

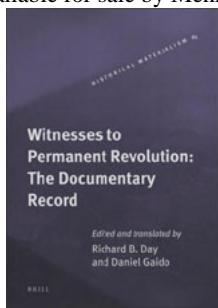
# A significant contribution to an understanding of Permanent Revolution

Witnesses to Permanent Revolution: The Documentary Record edited and translated by Richard B. Day and Daniel Gaido. (Brill, 2009).

By David North  
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To order *Witnesses to Permanent Revolution* from Mehring Books, click [here](#).

We are reposting this review, which discusses in detail the history and development of the Theory of Permanent Revolution, whose importance in contemporary society is underscored by the emergence of mass revolutionary struggles by the working class in North Africa. The book is available for sale by Mehring books.



The publication of *Witnesses to Permanent Revolution: The Documentary Record* is a major event in the study of the theoretical foundations of the 1917 October Revolution. The documents presented in this substantial volume (677 pages)—compiled, translated and introduced by historians Richard B. Day and Daniel Gaido—provide a comprehensive review of the controversies and polemics from which the theory of permanent revolution emerged. Day and Gaido have produced a book that is indispensable for those who wish to understand the development of Marxist theory and revolutionary strategy in the twentieth century.

Richard Day, who has taught for many years at the University of Toronto in Mississauga, is respected as an authority on Soviet history, economics and politics. His best known work, *Leon Trotsky and the Politics of Economic Isolation* (1973), remains an important exposition of the critical theoretical issues that underlay the struggle over economic policy in the Soviet Union in the 1920s. Day's work on the life and ideas of E. A. Preobrazhensky, including a translation of the latter's *Decline of Capitalism* (1985), rescued from historical oblivion this important figure in the Trotskyist Left Opposition, who was eventually murdered by Stalin in 1937. Professor Day has written essays on a wide range of subjects, including Marxist philosophy. He is presently preparing the publication of a new volume of previously unknown writings of Preobrazhensky.

Daniel Gaido, who was born in Argentina, lived and studied in Israel for more than a decade. He was actively involved in the struggle to defend

the democratic rights of Palestinians. Gaido recently has returned to Argentina. His published work includes a book, *The Formative Period of American Capitalism: A Materialist Explanation* (2006). American history, as the volume under review demonstrates, is not his only area of research. Gaido has written extensively on the history of the German socialist movement, and is currently preparing a history of the German Social Democratic Party during the period of the Second International.

The central aim of *Witnesses to Permanent Revolution* is the reconstruction of the impressive intellectual scope of the discussion out of which the theory of permanent revolution emerged. While not contesting the decisive role played by Trotsky in its elaboration and, most significantly, its strategic and practical application in the struggles of the Russian working class, Day and Gaido seek to acquaint the reader with the contributions made by other important socialist thinkers, such as Franz Mehring, Rosa Luxemburg, Alexander Helphand (Parvus), Karl Kautsky, and the much less well-known David Ryazanov. Trotsky would not have objected to a detailed account of the origins of the theory with which he had become so intensely and personally identified.

In 1923 the factional attacks on Leon Trotsky, launched by the Politburo troika of Zinoviev, Kamenev and Stalin, developed rapidly into a campaign against the theory of permanent revolution. All of Trotsky's alleged personal failings and political errors, his so-called "underestimation of the peasantry" and his inveterate "anti-Bolshevism" had their source, it was proclaimed over and over, in this pernicious doctrine. Between April and October 1917, the theory of permanent revolution provided the strategic foundation of the Bolshevik Party's struggle against the bourgeois Provisional Government and its Menshevik allies. But only six years later, it was being denounced as a heretical deviation from Marxist principles. As he witnessed not only the distortion of his own ideas but also the falsification of the history of socialist theory, Trotsky wrote with evident exasperation:

The expression "*permanent revolution*" is an expression of Marx, which he applied to the revolution of 1848. In Marxist, naturally not in revisionist but in revolutionary Marxist literature, this term has always had citizenship rights. Franz Mehring employed it for the revolution of 1905–07. The permanent revolution, in an exact translation, is the continuous revolution, the uninterrupted revolution. [1]

change in social conditions by means of which the existing society will be made as tolerable and comfortable as possible for them. [4]

Day and Gaido substantiate Trotsky's insistence upon the Marxist pedigree of the theory of permanent revolution. As they note, as early as 1843, Marx had written in his essay on *The Jewish Question* that the state could achieve the abolition of religion "only by coming into *violent* contradiction with its own conditions of life, only by declaring the revolution to be permanent." [2] More significantly, in March 1850, in their "Address of the Central Authority to the League," Marx and Engels wrote, in opposition to the democratic petty bourgeoisie, that the workers' task was

to make the revolution permanent, until all the more or less possessing classes have been driven from their ruling positions, until the proletariat has conquered state power, and ... has progressed sufficiently far—not only in one country but in all the leading countries of the world—that competition between the proletarians of these countries ceases and at least the decisive forces of production are concentrated in the hands of the workers. *Our concern cannot simply be to modify private property, but to abolish it, not to hush up class antagonisms but to abolish classes, not to improve the existing society but to found a new one.* [3]

The concept of the revolution's *permanence* developed out of the experience of the class struggles that swept across Europe in 1848. Just over a half-century had passed since the Jacobins, representing the most radical wing of the democratic petty bourgeoisie, had shattered, with the aid of revolutionary terror, the feudal *ancien régime* and laid the foundation for the establishment of a bourgeois state in France. In the intervening period, the social structure of Europe had grown more complex. The nature and political implications of the on-going political conflict between the bourgeois and the old aristocratic elites were altered by the emergence of a new social force, the proletariat—a class without property. The bourgeoisie became fearful that a popular uprising against the old aristocracy, into which the new proletarian masses were being drawn, might assume dimensions that threatened not only the remnants of feudal privilege but also capitalist property.

Thus, in the struggles of 1848 and their immediate aftermath, the bourgeoisie sought to contain the revolutionary struggle—at the expense of the working class. In France, the old center of revolution and the most politically advanced of European states, the new class relations found brutal expression in the slaughter of the Parisian proletariat in June 1848 by the military force under the command of General Cavaignac. Beyond the borders of France, the bourgeoisie was willing to compromise with the old aristocracy, even to the extent of abandoning the demand for the establishment of a democratic republic and accepting the continuation of aristocratic domination of the state. This was the fate of the German revolution, in which the bourgeoisie—terrified by popular insurrections and the "specter of communism"—capitulated politically to the Prussian aristocracy.

