

ROBERT GOLDSTON

THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

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Robert Goldston

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The Russian Revolution

saints and prophets in the West. To recognize this tremendous religious zeal, derived from the history of the rise of socialism, is the first step toward wisdom in dealing with those who inherited Marx' work.

CHAPTER TWO

1905: Dress Rehearsal

WHEN, IN THE SPRING OF 1896, Nicholas II was crowned Czar of All the Russias, there was an air of eager expectancy on the part of the Russian people. They hoped the new reign might mark the end of the dreadful tyranny of Alexander III. Nicholas' appearance, so different from that of his father, seemed to indicate a more liberal nature. He was young, well built if slender, handsome—and he sported the same kind of carefully cropped Van Dyke beard as his cousin who later became George V of England. His interests in life

were of the simplest kind: hunting, fishing, riding, his family—and autocracy. For if he had learned the Spartan virtues of an all-but-military education from his father, he had also been deeply indoctrinated with the divine right of kings. And from his father he had inherited an absolute state—complete with prisons, secret police, and exile areas—within which he was almost literally the father of his people, looked upon as almost divine. Russia was his private estate, and he was determined to keep it just the way he found it. But where Alexander III had been blessed with a huge frame, an iron will, a commanding appearance, and a savage cunning to maintain this position, his son Nicholas inherited none of these attributes. Rasputin once observed that the Czar “lacked insides”—and, indeed, it soon appeared that his habitual sad shyness was that of a man whose emotions had long since been frozen away into some remote corner of his being. Perhaps this was due to the violence with which his youth was surrounded. He had been present at the deathbed of his assassinated grandfather, Alexander II, and had never been allowed to forget that terrorists might strike again at any moment. For example, in 1887 a student’s plot to murder Alexander III was uncovered. It came to nothing, but one of the ringleaders (who were hanged) was a student named Alexander Ulyanov. His death and his cause, which frightened Nicholas, inspired Ulyanov’s younger brother Vladimir to revolutionary activity. This Vladimir Ulyanov was later to adopt the name Lenin.

Nicholas II was a dedicated diarist. Hardly a day went by on which he did not confide his thoughts to his diary. Yet over years filled with change, bloodshed, and disaster its pages record nothing more than a spiritual wilderness: “Walked long and killed two crows. Drank tea by daylight” was typical. While the revolu-

tionary events of 1905 were shaking the empire, we find: “April 14. Took a walk in a thin shirt and took up paddling again. Had tea in the balcony. Stana dined and took a ride with us. Read.” On the occasion of the dismissal of the Duma (the Russian parliament), when all the ruling classes were shaking with fright, Nicholas recorded: “July 7. Friday. Very busy morning. Half an hour late to breakfast with the officers. . . . A storm came up and it was very muggy. We walked together. Received Goremykin. Signed a decree dissolving the Duma! Dined with Olga and Petia. Read all evening.”

As Trotsky observed, “An exclamation point coming after the dissolution of the Duma is the highest expression of his emotions.” Count Sergei Witte, the hardheaded and able advisor of Nicholas’ early years, wrote: “I wish it therefore it must be—that motto appeared in all the activities of this weak ruler, who only through weakness did all the things which characterized his reign—a wholesale shedding of more or less innocent blood, for the most part without aim.” Nicholas himself, perhaps dimly aware of his shortcomings, tended to ascribe them to ill-fortune. “Whatever I try,” he once wrote, “nothing succeeds. I am out of luck.”

But these observations are not entirely fair. Nicholas was moved by at least one deep emotion—love for his wife, the Czarina Alix. He had married her in 1894 after a courtship lasting five years. Although the match was in part arranged by the German Kaiser Wilhelm (Alix was of German birth) and by Alix’ grandmother, Queen Victoria of England, there is no doubt the young couple were deeply in love. “Wonderful, unforgettable day in my life,” Nicholas confided to his diary on April 20, 1894, “the day of my engagement to my darling, adorable Alix.” After their marriage Alix herself wrote into her husband’s diary: “Never did I believe there could be such utter happiness in this

world, such a feeling of unity between two mortal human beings. I love you—those three words have my life in them.”

