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**TROTSKY IN OPPOSITION: 1923-1940**

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## Abstract

This thesis, which is divided into two parts, examines both the politics and theory of Trotsky's opposition to the post-Lenin leadership in the USSR between 1923 and 1940. Each of these parts is preceded by an introduction which outlines the content of the following chapters, and, in the case of the introduction to the first part, reviews the literature of current 'Trotsky studies'.

The first part begins with a chapter outlining Trotsky's political career before 1923 and indicating the content and significance of his theory of permanent revolution. The next three chapters present a narrative of Trotsky's political orientation toward the post-Lenin leadership, the Communist Party, and the Soviet state. The detail of Trotsky's programmatic position is discussed, using his published and unpublished writings. Each of the chapters puts this into the context of his current political perspectives.

For ten years, 1923-33, Trotsky's demands were relatively moderate, reflecting a belief that the real menace to socialist development came from capitalism (both inside and outside the country) and the 'Thermidorian' adaptation to its pressure by a section of the Party. Throughout the decade he sought to build alliances for reform; as late as 1932 he was in contact with disaffected groups in the Party. Thereafter, Trotsky's strategy towards the USSR changed from that of reformist to revolutionary, but he never relinquished the definition of the Soviet state as a 'workers' state'.

After expulsion from the Party (1927), and then exile from the USSR (1929), Trotsky's assessments of events were often erroneous but seldom uninteresting. Chapters three and four include discussion of his reactions to the 'left turn' (1929-30), the first show trials (1928-31), the Kirov affair (1934), the new Constitution of 1936, and the Moscow trials (1936-38).

The second part of the thesis presents the conceptual apparatus on which Trotsky's opposition was based: his view of the transition to socialism; his changing definitions of 'Thermidor' and 'Bonapartism'; his analysis of 'bureaucracy' - its nature, its causes, and its consequences. The conclusion incorporates a discussion of Trotsky's characterisation of the USSR as a 'degenerated workers' state'.

The notion of 'degenerated workers' state' was articulated to 'solve' the problem perceived by Trotsky: what remains when both the forward march of revolution and the anticipated counter-revolution have faltered? In Trotsky's view, the postponement of the historical reckoning between capitalism and socialism permitted the rise of an unstable 'Bonapartist' regime which, within itself, united features of both proletarian revolution and bourgeois counter-revolution.

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INTRODUCTION TO PART ONEStudying Trotsky

In life and in death Trotsky has been presented both as hero and villain of Russia's revolutionary epic. For Isaac Deutscher he was a prophet; to his Russian adversaries he became a renegade. Nearly fifty years after his assassination, Trotsky continues to excite the interest of students of the Russian revolution and the Soviet state. The questions he asked about the development of Russian politics and society in the post-revolutionary period remain relevant, and may, perhaps, be viewed as particularly pertinent in the current climate of perestroika. However, debates about Trotsky often conceal divisions on fundamental issues that extend beyond Trotsky himself. They refer implicitly to such matters as interpretations of Marx, conceptions of socialism, and the relevance of revolution.

In the Soviet Union, Trotsky still cannot be studied dispassionately, and the period following Lenin's death is particularly sensitive. Soviet studies are overshadowed by the political necessity to oppose the spirit of Trotsky, although this may change with Gorbachev's glasnost.<sup>1</sup> In the West too, politicians and historians have interpreted Trotsky through the prism of their own beliefs.<sup>2</sup> Here, at least, his name is popularly known, if only through activist groups proclaiming an allegiance. In the land of his birth, Trotsky has a negligible public place both in popular celebrations of the Revolution, such as the historical museums, and in libraries and archives. Soviet agitprop depicts him as the villain of the early post-revolutionary period; few Soviet studies treat him seriously as a historical figure.<sup>3</sup>

Trotsky, perhaps the epitome of the intellectual revolutionary, is, in many respects, an attractive subject for scholarly study. His work, at its best, matches any Marxist writing for clarity, force and style. But for many years, the political ostracism of Trotsky was matched by academic neglect. More recently, however, the declining influence of Soviet Marxism has been accompanied by a growing interest in Trotsky. The number of studies of Trotsky and Trotskyism published in the 1970s approached three times the level of the previous decade, and six or seven times the level of the 1950s.<sup>4</sup> In the present decade there is no sign of abatement. Before this expansion of interest, serious consideration of Trotsky was dominated by the work of Isaac Deutscher: his Trotsky trilogy stimulated interest, but did not lead immediately to any considerable expansion of scholarly research. Naturally, polemics between Trotskyists abounded, but only rarely illuminated Trotsky's theories. Occasionally, a useful memoir of Trotsky was published, and Irving Howe produced an article which, when enlarged, became his short book on Trotsky.<sup>5</sup> In addition, there were some interesting essays in review either of Deutscher's trilogy or of Trotsky's *Diary in Exile*, published in 1958.<sup>6</sup>

In the last decade and a half there have been four major developments in 'Trotsky studies': the serious discussion of Trotsky by non-Trotskyist Marxist writers; initiatives from within what can be broadly called the Trotskyist movement; the expansion of academic interest in Trotsky; and the publication of memoirs of his life and work.

At the end of the sixties the Krasso/Mandel polemic appeared, heralding a new departure: the willingness of non-Trotskyist Marxists to discuss Trotsky's Marxism without relapsing into the gross absurdities and slanders of the 1930s.<sup>7</sup> Deutscher, with his insistence on the classicism of Trotsky's Marxism, had largely left the subject undiscussed. This was



insufficient for a new generation coming to terms with Lukacs, Gramsci and Althusser. Furthermore, political upheavals in China, France, Czechoslovakia and Indo-China rekindled interest in Trotsky. This sometimes went no further than the invocation of Trotsky as a symbol. But it could also lead to serious interest in his ideas, which spoke to many contemporary issues: the growth of bureaucracy in a post-revolutionary state; the relative moderation and passivity of Communist Parties; the claims of states founded on the Soviet model to be socialist; the dynamics of revolution in the less developed countries.

With the disintegration of Moscow's hegemony in world communism, Communist intellectuals and students found they could also join the debate; indeed, sometimes they were forced to by the challenge from young militants outside the Communist Parties. Tentatively, Euro-communism revoked Trotsky's excommunication, even if it lacked the credentials so to do.<sup>8</sup> Communists now agreed that Trotsky had not served Hitler and the Mikado but possessed a revolutionary record blemished only by lapses into ultra-leftism.<sup>9</sup> More adventurous critics, Elleinstein might be taken as an example, even developed an analysis of the USSR that had a common foundation with the Trotskyist viewpoint: the USSR was perceived as 'backward' socialism, since privilege, bureaucracy, and political repression co-existed with an economy based on nationalisation and planning.<sup>10</sup>

If the last fifteen years has seen a growing readiness on the part of some non-Trotskyist Marxists to discuss Trotsky seriously, so also has the Trotskyist movement produced initiatives of substantial benefit to Trotsky studies. Movement publishing houses have issued Trotsky's writings with great energy, frequently to a high standard,<sup>11</sup> and a crop of articles and longer studies have been produced which make a serious contribution to the

study of Trotsky. Work by Mandel, Avenas, Geras, Lowy, Broué and Anderson merits reference in this context.<sup>12</sup> Trotskyist studies of Trotsky have been further developed by the *Cahiers Leon Trotsky*, published since 1979 by the Institut Leon Trotsky in Paris.<sup>13</sup>

In the recent past, academics have also more actively studied Trotsky, turning the subject into a minor publishing industry. No less than five biographies, of very variable quality, appeared between 1975 and 1979; the best of them by Warth and Wistrich.<sup>14</sup> Add to that major studies by Richard Day and Baruch Knei-Paz, the special issue of *Studies in Comparative Communism*, the papers delivered at the conferences held by Hofstra and Adelphi Universities in 1979 and the Feltrinelli Institute in 1980, and sundry other articles, and it amounts to a respectable pile of paper.<sup>15</sup>

The fourth development in recent Trotsky studies is the publication of some extremely valuable memoir material. Jan van Heijenoort's *With Trotsky in Exile*, published in 1978, stands out.<sup>16</sup> The author was Trotsky's principal secretary and general assistant from 1932 to 1939. Apart from Natalia Sedova, the continuity and intimacy of van Heijenoort's contact with Trotsky in exile was unique; this qualification is well supported by apparent clarity of memory. Adding to the vivid picture provided by *With Trotsky in Exile*, several articles have been produced by other associates of Trotsky.<sup>17</sup>

Questioners have often asked, benevolently: 'why produce another study of Trotsky (sometimes 'yet another study')?' Occasionally, one is lost for an answer! In more confident mood, I would suggest that the issues raised by Trotsky are of both historical and contemporary importance. Above all, Trotsky wanted to know how it was that the gap between the revolutionary idealism of 1917 and the post-revolutionary realities had become so wide.

To examine this he formulated other questions: what is possible in isolated and backward Russia? could this isolation be breached? what is the nature of Soviet society? how can a brutal and bureaucratic state achieve great economic progress? Such enquiry is still pertinent, but after several years at work on this project I have grown less confident that Trotsky's answers were as profound as his questions, although they are, nevertheless, invariably thought provoking. With Irving Howe, I believe that, whatever the petrification of contemporary Trotskyism, a 'good portion' of the writings of Trotsky is 'likely to survive'; for Eastern Europe he offers, if not 'precise guidance', then at least a point of 'renewal of the possibility of serious debate', and, for the West, he is still a 'formidable presence' in socialist political debate.<sup>18</sup>

There is yet another justification for the study of Trotsky: a more professional and valid, if predictable, response. The existence of a body of literature is no guarantee that all the right answers are available. Received authorities may expertly misguide. Previous interpretations may have been wrong, in whole or in part, in fact or in interpretation. New evidence may have been discovered; neglected aspects of the subject may now have been excavated. In particular, I would suggest that Trotsky has frequently been presented in too one-sided a manner: politics and theory have been kept apart, and the dynamics of his ideas have not been respected. During my work I have become aware of the importance of trying to present an immanent critique. Sympathy need not result in affirmation, but understanding, I believe, requires a meeting of minds. Critics and acolytes alike often seem more interested in Trotsky's conclusions than in the analysis behind them. I consider that, ultimately, it is more important to open up the arguments and see the path by which he arrived at his various conclusions than simply to pronounce them right or wrong.

In attempting to avoid a judgmental approach I have become critical with those who might wish, once and for all, to decide whether Trotsky was, 'at heart', either a democrat or an authoritarian. Historical analysis is not so straightforward, and Trotsky's political philosophy not so simple. Behind political mechanisms Trotsky looked for expressions of class interest. Democracy and dictatorship were not, in themselves, representative forms of class rule; for Trotsky there were no moral or political absolutes. Those who wish to pit the 'democratic' Trotsky of 1903 to 1905 against the 'substitutionist' Trotsky of 1917 to 1920, the 'anti-bureaucratic' Trotsky of 1923 against the 'authoritarian' Trotsky of 1920, the 'freedom for Soviet parties' Trotsky of 1936 against the 'political monopolist (and anti-factionalist)' of 1921 to 1927, are in danger of reading into Trotsky their own political philosophies and failing to elucidate Trotsky's viewpoint. Even Deutscher, in his monumental trilogy, is sometimes vulnerable to such temptations.<sup>19</sup>

Several years ago, in common with many of my student generation, I came to be interested in Trotsky's work through reading Deutscher's biography. I continue to regard his work very highly; readers of this thesis will find many points of agreement with it, not least a mutual preference for Trotsky against Stalin. I trust, however, that the reader will detect some difference of tone and method, even if this is implicit. Forty years have passed since Deutscher began working on his biography; Stalin was alive and the controversies that Deutscher examined had immediate political resonance. Accordingly, one priority was Trotsky's rescue from the damned. To do this Deutscher used the motif of Trotsky's 'prophetic' brilliance, which his title highlighted. On almost all significant points he judged Trotsky's strategic vision to have been right and Stalin's wrong.<sup>20</sup> In less sophisticated variants this can lead to a superficial reduction of Trotsky's theories to a set of basic predictions

that did or did not come true. Concentration on the conclusion leads away from the analysis behind it. To take a central example: what is important about the theory of permanent revolution is not simply the prognosis that, given certain conditions, the proletariat may achieve power before the bourgeoisie, but the justification for this view.

As Deutscher recognised, Trotsky is more than just a historical figure: he was, and is, a political subject. His critique was engaged without any pretence of detachment: it combined Marxist social science and value judgement. Although he advocated a scientific approach, he found it impossible to avoid moral language in pursuit of political objectives. Consequently any critique of Trotsky encounters problems of objectivity. My view is that it is forlorn to expect value free, 'objective' studies, but scholarship there must be. My aim is neither to defend Trotsky nor advocate his ideas; one does not have to agree with Trotsky in order to understand him. Whatever claim one makes for the relevance of Trotsky's ideas today is rhetorical in the first instance, and only defensible through sustained argument, both about Trotsky and the contemporary world. The primary task here is to describe and explain the history of Trotsky's opposition to the post-Lenin regime in the USSR not to intervene retrospectively in a political debate. Partisanship and historical scholarship, at best, sit uneasily together.

The focus of my interest in this thesis is Trotsky's reactions, political and theoretical, to the growth of a bureaucratic state. In order to concentrate on this, I do not attempt to deal with Trotsky's writings on the international communist movement, nor, except in outline, with his consideration of the problems of Soviet economic development.<sup>21</sup> I have not examined, in any comprehensive manner, the political detail of the conflict between Trotsky and his opponents; other works have done this well.<sup>22</sup>

Neither do I assess the reasons for Stalin's success except by suggesting that Trotsky's failure was, in part, a failure of theory.

I hope this thesis will show that the biographical, adversarial, mode is an incomplete presentation of the ways in which Trotsky's opposition manifested itself. Trotsky organised politically; but, in conjunction, he attempted to theorise the development and trajectory of the Stalin regime. Throughout this thesis I aim to clarify the concepts on which Trotsky's opposition was based, as well as address the demands that he raised. In order to understand the Trotsky-Stalin conflict, it is necessary to understand what Trotsky meant when he used terms such as 'bureaucracy', 'dual power', 'centrism', 'Thermidor', 'Bonapartism', and 'degenerated workers' state'.

Understanding Trotsky's concepts, it seems to me, requires that we attempt to view them as he did and, initially, delineate his definitions. To do this, I frequently use Trotsky's own words, either directly or in paraphrase. It might be argued that this may produce a confusion of voices, but I hope two things will be clear. Firstly, Trotsky's voice is dominant because the intention is to relate his concepts faithfully; secondly, the absence of critical commentary on every aspect of Trotsky's political thought should not be taken as solidarity with it. Criticism of Trotsky's ideas raises the problem of the standards by which they should be judged: to assert that his analysis was wrong 'because it was Marxist', is not particularly helpful, even if it may be correct. Although Marxism, undoubtedly, provided the basis on which Trotsky developed his analysis, this thesis focuses on Trotsky, not on Marxism: in general, therefore, I try to avoid painting too broad a canvas. My objective is to investigate the inter-relationship between theory and action, between Trotsky's conceptual framework, during the period of his opposition and exile, and

his strategies for changing Stalin's Russia. Explicit evaluation of Trotsky's theory is to be found, predominantly, in the last chapter, which, in particular, raises objections to Trotsky's view that the USSR is a 'degenerated workers' state'.

The 'tragedy' of Trotsky has usually been seen, following Deutscher, in political terms. The hero, a superior man in all respects, can make no impact on events; his enemies, with greater force at their disposal, stifle and eventually murder him. Inevitably, Trotsky lives in history firstly as Stalin's adversary, but there is another version of Trotsky's tragedy, not stressed by Deutscher. The eloquent theoretician, so perceptive in pre-revolutionary days, cannot easily find the concepts to cope with the Stalin regime. His vision is blurred; in places the language is forced. The mind limps after reality. This facet of Trotsky's work has been neglected despite its evident importance for understanding Trotsky's opposition. Academic studies of Trotsky as a theorist concentrate either, like Knei-Paz, on permanent revolution, or, like Day, Nove, and Davies, on Trotsky's economic views.<sup>23</sup> There is comparatively little on Trotsky's political analysis of the USSR, and nothing which explores the interconnections between this and Trotsky as Stalin's opponent.

This thesis is divided into two parts: in the first there is broad respect for chronology, in the second the method is thematic rather than biographical. Using historical method rather than philosophical, I emphasise, throughout, the political ideas that motivated and formed Trotsky's opposition to the Stalin regime. My concern is with the reciprocal relationship between ideas and political action. I do not consider it possible to understand Trotsky's political strategies unless they are placed in the context of his theoretical perspectives. But neither have I tried to examine Trotsky's thought for and in itself. Even

if that were possible or desirable, it would be to write another thesis with different concerns. Such a study inevitably would have to discuss, in more detail than this, the intellectual relationship between Marx and Trotsky. Here there is some reflection on the subject, in chapter five, but only in the context of a discussion of Trotsky's perspectives on the problems of socialist development. Further discussion, from a sympathetic point of view, may be found in 'Trotsky's Marxism' by Avenas.<sup>24</sup>

'Part One' stresses both the programmatic remedies prescribed by Trotsky to restore the political regime to health, and the ways of administering them. In the absence of both international revolution and an industrialised and prosperous Soviet economy, there could be no hope of a complete cure for the degenerative condition of chronic bureaucratisation. But, the democratisation of the Party, carried through by a united front, would, in Trotsky's view, relieve the body politic of its acute symptoms and stem the degeneration. Once this was achieved, the problems of international revolution and industrialisation might be more successfully addressed.

The medical analogy offered here, and drawn from Trotsky himself, may mislead if interpreted too literally: the 'doctor', Trotsky, first has his hands tied and is then locked away by the patient!<sup>25</sup> However, as a device, such an analogy may assist clarification. Trotsky was concerned not only with the ailing Soviet state, but also with the weak Soviet economy and the international communist movement. Until 1933 he thought that all three conditions had to be treated holistically; just as the first could not be cured whilst the second and third remained acute, a marked improvement in the other two required some recovery in the first. This circularity was, no doubt, less rigid both in Trotsky's mind and in reality than the analogy might suggest, but the chain existed, linked through the focus on the



oxygenating role of Party leadership. With the change of strategy in 1933 the chain was broken. Henceforth, the fortunes of international revolution were seen as dependent not on the Third International and its Soviet leadership, but on the Fourth and its Trotskyist leadership. A revival in the fortunes of international communism, independent of the Soviet state, became the designated starting point for Soviet revival: 'take up thy bed and walk'.

Trotsky's struggle against 'the bureaucracy' may be divided into three periods. Between 1923 and 1927, as a Party member, he criticised government and Party policies and the growth of bureaucracy. After expulsion, from 1928 to 1933, he opposed 'centrist' Stalinism, with the immediate objective of reinstatement in the Party and the ultimate aim of reforming both Party and state. From 1933 to 1940, he argued that Stalinism had become counter-revolutionary and that new revolutionary parties must be organised to overthrow, by 'political revolution', the degenerated regime. Even so, he maintained, the USSR remained a 'workers' state' and must be defended against capitalism.

I begin with a context-setting chapter that has three objectives: firstly to relate, briefly, Trotsky's political biography before the revolution; secondly, to discuss the theory of permanent revolution; and thirdly to consider Trotsky's reluctance to become an oppositionist. The three chapters that follow take, in turn, the three periods of Trotsky's opposition. In addition to their narrative purpose, they indicate Trotsky's evaluation of the political conjuncture and his response to it. Throughout, the moderation of Trotsky's opposition is emphasised: his acceptance of Party discipline in the first phase of struggle; his refusal to form a 'second party' until 1933; his defence of the Soviet Union, even in 1940, on the grounds that the October revolution had, in essential

respects, been maintained. The second part of the thesis attempts an explanation of this moderation by reference to Trotsky's view of the transition to socialism and his theory of bureaucracy and its role in the transitional regime.

In an attempt to make my subject coherent I have considered all three periods of Trotsky's opposition; in order to keep it manageable I have concentrated on particular themes. However, one period has been of particular interest to me, and, I hope, will provide a distinctive contribution to the literature on Trotsky: this is my consideration of Trotsky's writings of the period 1928-1933, which I found to be of particular interest. The Trotsky of 1923-1924, *The New Course* and *Lessons of October*, is relatively better known; so is the Trotsky of *Revolution Betrayed* (1936). The Trotsky of the middle period, as he struggled to cope with the contradictions of emergent Stalinism, is a more obscure figure. However he is the more interesting for being the more uncertain. It is in its complexity that Trotsky's theory and practice is engaging.

1. McNeal, R.H., 'The Revival of Soviet Anti-Trotskyism', *Studies in Comparative Communism*, vol.X, nos.1 and 2, (1977), pp.5-17.
2. Two extreme examples of political interpretations of Trotsky are: Mavrakis, K., *On Trotskyism. Problems of Theory and History*, translated from French, (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1976). Walker, D., *Quite Right Mr Trotsky!*, (London: Harney and Jones, 1985).
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5. Farrell, J.T., 'A Memoir on Leon Trotsky', *University of Kansas City Review*, vol.23, no.4, (1957), pp.293-298. Sternberg, F., 'Conversations with Trotsky', *Survey* 47, (1963), pp.146-159. Howe, I., 'Leon Trotsky: the Costs of History', *Partisan Review*, vol.30, no.4 (1963), pp.356-386.
6. Carr, E.H., 'The Tragedy of Trotsky', in Carr, *1917: Before and After*, (London: Macmillan, 1969), pp.139-166; reviews first published in *The Times Literary Supplement*, various dates. Lichtheim, G., 'Reflections on Trotsky', *Commentary*, vol.37, part 1, (1964), pp.52-60. Macintyre, A., 'Trotsky in Exile', *Encounter*, vol.XXI, no.6, (1963), pp.73-78.
7. Krasso, N., 'Trotsky's Marxism', *New Left Review* 44, (1967), pp.64-86. Mandel, E., 'Trotsky's Marxism: an Anti-critique', *New Left Review* 47, (1968), pp.32-51. Republished with further contributions from Krasso, 'Reply to Ernest Mandel', and Mandel, "'Trotsky's Marxism": a Rejoinder', and additional articles from others in Krasso(ed.), N., *Trotsky. The Great Debate Renewed*, (St. Louis: New Critics Press, 1972). Other examples of the genre, some less scrupulous than others, are: Beilharz, P., 'Trotsky's Marxism - Permanent Involvement?' *Telos* 39, (1979), pp.137-152; Elleinstein, J., *Staline-Trotsky. Le Pouvoir et la Révolution*, (Paris: Julliard, 1979); Hodgson, G., *Trotsky and Fatalistic Marxism*, (Nottingham: Spokesman Books, 1975); Johnstone, M., 'Reply to Ernest Mandel', in Krasso(ed.), *Trotsky. The Great Debate Renewed.*, pp.145-150; Johnstone, M., *Trotsky and World Revolution. A Critique*, published as a special issue of *Cogito. The theoretical and discussion journal of the YCL.*, (London: Young Communist League, 1977); Mavrakis, K., *On Trotskyism. Problems of theory and history*; Michail, L., *The Theory of Permanent Revolution. A Critique*, (London: CPGB, 1977); Thompson, P., and Lewis, G., *The Revolution Unfinished? A Critique of Trotskyism*, (Liverpool: Big Flame, 1977).
8. In *From Stalinism to Eurocommunism*, (London: NLB, 1978), Ernest Mandel quotes (p.66) an exchange between Claudin and Azcarate in which the latter, a member of the Executive Committee of the Communist Party of Spain, declared that 'Trotsky was a great revolutionary ... a good part of his critique of the Soviet system has been shown to be valid.' Quoted from *Triunfo*, 3 July, 1976.
9. This development was signalled most clearly by the conference held to mark the fortieth anniversary of 'Trotsky's death' (sic!) in 1980 in Fallonica, Italy, under the auspices of the Feltrinelli Foundation, an organisation with PCI links. The proceedings are published as: Gori, F.(ed.), *Pensiero e Azione Politica di Lev Trockji*, two volumes, (Firenze: Leo S. Olschki, 1982).

10. Elleinstein, J., *Histoire du Phénomène Stalinién*, (Paris: Grasset, 1975).

11. The publishing enterprises of the American Socialist Workers' Party, Pathfinder Press and Monad Press, have been to the fore in collecting and anthologising Trotsky's shorter writings and maintaining the established works in print. Since Trotsky's output was formidable, exceeding even that of Lenin, this has been a considerable task. Fortunately the editors have been able to take advantage of the bibliographical research of Sinclair, L., *Leon Trotsky. A bibliography*, (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1972). This has been consolidated by two further volumes, not commercially published, both available in Glasgow University library: a second edition, abridged, emended, and supplemented (1978), and an addenda (1980). Two further bibliographic studies by Sinclair should be mentioned: *Documents and Discussions 1930-1940: Source Material for the History of the Fourth International* (1981), a guide to the internal documents of the FI and its preliminary organisations; and, *The IS Papers* (1983), a guide to the papers of the International Secretariat of the FI.

The Pathfinder Press series, *Writings of Leon Trotsky, 1929-1940*, fourteen volumes (1972-1979), is comprehensive and well produced. It collects all Trotsky's published shorter writings for the period 1929-1940 that are not otherwise included in currently available volumes, and, particularly in its two supplements, it also includes some unpublished writings from the Trotsky Archive at Harvard University.

The three volume Pathfinder Press series, *Challenge of the Left Opposition*, (1975-1981), presents a selection from Trotsky's writings of the years 1923-1929. Even though less comprehensive than the *Writings*, perhaps inevitably so, it is extremely useful. Major pieces such as the *New Course* (1923) and the *Platform of the Opposition* (1927) are brought together with conference and congress speeches, and much previously unpublished material. There is a useful glossary of names and terms in each volume, but only general reference notes and, like the *Writings*, no identification of the document numbers of material that is in the Trotsky Archive.

Pathfinder Press and its associated houses have published much else that greatly facilitates working on Trotsky. In particular, a complete facsimile of Trotsky's journal in exile, *Byulleten' Oppozitsii*, (New York: Monad Press, 1973); and: *Leon Trotsky Speaks* (1972), *On Literature and Art* (1972), *Problems of Everyday Life and Other Writings on Culture and Science* (1973), *The Stalin School of Falsification* (1972).

New Park Publications in London also have a continuing commitment to the publication of Trotsky's work. Their recent outstanding addition to the field has been the the production of Trotsky's *Kak Vooruzhalas Revolyutsiya* in an excellent English translation by Brian Pearce: *How the Revolution Armed*, five vols., (1979-1981).

12. Anderson, P., 'Trotsky's Interpretation of Stalinism', *New Left Review* 139, (1983), pp.49-58; Avenas, D., 'Trotsky's Marxism', *International*, vol.3, no.2, pp.25-38, and no.3, pp.33-48, (1976); Broué, P., 'Trotsky et les Bloc des Oppositions de 1932', *Cahiers Léon Trotsky*, no.5, (1980); Geras, N., 'Literature of Revolution', *New Left Review* 113/114, (1979), pp.3-41; Geras, N., 'Classical Marxism and Proletarian Representation', *New Left Review* 125, (1981), pp.75-89; Löwy, M., *The Politics of Combined and Uneven Development. The Theory of Permanent Revolution*, (London: NLB, 1981); Mandel, E., *Trotsky. A Study in the Dynamic of his Thought*, (London: NLB, 1979); Mandel, E., 'Introduction' to Trotsky, *The Struggle Against Fascism in Germany*, (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1971).

13. The work of *Cahiers Léon Trotsky*, and the Institut Léon Trotsky which publishes it, has been much assisted by the opening, in 1980, of the section of the Trotsky Archive at Harvard that contains the exile papers. To protect political comrades and other correspondents Trotsky made it a condition of sale that correspondence received and sent should be closed for forty years. Until 1980 only Isaac Deutscher, with the permission of Natalia Sedova, was able to utilise the 17,500 documents contained there, including more than 4,000 letters by Trotsky himself. The exile papers provide a new and invaluable resource in the study of Trotsky. With the co-operation of the trustees of the Trotsky Archive, the Institut is publishing a very full edition of Trotsky's *Oeuvres*, containing Archive material with references. A second series will publish writings of the 1920s.
14. Carmichael, J., *Trotsky An Appreciation of His Life*, (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1975); Payne, R., *The Life and Death of Trotsky*, (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1977); Segal, R., *The Tragedy of Leon Trotsky*, (London: Hutchinson, 1979); Warth, R.D., *Leon Trotsky*, (Boston: Twayne, 1977); Wistrich, R., *Trotsky: Fate of a Revolutionary*, (London: Robson, 1979).
15. Day, R., *Leon Trotsky and the Politics of Economic Isolation*, (London: Cambridge University Press, 1973); Knei-paz, B., *The Social and Political Thought of Leon Trotsky*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979); *Studies in Comparative Communism*, vol.X, nos.1 and 2, (1977); Beilharz, P., *Trotsky, Trotskyism and the Transition to Socialism*, (London: Croom Helm, 1987); Pomper, P., (ed.), *Trotsky's Notebooks, 1933-35*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986); among other articles, not otherwise cited in the notes to this introduction, are: d'Agostino, A., 'Ambiguities of Trotsky's Leninism', *Survey* 106, vol.24, no.1, (1979), pp.178-203; Kern, G., 'Trotsky's Autobiography', *Russian Review*, vol.36, part 3, (1977), pp.297-319; Nove, A., 'A note on Trotsky and the "Left Opposition", 1929-1931', *Soviet Studies*, vol.29, no.4, (1977), pp.576-589; and, Wistrich, R., 'Leon Trotsky's Theory of Fascism', *Journal of Contemporary History*, vol.11, no.4, (1976), pp.157-184.
16. Van Heijenoort, J., *With Trotsky in Exile*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1978).
17. Ruhle-Gerstel, A., 'No Verses for Trotsky. A diary in Mexico (1937)', *Encounter*, vol.LVIII, no.4, (April 1982), pp.27-41; Swabek, A., 'Visiting Trotsky at Prinkipo', *Studies in Comparative Communism*, vol.X, nos.1 and 2 (1977), pp.152-159; Weber, S., 'Recollections of Trotsky', *Modern Occasions* (Spring 1972), pp.181-194.
18. Howe, I., *Trotsky*, (Glasgow: Fontana, 1978), p.170.
19. Deutscher, I., *The Prophet Armed Trotsky:1879-1921*; Deutscher, I., *The Prophet Unarmed Trotsky:1921-1929*; Deutscher, I., *The Prophet Outcast Trotsky:1929-1940*; (London: Oxford University Press, 1970).
20. The major exceptions to Deutscher's endorsement of Trotsky are his doubt concerning the necessity of a new revolution in the USSR and his opposition to the formation of the Fourth International. Deutscher, I., *The Prophet Outcast*, pp.311-3; pp.419-429.
21. Richard Day has published a number of major studies of Trotsky as an economist. *Politics of Economic Isolation*; 'The Theory of the Long Cycle: Kondratiev, Trotsky, Mandel', *New Left Review* 99, (1976), pp.67-82; 'Trotsky and Preobrazhensky. The Troubled Unity of the Left Opposition', *Studies in Comparative Communism*, vol.X, nos.1 and 2, (1977), pp.69-86;

'Leon Trotsky on the Problems of the *Smychka* and Forced Collectivisation', *Critique* 13, (1981), pp.55-68; 'Socialism in One Country - New thoughts on an Old Question', Gori(ed.), F., *Pensiero e Azione Politica di Lev Trockji*, vol.1, pp.311-330. Trotsky's part in the international communist movement has been much less well dealt with.

22. Carr, E.H., *The Interregnum*, (Harmondsworth: Pelican Books, 1969), Carr, E.H., *Socialism in One Country*, three vols., (Harmondsworth: Pelican Books, 1970-1972), Carr, E.H., *Foundations of a Planned Economy*, vols.1 and 2, (Harmondsworth: Pelican Books, 1974-1976). Daniels, R.V., *The Conscience of the Revolution*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1960).

23. Knei-paz, B., *The Social and Political Thought of Leon Trotsky*; Day, R., *Leon Trotsky and the Politics of Economic Isolation*; Nove, A., 'New Light on Trotsky's Economic Views', *Slavic Review*, vol.40, no.1, (1981), pp.84-97; Nove, A., 'Trockji, Collectivisation and the Five Year Plan', in Gori, F.(ed.), *Pensiero e Azione Politica di Lev Trockji* vol.2, pp.389-404; Davies, R., 'Trockji and the Debate on Industrialisation in the USSR', in Gori, F.(ed.), *Pensiero e Azione Politica di Lev Trockji* vol.1, pp.239-259.

24. Avenas, D., 'Trotsky's Marxism'.

25. Trotsky, 'Klassovaya Priroda Sovetskogo Gosudarstvo', *Byulleten' Oppozitsii*, no.36-37, (Oktyabr' 1933g.), p.3. Beilharz has called attention to Trotsky's preference for medical analogies in his historical writings. Beilharz, P., 'Trotsky as Historian', *History Workshop Journal* 20, (1985), pp.36-55.

## CHAPTER ONE: A RELUCTANT OPPOSITIONIST

*We are closer to India than to Europe ... and our autocracy, placed between European absolutism and Indian despotism, had many features resembling the latter.*

Trotsky, 1905.

### Section One: Before the Revolution

Lev Davidovich Bronstein was born into a modest but prospering Jewish peasant family on 26 October, 1879. His father, virtually illiterate, owned a farm in the remote village of Yanovka in the Kherson province of the Southern Ukraine.<sup>1</sup> His mother was literate but, according to Trotsky's autobiography, of slight intellect.<sup>2</sup> Lev Davidovich overcame the constraints of his social background, excelled at school and gained entrance to the University of Odessa to study mathematics. By seventeen, politics appealed more than mathematics and Bronstein became a professional revolutionary. As an enthusiastic Marxist, following a brief flirtation with revolutionary populism, Bronstein helped form the grandly styled South Russian Workers' Union. This modest revolutionary circle, confined to the town of Nikolayev, was soon smashed by police action: the young Bronstein was arrested in January 1898 and detained in solitary confinement, without charge, in appalling conditions. Later Trotsky recorded that this experience was worse than any of his other, nearly twenty, prison sentences.<sup>3</sup> In 1900 he was finally sentenced without trial to four years exile and dispatched to Siberia.

In his youth Trotsky demonstrated a total commitment to revolutionary politics, a quality that would remain with him throughout his life. He broke with his father by putting politics before university study,<sup>4</sup> was

very active in the organisation he helped establish,<sup>5</sup> and had to leave his wife and two baby daughters in order to escape Siberia.<sup>6</sup> For Trotsky, history and politics were higher than any individual: 'to understand the causal sequence of events and to find somewhere in the sequence one's own place, that is the first duty of the revolutionary.'<sup>7</sup>

In the summer of 1902, after two years exile, Bronstein escaped, adopting the name Trotsky, from his Odessa jailer. His objective was to make contact with Lenin, to meet the author of *What is to be Done*, which had so impressed him in exile.<sup>8</sup> After a perilous journey through Russia and Europe Trotsky arrived in London in October, without even the money for a cab.<sup>9</sup>

Despite an initial attraction to Lenin, and a seat on the *Iskra* board in London, Trotsky became a resolute opponent of the Leninist theory of the revolutionary party after the split in Russian Marxism at the Second Party Congress in 1903. To a degree Trotsky's reaction was against Lenin's dismissal of an older generation of Marxist leaders like Akselrod and Zasluch, but there was also a firm political basis to his position.<sup>10</sup> In the pamphlets *Report of the Siberian Delegation* (1903) and *Our Political Tasks* (1904) he developed a view of the revolutionary party very different from that of Lenin, arguing that both the 'economists' and the Leninists shared a lack of confidence in the revolutionary potential of the working class.<sup>11</sup> The former wished to restrict the workers' movement to economic demands, whilst the latter argued that political action required a vanguard party. Trotsky's hostility to Lenin's theories gained reinforcement through the 1905 revolution. He became convinced of the necessity of adopting the immediate objective of workers' power in Russia and formulated the theory of permanent revolution.



For most of 1905 it seemed to contemporaries that the Tsar would be forced to concede significant changes. During that year Trotsky obviously impressed the revolutionary movement. At the age of twenty-five he became the leading individual behind the newly created St. Petersburg Soviet, serving for a time as its President.

At the end of 1905, as the Tsarist government found strength for counter-revolution, Trotsky was again arrested. The trial of leaders of the Soviet resulted in life sentences of Siberian deportation, to which Trotsky replied by making his escape while en route to his exile.<sup>12</sup> In the years between his second escape and the outbreak of the first world war Trotsky lived in Vienna, travelling periodically to Germany. He met the leaders of German and Austrian social-democracy, recalling them later in his autobiography with an almost unrelieved contempt.<sup>13</sup> For him, Austro-Marxism was philistine, at one with the 'old imperial, hierarchic, vain and futile Vienna'. Its theorists had learned certain parts of Marx 'as one might study law' and lived 'on the interest that *Das Kapital* yielded.' Of the Germans, only Mehring, Liebknecht and Luxemburg are considered to be revolutionaries. Kautsky had accepted Marxism 'as a complete system, ... [and] popularised it like a school-teacher. Great events were beyond his comprehension'.

The Viennese years were journalistically productive, but the only work of any length was the first edition in German of 1905. Trotsky wrote both for non-Marxist, radical democratic periodicals, and for the Marxist press. The former provided Trotsky's income. His articles, on a diversity of subjects including war correspondence from the Balkans, appeared primarily in *Kievskaya Mysl*'.<sup>14</sup> Censorship was restrictive, but did not prohibit publication of all critical views.<sup>15</sup>

The years after 1905 were difficult for all Russian revolutionaries. Constitutional reforms in Russia were soon effectively abrogated, and the workers' movement there was suppressed in a wave of reaction led by Stolypin. Trotsky, at the margin of organisational activity in the social-democratic emigration, found his calls for unification of the Party unheeded, and his writings on the nature of the revolution in Russia largely dismissed. Lenin wrote: 'Trotsky's major mistake is that he ignores the bourgeois character of the revolution and has no clear conception of the transition from this revolution to the socialist revolution.'<sup>16</sup>

At the outbreak of the world war in August 1914 Trotsky was in Vienna. To avoid internment, he travelled first to Switzerland and then to France. His reactions to the war, and to the response from socialists, brought him steadily closer to the Bolshevik position than ever before.<sup>17</sup> At the same time, Lenin considered that the war had established an international balance of class forces which made proletarian revolution in Russia an immediate objective.<sup>18</sup>

In Paris, Trotsky published the anti-war paper *Nashe Slovo* until it was banned in 1916 and he was deported to Spain. The Spanish authorities arrested him and insisted that he go to Cuba. Trotsky, however, was able to secure agreement for his departure to the United States.<sup>19</sup> The news of the fall of Tsarism followed shortly after his arrival in New York in January 1917 and at the earliest opportunity he left for Europe, only to be temporarily delayed in Halifax, Nova Scotia, detained by British naval police.<sup>20</sup>

Trotsky finally arrived in Petrograd on 4 May, receiving enthusiastic greetings from a revolutionary crowd and a wary and cool reception from the

leaders of the Soviet.<sup>21</sup> By now Trotsky and Lenin held very similar views of the Russian revolution; within weeks, together with a group of followers, Trotsky joined the Bolshevik Party.<sup>22</sup>

Trotsky's role in the Russian revolution was central, second only to Lenin's. After detention during the upheaval of the July days, he was elected President of the Petrograd Soviet in September 1917. The design and execution of the plan for the October insurrection was his.<sup>23</sup> After Bolshevik victory he was apparently offered the chair of the Council of People's Commissars by Lenin.<sup>24</sup> Out of respect for Lenin, Trotsky refused, and was offered the post of Commissar of Home Affairs. Fearing the possibility of anti-semitic attacks on the new government if a Jew held such a major position, Trotsky again declined. He finally accepted the crucial position of Commissar of Foreign Affairs, hoping the international revolution would swiftly make his post redundant.<sup>25</sup> However, the Russian spark failed to inflame Europe and Trotsky had to negotiate with the representatives of Imperial Germany in early 1918 to conclude a separate peace settlement. He tried to use the treaty negotiations at Brest-Litovsk as a forum for revolutionary propaganda, believing that the Soviet government should make neither war nor peace. Failing to secure support for this standpoint, Trotsky negotiated a peace he opposed and thereafter, regarding his position as untenable, he resigned. Despite criticism from Lenin and others, he remained a favourite of the Party he had so recently joined and was promptly elected to the Central Committee on a vote which equalled Lenin's and was exceeded by no other.<sup>26</sup> His standing was such that, even after the failure of his policy towards Germany, he was immediately appointed Commissar of War. In this position he built an embryonic Red Army into a victorious fighting force.

Section Two: The Permanent Revolution

Bolshevism argued for revolution in Russia not simply as a political expression of the needs of Russian workers and peasants. The Russian Revolution was to be an attack on imperialism's most vulnerable point: snapping the weak link of the chain would provide a starting point for international revolution which would then repay its debt with interest. Without the support of revolution abroad, workers' revolution in Russia would be undermined by the economic, political and cultural backwardness of the country. In 1918 and 1919 revolutionaries were unwilling to contemplate the failure of international revolution. In opening the Second Congress of the Communist International in July 1920, Zinoviev remained convinced that European revolution was imminent:

[In 1919] ... I said, somewhat over-zealously, that when perhaps only a year had passed we would already have forgotten that a struggle had been carried out in Europe for Soviet power. ... Probably we allowed ourselves to be carried away; in reality not one year but probably two or three will be needed for the whole of Europe to become a Soviet republic.<sup>27</sup>

By 1924, at the latest, it was clear that Soviet Russia had to find a way to survive and prosper without European support. Stalin, unrenowned as a theoretician, asserted that socialism in one country was possible: international revolution was only necessary as a guarantee against military intervention. Trotsky remained committed to the original perspective: international revolution, even if no longer an immediate prospect, remained on the agenda. Russia's revolution needed European support to achieve socialism; without it only a preparatory regime could be created.

Nearly twenty years before, in 1906, Trotsky had concluded that without 'the direct State support of the European proletariat' the working class in Russia would be unable to convert a temporary domination into a 'lasting socialistic dictatorship' and would be overthrown.

Left to its own resources, the working class of Russia will inevitably be crushed by the counter revolution the moment the peasantry turns its back on it. It will have no alternative but to link the fate of its political rule, and, hence, the fate of the whole Russian revolution, with the fate of the socialist revolution in Europe.<sup>28</sup>

After 1917 Trotsky maintained that an isolated revolution could not endure.

Following the Brest-Litovsk treaty he had predicted:

The Russian Revolution and European imperialism cannot live side by side for a long time. For the present we exist because the German bourgeoisie carries on a bloody litigation with the English and French bourgeoisie. Japan is in rivalry with America and, therefore, in the meantime its hands are tied. That is why we keep above water. As soon as<sup>29</sup> the plunderers conclude peace they will all turn against us.

This speech stresses several times the idea that more or less immediate revolution in Europe is necessary for the survival of the Soviet regime. Without international revolution 'the Russian Revolution has reached its summit'.<sup>30</sup>

In a distorted form the revolution did survive, marked by the conditions of its existence. For many reasons Trotsky's prognosis was inaccurate in detail. However, its essential idea was maintained and extended. Before 1917, and during the revolutionary period, Trotsky's emphasis had been on the political need for international revolution; subsequently he stressed its economic necessity. The following statement is characteristic:

In the last analysis all the contradictions of the development of the USSR lead ... to the contradiction between the isolated workers' state and its capitalist encirclement. The impossibility of constructing a self-sufficient socialist economy in a single country revives the basic contradictions of socialist construction at every stage on an extended scale and in greater depth. In this sense, the dictatorship of the proletariat in the USSR would inevitably have to suffer destruction if the capitalist regime in the rest of the world should prove capable of maintaining itself for another long historical epoch.<sup>31</sup>

To understand why Trotsky placed such emphasis on the international revolution we must turn to his theory of permanent revolution. Other writers, Knei-Paz and Löwy for example, have dealt with this subject in

some detail; here there is only room for a sketch.<sup>32</sup>

Permanent revolution was the name given to Trotsky's theory of the dynamic of the Russian revolution, first articulated in the revolution of 1905, and systematically expressed in his book *Results and Prospects* (1906). The emerging Russian working class would lead the revolution against Tsarism. After succeeding in the struggle for democracy, the workers' revolution would proceed directly to the struggle for socialism. Trotsky's theory cannot be understood without reference to two aspects of its situation. Firstly, it must be considered in relation to other Marxist theories of the Russian revolution. Secondly, it has to be seen as historically grounded, a response to a specific set of class relationships in Russian society.

With his theory, Trotsky provided a novel answer to a problem that had constantly beset Russian Marxism. As a political tendency, Russian Marxism had developed in opposition to the Narodnik conception of a Russian socialism resting on the peasantry. It argued the impossibility of peasant socialism, the penetration of capitalism in Russia, and took the working class as its political base. Russian Marxism, however, faced an apparent contradiction. The Russian state was autocratic and as much, if not more, concerned to defend noble and land-owning interests against the peasantry, as it was to sponsor the development of capitalism as an agency of the bourgeoisie. The orthodoxy of Russian Marxism, as developed by Plekhanov, was that capitalism and the bourgeois revolution, which would replace autocracy by parliamentary democracy and create conditions for the realisation of the socialist 'minimum programme', was a necessary historical 'stage' prior to the socialist revolution. Since the bourgeois revolution had not taken place in Russia, Marxists found themselves calling for bourgeois revolution but with the proletariat playing the leading role.

The evident weakness of the Russian bourgeoisie created obvious complications. The role of the bourgeoisie in the bourgeois revolution was problematic. Political conceptions were hardened by the experience of 1905. Most Mensheviks, whilst recognising the vacillations of bourgeois parties, now expected the bourgeoisie to be hegemonic and the workers' party to remain outside government.<sup>33</sup> Bolsheviks took a contrasting position, recognising the bourgeoisie's weakness. There was agreement with Menshevism on the bourgeois nature of the revolution, but the proletariat and peasantry together rather than the bourgeoisie were viewed as the leaders of the bourgeois revolution. Lenin launched the hybrid slogan: the democratic dictatorship of proletariat and peasantry.<sup>34</sup> In his view the workers party should take the leading role in the revolutionary government, but only to introduce parliamentary democracy.

Trotsky, by contrast, rejected the conventional view that the revolution began and ended as a bourgeois revolution. He took the position that only the working class could play the role of a revolutionary class. His theory began with the premise: 'it is possible for the workers to come to power in an economically backward country sooner than in an advanced country.'<sup>35</sup> Those who imagine that the dictatorship of the proletariat is 'in some way automatically dependent on the technical development and resources of a country' have 'nothing in common with Marxism.'<sup>36</sup> Their view is a 'prejudice of "economic" materialism simplified to absurdity.'

Trotsky poses the question: will the Russian bourgeoisie make a bourgeois revolution and modernise the nation through capitalist procedures? He answers that either the revolution will triumph as a proletarian revolution or it will not triumph at all. Even though the initial tasks of the revolution had to be those of a bourgeois revolution, the bourgeoisie, as a whole, would continually attempt to restrict the

progress of the revolution. In practice, he argued, the distinction between the socialist minimum programme (democratic reforms) and the socialist maximum programme (working class power) would lose all significance, as the revolutionary working class, having begun with bourgeois tasks, passed on directly and inevitably, to those of the socialist revolution in a process which was to become known as 'permanent revolution'.<sup>37</sup> To be successful the revolution must become permanent until the establishment of a proletarian state. To remain in power the revolution must become permanent in a second sense. From its national location it must be extended internationally, removing the shackles of backwardness.

Arguably, the theory of permanent revolution is Trotsky's most original and creative contribution to Marxist theory. It articulates a theory of revolution for the 'underdeveloped' areas of the world in an age of imperialism, and breaks with an evolutionary conception of the necessary stages of social development prior to socialism. In his 'Preface' to volume one of *Capital*, Marx had written that the more advanced societies showed the less advanced the image of their own future.<sup>38</sup> This was routinely taken to indicate the necessity of capitalist development prior to socialism, although there were also within Marx's writings precedents for Trotsky's views.<sup>39</sup> According to Trotsky, Marx's statement in *Capital* had to be understood as an abstraction from the history of a particular capitalist country, and not as a universally applicable prognosis.<sup>40</sup> The history of Russian capitalism could not be understood as replication of the history of British capitalism. Imperialism had created a world economy; social analysis could no longer proceed as if each country was a separate entity. The whole had become more than the sum of its parts; the parts could only be understood in relation to the whole.



Russia had been 'condemned by nature itself to a long backwardness'; social development was primitive and slow.<sup>41</sup> Military challenge from more developed countries compelled the state, for survival, to appropriate resources to create a military-bureaucratic machine and become an agency of modernisation, ultimately of capitalist development. This mode of economic development reinforced the primitiveness of social development by further hampering the accumulation of a surplus in private hands, hindering the rise of artisanal and entrepreneurial groups. Towns remained, for a long period, military-bureaucratic institutions, centres of consumption and not production. The primary social consequence of the leading position of the state in industrialisation was that the bourgeoisie was weak, incapable and disinclined to challenge autocracy.

The unevenness of international capitalist development produced not simply a co-existence of 'advanced' and 'backward' countries, but a co-existence within the less developed countries of 'advanced' and 'backward' forms. To use Trotsky's terms, uneven development produced combined development. Backwardness brought the 'privilege' of historical 'leaps'. 'Backward' countries appropriate technique and organisation from the more 'advanced', whilst 'advanced' countries force their attentions on the more 'backward'. In the Russian case, Trotsky observed, the proletariat came into existence alongside a weak bourgeoisie and was concentrated into large, modern factories to a greater degree than in any other capitalist country.<sup>42</sup> Towns became politically crucial, the locus of revolutionary activity. The working class possessed a strength greatly exceeding that suggested by its numbers. However, revolutionary action could only be successful as a 'permanent' process. Even starting with a programme of demands that did not challenge capitalist property, (for example: democratic demands, the eight-hour day, measures to alleviate unemployment, etc.) the working class was brought into conflict with the

capitalist class. Its success, Trotsky argued, depended on following a political path which anticipated the necessity of moving directly on to the socialist programme. Only the working class could successfully challenge autocracy. Inevitably it would raise class demands. Thus any revolutionary government would have to choose between capital and labour. Bolshevism saw a workers' party acting in coalition with political representatives of the peasantry, leading a 'democratic' revolution and foreswearing all socialist measures. In Trotsky's view, this was ultimately as much an illusion as the Menshevik idea of a revolutionary democracy led by the bourgeoisie with the support of the workers.<sup>43</sup>

It is clear that the theory of permanent revolution was central to Trotsky's politics before 1917: can the same be said for the post-revolutionary period? Most studies neglect to ask this question, taking Trotsky's own answer for granted. During the 1920s, to deflect the charge of anti-Leninism, Trotsky publicly asserted that the issue now had no relevance. For example, in 1926, at the Fifteenth Party Conference, he states: 'even I ... regard it as a question which has been consigned to the archives.'<sup>44</sup> But this, surely, was simply a tactical attempt at conciliation, conditioned in particular by his alliance with Zinoviev and Kamenev. Only recently Trotsky had revived the controversies surrounding his theory of permanent revolution with the publication of *1905*, a work which contained one of the major statements of his theory.

The publication of this book may have been quite innocent. It is unsurprising that a major book by Trotsky, available hitherto only in German, should be published in Soviet Russia. What is of note, however, is the trouble taken by Trotsky to produce a new edition, and his readiness to debate contentious issues. Evidently Trotsky saw the publication of this volume as of current value. His preface proposed that the present

situation needed to be understood in the 'reflected light' of the past debates, and he took the trouble to reconstruct a revised version using the manuscript, rather than authorising a direct translation of the original.<sup>45</sup> Instead of deflecting attention away from past polemics Trotsky did the opposite. Three pre-revolutionary articles were incorporated as appendices and a fourth piece, Trotsky's speech to the 1907 Party Congress, was added in the second Russian edition.<sup>46</sup> When Pokrovsky challenged the theses of 1905 Trotsky was ready, perhaps even eager, to respond.<sup>47</sup>

Both before and after 1917, the theory of permanent revolution underpinned Trotsky's political views; permanent revolution was not simply one aspect of his thought, but its whole basis. In a letter to Albert Treint, a leader expelled from the French Communist Party for supporting Zinoviev, Trotsky referred to 'the question of permanent revolution' as 'decisive in the strategic programmatic sense.' He claimed no magical properties for it: 'to consider the theory ... as a suprahistorical dogma would contradict its very essence.' However it yields 'a unique and correct starting point in the internal dynamic of each contemporary national revolution and in its uninterrupted connection with the international revolution.'<sup>48</sup> Permanent revolution anchored Trotsky's examination of post-revolutionary difficulties. Centrally this revolved around Trotsky's insistence on the global dimension of revolutionary politics: revolution and counter-revolution were international. The revolution in Russia needed the revolution abroad; the counter-revolution in Russia needed the counter-revolution abroad. Without the world bourgeoisie the domestic bourgeoisie of NEP Russia would not be such a threat.<sup>49</sup>

Trotsky's idea of 'combined development', the foundation of his theory of permanent revolution, is of central importance to his analysis of post-revolutionary Russia. Although often implicit, Trotsky's approach to

the dilemmas of power in Soviet Russia depended essentially on political economy. His perceptions of pre-revolutionary Russia are manifestly the foundation for his perceptions of post-revolutionary Russia: inevitably so, political institutions may be rapidly changed by revolution, society is more resilient.

Before and after 1917 Russia combined in one country different historical stages of development. In various writings of 1923 Trotsky identifies the contradictory combination of modes of production as a basis for bureaucracy. The clearest examples are in *The New Course* (1924). 'The essential source of bureaucratism', Trotsky informs us, 'resides in the necessity of creating and sustaining a state apparatus that unites the interests of the proletariat and those of the peasantry in a perfect economic harmony from which we are still far removed.'<sup>50</sup> The bureaucracy mediates potentially contradictory social interests, reconciling them whilst promoting the particular interest of the ruling class.

After 1917 Trotsky modified the original formulation of permanent revolution in two ways: firstly, by generalising it to apply to the third world as a whole; secondly, by adding a further sense to its meaning. Hitherto it had had two basic propositions: the uninterrupted transformation of the revolution into proletarian forms, and the international dimension of the proletarian revolution. Now Trotsky added a third sense in which the revolution had to be 'permanent' the explicit recognition that after its transformation from democratic to proletarian forms, the revolution continues to live, grow, and develop. 'For an indefinitely long time and in constant internal struggle, all social relations undergo transformation.'<sup>51</sup>

Society keeps changing its skin. ... Revolutions in economy, technique, science, the family, morals and everyday life develop in complex reciprocal action and do not allow society to achieve equilibrium. Therein lies the permanent character of the

socialist revolution as such.<sup>52</sup>

The need for society to keep 'changing its skin' is vigorously promoted by Trotsky in the articles he produced during NEP on cultural questions.<sup>53</sup> These well illustrate the continuity of his ideas from before 1917. For ten years after the revolution, including the period before his open opposition, Trotsky waged a determined struggle for literacy, mutual respect, order, decency, public health, efficiency and rationality. In his view, the Russian working class, let alone the mass of the population, was sadly lacking these elementary qualities because it had not experienced prolonged bourgeois development. The absence of 'conservative traditions' among the proletariat, its 'revolutionary freshness', were, for Trotsky, consequent compensations: the workers in Russia had found it relatively easy to start a revolution, even if it was difficult to sustain. The political acculturation of workers in Western Europe restrained them initially, but should they take action their cultural maturity would ease the path to socialism after a revolution.<sup>54</sup>

An article first published in *Pravda* in April 1923 and later included in *Voprosy Byta*, demonstrates well the way Trotsky sees the political prominence of the working class contradicted by cultural backwardness.<sup>55</sup> 'Civility and Politeness as a Necessary Lubricant in Daily Relations' begins by posing the question: 'In what manner does the machinery of state come in direct contact with the population?' Trotsky's response is that, in Russia, the relationship is quite different from that prevailing in Western Europe and America. There, despite the 'caste' nature of the bureaucracy and the periodic appearance of the 'policeman's fist', the relations of the bureaucracy with the people are characterised by 'democratic civility'. This he sees as primarily 'a product and a heritage of bourgeois revolutions.' In contrast Soviet Russia must cope

with the implications of combined development.

Our Soviet bureaucratic machine is unique, complex, containing as it does the traditions of different epochs together with the germs of future relationships. With us, civility, as a general rule, does not exist. But of rudeness, inherited from the past, we have as much as you please. But our rudeness is not homogenous. There is the simple rudeness of peasant origin, which is unattractive certainly, but not degrading. ...

Side by side with this simple kind ... we have another, a special kind - the revolutionary - a rudeness of the leaders, due to impatience, to an over-ardent desire to better things ...

We still have, however - and herein is the chief stumbling block - the rudeness of the old aristocracy, with the touch of feudalism about it. This kind is vile and vicious throughout.<sup>56</sup>

Trotsky sees Russia as a product of an historical development which combined European and Asiatic influences. Throughout his historical writing he emphasises the weakness of urban manufacture. Towns in Russia, he suggests, were administrative and military centres, unlike the European town which became dominated by artisanal and trade guilds. In medieval Europe the town was based on 'a relatively advanced differentiation of the economy', but Russia's economic backwardness found expression 'first and foremost in the fact that artisanal trade failed to separate itself from agriculture and retained the characteristics of a home industry.' Trotsky comments:

In this respect we are closer to India than to Europe, just as our medieval towns were closer to Asia than to Europe and our autocracy, placed between European absolutism and Asian despotism, had many features resembling the latter.<sup>57</sup>

The theme of backwardness reasserting itself is a familiar refrain in Trotsky's post-revolutionary writings. In the 1920s his focus is on the latent resources of capitalism in NEP Russia. In Russian history the semi-autonomous, near subsistence, petty-commodity character of local economies, with no clear distinction between agriculture and manufacture, gave traders a prominent position.<sup>58</sup> Trotsky's insistent warnings during NEP about the dangers of private accumulation in the hands of the NEPmen and prosperous villagers must be seen in this light. With the victory of

the state over the peasantry, and the suppression of private commercial interests, Trotsky focussed on Stalinism: Russian backwardness was being overcome by barbaric means, not by a revolutionary enlightenment spreading from Europe. The Soviet present had to cope as best it could with the Russian past. Russia had taken 'the greatest leap in history', Trotsky wrote in 1938, 'now backwardness is taking its revenge'.<sup>59</sup>

### Section Three: The Turning Point

At the close of the Civil War, Trotsky was seen by many contemporaries as the virtual equal of Lenin, and his obvious successor. But in 1923, with Lenin gravely ill, Trotsky's strength became his weakness. Power, and not abstract merit, determined the leadership struggle. Trotsky's independence, devotion to principle, and self-confidence in his own abilities were admirable qualities alongside Lenin. They could be harnessed without creating an undue threat to those in the Bolshevik hierarchy who though more senior, were less dynamic. Alongside Lenin, Trotsky's enthusiasms could also be moderated, as for example, in the Trade Union debate of 1920. Without Lenin there was considerable concern about the prospect of Trotsky's leadership among the other Bolshevik leaders.

Trotsky had not been a Bolshevik before the 1917 revolution and had often criticised the Bolshevik leaders in intemperate terms.<sup>60</sup> On the basis of his past, there was reason to doubt that Trotsky would be prepared to accept Party discipline and collectivity of leadership. Even though he was prepared to deny it, Trotsky could not escape his own past. Other leaders remembered Trotsky as an antagonist; once he became a critic again, in 1923, the momentum of conflict was accelerated by such memories.

After illness forced Lenin's retirement, Trotsky emerged in the autumn of 1923 as the major critic of Party policy. Although he had previously given little public indication of disaffection, his essays of this period, collected in *The New Course*, represented a powerful indictment. Opposition to the growth of bureaucracy, to economic mismanagement, and to the mishandling of revolutionary possibilities abroad led Trotsky into direct conflict with the post-Lenin leadership of the Party. For four years Trotsky argued for reform, emphasising the revision of Party policy rather than a change of leadership.

This opposition from within constitutes the first phase of Trotsky's opposition, culminating in his expulsion from the Party. It began with a letter to the Central Committee of 8 October 1923, prompted in part by an attempt, by Zinoviev and others, to restrict his power on the Military Revolutionary Committee.<sup>61</sup> The letter announced his decision to struggle for the abolition of 'secretarial bureaucratism'; it was time for a new course in the conduct of Party politics. Now that the immediate threat of White counter-revolution had been averted the Party regime had to be more open: 'the tight hold that characterised the period of war communism should yield to a livelier and broader party responsibility.' The old course had, however, been reinforced: 'even in the cruellest hours of the civil war we argued in the party organization, and in the press as well, over such issues as the recruitment of specialists, partisan forces versus a regular army, discipline, etc.; while now there is not a trace of such an open exchange of opinions on questions that are really troubling the party.'<sup>62</sup> Officials, Trotsky claimed, are now routinely appointed and not elected.

Trotsky's opposition to nascent Stalinism began tentatively. Despite the later conviction and lack of compromise that characterised Trotsky in exile, his actions in 1923 were cautious and often remained so until 1927.



There were certain general dispositions among the Bolsheviks which tended to hinder the growth of opposition. Unity was at a premium in the context of bitter antagonism between the Bolsheviks and their internal and external enemies. This was pre-figured by the insistence on discipline which had been part of the Leninist theory of a revolutionary party, if not always a part of actual practice. It was further reinforced by the development of a single-party political system. In such a system it became increasingly difficult to make the distinction between loyalty to the Party and loyalty to the state. This proved a major difficulty for Trotsky, particularly during the war scare of 1927 when he advanced his 'Clemenceau thesis': opposition to the regime of Stalin and unconditional defence of the Soviet state.<sup>63</sup>

Unity held even greater appeal when put in the context of the Bolsheviks' conviction that the revolution in Russia was simply the prelude to a general European revolution. Given such a belief, the problems of revolution in a country commonly regarded as 'backward' could be seen both as natural and temporary. If the problems of the revolutionary regime derived from the backwardness of Russia, which was to be imminently resolved as revolution spread westwards to the more developed parts of Europe, then what sense was there in oppositional activity? Such a line of reasoning may well have influenced Trotsky before 1923. In his letter of 8 October 1923 Trotsky declared that many of the speeches in defence of workers' democracy made at the time of the Twelfth Party Congress in April 1923 seemed to him exaggerated, and to a considerable extent demagogic, in view of the incompatibility of a fully developed workers' democracy with the regime of a dictatorship.<sup>64</sup> Now, however, he called attention to the growth of 'the bureaucratisation of the party apparatus' which 'has reached unheard of proportions through the application of the methods of secretarial selection.' By this time Trotsky was beginning to observe a

reciprocal connection between the absence of revolution in the West and the problems of revolution in the East. The bureaucratisation of the Russian Communist Party could lead to a similar degeneration within the Communist International and the member parties, which might result in failure at decisive moments. There is a substantial implication in Trotsky's *The New Course* that this happened in Germany in 1923.<sup>65</sup> There can be no doubt that Trotsky's path to opposition was prompted by a growing conviction that the methods of leadership of the Party were likely to lead to defeats in the international arena.

There is much in the history of this period that is not known or knowable. The extent to which Trotsky pursued a critical analysis before declaring his opposition is not clear. He was scrupulous in his observance of Party discipline and hesitant to oppose openly. But the secret history of leadership discussions would no doubt reveal considerably more dissension than the public record of unanimity would show. Trotsky, in his letter of 8 October 1923, declared that he had been 'fighting resolutely and unequivocally within the Central Committee against the false policy' for a year and a half without results.<sup>66</sup> Lenin in his Testament had advised that the biggest danger to the Party's stability was a split between Trotsky and Stalin, which suggests, at the least, a situation of observable tension between the two that perhaps went further than their known disagreements during the Civil War, and later on economic matters.<sup>67</sup>

According to *My Life*, Trotsky had discussed bureaucratism with Lenin towards the end of 1922.<sup>68</sup> Lenin had offered Trotsky the possibility of becoming a fourth deputy chairman of the Council of People's Commissars, tempting him with the chance of using this post to 'shake up the apparatus'. Trotsky had retorted that the problem lay also in the Party administration as well as that of the state, and that 'the cause of all the

trouble lay in the combination of the two apparatuses and in the mutual shielding among the influential groups that gathered round the hierarchy of party secretaries'. Lenin apparently asked him whether he proposed to open fire not only against the state bureaucracy but against the Organizational Bureau of the Central Committee, which effectively meant the heart of Stalin's apparatus. Lenin offered 'a bloc against bureaucracy in general and against the Organizational Bureau in particular.' Trotsky further suggests that Lenin was beginning to formulate organisational plans for the struggle against bureaucracy. Such incidents are part of the hidden history of Bolshevik politics; there is no independent corroboration of the event. However, it is commensurate with Lenin's thinking of the time as shown by his last articles and by his political testament which suggests in its postscript, added in January 1923, that Stalin be removed from the post of General Secretary.<sup>69</sup>

With hindsight it seems that Trotsky did not choose the most advantageous moment for his challenge. The preceding Party congress in April would surely have been more appropriate. There he could have attacked bureaucratism in Lenin's name. At the time, Lenin's critiques of the organisational bodies of the Party, 'How We Should Re-organise the Workers' and Peasants' Inspectorate' and 'Better Fewer but Better', were still very fresh.<sup>70</sup> Furthermore, the question of relations between the Russians and the minority peoples of the country provided an opportune point of attack against Stalin, the Commissar for Nationalities. Bureaucratic methods of party organisation had characterised the dealings between the central authorities and the Georgian Bolsheviks, and had led to Lenin's stern rebuke in his notes on the matter.<sup>71</sup>

It seems that Trotsky was prepared to be content with compromise and sought honest co-operation. Lenin's secretary reported to Trotsky that a

'bomb' was being prepared for Stalin, to be delivered at the Congress.<sup>72</sup> But Trotsky assured Kamenev that the last thing he wanted to do was to start a fight at the congress for any changes in organisation.<sup>73</sup> He declared himself for the status quo and against removing Stalin (Lenin's clear advice on this in his testament was as yet unknown). In his autobiography Trotsky justified this reluctance arguing that, although an intervention at the Congress in the spirit of a 'bloc of Lenin and Trotsky' against the Stalin bureaucracy would have been successful, 'independent action on my part would have been interpreted, or, to be more exact, represented as my personal fight for Lenin's place in the Party and the state.'<sup>74</sup> The consequent struggle would have been so demoralising that, even in victory, the price would be too high.

Only after the economic crisis and the failure of the revolutionary movement in Germany in the summer and autumn of 1923 did Trotsky become a public critic. In October, Trotsky made it clear that the time for closed debate was past. In his letter of 8 October he concluded that it was both his right and duty 'to make the true state of affairs known to every Party member whom I consider to be sufficiently prepared, mature, self-restrained, and consequently capable of helping the party to find a way out of the impasse without factional convulsions and upheavals.'<sup>75</sup>

#### Section Four: The Purposes of Opposition

Despite the inevitable tactical changes, Trotsky maintained substantial strategic consistency throughout his opposition. Three broad areas of policy comprised the arena of struggle: the bureaucratisation of the revolution, the course of economic policy, and the attitude towards international revolution. The balance between these areas of policy

changed but the fundamental objective did not. Trotsky's aim was to preserve the potential of the revolution in a period during which its vitality was being sapped, its vision lost. He strongly urged the necessity of stemming the growth of a bureaucratic stratum which increasingly controlled the party and monopolised political life. All three aspects were seen as part of the same process and ultimately interdependent. This thesis, however, puts to one side the second and third areas so as to concentrate on the first.

From *The New Course* onwards Trotsky maintained the position advanced there that the fate of Soviet development will, 'in the last analysis, ... be resolved by two great factors of international importance: the course of the revolution in Europe, and the rapidity of our economic development'.<sup>76</sup> Objective adversities allow the contradictions of the Russian Revolution to assert themselves, resulting not least in the bureaucratisation of the party. Even so, responsibility for these 'objective factors', Trotsky argues, should not be rejected fatalistically. A clear perception of the dangers of degeneration is the starting point of resistance to it. Without this the pressure of objective conditions will be redoubled; without this the Party will drag its feet in domestic and international policy with potentially disastrous results. In a characteristic formulation, Trotsky comments:

Time is an important element of politics, particularly in a revolutionary epoch. Years and decades are sometimes needed to make up for lost months.

As a vanguard party, Bolshevism prided itself on its ability to keep pace with events. Trotsky, in *The New Course*, describes 'the most precious fundamental tactical quality' of Bolshevism as 'its unequalled aptitude to orient itself rapidly, to change tactics quickly, to renew its armament and to apply new methods, in a word, to carry out abrupt turns.'<sup>78</sup> It was 'Lenin's genius' that elevated this to a 'superior form'.

Bureaucratism threatened the vitality of the Party; petrification of leadership and rigid policy would follow. However, Trotsky was never passive nor fatalistic; whatever the objective situation, political action could facilitate or retard change. In the USSR the objective of policy should be to prolong, as much as possible, the existence of the workers' state, even in its given condition of isolation. The Comintern should do everything possible to bring nearer the victory of the proletariat in the advanced countries. 'At a certain point these two lines must be joined together. Only under this condition will the present contradictory Soviet regime have a chance - without Thermidor, counter-revolutions, and new revolutions - to develop into a socialist society on an expanding base that must ultimately encompass the entire globe.' Time, 'a crucial factor of politics in general', is 'decisive when it comes ... to the fate of the USSR.'<sup>79</sup> From correct premises, some comrades, Trotsky argued after exile, have arrived at the wrong conclusion because they foreshorten political developments: the impossibility of socialism in one country and the absence of European revolution from the current agenda do not mean that the immediate destruction of the October revolution is inevitable. In a letter to an unnamed German oppositionist in 1929, Trotsky asked rhetorically: 'Who has determined in advance the dates for European revolution? Who has figured out ... how many years the dictatorship of the proletariat can hold out in the Soviet republic, given the correct policy?' A correct policy in the Soviet Union could strengthen the dictatorship of the proletariat and prolong its isolated existence for 'more than three, five, or ten years.' A correct policy in the Comintern could bring the victory of the revolution in Europe closer by 'three, five, or ten years.'<sup>80</sup> This was quite sufficient to justify opposition.

Until 1933, and the collapse of Communism in Germany, Trotsky believed that the Opposition must assist the Russian Party and the Comintern by its

critical support. There is to be no equivocation in the support given to the Soviet state or the Communist parties as institutions, but these institutions must not be identified with their present leaderships, policies, or methods of work. 'Back to Lenin' must be the watchword, and to emphasise this the Opposition adopted the title 'Bolshevik-Leninist'. The duty of the Opposition is to be critical; only in this way can it rectify the deficiencies. The Opposition might be ignored, repressed, and ineffective, but it must struggle to maintain its voice. Even if its attempts to turn the party round and restore a correct orientation are unsuccessful, the Opposition can still serve the revolution by leaving a legacy to be built on in the future. After expulsion from the party he declared, in a 1929 letter to comrades: 'Let there remain in exile not three hundred and fifty who are true to our banner, but thirty-five or even three; the banner will remain, the strategic line will remain, and the future will remain.'<sup>81</sup> Even if Stalin's policies were the only ones possible in an isolated USSR, a claim that Trotsky did not accept, they must be criticised as opportunist, 'because it is necessary to protect the heritage of Marxist thought and its future.'<sup>82</sup> Trotsky had no illusions about the prospects of rapid success. 'Our policy is a long-term policy', he wrote in 1931 in an editorial for *Byulleten' Oppozitsii*, the Russian language Bolshevik-Leninist periodical published in Berlin.<sup>83</sup>

1. Trotsky, *Moya Zhizn'*, tom I, (Berlin: Granit, 1930), pp.23, 36.
2. Trotsky, *Moya Zhizn'*, tom I, p.36.
3. Trotsky, *Moya Zhizn'*, tom I, p.139.
4. Trotsky, *Moya Zhizn'*, tom I, pp.117, 123, 126.
5. Trotsky, *Moya Zhizn'*, tom I, pp.133-137.
6. Trotsky, *Moya Zhizn'*, tom I, p.157. Deutscher, citing Trotsky and other sources, comments that Alexandra 'urged him to try to escape ... In her own conviction she was, as his wife and as a revolutionary, merely doing her duty' in 'undertaking to struggle for her own and her children's lives, unaided, with no certainty of a reunion.' Deutscher, I., *The Prophet Armed*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1970), p.55. Amicable personal and close political relations were later resumed after Trotsky had met his lifelong companion Natalia Sedova. Deutscher, I., *The Prophet Armed*, pp.70-71.
7. Trotsky, *Moya Zhizn'*, tom I, p.15; see also the final paragraph of the final chapter of *Moya Zhizn'*, tom II.
8. Trotsky, *Moya Zhizn'*, tom I, p.157.
9. Trotsky, *Moya Zhizn'*, tom I, p.166.
10. Trotsky, *Moya Zhizn'*, tom I, p.188.
11. Trotsky, *Our Political Tasks*, (London: New Park, n.d.), pp.76-7.
12. 'There and Back', Trotsky, *1905*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1972), pp.401-476.
13. Trotsky, *Moya Zhizn'*, tom I, chapter XVI.
14. Trotsky, *Sochineniya* VI.
15. Trotsky, *Moya Zhizn'*, tom I, p.263.
16. Lenin, 'Tsel' Bor'by Proletariata v Nashei Revolyutsii', *Polnoe Sobranie Sochinenii*, tom 17, p.381.
17. Trotsky, 'Gruppirovki v Rossiskoi Sotsial-demokratii', in Trotsky, *Voina i Revoliutsia*, (Moscow: 1922), tom 2, pp.200-204.
18. Lenin, 'Neskol'ko Tezisev', *Polnoe Sobranie Sochinenii*, tom 27, pp.48-51.
19. Trotsky, *Moya Zhizn'*, tom I, chapter XXI.
20. Jones, D.R., 'The Trotsky Affair', *Canadian-American Slavic Studies*, vol.13, no.3, (1979), pp.310-331.
21. Trotsky, *Moya Zhizn'*, tom II, pp.6-7. Sukhanov, N. *The Russian Revolution 1917*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1955), pp.339-340.



22. Rabinowitch, A. *The Bolsheviks come to Power*, (London: NLB, 1979), p.316.
23. Rabinowitch, A. *The Bolsheviks come to Power*, pp.222, 224-225, 313-314.
24. Trotsky, *Moya Zhizn'*, tom II, p.61.
25. Trotsky, *Moya Zhizn'*, tom II, pp.62-63.
26. Deutscher, I., *The Prophet Armed*, p.398.
27. Zinoviev, speech to the First Session of the Second Congress of the Communist International. *Second Congress of the Communist International: Minutes of the Proceedings*, translated from the German edition of 1921, (London: New Park, 1977), vol.1, p.12.
28. Trotsky, *Results and Prospects*, (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1970), p.115.
29. Trotsky, 'Slovo Russkim Rabochim i Krest'yanam o Nashakh Druz'yakh i Vragakh i o tom, kak Uberech i Uprochit Sovetskuyu Respubliku', *Sochineniya XVII* (i), (Moscow: 1926), p.195.
30. Trotsky, 'Slovo Russkim Rabochim i Krest'yanam o Nashakh Druz'yakh i Vragakh i o tom, kak Uberech i Uprochit Sovetskuyu Respubliku', p.173.
31. Trotsky, 'Problemy Razvitiya SSSR', *Byulleten' Oppozitsii*, no.20, (Aprel' 1931g.), p.4.
32. Knei-Paz, B., *The Social and Political Thought of Leon Trotsky*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), Part I; Lowy, M., *The Politics of Combined and Uneven Development*, (London: NLB, 1981), chapter two.
33. Plekhanov, for example, after 1905.
34. Lenin, 'Dve Taktiki Sotsial-Doemokratii v Demokraticheskoi Revolyutsii', *Polnoe Sobranie Sochinenii*, tom 11.
35. Trotsky, *Results and Prospects*, p.63.
36. Trotsky, *Results and Prospects*, p.63.
37. The term 'permanent revolution' was not part of Trotsky's vocabulary in his first formulation of the idea. Knei-paz, B. *The Social and Political Thought of Leon Trotsky*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), pp.152-3.
38. Marx, *Capital*, vol.1, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1976), p.91.
39. Knei-paz, B., *The Social and Political Thought of Leon Trotsky*, pp.154-160. Lowy, M., *The Politics of Combined and Uneven Development, The Theory of Permanent Revolution*, (London: NLB, 1981), chapter one.
40. Trotsky, *History of the Russian Revolution*, (London: Sphere Books, 1967). 'Socialism in a Separate Country', vol.3, appendix II, p.349. Trotsky quotes Marx directly from the 'Preface' to *Capital* and comments: 'This statement ... takes its departure methodologically not from world economy as a whole but from the single capitalist country as a type. ... [It] has become less applicable in proportion as capitalist evolution

has embraced all countries regardless of their previous fate and industrial level.'

41. Trotsky, *History of the Russian Revolution*, vol.1, p.21; Trotsky, *Results and Prospects*, p.37.
42. Trotsky, *1905*, pp.21-23.
43. 'Our Differences', chapter 25 of Trotsky, *1905*; reprinted from *Przeglad Social-Demokratyczny*, VII, 1908.
44. Trotsky, 'Rech', *Pravda* (6.XI.1926), published in Trotsky, *The Challenge of the Left Opposition* (1923-25), (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1975), see p.145.
45. Trotsky, *1905*, p.vii. Rather than deflect attention away from past polemics Trotsky did the opposite.
46. A review of a Menshevik study of 1905, first published in *Die Neue Zeit* in 1908; 'Our Differences'; and, 'The Struggle for Power', first published in *Nashe Slovo*, (17.X.1915). Trotsky, *1905*, pp.284-298, 299-318, 319-326. The speech to the London Congress of the RSDRP, 1907, is pp.275-283.
47. 'Pravda li, chto v Rossii absolyutizm "sushchestvoval naprekor obshchestvennomu razvitiyu"?' , *Krasnaya Nov'* no.3, (May-June 1922). Trotsky quickly returned Pokrovsky's fire with an article first published in *Pravda* and then reproduced in the second edition of *1905*, pp.327-345: 'On the Special Features of Russia's Historical Development'. This article is a notable summary of Trotsky's views of Russian history.
48. EP10585: Trotsky to Treint, 22 September, 1931.
49. T3102: [contribution to 'Diskussionyi Listok', November 1927].
50. Trotsky, *The New Course*, in Trotsky, *The Challenge of the Left Opposition* (1923-25), p.91-92.
51. Trotsky, *The Permanent Revolution*, (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1970), p.132.
52. Trotsky, *The Permanent Revolution*, pp.132-133.
53. Trotsky, *Sochineniya XXI, Kultura Perekhodnogo Perioda*.
54. Trotsky, *1905*, p.340. The same stress on the comparative political implications of differing cultural formation is to be found in 'Ne o "Politike" Edinoi Zhiv Chelovek', *Sochineniya XXI*, pp.3-12.
55. Trotsky, 'Vnimatel'nost' i Vezhlivost', kak Neobkhodimaya Smazka Bytovykh Otnoshenii', *Pravda* (4.IV.1923), republished as 'Konchik Bol'shogo Voprosa' in Trotsky, *Sochineniya XXI*, pp.60-4.
56. Trotsky, 'Konchik Bol'shogo Voprosa', pp.60-1.
57. Trotsky, *1905*, pp.335-336. The references in Trotsky's post-revolutionary writings to continuities with the semi-Asiatic character of pre-revolutionary Russia are another illustration of the influence that the theory of permanent revolution had on Trotsky's analysis of the Stalin regime. Although Trotsky made no systematic use of the idea of the Asiatic

mode of production to Russia, a method adopted by some during the Twenties, the otherness of Russia, its Asiatic features, remained an undercurrent within Trotsky's response to Stalinism.

58. Trotsky had direct experience of the status and power of merchants. During his first Siberian exile he was employed by one, Yakov Andreyevich Chernykh. Trotsky, *Moya Zhizn'*, tom I, p.149; Trotsky, 1905, p.336.

59. Trotsky, 'Ikh Moral i Nasha', *Byulleten' Oppozitsii*, no.68-69, (Avgust-Sentyabr' 1938g.), p.12.

60. Trotsky in *Our Political Tasks* made several derogatory remarks about Lenin: (London: New Park, n.d.), particularly pp.121-8. The most celebrated case was Trotsky's letter to Chkheidze of 1913 in which he declared that 'the whole foundation of Leninism at the present time is built on lying and falsification'. This letter was discovered in Okhrana archives in 1921 and published in 1924 as part of the struggle against Trotsky: *Pravda*, 9.XII.24. Published with the letter was Trotsky's response to its discovery where he declared that 'I do not at all consider that, in my disagreements with the Bolsheviks, I was wrong on all points'. An honest comment of 1921 did Trotsky no service in the factional struggles three years later.

61. Trotsky, 'Letter to the Central Committee' (8 October, 1923), in Trotsky, *The Challenge of the Left Opposition* (1923-25), pp.51-58.

62. Trotsky, 'Letter to the Central Committee' (8 October, 1923), p.56.

63. The 'Clemenceau thesis' was first advanced by Trotsky in a letter to Ordzhonikidze, 11 July, 1927. This was quoted by Stalin in a speech to the Joint Plenum of the Central Committee and the Central Control Commission, 1 August, 1927. Stalin, *Works*, vol.10, pp.54-5. An excerpt was published in *Communist International*, 15 October, 1927. This excerpt is reproduced in Trotsky, *The Challenge of the Left Opposition* (1926-27), (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1980), pp.252-3. The subject continued to be extremely contentious during the rest of 1927. See below, note 125 to chapter two.

64. Trotsky, 'Letter to the Central Committee' (8 October, 1923), p.55.

65. Trotsky, *The New Course*, pp.94-95.

66. Trotsky, 'Letter to the Central Committee' (8 October, 1923), p.58.

67. It seems that, at a Politburo meeting in early 1923, Stalin commented caustically on Trotsky's ambitions: 'Either the Party must make Trotsky the de facto dictator in the economic areas of economic and military affairs, or he must really renounce work in the economic area, retaining for himself only the right of systematically disorganising the Central Committee in its difficult everyday work.' Ivanov, L. and Shmelev, A.N. *Leninizm i Ideinopoliticheskii Razgrom Trotskizm*, (Moscow, 1970), p.349.