The betrayal by the bourgeoisie of its "own" bourgeois revolution was facilitated by the representatives of the "left" petty bourgeoisie—which at every critical juncture proved itself to be a completely untrustworthy ally of the working class. As Marx and Engels explained in the "Address of the Central Authority:"

Far from desiring to transform the whole of society for the revolutionary proletarians, the democratic petty bourgeois strive for a

The working class, Marx and Engels concluded, should not allow its struggles and interests to be limited and betrayed. Rather, the workers

must do the utmost for their final victory by making it clear to themselves what their class interests are, by taking up their position as an independent party as soon as possible and by not allowing themselves to be misled for a single moment by the hypocritical phrases of the democratic petty bourgeois into refraining from the independent organization of the party of the proletariat. Their battle cry must be: The Revolution in Permanence. [5]

Fifty years later, at the turn of the twentieth century, the political significance and implications of this battle cry were to become the subject of intense debate within the rapidly growing Russian socialist movement. It was beyond dispute that the country was moving inexorably toward a democratic revolution that would sweep away a 300-year-old autocratic regime. But beyond that common premise, sharply divergent views developed regarding the class dynamics, political aims and, finally, the socio-economic consequences of the revolutionary movement. Would the Russian revolution follow the pattern of the "classical" French Revolution of 1789–1794, in which the overthrow of the feudal autocracy led eventually to bourgeois political rule, grounded in capitalist economic relations? Or would the democratic revolution in Russia, developing more than a century later and under vastly changed socio-economic conditions, necessarily take a profoundly different form? Did there exist in the Russia of 1900, as there had in the France of 1790, a revolutionary bourgeoisie? Was the Russian bourgeoisie really prepared to conduct, or even support, a revolutionary struggle against the autocracy?

Above all, how would the development of the democratic revolution be affected by the fact that the most active and dynamic social force in Russia as it entered the twentieth century was the industrial working class? The strikes of the 1890s had already revealed the immense power of a working class that was growing rapidly as the flow of foreign capital into Russia financed large-scale industrialization. What role would the industrial proletariat play in the democratic revolution? There could be no doubt that its strength would be decisive in the overthrow of the autocracy. But would the working class then accept the transfer of political power to its class enemy, the Russian bourgeoisie? Or would the workers proceed beyond the limits of the "classical" democratic revolution, seek to take power into their own hands, and undertake a far-reaching economic restructuring of society that violated the sanctity of capitalist property?

The posing of these questions led all but inevitably to a reconsideration and further elaboration of the Marx-Engels concept of permanent revolution. The documents that have been included in this volume testify to the intellectual depth of the discussion that unfolded in the Russian and German socialist movement between 1903 and 1907. Against the backdrop of a deepening political crisis of the autocracy, there was a growing dissatisfaction with the political perspective that had guided the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party since its founding. Theoretical and political objections emerged to a conception of the democratic revolution that accepted, all too readily, that the overthrow of the tsar would inevitably and necessarily place political power in the hands of the Russian bourgeoisie.

This perspective was identified principally with the work of G. V. Plekhanov, the “Father of Russian Marxism.” Plekhanov maintained that in the struggle against tsarism, the working class was to be allied with the liberal bourgeoisie. Once the autocracy was overthrown, a Russian version of a parliamentary democracy would be established. The party of the working class was to enter the Russian parliament as the socialist opposition, seeking to drive the liberal democratic regime as far to the left as possible. But the country would continue to develop, for the indefinite future, on a capitalist basis. Eventually, but no one knew precisely when, Russia would become sufficiently mature, politically and economically, for socialism. At that point, the working class would proceed to the overthrow of the bourgeois regime.

The central problem in this perspective was that it sought to interpret the nature and tasks of the democratic revolution in accordance with a formula that had been overtaken by history. Indeed, Plekhanov had insisted, as far back as 1889, that the democratic revolution in Russia could only succeed as a workers’ revolution. But if, as Plekhanov continuously emphasized, the working class was to be the decisive force in the overthrow of the autocracy, why would political power necessarily pass into the hands of the liberal bourgeoisie? The only answer that Plekhanov could advance in an effort to silence such questions was that Russian economic development had not sufficiently matured to permit the assumption of political power by the working class and the implementation of measures of a socialist character.

Significantly, the first important theoretician to suggest that Russian development might take a path quite different from that foreseen in the traditional model of the bourgeois democratic revolution was Karl Kautsky. Between 1902 and 1907, Kautsky wrote a series of documents, reproduced in this volume, that gravely undermined the authority of Plekhanov’s doctrinaire perspective, contributed to the development of a critical attitude toward out-dated precedents, and encouraged the path-breaking work of a younger generation of Russian and Polish social democratic theoreticians, including Leon Trotsky and Rosa Luxemburg.

In a 1902 article entitled “The Slavs and Revolution,” Kautsky questioned the assumption that the Russian bourgeoisie would play a revolutionary role in the struggle against tsarism. The dynamic of class relations had changed profoundly since the era of the earlier democratic revolutions. “After 1870,” Kautsky wrote, “the bourgeoisie in all countries began to lose its final remnants of revolutionary ambition. From that time onwards, to be a revolutionary also meant to be a socialist.” [6]

In another influential essay, provocatively titled “To What Extent is the *Communist Manifesto* Obsolete?”, first written in 1903 and revised in 1906, Kautsky stated that

insofar as we may speak of a ‘mistake’ in the *Manifesto* and consider criticism to be necessary, this must begin precisely with the ‘dogma’ that the bourgeoisie is revolutionary in political terms. The very displacement of revolution by evolution during the last fifty years grows out of the fact that a *revolutionary bourgeoisie* no longer exists. [7]

Among the most important achievements of the Day-Gaido anthology is its recollection, in accordance with the real historical record, of the immense role played by Kautsky, prior to World War I, in the development of the perspective of permanent revolution. Day and Gaido state that they hope that the publication of Kautsky’s writings on the Russian Revolution will help “to overcome the stereotypical and mistaken view of Kautsky as an apostle of quietism and a reformist cloaked in revolutionary phraseology.” [8] They add:

This view—an over-generalization drawn from Kautsky’s anti-Bolshevik polemics after 1917—was first developed by the ultra-left philosopher Karl Korsch in his reply to Kautsky’s work *Die materialistische Geschichtsauffassung* (1927) and became established in academic circles after the publication of Erich Matthias’ book, *Kautsky and Kautskyanism*. Kautsky’s main biographer, Marek Waldenberg, provides abundant material to refute this thesis, which was shared by neither Lenin nor Trotsky, both of whom always recommended the writings of Kautsky’s revolutionary period to communist workers. [9]

As Lenin and Trotsky insisted, Kautsky’s subsequent betrayal of socialism was a repudiation of his own work. When Lenin used the phrase, “How well Kautsky once wrote,” he expressed his own deep-felt dismay and anger over the political and intellectual collapse of the man who had been his teacher. This volume makes clear why Kautsky’s betrayal in August 1914 was so shocking to an entire generation of revolutionaries. The anthology includes so many truly splendid passages from Kautsky’s revolutionary writings that it is difficult to resist the temptation to overburden this review with citations that reveal the Second International’s “Pope of Marxism” to have been a remarkably perceptive, far-sighted and tough-minded polemicist. In retrospect, it is possible to detect (as we will later note) political weaknesses in certain conceptions advanced by Kautsky, especially when he wrote on the implications of a direct clash between the working class and the state. But the contrast between the stereotyped image of Kautsky as some sort of absent-minded professorial fuddy-duddy, complacently waiting for the revolution’s arrival as a gift provided by historical necessity, and the real man emerges with tremendous force. In a document published in February 1904, entitled “Revolutionary Questions,” Kautsky argues against the political fatalism that was, according to so many academic critics, supposedly his stock-in-trade:

The world is not so purposely organized as to lead always to the triumph of the revolution where it is essential for the interest of society. When we speak of the necessity of the proletariat’s victory and of socialism following from it, we do not mean that victory is inevitable or even, as many of our critics think, that it will take place automatically and with fatalistic certainty even when the revolutionary class remains idle. Necessity must be understood here in the sense of the revolution being the only possibility of further development. Where the proletariat does not succeed in defeating its opponents, society will not be able to develop further; it must either stagnate or rot. [10]

Another essay, “The *Sans-Culottes* of the French Revolution,” written originally in 1889 and republished in 1905, contains a veritable panegyric to revolutionary terrorism. According to Kautsky, the terrorism of the Jacobin regime “was more than a weapon of war to unnerve and intimidate the stealthy internal enemy; it also served to inspire confidence in the defenders of the revolution to continue their struggle against external enemies.” [11]

What about the claim that Kautsky, as an incorrigible “vulgar” materialist, had no sense whatever of the role of the subjective element in politics? That his conception of the forces that motivate mass action

recognized only dry and impersonal economic impulses, and that he failed to allow that emotions and ideals played any significant role in the political activity of the working class? Those who have accepted this stereotyped portrait of Kautsky will be surprised to discover that he considered the absence of “revolutionary romanticism” among American workers and the prevalence among intellectuals of “the most unscrupulous capitalism of the soul” to be significant factors in the weakness of socialism in the United States. [12]

As the anthology makes clear, Kautsky’s active involvement in Russian matters was not merely the expression of a kind-hearted avuncular concern for the travails of his young comrades engaged in a life and death battle against the savagely reactionary police state over which the tsar presided. Events in Russia, particularly in the aftermath of the Russo-Japanese War and the outbreak of the Revolution of 1905, were seen by Kautsky and his then close ally, Rosa Luxemburg, as critical to the fate of the socialist movement in Germany.

Kautsky, like Luxemburg, was deeply concerned over the growing authority of the trade unions in determining the political line of the SPD (German Social Democratic Party). Despite the formal victory of the orthodox Marxists over the revisionism of Eduard Bernstein at the Dresden Party Congress in September 1903, the pressure exerted by the trade unions represented an even greater danger to the existence of the SPD as a revolutionary movement. The eruption of the 1905 Revolution intensified political conflict within the party.

The mass strikes in Russia were seen by the leaders of left-wing forces within the SPD as the herald of a new spirit of revolutionary struggle and self-sacrifice in Germany. Even Rudolf Hilferding, later an arch-reformist, drew inspiration from the Russian upheaval. He wrote to Kautsky on November 14, 1905: “the collapse of Czarism is the beginning of our revolution, of our victory, that is now drawing near. The expectation, which Marx had mistakenly expressed about the movement of history in 1848, will now, we hope, be fulfilled.”[13]

Kautsky was even more enthusiastic over the mass struggles. He wrote in July 1905: “The Revolution in Permanence is—precisely what the workers of Russia need.”[14] Kautsky declared that “an era of revolutionary developments has begun. The age of slow, painful, almost imperceptible advances will give way to an epoch of revolutions, of sudden leaps forward, perhaps of occasional great defeats, but also—we must have such confidence in the cause of the proletariat—eventually of great victories.” [15]

But the revolution that lifted the spirits of militant tendencies within the SPD filled the trade union leadership with dread and revulsion. Fearful of the impact of the Russian example, the Fifth Congress of the Social-Democratic Free Trade Unions, held in May 1905 in Köln, rejected the mass strike and prohibited agitation that promoted it. The SPD chairman, August Bebel, attacked “pure and simple” trade unionism and supported a resolution, passed by the party congress held in Jena in September 1905, endorsing the mass strike in the fight for democratic rights.

However, the balance of power between the SPD and the trade unions had drastically changed, to the disadvantage of the party, over the previous decade. Though they had been founded under the leadership of the party, the trade unions, as their membership grew and their bank accounts swelled, acquired distinct and decidedly anti-revolutionary interests. As Theodore Bömelburg, a spokesman of the unions, bluntly declared, what they wanted above all was “peace and quiet.” [16] By 1905 the annual income of the trade unions was roughly fifty times greater than that of the SPD. To the extent that the SPD grew increasingly dependent on subsidies from the trade unions, it became subject to their demands. Moreover, experienced SPD leaders like Bebel must have recognized the possibility that the trade unions might break with the SPD, and create, in alliance with sections of the revisionists, an avowedly anti-revolutionary

“workers” party. This would create conditions for a violent attack by the state on the SPD. The pressure on SPD leaders to placate the trade unions was enormous. Thus, despite the passage of the mass strike resolution at the Jena congress, the SPD executive met secretly with the Trade Union General Commission. Bebel capitulated to the trade unions’ demand for a pledge that the SPD would “try to prevent a mass strike as much as possible.”[17] The General Commission warned the SPD that in the event of a political strike, the trade unions would withhold support. The single concession made by the trade unions was that they would not work openly to sabotage the strike. Given the bitter hostility of the trade union leadership to anything that threatened to radicalize class relations, it is doubtful that the SPD placed much faith in this concession.

This period was the high point of Kautsky’s long revolutionary career. As he defended Luxemburg against the bitter attacks of the trade union leaders, she referred to him, affectionately and with admiration, as “Karolus Magnus” (Karl the Great). The terrible disappointment and bitterness felt by Luxemburg over Kautsky’s subsequent drift to the right (which Kautsky justified in private correspondence as an attempt to placate the unions) can only be understood against the background of their long relationship.

The anthology includes, of course, important documents that emerged within the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party (RSDLP). Among these are two documents written by David Borisovich Gol’dendakh, whose party name was Ryazanov. Born in Odessa in 1870, he would later become best known as an indefatigable historian and archivist of the literary legacy of Marx and Engels. After the Bolshevik Revolution, he headed the State Archive Association and helped establish the Socialist Academy and the Marx-Engels Institute. He traveled to Western Europe, negotiated with various Social Democratic officials, and acquired a vast quantity of documents related to Marx and Engels.

This brilliant Marxist scholar also had a significant career as a revolutionary theoretician. Like Trotsky, he stood outside the Bolshevik and Menshevik factions. In 1917, he was, again like Trotsky, a member of the Inter-District Organization (*Mezhraionka*) before entering the Bolshevik Party in the summer of that year. Ryazanov’s role in the aftermath of the Bolshevik seizure of power, in which he attempted to find common ground with a section of the Mensheviks, has received serious scholarly attention in Alexander Rabinowitch’s *The Bolsheviks in Power* (Indiana University Press, 2007). Ryazanov’s long revolutionary career, his profound knowledge of Marxist theory and the history of the socialist movement, and his broad cultural interests made him an early and inevitable target of Stalin’s campaign to destroy the revolutionary Marxist intelligentsia of the USSR. Ryazanov was first arrested in February 1931 and accused of being part of the “Menshevik Center” and of “wrecking activities on the historical front.” Ryazanov, wrote Trotsky, “fell victim to his personal honesty.” [18] Expelled from the party and exiled to Saratov, Ryazanov was arrested again in 1937. On January 21, 1938, he was sentenced to death by the so-called Military Collegium and shot the same day.