Alix herself was by no means weak. A convert to the Russian Orthodox Church, she displayed a superstitious fanaticism which seems almost medieval. The restrictions and obligations of royal life bored and frightened the young Czarina. She would have nothing to do with receptions, parades, public appearances. Nor did she take any pains to hide the fact that she despised the officers and aristocrats who cluttered the imperial court. This gave rise to a widespread belief that she was in fact anti-Russian. Then, to further complicate matters, by Russian law only a male child could inherit the throne. But over the years Alix gave birth only to girls—four of them. Being naturally suspicious, the Czarina sought advice of quacks and mystics. Soon the royal palace at Tsarskoe Selo outside Saint Petersburg was crawling with astrologers, spiritualists, and other fakers. And when finally Alix did give birth to a son (Alexis, born in August 1904), it appeared that he suffered from hemophilia, a condition, usually hereditary and common to European royalty, which is characterized by a tendency to profuse and uncontrollable hemorrhaging from even the slightest wounds. Doctors predicted that Alexis would not live past his eighteenth birthday. This in turn drove the Czarina to ever more desperate reliance on “holy” men—on anyone who seemed to promise some sort of cure for her child.

The young couple's reign began with a disaster. A traditional part of the coronation ceremonies in Moscow was the giving out of presents to the people on Khodinka Field. For this ceremony a huge mob had gathered. Before them, across the field, the presents (rubles, handkerchiefs, gewgaws) were displayed on

stands. A whisper suddenly began to go through the crowd—there were not enough presents! The people made a frantic rush for the stands, and hundreds of women and children were trampled to death.

Another aspect of Nicholas' character soon showed itself—his deep-rooted hatred and suspicion of anyone (and there were many) more intelligent or more gifted than himself. “Nicholas was not only unstable, but treacherous,” Trotsky wrote. “The Czar reserved his special caresses for just those officials whom he decided to dismiss. . . . That was a kind of revenge on the Czar's part for his own nonentity.” And it was certainly true that, one after another, Nicholas' ablest ministers were dismissed until he was surrounded by men even weaker than himself. His attitude, which never changed, was perhaps best summed up in a declaration he issued when the town of Tver petitioned him for a few feeble “rights.” “I shall maintain the principle of autocracy just as firmly and unflinchingly as it was preserved by my unforgettable dead father,” the Czar stated.

In spite of the Czar's decrees and declarations, Russia, by the beginning of the twentieth century, was overripe for revolution. The visitor to Saint Petersburg in those years might easily have missed the deep agony of Russia's peasant and worker masses, hidden as it was behind a facade of imperial grandeur. The great palaces of the capitol, the broad boulevards, the richly dressed crowds of businessmen and aristocrats whose carriages crowded the Nevski Prospect (Saint Petersburg's Fifth Avenue), the steady booming of the midday guns in the Fortress of Peter and Paul across the river Neva from the Winter Palace—all this seemed to bespeak a permanence, an eternity of czarism. Of course beyond the Nevski Prospect sprawled vast and dreadful workers' suburbs, and the Peter and Paul for-

tress was crowded with political prisoners—but so things had been from time immemorial. The smoke rising from the huge new factories on the Vyborg side of the Neva, the smart crowds who attended the ballet and the opera, the hundreds of thousands of rubles which changed hands daily on the Saint Petersburg stock exchange—was this not evidence of solid prosperity?

But behind this facade lay some grim and terrible realities. The liberated serfs—about 98 percent of the population of Russia—were sinking into deeper misery. Free now from the feudal ties which had bound them to the land, they found themselves helpless victims of bankers and speculators who bought the land and then drove the peasants from it. On their own communal lands they toiled as harshly and hopelessly as ever they had on the feudal estates. By the thousand they were constantly fleeing to the already miserably over-crowded working-class quarters of the cities. But there they found themselves just as helpless and just as brutally victimized. Wages were pitifully low, prices high, hours long—an eleven-hour workday was not unusual. Unions were, of course, illegal, and all protest was savagely smashed.

