

# Primary Sources:

## *The Russian Revolution of 1905*



### Introduction

Below are three texts relating to the Russian Revolution of 1905. The first of these is the October Manifesto, issued by Tsar Nicholas II in October of 1905 in response to growing protests and calls for reform in the Russian empire. The second comes from Sergei Witte, a former Minister of Finance and, at the start of the revolution, chairman of the Committee of Ministers. He served as Russia's first Prime Minister from 1905 to 1906, and in 1907 he began writing his memoirs, in which he reflected back on the revolutionary period and the government's response to it. The final source is from the autobiography of Leon Trotsky, written in 1930. By that time, the Russian empire had collapsed and been replaced by Soviet leadership in 1917. Trotsky had been an active critic of the tsar and a key organizer of the 1905 revolution, as well as a central figure of the 1917 revolution, before he fell out of favor with Soviet leader Joseph Stalin in the 1920s.

As you are reading, consider how the author and the date each source was written shape the ways the Revolution of 1905 is characterized. In particular, consider what each source might identify as the "lessons" of 1905.

### PRIMARY SOURCES

#### INTRODUCTION

TSAR NICHOLAS II'S MANIFESTO OF  
OCTOBER 17<sup>TH</sup>, 1905

SERGEI WITTE, REMEMBERING THE  
1905 REVOLUTION IN 1907

LEON TROTSKY, REMEMBERING  
THE REVOLUTION OF 1905 AFTER  
THE BOLSHEVIK REVOLUTION OF  
1917

# Primary Source 1: Tsar Nicholas II's Manifesto of October 17<sup>th</sup>, 1905



Tsar Nicholas II

In the face of growing unrest and the General Strike of 1905, Minister of Finance Sergei Witte urged Nicholas II to address the public and the demands of reformers. Though hesitant, the tsar agreed and signed the October Manifesto on October 17, 1905. The document granted basic civil rights, the creation of political parties, and near universal male suffrage. It also provided for the establishment of an elected body of representatives, called the Duma, which would work in an advisory and legislative capacity with Nicholas II's imperial rule. Nicholas II was reluctant to embrace any limits on his power, but Witte warned that without this compromise, the tsar's government would likely collapse. After issuing the manifesto, more detailed laws were outlined and elections for the Duma were scheduled to be held in the Spring of the following year.

Source: Translated by Daniel Field (1938-2006), a professor of Russian history at Syracuse University. His translation is available at [http://academic.shu.edu/russianhistory/index.php/Manifesto\\_of\\_June\\_3rd,\\_1907\\_\(Dissolution\\_of\\_the\\_Second\\_Duma\)](http://academic.shu.edu/russianhistory/index.php/Manifesto_of_June_3rd,_1907_(Dissolution_of_the_Second_Duma))

We, Nicholas II, By the Grace of God Emperor and Autocrat of all Russia, King of Poland, Grand Duke of Finland, etc., proclaim to all Our loyal subjects:

Rioting and disturbances in the capitals [i.e. St. Petersburg and the old capital, Moscow] and in many localities of Our Empire fill Our heart with great and heavy grief. The well-being of the Russian Sovereign is inseparable from the well-being of the nation, and the nation's sorrow is his sorrow. The disturbances that have taken place may cause grave tension in the nation and may threaten the integrity and unity of Our state.

By the great vow of service as tsar We are obliged to use every resource of wisdom and of Our authority to bring a speedy end to unrest that is dangerous to Our state. We have ordered the responsible authorities to take measures to terminate direct manifestations of disorder, lawlessness, and violence and to protect peaceful people who quietly seek to fulfill their duties. To carry out successfully the general measures that we have conceived to restore peace to the life of the state, We believe that it is essential to coordinate activities at the highest level of government.