The first document by Ryazanov included in this anthology dates from 1902–03, entitled *The Draft Program of ‘Iskra’ and the Tasks of Russian Social Democrats*. Given the length of the original document, which ran 302 pages, Day and Gaido understandably chose to present only representative excerpts. It is an interesting document that reflects the intensity of the factional conflict which, in retrospect, foreshadowed the split that erupted at the Second Congress of the RSDLP in September 1903. Moreover, the document certainly suggests dissatisfaction with the Plekhanovist conception of the necessarily bourgeois character and form of the coming Russian revolution. However, this reviewer believes that Day and Gaido overstate the case in asserting that “Ryazanov’s critique of the *Iskra* program is remarkable because it anticipates in almost every detail the theory of *permanent revolution* ...” [19]

There are, indeed, certain formulations in which Ryazanov attempts to define the tasks of the working class in a manner that moves beyond the subordination to bourgeois rule envisioned by Plekhanov in the aftermath of the revolution. Ryazanov also expresses a skeptical attitude, which is later developed more forcefully in the writings of Parvus and Trotsky, toward suggestions that the peasantry might play a significant independent role in the revolutionary struggle. However, Ryazanov's formulations on the nature of the coming revolutionary regime remain somewhat tentative: he writes that the revolution "will unquestionably occur on the basis of bourgeois relations of production and in that sense will certainly be 'bourgeois'...." But it "will also, from beginning to end, be *proletarian* in the sense that the proletariat will be its leading element and will make its class imprint on the entire movement." [20] In another part of the document he asserts: "A democratic republic is the form in which the class struggle of the proletariat against the bourgeoisie will freely develop." [21] These formulations still fall substantially short of those later employed by Trotsky, who argued that the working class would not only leave its imprint on the revolution, but would also seize state power.

A large portion of Ryazanov's document—the weakest sections—is devoted to an attack on Lenin's *What Is To Be Done?*, especially the latter's insistence that socialist consciousness does not develop spontaneously within the working class, but that it is brought into the working class from outside. "Comrade Lenin goes too far," writes Ryazanov, as he launches into a forceful polemic against this idea. The commentary of Day and Gaido indicates that they are to some extent sympathetic to Ryazanov's position. However, it is precisely on this issue—that socialism is brought into the working class from without the sphere of its spontaneous economic struggles and practical activities—that Kautsky's influence on Lenin was most pronounced. In *What Is To Be Done?*, Lenin included a lengthy passage written by Kautsky, in which the latter explained that "socialist consciousness is something introduced into the proletarian struggle from without [*von Aussen hineingetragen*]" and not something that arose within it spontaneously [*urwuchsig*]." [22] Notwithstanding his opposition to reformism, Ryazanov's document advances positions that, in certain critical respects, resemble those of the Economists, the principal target of *What Is To Be Done?* Day and Gaido note that a historian, writing in 1970, described Ryazanov's critique of *Iskra* as "revolutionary Economism." [23]

The second Ryazanov document, which was written approximately three years later, in the midst of the 1905 Revolution, includes formulations that come much closer to those being developed by Trotsky and Parvus. Emphasizing the centrality of "the question of property," Ryazanov declared:

In concentrating all its efforts on completing *its own* tasks, it [the working class] simultaneously approaches the moment when the issue will not be *participation* in a provisional government, but rather the seizure of power by the working class and conversion of the 'bourgeois' revolution into a direct prologue for the social revolution. [24]

In the evolution of the theory and strategy of the Russian Revolution, Lenin's conception of the "democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry" emerged in 1905 as a major alternative to the orthodox conception of Plekhanov. Lenin's perspective differed from Plekhanov's in two fundamental respects, both of which had far-reaching political and practical implications. First, although Lenin characterized the coming revolution as bourgeois, he excluded that this revolution could be led, let

alone carried through to a decisive conclusion, by the Russian bourgeoisie. In contrast to Plekhanov, Lenin rejected categorically any political alliance with the bourgeois liberals. Moreover, for Lenin, the essential historical significance of the "bourgeois" revolution lay not in the establishment of democratic parliamentary institutions, but, rather, in the radical destruction of all vestiges of feudal relations in the countryside. This is why Lenin placed the so-called "agrarian question" at the center of the democratic revolution. As Trotsky emphasized, in his last major article on the origins of the theory of permanent revolution, "With infinitely greater power and consistency than Plekhanov, Lenin advanced the agrarian question as the central problem of the democratic overturn in Russia." [25]

From this analysis emerged a political strategy fundamentally different from that of Plekhanov. The success of the democratic revolution, which in the countryside entailed the expropriation of the vast estates of the old landowning class, could only be achieved through the massive mobilization of Russia's tens of millions of peasants. The Russian bourgeoisie, hostile to any form of mass action directed against private property, could neither sanction nor lead a revolutionary overturn of existing property relations in the countryside. But only through such a mobilization of the peasantry, which comprised the overwhelming majority of Russia's population, could the tsarist regime be overthrown.

For Lenin, therefore, Plekhanov's orientation toward the liberal bourgeoisie meant the doom of the revolution. The essential ally of the working class in the revolutionary struggle against the tsarist regime was the peasantry. It was from this assessment of the dynamics of the democratic revolution that Lenin developed his conception of the new form of revolutionary state power that would replace the tsarist autocracy: the *democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry*.

Lenin's conception of the democratic revolution placed the Bolshevik faction of the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party (it was not until 1912 that the Bolsheviks declared themselves as an independent party) in irreconcilable political hostility to the bourgeoisie and all the Menshevik tendencies which, in one form or another, insisted that a liberal bourgeois parliamentary republic was the only politically legitimate outcome of the overthrow of the tsar. However, Lenin clearly distinguished between the *democratic* and the *socialist* revolutions. The democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry, as envisaged by Lenin, would be established on the basis of capitalist relations. Writing in 1905 Lenin explained:

But of course it will be a democratic, not a socialist dictatorship. It will be unable (without a series of intermediary stages of revolutionary development) to affect the foundations of capitalism. At best, it may bring about a radical redistribution of landed property in favor of the peasantry, establish consistent and full democracy, including the formation of a republic, eradicate all the oppressive features of Asiatic bondage, not only in rural but also in factory life, lay the foundation for a thorough improvement in the conditions of the workers and for a rise in their standard of living and—last but not least—carry the revolutionary conflagration into Europe. Such a victory will not yet by any means transform our bourgeois revolution into a socialist revolution; the democratic revolution will not immediately overstep the bounds of bourgeois social and economic relationships; nevertheless, the significance of such a victory for the future development of Russia and the whole world will be immense. [26]

Lenin's program, as Trotsky later wrote, "represented an enormous step forward" beyond Plekhanov's conception of the bourgeois revolution. [27]

However, it raised a whole series of theoretical and political questions that revealed the ambiguities and limitations of Lenin's formulation. In particular, Lenin's conception foresaw the creation of a new and unprecedented state form in which power would be shared by two classes, the proletariat and the peasantry. How would power be distributed between these classes? Moreover, as Lenin clearly recognized, the destruction of the old landed estates and the redistribution of the land did not mean the end of the private ownership of land. The peasantry remained committed to private property, albeit on a more equitable basis. However, the peasantry would be hostile to the anti-private property, socialistic aspirations and orientation of the proletariat. This basic contradiction in the social orientation of the two classes called into question the viability of Lenin's democratic dictatorship.