Industrialization in Russia, largely financed and owned by English, French, German, and other foreign capital, came late and gave rise to a few interesting paradoxes. Thus, while Russia lagged hopelessly behind the West in such matters as railroads, communications, farm equipment, and industrial education, her factories, being new, were huge complexes. While only 17 percent of American labor worked in factories employing more than a thousand workers, nearly 50 percent of the Russian working class found themselves in such factories. This meant a heavy concentration—and the possibility of a quick mobilization of working-class

strength. The fact that such a large part of Russian industry was foreign-owned, combined with widespread illiteracy, meant that those layers of management which existed between owners and workers in other countries were largely absent in Russia. Industrialization did not give rise to a large middle class in Russia; instead, the largest capitalists acted as agents of financiers and owners in other countries and exploited their own people and natural resources for foreigners. Besides that, much of Russian industry was state-owned. This meant that the government bureaucracy which managed this segment of Russian industry grew ever more powerful. Nor had the working class itself risen gradually over the ages, working out its reforms as it went. It had sprung suddenly and fresh from a traditionally revolutionary countryside. Illiterate, terribly oppressed, with no middle class to lead it, the Russian working class was open to the most advanced revolutionary ideas.

But if Russia was, to a certain extent, the victim of Western financial imperialism, she practiced an imperialism of her own at the expense of the semicivilized peoples of central and eastern Asia. Rebuffed in the Crimea from expansionist policies in the West, the czars dreamed of continental domination in the East. Taking part in the great Western "grab" on the prospective Chinese Empire, Russia soon secured virtual dominion over Manchuria and sought to extend its powers to Korea as well. At the same time its agents never tired of playing what Kipling called their "great game" of subversion along the borders of British-held India.

Nicholas, unlike his father, seemed to have a great attraction to the idea of military conquest. He loved to dress up and play soldier. And with his deeply religious Czarina, he believed that his army was really bringing Christian civilization to the much-despised Asiatic heathens. In these expansionist dreams he was

urged on by his elder cousin, Kaiser Wilhelm of Germany, who hoped to keep Russian power entangled in Asiatic adventures. But as Russian designs on Korea became more and more obvious, the Japanese grew alarmed. They had their own ambitions in this area and they felt genuinely threatened by the Russian menace. As negotiations dragged on and on, the Japanese felt they could wait no longer. Suddenly, on February 8, 1904, without a declaration of war, Admiral Heihachiro Togo's warships raided the great Russian naval base at Port Arthur, dealing the Czar's Far-Eastern fleet a mortal blow within a few hours. Japanese infantry was soon poured into Korea and Manchuria, and the Russo-Japanese War was on.

On the Russian side the war was marked by incredible inefficiency and outright scandal. The Russian commander at Port Arthur, which was considered an impregnable fortress, surrendered when he still had food and ammunition for four months. The single-track Trans-Siberian Railroad (not yet completed) proved inadequate to transfer armies to the Far East. The people and the soldiers and sailors of Russia had no interest whatsoever in this war, which was understood to be simply another of the land-grabs of the Czar. Mutiny and cowardice were everywhere.

Admiral Togo, whose place in the history of naval warfare is comparable to that of Nelson, Farragut, and Tirpitz, soon smashed up the remains of the Russian Pacific fleet and imposed a blockade of the Korean-Manchurian coast. To break this blockade, destroy the new and much smaller Japanese fleet, and gain a much-needed victory Nicholas and his war advisors determined on the simpleminded gamble of sending Russia's Baltic fleet eighteen thousand miles around the world to meet Togo in the East. Powerful but hopelessly outdated ships, staffed with green crews and fa-

talistic officers, were stuffed with religious icons and sent on what everybody recognized as a suicide mission in a spirit of blind gambler's folly. After a seven-month voyage marked by humiliations (the fleet almost brought on a war with England by firing on English fishing boats off the Dogger Banks in blind panic), the Russian ships reached their rendezvous with Togo in the straits of Tsushima between Korea and Japan. It took the Japanese only a day and a half to sink or capture eleven battleships, two coast-defense battleships, nine cruisers, and eleven lesser vessels. Thousands of Russian sailors perished in the most complete naval disaster in history, and even Nicholas had to admit the war was lost.