Printing of the October Manifesto, issued by Nicholas II in October, 1905



**The Winter Palace, St. Petersburg**

We require the government dutifully to execute our unshakeable will:

(1.) To grant to the population the essential foundations of civil freedom, based on the principles of genuine inviolability of the person, freedom of conscience, speech, assembly, and association.

(2.) Without postponing the scheduled elections to the State Duma, to admit to participation in the duma (insofar as possible in the short time that remains before it is scheduled to convene) of all those classes of the population that now are completely deprived of voting rights; and to leave the further development of a general statute on elections to the future legislative order.

(3.) To establish as an unbreakable rule that no law shall take effect without confirmation by the State Duma and that the elected representatives of the people shall be guaranteed the opportunity to participate in the supervision of the legality of the actions of Our appointed officials.

We summon all loyal sons of Russia to remember their duties toward their country, to assist in terminating the unprecedented unrest now prevailing, and together with Us to make every effort to restore peace and tranquility to Our native land.

Given at Peterhof the 17<sup>th</sup> of October in the 1905<sup>th</sup> year of Our Lord and of Our reign the eleventh.

**Signature of Nicholas II (left);  
Demonstration on October 17,  
1905, by Ilya Repin, 1907 (below)**



## Primary Source 2: *Sergei Witte, Remembering the 1905 Revolution in 1907*



**Sergei Witte**

*Sergei Witte (1849–1915) was a key statesman in the Russian empire during the turn of the century. In the 1890s, he oversaw Russia's aggressive industrialization program as Minister of Finance, but by 1902 he had lost favor and was moved to the Committee of Ministers. As Russia struggled in the Russo-Japanese War and unrest inside Russia grew, it created an opportunity for Witte to regain the tsar's ear and return to influence. In 1905, he was appointed by Nicholas II to represent Russia in the brokering of the Treaty of Portsmouth. After returning home, he also played a critical role in shaping the government's response to the October Revolution of 1905. Witte pushed the tsar to compromise and convinced him to sign the October Manifesto. In November 1905, he became President of the Committee of Ministers (in effect, Russia's first Prime Minister),*

*though he only remained in office until the following spring. Two years after revolution, in 1907 Witte began writing his memoirs, which he finished in 1912. They were only published posthumously in translation in 1921. In this passage, he describes his understanding of Bloody Sunday, and the events and outcomes of the revolution.*

*Source: The Memoirs of Count Witte, trans. Abraham Yarmolinsky (London: William Heinemann, 1921), 250–54, 256–57, 266–68, 270–73, 275–76.*

In the early days of the Russo-Japanese war, General Kuropatkin\* on one occasion reproached Plehve,\*\* I recollect, with having been the only Minister to desire the Russo-Japanese war and make common cause with the clique of political adventurers who had dragged the country into it. "Alexey Nikolayevich (i.e., Kuropatkin)," retorted Plehve, "you are not familiar with Russia's internal situation. We need a little victorious war to stem the tide of revolution."

History made a mockery of the calculations of Plehve and his like. Instead of enhancing the prestige and increasing the physical resources of the regime, the war, with its endless misery and disgrace, completely sapped the system's vitality and laid bare its utter rottenness before the eyes of Russia and of the world generally, so that the population, whose needs had been neglected for many years by a corrupt and inefficient government, finally lost its patience and fell into a state of indescribable confusion.

I shall begin my narrative of the revolutionary upheaval of 1905–1906 with my reminiscences relating to the events of January 9, 1905, a day which in the annals of the Russian revolution is known as Bloody Sunday.

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\* Aleksey Kuropatkin (1848–1925) served as the Russian war minister at the start of the Russo-Japanese War and, after major Russian losses, demoted to a field commander.

\*\* Vyacheslav von Plehve (1846–1904) was Russian minister of the interior until his assassination in July 1904.

