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Paving the Path for Success: Lenin's Political Theory in Practice, 1902-1917

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THE FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

PAVING THE PATH FOR SUCCESS:
LENIN'S POLITICAL THEORY IN PRACTICE, 1902-1917

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This Thesis is dedicated to Dr. Art Vanden Houten in an effort to thank him for igniting my passion for political theory and showing me that the influence of a truly great teacher expands much further than the classroom.

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ABSTRACT

This thesis presents and evaluates a selection of Lenin's political writings from 1902-1917 in an effort to illustrate the continuity in his political theory. It traces two themes, Lenin's fight against opportunism and his advocacy for organization, throughout the selection of writings in an attempt to illustrate such continuity. This thesis also seeks to show that because there is a clear continuity in Lenin's writings, that the general historiography that presents Lenin as fickle and overly flexible in his writings is untrue. Furthermore, it draws the conclusion that if Lenin was not overly flexible in his writings, then he was not changing theory in an effort to gain absolute power

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iv
ABSTRACT.....	v
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	vi
INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER ONE	6
CHAPTER TWO	19
CHAPTER THREE	34
CONCLUSION.....	50
WORKS CITED	54
SECONDARY SOURCES	54
LIST OF LENIN’S WORKS IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE	56
BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH	58

INTRODUCTION

Lenin, as a revolutionary leader, produced an extensive amount of political writings, leaving a large collection for historical and political evaluation. Volumes have been written on Lenin's life and a myriad of interpretations have emerged since the last century when Lenin and the Bolsheviks assumed power. Lenin's political life had a enormous effect on Soviet history; an effect that continued to last long after he took power in 1917.

The significance given to Lenin and his theories in the creation of the Soviet State and in its history is paramount. While Lenin was alive he attained an enormous following, which eventually reached cult status. After his death, his celebrity grew to even greater heights and the Cult of Lenin began to grow throughout the Soviet Union.¹ Such a large following, before and after his death, suggests that Lenin was, to an extent, the cornerstone of Soviet history. Therefore, the way historians portray Lenin has enormous implications for how Soviet history, in general, is interpreted. Lenin's political theory was the base for many Soviet policies throughout its history, and his predecessors often used his writings to legitimize their own policies.² Thus, without the proper understanding of Lenin's political thought, one could easily blame Lenin for his successors' indiscretions and misuses of power, which could, and often has, put Lenin even further in a negative light. Generally, the existing scholarship on Lenin paints him as a man with an unquenchable thirst for power. He is often portrayed as a ruthless politician who would do anything to obtain absolute domination over his party and over the Russian people. Thus, one of the main focuses of such scholarship becomes Lenin's motivation and intentions.

Much of the literature that was written before the collapse of the Soviet Union argued that Lenin shaped his theories around his knack for manipulating his contemporaries and the masses. In the publication *Three Who Made a Revolution* (1948), Bertram D. Wolfe argued that the readiness to take power was really the essence of Leninist thought.³ Furthermore, he discussed Lenin's "keen sense of power" and argued that Lenin truly felt that he was in control of the party machine.⁴ In addition, Stanley W. Page, in his article *The Russian Proletariat and the World Revolution: Lenin's views to 1914* (1951), argued that Lenin's theoretical claims were irrational. Following that assumption, he argued that such irrationality was born out of Lenin's attempts to gain power. He claimed that many of

¹ For an in depth account on the Cult of Lenin, its creation, and its effect on Soviet History, see: Nina Tumarkin. "Religion, Bolshevism, and the Origins of the Lenin Cult." Nina Tumarkin, "Political Ritual and the Cult of Lenin." Robert C. Tucker, "The Rise of Stalin's Personality Cult."

² S. A. Smith, *The Russian Revolution: A very Short Introduction*. Shelia Fitzpatrick. *The Russian Revolution*, p. 42.

³ Bertram D. Wolfe. *Three Who Made a Revolution*, p. 296.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 243-248.

Lenin's theses were based on the "personal ambition" of a "self-appointed leader".⁵ In another article by Page, *Lenin's Assumption of International Proletarian Leadership* (1954), he argued that the basic pattern of Lenin's life shows a strong desire for leadership and he called Lenin compulsive and "utterly impractical".⁶ Furthermore, Page suggested that some of Lenin's most important political writings were based on his need to legitimize his role as a future dictator.⁷

Following in line with Page, in the publication *Lenin: The Compulsive Revolutionary* (1964), Stefan T. Possony suggested that Lenin wanted to rule supreme and was impatiently awaiting the time in which he could attain such a powerful position.⁸ He argued that under Lenin's leadership, the Bolsheviks had always intended to establish a dictatorship in the realm of politics and over the people.⁹ The same idea is present in Theodore Von Laue's *Why Lenin? Why Stalin?* (1964). Von Laue also put some focus on Lenin's intentions and paints Lenin as a manipulator. He argued, the Bolsheviks, possessed by Lenin's leadership, ruthlessly manipulated and exploited the ignorance of the masses to gain control and power.¹⁰ Furthermore, he portrayed Lenin as an impatient Marxist that did not care if taking power meant the demise of the party.¹¹ He also described Lenin as having a deep yearning for world recognition.¹²

Keeping with the same trend on Lenin's motivations in *The Russian Revolution* (1984), Shelia Fitzpatrick also described Lenin as on a quest for personal power. She argued that Lenin's true intentions were to head a dictatorship.¹³ In addition, she argued that Lenin, from 1905 onward, conceived the eventual revolutionary transfer of power according to the idea of a dictatorship.¹⁴ Robert Service, in his three volume work *Lenin: A Political Life* (1985), continued the idea that Lenin's intentions for forging revolution were an attempt at gaining power. He argued that no one could deny that Lenin was attracted by the idea of becoming "kingpin" in any organization to which he was affiliated.¹⁵ He argued that Lenin's zealotry came from a revolutionary quest for power.¹⁶ Furthermore, he suggested that Lenin was obsessive about control.¹⁷ In *The Russian Revolution*, Richard Pipes also gave the impression that Lenin was interested in pursuing power. In his introduction he made the claim the revolution was made by identifiable individuals who were acting in

⁵ Stanley W. Page. "The Russian Proletariat and World Revolution: Lenin's Views to 1914", p. 5.

⁶ Stanley W. Page. "Lenin's Assumption of International Proletarian Leadership", p. 237.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 241.

⁸ Stefan T. Possony. *Lenin: The Compulsive Revolutionary*, p. 243.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 253.

¹⁰ Theodore Von Laue. *Why Lenin? Why Stalin?*, p. 127.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 128.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 110-11.

¹³ Shelia Fitzpatrick. *The Russian Revolution*, p. 65.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 31.

¹⁵ Robert Service. *Lenin: A Political Life*, vol. 1, p. 173.

¹⁶ Robert Service. *Lenin: A Political Life*, vol. 2, p. xv.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 70.

an attempt to pursue their own advantages.¹⁸ He claimed that Lenin was absolutely determined to make the party machine subordinate to his will and was trying to create, “under the party’s cover”, an organization that would be under the complete control of Lenin himself.¹⁹ Furthermore, he claimed that Lenin would do anything to obtain power and he did so by “breaking the spirit of those who stood in his way”.²⁰

Since the evaluations of Lenin already mentioned were comprised before the collapse of the Soviet Union, in the midst of the cold war, one might expect works following the collapse to have a different tone. However, the negative attitude towards Lenin remained a part of the literature. There was a shift in the portrayal of Lenin insomuch as the more recent works seem to have suggested that Lenin’s efforts were directed more towards bringing his party to power. However, the emphasis given to Lenin’s need for strict control over the party implied that Lenin’s aim was to come out of the revolution as the one holding the most power.

Orlando Figes piece *The People’s Tragedy: The Russian Revolution 1891-1924* (1996) showed that the general trend in treating Lenin as power hungry remained. Figes argued that Lenin’s success in 1917 came from his ability to dominate the party.²¹ Furthermore, like the authors before him, Figes argued that Lenin’s actions were an attempt to gain absolute control. He stated that, “having secured the dictatorship of the party, Lenin turned next to the task of securing his own dictatorship over the party”.²² In his work *The Soviet Colossus* (2006) Michael Kort suggested that Lenin did not want power for just the sake of power and that he was not inclined to vanity.²³ However, his other arguments in the work argued otherwise. He claimed that Lenin’s conduct could be attributed to his will for power at any cost.²⁴ Furthermore, he argued that the Bolsheviks, under Lenin’s Leadership, distrusted any mass that they did not have the ability to control.²⁵ He also argued that Lenin’s form of dictatorship meant subordinating the masses to the “firm hand” of the Bolshevik party under his leadership.²⁶ In the same line, Robert V. Daniels, in his work *The Rise and Fall of Communism in Russia* (2007), also focused on Lenin’s attempt at power through party control. He argued that Lenin corrupted popular rule because of party power and control.²⁷ Furthermore, he argued that although the party seemed to hold the dictatorship, it would not have done so without

¹⁸ Richard Pipes. *The Russian Revolution*, p. xxiv.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 361.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 399.

²¹ Orlando Figes. *The People’s Tragedy*, p. 391.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 499.

²³ Michael Kort. *The Soviet Colossus*, p. 72.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 68.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 82.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 70.

²⁷ Robert V. Daniels. *The Rise and Fall of Communism in Russia*, p. 66.

Lenin's control and force.²⁸ The newer trend of focusing on party control as opposed to personal power seems as if more recent historians have given Lenin somewhat of a break. However, a closer look shows that an emphasis on Lenin's need for absolute power remained prevalent.

The focus on Lenin's intentions is closely bound with the idea that there was little continuity in his political works and much of the aforementioned scholarship has suggested that Lenin was an opportunist and manipulated his theories to maintain his drive for power. Wolfe argued that when Lenin was deprived of control, he found new methods to follow.²⁹ He also argued that a key factor of Lenin's theories and tactics were concentrated on, at any given moment, what seemed to be the best avenue for success at that time.³⁰ Page stated that much of Lenin's theories were illogical and changed from 1902 to 1917 and that Lenin did so to maintain his power position.³¹ Von Laue suggested that Lenin was so eager to see revolution and his power plan come to pass that his impatience came through in his theory and he argued that Lenin adjusted the laws of history to fit in a way that was advantageous for him.³² Possony argued that very early on in Lenin's political career, he practically made up theory to suit his needs.³³ Service contended that Lenin, although serious, was not a coherent political thinker and that his priority was to exert authority.³⁴ Pipes, having argued that Lenin was trying to gain power, attributed the "shift" in Bolshevik policy in 1917 to their "leader's will".³⁵ Daniels argued that in 1917 the changes in Lenin's theories were power based.³⁶ Similarly, Figes claimed that, for Lenin, the masses were just a tool to exploit and that he geared his theories towards taking power.³⁷ In addition, Kort argued that Lenin first seized opportunity and then let theory play catch up.³⁸

As the historiography stands, the negative view of Lenin and his motivations have greater implications for the way the changes in his theory are interpreted. If historians insinuate that Lenin's only political goal was to obtain and hold power, it is easy to suggest that his theories are made to meet that end. Furthermore, since Lenin's theories are at the base of Soviet history, the general view about Lenin and his theories has an effect on the way Soviet history is interpreted on a whole. Thus, the negative view of Lenin and his political thought could infer a negative interpretation on the entire history of revolutionary Russia and the Soviet Union.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 102.

²⁹ Bertram D. Wolfe. *Three Who Made Revolution*, p. 258.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 261.

³¹ Stanley W. Page. *Lenin's Assumption of International Proletarian Leadership*, pp. 237, 243-44.

³² Theodore Von Laue. *Why Lenin? Why Stalin?*, p. 111.

³³ Possony. *Lenin: The Compulsive Revolutionary*, p. 100.

³⁴ Service. *Lenin: A Political Life*, Vol. 2, pp. xii, 2.

³⁵ Richard Pipes. *The Russian Revolution*, p. 389.

³⁶ Daniels. *The Rise and Fall of the Russian Revolution*, p. 66.

³⁷ Orlando Figes. *The People's Tragedy*, pp. 144-45.

³⁸ Michael Kort. *The Soviet Colossus*, p. 72.

The main thesis of this work is that Lenin's political writings show a significant amount of continuity that clearly runs through the bulk of his works from 1902 to the end of 1917. It seeks to show that, because there is a clear continuity in his political thought, Lenin was not acting on a personal need for power, but was basing his writings on the belief that such policies and tactics would facilitate the victory of socialism in Russia. This is done by constructing the evolution of Lenin's political thought based on two main themes; his fight against reformism and opportunism and his rigid devotion to organize the revolution on many levels.

The arguments of this thesis are organized chronologically and Lenin's writings are presented in close order to the date published.³⁹ Chapter One outlines the content in Lenin's 1902 publication, *What is to be Done?*, and argues that he developed the elemental basics for the bulk of his political writings in the work. Chapter Two follows Lenin's writings and political tactics from 1903, when the Russian Social-Democratic Labor Party split, up to the effects that World War I had on the revolutionary movement. Chapter Two attempts to show that Lenin did make small changes to his writings and political activity, but only in an attempt to adhere to the basic core themes he presented in *What is to be Done?*. Chapter Three presents Lenin's writings and tactics after the February Revolution until the Bolshevik usurpation of power in October. Beginning with his *April Theses*, the chapter traces Lenin's perception of the Soviets and their place in Russia's socialist revolution based on his efforts to fend off opportunist policies and create an organizational form adequate for carrying out an armed insurrection. Ultimately, this thesis is an attempt to not only show that there is, indeed, continuity in the political thought that led to Lenin's leading position, but furthermore, because such continuity is present, it is an attempt to disprove the belief that Lenin was motivated solely by the idea of reigning as supreme dictator.

³⁹ *The State and Revolution*, although not published until 1918, is presented here out of chronological order in relation to the publish date of his other writings. However, since Lenin was working on the piece before October 1917 and noted that it was published later than originally intended, it was necessary for the argument of this thesis for it to be presented in this order.

CHAPTER ONE

In 1902, Lenin released *What is to be Done?*, in which he urged his party to emerge as the ideological signpost for the masses. He insisted on pushing the movement forward, and called upon his contemporaries to refrain from any activity that would stifle working class revolutionary sentiments. In order to truly lead the masses in line with the tasks of Social-Democracy, Lenin emphasized that the Social-Democrats could not act as a party of reforms in theory or practice, but had to act as a party of revolutionary momentum that called for the complete remaking of the Russian political system. To execute such a task, Lenin relied heavily upon a strict understanding of organization.

Lenin's *What is to be Done?*, despite its efforts to push the revolutionary movement forward, has often been the object of criticism and portrayed as the starting point at which he began his manipulative rise to dictatorship. Wolfe claimed that the conception of party unity that Lenin created in the work was meant to incite unconditional surrender to his plan.⁴⁰ He also suggested that Lenin manipulated theory to meet his ultimate end.⁴¹ In the same line, Pipes argued that Lenin "overturned" Marxist theory in order to reach his revolutionary goals.⁴² He also suggested Lenin later used the basis of *What is to be Done?* to seize control of the party's Central Committee.⁴³ Figes argued that, although not fully recognized, *What is to Be Done?* had great dictatorial implications.⁴⁴ Fitzpatrick claimed that, although practical for revolution, the work naturally lent itself towards authoritarianism.⁴⁵ However, despite these interpretations, it is clear that *What is to be Done?* was Lenin's attempt to outline the most effective way for his party to assist in the destruction of the autocracy and, ultimately, prepare the way for socialism.

For Lenin, the task of Social-Democracy was not the reform of the Russian political and economic systems, but to advance the complete overhaul of the standing autocracy; a task that was advocated by the first Social-Democrats from the very beginning of the party's development.⁴⁶ This idea was clearly expressed in *What is to be Done?*. Thus, one of the central arguments of the work became the fight against newly arising trends in Social-Democracy that Lenin felt would have ultimately led to the weakening of revolutionary movement. Lenin began *What is to be Done?* by explaining why "freedom of criticism", the latest trend in Social-Democracy of the time, which held a critical stance towards orthodox Marxism, was counterproductive for revolutionary movement.⁴⁷ For

⁴⁰ Bertram D. Wolfe. *Three Who Made a Revolution*, p. 158.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 157.

⁴² Richard Pipes. *The Russian Revolution*, pp. 359-60.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 360.

⁴⁴ Orlando Figes. *A People's Tragedy*, p. 151.