Notwithstanding the limitations of Lenin's program, it marked, in an objective historical sense, a significant milestone in the development of Russian revolutionary thought. This reviewer is, therefore, somewhat puzzled by the ill-considered and almost dismissive attitude taken by Day and Gaido toward Lenin's position. In this one instance, one almost hears the grinding of political axes, and it weakens their generally excellent review of the debate on the theory of permanent revolution. They state:

The problem with Lenin's notion of a 'democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry' was obvious: in Russia, there was no revolutionary petty-bourgeois party with whom to co-operate. Lenin thought such a party must eventually emerge, but this was hardly a practical basis upon which to base political tactics. [28]

One is surprised by this judgment. Whatever the limitations of Lenin's theory, they were certainly not "obvious." If they were, Trotsky's criticisms of the "democratic dictatorship" perspective and his development beyond it, with the theory of permanent revolution, would not have been such an impressive intellectual achievement. Also, Lenin could hardly be faulted for leaving open the possibility of a mass peasant party in Russia. The future development of the Socialist Revolutionary Party, which acquired a mass, albeit unstable, base within the peasantry, proved Lenin correct. Finally, it must be kept in mind that Lenin belonged to a generation that grew to political maturity in the aftermath of the catastrophe of the Paris Commune. The inability of the workers of Paris to rally the French peasantry to their side was the decisive factor that enabled the bourgeois regime in Versailles to destroy the Commune in May 1871. That was not a political failure that would be quickly forgotten. For Lenin, the fate of the working class in Russia (and, for that matter, any country with a large agrarian population) depended upon its ability to win the support of the peasantry. It is always worthwhile to think about the historical time-frame. Only 34 years separated the Paris Commune from the Revolution of 1905. The destruction of the Commune was a less distant event to Lenin's generation in 1905 than the Fall of Saigon in May 1975 is to the present day!

There is another aspect of Lenin's formulation of the democratic dictatorship that is of enduring significance. Lenin's understanding of the contradictory nature of the revolutionary peasant movement—above all, his insistence that peasant insurrections and the mass seizure of land did not necessarily lead to the destruction of capitalist relations—was both subtle and perceptive. Tackling an issue that would time and again cause political confusion within the left (among the admirers, for example, of Castro, Mao, the Naxalites and even Mexico's "sub-Comandante" Marcos), Lenin argued against the widespread misconception that peasant radicalism—even when it fights for the distribution of land to the rural poor—is socialistic. Lenin insisted that the nationalization of land is a key

component of the democratic revolution, and, under certain conditions, critical for the development of capitalism. Explaining that the nationalization of land is a democratic, rather than socialist, measure, Lenin wrote:

Failure to grasp this truth makes the Socialist Revolutionaries unconscious ideologists of the petty bourgeoisie. Insistence on this truth is of enormous importance for Social Democracy not only from the standpoint of theory but also from that of practical politics, for it follows therefrom that complete class independence of the party of the proletariat in the present "general democratic" movement is an indispensable condition. [29]

The military disasters suffered by Russia in its war with Japan led to the eruption of a revolution that was heralded by the massacre of St. Petersburg workers who had marched in protest on January 9, 1905 to the Winter Palace. The social explosion within the Russian Empire provided a powerful impulse for the development of revolutionary theory. The two figures who played the central role in the formulation of the theory of permanent revolution were Parvus and Trotsky.

Even 85 years after his death in Germany, Parvus (1867–1924) remains an enigmatic, even somewhat mysterious, figure. He is remembered far more for his nefarious commercial activities during World War I, after he had abandoned the revolutionary movement, than for his remarkable work as a Marxist theoretician during the final years of the nineteenth century and the first years of the twentieth. But it is indisputable that Parvus, born Alexander Helphand, played a critical role in the life of the revolutionary movement in Russia and Germany. He first came to the attention of European socialists with his attacks on the revisionism of Eduard Bernstein. His first anti-Bernstein articles appeared in the German socialist press in January 1898, even before Luxemburg, let alone Kautsky, entered into the fray. It was not merely their timeliness that made Parvus's articles significant; the articles displayed a truly remarkable grasp of the economics of German and world capitalism that left the impression that Bernstein did not really know what he was talking about.

As Trotsky later acknowledged, his own thoughts on the dynamic of Russian revolutionary development were deeply influenced by Parvus. It was Parvus, Trotsky wrote, who "definitely transformed the conquest of power by the proletariat from an astronomical 'final' goal to a practical task for our own day." [30] Both Parvus and Trotsky recognized that the emergence of the St. Petersburg Soviet in October 1905 opened up enormous possibilities for the working class. Parvus argued that conceptions of the appropriate "tasks" of the revolution which proceeded from abstract calculations of the supposedly "objective" development of the national productive forces, while ignoring the no less objective dynamic of the unfolding class forces in a revolutionary situation, were utterly inadequate. The seizure of power by the working class, Parvus argued, had become possible. He rejected the Menshevik argument that the working class, based on a fatalistic calculation of available economic resources, was obligated to stand aside and watch respectfully as the bourgeoisie took power into its hands. In a brilliant exposition of the interaction of politics and economics, Parvus cleared the path for a far more aggressive formulation of proletarian revolutionary strategy:

If class relations were determined by the historical course of events in some simple and straightforward manner, then there would be no use in racking our brains: all we would have to do is calculate the

moment for social revolution in the same way as astronomers plot the movement of a planet, and then we could sit back and observe. In reality, the relation between classes produces political struggle above all else. What is more, the final outcome of that struggle is determined by the development of class forces. The entire historical process, which embraces centuries, depends upon a multitude of secondary economic, political, and national cultural conditions, but above all it depends on the revolutionary energy and political consciousness of the struggling combatants—on their tactics and their skill in seizing the political moment. [31]

Parvus did not claim that Russia was ripe for the establishment of socialism. He stated categorically that “Without a social revolution in Western Europe, it is presently impossible in Russia to realize socialism.” [32] But he believed that the momentum of the class struggle might create conditions in which the working class could seize power. It would then use that power in a manner that advanced as far as possible the interests of the working class.

Parvus did not attempt to predict the exact course of revolutionary development. Politics, in his view, involved a complex interaction of forces, influences and factors that allowed for innumerable variants of development. He foresaw a protracted process of struggle, in which the actual overthrow of the tsarist autocracy represented only the starting point of the revolution. Parvus argued:

Placing the proletariat at the center and the head of the revolutionary movement of the whole people and the whole of society, Social Democracy must simultaneously prepare it for the civil war that will follow the overthrow of autocracy—for the time when it will be attacked by agrarian and bourgeois liberalism and betrayed by the political radicals and the democrats.