A certain Sergey Zubatov,<sup>\*\*\*</sup> a notorious agent-provocateur, is responsible for the idea of combatting the revolution by applying the principle of "knock out one wedge with another." He inaugurated a system which aimed at fighting the revolution with its own weapons and tactics, and which might be described as police socialism. The revolutionists are winning over the workmen to their side by preaching the doctrine of the socialistic millennium to them, he argued; -- let us, therefore, imitate the methods and the language of the socialistic agitators, and we shall have the masses with us. And Zubatov proceeded to organize a veritable "labor movement," with trade-unions, workers' meetings, lecture clubs, etc., all under the auspices of the Secret Service... in order to keep the laboring masses under the influence of the department of police...

On January 8<sup>th</sup>, I was told by the Minister of Justice that in the evening there would be a conference at Prince Mirski's<sup>†</sup> for the purpose of deciding what to do with the workmen who intended the next day to march to the Palace Square and present a petition to His Majesty... The spokesman of the delegation begged me to see to it that the Emperor should appear before the workmen and receive their petition. Otherwise, they said, a great disaster was inevitable... The next morning, from my balcony, I could see a large crowd moving along the Kamennoostrovski Prospect.<sup>‡</sup> There were among it many intellectuals, women, and children. Before ten minutes were over shots resounded in the direction of the Troitzky Bridge. One bullet whizzed past me, another one killed the porter of the Alexander Lyceum.<sup>§</sup>

The next thing I saw was a number of wounded being carried away from the scene in cabs, and then a crowd running in disorder with crying women here and there. I learned afterwards that it was decided at the abovementioned conference not to allow the marchers to reach the Square, but apparently instructions were not issued in time to the military authorities. There was no one present to speak to the workmen and make an attempt to bring them to reason. I do not know whether the same thing happened everywhere, but on the Troitzky Bridge the troops fired rashly and without rhyme or reason. There were hundreds of casualties in killed and wounded, among them many innocent people... the workmen were completely alienated from the Czar and his Government...



**Reconstruction of Bloody Sunday, 1905  
in 1925**

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<sup>\*\*\*</sup> Sergei Zubatov (1864-1917), a Russian police agent who believed that repression alone would only worsen revolutionaries. Instead, he supported a governmental policy of funding trade unions and labor organizers that were directed by the police.

<sup>†</sup> Pyotr Svyatopolk-Mirsky (1857-1914) was a Russian general and minister of the interior after Plehve's assassination, from August to December 1904. He was dismissed so quickly for advocating some modest compromises to assuage protestors.

<sup>‡</sup> A main street in St. Petersburg.

<sup>§</sup> A school for elites who would become leaders in the imperial government.



***Building barricades in Sormovo, December 1905***

The Government took no measures, or only ineffectual ones, to counteract and stop the subversive activities of the unions and of the press. Probably it did not have the necessary information regarding the aims and doings of many of the unions. Very likely, too, it was misled by incompetent advisers... As far as the enforcement of the censorship is concerned, the difficulty of the task was tremendously increased by the existence of a widespread secret press, which turned out and distributed millions of copies of all sorts of revolutionary pamphlets, programs and proclamations.

What prevented the Government from coping promptly and successfully with the revolutionary outbreaks was the lethargy, incompetence and timidity prevalent among executive and administrative officers....

I assumed the duty of ruling the Russian Empire in the capacity of President of the Committee of Ministers in October, 1905. At that time the country was in a state of complete and universal confusion.

The Government was in a quandary, and when the revolution boiled up furiously from the depths, the authorities were completely paralyzed... The rioting grew more fierce, not daily but hourly. The revolution came out openly on the streets and assumed a more and more threatening character. Its urge carried away all classes of the people.

A general feeling of profound discontent with the existing order was the most apparent symptom of the corruption with which the social and political life of Russia was infested. It was this feeling that united all the classes of the population. They all joined in a demand for radical political reforms, but the manner in which the different social groups visioned the longed-for changes varied with each class of people.



***The Barricades of Presnya, 1905, by Ivan Vladimirov***

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‡The Rothchild family is a wealthy German banking family.