⁴⁵ Shelia Fitzpatrick. *The Russian Revolution*, p. 31.

⁴⁶ V. I. Lenin. *What is to be Done?*. pp. 63-64.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 41.

Lenin, 'freedom of criticism' was nothing more than a change in Social-Democracy "from a party of social revolution into a democratic party of social reforms".⁴⁸ In essence, freedom of criticism was a turn away from Marx and, in Lenin's view, would have only lead to a bourgeois interpretation of Marx. Ultimately this would have allowed for the introduction of bourgeois ideas into Socialist ideology.⁴⁹ Lenin explained, that "the demand for a decisive turn from revolutionary Social-Democracy to bourgeois social-reformism was accompanied by a no less definite turn towards bourgeois criticism of all the fundamental ideas of Marxism".⁵⁰ Ultimately, Lenin argued, freedom of criticism would turn Social-Democracy into a party of reform and would remove the revolutionary character from the party.⁵¹ A party of reforms with no revolutionary character would only alter the oppressing political system, not abolish it and Lenin was fighting to avoid that outcome.

He further denounced 'freedom of criticism' as the responsible actor in the lowering of the theoretical aspect of the revolution.⁵² As of 1902, the party of the Russian Social-Democrats was still in its infancy and, as such, Lenin expressed how this fact enhanced the significance of theory. He explained that the "party is only in the process of formation, its features are only just being worked out , and it is still far from having settled the account with other trends of revolutionary thought which threaten to divert the movement from the correct path".⁵³ Thus, if freedom of criticism would have only led to the lowering of the theoretical level, then, as a consequence, it would have misguided the movement. Lenin realized the necessity for the vanguard party to correctly guide the Russian proletariat in its tasks of overthrowing the autocracy and rising as the proletarian vanguard of the revolutionary proletariat.⁵⁴ However, if the level of theory had declined because of the freedom of criticism, then the theory advocated by the vanguard would not have consisted of "advanced theory", and the role of the vanguard could only be executed by a party that was "guided by advance theory".⁵⁵ Therefore, any lowering of the theoretical level would have resulted in a vanguard party that was not fully able to lead the proletariat in its task.

Lenin credited much of the lowering of theory to the spreading of legal Marxism; that is Marxist works that were printed legally in the press.⁵⁶ He argues that the freedom of legal Marxism ultimately led to a vulgarized interpretation of Marx. Furthermore, he argued that legal Marxism only gave bits and pieces of Marx's theories, allowing some to only learn from the "crumbs".⁵⁷ Ultimately

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 43.

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 41.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid., p. 57.

⁵³ Ibid., p. 58.

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 60.

⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 59.

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 68.

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 142.

the proliferation of legal Marxism led to the spread of criticism and resulted in wide support for reformism in theory and practice.

Furthermore, in *What is to be Done?* Lenin addressed specific groups within Social-Democracy in order to show how their turn towards reformism was harmful to the cause of Social-Democracy. Lenin originally intended to write *What is to be Done?* as an attempt to further develop the ideas presented in his pamphlet 'What to Begin With?', however, he had to change some aspects of his original pamphlet because of the tenacity of Economism and was thus written as a "systematic 'clearing up' with all the 'Economists' of all [Social-Democracy's] basic points of difference".⁵⁸ Consequently, *What is to be Done?* arose as a platform for Lenin to argue against the Economists and their supporters, which he used as examples to further illustrate why that kind of reformism was harmful to the tasks of Social-Democracy.

Lenin attributed the turn towards Economism to the rise of freedom of criticism.⁵⁹ Thus, if freedom of criticism was merely reformism, so was Economism, and again, he explained why this acted as a sedative for revolutionary sentiments among the masses. He illustrated how reformism, as represented in the trend of Economism, stifled revolutionary momentum, lowered the theoretical level of the revolutionary theory, and averted the movement away from the task of overthrowing the autocracy.

For Lenin, the fact the Economism was a hindrance to building a revolutionary class consciousness among the workers was clear. He argued that, if left to their own devices, workers could only reach a trade union consciousness.⁶⁰ He began this argument by addressing the strike movements that erupted in second half of the nineteenth century. They developed spontaneously and Lenin claimed that one could view the strike movement as "consciousness in an *embryonic form*".⁶¹ However, he also noted that, taken into account on their own, the strikes were only a trade-union struggle.⁶² He asserted that it was the tasks of Social-Democrats, however, to direct the movement away from the spontaneity of trade-unionism and lead the masses to a working-class consciousness. This direction was necessary for moving the revolution forward, since, as Lenin stated, the "movement's strength [lay] in the awakening of the masses", and to do this, it would take more than simply a trade-union struggle.⁶³

The Economists, like Lenin, realized that the force of the movement relied on the masses. However, the difference emerged in the significance given to the spontaneous mass movement. Whereas Lenin believed that Social-Democrats should lay more importance on supplying the mass

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 38.

⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 52.

⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 63.

⁶¹ Ibid., p. 62.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Ibid., p. 61.

and the party with a plan for developing, through revolutionary Social-Democracy, a true working-class consciousness, the Economists put much significance in, and relied heavily upon, the mass's ability to act spontaneously. However, the development of a working-class consciousness was absolutely necessary for the building up of a revolutionary mass, and as Lenin explained, in order to help the movement advance forward, Social-Democrats had to refrain from relying on the spontaneous actions of the labor movement, which, as he further explained, were ultimately counteractive to advancing the revolution forward.

He legitimized his argument against the Economist and their supporters by denouncing their slogan of "lending the economic struggle a political character".⁶⁴ Lenin, unlike the Economists, did not believe giving economics a political character was the most applicable form of agitation among the masses. He argued that focusing solely on economic grievances was too narrow to develop the political class consciousness necessary for the tasks of revolutionary Social Democracy. In fact, Lenin listed a myriad of other arraignments that were equally, if not more, important for the use of creating a revolutionary mass. He insisted that Social Democrats must use all "manifestation[s] of political oppression and autocratic arbitrariness".⁶⁵ He also noted that true political class consciousness could only come from outside of the economic struggle, emphasizing once again the significance of political and social arraignments.⁶⁶ For Lenin it was clear that the Economists' slogan ignored vital social and political components for developing a consciousness mass that was ready for proletarian revolution.

Lenin did not fail to realize the importance of the strike movement and the importance of the underlying economic factors of trade-unionism, but as he explained, economic grievances would halt revolutionary momentum if they were the sole factors relied upon as a way to develop the class consciousness necessary for revolution. Lenin not only fought against the reliance on trade-unionism, but in his fight against the Economists' slogan, he also made clear that Social-Democrats must not do anything that would have put trade-unionist politics above Social-Democracy. The Economists' slogan would have only demoted Social-Democratic politics to trade-unionist politics and, as Lenin had already noted, the spontaneous labor movement of trade-unionism would not awaken the masses and would have ultimately slowed revolutionary momentum. Thus, any policy that would subordinate the Social-Democratic revolutionary struggle to the economic struggle for reforms would have slowed the movement by keeping the masses from reaching the political class consciousness that was necessary to move forward with a mass uprising against the Russian government.

Furthermore, Lenin argued that any economic concessions the workers gained through trade-unionism and economic agitation were merely a ploy by the government to convince the workers to

⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 88.

⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 86.

⁶⁶ Ibid., pp. 101-102.

trust its functioning.⁶⁷ Anything that would cause the workers to trust the existing government and lead to the pacification of their grievances would have ultimately stifled revolutionary momentum. For Lenin, it was clear, if the workers had faith in the system, then they would not fight against it. Thus, the Economists' slogan and their narrow focus on economic reforms acted against the final goal of a mass revolution and the success of Social-Democracy. Since economic reforms would pacify workers and stunt the growth of the revolution by stopping the spreading of working class consciousness, it threatened the movement by not developing any further than the spontaneous actions of trade-unionism, and the workers would not have seen that even though they may have succeeded in gaining some economic freedoms, they were still living within an oppressive system that dictated more than their working life.

In addition to stifling the revolutionary momentum of the movement, reformism, as seen through the example of Economism, lowered the theoretical level of the movement. Lenin, having already noted that legal Marxism resulted in a vulgarized interpretation of Marx, accused the Economists of having origins in legal Marxism.⁶⁸ Furthermore, he made the argument that the Economists' worship of spontaneity would not only fail to lead the masses towards Socialist ideology, but would have allowed for the domination of bourgeois ideology.⁶⁹ He wrote,

Hence, *any* belittling of the Socialist ideology, *any withdrawing* from it, means by the same token the strengthening of the bourgeois ideology. They talk of spontaneity. But the *spontaneous* development of the labour movement leads precisely to its subordination to the bourgeois ideology...because a spontaneous labor movement is trade unionism...and trade unionism means precisely ideological enslavement of the workers by the bourgeois.⁷⁰

Such a misrepresentation of ideology would have kept the working mass from understanding fully their revolutionary tasks. Lenin also equated spontaneity with unconsciousness.⁷¹ Thus, the Economists' emphasis and reliance on the spontaneous element would have harmed the revolutionary movement at a theoretical level.

Lenin also credited the Economists with supporting the status of the movement at that time and encouraging other revolutionaries to recognize the "rightful nature" of the current movement.⁷² So, as Lenin explained, if the present movement could only be considered a trade union struggle, then by default the Economists were supporting trade union aims, not Social-Democratic aims. Thus, such

⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 90.

⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 67-8.

⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 72.

⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 71

⁷¹ Ibid., p. 74.

⁷² Ibid., pp. 55-6.

a heavy reliance on the spontaneity of the masses would only have led to the “servitude” of Social-Democracy to the whims of the labor movement.⁷³

Lenin also presented an argument to show that the reformist ideas of the Economists and their supporters were directing the movement toward conciliation and not at all towards the overthrow of the existing political system. He said that the Economists were in favor of maintaining what already existed. Furthermore, Lenin fought against the defenders of Economism, saying that they did not believe it was possible to make overthrowing the autocracy a real task of the movement and therefore only presented a struggle for immediate political concessions.⁷⁴ Those concessions would become counteractive for the movement since, as Lenin suggested, such “pseudo-concessions” were an easy way for the government to get the working masses to trust it.⁷⁵ However, Lenin did note that revolutionary Social-Democracy did not completely discount the struggle for reforms, however he argued that along with the demand for reforms it was also necessary that they demand that the government no longer exists as an autocracy.⁷⁶ His adversaries did not demand the immediate abolition on the Russian autocracy and therefore, when left to stand on their own, those reforms did not serve to reach the ultimate end of revolutionary Social-Democracy. Furthermore, Lenin argued that guiding the different social-classes in overthrowing the autocracy was a key responsibility of the vanguard party and not doing so would have resulted in a party that was not truly able to function as the vanguard party.⁷⁷ Therefore, under the leadership of the Economists the vanguard party would not have developed and would not have been able to lead all social strata in that direction. It was for these reasons that Lenin fought strongly against the type of reforms the Economists and their supporters called for.

Lenin argued that the basic mistake with the new trend in Social-Democracy was the worship of spontaneity and the fact that it did not at all consider the new demands that spontaneity required from Social-Democracy.⁷⁸ It was the Economists’ worship of spontaneity that kept them from realizing what the movement required of them. It was their lack of understanding of that responsibility and their continued reliance on the spontaneous element that led to their hindrance of revolutionary momentum and to their contribution in lowering of the level of theory necessary for developing a revolutionary class-consciousness. It also led to their actions to secure menial economic reforms, resulting in the maintenance of what already existed instead of its diminishment. It was those features

⁷³ Ibid., p. 75.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 91.

⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 89.

⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 106.

⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 80.

that allowed Lenin to equate Economism with opportunism; which he continued to fight against throughout his political career.⁷⁹

In his fight against the worship of spontaneity, and correspondingly opportunism, Lenin noted that the spontaneous element should not have been ignored all together. It was his belief that the spontaneous movement put before the Social-Democrats new and urgent political, theoretical, and organizational tasks.⁸⁰ In an effort to prepare revolutionary Social-Democrats for those tasks, Lenin developed a logical plan for the party to lead the masses in their effort to not just reform the political system, but to remake it. With *What is to be Done?* Lenin tried to offer a clear path for the party on how to develop as the vanguard party. For this, he emphasized the need for preparedness through proper organization. Thus, in addition to his fight against reformism in theory and practice, Lenin's systematic arguments for organization were also a main element in work. Lenin encouraged Social-Democrats to organize in a way that would energize and stabilize the movement. Furthermore, he realized that proper organization would help maintain the integrity of revolutionary theory and would ensure the success of a well planned attack on the oppressive Russian government.

At the beginning of the Twentieth Century Russian political thought was coming into a new era and was confronted with a myriad of ideas on how to address the current political system of autocracy. Therefore, in attempt to prepare the Social-Democrats for what he realized to be the impending revolution, Lenin offered his organizational blueprint for the party in *What is to be Done?*. In the work, Lenin critiqued the platforms that he viewed as harmful to Social-Democracy and offered an alternative method for pursuing revolution in a way that was consistent with the goals of Social-Democracy. His effort was to supply an organizational outline for a party that was, at the time, unprepared for leading the revolution.

His original article *What to Begin With* presented three questions; "what is the character and main substance of [Social-Democracy's] political agitation, [their] organizational tasks, and the plan for building up, simultaneously and from various points, a militant all-Russian organization".⁸¹ Although Lenin ultimately began *What is to be Done?* by addressing the struggle against the Economists, he certainly did not abandon his advocacy for organization presented in his original pamphlet. In fact, he used his organizational arguments to further discount the views his adversaries had put forth. He continued to illustrate how Economism hindered revolutionary movement and he clearly argued that preparedness through organization was absolutely necessary for Social- Democrats if they were to have the ability to take up the torch of revolutionary leadership.

⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 55.

⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 75.

⁸¹ Ibid., p. 38.

Lenin argued that the modern movement was weakened by the lack of training and initiative among the revolutionary leaders.⁸² He further stated that the revolutionaries before 1902 had failed due to their lack of relevant experience and training. He explained that between 1894 and 1901 many revolutionaries joined the cause with “primitive” equipment and inadequate training and some did not have any equipment or training at all.⁸³ Lenin argued that the reason for this was “rustic craftsmanship”; the narrowness of organization due to fragmentation and the adherence to small circles within Social-Democracy. It was here that Lenin began once more to fight against opportunism and the worship of spontaneity that fostered such fragmentation. He argued that, despite the need for proper organization, one should not worship the spontaneous forms of organizations that arise. In fact, he calls this worship “the real sickness of [the] movement”.⁸⁴ Lenin explained it as a “sickness of growth” and argued that this type of growth would only cause more narrow circles to emerge within the movement, which would have caused even more fragmentation and destroy any chance for continuity.⁸⁵

It was from this standpoint that Lenin began to outline the proper way to organize so as not to increase such fragmentation. He continued by further explaining rustic craftsmanship and how it hindered the movement instead of guaranteeing its energy and stability. As before, Lenin fought against too much reliance on the spontaneous element and he attributed the rusticity of the movement partly to the narrowness created by such a heavy reliance. Thus, Lenin once again fought strongly against the Economists. He believed it was possible to connect Economism with rustic craftsmanship and argued that without eliminating Economism it would be impossible to eliminate rustic craftsmanship.⁸⁶ He reasoned that because of the efforts of the Economists to justify narrowness and because of their worship of spontaneity, that they began to “glorify” rustic craftsmanship.⁸⁷ For Lenin, the reason that this glorification was a detriment to the movement was that it put the political struggle on the backburner and focused disproportionately on the narrower economic struggle that did adequately represent political grievances.

Lenin argued that in order to create the proper organization needed to circumvent fragmentation and narrowness, a central group of professional revolutionaries was needed. He believed the spontaneously awakening masses would provide the dearth of such professional revolutionaries because of rapid growth in numbers; however, Lenin expressed the importance of not allowing Social-Democracy to become simply an organization of workers just because of increasing

⁸² Ibid., p. 61.

⁸³ Ibid., p.120.

⁸⁴ Ibid., p. 119.

⁸⁵ Ibid., pp. 119-20.

⁸⁶ Ibid., pp. 124-25.

⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 126.

worker participation.⁸⁸ The Economists, according to Lenin, equated the organization of workers and trade unions to the organization of revolutionaries. Lenin, on the other hand, argued that this would have only led to more division within the movement.⁸⁹ The Economists' version of organization was inherently fragmented because workers circles were narrow and normally only dealt with individual trades or factories. This was the type of disunity that Lenin was seeking to avoid by establishing a small, yet efficient, group of professional revolutionaries. It was the role of those professional revolutionaries to ensure "the energy, stability, and continuity of the political struggle".⁹⁰ Thus, Lenin called for the only kind of organization he saw capable of stimulating such energy and securing the stability of the movement.

Lenin's disagreements with the Economists were expressed as he argued the importance of a centralized organ of professional revolutionaries. He insisted that in order to produce an able organization of professional revolutionaries it was necessary to eliminate any distinction between workers and intellectuals and all differences among professions and trades.⁹¹ He believed that the narrowness of the economic struggle would not, and could not, produce the organization of professional revolutionaries he advocated. Lenin continued his fight against the Economists as he explained further why the party needed a clear organizational path if any effort was to be made to stabilize and build continuity within the movement. The Economists focused on the economic struggle, but Lenin fought against the idea that the economic struggle would produce the result needed to unify the movement. He stated,

The 'economic struggle against the employers and the government' does not in the least require – and therefore cannot produce – an all Russian centralized organization uniting in one general assault all and sundry expressions of political opposition, protest and indignation, an organization consisting of revolutionaries by profession and led by real political leaders of the whole people.⁹²

Furthermore, Lenin argued that the Economists, by focusing solely on economics continued the fragmentation of the movement by advocating a broad workers' organization that was easily accessible to the masses. He reasoned that such a haphazard organization would only further the discontinuity of the movement not only because its focus was too narrow, but also because its broadness would allow the political police easy access to the members and would lead to more arrest. Lenin argued that such a problem with a broad organization would not truly allow workers to join a united movement, but would simply reduce the movement to trade-unionism and would only give

⁸⁸ Ibid., pp. 131, 147-152.

⁸⁹ Ibid., p. 131.

⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 126.

⁹¹ Ibid., p. 132.

⁹² Ibid., p. 119.

workers more access to trade-unions.⁹³ However, Lenin did not completely discount the economic struggle all together. In fact, Lenin believed that by firmly establishing a solid organization of professional revolutionaries then not only would they have the ability ensure the fulfillment of Social-Democratic aims, but trade-unionist aims as well.⁹⁴

In addition to realizing that proper organization would stabilize and energize the movement, Lenin also realized that organization, when structured correctly, would help to maintain the integrity of revolutionary theory. He stated, “The narrow scope of the organizational work is undoubtedly and indissolubly connected with the narrowing of our theory and political tasks”, and it was clear that Lenin’s goal was to avoid such a consequence.⁹⁵ Thus, as before, Lenin fought against the worship of spontaneity. He stated that the worship of spontaneity practiced by the Economists gave too much emphasis on the “average worker”.⁹⁶ By concentrating on the average or common worker, the Economists began to fear rising too high above the workers’ comprehension in theory and speech. Ultimately such a narrow view of workers would have belittled theory by bringing it down to the level of the worker.⁹⁷ Lenin, on the other hand, believed that the party was responsible for bringing the workers up to the level of revolutionary theory and Social-Democratic politics.

Proper organization, Lenin believed, was the only way to raise the workers to the necessary level. He was not satisfied with merely involving the worker in revolutionary activities. He believed that all participants in the struggle, in order to secure the proper organ adept for the greater struggle, should receive the proper training and skills so as to help eliminate the narrowness that caused the lowering of political theory and tasks. In fact he called for an army of professional revolutionaries to carry out this struggle and he maintained that by raising the working man to the level of a professional revolutionary that such a force would have come to fruition. He argued that “the party struggle against any economic, political, social, or national oppression, can and must find, collect, train, mobilize and launch into a campaign such an army of omniscient people”.⁹⁸ But, once again, Lenin warned that too much reliance on the spontaneous factor would slow the movement, not advance it. In fact, he claimed that the spontaneous mass struggle would not become a class struggle until it was clearly led by a group of well trained professional revolutionaries.⁹⁹

Not only did Lenin credit Economism with lowering the theoretical and political level of the movement by talking down to the workers, he also believed that the narrowness Economism could not ensure the kind of continuity that would allow for a successful plan of attack on the autocracy. He held the Economists responsible for increasing breakups and arrest from the political police; therefore not

⁹³ Ibid., pp. 139-40.

⁹⁴ Ibid., p. 140.

⁹⁵ Ibid., p. 154.

⁹⁶ Ibid., p. 154.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Ibid., p. 169.

⁹⁹ Ibid., p. 156.

allowing any chance for a successful systematic attack on the standing Russian government. Lenin argued that the Economists' worship of spontaneity revealed their lack of concern for the political police that were a constant threat to continuity within the movement. He claimed that because of the importance the Economists gave to the spontaneous mass movement they believed that the struggle against the political police was rather unimportant.¹⁰⁰ For Lenin, the struggle against the political police most certainly required the small group of professional revolutionaries he advocated. He argued,

Such workers, the average people of the mass, are able to display enormous energy and self-sacrifice in a strike, in a street battle with the police and troops; they are able (and only they are able) to *decide* the outcome of the whole of our movement; but it is precisely the struggle against the *political* police which requires special qualities, requires revolutionaries *by profession*. And we must take care not only that the mass should 'put forward' concrete demands, but also that the mass of the workers should 'put forward' from among themselves an ever-growing number of such revolutionaries by profession.¹⁰¹

Lenin held the Economists accountable for keeping the group of professional revolutionaries from evolving out of the working masses. Lenin firmly believed that the creation of a small group of professional revolutionaries to help combat the traps set by political police was a chief responsibility of the Social-Democrats and he chastised the Economists for foregoing such a responsibility. He argued that the Economists believed they were relieved of such responsibility because of spontaneous upsurge of the masses.¹⁰² However, it was Lenin's belief that the spontaneous mass movement did not take responsibility away from professional revolutionaries, but in fact, created even more responsibility for them in order to correctly guide the movement and to safeguard it from the attacks of the political police.

In addition, Lenin made it clear that the responsibility of professional revolutionaries should not have been taken lightly and he argued that the struggle should be organized "according to all the rules of the art" by leaders who were considered professional revolutionaries because they were "occupied in revolutionary activities".¹⁰³ If, he argued, the Social-Democrats did not organize in a way that promoted professional revolutionaries, they would not be able to fulfill their obligations. Lenin suggested that if the professional revolutionaries did not organize properly with a centralized group, that was small and as secret as possible, then the political police would have had a greater faculty to break apart groups and arrest agitators, only leaving few participants to, unbeknownst to them, lead to

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., p. 129.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Ibid., p. 130.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

more arrest, thus sapping the energy right out of the movement.¹⁰⁴ Ultimately Lenin believed that only the small and secretive group of professional revolutionaries would have the ability to combat police tactics and increase the chances for a successful unification of the movement.¹⁰⁵

With the proper organization and a small group of professional revolutionaries, Lenin believed that an attack on the government would prove successful. The organization he advocated would have a better chance at securing victory in the struggle because they would most certainly have had a systematic plan, since, as noted, Lenin argued that the military actions between 1894 and 1901 were unsuccessful because there was no systematic plan. In order to create the kind of unified organization that would have the ability to devise such a plan, Lenin called on Social-Democrats to relieve themselves of local work and put their efforts into all-Russian work. Lenin realized that a problem with the movement was that it was not keeping up with the spontaneous upsurge of the masses and he sought to remedy the situation.¹⁰⁶ Ultimately he called for an all-Russian newspaper in order to construct the organization needed to prepare for any successful attack on the autocracy. He argued that they “must always carry on [their] everyday work and always be prepared for everything, because very often it is almost impossible to foresee in advance the change from periods of explosion to periods of calm”.¹⁰⁷ It was his belief that an all-Russian newspaper would have the ability to increase the preparedness of the vanguard party of professional revolutionaries, making a successful attack on Russia’s oppressive government more plausible.

He argued that only all-Russian work would have the ability to nurture the strong political organization he advocated. And, as noted, Lenin believed that only a strong, unified organization would have the ability to ensure success of an uprising against the government. Lenin warned against fragmentation caused by the lack of a strong, central organization and claimed that such fragmentation would only further the oppression of the masses.¹⁰⁸ Ultimately Lenin’s call for organization sought to guide the spontaneous movement of the masses in order to safeguard it from both the “mistakes of friends and the traps of enemies”.¹⁰⁹ For Lenin, preparation through organization was a key factor in securing the victory of the current movement. Lenin would continue to urge his party to be prepared for the mass uprising up until the moment it took place. He insisted that the party organize in a way that would advance the movement, not hinder it.

Lenin focused much of *What is to be Done?* on his fight against the Economists, however, the underlying themes that structured his polemics, the struggle against opportunism and the support for organization, are what remain important throughout his political theory. Despite the argument that the

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., pp. 129, 145.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., p. 146.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., p. 165.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., p. 186.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., p. 180.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., p. 185.

work showed an authoritarian bent that represented Lenin's need for power, it is clear that Lenin was simply trying to unite the party and safeguard it from those who did not, in Lenin's eyes, seek the best possible avenue for success. Page claimed that *What is to be Done?* was impractical and unrealistic,¹¹⁰ but ultimately, Lenin's *What is to be Done?* provided the groundwork for almost two decades of his political writings and actions. Moving from the beginning of one revolution to the next, the arguments presented in *What is to be Done?* are apparent in his criticisms, and also support, for the changing movement. Thus, despite many arguments for Lenin's fickle political nature, it becomes clear that the ideas he presented in *What is to be Done?* would remain critical to his political theory and were the concepts that would ultimately lead to his parties successful usurpation of power.

¹¹⁰ Stanelly W. Page. *The Russian Proletariat and World Revolution: Lenin's Views to 1914*, p. 1.

CHAPTER TWO

Richard Pipes wrote that Lenin was always changing his realities and that he, more than any other Russian revolutionary, changed his strategy.¹¹¹ However, a careful study of the dominant themes in Lenin's political theory shows that if his strategies changed it was only in an effort to stay ahead of the progressing movement as he advocated, or in the least, keep up with it. However, the core beliefs that formed his strategies did not change. Lenin continued to urge Russian Social-Democrats to take the path of the vanguard party in order to secure a decisive victory over tsarism and ultimately over the bourgeoisie. After 1902 Lenin stayed loyal to the original path he had laid out as he continued his fight against reformism and call for the proper organization of the party. In the years between the completion of *What is to be Done?* up to the beginning of the revolutions in 1917, Lenin voiced a clear plan for what he believed would lead to a successful mass revolution. He did not abandon his original fight, but in fact produced more literature that supported those primary ideas and justified his actions. If *What is to be Done?* was the framework for his revolutionary vision, then his writings from this time were its support. In this period of Russian history, where circumstances were changing rapidly, Lenin remained true to the core beliefs that shaped his political theory despite the ever evolving social and political structures around him.

Historians have used his works and actions from this period as proof that Lenin was an opportunist on a quest for personal power. The magnitude of the writings he produced during this time indeed offers ample material for lengthy evaluation and they have been strenuously scrutinized. However, despite the portrayal of Lenin as overly flexible in his theories, there is continuity present in his writings from this time period that stem from *What is to be Done?* and a clear cohesion with his original core arguments for success is discernable.

When the Russian Social-Democratic Labor Party¹¹² split in 1903, Lenin used the event to once again illustrate his opposition against opportunists and reformists. Following the Second Party Congress and the party split, Lenin furthered his arguments in his 1904 publication *One Step Forward, Two Steps Back*. He discussed the split within the party and ultimately gave blame to his opponents for the break. The split that resulted in the creation of the Bolshevik and Menshevik factions of the R.S.D.L.P., to Lenin, was caused by a rift between the revolutionary wing and the opportunist wing of the party.¹¹³ The events at the Second Party Congress have been used by historians to try to convey Lenin as an opportunist himself; suggesting that Lenin had planned an underhanded scheme to secure

¹¹¹ Richard Pipes. *Russia Observed*. p. 124.

¹¹² The Russian Social-Democratic Labor Party will be referred to as the R.S.D.L.P.

¹¹³ V. I. Lenin. *One Step Forward, Two Steps Back*, p. 115.

individual power over the party.¹¹⁴ However, compared with Lenin's previous arguments against opportunism and for centralized organization, one can find a clear connection in Lenin's thought and practice, showing that Lenin was not so much trying to sneak his way to absolute power, as trying to stay true to his original plan for the party.

Lenin had already set up his arguments against the opportunists and in *One Step Forward, Two Steps Back*, he further supported his argument that such occurrences of reformism would stifle the movement. He argued that the opportunists had caused the party split and that their actions would ultimately harm the cause of Social-Democracy. It has been argued that Lenin was already certain of his dictatorial power over the party.¹¹⁵ However a closer look might suggest that Lenin was motivated more because of his certainty of the rightful nature of his arguments against his opponents than securing a dictatorship over them. He stated that his opponents "uncritically adopt the point of view of bourgeois democracy, and blunt the weapon of the class struggle of the proletariat".¹¹⁶ This was what Lenin had been fighting against and now the party split was proving his case. He fought so vehemently for his position to win over his advisories because he was worried that if they were to succeed then the revolutionary movement would have been at stake. He said in order to determine if the revolution had moved forward, one must know who inspired the revolution; the revolutionaries or the opportunists.¹¹⁷

Furthermore, in *One Step Forward, Two Steps Back* Lenin continued to declare the need for organization and fight against the fragmentation that was created from the lack thereof. Despite the fact that Lenin's group was in the minority on the issue of organization¹¹⁸, he did not retreat from his original advocacy of a tight, central organizational structure, with actively participating professional revolutionaries making up the party. In fact, he continued his fight against the narrow circles caused by the opportunist in the party. He argued that although the party had accomplished a great deal, it was necessary to maintain the "single-party" connections that linked all Russian Social-Democrats.¹¹⁹ He once again asserted his belief that proper organization was the key to victory and he went further, stating that organization was the only weapon of the proletariat that would lead to victory.¹²⁰

Wolfe argued that *One Step Forward, Two Steps Back* was exaggerated and expressed Lenin's strong faith in hierarchy.¹²¹ Service's evaluation of *One Step Forward, Two Steps Back* alluded to what he believed to be Lenin's self-serving nature. He criticized Lenin by arguing that he

¹¹⁴ Stefan T. Possony. *Lenin: The Compulsive Revolutionary*. pp. 69-7.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 73.

¹¹⁶ V. I. Lenin. *One Step Forward, Two Steps Back*, p. 119.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 117.

¹¹⁸ Geoffrey Hosking. *Russia and the Russians*, p. 361.

¹¹⁹ V. I. Lenin. *One Step Forward, Two Steps Back*. p. 119

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 119

¹²¹ Bertram D. Wolfe. *Three Who Made a Revolution*, p. 259.

had written *One Step Forward, Two Steps Back* without any self-doubt or criticism.¹²² Along the same line, Figs argued that Lenin seized the opportunity to gain the control he wanted.¹²³ But for Lenin there was no need to write with any self-doubt. His arguments were based on the core beliefs he presented in *What is to be Done?* and he was confident in them. Lenin believed the path he had laid out in 1902 was the correct way to obtain a decisive victory and at the time of the inner party struggle he did not see the benefit of abandoning those ideas to appease his colleagues. The fact that he believed his opponents would only cause more fragmentation within the party and would divert the movement from its correct path only made him fight harder to defend his ideas.

Fitzpatrick portrayed the party split as a conflict over a minor issue and she claimed that Lenin's aggressiveness was the causal issue for the dispute.¹²⁴ However, because he had been urging his party to accept his organizational plan because it was imperative for revolutionary success, it is clear that when the issue arose at the congress, for Lenin, it was anything but a minor issue. Although his insistence for the correct organizational path ultimately divided his party, it was not the outcome Lenin was hoping for. In fact, he was fighting against fragmentation and circle spirit in an effort to maintain the unity of the party.¹²⁵ Thus, Lenin's fight at the Second Party Congress shows that despite the reluctance of his opponents to see the benefits of his organizational plan, he did not falter from what he believed as the correct and only way for a decisive victory of the proletariat.