68. Trotsky, *Moya Zhizn*, tom II, p.215-216.

69. Lenin, *Polnoe Sobranie Sochinenii*, tom 45, p.346.

70. Lenin, *Polnoe Sobranie Sochinenii*, tom 45, pp.383-8; pp.389-406.

71. Lenin, *Polnoe Sobranie Sochinenii*, tom 45, pp.356-362. Only in Trotsky's reply of 24 October to the response made to his letter of 8 October did he directly refer to this. It was in this letter, sharper in tone than the first, that Trotsky also related the curious and revealing incident that took place when the Politburo discussed its response to Lenin's article, 'Better Fewer but Better'. Stalin and his supporters unsuccessfully opposed the publication of the article; according to Trotsky, Kuibyshev even proposed that a dummy issue of *Pravda* including it should be printed solely for Lenin's eyes. Trotsky, *The Challenge of the Left Opposition* (1923-25), pp.59-62.
72. Trotsky reported this in his letter to the Bureau of Party History, *The Stalin School of Falsification*, (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1971), p.75, and repeated the claim in *Moya Zhizn*, tom II, p.220.
73. Trotsky, *Moya Zhizn*, tom II, p.224.
74. Trotsky, *Moya Zhizn*, tom II, p.219.
75. Trotsky, 'Letter to the Central Committee' (8 October, 1923), p.58.
76. Trotsky, *The New Course*, p.75.
77. Trotsky, *The New Course*, p.95.
78. Trotsky, *The New Course*, p.96.
79. Trotsky, 'K 12-i Godovshchine Oktyabrya', *Byulleten' Oppozitsii*, no.7, (Noyabr' Dekabr' 1929g.), p.3. See also Trotsky, 'What Now?', in Trotsky, *The Third International After Lenin*, (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1970), pp.254-5.
80. T3241: [Trotsky to a member of the Leninbund; 30, September, 1929].
81. T3255: [Trotsky to comrades in the USSR; 26, November, 1929].
82. Trotsky, 'Iz Perepiski Oppozitsii - Otvety na Pis'ma Druzei', *Byulleten' Oppozitsii*, no.10, (Aprel' 1930g.), p.18.
83. Trotsky, 'Chitatelyam-druzym, Chitatelyam-sochuvstvuyushchim, Chitatelyam-kolebyushimaya, Chitatelyam-zaduvshimsya, Chitatelyam-protivnikam', *Byulleten' Oppozitsii*, no.7, (Sentyabr' 1931g.), p.2.

CHAPTER TWO: THE FIRST PHASE OF OPPOSITION - 1923-1927

*None of us wants to or can be right against the Party. In the last analysis, the Party is always right ... Whether it is right or wrong in any particular, specific question at any particular moment, this is my Party.*

Trotsky, 'Speech to the Thirteenth Party Congress', (1924).

Section One: Political Controversies

Trotsky's letter to the Central Committee of 8 October 1923 acted as the signal for a collective statement from forty-six malcontents. This 'Declaration of the 46' protested against the 'completely intolerable' Party regime in an accent resembling Trotsky's, but went somewhat further by questioning the ruling on factions made by the Party Congress of 1921.<sup>1</sup> Trotsky was not amongst the signatories, although it seems extremely unlikely that he was ignorant of the organisation of this protest. Several of the signatories were close comrades; he may well have been invited to add his name.<sup>2</sup>

Trotsky's reticence took some while to overcome.<sup>3</sup> Throughout the 1923 discussion he did nothing which could be taken as evidence of actual leadership of an opposition faction. Even those prepared to participate openly in the Opposition were similarly inclined to caution. The tone of the 'Declaration of the 46' is respectful; the document was addressed to the Politburo and marked 'Secret'; it explicitly repudiates any call for the removal of the present leadership. At the expanded plenum of the Central Committee and the Central Control Commission, held from 25 October to 27 October, to which twelve signatories of the 46 had been invited, there were only two votes against the the leadership's resolution. This 'resolutely condemned' the action of the 46 'as a step of factional

splitting politics', and characterised Trotsky's action as 'a grave political error' which had 'objectively assumed the character of a factional move'.<sup>4</sup> Until the Thirteenth Party Conference in January 1924 the Opposition took an acquiescent attitude to its own condemnation. The struggle of the Left Opposition at its moment of greatest potential was conducted as a comrades' debate, concentrated at the higher levels of the Party.

Although accused of acting as such the Opposition refused to transform itself from a loose grouping into a faction with internal discipline. There was no platform issued. Indeed, the 'Declaration of the 46', rather than being the programme of a united group, carried the expressed reservations of forty-three of its signatories; eleven different qualifications were added to the basic document. Despite some forthright criticism the Opposition's statement had no specific proposals for remedying the ills it observed. In general terms it merely called for the abolition of the bureaucratic regime 'in the first place by those who have created it', and for its replacement by 'a regime of comradesly unity and internal Party democracy'. The 'Declaration' refrained from more precise suggestions, simply proposing a conference of the Central Committee and leading Party members with invitations to 'comrades holding views on the situation different from the views of the majority of the Central Committee.' The Opposition's spokesman was Preobrazhensky; the real candidate of the Opposition waited backstage when not suffering in his sickbed from a fever.<sup>5</sup>

The discussion of 1923 went through three stages: firstly, an attempt by the Opposition to raise issues in secret in the highest Party bodies, met initially by condemnation; secondly, a period of concessions during which relatively open discussion of the issues was allowed and the

5 December resolution passed on Party democracy; thirdly, repression of the Opposition culminating in the condemnation of the Party Conference in January 1924. The inconsistency of the response by the leadership to the Opposition critique illustrates both uncertainty and sensitivity on the issues raised, and testifies to the significance of the Opposition's challenge. Perhaps it also reflected an attempt to keep Trotsky from linking directly with the Opposition. If verbal concessions could be made, then the potential force of the Opposition could be dissipated and Trotsky's loyalty maintained. But this tactic was found to be mistaken. The 5 December resolution of the Politburo and Presidium of the Central Control Commission, despite its concessions to the Opposition, did not stem the criticism.

Trotsky had been responsible, together with Kamenev and Stalin, for drafting the 5 December resolution; its formulations indicate Trotsky's influence and it was subsequently referred to by S.I. Gusev, a leader of the Stalinist faction, as a 'mistaken concession to Trotsky'.<sup>6</sup> The resolution, later a basic text in the Opposition's canon, specified a set of 'negative' political tendencies that continued to figure prominently in Trotsky's oppositional writings: striking material inequality among Party members; connections with bourgeois elements and the spread of bourgeois ideology; a narrowing of horizons and the danger of a loss of the perspective of socialist construction and of world revolution; the danger of the 'NEP degeneration' of functionaries; the growth of bureaucratisation and the threat of separation from the masses.<sup>7</sup>

Because of Trotsky's illness, lasting for several months from October 1923, the meetings to draft the resolution were held in his apartment. Prone to fever, he was fighting at the expense of his health to secure a satisfactory formulation. Despite achieving acceptance of the resolution,

Trotsky was not prepared to let the issues rest. He pressed home his points by means of an open letter dated 8 December and published three days later in *Pravda*.<sup>8</sup> It warned that the 'bureaucrats' were ready to let the resolution remain a dead letter. In contrast Trotsky saw 'exceptional significance' in the resolution: it signalled a new course during which the 'centre of gravity' of the Party would be transferred from the apparatus to 'the activity, initiative, and critical spirit of all the Party members'. Such an explicit reading of the meaning of the resolution would no doubt have caused irritation; this was thoroughly aggravated by two further aspects to Trotsky's letter. Firstly, Trotsky appeared to challenge the vanguardist interpretation of party organisation that was coming to prevail by holding up the youth as 'the most reliable barometer of the Party', the section which reacted 'most vigorously' against bureaucratism. Then he compared the 'old guard' to the leaders of the Second International suggesting that just as they had degenerated into opportunists so might the old guard of Bolshevism. Such references clearly provoked indignation and Trotsky took the opportunity to add an explanatory but unapologetic appendix to the letter before publication.<sup>9</sup>

By mid-December Trotsky's opponents had discarded restraint. Stalin published an article in *Pravda* which attacked Trotsky's letter for its references to the youth and to possible parallels with the Social Democrats.<sup>10</sup> He reminded the Party that 'for various reasons' Trotsky could not 'bear responsibility for the possible degeneration of the Bolshevik old guard'. He concluded by accusing Trotsky of being 'in a bloc with the Democratic Centralists and with a section of the left Communists'. At the same time Zinoviev also drew attention to Trotsky's past, seeing in Trotsky's letter a revival of his pre-Bolshevik ideas of Party organization. The letter had been unclearly expressed, 'but we, the majority of the Central Committee, distinctly see in it no support, rather



a thwarting of the line followed by the Central Committee and its unanimous decision.’<sup>11</sup>

Trotsky's response was characteristic. A letter to *Pravda* declined to respond to specific attacks;<sup>12</sup> it was followed, at the end of December, by two articles in which Trotsky developed his critique.<sup>13</sup> Together with further essays, these articles make up the pamphlet, *The New Course*, published in mid-January 1924. By now some self-defence was essential. This was introduced to the pamphlet in a restrained manner; unlike the triumvirs Trotsky was not yet prepared to defend himself by attacking others. In his pamphlet Trotsky attempted to show that the charge of ‘underestimating’ the peasantry was an invention which boiled down to allusions to the theory of permanent revolution, and to ‘two or three bits of corridor gossip.’<sup>14</sup> Defending the theory of permanent revolution, Trotsky maintained that there was nothing within it which represented the ‘slightest attempt to leap over the peasantry.’ Trotsky also pointed to his proposal of February 1920 to experiment with market relations between town and country. What was required now were concrete policies to ‘lower the price of the merchandise for the peasants’. To do this planning was a necessity. A ‘concerted general plan’ must be elaborated by Gosplan; all the ‘fundamental factors of state economy’ must be brought into a ‘correct relationship with the national, that is, primarily, with peasant economy’. The first concern had to be ‘the development of state (socialist) industry’; in this sense a ‘dictatorship of industry’ was fundamental. This was not, however, to be directed against the smytchka (the link with the peasantry) but, on the contrary, only in this way could the smytchka be transferred from ‘the realm of mere rhetoric to the realm of economic reality.’<sup>15</sup>

*The New Course* also objects to the creation of a 'canon' of Leninism, an orthodoxy which was very threatening to Trotsky. Even a revolutionary tradition, Trotsky argues, can become a conservative force and he cites the history of German Marxism, both before and after 1914. He advances a definition of Leninism to establish his own residence in that tradition.<sup>16</sup> Marxism is 'a method of historical analysis, of political orientation, and not a mass of decisions prepared in advance'; Leninism is 'the application of this method in the conditions of an exceptional historical epoch'. It is 'courageously free from conservative retrospection, unbound by precedent, purely formal references and quotations'. Although Leninism is 'first of all, realism, the highest qualitative and quantitative appreciation of reality, from the standpoint of revolutionary action', it also 'cannot be conceived of without theoretical breadth, without a critical analysis of the material bases of the political process'.

Lenin cannot be chopped up into quotations suited for every possible case, because for Lenin the formula never stands higher than the reality; it is always the tool that makes it possible to grasp the reality and to dominate it. It would not be hard to find in Lenin dozens and hundreds of passages which, formally speaking, seem to be contradictory. But what must be seen is not the formal relationship of one passage to another, but the real relationship of each of them to the concrete reality in which the formula was introduced as a lever. The Leninist truth is always concrete!

Trotsky told his critics that although he had come to Lenin fighting, he had come 'fully and all the way'. Surely hinting at the defection of Zinoviev and Kamenev from Lenin's line in October 1917, Trotsky asked: 'Were all those who were faithful to the master in the small matters also faithful to him in the great?'

*The New Course*, despite its comparative brevity, is one of the most significant of Trotsky's works. It is his most important contribution to the debates of Russian Marxism since *Results and Prospects* published some eighteen years previously. A work of political analysis rather than political economy, its central theme is the discussion of the causes of and

remedies for bureaucratism. The major focus is on the problems of party organisation in a revolutionary regime compelled to exist in unfavourable circumstances.

Attitudes and habits of political behaviour, and their origins, are the immediate political concern of *The New Course*. Trotsky points to an internal degeneration of the methods of leadership, not a replacement of one group by another: the 'immense authority' of the group of Party veterans is 'universally recognised', but to regard it as 'absolute' would be a 'crude mistake'.<sup>18</sup>

It is only by a constant active collaboration with the new generation, within the framework of democracy, that the old guard will preserve itself as a revolutionary factor.<sup>19</sup>

Identifying the traits of bureaucratism, *The New Course* refers to 'apparatus cliquism, bureaucratic smugness and complete disdain for the mood, the thoughts and the needs of the Party.'<sup>20</sup> Leadership takes on 'a purely organisational character and frequently degenerates into order-giving and meddling'.<sup>21</sup> The Party is becoming divided into 'the upper storey where things are decided and the lower storey, where all you do is learn of the decision.'<sup>22</sup> The apparatus reifies the mass of the Party, treating it as an instrument at its disposal. It reduces the initiative of the membership 'to the minimum ... fundamentally contradicting the spirit of a revolutionary proletarian organisation.'<sup>23</sup>

*The New Course* indicates the basic phenomenological forms of bureaucratism, but the issue is not restricted to personal failings. Although Trotsky stresses faulty political practice, he repeatedly emphasises that, behind the form, the essence must be investigated. A new 'system of administration of men and things' is emerging.<sup>24</sup> 'The essence of the present difficulties does not lie in the fact that the "secretaries"

have overreached themselves on certain points.’<sup>25</sup> It is not a ‘survival’ of a previous regime, but ‘an essentially new phenomenon flowing from the new tasks, the new functions, the new difficulties and the new mistakes of the Party.’<sup>26</sup>

Trotsky gives particular attention to the relationship between state and Party. The state apparatus is ‘the most important source of bureaucratism’. An ‘enormous quantity of the most active Party elements’ is absorbed by it. There they are taught ‘the methods of administration of men and things instead of political leadership of the masses’.<sup>27</sup> In the state apparatus, Communists are ‘hierarchically dependent upon each other’, but in the Party, at least in theory, they are ‘equal in all that concerns the determination of the tasks and the fundamental working methods of the Party.’<sup>28</sup> The Party apparatus is infiltrated by the ‘whole daily bureaucratic practice of the Soviet state’.<sup>29</sup> Consequently it is increasingly preoccupied by ‘the details of the tasks of the Soviet apparatus, lives the life of its day to day cares ... and fails to see the wood for the trees.’<sup>30</sup> The Party itself is composed less and less of workers at the bench, but by professionals of various kinds and even opportunists.<sup>31</sup>

In *The New Course* the emphasis is diagnostic, not prognostic nor prescriptive. Its appeals are to the leadership of the Party and its suggestions concern leadership attitudes rather more than institutional arrangements. It was not intended as a manifesto of political opposition and, as such, its mobilising appeal is muted by a scrupulous concern to identify not only the subjective but also the objective origins of bureaucracy. Simultaneously Trotsky called for a struggle against bureaucracy and explained that this struggle could not be fully successful without a change in the material situation.

Whatever its lasting qualities, Trotsky's pamphlet made little impression on the Party leadership. Indeed, Eastman, a contemporary observer, sympathetic to Trotsky, reported that the general impression prevailed that it had been suppressed, so difficult was it to obtain a copy.<sup>32</sup> No doubt this reflected the verdict of the Thirteenth Party Conference, January 1924, that the pamphlet had 'still further accentuated the factional nature of his [Trotsky's] actions'.

Trotsky, as a result of his continuing illness, was unable to attend the Conference. In his absence Preobrazhensky defended the Opposition's point of view, accusing the Politburo of treating Trotsky as 'an outsider in our midst'.<sup>33</sup> In a carefully managed assembly such pleas were useless and the Opposition was duly condemned with only three out of 128 voting delegates opposing. The resolution castigated the Opposition bloc 'headed by Comrade Trotsky' as a 'petty-bourgeois deviation' which reflected the pressure of the petty-bourgeoisie on the position of the proletarian Party and its policy.<sup>34</sup>

Before the Party Conference closed, Trotsky, under medical instructions, was en route to the Caucasus for a cure.<sup>35</sup> When the news of Lenin's death was conveyed to him, Trotsky was already in the far South in Tiflis.<sup>36</sup> He considered an immediate return to Moscow but was informed by Stalin that there would be no possibility of arrival before the funeral. In fact the funeral was delayed and he could have been present; Trotsky took this as further evidence of Stalin's perfidy.<sup>37</sup> However, there is no evidence of bad faith on Stalin's part, and, in any case, it is odd that Trotsky did not immediately change his plans and return to Moscow. One of the few comforts at this time was a letter from Krupskaya, telling how Lenin's attitude 'when you came to us in London from Siberia did not change until his death'.<sup>38</sup>

During the spring of 1924 Trotsky's health had recovered sufficiently for his return to Moscow. In his absence political moves had been taken which further weakened his position.<sup>39</sup> Two hundred and forty thousand workers were recruited to the Party between February and May. The only necessary qualification was to be a worker; political education, political experience, political commitment, not even literacy, mattered as a test. The Party grew in one year by somewhat more than one-third to become a mass Party of three-quarters of a million by the start of 1925.<sup>40</sup> Here were the legions for the Stalinist commanders. Those enrolled in the 'Lenin levy', as it was known, were untrained and not yet capable of engaging in the relatively sophisticated debate which Trotsky attempted to sponsor in publishing *The New Course*. The new recruits knew nothing for themselves of Party history; their ideas of Leninism and its 'historical antagonist', Trotskyism, could only be received from the agitation and propaganda networks invigorated by their new tasks. Those participants in revolutionary Russian Marxism before 1917, who still remained an active part of the Party, shrank to a tiny fraction of the membership, less than 9,000 in a party of over one million by 1927.<sup>41</sup> This is the first consideration to bear in mind when assessing the massive majorities the leadership gained against the Opposition.<sup>42</sup>

Soon after Trotsky returned to Moscow the political Testament of Lenin was revealed to the Party leaders. This event, with such potential significance, passed quietly. Trotsky made no immediate use of Lenin's comments. Their posthumous revelation came after the first defeat of the Opposition; Lenin's death was too late to help Trotsky.

Between the interruption of work which illness forced during the winter months of 1921-22 and the stroke of 10 March 1923, which paralysed half his body and deprived him of speech, Lenin had several times entered

into political controversy with Stalin.<sup>44</sup> They had clashed over the question of the state monopoly of foreign trade and, more importantly, over the handling of the problems of national minorities and the growth of bureaucracy. On all these three issues Trotsky stood close to Lenin and it was to Trotsky that Lenin had turned for the defence of his positions. Lenin's paralysis ended his political interventions; Stalin was ready to compromise; Trotsky declined to press the attack. For more than a year the momentum of Lenin's polemic dissipated. Only with the reading of the Testament, as the notes of 25 December 1922 and 4 January 1923 were known, did the full extent of Lenin's opposition to Stalin become known. The Party leadership was able to deflect the challenge easily. Lenin's notes, intended for the Party Congress following his death, were only made public to a selected group of Party leaders. The Testament became a secret, but widely known, document.

The Testament contains character assessments of six leading comrades. It does not directly name a successor; it seems that Lenin thought in terms of a collective leadership following his death. Nevertheless, he apparently favoured Trotsky. The note speaks of Stalin and Trotsky as the 'two outstanding leaders of the present Central Committee'. Both are subject to criticism; Trotsky for his 'excessive self-assurance' and the 'excessive preoccupation with the purely administrative side of affairs', but Stalin, more seriously, because, having concentrated 'unlimited authority' in his hands, it is doubtful that 'he will always be capable of using that authority with sufficient caution'. Trotsky is also described as 'the most capable man' in the Central Committee. Such were the assessments of the first instalment, written on 25 December 1922.<sup>45</sup> The real condemnation of Stalin was appended later on 4 January. 'Stalin is too rude', Lenin begins. 'I suggest that the comrades think about a way of removing Stalin from that post [Secretary-General]'.<sup>46</sup> Possibly this

addendum resulted from Stalin's outburst to Krupskaya on 22 December, but there are also grounds for thinking that it was a more balanced assessment which followed from Lenin's consideration of Stalin's role in the controversy over the position of national minorities.<sup>47</sup>

By now there was no question of accepting Lenin's advice and removing Stalin from the post of General Secretary; he was too important to Zinoviev and Kamenev in their struggle with Trotsky. Zinoviev declared that despite 'every word of Ilich' being 'law in our eyes', and previous vows to fulfil everything recommended by the dying Lenin, on one point Lenin's fears had not proved well founded. Kamenev followed by supporting Zinoviev's plea not to depose Stalin and nobody appears to have argued to the contrary. The vote not to read the document to the Congress was carried by 30 to 10, with Krupskaya in the minority. Trotsky remained silent throughout the meeting.<sup>48</sup> Subsequently the Opposition made the call to 'Fulfil Lenin's Testament!' one of its slogans; and urged its publication. By then it was too late. Trotsky's silence in 1924 and his repudiation in 1925 of Eastman's substantially correct account in *Since Lenin Died* had compromised the Opposition.<sup>49</sup>

### Section Two: The Campaign Against Trotsky

Immediately after the meeting that considered the Testament, the Thirteenth Party Congress opened. Well worn complaints were supplemented by a new demand from Zinoviev. Not only should the opposition cease activity, but it should admit its errors.<sup>50</sup> The precedent of recantation was being set with little thought; only Krupskaya opposed.<sup>51</sup> Trotsky had been placed in a difficult situation. He began by declaring that he wanted to set aside everything that might exacerbate the problem, yet he was hardly prepared to



admit that he had been mistaken. To solve his dilemma Trotsky attempted to base his speech not on his own previous writings but on the 5 December resolution and a speech by Bukharin. His arguments contained nothing that had not been said in a more penetrating way in *The New Course*. To Zinoviev's demand for recantation Trotsky replied that 'none of us wants to be or can be right against the Party'.(emphasis added) But although 'nothing would be simpler' than to say I was mistaken, 'I cannot say so ... because I do not think it.' For Trotsky, Party members had a duty to be critical and to be loyal. 'I for my part believe that I am only fulfilling my duty as a Party member who warns his Party about what he considers to be a danger,' but, 'if the Party passes a resolution that one or another of us considers unjust, that comrade will say: right or wrong this is my Party, and I will take responsibility for its decision to the end.'<sup>52</sup>

Trotsky's position may either be seen as subtle or sophistic. What he was trying to do was to suggest that the Party stands at a different level from that of the individual Party member.

In the last analysis, the Party is always right because the Party is the sole historical instrument that the working class possesses for the solution of its fundamental tasks ... I know that no one can be right against the Party. It is only possible to be right with the Party and through it since history has not created any other way to determine the correct position.<sup>53</sup>

Trotsky's intention was, surely, to suggest that it mattered little whether the individual, by himself, was right or wrong and that there was a higher loyalty than faith in one's own convictions. This was a difficult and ultimately self-defeating line of reasoning.

Trotsky laid himself open to misinterpretation, but the dilemma arose from the organisational principles of the Leninist Party with its uneasy balance between democracy and centralism, between the freedom of criticism and discussion and the unity of action. By its opponents this theory would

be attacked as a camouflage for the reality of a centralised and monolithic instrument. By its supporters the theory would be seen as an example of the dialectical unity of opposites, a counterposition of antagonistic elements to provide a weapon which was dynamic and creative in its tensions. Later, Trotsky would distinguish between the form and the essence of the Party, making it possible for him to assert that the Party had ceased to exist even when an institution called the CPSU continued in being.<sup>54</sup> But the Thirteenth Party Congress was hardly a forum in which to expand on the formula 'the Party is always right' by digressing on what it was that made a party into the Party. Trotsky, at the Congress, found it difficult to articulate his challenge in a language which would clarify his meaning and he thereby left himself open to attack. Having said that the Party was always right, albeit in the last analysis, he suggests that it can also be wrong 'in any particular specific question at any particular moment'. Having proposed that no one can be right against the Party, he continued to maintain that, to a degree at least, he had been right.

At the Congress, Stalin took the opportunity to renew the attack: Trotsky's writings of *The New Course* went further than the resolution of 5 December.<sup>55</sup> They amounted to 'a new platform which raised new issues'. Trotsky is now trying to 'hush up and hide' the second platform, ignoring the resolution of the Thirteenth Conference which complements the 5 December resolution. On the new issues raised - the degeneration of cadres, the youth question and the issue of the generations, the bureaucratisation of the apparatus, and the formulation of factions and groups - Trotsky had been wrong. He was also wrong to suggest that the Party 'makes no mistakes'. In his characteristically literal, undialectical, and plainly hostile way Stalin made no attempt to understand Trotsky's meaning. 'The Party not infrequently makes mistakes', Stalin asserted. 'It is our task to detect these mistakes, to lay bare their

roots and to show the Party and the working class how we came to make them and how we should avoid repeating them in future.'<sup>56</sup> At the time this no doubt sounded moderate and reasonable. With the illumination of future developments the 'our' appears as a royal plural, and the task identified bears an ominous message.

For the time being Trotsky was not removed from any of his posts, but his position was now weak. The Congress confirmed the verdict of the previous Conference, and Trotsky showed no immediate inclination to strike back. He had not attended the Congress as an elected voting delegate, indeed the Opposition failed to secure any elected delegates. Trotsky and Preobrazhensky were there as invited, non-voting participants.<sup>57</sup> He was re-elected to the Central Committee, but, according to current rumour, he was only fifty-first on the list of 52 successful candidates.<sup>58</sup>

Through the summer of 1924 Trotsky refrained from raising the issues of dispute, even declining an invitation from the presidium of the Fifth Congress of the Comintern, meeting in June, to open the debate on the discussions in the Russian Party.<sup>59</sup> There was a minor controversy after the publication of Trotsky's book *On Lenin*, the bulk of which was composed of chapters written in the Caucasus in March and April.<sup>60</sup> Critics of Trotsky suggested that his purpose was to inflate his own importance.<sup>61</sup> The image of Lenin suggested was out of tune with the new orchestration on the theme of Leninism, being an affectionate and somewhat intimate appraisal and not a grand hymn to the subject's superhuman qualities. By design or not, an impression of closeness between Lenin and Trotsky was created, with the three now leading the Party conspicuously absent from the decisive historical action.

In the autumn the campaign against Trotsky again flared up, prompted by the publication of his long essay *Lessons of October*.<sup>62</sup> This book, the preface to a collection of articles and speeches from 1917, provoked an immediate controversy of a severity that Trotsky surely did not anticipate. Had it been his intention to take the offensive he would certainly have not responded in such a quiescent and conciliatory manner to the discussion. In an unpublished essay of explanation, 'Our Differences', he complains in a tone of offended virtue that he had given no basis for the discussion of current domestic politics, that he had not disputed the decisions of the Thirteenth Party Congress, and that he had carried them out to the letter in all his work.

Somehow or other, nevertheless, my preface has been interpreted not against the background of the defeat of the German revolution, but against the background of last year's discussion. In this connection, my preface has become a pretext for raising the question of my 'line' as a whole.<sup>63</sup>

Once again it seems that Trotsky failed to articulate effective oppositional tactics and strategy. He seems to have been unable to appreciate the ability of his opponents to choose the ground of the debate even after he had selected the theme.

In part, the purpose of writing *Lessons of October* was probably innocent. As Trotsky himself notes, the explanation of the failure of the German revolution in terms of the absence of a truly Bolshevik party was completely consistent with a theme which had been frequently stressed in his writings and speeches of the past year. The other purpose of *Lessons of October* was surely self-defence. The accusation of Menshevism brought against him through the previous year must have been difficult to bear. His preface presented a chance for self vindication by showing that at the decisive moment of the revolution Trotsky and Menshevism were poles apart.

The first lesson of October was that 'without a party, apart from a party, over the head of a party, or with a substitute for a party, the proletarian revolution cannot conquer'.<sup>64</sup> The party must be flexible enough, sufficiently free from inertia and conservatism, to survive the almost inevitable party crisis which accompanies the transition from preparatory revolutionary activity to the struggle for power. 'Consciousness, premeditation and planning' plays a crucial role for the proletarian revolution and this is the task of the party. Treating insurrection as an art, it must be prepared to shape the tactics according to the moment. No slogan, not even the call for soviets, must be turned into a fetish.

With these general axioms, Trotsky turned to the narrative of 1917 to illustrate his points. Trotsky did three things which were to infuriate his current opponents. Firstly, he argued that the events of 1917 were a vindication of his theory of permanent revolution, although the term was not used. Secondly he claimed that in practice Lenin and Trotsky were completely reconciled. When Lenin was forced underground, it was Trotsky's tactics for the seizure of power that prevailed; in detail, the tactics advocated by Lenin were unrealistic. Thirdly, Trotsky indicted Kamenev and Zinoviev by name for their failure to maintain the revolutionary position. It was they who had tended to Menshevism and not Trotsky. The Party was reminded in detail of their position in the two weeks prior to the seizure of power, a 'social-democratic' stance.

After this controversy Trotsky's position as Commissar of War had become untenable, as he recognised in a letter to the plenum of the Central Committee. He denied the charges against him but still maintained that any self-defence would only intensify the controversy and that was not in the interests of the Party.<sup>65</sup> However principled, such an attitude could not

serve Trotsky well. His refusal to be penitent made it all the easier for his adversaries to secure the Party's condemnation. Ill again with a bout of his mysterious fever, Trotsky awaited the verdict of the Central Committee. Some wanted to expel him from the Party, or at least from the Central Committee, but such a move, although backed by the Leningrad Party organisation headed by Zinoviev, apparently received no support at the plenum. Kamenev proposed expulsion from the Politburo. But even this met with the opposition of a large majority, including Stalin.<sup>66</sup> Trotsky was only removed from his post as head of the army and warned 'in the most emphatic terms that membership of the Bolshevik Party demands real, not verbal subordination to Party discipline and total and unconditional renunciation of any attacks on the ideals of Leninism'.<sup>67</sup> The resolution condemned Trotsky's statement for displaying only a 'formal loyalty', keeping silent about his mistakes, and trying to cling on to an anti-Bolshevik platform. Trotsky had become the focus for agitation against Soviet power by the bourgeoisie and Social-Democracy outside the USSR, and all anti-Soviet and vacillating elements within the country; Trotskyism was 'a falsification of communism in a spirit close to the "European" models of pseudo-Marxism, i.e. in the final analysis, in the spirit of "European" social-democracy.'

The meeting of the expanded Central Committee of January 1925 left Trotsky utterly defeated. He yielded his command submissively and left the capital immediately to take a cure in the South.<sup>68</sup> Although he would return to the battle, his adversaries had been stimulated by their victory and would be ready to defend the new orthodoxies against all heretics. In their struggle against Trotsky his opponents had forged the weapons they would use to devastating effect in the defence of the general line of the Party. In ideology and agitation they had evolved a rigid and doctrinaire Leninism and found a method for its application: the repeated quotation of

selected passages, torn from context and drained of life. History became a crude synthesis of fact and fiction according to the demands of the moment. Guilt was established by association. The demand for recantation became routine. The various organisational and disciplinary agencies contributed their own administrative methods. Transfer, demotion, and promotion were governed by the needs of inner-Party conflict. Party assemblies and Party officials were selected to confirm and support the current orthodoxies.

Trotsky had engaged in a debate which he conducted according to one set of rules while his opponents used another. During this period he failed to see the nature of the struggle in which he was involved, acting as if the outcome would be determined by the strength of arguments and not the degree of power. No doubt, not all the conspirators who acted against him were unprincipled; many preserved their integrity. Whatever their motives, however, they used methods and sanctioned expedients which would only strengthen the position of their present ally and future antagonist, Stalin. At later dates, Zinoviev, Kamenev and Bukharin would complain to defeated oppositionists that Stalin had betrayed the revolution, but Stalin only followed further along the path which they had all taken in the struggle against Trotsky.

### Section Three: The Leningrad Opposition

Throughout 1925 Trotsky avoided conflict. He even acceded to the demands of the Party leaders, denying the accuracy of Eastman's book on the Party struggles and disavowing his French sympathisers, Monatte and Rosmer, who had maintained an enthusiastic support after expulsion from the Communist Party.<sup>69</sup> Trotsky also instructed his comrades in the USSR to remain passive. Victor Serge records how Eltsin, one of Trotsky's assistants,

brought a directive from the 'Old Man': 'For the moment we must not act at all: no showing ourselves in public but keep up our contacts, preserve our cadres of 1923, and wait for Zinoviev to exhaust himself ...' Serge added that 'writing good books and publishing Leon Davidovich's *Collected Works* was to be our means of keeping up morale.'<sup>70</sup> During this period, the Opposition around Trotsky survived, although depleted in numbers, and apparently discussed tactics with their leader. Trotsky himself later declared that his denial of the veracity of Eastman's book was the decision of the 'entire leading group of the Opposition [who] considered it inadvisable at that time to initiate an open political struggle and steered towards making a number of concessions.'<sup>71</sup>

With Trotsky's first challenge defeated, political life in the Party might have regained stability, but the struggle against him was the primary basis of the unity of the triumvirate of Zinoviev, Kamenev and Stalin. In September 1925 its fragile unity collapsed. Zinoviev, Kamenev, Sokolnikov, and Krupskaya met to sign an oppositional 'platform of the four': a common enemy again brought together individuals with somewhat different perspectives. This platform has never been published, but it seems clear that its target was Stalin, and its main content a plea for free discussion and Party democracy.<sup>72</sup> To this general objective were added further points of dissension with Stalin, deriving from contrary evaluations of NEP. In 1925 the NEP was further strengthened. Zinoviev countered by declaring that NEP was a policy of state capitalism, and launched into an attack on Stalin's theory of socialism in one country.<sup>73</sup> Throughout the autumn and winter of 1925 the invalidity of Stalin's theory became a sub-theme of the Leningrad Opposition, led by Zinoviev and Kamenev. Stalin's victory over his rivals, gained by organisational means, gave to his new dogma a centrality in the stock of theoretical orthodoxies which it had not earned on its merits. Indeed, this revision of Marxist theory made little



impression until it was given a sharpened form by the dispute with Zinoviev. Hitherto it had apparently been viewed primarily as a reply to the heresy of permanent revolution, and secondly as the natural corollary of the Comintern's acceptance of capitalist stabilisation in Europe.<sup>74</sup>

At the Fourteenth Party Congress held in December 1925 the Leningrad Opposition was completely defeated, but not before it had delivered a forceful attack on Stalin. The most direct challenge came from Kamenev who concluded: 'Comrade Stalin cannot fulfil the role of unifier of the Bolsheviki staff.'<sup>75</sup>

Trotsky sat in virtual silence throughout the Congress; his only remarks were asides. His attitudes, however, are known from a personal memorandum written at the time.<sup>76</sup> It began by observing that *Pravda* and speakers for the majority at the Congress had characterised the Leningrad Opposition as the continuation and development of the 1923-4 Opposition. Trotsky admitted that this claim was not merely polemical, but contained an 'element of truth'. The previous Opposition had warned that 'the incessant cries about underestimating the peasantry, the demand to turn our face to the countryside, the advancement of the idea of a closed national economy and a closed construction of socialism' could be the 'groundwork for and facilitate a gradual backsliding into a Thermidor of a peasant variety.' The Leningraders were now warning of that 'very same danger, although their leaders played a key role in paving the way for it ideologically.'

Trotsky's private reflections implied a basis for negotiation. Furthermore, in his protracted speech at the Congress, Zinoviev had urged that the Central Committee be instructed to involve in Party work 'all the forces of all the former groups in our Party.'<sup>77</sup> Such a plea could hardly have escaped Trotsky's notice and it certainly did not go unremarked at the

Congress.<sup>78</sup> But Trotsky was in no hurry to conciliate. To a degree, he considered the conflict to be no more than a split between two rival sections of the apparatus. In 1923 Trotsky had fought against bureaucracy whilst Zinoviev had done much to promote it. Now the consequences were being clearly demonstrated. In a private letter to Bukharin of January 1926, Trotsky asked how it could happen that 'Moscow and Leningrad, the two main proletarian centres, adopt simultaneously and furthermore unanimously (think of it: unanimously!) at their district Party conferences two resolutions aimed against each other.' The only answer was that it was a reflection of the nature of the apparatus regime which persisted in Leningrad as much as the rest of the country.<sup>79</sup>

Another reason why it took some while before Trotsky reconciled himself to an agreement with Zinoviev and Kamenev was that he still underestimated Stalin. His comment to Sklyansky, a former deputy in the Commissariat of War, made in 1925 and recalled four years later in his autobiography, is indicative. In Trotsky's graphic but misleading phrase: Stalin is 'the outstanding mediocrity in the Party.'<sup>80</sup> Some notes on the current political situation composed in December 1925 also show Trotsky's lack of concern with Stalin, by making no direct reference to him.<sup>81</sup> Within a year Trotsky would take Stalin very seriously as a political figure; but in 1925 there were only three figures seen by Trotsky as decisively important: himself, Bukharin, and Zinoviev.

Stalin, however, took Trotsky seriously. He seems to have made some efforts to keep Trotsky isolated from Zinoviev and Kamenev, just as in 1923 the ruling faction had tried to find compromises to keep Trotsky separate from the Opposition. Speakers for the majority compared Trotsky favourably with the Leningrad leaders. Tomsky and Stalin both reminded the Congress that it had been Zinoviev and Kamenev who had most favoured harsh action

against Trotsky.<sup>82</sup> The Congress also heard from Tomsky that, unlike Kamenev, Trotsky's criticism had been constructive, if wrong.<sup>83</sup> Shortly after the Congress, Bukharin, with more generosity than he had shown in 1923, declared: 'Of course, Trotsky is not a Menshevik. He fought for the October revolution, he achieved a large number of things for which the Party is much indebted to him.'<sup>84</sup> Bukharin also pointed out that Trotsky had never taken the view, now being expounded by the new Opposition, that Soviet industry is state capitalist. Stalin, according to one account, even went so far as to describe Trotsky's economic theses presented to the Central Committee in April 1926, in opposition to those of Rykov, as 'ninety per cent correct'.<sup>85</sup>

For nearly two years Trotsky had taken little part in Party assemblies; his major activity had been within the apparatus of state. Now, at the Central Committee meeting of 6-9 April 1926, he played a central role. The occasion was notable not only as the start of a reaction against previous pro-peasant attitudes, but also as the first public sign of reconciliation between Trotsky and the Leningrad Opposition. Kamenev and Trotsky spoke in such similar tones that Stalin apparently taunted them: 'What's this? A bloc?'<sup>86</sup>

Trotsky had either recently met Kamenev to discuss the possibility of joining forces or was just about to. In *My Life* he refers to their meeting and recalls Kamenev's 'bureaucratic optimism'. Kamenev believed that if only Trotsky and Zinoviev were to unite and appear on the same platform the Party would immediately find its true Central Committee.<sup>87</sup> Trotsky was more circumspect. Once unity had been achieved the struggle against Stalin would be long and hard. Before that, it would take time to persuade his comrades to accept the new alignment. Radek, and perhaps a few others, wanted to reconcile Trotsky and Stalin against Zinoviev. Mrachkovsky

argued they should preserve their independence; indeed, many Trotskyists were hesitant to accept alliance with their erstwhile prosecutors.<sup>88</sup> Victor Serge, part of the Leningrad Left Opposition, relates in his memoirs that his group were taken aback by the news that Trotsky was concluding an agreement with the Zinoviev Opposition. In Leningrad Trotsky's followers were twenty or so, compared to possibly five or six hundred adherents of Zinoviev. To avoid being swamped, Serge and his friends hoped to delay agreement until they had built up their own faction. A small delegation went to Moscow to discuss their fears with Trotsky but they found him adamant that the fusion was necessary.<sup>89</sup>

Negotiations were interrupted by Trotsky's trip to Berlin for medical treatment. They must have been completed within two or three weeks after Trotsky's return in late May. During that time documents were circulated and meetings held. Apparently the Opposition now established itself organisationally, although the reports of its critics were no doubt somewhat exaggerated.<sup>90</sup> The Zinoviev group came to the new Opposition with a bureaucratic structure that must have been still partly intact after its defeat several months ago. Other oppositionists, previously more reluctant than the Zinoviev faction to organise, now realised that to survive they had to operate as a faction, even if they still continued formally to deny the charge. Their opponents were prepared to give no quarter. For example, Serge's delegation to Trotsky was warned that on leaving the building after the meeting they should blow their noses to obscure their faces and make it more difficult for the cameraman from the GPU stationed opposite.<sup>91</sup>

Section Four: With Zinoviev and Kamenev

The new Opposition made itself known at the July 1926 plenary meeting of the Central Committee and the Central Control Commission with a declaration signed by thirteen prominent figures.<sup>92</sup> This document began with a commitment to Party unity and a statement that its achievement depended on resolving the crises besetting the Party. Bureaucratism was identified as the immediate cause of these crises; unless this was overcome the Party would make no progress.

Several points of policy are raised in the 'Declaration of the Thirteen', most of them by now the familiar themes of opposition. Industrial development must be accelerated; agricultural policy must not be to the favour of the kulak; the link between the prospects for socialism in Russia and the international revolution must be emphasised. As an obvious reply to the supporters of 'socialism in one country', the document argued that 'all dubious theoretical innovations must be thrown out if they portray matters as though the victory of socialist construction in our country were not inseparably connected with the progress and outcome of the struggle for power by the European and world proletariat.'<sup>93</sup> One issue, new to the Trotskyist group but not to the Zinovievists, was the question of the wages of industrial workers. The 'Declaration' urged that even in times of economic difficulties real wages should be maintained and that with economic improvement they should be raised. The 'regime of economy' should not be translated into pressure on the workers. The plenum must give serious attention to the conditions of the workers, and, in particular, to the construction of workers' housing.

The plenum responded with a resolution which expelled Zinoviev from the Politburo for his de facto leadership of the faction and his use of the

apparatus of the Executive Committee of the Communist International (ECCI) for factional activity. It seems that Zinoviev had directed an ECCI functionary, Belenky, to organise Opposition meetings. According to the resolution 'all the threads of the Opposition's factional work led to the apparatus of the ECCI headed by Politburo member Comrade Zinoviev.'<sup>94</sup>

In the next weeks the Opposition suffered further blows. With justification, it complained the 'the most responsible assignments (to Vesenkha, the Commissariat of Trade, diplomatic work, etc.) are made exclusively from the point of view of factional selection.'<sup>95</sup> The most prominent change was announced on 14 August: the dismissal of Kamenev from the post of Commissar of Internal and Foreign Trade.<sup>96</sup> He was replaced by a Stalin protégé, Mikoyan. Undoubtedly the reversals suffered by the Opposition provoked a debate in its ranks about future strategy. The Democratic Centralist group argued that the orientation must be towards the formation of a second party, and, according to Trotsky, there was some sympathy for this view among his followers.<sup>97</sup> The Opposition challenge within the leading bodies of the Party, however necessary as a starting point, had failed. The alternatives were acquiescence or more extensive action. By late September the Opposition had resolved to carry the fight to the Party branches. Its leaders spoke at many large meetings to rank and file Party workers, most notably at the Moscow aircraft factory on 1 October. No longer was there any semblance of proper procedure. According to Trotsky, writing in *My Life*:

The apparatus counter-attacked with fury. The struggle of ideas gave place to administrative mechanics: telephone summons of the Party bureaucrats to attend the meetings of the workers' branches, an accumulation of cars with hooting sirens at all meetings, and a well organised whistling and booing at the appearance of the Oppositionists on the platform. The ruling faction exerted its pressure by a mechanical concentration of its forces, by threats and reprisals. Before the mass of the Party had time to hear, grasp or say anything, they were afraid of the possibility of a split and a catastrophe.<sup>98</sup> The Opposition was obliged to beat a retreat.

On the 4 October the Opposition declared its readiness to negotiate.<sup>99</sup>

Stalin set out his terms in speech at the Politburo on 11 October.

It is beyond doubt that the Opposition has suffered a severe defeat. ... The question now is, can we allow the Opposition leaders to remain members of the Central Committee, or not? ... Do we want the Opposition leaders to remain in the Central Committee? I think we do. But if they are to remain, they must dissolve their faction, admit their errors and dissociate themselves from the brazen opportunists inside and outside our Party.<sup>100</sup>

Stalin set out his 'conditions': a public declaration of obedience to Party bodies; an open admission that factional activity had been erroneous and harmful; and, dissociation from domestic critics such as Ossovsky, Medvedev, and Shlyapnikov, and from the foreign 'so-called ultra-left' (Korsch, Maslow, Fischer, Urbahns, Weber, etc.). In return the Opposition could expect to be allowed, as individual Party members, to uphold their views in their branches. There would be a softening of the tone of criticism, and those who had been expelled but now recognised their errors would have their cases reviewed. In response to the Opposition's request to lay its views before the Party before the next congress, Stalin disingenuously replied that this demand could not be called a demand since Party rules 'make it incumbent on the Central Committee to issue a discussion sheet before a Party congress.' Stalin did not call for, neither did he receive, a declaration by the Opposition that their programme was in error. The declaration of 16 October did, however, abjectly concede the impermissibility of the Opposition's factional activity and renounced such methods. The Opposition also readily repudiated the support of their foreign sympathisers and condemned Ossovsky and the Workers' Opposition.

Within days the truce was in tatters. The *New York Times* had been supplied with a copy of Lenin's 'Testament' by Max Eastman, Trotsky's sympathiser, and, almost certainly by chance, it was published only two days after the Opposition leaders had made their declaration.<sup>101</sup> The Politburo majority, furious at this, decided to put the subject of the

Opposition's views on the agenda of the forthcoming Fifteenth Party Conference. Stalin undertook to produce a statement.<sup>102</sup>

At this time an incident occurred which must have hardened to iron Stalin's determination to crush the Opposition. Trotsky, at an enlarged meeting of the Politburo, charged Stalin with being the 'grave-digger' of the revolution. Stalin was so outraged that he could barely control himself as he stormed from the room. According to Natalia Sedova, Pyatakov described the scene as worse than a battle field.<sup>103</sup> The exact date of this cannot be established, but the phrase was certainly used. Bukharin referred to it at the Party Conference a little later.<sup>104</sup>

What, in particular, provoked Trotsky's outburst is unclear. Whether he knew by now the content of Stalin's theses, with their charge of social-democracy, cannot be established. Certainly he would have been enraged that having repudiated their tactics the Opposition was now going to be condemned also for its programme. But the detail is less important than the general change in Trotsky's perception of the importance of Stalin. Hitherto, Trotsky had attributed no distinctive significance to Stalin. By October Trotsky had come to realise that Stalin's ambition and methods were a central obstacle in the path of the Opposition.

At the October 1926 plenum of the Central Committee, meeting after the publication of Stalin's theses, Trotsky was deprived of full membership of the Politburo, Kamenev from his candidate status, and Zinoviev was excluded from all Comintern duties. By now political controversies were no longer settled on grounds of argument, despite the lengthy speeches made by both protagonists at the Party Conference in October and November.<sup>105</sup> At the Conference Stalin again triumphed, securing the unanimous adoption of his theses. Trotsky, with a dignified and powerful speech, clearly gained



respect, if not sympathy. He was twice given extensions to his allotted time whereas Zinoviev was frequently interrupted and finally howled down.<sup>106</sup> The season for hounding Oppositionists finally closed with the Seventh Enlarged Plenum of the Executive Committee of the Communist International (ECCI) in November and December. The Opposition leaders were allowed to speak, against Stalin's wishes, but to little effect; the plenum passed a resolution condemning the Opposition as a 'Right danger ... sometimes masked with Left phrases'.<sup>107</sup>

During the winter there was little open controversy until a political crisis erupted in China in March and April. The slaughter of the Chinese Communists by their erstwhile allies prompted a sharp debate in Moscow about the way in which the tactic of 'united front' had been applied. During 1926 Trotsky had warned against 'the centrist deviation on questions of the world labour movement (the Anglo-Russian Committee, the Kuomintang, etc.)' and now he was ready to attack.<sup>108</sup> On this issue the ruling faction was especially vulnerable and, to defend itself, it again resorted to administrative measures. For example, Trotsky was denied access to the Party press to publish his views on the Chinese revolution.<sup>109</sup>

The Chinese question prompted the Opposition to reassert its positions with renewed vigour, despite the existence of some internal disagreement on that issue.<sup>110</sup> In May the Opposition's programmatic 'Declaration of the Eighty-four' was submitted, relating defeats in the international arena to false policies at home. The practical proposals focussed on the demand for proper discussion in order to achieve 'a genuine Leninist unity'. There was little prospect of this, as Trotsky effectively admitted in his speeches to the Eighth Plenum of the ECCI taking place at the same time that the Opposition was organising its statement. According to Trotsky, when the news from China broke, the Opposition had privately recognised

that it would pay dearly for the disaster: 'the whole history of the working class movement proves that great defeats result in a temporary triumph of the opportunist line.'<sup>111</sup> Opposition comrades, Trotsky protested to the ECCI, are 'persecuted, shifted around, driven out, regardless of the quality of their work, solely and exclusively for their viewpoint'. Smilga is being sent to the Far East 'simply to isolate him politically'; Safarov is to leave 'as soon as possible, be it for Turkey, or Tierra del Fuego, or the planet Mars, or anywhere else, so long as he disappears.'<sup>112</sup>

The Opposition was not prepared to surrender without a fight. Indeed, one section, the Democratic Centralists, was now determined not to surrender in any circumstances and, submitting its own platform of opposition, split from the rest.<sup>113</sup> Zinoviev and Kamenev alternated between optimism that the Opposition case would be quickly won, and despondency when this failed to transpire. Trotsky refused to capitulate but in private notes such as the 'Theses on Revolution and Counter-revolution' he seems to recognise that the Opposition stood little chance of success in the short term.<sup>114</sup>

During the summer of 1927 the Opposition jointly drafted its 'Platform', a comprehensive document of twelve chapters. According to Serge, Trotsky drafted the chapter on industrialisation whilst Zinoviev and Kamenev drafted the chapters on agriculture and the International.<sup>115</sup> Trotsky later wrote that two hundred comrades had contributed; presumably this referred to those who discussed the draft chapters rather than actual authors.<sup>116</sup> Except for the issue of the Chinese Revolution, where Trotsky later explicitly disassociated himself from the document, it is reasonable to consider the 'Platform' as representative of Trotsky's viewpoint on the nine substantive issues that it deals with.<sup>117</sup> Besides an introduction and two concluding chapters, there are chapters on the working class, the

peasantry and the agrarian question, industry, the Soviets, the national question, the Party, the Komsomol, international issues, and the Red Army and Navy.

The chapter on the Party emphasises its social composition, pointing out that workers currently employed as such constituted only 31 per cent of total membership and only one-tenth in 'the decision-making bodies'. Moreover, a very significant part is now played by former SRs and Mensheviks. In the last five years inner-Party democracy has been systematically abolished: 'the genuine election of officials in actual practice is dying out ... the real rights of one member of the Party at the top (above all the secretary) are many times greater than the real rights of a hundred members at the bottom.'<sup>118</sup>

Within the Party there is taking place - as a natural accompaniment of the general course - an extremely significant process of pushing out the veteran Party members, who lived through the underground period, or at least through the civil war, and are independent and capable of defending their views. They are being replaced by new elements, distinguished chiefly by their unquestioning obedience.

The 'Practical Proposals' of the 'Platform' on the question of the Party regime emphasise the need to restore the 'real inner-Party democracy' of Lenin's time; the Tenth Party Congress resolution on Party democracy is presented as a model. The balance between officials and rank and file must be changed to the latter's advantage. All Party members should prepare for the forthcoming Party congress by studying the Party controversies; all the necessary documents should be freely available. The number of paid Party functionaries should be reduced. Full-timers that remained should periodically be transferred to industrial or other rank-and-file work. A 'considerable part' of Party work should be performed by unpaid labour from members volunteering outside of industrial or other employment.<sup>119</sup> The Party budget should be 'vigorously' reduced and the expenses of local

organisations met from membership dues.

The Opposition hoped to publish its 'Platform' in the Party press. But although some space was made available to the Opposition during the preparatory period for the Fifteenth Party Congress, it was given a very restricted access.<sup>120</sup> In September the 'Platform' was published on a clandestine press, but GPU action quickly brought this to an end.<sup>121</sup> A short-lived political truce concluded between the leadership and the Opposition in August, signalled by the Opposition's declaration of 8 August, the 'Statement of the Thirteen', was now over.<sup>122</sup>

#### Section Five: The Opposition Defeated

During 1927 the challenge of the Left Opposition was defeated. The rhythm of political conflict followed a line established in the previous year, but with a greater intensity. Charges and counter-charges grew more violent. Now the arena of struggle broadened beyond Party limits. The Opposition tried to bring its ideas to a wider audience, turning official parades, by chance and design, into public demonstrations with viewing stands for its leaders and banners with its own slogans.<sup>123</sup> In the shadow of a war scare, Stalin questioned whether the Opposition was even in favour of the victory of the USSR in the coming battles with imperialism.<sup>124</sup> In his defence Trotsky, with an esoteric reference to Clemenceau's actions during the Great War, declared himself for the 'socialist fatherland' but against the Stalin line.<sup>125</sup>

A cyclical pattern was established during 1926 and 1927, brought only to an end by the expulsion of the Opposition from the Party at the Fifteenth Party Congress in December. After internal Opposition debates a

joint statement would be submitted (the 'Declaration of the Thirteen'; the 'Declaration of the Eighty-four'; the 'Platform of the Opposition'). This would be followed by a crescendo of increasingly public activity (the factory cell meetings in September-October 1926; the Yaroslavl station demonstration in June 1927 to protest against Smilga's 'exile' on administrative business; the October 1927 parade in Leningrad and the 7 November anniversary demonstrations, and Joffe's funeral on 19 November, 1927).<sup>126</sup> The ruling faction would then condemn the Opposition. The first two cycles were brought to an end by the Opposition statements of 16 October 1926 and 8 August 1927; on these occasions the ruling faction was satisfied, for the time being, with a self-criticism which attempted to separate tactics from objectives.<sup>127</sup> The third cycle ended in the Opposition's rout.

Trotsky himself recognised this pattern, arguing that it was imposed by the political context.<sup>128</sup> The Opposition had to use propagandistic methods: 'the distribution of speeches, work with individuals, the private meetings (smychki), and the carrying of placards on the street on 7 November'. The 'apparatus' pushed the Opposition further and further towards 'civil war'. But the Opposition would not take this path and made its declarations renouncing factionalism. Those who criticise the Opposition for its 'zigzag' tactics fail to understand that the Opposition cannot determine its tactics freely. 'The Opposition is swimming against the stream, fighting against difficulties and obstacles unprecedented in history.'<sup>129</sup>

Opposition attempts at the Fifteenth Congress to devise a new truce were rejected and mass expulsions occurred. Rival declarations were presented by the followers of Zinoviev and by the Trotskyists. The former was a complete surrender; it accepted the right of the Congress to ban the

propagation of the Opposition viewpoint.<sup>130</sup> The Trotskyists were only prepared to discontinue 'factional work ... [and] the propagation of our views by factional methods.' As individual Party members, Oppositionists could and should defend their views. Not to do so would 'be the equivalent politically of renouncing those views'.<sup>131</sup> Equivocation did nothing to help the Zinoviev group; the Congress duly voted for the expulsion of those Opposition leaders who still retained Party membership without discriminating between the two groups of Oppositionists. Kamenev made one last plea on behalf of his group, again without success. Rykov, speaking for the Congress, told the Opposition that applications for reinstatement would only be accepted from individuals, and not considered until six months had elapsed.<sup>132</sup>

Trotsky was scathing towards Zinoviev and Kamenev for arguing, in effect, that Party unity can be achieved by 'ideological renegacy'. This could only lead to demoralisation. It justified the double-dealing and careerist elements, in particular 'that broad layer of corrupted philistines in the Party who sympathise with the Opposition but vote with the majority.' The Opposition must not capitulate but educate itself theoretically through its own documents and the record of the Party congress. Oppositionists, however, must not 'restrict themselves to the role of critics; they must do constructive work and do it better and more conscientiously than the paid officials.' They must actively involve themselves in workers' and Soviet organisations to stay in touch with the masses and reach them with their criticism.<sup>133</sup>

### Section Six: Political Perspectives

During 1926 and 1927 the perspectives that informed Trotsky's opposition developed in three ways. Firstly, the analysis of Party bureaucratism was deepened and accompanied by specific proposals to reverse the tendency; secondly, Trotsky's attack on Stalin was more direct than before; thirdly, the concept of 'dual power' was advanced to characterise the social context of bureaucratic degeneration.

In 1923 Trotsky's analysis had been primarily diagnostic, as if the patient could be cured by proclaiming the virtues of a healthy life. In 1926 and 1927, whilst still advocating free discussion and criticism, Trotsky writes a prescription: inner-Party elections. His statement to the Politburo of 6 June, 1926, provides an example.<sup>134</sup> It focuses on a recent speech by Uglanov, the Party secretary in Moscow, condemning his definition of the 'essence of Party democracy' as a 'theoretical formulation of bureaucratism as a system'.

Democracy, Uglanov had asserted, is the presentation of basic tasks to the Party organisation 'in a correct and timely way so that it can resolve them'; the drawing in of 'the broad mass of Party members into the discussion and resolution of these problems'; the explanation of fundamental problems; checking the correctness of policy against the moods of the working class; and the rectification of inappropriate policies. Trotsky censures Uglanov for failing to add any further features and presenting a definition with a 'finished and programmatic quality' that represents 'a new word in the development of the Party regime and Party ideology'. Hitherto all political leaders have acknowledged the difference between resolutions on Party democracy and the practical reality; all have accepted the need to bring the reality closer to the definition of

democracy existing in principle. Now Uglanov has made the first open attempt to resolve the contradiction by 'bringing the programme down, drastically, to the level of what has existed in practice.' The essence of democracy is to be 'the unlimited domination of the Party apparatus, which presents, draws in, checks and rectifies'. In contrast with Uglanov, Trotsky suggests that the essence of Party democracy is threefold: 'freedom of discussion on all questions, constant control by the general body of opinion in the Party over Party institutions, and the election of all responsible individuals and collective bodies'.(emphasis added)

The 'Platform' of the Opposition further elaborates the requirements of Party democracy. It calls for: uninhibited discussion with guaranteed rights for minorities; a recruitment policy that discriminates in favour of workers; the proletarianisation of the Party apparatus; the restriction of social differentiation in the Party; the promotion of Party education through the study of Marx, Engels, and Lenin; and, the reconstruction of the Central Committee and the Central Control Commission along the lines recommended by Lenin in the Testament.<sup>135</sup> No special emphasis is given to elections, although they are referred to in a quotation from the resolution of 5 December, 1923, presented in contrast with current 'anti-Leninist definitions of inner-Party democracy'.

Workers' democracy means the liberty of frank discussion of the most important questions of Party life by all members, and the freedom to have organised discussions on these questions, and the election of all leading Party functionaries and commissions from the bottom up.<sup>136</sup>

With increasing emphasis, it was Stalin that was held responsible for the repudiation of Party democracy. A 'Supplement' to the 'Declaration of the Thirteen' (July 1926) advised the Party leadership that 'together with Lenin, who clearly and precisely formulated his thinking in the document known as his Testament, we are most profoundly convinced ... that the



organisational policies of Stalin and his group threaten the Party with the further grinding down of its basic cadres and with further shifts away from the class line.<sup>137</sup> The 'Platform of the Opposition' (1927) asserted that the Politburo is now effectively subjected to the Secretariat and the Secretariat to the general secretary; the 'worst fear' of Lenin in his Testament has been realised. Stalin has proved incapable of proper use of the 'unlimited power concentrated in his hands.'<sup>138</sup>

By October 1926 Trotsky had come to the view that Stalin was aiming to achieve 'the complete defeat of the nucleus which until recently was called the Leninist Old Guard, and its replacement by the one-man rule of Stalin, relying on a group of comrades who always agree with him.'<sup>139</sup> Two documents, written in September and October as presentations by private circulation of Opposition positions, show Trotsky's awareness of tensions within the ruling faction and Stalin's ambition. 'Questions and Answers' concludes that even if the Opposition is 'smashed' the result will not be unity. Three other contending groups are identified: 'a right deviation toward the kulak, the petty bourgeoisie, and middle class elements in general ... a trade unionist deviation which is marching hand in hand with the deviation towards the petty proprietor but which frequently comes into hostile conflict with the latter ... [and] purely machine elements who are without a definite political line but who shield the right deviation from the criticism of the Opposition.'<sup>140</sup> There are also 'numerous elements who have completely preserved their revolutionary spirit but who have not yet come to grips with the shifts in Party policy and Party regime.' The struggle against the Opposition keeps these heterogenous elements together for the moment, but if that were to end with the Opposition's defeat there would be new conflicts. A second document, 'Party Unity and the Danger of Split', observes that 'the concentration of power in the hands of a faction kept secret from the Party inevitably encourages the tendency towards

one-man rule'; collective leadership requires Party democracy, apparatus bureaucracy 'inevitably seeks a single will at the top.'<sup>141</sup> This statement is directed very sharply against Stalin. His faction, 'a faction within the ruling faction', has to be prevented 'from convulsing the Party any further with one-sided discussions and disorganising it with organisational measures paving the way for a ruinous regime of one-man rule in the Party.' Here, with substantial accuracy, Trotsky names names.

Only a dullard or a hopeless bureaucrat could think that the Stalinist struggle for 'Party unity' is capable of really achieving unity ... One-man rule in the administration of the Party ... requires not only the defeat, removal and ouster of the present United Opposition but also the gradual removal of all authoritative and influential figures in the present ruling faction. It is quite obvious that neither Tomsky, nor Rykov, nor Bukharin - because of their past, their authority, etc. - is capable of playing the role under Stalin that Uglanov, Kaganovich, Petrovsky, et al. play under him. The ouster of the present Opposition would in fact mean the inevitable transformation of the old group in the Central Committee into an opposition. A new discussion would be placed on the agenda, in which Kaganovich would expose Rykov, Uglanov would expose Tomsky, and Slepkov, Sten, and Company would deglorify Bukharin.<sup>142</sup>

Trotsky's readiness to indict Stalin is accompanied by a willingness to employ, belatedly, Lenin's Testament. When, in July 1925 he had been prevailed upon to deny Eastman's claims about the Testament, Trotsky publicly stated that there was no 'concealed' Testament. With a lawyer's care, Trotsky agreed that all Lenin's 'letters and suggestions' were 'invariably delivered to their destinations ... and have invariably exercised their influence on the decisions of the Party.'<sup>143</sup> During 1927 Trotsky turned the attention of leading bodies of the Party and Comintern to Lenin's Testament, most clearly in a speech to the Central Committee in October 1927. During Lenin's last illness, Trotsky stated, the Stalinists operated independently. 'That is why Lenin, weighing the prospect of his departure, gave the Party his last counsel: Remove Stalin, who may carry the Party to a split and to ruin. ... A selected apparatus concealed his letter. We can all now see the full consequences.'<sup>144</sup> According to the

record, Trotsky's words were drowned in uproar.

By 1927 Trotsky and the Opposition had begun, more systematically, to present political problems in the wider context of class conflict in Soviet Russia. The 'Declaration of the Eighty-Four' (May 1927) argues that NEP has seen the growth of 'the new bourgeoisie of the city and countryside' into 'a real force'.

The self-satisfied administrators, officials who are after their bosses' jobs, petty-bourgeois elements who have made their way into positions of authority and who look down on the masses - they all feel the ground growing firmer and firmer beneath their feet and they raise their heads higher and higher. These are all neo-NEP elements. Behind them stand the Ustrialovite specialists. And in the last row are the NEPman and the kulak...<sup>145</sup>

This statement accepted that such elements existed largely outside the Party, but asserted that they were now insinuating themselves within it. Should the Opposition be destroyed, it would open the way to the subordination of proletarian interests to those of other classes.

In late 1927 the term 'dual power' was invoked to indicate the challenge posed by the revival of a NEPist bourgeoisie. The 'Declaration of the Eighty-four' conveys its essential meaning, but the term itself does not yet appear. Not until the 'Platform of the Opposition', drafted during the summer of 1927, is it used for the first time. Here the Party is urged to adopt all measures to weaken 'the growth, unity, and pressure of ... hostile forces, preventing them from creating that actual, though concealed, dual power system toward which they aspire.'<sup>146</sup> The 'Platform' observes that the proletariat has lost power in Party and unions to 'administrators from petty-bourgeois circles', and the ranks of the 'labour aristocracy'. There has been a recruitment of former members of the SRs and Mensheviks to leading positions; 'about a quarter of the higher cadres of the active elements in the Party' are composed of such people.

Trotsky elaborates his understanding of 'dual power' in the Soviet regime in 'At a New Stage', a long memorandum written in December 1927 soon after his expulsion from the Party. Here he first made systematic use of the idea of dual power, connecting it with 'Kerenskyism'.

The proletarian part of the state apparatus, which was earlier sharply divided from the cadres of the old bourgeois intellectuals and did not trust them, in the last few years has separated itself more and more from the working class and, in its style of life, has drawn closer to the bourgeois and petty-bourgeois intellectuals, and has become more susceptible to hostile class influences.<sup>147</sup>

The growth of elements of dual power heralds the danger of thermidor, 'a kind of Kerenskyism in reverse'. This idea continued to appeal to Trotsky, as the following passage from a letter of 1928 illustrates.

The function of the historic Kerensky period consisted in this: that on its back the power of the bourgeoisie passed over to the proletariat. The historic role of the Stalin period consists in this: that upon its back the power is gliding over from the proletariat to the bourgeoisie; in general the post-Lenin leadership is unwinding the October film in a reverse direction. And the Stalin period is this same Kerensky period moving toward the Right.<sup>148</sup>

In 'At a New Stage' Trotsky suggested, as he would many times again, that the Russian Thermidor would not be democratic.<sup>149</sup> Kerensky's heirs would be no more capable of sustaining bourgeois democracy than he had been in 1917. The proletariat would fight; a resurgent bourgeoisie would 'soon need, not a transitional Thermidorian regime, but a more serious, solid, and decisive kind - in all probability, a Bonapartist or, in modern terms, a fascist regime.' In this document Trotsky contrasted the open sponsors of thermidor, the Mensheviks, with Ustrialov: the former are 'utopian' in their advocacy of democracy, the latter 'realistic'. For Trotsky, Ustrialov personified the insinuation of dual power. Trotsky saw Ustrialov, the theorist of a reconciliation between the bourgeois specialists and the regime, as a 'clever, far-seeing politician of the new bourgeoisie'. In contrast with the 'dying, old, emigrant bourgeoisie,' he did not aspire to immediate counter-revolution and did not wish to create

'disturbances' by skipping 'stages'. The present stage, according to Ustrialov, is the 'Stalin course'. Ustrialov is openly 'placing his bets on Stalin', and Stalin is executing Ustrialov's 'social orders'.<sup>150</sup>

Trotsky continues to use the idea of dual power after his exile to Turkey. In 1931 he is still warning of its threat, and still emphasising the role of Ustrialov. The situation has not yet matured, but there are 'elements of dual power in the very summits of the state apparatus.' (Emphasis added.)<sup>151</sup> Trotsky agreed that the 'left zig-zag of Stalin' had turned the bureaucracy around 'on its own axis', but for the time being he saw no need to change anything essential in his analysis. In 1931 he writes, as before, of the Soviet bureaucracy being 'an amalgam of the upper stratum of the victorious proletariat with broad strata of the overthrown classes' and including within itself 'a mighty agency of world capital'.<sup>152</sup> The 'elements of dual power contained in the bureaucratic apparatus have not disappeared with the inauguration of the new course, but have changed their colour and methods.' The new policy is not a consistent proletarian course, but a zig-zag to the left consequent upon the previous zig-zag to the right. The change in direction only indicates that the bureaucracy has no real independence, but continues to exist on the ground of the workers' state. Admittedly the 'specific gravity of the capitalist elements in the economy has been greatly reduced in recent years' but the bureaucracy still strives to act in its own interest, and this would ultimately result in the restoration of capitalism.<sup>153</sup>

Only in 1933, having already stopped using the term, did Trotsky silently discard the concept of dual power, tacitly recognising the redundancy of the idea. As subsequent chapters of this thesis make clear, much of Trotsky's political perspectives was revised between 1931 and 1933. In 1933 Trotsky repudiated reformism; 'dual power' had signified both the

active presence of the proletariat in the state and, therefore, the possibility of rectifying the political situation through reformist measures. The term also indicated the growing presence in the state of bourgeois influence. After the change of course by the regime in 1928 to 1930, it became increasingly absurd to postulate the imminent danger of capitalist restoration with the kulaks as its backbone. 'Klassovaya Priroda Sovetskogo Gosudarstvo' (1933) revised so much of previous perspectives that 'dual power' could no longer stand.<sup>154</sup> It fell, along with Trotsky's original sense of 'Thermidor', and 'Centrism'.

It is obviously possible to conclude that Trotsky's strategy for opposition was flawed or inadequate because he was defeated. This would, however, present an entirely monocausal interpretation. Trotsky was engaged in a highly one-sided conflict where Stalin and his allies controlled major political institutions, including the Party secretariat and its press. Even so, Trotsky must be held partly responsible for his own defeat: he neglected his own axiom that timing is crucial by failing to move decisively both in 1923 and 1925. Furthermore, and most importantly, his concept of 'dual power' misled him into thinking that the primary danger to the revolution, ten years after 1917, was the NEPist alliance between kulak and merchant. In fact, as hindsight reveals, the third party in the incipient counter-revolutionary trinity, the bureaucrat, presented the most serious threat to an already tarnished Soviet democracy.

In Trotsky's analysis of this period, the bureaucrat was driven towards Thermidor by the pressure of capitalist interests, national and international. Locating the course of counter-revolution outside the Party, rather than perceiving the danger within, meant that Trotsky stayed within Party discipline. For instance, although effectively factionalising, he refused to question the ban on factions. When the

dynamic of conflict reached a certain pitch and the Opposition began to agitate publicly, the leadership was able to secure the surrender of the Opposition and Trotsky, tacitly, had to recognise their legitimacy. Of course, it does not follow that any alternative position would have been successful: it is beyond the limit of good history to make such a claim. Furthermore, Trotsky himself recognised the difficulty faced by any opposition; after nearly a decade of turmoil, following on from the outbreak of war in 1914, popular hegemony went naturally to leaders who promised stability and order, not to those who, rightly or wrongly, were represented as disruptive.<sup>155</sup> As Carr put it: 'Trotsky was a hero of the revolution. He fell when the heroic age was over.'<sup>156</sup>

1. A copy of the 'Declaration of the 46' is in the Trotsky Archive: T802. A translation is in Carr, E.H., *The Interregnum*, (Harmondsworth: Pelican Books, 1969), pp.374-380.
2. For example: Preobrazhensky, Sosnovsky, I.N. Smirnov, Antonov-Ovseyenko, Muralov, and Pyatakov. It seems to have been widely reported at the time that Trotsky had seen the 'Declaration of the 46' before it was sent to the Central Committee. Preobrazhensky, speech to the Thirteenth Party Conference, *Trinadtsataya Konferentsiya RKP(B)*, (Moscow: 1924), pp.106-117. This is translated in *Documents of the 1923 Opposition*, (London: New Park, 1975), pp.66-76; see p.69.
3. At Party assemblies in 1924 Stalin emphasised the extent of agreement with Trotsky before his letter of 8 December. No doubt his purpose was to stress that it had been Trotsky who had disrupted unanimity. Stalin, *Works*, vol.6, (Moscow: 1953), p.33, p.235.
4. *Kommunisticheskaya Partiya Sovetskogo Soyuza v Resolyutsiyakh i Resheniyakh S'ezdov, Konferentsii i Plenumov TsK*, tom 2, (Moscow: 1970), pp.495-6.
5. Trotsky, *Moya Zhizn'*, tom II, (Berlin: Granit, 1930), p.240.
6. S.I. Gusev at a session of the Central Control Commission in 1926; quoted by Trotsky in a declaration to the Politburo, 13 August, 1926: T2998.
7. *Kommunisticheskaya Partiya Sovetskogo Soyuza v Resolyutsiyakh i Resheniyakh S'ezdov, Konferentsii i Plenumov TsK*, tom 2, p.500.
8. *Pravda*, 11.XII.1923; reprinted in Trotsky, *The New Course*, in Trotsky, *The Challenge of the Left Opposition (1923-25)*, (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1975), pp.123-130.
9. Trotsky, *The New Course*, pp.128-130.
10. Stalin, *Works*, vol.5, pp.380-397.
11. *Pravda*, 20.XII.1923.
12. *Pravda*, 18.XII.1923.
13. 'Gruppirovki i Fraktsionnye Obrazovaniya', *Pravda*, 28.XII.1923; 'Vopros o Partiinykh Pokoleniyakh', *Pravda*, 29.XII.1923.
14. Trotsky, *The New Course*, p.101.
15. Trotsky, *The New Course*, p.102, pp.108-109, p.118, p.120.
16. Trotsky, *The New Course*, pp.98-101.
17. Trotsky, *The New Course*, pp.98-99.
18. Trotsky, *The New Course*, p.125.
19. Trotsky, *The New Course*, p.125.



20. Trotsky, *The New Course*, p.69.
21. Trotsky, *The New Course*, p.77.
22. Trotsky, *The New Course*, p.69.
23. Trotsky, *The New Course*, p.124.
24. Trotsky, *The New Course*, p.91.
25. Trotsky, *The New Course*, p.68.
26. Trotsky, *The New Course*, p.76.
27. Trotsky, *The New Course*, p.91.
28. Trotsky, *The New Course*, p.77.
29. Trotsky, *The New Course*, p.78.
30. Trotsky, *The New Course*, p.77.
31. Trotsky, *The New Course*, pp.67-68, 74-75.
32. Eastman, M. *Since Lenin Died*, (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1925), p.81.
33. *Trinadtsataya Konferentsiya RKP(B)*, (Moscow: 1924), pp.106-117. *Documents of the 1923 Opposition*, p.73.
34. *Kommunisticheskaya Partiya Sovetskogo Soyuza v Resolyutsiyakh i Resheniyakh S'ezdov, Konferentsii i Plenumov TsK*, tom 2, pp.507-515.
35. *Pravda*, 8.I.1924.
36. Trotsky, *Moya Zhizn'*, tom II, pp.249-250.
37. Trotsky, *Moya Zhizn'*, tom II, p.250.
38. Trotsky, *Moya Zhizn'*, tom II, pp.251-2.
39. At the Commissariat of War his deputy and loyal assistant, Sklyansky, had been replaced by Frunze, a follower of Zinoviev. Trotsky, *Moya Zhizn'*, tom II, p.253.
40. Carr, E.H., *Socialism in One Country*, vol.2, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1970), pp.193-5.
41. Carr, E.H., *Foundations of a Planned Economy*, vol.2, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1976), pp.107, 118.
42. In the political discussion before the Fifteenth Party Congress, 1927, the theses of the Central Committee condemning the opposition were discussed in more than 10,000 cell meetings. 730,862 votes (no more, no less) were registered in favour; 4,120 against and 2,676 abstentions. *Against Trotskyism*, (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1972), p.310.

44. Lewin, M., *Lenin's Last Struggle*, (London: Pluto, 1975).
45. Lenin, *Poĭnoe Sobranie Sochinenii*, tom 45, pp.344-5.
46. Lenin, *Poĭnoe Sobranie Sochinenii*, tom 45, p.346.
47. Lewin, M., *Lenin's Last Struggle*, p.86.
48. Carr, E.H., *The Interregnum 1923-1924*, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1969), pp.366-8.
49. Eastman, M. *Since Lenin Died*, pp.28-31; Trotsky, 'Po Povodu Knigi Istmena "Posle Smerti Lenina"', *Bol'shevik* 1.IX.1925. Published as 'Letter on Eastman's Book' in *The Challenge of the Left Opposition (1923-25)*, pp.310-315.
50. *Trinadtsatyi S'ezd Rossiiskoi Kommunisticheskoi Partii (Bol'shevikov)* (1924), p.115.
51. *Trinadtsatyi S'ezd Rossiiskoi Kommunisticheskoi Partii (Bol'shevikov)* (1924), pp.235-7.
52. *Trinadtsatyi S'ezd Rossiiskoi Kommunisticheskoi Partii (Bol'shevikov)* (1924), pp.153-168.
53. *Trinadtsatyi S'ezd Rossiiskoi Kommunisticheskoi Partii (Bol'shevikov)* (1924), pp.166-7.
54. For example: Trotsky, 'Problemy Razvitiya SSSR', *Byulleten' Opozitsii*, no.20, (April' 1931g.), p.11.
55. Stalin, *Works*, vol.6, p.232.
56. Stalin, *Works*, vol.6, pp.238-9.
57. Daniels, R.V., *The Conscience of the Revolution*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1969), p.240.
58. Carr, E.H., *The Interregnum 1923-1924*, p.372.
59. Carr, E.H., *Socialism in One Country*, vol.2, p.14.
60. Trotsky, *On Lenin*, (London: Harrap, 1971). This is not one of Trotsky's better works, but it should be mentioned that what are surely the least satisfactory parts of the book, as it appears in its English translation, were not part of the original Russian edition. These chapters, 'The True and the False' and 'Children on Lenin', were book reviews for *Pravda* first published in October 1924, and they relate very uneasily to the rest of the book. The second, in particular, is distinguished by a sentimentality very unfamiliar in Trotsky's writings.
61. Carr, E.H., *Socialism in One Country*, vol.2, p.14.
62. Trotsky, *Uroki Oktyabrya*, in Trotsky, *Sochineniya*, III, part1, pp.ix-lxvii.
63. T2969. Available as Trotsky, 'Our Differences', *The Challenge of the Left Opposition (1923-25)*, pp.259-303. See p.297.

64. Trotsky, *Uroki Oktyabrya*, 1x.
65. Trotsky, 'Pis'mo Plenumu TsK RKP(b)', *Pravda*, 20.I.1925.
66. Carr, E.H., *Socialism in One Country*, vol.2, p.40.
67. *Kommunisticheskaya Partiya Sovetskogo Soyuza v Resolyutsiyakh i Resheniyakh S'ezdov, Konferentsii i Plenumov TsK*, tom 3, pp.142-150.
68. Trotsky, *Moya Zhizn'*, tom II, p.261.
69. Trotsky, 'Po Povodu Knigi Istmena "Posle Smerti Lenina"', *Bol'shevik*, 1.IX.1925. Trotsky, 'Reponse au Comite Central du PCR a la Question Posee par le CC du PCF Concernant le Journal de Monatte-Rosmer', *Humanite*, 1.X.1925.
70. Serge, V., *Memoirs of a Revolutionary*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1967), p.209.
71. T2538: [Trotsky to Muralov; 11 September, 1928]. Trotsky, 'Pis'mo N.I. Muralovu', *Byulleten' Oppozitsii*, no.19, (Mart 1931g.), p.39. The same claim, that the 'opposition centre decided unanimously ... that I must accept the ultimatum', is made by Trotsky in a letter to Hansen, 29 February, 1940: EP8444.
72. Carr, E.H., *Socialism in One Country*, vol.2, pp.77-79.
73. Zinoviev, G., *Leninizm*, (Leningrad: 1925), passim.
74. Carr, E.H., *Socialism in One Country*, vol.2, pp.51-61.
75. *Chetyrnadtsatyi S'ezd Rossiiskoi Kommunisticheskoi Partii (Bol'shevikov)* (1926), pp.289-92.
76. T2975: [22 December, 1925].
77. *Chetyrnadtsatyi S'ezd Rossiiskoi Kommunisticheskoi Partii (Bol'shevikov)* (1926), p.467.
78. *Chetyrnadtsatyi S'ezd Rossiiskoi Kommunisticheskoi Partii (Bol'shevikov)* (1926), p.467.
79. T2976: [Trotsky to Bukharin; 9 January, 1926].
80. Trotsky, *Moya Zhizn'*, tom II, p.255.
81. T2974: [14 December, 1925].
82. *Chetyrnadtsatyi S'ezd Rossiiskoi Kommunisticheskoi Partii (Bol'shevikov)* (1926), p.276. Stalin, *Works*, vol.7, p.390.
83. *Chetyrnadtsatyi S'ezd Rossiiskoi Kommunisticheskoi Partii (Bol'shevikov)* (1926), p.290.
84. Carr, E.H., *Socialism in One Country*, vol.2, p.187.
85. Serge, V., and Sedova Trotsky, N., *The Life and Death of Leon Trotsky*, (London: Wildwood House, 1975), p.136.

86. *Sotsialisticheskii Vestnik*, 22.V.1926, p.15.
87. Trotsky, *Moya Zhizn'*, tom II, p.265.
88. Trotsky, *Moya Zhizn'*, tom II, p.265. Serge, *Memoirs of a Revolutionary*, p.212. Trotsky, 'Novaya Moskovskaya Amal'gama', *Byulleten' Oppozitsii*', (Mart' 1937g.), p.11.
89. Serge, *Memoirs of a Revolutionary*, p.213.
90. Ruban, N.V., 'Bor'ba Partii protiv Trotskistsko-Zinov'evskoi Oppozitsii (1925-26gg.)', *Voprosy Istorii KPSS*, no.5, (1958), p.129. Abramov, B.A., 'Razgrom Trotskistsko-Zinov'evskogo Antipartiinogo Bloka', *Voprosy Istorii KPSS*, no.6, (1959), p.35.
91. Serge, *Memoirs of a Revolutionary*, p.214.
92. T880: ['Declaration of the Thirteen', July 1926].
93. T880.
94. *Kommunisticheskaya Partiya Sovetskogo Soyuza v Resolyutsiyakh i Resheniyakh S'ezdov, Konferentsii i Plenumov TsK*, tom 3, pp.345-351.
95. T891: [joint authorship(?); September or October 1926].
96. *Pravda*, 15.VIII.1926.
97. Trotsky, 'Radek i Oppozitsiya', *Byulleten' Oppozitsii*', no.1-2, (Iyul' 1929g.), pp.10-11.
98. Trotsky, *Moya Zhizn'*, tom II, p.274.
99. *Bol'shevik*, 31.X.1926.
100. Stalin, *Works*, vol.8, pp.220-224.
101. *New York Times*, 18.X.1926.
102. Stalin, *Works*, vol.8, pp.225-244, note 75 p.403.
103. Serge, V., and Sedova Trotsky, N., *The Life and Death of Leon Trotsky*, p.149.
104. *Piatnadtsataya Konferentsiya Vsesoyuznoi Kommunisticheskoi Partii (B)*, (1927), p.578.
105. Stalin's speeches at the Conference run to more than one hundred and twenty pages in his Collected Works. Stalin, *Works*, vol.8, pp.245-372.
106. *Piatnadtsataya Konferentsiya Vsesoyuznoi Kommunisticheskoi Partii (B)*, (1927), pp.505-35, pp.555-575.
107. Carr, E.H., *Foundations of a Planned Economy*, vol.2, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1976), p.22. See also Stalin's concluding speech at the Plenum where he derides the Opposition as a 'Right-wing deviation' and the 'embryo of a new party within our Party'. Stalin, *Works*, vol.9, pp.151-2.

