In January 1905 a political strike of 100,000 St. Petersburg workers brought the city to a standstill. On January 9 a mass demonstration of workers — dressed in Sunday-best and led by a priest — marched to the Winter Palace to petition the Tsar.

Dozens were brutally gunned down by Tsarist officers, but with the victors perished many illusions of peacefully winning reforms from the autocracy. Barricades were thrown up in the working class districts, and street fighting broke out.

When the first wave of fighting ebbed, towards the end of February 1905, the "liberal" capitalists and academics held conferences and banquets, politely to press their request for the Tsar to establish a constituent assembly. They were ignored.

From exile in Geneva, Lenin insisted (earning the lessons from the abortive European revolutions of 1848) that the bourgeoisie could not be entrusted with the tasks of the democratic revolution. He argued that only a revolutionary provisional government, brought to power by the workers and peasants, could establish a genuine democratic and functioning constituent assembly.

Lenin expressed this in his call for the democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasants. In his view, this would still be a bourgeois government but the workers and peasants would be the driving force of the revolution.

The workers would need to continue their independent struggles and build their own class leadership after the establishment of the democratic dictatorship. The Mensheviks, in contrast, looked forward to collaboration with the bourgeoisie in a prolonged period of capitalist development.

Trotsky, however, returning from exile, was the first to translate Plekhanov's 1889 insistence on the working class character of the revolution, and Karl Marx's post mortem of the 1848 revolutions, into a direct claim to working class power in Russia.

'Stages' theory rejected

He argued for a rejection of dogmatic notions of 'stages' of development, and for a recognition of the international character and uneven development of capitalism, as well as the impotence of the Russian bourgeoisie and the vacillations of the peasantry.

Trotsky argued that the only consistent revolutionary class was the proletariat, which had to take the leadership of the democratic revolution, and carry it through as part of its own, socialist, revolution — establishing not a 'democratic' bourgeois regime, but the dictatorship of the proletariat.

For this analysis, Trotsky revived Marx's terminology after 1848, referring to it as the 'permanent [ uninterrupted, unbroken] revolution'. It was to be the key to the October events of 1917.

These debates were far from abstract challenges. The relative calm of the summer of 1905 broke down with a new wave of strikes in October.

Typesetters in St. Petersburg came out demanding wage increases,iggering stoppages in other industries. Political demands for constitutional rights were added.

Two weeks after the general strike ended, another massive general strike showed the power of the movement. The demands for an end to the Tsar's imposition of martial law in Poland, and against the court-martial

Trotsky revived Marx's terminology after 1848, referring to the 'permanent [ uninterrupted, unbroken] revolution'. It was to be the key to the October events of 1917.
and execution of mutineers at the Krupp works, the conflict between tsarist officials and workers went on for a long time.

A five-day strike broke out, with workers holding a meeting to demand the release of the workers and the establishment of a workers' council. The strike was supported by the workers of the nearby factories, and the strike wave spread throughout the country.

In response to the strike, the tsar government sent in troops to put down the protests. However, the soldiers were met with resistance from the workers, who continued their strike and demands for better working conditions.

The strike continued for several days, with the workers holding firm against the government's attempts to suppress the movement. Eventually, the government was forced to make some concessions to the workers, and the strike ended with the workers gaining some of their demands.

The events of the strike were seen as a turning point in the development of the Russian Revolution, as it served to unite the workers and encourage them to continue the struggle for their rights.

Page II
"Our tactic absolute lack of confidence... support to the new government; suspect Kerensky especially. Immediate elections to the Petrograd duma; no... participation with others..."

This was ignored. The Bolshevik line became under Stalin left and less distinguishable from the Menshevik line in many areas the two parties began acting as one.

When Lenin returned on April 3, his first words were of the imminence of a socialist revolution. He went on to propose a line on the central committee with the Mensheviks. Lenin in the pamphlet, the April Theses.

The defeat of February could only be defended and completed by socialist revolution, the Mensheviks said, with the working class taking the lead and resolving the question of dual power by establishing its own dictatorship, he argued.

**End the war**

Lenin addresses rally in Dzerzhinsky Square

The rising glamour for an end to the war could only be satisfied if the capitalists and their state were toppled.

Scarcely a single leading Bolshevik supported Lenin on any of these questions, though his views effectively echoed the earlier analysis by Trotsky arguing his concept of 'permanent revolution' after 1905. Only the day before Lenin arrived, the Menshevik congress, led by Stalin and Kamenev, had endorsed a quite opposite line.

The party had to be won over at the eleventh hour. But this was a historical exception, as Trotsky later explained: the fundamental instrument of programme revolution is the party. On the basis of our experience — even taking only one year, from February 1917 to February 1918 — and on the basis of the supplementary experience in Finland, Hungary, Italy, Bulgaria and Germany, we can post as almost an unalterable law that a party crisis is inevitable in the transition from the preparatory revolutionary activity to the immediate struggle for power" (Lessons of October).

Lenin: it was able however to rely on support from rank and file Bolshevik workers and soldiers in his campaign to reverse the leadership's policy. By the time of the next all-Russian conference on April 24, the majority of 150 delegates representing 79,000 members had swung behind most of his position.

The successful revolution opposed union with the Mensheviks and denounced the provisional government as a 'government of landowners and capitalists'. It called for working class power in the belligerent countries as the way out of the war. Bolsheviks began to raise the slogan of 'all power to the soviets'.

Lenin however lost on his demand for a break with the pacific Zimmerwald grouping of social democrats, and his call in 1916 to change its name to the Communist Party.