On January 9, 1905, a peaceful march preceded to the Winter Palace. The crowd's intent was to appeal to the Tsar for his protection and for justice. The march resembled a religious procession, since many of the marchers carried religious icons and sung hymnals. However, despite its peaceful nature the procession was met with gunfire from the Tsar's army. By the end of the day an estimated 200 people, including many women and children, had been killed. This enraged the masses and caused the people to lose any faith that they had left in the Tsar.¹²⁶ After the events of Bloody Sunday, the start of the revolution moved at a quick rate. However, the revolutionary parties on the left did not play a large role and struggled with gaining a significant influence on the spontaneously erupting mass.¹²⁷ The Mensheviks, in their support for bourgeois revolution, cooperated with the liberals.¹²⁸ Lenin assessed the situation in accordance with his party plan. In fact, he believed that the revolution would confirm the correctness of what he advocated as the right program and tactics.¹²⁹ Furthermore, he continued to fight against those who, through their policies, propped up the bourgeoisie. He argued

¹²² Robert Service. *Lenin: A Political Life*, vol. 1, p. 110.

¹²³ Orlando Figs. *The People's Tragedy*, pp. 152-53.

¹²⁴ Shelia Fitzpatrick. *The Russian Revolution*. p. 29.

¹²⁵ V. I. Lenin. *One Step Forward, Two Steps Back*. p. 119.

¹²⁶ Orlando Figs. *The People's Tragedy*, pp. 175-79. Geoffrey Hosking. *Russian and the Russians*, pp. 365-67.

¹²⁷ Abraham Ascher. *Russia: A Short History*, p. 139.

¹²⁸ Michael Kort. *The Soviet Colossus*, p. 81.

¹²⁹ V. I. Lenin. *Two Tactics of Social-Democracy*. p. 121.

that the outcome of the revolution depended on the whether the working class became a subsidiary to the bourgeoisie, and therefore was politically powerless, or became the leaders of the “people’s revolution”.¹³⁰

In *Two Tactics of Social-Democracy* Lenin once again took up his fight against his opponents who advocated reforms. He criticized the Mensheviks for backing the liberal agenda and for reviving the mistakes of the Economists.¹³¹ He claimed that the proponents of Economism wanted to turn their back on the revolutionary struggle, hinder its development, and ultimately narrow and reduce the aims of the struggle.¹³² He again urged his party to lead the masses correctly to victory. To do this, he explained that Social-Democrats must also have the ability to point out the right path for victory; and quasi social reforms were not that path.¹³³ He wrote,

It is more advantageous to the working class for the necessary changes in the direction of bourgeois democracy to take place by way of revolution and not by way of reform, because the way of reform is one of delay, procrastination, the painfully slow decomposition of the putrid parts of the national organism. It is the proletariat and the peasantry that suffer first of all and most of all from that putrefaction.¹³⁴

The proletariat and the peasantry would suffer because such reforms would remove momentum out of the movement, thus they would never fully develop as the essential revolutionary force.

Lenin was against siding with the liberal bourgeoisie because such an alliance would not result in a decisive victory of the revolution. The bourgeoisie was not eager for a decisive victory over tsarism, in fact, Lenin argued they were incapable of producing it.¹³⁵ The more support the liberal-bourgeoisie had for their reformist agenda, then the more likely that they would reach a compromise with tsarism and such an outcome would have been detrimental to the cause of Social-Democracy. Lenin argued that such actions would have caused the dissolution of the Social-Democrats into the bourgeoisie and therefore they would not have had the ability to leave an impression on the revolution.¹³⁶

In keeping with his core belief that such behavior by the Social-Democrats would harm the movement in more ways than one, he again addressed the lowering of the theoretical aspect of the movement. He made clear his interpretation of Marxism when urging his party to realize that the overthrow of the Russian autocracy only stood as a temporary goal for the Russian Social-Democrats; as their ultimate goal should have remained a complete socialist revolution of the mobilized

¹³⁰ Ibid., p. 122.

¹³¹ Ibid., p. 127.

¹³² V. I. Lenin. *Two Tactics of Social Democracy*. CW, Vol. 9, p. 40.

¹³³ V. I. Lenin. *Two Tactics of Social-Democracy*. p. 130.

¹³⁴ Ibid., p. 125.

¹³⁵ Ibid., p. 129.

¹³⁶ Ibid., p. 128

proletariat.¹³⁷ Thus, any action of his party members that would have kept the revolution from reaching its final goal, such as buttressing the autocracy with reforms, would have kept the movement at a standstill and they would have had to wait even longer to see the completion of socialist revolution, if ever. Clearly, for Lenin, this would have been a turn away from what Marx had taught, and would thus harm the revolution at its theoretical root. Furthermore, he voiced his opposition specifically against the Socialist Revolutionaries. He claimed that the Socialist Revolutionaries did not understand the basic fundamentals of Marxism.¹³⁸ He called them “the unconscious ideologists of the petty bourgeoisie”.¹³⁹ Therefore, any actions of the Social-Democrats that would have put them on the level of the Socialist Revolutionaries would have also impaired the movement at the core of its theoretical basis.

For Lenin, the goal of the Socialist-Democrats was to lead the mass towards successful proletarian revolution in accordance with the goals of Social-Democracy. Therefore, he warned against the reformist tendencies that would circumvent the all important class struggle of the proletariat. Indeed, he argued, that it was not at all advantageous for the proletariat to evade the class struggle, but that it needed to expand the awareness of that struggle and its responsibility in that struggle. In order to keep moving towards the ultimate victory of the proletariat over the bourgeoisie, Lenin argued that the proletariat had to expand its scope by way of organization.¹⁴⁰ He claimed that appropriate preparation would pave the way for the dictatorship of the proletariat, who would ultimately gather enough strength to ensure a decisive victory over the autocracy.¹⁴¹

Service has, paradoxically, used the fact that Lenin did not change his ideas in 1905 despite the changing political current to illustrate that Lenin was himself an opportunist.¹⁴² However, the fact that Lenin remained true to the core beliefs that dictated his strategy not only shows that Lenin was not an opportunist, but that he was continuously fighting against those who were. Furthermore, Von Laue’s evaluation of Lenin’s actions during the Second Party Congress and his writing defending them suggested that Lenin’s plan for a revolutionary elite to rule the party was his way of securing personal leadership and combining it with the masses.¹⁴³ But, once again, Lenin’s steadfast adherence to his core beliefs shows that he was working against reforms and for the unity of the movement through organization, and not simply trying to ease his way into a personal dictatorship as suggested.

¹³⁷ Ibid., p. 134

¹³⁸ Ibid., p. 123

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 139.

¹⁴¹ V. I. Lenin. Two Tactics of Social-Democracy. CW, Vol. 9, p. 83.

¹⁴² Robert Service. Lenin: a Political Life, vol. 1, p. 130.

¹⁴³ Theodore H. Von Laue. Why Lenin? Why Stalin?, p. 109.

The 1905 Revolution showed that the opposition to autocracy was too disunited and too weak to completely destroy the autocracy.¹⁴⁴ However, the events of 1905 also led the Tsar to grant some concessions to his people. Such compromises were shown in the newly established Duma. For Lenin, the Duma represented just the type of bourgeois reforms that Lenin had warned against. Thus, he took up the fight against any support for the Duma, as he believed it was a ruse and would steer the movement towards conciliation and not revolution.

In August of 1905 writing about the boycotting tactics towards the Bulygin Duma, that in hindsight never convened, Lenin voiced his objections to the ruse of the government presented in the Duma. He claimed that the Bulygin Duma was a deal made by the landlords and big bourgeoisie with the autocracy and that such a deal would cause the bourgeoisie to withdraw from the revolution.¹⁴⁵ Since the Bulygin Duma was a body of reforms controlled by the big bourgeoisie and the autocracy, Lenin believed it would have stifled the revolutionary movement because it would come to terms with tsarism and would thus have no need to continue fighting a revolution that would bring an end to the autocracy. Such a scenario would not allow the for socialist revolution, since the bourgeois revolution must succeed in order for the Socialist revolution to advance.¹⁴⁶ Thus, Lenin condoned the members of the liberal bourgeoisie who called for a boycott of the Bulygin Duma. He insisted that the boycott of the Duma meant that the bourgeoisie was not cooperating with the Tsar and would therefore create a larger appeal of the bourgeoisie to the people, and thus would create, for Social-Democracy, a greater avenue for agitation and would further the political crisis, which was, for Lenin, “the source of the revolutionary movement”.¹⁴⁷

In addition to fighting against the Bulygin Duma in *Should We Boycott the Bulygin Duma*, Lenin once again denounced his opponents that he believed committed many mistakes of the Economists.¹⁴⁸ In his disagreements with the new *Iskra* that resulted shortly after the party split, Lenin again expressed how their reformist policies would halt the momentum of the revolution and belittle the cause of Social-Democracy. He claimed that the Social-Democrats of new *Iskra* were harming the ultimate end of the revolutionary movement in the way of reform and in their understanding of organization. In fact, it was their backward understanding of organization that led them towards the way of reforms on the matter of the Bulygin Duma.

Although both Lenin and his opponents supported a boycott, it was their position on which step to take instead of participating in the Duma that divided them. Lenin’s *Iskra* opponents, he claimed, supported the immediate creation of an organization of revolutionary self-government as a

¹⁴⁴ J. L. H. Keep. *Russian Social Democracy and the First State Duma*. p 180. Geoffrey Hosking, pp. 371-372.

¹⁴⁵ V. I. Lenin. *The Boycott of the Bulygin Duma, and Insurrection*, p. 180.

¹⁴⁶ V. I. Lenin. *Two Tactics of Social Democracy*, pp. 134-135.

¹⁴⁷ V. I. Lenin. *The Boycott of the Bulygin Duma, and Insurrection*. p. 181.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 185.

prologue to an armed uprising.¹⁴⁹ Lenin advocated organization as a way to ensure a successful uprising when the time was pertinent. However, the type of organization put forth by new *Iskra*, he believed, was not so much a plan to enable a successful and decisive victory over tsarism, but more so a struggle for rights within the current system.¹⁵⁰ Lenin advocated a centralized organization of the party to prepare them for the coming revolution and so that they would have the ability to take power when necessary and possible. His opponents' organizational policies as they related to the Bulygin Duma, for Lenin, would steer the movement towards conciliation and not towards the ultimate overthrow of the Russian autocracy. Lenin instead called for the immediate organization of a revolutionary army, which he believed to be the only thing that could pave the way for an uprising.¹⁵¹ Although Lenin's call for an organization that could ensure victory somewhat changed form, he did not alter his belief that it was in fact necessary to have such an organization and that such an organization should not do anything that would support the reforms of their opponents, which would have ultimately stifled the revolutionary movement.

The general strikes in the fall of 1905, led the Tsar to issue the October Manifesto, which granted more rights, including civil liberties and it established elections for the Duma.¹⁵² Therefore, the situation surrounding the First Duma was somewhat different than that of the Bulygin Duma. Therefore Lenin, in his publication *The State Duma and Social-Democratic Tactics*, noted that the strategy used against the Bulygin Duma might not have worked in the same way against the new Duma, and therefore Social-Democrats needed to evaluate the new situation and alter their tactics accordingly in order to reach the same end.¹⁵³ However, despite its differences with the Bulygin Duma, Lenin once again argued that the best way to handle the situation was to boycott the Duma. In his publication on the Bulygin Duma, Lenin stated that,

Until replaced by a provisional-revolutionary government the autocracy will not permit the workers and the people to conduct any elections that can in any way be called popular (and Social-Democrats will not agree to a travesty of 'popular' elections under the autocracy).¹⁵⁴

Thus, for Lenin, it was clear that despite the changes brought about by the October Manifesto, the new Duma would still not truly represent the people. Therefore, he considered the Duma a "gross travesty of popular representation" and nothing more than ineffective appendage of the autocracy.¹⁵⁵ It was this perception that justified Lenin's tactics in relation to the Duma.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., p. 187.

¹⁵² Abraham Ascher. *Russia: A Short History*, p. 140.

¹⁵³ V. I. Lenin. *The State Duma and Social-Democratic Tactics*, p. 105.

¹⁵⁴ V. I. Lenin. *Boycott of the Bulygin Duma, and Insurrection*. p. 185.

¹⁵⁵ V. I. Lenin. *A Tactical Platform for the Unity Congress of the R.S.D.L.P.*, p. 161.

Despite the October Manifesto, it was known that the autocracy perceived the Duma as a threat to its power and was hardly tolerant of the institution and, furthermore, could dissolve the Duma at will¹⁵⁶ Lenin viewed the Duma as a farce and an institute of deceit and believed that the Social-Democrats should once again boycott the Duma.¹⁵⁷ His belief was that such a misleading institution of the government would avert the revolutionary movement from its path towards a decisive victory over tsarism.

For many, the First State Duma stood to represent the Tsar's many promises for reform declared in the October Manifesto.¹⁵⁸ Lenin's writings concerning the First Duma clearly show that he too considered the institution a banner for reforms. As before, Lenin began to fight against such reforms, confirming his belief that such reforms would have been a detriment to the revolution. Since the Duma was nothing more than an institution of reforms, then following the precedent Lenin had already set, Social-Democrats would have been accomplices in slowing momentum of the revolutionary movement while at the same time pushing it towards conciliation if they chose to participate in the Duma or its elections.

When discussing his support for the boycott of the First Duma, Lenin explained that by boycott he meant not only nonparticipation in the elections, but also meant that the election meetings should be used for the agitation and promoting Social-Democratic aims.¹⁵⁹ Thus, Lenin was not neglecting entirely all things connected to the Duma. He did see that the elections, at least, provided an avenue for the masses to hear the Social-Democratic views that, for him, were the only way for a decisive victory over tsarism. However, he did not advocate the Social-Democrats participate in the election by producing actual candidates, thus he insisted that the election meetings should have remained solely for the purposes of agitation. He claimed that to fully participate in the elections and the resulting Duma would have caused a rift between the Social-Democrats and the masses and would have acted to divert the movement towards conciliation with tsarism. Lenin reasoned that if the Social-Democrats were to participate in the Duma or its elections, then they would have been legitimizing the institution in the eyes of the proletariat. If, he explained, the proletariat felt obliged to obey the Duma, then they would also see the legitimacy in obeying the Tsar.¹⁶⁰ Such action would have caused confusion about the aims of Social-Democracy, which would have been detrimental to the revolution. Lenin was adamant that if the Social-Democrats were to participate in the Duma in any other way than agitation, then it would have put the aims of Social-Democracy in a false light and, in turn, would have lowered the effectiveness of the revolutionary struggle in the eyes of the people.¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁶ J. L. H. Keep. *Russian Social-Democracy and the First State Duma*. p. 180.

¹⁵⁷ V. I. Lenin. *A Tactical Platform for the Unity Congress of the R.S.D.L.P.*, p. 162.

¹⁵⁸ J. L. H. Keep. *Russian Social-Democracy and the First State Duma*. p. 180.

¹⁵⁹ V. I. Lenin. *Should We Boycott the First Duma?*, p. 97.

¹⁶⁰ V. I. Lenin. *Report on the Unity Congress of the R.S.D.L.P.*, p. 364.

¹⁶¹ V. I. Lenin. *Should We Boycott the State Duma?*, p. 98.

Thus, by supporting an institution of reforms, the Social-Democrats would have weakened the momentum the struggle had gained due to the recent events in Russia.

Furthermore, Lenin's tactics towards the First Duma were also aligned with core beliefs about organization and its necessity for fostering the plan for a successful mass revolution. He clearly stated that Social-Democrats should not participate in the Duma because it was more likely to act as a disorganizing agent that would only corrupt the proletariat.¹⁶² In *What is to be Done?* Lenin argued for a clandestine, centralized group of professional revolutionaries to lead the mass. With the slight improvements in the emerging system after 1905, underground political parties had the ability to come slightly more into the public eye.¹⁶³ Thus, with the new political openness and revolutionary excitement, Lenin was able to focus on creating a revolutionary organization of the masses. When writing about the Bulygin Duma Lenin spoke of the necessity of creating a revolutionary army; emphasizing his continuous need for strict organization. Just as he argued against his opponents' idea of revolutionary self-government as the solution to the Bulygin Duma because it was not an organization that could facilitate the creation of a revolutionary mass, he also argued against the upcoming Duma because it would have lacked the same ability. Lenin believed there was no way the Duma in its current form could create a revolutionary organization.¹⁶⁴ His call for organization at the start of the First Duma was formed to fit the more open situation surrounding it. However, he still held that organization was the key to a successful uprising, which is what was needed for a triumph over tsarism. He urged Social-Democrats to not forget that preparations must be made for an armed uprising by all Social-Democrats, this would ensure unity of the party and, in turn, ensure the success of the armed uprising against the Tsar's government.¹⁶⁵

Just as Lenin realized that the situation surrounding the First Duma was different than that of the Bulygin Duma, he also had the foresight that the Second Duma would also present a different situation than its predecessor. When Lenin was writing about the First Duma he explained that in the event it was dissolved by the Tsar then, at that time, Social-Democrats would once again need to evaluate the political circumstances and make decisions regarding the new State Duma accordingly.¹⁶⁶ Lenin's writings on the Second Duma produce justification for his change in tactics towards the Second Duma. They show that even though he changed his tactics, he only did so because the political atmosphere and the elements comprising the Duma itself had changed and in order to stay consistent with his core beliefs regarding reformism and organization such a change in tactics was necessary.