108. T3000: ['Voprosy i Otvety'; September 1926].
109. Trotsky, 'First Speech on the Chinese Question' (to the Eighth Plenum of the ECCI: May, 1927), in Trotsky, *Problems of the Chinese Revolution*, (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1967), p.77.
110. Trotsky, 'Strategy and Tactics in the Imperialist Epoch', in Trotsky, *The Third International After Lenin*, (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1970), p.128.
111. Trotsky, 'First Speech on the Chinese Question' (to the Eighth Plenum of the ECCI: May, 1927), p.79. Trotsky, 'Second Speech on the Chinese Question' (to the Eighth Plenum of the ECCI: May, 1927), p.103.
112. Trotsky, 'Second Speech on the Chinese Question' (to the Eighth Plenum of the ECCI: May, 1927), p.99.
113. T964: ['Platform of the Fifteen', (the Democratic Centralists); 27 June, 1927].
114. T3015: ['Iz dnevnika (dlya pamyati)'; 26 November, 1926]. In *Moya Zhizn'*, tom II p.276, Trotsky summed up the Opposition's struggle: 'We went to meet the inevitable debacle, confident, however, that we were paving the way for the triumph of our ideas in a more distant future.'
115. Serge, V., *Memoirs of a Revolutionary*, p.222.
116. T1021: [Trotsky and others to members of the CPSU; 4, October, 1927].
117. Trotsky, 'Strategy and Tactics in the Imperialist Epoch', in Trotsky, *The Third International After Lenin*, p.128.
118. T1007: ['The Platform of the Opposition']. See Trotsky, *The Challenge of the Left Opposition (1926-27)*, (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1980), pp.353-3.
119. 'The Platform of the Opposition', p.360.
120. Deutscher, I., *The Prophet Unarmed*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1970), pp.356-7.
121. T1019: [Trotsky and others to the Central Control Commission; 1 October, 1927]
122. T994: [Trotsky and others; 8 August, 1927].
123. Trotsky, *Moya Zhizn'*, tom II, pp.278-280.
124. Stalin, 'Notes on Contemporary Themes', *Pravda*, 28.VII.1927; Stalin, *Works*, vol.9, p.336.
125. Trotsky attempted to clarify his attitude to defence of the Soviet Union in two speeches to the plenum of the Central Committee and the Central Control Commission in August 1927: T3080, T3085. See also T3092, a memorandum dated 24 September, 1927, which attempts a clarification of the meaning of the 'Clemenceau thesis'.

126. For the factory cell meetings of 1926 see: Popov, N., *Outline History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union*, vol.II, (Moscow- Leningrad: Co-operative Publishing Society of Foreign Workers in the USSR, 1934), p.293; Abramov, B.A., 'Razgrom Trotskistsko-Zinov'evskogo Antipartiinogo Bloka', p.36; Carr, E.H., *Foundations of a Planned Economy*, vol.2, p.14. For the Yaroslavl station demonstration of 9 June, 1927, on the occasion of Smilga's departure for Khabarovsk, see Deutscher, I., *The Prophet Unarmed*, p.339; Carr, E.H., *Foundations of a Planned Economy*, vol.2, p.29; Ruban, N.V., 'Bor'ba Partii protiv Trotskistsko-Zinov'evskoi Oppozitsii (1925-6gg.)', p.136; Trotsky's report of his own speech is in T980. For the demonstrations of October and November 1927 see: Trotsky, *Moya Zhizn'*, tom II, pp.278-284; Deutscher, I., *The Prophet Unarmed*, pp.365-6, 372-8, 383-4; Carr, E.H., *Foundations of a Planned Economy*, vol.2, pp.45, 48. Trotsky's speech at Joffe's funeral is T3108. There are eyewitness accounts in 'Memoirs of a Bolshevik- Leninist', Saunders, G., *Samizdat*, (New York: Monad, 1974), pp.94-9; Medvedev, R.A., *Let History Judge*, (New York: Vintage, 1973), pp.59-60; Murphy, J.T., *New Horizons*, (London: John Lane, 1941), pp.273-4; Fischer, L., *Men and Politics*, (London: Cape, 1941), pp.91-3; Serge, V., *Memoirs of a Revolutionary*, p.219.

127. For these declarations see T896 and T994.

128. T3109: ['Na Novom Etape'; December 1927].

129. T3109.

130. T1061: [Declarations to the Fifteenth Party Congress; 10 December, 1927].

131. T1061.

132. *Pyatnadtsatyi S''ezd VKP(B)*, tom II, (1962), pp.1417-9.

133. T3109: ['Na Novom Etape'; December 1927].

134. T2986: [statement to Politburo; 6 June, 1926].

135. 'The Platform of the Opposition', pp.358-361.

136. 'The Platform of the Opposition', p.359.

137. T880: ['Declaration of the Thirteen'].

138. 'The Platform of the Opposition', p.355.

139. T891: [joint authorship(?); September or October 1926].

140. T3000: ['Voprosy i Otveti'; September 1926].

141. T891.

142. T891. Trotsky did not have it entirely correct: Uglanov and Slepkov became Right oppositionists. Trotsky also, as elsewhere, thought that Stalin would come under fire being too much infected with 'leftist' prejudices.

143. Trotsky, 'Po Povodu Knigi Istmena "Posle Smerti Lenina"'.

144. T3102: [contribution to 'Diskussionyi Listok', November 1927].
145. T941: ['Declaration of the eighty-four'].
146. 'The Platform of the Opposition', p.303.
147. T3109: ['Na Novom Etape'; December 1927]. This was not Trotsky's first use of the idea of 'dual power'. He had referred to it in speeches made to Party bodies during 1927. For example: Trotsky, 'Second Speech at the Central Control Commission', in Trotsky, *The Stalin School of Falsification*, pp.148-9.
148. T3146: [Trotsky to comrades; 21 October, 1928].
149. T3109: ['Na Novom Etape'; December 1927]. See also T3173: [Trotsky, 'Chto i Kak Proizoshlo'; February 1929]; and Trotsky, 'O Termidorianstvo i Bonapartizme', *Byulleten' Oppozitsii*, no.17-18, (Noyabr' Dekabr' 1930g.), p.30.
150. T3102: [contribution to 'Diskussionyi Listok', November 1927]. See also T3092: [Trotsky, '"Tezis o Klemanso" i rezhim v partii'; 24 September, 1927], and Trotsky, 'What Now?' (1928) in *The Third International After Lenin*, p.296.
151. Trotsky, 'Problemy Razvitiya SSSR', passim., particularly p.11. Trotsky, 'Ob"yasneniya v Krugu Druzei', *Byulleten' Oppozitsii*, no.25-26, (Noyabr' Dekabr' 1931g.), pp.43-45.
152. Trotsky, 'Problemy Razvitiya SSSR', p.9.
153. Trotsky, 'Problemy Razvitiya SSSR', passim.
154. Trotsky, 'Klassovaya Priroda Sovetskogo Gosudarstvo', *Byulleten' Oppozitsii*, no.36-37, (Oktyabr' 1933g.), pp.1-12.
155. T3015: ['Iz dnevnika (dlya pamyati)'; 26 November, 1926].
156. Carr, E.H., *Socialism in One Country*, vol.1, (Harmondsworth: Pelican Books, 1970), p.167 .

CHAPTER THREE: BUILDING BLOCS - 1928-1933

*Let there remain in exile not three hundred and fifty who are true to our banner, but thirty-five or even three; the banner will remain, the strategic line will remain, and the future will remain.*

Trotsky, 'Letter to Comrades in the USSR', (1929).

Section One: Trotsky Exiled

In early January 1928, under article 58 of the criminal code, Trotsky was arrested for counter-revolutionary activities and deported to Alma Ata in Soviet Turkestan. He thereby joined an exclusive revolutionary elite of those arrested by all three Russian regimes of present times. From Asiatic exile he endeavoured to maintain his political commitments, corresponding with comrades and writing political statements.

During 1928 the political situation in the Party remained unstable. Tension between Stalin and Bukharin developed; Zinoviev and Kamenev tried to negotiate a way back to the corridors of power. 'Trotskyism' was like a wild card in the political pack, possibly useful but potentially very damaging if held at the wrong time. No one was yet ready to dismiss Trotsky; communication was not entirely broken. He was even permitted to send a series of documents to the Sixth Comintern Congress in July.<sup>1</sup>

In July 1928 Bukharin met Kamenev in secret to discuss the removal of Stalin.<sup>2</sup> Kamenev, maintaining contact with the Moscow Trotskyists, passed on his notes of the meeting and they ultimately came into Trotsky's possession. Kamenev also informed Trotsky, via the Moscow Trotskyists, that Stalin was preparing to make overtures to the Opposition: a rumour that seems to have had considerable circulation.<sup>3</sup> Kamenev advised Trotsky



not to be stubborn and wait for 'a special train' to return to Moscow, but to declare for reconciliation and joint work.<sup>4</sup> However, Trotsky scorned the political manoeuvres of Bukharin, Kamenev, and Stalin; in their dalliance with the Opposition they were purely opportunistic. Trotsky and the Trotskyists publicised these political flirtations mercilessly in order to destroy their chances. For example, Kamenev's notes of his meeting with Bukharin were circulated in Leningrad as a pamphlet by the Trotskyists.<sup>5</sup> Since their negotiations lacked principle, Bukharin and Kamenev were, in Trotsky's view, no better than horse traders.<sup>6</sup> Trotsky believed that Kamenev maintained contact with the Moscow Trotskyists only because he hoped to prod Stalin into a deal that would preclude a reconciliation between Kamenev and Trotsky. Following his advice would only lead to a 'political blow which could lower the Opposition to the level of the Zinoviev people ... a disgraceful half-amnesty which denies ... any political life whatever.'<sup>7</sup>

During the second half of 1928 the outpourings of Trotsky's pen were felt too threatening by Stalin and restrictions were imposed, culminating in expulsion to Turkey and residence on Prinkipo, a small island in the Sea of Marmara. From here Trotsky tried to find residence in one of the countries more central to European politics, but without success. The outcast revolutionary, lacking any substantial following or funds, was an unwelcome presence in the parliamentary democracies. Trotsky was able to leave Turkey before his final departure in 1933 on only one occasion. In November 1932, he travelled to Copenhagen, on the invitation of Danish Social Democratic students, to lecture to a large audience. In fact, this was to be the last time that Trotsky spoke in public.

While in Turkey, against formidable obstacles, Trotsky produced some of the best work of his last exile: an autobiography, three volumes of a

history of the Russian revolution, perceptive commentaries on the rise of German fascism, and a considerable output of polemics, theses, statements, and articles on the current situation in Russia.<sup>8</sup> Throughout these years Trotsky endeavoured to maintain active contact with Russia, with diminishing success. Priority was also given to the consolidation of Oppositionists expelled from other Communist Parties. However, Trotsky could do little that was practical. In one letter to comrades he wrote that the present period was one of 'ideological demarcation' and not 'mass actions',<sup>9</sup> in another he declared that 'epochs of reaction are always the periods for the deepening of theory.'<sup>10</sup>

The demoralisation of defeat and the moves by Stalin against the Right fractured the fragile unity of the Opposition. Particularly after exile to Turkey, Trotsky had enormous difficulty in maintaining its cohesion. Until 1929 the most prominent capitulators had generally not been part of the Trotskyist nucleus in 1926-7: Zinoviev, Kamenev, and their followers, along with Antonov-Ovseyenko and Pyatakov, former Oppositionists in ambassadorial exile and not closely involved.<sup>11</sup> In 1929 the Left Opposition suffered considerable blows. Initially, in July, Radek, Preobrazhensky, and Smilga led four hundred others to capitulation; then, in October, I.N. Smirnov and many other prominent figures surrendered.<sup>12</sup>

Trotsky condemned capitulation, but in order to stem the tide he was prepared to compromise with his own followers. He did not insist on monolithic unity within the Opposition. For instance, it is clear that although he harboured reservations about the 'very cautious tone' of the Oppositional declaration of 22 August, 1929, made by Rakovsky, Kosior, and Okudzhava, he nevertheless gave it support.<sup>13</sup> By October Trotsky already viewed the declaration as representing... 'a bygone stage'. Despite waves of capitulation, many hundreds continued to hold out. However, after the

surrender of Smirnov, Rakovsky was left as the only major leader of the Opposition in the USSR, until he too finally capitulated in 1934.

The history of the Left Opposition in exile has yet to be written, although Broué has made a start with his article, 'Les Trotskistes en URSS: 1929-38'.<sup>14</sup> A contemporary observer, Ciliga, a Yugoslav Communist, is informative on the tensions within the Opposition. Like Serge, he was a non-Russian Oppositionist; both were arrested but released after international pressure, before such things became impossible. Between 1930 and 1933 Ciliga was imprisoned in the Verkhne-Uralsk isolator where many of the most active members of the Trotskyist Opposition had been detained. Political debate flourished here, with the 'Collective of the Verkhne-Uralsk Leninist Bolsheviks' publishing programmes and prison newspapers.<sup>15</sup> There was even some contact between the prisoners and Opposition leaders. Rakovsky's writings were circulated, and Trotsky's letters and 1931 theses, 'Problemy Razvitiya SSSR', found their way to the isolator.<sup>16</sup> A group of the left, the Militant Bolsheviks, also managed to send an article to Trotsky, in microscopic script in a matchbox-sized carton, a part of which was subsequently published in *Byulleten' Oppozitsii*.<sup>17</sup>

Like most of the Opposition, the Verkhne-Uralsk Collective was divided into three sections: Left, Centre, and Right. Ciliga argues that the tensions within the Opposition were partially due to Trotsky's inconsistencies. All looked to Trotsky for a lead: 'a quotation from Trotsky had the value of a proof.'<sup>18</sup> In the writings of 1930 and 1931 they found an ambivalent evaluation of the Stalin regime: praise for the economic achievements and criticism of the bureaucratic deformations.

This chapter is more thematic than the previous one and less concerned with narrative. It focuses on the detail of Trotsky's perspectives. Other studies, Daniels' *Conscience of the Revolution* and Carmichael's *Trotsky* for example, offer a political narrative and take Trotsky's opposition for granted, failing to investigate its content. Partly because Trotsky's exile papers are now accessible to all, it is possible to examine the subject in greater depth. Three related matters are considered here: firstly, Trotsky's demands for political reform; secondly, his initial reactions to the adoption of the five-year plans and collectivisation; and thirdly, his relations with other political factions and tendencies in Russian Communism. It concludes by observing that, until 1933, Trotsky argued for the primacy of politics.

### Section Two: Political Demands

The 1927 'Platform of the Opposition' remained Trotsky's political keystone until 1933. A circular letter to Oppositionists written in October 1928 instructs comrades to apply the Platform on all questions; 'continuity must be restored':

Every speech by a Bolshevik-Leninist should be based on the Platform, with specific quotations being given whenever possible ... Theses over no matter what question of the day, little or big, should begin with a quotation from the Platform. This document was built out of a vast collective experience, and all the formulations were carefully thought out and discussed. The application of the Platform to all questions will have a great influence in the direction of discipline, especially among the youth.

Repeatedly, as in 1927, Trotsky contrasts the Party regime of Lenin with the bureaucratic centralism of the Stalin regime; the Tenth Party Congress resolution on Party democracy and the resolution of 5 December, 1923, are given a central place. He emphasises five points, the first four of which had also been included in the 'Platform': re-instatement of expelled

Oppositionists; publication of Lenin's articles, including the Testament; convocation of a Party congress with firm guarantees of full discussion and proper elections; a sharp reduction in the Party budget; and, the introduction of the secret ballot in the Party. Trotsky recognised these as minimal demands: 'the most immediate slogans on the internal Party level.' Again he referred his correspondent, possibly Smilga, to the 'Platform' for a fuller exposition, but for the purposes of agitation it was necessary to devise 'very simple, indisputable, transitional demands.' The Opposition must speak to the 'working class core' of the Party in 'language they can understand', not forgetting that the 'working class and the masses in general are not yet with us.'<sup>20</sup>

Trotsky's five demands are largely self-explanatory. Re-instatement of the expelled was a sine qua non, 'the essential proof, the infallible means of verification, and the first indicator of the seriousness and depth of all the recent moves towards the left.'<sup>21</sup> The publication of the concealed articles by Lenin and the proper organisation of a Party congress would be a second step towards the restoration of Party democracy. The reduction of the Party budget to 'one-twentieth of its present size' was regarded by Trotsky as necessary to stem corruption. 'The Party budget is the main instrument of the terrible corruption of the apparatus and the basis of its omnipotence.'<sup>22</sup>

Trotsky's enthusiasm for the secret ballot was a novel feature in 1928. He advocates it to a 'well-meaning' comrade of the Right, to whom he wrote in September.<sup>23</sup> It is definitively introduced to his set of transitional demands in October; 'the slogan of the secret ballot is a vital question in the Party and the trade unions.' A way must be found for the workers to control the apparatus. In the past, open voting was introduced to inhibit the influence of class enemies. Now the situation is

very different. The workers must be taken as they are. It is doctrinaire idealism to imagine that workers will, at present, vote courageously and firmly according to their convictions. 'The apparatchik stands at the rostrum and watches the hands of the voters, or the worker's wife pulls him by the sleeve: "Better not vote."' Therefore, 'the slogan of the secret ballot is the best expression for the struggle now beginning against dual power at the present stage.'<sup>24</sup>

In Turkey, Trotsky continued to argue for the secret ballot as a centrepiece of his demands for Party democracy, but not as a liberal. He still took a thoroughly instrumental view of political rights. Commenting, in 1930, on *Pravda's* exposure of the Syrtsov/Lominadze group as a block of Right and Left, he disputes that shared dissatisfaction is a sufficient basis for a bloc. Both wings of the Party advocate democracy, but for very different purposes. The Left 'never looked upon Party democracy as free entry for Thermidorean views and tendencies.'

What we mean by the restoration of Party democracy is that the real revolutionary proletarian core of the Party win the right to curb bureaucracy and to really purge the Party: to purge the Party of the thermidoreans in principle as well as their unprincipled and careerist cohorts who vote according to command from above, of the tendencies of tail-endism as well as the numerous factions of toadyism ... The Right suddenly invokes democracy in order to have the possibility to conduct a consistent opportunist policy, which exasperates all the classes and disorganises the Party. But a consistent Right-wing policy, whatever the intentions of Bukharin, Rykov, and Tomsky, is the policy of Thermidor. Where, then, is there a basis for a bloc, even a pretence of a bloc?<sup>25</sup>

Trotsky began from a position which had no sympathy for the view that political rights are worthwhile in themselves. He came rather late, therefore, to the conclusion that, in the given situation, elections with a secret ballot were desirable, and came even later to the idea that the right to organise factions, or even parties, in opposition to the rulers might also be desirable. He continued to emphasise that political demands

were contextual and not absolute. In a letter to the USSR, written in February 1929, Trotsky clarifies his call for a secret ballot. He drew a distinction between elections in the Party and the unions, where the slogan was applicable, and in the Soviets, where great caution was necessary. 'It goes without saying that we do not make a fetish of democratic forms. The protection of the dictatorship overrides all other considerations. ... the slogan of the secret ballot in no way has the character of a principle or of universality ... It is an ad hoc slogan, derived from the crisis of the contradictions existing between the cadres and the Party.'<sup>26</sup> The demand for secret ballots, Trotsky argues in 'Zashchita Sovetskoi Respubliki i Oppozitsiya', should not be presented as 'a general democratic slogan' but presented within 'the framework of the dictatorship [of the proletariat].' Adopting general democratic demands, the freedom to organise for example, Trotsky sees as the product of confusion about the class nature of the state. Such demands only make sense to him in the framework of capitalism.<sup>27</sup>

One conspicuous absence from Trotsky's set of political demands for the reform of the Party, both before and after his expulsion, is the right to form factions. In 1923 many Opposition speakers had called for a revision of the ruling on factions. Trotsky was more cautious and accepted the ban. 'Factions are a scourge in the present situation', he wrote, but they cannot be overcome by an administrative ruling. Indeed the bureaucratic regime fostered factionalism. The 'essential guarantee' against factions is 'correct leadership'. 'Opportune attention' must be paid to the 'needs of the moment'; the apparatus must be flexible, not paralysing the initiative of the Party but rather organising it, not fearing criticism and not intimidating the Party with the 'bugbear of factions'.<sup>28</sup>

The essential foundations for Trotsky's view of the question of factions are presented in *The New Course* (1924). Trotsky analyses the problem in terms of its contradictions, starting with the contradiction between the political monopoly of the Bolsheviki, which 'could not be otherwise', and the heterogeneity of society.<sup>29</sup>

Even episodic differences in views and nuances of opinion may express the remote pressure of distinct social interests and, in certain circumstances, be transformed into stable groupings; the latter may, in turn, sooner or later take the form of organised factions ...

With a typically sequential logic Trotsky pursues the issue:

If factions are not wanted, there must not be any permanent groupings; if permanent groupings are not wanted, temporary groupings must be avoided; finally, in order that there be no temporary groupings, there must be no differences of opinion, for wherever there are two opinions, people inevitably group together.

He then, with a rhetorical question, exposes the absurdity of trying to deal with the situation by 'purely formal measures'.

But how, on the other hand, do we avoid differences of opinion in a Party of half a million men which is leading the country in exceptionally complicated and painful conditions?

The Party needs both to curb the emergence of factionalism and to permit the free expression of 'contradictions and differences of opinion' without which the Party risks ideological and political sterility. Harmonising centralism and democracy is the task of the leadership. Overstressing the former to the neglect of the latter is a bureaucratic response which only promotes factionalism, first of all of the apparatus itself. It would result in a loss of 'the essential incomparable advantage of our Party'. Provided a 'vibrant and active democracy' exists within the Party, it is able 'at every moment, to look at industry with the eyes of the communist machinist, the communist specialist, the communist director and the communist merchant, collect the experiences of these mutually complementary workers, draw conclusions from them and thus determine its line.'<sup>30</sup>



The theme of Party unity became insistent in Opposition documents. It was the Stalinist faction that forced on the Party an internal regime that frustrated unity and bred factionalism. Repeatedly the Opposition declared against factionalism. After exile Trotsky relaxed his position: the Left Opposition had to act as a faction because the ruling faction continued to be repressive.<sup>31</sup> The alternative would be to renounce the freedom to criticise, in itself a dereliction of duty.<sup>32</sup> For Trotsky, factions were part of current reality; the only way to supersede them would be to recognise them temporarily, reform the Party, and establish conditions in which they would dissolve naturally.<sup>33</sup> Only in *Revolution Betrayed* (1936) did Trotsky put emphasis on the role that the ban on factions had played in the degeneration of the regime. After that he adopted a more open attitude towards faction formation in the internal politics of a revolutionary party.

### Section Three: Trotsky and the 'Left' Turn

In the years 1928-1930 Stalin turned economic policy on its axis. Initially, Trotsky welcomed the about turn. In 'Vyderzhka, Vyderzhka, Vydeerzhka!' he claimed responsibility for the change in policy and recognised his own programme, in a distorted form, in the new line.

Bukharin is completely correct when he accuses Stalin of not having thought up a single word, but just used bits of the Opposition platform. What has produced the left twitch of the apparatus? Our attack, our irreconcilability, the growth of our influence, the courage of our cadres.<sup>34</sup>

Trotsky recalled that the Opposition called in 1923 for a five-year plan to be worked out in rough draft. The ruling group in the Party has now finally come round to this, but they have turned it into a 'fetish standing above the real class relations and attitudes of the various layers of the proletariat.'<sup>35</sup> From 1930 Trotsky became increasingly anxious that the wild

excesses of the new policies would jeopardise the very foundations of the Soviet state by creating a massive head of discontent and an accumulation of economic difficulties. Despite his criticism of the interpretation of the NEP by Bukharin and Stalin, he was fundamentally opposed to the attempt to abolish it bureaucratically. This section is concerned with Trotsky's initial reactions to Stalin's 'revolution from above'. Further development of the theme is to be found in chapter seven in the section on bureaucracy and economic relations.

In 1930 Trotsky reaffirmed his commitment to 'the maximum rate of industrialisation and collectivisation'.<sup>36</sup> Indeed, all that Trotsky wrote on the subject demonstrates that he believed that a socialist society would and could only be a highly industrialised society. But this does not mean that his position, at all times, was to call for more and more industry. R.W. Davies calls attention to the changing emphases in Trotsky's policy prescriptions in 'Trotsky and the Debate on Industrialisation in the USSR'.<sup>37</sup>

For example, during 1925, as an economic administrator, Trotsky warned that the proportions between industry and agriculture could be disrupted by over-stimulating industry.<sup>38</sup> He then urged caution. Similarly he argued that the forced pace of industrialisation during the first five-year plan was a source of great danger.<sup>39</sup> The 'maximum rate' should be taken not as the statistical maximum but the economic optimum, defined as 'the most logical, most economically safe rate, which alone is capable of insuring a high rate in the future.'<sup>40</sup> So anxious did Trotsky become that he called for the start of the second five-year plan to be delayed by a year. 1933 should, he argued, be a 'year of capital reconstruction' in which a proper assessment could be made of the achievements and deficiencies of the first plan and appropriate action taken, so that the second plan would start from a sound basis. Otherwise the growing 'crisis' could lead to

'catastrophe'.<sup>41</sup>

In his first comments on the plan, Trotsky suggested that it was not a well considered policy. A 'crude break of pace', implemented 'empirically', had immensely increased costs. The apparatus had not freely accepted the new policy and would try to disrupt it: for the moment, administrators 'stand for it' rather than 'sitting' (in prison).<sup>42</sup> Two months later, in December 1929, Trotsky suggested that the USSR, as a result of the racing pace of industrialisation, was faced with 'a disturbance of the total economic equilibrium and consequently of the social equilibrium.'<sup>43</sup> 'Novyi Khozyaistvennyi Kurs v SSSR', written in early 1930, Trotsky's first systematic consideration of the new policy, continued and developed these concerns.

The objective data is beginning to show ever more convincingly, as could have been foreseen theoretically, that the take-off lacked the forces to sustain it. The industrialisation is more and more kept going by by administrative whip. Equipment and labour power are being strained. Disproportions in production are accumulating in different fields of industry. Delays in the coming quarters of the year may prove more threatening than in the first. The government, for its part, feels compelled to fill the newly opened industrial gaps by making greater budget or credit allocations. This leads to inflation, which, in its turn, causes an artificial increase in the demand for goods, and consequently makes individual branches of industry go beyond the targets of the plan, adding new disproportions.<sup>44</sup>

In this lengthy article Trotsky anticipates the objection that planning is just what the Opposition had called for. In essence, Trotsky's reply was that the new policy was not so much one of planning but of 'unrestrained subjectivism'. The Opposition 'never regarded the resources for industrialisation as inexhaustible; ... never thought that its tempo could be regulated by the administrative whip alone; ... never undertook "in the shortest possible time to overtake and outstrip" the capitalist world.' The Opposition always advanced 'the necessity for systematic improvement in the conditions of the working class; ... always considered

collectivisation dependent upon industrialisation; ... never demanded ... the liquidation of classes within the scope of a five-year plan.' Successful planning needs a free discussion of economic questions: 'it cannot be an a priori bureaucratic command'. The Party must be revived; 'Soviet democracy ... has become an economic necessity.' The most immediate and urgent measure is to implement the 'strictest financial discipline', as a first step toward 'general economic discipline'. Plans and their tempos must be realistic.<sup>45</sup>

Trotsky's attitude to the policy of complete collectivisation was similarly scathing. He regarded it as 'bureaucratic adventurism', with no chance of success.<sup>46</sup> A letter to followers in the USSR dated 7 February, 1930, presents his first reactions to the dramatic acceleration of collectivisation. The policy was a gamble which flowed from the theory of socialism in one country; 'never, at any stage, directly or indirectly, can we solidarise ourselves with an illusory policy flowing from a false theoretical premise.'<sup>47</sup> In this preliminary appraisal he also delineates a view which is frequently found in his later writings on the subject. Complete collectivisation in the given circumstances is no solution to the problems of class contradictions in the countryside. These contradictions will simply re-emerge within the collectives; a kulak stratum will reappear. An 'Open letter to the CPSU' (1930) warned that:

With their present means of production and the conditions of market economy that accompany them, the collective farms will unfailingly bring forth from their ranks a new layer of peasant exploiters. The administrative destruction of the kulak class outside the collectives not only fails to alter the economic fabric of the peasantry, but cannot prevent the development of kulakism inside the collective farms. This will be demonstrated primarily in the artels that are the most successful. By proclaiming that the collective farms are socialist enterprises, the present leadership provides<sup>48</sup> an excellent camouflage for the kulaks within the collectives.

By 1930 Trotsky was finding it increasingly difficult to keep events in the USSR in sharp focus. Throughout his commentaries on collectivisation there is a sub-theme that the extent of collectivisation resulted less from the exercise of force than from the mass reaction of the peasantry to the new conjuncture. His initial response to the rapid extension of collectivisation saw it as a peasant reaction to the administrative suppression of NEP.

The gate of the market was padlocked. The peasants stood frightened in front of it awhile, and then<sup>49</sup> rushed through the only open door, that of collectivisation.

Trotsky even declared that the leadership had been surprised by the sudden rush of the peasants into the collectives.<sup>50</sup> In a more developed piece, 'K Kapitalizmu ili k Sotsializmu', written for the *Byulleten' Oppozitsii* at the end of April, Trotsky was still suggesting that it was 'absolutely absurd' to see collectivisation as a whole as the 'product of naked violence.' Once again the mass character of collectivisation is presented as dependent on peasant initiative in the face of the end of NEP.<sup>51</sup>

To some followers in the USSR, Trotsky's critique of collectivisation seemed to be a revision of earlier positions. The Opposition had criticised the NEP for many years; Trotsky had frequently referred to it as a 'retreat'.<sup>52</sup> Some Left Oppositionists urged compromise with the Stalinists; they argued that it was not the Opposition who had changed but the policy makers. Trotsky protested his consistency: the ruling group is Centrist; it possesses no firm basis in the rival poles of proletariat and bourgeoisie. It can be pushed and pulled in either direction. The policy of the Stalinist leadership is consistently inconsistent: a policy of zig-zags. After the neglect of planning, the needs of industry, and the growth of the influence of the kulaks, Stalin had reversed his policy but with no more thought than before for the objective situation of the economy. Policy thus continued to be bureaucratically determined,

subjective and empiricist.<sup>53</sup>

Trotsky argued, as he had before, that the possibility of transforming the social relations of agricultural production depended on the capacity of the industrial economy to provide the means for the technical restructuring of agriculture on a higher basis. The question of organisational form, in this perspective, was a secondary question and could not be given primacy. Thus he maintained that Lenin's plan for agriculture linked building of co-operatives and the electrification of the country. Socialist agriculture would not be created by 'organisational, credit and state-administrative methods', but by 'mechanisation, tractorisation and electrification.'<sup>54</sup> Trotsky took this view against advocates of market orientated peasant co-operatives, such as Bukharin, at the high point of NEP, and then returned to it to oppose the Stalinist project of complete collectivisation.

Trotsky argued that there was no necessary reason for the productivity of labour on a collective farm to be above that on an individual farm. The question turned on the balance between the level of collectivisation and the level of the forces of production.<sup>55</sup> Successful collective farms depended upon the provision of agricultural machinery, and the successful utilisation of machinery depended upon the provision of fuel and power. But, as Trotsky noted in 'K Kapitalizmu ili k Sotsializmu', 'a tractor with fuel is nothing in itself; it becomes effective only as an integral part of a whole chain in which the links are technological development and great achievement in general.'<sup>56</sup> The technical base had to be created alongside or in advance of the creation of the collective farm; if not, the collective would fall apart while waiting for the technical base. As Nove observes, in a discussion of Trotsky's first exile articles for the *Byulleten' Oppozitsii*, he believed, unquestioningly, that if only enough

tractors (with fuel, spare parts etc.) could be provided, the peasants would immediately adopt collectivisation. 'Stalin', Nove argues, 'brutal though he was, seemed to have been more realistic about peasant attitudes.'<sup>57</sup>

With Stalin, Trotsky accepted that socialist agriculture would be a collectivised agriculture, but he believed that force could not bring this about. A correctly constructed plan of collectivisation would combine ideological activity with economic pressure, such pressure being designed to give real advantages to the collective farmer in place of threats from a militiaman. In the face of peasant reaction to the administrative campaign it had been correct to cry: 'Hold back!'<sup>58</sup> Trotsky, quoting his own speech of April 1919, declared that he had always been opposed to compulsory collectivisation. This speech proposed that the socialisation of the agricultural economy could in no way be accomplished against the wishes of the peasantry, but only by 'educational measures, measures of persuasion, of support, of example, of encouragement.'<sup>59</sup>

In his attitude to the agrarian question Trotsky did not deal in absolutes. He was not simply 'against the kulak' or 'in favour of collectivisation'. In 1925, despite his general concern about the NEP as a basis for the degeneration of the regime, he had been quite prepared to facilitate the development of capitalism in the countryside (i.e. to nurture the kulak) in order to build the forces of agricultural production.<sup>60</sup> Although he had warned constantly in 1926, 1927 and 1928 of the dangers presented by the growth of the strength of the kulaks, he opposed the liquidation of the kulaks as a class as an absurdly irrational enterprise. While having argued consistently that collectivist policies would ultimately be the way forward in agriculture, he recognised that their adoption in Stalinist form was 'pushing the country full speed toward

the most dangerous crisis and the worst catastrophe.'<sup>61</sup> In his 'Open Letter to the CPSU' of March 1930 he called for a retreat from adventurist positions, summing up his proposals as follows:

Put an end to "complete" collectivisation, replacing it with a careful selection based on real freedom of choice. Make the collective correspond to the resources actually available. Put an end to the policy of administrative abolition of the kulak. Curbing the exploitative tendencies of the kulak will remain a necessary policy for many years. The fundamental policy with regard to the kulak holdings must consist of a rigid contract system, that is, a contract with government organs obliging the kulak to furnish specific products at specific prices.<sup>62</sup>

Trotsky's attitudes to economic questions were flexible. They were related to the wider question of how, at a given moment, to shift the balance of forces in favour of the proletariat. Such a problem could not be resolved in terms of absolute and rigid injunctions. The dictatorship of the proletariat existed in an isolated country with a population that was overwhelmingly peasant. This meant that the smychka (link) between proletariat and peasantry was of decisive importance in the stability of the regime. Only by sustaining a balance of interests between the potentially opposed forces of proletariat and peasantry would it be possible to maintain the regime until its isolation could be ended. At the same time maintenance of the regime demanded economic development within the limits set by capitalist encirclement. A prerequisite of such development was harmony between industry and agriculture and the recognition of the mutual interdependence of their needs. A dynamic equilibrium had to be established, with industry as the leading principle.<sup>63</sup> A bureaucratic and violent collectivisation campaign threatened to disrupt the equilibrium as much as the unchecked growth of kulak agriculture under the conditions of NEP. Whilst Trotsky's critique of economic policy appears to change, it must be recognised that the target was itself moving. His positions are essentially grounded in a concern for the preservation of the smychka on terms set by the workers' state.



Section Four: Coalitions and United Fronts

Trotsky is popularly seen as intransigent, and even sectarian. However, in the Party and in exile, he was always ready to look for common ground with others in the pursuit of shared objectives, provided the ultimate independence of political tendencies was recognised by all. In one sense, the history of Trotsky's opposition to Stalin is the history of his attempts to find valid *oppositional combinations*. In 1923 the opposition he inspired was composed of a bloc of his own associates with others having previous affiliations to oppositions that he had once criticised. In 1926 and 1927, despite disagreements, the Trotskyists worked together with the Leningrad Opposition, although its leader, Zinoviev, had been Trotsky's sharpest critic between 1917 and 1923. Throughout, Trotsky based his political conduct on principle and not personality, striving to achieve an appropriate balance between rigorous programmatic definition and the construction of united fronts with those of similar but not identical persuasions. He saw the origin of common activity in the negotiation of a boundary between the primary and the secondary, always accepting that these were relative concepts which acquired their meanings in context.

To make a bloc with others to oppose a common enemy presupposed at least a minimal unity of purpose, but not of ultimate conviction. The possibility of agreement would depend both on the nature of the common enemy and on the delineation of primary and secondary divisions. For example, blocs with social democrats against fascists were desirable, but against Stalinists were impermissible. Trotsky made his positions clear in several letters to Victor Serge after his release from prison in the USSR in 1936. One commented on the position adopted by Ciliga after his release. Trotsky regarded Ciliga's advocacy of an alliance with the Mensheviks as 'a pile of nonsense'.<sup>64</sup> To claim, as Ciliga did, that, in the

USSR, democracy would be a step forward from Bonapartism, is to ignore the class nature of the Soviet state. In a later letter to Serge he responded to Ciliga's claim that a bloc with Dan, the Menshevik leader, against Stalinist reaction is just as acceptable as a bloc with Blum, the French Socialist leader, against fascism.

In comparison with the fascists, Blum represents a lesser evil. But can it be said that the Mensheviks represent a lesser evil in comparison with the Stalinists? If, in the USSR, we had only choice between the Stalinists and the Mensheviks, we would obviously have to pick the Stalinists, since the Mensheviks can serve only as stepladders for the bourgeoisie.<sup>65</sup>

In the disputes of 1926-27 Trotsky had regarded the policies advocated most strongly by Bukharin and the Rightists as the major target. He saw the Left as standing for the proletariat and the Right as an unconscious representative of the bourgeoisie. The defeat of the Opposition in 1927 was taken as confirmation of the strength of the Right and an indication of future developments. According to Trotsky, Thermidor could approach very quickly.

... those who expect that the backsliding process will continue at the present rate for a number of years may make a major error. That is the most improbable of all perspectives. In the process of decline, very precipitous shifts can and will occur under the pressure of domestic and external bourgeois forces. How long these shifts will take cannot be predicted. They could take a much shorter time than we think.<sup>66</sup>

In 1928, moves by the Centrists against the Rightists and their policies, and the consequent criticism by the Rightists of bureaucracy, complicated the political issues. Policies to curb the relative prosperity of the kulak and the merchant were welcome to Trotsky and pointed to support for the Centrists against the Rightists. Yet it could be argued that the cautious criticism of bureaucracy by the Rightists suggested that joint action by the Left and Right against the Centre was appropriate.

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Trotsky's strategic orientation derived from his analysis of class relations. In his view, the changes in policy weakened the bourgeoisie, therefore they were to be supported; in matters of Party politics the self-criticism of bureaucrats may be only an affectation but, on the question of grain collections, policy objectively undermines the kulaks whatever the intentions of its authors.<sup>67</sup> In 1928, before collectivisation, Trotsky emphasised the common ground between the Left and Centre: 'We are unconditionally ... ready to support the present official turn ... with all our forces and resources.'<sup>68</sup> It represents a 'step in our direction', it increases 'the chances of reforming the Party without great upheavals'; we are 'completely, and to the utmost of our ability', ready to assist. Alongside these commitments, however, there is a warning that the changes must not be overestimated; they represent 'an inconsistent and contradictory step.' 'It is not only what you do, but how you conceive of what you do' that is important. The change in policy is a response to the Opposition's critique. Trotsky warns against the 'political empiricism' of the Centrists, suggesting that the new orientation is in jeopardy since it is not based on theoretically rigorous perceptions. The Rightist tail will turn against the Centrist head, Trotsky predicted, using a favourite but rather opaque image. 'We are necessary to the Party precisely in order to deal with this "tail".'<sup>69</sup>

Trotsky's 'Declaration' to the Sixth Comintern Congress contained a classic formulation of his position towards the other major factions of the Party.

Can the Opposition support the Right against the Centrists, who formally hold power - in order to help overthrow them, to "avenge ourselves" on them for the odious persecution, the rudeness and disloyalty, the "Wrangel officer," Article 58, and other deliberately vicious deeds? There have been such combinations between the right and left in [past] revolutions. Such combinations have also ruined revolutions. In our Party the Right represents the link which the bourgeois classes secretly hold onto, to drag the revolution onto the path of Thermidor. At the present moment, the Centre is trying to resist, or

half-resist. It is clear: the Opposition cannot have anything in common with such combinationist adventurism, counting on the Right to overthrow the Centre.

The Opposition supports every step, even a hesitant one, toward the proletarian line, every attempt, even an indecisive one, to resist the Thermidorian elements. The Opposition does so and will do so completely independently of whether the Centre, which continues to look to the Right, wants it or not.<sup>70</sup>

Thus, the task of the Opposition is to serve the Party, but it cannot do this by renouncing its positions. Its duty is to maintain its agitation in order to strengthen the moves towards a proletarian line and expose the hesitancy and hypocrisy of the Centrists.

While supporting against the Right every step of the Centre toward the Left, the Opposition should (and will) criticise the complete insufficiency of such steps and the lack of guarantees in the entire present turn, since it continues to be carried out on the basis of orders from on high and does not really emanate from the Party.<sup>71</sup>

Trotsky's orientation towards the Right and Centre was both strategic and tactical, both theoretical and political. He believed that the Right represented the pressure of the national and international bourgeoisie on the Soviet state, not an independent factor but 'a petty bourgeois, opportunistic, bureaucratic, Menshevik, conciliationist wing that pulls towards the bourgeoisie.'<sup>72</sup> On this basis there could hardly be a tactical, let alone a strategic alignment. However, the particular formulations adopted by Trotsky reflect his current perceptions of the political conjuncture. After the July plenum of the Central Committee had given a temporary victory, or perhaps stay of execution, to the Rightists, Trotsky summoned comrades 'immediately, with all our might, [to] strike the first blow against the Right.'<sup>73</sup> Once it had become clear that the offensive against the Right had been resumed, Trotsky changes his emphasis. Somewhat unconvincingly he states that 'all along' his target had been the Centrists.

Comrade Nevelson, in his letter about the direction of our fire, comes to the absolutely indisputable conclusion that the main fire must be directed against Centrism as the camouflage and source of support for the Rights within the Party. Unfortunately, comrade Nevelson did not notice that that is what we have been doing all along. Against whom did we aim our fire

in all our articles and speeches, in the Platform, etc.? Against Stalin. And against Bukharin, to the extent that the latter identified himself with Stalin. In our Platform a few dozen lines were devoted to the Rights. ... All the fire of our criticism, all<sup>74</sup> along, has been concentrated almost exclusively on the Centrists.

The task of the Opposition, by October, had become 'implacably to oppose to the Centrists the proletarian core of the Party'. Even if it would be 'ridiculous doctrinairism' to rule out a bloc with 'one or another part of the present Centre' for all time, 'it would be losing one's head entirely to steer a course at present toward a bloc with the Centrists as they are now.'<sup>75</sup> Trotsky's position in 1928 was: no bloc with the Centrists for the present, no bloc with the Rightists now or in the future.

The only kind of alignment with the Right which Trotsky was prepared to entertain was an agreement to facilitate the restoration of Party democracy. Such a move was proposed in a letter of 12 September 1928. Replying to Shatunovsky, the 'well-meaning Party member of the Right' who had corresponded with him, Trotsky concludes by proposing some practical measures to restore legality in the Party: check bureaucratic arbitrariness through a cut of ninety-five per cent in the Party budget; hold a genuine Party congress, prepared by open discussion; introduce the secret ballot. 'On the basis of these proposals we would even be willing to negotiate with the Rights.'<sup>76</sup> Even this was too much for some fellow Oppositionists. A memorandum written by Trotsky in December 1928 reports the indignation of some comrades. Trotsky's response was that negotiations for an agreement on a strictly defined issue did not, in any way, add up to a bloc. Any agreement that might be concluded could be compared to an agreement between duellists on their rules of conduct.<sup>77</sup>

In foreign exile Trotsky's attitude remained, at first, much as it had been in 1928. 'There cannot even be talk of a bloc between the Left Opposition and the Right Opposition', he wrote to comrades in the USSR in

March 1929.<sup>78</sup> As before, however, this did not preclude agreements for the purpose of regenerating Party democracy. In October 1930, Trotsky declared his support for Rakovsky's idea of a coalition Central Committee, one composed of Right, Centre, and Left. This proposal was in line with the demands of the Left Opposition and could provide a useful slogan; 'there can be no objections in principle ... we have always said ... that we remained at the disposal of the Party.'<sup>79</sup> The Opposition did not leave the Central Committee of its own free will; it was expelled. Since the Right remained in the Central Committee, a coalition meant the inclusion of the Left. This was indispensable in the face of political crisis.

Of course there can be no question of the Stalinists agreeing to such a combination any earlier than the last twenty-four hours before the onset of the crisis. ... the proletarian nucleus of the Party senses the approaching danger and is looking for a way out. ... This nucleus cannot set itself the task of handing leadership and power over to the Left Opposition: it does not have that kind of confidence in the Opposition, and even if it did, such a radical change in the leadership would look more like a palace coup than a reform of the Party to the Party masses. The slogan of a coalition Central Committee is much more suitable as a slogan that, on the eve of crisis or in its midst, could become the slogan of broad layers of the Party.

This slogan has the merit of simplicity. It might appeal to 'a wide layer of opinion in the Party' as 'the only means of saving the Party from a complete collapse, with the danger of its being buried for good.' The Party has become 'so stagnant, atomised, repressed, and above all, disoriented' that its reawakening will begin with 'the most elementary slogans.' 'Let Stalin, Molotov, Bukharin, Rykov, Rakovsky, and Trotsky unite, if only to clean the riffraff out ...' this 'primitive idea' could play a 'serious role'. The Left would enter such a coalition 'only in the name of much broader aims.' This slogan 'could bring the masses of the Party out of their stupor and bring the Left Opposition out of its present isolation, which constitutes the main danger in the entire situation.'

A few weeks later, after a further campaign against the Right Opposition which he had expected to lead to their expulsion from the Central Committee, Trotsky became rather less enthusiastic. 'Even now,' Trotsky wrote, 'the slogan ... may appear to the broad circles of the Party as the only one capable of finding a way out of the chaos.' But 'a coalition central committee in itself would not solve anything.' Trotsky's support was conditional; he put renewed emphasis on the real premise of Party regeneration, 'a deep internal struggle' for the Opposition's platform. With full freedom to wage this struggle the Bolshevik-Leninists would not resist a coalition.<sup>80</sup> After this article Trotsky makes little reference to the question of a coalition Central Committee. The 1931 Theses, an important document written by Trotsky as the position of the International Left Opposition, are silent on this matter. Some months later, however, 'Ob'yasneniya v Krugu Druzei', an article for the *Byulleten' Oppozitsii*, discusses the idea: Trotsky still considers it a valid slogan, referring to it here as a proposal for 'an organisational commission for the reconstruction of the Party.'<sup>81</sup>

Even if the slogan is given no emphasis, the underlying issue did not go away. Trotsky frequently considered the possibility of agreements with other groups. There were two kinds of alliances to consider: with the incumbent leaders to reorient policy; and, with other critics to force changes. The differences were analogous to the distinctions between the tactics of united front 'from above' and 'from below' that had occupied the leaders of the Comintern during the 1920s in their discussion of class unity with socialist workers. Trotsky himself compared the declaration of 22 August, 1929, by Rakovsky and others, to a united front policy towards the 'official Communist Parties'.<sup>82</sup> The appeal for coalition effectively amounted to a tactic of united front 'from above'. Trotsky was prepared to pursue both forms of united front; no doubt he would have argued that these



were tactically interrelated.

During the period of the first five-year plan Trotsky's political tactics were moderate, both because of his basic conviction that reform remained viable, and because of his sense that the economic dislocations were so great that 'catastrophe looms over the Communist Party of the Soviet Union.'<sup>83</sup> Indeed, as the dangers increased Trotsky's moderation grew. By autumn 1932, as is shown by his proposals for a new Left Opposition statement to circulate in the USSR, Trotsky's position had become minimalist. The basic Opposition aim should be 'to say to the Party: "We are here! Having remained on the old principled positions, we are at the disposal of the Party and the working class ..." ' Revenge has no place in the Opposition's politics; the one immediate objective is 'to be admitted into common work in the present extremely difficult conditions. ... We should display the greatest tact, and should by no means indiscriminately proclaim the present leadership personnel "everywhere worthless." Not only Stalin and Molotov, but Zinoviev and Kamenev, Rykov and Tomsky, can still serve the Party, if they will revive it. The Left Opposition does not exclude anyone in advance; it demands only that they do not exclude it.'<sup>84</sup> In 'Signal Trevogi', a substantial article written in March 1933, Trotsky made yet another appeal for a united front. 'We are ready to work hand in hand with everyone who is willing to reconstitute the Party and prevent a catastrophe.' Let the Left Opposition and all Party members worthy of the name unite around the demand for an honest Party congress.

To assist the formation of a united front Trotsky was even prepared publicly to renounce the slogan 'Down with Stalin!'. In 'Signal Trevogi' he declares:

The slogan 'Down with Stalin!' is spreading everywhere throughout the Party and outside of it. ... But we consider this slogan

incorrect. ... [It] may be understood, and inevitably would be, as a slogan for the overthrow of the faction now in power, and even more - the overthrow of the apparatus. But we do not want to overthrow the system but to reform it by the efforts of the best proletarian elements.<sup>85</sup>

This revision of tactics was undoubtedly conditioned by the Party upheavals of 1932, discussed in the next section. Before the realignment of opposition forces in the autumn Trotsky attacked Stalin directly and called publicly for his removal. For instance, his open letter to the Presidium of the Central Executive Committee, dated 1 March 1932, and published in April, attacks Stalin in particularly strident tones. Trotsky, protesting against his recent deprivation of citizenship, asks the Presidium: 'Do you want to follow the Stalinist road any further? ... Stalin has brought you to an impasse. You cannot proceed without liquidating Stalinism. You must rely on the working class and give the proletarian vanguard the possibility, through free criticism from top to bottom, to review the whole Soviet system ... It is time to carry out at last Lenin's final and insistent advice: remove Stalin!'<sup>86</sup>

In the autumn of 1932 the slogan 'Down with Stalin!' was not used, and in 1933 it was explicitly repudiated. This followed discussion between Trotsky and his son, Sedov. In October, Trotsky wrote to Sedov that the call was correct in the specific sense in which Lenin had raised it in the Testament, but he argued that to demand the removal of Stalin when the Left lacks strength is dangerous. 'Miliukov, the Mensheviks, and all kinds of Thermidorians' will willingly echo it, and 'within a few months' Stalin may have to defend himself against this pressure. Then, temporarily, the Left would have to support him; in the present situation, therefore, the slogan is ambiguous.<sup>87</sup> In another document of the same period, possibly a draft of an article, Trotsky refers again to the pressure of Thermidor being so great that a united front with the Stalinists and even with a significant

sector of the Right is a real possibility; this would be hampered if the Left continued with the demand to remove Stalin.<sup>88</sup> The very popularity of the slogan underlies its disadvantage. 'To assume a protective colouring and politically dissolve into the general dissatisfaction with the Stalinist regime is something we cannot, we will not, and we must not do.'

In his proposal for a new Left Opposition statement to circulate in the USSR, Trotsky tried to draw a distinction between the slogans 'Down with Stalin!' and 'Down with the personal regime!'<sup>89</sup> To Sedov this was unacceptable. He argued that Trotsky should strengthen the resolve of the other oppositional groups who were prepared to call for Stalin's dismissal.<sup>90</sup> In reply Trotsky thought that to continue with the slogan might, in fact, undermine the creation of a broad consensus for reform. It was vital to reassure the disillusioned bureaucrats that the Left would not embark on a purge.<sup>91</sup>

As late as 15 March, 1933, Trotsky tried yet again to make common cause with the Stalin leadership. In a letter sent in one copy only, 'exclusively for the attention of the Politburo', he declared his readiness for preliminary talks without any publicity. He emphasised that the real issue was not power for one faction or another, but 'the fate of the workers' state and of the international revolution for many years to come. ... Only the open and honest collaboration of the two historically rooted factions ... can ... revive the Party.' The ruling faction must allow the Left Opposition to defend its own programme within the Party, but the method of presentation, 'not to mention how it could be realised in practice', should be regulated by a preliminary agreement 'with the aim of preventing disturbances and a rupture.'<sup>92</sup> This letter confirms what is apparent from other documents cited in these pages: on the eve of his repudiation of reformism, Trotsky's position had become

very moderate. Previous appeals to the Stalin leadership, the 'Open Letter' of 1 March 1932, for instance, had been less conciliatory.<sup>93</sup> It is as if Trotsky was testing the flexibility of his formula to the limit before it broke.

By late March 1933, Trotsky seems to have decided that attacks on Stalin could be resumed. He does not explicitly reinstate the slogan 'Down with Stalin!', but his article in issue 34 of the *Byulleten' Oppozitsii*, 'Nuzhno Chestnoe Vnutripartiinoe Soglashenie', is much more directly critical of Stalin than 'Signal Trevogi', published in the previous issue. By this time Hitler's parliamentary coup in Germany had succeeded and Trotsky had become convinced of the need for a new Communist Party to replace the KPD (Communist Party of Germany). Furthermore, his last appeal to the Politburo had received no response.

Did Trotsky believe in the possibility of compromise? Commenting in private on the Rakovsky declaration of August 1929, Trotsky suggested that its purpose was propagandistic, since the nature of the Stalinists' reply was 'obvious beforehand'.<sup>94</sup> A June 1932 article, making an appeal for unity, had declared: 'we know that the Stalinists will not accept our proposal ... we seek not friendship with the bureaucracy but collaboration in struggle with the proletarian vanguard.'<sup>95</sup> The March 1933 letter to the Politburo was sent at precisely the same time as Trotsky began to discard the perspective of reform, although, for the time being, he concluded that only Germany needed a second party.

It would seem clear that Trotsky had no illusions that Stalin would respond to his appeals but he obviously felt they were worth making. In the unlikely event of them being heeded, some political progress might result. If they were not, Trotsky could demonstrate his loyalty to the

Party and return accusations of factionalism. In May 1933, six weeks after its original dispatch, Trotsky sent copies of his secret letter to a number of Party and Government officials in the USSR, declaring that the silence it had received was an illustration of 'bureaucratic blindness' towards potential crisis.<sup>96</sup>

#### Section Five: In Search of Allies: 1932

'Signal Trevogi' (March 1933) summons all 'true revolutionists' for the struggle against 'bureaucratic Centrism ... the chief source of danger.' Who now did Trotsky include among the 'true revolutionists'? In 1932 and 1933 he still viewed the Right critically. In October 1932, in 'Stalinitz Prinimayut Mery', an article discussing the second expulsion of Zinoviev and Kamenev, Trotsky comments that Uglanov and Riutin, major figures of the Right, now also expelled, had admitted as early as 1928 that the Left Opposition had been correct in its stand on Party democracy. Trotsky warned that solidarity on this issue 'cannot cause a change of heart of the Left Opposition in relation to the Right Opposition.' Today, he asserts, both Left and Right urge a retreat in economic policy; this helps the Stalinists to 'dump them in the same heap'. But it should not be forgotten that the Rights are a faction of 'permanent retreat'. Even if there are tactical coincidences, the strategic lines of the Left and the Right are antagonistic.<sup>97</sup>

At about this time Trotsky wrote a letter to the USSR calling for a new Opposition statement. In a postscript concerning the Right Opposition he warns that the present mood favours the Right and that 'in the first stage of the turn' disagreements between the different tendencies will not be clear. For precisely that reason 'it is intolerable to mix up the ranks

and blunt the distinctions'; the more so because clarification must proceed not only on Russian but also international questions. Trotsky implied there would be considerable differences on the latter.<sup>98</sup> 'Nuzhno Chestnoe Vnutripartiinoe Soglashenie', a later article dated 30 March 1933, invites the co-operation of disaffected elements of the Centre rather than looking to the Right for allies. This last appeal to the Party for reform still sees the key to the present crisis in the relations between the Left Opposition and the Stalinists and semi-Stalinists. The Right, as such, are ignored; the focus is on the 'liberal bureaucrats' who support Stalin in public but privately criticise.<sup>99</sup>

Despite Trotsky's hesitations, there had, however, been some change in his attitude to the Right in the winter and spring of 1933. In 'Signal Trevogi' Trotsky explicitly directs the slogan 'Revive the Party!' to the Right Opposition as well as other groups.<sup>100</sup> Two months earlier, with unusual tolerance, he had suggested that the Rightists might, in certain circumstances, 'support the revival of the Party along the revolutionary road.'<sup>101</sup> One theme of Trotsky's writings of this period is that the Party regime prevents clarification; confused Party members may unintentionally stumble towards the Right. 'We have no doubt that the Right wing will produce from its midst not a few elements who will find their place and make their stand on our side of the barricades.'<sup>102</sup>

The partial reassessment of the Rightists and the reconsideration of tactics leading to dropping the slogan 'Down with Stalin!' were dictated by the internal political upheavals of the Party in the second half of 1932. All sections of the Party, including the Stalinist faction, had been greatly shaken by the consequences of collectivisation. Opposition to Stalin and his policies grew and in 1932 apparently assumed significant proportions. In June, in 'Stalinskaya Byurokratiya v Tiskakh', Trotsky

wrote that letters from the Soviet Union indicated that 'the Left Opposition is achieving a second enrolment throughout the entire country.'<sup>103</sup> In December, writing for the Internal Bulletin of the Communist League of America, he summed up the progress of the past year.

Many hundreds, perhaps even thousands, of former capitulators, particularly workers, have returned to the path of the Opposition; these are the elements which in the spring of 1928 honestly but prematurely believed in the principled change of the official course. The places of exile and imprisonment are constantly being filled with such "backsliders". Among the older generation of Bolsheviks, including those who only yesterday were ardent Stalinists, can be observed the complete decay of Stalin and his group and a decided turn toward greater attention and estimation of the Left Opposition.<sup>104</sup>

Roy Medvedev confirms that in 1932-33 hundreds of Trotskyists were arrested, 'some for a real but many for an imaginary connection with Trotsky.'<sup>105</sup> There also seems to have been a revival of activity among former, non-Trotskyist, oppositionists and an increasing mood of criticism even among the Stalinist faction. In 1936 Stalin, calling for the 'resignation' of Yagoda and his replacement by Yezhov, asserted that the OGPU was 'four years behind' in 'unmasking the Trotskyist-Zinovievite bloc.'<sup>106</sup> Why four? The Moscow trials of 1936-38 all referred to 1932 as the origin of the 'conspiracies'. Whatever fantasies Vyshinsky conjured, the emphasis on 1932 does not seem to have been pure invention. At that time there was certainly a renewed critical debate within the Party. Again Medvedev is informative.

A real anti-Stalinist opposition that did arise in the early thirties was the Riutin group. M.N. Riutin worked in the Central Committee apparat in 1930 and then was head of one of the Moscow raion committees. Disturbed by the failures in collectivisation and industrialisation, and by increasing ferocity in the Party, Riutin and P.A. Galkin organised an opposition group in Moscow, drawing in some of Bukharin's students (including D. Maretskii and A. Slepko) and some supporters of Zinoviev and Kamenev. The philosopher Ia.E. Sten and such once prominent Party officials as P.G. Petrovskii and N.A. Uglanov also joined this group. The Riutin group was essentially conspiratorial in nature. Its main goal was to remove Stalin and to change Party policies in the direction of greater democratisation, greater consideration for needs<sup>4</sup> the interests of workers and peasants, and an end to repression within the Party. Zinoviev and Kamenev were familiar

with the documents and the platform of this organisation.<sup>107</sup> Serge also refers to the Riutin platform, apparently a document of 160 pages.<sup>108</sup> The programme was, it seems, distributed in Moscow factories, to Zinoviev and Kamenev, and to several Left Oppositionists.<sup>109</sup> Riutin, with his associates, was expelled from the Party by a resolution of the Central Control Commission of 9 October 1932; Zinoviev and Kamenev were found guilty of assisting the group and similarly dismissed. Shortly after this a new 'group' of critics was discovered: the Eismont, Tolmachev, and A.P. Smirnov troika.<sup>110</sup> It seems that their 'crime' had been to discuss the removal of Stalin as General Secretary. All this indicates the growth of dissent, and even opposition, extending to high levels in Party and government; Eismont was People's Commissar of Supply in RSFSR and Smirnov was a former Commissar of Agriculture of the RSFSR.

At a distance it must have been extremely difficult for Trotsky to gauge the significance of the upheavals within the Party. In October 1932 he wrote 'Stalinty Prinimayut Mery', an article on the expulsion of Zinoviev and Kamenev, which is full of generalities. Clearly he had little, as yet, on which to base his assessments apart from the list of the expelled and the official indictment. Throughout the four thousand word article he gives no indication of any close knowledge of the situation. He assumes that the inclusion of Zinoviev and Kamenev with many right wingers is a fictional 'amalgam', and that two former Trotskyists have been thrown in for good measure. He derides the notion that there was any sympathy between Zinoviev, Kamenev, and the Rightists. He seems sure that Zinoviev and Kamenev have been expelled not for any change in their behaviour but because of a change in 'circumstances'. As former leaders of an opposition, still with Party membership, they are alternatives to Stalin even without presenting their application. Zinoviev and Kamenev, and by implication other capitulators from the Left Opposition, are 'Party



"liberals" who, at a given moment, rushed too far to the left or too far to the right and who subsequently took the road of coming to terms with the ruling bureaucracy. ... The sharpness of the contradictions and the intensity of the alarm in the Party more and more drive the moderate, cautious, and always-ready-for-compromise Party "liberals" onto the road of protest. The bureaucracy, caught in a blind alley, immediately replies with repression, to a large degree as a preventative measure.<sup>111</sup> In this article there is no suggestion of any knowledge of the Riutin platform and no hint of a change in Trotsky's attitude to the Rightists. His conclusion is that the real target of the Stalinists was not the Rightists but Zinoviev and Kamenev.

Many of Stalin's new critics had adopted a sympathetic posture towards the Left and this laid the basis for a new oppositional bloc incorporating the Trotskyists and the Zinovievists, with contacts to the Right. The critics operated clandestinely, for obvious reasons, and, therefore, little is known about their negotiations, but on the basis of correspondence between Trotsky and Sedov in the Trotsky archive it is beyond doubt that an oppositional bloc was being formed in the autumn of 1932, as both Pierre Broué and J. Arch Getty have observed.<sup>112</sup> Trotsky encouraged these moves; a covert supporter, I.M. Smirnov, played a central part in establishing the bloc.<sup>113</sup> Unfortunately for the historian, these letters are undated, and, for security reasons, are abbreviated and deliberately obscure. However, internal evidence, and comparison with Trotsky's commentary on the expulsion of Zinoviev and Kamenev, suggests that the correspondence did not begin before late October.

The preparation for this alignment had started more than a year previously. In Berlin, in July 1931, Ivan Smirnov met Leon Sedov. Smirnov, whose capitulation in 1929 had been distinguished by a refusal to

condemn Trotsky, was open and sympathetic. He wished to maintain contact with Trotsky, was fully prepared to supply news of the current situation in the USSR, and was ready even for a 'bloc' to exchange views and information. Since his return to Moscow was imminent he arranged for a trusted intermediary to act as a contact with Sedov.<sup>114</sup> Through this comrade, E.S. Goltsman, Smirnov supplied an article on the Soviet economy in the aftermath of collectivisation and the first years of the plan, published subsequently in the *Byulleten' Oppozitsii*.<sup>115</sup>

The bloc mooted by Sedov and Smirnov apparently came into being in the autumn of 1932, after several meetings between Sedov and Goltsman. Sedov confirmed its existence to Trotsky in a letter written, unusually, in 'invisible' ink.<sup>116</sup> This letter, undated and possibly written as late as January 1933, was subsequently partially defaced, presumably for security reasons: some words and names being cut out with scissors. This document confirms the existence of a bloc composed of the 'Zinovievists', the 'group of Sten and Lominadze', and the 'Trotskyists (the old ... [word excised, presumably capitulators])'. Already arrests had been made and the group around Smirnov, Preobrazhensky, and Ufimtsev had collapsed. The implication in the documents is that, if it were not for repression, the scope of the bloc would be enlarged. There were other groups in proximity: one, led by Safarov and Tarkhan, with a 'very extreme position', was apparently close to joining. Trotsky asked Goltsman, through Sedov, what the position was of the ultra-left groups such as the Democratic Centralists and the Workers' Opposition.<sup>117</sup> Apparently he received no reply; he later commented in a published article that such groups had 'in effect disappeared from the political arena'.<sup>118</sup> There were also the Rightists and the 'liberals' to consider. From the skeletal evidence provided by the correspondence, and the implications of Trotsky's articles, it is reasonable to conclude that there was some divergence between Trotsky

and his putative 'liberal' allies on attitudes to the Rightists. It appears that the 'liberals', an unspecified group of moderate Stalinists and onetime oppositionists now reinstated, wished to hold back and wait for the Rightists, presumably associates of the Riutin group. Sedov also urged caution. Trotsky disagreed: to lose time now would amount to giving the initiative to the Right.<sup>119</sup>

Trotsky was insistent that he was entering a bloc and not agreeing to a merger.<sup>120</sup> He explicitly reserved the right to oppose capitulation mercilessly, and whilst undertaking to publish documents from the allies in the *Byulleten' Oppozitsii*, would not refrain from free comment. In his view, the initial purpose of the bloc was the exchange of information: 'the allies will keep us informed about the USSR and we will inform them about the Comintern'. Trotsky no doubt saw this alignment both as a step towards a united front, and as a potentially invaluable way of reducing his distance from current affairs in the USSR. To build a general picture of the problems of the Soviet economy from Soviet publications was possible; Trotsky told Sedov that little had been added to the assessment of the situation he had derived from an attentive reading of the press.<sup>121</sup> However, Trotsky needed contacts in the USSR in order to stay in touch with political developments and to provide detail. He clearly valued Sedov's contacts with Goltsman, hoping to use them to clarify the situation in the USSR. Among his enquiries was a request for an evaluation of the 'Declaration of the Eighteen', that is, the Riutin platform as presented by *Sotsialisticheskii Vestnik*.<sup>122</sup> He also suggested to Sedov that Goltsman be shown his own proposals for a new Left Opposition statement to be issued in the Soviet Union.<sup>123</sup>

By this time Trotsky's contacts with the USSR were becoming tenuous. The virtually free correspondence that Oppositionists had been allowed at

first after expulsion, came to an end even before Trotsky's deportation. During the second half of 1928 the GPU had filtered letters through a political mesh, allowing those through that inclined to capitulation.<sup>124</sup> Contacts could be maintained by courier while Trotsky was still in the USSR; subsequently, postal communication was the main means. In Turkey he was initially in touch with perhaps twenty exiled oppositionists who wrote briefly to various addresses in France and Germany.<sup>125</sup> Sedov was in charge of maintaining contacts with the USSR.<sup>126</sup> As late as 1932 he was still sending letters to prominent former Oppositionists in the USSR via intermediaries in Europe. Regrettably, we know neither whether such letters arrived nor anything of their contents: copies have not survived and the originals, if they remain, are, no doubt, kept hidden in Soviet archives.<sup>127</sup>

Regular postal communication with the USSR became steadily more difficult, but postal services were used with some ingenuity. In 1931 Trotsky wrote to Sedov suggesting that the new platform, presumably the Theses, be cut into sections and sent in multiple copies to various addresses in the USSR with numbers for reassembly.<sup>128</sup> Since the theses reached Ciliga in prison it is possible that this device may have been successful!<sup>129</sup> Alternatively, personal meetings and courier service by intermediaries could still be used with some success, even as late as 1932. For instance, a sympathiser from the KPD, Karl Grohl, writing his memoirs under the name Karl Retzlaw, tells how Sedov entrusted him in 1932 with letters for delivery to contacts in Moscow. Clearly Sedov was in regular communication with these contacts; they were warned of Grohl's mission and quickly reported its success.<sup>130</sup> It seems that sympathisers, perhaps with business in the USSR, were used for the circulation of the *Byulleten'* and for pamphlets and statements.<sup>131</sup>

The bloc of oppositions fell apart almost as soon as it was created; actual and potential participants were arrested piecemeal.<sup>132</sup> It was significant as a demonstration that many critics of Stalin were ready to reconstruct contacts with Trotsky and that Trotsky was himself cautiously prepared to build bridges. Later, in 'Signal Trevogi', Trotsky indicated the importance of the bloc and refers to the arrest of 'Smirnov, Preobrazhensky, Ufimtsev', that is the trio identified by name in Sedov's 'invisible ink' letter. With their associates, they represented 'an influential section of the Left Opposition', those who had 'become frightened by the perspective of a split, took the turn at face value, and capitulated to the bureaucracy.'

Today we have the balance sheet of the experiment made by the honest, sincere, and not careerist, capitulators: after deporting Zinoviev and Kamenev, Stalin arrested Smirnov, Preobrazhensky, Ufimtsev, and the rest! This blow at the top had been preceded during the past year by the arrests of several hundred rank-and-file capitulators who had anticipated their leaders in returning to the road of the Left Opposition. Within the last two years a truly gigantic shift has occurred in the consciousness of the Party ... isolated individuals and groups, outstanding even in regard to their revolutionary qualities, may drift at times into the camp of the enemy under the influence of temporary conditions, but they are forced ultimately, by the march of events, to return to the old militant banner.<sup>133</sup>

### Section Six: The Primacy of Politics

When examining Trotsky in detail certain inconsistencies, (or 'dialectical subtleties' if one adopts a more sympathetic reading,) become apparent. Trotsky consistently opposes the bureaucratic character of the Party regime, yet presents it variously: at one moment, it is a secondary concern, at another a central matter. Presumably, Trotsky had not yet resolved the question for himself: he seems constantly to wrestle with the problem of how politics and economics relate in the USSR, trying to solve it with the frequently repeated formula - 'politics is concentrated

economics'.<sup>134</sup> Only in 1933 does he find a "solution" with his discovery that, ultimately, politics and economics were separate spheres in the workers' state.<sup>135</sup>

In 1923 Trotsky tended to treat the problem of Party democracy as a distinct issue. By 1926 he was articulating a much more integrated perspective with more attention to policy and less explicit preoccupation with the nature of bureaucracy. In his June 1926 memorandum to the Politburo, criticising Uglanov's formulations on Party democracy, Trotsky treats bureaucracy as a derivative problem with no autonomy.<sup>136</sup> 'The fundamental cause of bureaucratisation must be sought in the relations between the classes. ... Democracy is not a self-sufficing factor. What matters are the policies of the proletarian dictatorship in the arenas of the economy, culture etc.' If the policies of government contradict the interest of the working class they can only be implemented by bureaucratic methods. Typically, special emphasis was placed on economic policy. Negative effects such as a lag in socialised industrial development and a shifting of problems on to the shoulders of the working class, meant that the apparatus would be 'less and less able' to introduce policies by democratic means. The resulting bureaucratisation expresses 'the disrupted social equilibrium, which has been and is being tipped to the disadvantage of the proletariat.'

The same discounting of political autonomy can be found in Trotsky's writings in exile. In a circular letter to comrades written in March 1929, Trotsky refers to 'three classic questions' which provide the criteria by which tendencies in world communism may be evaluated. 'These questions are: i) the policy of the Anglo-Russian Committee; ii) the course of the Chinese revolution; iii) the economic policy of the USSR, in conjunction with the theory of socialism in one country.'<sup>137</sup> Anticipating objections,

Trotsky admits that some comrades might be astonished at the omission of the question of the Party regime. He responds rhetorically by declaring that the omission is deliberate. The Party regime is a 'derivative magnitude' in relation to Party policy with 'no independent, self-sufficient meaning.' To give it a primary position is to repudiate the Marxist proposition that 'democracy is always conditioned by the struggle of living forces.' It is also to risk identification with the Mensheviks.

In other places Trotsky presents the issue quite differently. For example, two letters written in June 1928 consider the subject. The first, a circular letter dated 2 June, admits to an inadequate treatment of the methods of leadership in previous correspondence. Rakovsky had correctly criticised this, advancing the idea that without correct political procedures there can be no consistently correct policies. Trotsky concurs, adding that with such a concentration of power as there inevitably is in a proletarian dictatorship, the 'violation of the spirit of democracy becomes the greatest and gravest evil.'<sup>138</sup> The second, apparently again for broad circulation, letter applauds Sosnovsky and Rakovsky for approaching all questions regarding the 'left course' from the point of view of the party regime. Trotsky commented: 'right now this is the only correct and reliable criterion.' The Party regime 'has a huge - and at certain moments, decisive - independent significance ... [as] the sole instrument by which we can consciously affect social processes.'<sup>139</sup>

In a statement to the Sixth Comintern Congress written at about the same time as these letters, Trotsky presents a similar evaluation of the importance of the Party regime. His assessment, with its contrast between the juridical form and the social content of the means of production, constitutes evidence for the claim that before 1933 there was a subtlety to Trotsky's position which the formula of degenerated workers' state

undermined, if not demolished.

The socialist character of our state industry ... is determined and secured in a decisive measure by the role of the Party, the voluntary internal cohesion of the proletarian vanguard, the conscious discipline of the administrators, trade union functionaries, members of the shop nuclei, etc. If we allow that this web is weakening, disintegrating, and ripping, then it becomes absolutely self-evident that within a brief period nothing will remain of the socialist character of state industry, transport, etc. The trusts and individual factories will begin living an independent life. Not a trace will be left of the planned beginnings, so weak at the present time. The economic struggle of the workers will acquire a scope unrestricted save by the relation of forces. The state ownership of the means of production will be first transformed into a juridical fiction, and late on, even the latter will be swept away.<sup>140</sup>

Much of Trotsky's commentary on the five-year plan points to the conclusion that he viewed the political regime as decisive. In 1929, he argued that the carrying out of the plan is a 'political task'. The plan could not change the Party regime. 'On the contrary, changing the Party regime is now the prerequisite not only for further success but also for the protection against the dangers which are mounting more rapidly than the successes.' The political starting point for successful planning had to be 'the slogans "Party democracy and Workers' Democracy" (in the trade unions and soviets) and "Unions of the Poor in the Countryside".' 'Naked bureaucratic violence' cannot be a successful basis for the struggle against the kulak. This must be fought 'in the framework of a carefully thought-out economic system', but for this 'one must ... take stock of one's own forces, as well as of the other forces in society - not in an a priori way, not statistically, but through living organisations, by means of proletarian democracy.'<sup>141</sup> Later in the same year, again commenting on the plan, Trotsky asserted that 'the regime of the Party has now become the nub of all the economic questions.' This regime, he argues, completely excludes any debate on economic policy and 'any kind of control of the economic process on the basis of the living experience of all its participants.' In contrast, Trotsky pleads not for the liquidation of



'discussions and struggles but ... for their immense flowering.' Socialist economy needs industrial democracy; factional struggles between 'electrifiers, petroleumists, peat-fuelists, tractorists, collectivists etc.' is seen by Trotsky as a natural form of economic regulation, in some ways akin to the struggle of guilds in the Middle Ages.<sup>142</sup>

Trotsky's inconsistencies result not only from the tensions within his analysis, but are also a consequence of conducting polemics on several fronts simultaneously. Between 1928 and 1931 Trotsky wrote an enormous amount on the 'Russian question', much of it in the form of short letters to comrades. It was obviously impossible to begin from first principles on each occasion, and often the second steps of his case are left implicit. The abbreviated nature of his argument, coupled with the variety of his opponents, produces apparently contradictory statements. To those who advocate reconciliation with the Rightists, and thus emphasise the question of the Party regime, he argues that Party democracy does not take priority.<sup>143</sup> To those who call for reconciliation with the Centrists he argues that nothing has changed in the Party regime.<sup>144</sup> However, even when Trotsky stressed particularly the significance of the Party regime he generally introduced qualifications. The letter, quoted above, which supported Sosnovsky and Rakovsky, moved rapidly on from a declaration that the Party regime could have a decisive significance to a statement that 'the Party regime is a derivative factor.'<sup>145</sup> The same attempt to strike the correct balance is shown by a passage from an article attacking the capitulation of Preobrazhensky, Radek, and Smilga.

The central question is not the figures of the bureaucratic five-year plan themselves but the question of the Party as the main weapon of the proletariat. The Party regime is not something autonomous: it expresses and reinforces the Party's political line. It corrects itself or degenerates, depending on the extent to which the political line corresponds to the objective historical situation. In this sense the Party regime is, for a Marxist, an indispensable control over the political line.<sup>146</sup>

Rather than juxtaposing and comparing detached quotations from pieces produced in differing contexts, it is necessary to try to understand the basis of Trotsky's approach. The fundamental elements are: firstly, his desire to defend the programme and to protect the integrity and independence of the Left Opposition whilst, at this stage, repudiating any tendency towards a second party; and, secondly, the recognition of the interdependence of all economic and political questions and their foundation in class struggle on an international scale.

Trotsky 'bent the stick' this way and that but his fundamental position was that although the nature of the Party regime had no ultimate independence, it was only through the Party that policies could be pursued. Therefore political agitation for specific demands had an immense significance. Without the restoration of democratic centralism the Left Opposition would remain excluded from political influence, unable to agitate successfully for programmatic demands.

Politics and economics may be interdependent, but the question of determination 'in the final analysis' remains. The carefully considered theses, 'Problemy Razvitiya SSSR' (1931), suggest that Trotsky had resolved the dilemma in favour of the primacy of politics. Whilst this document begins by defining the class nature of the Soviet Union in terms of property relations, it continues with a section on the Party which directs attention towards the political regime. Economics and politics are presented in 'dialectical interrelationship'.

The economic contradictions of the transitional economy do not develop in a vacuum. The political contradictions of the regime ... even though in the final analysis they grow out of the economic, have an independent and also a more direct significance for the fate of the dictatorship than the economic crisis. <sup>147</sup>

'Vulgar "economic", not dialectical materialism' is responsible for the official teaching that the growth of nationalised industry automatically

strengthens the proletarian dictatorship. In reality, Trotsky argues, the relationship between politics and economics is more complex; the workers' state had been stronger before the introduction of the five-year plan. The strength of the regime depends 'on the course of internal and international class struggle'; the state of the Party determines how dangerous the economic crises are. The problem of the Party always takes precedence over economic questions, 'no matter how great the significance of the rate of industrialisation and collectivisation may be in itself.'<sup>148</sup>

Without the idealistic and cementing force of the Communist Party, the Soviet state and the planned economy would consequently be condemned to disintegration.<sup>149</sup>

In the course of these theses Trotsky asks himself a question that he would have to return to two years later after the German debacle. The CPSU, he asserts, has 'incontestably' ceased to be a party; it is no longer 'an independent organisation of the vanguard' but a corpse strangled by the bureaucracy. 'Are we not thereby forced to the conclusion that there is no dictatorship of the proletariat in the USSR, since this is inconceivable without a ruling proletarian party?' Trotsky dismisses this as a 'caricature of reality' because it ignores the 'creative possibilities of the regime and the hidden reserves of the dictatorship.' In what do these 'creative possibilities and hidden reserves' consist? 'Tradition' and 'consciousness' are Trotsky's replies. They are demonstrated through the tradition of October, the 'habits of class thought', the 'lessons of revolutionary struggles', the 'hatred against the former ruling classes'; these are 'not only the reserve of the future, but also the living power of today, which preserves the Soviet Union as a workers' state.'<sup>150</sup> (Emphasis added.) For Trotsky, the Soviet state is a workers' state, and, for the Trotsky of this period, this means that the proletariat is able to subordinate the bureaucracy 'without a new revolution, with the methods and on the road of reform'.<sup>151</sup> What has been left for dead by the bureaucracy

can and must be revived; not 'all the elements of the Party inherited from the past are liquidated.'<sup>152</sup>

In 1933 Trotsky still argued the primacy of politics. Admittedly the five-year plan had brought 'immense gains in technique and production', but 'the figures of the political balance sheet show a clear and maximum deficit ... [and] politics decides.'<sup>153</sup> On the eve of changing his position Trotsky continued to see the 'great creative forces' underlying the Soviet regime in political terms, and the Left Opposition as their 'conscious expression'. Trotsky's call to revive the Party had by now become almost a cry of despair. 'Stalin has destroyed the Party, smashed it in pieces, scattered it in prison and exile, diluted it with a crude mass, frightened it, demoralised it. ... the Party as such no longer exists.' Yet, in this article, 'Nuzhno Chestnoe Vnutripartiinoe Soglashenie', Trotsky could still assert that the Party 'remains a very real historical factor.' If it were not so, there would be no need to repress Communists. So the call to revive Party democracy, that is 'to gather together the scattered, fettered, frightened elements of the real Bolshevik Party, revive its normal work, give it back the decisive influence on the life of the country', continued to be meaningful.<sup>154</sup> To introduce democracy in the Party would permit all the Thermidorean elements to assert themselves openly, but this would be less of a danger than allowing the momentum of the present course to persist.

Only after Trotsky's call for the construction of a new Bolshevik Party in the USSR did he exclude political criteria from his definition of the Soviet Union as a workers' state. In the 'Declaration of the Bolshevik-Leninists', written for the August 1933 conference of independent left socialist and communist organisations, there appears a new insistence on 'property character', as the 'the main question of the social order.'<sup>155</sup>

In 'Klassovaya Priroda Sovetskogo Gosudarstvo' (October 1933), the criterion of property relations would first be accorded sufficient, decisive status, maintaining its keystone position throughout all Trotsky's subsequent writings. According to his new theory the political regime was, at the same time, everything and nothing.

The anatomy of society is determined by its economic relations. so long as the forms of property that have been created by the October revolution are not overthrown, the proletariat remains the ruling class.<sup>156</sup>

But later in the same article:

Under the conditions of the transitional epoch, the political superstructure plays a decisive role.<sup>157</sup>

The only possible conclusion, and Trotsky did not hesitate to draw it, was that Soviet society was highly unstable.