At the peace conference, which was held at Portsmouth, New Hampshire (in September 1905), under the patronage of President Theodore Roosevelt, the Russians obtained very lenient terms for their defeat. But the loss of influence in Korea and Manchuria, the explosion of the Czar's dream of conquest, were as nothing compared to the undermining of czarist authority back home. The Russo-Japanese War had created the conditions for revolution in Russia itself.

The Russian workers, whose daily life had been made even more intolerable by wartime speedups, food shortages, and prices, whose friends and brothers had perished in scandalously mismanaged battles, began a series of strikes in Saint Petersburg and Moscow at the war's end. They were led in protest by a Russian Orthodox priest named Father Georgi Gapon. Deeply religious, Father Gapon used to lecture the workers on such vices as smoking and drinking, and urge them to church while helping them organize protests for such reforms as the eight-hour day. So ineffectual had the police considered Father Gapon's revolutionary leadership in the past that they actually

supported him as a sort of safety valve for the workers' anger. But in 1905 they miscalculated.

In January of that year the Saint Petersburg metal workers went on strike for four days. When this showed no effect, Father Gapon wrote a letter to the Czar: "Sire! Do not believe the Ministers. They are cheating Thee in regard to the real state of affairs. The people believe in Thee. They have made up their minds to gather at the Winter Palace tomorrow at 2 P.M. to lay their needs before Thee. . . . Do not fear anything. Stand tomorrow before the people and accept our humblest petition. I, the representative of the workmen, and my comrades, guarantee the inviolability of Thy person. Gapon."

Nicholas' response to this letter was to leave Saint Petersburg at once with his family for the palace at Tsarskoe Selo. Behind him as a reception committee he left battalions of heavily armed police—and the inevitable troops of mounted Cossacks. The Cossacks, fierce fighters and superb horsemen, had been the last line of defense for the czars of Russia for many centuries. They were fugitive serfs originally who, during the sixteenth century, had organized into fighting bands in the region of the Ukraine. The very word *cossack* is probably derived from the Turkish *quzzak* "adventurer." Recognized by earlier czars as a potentially fine fighting force, the Cossacks had been granted all sorts of special privileges over the centuries, including local self-government. Traditionally each Cossack village was ruled by a democratically chosen council, and all Cossack land was held communally for the use of all. The Cossacks were required to enter military service at the age of eighteen and that service lasted twenty years. They provided their own horses, while the government supplied equipment. One of Alexander II's mistakes had been the granting of some of the Cossack

communal land to Cossack officers and leaders for their private ownership—thereby sowing among the ordinary Cossack troops a seed of discontent which was to bear fruit in 1917. By the time of Nicholas II, there were about four million Cossacks in Russia, scattered primarily along the southern and eastern frontiers, where their military prowess made them invaluable frontier guards. Feeling themselves a very special group in Russia, pampered by the czars for centuries, the Cossacks were dependably ready to defend the crown in any confrontation with the people. And a memorable confrontation now took place.

On January 22, 1905, two hundred thousand workers and their families, led by Father Gapon, made their way in dignified procession to the Winter Palace. They carried icons and pictures of the Czar and sang "God Save the Czar" as they trudged through the icy streets. In his hand Father Gapon carried their petition—it requested an eight-hour day, a minimum wage of one ruble (fifty cents) a day, no overtime, and the calling together of a constituent assembly to draft a constitution for Russia. He had intended to hand this petition to the Czar personally while his followers waited patiently in the snow outside the palace.

The officers of the palace called upon the crowds to disperse as soon as they came into view. But two hundred thousand people cannot disband quickly. Besides, they were grimly determined to reach the Czar, who, they thought, might still grant their requests. The police and Cossacks, in panic before this immense throng, suddenly opened fire. Shooting into the dense masses of men, women, and children from a distance of about fifteen yards, they kept firing until the snow was reddened with blood. Five hundred people were killed, untold thousands wounded among the screaming, helpless crowd. On what came to be called Bloody

Sunday, Nicholas II did more than all the underground revolutionaries to give his people a lesson in what autocracy meant. Nationwide revolution was now inevitable. From Finland, where he was in hiding from the police, Father Gapon wrote to the Czar: "The innocent blood of workers, their wives and children, lies forever between thee, oh soul-destroyer, and the Russian people. . . . Let all the blood that has to be shed hangman, fall upon thee and thy kindred!"