***Old Buyan peasants and participants in the revolution of 1905***

The upper classes, the nobility, were dissatisfied and impatient with the Government. They were not averse to the idea of limiting the Emperor's autocratic powers, but with a view to benefiting their own class. Their dream was an aristocratic constitutional monarchy. The merchants and captains of industry, the rich, looked forward to a constitutional monarchy of the bourgeois type and dreamed of the leadership of capital and of a mighty race of Russian Rothschilds.<sup>11</sup> The "intelligentsia," i.e., members of various liberal professions, hoped for a constitutional monarchy, which was eventually to result in a bourgeois republic modelled upon the pattern of the French State. The students, not only in the universities, but in the advanced high school grades, recognized no law except the word of those who preached the most extreme revolutionary and anarchistic theories... As for the workmen, they were concerned about filling their stomachs with more food than had been their wont. For this reason, they reveled in all manner of socialistic schemes of state organization. They fell completely under the sway of the revolutionists and rendered assistance without stint wherever there was need of physical force.

Finally, the majority of the Russian people, the peasantry, were anxious to increase their land holdings and to do away with the unrestrained arbitrary actions on the part of the higher landed class and of the police... The peasant's dream was an autocratic Czar, but a people's Czar... The peasants were inclined to relish the idea of a constitutional monarchy and the socialistic principles as they were formulated by the laborite party, which party emphasized labor and the notion that labor alone, especially physical labor, is the foundation of all right. The peasants, too, were ready to resort to violence in order to obtain more land and, in general, to better their intolerable condition...



***Crowd gathered on Nevsky Prospect, St. Petersburg, October 1905***

The city of St. Petersburg, the intellectual capital of the country, with its large industrial population was, naturally enough, one of the chief storm centers of the revolution; It was there that the council (Soviet) of Workmen's Deputies came into being. The idea of setting up this institution was born in the early days of October, and the press began to agitate for it among the working population of the capital.

The historical manifesto which granted the country a constitution was issued on the 17<sup>th</sup> of October, 1905, and on the same day "The Bulletins (*Izvestiya*) of the Soviet of Workmen's Deputies,"<sup>¶</sup> a purely revolutionary organ, began to be printed in turn in several printing houses...

At the time when I entered upon my office (the 18<sup>th</sup> of October), this Workmen's Soviet appeared at the first glance to be a considerable power, for the reason that it was obeyed by the working masses...

The Workmen's Soviet met on October 18<sup>th</sup> and decided to declare a general strike, as an expression of the workmen's dissatisfaction with the manifesto. Nevertheless, the strike movement in Moscow and elsewhere began to wane and railroad traffic was soon restored to normal conditions. Under these circumstances the Soviet, at its session of October 19<sup>th</sup>, decided to call off the strike two days later. During the days following closely upon the publication of the manifesto, frequent clashes took place in the streets of the capital between the revolutionaries, on one side, and the troops, the police, and counter-revolutionaries, on the other...

Elsewhere in Russia, however, the demonstrations connected with the manifesto were accompanied by disorders. Thus, for instance, on October 26<sup>th</sup>, riots broke out at Kronstadt.<sup>††</sup> They were not quelled until October 28<sup>th</sup>. Kronstadt, a city administered by the Ministry of the Navy, was revolutionary to an extraordinary degree. The spirit of revolt was rooted deeper among the sailors than in the army... This revolutionary spirit became rampant among the sailors because of the naval authorities' misrule and also because the sailors were recruited from the more intelligent elements of the population, which fall an easier prey to revolutionary propaganda. It must be borne in mind that in those days the revolutionizing process was going on among vast masses of people....



***A Cossack patrol of destroyed oil fields in Baku, where interethnic violence erupted during the revolution of 1905 (above); Barricades in Kronstadt, November 1905 (below)***



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<sup>¶</sup>This refers to the socialist newsletter of the short-lived St. Petersburg Soviet, a workers' council during the revolution of 1905.