Social antagonisms instead of being overcome politically are suppressed administratively. These collect under pressure to the same extent that the political resources disappear for solving them normally. The first social shock, external or internal, may throw the atomised Soviet society into civil war. The workers, having lost control over the state and economy, may resort to mass strikes as weapons of self-defence. ... Under the onslaught of the workers and because of the pressure of economic difficulties, the trusts would be forced to ... enter into competition with one another. ... The socialist state would collapse, giving place to the capitalist regime or, more correctly, to capitalist chaos.<sup>158</sup>

The only alternative to the restoration of capitalism is, he argues, the removal of the present bureaucracy by force and the renovation of the entire political regime: all administrative practices must be transformed, the bureaucracy purged and placed under the control of the masses, and a series of major reforms introduced in the management of the economy.<sup>159</sup> A new party must be organised, with the Bolsheviki-Leninists as its core. This will be the vanguard of a new political revolution. Such a party will develop 'only as a result of the successful formation and growth of the new International.'<sup>160</sup> The political focus must be on the West: without the support of working-class revolutionary action there, 'the rupture of the bureaucratic equilibrium in the USSR would almost certainly favour the counter-revolutionary forces.'<sup>161</sup> The 'fundamental condition' for changing

the Soviet state is 'the victorious spread of the world revolution.'<sup>162</sup>

Trotsky concludes: 'the problem of the world revolution as well as the problem of the Soviet Union may be summed up in one and the same brief formula: The Fourth International.'<sup>163</sup>

1. The Sixth Congress of the Comintern was held in Moscow 17 July - 1 September, 1928. Trotsky was permitted to send five documents: a general declaration, T3123; 'Criticism of the Draft Programme' and 'What Now?' (both later included in *The Third International After Lenin*, New York: Pathfinder Press, 1970); 'The July Plenum and the Right Danger', T3126; and, 'Documents on the Origins of the Legend of Trotskyism' (later included in *The Stalin School of Falsification*, New York: Pathfinder Press, 1970).
2. Cohen, S.F., *Bukharin and the Bolshevik Revolution*, (Vintage Books, New York, 1975), pp.290-291. The documents relating to the meeting between Bukharin and Kamenev are in the Trotsky archive, T1897; first published in *Dissent*, Winter 1979.
3. T2442: [Moscow Trotskyists to Trotsky; September 1928].
4. T2630: [Kamenev to Moscow Trotskyists; 22 September, 1928].
5. G.G. 'Vnutri Pravo-Tsentristskogo Bloka', *Byulleten' Oppozitsii*, no.1-2, (Iyul' 1929g.), pp.15-17.
6. T3155: ['Na Zloby Dnya', December 1928].
7. T3146: [Trotsky to comrades; 21 October, 1928].
8. EP8342: Trotsky to Gollancz, 4 July, 1933, indicates some of the major difficulties Trotsky faced in his literary work. Even if his purpose was to improve the terms of publishing contracts Trotsky's problems were real: 'there is no library here or in Istanbul. Every reference book required ... must be purchased abroad and ... in case of urgency ... sent here by aerial post [only available in the summer]. secretary in Berlin for the purpose of visiting archives, libraries etc.
9. Trotsky, 'O Gruppirovkakh v Kommunisticheskoi Oppozitsii', *Byulleten' Oppozitsii*, no.1-2, (Iyul' 1929g.), p.20.
10. Trotsky, 'Iz Pis'ma L.D. Trotskogo k Russkomu Tovarishchu', *Byulleten' Oppozitsii*, no.1-2, (Iyul' 1929g.), p.10.
11. Carr, E.H., *Foundations of a Planned Economy*, vol.2, (Harmondsworth: Pelican, 1976), pp.59 and 79. Deutscher, I., *The Prophet Unarmed*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1970), p.406.
12. Deutscher, I., *The Prophet Outcast*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1970), pp.74-8.
13. According to Deutscher the declaration secured about 500 signatures. Deutscher, I., *The Prophet Outcast*, p.78. The declaration is in *Byulleten' Oppozitsii*, no.6, (Oktyabr' 1929g.), pp.3-7; a translation is in Rakovsky, C., *Selected Writings on Opposition in the USSR 1923-30*, edited by Fagan, G., (London: Allison and Busby, 1980), pp.137-144. Trotsky's published commentary is 'Otkrytoe Pis'mo Bol'shevikam-leninstam (Oppozitsioneram), Podpisavshim Zayavlenie v TsK i TsKK tov. V. Kossiora, M. Okudzhava i Kh. Rakovskogo', *Byulleten' Oppozitsii*, no.6, (Oktyabr' 1929g.), pp.7-8. There was also a letter, marked not to be published, sent to the USSR: T3238. By October Trotsky already viewed the declaration as representing 'a bygone stage': T3248.
14. Broué, P., 'Les Trotskistes en Union Sovietique, 1929-1938', *Cahiers Léon Trotsky*, no.6, (1980), pp.5-65.

15. Ciliga, A., *The Russian Enigma*, (London: Ink Links, 1979), p.211.
16. Ciliga, A., *The Russian Enigma*, pp.232, 268, and 270.
17. Ciliga, A., *The Russian Enigma*, p.217; *The Case of Leon Trotsky* [Dewey Commission hearings], (London: Secker and Warburg, 1937), pp.129- 133. X., Y., Z., 'Krizis Revolyutsii', *Byulleten' Oppozitsii*, no.25-26, (Noyabr'-Dekabr' 1931g.), pp.32-43.
18. Ciliga, A., *The Russian Enigma*, p.232.
19. T3146: [Trotsky to comrades; 21 October, 1928].
20. T3152: [Trotsky to I. Smilga(?); December 1928].
21. T3123: [Trotsky to Comintern Congress; July 1928]. J. Arch Getty, in 'Trotsky in Exile: the Founding of the Fourth International', has suggested: 'it is almost as if Trotsky equated reform of the Party with his return to it'. He equivocates unnecessarily; undoubtedly Trotsky did see it like that. *Soviet Studies*, vol.XXXVIII, no.1, (1981), p.31.
22. T1968: [Trotsky to comrades; 17 July, 1928].
23. T3131, T3132: [Trotsky to Shatunovskii; 12 September, 1928].
24. T3146: [Trotsky to comrades; 21 October, 1928].
25. Trotsky, 'Blok Levykh i Pravykh', *Byulleten' Oppozitsii*, no.17-18, (Noyabr'-Dekabr' 1930g.), p.25.
26. *Contre le Courant*, 9.III.1929. Published also in *Writings of Leon Trotsky* (1929), (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1975), pp.58-9. See also 'Pis'mo L.D. Trotskogo t. Suvarinu', *Byulleten' Oppozitsii*, no.1-2, (Iyul' 1929g.), pp.22-24.
27. Trotsky, 'Zashchita Sovetskoi Respubliki i Oppozitsiya', *Byulleten' Oppozitsii*, no.5, (Oktyabr' 1929g.), pp.12-13.
28. Trotsky, *The New Course*, in Trotsky, *The Challenge of the Left Opposition* (1923-25), (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1975), pp.80, 83.
29. Trotsky, *The New Course*, pp.78-9.
30. Trotsky, *The New Course*, p.77.
31. Trotsky, 'Zhalkii Dokument', *Byulleten' Oppozitsii*, no.3-4, (Sentyabr' 1929g.), p.10. See also T3237.
32. Trotsky, 'Otkrytoe Pis'mo Bol'shevikam-leninstam (Oppozitsioneram), Podpisavshim Zayavlenie v TsK i TsKK tov. V. Kossiora, M. Okudzhava i Kh. Rakovskogo'.
33. Trotsky called for this in his secret letter to the Politburo, 15 March, 1933: T3522.
34. Trotsky, 'Vyderzhka, Vyderzhka, Vyderzhka!', *Byulleten' Oppozitsii*, no.1-2, (Iyul' 1929g.), pp.14-15. See also Trotsky, 'Zhalkii Dokument'.



35. T3237: [Trotsky to comrades in the USSR; September, 1929].
36. Trotsky, 'Otvét tov. K.', *Byulleten' Oppozitsii*, no.12-13, (Iyun' Iyul' 1930g.), pp.28-29.
37. Davies R.W., 'Trotsky and the Debate on Industrialisation in the USSR', in Gori, F.(ed.), *Pensiero e Azione di Lev Trockij*, vol.1, (Firenze: Leo S. Olschki, 1982), pp.239-259.
38. T2989. Trotsky wrote three letters to Dzerzhinsky warning that the present expansionist policy would quickly lead to crisis. Davies, R.W., 'Trotsky and the Debate on Industrialisation in the USSR', pp.247-8.
39. Trotsky, 'Iz Perepiski Oppozitsii - Otvety na Pis'ma Druzei', *Byulleten' Oppozitsii*, no.10, (Aprel' 1930g.), p.16.
40. Trotsky, 'Otvét tov. K.', p.28.
41. Trotsky, 'Sovetskoe Khozyaistvo v Opasnosti!', *Byulleten' Oppozitsii*, no.31, (Noyabr' 1932g.), p.11.
42. Trotsky, 'K 12-i Godovshchine Oktyabrya', *Byulleten' Oppozitsii*, no.7, (Noyabr' Dekabr' 1929g.), p.3.
43. Trotsky, 'Iz Perepiski Oppozitsii - Otvety na Pis'ma Druzei', p.16.
44. Trotsky, 'Novyi Khoyaistvennyi Kurs v SSSR', *Byulleten' Oppozitsii*, no.9, (Fevral' Mart 1930g.), p.2.
45. Trotsky, 'Novyi Khoyaistvennyi Kurs v SSSR', pp.1-8.
46. Trotsky, 'Iz Perepiski Oppozitsii - Otvety na Pis'ma Druzei', p.18.
47. Trotsky, 'Iz Perepiski Oppozitsii - Otvety na Pis'ma Druzei', p.18.
48. Trotsky, 'Otkritoe Pis'mo Chlenam VKP(b)', *Byulleten' Oppozitsii*, no.10, (Aprel' 1930g.), p.2.
49. Trotsky, 'Novyi Khoyaistvennyi Kurs v SSSR', p.4. Trotsky also declared that 'the tendency to join collective farms has a mass character', 'Skrip v Apparate', *Byulleten' Oppozitsii*, no.11, (Mai 1930g.), p.13.
50. Trotsky, 'Novyi Khoyaistvennyi Kurs v SSSR', p.4.
51. Trotsky, 'K Kapitalizmu ili k Sotsializmu', *Byulleten' Oppozitsii*, no.11, (Mai 1930g.), pp.5-6. Such a view is reproduced several times during 1930, surely illustrating how dependent Trotsky was on the official Soviet press for his assessments of current events. At one point he declares that his own view is not 'anything new ... we simply repeat what the official Soviet press has admitted many times.' 'Skrip v Apparate', p.12.
52. For example, 'The NEP, after the Kronstadt rising, was a retreat': Trotsky, 'Second speech to the Central Control Commission', in Trotsky, *The Stalin School of Falsification*, (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1971), p.156. Shortly after the introduction of NEP, at the Fourth Comintern Congress in 1922, Trotsky agreed that 'for good and substantial reasons' NEP should be called a retreat, but it was not 'a capitulation'. Trotsky, *The First Five Years of the Communist International* vol.2, (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1970), pp.231-2.

53. Trotsky, 'Skrip v Apparate', pp.11-19. Trotsky, 'Problemy Razvitiya SSSR', *Byulleten' Oppozitsii*, no.20, (April' 1931g.), pp.1-36.
54. Trotsky, article in *Izvestiya*, 2.VI.1925. Quoted by Day, R., 'Leon Trotsky on the Problems of the Smychka and Forced Collectivisation', *Critique* 13, (1981), p.58.
55. Trotsky, 'Ot Redaktsii' [comments on Ya. Graef, 'Kollektivizatsiya Derevni i Otnositel'noe Perenaselenie'], *Byulleten' Oppozitsii*, no.11, (May 1930g.), p.24.
56. Trotsky, 'K Kapitalizmu ili k Sotsializmu', p.7.
57. Nove, A., 'A Note on Trotsky and the "Left Opposition"', *Soviet Studies*, vol.XXIX, no.4, (1977), p.581.
58. Trotsky, 'Otvét tov. K.', pp.28-29.
59. Trotsky, 'Zametki Zhurnalista', *Byulleten' Oppozitsii*, no.12-13, (Iyun'-Iyul' 1930g.), p.22.
60. Day, R., 'Leon Trotsky on the Problems of the Smychka and Forced Collectivisation', pp.58-64.
61. Trotsky, 'Otkritoe Pis'mo Chlenam VKP(b)', p.2.
62. Trotsky, 'Otkritoe Pis'mo Chlenam VKP(b)', p.6.
63. T2969. This typescript was prepared for publication but, for some reason, it never appeared. Available in Trotsky, *The Challenge of the Left Opposition* (1923-25), (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1975), pp.259-303. Chapter Seven is a particularly useful source on Trotsky's views on the relationship between proletariat and peasantry.
64. EP10269: Trotsky to Serge, 29 April, 1936.
65. EP10272: Trotsky to Serge, 5 June, 1936. The copy of this letter in the Harvard archive lacks the supplementary comments including the passage quoted above in the text. This letter, with several others, is in English translation in *Writings of Leon Trotsky Supplement* [1934-40], (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1979), pp.671-3.
66. T3109: ['Na Novom Etape'; December 1927].
67. T1509: [Trotsky to Beloborodov; 23 May, 1928].
68. T3112: [Trotsky to comrades; May 1928].
69. T3112.
70. T3123: [Trotsky to the Comintern Congress; July 1928].
71. T3123.
72. Trotsky, 'What Now?' (1928), in Trotsky, *The Third International After Lenin*, p.289.
73. T3126: ['Iyul'skii plenum i pravaya opasnost' ]; 22 July, 1928].

74. T2824.1: [Trotsky to comrades; 22 October, 1928].
75. T3146: [Trotsky to comrades; 21 October, 1928].
76. T3131: [Trotsky to Shatunovskii; 12 September, 1928].
77. T3155: [Na zloby dnya; December 1928].
78. Trotsky, 'Zadachi Oppozitsii', *Byulleten' Oppozitsii*, no.1-2, (Iyul' 1929g.), p.19. See also T3255.
79. T3348: [Trotsky to comrades in the USSR; 31 October, 1930].
80. Trotsky, 'Chto Dal'she?', *Byulleten' Oppozitsii*, no.17-18, (Noyabr' Dekabr' 1930g.), p.23.
81. Trotsky, 'Ob"yasneniya v Krugu Druzei', *Byulleten' Oppozitsii*, no.25-26, (Noyabr' Dekabr' 1931g.), p.45.
82. T3238: [Trotsky to comrades in the USSR; 25 September, 1929]; T3248: ['Kh. G. Rakovskii. Politika rukovodstva i partiinyi rezhim'; November-December 1929].
83. Trotsky, 'Signal Trevogi', *Byulleten' Oppozitsii*, no.33, (Mart 1933g.), p.1.
84. T3420: [Trotsky to comrades in the USSR; 1932].
85. Trotsky, 'Signal Trevogi', p.9.
86. Trotsky, 'Otkrytoe Pis'mo Prezidiumu TsIK Soyuza SSR', *Byulleten' Oppozitsii*, no.27, (Mart 1932g.), p.6.
87. EP10248: Trotsky to Sedov, 17 October, 1932.
88. T3419: ['Doloi Stalina'; 1932].
89. T3420: [Trotsky to comrades in the USSR; 1932].
90. EP4777: Sedov to Trotsky, 12 October, 1932.
91. EP10248: Trotsky to Sedov, 17, 24, and 30 October 1932.
92. T3522: [Trotsky to Politburo; 15 March, 1933].
93. Trotsky, 'Otkrytoe Pis'mo Prezidiumu TsIK Soyuza SSR'.
94. T3238: [Trotsky to comrades in the USSR; 25 September, 1929]. See also T3246, an 'interview' where Trotsky indicated that, even after the declaration, there was no hope of a restoration of Party membership to the Opposition.
95. Trotsky, 'Stalinskaya Byurokratiya v Tiskakh, Levaya Oppozitsiya na Podeme', *Byulleten' Oppozitsii*, no.28, (Iyul' 1932g.), p.11.
96. T3522: [Trotsky to Politburo; 15 March, 1933].

97. Trotsky, 'Stalinty Prinimayut Mery', *Byulleten' Oppozitsii*, no.31, (Noyabr' 1932g.), p.15, p.17.
98. T3420: [Trotsky to comrades in the USSR; 1932].
99. Trotsky, 'Nuzhno Chestnoe Vnutripartiinoe Soglashenie', *Byulleten' Oppozitsii*, no.34, (Mai 1933g.), pp.29-31.
100. Trotsky, 'Signal Trevogi', p.9.
101. T3498: ['Opasnost' Termidora'; 11 January, 1933].
102. T3419: ['Doloi Stalina'; 1932].
103. Trotsky, 'Stalinskaya Byurokratiya v Tiskakh, Levaya Oppozitsiya na Podeme', p.10.
104. T3481: ['O sostoyanii levoi oppozitsii'; 16 December, 1932].
105. Medvedev, R., *Let History Judge*, (New York: Vintage, 1973), p.140.
106. Khrushchev, N.S., *The Secret Speech*, introduced by Medvedev, Z.A., and Medvedev, R.A., (Nottingham: Spokesman Books, 1976), pp.35-6.
107. Medvedev, R., *Let History Judge*, pp.142-3.
108. Serge, V., *Memoirs of a Revolutionary 1901-1941*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1967), p.259.
109. *Sotsialisticheskii Vestnik*, 7.IX.1932 and 26.IX.1932.
110. Medvedev, R., *Let History Judge*, p.155; Antonov-Ovseyenko, A., *The Time of Stalin*, (New York: Harper, 1980), p.79.
111. Trotsky, 'Stalinty Prinimayut Mery', p.17.
112. Broué, P., 'Trotsky et les Bloc des Oppositions de 1932', *Cahiers Leon Trotsky*, no.5, (1980), pp.5-33. Getty, J. Arch, *Origins of the Great Purges*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), pp.119-122.
113. EP10110: Trotsky to Sedov, [1932]. EP4782: Sedov to Trotsky, [1932].
114. Deutscher, I., *The Prophet Outcast*, p.163.
115. Ko., 'Khozyaistvennoe Polozhenie Sovetskogo Soyuza', *Byulleten' Oppozitsii*, no.31, (Noyabr' 1932g.), pp.18-20.
116. EP4782: Sedov to Trotsky, [1932].
117. EP10110: Trotsky to Sedov, [1932].
118. Trotsky, 'Signal Trevogi', p.7.
119. Trotsky, 'Stalinty Prinimayut Mery', p.17; Trotsky, 'Nuzhno Chestnoe Vnutripartiinoe Soglashenie', pp.29-30. EP4777: Sedov to Trotsky, 12 October, 1932. EP10248: Trotsky to Sedov, 17, 24, and 30 October 1932.

120. EP10110: Trotsky to Sedov, [1932].
121. EP10248: Trotsky to Sedov, 5 October, 1932.
122. *Sotsialisticheskii Vestnik*, 7 September, and 26 September, 1932.
123. EP10110: Trotsky to Sedov, [1932].
124. There is information on the problems of postal communication in: T1613: [Trotsky to comrades; June 1928]; T2850: [Moscow Trotskyists to comrades; November 1928]; T2912: [Trotsky to Menzhinskii; 3 December, 1928].
125. Van Heijenoort, J., *With Trotsky in Exile*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978) p.40.
126. Sedov refers to the 'special journeys' to the USSR in EP4782: Sedov to Trotsky, [1932].
127. The certified post receipts are in the Trotsky archive: EP15821. It seems that in 1932 letters were sent to Sokolnikov, Preobrazhensky, Radek, Kollontai, and Litvinov. Presumably the last, at least, did not concern political opposition. There is also in the archive an address book for correspondence with the USSR begun in June 1930: EP15741. It seems that letters were sent to some seventy people.
128. EP10247: Trotsky to Sedov, 11 April, 1931.
129. Ciliga, A., *The Russian Enigma*, p.270.
130. Retlaw, K., *Spartakus*, (Frankfurt: Verlag Neue Kritik, 1971), pp.355-6.
131. Sedov refers to this in correspondence with Trotsky. EP4782: Sedov to Trotsky, [1932].
132. It is not clear whether the bloc was discovered at the time or only later. It is quite possible, as Pierre Broué argues, that the informers close to Trotsky did not know of the bloc and that the participants were arrested not as 'conspirators' but simply as individual oppositionists. Broué, P., 'Party Oppositions to Stalin (1930-32) and the First Moscow Trial', (unpublished, 1985).
133. Trotsky, 'Signal Trevogi', p.7.
134. Trotsky, 'Problemy Razvitiya SSSR', p.9. Trotsky, 'The Danger of Thermidor', *Militant*, 4.II.1933, T3498.
135. Whether this was in fact a solution will be considered in the final chapter of this thesis.
136. T2986: [Trotsky to Politburo; 6 June, 1926].
137. Trotsky, 'O Gruppировakh v Kommunisticheskoi Oppozitsii', p.21.
138. T1613: [Trotsky to comrades; June 1928].
139. T1770: [Trotsky to comrades; 24 June, 1928].

140. T3123: [Trotsky to Comintern Congress; July 1928].
141. T3237: [Trotsky to comrades in the USSR; September 1929].
142. Trotsky, 'Iz Perepiski Oppozitsii - Otvety na Pis'ma Druzei', p.16.
143. Trotsky, 'Diplomatiya ili Revolyutsionnaya Politika', *Byulleten' Oppozitsii*, no.1-2, (Iyul' 1929g.), pp.36-39.
144. Trotsky, 'Zhalkii Dokument'.
145. T1770: [Trotsky to comrades; 24 June, 1928].
146. Trotsky, 'Zhalkii Dokument', p.6.
147. Trotsky, 'Problemy Razvitiya SSSR', pp.4-5.
148. Trotsky, 'Problemy Razvitiya SSSR', p.5.
149. Trotsky, 'Problemy Razvitiya SSSR', p.10.
150. Trotsky, 'Problemy Razvitiya SSSR', p.11.
151. Trotsky, 'Problemy Razvitiya SSSR', p.12.
152. Trotsky, 'Problemy Razvitiya SSSR', p.11.
153. Trotsky, 'The Danger of Thermidor', *Militant*, 4.II.1933: T3498.
154. Trotsky, 'Nuzhno Chestnoe Vnutripartiinoe Soglashenie', pp.30-31.
155. T3584: ['Zayavlenie delegatsii bolshevikov-leninintsev na konferentsii levo-sotsialisticheskikh i kommunisticheskikh organizatsii'; 17 August, 1933].
156. Trotsky, 'Klassovaya Priroda Sovetskogo Gosudarstvo', *Byulleten' Oppozitsii*, no.36-37, (Oktyabr' 1933g.), p.3.
157. Trotsky, 'Klassovaya Priroda Sovetskogo Gosudarstvo', p.9.
158. Trotsky, 'Klassovaya Priroda Sovetskogo Gosudarstvo', p.9.
159. Trotsky, 'Klassovaya Priroda Sovetskogo Gosudarstvo', p.8.
160. Trotsky, 'Klassovaya Priroda Sovetskogo Gosudarstvo', p.11.
161. Trotsky, 'Klassovaya Priroda Sovetskogo Gosudarstvo', p.11.
162. Trotsky, 'Klassovaya Priroda Sovetskogo Gosudarstvo', p.10.
163. Trotsky, 'Klassovaya Priroda Sovetskogo Gosudarstvo', p.12.

CHAPTER FOUR: TROTSKY AND THE USSR - 1933-1940

*The old Bolshevik Party is dead, but Bolshevism is raising its head everywhere.*

Trotsky, 'Stalinism and Bolshevism', (1937).

Section One: Reform to Revolution

During 1933, by stages, Trotsky repudiated reformism and adopted a revolutionary strategy towards the Stalin regime. The immediate issue that prompted this break was the response of the German Communist Party (KPD) and the Comintern to National Socialism. Trotsky had argued for a defensive united front between Communists and Socialists, but Communist policy remained opposed to agreements with 'social-fascists'. In Trotsky's view, this ultra-left policy had only assisted Hitler; the bureaucratic regime, which had spread from Russian Communism to the International, had proved incapable of generating a successful strategy. On 12 March, a week after the last elections under the Weimar constitution had resulted in a legal pretext for the Nazi dictatorship in Germany, Trotsky wrote that the KPD had met its 'Fourth of August'.<sup>1</sup> Revolutionary Marxists must again begin to build a revolutionary party out of the wreckage, just as in 1914. But in March 1933 Trotsky was not yet ready to generalise this summons: the catastrophe might 'provoke a healthy reaction in some of the sections [of the Comintern]'.<sup>2</sup> In particular, Trotsky was not yet prepared to renounce the CPSU: 'for Germany we say the Communist Party is dead ... for the USSR we propose an agreement with the top circles of the Party.'<sup>3</sup>

In July Trotsky revised his position. Since there had been no discussion of the failure, new Communist Parties must be organised everywhere, except perhaps in the USSR: 'Nuzhno Stroiti Zanova

Kommunisticheskie Partii i Internatsional', Trotsky's first article calling for the preparation of a new International, sees this as a condition for the 'regeneration' of the Bolshevik Party and gives no direct advice for the USSR.<sup>4</sup> The inference that Trotsky was uncertain, even in July 1933, on whether to extend the new orientation to the USSR is supported by a statement from one of his secretaries. Van Heijenoort recalls that at the time 'Nuzhno Stroit Zanovo Kommunisticheskie Partii i Internatsional' was written, Trotsky, in private, clearly favoured excluding the USSR from the call for new Communist Parties.<sup>5</sup>

A recent article by J. Arch Getty comments on Trotsky's prevarications.<sup>6</sup> Getty is puzzled by the delay between Trotsky's declaration for a new Party in Germany and his extension of this position to other countries. He argues, with good reason, that Trotsky's politics have been presented as reflections of Trotsky's theoretical positions, and that comparatively little attempt has been made to understand how the theoretical outlook was reciprocally shaped by politics. Unfortunately, in my view, he attempts to displace one interpretation by another, rather than reconciling them.

It makes sense to argue, as Getty does, that Trotsky's delay in articulating a new position for the USSR should be seen in the context of his current political strategies: the attempt to construct a new opposition bloc, and the private appeal to the Politburo for preliminary talks with the objective of securing the return to the Party of the Left Opposition. But it does not follow that Trotsky's delay can entirely be explained by reference to his tactical orientation in the politics of the CPSU: this was a profound revision of previous positions and Trotsky needed to be certain that his new view would be accepted within the international Left Opposition. Even if Trotsky, privately, had little hope that the shock of



Nazi success in Germany would produce changes in the Comintern, it was prudent to wait and see for two or three months. Getty's dismissal of these concerns is not convincing; neither is his emphasis on Trotsky's use of a pseudonym to sign the first article breaking with the KPD. As Twiss remarks, in a riposte to Getty, Trotsky frequently used the same pseudonym; any attempt by Trotsky to repudiate 'Gurov's' article was hardly likely to carry conviction.<sup>7</sup>

'Nel'z'ya Bol'she Ostavat'sya v Odnom "Internatsionale" so Staliny'm, Manuil'skim, Lozovskim i Ko', an article dated five days later but published in the same issue of *Byulleten' Oppozitsii*, finally makes Trotsky's point clear.<sup>8</sup> Written en route from Turkey to France, this article took the form of a dialogue, a device favoured by Trotsky for the clarification positions. Here he asserted that 'in the USSR it is necessary to build a Bolshevik Party again.' However, the task of the new party would be to 'reform' the Soviet Union. There is still a close connection between old positions and new. The article, cast in the form of a dialogue, asks whether renouncing Party reformism means a turn towards 'civil war'. Trotsky denies that this is the Opposition's intention. It had not been the Left Opposition but the Stalinist bureaucracy that had waged civil war, in the form of arrests, deportations and executions. The real civil war, now on the agenda, 'is between the counterrevolution on the offensive and the Stalinist bureaucracy on the defensive.' Trotsky still foresees a 'fighting bloc' between the Bolshevik-Leninists and the Stalinists, although the pressure of events will fragment the Stalinist bureaucracy.

Only in 'Klassovaya Priroda Sovetskogo Gosudarstvo' (October 1933), did Trotsky reason through the consequences of his new position. Here there is a recognition of fundamental conflict between the Opposition and

the bureaucracy, although even here the prospect of a united front 'against the common [capitalist] foe', particularly in the event of war, is still envisaged. Trotsky's pamphlet finally recognises that 'the bureaucracy can be compelled to yield power into the hands of the proletarian vanguard only by force.' This struggle for what Trotsky later called a 'political revolution' will not be 'an armed insurrection against the dictatorship of the proletariat but the removal of a malignant growth upon it ... not a civil war but rather measures of a police character'.<sup>9</sup> Above all, discarding the perspective of political reform did not mean discarding the definition of the USSR as a workers' state.

Some years later Trotsky was taunted with having invented the contradictory concept of a counter-revolutionary workers' state. He accepted the definition, arguing that 'since 1923 the Soviet state has played a more and more counter-revolutionary role in the international arena.'<sup>10</sup> In this and other articles written during the 1939-40 polemic with dissident American Trotskyists, Trotsky argued that repugnance at the miserable reality of Stalinism should not lead to a sentimental and subjective rejection of the established definition. Those who followed this path were guilty of 'petty-bourgeois moralism'. As an alternative, Marxist, approach, based on a 'dialectical materialist method', Trotsky proposed that three questions needed answers. What is the historical origin of the USSR? What changes has this state suffered during its existence? Did these changes pass from the quantitative to the qualitative? Such a method could not replace 'concrete scientific analysis', but it would direct the analysis along the right road, 'securing it against sterile wanderings in the desert of subjectivism and scholasticism'.<sup>11</sup>

In 1933 Trotsky concluded that changes of quantity had led to a change in quality, but not in the form that he had hitherto anticipated. Trotsky invoked a new category: the degenerated workers' state, although in 1933 only the idea and not the term is used. Degeneration, Trotsky now recognises, has proceeded so far that the proletariat is removed from power and can only reconquer it by force. The state maintains itself, opposed to the working class, by coercion. But what then is its class nature? Has that changed? Trotsky's answer was emphatically no and remained so: the Soviet Union remained a workers' state.

#### Section Two: France, Norway, Mexico

Trotsky, with his family and political secretaries, left Turkey for France in July 1933. Seventeen years previously, an expulsion order had resulted in his deportation from France to Spain; that order was now withdrawn after four years of persistent agitation. In the middle of a period of political instability, France was an attractive domicile. Trotsky's time there was dramatic by contrast with the isolation of the Turkish island he had left behind. There were clandestine visits to Paris and rapid escapes from the curious eyes of press and public; after four and half years in Turkey, Trotsky once again experienced life in an active political milieu.<sup>12</sup>

In France, Trotsky's writing maintained considerable momentum, but it did not yield works of the substance of the Turkish years. His writings on French politics, while of interest, fall beneath the standard he had set in his work on Germany.<sup>13</sup> The articles on the 'Russian question' - 'Klassovaya Priroda Sovetskogo Gosudarstvo' (1933), and 'Rabochee Gosudarstvo, Termidor i Bonapartizm' (1935) - are of paramount importance in the development of Trotsky's theory of Stalinism and provide major insights into their

subjects, but they are short and undeveloped.

In my view, only the short volume of biography on Lenin can claim distinction.<sup>14</sup> As with all Trotsky's historical and theoretical studies, this book was produced in the most unpropitious circumstances, the author having to rely on others for his library research.<sup>15</sup> Despite the obstacles, it is a vibrant and interesting work, evidence of the writer's quality as a narrative historian. It was intended as the first part of a comprehensive study of Lenin, but, in the event, remained the only completed portion. Had it been finished it would surely have ranked with the *History of the Russian Revolution*. Trotsky himself declared, in advance of starting work on the book, that he hoped it would be the 'major work of my life.'<sup>16</sup> In later years Trotsky diverted his attention to the biography of Stalin, and was thus deprived of time for the completion of his previous project. He worked very hard, rarely 'less than twelve hours a day, and sometimes ... much more', but he aimed very high.<sup>17</sup> Like many authors, Trotsky was quite unrealistic about his capacities: consequently, he rarely met his target.

When Trotsky's incognito was accidentally destroyed in April 1934, a clamour arose against the government's leniency towards such a dangerous revolutionary. A new expulsion order was issued but temporarily unenforced for lack of a new host. Trotsky managed to maintain his French residence for another fourteen months until fear of deportation to one of the colonies led him to secure entry in June 1935 to Norway, where a Labour Government had recently taken office.

In Norway, in late 1935 and the first seven months of 1936, Trotsky produced his best-known book, *Revolution Betrayed*, published in French and German in 1936, and in at least a dozen other languages subsequently. In

it, he set himself the twin tasks of presenting a history of the Soviet state and of analysing its present nature. He wished both to account for the degeneration of the regime into a bureaucratic domination of politics and society, and to investigate whether this had proceeded to the point where a new revolution was necessary. The conclusion, examined in more detail in chapter seven, was that the bureaucracy had become the 'sole privileged and commanding stratum in Soviet society', but it was not, and could not be, a ruling class.<sup>18</sup> Rather, it ruled through the forms of property created by the October revolution; this was the central contradiction of Soviet society. Either the counter-revolution must be completed and capitalism restored, or a political revolution must sweep away the bureaucracy and reinstate 'Soviet democracy'.<sup>19</sup>

*Revolution Betrayed* is legitimately considered a fundamental work, but, suprisingly, Trotsky himself did not initiate it: at the time he had no plans for a major book on the USSR. It originated from an idea first put to him by Simon and Schuster, the American publishers of his *History of the Russian Revolution*. He was asked to provide a new preface to a one volume edition of the *History*.<sup>20</sup> Taking the opportunity for a serious analytical investigation, Trotsky enlarged the preface into a book only to find it rejected by the publishers. Negotiations floundered on contractual details, but Trotsky saw political motives behind its refusal.<sup>21</sup> Doubleday took it on. It sold poorly at the time and failed to make much money for either publisher or author; only after his death did it make a major contribution to Trotsky's reputation.<sup>22</sup>

*Revolution Betrayed* might be thought to deny the decline of Trotsky's work after 1933. However, on closer examination it does not constitute a substantial objection. Although the book was written during late 1935 and the first seven months of 1936, it is, for the most part, essentially a

summary of the ideas developed by Trotsky in earlier pieces, and textually very close in some places. 1930-1933 was the critical period for the development of Trotsky's views on the USSR. *Revolution Betrayed* effectively brings to an end the second phase of Trotsky's opposition. It is an exposition of the conclusions reached in 1933.

One political development introduced by *Revolution Betrayed* that must be noted is Trotsky's call for the freedom to organise Soviet parties.<sup>23</sup> This repudiated his previous assumption of an identity between the workers' state and the proletarian party; hitherto a single party state had been very much part of Trotsky's thinking. Consequently, for ten years, Trotsky was caught in a trap set for him many times over by Stalin and his allies, a trap that he had helped to design in 1923 and 1924 with his unconditional proclamations of loyalty. Until 1933 Trotsky conflated loyalty to the state with loyalty to the Party. When, in 1933, he discarded the perspective of reforming the Soviet Party and state he confirmed the formula: two parties equals revolution. But only on the basis that parties are direct reflections of classes is it necessary to accept Trotsky's claim, and its converse, that reformism in relation to the state must imply reformism in relation to the ruling party. Trotsky consistently claimed that to build a separate organisation was the political corollary of repudiating the definition of the Soviet state as a workers' state: but this was always an assumption, an assertion that he obviously felt did not need argument. By maintaining loyalty to the Party, Trotsky muted his own cries of warning, making them sound like cries of pain.

In August 1936, whilst on holiday in the country, Trotsky's house in Norway was burgled by members of the Norwegian fascist organisation who hoped to find evidence of his transgression of the political conditions of residence which he had agreed with the government.<sup>24</sup> Little was removed by

the intruders, but further conditions were added to the agreement restraining his political activity. It would now be impossible for Trotsky to defend himself against the lies emanating freely from Moscow. In response to his refusal to their conditions the government ordered his arrest, probably to maintain friendly relations with the USSR. Trotsky was, in effect, imprisoned and isolated, at just the moment when he needed the freedom to repudiate Moscow's charges against him.

A successful campaign was waged on Trotsky's behalf to find another country willing to accept him.<sup>25</sup> Mexico gave him permission to live there and Trotsky left Norway with relief.<sup>26</sup> Although having solitude to study and write, Norway had provided much less direct contact with political comrades than France and this had clearly hindered Trotsky's priority, the building of a Fourth International to displace the moribund Third.<sup>27</sup> In Coyoacán, a suburb of Mexico City where Trotsky lived from his arrival in Mexico in January 1937 until his assassination in August 1940, his life was free from the hostile attention of the state, although the threat from Stalin's agents was increasingly felt.

The writings of the Mexican period bear testimony to its political compulsions: the response to the Moscow trials, the foundation of the Fourth International in 1938, the Spanish revolution and Civil War of 1936-9, the orientation towards the international crises which erupted into war in 1939, and the polemics in the Fourth International on the class nature of the Soviet Union. These were important subjects, and Trotsky's commentaries have a lasting interest, but such issues were primarily of contemporary concern. Occupying himself with world affairs, repudiating the charges of the Moscow trials, participating in the political life of the communist opposition to Stalin, he had little time for major literary projects although his energy was undiminished. No substantial work of

theoretical significance was completed during his last years. Nothing after *Revolution Betrayed* makes any major addition to Trotsky's analysis of Stalinist Russia. Although considerable attention was devoted to a biography of Stalin, this was far from complete when Trotsky was assassinated.<sup>28</sup> Only the debate in the Fourth International on the class nature of the Soviet Union is of any significance for this study.

Trotsky's life in Mexico was far from comfortable or relaxed, despite its lighter moments.<sup>29</sup> Work was delayed by secretarial problems; not suprisingly perhaps, there were difficulties in the employment of a skilled and reliable Russian language typist.<sup>30</sup> There were familiar problems of the absence of necessary facilities and materials; *Pravda* arrived late or not at all; indispensable records were in jeopardy for lack of filing cabinets.<sup>31</sup> The threat of assassination, ever present since Turkey, increasingly made itself felt. After the failed assassination attempt of 24 May, 1940, when the raiders swept through the house with machine guns, Trotsky was even provided with a bullet proof vest.<sup>32</sup> The Trotsky house on the Avenida Viena now became a 'fortress - and at the same time a prison', but this was to be no proof against the next attempt on Trotsky's life by the lone assailant, Jacson.<sup>33</sup>

After Trotsky's exile to Turkey, there had been, initially, a vitality to his political activity. It was a time of reorientation and readjustment forced by the Stalinist economic revolution and the rise of German fascism. An organisation had to be launched and positions defined in relation to the Communist Parties and left-wing movements that had split from social democracy. At least until 1932, some contacts with the USSR remained and there was still the possibility of meaningful action, if only at a distance.<sup>34</sup> After leaving Turkey Trotsky failed to produce any major work of the quality of *History of the Russian Revolution*. Even his shorter



commentaries do not match, in my view, the high standard he had set in his writings on the rise of German fascism.<sup>35</sup> In part the explanation must be found in his political situation. In Norway and Mexico (1935-1940) he was more isolated than in Turkey and France (1929-1935). By the late 1930s, years of unsuccessful opposition had taken their toll. Now the fortunes of revolution took another downward turn with the trials in Moscow and the dashing of hopes in France and Spain. Furthermore, the social circumstances of Trotsky's life were not propitious for work.

In Mexico, more than before, the household faced acute financial stress, especially after the break with Diego Rivera. Rivera had been both a patron and follower; the political rift that occurred in January 1939 led to the loss of his subsidy as the Trotsky household had to move from Rivera's Blue House and rent another on the outskirts of Coyoacán.<sup>36</sup> Frequent calls went out from his secretaries for funds to ensure that one meal followed another.<sup>37</sup> Trotsky himself shared the anxiety that penury produced: in 1938 his secretary wrote to an American comrade concerning the financial situation, adding that 'LD seems terribly oppressed by the burden of the financial problems.'<sup>38</sup> To assist the position Trotsky tried to adapt his writing style to produce articles that would sell to American magazines. He realised that if it was to sell, his work must not be written in 'a too Fourth International manner', but be more 'adapted to the average man on the New York street'.<sup>39</sup> He even offered to write 'a very "American" kind of article without any kind of political tendency.'<sup>40</sup>

Although only in his mid-fifties, Trotsky became increasingly depressed by a sense of impending old age, and by anxiety about his health.<sup>41</sup> His letters to Natalya show this well. 'Youth has gone by long ago ... but suddenly I noticed that even its memory has disappeared. ... Obviously all these years of persecution had a great effect on my nervous

system and my memory.’<sup>42</sup> In September 1933 he writes that a day of discussion with comrades had left him feeling like a ‘starets’, a wise old man, but in the night he woke often calling for Natalya and feeling like ‘an abandoned boy calling his mother’.<sup>43</sup> In 1937, after his brief affair with Frida Kahlo, Trotsky wrote to Natalya, from whom he was temporarily and briefly separated: ‘every two or three lines ... I get up, take a few steps in my room and weep, I shed tears of reproach towards myself, tears of gratitude towards you, and most of all I shed tears because old age has caught us unawares.’<sup>44</sup>

The torment of Trotsky’s family was a further persecution. All his children perished before him, all with the ‘help’ of Stalin. Nina, the younger daughter of his first marriage, died in 1928, her illness exacerbated by the recent arrest of her husband, Man-Nevelson.<sup>45</sup> Zina, the elder daughter, committed suicide in 1933 in Berlin; she had been allowed eventually to leave the USSR with her son, Seva, but behind her stayed her arrested husband, Platon Volkov, and their young daughter.<sup>46</sup> Sergei, the non-political younger son born to Natalya and Trotsky in 1908, was arrested and died in the camps, probably in 1939.<sup>47</sup> Leon Sedov, the older of the two boys, died in Paris in February 1938, aged thirty-two, in circumstances which pointed to assassination.<sup>48</sup> Leon had accompanied his parents into exile and had become a vital political comrade, handling much of the organisational activity of the Trotskyist movement.<sup>49</sup> Trotsky and Natalya were devastated by his death. In a letter written six days after the news of his death, Trotsky referred to that time as the ‘most terrible in our life’.<sup>50</sup> One of his secretaries reported that it was ‘as if the whole mountain chain of Mexico was bearing down upon this one house.’<sup>51</sup>

Surely it was partly in response to his oppressions that, during the second half of his exile, Trotsky’s vision became increasingly triumphal:

he needed the conviction that the victory of the revolution was in sight. About him he perceived the decline of capitalism, the approach of war, and the sharpening of class contradictions. For Trotsky, revolution was imminent, provided the vanguard acted. As Molyneux has noted, even during the great upheavals of 1917-21 Trotsky had not been so unconditional in his predictions.<sup>52</sup> Now, it seems, Trotsky, more than ever, had to be optimistic amidst all the wreckage of earlier hopes in order to continue his political work. His certainty was as strong as his party was weak; there was a desperation about this call to arms. Without a revolutionary vanguard fit for its task great opportunities were being squandered. The Fourth International must be built and built quickly.

### Section Three: Trotsky's Analysis of Current Events

One of Trotsky's major problems after exile was to maintain a sharp focus on current events at great distance. This section, and the next, reviews Trotsky's reactions to some major political developments after his exile. The first part deals with Trotsky's commentary on the early show trials; although it belongs chronologically outside this chapter, it has been put here to juxtapose it with consideration of Trotsky's reactions to the Kirov assassination, the new Constitution of 1936, and the Moscow trials.

Even before expulsion from the USSR, but especially after, the revolutionary in exile had to respond on the basis of increasingly inadequate information, with the consequence that his commentaries sometimes brought together deduction and speculative interpretation in an unsatisfactory combination. In the absence of hard information Trotsky did not become agnostic, but preferred an extrapolation that depended on theoretical dispositions. Sometimes his conclusions were plainly wrong, as

is well illustrated by his reactions to the first show trials.

### The First Show Trials.

When Stalin began to move against the intelligentsia in 1928 Trotsky took it as a confirmation of the correctness of the Opposition's arguments. The first major indication of the change of policy was the Shakhty affair of 1928. In March, the security police revealed their 'discovery' of a 'counter-revolutionary conspiracy' involving engineers at the Shakhty mines in the Northern Caucasus. At their show trial there was no attempt to distinguish between saboteurs and loyal specialists, thus signalling a drive against the whole technical intelligentsia. The accused were found guilty, on fabricated evidence, and suffered heavy sentences; five men were executed. Trotsky's references to the Shakhty affair during 1928 were casual, but, nevertheless, clearly indicate that he was in no doubt about the legitimacy of the charges. He takes the affair to be proof of the Opposition's case. It has shown that the Opposition were right to attack the bureaucracy for negligence and even corruption.<sup>53</sup>

The Shakhty trial was followed in 1930 and 1931 by further show trials. In 1930 the leaders of an alleged conspiracy to overthrow the Soviet state were put on trial. The defendants were supposed to have organised an Industrial Party to carry out sabotage as preparation for capitalist restoration in conjunction with France and Britain. The only evidence brought against these previously high-ranking economists was their own confessions. The trial marked the high point of the persecution of the technical intelligentsia during the period of the first five-year plan; according to Bailes, it was 'the most widely publicised show trial in the Soviet Union before the purges of the late 1930s'.<sup>54</sup> Five defendants were given death sentences, later commuted, and the others were given ten years' imprisonment. In March 1931 another major trial took place. Fourteen

defendants, mainly economists and planners, were charged with establishing a 'Menshevik counter-revolutionary organisation' to restore capitalism in conjunction with imperialism. Again the defendants 'confessed', but this time their sentences were relatively light, with a total of 53 years imprisonment. In both cases Trotsky took the proceedings at face value, declaring that the Opposition's arguments had been justified.

Two trials - against the specialist-saboteurs and against the Mensheviks - have given an extremely striking picture of the relationship of forces of the classes and the parties in the USSR. It was irrefutably established by the court that during the years 1923-1928 the bourgeois specialists, in close alliance with the foreign centres of the bourgeoisie, successfully carried through an artificial slowdown of industrialisation, counting upon the reestablishment of capitalist relationships. The elements of dual power in the land of the proletarian dictatorship attained such a weight that the direct agents of the capitalist restoration, together with their democratic agents, the Mensheviks, could play a leading role in all the economic centres of the Soviet republic! (emphasis added)<sup>55</sup>

Trotsky's record as a commentator on the early show trials was shabby. He showed none of the almost punctilious regard for accurate detail that characterised his self-defence in the wake of the Moscow trials. His hasty judgements were clearly founded upon political predispositions. The trials fitted his perception of the growth of dual power; he paid little attention to the factual evidence. In one article Trotsky wrote: 'The Ramzins, the Osadchys and the Mensheviks have confessed. The question of knowing to what extent these confessions are sincere is not of great interest to us.'<sup>56</sup> In another piece, on the subject of Ryazanov's implication in the conspiracy, he defended him and condemned the Mensheviks, simply on the basis of their past records. 'We are absolutely certain that Ryazanov did not participate in any conspiracy.'<sup>57</sup> On the other hand:

The Mensheviks ... seek the reestablishment of capitalism. ... The position of the Mensheviks ... is counterrevolutionary in the most precise and objective sense of the word, that is, in the class sense. This position cannot but lead to attempts to utilise the discontent of the masses for a social uprising. The activity of the Mensheviks ... is nothing but a preparation for such an uprising. ... The parties which believe that there is no way out for Russia other than a return to a bourgeois regime

cannot but make a bloc with the bourgeoisie.<sup>58</sup>

Somewhat belatedly Trotsky recognised his own gullibility in taking these trials seriously. He added an editorial note to an article by Victor Serge, published in the *Byulleten' Oppozitsii* in 1936, which admitted to greatly underestimating 'the degree of shamelessness of Stalinist "justice"', and taking too seriously the confessions of the former Mensheviks.<sup>59</sup> At the hearings in Mexico of the Dewey Commission he was asked why he had been silent about the Menshevik trials. Trotsky's reply is of interest:

I must recognise that I took the trials seriously. It was a great error. I was in Prinkipo - it was in 1931 - absolutely isolated from any political milieu. I had no illusions about the justice of the Soviet Union at that time, but on the other hand I knew that the Right-wing Mensheviks ... took part in the struggle in the Civil War against us. ... I didn't study the trial at that time. I was very busy with my history of the October Revolution, and I admitted that the trial was more or less correct. It was a great error on my part.<sup>60</sup>

This candid statement amounts to an admission that at the time, preoccupied with other matters, Trotsky accepted the validity of the verdict because he expected treachery from the Mensheviks.

### The Kirov Affair

On 1 December, 1934, the leading figure of the Leningrad Party organisation, Sergei Kirov, was assassinated. That he died at the hand of a young Communist called Nikolaev is one of the few uncontested facts of the matter. In later years it emerged that there was much that was 'mysterious', as Khrushchev said, about the affair.<sup>61</sup> Kirov was alone at the time of his assassination, despite security regulations. Further, his bodyguard was murdered by the NKVD before Politburo members could interrogate him. Nikolaev himself, it seems, had been previously detained by the local NKVD and then released although he carried a revolver and a

map of Kirov's route to work. Khrushchev did not state that Stalin arranged the murder, although he came close to saying it. He did, however, make it clear that there was police complicity. Many historians in Britain and America believe, along with Roy Medvedev, that Stalin was responsible, but not all accept this view. One sceptical commentator, J. Arch Getty, after a careful survey of the affair, reaches the conclusion that the 'Stalin was guilty' verdict makes little sense and cannot be supported on anything more than insubstantial conjecture.<sup>62</sup> Getty observes that prior to Orlov's assertions, published in 1953, there had been no claim that Stalin arranged Kirov's murder.<sup>63</sup> Only with Khrushchev's secret speech in 1956, and Boris Nicolaevsky's article published in the same year, did the accusation gain wide credence.<sup>64</sup> Getty's view is that it is not at all clear that Stalin stood to gain by Kirov's death, a point that most people have assumed. He sees no evidence, as opposed to conjecture, that there were substantial differences of policy between the two leaders.

Several years before the assassination of Kirov became a pretext for the repression of former or suspected Oppositionists, Trotsky had predicted that Stalin would pin the responsibility for terrorist acts on the Opposition. Expulsions would not be enough for Stalin. He would 'try to draw a line of blood between the official Party and the Opposition. He absolutely must connect the Opposition with terrorist crimes, preparations of armed insurrection, etc.'.<sup>65</sup> The first executions of Trotskyists in the USSR came, as isolated occurrences, in 1929. Jacob Blumkin, a GPU operative sympathetic to Trotsky was shot in December. He had taken the opportunity to visit Trotsky in Turkey and bring back to the USSR an innocuous letter to Oppositionists. Trotsky saw his execution as 'Stalin's personal business', testimony to his 'fear of the Left Opposition' and a threat to Left Oppositionists inside and outside the USSR that detainees would be executed as a reprisal for opposition.<sup>66</sup> Such summary justice for

Party members, even for confirmed Oppositionists, was still shocking. It took the Kirov affair to change this.

The Kirov affair confirmed Trotsky's prediction, made five years previously, that Stalin would seek to connect the Opposition with terrorist acts in order to discredit it. In a commentary upon the events Trotsky quoted his own words from 1929 and noted the already familiar use of an 'amalgam'.<sup>67</sup> This term, which Trotsky used with increasing frequency, refers to the technique of lumping together all kinds of heterogenous and opposed individuals, currents, and tendencies, in order to establish guilt by association. In this case Trotsky interpreted the arrest of Zinoviev and Kamenev as an attempt to create an amalgam, the creation of a connection between 'the terrorist assassination and the Opposition, all opposition, all criticism in general, past, present, or future.'<sup>68</sup> Other aspects of the amalgam were the alleged complicity of White Guards, of the Latvian consul who was supposed to have played a co-ordinating role, and the reference to the consul's offer to play go-between for Nikolaev and Trotsky. Trotsky suggested that this consul was the 'cousin' of the 'Wrangel officer', in reality a GPU man, who had been planted in the Opposition in 1927.<sup>69</sup>

As with the trials of 1928-1931, Trotsky is inclined initially to accept the official version as basically correct if only because he was unsure what to make of the affair. Later he declared that his 'first hypothesis was that it was individual revenge' perhaps arising from conflicts about a woman.<sup>70</sup> His first commentary, dated 10 December, was a short and pseudonymous circular of the International Secretariat of the International Communist League (ICL), the organisation that prefigured the Fourth International. Trotsky gave a preliminary assessment, adding: 'we have as yet no information that permits us to pass definitive judgement,



... subsequent information may again render necessary a radical change in the appraisal of the event.' The ICL position must be 'the absolute condemnation of the assassin [for terrorism] and the defence of the USSR against its class enemies, both external and internal.'<sup>71</sup>

In Trotsky's first statement made under his own name, dated 30 December, he wrote: 'Nikolaev is depicted by the Soviet press as a participant in a terrorist organisation made up of members of the Party. If the dispatch is true - and we see no reason to consider it an invention, because the bureaucracy has not confessed it with an easy heart - we have before us a new fact that must be considered of great symptomatic significance.'<sup>72</sup> As before, it seems that Trotsky adopted the official line because it fitted his own perspective. If Nikolaev was operating on behalf of a terrorist organisation this must indicate considerable hostility to the political leadership and the decomposition of the bureaucracy.

Trotsky became increasingly sceptical about the veracity of official accounts as more information became available. An article dated January 12, 1935, contains the following passage:

The fourteen ... accused ... were all shot. Did they all participate in the terrorist act? The indictment answers this question in the affirmative, but it does not adduce even the semblance of proof. We do not believe the indictment. We have seen with what brazen and cowardly tendentiousness it has injected the name of Trotsky into its text.<sup>73</sup>

Trotsky revises his own assessment on two critical points: the involvement of the secret police and the lengths to which Stalin will go to fabricate conspiracies.

In his remarks of 10 December, Trotsky had reported that 'the Nazi and the White Guard press speak of a provocation on the part of the GPU' but he dismissed their idea that the GPU may have killed Kirov 'in order to show that it is indispensable and to augment its power'. Admittedly, rivalry

exists between the GPU and the Party apparatus. 'But to think that it has reached such dimensions that the GPU assassinates leaders of the Party - the least one can say is that this exaggeration is altogether out of proportion with the state of affairs.'<sup>74</sup> Having read extracts from the indictment, he comes to very different conclusions.

The version we have adduced, which unfailingly flows from the indictment itself ... presupposes consequently that the GPU itself, through the medium of an actual or a fake consul, was financing Nikolaev and was attempting to link him up with Trotsky. ... We do not mean to say that the GPU, in the person of its Leningrad agents, premeditated the murder of Kirov; we have no facts for such a supposition. But the agents of the GPU knew about the terrorist act that was in preparation; they kept Nikolaev under surveillance; they established contacts with him through the medium of trumped-up consuls for the double purpose of capturing as many persons as possible involved in the matter and, at the same time, of attempting to compromise<sup>75</sup> the political opponents of Stalin by means of a complex amalgam.

A month later Trotsky commented on the latest news from Moscow that a military tribunal had condemned twelve GPU officers from Leningrad, with Medved at their head, to sentences of hard labour for showing criminal negligence in not taking the necessary security measures although aware of the attempt being prepared on Kirov's life. Trotsky concluded that negligence 'doesn't come into it'. The GPU was 'taking a chance with Kirov's life, that is the explanation that fits better the basis of the affair. ... the task of Medved and his colleagues was not at all to stop the conspirators - that would have been all too easy; what they had to do was to find a suitable consul, put him in touch with Nikolaev, inspire Nikolaev with confidence in the consul and so on; at the same time, they had to establish a connection between the Zinoviev-Kamenev group and the Leningrad terrorists. That was not easy. It needed time. And Nikolaev refused to wait.'<sup>76</sup>

In his remarks of 10 December Trotsky had speculated that Stalin may seek to link Nikolaev with the ICL, but although 'it is not excluded' this 'is not very probable'. By 28 December, after the implication of Zinoviev

and Kamenev in the affair, Trotsky was concluding that Stalin was capable of the basest amalgams.<sup>77</sup> Subsequently Trotsky learnt that his own name had been brought into the affair; the 'foreign consul' had offered to put Nikolaev in touch with him, if a letter could be supplied from the terrorist group.<sup>78</sup> After the tribunal's verdict on Medved and his 'accomplices', Trotsky concluded that if the secret police knew of a conspiracy against Kirov so must Stalin have known. The affair was at such a high level that Medved would have had to maintain daily contact with Yagoda, and Yagoda must have kept Stalin informed. 'Without the direct agreement of Stalin - more precisely, without his initiative - neither Yagoda nor Medved would have decided to mount such a risky enterprise.'<sup>79</sup> Thus Trotsky reached a conclusion close to that which became orthodoxy some two decades later, even if he stopped short of saying that Stalin had Kirov murdered. Indeed, as his testimony to the Dewey Commission indicates, he continued to see Kirov's murder as a terrorist assassination, not the result of Stalin's plotting from beginning to end.<sup>80</sup>

Subsequent commentators have seen Kirov as the proponent of 'moderate Stalinism'. Trotsky, however, did not present him as such. To Trotsky, Kirov was simply 'an administrator of average ability; in my view of no political importance.'<sup>81</sup> He proposed that the attack on Kirov was 'arranged in order to crush the Opposition', adding that 'there had been no intention of killing Kirov'.<sup>82</sup> In an article published some time later, Trotsky even suggested that both Stalin and Kirov were 'in close touch with the conspiracy', which had been arranged 'by the GPU for the purpose of striking a blow at the Leningrad organisation of Zinovievists'. Again Nikolaev is portrayed as a man of terrorist convictions who eludes the control of the secret police. 'Stalin did not wish to kill Kirov; Kirov himself did not wish to be killed; but Nikolaev, although surrounded on all sides by agents provocateurs, himself took his role too seriously.'<sup>83</sup>

In Trotsky's view, one conspiracy would inevitably lead to another. The Stalinists must defeat the Opposition, or be defeated by them. They could not do so ideologically, so they turned increasingly to 'repression, new amalgams of an increasingly monstrous kind and, finally, an alliance with bourgeois police against Leninists on the basis of a mutual rendering of services.'<sup>84</sup> For 'Stalin-Yagoda-Yaroslavsky and Co.' almost anything is possible; they 'lack neither the malevolent will nor the material means.' The precise course will be 'drummed up by the march of events', but Trotsky predicts, nearly two years before the first of the Moscow trials, 'the preparation of "public opinion" will proceed along the line of a campaign concerning terrorist dangers on the part of the "Trotskyists" that menace the peace and order of Europe.'<sup>85</sup>

Trotsky seems to have been prompted by the implications of the Kirov assassination to conclude that a new phase in the development of Stalinism was emerging. It is clear that the affair arrested Trotsky's current work on French politics as he gave his attention to events in the USSR. At the end of December he completed two articles which together comprised a whole issue of the *Byulleten' Oppozitsii*.<sup>86</sup> Then three further short articles followed in January 1935.<sup>87</sup> Throughout this time he must also have been working on two longer articles, dated 30 January and 1 February, which are more general and considered assessments of the situation in the USSR, the second, 'Rabochee Gosudarstvo, Termidor i Bonapartizm, also being a major theoretical re-appraisal.'<sup>88</sup> It seems reasonable to conclude that Kirov's murder shook Trotsky into returning to current Soviet affairs, a subject that had little occupied him for some while. It might be said that the immediate preparation of *Revolution Betrayed* begins here.<sup>89</sup>

Although he was, as he admitted, a 'distant judge, an isolated observer',<sup>90</sup> Trotsky concluded, on the basis of his reading: 'a new chapter

is being opened in the history of the Soviet Union.'<sup>91</sup> The assassination and its repercussions provided 'an external and dramatic form to that general turn in Soviet policies that has been unfolding during the last year and a half. The general direction of this turn is to the right, more to the right and still further to the right.'<sup>92</sup> Trotsky saw three linked aspects constituting the new development: 'the diplomatic retreat before the world bourgeoisie and before reformism; the economic retreat before the petty-bourgeois tendencies within the country; the political offensive against the vanguard of the proletariat.'<sup>93</sup>

Trotsky's interpretation of the Kirov affair shows a concern to establish the facts that was in marked contrast with his assessment of the first show trials. To his credit, he quickly questioned and discarded official explanations and stressed the complicity of the regime in Kirov's murder, anticipating later accounts. His argument that the turn was rightward was a recognition of the growing accommodation between the Stalinists and capitalism, rather than a reversion to his 1928 perspectives of 'kulak restorationism'. By now, as chapter six explains, Trotsky saw the bureaucracy as 'Bonapartist' and not 'Centrist', indicating thereby that it had risen above the former factional divisions of the Party. The new turn 'to the right' was not seen as a reconstruction of the Stalin-Bukharin alignment. Indeed, Trotsky makes a specific warning, almost in anticipation of the Bukharin trial:

Today one can already forecast that, after the raid against the Lefts, there will sooner or later follow a raid against the Rights. ... The basic task of the bureaucracy is: to hold its own. The enemies and the opponents of the ruling clique, or merely those friends who are not quite reliable, are classified as left or right "agencies of the intervention," often depending only on the technical conveniences of the amalgam. The expulsion of Smirnov, the former People's Commissar of Agriculture, from the Party is a subtle warning to the Rights: "Don't bestir yourselves. Remember there is tomorrow!"<sup>94</sup>

The New Constitution of 1936

It is one of the ironies of Soviet history that just as the purge trials were being prepared a new Soviet Constitution, supposedly the most democratic in the world, was drafted and publicly discussed. Finally adopted by the Extraordinary Eighth Congress of Soviets in December 1936, this became known as the Stalin Constitution, despite the fact that it was Bukharin who presided over the drafting commission that sat during much of 1935 and the first months of 1936. Officially, its task was to register the changes in Soviet society, particularly those resulting from the overthrow of the market and the destruction of capitalist classes. Implicitly the new constitution also reflected the social conservatism that was becoming characteristic of the USSR after the repudiation of social radicalism from 1931 onwards.

The new Constitution began by stating: 'The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics is a socialist state of workers and peasants.'<sup>95</sup> This form of words was not original. From the first the Soviet state had been known as a Socialist Soviet Republic. The 1918 Constitution also stated that 'the Russian Republic is a free socialist society of all the toilers of Russia.'<sup>96</sup> In the past, however, the claim to the title 'socialist' had represented an aspiration. The 1918 Constitution refers to itself as 'designed for the present transition period' and declares its aim to be the establishment of 'a dictatorship of the urban and rural proletariat and the poorest peasantry ... with a view to crushing completely the bourgeoisie, abolishing the exploitation of man by man, and establishing socialism, under which there will be no division into classes and no state power.'<sup>97</sup> (emphasis added) In 1936, according to the authors of the Constitution, socialism had become a reality. This was inscribed in the Constitution by its references to soviets of 'toilers' deputies' and not workers' deputies, by the nature of the economic system, 'socialist' by

virtue of the liquidation of the capitalist system and 'the abolition of the exploitation of man by man', and above all by the fundamental change to a system of universal, equal and direct suffrage.<sup>98</sup> No longer were there to be discriminations based only on class position: in 1918 some groups had been entirely disenfranchised, whilst town dwellers were constitutionally privileged. As Unger notes, the 1936 Constitution was 'more akin in both style and content to the "bourgeois" constitutions so much despised in earlier years.'<sup>99</sup> In 1936 even the right to personal property and inheritance was guaranteed by the Constitution.

Trotsky's comments on the new Constitution appear in an article, 'Novaya Konstitutsiya SSSR', published in May 1936, when the outlines of the proposed changes were apparent; in a chapter of *Revolution Betrayed*; in various interviews given to journalists during the Moscow trials, and in the record of the Dewey commission's proceedings in Mexico.<sup>100</sup> Throughout, his fundamental point was that in the current context of Soviet politics to establish equal rights was meaningless since no one had any political rights against the bureaucracy.<sup>101</sup> 'It is a lie and a triple lie to allege that socialism has been realised in the USSR. The flowering of bureaucratism is barbaric proof that socialism is still far removed.'<sup>102</sup> To claim, as the Constitution does, that Soviet society functions on the principle 'from each according to his ability, to each according to his work' is theoretical ignorance. Trotsky argues that violence has been done here to Marx's idea of communist society: 'from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs.' Cutting this in half distorts the sense of 'from each according to his ability'. Trotsky interprets this precept not as a general obligation to work but as a recognition that compulsion has withered away. In the 'truly communist' sense that Marx implied by linking together the two injunctions, the reference was to the full development of the creativity of labour as an expression of human

need. Work ceases to be an obligation and society has no further use for compulsion, since only the 'sick and abnormal' would refuse to work. Detaching the principle from its original counterpart and marrying it to distribution 'according to work' empties the formula of anything but a formal meaning: 'even a mule under the whip works "according to his ability", but from that it does not follow that the whip is a social principle for mules.'<sup>103</sup>

'Constitutions cannot in general change the regime,' Trotsky told the *New York Daily Forward*, 'they only inscribe on paper the real relationship of forces.' Here, and in several other places, Trotsky suggested that the purpose of the new law was to 'sanctify' the new balance of forces in which the bureaucracy was uppermost. The Party is no longer the Party of the masses, 'but a machine of the bureaucracy.' Now it has been formally given a privileged position: 'for the first time, the absolutism of the Party is expressed textually.'<sup>104</sup>

Stalin justified the special place given to the Party in his interview with Roy Howard, an American journalist. If rival classes no longer existed, he argued, then there was no need for rival parties. Trotsky response was: 'every word a mistake, and some of them two!'<sup>105</sup> It was impossible to simplify the political representation of class interests like that; and if Stalin's claim were taken seriously, it would be an argument for no party at all, not an argument for the monopoly of a single party. Theoretical propositions on 'the mutual relations of classes and parties' have been 'dragged in ... by the hair'.<sup>106</sup> The real question for the bureaucracy was survival.

The new Constitution is a 'step backward, from the dictatorship of the proletariat towards a bourgeois political regime.'<sup>107</sup> The new provisions on



universal, direct and secret voting represent, in Trotsky's opinion, a de jure liquidation of the ruling position of the proletariat, expressing a de facto situation established well before. To call the state 'classless' and 'popular' is, from a Marxist standpoint, 'pure nonsense'.<sup>108</sup> Such obfuscation is to conceal the 'dictatorship of the privileged strata of Soviet society over the producing masses', to create a plebiscitary mechanism, and to provide 'a cover of democratic phrases', especially for the 'friends of the Soviet Union'.<sup>109</sup> Perhaps Stalin is even preparing his own coronation!<sup>110</sup>

The constitutional protection offered to personal property is also seen by Trotsky as a reflection of bureaucratic interests. In principle, he applauds the guaranteeing of property of this kind. Personal property for consumption to provide a comfortable life 'will not only be preserved under communism but will receive an unheard of development. ... The first task of communism is to guarantee the comforts of life to all.'<sup>111</sup> Clearly Trotsky was against asceticism, although equally, and somewhat pompously, he scorned luxury: 'it is subject to doubt, to be sure, whether a man of high culture would want to burden himself with the rubbish of luxuries.'<sup>112</sup> Trotsky, however, regarded the appetite for consumption in the Soviet Union as petty bourgeois, with shortage feeding greed. By making personal property a matter of constitutional concern the purpose of the bureaucracy is to defend its own private property.

Some of Trotsky's commentary on the new Constitution is worthwhile, but by no means all. For instance, part of his explanation for the guarantee of personal property is that the bureaucracy has responded to 'the growth of prosperity' by renouncing arbitrary seizures of the property of others, and feels compelled to do this in order to make material incentives work in the search for a higher productivity of labour.<sup>113</sup>

Whilst this assertion may be logical, it could not be, and was not, defended by empirical observation.

Another entirely speculative reason suggested by Trotsky for the introduction of the new Constitution was that the bureaucracy was being forced to introduce changes in order to consolidate its own position. Trotsky argues that although the soviets had long ago lost their political meaning 'they might have revived with the growth of new social antagonisms and with the awakening of the new generation.'<sup>114</sup> The Soviet 'aristocracy' needs to get rid of the city soviets. It wishes to give the peasantry greater political weight because 'it is able to use the kolkhozniks not without success against the city workers. To smother the protest of the workers against the growing social inequality by the weight of the more backward masses of the village - this is the chief aim of the new Constitution ... Bonapartism ... always leans upon the village as against the city.'<sup>115</sup>

A further explanation for the constitutional change, provided by Trotsky, is that the bureaucracy needs to find some way of controlling its own administration. 'Like the European bourgeoisie in its time', the Soviet bureaucracy has been 'compelled to resort to the secret ballot in order at least partially to purge its state apparatus.' In the USSR 'nepotism, arbitrariness, profligacy, pillage and bribery' have become the basis of administration. Such decay threatens 'the very existence of the state as the source of power, income and privilege of the ruling stratum. A reform became necessary.' The Kremlin rulers are turning to the population for help in cleansing the administration.<sup>116</sup> Stalin plays the same double game. He helps to maintain the bureaucracy by seeming, from time to time, to stand somewhat apart from it and criticise. 'He is even compelled to seek a whip from below against the abuses from above.'<sup>117</sup>

In Trotsky's writings on the Constitution we see once again his difficulty with Soviet official accounts. He cannot entirely dismiss them; lacking other sources of information, he tries to integrate them into his own perspective. Even Stalin's assessments, provided they fit with Trotsky's analysis, are taken seriously. Ambiguity often results. For all Trotsky's thunder about the counterfeit of the new Constitution he still concludes that it is 'impermissible to wave it aside as an insignificant trifle. History tells of many cases of a bureaucratic dictatorship resorting for its salvation to "liberal" reforms and still further weakening itself.'<sup>118</sup> The new Constitution offers a 'semi-legal' cover for the struggle against Bonapartism. He calls the Bolshevik-Leninists to action, as if the previous ten years had not happened.

The Bolshevik-Leninists must henceforth follow attentively all the twists and turns of constitutional reform, painstakingly taking into consideration the experience of the first coming elections. We must learn how to utilise the rivalry between the various "public organisations" in the interests of socialism. We must learn how to engage in battles on the subject of the plebiscites as well. The bureaucracy is afraid of the workers; we must unfold our work among them more audaciously and on a more extensive scale. Bonapartism is afraid of the youth; we must rally it to the banner of Marx and Lenin. From the adventures of individual terrorism, the method of those who are desperate, we must lead the vanguard of the young generation onto the broad road of the world revolution. It is necessary to train new Bolshevik cadres which<sup>119</sup> will come to replace the decaying bureaucratic regime.

#### Section Four: The Moscow Trials

Shortly after the completion of *Revolution Betrayed* in August 1936, Trotsky learned that Zinoviev and Kamenev were to be tried for terrorism.<sup>120</sup> At the trial which took place in Moscow between 19 August and 24 August 1936, sixteen defendants were charged with conspiring with Trotsky to carry out terrorist action against the party leaders, and with having procured Kirov's murder. All the accused 'confessed' and were executed.

Many new arrests followed on the basis of testimony from the first trial. Tomsy, implicated by the 'evidence' of the trial, committed suicide. A second trial took place in January 1937, with Yezhov now at the head of the NKVD after Yagoda's dismissal in the previous September for laxity towards oppositionists. The seventeen defendants included Pyatakov, Radek and Sokolnikov. This time the charges were even more extreme. Trotsky, it seems, had not been content with terrorism but had also plotted the restoration of capitalism. His alleged aim was to topple the Soviet government with the help of Germany and Japan. A third trial came in March 1938. Yagoda was now in the dock, with three former Politburo members, Bukharin, Rykov and Krestinsky, and an assorted group of seventeen more leaders of the 'Anti-Soviet Bloc of Rights and Trotskyists', including Rakovksy. The accused were inevitably found guilty of the familiar compound of heinous crimes; those that were not executed immediately perished soon enough in the camps.

After hearing the Tass announcement of the trial of Zinoviev, Trotsky immediately repudiated its allegations, calling the trial 'one of the greatest falsifications in the history of politics.'<sup>121</sup> The claim that Trotsky had directed a terrorist plot from Norway against the leaders of the regime 'does not contain an iota of truth. ... [it is] in sharpest contradiction to my ideas and to the whole of my activities ...'; 'I have had no connection with the Soviet Union since arriving in Norway.'<sup>122</sup> The trial was 'not a new trial, but a new and corrected version of the January 1935 trial', the trial following the Kirov affair.<sup>123</sup> 'For political vengeance it puts the Dreyfus scandal and the Reichstag fire trial in the shadow.' Trotsky was in no doubt that the trial was entirely fraudulent and the confessions had been forced.<sup>124</sup>

The Moscow trials were a challenge that Trotsky could not ignore. Although, at first, he was concerned whether the sheer infamy of the charges made it shameful to reply to them, the attempt to destroy his credibility as a revolutionary communist was so outrageous that a disdainful silence was not an adequate response.<sup>125</sup> 'I have to spend time on the most disgusting slanders and accusations', Trotsky wrote, '[just when] I was already rejoicing to be able to quietly continue work on Lenin's biography. There is nothing to be done about it. Old William Liebknecht used to say: "Whoever has to deal with politics must have a thick skin."',<sup>126</sup> During the next twenty months, Trotsky made innumerable statements on the trials, in print and in person. He was concerned both to demonstrate the falsity of the charges and to explain the reasons for the trials, their purposes, and what they showed about Stalin's regime.

Trotsky's immediate problem in August 1936 was to find the best forum within which to reply. It seemed unlikely that continuing to use the columns of the press, both socialist and bourgeois, would be enough. The best response would be to appear before a court and prove innocence, but there were practical problems with this course of action. To return to Moscow to appear at the trial, Trotsky wrote, would be to 'give myself up, bound hand and foot'; to call witnesses, to present documents, to mount any serious defence would be impossible.<sup>127</sup> The Soviet government was not going to risk defeat in a foreign court by fighting an unsuccessful extradition case. Trotsky hoped that the Norwegian government would establish an independent tribunal but they too failed to oblige.<sup>128</sup> He suggested that the Ministries of Justice in the countries where he had allegedly instigated crimes were duty bound to summon him before the courts; again the call fell on deaf ears.<sup>129</sup> Trotsky, through his Norwegian lawyer, Michael Puntervold, even wrote to the League of Nations seeking, unsuccessfully, the right to address its international tribunal on

terrorism in the hope of exposing the trial verdict to scrutiny.<sup>130</sup>

A more practical alternative was for Trotsky himself to bring judicial proceedings to force a hearing. This he tried, commencing proceedings against newspapers that gave credence to the accusations, but the Norwegian government made his task impossible. On 26 August 1936 Trotsky had been put under house arrest after refusing to undertake to refrain from interfering 'directly or indirectly, orally and in writing, in political questions current in other countries'; as Deutscher notes, Trotsky could not accede to this demand without lending 'colour to all the calumny against him which Stalin was drumming into the world's ears.'<sup>131</sup> Next, the government passed a decree to prohibit 'an alien interned under the terms of the decree of 31 August, 1936,' from appearing as a plaintiff before a Norwegian court without the permission of the Ministry of Justice. Trotsky, in fact, was the only alien concerned, and naturally permission was refused. Trotsky responded by trying to sue Stalinist papers abroad, but the Ministry of Justice announced its intention to oppose his attempts and he was forbidden to communicate with lawyers abroad.<sup>132</sup>

With the courts closed to him, another possibility for Trotsky was to establish an international commission of sufficient status that its proceedings and conclusions would be taken as authoritative by world public opinion. A proposal for a commission of inquiry into Stalin's repressions had already been put in 1935 by Natalia Sedova, in the hope it would throw light on the fate of her son, Sergei.<sup>133</sup> Trotsky returned to this idea, in its essentials, with his first statement after learning of the forthcoming trial in August 1936. He requested the appointment of a commission by the Norwegian government, suggesting that it would be best if such a body could be augmented by an 'impartial international commission [nominated] by the labour organisations of the entire world, or better still its international

leaders'.<sup>134</sup> Four days after this statement he declared to the *New York Times*, 'I will make the accusers the accused.'<sup>135</sup>

For the time being, the Norwegian government, bending to pressure from the USSR, made the establishment of a commission impossible. Not only did it restrict Trotsky's rights to pursue legal remedies, but Trotsky was also kept under house arrest, his post interrupted and censored, his secretaries deported, and his commentaries for the press suspended. Trotsky called on 'our friends' to 'do everything possible independently'. He called for the creation of 'a special commission ... to handle this matter, with V.S. [Victor Serge] at its head'. In the meanwhile not a single day should be lost; 'practical agreements are permissible not only with Social Democrats but also with bourgeois democrats and "respectable" elements in general, for the Cesare Borgia of Tiflis [Stalin] and his methods rank much lower than capitalist democracy.'<sup>136</sup>

Mounting a case for Trotsky in radical circles was not without its problems. In the 1930s, particularly after the re-orientation of Soviet policies following Hitler's triumph, fellow-travelling was fashionable. The Civil War in Spain had only recently erupted, drawing in international allies on both sides and apparently confirming the viewpoint that to fight fascism it was necessary to align with the USSR. Internationally, there were powerful voices raised in Stalin's support. Theodore Dreiser, Leon Feuchtwanger, Henri Barbusse, Louis Aragon and Romain Rolland all expressed their trust in Soviet justice.<sup>137</sup> Léon Blum refused to stand with Friedrich Adler, the Secretary of the Second International, who had denounced the trial as a medieval witch hunt.<sup>138</sup> The French Premier did his best to ensure that the European Socialists would play no part in any commission of inquiry.<sup>139</sup> Even Shaw and Malraux would not condemn Stalin.<sup>140</sup>

Nevertheless, Trotsky's friends abroad were far from inactive. In Paris Leon Sedov prepared a Red Book on the Moscow trial, much to the delight of his father.<sup>141</sup> In several countries defence committees were formed which, following Trotsky's advice, brought liberals, independent radicals and socialists of various sorts alongside Trotskyists in defence of the exile. The most important of these was the American committee, formed as the 'Provisional American Committee for the Defense of Leon Trotsky' in October 1936. Originally there were six members of this committee including John Dewey, Norman Thomas and Freda Kirchwey, none of them Trotskyists.<sup>142</sup> Within a month they were joined by Edmund Wilson, James T. Farrell, Suzanne LaFollette and several others, and the Committee dropped the 'Provisional' from its title.

Trotsky willingly contributed to the political controversy surrounding the Defense Committee. He used the opportunities presented by the work of the Defense Committee not only to expose Stalinist justice but also to challenge Stalinist rule. The meeting in the New York Hippodrome in February 1937 was to be a high point. Trotsky, excluded from entering the US, planned to deliver a speech using telephonic connections. Sabotage, or perhaps just incompetence, prevented this and a text of the speech had to be read, by Max Shachtman, to the packed hall.<sup>143</sup> The manager of the Trotskyist publishing house reported to Trotsky that, despite the disappointment, the meeting had been a 'huge success'. 'A tremendous amount of literature on the trials was sold'; the speech is being rushed through the presses in an edition of twenty-five thousand to sell as a five cent pamphlet.<sup>144</sup>

In his speech, Trotsky rehearsed many of the arguments he would later use before the Dewey commission. He declared that his appeal would not be to the passions but to reason, 'reason will be found on the side of truth.'



It was an offence against reason to believe in the truth of the Moscow accusations. The speech contained a political credo.

The Moscow trials do not dishonour the revolution, because they are the progeny of reaction. The Moscow trials do not dishonour the old generation of Bolsheviks; they only demonstrate that even Bolsheviks are made of flesh and blood, and that they do not resist endlessly when over their heads swings the pendulum of death. The Moscow trials dishonour the political regime which has conceived them: <sup>145</sup> The regime of Bonapartism, without honour and without conscience!

Trotsky briefly stated the axioms of his political attitude towards the USSR. '... a new aristocracy has been formed in the Soviet Union. ... The bureaucracy is the embodiment of monstrous inequality. ... Its leaders are forced to hide the reality ... [they are] afraid of the people. ... The fundamental acquisitions of the October Revolution ... are not yet destroyed, but they have already come into irreconcilable conflict with the political despotism. ... Stalin's regime is doomed. ... all those for whom the word socialism is not a hollow sound but the content of their moral life - forward! Neither threats, nor persecutions, nor violations can stop us! Be it even our bleaching bones, the truth will triumph!',<sup>146</sup>

In subsequent months Trotsky continued to comment extensively on the Moscow trials, exposing them to ridicule as a black fantasy that lacked all credibility. After the third trial he commented on the monotony and predictability of the proceedings. 'Even a mediocre journalist could have drafted ... Vyshinsky's final plea in advance.'<sup>147</sup> If the accusations had been correct then he should have drawn the conclusion that 'the Soviet government is nothing but a centralised apparatus for high treason.'<sup>148</sup>

The heads of the government and the majority of the people's commissars (Rykov, Kamenev, Rudzutak, Smirnov, Yakovlev, Rosengolts, Chernov, Grinko, Ivanov, Osinsky, and others); the most important Soviet diplomats (Rakovsky, Sokolnikov, Krestinsky, Karakhan, Bogomolov, Yurenev, and others); all the leaders of the Communist International (Zinoviev, Bukharin, Radek); the chief leaders of the economy (Pyatakov, Smirnov, Serebriakov, Lifshits, and others); the best captains and leaders of the army (Tukhachevsky, Gamarnik, Yakir, Uborevich, Kork, Muralov, Mrachkovsky, Alksnis, Admiral Orlov, and others); the most outstanding worker-revolutionists produced by Bolshevism in

thirty-five years (Tomsky, Yevdokimov, Smirnov, Bakaev, Serebriakov, Boguslavsky, Mrachkovsky); ... the heads of all the ... Soviet Republics without exception ...; the leaders of the GPU for the last ten years ...; finally, and this is most important, the members of the all-powerful Political Bureau, actually the supreme power of the country, Trotsky, Zinoviev, Kamenev, Tomsky, Rykov, Bukharin, Ruzzutak - all of them were plotting against the Soviet power in the years when they held it in their hands!

All of them, as agents of foreign powers, aimed at ripping to shreds the Soviet federation built by them, and enslaving to fascism<sup>149</sup> the peoples for whom they had fought for dozens of years!

The primary basis for the verdicts in the three trials was the 'evidence' of the accused and this alone made the procedures suspect. Knowing the majority of the defendants, having observed the Stalin regime at work during the aftermath of Kirov's assassination, and certain that central pivots of the testimony were lies, Trotsky concluded that the confessions had been extorted. After the first trial Trotsky recalled that in May 1936 he had already observed that 'confessions' had become a familiar part of Soviet political trials.<sup>150</sup> The authorities needed such declarations to implicate other people, to justify their own repressions, and quite simply as a buttress for the 'Bonapartist dictatorship'.