A veritable whirlwind of bloodshed and destruction was to follow Bloody Sunday. But it was not to be led by Father Gapon. For its leaders the Russian Revolution of 1905 turned to a new generation of revolutionaries—hardened realists who had been brought up in the awful school of czarist terror and who were dedicated to the ideas of Karl Marx.

The revolutionary movement in Russia, which had at one time centered on liberal reformist hopes (such as the Decembrist plot), had become increasingly more violent in response to the increasing violence of the czarist autocracy. The great anarchist leader Mikhail Bakunin had preached a philosophy of total destruction and had waged a losing battle with Marx for control of the international working-class movement. Marx himself, distrusting the wild and romantic faith in the lessness of the Russian leadership, had little faith in the revolutionary prospects. "I do not trust any Russian," he wrote to Engels. "As soon as a Russian worms his way in all hell breaks loose."

Through the years of oppression a wide gap had opened between the young intellectuals of the universities in Saint Petersburg and Moscow and the peasant and worker masses. Both groups were revolutionary but the young intelligentsia found it almost impossible to maintain meaningful connections with the illiterate masses. One group, calling themselves Narodniks, de-

termined on a program of revolution based on the peasants. They would provide the leadership and the peasants would follow in seizing the land and then establishing a sort of utopian society based on common ownership of the land. Another group of intellectuals placed their faith in the city workers, who, with proper leadership, were to lead the rest of the country in revolt—these young men gravitated to Marxian socialism. And if these two groups disagreed on many things, they were united in one—their hatred of czarism and all it stood for.

Marxism was brought to Russia by Georgi Plekhanov, the son of a well-to-do middle-class family in the province of Tambov. Exiled from Russia for his part in terrorist activities while still a youth, Plekhanov emigrated to Switzerland. There in 1883 (the year of Karl Marx' death) Plekhanov founded the Liberation of Labor party. Formed with the help of many Russian revolutionary exiles throughout Europe, this was the first Russian Marxist party. But where Marx had foreseen revolution arising only after prolonged industrialization, where he had proposed the necessity of a middle-class revolution of the French type before a workers' socialist revolution, Plekhanov held that from the peculiarities of Russian development, "In Russia, political freedom will be gained by the working class, or it will not exist at all." Thus, instead of waiting for the weak, almost nonexistent Russian middle class to lead them through the forms of democracy, the Russian workers would have to organize and lead their own revolution.

Plekhanov also taught that the old tactics of individual terrorism were hopeless. Rather than bombs the working class needed organization—the important thing was to organize a party of agitators to lead strikes and demonstrations. Slowly but surely Plekha-

nov's idea seeped back into Russia. His followers were to be found in many cities. In 1898 they met secretly in the city of Minsk, where they adopted the name *Social Democrats* for their party. During this time, their rivals, the Narodniks, adopted the name *Social Revolutionaries*. Plekhanov's people soon spread a network of revolutionary activity throughout Russia. They had their own newspaper called *Iskra* (the Spark) which, though printed abroad, was smuggled into Russia in thousands of copies. They also organized the distribution of illegal literature and a means of escape for refugee leaders. By 1903 the Social Democrats were strong enough to call an international conference in Brussels. There, beyond the reach of the Russian authorities (they hoped), they would adopt an official creed and program of action. But at this moment of his greatest triumph Plekhanov was destined to lose control of his party to a young agitator from the Russian provincial town of Simbirsk. This was Vladimir Ulyanov (who had already assumed his conspiratorial name of Lenin), the younger brother of that Ulyanov executed years before by Alexander III.