<sup>††</sup>A community on an island off the coast of St. Petersburg that had a substantial naval base





***Cavalry at the Winter Palace, St.  
Petersburg, January 9, 1905***

On November 13<sup>th</sup>, the Soviet again considered the proposition of declaring a general strike. The plan was rejected... From that time on the authority of the Soviet began rapidly to decline and its organization to decay. It was then that I found it opportune to have Nosar arrested.<sup>##</sup> The arrest was made on November 26<sup>th</sup>. Thereupon the Soviet elected a presidium of three to replace Nosar. This presidium held secret sessions, while the body of the Soviet did not meet at all... After Nosar was taken, I ordered the arrest of the whole Soviet... [We] waited for the Soviet to meet, which the latter hesitated to do. Their fears were well founded, for as soon as the body gathered on December 3<sup>rd</sup> in the Hall of the Free Economic Society,<sup>##</sup> the members, 90 in all, were rounded up and arrested. After Nosar's arrest the Soviet had attempted to put through a plan for a general strike as a protest against the arrest, but their efforts were in vain.

Thus, ended the affair of the Workmen's Soviet and its leader, Nosar... Since 1905 there have been no serious strikes in Russia. The strike movement during the revolution taught the workers to assume a very skeptical attitude toward leaders like Nosar. It also taught the employers a lesson. To a certain extent they have bettered the conditions of the workers. The Government, too, learned a lesson. This year the Government has enacted a workmen's insurance law, despite the masked opposition of some of the representatives of industry sitting in the Imperial Council and Duma. This law was practically approved about twenty years ago, when I was Minister of Finances, but met with constant obstruction.



***First chairman of the St. Petersburg  
Soviet, Georgiy Khrustavel-Nosar***

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<sup>##</sup> Georgiy Khrustalev-Nosar was the first chairperson of the St. Petersburg Soviet.

<sup>##</sup> The Free Economic Society was well-established intellectual society that had a meeting house in St. Petersburg.

# Primary Source 3: *Leon Trotsky, Remembering the Revolution of 1905 after the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917*

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**Leon Trotsky**

*In 1905, Leon Trotsky (1879-1940) was 26 years old. Already a radical socialist activist, he became a leader of the failed 1905 October Revolution as well as of the successful 1917 Soviet Revolution. But not all socialists of the time were the same. Since 1903, Vladimir Lenin supported a more tightly organized revolution coordinated by a small group of socialist leaders, while Trotsky supported creating a coalition that was broader based and less top down. Following Russia's lost to Japan in 1905, Lenin and Trotsky both participated in the October Revolution with the goal of overthrowing the tsar, but the split between them - and among socialists in general - was already clear. After the Soviet Revolution of 1917, Trotsky reconciled with Lenin and joined the USSR's leadership. However, he later became a leading voice of opposition to the policies of Joseph Stalin, for which he was deported to Turkey in 1929, where he wrote his autobiography, which appeared in print the following year. In this passage, he remembered his role in the October Revolution.*

Source: Leon Trotsky, *My Life: An Attempt at an Autobiography* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons), 1930), 175-80, 183-86. Accessible also at <https://www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/1930/mylife/ch14.htm#n1>

The October strike did not develop according to plan. It began with the printers in Moscow, and then subsided slowly. The decisive fights had been planned by the parties for the anniversary of the Bloody Sunday (January 22). That is why I was completing my work in my Finnish refuge without haste.\* But an accidental strike that was already in its last gasps suddenly spread to the railways and went off at a gallop. After October 10 of that year,\*\* the strike, now with political slogans, spread from Moscow throughout the country. No such general strike had ever been seen anywhere before. In many towns there were clashes with the troops. But, taken by and large, the October events remained on the plane of a political strike and never took on the character of an armed up rising. Absolutism lost its head, however, and retreated. On October 17 it announced the Constitutional Manifesto.\*\*\* It is true that injured Czarism retained the apparatus of power. The government policy was more than ever, to use the words of Witte, "a mixture of cowardice, blindness, treachery and stupidity."† Nevertheless, the revolution won its first victory, a victory not complete in itself, but one which promised much...

