization**. This is the element of continuity when Lenin proposes that the Bolsheviks take the SR program in 1917. So: the role of experience in **convincing**. (a condemnation of future Stalin practices !). Here too: continuity: in 1917, the central theme of Lenin: to convince, to organize, to gain majorities for the objective possibility of the struggle for power to become an effective clinical reality.

* d. The **dialectical, concrete and political** approach of the tasks:

+ **combination** of social and political slogans and the place of the political ones (the antifeudal tasks and the struggle against juridical inequality) (note: "specifically Russian"). The people's militia.

+ Succession and combination of tasks against feudalism (all the peasantry) and against the rich peasants (specific organization of the poor peasants, of the rural proletariat). (**one process** of "uninterrupted" revolution).

= 3. *Some notes about Trotsky's writings.*

* There are more similarities between Trotsky's and Lenin's approach than usually noticed, if we look at the **fundamental** works of Trotsky at that time (*1905* and *Results and Prospects*).

+ The centrality of the agrarian issue: "The agrarian question has become the axis of Russia's political life". "It is an aid to the revolutionary party and at the same time its greatest challenges".

+ The demands: land reform/expropriation of the nobility, liquidation of Tsarism/ democracy.

+ The theme of the "American type farming".

+ The succession of tasks: "The revolutionary liquidation of the autocracy and feudalism must precede the solution which is to come".

+ For the of integration representatives of the peasants and petty-bourgeoisie in the future workers' government: "one may of course describe such a government as the dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry or even a coalition government of the working class and petty-bourgeoisie but the question nevertheless remains: who is to wield hegemony in the government itself, and through it in the country?".

*- Take note also of:

- + An important analysis of regional differences in agrarian structure.
- + An analysis of the obstacle to modernization in the use of super-exploited labor force.
- The theory (permanent revolution) of Trotsky gives. Even at that time, a central place to the agrarian question. As a politician, Trotsky devotes much less attention than Lenin to this question... as to many others because of his "social-revolutionary fatalism".

= 4. Working hypothesis concerning the limits of Lenin's approach of the agrarian question

= Introduction remark: two symptoms, the failure to build an effective organizational network and to challenge SR hegemony + the basically unilateral negative approach to the Mir (the village commune).

* On the Mir:

- + Some flexibility.
- + But a general line against it.
- Two possible explanations: a consequence of Lenin's pre-1914 "economist limitation" + a consequence of traditional (Marxist conviction that the peasantry is quickly disintegrating.

= a. *The "economist limitation". the future of the agrarian structure and the 1917 turn.*

* The general approach of the future of the agrarian structure is, before 1914, limited by the conviction that, on the economic field, the development of capitalism is unavoidable. So: the nationalization of the land as the ultimate capitalist demand.

* If such is the case, then the Mir is condemned and has no future (see also Marx on that).

* In 1917, Lenin explicitly changed his position on the meaning of the nationalization of the land, because of the new prospects for the revolution. See: the "post-face" he wrote in September 1917 to the re-publication of the RSDLP'S agrarian program. Nationalization became a transitory demand. This is one of the questions on which the reorientations of Lenin is expressed very clearly.

= b. *The vision of a quick disintegration of the peasantry.*

* A classical Marxist approach: the peasantry as a "half-class", internally stratified and condemned to disintegrate into rural bourgeoisie and rural proletariat.

+ See: "De-peasantizing" process, splitting at an enormous speed" (it was very probably an over-inflated assessment, off the mark).

+ See: a necessary correction about the remnants of feudalism.

* **Consequences:** With the peasantry to demolish the pre-capitalist order, against it to build the future society (either capitalist or socialists): insofar as the future is concerned, the peasantry is seen as a **reactionary class**.

= So: a difference of principle. To support the rural proletarian forces **as a class**. To support the peasantry on **two conditions** (against the feudal past and insofar as it does not hinder the free development of class struggle).

= Therefore: the evolution of the alliance policy. From a global alliance with the whole peasantry **combined with** a special bloc with the rural poors to an alliance with the rural poors against the rich peasants. The vision of a **very quick** evolution of the class struggle in the countryside after victory: the "middle peasants" disappear because of economic development and class bipolarization.. One of the two conditions to consolidate the revolutionary power (with the European revolution).

= If we compare these theses with the course followed by revolutions since then, we can very briefly stress the following points:

+ The question of the **internal stratification** of the peasantry has indeed often been a key feature of the socio-economic and political developments in the countryside. This is especially true, for example, in a country like China which was never feudal as Russia (no tight against the juridical inequality stemming from serfdom) but was in many regions characterized by early antagonisms between poor and rich peasants.

+ It is not always so. There are countries where this internal stratification does not develop (for example when land is available: a number of African countries) or is hindered (for example when big capitalist companies control production through contracts with small holders).

+ Where the peasantry was a massive force, it did not disintegrate because of economic and socio-political pressures. The question of the "middle peasant" was not solved for ever through a quick expansion of class struggles in the countryside (even in Russia: the 1918 policy failed).