Vladimir Ulyanov was born on April 22, 1870, into an upper-middle-class family in a provincial district far from Moscow and farther from Saint Petersburg. His father, a very hard-working man, rose to become Inspector of Schools for the province around Simbirsk and was entitled to be addressed "Your Excellency." His mother, of Russo-German extraction, was a devout Lutheran, and her house in Simbirsk, which was soon crowded with three sons and three daughters, looked much more like an old New England house than a Russian provincial villa. The house was a happy one, and the children did very well at school. Alexander, the eldest boy, won many medals for scholarship, and Vladimir followed suit. In 1886, Alexander went to

the University at Saint Petersburg to study zoology, while Vladimir was completing his secondary education back in Simbirsk. Their father had died in that year, and Vladimir, in his elder brother's absence, was now head of the household. One day in March 1887 he was visited in his classroom by a teacher, who informed him that Alexander had been arrested in Saint Petersburg for taking part in a plot against the Czar's life. Vladimir is said to have replied, when faced by this stunning news: "That means, then, that Sasha couldn't have acted in any other way."

When his mother went to Saint Petersburg to attend her son's trial and plead for his life with the authorities there, none of the Ulyanovs' old friends or associates could be found to go with her. Soon it appeared that the family was stigmatized by Alexander's action—Vladimir learned young what guilt by association could mean. At his trial Alexander, who had taken only a minor part in the conspiracy, tried to take all the blame onto his own shoulders to protect his friends. One day in May, when Alexander's mother was still trying to win her son's life from official Saint Petersburg, she learned that he had been executed the night before. She returned to Simbirsk, where the family now lived in isolation, and carried on as if nothing had happened in order to spare the younger children. But it was already too late for Vladimir.

Alexander's cruel death hardened Vladimir. He was seventeen when he was graduated from the local academy with grades so high that the school was forced to give him the gold medal in spite of his notorious brother. But Vladimir found his further academic career blocked by the authorities, who suspected him of the same revolutionary thinking as his dead brother. Applications to universities in Saint Petersburg and Moscow were turned down abruptly. Finally Vladimir

mir's mother got him accepted at the University of Kazan, where he started to study law. But he was seized by the police and expelled from the university when he took part in a student demonstration. It was just after this event that Vladimir first read Karl Marx. It seemed to the young student the only serious approach to the problems which beset Russia and which had brought about the death of his brother. Soon he joined a Marxist study group of other students who met secretly in the city. His mother, however, fearing for her son's life, saw to it that he was removed from Kazan to a country estate. A few weeks later the Marxist group was arrested and given heavy sentences.

Vladimir on a country estate was not a success. He once explained to his wife: "My mother wanted me to go in for farming. But I saw that it wasn't working out: my relations with the peasants became abnormal." By this he meant that any master-underling relationship was abnormal. Yet the time he spent in the country proved invaluable to Vladimir as he studied peasant problems firsthand. He also read extensively during the long nights. He started to learn German, English, French, and Italian and devoured books on political economy—sometimes with the help of a dictionary. In May 1889 his mother finally obtained permission from the authorities to allow him to take his law degree as an outside student at one of the Saint Petersburg universities. Characteristically, he learned the four-year course in less than a year and a half and then passed first in his class.

But the old stigma was still attached to the Ulyanov family. Vladimir was forced to start his practice in the far-off provincial city of Samara. Here he spent as much time studying Marx as earning a living and here he first came across the writings of Georgi Plekhanov. When the terrible famine of 1891–1892 struck the

Samara area, Vladimir was already enough of a Marxist to welcome it as a factor in stirring up peasant revolt. He refused to join in efforts to help the starving, seeing in their misery simply more pressure on the hated government. His letters to Marxists throughout Russia had, by this time, brought him to the forefront of the revolutionary movement.

In 1895, Vladimir collapsed—the doctors diagnosed pneumonia. Partly to recuperate, but mainly to get into touch with the exiled leaders of the Social Democratic party, Vladimir journeyed to Switzerland. Plekhanov was much impressed by his intellect and drive but a little disturbed by the harshness of his manner. Nevertheless, Vladimir was accepted into the movement and when he returned to Russia in October 1895, he carried seditious literature in the false bottom of his suitcase. Within three months of his return the Czar's secret police arrested him. He endured his imprisonment stoically, devoting his time to study and thought. When, after fourteen months in the cells, he was exiled to Siberia for three years, he made no protest.