¹⁶² V. I. Lenin. *A Tactical Platform for the Unity Congress of the R.S.D.L.P.*, p. 161.

¹⁶³ Abraham Ascher. *Russia: A Short History*, pp. 140-141. Geoffrey Hosking. *Russia and the Russians*, p. 382.

¹⁶⁴ V. I. Lenin. *A Tactical Platform for the Unity Congress of the R.S.D.L.P.*, p. 162.

¹⁶⁵ V. I. Lenin. *Should We Boycott the State Duma?*, p. 97.

¹⁶⁶ V. I. Lenin. *Draft Resolution on the State Duma Submitted to the Unity Congress*, p. 293.

In his writings concerning the Duma, Lenin explained how the First Duma showed that freedom from the existing oppression was not attainable under the laws created by the government and enforced by its lackeys within the Duma.¹⁶⁷ He clearly explained the difference of the situation surrounding the Second Duma, stating,

The First Duma was a Duma of hopes for peaceful development. The Second Duma will be the scene of a sharp struggle between the Black-Hundred tsarist government and the representatives of the masses: the masses of proletarians, who are consciously striving for liberty in order to facilitate the fight for socialism, and the masses of the peasants, who are rising spontaneously against the feudal-minded landlords.¹⁶⁸

Lenin thus perceived the First Duma as a culmination of reformists, resulting in a institution that had hoped to conciliate its actions with the autocracy at a time when there was still a chance for change through revolutionary means. For that reason, it would have been against true Social-Democratic policy to participate. However, Lenin viewed the Second Duma differently; as an avenue for more substantial revolutionary agitation among the masses. Furthermore, Lenin argued that the dissolution of the First State Duma proved the correctness of the boycott tactics because it showed the people the deceptive nature of the Duma. However, he then argued that the counter-revolutionary actions of the bourgeoisie and the reformist tactics of the liberals implored the Social-Democrats to take action against them in the arena of the Duma.¹⁶⁹

Lenin claimed that the new revolutionary tide surrounding the Second Duma made it a responsibility of the Social-Democrats to take a stand against the liberal-bourgeoisie and its negotiations with the autocracy, and to produce a “joint struggle in the ranks of the people”.¹⁷⁰ When discussing his tactics on the First Duma, Lenin argued that the goals of Social-Democracy could be reached to a greater degree by a boycott than by participation.¹⁷¹ However, Lenin realized that the Second Duma was more left than the first.¹⁷² With the Duma sitting more to the left, he explained, the Social-Democrats were thus confronted with a more acute revolutionary crisis.¹⁷³ In the light of a more reactionary Duma, Lenin once again called on his party to lead the masses away from reforms in order that it reach its full potential as a revolutionary force. To do this during the current situation, Lenin felt it necessary to change his tactics relating to the Second Duma, thus he advocated participation instead of a boycott.

Lenin did not see a legitimate reason to participate in the First Duma, but since the Second Duma showed a new revolutionary tide, it was not only necessary for the Social-Democrats to

¹⁶⁷ V. I. Lenin. *The Second Duma and the Task of the Proletariat*, p. 156.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 159.

¹⁶⁹ V. I. Lenin. *Draft Resolutions for the 5th Congress of the RSDLP.*, p. 141.

¹⁷⁰ V. I. Lenin. *The Second Duma and the Second Revolutionary Wave*, p. 117.

¹⁷¹ V. I. Lenin. *The Duma and Social-Democratic Tactics*, p. 107.

¹⁷² V. I. Lenin. *The Second Duma and the Second Revolutionary Wave*, p. 113.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 115.

participate, it was their duty. If they did not participate, the revolutionary momentum coming out of the Second Duma would not have been used in the most efficient way and such a mishandling of revolutionary energy could have weakened the struggle. Therefore, Lenin saw a benefit in participating in the Second Duma that was not there in the First Duma, and the consequences for not participating were greater the second time around.

Ultimately, Lenin laid out what he believed to be the immediate political tasks of the Social-Democrats for the Second Duma. He said that those tasks were to illustrate to the masses that the Duma was unfit as a means of revolutionary demands of the proletariat. Furthermore, Social-Democrats were responsible for showing the people that it was impossible to achieve liberation through a parliamentary structure as long as that structure was controlled by the autocracy. Also, he argued, it was important to make clear the necessity of insurrection and he continued to advocate for more equal voting rights. All of this, he claimed, was possible through the Duma if Social-Democrats refrained from merging with any other oppositional party and remained absolutely independent as the true party of the proletariat.¹⁷⁴

Keeping in line with his main beliefs, Lenin again fought for preparedness through organization, saying that, through the help of Social-Democracy, the proletariat must remain consistent in preparing the “ever broader masses” for the struggle necessary in the battle against the Tsarist government.¹⁷⁵ Furthermore, he called for the same kind of unity that he had been advocating since 1902 as he urged his comrades to concentrate all of their forces on obtaining victory in the coming battle for freedom.¹⁷⁶ Lenin thus realized that the revolutionary tide was regaining strength and, as before, he called on his party members to help direct the tide. He tried to counteract the spontaneous element of the movement by advocating participation in the new, more reactionary, Duma. He welcomed the energy born out of the spontaneous upsurge of the moment, but, as in 1902, he insisted that his party do everything possible to harness the power of that spontaneity and make it as “conscious, consistent, and steadfast as possible”.¹⁷⁷ As presented in *What is to be Done?*, Lenin warned that the worship of spontaneity would lead the proletariat in the wrong direction. Therefore, although Lenin saw the benefit of making use of the spontaneous element, it should not have been relied upon to direct the movement towards a decisive victory without guidance in alignment with Social-Democracy. Thus, from an organizational standpoint, Lenin wrote specifically about the revolutionary Social-Democrats’ activities in the Duma. He urged them, as a Social-Democratic

¹⁷⁴ V. I. Lenin. Draft Resolution for the 5th Party Congress of the R.S.D.L.P., p. 141.

¹⁷⁵ V. I. Lenin. The Second Duma and the Task of the Proletariat, p. 159.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 116.

organization, to use the Duma for the primary functions of agitation, propaganda, and furthering organization.¹⁷⁸

Lenin's change in tactics regarding the State Duma has been offered by historians as evidence that Lenin changed his theories and practices to suite his personal aim of attaining power. Possony suggested that Lenin, after realizing the number of Mensheviks elected to the First Duma, decided to change his tactics about the Duma and also to try frantically to reunite the R.S.D.L.P.¹⁷⁹ However, Lenin's writings show that he changed his tactics concerning the State Duma not because the success of the Mensheviks, but because of the change within the Duma itself. In fact, Lenin chastised the Mensheviks for their participation in the First Duma and argued that they were wrong in regarding the Duma as parliamentarianism in true form and ignoring that the Duma was afraid of any revolutionary activity conducted by the people independently of the Duma.¹⁸⁰ Alfred Levin in *The Second Duma: A Study of the Social-Democratic Party and the Russian Constitutional Experiment* argued that the Bolshevik's attitude change toward the Duma was abrupt and sudden¹⁸¹, while on the other hand Keep argued that Lenin changed his mind about the Duma at the sound of every rumor.¹⁸² In relation to the first two convocations of the State Duma, it is clear that Lenin did indeed change his tactics. However, the change was not severely abrupt nor made on a whim. His decision was, like many of his decisions, deeply rooted in the core beliefs that he was certain would lead to a successful assault on the Tsarist government. Keep also suggested that the "most plausible explanation" for Lenin's change in tactics was his realization that a successful armed uprising in the near future was an improbability.¹⁸³ However, it is clear that Lenin still argued that an armed mass uprising was still quite possible and that it would happen sooner than later. In fact, Lenin based much of his decision to participate the Second Duma on what he believed to be a new revolutionary tide. Thus, in order to stay consistent with his earlier arguments about guiding the mass in the right direction, he saw it necessary to participate in an attempt to guide the revolutionary wave on the road of Social-Democracy; otherwise the revolutionary momentum could have been swallowed up by the liberal-bourgeoisie reformists. Service suggested that, in relation to the State Duma, Lenin was making decisions in an effort to extract the maximum advantage for personal gains.¹⁸⁴ But, when aligned with his previous arguments against reform and with his continuous fight for preparedness through organization, it becomes clear that Lenin tactics towards the Duma were only changeable in accordance to the situation. Thus, the core beliefs that fostered Lenin's political thought are prevalent in his tactics towards the Duma and he did not veer too far from what he originally believed to be the path to a successful revolution.

¹⁷⁸ V. I. Lenin. Draft Resolution for the 5th Party Congress of the R.S.D.L.P., p. 141.

¹⁷⁹ Stefan T. Possony. Lenin: The Compulsive Revolutionary. p. 98.

¹⁸⁰ V. I. Lenin. Report on the Unity Congress of the R.S.D.L.P., p. 358.

¹⁸¹ Alfred Levin. The Second Duma. p.51.

¹⁸² J. H. L. Keep. Social-Democracy and the First State Duma. p.190

¹⁸³ Ibid., p. 198.

¹⁸⁴ Robert Service. Lenin: A Political Life. Vol. 1, p. 165.

After the dissolution of the first two Dumas, the Third Duma completed its full five year term. Afterwards, in 1912, the Fourth Duma was elected.¹⁸⁵ The same year the Fourth Duma was elected there was an upsurge in revolutionary sentiment. In the beginning of 1912, government soldiers fired on a crowd of strikers at a goldmine in eastern Siberia. This created a more volatile labor movement and increased Bolshevik support among labor unions and, within two years, there was an increase in industrial strikes¹⁸⁶ With the Duma debate somewhat waning in relation to the new revolutionary upsurge, it was not long before the outbreak of the First World War ushered in different tasks and responsibilities for Social-Democrats in Russia.

Lenin, as before, and in an effort to remain true to the aims of Social-Democracy, shifted his focus; this time the focus was on the tasks of Social-Democrats during the war. Despite the shift in Lenin's focus, much of his writings about Social-Democratic tactics during the war show a coherent connection with the Lenin's core beliefs about reformism and opportunism. In fact, in two of his well known publications concerning Social-Democrats and war, *The Collapse of the Second International* and *Socialism and War*, one can clearly see that Lenin's original arguments for advancing a mass movement capable of overthrowing the autocracy is the cornerstone of the works. He once again fought against reformism and opportunism and made an argument for the proper revolutionary organizations.

The two works presented an argument against all Social-Democrats, in Russia and internationally, who supported their home countries' war efforts. It was, in many ways, an attempt to show how such supporters of the war had betrayed Social-Democracy by disregarding the Basle Manifesto; which Lenin claimed was unanimously adopted and was meant to outline the tactics in such a war, and held that that Social-Democrats would not support their governments in a capitalist war.¹⁸⁷ Lenin began to emphasize the term social-chauvinism to refer to Social-Democrats, whom he considered opportunists, who had deserted the camp of Social-Democracy and advocated acting in defense of their home countries during the war.¹⁸⁸ Lenin directly equated the social-chauvinism to opportunism and accused them of refusing to support the proletarian revolution against the bourgeoisie in one's own country.¹⁸⁹ Lenin claimed that a truly revolutionary class should want nothing more than the defeat of its government during, what he called, a reactionary war.¹⁹⁰ Thus, any support for the war effort by Social-Democrats would have legitimized support for the war in the eyes of the masses, and Lenin realized that this would have complicated the development of a truly revolutionary class. Just as Lenin had argued in 1902, he believed that if Social-Democrats did

¹⁸⁵ E. A. Goldenweiser. *The Russian Duma*, p. 412.

¹⁸⁶ Abraham Ascher. *Russia: A Short History*, p.151.

¹⁸⁷ V. I. Lenin. *Socialism and War*, p. 307-08.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid*, p. 307.

¹⁸⁹ V. I. Lenin. *The Collapse of the Second International*, p. 242.

¹⁹⁰ V. I. Lenin. *Socialism and War*, p. 315.

anything that would keep the masses from growing into a revolutionary proletariat, then the movement would have been at stake. Furthermore, he criticized the social-chauvinist for distorting the theories of Marx and Engels.¹⁹¹ He also claimed that the leading opportunists at the Second International were prostituting Marx.¹⁹² Thus, as before, Lenin's arguments against opportunism suggested that it effected the revolutionary movement at a theoretical level.

Lenin argued that the Second International had collapsed because the opportunists had betrayed socialism. In fact, he argued that the collapse of the international signified the "complete victory of opportunism".¹⁹³ For Lenin, this was all the more disconcerting because he believed that the war had raised opportunism to a "higher stage".¹⁹⁴ He also argued that both opportunism and social-chauvinism advocated the conciliation or corroboration of classes instead of supporting the class struggle.¹⁹⁵ Thus, once again Lenin was fighting against the conciliatory practices of opportunism that would have harmed the movement of the revolution by encouraging compromise with the current government, instead of its demolition.

Furthermore, in the two writings, Lenin claimed that the best way to combat the problem of opportunism was through organization.¹⁹⁶ He once again urged his party to begin the process of building up a revolutionary organization.¹⁹⁷ Furthermore, in accordance with his original plan for organization, he argued that in order for such an organization to be effective, it should work underground.¹⁹⁸ It was important that the opportunists were combated in such a way because Lenin believed that the working class could not fulfill its role as a revolutionary class unless it waged its own war against the subservience to opportunism.¹⁹⁹ Lenin believed the war had exposed opportunism as a close ally to the bourgeoisie²⁰⁰, thus, any working-class subservience to the opportunists would, in turn, mean the working-class subservience to the bourgeoisie, and as Lenin had argued many times before, such a result could completely halt the revolutionary movement. Once again, Lenin therefore turned to organization in attempt to safeguard the movement and keep it moving forward.

Both of these works clearly show a connection to Lenin's original fight against opportunism. Furthermore, Lenin once again calls for proper organization to support and shield the movement from attacks of the bourgeoisie and the opportunists. However, despite the fact that Lenin remained true to the basic core elements of his theories, these works have also been used to paint Lenin as a manipulative politician eager to gain personal power. Service argued that the policies Lenin put forth

¹⁹¹ Ibid., p. 308.

¹⁹² V. I. Lenin. *The Collapse of the Second International*, p. 257.

¹⁹³ Ibid., p. 256.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid., p. 243.

¹⁹⁵ V. I. Lenin. *Socialism and War*, p. 310.

¹⁹⁶ V. I. Lenin. *The Collapse of the Second International*, p. 250.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid., pp. 252-253.

¹⁹⁸ V. I. Lenin. *Socialism and War*, p. 314.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., p. 312.

²⁰⁰ V. I. Lenin. *The Collapse of the Second International*, p. 257.

in these two works were based on “shaky” and “inadequate” argumentation.²⁰¹ Furthermore, he claimed that he distorted and exaggerated arguments to advance his ideas.²⁰² In addition, Possony suggested that Lenin had unrealistic beliefs regarding the idea of revolution starting everywhere, and those beliefs were the background for his platforms.²⁰³ Such generalizations of these works show the continued attitude of many historians to portray Lenin as too flexible in his theories and policies. However, when lined up with his previous writings, it is clear that although it may seem that Lenin was flexible in some aspects, it is clear that he remained true the main thread of his original arguments and plans for a successful revolutionary uprising. In this two works, one cannot miss his continued fight against opportunism. Furthermore, his reasoning for the need of an underground organization also shows continuity with preceding arguments on the subject.