It is one of the key reason for which cooperatives became so central, as against state farms. At the same time, a much more lasting alliance with the peasantry than foreseen proved possible: it is one of the reason why new revolutionary regimes could survive in unfavorable environments.

= **Conclusion:**

+ As a working hypothesis, we can say that one of the main errors of Lenin, before 1914, was of- a **leftist** character: underestimation of the importance of the rural commune, of the specific village culture; overestimation of the speed of development of the class struggle inside the countryside and simplification of its dynamic.

5. Lenin's political superiority in 1917.

Study Rosa Luxemburg's critique of the 1917 land policy of the Bolsheviks.

+ It looks "programmatically" and logically correct.

+ It is politically totally abstract: if you suppress the struggle for land, you no longer have this massive rural upsurge, so decisive for the victory of the revolution. Or else, the peasants turn against proletarian power.

= The political superiority of Lenin at that time, as against formalist Marxist arguments, reflects the long-term superiority of his understanding of the **dialectics of politics** in the proletarian revolution, as well as the dialectics of the struggle to demolish the old order and to rebuild a new order. These two points are essential to understand the permanent revolution. It confirms how much we have to learn from Lenin himself concerning this process. Relate the agrarian dispute with the one on the national question (against Bukharin, especially). It reflects also the new clarity of his general perspectives.

= Conclusion

+ The dangers of a formalistic approach of the revolutionary processes and tasks. The superiority of a dialectical and political approach.

- A **continuity** in Lenin **and** a **process of correction/reevaluation**:

+ A **first**

correction was introduced by Lenin in 1917 as a result of his overall reevaluations (the agrarian program in a transitory dynamic which opens the possibility of another approach of the village communal traditions).

+ But it still took years for Lenin to introduce a second correction to its perspectives: see on this his last writings on **cooperation** (which opened another approach on the issue of peasant family farming: how to gain them consistently in the transition).

+ It is clear that much remains to be studied on this issue. But it is a **very important one** to understand the class correlation of forces allowing the existence of processes of permanent revolution in such countries. and to precise the tasks of the proletarian party toward the agrarian question, so central in these revolutions.

GENERAL CONCLUSION

= To draw lessons from the Russian revolution and read Lenin (as well as Trotsky and others) in a useful way, it is very important to understand the **process of formation** of Russian Marxism, of Leninism, and of each of the key figures of the Russian Marxist movement. Much more has to be said on this than what is presented here.

= 1905, 1914 and 1917 were **turning points** in the formation of Leninism and in the evolution of key currents and figures of the Russian Marxist movement. We can say that in 1914- 1917, "Leninism" (this term was not used in Lenin's times!) really crystallized. But the evolution of Lenin's thought, and of the Bolshevik party's line, is of course not finished. The experience of the transition (under very specific conditions) and of subsequent international class struggles will have a very

important impact in the later evolution of Russian Marxism. But this is another history.

= The conception of a **social revolutionary convergence** has many implications for the tasks and responsibilities of a proletarian party. It is key to understanding fully the politics of strategic alliances (social bloc + distinctive dynamism of each layer involved in the alliance + class character of the leadership + mechanism of proletarian hegemony) in a process of permanent revolution and how such a policy evolves, to incorporate the transition itself, and not just the initial struggle for power.

The lessons of the peasant question in the Russian revolution are relevant to shed light on the overall revolutionary process, and the interaction of the mobilization of various exploited and oppressed classes, layers, sectors, communities of society.

The contemporary women's movement begins, in Russia, during the world war. See, concerning the issue we are discussing now, the question raised by Alix Holt about the specific revolutionary dynamism of women's struggles in the transition, their potential dynamic effect on the overall revolutionary process of transformation of society (Alix Holt, "Les bolcheviques et l'oppression des femmes", in *Femmes et mouvement ouvrier*, Paris: La Brèche, 1979).

The goal is to **strengthen** the mass character (base) of the revolution and to maximize the revolutionary potential of people's struggles, both before and after the seizure of state power. In such a framework, the **leading capacity of the proletariat** should not be assimilated to simplistic hierarchies and relations of subordination (peasants' demands and specific feminist demands, for example are not "secondary").

This issue is of course very relevant for contemporary Third World revolutionary struggles, due to the (potential) role played by women's struggles and the key role played in many of these social formations by a combination of layers: urban working class, urban poor, rural workers, peasants, lower strata of the "middle classes" and elements of the intelligentsia.

= It can be very fruitful to come back again and again on the study of the formation of Russian Marxism and the lessons of the Russian revolution. There is still a lot to be (re)discovered! But this can only be a collective tasks...

APPENDIX: from Teodor Shanin

Two excerpts from: Teodor Shanin, *The Roots of Otherness, Russia's Turn of the Century. Volume 2: Russia, 1905-1907: Revolutions as a Moment of Truth*, McMillan, 1986.

