

**FROM OCTOBER
TO BREST LITOVSK**

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From October to Brest Litovsk by Leon Trotsky

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By LEON TROTZKY

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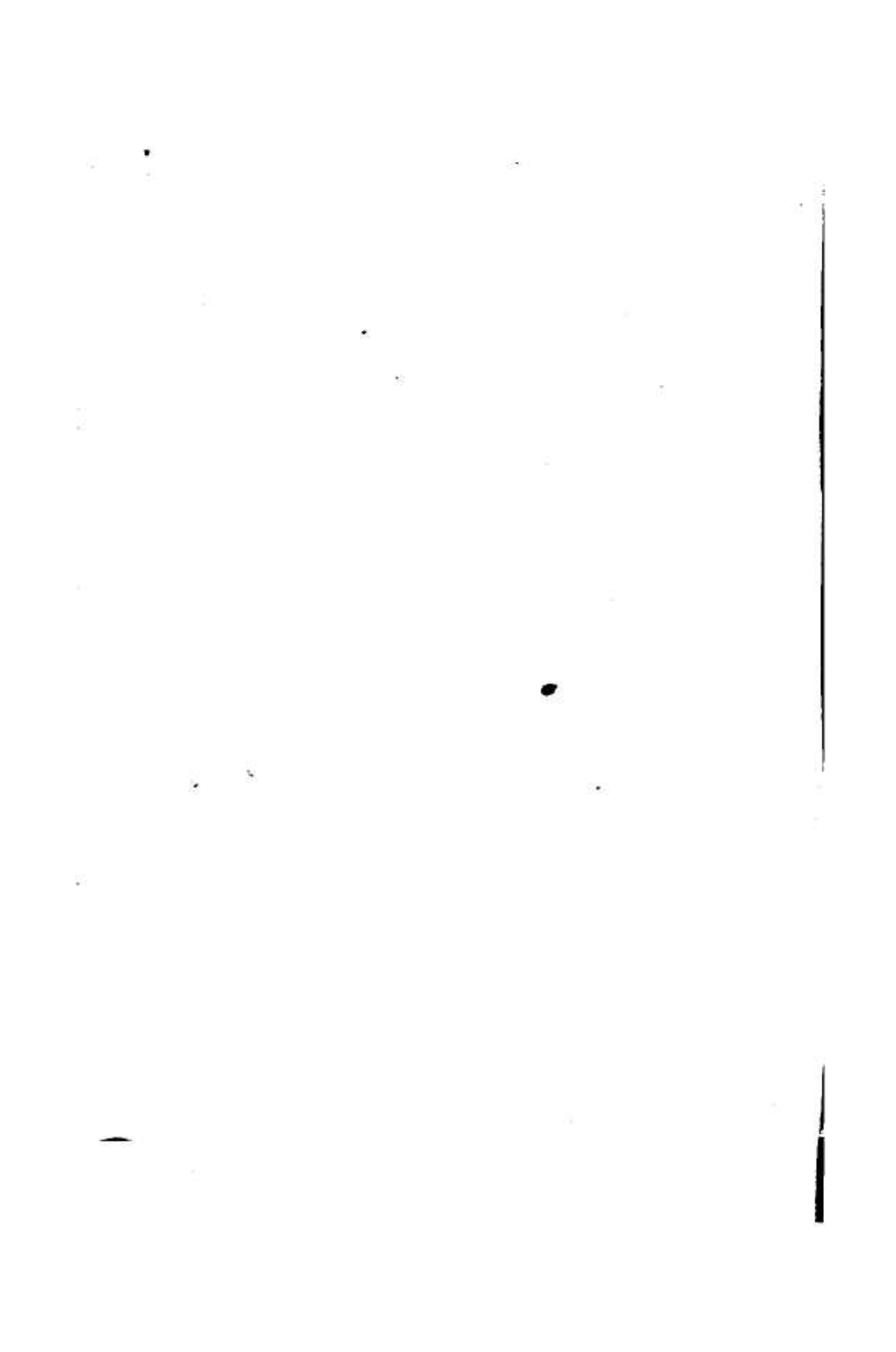
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TRANSLATOR'S NOTES:

1. In this book Trotzky (until near the end) uses the Russian Calendar in indicating dates, which, as the reader will recall, is 13 days behind the Gregorian Calendar, now introduced in Russia.

2. The abbreviation S. R. and S. R.'s is often used for "Social-Revolutionist(s)" or "Socialist-Revolutionaries."

3. "Maximalist" often appears instead of "bolshevik," and "minimalist" instead of "menshevik."



The Middle-Class Intellectuals in the Revolution

Events move so quickly at this time, that it is hard to set them down from memory even in chronological sequence. Neither newspapers nor documents are at our disposal. And yet the repeated interruptions in the Brest-Litovsk negotiations create a suspense which, under present circumstances, is no longer bearable. I shall endeavor, therefore, to recall the course and the landmarks of the October revolution, reserving the right to complete and correct this exposition subsequently in the light of documents.