World War I was only one of the political crises that Lenin and the other Social-Democrats found themselves in since the publication of Lenin’s *What is to be Done?*. Lenin, however, did not allow such political crises to negate his original plans for a successful attack on tsarism. Where he left off in *What is to Be Done?* in his fight against opportunism and call for organization, he picked up in the writings he produced in the subsequent years. Despite a quickly changing political situation and increasing opposition against his ideas, Lenin remained true to the core elements that comprised his writings since 1902. Despite history’s portrayal of him, such a continuity suggests that Lenin was not trying to simply gain control through the manipulation of the party and the masses, but was trying, despite heavy adversity, to remain true to what he believed would lead to the successful achievement of Social-Democratic aims. This steadfast adherence to those core beliefs did not falter during the Revolution of 1905, nor did not falter during the party split, and it did not waver even in the midst of world war. It would be that steadfast adherence that gave Lenin insight into the events of 1917 and allowed him to lead his party in a time of revolution.

²⁰¹ Robert Service. *Lenin: A Political Life*, vol. 2, p. 83.

²⁰² *Ibid.*, p. 86.

²⁰³ Stefan T. Possony. *Lenin: The Compulsive Revolutionary*. p. 177.

CHAPTER THREE

On international Women's in late February 1917 thousands of women joined the crowds of the rising labor strikes. The crowds carried banners that read "Down with the autocracy"²⁰⁴, marking the beginning of the year Russia would undergo two separate revolutions. After the collapse of Tsar Nicholas II, the Russian people were promised an opportunity, at a point when circumstances would allow it, to elect a Constituent Assembly, that would in turn, decide on a democratic constitution.²⁰⁵ However, until such time the new Provisional Government, created out of the State Duma, rose as an interim government. The Provisional Government promised freedom of speech, the creation of unions and to abolish all social, religious, and national discriminations. Most importantly it promised to convene a Constituent Assembly and to continue the international war.²⁰⁶ At the same time that the Provisional Government was coming into being, the newly revived Soviet of Workers and Soldiers Deputies were also asserting its power.²⁰⁷ The Soviets were seen as private institutions and were directed by non-elected representatives of various socialist.²⁰⁸ The existence of both the Provisional Government and the Soviets created a cooperative form of government in which the Provisional Government possessed complete administrative responsibility while the Soviet acted largely as a system of checks and balances.²⁰⁹ This corporative, yet dysfunctional, form of government was coined as "dual power".²¹⁰

The relationship between the two institutions was inherently volatile. As Leon Trotsky explained in his *The History of the Russian Revolution*, the shared power created many obstacles for the authority of the Soviets and the furtherance of socialist revolution. He stated,

In the immeasurably greater maturity of the Russian proletariat in comparison with the town masses of the older revolution, lies the basic peculiarity of the Russian revolution. This led first to the paradox of a half-spectral government, and afterwards presented the real one from being resolved in favor of the bourgeoisie. For the question stood thus: Either the bourgeois will actually dominate the old state apparatus, altering it a little for its purposes, in which case the Soviets will come to nothing; or the Soviets will form the foundation of a new state, liquidating not only the old government apparatus, but also the domination of those classes it served. The Mensheviks and the Socialist-Revolutionaries were steering toward the first solution, the Bolsheviks towards the second. The oppressed

²⁰⁴ Abraham Ascher. *Russia: A Short History*, pp. 158-59.

²⁰⁵ Shelia Fitzpatrick. *The Russian Revolution*, p. 40.

²⁰⁶ Abraham Ascher. *Russia: A Short History*, p. 160.

²⁰⁷ Dietrich Geyer. *The Russian Revolution*, p. 68-76.

²⁰⁸ Richard Pipes. *The Russian Revolution*, p. 297.

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 296.

²¹⁰ Abraham Ascher. *Russia: A Short History*, p. 160, 161.

classes...did not possess in the past the knowledge, or skill, or leadership to carry through what they had begun, were armed in the Russian revolution of the twentieth century with all three.²¹¹

Trotsky's evaluation of the dual power encased the essence of the struggle for power between February and October. It was Lenin's knowledge and skepticism about the true nature of the coalition government that contributed to his actions leading to the October Revolution.

Much of the content from Lenin's writings in 1917 center around the situation of the dual power and its effects on the revolution. Beginning in April Lenin evaluated the phenomenon of dual power and what it meant for socialist revolution. Coming to a head during the October revolution, as he was guided by his theoretical guideline for the establishment of communism in *The State and Revolution*, Lenin continued to illustrate the dangers dual power posed for the revolution.

When Lenin returned to Russia in April he at once set out to issue his response to the situation. In his *April Theses*, Lenin explained the importance of the new revolutionary situation born out of the February events. He stated,

This peculiar situation demands of us an ability to adapt ourselves to the special conditions of party work among unprecedentedly large masses of proletarians who have just awakened to political life.²¹²

Lenin once again saw the necessity of adapting his party plan to the current situation in order to stay in line with his core system of beliefs. However, despite the need for adapting to the new circumstances prevailing at the time, Lenin did not stray from the building blocks of his theory. Upon Lenin's return to Russia after the February Revolution, he once again voiced his objections to the opportunists and expressed his view of the type of organization fitting for the situation in revolutionary Russia that would have had the ability to see the next revolution to its ultimate end.

In his *April Theses*, he explained that the masses needed to be made aware that the Soviets were the only possible form of revolutionary government. However, he did not simply evoke the name of the Soviets as the forbearers of socialist transformation, but also criticized their tactics in relation to their dealings with the Provisional Government. He claimed that it was the task of his party to show the masses the errors of the Soviets and argued that they were, at the time, yielding to the influence of the bourgeoisie.²¹³ Furthermore, Lenin called for the abolition of the standing army, the police, and the bureaucratic apparatus.²¹⁴ He also called for the confiscation of all landed estates.²¹⁵ He explained that

²¹¹ Leon Trotsky. *The History of the Russian Revolution*, pp. 213, 214.

²¹² V. I. Lenin. *The Task of the Proletariat in the Present Revolution* ("April Theses"), p. 295.

²¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 297.

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 298.

it was the party's direct task to introduce socialism by bringing social production and distribution under the control of the Soviets.²¹⁶

Lenin realized that with this position the Bolsheviks were in the minority, but he explained that although it was indeed a minority position, it was only a minority to the opportunists, making the fact insignificant.²¹⁷ He argued that at the current time the revolution was passing into the second stage, which required the proletariat to make steps towards overcoming the rule of bourgeois government.²¹⁸ Thus, if the Soviets themselves did not take control of production and distribution as he advocated, then the opportunist trend within the Soviets of cooperating with the Provisional Government would have continued to prevail. For Lenin, this would have hindered the movement from successfully completing the second stage of revolution; socialist revolution.

Furthermore, Lenin criticized the Provisional Government for not setting a date for convening a Constituent Assembly. Although the Provisional Government was promising the masses the right to elect a Constituent Assembly, they were not following through on their promise. For Lenin this was exactly the bourgeois reaction that was to be expected. After February and the collapse of the autocracy, the bourgeoisie seemingly held the dominant position in Russian political and social structures. Therefore, the bourgeoisie had no reason to continue supporting the revolution since the next step would have been socialist revolution, which would have disenfranchised the bourgeoisie and taken away their leading position in society. Thus, any actions from his party members that would have supported the Provisional Government would have been counteractive for the socialist revolution. Lenin clearly argued that socialist revolution was the ultimate goal for his party and it was for that reason that he fought against his opponents who supported the bourgeois Provisional Government by cooperating with it.

In his *April Theses* Lenin also discussed Russia's participation in the current imperialist war. The Provisional Government supported Russia's war efforts and did not think it best to remove Russia from the war.²¹⁹ Therefore, for Lenin, any support of the Provisional Government was also support for maintaining the war effort. Lenin had been fighting against the imperialist war since it had begun and disagreed with the Provisional Government's decision to continue the war. The war remained a point of contention between Lenin and his opponents and he argued that his opponents were "socialist in word and chauvinist in deed".²²⁰ However, true to Lenin's political thought, he turned towards organization to derive some benefit from the circumstances brought on by the dragging war. For the aim of convincing the masses, including the standing army, that the war was an imperialist war that would only further the aims of the bourgeois, Lenin argued for the fraternization of the soldiers. He

²¹⁶ Ibid.

²¹⁷ Ibid., p. 297.

²¹⁸ Ibid., p. 296.

²¹⁹ Abraham Ascher. *Russia: A Short History*, p. 160.

²²⁰ V. I. Lenin. *The Task of the Proletariat in the Present Revolution* ("April Theses"), p. 300.

claimed that the only way to illustrate the bourgeois aims of the war was to organize a widespread campaign in the army on the front lines.²²¹ This organized effort, in Lenin's view, would build a stronger proletariat for completion of socialist revolution.

Figs claimed that Lenin's dominant nature reached extreme proportions in his *April Thesis*.²²² Pipes argued that Lenin's *April Thesis* had outlined a program that was out of touch and he claimed, that to his audience, Lenin seemed as if he was raving mad.²²³ In the same line, Daniels argued that it was such a shift from what Lenin had normally advocated that his party members were absolutely shocked.²²⁴ But this was not the case and, in his publication *The Dual Power*, Lenin expanded the ideas he had presented in his *April Theses*. He stated that the basic question of every revolution is that of state power.²²⁵ For Lenin, the understanding of that concept was crucial because if it was not understood then there could be no guidance for the revolution.²²⁶ Furthermore, he argued that if the consequences of dual were not understood, then there could be no further advancement of the movement.²²⁷ Lenin explained that the dual power was not something that anyone had anticipated and, accordingly, the current party tactics should have met the needs of dealing with such a phenomenon as the dual power, and that an amendment to "old formulas" was necessary.²²⁸

Lenin continued to explain that the dual power was a danger to the ultimate outcome of socialism he had been advocating. He saw the Provisional Government as a bourgeois government and he argued that they stood for the undivided power of the bourgeoisie.²²⁹ On the other hand, Lenin argued that the Soviets were a form of government existing of the proletariat.²³⁰ The Soviets, for Lenin, were a revolutionary dictatorship since their power was not granted by any law, but was acquired by a revolutionary seizure of power. He argued that their power came from a direct initiative of the people.²³¹ However, Lenin made it clear that despite the power given to the Soviets by the people, they were remaining weak because of their conciliatory policies concerning the Provisional Government. He stated that "by direct agreement with the bourgeois Provisional Government and by a series of actual concessions, it has itself surrendered and is surrendering to the bourgeoisie".²³² Furthermore, he argued that the Soviets were the only possible revolutionary government.²³³

²²¹ Ibid., p. 296.

²²² Orlando Figs. *The People's Tragedy*, p. 391

²²³ Richard Pipes. *The Russian Revolution*, p.393.

²²⁴ Robert V. Daniels. *The Rise and Fall of Communism in Russia*, p. 61.

²²⁵ V. I. Lenin. *The Dual Power*. *Lenin Anthology*, p. 301.

²²⁶ Ibid.

²²⁷ Ibid.

²²⁸ Ibid.

²²⁹ Ibid., p. 303.

²³⁰ Ibid., p. 301.

²³¹ Ibid., pp. 301- 302.

²³² Ibid., p. 302.

²³³ Ibid., p. 303.

Therefore, any propping up of the bourgeoisie Provisional Government was counterrevolutionary and would have removed the revolutionary character from the Soviets.

Lenin believed that the Provisional Government should be overthrown, but believed an overthrow was impossible at the time because of the agreements that it had with the Soviets. Thus, Lenin's opponents that supported the Provisional Government were keeping the Soviets from reaching its potential as a true revolutionary government, the only government, with the power vested in the people. Therefore, just as Lenin had fought since 1902 against opportunism that halted the revolutionary movement, he fought against the opportunism that would have stopped the revolution after the success of the bourgeoisie revolution and, in turn, denied the revolution the ability to move towards socialism. Lenin then accused the Mensheviks and the Socialist Revolutionaries of not realizing the deceptive nature of the bourgeois government and therefore hindered the emancipation from such government.²³⁴

Furthermore, although not quite offering an organizational plan, Lenin once again turned towards his adherence to a strict understanding of organization to evaluate the situation and the actions of his opponents. He stated that it was the lack of organization among the proletariat that gave the Provisional Government the clout it retained after February.²³⁵ He also argued that it was a lack of class-consciousness and organization that led his opponents to make agreements with the Provisional Government.²³⁶

Despite the fact that in his *April Theses* and *The Dual Power* Lenin only touched on the idea of organization, it is clear that the idea had not been removed completely from his writings. In his publication *Can the Bolsheviks Retain State Power?* Lenin again put organization as a main focus. However, since the bourgeoisie revolution had already succeeded in its task of overthrowing the autocracy, which had been a major focus of Lenin's in his works prior to 1917, he no longer focused his organizational ideas specifically towards a party prepared for bourgeois revolution, but focused on preparing the masses for the completion of socialist revolution.

Lenin argued that the Soviets were a government of the people. He believed this to be true because, as he saw them, the Soviets were a new state apparatus that provided an armed force comprised of the proletariat and bound up very tightly with the people, which created a bond with the people.²³⁷ Lenin felt strongly about the importance of the Soviets because, as he had argued before, the revolutionary movement was not finished after the collapse of tsarism, but still needed to move forward if the proletariat was to defeat the rule of the bourgeoisie.

²³⁴ Ibid., p. 304.

²³⁵ Ibid., p. 302.

²³⁶ Ibid., pp. 302-03.

²³⁷ V. I. Lenin. *Can the Bolsheviks Retain State Power?* Lenin Anthology, p. 399.

Since, as Lenin argued, the Soviets were the only possible form of revolutionary government, he did not fail to see their benefit in training the proletariat for socialist revolution. He argued that the Soviets provided the organization necessary for such training. He stated that,

[The Soviets as a state apparatus] constitutes an organizational form for the vanguard, i.e., for the most class conscious, most energetic and most progressive section of the *oppressed* classes, the workers and peasants, and so constitutes an apparatus by means of which the vanguard of the oppressed classes can elevate, train, educate, and lead *the entire vast mass* of these classes, which has up to now stood completely outside the political life and history.²³⁸

It is clear that Lenin saw the Soviets as the vanguard with the ability to lead the masses to the victory of socialism, thus it was important that they were able to train the masses for participating in the political arena. By organizing the masses with the help of the Soviets, Lenin believed that the proletariat would gain the knowledge and strength to advance the movement towards socialist revolution. He stated that, in order to secure victory, the Soviets needed to “imbue the oppressed and the working people with the confidence in their own strength”.²³⁹

Furthermore, Lenin elaborated on the training and skills the proletariat would need, not only to see socialist revolution to victory, but to operate the new socialist state apparatus after the triumph of socialism. He argued for the creation of the dictatorship of the proletariat, saying that it would provide the new socialist state apparatus with a system that is universal, up-to-date, and non-bureaucratic.²⁴⁰ He once again called on the people to organize and establish a socialist state apparatus fully devoted to the sympathy to the large majority of the oppressed peoples.²⁴¹ He believed that to hand over the administrative work of the state apparatus to the proletarians would incite the revolutionary fervor among the people and would multiply its forces. Such a handover of administrative work would have been possible if the Soviets fully exercised control and supervision.²⁴² However, Lenin once again faced the problem of the Soviets’ cooperation with the Provisional Government. He said the dual power amounted to “paralysis for the Soviets”.²⁴³ Again, Lenin blamed his opportunist opponents as he argued that the Socialist-Revolutionaries and the Mensheviks had perverted and misused the Soviets because of their coalition policies with the bourgeois government.²⁴⁴

Lenin’s theories on the state obviously affected his policies during 1917. He continued to elaborate on those theories in *The State and Revolution*. Service has argued that because *The State*

²³⁸ Ibid.

²³⁹ Ibid., p. 405.

²⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 402.

²⁴¹ Ibid., p. 405.

²⁴² Ibid., p. 402.

²⁴³ Ibid., p. 400.