On Lenin's evolution:

Table 6.1 (p. 281)

The historical Lenin: a taxonomy

Period	Stage	Dates
(i) <i>The young Lenin</i>	(A) The deferential Lenin	1895-1901
	(B) The Jacobin Lenin	1902-1905
(ii) <i>The drive for power</i>	(A) The "peasantophile" revolutionary Lenin	1905- 1907
	(B1) The parties' decline and the proletarian hope	1909-1911
	(B2)	1912-1914
	(C) The internationalist Lenin	1914-1917
	(D) Lenin's power drive	1917 March-October
(iii) <i>The state power</i>	(A) The Republic of Soviets	1917-1918
	(B) The civil war	1918-1920
	(C) The beginning of construction of a new regime	1921-1922
	Lenin's last struggle	1922-1923

The political context of each of these stages differed as did Lenin's response, but we should guard against relating these simplistically, as cause and effect in an unproblematic model of rationality. A choice between alternatives and a set of contradictions were involved in each case and the results stamped by a particular personality which was in turn shaped by their impact - a dialectical loop. In his immediate goals, the targets of his attack and the audience at which he directed his effort, Lenin's political stance changed sharply as he moved from one stage to another. Some of those changes he declared, others can be spotted if we watch Lenin's change of emphasis in the choice of the political enemies. Parallel and partly related to this were his changes of tactics and style of leadership. At a different and 'deeper' level lay the issue of Lenin's *Weltanschauung*, the basic theoretical models through which he perceived term strategies of socialist revolution and transformation he adopted. With regard to these, there were some profound consistencies throughout his life while the transformation was slower, responding to the three 'periods' rather than to the 'stages' of the taxonomy suggested.

p. 305:

If 1900- 1903 and again 1908- 1914 were the times when both Lenin's confidence and inter-party experience grew, making his authority tower even over the most senior and effective of his political partners, 1917- 1920 was a lesson of war and 1921 - 1923 was a lesson in state formation. The revolution of 1905- 1907 was the time when Lenin learned during his first direct struggle for revolutionary power about peasant rebellion, about nationalism, about mass movements and about

political experience (and how to be taciturn about doing so).

On Women and the 1905-1907 Revolution

Within the hierarchical and repressive Russian society women appeared still as the lower and still more oppressed part of each social category.

Russia's first book of manners, the seventeenth century *Domostroi*, made wife-beating a necessity and a virtue. Women were usually expected to

display the nobility's self-discipline without its powers merchants' servility without their property- hold, and peasants' labour without the charge of a farm and the right to voice a view at the communal assembly. Informal influences and arrangements amended up to a point those handicaps, but the actual inequality of the Russian women was severe. The 1905- 1907 revolution stirred up some of the resulting tension. A Russian equivalent of the "suffragettes" developed in the "professionally" circles and their organization joined the Union of Unions. It disintegrated within a short time. Peasant women attempted to organize in some villages, as mentioned, but that was seldom and did not survive for long. Mostly, the social mechanisms of gender control held intact and autonomous female action seldom appeared. Most of the women who participated in political struggle did so beside their men and led by their leaders. We mentioned the persistent reports of the peasant women's caution in the face of the authorities - a conservatism of the Oppressed, rooted in realistic pessimism about the fate of anti-government defiance as much as in lack of access to broader social visions, abstract ideas or simple literacy. Among the urban wage-workers, women were mostly engaged in personal services which were never unionized, while the metal industry and railways which were central to the political defiance of those days, had no women at all.

The 1905 reforms gave nothing in particular to Russian women; they did not receive the right to vote, and the inheritance and divorce laws started intact keeping them disenfranchised. Russia's political parties, since the 1870s, had a number of illustrious female members and leaders. But no long-term organizations of modes of action struggling for particular feminist causes were established in 1905- 1907, with significant results for the goals, nature and social composition of the 1917-1921 political organizations. The place of a social underdog does not necessarily mean being a social rebel or even dreaming the dream of social justice. Nor does it necessarily mean drawing meaningful political lessons from a manifestly revolutionary situation. No specific female "lesson" was drawn from the 1905-1907 revolution, at least, not explicitly.

P.S.

* The Working Papers of the IIRE are designed to announce works in progress and circulate early drafts and materials, an important stage in preparing them for possible later publication - whether as a Notebook for Study and Research, one or several articles in a magazine, a book etc. They present in particular reworked transcripts of oral educational reports.

The circulation of the WPIIRE is deliberately limited and may vary depending on the topic at hand. Their main purpose is to help the author by stimulating comments, suggestions and criticisms. These may concern the content as well as the form, the sources as well as the analysis. We hope the WPIIRE will enhance international exchanges and contribute to a better collectivization of current theoretical, historical and political thinking.

The studies presented in this format generally retain an unfinished character. They are circulated to insure some exchange prior to completion and possible publication. It is therefore requested that they not be quoted or referred to in public without the formal authorization of the author.

Footnotes

[1] It was never done.

[2] Note for readers of *Working Paper 2* : the content of this third report, as far as Lenin's evolution is concerned, is included in the second outline. There was also an outline on the general issue of the state in revolutionary times which is not included here.

[3] R.M. means "Reading Materials", selections of documents and writings distributed to the participants in the school.