Siberian exile under czarism was a uniquely Russian form of punishment. There were few guards—the prisoners traveled by themselves to their destination, and they could move within certain restricted areas as free men. They could work, get married, set up a household—the prison walls were nothing more than the frozen wastes all around them. Under these circumstances it is not surprising that Siberia became an excellent training ground for revolutionaries. There they studied, corresponded, and schemed. Lenin (Vladimir had adopted this conspiratorial name some time before) found time to continue his studies, to hunt and fish, and to think. When a young girl named Krupskaya, whom he had met a few years before in Saint Petersburg, was exiled for revolutionary activity to Le-

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nin's district, they married and remained until the day of Lenin's death not only a devoted couple but also comrades in the revolutionary movement. For Siberian exile did little to lessen Lenin's activities. He maintained a secret but huge correspondence with the underground movement throughout Russia. His brilliant mind and his caustic wit had by now brought him into prominence and a position of leadership within the movement. When his exile came to an end in February 1900, he had already laid plans for the publication of *Iskra* and its secret distribution throughout Russia.

Reaching Switzerland again, Lenin was already recognized as the leader of the young guard of the Social Democratic movement. He joined forces with Plekhanov to edit *Iskra* and wrote a pamphlet entitled "What is to be done?" in which he proposed the idea of a small and exclusive leadership of dedicated revolutionaries rather than a broad, mass party.

The next few years were to be ones of poverty and rootless roaming for Lenin and Krupskaya. They lived in Brussels, Paris, Zurich, London—always poor, always carrying on the immense labor of organizing followers in distant Russia. When Plekhanov called for the first congress of the Social Democratic party in Brussels in 1903, Lenin was ready to challenge him for the leadership.

The question which divided this congress was whether the Social Democratic party would organize itself democratically or develop a dictatorship of the leaders of the central committee. Lenin, who was in favor of a dictatorship, threw himself into this debate with his usual vigor, and in the end his views prevailed by two votes. On this rather shaky evidence he claimed that his followers were in the majority (in Russian, *bol'sheviks*), while his opponents were in the minority (in Russian, *mensheviks*). In actuality, then as later it was

the Mensheviks who had a large majority within the party. Lenin's stage-managed victory at the congress soon collapsed. He lost control of *Iskra* and immediately set up a new newspaper called *Vperyed* (Forward) as a counterforce to the Mensheviks.

While the Czar was leading Russia into the shambles of defeat in the Japanese war, Lenin concentrated on his feud against the Mensheviks. But these inter-party squabbles were interrupted by dramatic news from Saint Petersburg—as the Japanese war was ending in defeat, strikes and riots swept Russia.

After writing his letter of denunciation to the Czar, Father Gapon had left Finland and made his way to Switzerland, where he urged the revolutionary leaders to act quickly and decisively. But, immersed in their feuds, they paid little attention to the priest—all except a young man named Lev Bronstein, who called himself Trotsky. Trotsky was a young disciple of Plekhanov and Lenin who had gone through the same bitter school of provincial life, prison, and Siberian exile. His views, while close to theirs, were slightly different. He was more superficially brilliant than Lenin and certainly wittier. He had taken his name from that of one of his Siberian guards in the same spirit of irony which was to illuminate his writings. But a certain arrogant egotism marred his personality. Although dedicated and brilliant, he lacked a certain seriousness, a certain moral weight as compared to Lenin. Edmund Wilson has summed up this difference by pointing out that Lenin identified himself with history while Trotsky identified history with himself.

In any event, 1905 was certainly Trotsky's year to shine. He immediately made his way to Saint Petersburg and plunged into the revolutionary movement there, organizing strikes, writing pamphlets, urging means of military defense on the workers.