In the May 1936 article, 'Samye Ostrye Blyuda Eshche Vpered!', Trotsky assumes that promises of clemency were the normal means by which confessions of guilt were obtained.<sup>151</sup> By the end of the year, through intuition and reflection, study of the verbatim records of trials, press reports, and information from former prisoners like Serge and Ciliga, Trotsky had come to realise that such admissions were being achieved in far more complex ways. Many of the accused had previously made similar declarations; 'at each new stage in the capitulation, the victims kept finding themselves faced with the alternative: either reject all the preceding denunciations and engage in a hopeless struggle with the bureaucracy - without a banner, without an organisation, without any

personal authority - or sink one step lower again, by accusing themselves and others of new infamies.' Only those who are willing to play their parts will be tried in public; the rest will be secretly executed.<sup>152</sup> After secretaries, close associates and friends have been implicated, 'the designated victim finds himself at the finish so enmeshed in a network of false testimony that all resistance seems to him useless.'<sup>153</sup> The secret police does not need physical torture 'to destroy the nerves and crush the will of the imprisoned men.'<sup>154</sup> Psychological pressures can be massive. Wives and families will be arrested and used as hostages. Husbands will be blackmailed against the threat of intimate disclosures to wives. Administrators will be threatened with exposure for the normal practice of receiving perks and privileges.<sup>155</sup> Resisters will be taken frequently to the sites of executions and then returned to their cells. When, finally, the accused is brought to trial the hall is packed with unfamiliar and hostile faces, with a claque available to disconcert the defendants.<sup>156</sup>

Some of the victims - Trotsky cites Muralov as an example - may also be swayed by the argument that by confessing they are serving the Party. Of course, for Trotsky, this is a false consciousness; self-degradation 'can only demoralise the Party.' Nevertheless, Trotsky understands that some may have been persuaded to accept the claim that any oppositional association is prejudicial to the defense of the country: 'the psychosis of war is now the most important factor in the hands of the bureaucracy.'<sup>157</sup>

Trotsky shows considerable sympathy for the victims of the trials. By offering no condemnation of their submission he shows an appreciation that it was of a different order from the capitulations that many of them had made in the years 1928-1930. Before the Dewey Commission he surmised that had he still been in the USSR, Sergei's arrest would have been followed by Natalya's. Mother and son would have been forced to admit guilt. Then he

himself would have been put under pressure to 'confess'. Faced by this, Trotsky did not indulge in vicarious heroics, self-important declarations that the only way to behave is to refuse to confess. 'The situation is very difficult - such a situation exists with hundreds and thousands.'<sup>158</sup>

Understanding the significance of the Moscow trials was not easy, then or now. The rational mind is easily outraged by such monstrosities and finds it difficult to comprehend them in their Byzantine complexities. Indeed, it might be argued that the whole process of the purges, of which the trials were but a part, was so irrational that to attempt a rational explanation is hardly possible. Perhaps Trotsky felt something of this, despite his commitment to the logic of materialism. In one of his first considered statements he wrote:

I am in the process of reading the accounts of the trial in *Pravda*. They make me choke with disgust. To imagine such shamelessness, such stupidity, such perfidy, is not an easy task, even for a politician.<sup>159</sup>

To Trotsky the trials represented a return to the intellectual barbarism of witchcraft trials and the inquisition, a leap backwards across the centuries that sorely tested the powers of any commentator. The preface to his *Les Crimes de Staline*, a book published in France in 1937, concludes: '...over and over again, writing these pages, I have observed how limited is our vocabulary and the range of our feelings in the face of the enormity of the crimes being committed today in Moscow.'<sup>160</sup> The escalation of outrageous fantasy, through the eighteen months since the first trial, made the news from Moscow seem like a 'delirious dream'.<sup>161</sup>

Trotsky put the trials in the context of the historical development of the Russian revolution, repeatedly utilising, frequently implicitly, the concepts which he had developed over many years: the idea that there were two chapters to the revolution, progressive and regressive; the evolution of Thermidor into Bonapartism; the inevitability of an increasingly savage

struggle between revolution and counter-revolution. For instance, to the *British News Chronicle* Trotsky commented in August 1936: 'The new conservative leading stratum, the Soviet aristocracy personified by Stalin, is finally severing the umbilical cord that connected it with the October revolution.'<sup>162</sup> The present is being separated from the past by a 'river of blood'.<sup>163</sup>

The court in Norway, trying the fascists who had raided Trotsky's home in August 1936, was offered a comprehensive assessment of the trials. Clearly Trotsky used this opportunity to leave a record of his thinking, despite the closed judicial proceedings. He was permitted to speak, uninterrupted, for four hours. Later this speech was revised and published in *Les Crimes de Staline*.<sup>164</sup> Here Trotsky asserted that 'the first thing to be taken into consideration is the fundamental contradiction that is today tearing Soviet society apart.' This was that the ideals of the revolution (a classless society and the withering away of the state) are in 'flagrant contradiction with the real structure of Soviet society today'. The powerful and privileged 'absolutist bureaucracy' is forced 'to use Communist formulations to justify relationships and facts that have nothing to do with communism.'

The obligatory lie permeates the entire official ideology. People think one thing and write and say another. The gap between the word and the reality grows continually. ... Lies, slander, forgery are not occasional weapons against political adversaries but are organically derived from the bureaucracy's false position in Soviet society. ... But reality makes itself felt at every step, exposes the official lie, and verifies the criticism of the Opposition - whence the necessity for the bureaucracy to have recourse to ever stronger methods for proving its infallibility. ... Such is the political atmosphere, such is the social psychology, that have made possible the weird spectacle of the Moscow trial.<sup>165</sup>

To these broad historical propositions, Trotsky added several supplementary reasons for the trials, all originally stated before the

completion of the first trial, and then reworked in innumerable ways during the next twenty months. Firstly, he situated the trials in a continuum which began with the trials following the Kirov assassination. 'The trial now being held is a new edition of the January 1935 trial. At that time we had a general rehearsal. Now we have the premiere.'<sup>166</sup> Secondly, the trials were Stalin's response to the growth in influence of the Opposition, or at least its potential for growth, particularly beyond the USSR as the Fourth International.<sup>167</sup> Thirdly, Stalin was reinforcing his new orientation in foreign policy by demonstrating to the world bourgeoisie the sincerity of his renunciation of revolutionary positions.<sup>168</sup> Fourthly, the trials were partially due to Stalin's vindictive nature. Trotsky liked to recall Kamenev's story of how Stalin had once confided, after a bottle of wine, that what he liked best in life was 'to choose your victim, prepare your blow well, take pitiless revenge, and then go to bed.'<sup>169</sup>

Trotsky saw the trials as symptomatic of a crisis in Soviet society. In February 1937, in a letter to Henri Molinier, a French comrade, he wrote: 'As for the Moscow trial, I think it is the beginning of the downfall of Stalinism.'<sup>170</sup> His writings of this period are peppered with similar statements. For example, his article 'Behind the Moscow Trials' concluded:

The struggle between the bureaucracy and society becomes more and more intense. In this struggle victory will inevitably go to the people. The Moscow trials are but episodes of the death agony of the bureaucracy. Stalin's regime will be swept away by history.<sup>171</sup>

Another, 'Nachalo Kontsa', whilst equally certain that Stalin's days are numbered, proposed an altogether more conditional prognosis. Here the assessment of contemporary events is in line with Trotsky's wider theoretical appraisal. Bonapartism has developed both from 'the fundamental contradiction between the bureaucracy and the people' and from 'the supplementary contradiction between the revolutionists and the

Thermidoreans within the bureaucracy.' Stalin cannot win. His Bonapartism contradicts the needs of the people. 'It is quite probable that revolutionary convulsions in Asia and Europe will ... prepare its downfall under the blows of the toiling masses.'

In 'Nachalo Kontsa', Trotsky rehearsed a theme familiar in his writings. Stalin 'come what may, is a product of the revolution.' In the past he had sought support, at certain critical moments, from 'the revolutionary elements and ... the people against the overprecipitate offensive of the privileged ones.' The purge represents the ejection by the ruling stratum of all those in its midst that 'remind it of its revolutionary past, the principles of socialism, liberty, equality, fraternity, and the unsolved tasks of the world revolution.' The 'Soviet aristocracy' has used 'the Stalin clique to make short shrift of the revolutionists', but, it 'cherishes no sympathy and respect for the present leaders. It desires to be completely free from all the constraints of Bolshevism, even in the mangled form which is still indispensable to Stalin for disciplining his clique. On the morrow Stalin will become a burden to the ruling stratum.' Trotsky's putative capitalists among the bureaucracy will have no further need for Stalin if they are successful. Should a revolutionary upsurge fail to shake Soviet society, Stalin will fall victim to 'the type of amalgam he has himself instituted, most probably on the charge of - Trotskyism.'<sup>172</sup>

#### Section Five: The Dewey Commission

Trotsky's response to the charges of the Moscow trials was to take the offensive by staging a counter-trial. The major difficulty this encountered was the need to secure sufficient authority to sway

international opinion. This temporarily delayed preparations. At first Trotsky appeared to be unwilling to press the American Defense Committee into action. In February 1937 he wrote to friends: 'We are holding the best cards. We don't have to be as impatient as at the time of my internment in Norway.'<sup>173</sup> By March, however, Trotsky himself was becoming impatient and apprehensive that the Defense Committee's inquiry might be pre-empted by Stalinist-influenced pseudo-commissions. To Suzanne La Follette, a radical recruit to the Defense Committee, who was by now playing a central role in the creation of an inquiry, Trotsky argued: 'It is utopian to wait for an ideal commission, above all attack and reproach. The commission must and will gain authority during its work, because the facts, the logic, the arguments, the documents are all on its side.'<sup>174</sup> To his own followers he was unrestrained. Once a commission, even of 'modest rank-and-file people, had published evidence refuting some of Vyshinsky's claims, the "nobility" would join in. The real problem was whether the will to establish the inquiry existed, and this depended on the policy of 'our comrades'. After two months of discretion, Trotsky now expressed himself without hesitation. 'The general line of our comrades in the committee is not correct.' They had, he felt, been over cautious and adaptive towards the liberals. Now they must secure the immediate organisation of a delegation to travel to Mexico to begin the hearings.<sup>175</sup>

Perhaps Trotsky's impatient letters succeeded in accelerating the committee's activity since, almost at once, a commission was established. Only three weeks later, in April 1937, a group of five, referred to both as a sub-commission and the preliminary commission, arrived in Mexico City.<sup>176</sup> This small group comprised John Dewey, chairman, Carleton Beals, Otto Ruehle, Ben Stolberg and Suzanne La Follette, secretary. Constitutionally the five operated as delegates of the commission of inquiry set up by the American Trotsky Defense Committee in conjunction with its British and



French equivalents. Effectively, however, the sub-commission performed the real work.<sup>177</sup> None of the five could be considered to be a Trotskyist, but only Dewey had an international reputation of real note. His courageous participation, at the age of seventy-eight, ensured that the commission's proceedings would not be ignored. The inquiry accurately became known as the Dewey Commission.

It is clear that Trotsky put great store by the inquiry and considered it to be of immense political significance. Consequently he put enormous effort into it, demanding the same of those around him, as van Heijenoort, Trotsky's secretary, illustrates.

' The hearings of the subcommission meant long days of work for those around Trotsky. Folders that had passed untouched through Alma Ata and Prinkipo were opened for the first time since they had left Moscow. Masses of documents had to be read, in order to find here or there some useful item. Dozens of affidavits about the demonstrably false assertions made at the trials had been collected throughout the world for the commission. Many of these affidavits came from persons who had become political adversaries of Trotsky's, so that a great deal of effort was required to obtain them. These affidavits had to be not only translated but also annotated, so as to be understood by the public and, in particular, by the members of the commission. Countless minute details had to be clarified, explained, arranged. Needless to say, in all this work, there was nothing falsified, nothing hidden, no thumb pressed on the scales.<sup>178</sup>

At the Mexico hearings, Trotsky's defense was lengthy and complex. The transcript of his closing speech alone, given in English, occupies one hundred and twenty-five pages.<sup>179</sup> Undoubtedly, it was an extremely impressive performance. The Moscow trials, of course, constituted the point of focus, but as Deutscher suggests it was also something of an apologia pro vita sua.<sup>180</sup> Characteristically, it ends with an assertion of optimism.

The experience of my life, in which there has been no lack either of successes or of failures, has not only not destroyed my faith in the clear, bright future of mankind, but, on the contrary, has given it an indestructible temper. This faith in reason, in truth, in human solidarity, which at the age of eighteen I took with me into the workers' quarters of ... Nikolaiev - this faith

I have preserved fully and completely. In the very fact of your Commission's formation ... I see a new and truly magnificent reinforcement of the revolutionary optimism which constitutes the fundamental element of my life.<sup>181</sup>

Trotsky's appeal was to public opinion. Trusting shared faith in reason and truth, he asked the public to consider the Moscow trials against standards of common sense. Would it really have been of benefit to the Opposition to commit the crimes of which it was accused? Why was there so little substantive evidence? Why should the accused have so freely confessed to actions so completely contradictory of their long-held political positions?

During the trials the accused claimed to have worked directly on Trotsky's instructions, telling of meetings with him and letters from him. Trotsky denied all. At the inquiry he declared that because of the circumstances of his life he could give proof that he had not met with his alleged co-conspirators. Charles Beard had been wrong, in this case, to claim that 'it is almost, if not entirely, impossible to prove a negative.' To the celebrated historian who had declined to join the inquiry, Trotsky replied that he could do 'the impossible'.<sup>182</sup> 'Thanks to the circumstances of my mode of living (police surveillance, constant presence of a guard composed of my friends, daily letters, etc.)', there were irrefutable alibis.<sup>183</sup>

If Trotsky's archives actively disproved a conspiracy, so did they discredit the charge of terrorism. 'Positive acquaintance with the daily development of my thought and acts over a period of nine years', Trotsky declared, 'is entirely sufficient to demonstrate a "negative fact" - namely, that I could not have committed acts contrary to my convictions, to my interests, to my whole character.'<sup>184</sup> Carl Becker, another historian who had declined Dewey's invitation, had asked: 'If Trotsky has not, as he

asserts, been involved in the alleged "conspiracy" [to overthrow Stalin] ... the obvious question seems to be "Why not?",<sup>185</sup> Trotsky's reply was that individual terrorism was a completely ineffective means of furthering the socialist revolution; he would only plead guilty to trying, through agitation, to persuade the Soviet workers to rise in revolt against their rulers.

Trotsky was first and foremost a revolutionary. This placed him somewhat at odds with the spirit that motivated Dewey and had given momentum to the formation of the commission. Trotsky saw the chance for political gain: here was a stage on which to combat Stalinism. Fortunately for Trotsky, the pursuit of justice was in harmony with his larger concerns. From these dual objectives came a delicate problem. To carry conviction the inquiry had to be conducted by political opponents. Stalinists were not willing to attend; therefore the political composition of the 'commission ranged from liberal, to social-democratic and radical, to anarcho-syndicalist. Trotsky's problem was to maximise his political input whilst minimising that of his opponents. He claimed the right to make political statements but if the commissioners tried to follow suit, he would trump them with a statement of the commission's purpose: the pursuit of justice.

Without this veto, the more effective for being implicit, Trotsky would never have agreed to the commission. Before the commission had been formed, he had opposed Fenner Brockway's proposal to create a social-democratic committee to examine 'the role of Trotskyism in the working class movement.'<sup>186</sup> He saw this suggestion as a 'factional political intrigue' designed to avoid embarrassing 'Stalin and his agents'. Open polemics were one thing; 'as a political man, Brockway can judge Trotskyism as he likes; that is his right.' To try to do this as a

substitute for 'a juridical inquiry into the criminal accusations and the trials, more exactly, into the greatest frame-ups in the world' was quite another.

After the hearings in Mexico, the inquiry continued at a more leisurely pace in New York during the summer of 1937. Wendelin Thomas, the former leader of the German naval revolt of 1918, brought up Trotsky's role in the repression of the Kronstadt rebels and Makhno's partisans. Trotsky's response was to argue that such matters did not have a direct bearing on the inquiry, but that he would, and did, answer Thomas's questions for the benefit of all those interested 'in my actual views'.<sup>187</sup> Later, it transpired, Thomas was considering making an individual statement, as a commissioner, that Bolshevism was itself the source of the Moscow trials, a thesis symmetrically opposite to Trotsky's. Trotsky accepted Thomas's right, as an individual, to hold and propound any view on Bolshevism, but insisted it was not the purpose of the commission to judge Bolshevism.<sup>188</sup> 'No political tendency would agree to be the object of appraisal by an interparty commission; no rational commission would undertake such an insuperable task. ... The task of the inquiry ... did and does consist only of verifying certain specific charges made against certain individuals. The political conclusions from the verdict of the commission will be drawn by each tendency in its own way.'<sup>189</sup>

To argue that Trotsky's attitude was special pleading ignores a real dilemma that facing him. The Moscow trials were, in essence, political trials, and this imposed the necessity to treat them politically. Trotsky was forced to conduct a political defence by the nature of the charges against him, despite his temporary tactical alliance with liberals and others. To maintain this alliance Trotsky would accept the necessity, as Deutscher put it, 'to explain the many involved issues ... not in his

accustomed Marxist idiom ... but in the language of the pragmatically minded liberal', but he made no fundamental concessions.<sup>190</sup>

In any event, Trotsky undoubtedly saw the work of the inquiry entirely in political terms; for him it was not simply an abstract search for truth. Deutscher rather obscures this by his hyperbolic tribute to Trotsky's performance before the inquiry.

By the end no question had been left unanswered, no important issue blurred, no serious historic event unilluminated. ... The incisiveness of Trotsky's logic got the better of his unwieldy sentences, and the clarity of his ideas shone through all his verbal blunderings. [Throughout the hearings Trotsky spoke in English.] ... Above all the integrity of his case allowed him to overcome all external restraint and constraint. He stood where he stood like truth itself, unkempt and unadorned, unarmoured and unshielded, yet magnificent and invincible.<sup>191</sup>

One 'important issue' undoubtedly had been left unilluminated: the negotiation of an opposition bloc in 1932, and, in particular, Sedov's relations with Goltsman, one of the accused at the first trial. In Moscow Goltsman had testified that he had met Trotsky's son several times in Paris as the emissary of I.N. Smirnov, and that he had travelled to Copenhagen to meet with Sedov, and through him, with Trotsky.<sup>192</sup> Trotsky had little difficulty in demonstrating the fiction of the second part of Goltsman's claims: Sedov was never in Copenhagen, the 'Hotel Bristol' did not exist, etc. By concentrating on this area he avoided discussion of the first part. At the inquiry in Mexico, responding to an unambiguous question, he denied having any relations, direct or indirect, with Goltsman since he had left Russia.<sup>193</sup>

It is beyond belief that Trotsky simply forgot to mention Sedov's contacts with Goltsman to the Mexico inquiry. By that time he was clearly familiar with the Verbatim Report from Moscow which published Goltsman's testimony.<sup>194</sup> Normally Trotsky put great effort into checking allegations

by reference to his archives. He must have given consideration to the matter: indeed, it is doubtful that he would even have needed to check his archives. Sedov's meetings with Goltsman concerned the co-ordination of opposition to Stalin, not the kind of matter to be easily forgotten. Following the Copenhagen visit of 1932, Trotsky met his son in Paris only weeks after the discussions with Goltsman in Berlin. He would, no doubt, have been fully informed of recent developments. Moreover, Sedov's *Red Book* had reminded Trotsky of the contacts months before the Mexico hearings. There Sedov had referred to his meetings with Smirnov and Goltsman in Berlin as 'the only drops of truth in the Moscow trial's sea of lies.'<sup>195</sup> The only plausible interpretation is that Trotsky decided to mislead the Mexican sub-commission in order to avoid compromising his defense by discussion of a secondary matter. The charges of terrorism, of the direction of a Russian centre of operations to restore capitalism, and of being a fascist agent were the points on which to concentrate. These accusations were total fabrications, with or without the exploration of the Sedov-Goltsman contacts.

During the summer following the hearings, it appears that Trotsky decided to cover his tracks. On 29 June he wrote to the Commission correcting 'some factual inaccuracies' in his statements to the sub-commission, although 'not one of them has any direct bearing on the object of the Commission's inquiry'. The most significant of these concerned Goltsman.

To a question regarding Goltsman I replied that after my departure from Russia I had neither "directly or indirectly" any communication with him. In fact, Goltsman met my son, Sedov, in Berlin in 1932 and communicated to him, as I subsequently learned, some factual reports about the situation in the USSR. ... This fact can be interpreted as an "indirect" communication between Goltsman and myself.<sup>196</sup>

With the commission in New York, it was relatively safe for Trotsky to admit his error. No doubt he wished to cover himself against any observation of a flaw in his testimony; at the same time, he had nothing to gain and much to lose if the Sedov-Goltsman contacts became a matter of public discussion. If this were to happen, he obviously wished his position to be as secure as possible. His secretary wrote to Sedov on 3 July, enclosing a copy of an undated letter written by Trotsky to his son in 1932, in October or November.<sup>197</sup> Van Heijenoort's letter asks Sedov for the original of the 1932 letter, adding that it would not be made available to the Commission before being cleared with Sedov. Without being pressed to do so, Trotsky himself apparently had no intention of releasing the letter to public scrutiny. It would have risked giving credibility to the Moscow trials. If the subject was pursued in New York however, he wanted the letter in order to show that the purpose of the oppositional block was principally for the reciprocal exchange of information and its publication in the *Byulleten'*. There is nothing in the letter about terrorism, or direct action of any kind.<sup>198</sup> In fact, the commissioners in New York were insufficiently informed to be able to pursue the matter. So nothing more came of this in the inquiry.

It can only be supposition that Trotsky decided to first mislead the inquiry and then rectify his 'error' at a time when he could not be questioned. However, this interpretation fits what is known of the facts. It is also in line with Trotsky's political orientation to the committee's work. If such a supposition is correct, it does not make the Moscow trials in any way valid and it does not detract from Trotsky's demolition of Stalin's case. All it shows is that Trotsky approached the matter as a shrewd politician; he was being true to his revolutionary convictions.

Trotsky's essentially political attitude to the inquiry is also shown in the rebukes he delivered to his American comrades. He berated them with being less faithful to their politics than Dewey was to his. Dewey's participation was much appreciated by Trotsky, but Dewey was and would remain a liberal. 'He is not for Stalin and not for Trotsky. He wants to establish the truth.' 'Your position', Trotsky told his comrades, 'is different. You know the truth. Have you the right to hide it, even as members of the committee? You have the same duty as the liberals to preserve your political identity within the committee.' Allegiances should have been publicly declared, convictions openly stated. Trotsky argued that it would have been of 'inestimable value ... in propaganda among the masses' to have first done this, declaring that the alliance with 'honest liberals' was to show public opinion the justice of the case, and then to expose the Stalinists by inviting them to participate on an equal basis.<sup>199</sup>

After the hearings in Mexico had been completed, Trotsky wrote to his comrades and again indicated that they should take a political view of the work of the committee. 'The most important question', he suggested, 'is to create a network of sympathetic workers' groups around the committee.' Once the report of the inquiry's proceedings had been published, 'all our comrades must concentrate their efforts on bringing this report to the workers.' Trotsky made some very specific organisational proposals. Meetings of workers, even if small, must pass resolutions endorsing the inquiry, and also elect permanent representatives to liaise with the committee. New committee members can be recruited from these delegates, thus improving 'the relationship of forces' around the committee. The 'most important point' is to 'introduce simple and modest workers alongside the most illustrious liberals. Otherwise we will accomplish only one-hundredth of our duty.' Trotsky invested this proposal with great political significance. 'A simple worker who becomes a member of the



committee has the possibility of educating himself, of broadening his horizon, and of gaining authority in the eyes of his associates. In this way you will educate worker leaders and create very important channels for your political influence.'<sup>200</sup>

Eventually in September, 1937, the Dewey Commission reached its verdict: 'We find that the trials of August 1936 and January 1937 were frame-ups. ... We find Leon Trotsky and Leon Sedov not guilty.'<sup>201</sup> Trotsky advised his comrades to propose that since the full commission had not met in public, it should hold a public concluding session to report on its proceedings and announce its verdict.<sup>202</sup> Consequently the commission's verdict was not publicised until a mass meeting held on 12 December, 1937, at which Dewey and other commissioners spoke. Dewey continued resolutely to defend the verdict of the commission, but he upset Trotsky by voicing, in a radio broadcast, his own political opinions, critical of Bolshevism.<sup>203</sup> Trotsky felt that the chairman of the commission had exceeded his brief by making an obiter dictum which reflected neither the purpose of the inquiry, nor the unanimous view of the commission. He regretted that his own telegram, read to the 12 December meeting, had abstained from 'political enunciations'.<sup>204</sup> Indeed this communication had adopted the language of liberalism: 'Nowhere and never did the truth serve reaction. Nowhere and never is progress fed on lies.'<sup>205</sup>

In a statement to journalists Trotsky was less restrained. He emphasised that the commission had not only declared himself and his son 'not guilty', but had also stated that the Moscow trials were a frame-up. He permitted himself some political observations, although of a very general character. 'The decision of the commission', he asserted, 'will have tremendous political consequences in relation both to the Comintern and to the Soviet bureaucracy. ... The exposure of the Kremlin oligarchy

will deliver an irreparable blow to the authority of the Comintern. The downfall of the Comintern will deliver a severe blow to the positions of the oligarchy inside the USSR.' A single blast of the trumpet, even the trumpet of truth, would not be sufficient to demolish Stalin's walls of Jericho immediately, but given time it heralded momentous developments. Stalin would only be able to answer the commission with a revolver: 'such an argument ... can annihilate an opponent, but not assassinate the voice of the world's conscience. ... Stalin and the GPU are branded forever as the perpetrators of the greatest crimes in history.'<sup>206</sup>

Considering the difficulties of holding a counter-trial, the Dewey Commission had some success. But not without qualification. It had proved impossible to fulfill the original intention to hold the proceedings in a large public hall, for both security and financial reasons. The Stalinists of course ignored their invitations and reduced the adversarial possibilities of the counter-trial. Furthermore, the temptation to go beyond examining the facts and to debate the political origins of the trials could not, ultimately, be resisted when the Commission resumed work in New York: those prepared to give Trotsky a fair hearing did not thereby commit themselves to silence if they rejected Trotsky's analysis. This generated some acrimonious exchanges on Kronstadt with former supporters and a rather more disciplined and productive polemic between Trotsky and Dewey on revolutionary morality.

It was understandable that Trotsky should claim complete success for the inquiry. Before a quasi-judicial assembly he had demolished the credibility of the Moscow trials for those with ears to hear. But Trotsky's defence had consumed enormous time and energy, with rather less dramatic results than he had expected. Perhaps he had hoped for too much from the commission; it was a time when rational argument had, for many,

become a lost art. Particularly in Europe disappointingly few people had listened to the Commission, possibly as a result of the impossibility of securing the participation of commissioners who matched Dewey's international stature. Perhaps Trotsky had hoped for too much from the Defense Committee. It appears that his comrades found it expedient to agree with his objective of surrounding it with workers' groups and then do nothing; Trotsky, in October 1937, again reproached them with a 'fundamentally false policy'.<sup>207</sup> Perhaps Trotsky's time would have been better spent on other projects; in Mexico his writing was more fragmented, more polemical, and more ephemeral than at any other period of his last exile. However such things might have been, it must be stated that Trotsky had no real choice but to pursue his defence, and to do this as rigorously and as effectively as possible. He believed that it was of enormous political importance to establish beyond all doubt that he was not a terrorist and that the Stalin regime had discarded all pretensions to honesty, showing, thereby, that its only choice was to rule through repression. Not to do this was to relinquish political engagement, to lapse into a submissive pessimism utterly out of character.

#### Section Six: Final Perspectives

After 1933 Trotsky sees the impetus for revolution in the USSR coming from revolutions abroad; Western Europe and the international situation are his primary interests. 'The revolutionary centre of gravity has shifted definitely to the West, where the immediate possibilities of building parties are immeasurably greater.'<sup>208</sup> The break with the Third International was simultaneously the origin of the Fourth. Trotsky now regarded the formation of a new International as the truly indispensable part of his work.<sup>209</sup> After preparatory conferences in 1933 and 1936, the

new organisation was formally founded in September 1938 in a one-day conference held in great secrecy at Alfred Rosmer's home in France.<sup>210</sup>

From afar Trotsky greeted the Fourth International. He admitted that 'the working class, especially in Europe, is still in retreat, or at best in a state of hesitation. Defeats are still too fresh, and their number far from exhausted'. Consequently, the Fourth International grows 'more slowly than we would like'. But the task of the moment required a new International: 'as a matter of fact, it is necessary to place extremely great value upon the international ties of the proletarian vanguard in order to gather together the international revolutionary staff at the present time, when Europe and the entire world live in the expectation of the approaching war.' Even though 'history has piled up monstrous obstacles before [it]', the Fourth International will be history's instrument: 'the harsh and tragic dialectic of our epoch is working in our favour. Brought to the extreme pitch of exasperation and indignation, the masses will find no other leadership than that offered them by the Fourth International.'<sup>211</sup> Fifty years later not even its most ardent partisans can claim such success.

The Fourth International has always been divided. A major reason for this has been 'the Russian question' and the problems that derive from it (eg. unconditional defense of the USSR, the People's Democracies, Moscow-aligned Communist Parties, wars between the 'socialist' states of South-East Asia, etc.). Regis Debray, a political opponent, described Trotskyism as 'a metaphysic paved with good intentions ... based on a belief in the natural goodness of the workers, which is always perverted by evil bureaucracies but never destroyed. ... Condemned to exist in the present within the categories of the past, Trotskyism withers on the vine.'<sup>212</sup> At least for the USSR, this biting attack has some relevance.

Trotsky's followers have had to live with a theory that has had limited explanatory power and has been mistaken in its essential prognosis. Trotsky viewed the degenerated workers' state as a highly contradictory entity that was extremely unstable.<sup>213</sup> Yet it has survived for sixty years, including four years of war and two political succession crises, (before and after Khrushchev). Economic growth has persisted, even if at a declining rate.

After 1933 Trotsky's writing on the USSR was less well informed and less directly engaged than before. With the formulation of the theory of 'degenerated workers' state', a lack of theoretical flexibility became inscribed within his view of the USSR. Before 1933, this theory was one possibility alongside others. Once Trotsky had discarded the perspective of reform, his novel concept rapidly developed from an ad hoc response to changing circumstances into an orthodoxy. In *Revolution Betrayed* Trotsky pushes his orthodoxy to the limit, whilst remaining within it. Chapters seven and eight of this study return to *Revolution Betrayed* and the degenerated workers' state thesis. The rest of this chapter concerns itself with Trotsky's positions in the debates in the Fourth International on the class nature of the USSR.

Not all Trotsky's comrades were convinced by his arguments. Over the years many of Trotsky's followers have split from him on the characterisation of the USSR.<sup>214</sup> During 1937 Trotsky polemicised against Yvan Craipeau, a French Trotskyist leader who took the view that the USSR was a 'new class society', and a tendency among the American Trotskyists, led by Burnham and Carter, which took the position that the Soviet state was neither proletarian nor bourgeois.<sup>215</sup> Theory was always well to the fore, but revulsion at the purge trials must surely have also played a part in fostering criticism. As Trotsky saw it: 'the sentimental reaction

against the indescribable crimes of the bureaucracy in the USSR, in Spain, and elsewhere ... must inevitably influence the sociological and psychological appreciation of the USSR.'<sup>216</sup> Trotsky argued that 'the substitution of a subjective "normative" method in place of an objective, dialectical approach to the question ... renders it difficult for many comrades to arrive at a correct sociological appraisal of the USSR.'<sup>217</sup> In other words, it was difficult with the crude yardstick of common sense to accept that a workers' state could be so tyrannical.

'Once Again: the USSR and its Defense', the article written to oppose Craipeau, is interesting as an anticipation of the line that Trotsky would take against Rizzi two years later. Trotsky begins by admitting 'for a moment' that the bureaucracy really is a class and asking if it is justified to draw the political conclusion of neutrality in international conflict between the 'new class' and capitalist class states. Trotsky's answer indicates that he sees the progressiveness of the USSR arising not from planned economy in itself, but from a superior capacity to develop the forces of production. 'Whatever its modes of exploitation may be, this new society is by its very character superior to capitalist society. There you have the real point of departure for Marxist analysis.'<sup>218</sup> Trotsky argues that the bureaucracy is not, in fact, a new class. He stresses that his statement in *Revolution Betrayed* that the state 'belongs, in some respect, to the bureaucracy' is intended as a qualified position. The bureaucracy does not hold the state in all respects; it operates on the basis of 'economic foundations ... created by the revolution.' The strength of the bureaucracy arises because of 'the retardation in the world revolution ...[ie.] a conjunctural cause. ... Can one speak of a new ... conjunctural class? I really doubt that.'<sup>219</sup>

In the reply to Burnham and Carter, 'Nerabochee i Neburzhuaznoe Gosudarstvo', Trotsky confronts the argument that the working class has lost power but, since the economic system remains basically unchanged, the bourgeoisie has not regained it. Trotsky's answer is, first of all, to warn against a theoretical innovation of this variety: 'all kinds of conclusions' might result, although he accepts that Burnham and Carter have avoided the worst kinds. In this article Trotsky's orthodoxy is again stretched to the limit. He accepts that although this oppression originates with world imperialism, the transmission of the oppression is through the bureaucracy. Returning to his own argument from *Revolution Betrayed*, Trotsky presents the bureaucracy as a 'bourgeois organ' not just because it transmits the pressure of international capitalism, but also because 'bourgeois norms of distribution' operate. This is an 'inner contradiction ... lodged in the workers' state from the first days ... However, so long as that contradiction has not passed from the sphere of distribution into the sphere of production, and has not blown up nationalised property and planned economy, the state remains a workers' state.'<sup>220</sup>

What Trotsky fails to resolve, in these two articles and elsewhere, is: firstly, whether the 'spheres' of production and distribution can be unrelated, and, secondly, how a planned economy can survive without the political mechanisms that make it possible? Trotsky asserts that the rule of the proletariat can exist in diverse forms: not only through the monopoly of one party, but 'even through a factual concentration of power in the hands of a single person'.<sup>221</sup> He admits that this would be 'a symptom of the greatest danger to the regime', but he fails to distinguish between the episodic use of emergency measures and the sustained development of a normal feature. There is also a reliance on analogy to an extent that undermines the necessary recognition that the USSR is a

specific social formation requiring specific analysis.

The most significant challenge to Trotsky came in 1939 when he was again challenged on the class nature of the Soviet state by a new faction in the American Socialist Workers' Party (SWP).<sup>222</sup> Initially, the point of dispute was whether to maintain the orthodox definition in the light of the non-aggression pact between Germany and the USSR, and Soviet actions first in Poland and later Finland. Through the autumn, winter and spring, the conflict became increasingly comprehensive and merciless. It involved not only the Russian question, but problems of methodology and philosophy, and, inevitably, accusations and counter-accusations about the internal regime of the SWP and the role of intellectuals. Eventually the 'minority', led by Shachtman, Burnham and Abern, accounted for not far short of half the Party, and, it was expelled.<sup>223</sup> Yet in its earliest stages this dispute was characterised by some uncharacteristic flexibility on the part of Trotsky.

In the article 'SSSR v Voine' (September 1939) Trotsky appears to regard agreement on 'concrete-political tasks' as being of more significance than 'abstract-sociological' matters. If only for the purposes of debate, he considers what was previously unthinkable:

Let us concede for the moment that the bureaucracy is a new 'class' and that the present regime in the USSR is a special system of class exploitation. What new political conclusions follow for us from these definitions?<sup>224</sup>

His answer was none. Both sides acknowledged the need for a 'revolutionary uprising by the toilers', and the goal of 're-establishment of the rule of the Soviets'. Even if some critics called the future revolution 'social', refused to recognise the USSR as any kind of workers' state, and demanded that the 'totalitarian bureaucracy' be called a ruling class, what difference would it make to immediate political demands. Trotsky suggests that if such 'terminological concessions' are made, it will place the critics in a difficult position: 'they themselves would not know what to do



with this purely verbal victory'. To split with such comrades would be 'monstrous nonsense'.<sup>225</sup>

This unfamiliar generosity was supplemented by an unusual tolerance towards the idea of a 'new' ruling class. Even to consider this as hypothetical possibility was out of character: yet in this article Trotsky gives it serious consideration, albeit in a clearly conditional form. Only in the first instance is this question one of terminology. Trotsky comes close to suggesting that it matters little what the ruling group is called, the real problem is the way in which it is conceived in a world-historical sense. He admits that the Soviet bureaucracy 'bears very little resemblance' to either the bourgeois or labour bureaucracy in capitalist society, and that 'to a far greater degree than fascist bureaucracy it represents a new and much more powerful social formation'. If it were to be called a class it would help little, since it 'does not resemble any of those propertied classes known to us in the past'. Calling it a 'caste' at least indicates its 'shut-in character, its arbitrary rule and the haughtiness of the ruling stratum'. It is a non-scientific term, but all the better for that: 'the make-shift character of the term is clear to everybody'. The difficulty arises because 'the old sociological terminology did not and could not prepare a name for a new social event which is in a process of evolution (degeneration) and which has not assumed stable forms.'<sup>226</sup>

Essentially at issue is the Marxist conception of the transition from capitalism to socialism.

Does the bureaucracy represent a temporary growth on a social organism or has this growth already become transformed into a historically indispensable organ? Social excrescences can be the product of an 'accidental' (i.e., temporary and extraordinary) enmeshing of historical circumstances. A social organ (and such is every class, including an exploiting class) can take shape only as a result of the deeply rooted inner needs of production itself. If we do not answer this question, then the entire

controversy will degenerate into sterile toying with words.<sup>227</sup>

Trotsky seems certain of his own conclusion.

In the bureaucratic degeneration of the Soviet state it is not the general laws of modern society from capitalism to socialism which find expression but a special, exceptional and temporary refraction of these laws under the conditions of a backward revolutionary country in a capitalist environment.<sup>228</sup>

Yet, for a moment, Trotsky raises the possibility that 'in its fundamental traits' the USSR might be a 'precursor of a new exploiting regime on an international scale'.<sup>229</sup> It was typical of Trotsky to give his prognosis an alternate character. What was new was the nature of the hypothesised alternative to a regenerated Soviet system; previously Trotsky had been scathing towards 'new class' conceptions, taking the view that capitalism was the only alternative.<sup>230</sup>

Trotsky was sure that the war would provoke a proletarian revolution, which 'must inevitably lead to the overthrow of the bureaucracy in the USSR and the regeneration of Soviet democracy'; then the bureaucratic phase will be clearly revealed as a purely 'episodic relapse'. If, however, the war witnessed a decline in the proletariat, the growth of a new ruling class might result. Monopoly capitalism would continue to decay; 'the further existence of this system is impossible'.

The productive forces must be organised in accordance with a plan. But who will accomplish this task - the proletariat or a new ruling class of 'commissars' - politicians, administrators and technicians?<sup>231</sup>

Should the pessimists be justified and the proletariat fail to rise to the challenge, or, having risen, prove incapable of holding power and surrender it, as in the USSR, to a privileged bureaucracy, then 'we would be compelled to acknowledge that the reason for the bureaucratic relapse is rooted not in the backwardness of the country and not in the imperialist environment but in the congenital incapacity of the proletariat to become a ruling class. The corollary would be that Soviet society anticipated a new kind of exploiting regime.

... nothing else would remain except only to recognise that the socialist programme, based on the internal contradictions of capitalist society, ended as a Utopia. It is self-evident that a new 'minimum' programme would be required - for the defence of the interests of the slaves of the totalitarian bureaucratic society.<sup>232</sup>

In 1939 a coincidence of circumstances prompted Trotsky to look down a new road; he did not find it tempting enough to take it, but neither did he renounce it categorically. For the first time in his adult life he contemplated socialist revolution as a prospect that might be revealed as Utopian. Difficulty arises in deciding whether this change was real or apparent, fundamental or purely verbal. Isaac Deutscher took the view that it was literary rather than literal.<sup>233</sup> In support of this interpretation it should be noted that Trotsky tended in the late thirties to resort to hyperbole. In part, it is plausible that Trotsky raised the spectre of totalitarian servitude to emphasise his calls to action. It is difficult to accept that he really took the view that the only alternatives in immediate prospect were proletarian victory, or the transformation both of capitalism and the degenerated workers' state into a common bureaucratic collectivism, with the accompanying revelation of Marxism as a false hope. However, underlying Trotsky's rhetorical flourishes there was often a recognition of the complexities of human affairs. Perhaps, alongside the public certainty that the triumph of the revolution was assured, there was, near the end of his life, a private fear that Stalinism was something more than a momentary reversal.

Trotsky's willingness to contemplate, as possibilities, hypotheses once considered fantastic, may have been a result of the impact on him of Bruno Rizzi's work. This onetime follower had produced a book outlining a theory of bureaucratic collectivism. The idea was not new to Trotsky, but he did regard Rizzi as having the merit of 'seeking to transfer the question from the charmed circle of terminological copybook exercises to

the plane of major historical generalisations.’<sup>234</sup> In other words, Trotsky and Rizzi were, despite their profound disagreements, discussing problems in the same terms. Rizzi equated Stalinism and fascism, regarding the new social formation as an expression of the profound need for economic collectivism to secure progress. Trotsky agreed that there was a tendency towards collectivism, but questioned the possibility of a complete realisation unless in a socialist form. In any case, capitalist crisis is produced not simply by market economics, but also by national division, and bureaucratic collectivism would not overcome this. He saw the social progress in the USSR resulting from the economic development produced by collectivism. The bureaucracy retarded this development and was, therefore, retrogressive. It could not be a new ruling class, if for no other reason than for this: ‘the bureaucracy is not the bearer of a new system of economy peculiar to itself and impossible without itself’.<sup>235</sup>

‘SSSR v Voine’ has a good deal to say about Rizzi’s ideas. That Trotsky gave them considerable attention is clear also from a copy of an article by Rizzi in the Trotsky Archive: the first half of the typescript, but only this part, is smothered in Trotsky’s familiar coloured pencil annotations.<sup>236</sup> Another oddity is that Trotsky apparently made no reply to any of the six letters he was sent by Rizzi.<sup>237</sup> It seems that Rizzi’s ideas were of more interest than Rizzi himself, and that Trotsky only had time for the notion of bureaucratic collectivism. Rizzi’s sometimes quirky thoughts on other matters did not detain Trotsky. In a footnote to ‘SSSR v Voine’ Trotsky refers to the contradictions of Rizzi’s work: after expounding the theory of bureaucratic collectivism in the first section of the book, Rizzi then returns to the views of the Fourth International to refute his own theory with ‘a new series of blind fumbings’. Trotsky suggests that it is pointless to follow all the meanderings of ‘a writer who has obviously lost his balance’.<sup>238</sup>

At the end of his life Trotsky remained true to his convictions. Socialist revolution could be suppressed by fascism and Stalinism alike, but it could not be overcome forever. Capitalism could not be saved, or transformed, by reforms. Revolution against fascist and democratic capitalism, and political revolution against Stalinism, was the only way forward. The crisis of the working class movement was a crisis of its leadership, not a failure of Marxist perspectives. With the correct policies the Fourth International 'will become the guide of millions and these revolutionary millions will know how to storm earth and heaven.'<sup>239</sup> Just as revolution grew out of war in 1917, with a leadership that had been tiny at the start, so would it happen again. In 1939 he wrote to Cannon complaining that it was 'shameful that revolutionaries see only one side of the present historic development, its dark reactionary side, and ignore the approach of a general denouement, in which the Fourth International will have the same role to play as did the Bolsheviks in 1917.'

Fascism accelerates the new war and the new war will tremendously accelerate the revolutionary movement. In the case of war every small revolutionary nucleus can and will become a decisive, historic factor in a very short time.<sup>240</sup>

Trotsky saw the new war as a direct continuation of the first 'imperialist' war. The tasks of the vanguard must also be the same: turn the imperialist war into a civil war and overthrow capitalism.<sup>241</sup> The political regimes of capitalism were more or less comfortable, like first or second class carriages on the railway, 'but when the whole train is plunging into an abyss, the distinction between decaying democracy and murderous fascism disappears in the face of the collapse of the entire capitalist system.'<sup>242</sup>

The victory of the imperialists of Great Britain and France would not be less frightful for the ultimate fate of mankind than that of Hitler and Mussolini. Bourgeois democracy cannot be saved. By helping their bourgeoisie against foreign fascism, the workers would only accelerate the victory of fascism in their own country. The task posed by history is not to support one part of the imperialist system against another but to make an end to the

system as a whole.<sup>243</sup>

To the end of his life Trotsky's faith in the 'communist future' remained 'unshaken'. In his 'Testament', written during February and March 1940 when he believed that his high blood pressure could lead to a fatal stroke, Trotsky declared that this 'faith in man ... gives me even now such power of resistance as cannot be given by any religion.'<sup>244</sup> Given his life over again, Trotsky declared, 'I would of course try to avoid this or that mistake, but the main course of my life would remain unchanged. I shall die a proletarian revolutionist, a Marxist, a dialectical materialist, and, consequently, an irreconcilable atheist.'<sup>245</sup> In this short document, more personal than political, he refers to his fear of prolonged sclerosis, declaring that he 'reserved the right', in such circumstances, to take his own life. In fact his health was not so poor as he imagined, although his life was near its close. He was assassinated on 20 August 1940, at age sixty, and died some twenty-six hours later after a hopeless emergency operation.<sup>246</sup>

Joseph Hansen who was with Trotsky when he was rushed to hospital relates that Trotsky's final words were: 'I am sure of the victory of the Fourth International ... go forward.'<sup>247</sup> To Trotsky's followers such certainty has been inspirational: the legacy they have drawn upon is one of struggle. Perhaps Trotsky was at his most impressive as a man of action, particularly during the revolutions of 1905 and 1917, and as Commissar of War. In exile, his achievements were, inevitably, modest and less impressive. The 'prophet outcast' wielded only his pen against Stalin's sword. For those unattracted by the Fourth International, Trotsky's writings constitute his legacy. It is to these that the second part of this thesis turns.

1. T3520: [Trotsky to International Secretariat of the International Communist League; 12 March, 1933].
2. T3520.
3. Trotsky to Frankel, 12 April, 1933. Published from the Cannon archives in *Writings of Leon Trotsky* Supplement [1929-33], (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1979), pp.225-8.
4. Trotsky, 'Nuzhno Stroit Zanova Kommunisticheskie Partii i Internatsional', *Byulleten' Oppozitsii*, no.36-37, (Okytyabr' 1933g.), pp.19-22.
5. Van Heijenoort, J., 'How the Fourth International was Conceived', in Hansen J., et al, *Leon Trotsky: the Man and his Work*, (New York: Merit, 1969), p.63.
6. Getty, J. Arch, 'Trotsky in Exile: the Founding of the Fourth International', *Soviet Studies*, vol.XXXVIII, no.1, (1986), pp.24-35.
7. Twiss, T., 'Trotsky's Break with the Comintern: a Comment on J. Arch Getty', *Soviet Studies*, vol.XXXIX, no.1, (1987), p.133.
8. Trotsky, 'Nel'zya Bol'she Ostavat'sya v Odnom "Internatsionale" so Stalinym, Manuil'skim, Lozovskim i Ko', *Byulleten' Oppozitsii*, no.36-37, (Okytyabr' 1933g.), p.24.
9. Trotsky, 'Klassovaya Priroda Sovetskogo Gosudarstvo', *Byulleten' Oppozitsii*, no.36-37, (Okytyabr' 1933g.), p.10. In *The Revolution Betrayed*, (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1970) Trotsky refers directly to the political revolution: pp.252, 288.
10. Trotsky, 'Eshche i Eshche Raz o Prirode SSSR', *Byulleten' Oppozitsii*, no.81, (Yanvar' 1940g.), p.9.
11. Trotsky, 'Melko-burzhuznaya Oppozitsiya v Rabochei Sotsialisticheskoi Partii Soedinennykh Shtatov', *Byulleten' Oppozitsii*, no.82-83, (Fevral' Mart Aprel' 1940g.), p.17.
12. Van Heijenoort, J., *With Trotsky in Exile*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978), pp.49-78. Broué, P., 'Trotsky's Clandestine Activity at Domene', in *Writings of Leon Trotsky* [1934-35], (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1974), pp.405-411.
13. *Leon Trotsky on France*, (New York: Monad Press, 1979). Trotsky, *The Struggle Against Fascism in Germany*, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1975).
14. Trotsky, *The Young Lenin*, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1974).
15. Van Heijenoort, J., *With Trotsky in Exile*, p.60.
16. EP8344: Trotsky to Gollancz, 28 September, 1933.
17. 'Lev Davidovich', in Hansen J., et al, *Leon Trotsky: the Man and his Work*, p.45. Recollections by other former secretaries and associates are also useful. Charles Cornell recalls learning in Mexico that Trotsky 'finished the three volumes of *History of the Russian Revolution* in thirteen months.' Cornell, C., 'With Trotsky in Mexico', in Hansen J., et al, *Leon Trotsky: the Man and his Work*, p.65. Sara Weber states: 'But for a brief after-lunch period, LD remained at his desk throughout the day and

late into the evening.' Weber, S., 'Recollections of Trotsky', *Modern Occasions*, Spring 1972, p.183. A former secretary, Raya Dunayevskaya (Rae Spiegel), comments on his capacity for work at the time of Bukharin's trial: 'Leon Trotsky as Man and Theoretician', *Studies in Comparative Communism*, vol.X, nos.1 and 2, (1977), p.168.

18. Trotsky, *The Revolution Betrayed*, p.249.

19. Trotsky, *The Revolution Betrayed*, pp.288-9.

20. EP919: Fadiman to Trotsky, 6 February, 1935. EP5123: Simon and Schuster to Trotsky, 17 July, 1935. EP5129: Simon and Schuster to Trotsky, 17 June, 1936.

21. EP5129: Simon and Schuster to Trotsky, 17 June, 1936; this contains details of the proposed contract. EP10358: Trotsky to Simon and Schuster, 1 July, 1936; this declares that the proposals are 'absolutely unacceptable'. A lively exchange followed with Trotsky threatening legal action, EP10360. Trotsky complained to Walker that Simon and Schuster had been 'entirely disloyal.' '...through Duranty they are now connected with Moscow'. EP10753: Trotsky to Walker, 28 July, 1937. In 1939 Trotsky recalled that Simon and Schuster had been extremely enthusiastic about his books, but 'they changed their attitude and refused to accept *The Revolution Betrayed*'. EP8437: Trotsky to Hansen, 24 March, 1939. Writing some years later, Sara Weber recalled that she had made contact with Doubleday Doran about *Revolution Betrayed*: 'This work started as an introduction to the second edition of the *History of the Russian Revolution* prepared by Simon and Schuster. But the introduction grew into a book, and Simon and Schuster refused to accept it. This was already after the Moscow trials began, and the publishing world was hard put to resist the pressure of Stalinist agents and sympathisers.' Weber, S., 'Recollections of Trotsky'.

22. The royalty statements are in the Trotsky archive: EP15814. The contract is EP15799. By May 1939 Trotsky's royalties were still some \$870 less than the advance he had received. Apparently the American sales, during Trotsky's lifetime, were a little over 4,000. In 1937 the publisher informed Trotsky that 5,888 copies needed to be sold to reimburse production costs and the advance (\$2,500). EP3019: Maule to Trotsky, 2 April, 1937.

23. Trotsky, *The Revolution Betrayed*, p.252.

24. Deutscher, I., *The Prophet Outcast*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1970), pp.330-1.

25. The American Trotsky Defense Committee helped secure permission for Trotsky to enter Mexico. Poole, T.R., "*Counter-trial*". *Leon Trotsky on the Soviet Purge Trial*, (University of Massachusetts, Ph.D., 1974), pp.235-6.

26. Trotsky, 'On the Atlantic', *Writings of Leon Trotsky [1936-37]*, (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1978), p.39.

27. Trotsky, *Diary in Exile*, (New York: Atheneum, 1963), p.46.

28. Trotsky, *Stalin*, (London: Hollis and Carter, 1947).



29. One of the lighter moments was a visit from Edward G. Robinson, the actor, in 1938. Robinson arranged for some film shows in the Trotsky household. Trotsky wrote to Robinson in August 1938 after a showing of 'The Last Gangster'. He appreciated the actor's talent but hoped he might find 'a real artistic piece filled with heroic dynamics and a high moral intensity'. EP9795: Trotsky to Robinson, 27 August, 1938. See also EP4283: Robinson to Trotsky, 7 October, 1938.
30. EP10829: Trotsky to Weber, 4 October, 1937.
31. EP9426: Trotsky to Novack, 23 February, 1937. EP12488: Curtiss to Weber, 4 February, 1939. EP11741: Curtiss to Karsner, 29 March, 1939.
32. EP7640: Trotsky to Curtiss, 16 August, 1940. For Trotsky's account of the 24 May attack see: Trotsky, 'Stalin Seeks My Death', *Writings of Leon Trotsky* [1939-40], (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1977), pp.233-250, first published in *Fourth International*, VIII.1941.
33. Trotsky, 'To Generous Friends', *Writings of Leon Trotsky* [1939-40], p.237, first published in *Fourth International*, October 1940.
34. See references 123, 124, 127, and 128 in chapter three.
35. Trotsky, Van Heijenoort recalls, 'undoubtedly' ranked the *History of the Russian Revolution* above all his other work. Van Heijenoort, J., *With Trotsky in Exile*, p.61.
36. Van Heijenoort, J., *With Trotsky in Exile*, pp.134-139.
37. For example: 'I am writing this in haste merely to inform your committee on funds for LD that the bank balance is now only 10.70 in pesos, that is about \$3, and that there is on hand in the house barely enough to keep the place going for a few days. Can you put some heat on a few of the financial contacts?' EP11756: Hansen to Karsner 26 January, 1938. See also: EP11763: Hansen to Karsner 2 March, 1938; EP11774: Hansen to Karsner 21 July, 1938; EP11732: Curtiss to Karsner 29 December, 1938; EP11741: Curtiss to Karsner 29 March, 1939.
38. EP11741: Curtiss to Karsner, 29 March, 1938.
39. EP10763: Trotsky to Walker, 5 November, 1937.
40. EP10765: Trotsky to Walker, 19 December, 1937.
41. 'Old age is the most unexpected of all the things that happen to a man.' Trotsky, *Diary in Exile*, p.106.
42. EP10598: Trotsky to Natalya Sedova, 3 September, 1933.
43. EP10606: Trotsky to Natalya Sedova, 19 September, 1933.
44. EP10618: Trotsky to Natalya Sedova, 11 July, 1937. Van Heijenoort, J., *With Trotsky in Exile*, pp.110-113, gives some information on Trotsky's affair with Frida Kahlo.
45. Deutscher, I., *The Prophet Unarmed*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1970), pp.428-9.

46. Deutscher, I., *The Prophet Outcast*, pp.146-8, 176-9, 195-8. Van Heijenoort in *With Trotsky in Exile* comments on how Trotsky's face became furrowed following the death of his daughter, and how he began to show less care for his appearance: p.41.
47. Deutscher, I., *The Prophet Outcast*, pp.401-2. Joseph Berger describes his meeting with Sergei Sedov in 1937 in *Shipwreck of a Generation*, (London: Harvill, 1971), pp.93-6.
48. Deutscher, I., *The Prophet Outcast*, pp.392-7.
49. Trotsky, 'Lev Sedov: Syn, Drug, Borets', *Byulleten' Oppozitsii*, (Mart 1938g.). Van Heijenoort, J., *With Trotsky in Exile*, p.40.
50. EP7523: Trotsky to Cannon, 22 February, 1938.
51. EP12486: Curtiss to Weber, 21 March, 1938.
52. Molyneux, J., *Leon Trotsky's Theory of Revolution*, (Brighton: Harvester, 1981), pp.182-5.
53. T1509: [Trotsky to Beloborodov; 23 May, 1928]. T3143: ['Krizis pravot-sentrisckogo bloka i perspektivy'; November 1928].
54. Bailes, K.E. *Technology and Society under Lenin and Stalin*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978), p.96.
55. This was not a casual comment, but a fully considered appraisal from Trotsky's 1931 theses. Trotsky, 'Problemy Razvitiya SSSR', *Byulleten' Oppozitsii*, no.20, (Aprel' 1931g.), p.9.
56. Trotsky, 'Deistvitel'noe Raspolozhenie Figur na Politicheskoi Doske', *Byulleten' Oppozitsii*, no.21-22, (Mai-Iyun' 1931g.), p.36.
57. Trotsky, 'Delo t. Ryazanova', *Byulleten' Oppozitsii*, no.21-22, (Mai-Iyun' 1931g.), p.20.
58. Trotsky, 'Delo t. Ryazanova', p.19.
59. *Byulleten' Oppozitsii*, no.51, (Iyul' Avgust 1936g.), p.15.
60. *The Case of Leon Trotsky*, (London: Secker and Warburg, 1937), p.429.
61. Khrushchev, N.S., *The Secret Speech*, introduced by Medvedev, Z.A., and Medvedev, R.A., (Nottingham: Spokesman Books, 1976), p.35.
62. Medvedev, R.A., *Let History Judge*, (New York: Vintage, 1971), p.166: 'Stalin's guilt in the assassination ... appears plausible and, logically and politically, almost proved.' Getty disagrees: Getty, J. Arch, *Origins of the Great Purges*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), pp.207-210.
63. Getty, J. Arch, *Origins of the Great Purges*, p.207. Orlov, A., *The Secret History of Stalin's Crimes*, (London: Jarrolds, 1954).
64. Nicolaevsky, B., 'The Murder of Kirov', first published in *Sotsialisticheskii Vestnik* (May, October and December 1956). Republished in *Power and the Soviet Elite*, (London: Pall Mall Press, 1966), pp.69-97.

65. Trotsky, 'V Chem Neposredstvennaya Tsel Vysylki Trotskogo', *Byulleten' Oppozitsii*, no.1-2, (Iyul' 1929g.), p.2.
66. Trotsky, 'Ya. G. Blyumkin Rasstrelyan Staliny', *Byulleten' Oppozitsii*, no.9, (Fevral Mart 1930g.), p.8. Such summary justice for Party members, even for confirmed Oppositionists, was still shocking. It took the Kirov affair to change this.
67. Trotsky, 'Delo Zinov'eva, Kameneva i dr.', *Byulleten' Oppozitsii*, no.42, (Fevral' 1935g.), pp.7-10.
68. Trotsky, 'Delo Zinov'eva, Kameneva i dr.', p.7.
69. Trotsky, 'Obvitel'nyi Akt', *Byulleten' Oppozitsii*, no.41, (Yanvar' 1935g.), p.11.
70. *The Case of Leon Trotsky*, p.260.
71. Trotsky, 'Remarks on the Kirov Assassination', *Writings of Leon Trotsky Supplement [1934-40]*, (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1979), p.543. First published, under a pseudonym, as a confidential circular of the International Secretariat of the ICL.
72. Trotsky, 'Stalinskaya Byurokratiya i Ubiistvo Kirova', *Byulleten' Oppozitsii*, no.41, (Yanvar' 1935g.), p.6.
73. Trotsky, 'Nekotorye Itogi Stalinskoi Amal'gamy', *Byulleten' Oppozitsii*, no.42, (Fevral' 1935g.), p.6.
74. Trotsky, 'Remarks on the Kirov Assassination', p.544.
75. Trotsky, 'Obvitel'nyi Akt', p.11.
76. Trotsky, 'Vse Stanovit'sya Postepenno Na Svoe Mesto', *Byulleten' Oppozitsii*, no.42, (Fevral' 1935g.), p.11.
77. Trotsky, 'Stalinskaya Byurokratiya i Ubiistvo Kirova', p.9.
78. This was not known when the article dated 28 December was completed. It is the central focus of the article 'Obvitel'nyi Akt', 30 December, 1934.
79. Trotsky, 'Vse Stanovit'sya Postepenno Na Svoe Mesto', p.11. I take Trotsky to be saying that the initiative was to utilise a terrorist plot already in motion, not to set one up.
80. *The Case of Leon Trotsky*, p.260.
81. T3956: [Trotsky, 'Declaration'; 21 August, 1936].
82. T3956.
83. Trotsky, 'Pozor!', *Byulleten' Oppozitsii*, no.54-55, (Mart 1937g.), p.19.
84. Trotsky, 'Stalinskaya Byurokratiya i Ubiistvo Kirova', p.9.
85. Trotsky, 'Stalinskaya Byurokratiya i Ubiistvo Kirova', p.9.

86. *Byulleten' Oppozitsii*, no.41, (Yanvar' 1935g.).
87. 'Nekotorye Itogi Stalinskoi Amal'gamy'; 'Delo Zinov'eva, Kameneva i dr.'; 'Vse Stanovit'sya Postepenno Na Svoe Mesto'.
88. Trotsky, 'Kuda Stalinskaya Byurokratiya Vedet SSSR?', *Byulleten' Oppozitsii*, no.42, (Fevral' 1935g.), pp.1-10. Trotsky, 'Rabochee Gosudarstvo, Termidor i Bonapartizm', *Byulleten' Oppozitsii*, no.43, (Aprel' 1935g.), pp.2-13.
89. See in particular 'Kuda Stalinskaya Byurokratiya Vedet SSSR?'.
90. Trotsky, 'Vse Stanovit'sya Postepenno Na Svoe Mesto', p.12.
91. Trotsky, 'Kuda Stalinskaya Byurokratiya Vedet SSSR?', p.1.
92. Trotsky, 'Kuda Stalinskaya Byurokratiya Vedet SSSR?', p.1.
93. Trotsky, 'Kuda Stalinskaya Byurokratiya Vedet SSSR?', p.4.
94. Trotsky, 'Kuda Stalinskaya Byurokratiya Vedet SSSR?', p.4.
95. Unger, A.I., *Constitutional Development in the USSR*, (London: Methuen, 1981), p.140. This volume collects the four constitutions of 1918, 1924, 1936 and 1977, and provides a useful commentary. All references are to the translations published here.
96. Unger, A.I., *Constitutional Development in the USSR*, p.28.
97. Unger, A.I., *Constitutional Development in the USSR*, p.28.
98. Unger, A.I., *Constitutional Development in the USSR*, pp.140, 157.
99. Unger, A.I., *Constitutional Development in the USSR*, p.79.
100. Trotsky, 'Novaya Konstitutsiya SSSR', *Byulleten' Oppozitsii*, no.50, (Mai 1936g.), pp.1-7; Trotsky, *Revolution Betrayed*, chapter ten; T3960: interview for the *News Chronicle*; T4144: answers to the *Daily Forward*; *The Case of Leon Trotsky*, pp.362-3.
101. Trotsky, *Revolution Betrayed*, p.264.
102. Trotsky, 'Novaya Konstitutsiya SSSR', p.6.
103. Trotsky, *Revolution Betrayed*, p.259.
104. T4178: [Trotsky to the Committee on Cultural Relations with Latin America; 27 July, 1937] Neither of the two preceding constitutions had mentioned the Communist Party. In the 1936 law it was given a special place. Article 141 specified what kind of organisations had the right to nominate candidates for election; among these were included 'Communist Party organisations'. More significantly, article 126 decreed that 'the most active and conscious citizens from the ranks of the working class and other strata of toilers shall unite in the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks), which is the vanguard of the toilers ...' The integration of Party and state was thus recognised, and special rights conferred on members of the Party.
105. Trotsky, *Revolution Betrayed*, p.267.

106. Trotsky, *Revolution Betrayed*, p.270.
107. Trotsky, 'Chetvertyi Internatsional i SSSR', *Byulleten' Oppozitsii*, no.54-55, (Mart 1937g.), p.50. Trotsky, *Revolution Betrayed*, p.272.
108. Trotsky, 'Chetvertyi Internatsional i SSSR', p.51.
109. Trotsky, 'Novaya Moskovskaya Amal'gama', *Byulleten' Oppozitsii*, no.54-55, (Mart 1937g.), p.13; and, T4178.
110. T4181: [preface to a Spanish edition of *Revolution Betrayed*].
111. Trotsky, *Revolution Betrayed*, p.260.
112. Trotsky, *Revolution Betrayed*, p.260.
113. Trotsky, *Revolution Betrayed*, p.260.
114. Trotsky, 'Novaya Konstitutsiya SSSR', p.6.
115. Trotsky, 'Novaya Konstitutsiya SSSR', p.6.
116. Trotsky, 'Novaya Konstitutsiya SSSR', p.3.
117. Trotsky, 'Novaya Konstitutsiya SSSR', p.6.
118. Trotsky, 'Novaya Konstitutsiya SSSR', p.7.
119. Trotsky, 'Novaya Konstitutsiya SSSR', p.7.
120. Trotsky, 'In "Socialist" Norway', *Writings of Leon Trotsky [1936-37]*, p.25.
121. T3954: [statement published in *The New York Times*, 30.VIII.1936].
122. T3954.
123. Trotsky, 'Open Letter to the Oslo Chief of Police', *Writings of Leon Trotsky [1935-36]*, (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1977), p.387.
124. Trotsky, [statement on the Moscow trial], *The New York Times*, 20.VIII.1936.
125. Trotsky, 'In "Socialist" Norway', p.33.
126. Trotsky, 'Stalin is Not Everything', *Writings of Leon Trotsky [1935-36]*, p.410.
127. T3960.1: [Antwort an Herren Johann Scharffenberg; 24 August, 1936].
128. T3958: [statement published in *Lutte Ouvriere*, 5.IX.1936].
129. T3960.1.
130. Trotsky, 'Letter to the League of Nations', *Writings of Leon Trotsky [1935-36]*, p. 43. The only response accorded to Puntervold's letter was a formal acknowledgement.
131. Deutscher, I., *The Prophet Outcast*, p.337.

132. Deutscher, I., *The Prophet Outcast*, p.344. Trotsky, 'In "Socialist" Norway', WLT36-37, pp. 34-35.
133. Sergei's last letter from the USSR had reported the gravity of his situation following the Kirov assassination. He was now in prison, and his mother feared he would be caught in a new 'amalgam' devised by Stalin. To forestall this she called for an 'international commission of authoritative and conscientious people' to investigate all the repressions connected with the murder of Kirov. Trotsky, *Diary in Exile*, contains the first draft of this statement: pp. 129-133. See also Trotskaya, N., 'K Sovesti Mira', *Byulleten' Oppozitsii*, no.54-55 (Mart' 1937g.), pp.48-9.
134. *The New York Times*, 30.VIII.1936.
135. *The New York Times*, 20.VIII.1936.
136. Trotsky, 'Our Friends Should Not Wait', *Writings of Leon Trotsky Supplement [1934-40]*, (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1979), p.712. Unpublished letter to comrades.
137. Deutscher, I., *The Prophet Outcast*, pp.367-8.
138. Adler, F., *The Witchcraft Trial in Moscow*, (New York: Pioneer Publishers, 1937). Deutscher, I., *The Prophet Outcast*, p.367.
139. Deutscher, I., *The Prophet Outcast*, pp.366-367.
140. Deutscher, I., *The Prophet Outcast*, pp.369-370.
141. Sedov, L., *Le Livre Rouge sur le Proces de Moscou*, (Paris: 1936). Trotsky commented favourably on Sedov's work in 'Lev Sedov: Syn, Drug, Borets', p.5.
142. Poole, T.R., "*Counter-trial*". *Leon Trotsky on the Soviet Purge Trial*, (University of Massachusetts, Ph.D., 1974), pp.223-226. The Committee's critics argued that it was simply a Trotskyist front, a charge that gained ground from the Committee's reference to 'Defense' in its title. This accusation was an exaggeration. Although much of the administrative work was performed by Trotskyists, particularly George Novack and Felix Morrow, there was only one member of the Trotskyist organisation on the Executive Committee, James Burnham.
143. Van Heijenoort, J., *With Trotsky in Exile*, pp.106-8.
144. EP5833: Wasserman to Trotsky, 11 February, 1937.
145. Trotsky, 'O Protsesse (Rech' k Amerikanskim Rabochim)', *Byulleten' Oppozitsii*, no.54-55 (Mart 1937g.), p.7.
146. Trotsky, 'O Protsesse (Rech' k Amerikanskim Rabochim)', p.8.
147. Trotsky, 'Itogi Protsessa', *Byulleten' Oppozitsii*, no.65, (Aprel' 1938g.), p.3.
148. Trotsky, 'Itogi Protsessa', p.3.
149. Trotsky, 'Itogi Protsessa', p.3.
150. Trotsky, 'Why They Confessed Crimes They Had Not Committed', *Writings of Leon Trotsky [1936-37]*, p.57; first published in *Les Crimes de Staline*,

(1937).

151. Trotsky, 'Samye Ostrye Blyuda Eshche Vpered', *Byulleten' Oppozitsii*, no.50, (Mai 1936g.), pp.16-7.

152. Trotsky, 'Why They Confessed Crimes They Had Not Committed', p.59.

153. Trotsky, 'Why They Confessed Crimes They Had Not Committed', p.60.

154. T4305: ['Behind the Moscow Trials', article published in *Sunday Express*, 6.III.1938].

155. Trotsky, 'Why They Confessed Crimes They Had Not Committed', p.61.

156. Trotsky, 'Why They Confessed Crimes They Had Not Committed', pp.56-63; *The Case of Leon Trotsky*, pp.393-396; Trotsky, 'Itogi Protsessa', pp.3-5; Trotsky, 'Podsudimye Zelenskii i Ivanov', *Byulleten' Oppozitsii*, no.65, (Aprel' 1938g.), pp.11-12.

157. *The Case of Leon Trotsky*, pp.395-6. Presumably Trotsky meant to say 'now a most important factor'.

159. Trotsky, 'Trials Without End', *Writings of Leon Trotsky* [1935-36], (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1977), p.425. Reprinted from *Service d'Information et de Presse pour la Quatrieme Internationale*, no.14, 1.XII.1936.

160. Trotsky, 'Preface' to *Les Crimes de Staline*, *Writings of Leon Trotsky* [1936-37], p.357.

161. T4305: Trotsky, 'Behind the Moscow Trials', *Sunday Express*, 6.III.1938.

162. T3960: [interview for the *News Chronicle*].

163. Trotsky, 'Stalinizm i Bolshevizm', *Byulleten' Oppozitsii*, no.58-59, (Sentyabr' Oktyabr' 1937g.), p.11.

164. Trotsky, 'In Closed Court', *Writings of Leon Trotsky* [1935-36], pp.455-485.

165. Trotsky, 'In Closed Court', pp.473-4.

166. T3955: [interview for *Dagbladet* (Oslo); published 21.VIII.1936].

167. Trotsky, 'Stalin is Not Everything', pp.410-411.

168. Trotsky, 'Stalin is Not Everything', p.410.

169. Trotsky, 'Stalin is Not Everything', p.411.

170. EP9150: Trotsky to H. Molinier, 16 February, 1937.

171. T4305: ['Behind the Moscow Trials', *Sunday Express*, 6.III.1938].

172. Trotsky, 'Nachalo Kontsa', *Byulleten' Oppozitsii*, no.58-59, (Sentyabr' Oktyabr' 1937g.), pp.3-4.

173. Trotsky, 'Postponing the Swiss Trial', *Writings of Leon Trotsky Supplement* [1933-40], pp.730-731. A reference note to this unpublished

letter (p.934) states that Trotsky's action accusing Communist officials of slander eventually resulted in damages of ten thousand Swiss francs to his favour.

174. EP8741: Trotsky to Suzanne LaFollette, 15 March, 1937.

175. EP10328: Trotsky to Shachtman, 15 March, 1937.

176. Poole, T.R., "Counter-trial". *Leon Trotsky on the Soviet Purge Trial*, p.294. Carlo Tresca, a well known Italian anarcho-syndicalist in exile in America, was to have been a member of this group, but at the last moment was unable to travel.

177. The additional commissioners, Alfred Rosmer, Wendelin Thomas, Francisco Zamorra, Professor E.A. Ross, and others, primarily gave status. Poole, T.R., "Counter-trial". *Leon Trotsky on the Soviet Purge Trial*, pp.296-300.

178. Van Heijenoort, J., *With Trotsky in Exile*, pp.108-109.

179. *The Case of Leon Trotsky*, pp.459-585.

180. Deutscher, I., *The Prophet Outcast*, p.380.

181. *The Case of Leon Trotsky*, pp.584-5.

182. *The Case of Leon Trotsky*, p.464.

183. *The Case of Leon Trotsky*, p.466.

184. *The Case of Leon Trotsky*, p.467.

185. Kirker, H., and Wilkins, B.T., 'Beard, Becker and the Trotsky Inquiry', *American Quarterly*, vol.XIII, (1961), pp.516-525.

186. T4122: ['Fenner Brokvei kak Pritt no.2'; 6 March, 1937].

187. Trotsky, 'Otvety na Voprosy, Vendelina Tomasa', *Byulleten' Oppozitsii*, no.51, (Iyul' Avgust 1937g.), pp.12-14.

188. EP8289: Trotsky to Goldman, 5 September, 1937.

189. Trotsky, 'London Bureau Aids Stalin Frame-ups by Refusal to Join Probe Commission', *Socialist Appeal*, 18.IX.1937. This article was directed against Fenner Brockway and the London Bureau of Revolutionary Socialist Parties. But Trotsky indicated in his letter to Goldman, 5 September, 1937, its real target was Wendelin Thomas: EP8289.

190. Deutscher, I., *The Prophet Outcast*, p.381.

191. Deutscher, I., *The Prophet Outcast*, pp.381-382.

192. *The Case of the Trotskyite-Zinovievite Terrorist Centre*, (Moscow: 1936), pp.99-100.

193. *The Case of Leon Trotsky*, p.91. This was rather more categorical than the information he provided in August 1936 for the Prague Committee for Right and Justice, the Trotsky defence committee. Here he recalls Goltsman as an Opposition sympathiser in 1927, a "liberal" Soviet functionary'. There had been no meetings or correspondence since January 1928. 'I cannot



say anything about his [Goltsman's] stay in Berlin. During those years (1930-33) there were plenty of dissatisfied Soviet functionaries who while they were abroad gave free expression to their critical opinions - at least between the four walls of a room. My cothinkers in diverse European countries used to assemble such "critical depositions" and put them at my disposal. I made articles from this material for the Russian *Byulleten'*, etc. My son sent me such communications several times during his stay in Berlin: all of them will be found in the Russian *Byulleten'*. ... Did my son mention Goltsman's name at the time? I do not remember, nor does my wife. It is possible that my son did not mention his source in that case, as in others, since my correspondence is never secure and "critical" people from the USSR risk a lot. Anyway, the name would not have meant much to me. 'Some Facts for the Prague Committee', first published in *Fuer Recht und Wahrheit*, the journal of the Committee of Right and Justice. *Writings of Leon Trotsky* [1935-36], pp.408-409. See chapter three for information about Goltsman and his part in the establishment of a new opposition bloc in 1932.

194. Trotsky quotes from the court record throughout his final speech to the Dewey commission. *The Case of Leon Trotsky*, pp.459-585.

195. Sedov, L., *The Red Book on the Moscow Trial*, (London: New Park, 1980), p.86.

196. *The Case of Leon Trotsky*, p.592.

197. EP13095: Van Heijenoort to Sedov, 3 July, 1937.

198. EP13095: Van Heijenoort to Sedov, 3 July, 1937.

199. EP10328: Trotsky to Shachtman, 15 March, 1937.

200. EP7500: Trotsky to Cannon, 20 April, 1937.

201. *Not Guilty - Report of the Commission of Inquiry into the Charges made against Leon Trotsky in the Moscow Trials*, (London: Secker and Warburg, 1938), p.xv.

202. EP8684: Trotsky to Kluger, 6 October, 1937.

203. EP8157: Trotsky to Frankel, 26 January, 1938. Van Heijenoort, J., *With Trotsky in Exile*, p.110.

204. EP8157: Trotsky to Frankel, 26 January, 1938.

205. Trotsky, 'Telegram to the Dewey Commission', 9 December, 1937, *Socialist Appeal*, 25.XII.1937.

206. Trotsky, 'Kratkie Komentarii k Verdiktu', *Byulleten' Oppozitsii*, no.62-63, (Fevral' 1938g.), pp.2-4.

207. EP7512: Trotsky to Cannon, 14 October, 1937.

208. Trotsky, 'Klassovaya Priroda Sovetskogo Gosudarstvo', p.11.

209. Trotsky, *Diary in Exile*, p.46.

210. Deutscher, I., *The Prophet Outcast*, p.419. As yet there is no good study of the Fourth International. Pierre Frank provides a partisan account in *The Fourth International: the Long March of the Trotskyists*, (London: Ink Links, 1979).
211. Trotsky, 'Krupnyi Uspek', *Byulleten' Oppozitsii*, no.70 (Oktyabr' 1938g.), pp.5-6.
212. Debray, R., *Revolution in the Revolution*, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1968), p39.
213. Trotsky suggests that 'a totalitarian regime, whether of a Stalinist or a fascist type, by its very essence can be only a temporary transitional regime. Naked dictatorship in history has generally been the product and the symptom of an especially severe social crisis, and not at all of a stable regime.' He asks: 'Might we not put ourselves in a ludicrous position if we affixed to the Bonapartist oligarchy the nomenclature of a new ruling class just a few years or even a few months prior to its inglorious downfall?' Trotsky, 'SSSR v Voine', *Byulleten' Oppozitsii*, no.79-80, (Avgust Sentyabr' Oktyabr' 1939g.), p.6.
214. Some of the deviations from Trotskyism are discussed in Bellis, P., *Marxism and the USSR*, (London: Macmillan, 1979).
215. Trotsky, 'Once Again: the USSR and its Defense', *Writings of Leon Trotsky* [1937-38], (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1976), pp.34-44. Reprinted from *Internal Bulletin* no.2, Organizing Committee for the Socialist Party Convention. Trotsky, 'Nerabochee i Neburzhuaznoe Gosudarstvo?', *Byulleten' Oppozitsii* no.62-63 (Fevral' 1938g.), pp.15-19).
216. EP7514: Trotsky to Cannon, 14 November, 1937.
217. Trotsky, 'Nerabochee i Neburzhuaznoe Gosudarstvo?', p.16.
218. Trotsky, 'Once Again: the USSR and its Defense', p.35.
219. Trotsky, 'Once Again: the USSR and its Defense', pp.36-9.
220. Trotsky, 'Nerabochee i Neburzhuaznoe Gosudarstvo?', p.18.
221. Trotsky, 'Nerabochee i Neburzhuaznoe Gosudarstvo?', p.15.
222. Burnham openly opposed the theory of degenerated workers' state, Shachtman was undecided, and Abern maintained the orthodoxy. Shachtman, M., '1939: Whither Russia? Trotsky and his Critics', *Survey* 41, (1962), p.102.
223. Burnett, J.T., *American Trotskyism and the Russian Question*, (University of California, Ph.D., 1968) p.177.
224. Trotsky, 'SSSR v Voine', p.2.
225. Trotsky, 'SSSR v Voine', p.2.
226. Trotsky, 'SSSR v Voine', p.3.
227. Trotsky, 'SSSR v Voine', p.3.

228. Trotsky, 'SSSR v Voine', p.3.
229. Trotsky, 'SSSR v Voine', p.4.
230. Trotsky, 'Once Again: the USSR and its Defense'.
231. Trotsky, 'SSSR v Voine', pp.3-4.
232. Trotsky, 'SSSR v Voine', p.4.
233. Deutscher, I., *The Prophet Outcast*, pp.467-471.
234. Trotsky, 'SSSR v Voine', p.5.
235. Trotsky, 'SSSR v Voine', p.3.
236. Rizzi, B., 'Qu'est-ce que la propriété en URSS?' (49pp.); EP17135. The first section of *The Bureaucratization of the World* has been translated by Adam Westoby and published with his introduction in Rizzi, B., *The Bureaucratization of the World - The USSR: Bureaucratic Collectivism*, (London: Tavistock, 1985).
237. The letters from Rizzi to Trotsky are dated: 10 December, 1938; 18 June, 1939; 19 June, 1939; 7 July, 1939; 9 July, 1939; 9 July, 1939. They are: EP4267, EP4268, EP 4269, EP4270, EP4271, EP4272. They are republished with an autobiographical letter to Naville from 1959, and with introductions by Pierre Naville and Attilio Chitarin, in *Belfagor*, 30.XI.1983.
238. Trotsky, 'SSSR v Voine', p.6.
239. Trotsky, 'Rech' L.D. Trotskovo', *Byulleten' Oppozitsii*, no.71, (Noyabr' 1938g.), p.16.
240. EP7546: Trotsky to Cannon, 6 June, 1939.
241. Trotsky, 'Who is Guilty of Starting the Second World War', *Socialist Appeal*, 9.IX.1939.
242. Trotsky, 'Manifest Chetvertogo Internatsionala: Imperialistskaya Voina i Proletarskaya Revolyutsiya', *Byulleten' Oppozitsii*, no.84, (Avgust Sentyabr' Oktyabr' 1940g.), p.27.
243. Trotsky, 'Manifest Chetvertogo Internatsionala: Imperialistskaya Voina i Proletarskaya Revolyutsiya', p.28.
244. T4828: ['Testament'; February and March 1940]. *Writings of Leon Trotsky [1939-40]*, (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1973), pp.158-9.
245. Trotsky, 'Testament'.
246. Trotsky, N.S., 'How it Happened', (November 1940), in Hansen, J., (ed.), *Leon Trotsky: the Man and His Work*, (New York: Merit, 1969), pp.35-9.
247. Hansen, J., 'With Trotsky to the End', in Hansen, J., (ed.), *Leon Trotsky: the Man and His Work*, p.23.

TROTSKY IN OPPOSITION: 1923-1940

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VOL. II

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INTRODUCTION TO PART TWOStalinism and Socialism

This thesis attempts to elucidate Trotsky's opposition to the post-Lenin Russian leadership; within this its main point of focus is his responses, political and theoretical, to the bureaucratic political elite. Preceding chapters have been mainly concerned, within a chronological framework, with Trotsky's tactical, strategic and programmatic position towards Stalin and his allies. The second part of this study takes a thematic approach, stressing, in particular, Trotsky's diagnosis of the problems that produced Soviet bureaucracy.

This introduction briefly considers Trotsky's view of socialism, thereby clarifying his objections to Stalinism. It is unusual, but not unknown, for Trotsky's critique explicitly to raise questions about the nature of socialism. Characteristically, it proceeds from concrete problems, asking questions about the tendency of development. To look to Trotsky for detail about the future would be mistaken: as a Marxist he did not try to draw a blueprint. However, there are sufficient indications in his post-revolutionary writings, especially in commentaries on cultural matters and in *Revolution Betrayed*, to reconstruct his view of socialism. Even where his critique of the Stalin regime does not refer directly to a mental picture of socialist society, Trotsky was surely implicitly influenced by it.

Chapter five reviews Trotsky's positions on three interconnected aspects of the transition to socialism: the material basis of socialism; the role of democracy; and cultural revolution. Besides Knei-Paz's *Social*

*and Political Thought of Leon Trotsky* and Mandel's *Trotsky A Study in the Dynamic of his Thought*, few studies of Trotsky have made any attempt to consider his views on the nature of a society in transition to socialism.<sup>1</sup> In my view it is necessary to do so, in order to illuminate certain aspects of his confrontation with Stalinism. Firstly, Trotsky's reluctance to become a public critic, and his moderation once an oppositionist, remains obscure unless put into the context of his conception of the transition to socialism. The caution of Trotsky's politics is based on a sceptical view of the possibilities of rapid, fundamental change in the transition to socialism. Secondly, this discussion lays the foundation for a consideration of Trotsky's analysis of bureaucracy. Trotsky emphasises that material development is the basis on which democratic and cultural development becomes possible and bureaucracy superseded. Trotsky's critique of Stalinism did not start from the absence of democracy, nor from cultural barbarism. Stalin was not to be opposed simply, or even primarily, because he was a dictator, but because he was an anti-socialist dictator.

Chapter six discusses Thermidor and Bonapartism, the terms Trotsky used to discuss the counter-revolution he perceived in Russia. Such references had wide currency before Trotsky adopted them in the mid-1920s. In Trotsky's hands they became more than a literary devices; they conveyed, in their final meanings, Trotsky's idea that within the anti-capitalist social revolution, begun in October 1917, there had taken place a political counter-revolution. Stalin - in part its cause and in part its effect - presided over a Bonapartist regime that had achieved relative autonomy from society.