What characterized our party almost from the very first period of the revolution, was the conviction that it would ultimately come into power through the logic of events. I do not refer to the theorists of the party, who, many years before the revolution—even before the revolution of 1905—as a result of their analysis of class relations in Russia, came to the conclusion that the triumphant development of the revolution must inevitably transfer the power to the proletariat, supported by the vast masses of the poorest peasants. The chief basis of this prognosis was the insignificance of the Russian bourgeois democracy and the concentrated character of Russian industrialism—which makes of the Russian proletariat a factor of tremendous social importance. The insignificance of bourgeois democracy is but the complement of the power and significance of the proletariat. It is true, the war has deceived many on this point, and, first of all, the leading groups of bourgeois democracy themselves. The war has assigned a decisive role in the events of the revolution to the army. The old army meant the peasantry. Had the revolution developed more normally—that is, under peaceful circumstances, as it had in 1912—the proletariat would always have held a dominant position, while the peasant masses would gradually have been taken in tow by the proletariat and drawn into the whirlpool of the revolution.

But the war produced an altogether different succession of events. The army welded the peasants together, not by a

political, but by a military tie. Before the peasant masses could be drawn together by revolutionary demands and ideas, they were already organized in regimental staffs, divisions and army corps. The representatives of petty bourgeois democracy, scattered through this army and playing a leading role in it, both in a military and in a conceptual way, were almost completely permeated with middle-class revolutionary tendencies. The deep social discontent in the masses became more acute and was bound to manifest itself, particularly because of the military shipwreck of Czarism. The proletariat, as represented in its advanced ranks, began, as soon as the revolution developed, to revive the 1905 tradition and called upon the masses of the people to organize in the form of representative bodies—soviets, consisting of deputies. The army was called upon to send its representatives to the revolutionary organizations before its political conscience caught up in any way with the rapid course of the revolution. Whom could the soldiers send as deputies? Eventually, those representatives of the intellectuals and semi-intellectuals who chanced to be among them and who possessed the least bit of knowledge of political affairs and could make this knowledge articulate. In this way, the petty bourgeois intellectuals were at once and of necessity raised to great prominence in the awakening army. Doctors, engineers, lawyers, journalists and volunteers, who under pre-bellum conditions led a rather retired life and made no claim to any importance, suddenly found themselves representative of whole corps and armies and felt that they were "leaders" of the revolution. The nebulousness of their political ideology fully corresponded with the formlessness of the revolutionary consciousness of the masses. These elements were extremely condescending toward us "Sectarians," for we expressed the social demands of the workers and the peasants most pointedly and uncompromisingly.

At the same time, the petty bourgeois democracy, with the arrogance of revolutionary upstarts, harbored the deepest mistrust of itself and of the very masses who had raised it to such unexpected heights. Calling themselves Socialists, and considering themselves such, the intellectuals were filled with an ill-disguised respect for the political power of the liberal bourgeoisie, towards their knowledge and methods. To

this was due the effort of the petty bourgeois leaders to secure, at any cost, a cooperation, union, or coalition with the liberal bourgeoisie. The programme of the Social-Revolutionists—created wholly out of nebulous humanitarian formulas, substituting sentimental generalizations and moralistic superstructures for a class-conscious attitude, proved to be the thing best adapted for a spiritual vestment of this type of leaders. Their efforts in one way or another to prop up their spiritual and political helplessness by the science and politics of the bourgeoisie which so overawed them, found its theoretical justification in the teachings of the Mensheviks, who explained that the present revolution was a bourgeois revolution, and therefore could not succeed without the participation of the bourgeoisie in the government. In this way, the natural bloc of Social-Revolutionists and Mensheviks was created, which gave simultaneous expression to the political lukewarmness of the middle-class intellectuals and its relation of vassal to imperialistic liberalism.

It was perfectly clear to us that the logic of the class struggle would, sooner or later, destroy this temporary combination and cast aside the leaders of the transition period. The hegemony of the petty bourgeois intellectuals meant, in reality, that the peasantry, which had suddenly been called, through the agency of the military machine, to an organized participation in political life, had, by mere weight of numbers, overshadowed the working class and temporarily dislodged it. More than this: To the extent that the middle-class leaders had suddenly been lifted to terrific heights by the mere bulk of the army, the proletariat itself, and its advanced minority, had been discounted, and could not but acquire a certain political respect for them and a desire to preserve a political bond with them; it might otherwise be in danger of losing contact with the peasantry. In the memories of the older generation of workingmen, the lesson of 1905 was firmly fixed; then, the proletariat was defeated just because the heavy peasant reserves did not arrive in time for the decisive battle. This is why in this first period of the revolution even the masses of workingmen proved so much more receptive to the political ideology of the Social-Revolutionists and the Mensheviks. All the more so, since the revolution had awakened the hitherto dormant and backward