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\* Trotsky had been working for more radical action following the events of Bloody Sunday in January 1905. But in May he escaped arrest to Finland.

\*\* Tolstoy used the Julian calendar, which was thirteen days earlier than the more common Gregorian calendar. This day thus would be October 23, 1905 elsewhere.

\*\*\* Usually now called the October Manifesto.

† This is Sergei Witte, leading Russian government agent who was the main designer of the October Manifesto. As this quote suggest, though, he was not confident with the tsar's leadership.

# Известия Московского Совета рабочих депутатов.

№ 1. 7 декабря 1905 года. № 1.

Московский Совет Рабочих Депутатов, Комитет и Группа Российской Социально-Демократической Рабочей Партии и Комитет Партии Социалистов-Революционеров. ПОСТАНОВИЛИ: объявлять в Москве с 7 декабря, с 12 час. дня всеобщую политическую стачку и стремиться перевести ее в вооруженное возстание.

## Во время работы, создавать и проводить

Товарищи рабочие, создайте и проводите в 11 декабря, когда рабочий класс своей стачкой и политическим давлением вынудит правительство и администрацию "выпустить" из тюрьмы политзаключенных, всеобщую политическую стачку и стремиться перевести ее в вооруженное возстание.

Товарищи рабочие! Мы, избранные вами депутаты, Московский Совет, и Группа Р. С. Д. и Комитет Партии социалистов-революционеров, объявляем всеобщую политическую стачку и призываем всех на стачку. 3-го декабря в 12 часов дня бросить все работы на заводах фабриках и заводах на улицах города и в промышленных предприятиях.

Да поддержит демократическое правительство, Московский Совет, Демократическая Рабочая Партия, Социалистическая Рабочая Партия, Комитет Партии Социалистов-Революционеров, Группы Рабочих Депутатов.

А валь делегатский комитет должен уметь вести переговоры с правительством и администрацией, а также вести переговоры с рабочими и стачечниками.

Важнейшим делом на этот раз является борьба за освобождение политзаключенных. Мы уже сообщали в предыдущих номерах о том, что правительство и администрация отказываются выпустить из тюрьмы политзаключенных. Мы считаем, что это является нарушением прав рабочих и стачечников.

Да поддержит демократическое правительство, Московский Совет, Демократическая Рабочая Партия, Социалистическая Рабочая Партия, Комитет Партии Социалистов-Революционеров, Группы Рабочих Депутатов.

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## First issue of Izvestia, News of the Moscow Soviet of Workers' Deputies, December 7, 1905

I arrived in St. Petersburg when the October strike was at its peak. The wave of strikes was sweeping farther and farther, but there was danger that the movement, not being controlled by a central organization, would die down without any results. I came from Finland with a plan for an elected non-party organization, with delegates who represented each a thousand workers... In the Soviet<sup>‡</sup> I was known by the name of Yanovsky, after the village in which I was born. In the press I wrote as Trotsky. I had to work for three newspapers. With [Alexander] Parvus<sup>§</sup> I took over the tiny *Russian Gazette* and transformed it into a fighting organ for the masses. Within a few days the circulation rose from thirty thousand to one hundred thousand. A month later, it had reached the half-million mark. But our technical resources could not keep up with the growth of the paper. We were finally extricated from our difficulties by the government raid....