Chapter seven examines Trotsky's view of bureaucracy in more detail. This chapter begins by indicating Trotsky's developing definition of the

term. Trotsky saw that what began as a bureaucracy, in the restricted administrative sense, was changing its nature in the process of its development. From political malpractice, bureaucracy became a system of administration and eventually a social group that exercised power and benefited from it. 'Bureaucracy' is, perhaps, the wrong term for such a dynamic ruling group of heterogenous composition. But whilst terminology has its importance, the substantive issue is Trotsky's perception of how this formation originated and the momentum of its development. It is on this that Chapter Seven concentrates. His failure to devise an adequate term, more specific in its definition, should not obscure the value of his analysis of the structural contradiction of the Soviet 'bureaucracy'. The second section of this chapter investigates Trotsky's perception of the impact of bureaucracy on the Soviet economy after the adoption of the five-year plans. Thirdly, this chapter discusses the presentation of the relationship between bureaucracy and scarcity in *Revolution Betrayed*. Fourthly, it presents Trotsky's answer to the question: 'What is bureaucracy?' And finally it discusses some of the strengths and weaknesses of the term 'bureaucracy'.

The complexity and penetration of Trotsky's critique of the Stalin regime developed in the course of his opposition. At first it was distinguished by moderation; a sympathetic investigation of the difficulties facing the leadership. Ultimately it became a comprehensive indictment of the regime in general, and Stalin in particular, for usurping the banner of socialism. With the introduction in 1936 of a new Constitution proclaiming socialism, and the almost simultaneous opening of the purges trials, the tone of Trotsky's opposition sharpens. Stalin is compared with Hitler, and found to be even worse because he attacks from within. Hitler assaults Marxism; Stalin not only assaults it but prostitutes it.

Not a single principle has remained unpolluted, not a single idea unsullied. The very names of socialism and communism have been cruelly compromised, from the day when uncontrolled policemen, making their livelihood with a 'communist' passport, gave the name socialism to their police regime. Revolting profanation! The barracks of the GPU are not the ideal for which the working class is struggling.<sup>2</sup>

Alongside the attempt to develop an analysis of the Stalin regime based on Marxist social science, Trotsky found it impossible to resist a moral condemnation of Stalinism based on the ideals of socialism. 'Nachalo Kontsa' proposes:

Socialism signifies a pure and clear social system which is accommodated to the self-government of the toilers. Stalin's regime is based on a conspiracy of the rulers against the ruled. Socialism implies an uninterrupted growth of universal equality. Stalin has erected a system of revolting privileges.

Socialism has as its goal the all-sided flowering of the individual personality. When and where has man's personality been so degraded as in the USSR?

Socialism would have no value apart from the unselfish, honest, and humane relations between human beings. The Stalin regime has permeated social and personal relationships with lies, careerism and treachery.<sup>3</sup>

For Trotsky the struggle for socialism has two connected purposes: to end the domination of man by man and to secure the domination of man over nature. The transition from a market to a planned economy was the condition for abolishing exploitation and for mastering nature; without overcoming scarcity, the domination of man by man could not be ended. In *Revolution Betrayed*, Trotsky writes:

The very purpose of communism is to subject nature to technique and technique to plan, and compel the raw material to give unstintingly everything that man needs. Far more than that, its highest goal is to free finally and once and for all the creative forces of mankind ... Personal relations, science and art will not know any externally imposed "plan", nor even any shadow of compulsion.

Socialism, in Trotsky's conception, was very different from the authoritarian, corrupt and brutal society over which Stalin presided. Once the dictatorship of the proletariat had begun to transform itself into socialism, the revolution would become fully constructive and a new society



evolve: a society of plenty not poverty, equality not privilege, culture not barbarity, free expression not censorship. Politics as the organisational form of social antagonism would be a matter for historians, but controversy would flourish. The needs of society would be debated openly and genuinely, no longer as the ideological camouflage for particular interests. The cultural domain would be steadily enlarged and art would be reconciled with politics.

In a socialist society the associated producers would own and control the means of production, and would operate them in accordance with the principles of social need and not private profit: 'socialism is a structure of planned production to the end of the best satisfaction of human needs.'<sup>5</sup> Commodity production would wither: the national economy under socialism would operate as a single enterprise.<sup>6</sup> Ultimately, the organisation of production and distribution by means of democratic planning would ensure the possibility of fulfilling the injunction: to each according to his needs. In such a society, social morality would ensure the operation of the precept: from each according to his abilities.<sup>7</sup>

Stalin's definition of socialism was, in essence, formal and unconcerned with the content of social relationships. It advanced the criterion of ownership, effectively assuming that by the nature of ownership, private or collective, the character of social relations was automatically determined. If means of production were owned privately there would be capitalism; if they were owned collectively there would not. With general nationalisation in industry and collectivised agriculture there could be no exploiting class and it therefore followed that the society was socialist. Consequently the Soviet Constitution of 1936 could declare that the Soviet Union was a socialist country without regard to the real situation of inequality in political influence and material

well-being.<sup>8</sup> Trotsky ridiculed this method of procedure in *Revolution Betrayed*. If a ship is declared collective property but there are still first, second and third class cabins, the third-class passengers will care less about the judicial status of property and more about their conditions of life. First-class passengers will, however, 'propound, together with their coffee and cigars, the thought that collective ownership is everything and a comfortable cabin nothing at all.'<sup>9</sup>

Unlike Stalin, Trotsky made no sharp contrast between a lower stage of communism, called socialism, and a higher stage: in several places Trotsky uses the term socialism for both 'stages', implying a steady transition.<sup>10</sup> In his view there will be permanent revolution in social relations in the post-revolutionary regime. Socialism will follow the dictatorship of the proletariat. It would not arrive full grown, and its pre-figurative forms in the workers' state should not be mistaken for the presence of socialism. Until class formations were in an advanced state of dissolution, until coercion was displaced by co-operation, until the economy had been thoroughly reformed, it would be incorrect to speak of socialism as a reality. Trotsky approached the problem dialectically, declining to establish, by prior definition, the moment at which socialism would replace the workers' state. The problem of the transformation from quantity to quality could only be resolved historically.

1. Knei-Paz, B., *The Social and Political Thought of Leon Trotsky*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), part IV. Mandel, E., *Trotsky A Study in the Dynamic of His Thought*, (London: NLB, 1979), chapter eleven.
2. Trotsky, 'Nachalo Kontsa', *Byulleten' Oppozitsii*, no.58-59, (Sentyabr' Oktyabr' 1937g.), p.3.
3. Trotsky, 'Nachalo Kontsa', p.3.
4. Trotsky, *Revolution Betrayed*, (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1970), p.180
5. Trotsky, *Revolution Betrayed*, p.61.
6. Trotsky, *Towards Socialism or Capitalism*, passim, particularly Chapter 11. Reprinted in Trotsky, *The Challenge of the Left Opposition (1923-25)*, (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1975).
7. Trotsky, *Revolution Betrayed*, p.46.
8. The text of the 1936 Constitution, along with those of 1918, 1924, and 1977, is available with commentary in Unger, A.L., *Constitutional Development in the USSR*, (London: Methuen, 1981).
9. Trotsky, *Revolution Betrayed*, p.239.
10. Trotsky, 'Problemy Sovetskogo Rezhima. (Teoriya Pererozhdeniya i Pererozhdenie Teorii)', *Byulleten' Oppozitsii*, no.34, (Mai 1933g.). In 'Klassovaya Priroda Sovetskogo Gosudarstva' Trotsky writes: 'there is no hard and fast partition between socialism and communism.' *Byulleten' Oppozitsii*, no.36-37, (Oktyabr' 1933g.), p.4. See also *Revolution Betrayed*, pp.57, 61.

CHAPTER FIVE: TROTSKY'S SOCIALIST PERSPECTIVES

*Comrades, we stand face to face with a very difficult period ... and to such periods ... there correspond harsh measures. The further we go the easier things will become, the freer every citizen will feel, the more imperceptible will become the compelling force of the proletarian state. Perhaps we shall then even allow the Mensheviks to have papers, if there are Mensheviks still in existence.*

Trotsky, Terrorism and Communism, (1920).

Section One: The Material Base of Socialism

If the Russian workers could come to power before workers in the more economically developed parts of Europe it would be due to the material circumstances in which they found themselves. The theory of permanent revolution was objectively rooted, not a repudiation of materialist analysis but a specific application of the method. Trotsky never suggested that an underdeveloped country could become socialist. Neither could a workers' revolution immediately introduce socialism; the workers' state or dictatorship of the proletariat was a necessary prior stage. There had to be a transition to socialism during which socialism would evolve as the forces of production were developed to a level of abundance.

Communism, in Trotsky's view, implied that work would be performed not because of material incentives but for social reasons and individual fulfilment. The distribution of products for consumption would, in parallel, not be a matter determined by economic calculation of the input of labour; the law of value would cease to operate in consumption, just as in production, and distribution would not demand any control 'except that of education, habit and social opinion'. Such a situation would not arise until 'life's goods' existed in 'continual abundance'.<sup>1</sup> Ultimately, to

achieve this, an international revolution was necessary. Until a global economy freely flourished, economic development was constrained.<sup>2</sup>

'Socialism and national states are mutually exclusive.'<sup>3</sup> The reassertion of nation states both in fascist form and in Stalin's 'socialism in one country' was considered by Trotsky to be thoroughly reactionary.<sup>4</sup>

Some critics, Mavrakis, Hindess, and Bettelheim for example, find in Trotsky an 'economism' that they argue was characteristic of the Marxism of the period.<sup>5</sup> No doubt, in one sense, Trotsky would have agreed. He often summarised his own methodology thus:

... although economics determines politics, not directly or immediately, but only in the last analysis, nevertheless economics does determine politics.<sup>6</sup>

*Revolution Betrayed* states forthrightly: 'Marxism ... constructs the communist programme upon the dynamics of the productive forces.'<sup>7</sup> In another sense, the charge of 'economism' is too crude to be taken seriously. No doubt some representatives of the Second International did accept a highly mechanistic view of Marxism, an economic reductionism that left little room for class struggle. But the critics use a very broad brush that produces an ahistorical picture. Perhaps there are some statements in Trotsky on method and general orientation which appear capable of bearing inevitabilist viewpoints, (in Marx too); however, Trotsky's view of historical development was that of a determinist, and determinism is not the same thing as inevitabilism. Furthermore, Trotsky's claims were usually conditional: economics only determines 'in the last analysis.' Consider, for instance, this passage from *My Life*, written in 1929, in which Trotsky relates something of his intellectual activity between 1905 and 1914:

During the years of the reaction I studied the questions of trade and industry both on a world scale and a national scale. I was prompted by a revolutionary interest. I wanted to find out the relationship between the fluctuations of trade and industry, on the one hand, and the progressive stages of the labor movement and revolutionary struggle, on the other. In this, as in all

other questions like it, I was especially on my guard to avoid establishing an automatic dependence of politics on economics. The interaction must necessarily be the result of the whole process considered in its entirety. (Emphasis added)

Trotsky never forgot his early claim that Marxism was above all a method of analysis, not of texts but of social relations (*Results and Prospects*).<sup>9</sup> He always registered his commitment to concrete investigation. Dialectics and materialism cannot, 'like an ever-ready master key', be 'imposed upon facts': ... 'dialectical materialism [sic] can be applied to new spheres of knowledge only by mastering them from within'.<sup>10</sup> For example, an article of 1923, 'O Krivoi Kapitalisticheskogo Razvitiya', warned that speculative juggling with the concepts and terms of the materialist method leads to 'formalism' and the reduction of analysis to 'rendering definitions and classifications more precise and to splitting empty abstractions into four equally empty parts.'<sup>11</sup> Why sharpen and resharpen a tool, Trotsky asked, instead of using it? The skill of the craftsman is embodied in the product, and this, surely, is how Trotsky should be judged.

The theory of permanent revolution, the analysis of bureaucracy, and the investigations of German fascism provide three powerful examples of how distanced Trotsky was from the mechanical materialism of which he stands accused. In none of these three cases is the interpretation of the subject ever reduced to economic inevitability. These major parts of Trotsky's work indicate a recognition of the complexity of history. Nowhere is it suggested that an automatic link may be observed between the level of the forces of production and the phenomenon being investigated. Indeed Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution encountered great opposition precisely because it denied the conventional perception of the economic base of the Russian revolution.

In '0 Krivoi Kapitalisticheskogo Razvitiya' Trotsky presents an argument which may still stand as a reply to critics writing sixty years later. He argues the desirability of establishing 'the subterranean impulses which economics transmits to the politics of today'. His article is constructed around a quasi-hypothetical chart which plots the curve of capitalist development. The chart itself is divided into 'super-structure' and 'economic foundation'. Trotsky suggests that by plotting 'superstructural' events against the capitalist curve, correspondences may be observed. He admits that he has done this 'at the risk of incurring the theoretical ire of opponents of economism (and partly with the intention of provoking their indignation) ...' He offers both a warning and a conclusion:

Along this road it is naturally not at all difficult to fall into the most vulgar schematisation and, above all, to ignore the tenacious internal conditioning and succession of ideological processes - to become oblivious of the fact that economics is decisive only in the last analysis. There has been no lack of caricature conclusions drawn from the Marxist method! But to renounce on this account the above-indicated formulations of the question ('it smells of economism') is to demonstrate complete inability to understand the essence of Marxism, which looks for the causes of changes in social superstructure <sup>in</sup> the changes of the economic foundation, and not anywhere else.<sup>12</sup>

In analysing the problems of the revolution in power, Trotsky's point of departure was economic backwardness, but the pivot of his evaluation is political. He never took the view that economic development had to result in the replacement of the present regime by a regenerated workers' state. His incessant calls for political change, first reformist and then revolutionary, would be incomprehensible if he had only been capable of 'economism'. To argue the opposite is to assert a massive self-delusion on Trotsky's part.

Trotsky's analysis of Soviet politics and his prescriptions for action begin with economic production. Here, two fundamental principles guided

Trotsky: the state sector must achieve a higher rate of economic growth than the private, capitalist sector; the rate of growth of the Soviet economy must be higher than the rate of growth of the world capitalist economy. If these two conditions were not met the inevitable consequence would be the ultimate defeat of the revolution.

From 1923 Trotsky became increasingly anxious that economic policy was incorrectly directed, resulting in the growth of private capital. He established his position in a speech to the Twelfth Party Congress in 1923 considering the 'scissors crisis'. NEP was described as 'an arena of struggle between us and private capital'; the struggle would be long and must be waged with close attention to who, at each stage, was benefiting from economic expansion. He warned that in the previous year, despite the growth of the productive forces, the state sector worked at a loss, whereas the private sector had accumulated.<sup>13</sup> However, the market could not be abolished, only superseded. During the transitional period there would be a struggle of modes of production, deriving from the class struggle of bourgeoisie and proletariat. This would last not years, 'but generations'.<sup>14</sup> During the dictatorship of the proletariat, the state would introduce measures facilitating the displacement of capitalism by socialism. But, he argued in a letter to Hungarian Trotskyists written in 1930, market relations, even in the most advanced countries, would continue for 'a rather long transitional period.'<sup>15</sup>

Trotsky's second principle was that the Soviet economy could not be considered in isolation from the world economy. In dozens of places through the 1920s Trotsky repeated the fundamental idea that the comparative levels of development of contesting modes of production would determine the political future of Soviet Russia. The conclusion of a lengthy economic analysis, *Towards Socialism or Capitalism?* (1925),



speculates about the long term consequences of a resurgent capitalism in Europe, able to resist all revolutionary challenges. Were this to happen we would be 'obliged - though already engaged in changing from our slow freight train to the faster passenger train - to catch up with a first-class express.' It would indicate that 'we were mistaken in our fundamental historical judgements'. Colossal dangers would arise: Perhaps a war against the USSR or possibly a 'deluge of capitalist goods produced far better and more cheaply than our own goods, which might smash our foreign trade monopoly and together with it the other bases of our socialist economy.'<sup>16</sup> This second alternative continued to haunt Trotsky.<sup>17</sup>

The basic issue was whether the potential of world capitalism was exhausted. If capitalism continued to be 'a progressive historical force ... there can be no question of transforming the Soviet republic into a socialist country.' The October Revolution would be 'inevitably doomed to destruction, leaving behind nothing but the heritage of its democratic agrarian reforms.'<sup>18</sup> Could capitalism lead Europe out of its 'historic impasse'? Could India free itself from 'slavery and misery without leaving the framework of peaceful capitalist development'? Could China 'attain the level of culture of Europe and America without revolution and without wars'? Could the United States 'reach the limits of its productive forces without shaking Europe and without laying the basis for a catastrophe for all humanity in the form of a terrible war'? The answers to these questions, according to Trotsky, would determine the 'ultimate fate of the October Revolution'. He had no doubt about the answer. Indeed the premise of his political strategy was a conviction that in 1914 capitalism had entered an epoch of sustained crisis: 'With the imperialist war we entered the epoch of revolution, that is the epoch when the very mainstays of capitalist equilibrium are shaking and collapsing.'<sup>19</sup> (emphasis added)

As Day has noted, Trotsky's insistence that contradictions must be analysed on a global basis led to some reservations about the ideas of Preobrazhensky.<sup>20</sup> These were never publicly articulated, presumably because Trotsky did not wish to undermine the unity of the Left Opposition. In some unpublished notes of 1926 Trotsky registers concern that Preobrazhensky's work might be turned into 'a finished economic perspective envisaging the development of socialism in one country.'<sup>21</sup> This would be a 'plagiarism and falsification', but there are 'grounds for fearing its possibility.' The 'only correct approach' to the analysis of the Soviet economy is through the 'interaction between the law of value and the law of socialist accumulation'. This method 'must begin within the framework of the closed-in Soviet economy', but it must proceed to the world economy. Then it will become clear that the law of value that operates within the limited framework of the NEP is complemented by the growing external pressure from the law of value that dominates the world market.

The basis for the growth of the productive forces is technological development, 'the driving force of the historical process'. 'It is', as Trotsky puts it in a speech of 1926, published as 'Kultura i Sotsializm', 'the fundamental condition for the emancipation of the exploited.' The technology developed by the bourgeoisie, although hitherto 'an instrument of exploitation', must be used because the proletariat has no alternative yet to offer. 'The machinery of class oppression can be smashed by a revolutionary blow, [but] the productive machinery that existed under capitalist anarchy can be reconstructed only gradually.'<sup>22</sup>

In 'Kultura i Sotsializm', Trotsky views capitalist technology equivocally. 'In the form in which we took it over, [it] is quite unsuitable for socialism. It constitutes a crystallisation of the anarchy of capitalist economy. Competition between different enterprises, chasing

after profits, unevenness of development between different branches of the economy, backwardness of certain areas, parcelisation of agriculture, plundering of human forces: all this finds in technology its expression in iron and brass.' However Trotsky, like most Marxists, profoundly admired the productive potential of capitalist technology. With Lenin, he saw the latest techniques as an anticipation of socialist forms resulting from the pressure generated by the forces of production.<sup>23</sup> Industrial development demands a socialisation of production which is expressed in technique before it can be matched by a revolution in the relations of production. Alongside many of his comrades, Trotsky advocated 'Fordism' enthusiastically. In an aphorism reminiscent of Lenin's 'Soviet power plus electrification', he tells his audience: 'the Soviet system shod with American technology will be socialism.'<sup>24</sup> He calls for the separation of Fordism from Ford, the socialisation and purging of Fordism. 'This is what socialism does.'

Our social order offers a different, incomparably more expedient application for American technique. But American technology will transform our order, liberating it from the heritage of backwardness, primitiveness, and barbarism. From the combination of the Soviet order with American technology there will be born a new technology and a new culture - <sup>25</sup> technology and culture for all without favourite sons or stepsons.

Trotsky's idea of Fordism without Ford is shown most clearly by his comments on production lines or 'conveyors' as he calls them. The 'endless moving belt' that brings to the worker all he needs and takes from him the product represents more than a means of internal transport: 'it constitutes a method of regulating the production process itself, in that the worker is obliged to harmonise his movements with the movement of the endless belt.'<sup>26</sup> Capitalism uses production lines to exploit the worker more intensively, 'but this use of the conveyor is connected with capitalism, not with the conveyor itself.'<sup>27</sup> Socialism will use conveyors to regulate the production process and, unlike capitalism it will not restrict these to

the individual enterprise. Trotsky enlarges the idea of a production line to incorporate the linkages between factories, sources of raw materials and power supplies. Railways and other kinds of transport, oil pipelines and power cables are all viewed as equivalents to the conveyor within a single factory. He believes that by establishing a comprehensive network of this kind it will be possible to create a harmonious and smoothly functioning socialist economy with 'a wide scattering of industrial enterprises, without which the town cannot be dissolved in the country or the country in the town.'<sup>28</sup>

Trotsky saw technological development as the way to social progress: 'the struggle for technology is for us the struggle for socialism.'<sup>29</sup> In a speech to the First All-Union Congress of the Society of Friends of Radio (March 1926), broadcast simultaneously, Trotsky took as his theme the role of radio in overcoming the unevenness of the social development of the nation. 'We cannot seriously talk about socialism without having in mind the transformation of the country into a single whole, linked together by means of all kinds of communications.'<sup>30</sup> Radio has an enormous role to play in bringing the country together. It will help raise the consciousness of the inhabitants of regions distant from the great cities of European Russia, particularly the peasantry. People will be made aware of their economic interdependence. The country will be prepared for the day when the victorious workers of Europe broadcast their appeals for solidarity, a day which might well see Europe blockaded by America and thus needing support from the agricultural resources of the USSR.

Trotsky, with his perception of uneven and combined development as the basis for 'permanent revolution', was only too aware of the stark contrast between the advanced and the backward sectors of the economy and the need to integrate the two in a socialist economy which reconciled their

differences. Technological transfer played a vital role in this process. The industrialisation of agriculture was an insistent refrain within Trotsky's writings on the problems of NEP and then collectivisation.<sup>31</sup> Town and country will be brought together by the development of technology and its general application.

Socialist planning will depend on the spread of technology. This demands good communications; not only radio, but trains, cars, lorries and aeroplanes.<sup>32</sup> Technology, in Trotsky's opinion, also promotes rational thought and logical calculation, the intellectual discipline crucial to a planned socialist economy.

Socialist construction is in its very essence conscious, planned construction, combining - on a hitherto unprecedented scale - technology, science, and carefully thought-out social forms and methods of utilising them. ...

Socialist construction in general may be characterised as an attempt to rationalise human relationships, i.e., to subordinate them to reason armed with science.<sup>33</sup>

Technology hastens the triumph of rationality. For instance, teaching the metric system of measurement to a hundred million peasants was 'a big revolutionary-cultural task [which] it is almost certain that we shall not achieve ... without the aid of tractors and electric power.'<sup>34</sup>

Trotsky's enthusiasm for technology is fully consonant with the materialism of his Marxism and his search for a secular rationality as the basis for socialist society. His commitments were orthodox in the context of contemporary Marxism and reflected a confidence in science that was shared well beyond revolutionary circles. In contrast, an opposing line of thought, stronger now than it was then, warns against the high-technology future, the domination of machines, and the implied social division of labour between experts and the unskilled.<sup>35</sup> In 'Kultura i Sotsializm' Trotsky dismissed such apprehension:

"But what about the monotony of labour, depersonalised and despiritualised by the conveyor?" I am asked in one of the

written questions sent up. This is not a serious fear. If you think and discuss it through to the end, it is directed against the division of labour and against machinery in general. This is a reactionary path. Socialism and hostility to machinery have never had and will never have anything in common.<sup>36</sup>

The abolition of poverty stands above all else. Raising the productivity of labour requires mechanisation and automation. Labour might become more monotonous but this is compensated for by 'its reduced duration and its increased easiness.' Not for a moment did Trotsky consider that working machinery on a production line, whether for only six hours and not eight or ten, could undermine his objective of creating a socialist sensibility.

Trotsky's chapter on the 'Socialisation of the Production Process' in *Toward Socialism or Capitalism* (1925) carried a similar rebuke. Socialised production must produce standard products of high quality and fewer types. 'But to our shame,' Trotsky complains, 'even now, in the ninth year of our socialist economy, we quite frequently hear from the mouths of managers, even of engineers, complaints that specialisation in production destroys the "spirit," clips the wings of creativity, makes labour in the enterprise monotonous, "boring," and the like.'<sup>37</sup> Such a 'whining and out-and-out reactionary view' is reminiscent of old Tolstoyan-populist conceptions of the advantages of home industry as opposed to factory industry. The Soviet state must take advantage of the conditions presented by nationalised property relations to emulate and outstrip the 'present achievements of foreign laboratories, the capacity of foreign power stations, the spread of American activities in standardisation, and the advances of American enterprises in specialisation.'<sup>38</sup>

### Section Two: Democracy and Socialism

Trotsky's social analysis begins with class and not politics, still less morality. The revolutionary's rules of conduct come from the class struggle, 'this law of all laws'.<sup>39</sup> If a society is class divided then any claim that it is politically democratic is automatically fraudulent. Marxist revolutionaries had to struggle not for democracy but for the power of the working class. In this struggle democratic demands might have a progressive or a reactionary content depending on the context. In capitalism's maturity the social-democrats had become counter-revolutionary by giving priority to democracy, but in fascist societies democratic slogans should be part of the transitional demands.<sup>40</sup>

The strength of the bourgeoisie lay in its capacity to conceal the exploitative character of its rule. Trotsky saw the bourgeois state, in the last analysis, as an apparatus of coercion. But it could not endure without securing its legitimacy through ideology, and simultaneously the illegitimacy of those means which might overthrow it. In 'Ikh Moral' i Nasha', he writes:

The ruling class forces its ends upon society and habituates it into considering all those means which contradict its ends as immoral. That is the chief function of official morality. It pursues the idea of the "greatest possible happiness" not for the majority but for a small and ever-diminishing minority. Such a regime could not have endured for even a week through force alone. It needs the cement of morality. The production of this cement constitutes the profession of the petty-bourgeois theoreticians and moralists. They radiate all the colours of the rainbow but<sup>41</sup> in the final analysis remain apostles of slavery and submission.

Trotsky proposed that the strength of democracy depended, fundamentally, on the receptivity to bourgeois ideas of the 'upper strata of the proletariat', and particularly the intermediate groups between bourgeoisie and proletariat, the 'middle classes' as he called them.

Democracy, Trotsky told the readers of *Terrorizm i Kommunizm*, is more favourable to the political education of the workers than absolutism, but 'it sets a limit to that development in the shape of bourgeois legality' by promoting 'opportunist habits and law-abiding prejudice' in the proletariat's upper strata.<sup>42</sup> The capitalist calculates that democracy can be easily used to suit his own purposes. The capitalist reasons thus:

While I have in my hands lands, factories, workshops, banks; while I possess newspapers, universities, schools; while - and this is most important of all - I retain control of the army: the apparatus of democracy, however you reconstruct it, will remain obedient to my will. I subordinate to my interests spiritually the stupid, conservative, characterless lower middle class, just as it is subjected to me materially. I oppress, and will oppress, its imagination by the gigantic scale of my buildings, my transactions, my plans, and my crimes. For moments when it is dissatisfied and murmurs, I have created scores of safety-valves and lightning conductors. At the right moment I will bring into existence opposition parties, which will disappear tomorrow, but which today accomplish their mission by affording the possibility of the lower middle class expressing their indignation without hurt therefrom for capitalism. I shall hold the masses of the people, under cover of compulsory general education, on the verge of complete ignorance, giving them no opportunity of rising above the level which my experts in spiritual slavery consider safe. I will corrupt, deceive, and terrorize the more privileged or the more backward of the proletariat itself. By means of these measures, I shall not allow the vanguard of the working class to gain the ear of the majority of the working class, while the necessary weapons of mastery and terrorism remain in my hands.<sup>43</sup>

Trotsky's imaginary exchange between a bourgeois representative and a revolutionary opponent appears in *Terrorizm i Kommunizm* (1920), his polemic against Karl Kautsky - a vitriolic attack on those who have succumbed to democratic appeals. Although much more popular in character, this book is, in a sense, Trotsky's equivalent to Lenin's *State and Revolution*. Its central concern, as with Lenin's, is to contrast the Marxist tradition with the renegacy of contemporary social democracy, and thereby to retrieve and defend the idea of the dictatorship of the proletariat. To the astute capitalist Trotsky has his proletarian antagonist reply:

The first condition of salvation is to tear the weapons of domination out of the hands of the bourgeoisie. It is hopeless to think of a peaceful arrival to power while the bourgeoisie retains in its hands all the apparatus of power. Three times



over hopeless is the idea of coming to power by the path which the bourgeoisie itself indicates and, at the same time, barricades - the path of parliamentary democracy. There is only one way: to seize power ... Independently of the superficial balance of forces in parliament, I shall take over for social administration the chief forces and resources of production. I shall free the mind of the lower middle class from their capitalist hypnosis. I shall show them in practice what is the meaning of socialist production. Then even the most backward, the most ignorant, or most terrorized sections of the nation will support me, and willingly<sup>44</sup> and intelligently will join in the work of social construction.

Even if the 'party of the proletariat' achieved a majority in a democratic parliament, 'not an absolute impossibility' in Trotsky's estimation, it could still defend itself only by abrogating democracy.

Trotsky's assumption, carried through all but the final years of his political life, that there was one and only one party of the proletariat suggests a reductionist view of politics. Like the accusation of 'economism', Krasso's general charge against Trotsky of 'sociologism' is too crude but it is not without foundation.<sup>45</sup> As Krasso indicates, for Trotsky, politics was the reflection of class interest not the interplay of ideas. He did not present the working class as a single, homogenous political actor, but he did assume, routinely, that the workers could be adequately represented by a single party. In this he was far from alone; it was a commonplace of Bolshevism and of contemporary Marxism. Where Trotsky did differ from pre-revolutionary Bolshevism was on how the party would relate to the working class. Before 1917 Trotsky had been a critic of Lenin on this question.

Both Trotsky and Lenin recognised the intimacy of the relationship between party and revolution. But there was a significant difference in their emphases. Taking their pre-revolutionary positions in the abstract, it might be said, somewhat schematically, that for Lenin without the Party there would be no revolution, but for Trotsky without the revolution there would be no Party. Before 1914, Trotsky urged the Mensheviks and the

Bolsheviks to reconcile their differences. Later, to explain this, he referred to his 'social-revolutionary fatalism', his belief that the revolution would inevitably bring together the revolutionaries.<sup>46</sup>

Trotsky's first comprehensive statement on the nature of a revolutionary party, *Our Political Tasks*, was published in 1904. Its basic proposition was that the party could not replace the proletariat. The need for a party arose because of the distance between the objective interests of the proletariat and its subjective consciousness of those interests. The role of the party is to bridge the gap. In 'every important political event' it should try to benefit the immediate interests of the proletariat, basing itself on the 'given level of consciousness of the proletariat'.<sup>47</sup> Crucially, it should do this in such a way as to raise the level of proletarian consciousness thus bedding itself in the proletariat more deeply. 'Decisive victory will come the day we overcome the distance separating the objective interests of the proletariat from its subjective consciousness'.<sup>48</sup> More than thirty years later, in 1938, when the Fourth International was established, Trotsky expressed much the same idea in its founding document. The political objectives of proletarian power cannot be achieved without 'the most considered attention to all, even small and partial questions of tactics.'<sup>49</sup> The vanguard 'must help the masses in the process of the daily struggle to find the bridge between present demands and the socialist programme of the revolution.'<sup>50</sup> The old division of the socialist programme into a minimum and a maximum programme provided no such bridge. The new programme for 'an epoch of decaying capitalism' must be structured around 'a system of transitional demands'.<sup>51</sup>

In *Our Political Tasks* Trotsky castigated both the 'Economists' and the 'politicos' for failing to register adequately the tension between subjectivity and objectivity. The 'Economists' remained only at the given

level of subjectivity, failing to intervene to raise the workers' consciousness. The 'political' elements (Lenin and his followers) began with the objective proletarian interests, but they too failed to close the gap between the objective and subjective interests of the class they were supposed to represent. The 'Economists' march 'at the tail-end of history', the 'politicos' try to 'transform history into their own tail.'<sup>52</sup>

*Our Political Tasks* opposed Lenin for failing to recognise new social and political imperatives. Trotsky's attack on the 'Iskraists' accepted the previous validity of their work, but now ideas were turning into dogma.<sup>53</sup> Trotsky sees this as an organic process:

...every partial process in the general class struggle of the proletariat ... develops its own inner tendencies, its own ways of thinking and tactics, its own slogans and its own specific psychology. Each partial process tends to go beyond its bounds (imposed by nature) and impress its tactics, its thinking, its slogans and morals on the whole historical movement it unleashes.<sup>54</sup> The means turn against the end, the form against the content.

Trotsky later repudiated *Our Political Tasks*, after his adoption of Leninism following 1917. Twenty years later, in an unpublished study of the disputes of 1923 and 1924, he put the 'correct attitude' to party organisation at the centre of revolutionary activity. Without it there could be no question of 'any correct, stable, or consistent participation ... in the labour movement.'<sup>55</sup> Against Trotsky's conciliationism, Lenin had been 'absolutely right.' In *My Life* he again admitted that, although subjectively a centralist in 1903, he had not fully realised 'what an intense and imperious centralism the revolutionary party would need to lead millions of people in a war against the old order.'<sup>56</sup>

Certainly the stress of Trotsky's organisational precepts changes markedly in the post-revolutionary period, but there is a line of consistency which links the Trotsky of 1903-4 with the Trotsky of 1923-4

(*The New Course and Lessons of October*). The organisation must be appropriate to the tasks for which it is designed; the revolution stands higher than the party and not vice versa. As a living entity the party is ever changing. Form must not dominate content. At particular turning points the party must be ready to reorientate itself. It follows that the struggle between differing points of view, within certain parameters, is a struggle between relatively correct and relatively incorrect positions, not a confrontation between absolute good and absolute evil. It was in this sense that Trotsky criticised Lenin for taking on the characteristics of Robespierre and adopting his maxim: 'I know of only two parties, that of the good citizen and that of the bad.'<sup>57</sup> The 'tailist' Economists and the vanguard Iskraites had both contributed to the development of a revolutionary political culture. Party rectification could not be secured by 'liquidating' one or other tendency. Their mistakes arose from the material circumstances of the evolving set of relationships between the proletariat, the party and the bourgeois-democratic intelligentsia.<sup>58</sup> Trotsky carried the essence of this idea with him beyond 1917 and into exile.

In *The New Course*, Trotsky argues that the Party must be flexible enough to contain the perspectives of various groups, but he agrees that freedom to form factions would, in the circumstances of the time, undermine unity. Later he revised this position. In the 1930s Trotsky stressed the permissibility, even the necessity, of factions to ensure the vitality of the party: 'how could a genuinely revolutionary organisation, setting itself the task of overthrowing the world and uniting under its banner the most audacious iconoclasts, fighters and insurgents, live and develop without intellectual conflicts, without groupings and temporary factional formations.' In Trotsky's view the ban on factions was a temporary measure, not a doctrinal precept; he saw the history of Bolshevism as 'a history of

the struggle of factions.'<sup>59</sup>

Largely because Trotsky later repudiated his anti-Lenin views on the party, his pamphlet *Our Political Tasks* remained untranslated into Western languages for a considerable time. Trotskyist groups were reluctant to parade their leader's heterodoxy.<sup>60</sup> One of the consequences of this is that the pamphlet has generally been known at second hand, primarily through Deutscher's biography. He puts great stress on Trotsky's warning that Lenin's methods could lead to dictatorship, citing it twice in five pages. Trotsky, 'the prophet', had in Deutscher's view produced the headings for several future 'chapters in the annals of the revolution'.<sup>61</sup>

*Our Political Tasks* has been seen by some writers, Deutscher and Knei-Paz for example, as a remarkably perceptive response to the 'Leninist' idea of a revolutionary party, but to treat Trotsky's comments as a prescient prediction is misleading.<sup>62</sup> There was much more to Trotsky's pamphlet than his well known premonition. When he suggested that the methods of 'substitutionism' lead, in the internal politics of the party, to the 'party organisation "substituting" itself for the party, the central committee substituting itself for the party organisation, and finally the dictator substituting himself for the central committee', he did not invest that passage with quite the force that it has subsequently taken on.<sup>63</sup> What he wished to emphasise was not the 'prediction' itself but the invalidity of the party leadership thinking for the party and advancing its policies from the programme rather than linking the content of party work to the real state of class struggle.

In 1904 Trotsky did not intend his statement to be a prophesy, and he later rejected such organisational teleology as analytically invalid: in 1939, against Victor Serge, he argued that the call to replace the

'excessive centralism' of the Bolshevik Party with 'more confidence in the masses, more freedom' was 'outside time and space'.

There are revolutionary masses, there are passive masses, there are reactionary masses. The very same masses are at different times inspired by different moods and objectives. It is just for this reason that a centralised organisation of the vanguard is indispensable. Only a party, wielding the authority it has won, is capable of overcoming the vacillation of the masses themselves. To invest the mass with traits of sanctity and to reduce one's programme to amorphous 'democracy', is to dissolve oneself in the class as it is, to turn from a vanguard into a rearguard, and by this very thing, to renounce revolutionary tasks.<sup>64</sup>

A similar analysis is to be found in the unfinished biography of Stalin. In this book there is the only substantial reference to *Our Political Tasks* in all of Trotsky's post-revolutionary writings. It comes in a discussion of Stalin's revolutionary apprenticeship, supporting an attack against him and not Lenin. Although Trotsky admits that his pamphlet contained 'not a little that is immature and erroneous in ... criticism of Lenin', he was prescient about the 'high and mighty "committeemen" ', a year before Lenin took up the same cause at the Bolshevik Congress in 1905.<sup>65</sup> Stalin was the 'committeeman' par excellence. Alongside this deft, but tendentious, partial re-appropriation of *Our Political Tasks*, Trotsky raises the more profound question. He admits that 'it is rather tempting to draw the inference that future Stalinism was already rooted in Bolshevik centralism or, more sweepingly, in the underground hierarchy of professional revolutionists'. Not one to so dramatically renounce the convictions of more than twenty years, Trotsky puts temptation aside. On analysis, the inference 'crumbles to dust, disclosing an astounding paucity of historical content.'

Of course, there are dangers of one kind or another in the very process of stringently picking and choosing persons of advanced views and welding them into a tightly centralised organisation. But the roots of such dangers will never be found in the so-called "principle" of centralism; rather they should be sought in the lack of homogeneity and the backwardness of the toilers - that is, in the general social conditions which make imperative that very centripetal leadership of the class by its vanguard.

The key to the dynamic problem of leadership is in the actual interrelationships between the political machine and its party, between the vanguard and its class, between centralism and democracy. Those interrelationships cannot, of their nature, be established a priori and remain immutable. They are dependent on concrete historical conditions; their mobile balance is regulated by the vital struggle of tendencies, which, as represented by their extreme wings, oscillate between the despotism of the political machine and the impotence of phrasemongering.<sup>66</sup>

The Marxist concept of dictatorship of the proletariat was a class interpretation. The proletariat was to be the ruling class. But the form of its rule was unclear. Lenin and Trotsky both held that classes had objective interests and summoned the party to intervene to ensure, where necessary, the compatibility of consciousness and class interest. It followed that the dictatorship of a class did not necessarily depend on the involvement of all or even of a majority of the class in government. Provided those in power followed workers' interests the government was to be regarded as a workers' government. Even so, it had been presumed that with the overthrow of the bourgeois state, the displacement of its ideologists, and the imposition of controls over capital, the working class would participate in a democratic dictatorship. However, the victorious Bolshevik leadership quickly found that some of its problems could be solved more quickly if they were not hampered by the democratic procedures which they formally upheld.

After the revolution the newly established government had to confront a range of problems. The revolution had to be defended against immediate threats to its existence from within and without; economic production had to be restored and developed from a position of acute crisis. The material deprivations which had undermined the political stability of previous regimes were far from solved by controlling or dispossessing the capitalists. Indeed, revolutionary measures could well exacerbate the dislocation of economic production. The alleviation of material

deprivation diverted resources to consumption. Workers' control legislation could well be transformed into a defence against managerial injunctions to raise production levels. Now the Bolshevik leadership had to consider how to begin the implementation of a programme for social revolution that was definite in its objectives, but vague in its conception of policies to secure the transition. It had to produce practical solutions to the question: who rules? A governmental apparatus had to be built from what was available. Social policy had to become social action, in conditions of incipient counter-revolution and economic crisis.

Democracy suffered progressive redefinition. From the start the 'bourgeois' idea of 'one man one vote' was rejected in favour of a class conception. Constitutionally, individuals received or were deprived of voting rights according to their class positions.<sup>67</sup> Then democracy ceased to be a matter of control by working class Soviets over the organs of government. Power effectively lay with the Bolshevik Party. Other parties would be tolerated or banned according to the test of proximity to the working class, a test to be administered by the Bolshevik leadership. Democracy by the Civil War years had effectively become a coupling of internal Bolshevik Party procedures with a 'higher' conception of the purposes of the regime. After 1921, further revisions ensued. Tendencies within the Bolshevik Party would readily be identified as factions which represented the views of now illegal political organisations of hostile classes. Democracy was exercised by fewer and fewer people, and was more and more defined by reference to the working class purposes of the regime: the 'historic' objectives of the working class were held to be democratic. The working class might be a minority of society, but it was, in Marxist theory, the only class capable of guiding social development to a classless self-administration by all. Moreover the mass of the Russian population were peasants whose very existence as a class, let alone a class capable of



articulating a political independence, was in doubt. So when the Bolshevik regime acted without reference to popular wishes, or even against them, it was still acting 'democratically'. To cope with this tension a distinction was frequently made between what was slightly called formal democracy or bourgeois democracy and workers' democracy. In reality the 'higher' form of democracy became its opposite; democracy became unity in action to secure the policies that a shrinking circle of Bolshevik leaders defined as those of the working class.

During the 1920s, Trotsky's attention was focused on the Party; he never questioned the maintenance of a one-party state. After expulsion he considers, still at first in a rather abstract manner, the question of political pluralism. An article, written in 1934 in response to a commission for the American magazine *Liberty*, is particularly illuminating in the reconstruction of Trotsky's idea of the place of democracy in socialist society. It imagines a Soviet America, thus projecting a view of socialism without the deformations of economic underdevelopment. Trotsky presents his ideas through a dialogue, a favourite literary device.<sup>68</sup> An American and a Russian engineer, Troshin, are debating socialism, the one sceptical the other enthusiastic. Trotsky has the American, Cooper, express his reservations in typical fashion.

I just happen to be accustomed to roast beef, a cigar, and my own car. When you get done with all this am I going to end up on famine rations, having to wear mismatched shoes that don't fit, read monotonous stereotyped propaganda in the one newspaper that will be left, elect hand-picked candidates in soviets chosen at the top, rubber-stamp decisions made without my participation, keep my real thoughts to myself, and sing praises every day to the Leader fate has sent me, from fear of being arrested and shipped off somewhere? If that's what you have in mind, I'm telling you now you can have my ticket to paradise.<sup>69</sup>

Trotsky's Troshin patiently responds that such features of Soviet Russian life are only a result of an economic scarcity that Soviet America will not be compelled to experience.<sup>70</sup> In the transitional period, 'American Soviets will differ from the Russian Soviets as much as the United States of

Roosevelt differs from the Russia of Nicholas II.<sup>71</sup> Trotsky's idea of life under American Soviets represents his conception of how life might be in Soviet Russia following extensive economic development and political revitalisation. In his view, American Soviets will be 'full-blooded and vigorous'. There will be no place in the Soviets for Henry Ford or other defenders of the capitalist regime: they might be given a Pacific island. 'But a wide-ranging struggle between various interests, programmes, and groupings is not only possible but inevitable on the basis of a soviet regime.' Plans for the economy, for education, for transport, for agriculture, for 'sharing the highest technological and cultural achievements with South America', for 'probing outer space' (sic), for 'eugenics', 'all of these tasks will give rise to competing doctrines and schools of thought, electoral struggles in the soviets, and passionate debate in the newspapers and at public meetings.'<sup>72</sup>

The stress on pluralism in that dialogue echoes some remarks Trotsky made in the final chapter of *Literatura i Revolyutsiya* (1923). Here he faces the question: if under Socialism solidarity is the basis of society, will competition disappear? No, he replies; 'to use the language of psychoanalysis, [it] will be sublimated [and] ... will assume a higher and more fertile form.'

There will be the struggle for one's opinion, for one's project, for one's taste. In the measure in which political struggles will be eliminated - and in a society in which there will be no classes, there will be no such struggles - the liberated passions will be channelled into technique, into construction which also includes art. ... All forms of life, such as the cultivation of land, the planning of human habitations, the building of theatres, the methods of socially educating children, the solution of scientific problems, the creation of new styles, will vitally engross all and everybody. People will divide into "parties" over the question of a new gigantic canal, or the distribution of oases in the Sahara (such a question will exist too), over the regulation of the weather and the climate, over two competing tendencies in music, and over a best system of sports. These groups will not be poisoned by the greed of class or caste. All will be equally interested in the success of the whole. The struggle will have a purely ideological character.<sup>73</sup>

Trotsky's reflections, in exile, on the question of socialist democracy are distinguished by three primary concerns: the need for democracy in a socialist economy; the attempt to separate socialism and Stalinism; and, the defence of revolutionary dictatorship.

The struggle for a socialist planned economy cannot be successful without a simultaneous struggle for democracy: such is the basic message of Trotsky's analysis of the first five-year plan.

Socialism is not a ready-made system which can spring full-blown from someone's head, even the most gifted one. The task of the correct division of the forces and means of production can only be solved by means of constant criticism, by verification, by the ideological struggle of the various groupings within the proletariat. We reject formal democracy because in the framework of capitalism it means handing over the keys to the enemy armed to the teeth. But at the same time we insist that without working-class democracy we will not be able to maintain the dictatorship of the proletariat, let alone succeed in building socialism.

In the 1930s, with the comprehensive growth of state coercion, Trotsky found himself criticised for complicity in the construction of the regime. He had played a central role in the establishment of the twin features which, according to some accounts, had been critical to the development of Stalinism: the authoritarian centralisation of early Soviet rule, and the monopoly of an orthodox Leninist party. In reply Trotsky both defended the revolutionary terrorism of the early period and repudiated the tyrannies of Stalinism. Once he had advocated a Bolshevik monopoly of power, now he called for freedom for political parties provided they accepted the Soviet regime. The prohibition of the other 'Soviet parties', Trotsky asserted, did not 'flow from any "theory" of Bolshevism but was a measure of defense of the dictatorship in a backward and devastated country, surrounded by enemies.'<sup>75</sup> Banning other parties, and then factions within the Bolshevik Party, 'signalled a tremendous danger'. It was only necessary because of the 'material weakness of the dictatorship ... the difficulties of its

internal and international situation.' Had the revolution triumphed, 'even if only in Germany', it would not have been necessary to maintain the prohibition on other parties. Even though 'the domination of a single party served as the juridical point of departure for the Stalinist totalitarian system', its real origin was in the defeat of the proletariat in Europe and Asia and not in the nature of Bolshevism.<sup>76</sup>

Trotsky claimed consistency, but his formulations of the later 1930s were a good deal more open than those of 1919 and 1920. Even so he had not become a democrat, and his criticism of Stalin never proceeded from that point of departure. To the end of his life he remained as implacably opposed as ever to what he regarded as naive and sentimental democratic prejudices. His polemics of 1938 and 1939 are just as sharp as those against Kautsky twenty years before. The key to his position in 1920 and in exile is his perception of the relationship between means and ends. For Trotsky the establishment of a universal morality, with which to evaluate procedures and practices according to a constant and comprehensive standard, was hypocritical and useless. In *Terrorizm i Kommunizm*, he argues that everyone, in practice, follows the maxim that the end justifies the means, as 'he who aims at the end cannot reject the means'.<sup>77</sup> No revolutionary can be limited by peaceful, democratic means and remain a revolutionary, not because of a principled preference for violence but because 'history down to now has not thought out any other way of carrying mankind forward than that of setting up always the revolutionary violence of the progressive class against the conservative violence of the outworn classes.'<sup>78</sup>

These ideas are further developed in 'Ikh Moral' i Nasha' (1938), an article in close continuity with *Terrorizm i Kommunizm*, that similarly argues the futility of moral absolutes.<sup>79</sup> This piece, together with other writings

of the same period (1937-1940), answered those who saw Stalinism and Trotskyism as essentially one and the same. The historical context of this discussion was the Moscow trials of 1936-1938 and Trotsky's repudiation, particularly through his defence before the Dewey Commission in Mexico, of the charges levelled there against him. Many erstwhile sympathisers of Stalin had now recoiled to democratic positions and claimed an identity between Stalinism and Trotskyism. In fact 'they continue to defend the GPU ... He who slanders the victim aids the executioner.'<sup>80</sup>

### Section Three: Culture and Socialism

In Trotsky's analysis the future of the Russian revolution was based on two major 'objective' factors: the development of the forces of production and the maturity of international revolution.<sup>81</sup> But 'subjective' factors, the culture and consciousness of social groups, social classes, and political parties, could also have a fundamental impact.<sup>82</sup> For example, the 'Platform' of the Left Opposition gives priority to 'the growth of our productive forces and the dominance of the socialist elements over the capitalist', but links this with 'an improvement of all the conditions of existence of the working class ... material, ... political ... cultural.'<sup>83</sup>

'Culture' has a variety of meanings, frequently value laden. In 'Kultura i Sotsializm', Trotsky discussed some of them, beginning with the broadest possible formulation.

Culture is everything that has been created, built, learned, conquered by man in the course of his entire history, in distinction from what nature has given. ... from the moment that man separated himself from the animal kingdom - and this happened approximately when he first grasped primitive tools of stone and wood and armed the organs of his body with them - from that time there began the creation and accumulation of culture, that is, all kinds of knowledge and skill in the struggle with nature and the subjugation of nature.<sup>84</sup>

This antithesis between nature and culture has survived in the word cultivation; according to Trotsky this was the original sense of culture. Characteristically, Trotsky identifies technology as the basis of culture: 'without technology there is no culture'.<sup>85</sup> Trotsky explained, in response to a question from the floor, that it is wrong to ask whether culture advances technology or vice versa. They cannot be counterposed; technology is 'the mainspring' of culture. 'The decisive instrument in the cultural revolution must be a revolution in technology.'<sup>86</sup>

Trotsky calls for a cultural revolution knowing that this cannot be simply a revolution in culture. Of course, the struggle to 'raise the spiritual level of the masses' cannot be postponed, but it would be 'a miserable and contemptible daydream to imagine that we can create a truly new culture before we have ensured prosperity, plenty, and leisure for the masses.' In a characteristic inversion, Trotsky explains that in capitalist society the relative development of the productive forces is constrained by the underdevelopment of the social forms of political and property relations; after the proletarian revolution the relative development of the social forms is constrained by the underdevelopment of the productive forces.

The big link to carrying through the cultural revolution is the link of industrialisation, and not literature or philosophy at all. I hope that these words will not be understood in the sense of an unfriendly or disrespectful attitude to philosophy and poetry. Without generalising thought, and without art, man's life would be bare and beggarly. But that is just what the lives of millions of people are to an enormous extent at the present time. The cultural revolution must consist in opening up to them the possibility of real access to culture and not only to its wretched fag-ends. But this is impossible without creating great material preconditions. That is why a machine that automatically manufactures bottles is at the present time a first-rate factor in the cultural revolution, while a heroic poem is only a tenth-rate factor.

In embarking upon this cultural revolution, the workers' state immediately faces a contradiction. Culture is 'a social-historical phenomenon in its very essence'.<sup>88</sup> Since 'historical society has been and continues to be class society, culture is found to be the basic instrument of class oppression.' Marx had said that the ruling ideas of an epoch were essentially the ideas of the ruling class. So it is with culture as a whole. 'Yet we say to the working class: master all the culture of the past, otherwise you will not build socialism.'

The legacy of capitalism for 'spiritual' culture, to use Trotsky's term, is profoundly contradictory. Some elements of it are worthless, others must be appropriated. 'We utterly reject religion, along with all substitutes for it.'<sup>98</sup> For Trotsky, religion was 'the highest expression of serf-owning ideology', a series of myths which maintained the social relations and institutions of feudal-monarchical society. The 'oppressed masses' were deceived into a false consciousness by those who, for the most part, believed the myths and were 'honestly guided by them'. The advent of bourgeois society was accompanied by an advance in scientific thought. But the bourgeoisie, in its turn, could not dispense with ideology. The centre stage was occupied now not by religion but by 'the conscious falsity of capitalist democracy'. Trotsky suggests that ideology in capitalist society is less a matter of false consciousness, and more a result of the 'organised deception of the people by means of a combination of methods of exceptional complexity.' Ideology, growing out of the contradiction between the rationalism of bourgeois thought and the irrationalism of bourgeois society, undermines the value of bourgeois science. Trotsky praises the achievements of the bourgeoisie in natural science and classical economics; and in philosophy two methodological innovations have been invaluable - materialism and dialectics. But, in most fields, the situation is 'lamentable'. 'A pearl of genuine knowledge can be found in these spheres

only after digging through dozens of professional dunghills'.<sup>90</sup>

The artistic legacy of the past is 'no less contradictory' than the heritage of science and technology. It too helps man 'to find his bearings in the world', presenting him not with 'a system of laws' but with 'a group of images and ... a way of inspiring certain feelings and moods.'<sup>91</sup> In contrast with the proletkult theorists, Trotsky in no way rejected the art of class society.

The art of past centuries has made man more complex and flexible, has raised his mentality to a higher level, has enriched him in an all-around way. This enrichment is a precious achievement of culture. Mastery of the art of the past is, therefore, a necessary precondition not only for the creation of new art, but also for the building of the new society, for communism needs people with highly developed minds. [Art] ... is able to give nourishment to our feelings and to educate them. If we were groundlessly to repudiate the art of the past, we should at once become poorer spiritually.<sup>92</sup>

Although art served an ideological role, it could not be reduced to and assessed as an ideology; 'a work of art should, in the first place, be judged by its own law, that is the law of art.' Ultimately, 'the development of art is the highest test of the vitality and significance of each epoch'; so it will be with socialism.<sup>93</sup> For the development of art, the policy of the state must be exercised with great caution: 'art must make its own way and by its own means'.<sup>94</sup> There are domains in which the Party leads 'directly and imperatively', and there are those, including art, where it does not. Trotsky's view was permissive, but, as always, subject to the qualification that the revolution constituted the highest authority. The revolution will not stop from 'laying its hand on any tendency in art which, no matter how great its achievement in form, threatens to disintegrate the revolutionary environment' or to dissolve the unity of the revolutionary alliance of the proletariat, peasantry, and intelligentsia.



Trotsky's most important writings on literature are to be found in *Literatura i Revolyutsiya* (September 1923), an anthology of essays written during his two previous summer vacations. This book, marked, as Irving Howe suggests, by 'enormous verbal energy', both surveys the literature of Russia since the Revolution and discusses the future of art and literature under the dictatorship of the proletariat and socialism.<sup>95</sup> It is doubly remarkable for having been produced not by a professional critic, but by a man of politics and the revolution.

Despite the sympathetic comments made in *Literatura i Revolyutsiya* about the Futurists, Mayakovsky in particular, Trotsky opposed those who argued an exclusive case for 'proletarian literature' in particular and 'proletarian culture' in general. Those who talk in such terms are usually confused about their meanings.

"Proletarian culture" ... in three cases out of ten is used uncritically to designate the culture and art of the coming Communist society, in two cases out of ten to designate the fact that special groups of the proletariat are acquiring separate elements of pre-proletarian culture, and finally, in five cases out of ten, it represents a jumble of concepts and words out of which one can make neither head nor tail.<sup>96</sup>

Addressing himself to the core idea of proletkult, Trotsky opposes fundamentally the view that just as the bourgeoisie established its own art and culture so will the proletariat. This was neither possible nor desirable. Its advocates drew a false analogy between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat.

Trotsky's fundamental argument was that the objective of proletarian culture was ill-conceived, since it assumed an analogy between the destiny of the bourgeoisie and of the proletariat. On the contrary, the period of proletarian rule, its class domination, was only the prelude for its dissolution in socialist society. It marked a transition from 'one social-cultural system to another, from capitalism to socialism'.<sup>97</sup>

Previously the bourgeoisie had fought to establish and maintain a class rule that had endured for an 'epoch' of human history. In contrast, proletarian rule could not constitute an 'epoch'. In *Literatura i Revolyutsiya*, Trotsky envisages a transition to socialism lasting decades but not centuries.<sup>98</sup> Not only was the objective of proletarian culture strategically wrong, but there would simply not be time for it to be achieved. Furthermore, the protracted rise of the bourgeoisie with its accumulation of wealth and culture before the domination of capitalism cannot be echoed by the ascent of the proletariat, a property-less and deprived class under capitalism which achieves power in a cataclysmic manner. Before it achieves power the working class has next to no opportunity to develop its own culture; it takes power even before it has appropriated the fundamental elements of bourgeois culture. With the overthrow of capitalism the immediate struggle to consolidate power presents political priorities.

... no matter how important and vitally necessary our culture-building may be, it is entirely dominated by the approach of European and world revolution. We are, as before, merely soldiers in a campaign. We are bivouacking for a day. Our shirt has to be washed, our hair has to be cut and combed and, most important of all the rifle has to be cleaned and oiled. Our entire present-day economic and cultural work is nothing more than a bringing of ourselves into order between two battles and two campaigns. The principal battles are ahead and may be not so far off. Our epoch<sup>99</sup> is not yet an epoch of new culture, but only the entrance to it.

Against the proletkult enthusiasts, Trotsky argued that bourgeois culture could only be transcended through assimilation of all that was best in it; to do this it first had to be understood comprehensively. These tasks would be time consuming. During 'the twenty, thirty, or fifty years of proletarian world revolution' there would be no time left for the construction of proletarian culture.<sup>100</sup>

The transition to socialism required people of culture, but not specifically proletarian culture. Cultural development always proceeds

more slowly than political development. 'The political writing of a class hastens ahead on stilts, while its artistic creativity hobbles behind on crutches.'<sup>101</sup> In a transition period, brief by the standards of history, the intellectual vanguard of the proletariat should not be concerned with 'the abstract formation of a new culture regardless of the absence of a basis for it, but ... a systematic, planned and, of course, critical imparting to the backward masses of the essential elements of the culture which already exists.'<sup>102</sup>

In his examination of cultural change after 1917, Trotsky applies the ideas of permanent revolution, echoing his propositions of 1923 on everyday life.<sup>103</sup> The revolutions of 1905 and 1917 'fulfilled, in abridged form and accelerated tempo, the educational work of the bourgeois reformations and revolutions of the West. Long before this work was finished ... the revolution ... was compelled by the course of the class struggle to leap over to the road of socialism. The contradictions in the sphere of Soviet culture only reflect and refract the economic and social contradictions which grew out of this leap.'<sup>104</sup> The Soviet Union takes bourgeois culture 'ready made in its latest forms and, thanks to socialised means of production, applies the borrowings not partially and by degrees but at once and on a gigantic scale.'<sup>105</sup> Even under Stalin's rule, the cultural progress of the USSR was not denied by Trotsky. Particularly for the national minorities, 'the bureaucracy is laying down a bridge ... to the elementary benefits of bourgeois culture.'<sup>106</sup> But soap and education do not amount to socialism. In 'the daily life of the basic mass of the population ... the heritage of Tsarist and bourgeois Russia ... vastly prevails over the embryonic growth of socialism.'<sup>107</sup>

The moderation shown by Trotsky in matters of artistic culture was reproduced in his writings on the culture of everyday life. Between 1921

and 1927 he gave many speeches and produced numerous articles which addressed this subject. Several of these were collected in a volume published in 1923 with the title *Voprosy Byta*. The essential message of this book is that emphasis must be given to cultural development through a lengthy and patient process of education and self-improvement. This can and should begin now. It will inevitably be a slow process: 'politics change rapidly, but morals cling tenaciously to the past.'<sup>108</sup> Ultimately, success will come from the creation of the economic preconditions for a revolution in everyday life. In the meantime, cultural improvement enhances 'our capacity for rationalising production, and promoting socialist accumulation.'<sup>109</sup> The Communist Party, despite its advanced positions, still has a lot to learn in the field of popular culture and must not seek to secure advances by compulsion; it must guide and not command, debate and not dictate.<sup>110</sup> In particular, intervention in family relationships must be undertaken with great care. A 'new, higher type of family' will only evolve in conjunction with the 'raising of the standard of the culture of the individual working man and woman, ... for in this domain we can only, of course, speak of inner discipline and not of external compulsion.'<sup>111</sup>

Domestic life, Trotsky states, is a reservoir of tradition and conservatism, which has been dramatically affected by the upheavals of war and revolution. The old family is being broken up and reconstructed into new forms, as, at the same time, relations between men and women change dramatically. In his essay 'Ot Staroi Sem'i - k Novoi', Trotsky indicated the interconnections between politics, economics, and social life. Instituting the formal political equality of men and women in the Soviet state had been simple; instituting the industrial equality of men and women workers, 'doing it in such a way that the men should not put the women to disadvantage', was much more difficult. But achieving equality in the

family was the most difficult.

All our domestic habits must be revolutionised before that can happen. And yet it is quite obvious that unless there is actual equality of husband and wife ..., in a moral sense as well as in the conditions of life, we cannot speak seriously of their equality in social work or even in politics. As long as woman is chained to her house-work, the care of the family, the cooking and sewing, all her chances of participation in social and political life are cut down in the extreme.<sup>112</sup>

To achieve sexual equality there must be both cultural and economic improvement. A richer workers' state will free the family 'from the burden of the kitchen and the laundry': 'washing must be done by a public laundry, catering by a public restaurant, sewing by a public workshop.' With economic advance the public education of children will also be tackled seriously. Although the country was still too poor to undertake comprehensive schemes of the socialisation of domestic labour, experiments should begin now. Priority must be given to a 'combination of private initiative with support by state power - above all, by local soviets and economic bodies' to create 'model communities'. With such examples to follow and an increase in resources through economic revival, socialist forms would be generalised.

Then the bond between husband and wife would be freed from everything external and accidental, and the one would cease to absorb the life of the other. Genuine equality would at last be established. The bond will depend on mutual attachment. And on that account particularly, it will acquire inner stability, not the same, of course, for everyone, and compulsory for no one.<sup>113</sup>

In his discussion of the impact of Stalinism upon the cultural life of the Soviet peoples, Trotsky gave particular attention to the attempt to liberate women and change the nature of the family. In *Revolution Betrayed*, he writes:

Up to now this problem of problems has not been solved. ... The consecutive changes in the approach to the problem of the family in the Soviet Union best of all characterise the actual nature of Soviet society and the evolution of the ruling stratum.

How man enslaved woman, how the exploiter subjected them both, how the toilers have attempted at the price of blood to free themselves from slavery and have only exchanged one chain for

another - history tells us much about all this. In essence, it tells us nothing else.<sup>114</sup>

Trotsky's analysis centres on the need for the effective socialisation of domestic labour, and the absence of the necessary resources.

The complete absorption of the housekeeping functions of the family by institutions of the socialist society, uniting all generations in solidarity and mutual aid, was to bring to woman, and thereby to the loving couple, a real liberation from the thousand-year-old fetters.<sup>115</sup>

The Soviet state tried 'to take the old family by storm', but this proved impossible not 'because the will was lacking, and not because the family was so firmly rooted in men's hearts.' Society was 'too poor and little cultured'.<sup>116</sup> The scarcity which hindered socialist relations of production also hindered the development of socialist culture.

Trotsky proceeds from pots, pans, and child care, to the new limitations under Stalin's regime on abortion and divorce. To explain these he refers to the position of the bureaucracy.

The retreat ... goes infinitely farther than iron economic necessity demands. To the objective causes producing this return to such bourgeois forms as the payment of alimony, there is added the social interest of the ruling stratum in the deepening of bourgeois law. The most compelling motive of the present cult of the family is undoubtedly the need of the bureaucracy for a stable hierarchy of relations, and for the disciplining of youth by means of 40 million points of support for authority and power.<sup>117</sup>

'The very idea of laws about abortion and divorce' will be alien to 'the genuinely socialist family.' After 'a bold step in the direction of such a family ... thermidorian legislation is beating a retreat to the bourgeois models.'<sup>118</sup> In Trotsky's account, economic and cultural backwardness undermines socialist experiment and produces the bureaucracy that reverses previous advances. There is no hint here that patriarchy might have a significant momentum of its own, or that there had been any lack of commitment from the leadership of Lenin's time.

The cultural life of Stalinist Russia, in Trotsky's opinion, was completely foreign to the human liberation sketched in *Literatura i Revolyutsiya* and other writings of the 1920s. After Lenin's death not a single Marxist work has been published that 'deserves attention and translation.' They are all 'scholastic compilations which say over the same old ideas, endorsed in advance, and shuffle over the same old quotations according to the demands of the current administrative conjuncture.'<sup>119</sup> Trotsky recalls his own statement of the previous decade that 'the development of art is the highest test of the vitality and significance of every epoch'.<sup>120</sup> 'In spite of individual exceptions,' he wrote in *Revolution Betrayed*, 'the epoch of Thermidor will go into the history of artistic creation pre-eminently as an epoch of mediocrities, laureates and toadies.'<sup>121</sup>

Art has been subjected to the same pressures as the family, with the same consequences: after a period of notable advance there has been a conservative reaction. The 'best productions of revolutionary literature' and 'excellent films' belong to the first years. Then the regime 'had no fear of experiments, searchings, the struggle of schools, for it understood that only in this way could a new cultural epoch be prepared.'<sup>122</sup> To limit creative freedom for political reasons was considered legitimate; to dictate directly to the artist was not. Now 'the present ruling stratum considers itself called not only to control spiritual creation politically, but also to prescribe its roads of development.'<sup>123</sup>

The struggle of tendencies and schools has been replaced by interpretation of the will of the leaders. There has been created for all groups a compulsory organisation, a kind of concentration camp of artistic literature. Mediocre but 'right-thinking' storytellers like Serafimovich or Gladkov are inaugurated as classics. Gifted writers who cannot do sufficient violence to themselves are pursued by a pack of instructors armed with shamelessness and dozens of quotations. The most eminent artists either commit suicide, or find their material in the remote past, or become silent. Honest and talented books appear as though accidentally, bursting out from somewhere under the counter, and have the character of artistic contraband.

'Spiritual creativeness,' Trotsky argues, 'demands freedom.' The supreme purpose of communism is 'to free finally and once and for all the creative forces of mankind ... Personal relations, science and art will not know ... any shadow of compulsion.'<sup>124</sup>

When Trotsky considers the transitional period he always does so as a realist and a gradualist, but when he allows himself to speculate on the socialist future his dream is as utopian as any in the history of Marxist thought. The final chapter of *Literatura i Revolyutsiya*, 'Revolutionary and Socialist Art', is among the most visionary of his writings on socialism. The revolutionary period, which 'carries the class struggle to its highest tension', will give way to socialism, which 'will abolish class antagonisms, as well as classes', with profound consequences for art. Art will leave the 'custody of special priestly castes' and become the property of all people.<sup>125</sup> The fusion of artistic culture and everyday life is the most insistent of Trotsky's themes in the last chapter of his book. All barriers between art and industry and art and nature will fall. With the withering of classes and hence the struggles between them, politics changes its nature dramatically. In place of the base pursuit of individual or sectional interests there comes, in Trotsky's vision, a higher conflict over aesthetics: "parties" will form themselves as 'associations of temperaments, of tastes and of moods.'<sup>126</sup> Art and culture will substitute for politics; divisive collisions give way to a ceaseless striving for social perfection. This will be expressed not only in the production of works of art, but in the domination of nature by man and even in man's mastery of his own physical self. Trotsky's aspirations for rationalism know no bounds. Man will try to master 'first the semi-conscious and then the subconscious processes in his own organism, such as breathing, the circulation of the blood, digestion, reproduction, and, within necessary limits, he will try to subordinate them to the control of reason and



will.<sup>127</sup> This might be read simply as an early anticipation of organ transplants and other wonders of modern surgery. But Trotsky reasons the process through to its logical conclusion and propounds a vision with Promethean conclusions. Trotsky's socialist man aspires to be a superman. The rout of blind and unconscious passions will extend even to human reproduction and the fear of death.

The human race will not have ceased to crawl on all fours before God, kings and capital, in order later to submit humbly before the dark laws of heredity and a blind sexual selection! Emancipated man will want to attain a greater equilibrium in the work of his organs and a more proportional developing and wearing out of his tissues, in order to reduce the fear of death to a rational reaction of the organism towards danger.

In this search for perfection all the arts will be developed to the highest point. The concluding flourish of *Literatura i Revolyutsiya* pictures an unsurpassable 'kingdom of freedom'.

Man will become immeasurably stronger, wiser and subtler; his body will become more harmonised, his movements more rhythmic, his voice more musical. The forms of life will become dynamically dramatic. The average human type will rise to the heights of an Aristotle, a Goethe, or a Marx. And above this ridge new peaks will rise.<sup>128</sup>

1. Trotsky, *Revolution Betrayed*, (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1970), pp.45-6. The premise that socialism requires abundance is also to be found in outline in 'Kultura i Sotsializm' (1926), *Sochineniya XXI*, pp.440-1.
2. Trotsky, 'Answers to Questions by Anita Brenner', *Writings of Leon Trotsky [1933-34]*, (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1975), p.142.
3. Trotsky, '15 let!', *Byulleten' Oppozitsii*, no.31, (Noyabr' 1932g.), p.2.
4. Trotsky, 'The Draft Programme of the Communist International', in Trotsky, *The Third International After Lenin*, (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1970), pp.52-5. Trotsky, 'Klassovaya Priroda Sovetskogo Gosudarstvo', *Byulleten' Oppozitsii*, no.36-37, (Oktyabr' 1933g.), p.5.
5. For example: Mavrakis, K., *On Trotskyism: Problems of Theory and History*, (London: RKP, 1976); Hindess, B., 'Introduction' to Bettelheim, C., *Economic Calculation and Forms of Property*, (London: RKP, 1976); Bettelheim, C., 'Introduction' to *Class Struggles in the USSR: First Period, 1917-1923*, (Hassocks: Harvester Press, 1977).
6. Trotsky, 'Ot Tsarapiny - k Opasnosti Gangreny', *Byulleten' Oppozitsii*, no.82-83, (Fevral' Mart Aprel' 1940g.), p.25.
7. Trotsky, *Revolution Betrayed*, p.45.
8. Trotsky, *Moya Zhizn'*, tom I, (Berlin: Granit, 1930), pp.254-5.
9. Trotsky, *Results and Prospects*, (New York: Pathfinder, 1970), p.64.
10. Trotsky, 'Kultura i Sotsializm', p.429.
11. Trotsky, 'O Krivoi Kapitalisticheskogo Razvitiya', *Sochineniya XII*, p.363.
12. Trotsky, 'O Krivoi Kapitalisticheskogo Razvitiya', pp.361-2.
13. *Dvenadtsatyi S'ezd Rossiiskoi Kommunisticheskoi Partii (Bol'shevikov)* (1923), pp.282-3.
14. Trotsky, 'Answers to Questions by Anita Brenner', p.144.
15. T3336: [Trotsky to Hungarian comrades; September or October 1930].
16. Trotsky, *Towards Socialism or Capitalism* (1925), in Trotsky, *The Challenge of the Left Opposition* (1923-25), (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1975); see pp.375-6.
17. Trotsky, 'The Draft Programme of the Communist International', *The Third International After Lenin*, p.47. Trotsky, 'Kto Kogo?', *Byulleten' Oppozitsii*, no.14, (Avgust 1930g.), p.3.
18. Trotsky, 'Preface to *La Revolution Defigurée*', *Writings of Leon Trotsky* (1929), (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1975), p.124.
19. Trotsky, 'Report on the World Economic Crisis and the New Tasks of the Communist International', (23 June, 1921), in Trotsky, *The First Five Years of the Communist International*, vol.1, (New York: Monad Press, 1972), p.174.

20. Day, R., 'Trotsky and Preobrazhensky. The Troubled Unity of the Left Opposition', *Studies in Comparative Communism*, vol.X, nos.1 and 2, (1977), pp.69-86. Preobrazhensky was generally regarded as the spokesman of the Left Opposition on economic questions. In 1926 he published *The New Economics* based on articles that first appeared in 1924 in *Vestnik Kommunisticheskoi Akademii*. A translation by Brian Pearce is available: *The New Economics*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965). See also Preobrazhensky, E.A., *The Crisis of Soviet Industrialization*, selected essays edited by Filtzer, D.A., (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1979).
21. T2984: ['Zakon Sotsialisticheskogo Nakopleniya'; 2 May, 1926].
22. Trotsky, 'Kultura i Sotsializm', pp.426-7.
23. Claudin-Urondo, C., *Lenin and the Cultural Revolution*, (Hassocks: Harvester Press, 1977), pp.84-105.
24. Trotsky, 'Kultura i Sotsializm', p.438.
25. Trotsky, 'Kultura i Sotsializm', p.438.
26. Trotsky, 'Kultura i Sotsializm', p.438.
27. Trotsky, 'Kultura i Sotsializm', p.438.
28. Trotsky, 'Kultura i Sotsializm', p.439.
29. Trotsky, 'Kultura i Sotsializm', p.433.
30. Trotsky, 'Radio, Nauka, Tekhnika i Obschestvo', *Sochineniya XXI*, p.420.
31. Trotsky, 'Kultura i Sotsializm', pp.433-8.
32. Trotsky, 'Radio, Nauka, Tekhnika i Obschestvo'. Trotsky, 'Kultura i Sotsializm', p.426.
33. Trotsky, 'K Pervomu Vserossiiskomu S'ezdu Nauchnykh Rabotnikov', *Sochineniya XXI*, pp.262-3.
34. Trotsky, 'Kultura i Sotsializm', p.442.
35. For example: Schumacher, E.F., *Small is Beautiful*, (New York: Harper, 1973).
36. Trotsky, 'Kultura i Sotsializm', p.440.
37. Trotsky, *Towards Socialism or Capitalism* (1925), p.365.
38. Trotsky, *Towards Socialism or Capitalism* (1925), p.366.
39. Trotsky, 'Ikh Moral' i Nasha', *Byulleten' Oppozitsii*, no.68-69, (Avgust Sentyabr' 1938g.), p.18.
40. Trotsky, 'Agoniya Kapitalizma i Zadachi Chetvertogo Internatsionala', *Byulleten' Oppozitsii*, no.66-67, (Mai-Iyun' 1938g.), p.14.

41. Trotsky, 'Ikh Mora1' i Nasha', pp.8-9.
42. Trotsky, *Terrorizm i Kommunizm*, *Sochineniya* XII, p.33.
43. Trotsky, *Terrorizm i Kommunizm*, pp.38-9.
44. Trotsky, *Terrorizm i Kommunizm*, p.39.
45. Krasso, N., 'Trotsky's Marxism', in Krasso, N.,(ed.) *Trotsky. The Great Debate Renewed*, (St. Louis, Mo: New Critics Press, 1972), p.22.
46. Trotsky, *Moya Zhizn'*, tom I, p.256.
47. Trotsky, *Our Political Tasks*, (London: New Park, n.d.), p.75.
48. Trotsky, *Our Political Tasks*, p.75.
49. Trotsky, 'Agoniya Kapitalizma i Zadachi Chetvertogo Internatsionala', p.3.
50. Trotsky, 'Agoniya Kapitalizma i Zadachi Chetvertogo Internatsionala', p.2.
51. Trotsky, 'Agoniya Kapitalizma i Zadachi Chetvertogo Internatsionala', pp.2-3.
52. Trotsky, *Our Political Tasks*, pp.76-7.
53. Trotsky, *Our Political Tasks*, p.94.
54. Trotsky, *Our Political Tasks*, p.94.
55. T2969. Available as Trotsky, 'Our Differences', *The Challenge of the Left Opposition* (1923-25), (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1975), see p.265.
56. Trotsky, *Moya Zhizn'*, tom I, p.188.
57. Trotsky, *Our Political Tasks*, pp.124-5.
58. Trotsky, *Our Political Tasks*, pp.25-40, particularly p.38.
59. Trotsky, *Revolution Betrayed*, pp.95-6.
60. When the pamphlet was eventually published by New Park Press (the Workers' Revolutionary Party in Britain) it was preceded by a foreword that claimed that the value of the work resided in the glimpses it provided of the genesis of the theory of permanent revolution. 'Historical hindsight, which teaches us how wrong Trotsky was against Lenin, must also accord him a startlingly clear insight into the future unfolding of the revolution in Russia.' Trotsky, *Our Political Tasks*, p.vi.
61. Deutscher, I., *The Prophet Armed*, p.96.
62. Knei-Paz, B., *The Social and Political Thought of Leon Trotsky*, (Oxford: Oxford Univeristy Press, 1978), pp.185-6.
63. Trotsky, *Our Political Tasks*, p.77.

64. Trotsky, 'Moralisty i Sikofanty protiv Marksizma', *Byulleten' Oppozitsii*, no.77-78, (Mai Iyun' Iyul' 1939g.), p.15.
65. Trotsky, *Stalin*, (London: Hollis and Carter, 1947), p.62. There is also a reference by Trotsky to *Our Political Tasks* in his article: '“Trotskyism” and the PSOP' (July 1939). Here Trotsky explicitly repudiates the pamphlet: 'all subsequent experience demonstrated to me that Lenin was correct in this question'. Trotsky, *On France*, (New York: Monad Press, 1979), p.234.
66. Trotsky, *Stalin*, pp.61-2.
67. Articles 64 and 65 of the RSFSR Constitution of 1918. See Unger, A.L., *Constitutional Development in the USSR*, (London: Methuen, 1981), pp.36-7.
68. The American publishers did not like the use of an imaginary dialogue and rewrote the article for publication, using Trotsky's words but presenting them in a rather more didactic form than the original. The original is used here, T3665. References are from the edition as published in *Writings of Leon Trotsky Supplement [1934-40]*, (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1979), pp.517-527: Trotsky, 'Soviets in America'.
69. Trotsky, 'Soviets in America', p.521.
70. Trotsky, 'Soviets in America', pp.521-2.
71. Trotsky, 'Soviets in America', p.518.
72. Trotsky, 'Soviets in America', p.524.
73. Trotsky, *Literatura i Revolyutsiya*, vtoroe dopolnennoe izdanie, (Moscow: 1924), p.175.
74. Trotsky, 'Novye Zigzag i Novye Opasnosti', *Byulleten' Oppozitsii*, no.23, (Avgust 1931g.), p.8.
75. Trotsky, 'Stalinizm i Bol'shevizm', *Byulleten' Oppozitsii*, no.58-59 (Sentyabr'-Oktyabr' 1937g.), p.15.
76. Trotsky, 'Stalinizm i Bol'shevizm', p.15.
77. Trotsky, *Terrorizm i Kommunizm*, p.25.
78. Trotsky, 'Preface to the second English edition', (1935), *Terrorism and Communism*, (London: New Park, 1975), p.3.
79. Trotsky, 'Ikh Moral' i Nasha', p.19.
80. Trotsky, 'Ikh Moral' i Nasha', p.11.
81. Trotsky, *The New Course*, in Trotsky, *The Challenge of the Left Opposition* (1923-25), p.87.
82. Trotsky, 'Report on the New Economic Policy and the Perspectives of the World Revolution', (November 1922), in Trotsky, *The First Five Years of the Communist International*, vol.2, pp.224-7.

83. 'Platform of the Opposition', in Trotsky, *The Challenge of the Left Opposition* (1926-27), (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1980), p.311.
84. Trotsky, 'Kultura i Sotsializm', pp.423-4.
85. Trotsky, 'Kultura i Sotsializm', pp.424-5.
86. Trotsky, 'Kultura i Sotsializm', p.442.
87. Trotsky, 'Kultura i Sotsializm', p.442.
88. Trotsky, 'Kultura i Sotsializm', p.425.
89. Trotsky, 'Kultura i Sotsializm', p.428.
90. Trotsky, 'Kultura i Sotsializm', p.429.
91. Trotsky, 'Kultura i Sotsializm', p.430.
92. Trotsky, 'Kultura i Sotsializm', p.430.
93. Trotsky, *Literatura i Revolyutsiya*, p.7.
94. Trotsky, *Literatura i Revolyutsiya*, p.165.
95. Howe, I., *Trotsky*, (Glasgow: Fontana, 1978), p.87.
96. Trotsky, *Literatura i Revolyutsiya*, p.148.
97. Trotsky, *Literatura i Revolyutsiya*, p.149.
98. Trotsky, *Literatura i Revolyutsiya*, p.144. See also Trotsky, 'Speech to the Fifteenth Party Conference', in Trotsky, *The Challenge of the Left Opposition*, pp.160-1, and reference 14 above.
99. Trotsky, *Literatura i Revolyutsiya*, p.145.
100. Trotsky, *Literatura i Revolyutsiya*, p.145. Reference to a transition period of twenty, thirty, or fifty years was also made by Trotsky in a speech of 9 May, 1924, 'O Khudozhestvennoi Literature i Politike RKP', included in the second edition of *Literatura i Revolyutsiya* (pp.195-213): see p.210.
101. Trotsky, 'O Khudozhestvennoi Literature i Politike RKP', *Literatura i Revolyutsiya*, p.197.
102. Trotsky, *Literatura i Revolyutsiya*, p.147.
103. See above: chapter 1, section 2.
104. Trotsky, *Revolution Betrayed*, p.176.
105. Trotsky, *Revolution Betrayed*, p.174.
106. Trotsky, *Revolution Betrayed*, p.171.
107. Trotsky, *Revolution Betrayed*, p.173.

108. Trotsky, 'Chtoby Perestroit' Byt, Nado Poznat' Ego', *Sochineniya XXI*, p.17.
109. Trotsky, 'Chtoby Perestroit' Byt, Nado Poznat' Ego', p.21.
110. Trotsky, 'Sem'ya i Obryadnost'', *Sochineniya XXI*, p.42.
111. Trotsky, 'Ot Staroi Sem'i - k Novoi', *Sochineniya XXI*, p.37.
112. Trotsky, 'Ot Staroi Sem'i - k Novoi', p.33.
113. Trotsky, 'Ot Staroi Sem'i - k Novoi', p.37.
114. Trotsky, *Revolution Betrayed*, pp.145, 158-9.
115. Trotsky, *Revolution Betrayed*, p.144.
116. Trotsky, *Revolution Betrayed*, p.145.
117. Trotsky, *Revolution Betrayed*, p.145.
118. Trotsky, *Revolution Betrayed*, p.157.
119. Trotsky, *Revolution Betrayed*, p.183.
120. Trotsky, *Revolution Betrayed*, p.179.
121. Trotsky, *Revolution Betrayed*, p.185.
122. Trotsky, *Revolution Betrayed*, p.181.
123. Trotsky, *Revolution Betrayed*, p.181.
124. Trotsky, *Revolution Betrayed*, p.180.
125. Trotsky, *Literatura i Revolyutsiya*, p.175.
126. Trotsky, *Literatura i Revolyutsiya*, pp.175-6.
127. Trotsky, *Literatura i Revolyutsiya*, p.193.
128. Trotsky, *Literatura i Revolyutsiya*, p.194.