The working class must understand that the revolution and the collapse of autocracy are not the same thing, and that, in order to carry through the political revolution, it will be necessary to struggle first against the autocracy and then against the bourgeoisie. [33]

Parvus’s remarkable essay, “What Was Accomplished on the 9<sup>th</sup> of January,” contains a wealth of political insights, which reflect the wisdom of a political age that stood, at least in its understanding of the realities of the class struggle, on a level incomparably higher than our own. Discussing the problems that arise in the course of fighting alongside temporary and unstable allies, Parvus advised:

- 1) Do not blur the organizational lines. March separately, but strike in unison.
- 2) Do not waver in our own political demands.
- 3) Do not hide differences of interest.
- 4) Keep watch of our allies in the same way as we watch our enemies.
- 5) Pay more attention to taking advantage of the situation created by the struggle than to the maintenance of an ally. [34]

In late 1905, Trotsky wrote “Up to the Ninth of January.” A complete English translation of this work appears for the first time in this anthology. The work is an acute and devastating exposure of the political rottenness of the liberal representatives of the Russian bourgeoisie. Trotsky chronicles their spineless and submissive attitude toward the tsarist regime in a period of mounting crisis, caused by the devastating defeats of the Russian army in the war with Japan. He writes with contempt of the manner in which the liberal politicians acquiesced in the war:

It was not enough for the [liberals] to join in the dirty work of a shameful slaughter and to take upon themselves—that is, to load upon the people—part of the expenses. They were not satisfied with tacit political connivance and acquiescent cover-up of the work of tsarism—no, they publicly declared to everyone their moral solidarity with those responsible for committing the greatest of crimes ... One after the other they responded to the declaration of war with loyal pronouncements, using the formal rhetoric of seminars to express their political idiocy....

And what about the liberal press? This pitiful, mumbling, groveling, lying, cringing, depraved and corrupting liberal press! [35 ]

One might be forgiven for believing that the young Trotsky was describing the Democratic Party of the United States and today’s *New York Times*. But more than a century ago, the foulness of bourgeois liberalism was well understood by socialists.

Even in an anthology which includes the work of other brilliant writers, in the early essays of Trotsky a new perspective finds expression in an original and powerful voice. What is most remarkable in these early writings is their vivid conceptualization and articulation of an emerging mass revolutionary movement of the working class and the elemental force of its struggle for power. In this sense, the contrast to Kautsky’s writings is striking. Even in the best work of the latter, when he is formulating and defending a revolutionary perspective, Kautsky’s portrayal of the clash of opposing class forces is detached, and seems to reflect the inner doubts of the writer. He left open the possibility, in a not very convincing manner, that the working class might be able, without resorting to violence, to frighten its class enemy into surrendering power! He wrote:

A rising class must have the necessary instruments of force at its disposal if it wants to dispossess the old ruling class, but it is not unconditionally necessary that it *employ* them. Under certain circumstances, *awareness* of the existence of such instruments can be enough to induce a declining class to come to an agreement peacefully with an opponent that has become overwhelming. [36]

It should, of course, be kept in mind that Kautsky was well aware of the hostility that existed within sections of the SPD, and especially within the trade unions, to any suggestion that the party believed in the inevitability of, let alone advocated, an armed struggle for power. Nor was he

unmindful that incautious formulations, even in a theoretical journal, might be seized upon by the Prussian state as a pretext for an assault on the SPD. The fact that there existed influential voices within the upper echelons of the state that were continuously advocating a bloody showdown with the Social Democracy was well known. But still, it is evident that Kautsky had no clear answer to the unavoidable problem that confronted the working class in a modern capitalist state: how to overcome the resistance of the military forces at the disposal of the government? In one essay, Kautsky went so far as to suggest that the defeat of a government prepared to defend itself by mobilizing the military might not be possible. “The consciousness of technical military superiority makes it possible for any government that possesses the necessary ruthlessness to look forward calmly to a popular armed uprising.” [37]

Trotsky, as Day and Gaido, point out, “makes precisely the opposite argument: a mass strike will necessarily lead to armed conflict when the government responds with orders to shoot down strikers.” [38] While for Kautsky the issuing of orders to soldiers that they fire on workers might well mean the end of the revolution, for Trotsky such orders could lead to the end of the oppressors’ state. Trotsky noted that reactionaries tend to believe that the defeat of revolution requires only the sufficient application of repressive force. “Grand Duke Vladimir,” Trotsky observed laconically,

who spent his time in Paris studying not only the warehouses but also the administrative-military history of the Great Revolution, concluded that the old order would have been saved in France if Louis’s government had crushed every sprout of revolution, without any wavering or hesitation, and if he had cured the people of Paris with a bold and widely organized blood-letting. On 9 January, our most august alcoholic showed exactly how this should be done.... Guns, rifles and munitions are excellent servants of order, but they have to be put into action. For that purpose, people are needed. And even though these people are called soldiers, they differ from guns because they feel and think, which means that they are not reliable. They hesitate, they are infected by the indecision of their commanders, and the result is disarray and panic in the highest ranks of the bureaucracy. [39]

This collection does not include Trotsky’s first definitive elaboration of the theory of permanent revolution, the famous *Results and Prospects*, which was published in 1906. But Day and Gaido do present a number of immensely important documents in which the development of Trotsky’s political thought—from the contemptuous exposure of the reactionary character of Russian liberalism to his conclusion that the logic of class struggle will compel the working class to take power—can be traced. These crucial preparatory works include Trotsky’s “Introduction to *Ferdinand Lassalle’s Speech to the Jury*,” “Social Democracy and Revolution,” and the “Foreword to Karl Marx, *Parizhskaya Kommuna*.” All of these essays date from 1905, the year in which Trotsky became chairman of the St. Petersburg Soviet and emerged as the greatest orator and mass leader of the first Russian revolution.

Trotsky’s “Introduction to *Ferdinand Lassalle’s Speech to the Jury*” is one of his early masterpieces. Lassalle had played a major role in the 1848 revolution in Germany, as a representative of the extreme left wing of the democratic forces. Arrested for inciting insurrection against Prussia, Lassalle wrote a speech in his own defense. The speech was never actually delivered in the courtroom, but thousands of copies of the written text were distributed throughout Germany and made a profound

impression. Trotsky, as Day and Gaido observe, “obviously admired the grand rhetoric of Lassalle’s *Speech to the Jury*,” and it certainly influenced the form taken by Trotsky’s no less memorable speech when he was placed on trial in 1907 after the defeat of the 1905 revolution. [40]

In his “Introduction,” Trotsky drew lessons from the experience of the 1848 revolution to drive home the essential political point that in the contemporary struggle against the tsarist autocracy, the Russian bourgeoisie was the bitter enemy of the working class. The bourgeoisie had learned from the events of 1789–95 that revolution, however critical for the realization of its own interests, raised the danger of unintended consequences. As it succeeded in consolidating its own social and economic position, the more determined it became to resist the demands of the masses. In the ensuing conflict, the previously concealed nature of society emerged into the open. In a memorable passage, Trotsky described a revolutionary epoch as “a school of political materialism.”