Besides the *Russian Gazette* and *Nachalo*,<sup>||</sup> I also wrote editorials for the *Izvestia (The News)*, the official Soviet organ, as well as numerous appeals, manifestoes and resolutions. The fifty-two days of the existence of the first Soviet were filled to the brim with work — the Soviet, the Executive Committee, endless meetings, and three newspapers. How we managed to live in this whirlpool is still not clear, even to me. But much of the past seems inconceivable because as we remember it we lose the element of activity; we look at ourselves from outside. Whereas in those days we were sufficiently active. We not only whirled in the vortex, but we helped to create it...

In his memoirs [Sergei] Witte wrote afterward that in 1905 "the vast majority of the people seemed to go mad." Revolution appears to a conservative as collective madness only because it raises the "normal" insanity of social contradictions to the highest possible tension. Just as people dislike to recognize themselves in a bold caricature. And yet the entire modern development condenses, strains, and accentuates the contradictions and makes them unbearable, consequently preparing that state of mind when the great majority "goes mad." But in such cases, the insane majority puts the straitjacket on the sane minority. Thanks to this, history keeps moving along.



Members of the St. Petersburg Soviet of Workers' Deputies, 1905: Leon Trotsky at center

<sup>‡</sup> The name for the workers' council that formed that year to organize the strikes and other actions.

<sup>§</sup> Alexander Parvus was a socialist activist who wrote popular articles at the time predicting the decline of nation-states in the face of the socialist revolution.

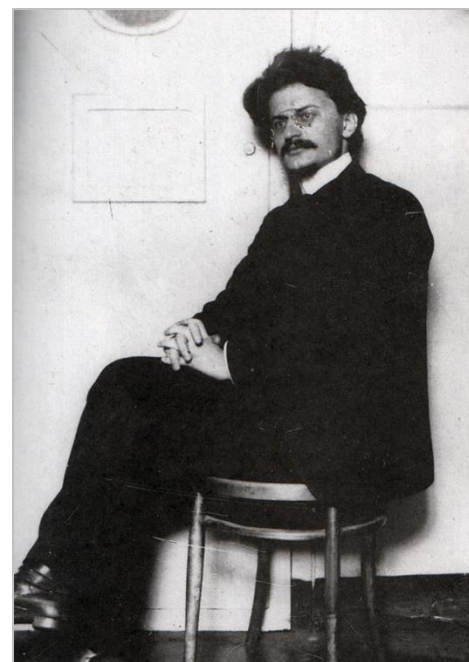
<sup>||</sup> Two socialist newspapers at the time run by Trotsky and Parvus.



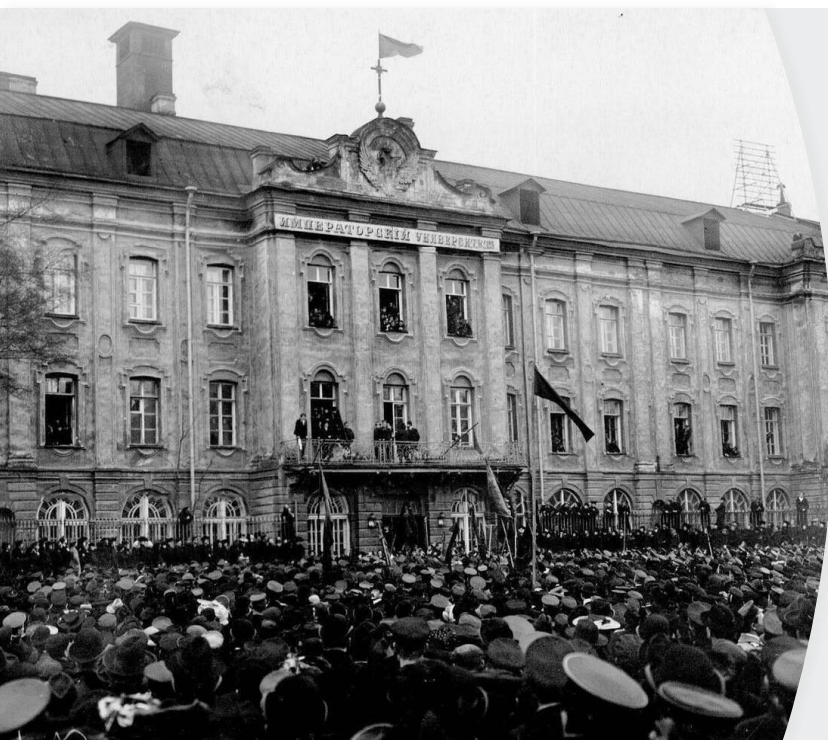
**Mugshot of Leon Trotsky following arrest of the St. Petersburg Soviet, 1905**