²⁴⁴ Ibid.

and Revolution was not published until 1918 it did not help shape on the revolutionary events of October 1917.²⁴⁵ However, most of Lenin's research and notes for *The State and Revolution* were made in 1916, prior to the two revolutions in 1917.²⁴⁶ Thus, although the work itself was not presented to the public until after the October Revolution, its substance gives yet another insight into Lenin's revolutionary plan for the victory of socialism. Robert V. Daniels, in his publication *State and Revolution: A Case Study in the Genesis and Transformation of Communist Ideology*, suggested that Lenin's *State and Revolution* did not conform to his preceding political thought or practice.²⁴⁷ He also argued that *The State and Revolution* stood in sharp contrast to Lenin's previous works and was a "monument to Lenin's intellectual deviation".²⁴⁸ Furthermore, Daniels suggested that all of Lenin's works after 1917 were devoid of his strong advocacy for organization.²⁴⁹ In his *The Rise and Fall of Russian Communism* he again argued that Lenin had given almost no thought to the ideas he presented in *The State and Revolution* before he began his notes in 1916.²⁵⁰ Rodney Barfield, in his work *Lenin's Utopianism: State and Revolution*, said that *The State and Revolution* was not a total break with all of Lenin's political thought, but did suggest that Lenin's writings after the February Revolution had moved the furthest from the attitudes expressed in *What is to be Done?* than any of his other writings.²⁵¹ Similarly, Service argued that Lenin's writings during 1917 were proof of his "changeability".²⁵²

Historians have also used Lenin's writing in 1917, especially *The State and Revolution*, to illustrate his lust for power and quest for self-fulfillment. Page suggested that it was a "dialectical thesis justifying the position of a future dictator".²⁵³ In addition, Von Laue argued that it was a piece based on utopianism combined with power.²⁵⁴ He also suggested that during such time, the Bolsheviks, under Lenin's leadership, attempted to exploit the ignorance among the masses.²⁵⁵ Service argued that the motivation for *The State and Revolution* was Lenin's attempt to assume the exclusive claims of Marxist orthodoxy for himself and said that it was a "half-baked intellectual product".²⁵⁶ While admitting that *The State and Revolution* did contain some of Lenin's common organizational elements, Alfred B. Evans suggested that the work was an attempt to rise internationally as the leader

²⁴⁵ Robert Service. *Lenin: A Political Life*, vol. 2, p. 216.

²⁴⁶ Rodney Barfield. *Lenin's Utopianism: State and Revolution*, pp. 51-2. Alfred B. Evans. *Rereading Lenin's State and Revolution*, pp. 3, 4.

²⁴⁷ Robert V. Daniels. *State and Revolution: A Case Study in the Genesis and Transformation of Communist Ideology*, p. 22.

²⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 22-3.

²⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 24.

²⁵⁰ Robert V. Daniels. *The Rise and Fall of Russian Communism*, p. 61.

²⁵¹ Rodney Barfield. *Lenin's Utopianism: State and Revolution*, p. 48.

²⁵² Robert Service. *Lenin: A Political Life*, Vol. 2, p. 67.

²⁵³ Stanley W. Page. *Lenin's Assumption of Proletarian Leadership*, p. 241.

²⁵⁴ Theodore Von Laue. *Why Lenin? Why Stalin?*, p. 130.

²⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 127.

²⁵⁶ Robert Service. *Lenin: A Political Life*, Vol. 2, pp. 221-22, 224.

in the interpretation of Marx's theories.²⁵⁷ Evans further argued that the completion of *The State and Revolution* became all the more important to Lenin because, after February 1917, the possibility for Lenin to take power presented itself more acutely.²⁵⁸ In addition, Kort argued that it was an attempt to justify the Bolshevik seizure of power.²⁵⁹

Despite the trend of treating *The State and Revolution* as completely separate from Lenin's political theories and tactics preceding 1917, it does fall in line with his previous works. Like the rest of his writings, one can find a connection with Lenin's fight against opportunism. Furthermore, despite the claim that Lenin did not pay much attention to organization after the February Revolution, this is not true. Like many of the works Lenin completed in 1917, there is a clear adherence to organization, even if in different form in order to accommodate the new revolutionary circumstances. Thus, like the rest of Lenin's writings in 1917, *The State and Revolution* fell in line with his core beliefs based on the fight against reformism and his advocacy for an organized effort towards revolution

In his work *The Dual Power*, Lenin argued that the state is the most important question of the revolution. In *The State and Revolution* Lenin did not hold back in his disagreements with his adversaries concerning such an important question. He used his interpretation of Marx's teachings on the state to criticize his opponents who he believed were keeping the movement from advancing towards socialist revolution. He chastised the Socialist Revolutionaries and the Mensheviks, for their corporation with the Provisional Government. Lenin argued that their actions would keep the movement from reaching socialist revolution because it would stop the movement from advancing forward at all.

Lenin began the work by outlining the meaning of the state. He argued that the state was born out of the irreconcilability of class antagonisms and was nothing more than an organ of oppression. The state legalized such oppression by moderating the conflict between classes. Lenin, however, was sure to note that the state did nothing more than moderate such conflict because the existence of the state showed that class antagonisms were, in fact, irreconcilable.²⁶⁰ Furthermore, the state held its power position because, in essence, they were "special bodies of armed men having prisons, etc. at their command".²⁶¹

Lenin then discussed the withering away of the state. He explained that the withering away of the state would only happen after the bourgeois state ceased to exist. However, the bourgeois state would not wither away, as Lenin further explained, but must be abolished by proletarian revolution.²⁶²

²⁵⁷ Alfred B. Evans. Rereading Lenin's State and Revolution, p. 5.

²⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 8.

²⁵⁹ Michael Kort. The Soviet Colossus, p. 72.

²⁶⁰ V. I. Lenin. The State and Revolution, p. 10 & 11.

²⁶¹ Ibid., p. 13.

²⁶² Ibid., p. 20.

After a proletarian victory over the bourgeois state apparatus, then the state would render itself unnecessary and would then wither away.²⁶³ Furthermore, he argued that, unlike the bourgeois state which could only be abolished through socialist revolution²⁶⁴, the abolition of the proletarian state was only possible through the process of withering away.²⁶⁵ He also argued, that according to Marx's teachings, the proletariat needed to smash the bourgeois state machine that already existed. It could not just "lay hold" of the already made state machine. Without the proletariat demolishing the bourgeois state, Lenin argued, socialist transformation would have been impossible.²⁶⁶ Furthermore, he argued that revolution did not consist of governing with the assistance of the existing state apparatus, but consisted of smashing the state machine.²⁶⁷

Lenin also discussed the prospect of the Commune, as he argued that it would be the eventual and last form of society reached by the proletarian state.²⁶⁸ He stated,

The Commune is the first attempt by a proletarian revolution to *smash* the bourgeois state machine; and it is the political form 'at last discovered' by which the smashed state machine can be replaced.²⁶⁹

He stated that the Commune would eliminate bourgeois parliamentarianism because the people themselves would have to make the laws as well as live by them.²⁷⁰ Lenin also argued that the abolition of the state meant the abolition of democracy.²⁷¹ He viewed the current form of democracy as a bourgeois democracy. He argued that bourgeois democracy, for the large majority, was a democracy of suppression; as exclusion from said democracy.²⁷² Lenin realized that democracy was of great importance to the working class in its struggle for emancipation from capitalism. However, he made clear that democracy was in no way a system that should not be overstepped on the path towards communism.²⁷³ Furthermore, he argued that there was a transitional stage in the move from a capitalist society to a communist society, and that in such a transitional phase, the state can be nothing but revolutionary; existing as a dictatorship of the proletariat.²⁷⁴ Furthermore, he claimed that only full creation of communism would eventually render the state absolutely unnecessary.²⁷⁵ Thus, under the

²⁶³ Ibid., p. 19.

²⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 21.

²⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 24.

²⁶⁶ Ibid., pp. 38-40.

²⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 109.

²⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 55.

²⁶⁹ Ibid.

²⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 47.

²⁷¹ Ibid., p. 78.

²⁷² Ibid., p. 85.

²⁷³ Ibid., p. 94.

²⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 82.

²⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 86.

establishment of, and guidance from, the Commune, the proletariat would begin to see the state and bourgeois democracy wither away, substituted by true communism.

It was Lenin's views on the state apparatus that once again brought him in discord with his adversaries. The cooperative actions of his party opponents concerning the Provisional Government led Lenin to once again come to the defense of the revolution against the opportunists. He argued that a distortion of Marx had taken place, and without the proper understanding of the state in accordance with Marxist theory, socialist revolution would never reach its intended end. It was Lenin's core beliefs against reformism and opportunism combined with his advocacy for organization that allowed him to see the Provisional Government as a foe of socialist revolution.

Lenin argued that his opponents were guilty of "doctoring Marxism" and they did so to make their policies seem expectable to the bourgeoisie.²⁷⁶ He claimed that the petty-bourgeoisie portrayed Marx in such a way as to represent the state as the reconciliation of classes.²⁷⁷ However, as Lenin argued, class antagonisms were irreconcilable, and the state was a manifestation of those antagonisms. Furthermore, he argued that his opponents' interpretation of the state aimed for the alleviation of class-antagonisms. For Lenin, this was impossible and, had it been possible, it would have removed from the means of struggle from the masses. Without such a means of struggle, the oppressed classes would not have had the ability to overthrow the oppressor class.²⁷⁸ For Lenin, such an outcome would have halted the revolutionary movement altogether, and never allow the socialist revolution a chance at success over the bourgeoisie. Just as in *What is to be Done?* Lenin saw the deception of the opportunists happening at a theoretical level and argued that such distortions of Marxist theory would have kept the movement from advancing towards socialist revolution.

Lenin argued that the liberation of the oppressed classes was not possible without an overthrow of power by way of revolution. In order to achieve such an aim, the revolution had to succeed in accomplishing the destruction of the state apparatus.²⁷⁹ The opportunists, he claimed, presented a vague concept of gradual change without the presence of revolution; a notion only beneficial to the bourgeoisie.²⁸⁰ He suggested that petty-bourgeoisie democrats replaced the "class struggle with dreams of class harmony" and that they pictured the socialist transformation as a "peaceful submission of the minority to the majority which has become aware of its aims".²⁸¹ Furthermore, Lenin said that the opportunists had forgotten how to think at all in a revolutionary way.²⁸²

²⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 9.

²⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 11.

²⁷⁸ Ibid.

²⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 12.

²⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 20.

²⁸¹ Ibid.p. 27.

²⁸² Ibid., p. 52.

Lenin believed that with the withering away of the state would come the withering away of democracy. However, according to Lenin's argument, the state would not wither away until the bourgeois state apparatus was overthrown by proletarian revolution. For Lenin, parliamentarianism, as represented through the Provisional Government, was an obstacle for the revolution and therefore the withering away of the proletarian state and democracy. He stated, that the "form of oppression" mattered not to the exploited class,²⁸³ and despite the way the Provisional Government presented itself to the people, Lenin still saw it as an instrument of bourgeois control. He argued that within the state apparatus the real business was decided behind closed doors, while the parliament was "given up to talk" for the purpose of deceiving the masses.²⁸⁴ Furthermore he argued that his opponents in the Soviets that supported the Provisional Government had succeeded in fashioning the Soviets after such bourgeois parliamentarianism.²⁸⁵ Therefore, through encouraging Soviet cooperation with the Provisional Government, the Socialist Revolutionaries and the Mensheviks were halting the formation of the dictatorship of the proletariat and removing the revolutionary possibility from the Soviets.

Lenin said that owing to the perseverance of opportunism and social-chauvinism the criticisms that Marx had made about parliamentarianism had been forgotten.²⁸⁶ Thus, the supporters of the Provisional Government ignored the repressive and deceptive bourgeois nature of the institution. Lenin stated, "To decide once every few years which member of the ruling class is to repress and crush the people through parliament - this is the real essence of bourgeois parliamentarianism".²⁸⁷ He argued that the Socialists Revolutionaries and the Mensheviks had ignored this idea of Marx²⁸⁸ and had "joined into wedlock" with the bourgeoisie through the coalition government.²⁸⁹ He further argued that they entered into deals with the bourgeoisie for selfish reasons.²⁹⁰

Lenin argued that the Socialist Revolutionaries and the Mensheviks had deserted to the side of the bourgeoisie against the revolution and the proletariat. To him, their actions within the Soviets concerning the Provisional Government supported his claims. In his work *The Dual Power* Lenin argued that "inasmuch as these Soviets exists, inasmuch as they are a power, we have in Russia a State type of the Paris Commune".²⁹¹ In *The State and Revolution*, Lenin not only addressed the similarities between the Russian Soviets and the Paris Commune, but also argued the importance continuing to nurture the Soviets into a system modeled after the Commune if the transformation to socialism in Russia was to lead to the desired outcome of a pure communist state in Marxist fashion.

²⁸³ Ibid., p. 77.

²⁸⁴ Ibid., p. 46.

²⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 47.

²⁸⁶ Ibid., p. 45.

²⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 46.

²⁸⁸ Ibid., pp. 45- 46.

²⁸⁹ Ibid., pp. 16-17.

²⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 47.

²⁹¹ V. I. Lenin. *The Dual Power*, p. 302.

It is clear that, in accordance with his interpretation of Marxist theory, Lenin viewed the Soviets as a form of the Paris Commune incarnate. However, because of the Soviets' alliance with the Provisional Government, they were in danger of isolating themselves from the proletariat and in turn, would not continue to develop as an institution comparable to the Paris Commune. In fact, Lenin claimed that owing to the petty-bourgeois leadership within the Soviets, they had become impotent as an institution and were only still alive because the bourgeoisie was not yet strong enough to eliminate them.²⁹² Since Lenin saw the Paris Commune as the first attempt to smash the existing bourgeois state machine, then any actions by his opponents that would have hindered the advancement of the Soviets would have meant the maintenance of the bourgeois state apparatus, and thus, the ruin of socialist transformation into communism.

In addition to *The State and Revolution* adhering to Lenin's continuous fight against opportunism, it also offered more insight into his thoughts towards organization and revolution. . Despite his emphasis in the work on his opponents' mistakes concerning the theory of the state and their connections with the bourgeois government, Lenin did not abandon his continuous advocacy for a form of organization. Although much of Lenin's writings on organization were directed towards the party, they were offered as a guideline for revolutionary success. *The State and Revolution* also stood as a guideline even though it was not intended to direct party organization. In *The State and Revolution*, like many of his preceding works, Lenin's organizational appraisals were not just directed to discount his enemies, but were also an attempt to steer the movement successfully towards socialism.

Since Lenin believed the only way for the victory of socialism was by the revolutionary overthrow of the bourgeois state by the proletariat he focused his organizational prowess on the masses. He said,

The state is a special organization of force: it is an organization of violence for the suppression of some class. What class must the proletariat suppress? Naturally only the exploiting class, i.e., the bourgeoisie. The working people need the state only to suppress the resistance of the exploiters, and only the proletariat can direct the suppression, can carry it out. For the proletariat is the only class that is consistently revolutionary, the only class that can unite all the working and exploited people in the struggle against the bourgeoisie, in completely removing it.²⁹³

For the proletariat to enact such repression it would have required a "special coercive force"; the dictatorship of the proletariat.²⁹⁴ Furthermore, he argued that the bourgeois state could not have been replaced by the dictatorship of the proletariat through the process of withering away, but only by

²⁹² V. I. Lenin. *The State and Revolution*, p. 16.

²⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

²⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

revolutionary means.²⁹⁵ It was from this standpoint that Lenin would offer a form of organization capable of succeeding in overthrowing the bourgeoisie and establishing socialism in Russia.

Lenin defined the dictatorship of the proletariat as “undivided power backed by the armed forces of the people”.²⁹⁶ He further explained it as “the organization of the vanguard of the oppressed as the ruling class for the purposes of oppressing the oppressors”.²⁹⁷ Lenin believed that such an organization of the people was possible because, as he argued, destroying the state machine would unite the workers.²⁹⁸ Lenin had always advocated unity as a key for success and sought out such unity through his organizational plans. Therefore, Lenin realized that smashing the state machine would further unite the proletariat and create the dictatorship of the proletariat, which for Lenin, was crucial for the socialist transformation after overthrowing bourgeois rule.

Lenin argued that only the proletariat could rid itself of the current oppressive political system, but in the process it had to work at the reorganization of the state.²⁹⁹ By reorganization Lenin meant that the proletariat had to organize itself as the ruling class with political supremacy over the bourgeoisie.³⁰⁰ He claimed that true Marxists realized that once the proletariat had forcibly obtained political power and had destroyed the existing state machine, then they needed to remake the state with the organization of the armed workers, with characteristics of the Paris Commune.³⁰¹ Since, as Lenin saw it, the Commune was the only way for the victory of socialism, proper organization of the proletariat into the form of the Commune was crucial in order it complete this revolutionary task.