Spontaneous mass anti-war demonstrations in Petrograd in April exposed again the precarious balance of dual power between the soviets and the state. But the Soviet... against the..."
Rocked by the failed Kornilov revolt, Kerensky’s provisional government had collapsed. Worse from his point of view was the new insistence from his own Social Revolutionary party that he should not lead another government containing capitalist ministers. He was reduced to a directorate of five. Meanwhile from his hiding place Lenin wrote two letters to the Bolshevik central committee urging the leaders to prepare to seize the power. While the objective conditions had not existed in July, the situation had changed by September. The point is to make the task clear to the party. The present task must be an armed uprising in Petrograd and Moscow (with its region), the seizing of power and overthrow of the government. The vanguard of the working class had now seized behind the Bolsheviks, as demonstrated by their dominant position in the main soviets. They had won control in Petrograd, Moscow, Kerensky, and began holding up the movement of government freights. A similar sort of affair was also developing within the army, where formalism began again after the witch-hunting of July, and more and more of the most hated officers were arrested or murdered. The Bolsheviks stepped up their agitation throughout the country; the question was whether a suitably posed - which class was to rule? Day by day the rival government of the soviets grew, strengthened as the capitalist leaders began to sabotage the war effort in an attempt to discredit the revolution - only to be usurped by factory committees, which stepped in and took control of production. The enormous growth of support for the Bolsheviks, and their success in forming the executive committee to convene the congress of soviets for October 20 (later postponed to October 25) made Lenin even more impatient to begin the insurrection. Events leapt forward when the government issued an order for the reorganisation of the Petrograd garrison units in preparation for a new offensive. The response was immediate. Ignoring the capitalist accusations that the Petrograd soldiers had grown fat in idleness, the workers insisted that the garrison remain intact. The soldiers in return campaigned for the workers to be armed. The compromisers themselves unwittingly helped this process along when they suggested to the soviet a ‘committe of revolutionary defence’. Supposedly to protect the capital against the advancing German army. To their surprise, the Bolsheviks accepted the proposal; they had often discussed setting up an armed organisation of the soviet to lead the insurrection - now the Mensheviks themselves had proposed to set up a body that could do just that. The central committee met on October 10; it set October 15 as the target date for the insurrection, but this proved impossible. On October 16, at Lenin’s insistence, the central committee met again. Lenin pressed a new resolution calling for all organisations and all workers and soldiers to an all-sided and most vigorous preparation of armed insurrection. It was carried by twenty-yors to the two of Kamenev and Zinoviev, with three abstentions. Kamenev and Zinoviev broke ranks and denounced the Bolshevik plans in the non-party press. Though Lenin branded them as strike-breakers of the revolution and demanded their expulsion, the central committee would not agree. Military preparations Meanwhile the committee of revolutionary defence (now renamed the military revolutionary committee) had gone about its work with a will, setting up departments of defence, supplies, communications and intelligence. One regiment after another of placemen deserted themselves under the committee’s command, refusing to go to the front unless officered by the soviet. The prolonged period of dual power was giving way to the power of the soviets. The provisional government found itself more and more isolated, with ever fewer dependable troops. On October 21, the Petrograd garrison conference called on the All-Russian congress of soviets to Take the power in its hands, and guarantee to the peace, land and liberty. The next day the Petrograd soviet had called a peaceful review of its forces. It was a huge success, with every large hall filled with workers demanding ‘Down with Kerensky’, ‘Down with the war’, ‘All power to the soviets!’ It was the party government itself which gave the pretext for launching the insurrection, when it dispatched troops to close down the Bolshevik’s printing press and shut off the phone to the Smolny institute which was headquarters to the soviet as well as the Bolshevik party. The military revolutionary committee responded by fortifying Smolny with machine guns and armoured vehicles. The insurrectionary forces were now ready for action. In the early morning of October 25, Red Guard detachments occupied all of the strategic points of the capital, with hardly a shot fired. At 7am the telephone exchange fell, and comsoviets called the Bolsheviks and SRs rallied against the Bolsheviks for attacking it. Walk-out However the elections for the presiding council saw the Bolsheviks win fourteen seats to the Mensheviks’ three and the Internationalists only one. Seeing that they were a minority, the compromisers denounced the Bolsheviks and marched angrily out of the soviet. John Reed, the American journalist sympathetic to the Bolsheviks who chronicled the revolution in Ten Days That Shocked the World, described Trotsky that day: ‘. . . standing up with a pale, cruel, fearless look in his eyes, he walked contempt. All these so-called socialist compromisers, these frightened Mensheviks, social revolutionaries, Bund - let them go! They are just so much refuse which will be swept away into the garbage heap of history.’ Arrested By October 26 the Winter Palace had surrendered and the ministers of the provisional government were placed in cells. Kerensky had fled in or order to bring ‘loyal’ troops to rescue the compromised leaders. At 8:30 in the evening of October 26, the praesidium of the congress of soviets met to announce the arrest of the ministers, and to adjourn the congress, greeted by thunderous applause. When the cheering had died down Lenin announced: ‘We shall now proceed to construct the socialist order.’ He went on to outline the soviet terms for peace - no annexations, no indemnities, and the right of peoples to self determination. He then read out the proclamation to the peoples and governments of all the belligerent nations, which was unanimously adopted by the congress. Next Lenin read the decree on the land. All private ownership of land was abolished; all landowners were transferred to land committees and peasants’ soviets. The land decree was debated and passed with a voice against: the working class vanguard had honoured its commitment to the agrarian questions that had been promised to the soviets were overjoyed. Despite the material and political problems which were to beset the revolution, the conquest of power by the armed working class headed by a conscious Marxist revolutionary party stands as a turning point in history. This revolution, 75 years later still is, OUR revolution. 

JOHN LISTER