

MUNICH, 24 October, 1967 (Communist Area Analysis Department:  
USSR - r.r.g.)

To comprehend Trotsky's past in the October Revolution, it should first be recalled that he had played a more prominent role than Lenin in the events of 1905, when Soviets were established (largely by the mensheviks) for a brief period in many Russian cities. While Lenin was editing bolshevik newspapers and steering the Petersburg Committee of the RSDRP,<sup>1</sup> Trotsky, at the age of 26, was in practice the leading social democrat of the rising. He had broken with Lenin in 1903, left the mensheviks in 1904, and had become one of Lenins' most witheringly sarcastic -- and effective -- critics. During the final few days of the Petersburg Soviet, Trotsky was its brilliant and courageous chairman.

In 1908 Trotsky was trying to unite the social democrats. He began to publish the underground newspaper, Pravda in Vienna, avoiding polemics and seeking common ground between the bolsheviks and the mensheviks. Pravda therefore came under constant fire from Lenin, who wished to have nothing to do with the mensheviks for fear of having to compromise. Trotsky, on the other hand, argued that if the bolsheviks were wrong to try to monopolize rights which belonged to the entire party, the mensheviks were equally wrong to spurn them. He and the illegal Pravda clamoured for a full-scale conference of the party, which finally met in Vienna in August 1912.

Trotsky was chairman, and Lenins' faction (represented by the bolshevik Central Committee in Prague) typically refused to attend. The conference ended with the formation of an Organization Committee, but in the next few years Lenins' Central Committee gradually gained the upper hand. Lenin had begun to publish his own (legal) version of Pravda in February 1912,

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1) The Russian initials of the All-Russian Social Democratic (Labour) Party.

hoping thereby to rebuild his organization in Russia and to split the mensheviks. The legal menshevik paper (Luch) never attained as large a circulation as Lenins' version of Pravda.

In 1914-17 Trotsky was in Paris, arguing rigorously in Nashe Slovo for a republican United States of Europe (sixty years too soon?). He was still trying to unite all the social democrats, but in order to find at least some common ground with the bolsheviks, he announced that he was ready to break with those mensheviks who supported the war. By 1915, Lenin was planning for "revolution in one country", whereas Trotsky was dreaming of a chain of coordinated revolutions of the whole European proletariat. Lenin was also advocating Russian defeat rather than continuation of the war, and by the end of 1915 this simple and unpatriotic slogan was attracting many of the most radical elements among the workers. Lenin arrived in Petrograd on 16th April 1917, and by November his Central Committee was in touch with 163 all-bolshevik organizations, which as early as May had had 30,000 members in Moscow alone.

Trotsky returned to Petrograd in May 1917, a month later than Lenin. He then revived a small group known as the Mezhraiontsy which originally had been half-way between the bolsheviks and the mensheviks, and he led it into a merger with the bolsheviks in August.<sup>2</sup> By September Lenin and Trotsky were both advocating immediate socialist revolution, but it was Trotsky who actually organized the seizure of the key points in Petrograd on 6-7th November, as well as the arrest of the Provisional Government on the following night. Lenin was the driving force and planner of the Revolution, but it was Trotsky who carried it out.

In fact Lenin had gone into hiding in the last week of October, and he did not reappear until the evening of November 6.

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2) At this point Trotsky became a member of the Central Committee. He was made a member of the Politburo on 23rd October, but there is no evidence that the body ever functioned before the rising. The other members were Lenin, Zinoviev, Kamenev, Stalin, Sokolnikov and Bubnov.



The rising on the 6th was carried out under the orders of the Military Revolutionary Committee of the Petrograd Soviet, and Trotsky was its able and fire-eating chairman. He controlled both the Army units in the capital (such as the troops who stormed the Winter Palace) and the Red Guard units in the factories. The latter numbered at least 20,000 men by the beginning of November, but were not so important as the armed forces in the seizure of power.

It was Trotsky who put down the rising of the military cadets in Petrograd on November 11th, and it was Trotskys' men who routed Kerensky and General Krasnovs' few hundred cossacks on November 14th.

After the signing of the peace treaty at Brest-Litovsk on 3rd March 1918 (a treaty for which Trotsky had refused to vote in the Central Committee), he was made People's Commissar for War. He organized the Red Army with such ruthless efficiency that it emerged as the ultimate victor in the civil war, and he thereby kept both Lenin and the bolsheviks in power. He was proven to be wrong in his theory of the "permanent revolution" (which presumed that all of Western Europe would fall to the Bolsheviks), but he was extremely effective in enabling Lenin to prove the validity of the theory of "revolution in one country." The fact that he had played such an incomparably more prominent part than Stalin in the seizure of power was surely one of the main reasons for his assassination by Stalins' secret police in Mexico in 1940.