Lenin was not overly optimistic on the process of proletariat reorganization of the state. He argued that eliminating all the bureaucracy of the state all at once, without anything to replace it, was out of the question.³⁰² He said that such an idea was utopian.³⁰³ He sought to combat the idea by suggesting that the workers would organize industry based on what already existed, but only under the strict discipline of the newly held state power of the armed workers.³⁰⁴ He argued that the proletariat needed to organize a “socialist economic system” where all officials would receive the same salaries as the average wage worker.³⁰⁵ He further argued that only organizing the economy in this way would lead to the leadership of the armed proletariat and the abolition of bourgeois institutions, including bourgeois parliamentarianism.³⁰⁶ Lenin believed that communism would not develop in any other way

²⁹⁵ Ibid., p. 24.

²⁹⁶ Ibid., p. 28.

²⁹⁷ Ibid., p. 84.

²⁹⁸ Ibid., p. 41.

²⁹⁹ Ibid., p. 45.

³⁰⁰ Ibid., p. 30.

³⁰¹ Ibid., p. 107.

³⁰² Ibid., p. 48.

³⁰³ Ibid., pp. 48- 49.

³⁰⁴ Ibid., p. 49.

³⁰⁵ Ibid, pp. 49- 50.

³⁰⁶ Ibid., p. 50.

than through the dictatorship of the proletariat, thus, the organization of the dictatorship of the proletariat and its actions were crucial to reaching the final goal of the socialist movement.

Although Lenin did not give as much emphasis on organization in *The State and Revolution* as his other works, the concept was certainly not left out. As before, Lenin reevaluated his organizational plan according to the circumstances prevailing at the time. In 1917, Lenin no longer had to focus his organizational plan specifically towards the party and no longer for the purposes of overthrowing the autocracy. Lenin felt that the eve of revolution was near, and thus sought to prepare the masses for power and fulfilling their tasks of keeping the transformation moving towards the development of communism. Although *The State and Revolution* was not published until 1918, Lenin noted in the postscript that the completion of the work was intended for August or September 1917, but he was unable to finish because of the revolutionary events around him.³⁰⁷ Thus, *State and Revolution* does illustrate that Lenin adhered to his core belief system when planning for the coming socialist revolution.

From April through July, the masses were pushing the party to take decisive action.³⁰⁸ By the fall it had become clear that the masses were ready to have power in their hands. The focus on insurrection was now even more acute. As Trotsky later explained, Lenin was not blind to the benefits of the Soviets leading the insurrection, although he did realize the difficulties the scenario presented.³⁰⁹ Therefore, Lenin argued that the insurrection would have been more effective if conducted at the hands of the party.³¹⁰ Lenin decided that the Bolsheviks had to act before the convening of the upcoming Congress of Soviets in order to circumvent any decisions made by the congress that would delay insurrection.³¹¹ In his *Letter to Comrades*, Lenin urged for an insurrection and warned that delay would be disastrous for the movement.³¹² In the publication he once again argued that the Soviets were the “vanguard of revolution” and he blamed the Socialist-Revolutionaries and Mensheviks for the delay in taking power.³¹³ It is clear from Lenin’s writings that he believed that the Soviets’ ability to undertake socialist revolution was in danger because of the influence of his opportunist opponents. However, as Lenin’s writings also show, he was dedicated to the idea that the Soviets were the only revolutionary form of government, so it was crucial for the insurrection to include the Soviets. Thus, through Bolshevik guidance in the Military Revolutionary Committee, a Soviet institution, Lenin’s party led the insurrection.³¹⁴

³⁰⁷ Ibid., p. 114.

³⁰⁸ Leon Trotsky. *The History of the Russian Revolution*, p. 277.

³⁰⁹ Ibid., p. 285.

³¹⁰ Ibid.

³¹¹ Shelia Fitzpatrick. *The Russian Revolution*, p. 61.

³¹² V. I. Lenin. *Letter to Comrades*, p. 195.

³¹³ Ibid., p. 198.

³¹⁴ Robert Service. *Lenin: A Political Life*, Vol. 2, pp. 257-264. Geyer, 112-114.

A general view of Lenin's urgency to take power with the help of the Soviets is that he knew the Bolsheviks could never obtain enough votes in the coming Congress of Soviets for insurrection. He therefore needed to legitimize Bolshevik rule by manipulating the Soviets before the Congress met.³¹⁵ Possony argued that what Lenin really wanted was a dictatorship and that he wanted to accomplish it through the insurrection. He further argued that the revolution was "artificially executed".³¹⁶ However, since for Lenin insurrection meant a decisive break with the bourgeois Provisional Government, the Soviets would retain the revolutionary ability to head the triumph of socialism. Therefore, Lenin's decision to lead the insurrection through the Soviets was in line with his writings on the subject. On October 25, through the implementation of Lenin's plan, the Provisional Government was overthrown and the next day the All Russian Congress of Soviets met and ratified the transfer of all power to the Soviets.³¹⁷ When compared with Lenin's writings from 1917, the event was a true victory for socialism.

Much of Lenin's works in 1917 were centered on an effort to delegitimize the Provisional Government and warning the Soviets and the people of its bourgeois nature. Furthermore, he focused on armed insurrection in order to see socialist revolution to fruition in spite of the coalition government prevailing at the time. As before, Lenin's focus, while aimed at the situation around him, never parted from the idea of guiding the movement to the victory of socialism and just as Lenin's writings preceding 1917 were centered around his fight against opportunism and offering a revolutionary organizational plan, his writings in 1917 were based on those core beliefs that comprised his political theory.

The traditional view among many historians is to treat Lenin's works from 1917 as a deviation from his earlier political thought and practices. Even the historians that show some continuity in Lenin's works before February and after February still use the slight changes in his writings to suggest that the turn in his theory was a vie for power in the new revolutionary situation. However, Lenin's writings of 1917, including *The State and Revolution*, show once again that his political thought was consistent and aimed at driving the masses towards successful socialist revolution, and not towards winning absolute power over his opponents or the people. Starting with his return to Russia and his release of the *April Theses* Lenin set a path for leading the proletariat to socialist revolution. He went further in *The State and Revolution* with his suggestions on how to see socialist transformation all the way through to the development of communism. His core beliefs remain evident throughout 1917 as he continued to fight against opportunism and argue for some form of organization appropriate for carrying out socialist revolution. Despite the trend of treating Lenin's

³¹⁵ Shelia Fitzpatrick. *The Russian Revolution*, pp. 62-4. Richard Pipes. *The Russian Revolution*, pp. 473-75.

³¹⁶ Stefan T. Possony, pp. 253-54.

³¹⁷ Shelia Fitzpatrick. *The Russian Revolution*, pp. 64, 65.

writings during 1917 as separate from his previous political theory, his continuous fight against opportunism and advocacy for a form of revolutionary organization shows otherwise. It was his belief system that led to him to realize the truly deceptive nature of the dual power between the Provisional Government and the Soviets, which in turn steered his policies, and eventually allowed for the victory of socialism in October.

CONCLUSION

In 1902 Lenin laid out a practical plan for his party in an effort to encourage Social-Democrats to steer the masses towards a successful uprising. In *What is to be Done?* by criticizing the Economists, Lenin presented his argument against reformism, and in turn, opportunism. He argued that the critical stance that the opportunist Economists held towards Orthodox Marxism hindered the revolutionary fervor of the movement. Furthermore, he argued that the freedom they took in criticizing Marx harmed the movement at a theoretical level. He believed that harming the movement at such a level would have hindered the development of the vanguard party able to lead the masses towards revolution. In addition, Lenin's writings show that he believed that the Russian political system needed a complete overhaul if it had any chance of incorporating the oppressed masses into political life. Lenin fought against the reformists in *What is to be Done?* whose policies directed the movement towards conciliation with the standing autocracy and not towards its overthrow.

Also, in *What is to be Done?* Lenin presented a clear organizational plan for the party. He argued that the lack of training on the part of the revolutionaries had kept them from adequately leading the movement. Lenin sought to remedy the situation by ridding the party of rustic craftsmanship and circle spirit. He called for a group of professional revolutionaries to organize themselves into a small, centralized, and clandestine group. Lenin argued that only a small, secret group could fend off the attacks of the political police. Without such organization, Lenin believed that the bourgeois revolution would never succeed, which also meant that socialist revolution would never succeed.

Although *What is to be Done?* was presented as a Social-Democratic party plan, the themes that Lenin firmly introduced influenced his political theory for almost two decades. His fight against opportunism never ceased and his strict understanding of organization as a key element for the victory of revolution remained discernable. *What is to be Done?* laid the groundwork for Lenin's political career until his party assumed power in October 1917.

When the R.S.D.L.P. split in 1903, Lenin once again turned towards his fight against reformism and opportunism. In his work *One Step Forward, Two Steps Back*, he blamed his opportunist opponents for the party split. Furthermore, in the work Lenin continued to fight against fragmentation and again argued that organization was the only thing that could unite the party. In 1905, with the actual outbreak of revolution in Russia, Lenin's *Two Tactics of Social-Democracy* argued against his opponents who advocated reforms. He criticized the Mensheviks for backing the Liberal reformist agenda; a move that Lenin believed would have kept socialist revolution from coming to fruition. Lenin argued that it was not advantageous for the proletariat to evade the class

struggle and the Social-Democrats needed to lead the way for proletariat by expanding and strengthening it through organization.

Lenin's writings immediately after the 1905 Revolution continued to justify his actions. In doing so, he legitimized his change in tactics relating to the newly established State Duma. In a collection of works regarding the Duma, he argued that the Social-Democrats should boycott the Bulygin Duma and the First Duma because the two were deals made with the autocracy and he believed that such concessions in favor of the bourgeoisie would cause the bourgeoisie to withdraw from the revolution. Furthermore, Lenin argued that the Duma was established at a time when change by way a revolution was still possible. Lenin also stayed true his understanding of the benefits organization had for the revolution, since he argued that the election meetings for the Duma should have been used for propaganda and organizational purposes. He also argued that the creation of a revolutionary dictatorship could have paved the way for a successful uprising.

His writings concerning the Second Duma were also in line with his fight against the opportunists. He claimed that the Second Duma was more left than the first, and in order to guide the movement successfully towards revolution, the Social-Democrats thus had a responsibility to participate. Lenin argued that reaching Social-Democratic aims would be possible through the new, more radical, Duma if the Social-Democrats refrained from making any alliances with any reformist parties also participating in the Duma. Lenin evaluated the situation of the Second Duma in accordance with his understanding of the beneficial nature of proper organization for the revolution, as he argued that the primary functions for participating in the Duma were agitation and organization.

When the debate about the Duma had somewhat slowed, the outbreak of war shifted Lenin's focus towards the harmful effects social-chauvinism had on the revolutionary movement. In his writings concerning the war he directly equated social-chauvinism to opportunism and claimed that the social-chauvinists, just like the opportunists, had distorted Marx and were moving towards conciliation with the autocracy instead of its overthrow. He continued his ideas of organization when he argued that the best way to combat opportunism was through proper organization and he urged his party to begin building a revolutionary mass capable of an uprising. In the writings Lenin produced in the years after *What is to be Done?* there is a clear connection with the main themes he had presented in 1902. Despite the constant change in the Russian political climate Lenin remained true the core elements that were becoming essential to his political theory.

After the February Revolution in 1917, Lenin returned to Russia and released his *April Theses*. He immediately picked up his continuous fight against opportunism. He argued that the Socialist-Revolutionaries' and the Mensheviks' cooperative attitude towards the Provisional Government was removing the revolutionary character from the Soviets who, he believed, were the only truly revolutionary government. He continued his argument by adding that the Provisional Government was actively deceiving the people by refusing to convene a Constituent Assembly and

that his opponents failed to see the bourgeois nature of the Provisional Government. He continued the same arguments in his work *The Dual Power*, while at the same time asserting his belief that the question of the state was of vital importance for guiding the movement. In *The Dual Power* Lenin argued that the Soviets were a revolutionary dictatorship and again claimed that they were the only revolutionary form of government capable of carrying out the functions of socialist transformation. He criticized his opportunist opponents for their part in keeping the Provisional Government alive and argued that the Soviets' cooperative attitude towards the Provisional Government kept it from being overthrown.

Throughout 1917, Lenin continued his fight against the opportunists, and as the cause for armed insurrection increased, Lenin outlined how his opponents' conciliatory attitudes were harming the movement from evolving into socialist revolution. In his work *Can the Bolsheviks Retain State Power?* he not only continued his fight against the opportunists, but again asserted his belief that a strict adherence to organization was necessary for the success of socialist revolution and the development of communism. He argued that the Soviets were a government of the people and should have been utilized in training and organizing the revolutionary proletariat. In *The State and Revolution* Lenin elaborated on what he believed to be the proper avenue for socialist revolution. In detail, he gave his interpretations on Marx's theories of the state and its withering away after the development of communism. He argued that the opportunists gave a vague conception of gradual change. Lenin believed that gradual change would hurt the development of the proletariat, and thus, the coming of socialist revolution. Lenin once again turned towards the dictatorship of the proletariat as the organization needed not only for the triumph of socialism, but for the full development of communism, and in turn, the withering away of the bourgeois state.

Ultimately, Lenin's views on opportunism and organization led to the way he viewed the Provisional Government and the Soviets in 1917. Because of the strict adherence to his core belief system that was prevalent long before 1917, Lenin was able to recognize the bourgeois nature of the coalition government and he was able to realize the significance of the Soviets in leading the proletariat towards revolution. When the question of armed insurrection came even more into the forefront in the fall of 1917, Lenin turned to the Soviets and urged them to act as the vanguard. He held on to the belief that, through the Soviets, the socialist assumption of power and socialist transformation would lead to the full development of communism. With that in mind Lenin obtained the support he needed from the Soviets and through them his party led the insurrection that brought Lenin and the Bolsheviks to power.

Throughout his political career Lenin often made reference for the need to shape and change tactics and policies to fit the situation. Every major milestone in Russia's political and social development, for Lenin, warranted concise evaluation. However, Lenin's adjustment to his policies and tactics were not for nothing. It is clear that despite the apparent changes, the bulk of Lenin's work

shows continuity in his attempts to avert any efforts of his contemporaries that would have kept the movement from reaching the final goal of socialist revolution. Through his fight against reformism and opportunism and his strict adherence to organization, Lenin steered the movement towards the socialist assumption of power.

Historians have argued that Lenin was a fickle revolutionary and that he changed his theories on a whim. However, it is clear that Lenin was not fickle in his political theory, but precise. His writings line up with the core beliefs he outlined in 1902. He continued to mold his beliefs to the evolving Russian political currents. In the instances that Lenin overtly changed his tactics, he legitimized his actions by illustrating how they were made in defense of the movement. Lenin fought continuously against reformist tendencies and the distortion of Marxist theories by opportunists. And, despite what form it may have taken at a given time, Lenin adhered to organization as a crucial factor to the development and success of the movement.

Some historians have used their arguments that Lenin was overly flexible in his theories to prove he was a man paving a path for personal power. However, since the bulk of Lenin's works from 1902 until the Bolshevik assumption of power shows a clear continuity with the main themes of his writings, arguments that suggest that Lenin was megalomaniac in a vie for absolute power are unsound. Lenin did indeed change his theories, but not to obtain a personal dictatorship over the party and the people. As shown, Lenin changed his tactics in an effort to continue his fight against the opportunists and to adhere to his understanding of organization as a key element for the continued success of the revolutionary movement. Thus, if Lenin wasn't changing his theories on every whim, as has often been suggested, then one certainly cannot conclude that the changes in his political writings were in an effort to manipulate the masses in an attempt to reign supreme.

In *What is to be Done?* Lenin argued that there could be no revolutionary movement without revolutionary theory.³¹⁸ Lenin's statement suggests that he saw the connection between his own political thought and practice. Therefore, Lenin was only flexible in his writings insofar as they were written to evaluate or offer tactics for a particular situation. However, in order for Lenin to derive the most benefit for the movement, he aligned his theories with the steady changes happening at the time. There were few constants in Russia from 1902 to the end of 1917, but Lenin's fight against opportunism and his adherence to organization is clearly one of those constants. Despite the way history has often portrayed him, Lenin was a true revolutionary. He dedicated his life to seeing socialist revolution through to success and the way Lenin adjusted the main themes in his writings to accommodate new political situations as they arose shows that not only were Lenin's theories purely revolutionary, they were evolutionary.

³¹⁸ V. I. Lenin. *What is to Be Done*, p. 58.

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

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