It translates all social norms into the language of force. It gives influence to those who rely upon force and are united, disciplined, and ready to take action. Its mighty tremors drive the masses onto the field of struggle and reveal to them the ruling classes—both those who are departing and those who are arriving. For exactly this reason, it is terrifying both for the class that is losing power and for the one acquiring power. Once they have entered upon this road, the masses develop their own logic and go much further than necessary from the viewpoint of the new bourgeois arrivals. Every day brings new slogans, each more radical than the previous one, and they spread as rapidly as blood circulates in the human body. If the bourgeoisie accepts revolution as the starting point of a new system, it will deprive itself of any opportunity to appeal to law and order in opposing the revolutionary encroachments of the masses. That is why a deal with reaction, at the expense of the people’s rights, is a class imperative for the liberal bourgeoisie.

This applies equally to its position before, during, and after the revolution. [41]

At the end of his careful review of the German bourgeoisie’s betrayal of the democratic revolution of 1848, Trotsky drew the essential political conclusion: a half-century later, there existed even less possibility that the bourgeoisie would play any sort of progressive political role. Moreover, the global development of capitalism during the preceding half-century had drawn the Russian bourgeoisie into a world-wide system of political domination and economic exploitation. It is at this point that Trotsky calls attention to a new and decisive factor in the development of the Russian revolution:

Imposing its own type of economy and its own relations on all countries, capitalism has transformed the entire world into a single economic and political organism. And just as modern credit binds thousands of enterprises together by an invisible thread and imparts astounding mobility to capital, eliminating numerous small and partial crises while at the same time making general economic crises incomparably more serious, so the entire economic and political functioning of capitalism, with its world trade, its system of monstrous state debts and international political alliances, which are drawing all the reactionary forces into a single worldwide joint-stock company, has not only resisted all partial political crises but has also prepared the conditions for a social crisis of unprecedented



dimensions. Internalizing all the pathological processes, circumventing all the difficulties, brushing aside all the profound questions of domestic and international politics, and hiding all the contradictions, the bourgeoisie has postponed the denouement while simultaneously preparing a radical, worldwide liquidation of its supremacy. It has avidly clung to every reactionary force without questioning its origins....

From the very outset, this fact gives currently unfolding events an international character and opens up majestic prospects. Political emancipation, led by the Russian working class, is raising the latter to heights that are historically unprecedented, providing it with colossal means and resources, and making it the initiator of capitalism's worldwide liquidation, for which history has prepared all the objective preconditions. [42]

These paragraphs mark Trotsky's emergence as a strategist of world socialist revolution!

Beneath the impact of the monumental strike of October 1905 and the creation of the St. Petersburg Soviet, the most advanced socialist thinkers struggled to discover the political formula that would reconcile the ever more glaring contradiction between the economic backwardness of Russia—which was, according to the conventional interpretation of Marxism, unprepared for socialist revolution—and the undeniable reality that the working class was the decisive force in the unfolding revolutionary situation. Where was the revolution going? What could the working class expect to achieve?

Parvus, writing in November 1905, advised that

The direct revolutionary goal of the Russian proletariat is to achieve the kind of state system in which the demands of workers' democracy will be realized. Workers' democracy includes all of the most extreme demands of bourgeois democracy, but it imparts to some of them a special character and also includes new demands that are strictly proletarian. [43]

The Russian revolution, he explained, "creates a special connection between the minimum program of Social Democracy and its final goal." Parvus then added:

This does not imply the dictatorship of the proletariat, whose task is a fundamental change of production relations in the country, yet it already goes beyond bourgeois democracy. We are not yet ready in Russia to assume the task of converting the bourgeois revolution into a socialist revolution, but we are even less ready to subordinate ourselves to a bourgeois revolution. Not only would this contradict the first premises of our entire program, but the class struggle of the proletariat also drives us forward. Our task is to expand the limits of the bourgeois revolution by including within it the interests of the proletariat and by creating, *within the bourgeois constitution itself*, the greatest possible opportunities for social-revolutionary upheaval. [44]

Even Parvus seemed to retreat before the problem posed by the backwardness of Russian economic development and the political

dynamism of the working class.

One month later, in his foreword to Marx's speech on the Paris Commune, Trotsky asserted that there was a solution to this problem. But to find it required the understanding that there did not exist a formal and mechanical relationship between the level of development of the productive forces of a given country and the capacity of its working class to take power. The calculations of the revolutionary party had to include other critical factors, i.e., "the relations of class struggle, the international situation, and finally, a number of subjective factors that include tradition, initiative, and readiness for the fight." [45] What conclusion followed from this insight? Trotsky declared: "In an economically backward country, the proletariat can come to power sooner than in a country of the most advanced capitalism." [46] A half-century of socio-economic development, decades of theoretical work, and the experience of a revolution was necessary to arrive at this conclusion.

Trotsky had, at this point, worked out the basic outline of his theory of permanent revolution. In fact, passages from his "Introduction" to Lassalle's speech and his "Foreword" to Marx's speech on the Paris Commune were reproduced in *Results and Prospects*. However, even as he prepared the writing of this crucial work, Trotsky continued to find encouragement and inspiration in the writings of Kautsky.

Among the most important documents included in the Day-Gaido anthology is a virtually unknown work by Kautsky from February 1906, "The American Worker." It was written as a reply to the study of American society by the German sociologist Werner Sombart (1863–1941), which bore the intriguing title, *Why Is There No Socialism in the United States?* The question was an important one. Obviously, from the political standpoint, it had to be addressed. What was the future of socialism if it remained unable to obtain a mass following in the working class within the most advanced capitalist country? Moreover, there was a critical theoretical issue that could not be ignored. How was one to explain, within the framework of Marxist theory, the following paradox: In the United States, the most advanced capitalist country, socialism seemed to be making very little headway. But in Russia, among the countries where capitalism was the least developed, socialism was advancing by leaps and bounds. How was the paradox to be explained? Yet another question was raised. If, as Marx had indicated, the advanced countries revealed the "pattern" of development which less developed countries would necessarily reproduce, what were the implications of the "non-socialist" pattern of development of the most advanced and powerful country in the world? Sombart, drawing the most conservative conclusions, argued that the United States showed Europe its future.

Kautsky raised an objection. Sombart's claim, he wrote, "can be accepted only with great reservations." The sociologist's error was to abstract American conditions in a one-sided manner out of a complex totality of economic, social and political relations formed on the basis of the global development of capitalism. Sombart failed to note that the pattern of development with which Marx was most familiar, that of England, had not been simply reproduced in other countries. The England of Marx's time possessed the most developed industry. But the advance of industrial capitalism generated the opposing tendencies of proletarian resistance and organization. So England saw the emergence of Chartism, and later trade unions and social legislation. But this development, in which there existed interaction of capitalist development and working class counter-action, did not establish a universal "pattern."