CHAPTER SIX: THERMIDOR AND BONAPARTISM

*Are we sitting in a society of Marxist historians and discussing historical analogies in general? No, we are carrying on a political fight in which we have made use of the Thermidor analogy hundreds of times.*

Trotsky, 'Radek's Theses', (1928).

Section One: Thermidor in Contemporary Discourse

Just as the Russian revolution compels the attention of twentieth-century socialists so the French revolution excited the interest of Russian revolutionaries. Even before 1917 'most of the classic accounts from Thiers and Carlyle to Aulard and Sorel had been translated' into Russian; so too had Taine, Louis Blanc and Jean Jaurès.<sup>1</sup> Concern with the subject was so great in Russia in 1917 that one historian has written of an intellectual and cultural tyranny exercised by 'Paris over Petrograd'.<sup>2</sup> After 1917, this fascination continued. Some forty-five post-revolutionary publications ranging from modest pamphlets to a reissue of Kropotkin's *Great French Revolution* (600 pages) were listed by a social science bibliography, *Chto Chitat' po Obshchestvennym Naukam*, published in Russia in 1924.<sup>3</sup> In view of the acute shortage of paper at the time, this testifies to substantial interest.

During the 1920s, analysts of events in Russia often used parallels with French experience. In 1920 Albert Mathiez, the distinguished historian of the French Revolution, produced a ten-page article which considered the similarities between Jacobinism and Bolshevism in power.<sup>4</sup> Two years later Martov, the Menshevik leader, followed along the same paths, elaborating on 'the striking similarity and a number of perfect analogies, between the institutions used by the Jacobins and those serving



the contemporary dictatorship'.<sup>5</sup> By the end of the decade Victor Serge, in *Year One of the Russian Revolution* (the title, with its echo of the French revolutionary calendar, is significant in itself), had also found enlightenment in the parallels between 1793 and 1918.<sup>6</sup>

Lenin too used comparisons with 1789 and 1848 to consider the approaching Russian revolution.<sup>7</sup> References to French revolutionary history abound in his work.<sup>8</sup> After 1917 he continued to think comparatively about revolutionary Russia's prospects. In an unpublished note, he even expressed the apprehension that NEP might lead to Thermidor.<sup>9</sup>

Well before he started using the Thermidor analogy, Trotsky was taking lessons from the history of the French revolution. *Our Political Tasks* (1904) excoriates the Jacobinism of the Leninists.<sup>10</sup> *Results and Prospects* contrasts 1789 with 1848 and asks which model the Russian bourgeoisie will follow.<sup>11</sup> Nearly twenty years later in *Lessons of October* he states with some polemical exaggeration:

Had we failed to study the Great French Revolution, the revolution of 1848, and the Paris Commune, we should never have been able to achieve the October Revolution even though we passed through the experience of the year 1905.<sup>12</sup>

In the draft of an article produced in 1927 Trotsky recalled:

Before the introduction of NEP and during its first phase, many of us had quite a few discussions with Lenin about Thermidor.<sup>13</sup> The word itself was in great currency among us.

However, in the early 1920s Trotsky does not use Thermidor predictively. *Between Imperialism and Revolution* (1922) suggested that NEP would overcome the danger of Thermidor. Its adoption represented a correct response to the 'Thermidor moods and tendencies of the petty bourgeois'.<sup>14</sup> Trotsky's early warnings of bureaucratic disfiguration are not bolstered by the analogy. When, in 1923, Trotsky warned that 'history offers us more than one case of degeneration of the "old guard"', German Social Democracy was presented as the example.<sup>15</sup> Indeed, in *The New Course* Trotsky cautions:

Historical analogies with the Great French Revolution (the fall of Jacobins) made by liberalism and Menshevism for their own nourishment and consolation, are superficial and inconsistent.<sup>16</sup>

The fall of the Jacobins had been predetermined by the immaturity of social relationships. Moreover, Europe beyond France was economically and politically still more backward, offering no basis for the international consolidation of revolution. In Russia things were different. The proletariat was politically strong and able to conciliate the peasantry. The extension of revolution beyond Russian borders was inevitable. So there would be no Thermidor in Russia.

Others were not so sure: in 1921, the Tenth Party Congress resolution, 'On Party Unity', warned of the danger that counter-revolution might proceed indirectly.

Propaganda should also explain the experience of previous revolutions, in which the counter-revolution supported the petty-bourgeois groups that were closest to the extreme revolutionary party, in order to shake and then overthrow the revolutionary dictatorship, thus opening the way for the subsequent complete victory of counter-revolution, the capitalists and the landowners.<sup>17</sup>

The shadow of the Kronstadt rebellion of March 1921 fell over this Congress. Although portrayed with polemical inflation as a White Guard plot, Lenin's real assessment of the threat it posed is expressed precisely by the resolution quoted above.<sup>18</sup> In time, Trotsky too was to take up the idea of the Kronstadt revolt as an expression of Thermidor, as for example in the unpublished memorandum 'Thermidor' written in the summer of 1927.<sup>19</sup>

By the late twenties, 'Thermidor' was a well-established and central term in the vocabulary of Party opposition, and likely, when used, to provoke a tough reaction from the Party leadership. In the autumn of 1925, for example, Zalutsky a prominent member of the Zinoviev opposition had been severely censured and removed from his post as secretary of the

Leningrad Provisional Party Committee for speaking of the Thermidorian degeneration.<sup>20</sup> Not only Trotsky, but Radek, in 1927, and Rakovsky in 1928, devoted essays to the subject.<sup>21</sup> In detail, its meaning was not entirely clear, but, following the history of revolutionary France, it was generally understood to be the turning point in a revolution, when the radicals are ousted. Most probably, many who used the term as a general reference to counter-revolution were unaware of the precise historical context of Robespierre's execution on the 9th Thermidor, 1794. But this did not stop its wide circulation.

### Section Two: Trotsky and Thermidor

Thermidor became a key concept in Trotsky's analysis of Soviet politics after Lenin. He made frequent reference to it and even when the term itself is not used, the ideas behind it often were.<sup>22</sup> His best known and most vivid use of the analogy comes in his defence speech at the Central Control Commission in July 1927. There he claimed that it had become 'absolutely indispensable' to 'refresh our knowledge of the Great French Revolution, especially of its last period.'<sup>23</sup> Evidently Trotsky was asking others to follow the path he had already taken: the speech brims over with his acquired insights. He related how Soltz, a member of the Central Control Commission, had warned an oppositionist that the current Party splits would lead in the same bloody direction as followed previously by the French Revolution. Trotsky responded by identifying 'two chapters' in the French revolution, one ascendant the other descendant.

I should like comrade Soltz to think his analogy through to the end and, first of all, to give himself an answer to the following question: in accordance with which chapter is Soltz preparing to have us shot? ... When we did the shooting we were firm in our knowledge as to the chapter. But comrade Soltz, do you clearly understand in accordance with which chapter you are now preparing to shoot? I fear, comrade Soltz, that you are about to shoot us in accordance with the ... Thermidorian chapter.<sup>24</sup>

Before 1927, Trotsky's use of Thermidor was less dramatic. According to Trotsky, the Opposition first used the term in 1923, but Trotsky himself seems to have made no public use of it during that year.<sup>25</sup> In his autobiography he gives the year 1925 as the date of his first realisation, 'with absolute clarity', of the problem of Thermidor.<sup>26</sup> He records that the occasion was a conversation about Stalin with Sklyansky, a former deputy at the War Commissariat. Thermidor, the first stage of a counter-revolution, demanded, in Trotsky's view, 'mediocrities who cannot see further than their noses'. Stalin was 'the outstanding mediocrity in the Party.' Perhaps this description, repeated in several other places, was suggested by Marx's preface to the second edition of the *18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*. Here Louis Napoleon is described as a 'grotesque mediocrity' who plays a 'hero's part' as a result of circumstances and relationships created by the class struggle.<sup>27</sup> This was precisely Trotsky's view of Stalin.

The first documentary evidence of Trotsky's use of the Thermidor parallel appears to be in 1925. In December, in a private note, he concluded that the response met by the demands of the present Leningrad Opposition indicated an 'ideological orientation in the Party' which could facilitate 'a gradual backsliding into a Thermidor of a peasant variety'.<sup>28</sup> Trotsky further reflects on Thermidor and its peasant base in several pages of notes, the 'Theses on Revolution and Counter-revolution', produced for private reflection in November 1926. Although they conclude that it 'would be a crude distortion of reality to speak of Thermidor as an accomplished fact', there have been 'some rehearsals within the Party and the laying of some theoretical groundwork.'<sup>29</sup> So long as the revolution remains isolated, 'the question of the peasantry ... will remain as before the central question for the proletariat at all stages.'

In 1917, his theses continue, a 'combination of proletarian revolution with a "peasant war"' had achieved victory; the danger of counter-revolution is now 'governed by the possibility of the peasantry being separated from the proletariat because of its lack of a direct stake in preserving the socialist regime in industry, the cooperative regime in ... trade, etc.'. NEP has 'revived the contradictory petty-bourgeois tendencies among the peasantry, with the consequent possibilities of a capitalist restoration.' Pressure for capitalist restoration has its 'economic basis [in] ... the peasants' material interest in high prices for grain and low prices for industrial goods. ... The relation between industrial and agricultural prices (the scissors) should prove to be the decisive factor in the question of the peasants' attitude towards capitalism and socialism.' Trading capital, both private and co-operative, provides 'the political elements for restoration.'

In later documents Trotsky continues to stress the role of the peasantry in a potential Thermidor. As late as January 1933 he writes: 'In the Soviet Union only the peasantry can become a force for Thermidor.'<sup>30</sup> However, Trotsky seems to have been growing uncertain about the analogy. His articles of the early thirties use the term less frequently and eventually it is dropped. 'Klassovaya Priroda Sovetskogo Gosudarstvo', the article which announced the major revision of perspectives in 1933, finds no room for it.<sup>31</sup> This unremarked, but astonishing contrast signifies the extent to which Trotsky recast his analysis in 1933. Thermidor had occupied a central place in Trotsky's lexicon of opposition.

In 1933 Trotsky recognised that the perspectives he had operated with during the previous seven years had been, in some respects, misguided. He had thought of Thermidor as the end result of 'dual power', an idea also discarded in 1933: as bourgeois elements contested proletarian so they

prepared Thermidor, the restoration of capitalism through indirect means.<sup>32</sup> Until this restoration was achieved Thermidor was certainly a danger but not a reality; Trotsky vehemently opposed all those who disagreed on either point.

In 1933 the concept ceased, in its old form, to be useful to Trotsky: although the restoration of capitalism might still be an ultimate destination it was no longer thought of as immediately proximate. History had proceeded along paths unexpected by Trotsky. He had seen the peasantry, and particularly the kulak stratum, as the social base of the incipient Thermidor. Its mode of production was still essentially capitalist. With the introduction of collectivisation Trotsky's perception of the counter-revolutionary threat was bound to change.

Collectivisation was a defeat for the Right of the Party. In Trotsky's view, it had been this tendency which, by its articulation of a 'pro-peasant' policy had nurtured a containable threat into a substantial danger: 'a consistent right-wing policy whatever the intentions of Bukharin, Rykov and Tomsky is the policy of Thermidor'.<sup>33</sup> (emphasis added) Although Trotsky had accepted the possibility of a defeat of the Right by the Centre, the victory of the Right over the Centre was regarded as far more probable. Indeed, the first reports of the Right's defeat met with the response that the result was simply provisional.<sup>34</sup> Only the Left and the Right had their roots in social classes, and, it is the classes that 'will decide'.<sup>35</sup> The Centre lacked substance: 'parallel with its independence from the proletariat, ... [the] bureaucracy becomes more and more dependent upon the bourgeoisie.'<sup>36</sup>

Confronted by the evidence of Stalin's increasingly powerful position, consolidated by the rupture of his entente with petty capitalism, Trotsky's

viewpoint began to change. In various writings, the unnamed 'real Thermidorians' are placed not in the first ranks of the Right, but in the 'second, third and fifth ranks.'<sup>37</sup> As Chapter Three indicated, Trotsky stressed the need for a united front, which might include the Right, to confront the current crisis and, first of all, to restore Party democracy.

Until 1933 the Thermidor analogy was retained, but Trotsky shows some uncertainty about it. 'Problemy Razvitiya SSSR' (April 1931) contrasts Thermidor and Bonapartism, although these two forms are presented not as 'irreconcilable class types', but variants of a single process. Thermidor would result from the victory of the Right, whereas the 'plebiscitary degeneration of the party apparatus undoubtedly increases the chances of the Bonapartist form'.<sup>38</sup> However, some time later, in 'The Danger of Thermidor', one of his more significant considerations of Thermidor, Trotsky concluded that 'bureaucratic centrism has not strengthened the dictatorship of the proletariat but on the contrary has enormously strengthened the danger of Thermidor.'<sup>39</sup> (emphasis added)

'The Danger of Thermidor' (January 1933), demonstrates how Trotsky is trying to match old perspectives to new realities. Particularly in 1928, Trotsky had thought of the Right as the 'Thermidorian wing of the Party' and the Left as the proletarian wing with the Centre based on the bureaucratic apparatus and subject to the opposed gravitational pull of class-based tendencies. The supremacy of the Centre over the two wings has obviously changed the picture. Still there is reference to the peasant base of Thermidor, but in a more sophisticated form. Not only does the issue depend on the balance of forces between proletariat and peasantry. It also depends on the extent to which the proletariat has been corroded by peasant migration and the influence of petty-bourgeois ideas. Worker susceptibility to such ideas has been assisted by the false policies of the

leadership and the stifling of workers' democracy. The Party itself, as Lenin indicated, rests on two classes.

When Trotsky considers the Party in this article he begins in a familiar way. Within the Party there are really two parties: the proletarian and the Thermidorian. 'Above stands the bureaucracy'. But now the perspective has been modified. As if in self criticism of former conclusions, he asserts:

It would be a mistake to assume that the line of the Thermidorian split goes between the Stalinist apparatus and the right wing of the Party. No it passes through the apparatus itself.<sup>40</sup>

He follows this with the view that the purge of the Right does not mean that Stalin is taking measures against Thermidor. Firstly, purges always incorporate action against critical proletarian elements whatever the initial target. Secondly, even where the blows fall in the right wing they do not strengthen the Party but weaken it. In an assessment conspicuous for its openness, Trotsky suggests that within the Right there are not only Thermidorian elements but 'hundreds of thousands, perhaps millions' who are 'deeply hostile to capitalist restoration but demand the revision of the entire policy from the point of view of the town and country workers'. Their programme is confused; they may serve as 'a prop for Thermidor', but they could assist the revival of the Party.<sup>41</sup>

In Trotsky's usage Thermidor conveyed a number of meanings and some of these had become particularly unserviceable by 1933. The term is therefore dropped quietly. For more than a year after the publication of 'Klassovaya Priroda Sovetskogo Gosudarstvo' Thermidor is not on display in Trotsky's writings. However in 1935 it returns, reshaped, newly framed, almost with a fanfare.<sup>42</sup> The new conception of Thermidor retains some elements of the old, but, in keeping with Trotsky's new theory that the bureaucratic counter-revolution in Russia was political and not social, it repudiates



the linchpin of the previous formulation: Thermidor did not have to be a capitalist restoration. Trotsky now recognises, finally, that he had stretched the analogy to the point of distortion. Thermidor in France had not been a counter-revolution at all but a conservative reaction within the bourgeois revolution. It had not restored feudalism. Why then should Thermidor in Russia have to restore capitalism?

The overturn of the Ninth Thermidor did not liquidate the basic conquests of the bourgeois revolution, but it did transfer power into the hands of the more moderate and conservative Jacobins, the better-to-do elements of bourgeois society. Today it is impossible to overlook that in the Soviet revolution also a shift to the right took place a long time ago, a shift entirely analogous to Thermidor, although much slower in tempo, and more masked in form.

### Section Three: The Attractions of Analogy

Any attentive reading of Trotsky's work will quickly reveal the central importance he gave to matters of literary style. Van Heijenoort provides a valuable brief summary of Trotsky's merits as a writer: 'Trotsky's style achieves its effects by extremely simple means. His vocabulary, especially in his more properly political writings, is always rather limited. The sentences are short, with few subordinate clauses. Their power arises from a sturdy articulation, most often with strongly marked but always well balanced oppositions. ... He wrote with ease, being able to dictate several hours at a sitting. But then he would go over the manuscript and correct it carefully. For some of these great writings, such as the *History of the Russian Revolution*, there are two successive drafts behind the definitive text, but in the majority of cases there is only one. His enormous literary production ... is, needless to say, uneven. Some parts are more worked over than others, but not a sentence in any of them has been neglected.'<sup>43</sup>

The language and conceptual terms of his major writings were the product of considerable reflection, and he particularly favoured the use of analogy.

Without historical analogies it is not possible to think politically, for mankind cannot start his history anew every time.<sup>44</sup>

Analysts could not be forever inventing new terms. 'Established, economical notions' could not be abandoned 'in the face of new phenomena'. If they were, 'the transmission of human thought would, in general, be impossible'.<sup>45</sup>

Whilst admitting the dangers of over-stretching analogy and thereby 'reducing the concrete process to abstractions', Trotsky nevertheless found the device indispensable.<sup>46</sup> His own justifications were candid but there is more to be added: Trotsky's use of analogy is partly a stylistic convenience and partly a reflection of his analytical method and its presumptions.

Frequent recourse to analogy was a natural inclination for Trotsky. He felt at ease in a mental world of European history and culture, a rich storehouse of reference. As a revolutionary orator, particularly in 1905 and 1917, he became experienced in political communication. In his writing the orator's skill is evident in a facility for the striking image. Perhaps that is what Lunacharsky had in mind when he wrote that Trotsky's 'articles and books are, as it were, frozen speech.'<sup>47</sup>

The analytical tasks presented by post-revolutionary Russia were novel and difficult; a new language could not be invented, new concepts were slow to emerge. Analogy was both a refuge and a resource. The adoption of familiar images and ideas to interpret the unfamiliar is a common procedure. The danger is that it produces the illusion rather than the

reality of comprehension. Take, for example, some of the ways in which Trotsky characterised the degenerated workers' state. He suggested that it might be regarded as a diseased liver which somehow continued to function, or as a crashed car which now no longer worked as it should but is still recognisable as a car.<sup>48</sup> Here Trotsky was using analogy primarily as a literary device, although behind it stood the idea of changes in quantity leading to changes in quality. As analogies these are formal references of a mechanical nature. Trotsky's most favoured popular exposition of the degenerated workers' state was more successful, because it was a social and not a physical image and because it had more than a formal content. In parallel to a reformist Trade Union in capitalist society, the degenerated workers' state is run by a privileged bureaucracy who have their own interest to serve as well as that of their members. The workers 'essential' objectives are neglected but some representation of their class interests does take place.<sup>49</sup>

Historical method led Trotsky to analogy; as he remarked, language pointed to method.

Physical analogies with revolution come so naturally that some of them have become worn-out metaphors (sic): 'Volcanic eruption', 'birth of a new society', 'boiling point.' ... Under the simple literary image there is concealed here an intuitive<sup>50</sup> grasp of the laws of dialectic - that is the logic of evolution.

Peter Beilharz has shown that Trotsky's use of physical metaphor, particularly in *History of the Russian Revolution*, is extensive.<sup>51</sup> Even if such metaphors are 'worn-out', they can still do service.

Understanding the present through the process of its development produced historical parallels that were intended to be substantive. Trotsky was saying more than 'it helps to regard a as b'; he was suggesting that a is essentially like b in important specific ways. Trotsky's interpretation of historical method, his insistence upon historical

necessity (the 'laws' of history), was reflected in his use of analogy. Far more than a literary image, Thermidor, as Trotsky used it, was a complex set of references underpinned by the claim that social development is governed by historical laws.

The axiomatic assertions of Soviet literature, to the effect that the laws of bourgeois revolutions are "inapplicable" to a proletarian revolution, have no scientific content whatever.<sup>52</sup>

The analogy of Thermidor was central in Trotsky's analysis of post-revolutionary development in Russia. Stephen Cohen comments that 'after 1926, it stood at the centre of his understanding of Soviet society and his opposition. He measured every omen of deradicalisation, every policy, domestic and foreign, by a Thermidorian yardstick.'<sup>53</sup> Cohen argues that not only did the analogy obsess Trotsky, but it also misled him. His evaluation is backed by most other commentators on the subject. McNeal describes Trotsky's concept as 'more polemical than if not totally lacking cohesion, are at best inconsistent', adding that Trotsky himself was aware of that.<sup>54</sup> Even Isaac Deutscher doubts the value of the analogy, agreeing with Trotsky that the analogy had done more to obfuscate than to clarify.<sup>55</sup>

If Trotsky himself, in 1935, called his own analogy into question, one might reasonably ask whether there was any value to it. In a strict reading there is as much dissonance as consonance. Thermidor in France brought the 'bloody' period of the revolution to an end; in Russia the Stalinist terror was an integral part of the 'Thermidor'. In France there was a deceleration in the process of change; in Russia, the reverse. The French Thermidor confirmed the 'bourgeois revolution' by removing the radical Jacobins; in Russia another nail was driven into the coffin of the socialist revolution. Deutscher proposes that Stalin might be compared with Robespierre, not with those who had him guillotined.<sup>56</sup>

Against such objections to the term, a rival position can be constructed. The bureaucratic reaction underway since 1924 had been consistently opposed by Trotsky, but until 1935 he had not called it 'Thermidor'. Admittedly, he had failed to recognise explicitly that Thermidor in the French revolution had been a political upheaval and not a social counter-revolution. In fact, he did not even consider the absurd idea that Thermidor in France represented the restoration of feudalism. Rather, he saw it as 'stepping down one rung on the ladder of revolution'.<sup>57</sup> The meaning of Thermidor to Trotsky is not captured by reference to an anticipated capitalist restoration, but by what might be called a political sociology of counter-revolution.

Why then did Trotsky originally see Thermidor in the Soviet Union as the restoration of capitalism? The basic answer is that Trotsky believed that degeneration had to lead on to something else, not to the atrophy of the degenerated state. Secondly, Thermidor was an explosive issue. Even to discuss its potential was to risk the accusation that the revolution was being written off. Trotsky had no desire to suffer that charge; thus it was a political necessity to place Thermidor in the future and not the present or past. The identification between capitalist restoration and Thermidor would make this clear and signify a sustained commitment to reformist change. Only when 'Klassovaya Priroda Sovetskogo Gosudarstvo' establishes a distinction between political and social counter-revolution is the way open wide for the adoption of Thermidor in its later sense. Indeed, after a decent interval following the private burial in 1933 of the former manifestation of the idea, the second coming of Thermidor is used as historical validation of the theory of degenerated workers' state. Now, to support his thesis, Trotsky asks rhetorically: why should proletarian revolutions not experience their political counter-revolution and political revolutions, within the social revolution, if France experienced such

political upheavals in 1794, 1815, 1830 and 1848?<sup>58</sup>

Trotsky used Thermidor both as analogy and as metaphor: he gave it both a precise and a broad scope. What begins as analogy to indicate parallel processes between events in France and Russia becomes over-extended and transformed into a metaphor for the Soviet counter-revolution. It becomes a backcloth against which all the scenery of the decline and fall of October can be arranged. Yet the kernel of the analogy endures: the idea that a counter-revolution may be achieved through the degeneration of the revolutionary party, assisted by the evaporation of revolutionary class consciousness once the first objectives have been achieved.

There is no need to search for an elusive identity between two events a century and a half apart, and Trotsky did not do this. The analogy is valid, I suggest, if it helps to locate parallel processes and convey their meaning more effectively. Trotsky sketched out a political sociology of revolution recognising that the potential for counter-revolution is an integral element of the whole process, emerging from within the matrix of the revolution itself and bearing its impression. His comments on the ebb and flow of revolutionary class consciousness and on the possibility of counter revolution insinuating itself within the revolutionary party and state remain of lasting utility.

Like the parallel between a reformist trade union and a degenerated workers' state, Thermidor is a live image rooted in society and not an inanimate physical reference. With all its problems it adds to the analysis presented by Trotsky, extending rather than flattening it. In the next section I argue that when Trotsky returned Thermidor to centre-stage in 1935 he revised its definition but retained some of the original

features. There are three major assertions, often repeated, which give coherence to Trotsky's conception of Thermidor and establish a continuity that spans his two uses of the term. Firstly, revolutions are typically followed by counter-revolutions, but all revolutions leave their mark; secondly, the revolutionary class always suffers a decline in the aftermath of its triumph; thirdly, Thermidor is a distinct form of counter-revolution by degeneration from within. These propositions are, I suggest, more interesting and important than speculating on whether Thermidor means the re-establishment of the old order or not.

#### Section Four: A political sociology of counter-revolution

By the very use of the Thermidor analogy Trotsky asserted the validity of a political sociology of counter-revolution. The first systematic discussion of this idea by Trotsky was in his diary notes, 'Theses on Revolution and Counter-revolution' (November 1926). They remained unpublished during Trotsky's lifetime although the thoughts articulated there were to be expressed again and again. They begin by observing that:

Revolutions have always in history been followed by counter-revolutions - Counter-revolutions have always thrown society back, but never as far as the starting point of the revolution.<sup>59</sup> (emphasis added)

In *Revolution Betrayed* the same point is made.

Every revolution up to now has been followed by a reaction, or even a counter-revolution. This ... has never thrown the nation all the way back to its starting point ...<sup>60</sup>

This is the first element in Trotsky's political sociology: revolutions, followed by counter-revolutions, leave their mark, even if in a distorted form. For example, even if the Romanovs were restored, Trotsky argued, the feudal ownership of land could not be: 'no force in the world can turn back the agrarian-democratic overturn in Russia.'<sup>61</sup>

The second element of Trotsky's theory is his belief that a decline in the consciousness of the revolutionary class is natural following the overthrow of the old order. There is no ratchet which can hold consciousness at its highest point: 'the proletariat as a class is not always identical with itself'.<sup>62</sup> The 1926 'Theses' put it thus:

Revolution is impossible without the participation of the masses. This participation is in its turn possible only when the oppressed masses connect their hopes for a better future with the idea of a revolution. In this sense the hopes engendered by the revolution are always exaggerated ... But from these same conditions comes one of the most important - and moreover, one of the most common - elements of the counterrevolution. The conquests gained in the struggle do not correspond, and in the nature of things, cannot directly correspond with the expectation of the broad backward masses awakened for the first time in the course of the revolution. The disillusionment of these masses, their return to routine and futility, is as much an integral part of the post-revolutionary period as is the passage in the coup of 'law and order' of those 'satisfied' classes, or layers of classes that had participated in the revolution ...<sup>63</sup>

Trotsky then establishes in general form the evaporation of militant, cohesive class consciousness as a central problem. He expands on the general proposition, relating it to Russia. The October revolution, now more than 'any other in history', raised high hopes in the 'popular masses'. The 'immense sufferings' of the period 1917 to 1921 changed the nature of proletarian consciousness. Although there have been material improvements, indeed, partly because of them, the masses 'have grown more cautious, more sceptical, less directly responsive to major generalisation'. The bureaucracy banks on such moods and finds support in its struggle with the opposition who are branded as trouble makers. Workers who support the bureaucracy are 'not at all careerists, but ... have put on weight, acquired families.' Some, including Party members, 'have grown smug, fat, and semi-conservative'. In *Revolution Betrayed* an identical point is made.

It is for the very reason that a proletariat still backward in many respects achieved in the space of a few months the unprecedented leap from a semi-feudal monarchy to a socialist dictatorship, that the reaction in its ranks was inevitable ... Instead of the expected prosperity of the country an ominous destitution reigned for long ... after an unexampled



tension of forces, hopes and illusions, there came a long period of weariness, decline and sheer disappointment in the results of the revolution<sup>64</sup>. The new commanding caste rose to its place upon this wave.

The third component of Trotsky's political sociology is that Thermidor is a particular kind of counter-revolution: a subtle rather than a catastrophic process, a 'special form of counter-revolution carried out on the instalment plan'.<sup>65</sup> In 'The Danger of Thermidor', he writes:

Not every counter-revolution can be compared to Thermidor: neither Kornilov, nor Denikin, nor Wrangel had anything in common with Thermidor. In all these cases we had an armed struggle by capitalists and property owners for the restoration of their domination. The proletarian state repelled this danger. Can it happen again? The Russian big bourgeoisie has been destroyed to the roots. The survivors can only reappear on the scene either at the tail of some foreign military intervention or at the tail of Thermidor.<sup>66</sup>

The specific feature of Thermidor is the internal degeneration of the revolutionary camp: reaction is clothed in the banners of revolution. According to Trotsky, when the opposition used the term Thermidor it had in mind primarily:

a very significant and widespread process within the party: the growth of a stratum of Bolsheviks who had separated themselves from the masses felt secure, connected themselves with non-proletarian circles, and were satisfied with their social status, analogous to the strata of bloated Jacobins who became, in part, the support and the prime executive apparatus of the Thermidorian overturn in 1794.<sup>67</sup>

The 1926 'Theses' call attention to the enhanced role of 'a special category of old Bolsheviks': activists in 1905 who had adapted to the regime after that revolution's defeat, defencists in the war, supporters of the February revolution but opponents of Bolshevism until after October. 'These elements,' Trotsky comments, 'are, naturally, elements of the conservative type. They are generally in favour of stabilisation, and generally against every opposition.'<sup>68</sup> The Thermidorians purge the left not as an explicit attack on the revolution, but on the grounds that this will achieve its defence and consolidation.

*Revolution Betrayed* defines Thermidor as a 'triumph of the bureaucracy over the masses' and calls Stalin 'the indubitable leader of the Thermidorian bureaucracy'.<sup>69</sup> Stalin's qualifications are not only 'narrow vision and close bonds with the political machine', but also 'the prestige of an old Bolshevik'.<sup>70</sup> Had he been shown, in the first years of power, 'the image of the Party ten or fifteen years later' he, along with all other Bolsheviks, would have denounced it as 'a malicious slander'.<sup>71</sup> The bureaucracy 'conquered the Bolshevik Party', but from within; 'the degeneration of the Party became the cause and consequence of the bureaucratisation of the state.'<sup>72</sup> Revolutionaries were pushed aside by those who either, like Stalin, played a secondary role in 1917, or who opposed the October revolution and joined the Party later.<sup>73</sup> As examples of this second group Trotsky cites Soviet ambassadors such as Troyanovsky, Maisky, and Potemkin.<sup>74</sup>

For Trotsky, the unconscious masking of retrogressive policies by revolutionary rhetoric occurs primarily within the Party, but it can also take place without. He saw the Kronstadt rising as the nearest to Thermidor of all prior counter-revolutionary movements in the Soviet Union.<sup>75</sup> Many of the rebels thought of themselves as revolutionaries yet at base it was a 'rebellion of the peasantry, hurt, discontented, and impatient with the proletarian dictatorship.'

The petty bourgeois counter-revolution which genuinely thinks it is revolutionary, which does not want the domination of capital but inevitably prepares it - that is Thermidor.<sup>76</sup>

Section Five: Bonapartism

With Trotsky's reacceptance and redefinition of Thermidor in 1935 the attractions of further historical appropriation proved to be irresistible. In previous years, Trotsky had worried whether there had to be a Thermidor before Bonapartism; now the onset of Thermidor was firmly located in the past and Bonapartism could be adopted without violation of historical schemas.<sup>77</sup> In the 1930s, Bonapartism became a major tool in Trotsky's political analysis. Its theoretical nature yields an inherent flexibility which might make it appear insubstantial, but it does achieve the purpose of indicating a real development in contemporary politics, the emergence of totalitarian states that possess a high degree of autonomy from society. Indeed, in the late thirties Trotsky began to describe the Soviet state as totalitarian.<sup>78</sup>

Already before 1935 Trotsky had found the concept of Bonapartism useful. In common with others, he speculated about who might be the Russian Bonaparte.<sup>79</sup> From Kerensky and Kornilov many, including Trotsky himself, were cast in the role. Feliks Dzerzhinskii, the former head of the Cheka, had written to Stalin in October 1925 warning that the incipient split might tear open the ranks of the Communist Party, with the Leninists devouring each other like spiders and Trotsky coming on to the scene as the 'communist Bonaparte'.<sup>80</sup>

In 1928 Trotsky began to write of Bonapartism as a possible development.<sup>81</sup> If the bourgeoisie mounted a successful challenge it could not introduce a democratic order in a country that had been shaken by the greatest revolution in history. It would need 'a supreme and military concentration of power, lifting itself above classes, but having as its immediate point of support the kulak.' This would be Bonapartism. Most

likely the army would play the decisive role, headed by 'the Bonapartist candidate Klim' (i.e. Voroshilov, the People's Commissar for War). But the Party-state apparatus, headed by 'the master' (i.e. Stalin), was also capable of instituting Bonapartism. The result of the intrigues of these tendencies could not be predicted: 'Will the master himself eventually mount the white horse, or will he be found lying under Klim's horse?' From the point of view of the working class it is an unimportant question who rides triumphant. Even if it is a military man it need not be Voroshilov. 'If he won't do it, then Budenny. We have no lack of Bonapartes.'<sup>82</sup>

This uncertainty about the identity of the Bonaparte was carried into foreign exile by Trotsky. In April 1930, Stalinism is defined as 'a preparation for Bonapartism inside the Party'.<sup>83</sup> A month later Trotsky refers to 'the dogma of the Bonapartist party'.

It is impossible to be loyal to the party without being loyal to the Central Committee: it is impossible to be loyal to the Central Committee without being loyal to Stalin.<sup>84</sup>

Yet, in a circular letter to the USSR written in the same year, Trotsky again pointed to 'Klim' as a potential 'saviour' who might act against the General Secretary on the grounds that 'something at least had to be saved'. The 'elements of a coup' had been present for some time: for example, 'the elimination of the elective principle within the party, the intervention of the GPU in the factional struggle, the nakedly plebiscitary regime'. Again Trotsky suggests that it need not be Voroshilov who takes such action. There are many candidates for the same role 'in the army and GPU - all these Bluechers, Tukhachevskys, Yagodas, Deribas and so on.' If a coup did occur the immediate result would be a fusion of military dictatorship and certain surviving elements of the Soviet system: 'our own, native-born form of Bonapartism, in its first stage.' It would be 'a "grand R-R-Rooshian" Bonapartism sweeping all before it and mincing no words.'<sup>85</sup>

Trotsky initially regarded Bonapartism, like Thermidor, as 'one of the forms of the victory of the bourgeoisie over the uprising of the popular masses.' In 1931 he castigated Kautsky for identifying the present Soviet regime with the social regime of Bonapartism, thus concealing the difference in class foundation. In the same document, 'Problemy Razvitiya SSSR', Bonapartism is contrasted with Thermidor, although it is made clear that they only represent different but possibly coincident paths of bourgeois counter-revolution. A Bonapartist overthrow would be a 'more open, "riper" form carried out against the Soviet system and the Bolshevik Party as a whole, in the form of the naked sword raised in the name of bourgeois property.' Once again it is not Stalin who is seen as the primary candidate for 'the main place ... in the camp of the counter-revolution'. It could be an 'adventurist-praetorian' element such as Tukhachevsky, Bluecher or Budenny; 'downright refuse' like Bessedovsky, the Soviet diplomat loyal to Stalin until he defected in 1930, or 'still weightier elements of the type of Ramzin and Osadchy', both of whom had been defendants in the Industrial Party trial in 1930.<sup>86</sup>

As Trotsky recognised the increasing consolidation of the power of the Stalinist apparatus, so he was drawn more to the view that Bonapartism was already in existence. In 1933, the adoption of the new orientation of political revolution is accompanied by a revision of his thinking on Bonapartism. The dropping of Thermidor makes way for Bonapartism, provided 'the social content of Soviet "Bonapartism" is defined with the requisite clarity'.<sup>87</sup> Trotsky himself, however, did not yet use the concept in a developed form. Finally, in 1935, with the readoption of Thermidor he accepted the description without equivocation, albeit with certain modifications. This became possible because the definition of the ruling group as centrist had finally been discarded. Hitherto, centrism was counterposed to Bonapartism, sometimes explicitly. For example, 'K

Kapitalizmu ili k Sotsializmu', an article published in *Byulleten'*

*Oppozitsii* in 1930, states:

Bureaucratic centrism begins its career as a current manoeuvring between the two extreme, party currents, one of which reflects the petty-bourgeois line the other the proletarian; Bonapartism is a state apparatus that has openly broken from all traditional attachments, including party ones, and from now on manoeuvres 'freely' between the classes as an imperious 'arbiter'.

By degrees the conception of the ruling group as Centrist was dropped, firstly in relation to its international role and then for the Soviet arena. Once Trotsky called for revolutionary measures against the group, even though he initially referred to them as 'police measures', he had to discard the designation 'Centrist'.

Trotsky distinguished between 'Soviet Bonapartism' and 'bourgeois Bonapartism'. Emerging from a differing balance of class forces, the Soviet form existed on the basis of a workers' state, and promoted policies of rapid economic development. Therefore, Trotsky introduced a note of qualification. In writings of the early thirties on the rise of fascism, he had used the term Bonapartism to apply to 'those capitalist governments which, by exploiting the antagonisms between the proletarian and Fascist camps and by relying directly upon the military-police apparatus, raise themselves above parliament and democracy, as the saviours of "national unity".' In this sense, he had described the governments of, among others, Giolitti, Brüning and Doumergue, and later he would also use it of Petain.<sup>89</sup> He had also written of a 'Bonapartism of fascist origin (Mussolini, Hitler etc.)', as a stage in the evolution of fascist regimes.<sup>90</sup> To try to avoid suggesting an identity between fascism and Stalinism, the more considered passages speak of 'Soviet Bonapartism' to indicate a social base.<sup>91</sup> Trotsky also wished to draw a distinction between the 'Bonapartism of decay, and the young, advancing Bonapartism which was not only the gravedigger of the political principles of the bourgeois revolution, but also the defender of its social conquests.'<sup>92</sup> The latter

form, as here defined, corresponded directly with Trotsky's post-1933 view of Stalinism. The Bonapartism of 'bourgeois rise and not decay' provides the parallel.

Although 'Bonapartism' suffers shifts of focus and of meaning, like 'Thermidor' before it, there are two related senses in which Trotsky consistently uses the term. Firstly, it designates a particular technique of rule, and secondly, it designates a state form that arises in specific conditions of class impasse. The first sense conveys the idea that an anti-democratic reality is masked by the superficial maintenance of the external forms of democracy. There has been a 'complete plebiscitary degeneration of the Stalinist apparatus', Trotsky asserted in 1931 in 'Problemy Razvitiya SSSR'.<sup>93</sup> Power is being concentrated more and more in the hands of a single individual, Stalin, whose 'Bonapartist almightiness' threatens the fate of the revolution itself, Trotsky advised the Politburo of the CPSU in a secret letter of January 1932.<sup>94</sup> This new system of rule was formally consolidated by the adoption of a new constitution in 1936.

Trotsky writes:

Bonapartism, as history testifies, is able to abide very well with universal and even secret suffrage. The democratic ritual of Bonapartism is the plebiscite. From time to time the question is put to the citizens: For or against the Leader? The Leader, on his part, takes precautions so that the voter is able to feel the barrel of a gun at his temple. Since the days of Napoleon III, who now looks like a provincial dilettante, this technique has attained an unprecedented development, as witness, say, the latest spectacle by Goebbels. The new constitution is thus intended to liquidate juridically the outworn Soviet regime,<sup>95</sup> replacing it by Bonapartism on a plebiscitary basis.

The second sense in which Trotsky uses Bonapartism is the more profound, since it invokes the social base of the state to explain its techniques of rule. Trotsky clearly had in mind Marx's own writings on Bonapartism, although he never quoted them. In *The Civil War in France* the following passage appears as an assessment of the Second Empire in France.

In reality it was the only form of government possible at a time when the bourgeoisie had already lost, and the working class had not yet acquired, the facility of ruling the nation.

This, together with its inversion, was Trotsky's view of Soviet Bonapartism. The working class only ruled indirectly through a bureaucracy which had risen above it, partially detaching itself. The threat from the bourgeoisie remained but was insufficiently powerful, as yet, to achieve its objective. Bonapartism is a form of the state which marks an extreme development of the relative autonomy of politics from society. As Trotsky suggests in *Revolution Betrayed*, it 'enters the scene in those moments of history when the sharp struggle of two camps raises the state power, so to speak, above the nation, and guarantees it, in appearance, a complete independence of classes - in reality, only the freedom necessary for a defense of the privileged'. Stalinism has risen above 'a politically atomized society' which has been 'torn by the antagonism between an organized and armed soviet aristocracy and the unarmed toiling masses'.<sup>97</sup>

*Revolution Betrayed* offers little development of the concept of Bonapartism. In it, Trotsky is, if anything, less discriminating in his use of the analogy. Earlier pieces had made a particular point of comparing Soviet Bonapartism to the 'Bonapartism of bourgeois rise'. In *Revolution Betrayed* Trotsky is less fastidious; this reference does not occur. Indeed he goes further than before in identifying Stalinism with fascism.

In the last analysis, Soviet Bonapartism owes its birth to the belatedness of the world revolution. But in the capitalist countries the same course gave rise to fascism. We thus arrive at the conclusion, unexpected at first glance, but in reality inevitable, that the crushing of Soviet democracy by an all powerful bureaucracy and the extermination of bourgeois democracy by fascism were produced by one and the same cause: the dilatoriness of the word proletariat in solving the problems set for it by history. Stalinism and fascism, in spite of a deep difference in social foundations, are symmetrical phenomena. In many of their features they show a deadly similarity. A victorious revolutionary movement in Europe would immediately shake not only fascism, but Soviet Bonapartism.<sup>98</sup>



The only point on which *Revolution Betrayed* does mark some development of the idea of Soviet Bonapartism is in its passages on Stalin himself. Trotsky's comments strongly reinforce an existing axiom: the role of supreme leader.

The increasingly insistent deification of Stalin is, with all its elements of caricature, a necessary element of the regime. The bureaucracy has need of an inviolable super-arbiter, a first consul if not an emperor, and it raises upon its shoulders he who best responds to its claim for lordship. That 'strength of character' of the leader which so enraptures the literary dilettantes of the West, is in reality the sum both of the collective pressure of a caste which will stop at nothing in defense of its position. Each one of them at his post is thinking: *l'état - c'est moi*. In Stalin each one easily finds himself. But Stalin also finds in each one a small part of his own spirit. Stalin is the personification of the bureaucracy. That is the substance of his political personality.

Stalin may appear to enjoy great power but in reality the Bonapartist regime is an unstable regime of crisis. For the USSR, with its acute social contradictions, this is even more the case. 'By its very essence', Trotsky asserts, Bonapartism 'cannot long maintain itself'.<sup>100</sup> To express the idea graphically he uses the image of a sphere balanced on the point of a pyramid: it must inevitably roll down on one side or the other. The question is: to which side will it roll? Bonapartism may very well be the final stage before the complete overthrow of the workers' state, but a revolutionary victory in the West could lead to the revitalisation of the workers' state.

Trotsky was mistaken: by constant resort to force the unstable regime preserved itself against both external enemies and internal threats, real or supposed. Its 'Bonapartism' was more solid than he had thought possible. Yet, even if wrong in his prediction, Trotsky's perception of the tendency of development had much in its favour: as Carr observes in 'The New Soviet Society', (the chapter that concludes the political part of his *History of Soviet Russia*), Stalinism was rising above society. Carr's

final sentence offers a judgement that Trotsky would certainly have accepted: 'Seldom, perhaps, in history has so monstrous a price been paid for so monumental an achievement.'<sup>101</sup>

Trotsky's presentation of Stalin as Bonapartist leader obviously appealed to Carr. This is implicit in his judgement that 'Stalin ... presents to history two contrasting faces: revolutionary and counter-revolutionary.'<sup>102</sup> Carr continues: 'The grandiloquence of Napoleon III, the cynical diplomacy of Cavour, and the blood-and-iron discipline of Bismarck were all reflected in the dictatorship of Stalin.' No doubt Trotsky succumbed to the temptation to over-extend his use of Bonapartism, just as he had with Thermidor; no doubt, also, he was, consciously or not, drawing upon an existing tradition in Marxist political thought when he used the analogy. Even so, Trotsky could legitimately lay claim to having identified this developing trait in the Soviet regime.

1. Keep, J., '1917: The Tyranny of Paris Over Petrograd', *Soviet Studies*, vol.XX, (1968-9), no.1, p.25.
2. Keep, J., '1917: The Tyranny of Paris Over Petrograd'.
3. Knizhnik, I., *Chto Chitat' po Obshchestvennym Naukam*, (Leningrad: Priboi, 1924), pp.410-413.
4. Mathiez, A., 'Bolshevism and Jacobinism', *Dissent*, Winter 1955, pp.77-86.
5. Martov, J., 'The State and Socialist Revolution', partially published in translation in Howe, I., *Essential Works of Socialism*, (New York: Bantam, 1971), pp.258-266.
6. Serge, V., *Year One of the Russian Revolution*, (London: Allen Lane, 1972), pp.307-9.
7. Lenin, 'Revolyutsiya Tipa 1789 ili Tipa 1848 goda?', *Polnoe Sobranie Sochinenii*, IX, pp.380-2.
8. For example: *Shag Vpered, Dva Shaga Nazad*, *Polnoe Sobranie Sochinenii*, VIII, in particular pp.330, 368-371. See also Lenin's response to Rosa Luxemburg's review of that pamphlet, *Polnoe Sobranie Sochinenii*, IX, pp.38-65. Young, A.P., 'Lenin and the French Revolution as Myth and Model' in Davis, C.B., (ed.), *Proceedings of the Consortium on Revolutionary Europe 1750-1850: 1983*, (Athens, Ge.: Consortium on Revolutionary Europe, 1985), pp.168-195.
9. In a brief comment as part of his preparatory notes for a report to the Tenth Party Congress Lenin wrote: 'Thermidor? Soberly, it may be, yes? Will be? We shall see?' *Polnoe Sobranie Sochinenii*, XLIII, p.403. This formulation did not find a place in the speech Lenin actually delivered.
10. Trotsky, *Our Political Tasks*, (London: New Park, n.d.), pp.121-8.
11. Trotsky, *Results and Prospects*, (New York: Pathfinder, 1970), pp.52-61.
12. Trotsky, *Uroki Oktyabrya*, *Sochineniya* III, xiii.
13. T3068: ['Thermidor'; 1927].
14. Trotsky, *Mezhdurazmnozhim i Revolyutsiei*, *Sochineniya* XII, p.262.
15. Trotsky, *The New Course*, in Trotsky, *The Challenge of the Left Opposition* (1923-25), (New York: Pathfinder, 1975), p.125.
16. Trotsky, *The New Course*, p.87.
17. *KPSS v Rezolyutsiakh i Resheniyakh*, tom II 1917-1924, (Moscow: 1970), p.220.
18. In speeches to the Tenth Party Congress Lenin suggested that Kronstadt resembled the trajectories of previous revolutions: the counter-revolution endorses revolutionary slogans to divide the revolutionary forces. *Polnoe Sobranie Sochinenii*, XLIII, pp.25-6, p.47.

19. T3068: ['Termidor'; 1927].
20. Carr, E.H., *Socialism in One Country*, volume two, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1970), pp.125-7.
21. Radek, K., 'Termidorijskaya Opasnost' i Oppozitsiya': T956. 'Pismo Kh.G. Rakovskogo o Prichinakh Pererazhdeniya Partii i Gosudarstvennogo Apparata', *Byulleten' Oppozitsii*, no.6, (Oktyabr' 1929g.), pp.14-20.
22. Trotsky's major writings on Thermidor are: T3015: ['Iz dnevnika (dlya pamyati)'; 26 November, 1926]; T3068 ['Termidor']; 'Two Speeches at the Central Control Commission' (1927), in Trotsky, *The Stalin School of Falsification*, (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1971), pp.125-159; T3144: ['Krizis pravo-tsentristskogo bloka i perspektivy'; November, 1928]; T3146: [letter to comrades; 21 October, 1928]; 'Where is the Soviet Republic Going?', [from *Chto i Kak Proizoshlo*], *Writings of Leon Trotsky* [1929], (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1975), pp.45-51; 'Zashchita Sovetskoi Respubliki i Oppozitsiya', *Byulleten' Oppozitsii*, no.5, (Oktyabr' 1929g.), pp.1-17. 'Pis'mo Ital'yanskim Levym Kommunistam', *Byulleten' Oppozitsii*, no.6, (Oktyabr' 1929g.), pp.30-32. 'On the Question of Thermidor and Bonapartism', [from *International Bulletin*, Communist Left Opposition, 1 March, 1931], *Writings of Leon Trotsky* (1930-31), (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1973), pp.71-72; 'O Termidorianstve i Bonapartizme', *Byulleten' Oppozitsii*, no.17-18, (Noyabr' Dekabr' 1930g.), pp.29-31. 'Problemy Razvitiya SSSR', *Byulleten' Oppozitsii*, no.20, (Aprel' 1931g.), pp.2-15. T3498: [published as 'The Danger of Thermidor', *Militant*, 4.II.1933]. 'Rabochee Gosudarstvo, Termidor i Bonapartizm', *Byulleten' Oppozitsii*, no.43, (Aprel' 1935g.), pp.2-13. 'The Soviet Thermidor', chapter five of *Revolution Betrayed*, (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1970).
23. Trotsky, 'First Speech at the Central Control Commission', p.142.
24. Trotsky, 'First Speech at the Central Control Commission', p.143.
25. 'Zashchita Sovetskoi Respubliki i Oppozitsiya', p.8.
26. Trotsky, *Moya Zhizn'*, tom II (Berlin: Granit, 1930), p.255.
27. Marx, K., *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1967), p.6.
28. T2975: [22 December, 1925].
29. T3015: ['Iz dnevnika (dlya pamyati)'; 26 November, 1926].
30. Trotsky, 'The Danger of Thermidor'.
31. Trotsky, 'Klassovaya Priroda Sovetskogo Gosudarstva', *Byulleten' Oppozitsii*, no.36-37, (Oktyabr' 1933g.), pp.1-12. However, this article does admit that, on certain conditions, the concept of Bonapartism may be used in the analysis of the USSR.
32. See Section Six of Chapter Two.
33. Trotsky, 'Blok Levykh i Pravykh', *Byulleten' Oppozitsii*, no.17-18, (Noyabr' Dekabr' 1930g.), p.25.

34. T3144: ['Krizis pravo-tsentristskogo bloka i perspektivy'; November, 1928]. See also Trotsky, 'Vyderzhka, Vyderzhka, Vyderzhka!', *Byulleten' Oppozitsii*, no.1-2, (Iyul' 1929g.), p.14, where the defeat of the Right is presented as 'sharp in form, superficial in content.' As late as October 1932 Trotsky wrote: 'It can be expected that in the very near future it will be clear that the Left and Right Opposition are neither crushed nor annihilated but, on the contrary, are the only political currents in existence.' Trotsky, 'Stalinit'sy Prinimayut Mery', *Byulleten' Oppozitsii*, no.31, (Noyabr' 1932g.), p.17.
35. T3144: ['Krizis pravo-tsentristskogo bloka i perspektivy'; November, 1928].
36. T3144. Since the Stalinist faction was described as 'centrist', its attenuated social base was still proletarian. Although the dynamic was Bonapartist in tendency, in 1928 Trotsky still sees an unbroken connection between the 'centrists' and the working class through the mediation of functionaries in the Party and the trades unions. T2824 and T2760.
37. Trotsky, 'The Three Factions in the Comintern', *Writings of Leon Trotsky* [1930], (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1975), p.15.
38. Trotsky, 'Problemy Razvitiya SSSR', p.10.
39. Trotsky, 'The Danger of Thermidor'.
40. Trotsky, 'The Danger of Thermidor'.
41. Trotsky, 'The Danger of Thermidor'.
42. Trotsky, 'Rabochee Gosudarstvo, Termidor i Bonapartizm'.
43. Van Heijenoort, J., 'Lev Davidovich', in Hansen, J., (et al), *Leon Trotsky: the Man and his Work*, (New York: Merit, 1969), p.46.
44. T3364: ['Krizis nemetskoi levoi oppozitsii'; 17 February, 1931].
45. Trotsky, 'Eshche k Voprosu o Bonapartizme', *Byulleten' Oppozitsii*, no.43, (Aprel' 1935g.), p.14.
46. Trotsky, 'On the Question of Thermidor and Bonapartism', p.71.
47. Lunacharsky, A., *Revolutionary Silhouettes*, (London: Allen Lane, 1967), p.65.
48. Trotsky, 'Nerabochee i Neburzhuaznoe Gosudarstvo', *Byulleten' Oppozitsii*, no.62-63, (Fevral' 1939g.), p.16. Trotsky, 'Eshche i Eshche Raz o Prirode SSSR', *Byulleten' Oppozitsii*, no.81, (Yanvar' 1940g.), p.9.
49. Trotsky, 'Nerabochee i Neburzhuaznoe Gosudarstvo', p.16. Trotsky, 'Eshche i Eshche Raz o Prirode SSSR', p.9.
50. Trotsky, *History of the Russian Revolution*, volume III, (London: Sphere Books, 1967), p.257.
51. Beilharz, P., *Trotsky, Trotskyism, and the Transition to Socialism*, (London: Croom Helm, 1987), chapter three.

52. Trotsky, *Revolution Betrayed*, p.89.
53. Cohen, S.F., *Bukharin and the Bolshevik Revolution*, (New York: Vintage, 1975), p.132.
54. McNeal, R.H., 'Trotskyist Interpretations of Stalinism', in Tucker, R., (ed.), *Stalinism: Essays in Historical Interpretation*, (New York: Norton, 1977), p.35; Knei-Paz, B., *The Social and Political Thought of Leon Trotsky*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), p.394.
55. Deutscher, I., *The Prophet Outcast*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1970), p.317.
56. Deutscher, I., *The Prophet Outcast*, p.317.
57. Trotsky's memorandum on Thermidor (T3068: 1927) contains comments on the French Thermidor such as this, directly anticipating his formulations of 1935 on the Russian Thermidor.
58. In 'Rabochee Gosudarstvo, Termidor i Bonapartizm' Trotsky wrote (p.7): 'the social domination of a class (its dictatorship) may find extremely diverse political forms. This is attested to by the entire history of the bourgeoisie, from the Middle Ages to the present day. The experience of the Soviet Union is already adequate for the extension of this very same sociological law - with all the necessary changes - to the dictatorship of the proletariat as well.' *Revolution Betrayed* argues (p.288): 'History has known elsewhere not only social revolutions which substituted the bourgeois for the feudal regime, but also political revolutions which, without destroying the economic foundations of society, swept out an old ruling upper crust (1830 and 1848 in France, February 1917 in Russia, etc).'
59. T3015: ['Iz dnevnika (dlya pamyati)'; 26 November, 1926].
60. Trotsky, *Revolution Betrayed*, p.88.
61. Trotsky, 'Rabochee Gosudarstvo, Termidor i Bonapartizm', p.11.
62. T3029: [Trotsky to Central Committee; 21 February, 1927].
63. T3015: ['Iz dnevnika (dlya pamyati)'; 26 November, 1926].
64. Trotsky, *Revolution Betrayed*, p.89.
65. T3068: ['Termidor'; 1927]. Trotsky also described Thermidor as 'in its essence a transitional regime, a kind of Kerenskyism in reverse' and 'a screen' for the growth of dual power in Soviet Russia: T3109: ['Na novom etape', December 1927].
66. Trotsky, 'The Danger of Thermidor'.
67. Trotsky, 'The Danger of Thermidor'.
68. T3015: ['Iz dnevnika (dlya pamyati)'; 26 November, 1926].
69. Trotsky, *Revolution Betrayed*, p.105, p.93.
70. Trotsky, *Revolution Betrayed*, p.93.

71. Trotsky, *Revolution Betrayed*, p.95.
72. Trotsky, *Revolution Betrayed*, p.94.
73. According to Trotsky, Stalin was 'a secondary figure before the masses and in ... the revolution.' Trotsky, *Revolution Betrayed*, p.93.
74. Trotsky, *Revolution Betrayed*, p.93.
75. T3068: ['Termidor'; 1927]; and, Trotsky, 'The Danger of Thermidor'.
76. Trotsky, 'The Danger of Thermidor'.
77. Trotsky, 'The Danger of Thermidor'; Trotsky, 'On the Question of Thermidor and Bonapartism', p.71.
78. In 1938 Trotsky used the term 'totalitarian', a decade before American political scientists. He presents it as an unproblematic concept, a description of the bureaucratic state. Trotsky, 'Statya Stalina o Mirovoi Revolyutsii i Nyneshnii Protsess', *Byulleten' Oppozitsii*, no.65, (Aprel' 1938g.), p.8. Trotsky, 'Totalitarnye Porazhentsy', *Byulleten' Oppozitsii*, no.68-69, (Avgust Sentyabr' 1938g.), p.3.
79. T3348: [Trotsky to comrades in the USSR; 31 October, 1930].
80. Dzerzhinskii's letter to Stalin was published in *Politicheskii Dnevnik*, no.30, (III.1967), *Politicheskii Dnevnik 1964-1971*, (Amsterdam: Alexander Herzen Foundation, 1972), pp.238-241.
81. T3144: ['Krizis pravo-tsentristskogo bloka i perspektivy'; November, 1928]; T3146: [letter to comrades; 21 October, 1928].
82. T3146.
83. Trotsky, 'K Kapitalizmu ili k Sotsializmu', *Byulleten' Oppozitsii*, no.11, (Mai 1930g.), p.8.
84. Trotsky, 'K XVI-mu S''ezdu VKP(b)', *Byulleten' Oppozitsii*, no.12-13, (Iyun' Iyul' 1930g.), p.3.
85. T3348: [Trotsky to comrades in the USSR; 31 October, 1930].
86. Trotsky, 'Problemy Razvitiya SSSR', p.10.
87. Trotsky, 'Klassovaya Priroda Sovetskogo Gosudarstvo', pp.4-5.
88. Trotsky, 'K Kapitalizmu ili k Sotsializmu', p.9.
89. Trotsky, 'Bonapartizm i Fashizm', *Byulleten' Oppozitsii*, no.40, (Oktyabr' 1934g.), p.5. Trotsky, 'Bonapartizm, Fashizm, i Voina', *Byulleten' Oppozitsii*, no.84, (Avgust Sentyabr' Oktyabr' 1940g.), p.29.
90. Trotsky, 'Bonapartizm i Fashizm', p.5.
91. For example: Trotsky, 'Klassovaya Priroda Sovetskogo Gosudarstvo', p.5. Trotsky, 'Rabochee Gosudarstvo, Termidor i Bonapartizm', p.13.

92. Trotsky, 'Rabochee Gosudarstvo, Termidor i Bonapartizm', p.12.
93. Trotsky, 'Problemy Razvitiya SSSR', p.8.
94. T3423: [Trotsky to Central Control Commission; 4 January, 1932].
95. Trotsky, 'Novaya Konstitutsiya SSSR', *Byulleten' Oppozitsii*, no.50, (Mai 1936g.), p.6.
96. Marx, K., *The Civil War in France*, (London: 1921), p.30.
97. Trotsky, *Revolution Betrayed*, pp.277-8.
98. Trotsky, *Revolution Betrayed*, pp.278-9.
99. Trotsky, *Revolution Betrayed*, p.277.
100. Trotsky, 'Rabochee Gosudarstvo, Termidor i Bonapartizm', p.12.
101. Carr, E.H., *Foundations of a Planned Economy, 1926-1929*, vol.2, (Harmondsworth: Pelican, 1976), p.477.
102. Carr, E.H., *Foundations of a Planned Economy, 1926-1929*, vol.2, pp.474-5.



CHAPTER SEVEN: BUREAUCRACY

*If the state does not die away, but grows more and more despotic ... and the bureaucracy rises above the new society, this is not for some secondary reason like the psychological relics of the past, etc., but is a result of the iron necessity to give birth to and to support a privileged minority so long as it is impossible to guarantee genuine equality.*

Trotsky, Revolution Betrayed, (1936).

Section One: Bureaucratism to Bureaucracy

In 1917 the growth of soviets was a reflection of revolutionary political mobilisation and the creation of a new state in embryo. After October the new regime had to organise an economy and a state with scarce resources of competent administrative personnel. The soviets provided only the formal base. The state needed a bureaucracy and it could not find it from within the soviets. Some early Bolshevik critics, Alexandra Kollontai for example, opposed this development in principle.<sup>1</sup> Trotsky had no sympathy with such people: bureaucracy as efficient administration by experts did not distress him, quite the reverse. He approved of a division of labour based on expertise. Those who might, in another idiom, be called bureaucrats, he referred to as officials or administrators, and, collectively, the apparatus.<sup>2</sup> Only if administration follows the wrong paths do administrators become bureaucrats.<sup>3</sup>

Trotsky sometimes displayed a rather touching faith in the principle of disinterested administration. For example, in a talk 'with a representative of the American Press' at the close of the Russian Civil War he stated: 'In my opinion there are certain general methods which are applicable in all spheres of life ... in the sphere of administration, a

good administrator of a factory will also be a good military administrator. The methods of administration are, by and large, just the same. Human logic finds the same application in the military sphere as in others: precision, perseverance, all these qualities are necessary in every sphere in which people want to build, create and learn.’<sup>4</sup>

For Trotsky, bureaucracy was not so much administrative practice as administrative malpractice. In 1923 he identified ‘bureaucratism’, an immature form of ‘bureaucracy’, as the major problem, focusing on a set of practices established in a relationship between office holders and the Party rank and file. His immediate political concern was with attitudes and habits of behaviour, and their origins. He emphasised an internal degeneration of the methods of leadership, not a replacement of one group by another. *The New Course* (1924) accepts that the ‘immense authority’ of Party veterans is ‘universally recognised’. Nevertheless, to regard it as ‘absolute’ would be a ‘crude mistake’.<sup>5</sup>

It is only by a constant active collaboration with the new generation, within the framework of democracy, that the old guard will preserve itself as a revolutionary factor.<sup>6</sup>

Identifying the traits of bureaucratism, *The New Course* refers to ‘apparatus cliquism, bureaucratic smugness and complete disdain for the mood, the thoughts and the needs of the Party.’<sup>7</sup> Leadership takes on ‘a purely organisational character and frequently degenerates into order-giving and meddling’.<sup>8</sup> The Party, Trotsky asserts, is becoming divided into ‘the upper storey where things are decided and the lower storey, where all you do is learn of the decision.’<sup>9</sup> The apparatus sees the mass of the Party only ‘as an object of action’.<sup>10</sup> These characteristics are the direct form in which bureaucratism is manifested, but the issue is not restricted to personal failings. Although Trotsky stresses the expression of the phenomenon in terms of faulty practices, he repeatedly

emphasises that the phenomenon must be treated as the emergence of a new 'system of administration of men and things'.<sup>11</sup> He argues that 'the essence of the present difficulties does not lie in the fact that the "secretaries" have overreached themselves on certain points.'<sup>12</sup> It is not a 'survival' of a previous regime, but 'an essentially new phenomenon flowing from the new tasks, the new functions, the new difficulties and the new mistakes of the Party.'<sup>13</sup>

In *The New Course*, Trotsky gives particular attention to the relationship between state and Party. For him, the state apparatus is 'the most important source of bureaucratism'. An 'enormous quantity of the most active Party elements' is absorbed by it. There they are taught 'the methods of administration of men and things instead of political leadership of the masses'.<sup>14</sup> In the state apparatus Communists are 'hierarchically dependent upon each other' but in the Party, at least in theory, they are 'equal in all that concerns the determination of the tasks and the fundamental working methods of the Party.'<sup>15</sup> The Party apparatus has been infiltrated by the 'whole daily bureaucratic practice of the Soviet state'. Consequently, it is increasingly preoccupied by 'the details of the tasks of the Soviet apparatus, lives the life of its day to day cares ... and fails to see the wood for the trees.'<sup>16</sup> Thus, the Party itself is composed less and less of workers at the bench, but by professionals of various kinds.<sup>17</sup>

The antithesis of bureaucratic administration, in Trotsky's definition, was democratic administration. To counter bureaucratism, a 'serious, profound, radical change of course toward Party democracy' has become necessary.<sup>18</sup> This means, first of all, a change in the 'spirit' that reigns in our organisations.<sup>19</sup> Trotsky makes it clear that democracy is not to be defined primarily in a juridical manner; he accepts the orthodox

Bolshevik repudiation of 'pure', 'complete', 'ideal democracy'.<sup>20</sup> The central issue, for him, is the right to discuss, to criticise and to propose alternatives, and the readiness of the Party apparatus to respond.

In my view, Trotsky was, in principle, neither an authoritarian nor a democrat; he was a socialist who believed that political action was a means to an end. By 1923, he considered that Soviet Russia needed a new political course to meet a new situation, but he did not, at this time or at any other, begin from the acceptance of democracy as an abstract and inviolable principle. Democracy, as such, was not an end in itself. In his eyes, both democracy and dictatorship were means to an end, alternative instruments to be used according to the needs of the moment. In the Party, democracy and centralism are 'two faces' of organisation. The task is 'to harmonise them in the most correct manner, that is, the manner best corresponding to the situation.'<sup>21</sup>

While the Civil War raged, democracy could be suspended. Once it was over, within the Party at least, democracy had to be resurrected. The time had come to redirect the political line and take a course towards democracy. There were limits to the extent to which democracy could be violated if the end was to remain realisable. But the full implementation of democracy, both within the Party and without, was, in Trotsky's view, neither possible nor desirable. The same reasons which had produced bureaucracy and barbarity in the past would continue to operate in the present and future. Trotsky's commitment to materialism was too powerful to permit any other conclusion. As an aspect of the division of labour, bureaucracy, according to Trotsky, could only be broken down on the basis of highly developed forces of production. Nevertheless, elements of democracy might exist without its full implementation, both inside and outside the Party. A more democratic or a more bureaucratic relationship

was, in Trotsky's view, a viable distinction. Even though there was an economic base to bureaucracy it was still possible to curb some of its excesses by political means; the 'workers' state' could be a partial check.

In 1923 Trotsky already shows an awareness that bureaucracy is more than bureaucratism. Despite the thrust of his own argument, he states that 'it is unworthy of a Marxist to consider that bureaucratism is only the aggregate of the bad habits of office holders'.<sup>22</sup> He calls it 'a general phenomenon', not 'a fortuitous feature of certain provincial organisations'.<sup>23</sup> It originates in the centre and not the periphery, travelling downwards and outwards. This wish to understand the phenomenon systematically led Trotsky to the beginnings of a recognition of bureaucracy as a group of people.

Trotsky claims that in the six years since October 'fairly stable groupings have been formed in the Soviet regime'.<sup>24</sup> He is in no doubt that 'the chairmen of the regional committees or the divisional commissars, whatever their social origin, represent a definite social type'.<sup>25</sup> A Party secretary creates for himself 'an auxiliary apparatus with bureaucratic sections, a bureaucratic machinery of information, and with this apparatus ... he tears himself loose from the life of the Party.'<sup>26</sup> From here it is not such a big step to the discovery of the bureaucracy as socio-political grouping.

Between 1926 and 1928 Trotsky, and the Left Opposition, came to recognise that bureaucracy had evolved beyond the malformation of practice. With growing confidence they began to refer to the bureaucracy as a differentiated group in state and Party administration, understanding this in social as well as political terms. This is a crucial stage in the evolution of Trotsky's position. It is, therefore, curious that this

period is neglected by both Knei-Paz and Krygier in otherwise useful discussions of Trotsky's post-revolutionary perspectives.<sup>27</sup>

With the development of 'elements of dual power', the bureaucracy becomes increasingly detached from the working class and comes to outweigh it, politically and socially. The 'Declaration of the Thirteen' (July 1926), still routinely referring to bureaucratism, observes that there are more government personnel, professional people, employees and office workers in the co-operative network and in other institutions than workers in state industry and transport, a fact which 'testifies to the colossal political and economic role of the bureaucracy.' Furthermore, 'the state apparatus in its social composition and standard of living is bourgeois or petty-bourgeois to a great extent'.<sup>28</sup> In 1927, for the first time in any major Opposition document, the 'Platform' refers to an 'enormous caste of genuine bureaucrats'. (emphasis added)<sup>29</sup> The bureaucracy moves closer to other privileged strata and, Trotsky asserts, becomes amenable to their influence.

Trotsky sees a growing inter-penetration between bureaucrats and NEPist elements. 'The ruling circles are becoming more and more fused with the upper layers of Soviet-NEP society.'<sup>30</sup> Stalin accuses the Opposition of steering towards two parties, but, Trotsky counters, that it is his policies that are leading to dual power and 'the formation of a bourgeois party within the Right-wing of the Party, using its banner for camouflage.' He continues: 'In a whole series of government agencies and in the offices of Party secretaries, secret meetings between Party apparatchiks and "specialists," i.e. Ustrialovist professors, are being held ...'<sup>31</sup> With the decline in the influence of the proletariat, the self-confidence of 'the petty bourgeoisie and the growing middle bourgeoisie' has risen. This grouping has 'reconstituted its bonds with the entire apparatus, and it

holds the firm opinion that its day is coming.<sup>32</sup>

In the period 1926 to 1928 Trotsky's analysis of bureaucracy deepened substantially. In 1923 he had seen the differentiation between bureaucrats and others originating from the specific socio-economic and political conditions that brought about a transformation in administrative practices. Now he asserted, with increasing confidence, that the functional division was becoming a social division: bureaucratism turns the bureaucrats into the bureaucracy. Four features are added to his conception of bureaucracy during these years.

Firstly, the bureaucracy has to use bureaucratic methods to secure adoption of policies which run counter to workers' interests; within the Party there is still a sufficiently strong proletarian element to hinder the pursuit of such policies unless bureaucratic mechanisms are employed. Policy bears the marks of pressure from groups opposed to the interests of the proletariat: there has been a 'backsliding from the proletarian class line'. Trotsky saw 'backsliding' wherever he looked: the inability to understand the dangerous consequences of a relative lag in industrial development; a bureaucratic attitude to 'such questions as wages, the "regime of economy", unemployment, housing construction etc. '; the 'underestimation of the differentiation in the village'; the course toward 'the productively powerful middle peasant, i.e. in reality the kulak'; the failure to appreciate that 'the political activity of the urban and rural petty bourgeoisie is growing more rapidly than the activity of workers, agricultural labourers, and poor peasants'; the extension of the electoral decree in favour of the petty bourgeoisie; the denial that the workers' state needs to be drawn closer to the workers; the dressing-up of the NEP; the political struggle against critics of the right deviation, carried out as a move against a supposed ultra-left; and, 'centrist deviation' in the

international sphere (e.g. policy for Britain and China, the orientation towards the Amsterdam federation of reformist trade unions).

Such backsliding 'engenders the need to force policies through by bureaucratic apparatus methods.'<sup>33</sup> Stalin, Molotov, Uglanov, and Kaganovich do not strive for bureaucratism; they would like to work democratically. 'But they run up against some sort of dull resistance in the Party and they are forced more and more to impose their policies from above.' So they postpone the Party congress, inhibit discussion, purge Party institutions, and expel critics from Party membership.<sup>34</sup>

Secondly, the metamorphosis is now no longer largely a question of the degeneration of established cadres. The bureaucracy replenishes itself by recruiting opportunist and malleable personnel.

How many of the present venerable defenders of October, who are "protecting" the revolution against the "anti-Soviet" Opposition, were on the other side of the barricades during the October revolution? ... Opportunism invariably tries to base itself on an already constituted force. ... Pseudo-revolutionaries of every stripe, former revolutionaries who have been devoured by the philistine dormant within them, former workers who have become swaggering dignitaries, the Martynovs and Kuusinens past and present, by holding fast to the status quo, can present themselves, and even think of themselves as the direct heirs of October.<sup>35</sup>

Thirdly, the bureaucracy becomes more cohesive as a group, developing a distinct ideology and consciousness. Trotsky gave considerable emphasis to this in *My Life* and other writings of the late twenties. The division between 'leaders who expressed the historical line of the class' and the apparatus was 'at first ... more psychological than political'.<sup>36</sup> October was too close, the authority of the old leaders still strong. A 'different psychology' was developing but initially with the cover of the 'traditional forms'.<sup>37</sup> The 'stratum' which composed the 'apparatus of power' evolved 'independent aims and tried to subordinate the revolution to them'.<sup>38</sup>



People were completely absorbed by 'every-day routine'; many saw the temporary situation as the ultimate goal.<sup>39</sup> The bureaucrats replace theory by empiricism and eclecticism; materialism by idealism. Administration is substituted for planning, and 'corridor skills' for politics.<sup>40</sup> The world is an object to be manipulated; typically, the bureaucrat possesses grandiose illusions of his own power and competence. 'A new type was being evolved.'<sup>41</sup> The smug official's motto is: 'not all and always for the revolution, but something for myself as well'.<sup>42</sup>

Fourthly, the bureaucracy acquires material privileges. Trotsky lays emphasis on this particularly after his expulsion for the Party, citing scandals like the Smolensk affair.<sup>43</sup> In 'What now?' (1928), Trotsky argues that bureaucratism has become more than 'a powerful routine': there are 'great encrustations of interests and connections around the apparatus.'<sup>44</sup> 'Almost every province has its own Smolensk affair of greater or lesser proportions.'<sup>45</sup>

Who is the hero of [such] affairs? He is a bureaucrat who has freed himself from the active control of the Party ... Ideologically, he has become drained; morally, he is unrestrained. He is a privileged and an irresponsible functionary, in most cases very uncultured, a drunkard, a wastrel, and a bully, in short, the old familiar type of Dzherzhimorda. ... But our hero has his own "peculiarities": showering kicks and wallops, wasting national resources or taking bribes, the Soviet Dzherzhimorda swears not by the "Will of God" but by the "construction of socialism." When any attempt is made from below to point him out, instead of the old cry "Mutiny!" he raises the howl, "Trotskyist!" - and emerges victorious.

Despite this powerful indictment, Trotsky's attitude to Party officials here is restrained in comparison with the character it assumes a decade later. He makes it clear that it is 'the system' that he attacks, not its personnel. 'The majority [of Party officials] ... are honest and devoted men, capable of self-sacrifice.' Nevertheless, the rot has spread and the system must be changed; the Party must purge its apparatus, replacing most of the officials, even well-meaning functionaries.<sup>46</sup>

Section Two: Bureaucracy and Economic Relations

By the time he was expelled from the USSR, Trotsky's notion of bureaucracy was well developed. Although in 1929 he still anticipated the resurgence of the Right, the bureaucracy was becoming the point of focus in his analysis. This section investigates how Trotsky utilised the concept in his analysis of the Soviet economy.

Between 1930 and 1933 Trotsky made a thorough study of the problems of the Soviet economy. A letter to Santini, an Italian comrade, written in February 1933 reports: 'right now I am completely submerged in matters of the Russian economy.'<sup>47</sup> At one point he even declared an intention to produce a book on the Soviet economy, a project that remained unfulfilled.<sup>48</sup> Apparently he also considered accepting Abba Lerner's invitation to contribute an article to the *Review of Economic Studies*.<sup>49</sup> Although several scholarly articles on Trotsky as an economic theorist have been published in the last few years, by Davies, Day, and Nove, none has concentrated on Trotsky's commentaries on the problems of the five-year plan.<sup>50</sup>

Trotsky used both the Soviet press and information and analyses received from comrades and sympathisers in the USSR. Rakovsky's work was particularly influential and Trotsky's debt to him is clear. *Byulleten' Opozitsii* published Rakovsky's major article on the Soviet economy, 'Na S''ezde i v Strane', at the end of 1931 and Trotsky referred to it several times in his major economic article of 1932, 'Sovetskoe Khozyaistvo v Opasnosti!'<sup>51</sup> He also made careful use of a limited selection of Soviet publications. In the Trotsky archive there are annotated copies of *Pravda*, *Za Industrializatsiyu*, and *Ekonomicheskii Zhizn'* from 1932 and 1933.<sup>52</sup>

Six major articles, written over three years, developed what seems to me to be a trenchant and sound critique: 'Otkritoe Pis'mo Chlenam VKP(b)' (March 1930); 'K Kapitalizmu ili k Sotsializmu' (April 1930); 'Uspekhi Sotsializma i Opasnosti Avanturyizma' (December 1930); 'Novye Zigzag i Novye Opasnosti' (July 1931); 'Sovetskoe Khozyaistvo v Opasnosti!' (October 1932); and 'Signal Trevogi' (March 1933).<sup>53</sup> As later in *Revolution Betrayed*, Trotsky's commentaries of this period were prefaced, typically, by a defence of the USSR and its economic achievements. He wrote in 'Problemy Razvitiya SSSR' that 'capitalism never gave and is incapable of giving that progression of economic growth which is developing at present on the territory of the Soviet Union.'<sup>54</sup> Even collectivisation was upheld: its 'present tempos ... signify a new epoch in the development of humanity, the beginning of the liquidation "of the idiocy of rural life".'<sup>55</sup> But reading beyond this political obligation, Trotsky's critique of the deficiencies of the Soviet economy is devastating. It centres on the consequences of bureaucratic management of the economy.

Planning, Trotsky argues in 'Sovetskoe Khozyaistvo v Opasnosti!', is 'an art' that has to be 'mastered ... step by step, not by a few but by millions, as a component part of the new economy and culture.'<sup>56</sup> The plan must be a hypothesis not an a priori directive. It must be constantly checked in its implementation; flexible, not taut. The bureaucracy, with its illusion of power, does not plan, it 'commands'. In 'Signal Trevogi', Trotsky writes:

Even if the Politburo consisted of seven universal geniuses, of seven Marxes or seven Lenins, it would still be unable ... to assert command over the economy of 170 million people. This is precisely the gist of the matter. The Politburo of Marxes and Lenins never would have even posed such a task for itself. But the present Politburo consists of second-rate bureaucrats who are drunk with the power they have wrested from the Party, who have lost the ground from under their feet, and who are most of all concerned with preserving their inflated personal prestige.<sup>57</sup>

'Sovetskoe Khozyaistvo v Opasnosti!' and 'Signal Trevogi' are particularly important discussions of the problems of the Soviet economy, rehearsing a critique to be repeated in *Revolution Betrayed*. The Soviet economy faces a crisis that arises from the way in which the economy has been developed and the rate of its growth. In a sense it is a crisis of success, but none the less threatening for that. The achievements are undermined by five closely related features: underfulfilment, disproportionality, poor quality production, inflation, and the imposition of 'an inhuman load' on the workers, restricting the growth of labour productivity. The following <sup>paragraphs</sup> summarise Trotsky's views on these subjects.

To assess the level of achievement of the plan is impossible, because the targets have been continually revised, because there is no reliable unit of measurement, and because the bureaucracy will not allow its failings to be revealed. However, it is clear that performance has fallen short of intention. Evaluating this is not only a matter of inadequate statistics; it is greatly complicated by sectoral differences. In 'Sovetskoe Khozyaistvo v Opasnosti!', for example, Trotsky suggests that producing one million and not two million shoes is much less serious than half building a shoe factory.<sup>58</sup> If construction work on a new factory is halted through lack of materials when it is 90 per cent complete, that may be described statistically as 90 per cent fulfilment, 'but from the point of view of the economy the expenses incurred must simply be entered under the loss column.'<sup>59</sup> Shortfalls cannot be meaningfully averaged. 'An average growth of 50 percent may mean that in sphere A the plan is fulfilled 90 per cent, whereas in sphere B, only 10 per cent; if A depends on B, then in the subsequent cycle of production, branch A may be reduced below 10 per cent.'<sup>60</sup>

In Trotsky's view, underfulfilment, of itself, is less of a problem than 'the growing disparity between the various branches of the economy.'<sup>61</sup> But the one produces the other: 'wild leaps in industrialisation have brought the various elements of the plan into dire contradictions with each other.'<sup>62</sup> In this conflict it is the consumer goods sector that invariably loses, to the detriment of the whole economy. Trotsky writes in 'Signal Trevogi': 'The excessive shift in the apportionment of national income - from the village to the city, from light industry to heavy industry; the ominous disproportions within industry, light as well as heavy - has excessively lowered the efficient functioning of labour power and capital expenditures.'<sup>63</sup>

Economic growth has been vitiated by poor quality production, resulting from the 'administrative hue and cry for quantity'.<sup>64</sup> Low quality in one sector leads to low quality in another, with effects on the quantity of production. An example, again from 'Sovetskoe Khozyaistvo v Opasnosti!': poorly sorted coal produces poor quality metal which produces poor quality machines; these turn out inferior goods, break down, force inactivity upon the workers, and deteriorate rapidly.<sup>65</sup> In *Revolution Betrayed*, Trotsky develops his analysis and proposes a link between quality levels and sectoral character. Bureaucratism and high quality production are inimical, and their antagonism is most clearly visible in 'all those branches of economy which stand nearest to the people.'<sup>66</sup> Gigantic factories can be built by bureaucratic command, 'although, to be sure, at triple the cost.' But the closer to the consumer, the more the economy runs into the problem of quality; 'Soviet products are ... branded with the the grey label of indifference.'<sup>67</sup>

In 'Signal Trevogi' in a telling, if unsavoury, image, Trotsky described inflation as 'the syphilis of planned economy'.<sup>68</sup> It ravages

planned economy from within. It is the penalty for bureaucratic adventurism and ineptitude, a sign of the bureaucracy's unwillingness to live within the means of the economy. 'The gaps within the plan are stuffed with paper money.'<sup>69</sup> Contrary to claims that planned economy has nothing to fear from inflation, Trotsky argues that 'during the first steps of planned economy, and this covers a series of five-year plans,' it is dangerous, even 'ruinous'. It destroys incentives, encourages speculation, and undermines the living standards of the masses. It makes an independent check on the plan impossible.<sup>70</sup> In *Revolution Betrayed*, Trotsky goes so far as to argue that 'the raising of the productivity of labour and improving the quality of production is quite unattainable ... without a stable unit of currency. ... The sole authentic money is that based on gold.'<sup>71</sup>

The success of a planned economy, in Trotsky's view, is to be measured by the degree that it satisfies human needs.<sup>72</sup> He argued in 'The Danger of Thermidor' (1933) that industrialisation must secure a systematic, if slow, rise in the standard of living for workers and peasants. This it was signally failing to do.

