In 1929, Leon Trotsky published *The Permanent Revolution* in response to Stalinist attacks on his book *Results and Prospects*, written in 1906. According to Stalinist propaganda of the 1920s, Lenin condemned Trotsky’s theory of permanent revolution at the time of the 1905 revolution for ‘under-estimating’ the peasantry. In this volume, we have pointed out in several places that Trotsky did indeed reject Lenin’s slogan of ‘the democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry’ on the grounds that the peasants would be unable to produce a coherent political party to serve as a reliable ally of Social Democracy. In terms of the historical evidence, Trotsky showed greater foresight on this matter than Lenin. After the Bolsheviks signed the Brest-Litovsk Treaty in 1918, only a handful of Left SRs continued to support the revolutionary government, and, in August 1918, it was a Socialist Revolutionary, Fanya Kaplan, who attempted to assassinate Lenin.

The debate over permanent revolution only resurfaced after Lenin’s death in 1924 because Stalin wrapped his claim to succession in the slogan of ‘Socialism in One Country’. Trotsky was said to lack confidence in the revolution’s long-
run survival because a) he had *always* premised success on an international revolution, and b) he was *still* under-estimating the need for support from the peasantry, whom he allegedly proposed to tax excessively in order to finance industrialisation. Countless volumes have been written on the debate over socialism in one country, and this is not the place to review them.¹ In the fourth chapter of *Permanent Revolution*, Trotsky summarised the position he had taken in 1905 by quoting the final lines of the article we have translated here:

> The complete victory of the revolution signifies the victory of the proletariat. The latter, in turn, means further uninterrupted revolution. The proletariat is accomplishing the basic tasks of democracy, and at some moment the very logic of its struggle to consolidate its political rule places before it purely socialist problems. Revolutionary continuity [*nepryvyonost’*] is being established between the minimum and the maximum programme. It is not a question of a single ‘blow’, a day, or a month, but of an entire historical epoch. It would be absurd to try to fix its duration in advance.

‘This one reference,’ Trotsky declared in 1929, ‘in a way exhausts the subject…’.² To settle the point, he added that in November 1905 the Bolshevik newspaper *Novaya Zhizn’,* edited by Lenin himself, dismissed any significant differences between the two men:

> This gratuitous assumption is of course sheer nonsense. Comrade Trotsky said that the proletarian revolution can, without halting at the first stage, continue on its road, elbowing the exploiters aside; Lenin, on the other hand, pointed out that the political revolution is only the first step. The publicist of *Nasha Zhizn* [a liberal newspaper] would like to see a contradiction here….The whole misunderstanding comes, first, from the fear with which the name alone of the social revolution fills *Nasha Zhizn;* secondly, out of the desire of…[*Nasha Zhizn’*] to discover some sort of sharp and piquant difference of opinion among the Social Democrats; and thirdly, in the figure

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¹ Insofar as the dispute involved something more than propaganda and personal vendettas among Lenin’s potential successors, the salient issue for Trotsky really concerned economic policy in general, and industrialisation strategy in particular. This argument was first made in 1973 by one of the editors of this volume. See Day 1973.

² L. Trotsky 1962, p. 86.