Kautsky explained:

Today, there is a whole series of countries in which capital controls the whole of economic life, but none of them has developed all the aspects of the capitalist mode of production to the same extent. There are, in particular, two states that face each other as extremes, in

which one of the two elements of this mode of production is disproportionately strong, i.e., stronger than it should be according to its level of development: *in America, the capitalist class; in Russia, the working class.* [47]

Which country, then, showed Germany its future? Kautsky answered:

Germany's *economy* is closest to the *American* one; its *politics*, on the other hand, are closest to the *Russian*. In this way, both countries show us our future; it will have a half-American, half-Russian character. The more we study Russia and America, and the better we understand both, the more clearly we will be able to comprehend our own future. The American example alone would be as misleading as the Russian.

It is certainly a peculiar phenomenon that precisely the Russian proletariat should show us our future—as far as the rebellion of the working class, not the organization of capital, is concerned—because Russia is, of all the great states of the capitalist world, the most backward. This seems to contradict the materialist conception of history, according to which the economic development constitutes the basis of politics. But, in fact, it only contradicts that kind of historical materialism of which our opponents and critics accuse us, by which they understand a *ready-made model* and not a *method of inquiry*. They reject the materialist conception of history only because they are unable to understand it and apply it fruitfully. [48]

It is not possible, without adding substantially to the length of this review, to examine Kautsky's explanation of the peculiarity of America's political development. Suffice it to say that Kautsky offered an extremely insightful analysis of the economic and social environment that made it exceptionally difficult for socialism to advance in America as it had in Europe. Among the factors to which he pointed was the manner in which the great wealth of American capitalism corrupted a substantial section of the intelligentsia, rendering it indifferent to the political and social needs of the working class. Nevertheless, Kautsky concluded that, despite the many obstacles, socialism would eventually make extraordinary advances in the United States.

Kautsky's "The American Worker" exerted a powerful influence on Trotsky, as he explicitly acknowledged in *Results and Prospects*. He included in his work passages from the paragraphs cited above. Trotsky never denied the immense debt that he and others of his generation owed to Kautsky. Trotsky did not forgive Kautsky's later betrayals, but he saw no need to minimize, let alone deny, his achievements. Trotsky remembered Kautsky, at the time of his death in 1938, "as our former teacher to whom we once owed a great deal, but who separated himself from the proletarian revolution and from whom, consequently, we had to separate ourselves." [49]

If Kautsky's vital contribution to Trotsky's elaboration of the theory of permanent revolution needs to be stressed, it is because so much ink has been wasted by the petty-bourgeois anti-Marxist left on behalf of its efforts to completely discredit the theoretical heritage of socialism, in whose development Kautsky played a major role. The denunciations of the whole corpus of Kautsky's work, promoted by the Frankfurt School and amplified by diverse varieties of petty-bourgeois radicalism, have been from the right, directed not at explaining the nature and objective source of the weaknesses of the pre-1914 Social Democracy, but rather against its greatest strength—that it was based on and sought to educate,

politically and culturally, the working class. The study of Kautsky's writings, written before he succumbed to the political pressures bearing down on the pre-1914 Social Democracy, will make possible a deeper understanding of the development of Marxist thought, including that of Lenin and Trotsky. This reviewer endorses fully the words with which Day and Gaido conclude their introduction to this splendid volume:

The theory of permanent revolution has been a focus of debate for decades, not only between Trotsky's followers and his critics but also amongst academic historians. But in the court of history, as Trotsky understood very well when judging Kautsky, fairness and decency require that participants be assured every opportunity to speak for themselves. [50]

Between the years 1903 and 1907 Marxist social and political thought underwent an extraordinary development. To study these documents is to return to an age when political thought stood incomparably higher than it does today. This review, despite its length, has provided only a glimpse of the riches contained in *Witnesses to Permanent Revolution*. It is inevitable that documents as complex and far-ranging as those presented in this anthology lend themselves to diverse interpretations. I have indicated certain areas where I disagree with the judgments of Richard Day and Daniel Gaido. But this does not diminish in the least my very great appreciation, which will be felt by many socialists, for their important contribution to the revival of interest in the development of revolutionary theory in the twentieth century.

To order *Witnesses to Permanent Revolution* from Mehring Books, click here.

Footnotes:

- [1] *The New Course* (London: New Park, 1972), p. 45.[back]
- [2] *Witnesses to Permanent Revolution: The Documentary Record* edited and translated by Richard B. Day and Daniel Gaido. (Brill, 2009). p. 3.[back]
- [3] *Ibid*, pp. 9–10.[back]
- [4] *Marx Engels Collected Works*, Volume 10 (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1978), p. 280.[back]
- [5] *Ibid*, p. 287.[back]
- [6] Day and Gaido, p. 63.[back]
- [7] *Ibid*, p. 181.[back]
- [8] *Ibid*, p. 569.[back]
- [9] *Ibid*.[back]
- [10] *Ibid*, p. 223.[back]
- [11] *Ibid*, p. 541.[back]
- [12] *Ibid*, pp. 642–43.[back]
- [13] *Ibid*, p. 36.[back]
- [14] *Ibid*, p. 376.[back]
- [15] *Ibid*, p. 407.[back]
- [16] *Ibid*, p. 374.[back]
- [17] *Ibid*, p. 375.[back]
- [18] *Ibid*, p. 70.[back]
- [19] *Ibid*.[back]
- [20] *Ibid*, pp. 133–34.[back]
- [21] *Ibid*, pp. 121–22.[back]
- [22] Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 5 (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1961), p. 384.[back]
- [23] Day and Gaido, p. 70.[back]
- [24] *Ibid*, p. 473.[back]
- [25] "Three Conceptions of the Russian Revolution," in *Writings of Leon Trotsky 1939–40* (New York: Pathfinder, 1973), p. 67.[back]

- [26] Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 9 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1972), pp. 56–57.[back]
- [27] “Three Conceptions,” p. 68.[back]
- [28] Day and Gaido, p. 257.[back]
- [29] *Collected Works*, Vol. 9, p. 48.[back]
- [30] Day and Gaido, p. 252.[back]
- [31] *Ibid*, p. 261.[back]
- [32] *Ibid*.[back]
- [33] *Ibid*, 267.[back]
- [34] *Ibid*, pp. 267–68.[back]
- [35] *Ibid*, pp. 282–84.[back]
- [36] *Ibid*, p. 247.[back]
- [37] *Ibid*, p. 236.[back]
- [38] *Ibid*, p. 334.[back]
- [39] *Ibid*, p. 347.[back]
- [40] *Ibid*, p. 411.[back]
- [41] *Ibid*, p. 416.[back]
- [42] *Ibid*, pp. 444–45.[back]
- [43] *Ibid*, p. 493.[back]
- [44] *Ibid*, emphasis added.[back]
- [45] *Ibid*, p. 502.[back]
- [46] *Ibid*.[back]
- [47] *Ibid*, pp. 620–21.[back]
- [48] *Ibid*, p. 621.[back]
- [49] *Ibid*, p. 58.[back]
- [50] *Ibid*.[back]

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