Statistics on collectivisation are no substitute for bread. The kolkhozes are numerous, but there is neither meat nor vegetables. The towns have nothing to eat. Industry is disorganised because the workers are hungry. ... The hungry workers are discontented with the Party's policy. The Party is discontented with the leadership. The peasantry is discontented with the industrialisation, the collectivisation and the town. ... The real balance sheet [of the five-year plan] is in the fields of the peasants, the barns of the collective farms, in the warehouses of the factories, in the dining rooms of the workers, and finally in the heads of the workers and peasants.

The workers suffer not just because management treats their needs with contempt, a fact that even the Soviet press is forced to concede, but also because of the shortages of material goods and foodstuffs. The national income has been wrongly distributed. 'Sovetskoe Khozyaistvo v Opasnosti!' argues that there is no consideration for the welfare of the masses; the bureaucracy rides roughshod over all needs but its own.<sup>74</sup> This, Trotsky

argues in 'Signal Trevogi', has momentous consequences for labour productivity and the organisation of the economy.

Unbearable working conditions cause a turnover of labour within the factories, malingering, careless work, breakdown of machines, damaged products, and general low quality in the grade of production. The entire planned economy falls under the blow.<sup>75</sup>

Industry, divorced from control by the producers, has taken on a bureaucratic 'super-social' character. Consequently, Trotsky declares in 'Problemy Sovetskogo Rezhima (Teoriya Pererozhdeniya i Pererozhdenie Teorii)', it has lost the ability to satisfy human needs even to the degree accomplished by less-developed capitalist industry. As the producers see little relation between their efforts and their standard of living they 'lose interest in their work and are filled with irritation against the state.'<sup>76</sup> This, 'not the malicious will of the "fragments"' (the capitalist survivals), promotes coercion in all aspects of economic life: 'the strengthening of the power of shop managers, laws against absentees, the death penalty for spoliation of collective-farm property by its members, war measures in sowing campaigns and harvest collections, forcing of individual peasants to lend their horses to the collectives, the passport system, political departments in the village, etc., etc.'<sup>77</sup>

The economic difficulties of the USSR, Trotsky argues, have two basic sources: the absence of democracy in the Party and the Soviets, and the fantasies of bureaucratic administration. From the first comes the second; it is because there is no control over the bureaucracy that it can ignore the objective economic and social circumstances.<sup>78</sup> Trotsky's lesson, most loudly proclaimed in his insistence on the need for financial orthodoxy, is that the Soviet economy cannot run before it can walk. From this comes his belief that the plan cannot be bureaucratically imposed as a replacement for the market.

The destruction of NEP had been premature: 'economic accounting is unthinkable without market relations'. By restoring open markets for the trade of surplus products at speculative prices, Trotsky argues in 'Sovetskoe Khozyaistvo v Opasnosti!', the mistake of the 'inopportune liquidation of NEP' had been recognised, but only in a manner that was 'empirical, partial, thoughtless, and contradictory.'<sup>79</sup> Just as the state cannot be abolished but withers away, so also money and the market are reflections of the objective level of the forces of production and cannot be prematurely strangled. Trotsky writes in 'Problemy Sovetskogo Rezhima (Teoriya Pererozhdeniya i Pererozhdenie Teorii)':

Different functions of money, like those of the state, expire by different deaths. As a means of private accumulation, usury, exploitation - money disappears parallel to the liquidation of classes. As a means of exchange, standard of measurement of labour value, regulator of the social division of labour, money is gradually dissolved in the planned organisation of social economy, it finally becomes an accounting slip, a check for a certain proportion of social goods for the gratification of productive and personal wants.<sup>80</sup>

In exile, Trotsky, the advocate of planning in an 1920s, had apparently turned into an advocate of the market. For instance, he declared in 'Sovetskoe Khozyaistvo v Opasnosti!' that a 'correct and economically sound collectivisation' should not lead to the elimination of NEP, but 'to a gradual reorganisation of its methods.' Equivalent exchange between industry and agriculture had to be the basis for collectivisation.<sup>81</sup> The 'economic foundation of the dictatorship of the proletariat' can be considered 'fully assured' only when the state is able to renounce 'administrative measures of compulsion against the majority of the peasantry in order to obtain agricultural products.' Only on such a basis could collectivisation acquire 'a true socialist character'.<sup>82</sup>

Trotsky's advocacy of the virtues of a market may appear to be a conversion, but the reality was more complex. Chapter three, section



three, discussed Trotsky's reactions to the 'left' turn, concentrating on collectivisation. There it was emphasised that the theorist who assesses a changing reality may appear to change whilst standing still. To some extent, the same can be said here. Furthermore, as chapter five indicated, Trotsky's viewed the transition to socialism as a process during which economic and social reality could only be changed slowly. During and after NEP, Trotsky regarded market regulation and planning as reflections of class forces, not as alternative techniques of economic management: the antagonism between these two regulators mirrored the class struggle between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie.

The inability of either plan or market to dominate was an expression of the essential contradiction of the degenerated workers' state. Its proletarian class nature was established by the fact of planned production on the basis of nationalised property; its degeneration was political, the triumph of the bureaucracy. The bureaucracy defended and extended 'bourgeois norms' of distribution, both because its function was to regulate inequality in conditions of scarcity and because its interest was to develop inequalities favourable to itself. Alongside this view of the bureaucracy pitched against the working class in the conflict between market and plan, Trotsky's writings contain another idea, more complex and subtle: that the bureaucracy may be regarded as containing within itself the contradiction between the two forms. Presumably this is what Trotsky means when he writes in 'Klassovaya Priroda Sovetskogo Gosudarstvo' that 'the bureaucracy has expropriated the proletariat politically in order to guard its social conquests with its own methods.'<sup>83</sup> With this idea Trotsky was able to develop the concept that all workers' states have a 'dual nature', a subject to be considered in the next section of this chapter.

The difficulties of the Soviet economy that Trotsky perceives have not occurred accidentally but as the consequence of a new political economy. The contradictions of the economy, growth and waste, are reflections of the contradictory position of the bureaucracy. Arising on the basis of nationalised property and revolution, and then turning away from its origins, the bureaucracy simultaneously promotes and retards economic progress. It squanders unproductively a 'tremendous portion' of the national income, but it is also interested, 'by its very function', in the economic and cultural growth of the country.<sup>84</sup> Because 'its roots are embedded in the nationalised means of production', the bureaucracy was 'compelled to safeguard and develop them.' It accomplished this 'bureaucratically, that is to say, badly, but the work itself bears a progressive character.' Its initial 'major' successes have 'augmented its self-esteem and consolidated it around the leader who incarnates in the most complete fashion the positive and negative traits of the bureaucratic stratum.'<sup>85</sup>

Trotsky's supporters have often analysed the USSR in terms of a conflict between 'the law of value' and 'the law of the plan'.<sup>86</sup> Although Trotsky himself never put it in quite that way, it is a logical extrapolation from his work. In *Revolution Betrayed* he used such an idea predictively:

The contrast between forms of property and norms of distribution cannot grow indefinitely. Either the bourgeois norm must, in some form or other, spread to the means of production, or the norms of distribution must be brought into correspondence with the socialist property system.<sup>87</sup>

However, reading Trotsky more closely, both in the writings of 1932-33 and *Revolution Betrayed*, it is clear that the opposition between plan and market is an abstraction that he poses only at a high level of generality. In detail, he admits that reality is more complex. Plan and market are categories dialectically opposed, representing a future mode of production

and a past. The present was a transition between one and the other which necessarily involved the parallel existence of both, while one struggled to overcome the other. The result was their inter-penetration and transmutation.

In *Revolution Betrayed*, and with more emphasis in articles written in 1932 and 1933, Trotsky, in effect, argues that production is not governed by planning. In 1933, in 'Problemy Sovetskogo Rezhima (Teoriya Pererozhdeniya i Pererozhdenie Teorii)', he wrote: 'the Soviet economy today is neither a monetary nor a planned one. It is an almost purely bureaucratic economy.'<sup>88</sup> In this sense Trotsky often argued, as for example in 'Uspekhi Sotsializma i Opasnosti Avanturyzma' and in 'Problemy Razvitiya SSSR', that the five-year plan had become a dogma, not, as it should be, a hypothesis that is modified and verified by collective experience.<sup>89</sup> Production is administratively organised but not planned, in the sense of conscious social regulation and control by the associated producers. (my emphasis) In *Revolution Betrayed* he uses the term 'administrative planning':

Administrative planning has sufficiently revealed its power but therewith also the limits of its power. An a priori economic plan - above all in a backward country with 170 million population, and a profound contradiction between city and country - is not a fixed gospel, but a rough working hypothesis which must be verified and reconstructed in the process of its fulfilment. ... For the regulation and application of plans two levers are needed: the political lever in the form of a real participation in leadership of the interested masses themselves, a thing which is unthinkable without Soviet democracy; and a financial lever in the form of a real testing out of a priori calculations with the help of a universal equivalent,<sup>90</sup> a thing that is unthinkable without a stable money system.

If planned production needs Soviet democracy then, in the full sense, the Soviet economy cannot be planned. If planned production requires a stable money system as a universal equivalent, then the plan and the market are both part of the regulation of production in a transitional economy (i.e. the market is not restricted to distribution).

Distribution supposedly operates according to 'bourgeois norms', but throughout *Revolution Betrayed* Trotsky constantly refers to the fact that distribution is bureaucratically managed. For example, the analogy of a near empty shop with the policeman regulating production, however powerful and instructive, does not support the idea of bourgeois norms of distribution.<sup>91</sup> The bureaucratic state intervenes directly in distribution, sponsoring and developing inequalities. Only in the first instance, with shortage as the basis for inequality, can distribution be seen as impersonally determined.

In *Revolution Betrayed* Trotsky discusses money and inflation, and presents in these passages a good example of the necessity of going beyond his general presentation of the contradictions of Soviet society to reach his specific, if brief, evaluations of particular problems. In these pages we find the following statements, far more penetrating than his general conclusion on the norms of distribution:

Soviet money has ceased to be money; it serves no longer as a measure of value ...<sup>92</sup>

The fact seems almost unbelievable now that in opening a struggle against "impersonality" and "equalization" ... the bureaucracy was at the same time sending "to the devil" the NEP, which means the money calculation of all goods, including labour power. Restoring "bourgeois norms" with one hand they were destroying with the other the sole implement of any use under them. With the substitution of "closed distributors" for commerce, and with complete chaos in prices, all correspondence between<sup>93</sup> individual labour and individual wages necessarily disappeared.

Only the abolition of the card system (i.e. rationing), the beginning of stabilization and the unification of prices<sup>94</sup> created the condition for the application of piecework payment.

Thus Trotsky indicates the fiction of the idea that distribution during the first five-year plans was in any real sense based upon the law of value. Only in the loosest of senses was this so; distribution took place unequally. The market in no way directly determines patterns of distribution.

### Section Three: Bureaucracy and Scarcity

As the first section of this chapter demonstrated, Trotsky's conception of the bureaucracy matured as the bureaucracy itself matured. His analysis deals both with the political characteristics of bureaucracy and its deeper social causes. During the 1920s and early 1930s he typically stresses two basic determinants: the inherited backwardness of the Soviet regime, and its isolation. For example, the section of his theses 'Problemy Rázvitiya SSSR' (1931) that outlines 'the basic contradictions of the transition period' proposes the following linked contradictions:

- a) the heritage of the capitalist and pre-capitalist contradictions of old Tsarist-bourgeois Russia, primarily the contradiction between town and country;
- b) the contradiction between the general cultural-economic backwardness of Russia and the tasks of socialist transformation which dialectically grow out of it;
- c) the contradiction between the workers' state and the capitalist encirclement, particularly between the monopoly of foreign trade and the world market.<sup>95</sup>

By the time Trotsky writes *Revolution Betrayed* his emphasis has changed. He is far more concerned with the mechanisms that produce and reproduce bureaucracy in the present than with the inheritance of the past.

If the state does not die away, but grows more and more despotic ... and the bureaucracy rises above the new society, this is not for some secondary reason like the psychological relics of the past, etc., but is a result of the iron necessity to give birth to and to support a privileged minority so long as it is impossible to guarantee genuine equality.<sup>96</sup>

History now plays an auxiliary role. He accepts that 'the unfamiliarity of the masses with self-government, the lack of qualified workers devoted to socialism etc.', contributed to the growth of bureaucracy. <sup>97</sup> And the history of bureaucratic development cannot be ignored: the shattering of the working class, physically and psychologically, in the early years of Soviet power; the impact of the civil war and the subsequent demobilisation of the Red Army; the consequences on morale of the international defeats suffered by the revolution; the degeneration of the Bolshevik Party.<sup>98</sup> But more profoundly, bureaucracy was a product of the low level of economic

development.

The preservation of social order in conditions of acute scarcity is one of the major functions of a bureaucracy. The basis of its rule is 'the poverty of society in objects of consumption, with the resulting struggle of each against all'.<sup>99</sup> This axiom of Trotsky's analysis is graphically supported by his famous image of the consumer sector as a shop. With sufficient stock, a shop can satisfy purchasers whenever they come. The Soviet economy cannot supply the shop adequately and queues form, real or implicit. 'It is necessary to appoint a policeman to keep order' and ration goods; this policeman is the Soviet bureaucracy.<sup>100</sup> For Trotsky this is the starting point of its power. 'It "knows" who is to get something and who has to wait.'<sup>101</sup> The bureaucracy is corrupted through its power over resources. It 'draws off the cream for its own use. Nobody who has wealth to distribute ever omits himself.'<sup>102</sup>

*Revolution Betrayed* argues that, fundamentally, the bureaucracy gains its power through its control of scarce resources. The connection between bureaucracy and scarcity is made the key to Trotsky's theory of the post-revolutionary state. In previous writings, back to *The New Course* in 1923, Trotsky had always indicated the role played by the bureaucracy in reconciling social antagonisms. No less should be expected from any Marxist theory of the state. In 1934, in an important article on the Kirov assassination, Trotsky anticipated some of the argument of *Revolution Betrayed*. In 'Stalinskaya Byurokratiya i Ubiistvo Kirova', he identified a contradiction between 'the urge for individual appropriation' and the 'collectivist tendencies of economic life'.

So long as the overwhelming majority of the population has not yet emerged from actual want, the urge for individual appropriation and for the accumulation of goods retains a mass character ... It is true that essentially this accumulation has consumption for its immediate goal; but if ... the accumulation is permitted to exceed certain limits, it will transform itself

into primitive capitalist accumulation and can result in overthrowing the kolkhozii and after them the trusts. ... The satisfaction of the essential elementary needs is always bound up with a bitter struggle of each against all, illegal appropriation, evasion of laws, cheating of the state, favouritism and thievery on mass scale. In this struggle, the role of controller, judge and executioner is assumed by the bureaucracy.<sup>103</sup>

The contribution of *Revolution Betrayed* is to make these insights more systematic: to generalise them into a theory of the transitional state.

Perry Anderson recognises the central part played by nuzhda (scarcity) in Trotsky's analysis, but argues that Trotsky, mistakenly, thought that 'Stalinism represented merely an "exceptional" or "aberrant" refraction of the general laws of transition from capitalism to socialism, that would be confined to Russia itself.'<sup>104</sup> Anderson's argument was constricted within a brief paper; possibly a more developed articulation would recognise that Trotsky understood that there was a general tendency at work. Anderson correctly notes both that Trotsky denied the possibility that Stalinism might be generalised, on a world scale, as 'bureaucratic collectivism', and that he maintained the unwillingness of the Stalinist leadership to play a revolutionary role internationally. However, Anderson ignores Trotsky's explicit acceptance that Soviet experience is pre-figurative. All socialist revolutions, Trotsky argued, will face the two basic contradictions that promoted Stalinism: firstly, the contradiction between social production and private distribution; secondly, the contradiction between the existing level of the forces of production and the abundance required by socialism. Anderson suggests that Trotsky's emphasis on degeneration, that is a regression from 'a prior state of (relative) grace', cannot cope with the spontaneous generation in 'very backward societies, without any tradition of either bourgeois or proletarian democracy,' of 'a workers' state ruled by an authoritarian bureaucratic stratum'.<sup>105</sup> This is merely a linguistic objection; unusually, Anderson fails to give Trotsky full credit for his insight.

In Trotsky's view 'degeneration' is a tendency inherent in any regime transitional to socialism, but especially in very poor societies. The basis of the state is social conflict; the basis of social conflict is scarcity. Capitalism will never yield the economic abundance that socialism requires. *Revolution Betrayed* argues:

A socialisation of the means of production does not yet automatically remove the 'struggle for individual existence.' ... A socialist state even in America, on the basis of the most advanced capitalism, could not immediately provide everyone with as much as he needs, and would therefore <sup>be</sup> compelled to spur everyone to produce as much as possible.<sup>106</sup> (Emphasis added.)

Without overcoming scarcity the coercive state will stubbornly refuse to wither away; the transition to socialism will be blocked. The bureaucracy, 'in its very essence', is the 'planter and protector of inequality. It arose in the beginning as the bourgeois organ of the workers' state.'<sup>107</sup>

Isolated in the world and thrown back on its own resources the Soviet bureaucracy found it necessary to create and defend economic inequalities to provide incentives for the rapid expansion of industrial production. This directly undermined the ideals of the revolutionaries. In *Revolution Betrayed*, Trotsky argues:

The power of the democratic Soviets proved cramping, even unendurable, when the task of the day was to accommodate those privileged groups whose existence was necessary for defence, for industry, for technique and science. In this decidedly not 'socialistic' operation, taking from ten and giving to one, there crystallised out and developed a powerful caste of specialists in distribution.<sup>108</sup>

Trotsky recalls that Lenin, in *State and Revolution*, had proposed that officials of the proletarian state should be subject to election and recall, paid no more than a skilled worker, and given limited tenure so that 'all may for a time become 'bureaucrats', and therefore nobody can become a bureaucrat.' In fact, the Soviet state has grown into 'a hitherto unheard of apparatus of compulsion'.<sup>109</sup> In order to explain this, Trotsky returns to Engels. He observes that *Anti-Dühring* argued that the withering



of the state depended on the overthrow of class domination and the ending of 'the struggle for individual existence created by the present anarchy in production'.<sup>110</sup> Trotsky focuses attention on the latter condition. To overcome scarcity, the state has to play the central role in the economic development of post-revolutionary society. But in doing so it is forced to rely on the method of wage payment worked out by capitalism, albeit with 'various changes and mitigations.'<sup>111</sup> With this starting point Trotsky, in *Revolution Betrayed*, develops the idea of the 'dual nature' of workers' states. He suggests:

The state assumes directly and from the very beginning a dual character; socialistic, insofar as it defends social property in the means of production; bourgeois, insofar as the distribution of life's goods is carried out with a capitalistic measure of value and all the consequences ensuing therefrom.<sup>112</sup>

As Trotsky recognised, this view was anticipated by Marx, in *Critique of the Gotha Programme*, and utilised by Lenin in *State and Revolution*.<sup>113</sup> Marx emphasises that, in its first phase, communist society is 'in every respect, economically, morally, and intellectually, still stamped with the birth marks of the old society from whose womb it emerges.' It follows, for both economic and cultural reasons, that the inequalities of wage payment will continue to persist until a higher phase of communist society is developed 'after the productive forces have also increased with the all-round development of the individual, and all the springs of co-operative wealth flows more abundantly.' Lenin, in turn, noted that because of economic immaturity and the continued existence of the traditions of capitalism the 'narrow horizon of bourgeois right' would exist in the first phase of communist society. He drew explicitly the implications of Marx's conclusions:

Of course, bourgeois right in regard to distribution of articles of consumption inevitably presupposes the existence of the bourgeois state, for right is nothing without an apparatus capable of enforcing the observance of the standards of right. Consequently, for a certain time not only bourgeois right, but even the bourgeois state remains under communism, without the bourgeoisie!<sup>114</sup>

Marx and Lenin had foreseen a future development in general outline; Trotsky had to deal with an unfolding process. Lenin had asserted that the apparent paradox of the bourgeois state within communism was no mere 'dialectical puzzle' but indicated that 'at every step' the 'remnants of the old' survive in the new; Trotsky argued that the corrosion of democratic forms was not simply a matter of survivals, but was continually reproduced as a result of newly established forms of social relationships reflecting the inadequate development of the forces of production. The workers' state was riven by the contradiction between the two aspects of its dual nature.

The dual function of the state could not but affect its structure. Experience revealed what theory was unable clearly to foresee. If for the defense of socialised property against bourgeois counter-revolution a 'state of armed workers'

was fully adequate, it was a very different matter to regulate inequalities in the sphere of consumption. Those deprived of property are not inclined to create and defend it.<sup>115</sup>

Trotsky's critics have often argued that he failed to give due recognition to the connection between bureaucracy and industrial society. For example, in a recently published essay, Lovell argues:

Trotsky did not respond to the idea that with the increasing complexity of social life and specialisation there is an inexorable tendency to bureaucratisation in most areas of social life, and that these tendencies might be exaggerated in a socialist state ... He did not fully take account of the functional explanations of bureaucratisation.<sup>116</sup>

In Trotsky's defence it might be said that he did, at least, recognise 'bureaucracy' as a significant social phenomenon. His analysis was a form of functionalism, but one that rested on a social and not a technical base. The argument that technical development promotes bureaucracy is the symmetrical opposite of Trotsky's position. He would have seen such an assertion as a repudiation of Marxism and a rejection of his idea of self-managing socialism.

Section Four: What is the bureaucracy?

Although the term 'bureaucracy' figures prominently in Trotsky's analysis of Soviet society, until the mid-1930s the definition of its social composition was imprecise. As this chapter has shown, Trotsky concentrated on its political, ideological, and economic features. Until *Revolution Betrayed* presents the matter in a more considered and mature form, Trotsky seems to write as if the composition of the bureaucracy is obvious. Hitherto, there are only the broadest indications of which occupational groups might be included in the bureaucracy.

In *Revolution Betrayed* Trotsky attempted to describe Soviet social structure and to quantify the bureaucracy, although he is clearly hampered by problems of definition and the limitations of the materials at his disposal. Accurate quantification of the bureaucracy is impossible: where the state is almost the sole employer it is hard to say where the administrative apparatus ends.<sup>117</sup> This real difficulty is reinforced by ideological and political interests. Those that deny the existence of a problem will be of little help in its investigation. The Webbs, for example, in twelve hundred pages 'never once mention the Soviet bureaucracy as a social category'.<sup>118</sup> In this, they only reflect the official Soviet view. The forthcoming census, for example, has been 'constructed with the direct intention of concealing the privileged upper strata, and the more deprived lower depths.'<sup>119</sup> The categories it will use are of little analytical use. People will be listed as: workers; clerical workers; collective farmers; individual farmers; individual craftsmen; members of the liberal professions; ministers of religion; or, other non-working elements. Since there are no classes in the Soviet Union, so the official commentary runs, there is no need for further social divisions. Trotsky proposes, in contrast, that the 'real divisions of Soviet society' are:

Heads of the bureaucracy, specialists, etc., living in bourgeois conditions; medium and lower strata, on the level of the petty bourgeoisie; worker and collective farm aristocracy - approximately on the same level; medium working mass; medium stratum of collective farmers; individual peasants and craftsmen; lower worker and peasant strata passing over into the lumpenproletariat; homeless children, prostitutes, etc.<sup>120</sup>

As if with the help of an envelope back and a blunt pencil, Trotsky arrives crudely at a figure of four to five hundred thousand 'leaders', a 'ruling caste in the proper sense of the word'. These people are the 'directing personnel' of the central state apparatus, the Republican administrations, the armed forces, and the secret police, the social organisations, the trades unions, and the Party apparatus. Beneath this upper layer there is a 'heavy administrative pyramid'. The 'whole stratum which does not engage directly in productive labour, but administers, orders, commands, pardons and punishes ... must be numbered at five or six million.' This group includes: approximately two million in the executive committees of provincial, town and district Soviets, and in the parallel organs of the Party, the trades unions, the Komsomol, the administrations of transport and the armed forces, and agents of the GPU; presidents of the Soviets of six hundred thousand towns and villages; half a million for the administration of industrial enterprises of all-Union significance, plus further personnel in the enterprises controlled by the Republics and local Soviets; presidents and Party organisers in two hundred and fifty thousand collective farms, with a further half million for the state farms and machine tractor stations; and, the leaders of three hundred thousand state and co-operative trade departments. The total falls somewhat short of five millions, but this is presumably due to the assumption that the 1933 figures being used were an under-estimation of the current level. His total does not pretend to accuracy, 'but it will do well enough for a first approach ... it is sufficient to convince us that "the general line" of the leadership is not a disembodied spirit.'<sup>121</sup>

Trotsky makes it clear that the Party as a whole is not equivalent to the bureaucracy, and it is not used by him as a category of social analysis. He estimates that 'in the whole mass of the bureaucracy' Party members and Komsomoltsi constitute a block of one and a half to two millions. These Communist administrators are the backbone both of state and Party. The remaining mass of the Party and the non-Party aktiv serves as a reserve for the replenishment of the bureaucracy.<sup>122</sup>

Beyond the bureaucracy there is a workers' and peasants' aristocracy, that includes the Stakhanovites, the non-Party aktiv, and 'trusted personages'. This provides a social basis to the bureaucracy of approximately the same numerical size, five to six millions. Adding in the families, 'these two interpenetrating strata constitute as many as twenty to twenty-five millions', after a crude allowance for a comparatively small family size and deductions for double counting resulting from multiple employment within families. The conclusion is:

Twelve, or perhaps fifteen per cent of the population - that is the authentic social basis of the autocratic ruling circles.<sup>123</sup>

Trotsky's conception of the bureaucracy and its social basis is obviously elastic. When he writes of bureaucracy in *Revolution Betrayed*, and in other places, it is frequently unclear whether he is distinguishing between the 'upper caste' and the group as a whole. At the margin of its outer limit the bureaucracy includes people with very modest living conditions. Lower functionaries live at 'a very primitive level - lower than the standard of living of the skilled worker of the West.'<sup>124</sup> But, Trotsky comments, 'everything is relative.' There may be a gulf between the president of a rural Soviet and the dignitary of the Kremlin, but, he asserts, conditions for the mass are utterly miserable.

It is harder still to estimate the income of the bureaucracy than to determine its size. In addition to regular salaries, there are all kinds of additional incomes. Nevertheless, Trotsky risks a guess, as approximate as it could be.

If you count not only salaries and all forms of service in kind, and every type of semi-legal supplementary source of income, but also add the share of the bureaucracy and the Soviet aristocracy in the theatres, rest palaces, hospitals, sanatoriums, summer resorts, museums, clubs, athletic institutions, etc., etc., it would probably be necessary to conclude that fifteen per cent, or, say twenty per cent, of the population enjoys not much less of the wealth than is enjoyed by the remaining eighty to eighty-five per cent.<sup>125</sup>

Incomes in a socialist society can be conceived, Trotsky suggests, as the sum of two parts. Firstly, a 'share' in the wealth of the country, and, secondly, a payment for the labour of producers: dividend plus wages, 'a' plus 'b'. The higher the level of economic development, the greater the proportion occupied by 'a'. In the USSR, the unskilled labourer receives only 'b', 'the minimum payment which under similar conditions he would receive in a capitalist enterprise'; the Stakhanovite or bureaucrat receives '2a' plus 'b', or '3a' plus 'b', and so on. Thus:

Differences in income are determined, in other words, not only by differences of individual productiveness, but also by a masked appropriation of the labour of others. The privileged minority of shareholders is living at the expense of the deprived majority.<sup>126</sup>

Even if the unskilled worker receives some dividend, it is ten or fifteen times less than those who are privileged. The transfer of the factories to the state has changed the position of the workers only juridically. They still live in want, are faced by a superbureaucratic management, and have lost all influence whatever on management. They are oppressed by piecework, hard material conditions of existence, lack of free movement and terrible police repression.

Section Five: Bureaucracy and Class

For Trotsky, the bureaucracy, as an independent entity, lacked any essential position in the class relations of Soviet society. Krygier notes that the linguistic imagery used by Trotsky, in particular his anthropomorphic references to diseased organisms, reveals his position.<sup>124</sup> Trotsky asks, in his last major article on the subject, whether the bureaucracy is 'a cancerous growth or a new organ?'<sup>125</sup> He answers that, however grotesque it has become, however threatening to the very existence of the workers' state, the bureaucracy remains 'a temporary growth on a social organism' and can be overcome with suitable treatment. This 'temporary growth', which threatened the life of the body on which it developed, was, in Trotsky's analysis, also the representative of the host.

Bureaucracies, typically, function on behalf of wider bodies. Trotsky had obviously intended to convey this when he first used the term, and, even in the 1930s, he sustained this definition of the term. However, by this time, Trotsky had become rather ambivalent about whose interests the bureaucracy represents. His idea of degenerated workers' state had to dictate that, despite themselves, the bureaucrats continued to represent the workers so long as they defended nationalised property and administered the economy centrally. But after 1933, Trotsky considered the antagonism between workers and bureaucrats to be so great that he believed the bureaucracy to be on the point of destroying all vestiges of the workers' revolution and restoring capitalism. He suggested that only its fear of workers' reactions held the bureaucracy back from restoring capitalism.<sup>126</sup>

In *Revolution Betrayed*, Trotsky argued that the bureaucracy had achieved a unique degree of independence. 'In its intermediary and regulating function, its concern to maintain social ranks, and its

exploitation of the state apparatus for personal goals, the Soviet bureaucracy is similar to every other bureaucracy, especially the fascist.' But, 'in no other regime has a bureaucracy ever achieved such a degree of independence from the dominating class.'<sup>127</sup> The bureaucracy has 'risen above' a ruling class which has 'no tradition of dominion or command' and is hardly emerging from 'destitution and darkness'. For this reason it is 'something more than a bureaucracy'; it has become 'the sole privileged and commanding stratum in Soviet society'.<sup>128</sup>

If the bureaucracy has effectively ceased to represent any interest but its own, can it still be called a bureaucracy? If the bureaucracy is so alien to socialism that the workers must overthrow it, is it still a bureaucracy? Trotsky, it seems to me, replies in the affirmative not so much because of any attachment to the term 'bureaucracy', but more because he rejects absolutely the idea that the ruling group in the USSR is a class.

The basis of his argument is his view that the differentiation of the bureaucracy is through political function and the privileges in consumption that derive from bureaucratic position. It has no location in a system of productive relations other than as a representative of the proletariat. His view is clearly stated in 'Klassovaya Priroda Sovetskogo Gosudarstvo'.

A class is defined not by its participation in the distribution of the national income alone, but by its independent roots in the economic foundation of society. Each class (the feudal nobility, the peasantry, the petty bourgeoisie, the capitalist bourgeoisie and the proletariat) works out its own special forms of property. The bureaucracy lacks all these social traits. It has no independent property roots. Its functions relate basically to the political technique of class rule. The existence of a bureaucracy, in all its variety of forms and differences in specific weight, characterises every class regime. Its power is of a reflected character. The bureaucracy is indissolubly bound up with a ruling economic class, feeding itself upon the social roots of the latter, maintaining itself and falling together with it.<sup>129</sup>



The 'ruling economic class' was the proletariat: 'the nationalisation of the land, the means of industrial production, transport and exchange, together with the monopoly of foreign trade constitute the basis of the Soviet social structure. Through these relations, established by the proletarian revolution, the nature of the Soviet Union as a proletarian state is for us basically defined.'<sup>130</sup> Those theories that dwelt on appearances without analysing the essence of social relations were, in Trotsky's view, 'sociological' or, sometimes, 'moralistic'.

At the same time Trotsky yielded to the tensions of his position by recognising that the ruling group, if not a class, was more than just a bureaucracy. Its position was 'in the highest degree contradictory, equivocal and undignified'.<sup>131</sup> It operated with a high degree of independence, it was privileged, it took on 'bourgeois customs' and it established 'a new and hitherto unknown relation between bureaucracy and the riches of the nation'.

The means of production belong to the state. But the state, so to speak, "belongs" to the bureaucracy.<sup>132</sup>

Such a position menaces the proletarian character of the state but, so far, the bureaucracy has only 'betrayed the revolution' and not overthrown it.<sup>133</sup>

Parallel with the theoretical argument, Trotsky considers the subject empirically.

The bureaucracy has neither stocks nor bonds. It is recruited, supplemented and renewed in the manner of an administrative hierarchy, independently of any special property relations of its own.<sup>134</sup>

Bureaucrats, as individuals without property rights, cannot pass 'rights in the exploitation of the state apparatus' from one generation to the next. Their privileges are an abuse of power that they cannot admit to: they conceal their existence as a 'special social group'.<sup>135</sup>

As an historical analysis of the genesis of bureaucracy Trotsky's account has much to offer and, particularly through the mediation of Isaac Deutscher, Trotsky has had an undoubted impact on Western interpretations of Soviet history. Much of his discussion on the origins of bureaucracy remains useful; three aspects particularly merit attention. Firstly: Trotsky directed attention to the political and social impact of economic shortage by his remarks on the 'dual nature' of a workers' state: collectivist in production, individualist in distribution. Economic inequality contradicts and undermines the political equality necessary for democracy; we might add that in a non-market system where the economic role of the state is far reaching and obvious the impact of economic inequality is not muted by commodity fetishism. Secondly: Trotsky saw that the attempt to pursue the socialist objective of planned industrialisation with methods that are pre-socialist or even anti-socialist would result in inefficiency and bureaucracy. Thirdly: Trotsky pursued a critical analysis, pivoted on the idea that minority political control has to be linked to a social base. On the other side of the balance, however, must be placed the confusions introduced by an uncritical use of the term 'bureaucracy', compounded by reference to it as a caste.

Bureaucracies are frequently thought of as conservative bodies, hidebound by rules and established patterns of behaviour, status, and career patterns. In Trotsky's earlier writings, the bureaucrat is depicted as inevitably conservative and even dull-witted. He is 'inclined to think that everything needed for human well-being has already been done, and to regard anyone who does not acknowledge this as an enemy'.<sup>136</sup> He yearns for 'tranquillity and order'.<sup>137</sup>

Whatever else the Soviet 'bureaucracy' was, it was not conservative. Trotsky's assessment became increasingly unreal after 1928, but he strove

to maintain consistency. For the bureaucracy, he argued, there is no problem larger than the problem of self-preservation. Policy is to be understood as a direct consequence: 'all its turns', he argued rather extravagantly in 'Problemy Razvitiya SSSR', 'result directly from its striving to retain its independence, its position, its power.'<sup>138</sup> Its change of policy is to be seen in this light also. Political policy remained highly bureaucratic, ever more authoritarian. Economic policy retained its essential objective: the building of 'socialism' in one country. More important for Trotsky than all else, this was the confirmation of the perversion of Marxism by bureaucratic idealism.<sup>139</sup> 'Novyi Khozyaistvennyi Kurs v SSSR' (1930) argued that the real change had been only to shift the theory 'into third gear'.<sup>140</sup> Policy was still formulated in the familiar, shortsighted empiricist fashion; the bureaucrat still looked at the world as an object of free action. Bureaucratic 'tail-endism' had been turned into its opposite - 'adventurism', but this had 'frequently happened in history'.<sup>141</sup>

During the 1930s privilege and power were not necessarily closely associated, as the purges proved. Reference to the ruling group as a bureaucracy suggests more homogeneity between different sections of the upper stratum of Soviet society than is warranted. Similarly, to call the bureaucracy a caste overstresses its unity. A caste is usually defined as a group that reproduces itself by heredity; no outsiders can join. The Soviet ruling group, particularly in the 1930s, was constantly replenished by outsiders, had a high rate of turnover, and, in some ways, as Fitzpatrick has shown, was a meritocratic body.<sup>142</sup> This seems to be a sufficient disqualification for the term 'caste'.

It is not the task of this study to find a term for the ruling group in the USSR. Trotsky's use of 'bureaucracy' is open to the objections

outlined here, but it is not clear that, within the orthodox Marxist framework that he employed, 'class' would be a better substitute, largely for the reasons that Trotsky himself identified. To pursue this discussion further would, however, transgress the self-imposed limits of this thesis. The temptation to do so is rejected, so as to keep this study within reasonable boundaries.

1. For Kollontai's views on bureaucracy see the pamphlet, *The Workers' Opposition*, in Kollontai, A., *Selected Writings*, (London: Allison and Busby, 1977), pp.159-200.
2. For example see Trotsky's response to Lenin's memorandum concerning the work of Deputy Chairmen of Sovnarkom, April 1922: T749; also published in Meijer, J.M., (ed.), *The Trotsky Papers*, (The Hague: Mouton, 1971), pp.730-734.
3. This distinction was clearly made by Trotsky in the hearings of the Dewey commission. *The Case of Leon Trotsky*, (London: Secker and Warburg, 1937), eg. pp.360-1.
4. Trotsky, *Kak Vooruzhalas' Revolyutsiya*, III(ii), p.241.
5. Trotsky, *The New Course, The Challenge of the Left Opposition (1923-25)*, (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1975), p.125.
6. Trotsky, *The New Course*, p.125.
7. Trotsky, *The New Course*. p.69.
8. Trotsky, *The New Course*, p.77.
9. Trotsky, *The New Course*, p.69.
10. Trotsky, *The New Course*, p.71.
11. Trotsky, *The New Course*, p.91.
12. Trotsky, *The New Course*, p.68.
13. Trotsky, *The New Course*, p.76.
14. Trotsky, *The New Course*, p.91.
15. Trotsky, *The New Course*, p.77.
16. Trotsky, *The New Course*, p.77-8.
17. Trotsky, *The New Course*, pp.73-5.
18. Trotsky, *The New Course*, p.126.
19. Trotsky, *The New Course*, p.126
20. Trotsky, *The New Course*, p.124. See also Trotsky's speech to the Thirteenth Party Congress, *Trinadtsatyi S'ezd Rossiskoi Kommunisticheskoi Partii (Bol'shevikov)* (1924), p.158.
21. Trotsky, *The New Course*, p.124
22. Trotsky, *The New Course*, p.91.
23. Trotsky, *The New Course*, p.70.
24. Trotsky, *The New Course*, p.74.

25. Trotsky, *The New Course*, p.74.
26. Trotsky, *The New Course*, p.78.
27. Knei-Paz, *The Social and Political Thought of Leon Trotsky*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), chapter ten. Krygier, M., "Bureaucracy" in Trotsky's Analysis of Stalinism', in Sawyer, (ed.), *Socialism and the New Class*, Australian Political Studies Association Monograph no.19, (Adelaide: 1978), pp.46-67.
28. T880: [declaration of the thirteen; July 1926].
29. 'Platform of the Opposition' (1927), in Trotsky, *The Challenge of the Left Opposition* (1926-27), (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1980), p.356.
30. Trotsky, 'Second Speech to the Central Control Commission' (1927), in Trotsky, *Stalin School of Falsification*, (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1971), p.149.
31. T3109: ['Na Novom Etape'; December, 1927].
32. Trotsky, 'What Now?' (1928), in Trotsky, *Third International After Lenin*, (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1970), p.296.
33. T3000: ['Voprosy i Otvety'; September 1926].
34. T3092: ['"Tezis o Klemanso" i rezhim v partii'; 24 September, 1927].
35. T3132: [Trotsky to Shatunovskii; 12 September, 1928].
36. Trotsky, *Moya Zhizn'*, tom II, (Berlin: Granit, 1930), pp.242-3.
37. Trotsky, *Moya Zhizn'*, tom II, p.243.
38. Trotsky, *Moya Zhizn'*, tom II, p.242.
39. Trotsky, *Moya Zhizn'*, tom II, p.243.
40. The reference to 'corridor skills' is in T3253 [preface to the German edition of 'Who is leading the Comintern today']; Trotsky, *Writings of Leon Trotsky* [1929], (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1975), p.380. See also Trotsky, 'The Philosophical Tendencies of Bureaucratism', T3147; Trotsky, *The Challenge of the Left Opposition* (1928-29), (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1981), pp.389-409.
41. Trotsky, *Moya Zhizn'*, tom II, p.243.
42. Trotsky, *Moya Zhizn'*, tom II, p.246. It is evident that the 'new governing stratum' repelled Trotsky. He disliked the 'visiting at each other's homes, the assiduous attendance at the ballet, the drinking-parties at which people who were absent were pulled to pieces'; he suggests that 'the out-and-out philistine, ignorant, and simply stupid baiting of the theory of permanent revolution grew from just these psychological source'. Psychological processes, he suggests, when in tune with 'changes in the anatomy of the revolutionary society', may develop a powerful momentum.
43. T1613: [letter to comrades; June 1928].

44. Trotsky, 'What Now?' (1928).
45. Trotsky, 'What Now?' (1928).
46. Trotsky, 'What Now?' (1928).
47. Trotsky to Santini, 15 February, 1933. *Writings of Leon Trotsky Supplement (1929-1933)*, (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1979), pp.188-9. There is no copy of this letter in the Harvard archive.
48. Trotsky, 'Signal Trevogi', *Byulleten' Oppozitsii*, no.33, (Mart 1933g.), p.4.
49. EP2732: Lerner to Trotsky, 23 March, 1934. Trotsky's reply has been lost. It seems from EP2733: Lerner to Trotsky, 12 September, 1938, that Lerner visited Trotsky in Mexico. Lerner was one of the founding editors of *Review of Economic Studies*, published at the London School of Economics. A major economic theoretician, he published, amongst many books and articles, *The Economics of Control*, (New York: Macmillan, 1944). See, in particular, 'Economic Theory and Socialist Control', *Review of Economic Studies*, vol.II 1934-1935, pp.51-61; Lerner acknowledged Trotsky's contribution to the study of the problems of socialist planning and quoted *The Soviet Economy in Danger*.
50. Davies, R., 'Trotsky and the Debate on Industrialisation in the USSR', in Gori, F.(ed.), *Pensiero e Azione Politica di Lev Trocki*, vol.1, pp.239-259; Day, R., 'Leon Trotsky on the Problems of the *Smychka* and Forced Collectivisation', *Critique* 13, (1981), pp.55-68; Nove, A., 'New Light on Trotsky's Economic Views', *Slavic Review*, vol.40, no.1, (1981), pp.84-97.
51. Rakovsky, 'Na S'ezde i v Strane', *Byulleten' Oppozitsii*, no.25-26, (Noyabr' Dekabr' 1931g.), pp.9-32. A translation by D. Filtzer with an introduction by R.W. Davies is in *Critique* 13, (1981), pp.7-54.
52. T3948-T3953: [papers and journals from 1932 and 1933].
53. Trotsky, 'Otkritoe Pis'mo Chlenam VKP(b)', *Byulleten' Oppozitsii*, no.10, (Aprel' 1930g.), pp.2-7. Trotsky, 'K Kapitalizmu ili k Sotsializmu', *Byulleten' Oppozitsii*, no.11, (Mai 1930g.), pp.3-10. Trotsky, 'Uspekhi Sotsializma i Opasnosti Avanturyzma', *Byulleten' Oppozitsii*, no.17-18, (Noyabr' Dekabr' 1930g.), pp.1-10. Trotsky, 'Novye Zigzag i Novye Opasnosti', *Byulleten' Oppozitsii*, no.23, (Avgust 1931g.), pp.3-8. Trotsky, 'Sovetskoe Khozyaistvo v Opasnosti!'. Trotsky, 'Signal Trevogi', pp.1-10. Apart from his published articles there was also a manuscript of an article apparently intended for a non-Marxist periodical, dated 7 September, 1933: T3594; available in *Writings of Leon Trotsky Supplement [1929-1933]*, pp.292-298.
54. Trotsky, 'Problemy Razvitiya SSSR', *Byulleten' Oppozitsii*, no.20, (Aprel' 1931g.), p.2.
55. Trotsky, 'Problemy Razvitiya SSSR', p.2.
56. Trotsky, 'Sovetskoe Khozyaistvo v Opasnosti!', p.2.
57. Trotsky, 'Signal Trevogi', p.2.

58. Trotsky, 'Sovetskoe Khozyaistvo v Opasnosti!', p.10.
59. Trotsky, 'Sovetskoe Khozyaistvo v Opasnosti!', p.3.
60. Trotsky, 'Sovetskoe Khozyaistvo v Opasnosti!', p.10.
61. Trotsky, 'Sovetskoe Khozyaistvo v Opasnosti!', p.10.
62. Trotsky, 'Sovetskoe Khozyaistvo v Opasnosti!', p.10.
63. Trotsky, 'Signal Trevogi', p.2.
64. Trotsky, 'Sovetskoe Khozyaistvo v Opasnosti!', p.4.
65. Trotsky, 'Sovetskoe Khozyaistvo v Opasnosti!', p.3.
66. Trotsky, *Revolution Betrayed*, (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1970), p.275.
67. Trotsky, *Revolution Betrayed*, p.276.
68. Trotsky, 'Signal Trevogi', p.3.
69. Trotsky, 'Signal Trevogi', p.3.
70. Trotsky, 'Signal Trevogi', pp.2-3.
71. Trotsky, *Revolution Betrayed*, pp.67-8.
72. Trotsky, *Revolution Betrayed*, p.61.
73. Trotsky, 'The Danger of Thermidor', *Militant*, 4.II.1933, T3498.
74. Trotsky, 'Sovetskoe Khozyaistvo v Opasnosti!', pp.5-6.
75. Trotsky, 'Signal Trevogi', p.2.
76. Trotsky, 'Problemy Sovetskogo Rezhima (Teoriya Pererozhdeniya i Pererozhdenie Teorii)', *Byulleten' Oppozitsii*, no.34, (Mai 1933g.), p.6.
77. Trotsky, 'Problemy Sovetskogo Rezhima (Teoriya Pererozhdeniya i Pererozhdenie Teorii)', p.6.
78. Trotsky, 'Signal Trevogi', p.2.
79. Trotsky, 'Sovetskoe Khozyaistvo v Opasnosti!', p.9.
80. Trotsky, 'Problemy Sovetskogo Rezhima (Teoriya Pererozhdeniya i Pererozhdenie Teorii)', p.5.
81. Trotsky, 'Sovetskoe Khozyaistvo v Opasnosti!', pp.7-9.
82. Trotsky, 'Sovetskoe Khozyaistvo v Opasnosti!', p.7.
83. Trotsky, 'Klassovaya Priroda Sovetskogo Gosudarstvo', *Byulleten' Oppozitsii*, no.36-37, (Oktyabr' 1933g.), p.3.



84. Trotsky, 'Klassovaya Priroda Sovetskogo Gosudarstvo', p.8. Function and interest run in parallel: 'The higher the national income, the more copious its funds of privileges'. Trotsky suggests that it is the consumption interest of the Soviet bureaucracy that is central to the growth of the Soviet economy.
85. Trotsky, 'Stalinskaya Byurokratiya i Ubiistvo Kirova', *Byulleten' Opozitsii*, no.41, (Yanvar' 1935g.), p.10.
86. Ernest Mandel produces the most sophisticated formulations of this view. He regards 'the unfolding conflict between the logic of the plan and the influence of the law of value' as 'the main contradiction and the main law of motion of the Soviet economy': 'Once Again on the Trotskyist Definition of the Social Nature of the Soviet Union', *Critique*, no.12 (1980), p.119. He does, however, readily indicate that plan and market do not operate as pure forms: for example, *Marxist Economic Theory*, (London: Merlin Press, 1968), chapter fifteen.
87. Trotsky, *Revolution Betrayed*, p.244.
88. Trotsky, 'Problemy Sovetskogo Rezhima (Teoriya Pererozhdeniya i Pererozhdenie Teorii)', p.6.
89. Trotsky, 'Uspekhi Sotsializma i Opasnosti Avanturyzma', pp.1-10. Trotsky, 'Problemy Razvitiya SSSR', p.9.
90. Trotsky, *Revolution Betrayed*, pp.66-7.
91. Trotsky, *Revolution Betrayed*, p.112.
92. Trotsky, *Revolution Betrayed*, p.70.
93. Trotsky, *Revolution Betrayed*, p.72.
94. Trotsky, *Revolution Betrayed*, p.80.
95. Trotsky, 'Problemy Razvitiya SSSR', pp.2-3.
96. Trotsky, *Revolution Betrayed*, p.55.
97. Trotsky, *Revolution Betrayed*, p.59.
98. Trotsky, *Revolution Betrayed*, pp.89-100.
99. Trotsky, *Revolution Betrayed*, p.112.
100. Trotsky, *Revolution Betrayed*, p.112.
101. Trotsky, *Revolution Betrayed*, p.112.
102. Trotsky, *Revolution Betrayed*, p.113.
103. Trotsky, 'Stalinskaya Byurokratiya i Ubiistvo Kirova', p.4.
104. Anderson, P., 'Trotsky's Interpretation of Stalinism', *New Left Review* 139, (1983), p.56.
105. Anderson, P., 'Trotsky's Interpretation of Stalinism', p.57.

106. Trotsky, *Revolution Betrayed*, p.53.
107. Trotsky, *Revolution Betrayed*, p.113. See also Trotsky, 'Klassovaya Priroda Sovetskogo Gosudarstvo', p.7, where the bureaucracy is described as the 'bourgeois instrument of socialist progress'.
108. Trotsky, *Revolution Betrayed*, p.59.
109. Trotsky, *Revolution Betrayed*, p.51.
110. Trotsky, *Revolution Betrayed*, p.52.
111. Trotsky, *Revolution Betrayed*, p.53.
112. Trotsky, *Revolution Betrayed*, p.54.
113. Trotsky, *Revolution Betrayed*, p.53.
114. Lenin, *Gosudarstvo i Revolyutsiya*, in Lenin, *Polnoe Sobranie Sochinenii*, XXXIII, pp.98-9.
115. Trotsky, *Revolution Betrayed*, pp.54-5.
116. Lovell, D. W., *Trotsky's Analysis of Soviet Bureaucratization*, (London: Croom Helm, 1985), p.41.
117. Trotsky, *Revolution Betrayed*, p.135.
118. Trotsky, *Revolution Betrayed*, p.136.
119. Trotsky, *Revolution Betrayed*, p.243.
120. Trotsky, *Revolution Betrayed*, p.243.
121. Trotsky, *Revolution Betrayed*, pp.136-8.
122. Trotsky, *Revolution Betrayed*, pp.138-9.
123. Trotsky, *Revolution Betrayed*, p.139.
124. Trotsky, *Revolution Betrayed*, pp.139-140.
125. Trotsky, *Revolution Betrayed*, p.142.
126. Trotsky, *Revolution Betrayed*, p.240.
127. Krygier, M., "'Bureaucracy" in Trotsky's Analysis of Stalinism', pp.47, 58.
128. Trotsky, 'SSSR v Voine', *Byulleten' Oppozitsii*, no.79-80, (Avgust Sentyabr' Oktyabr' 1939g.), p.2.
129. Trotsky, *Revolution Betrayed*, pp.251.
130. Trotsky, *Revolution Betrayed*, p.248.
131. Trotsky, *Revolution Betrayed*, p.249.

132. Trotsky, 'Klassovaya Priroda Sovetskogo Gosudarstvo', p.7.
133. Trotsky, *Revolution Betrayed*, p.248.
134. Trotsky, *Revolution Betrayed*, p.250.
135. Trotsky, *Revolution Betrayed*, p.249.
136. Trotsky, *Revolution Betrayed*, p.252.
137. Trotsky, *Revolution Betrayed*, p.249.
138. Trotsky, *Revolution Betrayed*, p.249.
139. Trotsky, 'Where is the Soviet Republic Going?', [from *Chto i Kak Proizoshlo*], *Writings of Leon Trotsky* [1929], (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1975), p.48.
140. Trotsky, *The Permanent Revolution*, (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1970), p.159.
141. Trotsky, 'Problemy Razvitiya SSSR', p.7.
142. Trotsky, 'Problemy Razvitiya SSSR', p.11.
143. Trotsky, 'Novyi Khozyaistvennyi Kurs v SSSR', *Byulleten' Oppozitsii*, no.9, (Fevral' Mart 1930g.), p.4.
144. Trotsky, 'Otkrytoe Pis'mo Chlenam VKP(b)', *Byulleten' Oppozitsii*, no.10, (Aprel' 1930g.), p.3. Trotsky, 'Skrip v Apparate', *Byulleten' Oppozitsii*, no.11, (Mai 1930g.), p.16. Trotsky, 'Uspekhi Sotsializma i Opasnosti Avanturyzma', *Byulleten' Oppozitsii*, no.17-18, (Noyabr' Dekabr' 1930g.), p.10. Trotsky, 'Is Stalin Weakening or the Soviets?', *The Political Quarterly*, July-September 1932.
145. Fitzpatrick, S., 'Stalin and the Making of a New Elite', *Slavic Review*, vol.38, (1979), pp.379-402.

CHAPTER EIGHT: TROTSKY AND STALINISM - CONCLUSION

*Epochs of reaction are always the periods for deepening theory.*

Trotsky, 'Letter to comrades in the USSR', (1929).

At about the time he started work on *Revolution Betrayed*, Trotsky wrote a review of a collection of Engels' letters to Kautsky concluding, perhaps introspectively, with the comment that 'the value of political prognoses is not that they coincide with every stage of reality, but that they assist in discerning its genuine development.'<sup>1</sup> In one sense it does not matter a great deal whether Trotsky was right or wrong on this or that point, or even as a whole; what is important is whether his analysis was useful. My conclusion is that Trotsky does assist in 'discerning the genuine development' of the historical reality of the USSR, but, undoubtedly, he does not provide all the answers, nor could he be expected to.

In assessing Trotsky's work on the USSR it is essential to relate tasks with results. Inadequate understanding of an unfolding process is a human fallibility and Trotsky was hardly alone in his failure to recognise the dangers of bureaucratic power. The kind of holistic social analysis he attempted presents great difficulties, even when there is terminological and typological consensus. Moreover, the Soviet state was unique and still in flux; Trotsky was working very much in isolation, without established concepts. As he readily admitted, this inevitably gave rise to problems.<sup>2</sup> It would be much simpler if 'social phenomena had always a finished character.' Although doctrinaires might prefer a categorical definition, this is not possible for dynamic social formations which 'have had no precedent and have no analogies.'

There is nothing more dangerous ... than to throw out of reality, for the sake of logical completeness, elements which today

violate your scheme and tomorrow may wholly overturn it. ... The scientific task, as well as the political, is not to give a finished definition to an unfinished process, but to follow all its stages, expose their mutual relations, foresee possible variants of development, and find in this foresight a basis for action.

Trotsky was consciously searching for a 'basis for action'. The objective of this thesis has been to investigate his quest, rather than the minutiae of his activity. Confronted by the steady growth of a bureaucratic state, he struggled, with less than full success, to keep his theoretical analysis abreast of political developments. This conclusion reviews the major features of his analysis, indicating some inter-connections between theory and practice.

Ten years before the fall of Tsarism Trotsky had declared that, if the Russian revolution did not spread to Europe and become 'permanent', a working class government could not endure. In a sense, this prediction was fulfilled, yet not in the originally anticipated manner. For obvious reasons, *Results and Prospects*, and all Trotsky's other pre-revolutionary writings, assume that if the working class lost power the capitalist class would regain it; no one thought that a workers' state could remain isolated in a backward country for a prolonged period. Trotsky did not conceive of class struggle between opposed forces resulting in prolonged immobility. If revolution were not successful then there would be counter-revolution; if socialism were not established then capitalism would be restored. It took many years after October before Trotsky appreciated that the counter-revolution which was occurring did not amount to the restoration of capitalism.

To see the political controversies of the 1920s as a 'struggle for power' is simplistic, unless the purposes of power are made clear. There is no evidence that Trotsky was personally ambitious: his aim was to secure

policies that, he believed, expressed the interests of the working class. From 1923, he argued that one way to secure this was by increasing proletarian representation in the institutions of power.<sup>3</sup> But, for Trotsky, class position is no guarantee of political rectitude. Having adopted a Leninist position on the need for a political vanguard, Trotsky was opposed to the recruitment of workers to cadre positions purely for class reasons. Later, in exile, he recognised that the mass influx of raw workers to the Party in 1924 had been one of the causes of the Opposition's defeat.<sup>4</sup>

With the Party majority, Trotsky agreed in the twenties that a bureaucracy was needed that would serve the interests of the workers by organising the defence of the Soviet state, securing the cultural and material advance of the previously oppressed sections of society, and extending socialist production. He accepted that, in certain circumstances, an extreme centralisation of power, even in the hands of a single individual, might be necessary.<sup>5</sup> Even in normal times the sectional conflicts within the working class required arbitration; the difficult decisions of resource allocation between accumulation and consumption demanded expert consideration; negotiations with diverse social interests within the country, not to speak of the problems of foreign relations, called for effective political representation of the working class. Given the economic and cultural under-development of post-revolutionary Russia, it seems to me unsurprising that Trotsky argued the need for a bureaucracy. What is less so, is his reluctance to accept that the bureaucracy could become so obstructive to socialist progress that the achievements of the October revolution were transformed into a hollow shell. If studying Trotsky has taught me anything, it is that what seems necessary, at one point, for the survival of a revolution may ultimately destroy it from within.

In Trotsky's analysis, the transition to socialism was a period of class struggle between proletariat and bourgeoisie. The revolutionary state faced the menace of capitalist restoration. Its vulnerability depended on the successes of socialist economic construction, the extent to which world capitalism would be able to pressure the revolutionary state, and the ability of the revolutionary leadership to recognise and react to danger. At first, Trotsky thought of capitalist restoration as a threat from outside the Party and state, even if by using the image of Thermidor and the concept of dual power he indicated its corrosive strength. Even after his expulsion, and the dramatic changes of 1928-1930 within the Soviet Union, Trotsky still considered capitalist restoration in terms of counter-revolution rather than prolonged degeneration. However, in exile, a quiet and slow re-consideration took place. In particular this revolved around the place of the bureaucracy in the political economy.

During the 1920s, as indicated in chapter five, Trotsky had seen little danger from the production methods and a division of labour taken from capitalism. In the 1930s, he continued to argue that although the capitalist class could be overthrown, the capitalist mode of production could only be displaced gradually. By this time, however, his assessment was more equivocal. Still accepting that the revolutionary state was compelled to use capitalist techniques (material incentives, management, experts, production lines, etc.), he now perceived the dangers more clearly, articulating them in his reflections on the contradictory nature of any and every workers' state. Now the bureaucracy itself, with its dependence on 'bourgeois norms of distribution', was seen as a potential advocate of capitalism.

So long as Trotsky saw capitalist restoration as an immediate threat, and identified it with the NEP bourgeoisie, the moderation of his critique

would be reinforced. If resurgent capitalism was the main danger then it made sense to emphasise Party unity. While the Right was perceived as a greater danger than the Centre, Trotsky's gradualist stance would be preserved. Only after the bureaucracy came to be seen as a cohesive and self-interested force, not simply as the transmitting mechanism for exterior capitalist interests, could reformism be discarded.

Why, for so long, did Trotsky see the kulaks and their allies, and not the bureaucracy, as the major threat? The answer, at least partly, is that the assumptions of Trotsky's method predisposed him so to do. He looked for a class explanation of politics and analysed current problems in such terms. According to Trotsky, the Party Left spoke for the proletariat, whilst the Right had succumbed to the pressure of the bourgeoisie. The Centre, led by Stalin, was based on the bureaucratic apparatus. It stood between the two wings and was 'Centrist' not simply because it was 'in the centre', but because it equivocated between revolutionary and reformist positions. It lacked any secure base; it would be pulled this way and that by class pressures. A short-lived zig-zag to the left was possible, although a more substantial course to the right was more probable. What was entirely improbable was that it would emerge victorious over both left and right. After the defeat of the Right, admittedly behind closed doors, at the April 1929 Central Committee plenum and the Sixteenth Party Conference, Trotsky wrote that 'the present crushing of the Right' was 'sharp in form but superficial in content'.<sup>6</sup>

Trotsky's attempt to see beyond the details of political struggle sometimes, it seems, blinded him to such details. At first he did not even look closely at them: the story told by Deutscher of his preference for reading novels at the Central Committee sessions may be apocryphal but it is entirely credible.<sup>7</sup> Apparently, he was surprised by the split in the



triumvirate and the formation of the Leningrad Opposition in 1925.<sup>8</sup> His contempt for Stalin and his methods led him to neglect the organisation of a political base. Politics as 'corridor skills' was a vulgar business in Trotsky's estimation, best left to bureaucrats. He fought on a more elevated terrain: ideas. From 1926 to 1932 this superior attitude was much less in evidence. Perhaps Trotsky had been forced by events to bring a sharper focus to bear on political personalities and events.<sup>9</sup> Even so, his writings still, in my view, fail to account adequately for the initiative and impact of the Stalinist faction. He subordinates the analysis of Soviet politics to the analysis of the class struggle between proletariat and bourgeoisie. In particular this may be seen in his analysis of the 'left' turn.

The 'left' turn began in 1928 with economic policies that restricted and then curtailed the NEP, leading to the five-year plans and collectivisation. The political corollary was the defeat of the advocates of NEP, the group that, in 1928, became known as the Right Opposition. Trotsky's reaction was positive but highly sceptical. He doubted the sincerity of the Stalinist turn.

In the most critical moments centrism swings on a rope, not knowing where to jump next. If in 1926 and 1927 the Right faction had shown one-tenth of the persistent drive which we showed then, the Stalinists in 1928 would have made a turn to the right and not to the left, under the effect of those same objective causes.<sup>10</sup>

From 1926 to 1928 Trotsky had presented inner-Party conflicts as a reflection of class struggle, with the Opposition as the proletariat's surrogate. If the proletariat lost by the defeat of the Opposition, then the bourgeoisie gained. But almost as soon as the Opposition had been defeated, the Stalin faction celebrated by adopting, albeit in a distorted form, some of its policies. Even so, Trotsky still anticipated the return of the Right. Consequently, when the 'left' turn suffered a temporary

reversal at the July 1928 plenum of the Central Committee, Trotsky wrote, one-sidedly, that 'the Right has issued entirely victorious from its first skirmish with the Centre, after four or five months of "left" politics.'<sup>11</sup> Trotsky accepted that this was not the final battle, but throughout 1928 he took the view that the Centre can only be fully victorious on condition that it ceases to be the Centre, welcomes the Left back to the Party, and reorients itself on the social base of the proletariat.<sup>12</sup> In this he was obviously wrong.

Through the lens of class analysis Trotsky saw, as the major threat, the growth of elements of dual power, not the growth of bureaucratic power per se. The bureaucracy was not a class; it had to be inserted into a class analysis. Its 'zigzag' policies show that 'it has no point of social support and no independent class policy.'<sup>13</sup> The dominant position of Centrism in the Party could only be temporary. 'By its victory on both fronts, Centrism has betrayed itself. Its social basis contracts in the same proportion as its power in the apparatus increases. The equilibrium of Centrism more and more approaches that of a tight-rope walker; there can be no talk of its stability.'<sup>14</sup> 'Crisis in the Right-Centre Bloc', the article from which the above quotes are taken, demonstrates, perhaps better than any other single major document, how the perspectives that had governed Trotsky's political struggle in the first period of opposition reached a crisis at the start of the second.

Here, Trotsky finds enormous difficulty in reconciling the idea that power needs a social foundation with his acceptance of the evident strength of the Centre. Asking 'What is Centrism?', he turns immediately to the question of its social base and warns: 'this question must not ... be considered mechanically and schematically, with the intention of allotting each faction a well-defined social basis. We must remember that we have

before us transitional forms, incomplete processes.' So far, so good. But then after a brief tour through the politics and social character of labour bureaucracies in the international workers' movement he returns to the social base of Centrism in the USSR, constructing a base for it in the most unlikely territory.

Centrism is the official line of the apparatus. Its protagonist is the Party official. But the officialdom is no class. It serves classes. Then which among them is represented by centrism? The reviving property-owners find their expression, timid though it is for the present, in the Right faction. The proletarian line is represented through the Opposition. By the method of elimination we get ... the seredniak (middle peasant).<sup>15</sup>

As Nove observes in his 'Note on Trotsky and the Left Opposition, 1929-31': 'in retrospect, much of the analysis was not only wide of the mark but too schematic, too wedded to dogmatic Marxist categories of class into which individual policy positions were too neatly fitted.'<sup>16</sup>

Even out of focus, Trotsky's writing is always lively and frequently acute. The perspectives of his first period of opposition were shown to be false by the victory of the Centre over the Right and the consolidation of the position of the bureaucracy. For five years, Trotsky moderated his opposition to the bureaucracy because he feared the restoration of capitalism. However, this does not mean that Trotsky's commentary on this period is worthless; consider, for example, his assessment of the dilemmas of power in *The New Course* or his reflections on class consciousness in the diary notes of 1926.<sup>17</sup> During the second period of opposition, 1928-33, Trotsky begins to adjust his perspectives. He drops the idea of dual power; he retunes 'Thermidor'; he recognises the bureaucracy's impact. His theses of 1931, for instance, reflect the promotion of the bureaucracy.

The bureaucracy ... is not a passive organ which only refracts the inspirations of the class. Without having absolute independence, the illusion of which lives in the skulls of many bureaucrats, the ruling apparatus nevertheless enjoys a great relative independence. The bureaucracy is in direct possession of state power; it raises itself above the classes and puts a powerful stamp upon their development; and even if it cannot

itself become the foundation of state power, it can ... greatly facilitate the transfer of power from the hands of one class into the hands of another.<sup>18</sup>

Trotsky's analysis of Soviet development after Lenin was complex. At some points, for example the problems of the 'planned' economy, it is profound; at others, the potential of the kolkhoz for capitalism for instance, it is quite wrong. It is not necessary to mark each of Trotsky's judgements to arrive at an overall assessment; indeed, that would be misleading. It is more satisfactory to consider what is fundamental in Trotsky's analysis. Therefore, this chapter concentrates on Trotsky's notion of degenerated workers' state.

Trotsky's analysis combined, firstly, a theory of why the ideals of the revolution were not sustained and, secondly, a theory of what the Soviet Union had become. The two are closely linked, but separable and amenable to distinct evaluation. Much of Trotsky's commentary on the origins of Stalinism was well observed and has been absorbed within later historical accounts; ultimately he is far more persuasive on this aspect of his work. As a statement of what Soviet society is, Trotsky's work, it seems to me, should only be taken as a starting point not as a conclusion. His gifts as a polemicist enabled him to argue persuasively that Soviet society was not socialist, but his idea of degenerated workers state was more a set of theoretical insights than a complete theory.

Clearly, Trotsky found great difficulties in analysing the USSR and, based on that, articulating an opposition strategy. In the first period of struggle he was a reluctant oppositionist, alternating between attack and retreat; in the second, despite expulsion, he remained committed to the Communist Party and to reformist positions; in the third, however much he attacked the Stalin regime, he remained unshakeably committed to the

defence of the USSR against capitalism. The origins of Trotsky's equivocations are in his theory of the bureaucratically degenerated workers' state.

Trotsky's concept of degenerated workers' state combines references to a future communist mode of production (the economic base); references to the displaced capitalist mode of production, tenacious in its influence over the new society (distribution and superstructure); and references to the specific history of Soviet Russia. Even the pattern of argument in *Revolution Betrayed* weaves around the proposition that the USSR is not socialist, not around the elaboration of what, precisely, it is. The idea of a degenerated workers' state is what is left after other possibilities are dismissed: the Soviet Union is not socialist and not capitalist. It is the product of a revolution that overthrew capitalism, and is, therefore, seen as 'beyond' capitalism. Revolutionary origins provide a sufficient explanation for the repudiation of the market, nationally and internationally. The USSR must be a workers' state not a bourgeois state, and, for Trotsky, these are the only two possibilities.

Understanding the present primarily as a conflict between the future and the past, Trotsky does not articulate categories that are specific to the degenerated workers' state. His two essential specific conceptual innovations are: the 'dual nature' of the workers' state, and the notion of bureaucracy. The first was a concretisation of earlier insights by Marx and Lenin. It points to the instability of the Soviet regime, reflecting the idea that the present combines the future and the past. It does not solve the problem of how the relations of production in the USSR are reproduced; rather it escapes from this question. The second, with all its difficulties, was also basic to Trotsky's theory of Stalinism. Degeneration could not be left as a reified concept. Like the first, it

too indicates a dependency on an established conceptual framework. Trotsky validated his use of the term by an analogy, and possibly even drew it from this. A trade union bureaucracy under capitalism both represents and misrepresents workers' interests; so does the Soviet bureaucracy.

Politically, the present denies the past; the rulers do not represent the interests of the workers and the workers have no way of representing themselves. Trotsky was surely right to assert a degeneration, if only from bad to worse. Arguments that the workers never had much 'real say', and that the regime always permitted privilege, do not contradict the fact that, in the 1930s, the position of the 'worker at the bench' was worse than before. The state had become more oppressive, the working class less revolutionary. Why not then allow the claim that the USSR is a 'degenerated workers' state'?

Firstly: even if we accept that the Soviet state was once a 'workers' state' and has degenerated, it is not clear that there can be any such thing as a 'degenerated workers' state'. Perhaps the tendency of degeneration can never be fulfilled. If the process develops to a point where reformist action cannot succeed, then what sense does it make to still call the state a 'workers' state'. In his polemics with the Democratic Centralists in 1928 Trotsky took this position. He argued that their political stance betrayed a theoretical position: a break with the ruling Party, let alone the adoption of a revolutionary strategy, was sufficient indication that they had discarded the definition of the USSR as a workers' state. The letter to Borodai, written in November 1928, is quite explicit: if the 'road of reform' is relinquished, 'the banner of a second proletarian revolution must be unfurled.'<sup>19</sup>

Secondly: can the bureaucracy continue to represent the interests of the workers, despite itself, by preserving the planned economy on the basis of state property? To answer in the affirmative is to assert a 'proletarian essence' to nationalisation: the workers' state is expressed by 'economics', its degeneration by 'politics'. Surely it is now clear, with the experience of third world 'socialism', welfare state 'socialism', and even fascism, that state control of the means of production does not amount to an expression of proletarian interests if the state does not consciously promote those interests. Trotsky saw that what was significant about production relations in the USSR was not the fact of nationalisation but the planned economy which nationalisation had made possible. Particularly before he discovered the need to call the USSR a degenerated workers' state, he understood that planning was a social relation of production that demanded democracy and respect for the interests of the workers and peasants. That is why he once referred to the Soviet economy not as a planned economy, but as a bureaucratic economy.<sup>20</sup> It follows that politics and economics cannot be dissociated in the form that is required by Trotsky's concept.

Thirdly: it is not convincing to argue for the 'degenerated workers' state' thesis by polemicising against rival hypotheses. If the state is neither capitalist nor socialist, it does not have to be a workers' state at some point between the two. This reductionist logic hardly seems adequate to deal with real historical formations. The argument that all states have a class basis, that capitalism was overthrown and has not been restored in Russia, and therefore a workers' state exists, albeit in a degenerated form, is a syllogism too simplistic to be taken seriously. The starting point for a satisfactory analysis should not be labels, but actually existing societies.

The fundamental argument against Trotsky's idea of degenerated workers' state was, in fact, within his own work. In 1935, in 'Rabochee Gosudarstvo, Termidor i Bonapartizm', he wrote:

In contradistinction to capitalism, socialism is built not automatically but consciously. Progress towards socialism is inseparable from that state power which is desirous of socialism, or which is constrained to desire it. Socialism can acquire an immutable character only at a very high stage of its development, when its production forces have far transcended those of capitalism, when the human wants of each and all can obtain bounteous satisfaction and when the state will have completely withered away, dissolving in society. But all this is still in the distant future. At the given stage of development, socialist construction stands and falls with the workers' state.<sup>21</sup>

Since it is impossible to imagine a perfect workers' state, all workers' states, in relation to the ideal, are deformed. A fundamental question arises from Trotsky's assertion that the basic cause of deformation is scarcity. Trotsky argued that only on the basis of economic abundance could deformation be avoided. The problem with this claim is that it begs an obvious question: what is abundance? Trotsky is well aware that the answer must be relative and culturally determined. By 1936, as Trotsky noted, the Soviet Union possessed more developed productive forces than the 'most advanced countries of the epoch of Marx.'<sup>22</sup> 'But in the historic rivalry of two regimes it is not so much a question of absolute as of relative levels.' As technique develops, so does 'the very scope of human demands. ... Motor cars, radios, cinema, and aeroplanes were all unknown to Marx's contemporaries.' Presumably we would now have to add: colour televisions, video recorders, hi-fi stereos, microcomputers, and many other such things. The motor car, Trotsky writes, differentiates modern society 'no less than the saddle horse once did.' A socialist society is 'unthinkable' without the free enjoyment of such goods. 'How many years are needed in order to make it possible for every Soviet citizen to use a car in any direction he chooses, refilling his petrol tank without difficulty en route?'<sup>23</sup> Personal property for consumption 'will not only be



preserved under communism but will receive an unheard of development.<sup>24</sup>

How, on this definition, will we ever arrive at national abundance, let alone international? In response to this problem Trotsky provides two answers, with the first stressed more heavily. With the establishment of planned production, 'there is not the slightest scientific ground for setting any limit in advance to our technical productive and cultural possibilities': abundance is not a utopian prospect.<sup>25</sup> Secondly, cultural development need not be expressed solely through advancing material comforts. Trotsky drew a distinction between the 'petty bourgeois' and the 'communist' attitudes to personal consumption: the former retaining the blinkers of 'domestic economy' and 'the psychology of greed and envy'.<sup>26</sup> These answers leave many more questions to be asked: for instance, are there limitations imposed by finite resources? and what is the relationship between ownership and consumption in a socialist society?

The survival of the USSR, albeit reformed in various ways, would present Trotsky with difficulties; the impossible happened. Would Trotsky still defend the USSR in all its conflicts with imperialism, even those that arise from a Soviet attack?<sup>27</sup> Here, I believe, we need to clarify what it was that Trotsky was supporting. He argued the superiority of the USSR not because it had been created from the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism, but because, as a result, it would be more progressive than capitalism. In numerous places Trotsky argues that the basis of human progress is the social capacity to develop the forces of production.<sup>28</sup> Ultimately, he believes that victory will be won by the system that can achieve the highest productivity of labour.<sup>29</sup> He assumed that the nationalisation of the means of production, even without their full socialisation, would enable the Soviet economy to raise the productivity of labour faster than under capitalism.<sup>30</sup> Two ratios must be considered: that

between the Soviet economy and a counter-factually hypothesised Russian economy still, in the 1930s, under capitalism; and, that between the Soviet economy and international capitalism. Although a definitive answer is not possible, we might argue, for Russia, that the administered economy was more effective than capitalism in securing primitive accumulation. But, for Trotsky, this would not have ended the debate. Trotsky would surely not have remained committed to the defence of the USSR simply because of nationalised property, planning, and the state monopoly of foreign trade, but only on condition that these achieved a progressive economy in relation to capitalism. As the benefits of forced industrialisation recede into the past, and as the international position of the USSR moves into relative decline, it is increasingly difficult to argue the superiority of the USSR on economic grounds.

Trotsky ruled out the possibility that an isolated and degenerated workers' state could have a sustained existence. His reasons can be reduced to three. Firstly: he remained convinced that economics is the basis of politics, or, as he often put it, politics is concentrated economics.<sup>31</sup> With no roots in the relations of production, except as the representative of the proletariat, the bureaucracy, through the logic of its own position, will be compelled to overthrow the existing relations of production and restore capitalism. A prolonged co-existence of the political domination of the bureaucracy with nationalised property and economic planning was assumed to be impossible. Secondly: Trotsky was a rationalist. In *Literatura i Revolyutsiya*, for example, he opposed revolutionary romanticism, arguing that 'the revolution is strong to the extent that it is realistic, rational, strategic and mathematical.'<sup>32</sup> In his perspective, the Stalinist regime had to be seen as monstrously irrational and therefore highly unstable; Stalin's USSR had no right to an existence in history. Thirdly: the fate of the USSR had to be considered

in international perspective. Trotsky's vision of capitalism in the 1930s was increasingly, and inaccurately, catastrophic. His conception of the epoch as one of wars and revolutions, the decline of capitalism, underpinned his certainty that the end of Stalinism was near. In 1939 he wrote: 'The disintegration of capitalism has reached extreme limits ... The further existence of this system is impossible.' The new war heralded a proletarian revolution in Europe; this 'must inevitably lead to the overthrow of the bureaucracy in the USSR.'<sup>33</sup> The 'Bonapartist oligarchy' might only be months away from its inglorious downfall.<sup>34</sup>

Deutscher, Trotsky's major biographer and a disciple of the 'prophet', argued that he had been too hasty in writing off the capacity of the Soviet state for reform.<sup>35</sup> Whether Trotsky would have agreed is highly dubious. No doubt he would have accepted Deutscher's perception of growing contradictions between the bureaucratic state and the larger, better educated and more prosperous working class, and tensions between bureaucratic economic management and the complexities of the relatively developed contemporary economy. He was the source of these views. But I do not believe he would have accepted that, after Stalin, a return to the socialist course could be made peacefully. Trotsky never considered revolution or counter-revolution as a purely objective process. However powerful his commitment to materialism, he never argued that economic development was a sufficient basis for socialist reconstruction. Despite the primacy of economics required by his theory, in conjunctural analysis Trotsky always looked first to politics.

1. T3710: ['Fridrikh Engels v Novykh Pis'makh'; 15 October, 1935]. The review was published in *New Internationalist*, June 1936.
2. Trotsky, *Revolution Betrayed*, (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1970), pp.255-6.
3. Trotsky, *The New Course*, in Trotsky, *The Challenge of the Left Opposition (1923-25)*, (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1975), pp.73-4.
4. Trotsky, *Revolution Betrayed*, pp.97-8.
5. Trotsky, 'Nerabochee i Neburzhuaznoe Gosudarstvo?', *Byulleten' Oppozitsii*, no.62-63, (Fevral' 1938g.), p.15.
6. Trotsky, 'Vyderzhka, Vyderzhka, Vyderzhka!', *Byulleten' Oppozitsii*, no.1-2, (Iyul' 1929g.), p.14.
7. Deutscher, I., *The Prophet Unarmed*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1970), pp.249-250.
8. *The Case of Leon Trotsky*, (London: Secker and Warburg, 1937), pp.322-3.
9. For example: T891: ['Ob Edinstve Partii'; September, 1926]; and T3000: ['Voprosy i Otvety'; September 1926]. See above: section six of chapter two.
10. Trotsky, 'Iz Pis'ma Oppozitsioneru v Rossii', *Byulleten' Oppozitsii*, no.3-4, (Sentyabr' 1929g.), pp.33-4.
11. T3126: ['Iyul'skii Plenum i Pravaya Opasnost''; July 1928].
12. For example: T2419: [Trotsky to Kasparova; 30 August, 1928]; T2420: [Trotsky to Ashkinazi; 30 August, 1928].
13. T3144: ['Krizis Pravo-Tsentristkogo Bloka i Perspektivy'; November, 1928].
14. T3144.
15. T3144.
16. Nove, A., 'A Note on Trotsky and the "Left Opposition", 1929-31', *Soviet Studies*, vol.XXIX, no.4, (1977), p.578.
17. T3015: ['Iz dnevnika (dlya pamyati)'; 26 November, 1926].
18. Trotsky, 'Problemy Razvitiya SSSR', *Byulleten' Oppozitsii*, no.20, (Aprel' 1931g.), p.7.
19. T3151: [Trotsky to Borodai; 11 November, 1928].
20. Trotsky, 'Problemy Sovetskogo Rezhima (Teoriya Pererozhdeniya i Pererozhdenie Teorii)', *Byulleten' Oppozitsii*, no.34, (Mai 1933g.), p.6.
21. Trotsky, 'Rabochee Gosudarstvo, Termidor i Bonapartizm', *Byulleten' Oppozitsii*, no.43, (Aprel' 1935g.), p.11.
22. Trotsky, *Revolution Betrayed*, p.57.

23. Trotsky, *Revolution Betrayed*, p.57.
24. Trotsky, *Revolution Betrayed*, p.260.
25. Trotsky, *Revolution Betrayed*, p.45.
26. Trotsky, *Revolution Betrayed*, p.260.
27. On the subject of the Soviet attack on Finland, Trotsky commented: 'From the standpoint of the self-defence of the workers' state surrounded by enemies, forceful sovietisation was justified.' Although military intervention to 'extend the arena of the socialist revolution' would have been 'more than a dubious act', the 'safeguarding of the socialist revolution' by consolidating the position of the workers' state 'comes before formal democratic principles'. Trotsky, 'Balance Sheet of the Finnish Events', *In Defence of Marxism*, (London: New Park, 1971), p.216, first published in *Fourth International*, June 1940.
28. For example: Trotsky, *Revolution Betrayed*, p.45.
29. Trotsky, *Revolution Betrayed*, pp.9-10.
30. Trotsky, 'Once Again: the USSR and its Defense', *Writings of Leon Trotsky* [1937-38], (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1976), p.36. Reprinted from *Internal Bulletin* no.2, Organizing Committee for the Socialist Party Convention. Trotsky, 'Nerabochee i Neburzhuaznoe Gosudarstvo?', pp.15-16.
31. Trotsky, 'Problemy Razvitiya SSSR', p.9. Trotsky, 'The Danger of Thermidor', *Militant*, 4.II.1933: T3498. Trotsky, 'Nerabochee i Neburzhuaznoe Gosudarstvo?', p.15.
32. Trotsky, *Literatura i Revolyutsiya*, vtoroe dopolnennoe izdanie, (Moscow: 1924), p.64.
33. Trotsky, 'SSSR v Voine', *Byulleten' Oppozitsii*, no.79-80, (Avgust Sentyabr' Oktyabr' 1939g.), pp.3-4.
34. Trotsky, 'SSSR v Voine', p.6.
35. Deutscher, I., *The Prophet Outcast*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1970), pp.311-2.

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The major source for this thesis has been Trotsky's writings. Unfortunately a complete edition of these, comparable with Lenin's *Po1noe Sobranie Sochinenii*, does not exist. Their publication has been rather haphazard, often influenced by political priorities. The *Sochineniya* published in Moscow was discontinued in 1927; for the most part it comprises work outside the chronological span of this study. This absence is being partially rectified by the publication of a very full edition of Trotsky's *Ouevres*, containing Archive material with references. The Institut Léon Trotsky in Paris intends to follow the first series, comprising exile works, with a second series that will publish writings of the 1920s. A collected edition in Russian is unlikely to be published in the near future.

The most useful single source for this study has been Trotsky's journal in exile, *Byulleten' Oppozitsii*, published in facsimile (New York: Monad Press, 1973). The other major collection of documents is the Pathfinder Press series, *Writings of Leon Trotsky, 1929-1940*, fourteen volumes (1972-1979). Comprehensive and well produced, it has provided a useful guide and supplement to *Byulleten' Oppozitsii*.

The Trotsky archive in the Houghton Library at Harvard University is indispensable, both for the exile period and the years 1923-28. Until 1980 most of the shorter documents from the exile period were held in the 'closed section'; in the reference notes these are designated EP (exile papers). Other documents from the archive have a reference number prefaced by T. Some of the more significant documents from the earlier period are available in a three volume Pathfinder Press series:

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