A revolutionary chaos is not at all like an earthquake or a flood. In the confusion of a revolution, a new order begins to take shape instantly; men and ideas distribute themselves naturally in new channels. Revolution appears as utter madness only to those whom it sweeps aside and overthrows. To us it was different. We were in our own element, albeit a very stormy one. A time and place was found for everything. Some were even able to lead personal lives, to fall in love, to make new friends and actually to visit revolutionary theatres...

The Soviet roused great masses of people. The workers supported it to a man. In the country, disturbances continued, as they did among the troops who were returning home from the Far East after the Peace of Portsmouth... All the elements that go to make a successful revolution were there, but they did not mature.



**Trotsky in prison awaiting trial, 1906**



On October 18, the day after the promulgation of the manifesto, tens of thousands of people were standing in front of the University of St. Petersburg, aroused by the struggle and intoxicated with the joy of their first victory. I shouted to them from the balcony not to trust an incomplete victory, that the enemy was stubborn, that there were traps ahead; I tore the Czar's manifesto into pieces and scattered them to the winds. But such political warnings only scratch the surface of the mass consciousness. The masses need the schooling of big events....

**Rally at the University of St. Petersburg, October 18, 1905**



**Leon Trotsky arriving in Petrograd by train on May 4 as the 1917 revolution was underway**

The partial victory of the October strike had for me a tremendous theoretical as well as political importance. It was not the opposition of the liberal *bourgeoisie*, not the elemental risings of the peasantry or the terrorist acts of the intelligentsia, but the strike of the workers that for the first time brought Czarism to its knees. The revolutionary leadership of the proletariat revealed itself as an incontrovertible fact... Revolution was obviously opening up to the proletariat the prospect of seizing the power. The years of reaction which soon followed failed to make me move from this position...

From February to October, my participation in the events was chiefly of a literary nature. In October, I plunged headlong into the gigantic whirlpool, which, in a personal sense, was the greatest test for my powers. Decisions had to be made under fire. I can't help noting here that those decisions came to me quite obviously. I did not turn back to see what others might say, and I very seldom had opportunity to consult anybody; everything had to be done in such a hurry... I organically felt that my years of apprenticeship were over, although not in the sense that I stopped learning. No, the urge and willingness to learn I have carried through my whole life in all their first intensity. But in the years that followed I have been learning as a master learns, and not as a pupil...

In Russian life, the revolution of 1905 was the dress rehearsal for the revolution of 1917. That was its significance in my personal life as well. I took part in the events of 1917 with absolute resolution and confidence, because they were merely a continuation and development of the revolutionary activity which had been interrupted by the arrest of the St. Petersburg Soviet on December 3, 1905... In this respect, as in others, the year 1905 was a preparation for the year 1917.

**Moscow factory workers at a barricade, 1905**



# Image Citations:

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Building barricades in Sormovo, during the December uprising of 1905, December 12, 1905, Public Domain, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:The\\_Russian\\_Revolution,\\_in\\_Sormovo,\\_Nizhny\\_Novgorod\\_1905.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:The_Russian_Revolution,_in_Sormovo,_Nizhny_Novgorod_1905.jpg)

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Mugshot of Trotsky after Soviet members were arrested during a meeting in the Free Economic Society building, December 3, 1905, Saint Petersburg Police Department, Public Domain,  
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