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The terrible defeat of the Russian fleet at Tsushima had brought about a chain reaction in Russia itself. The sailors of the battleship *Potemkin* in the Black Sea mutinied and seized control of their ship. When the other ships of the fleet were ordered to fire upon her, the sailors refused to do so. And as the Czar's defeated armies straggled back to Saint Petersburg and Moscow they spread complete demoralization. Peasants rose to burn manor houses in the countryside while workers struck in the cities. Posters calling for action appeared on walls as if by magic. Into the streets poured vast and ugly crowds determined to win their rights from the autocracy. Saint Petersburg was gripped by one of the most effective general strikes in history. And now such practical matters as gunrunning and the manufacture of bombs began to assume importance. Rifles were smuggled in from America, where the revolution had much support. Mark Twain commented at the time: "If such a government cannot be overthrown otherwise than by dynamite, then thank God for dynamite."

While these events were taking place the Russian middle classes, who wished to win certain rights from the Czar but feared a complete victory of the masses, organized into a political party called the Constitutional Democrats—Cadets, for short. They demanded a parliamentary democracy along English lines, over which the Czar would rule as a constitutional monarch. They found a leader in Paul Milyukov, a well-known historian.

Thus the Czar faced three main parties of opposition: the Cadets, with their demand for democracy; the Social Democrats, with their movement toward worker-led socialism; and the Social Revolutionaries, the party of peasant socialism. To complicate matters, the Social Democrats were already split into Bolshevik and

Menshevik factions. And even for the fatalistic and autocratic Nicholas II, this opposition was too much.

Already Saint Petersburg was largely controlled by the striking workers. Under Trotsky's leadership they had set up soviets (the word means councils) of deputies in the factories and shops, which in turn sent delegates to the central Saint Petersburg Soviet. In Moscow and other cities soviets also appeared. Everywhere they disputed power with the Czar's government.

Nicholas II had no choice but to give way to this pressure. The life of his country was at a standstill, the troops unreliable, the fleet in open revolt. He issued a manifesto in which he promised Russia a constitution. Laws regarding the judicial system would also be modified, and certain land reforms were proposed. The Czar was to retain supreme control of the country, but the Duma was to have—for the first time in Russian history—certain legislative powers. These concessions, weak though they appeared, were enough to satisfy the middle-class Cadets. And when they withdrew their support from the general strike, it soon collapsed. Trotsky, as president of the Saint Petersburg Soviet, pressed for further concessions; by the device of having the workers start a run on the banks, he succeeded in winning a little more ground.

By now Lenin and Krupskaya and a few of their followers had hurried back to Russia from exile. But their arrival was too late, as was Trotsky's call for armed uprising. The people were weary of the struggle. Slowly but surely the Czar regained control of the army and navy. A new general strike, called by the Saint Petersburg Soviet, had little effect. Cossacks patrolled the streets, and Trotsky was arrested, as were other leaders. Lenin continued to lead the Moscow Soviet in rebellion for a few additional weeks—but the Army answered with artillery. Lenin and Krupskaya

escaped back into exile only a few steps ahead of the police.

By New Year's Day 1906 the revolutionary movement had collapsed throughout Russia. Trotsky was given a long sentence of Siberian exile. The Revolution of 1905 had run into the sands, and the Czar's throne seemed as secure as ever.

But the defeated revolutionaries learned much from 1905. First of all, they learned that they could not count on the Cadets in a pinch. Secondly, among the revolutionaries, the Menshevik faction decided that their brief attempt to seize governmental power proved that they were not capable of ruling just yet. Much better, they said, to first set up a constitutional government by the Cadets and then educate the masses before attempting to establish socialism. The Bolsheviks learned a much more practical and important lesson; they knew now that any attempt at armed rebellion would fail unless the army was first won to support it. By themselves the masses, even with good leadership, were not capable of winning control of the government.

Nicholas II learned almost nothing from 1905. His faith in autocracy remained unshaken, and he moved quickly to take back the meager concessions he had been forced to make. Had it not been shown that revolution must fail? Had it not been demonstrated that, in the final analysis, the Cossacks and the Guards Regiments could be counted upon to drown any serious workers' uprising in blood? After 1905 the Czar and his court and the nobility and the entire vast Russian bureaucracy sank speedily back into lethargy, into their dreams of endless power, endless privilege. The masses and the Czar had met face to face, and the

masses had been forced to grovel in the end. Trapped by history, the Russian ruling classes could not recognize in the events of 1905 the dress rehearsal for a much more terrible and decisive struggle ahead.