

TROTSKY AND THE PROBLEM OF SOVIET BUREAUCRACY

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In 1917 the Bolsheviks anticipated, on the basis of the Marxist classics, that the proletarian revolution would put an end to bureaucracy. However, soon after the revolution many within the Bolshevik Party, including Trotsky, were denouncing Soviet bureaucracy as a persistent problem. In fact, for Trotsky the problem of Soviet bureaucracy became the central political and theoretical issue that preoccupied him for the remainder of his life. This study examines the development of Leon Trotsky's views on that subject from the first years after the Russian Revolution through the completion of his work *The Revolution Betrayed* in 1936. In his various writings over these years Trotsky expressed three main understandings of the nature of the problem: During the civil war and the first years of NEP he denounced inefficiency in the distribution of supplies to the Red Army and resources throughout the economy as a whole. By 1923 he had become concerned about the growing independence of the state and party apparatuses from popular control and their increasing responsiveness to alien class pressures. Then in later years Trotsky depicted the bureaucracy as a distinct social formation, motivated by its own narrow interests, which had attained a high degree of autonomy from all social classes. Throughout the course of this evolution, Trotsky's thinking was influenced by factors that included his own major concerns at the time, preexisting images and analyses of bureaucracy, and Trotsky's interpretation of unfolding events. In turn, at each point Trotsky's understanding of the general nature of the problem of Soviet bureaucracy directed and shaped his political

activities and his analyses of new developments. The picture of Trotsky that emerges is of an individual for whom ideas and theories were extremely important as means of understanding the world, and as a guide to changing it.

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PREFACE

The author of any dissertation incurs many debts—scholarly, financial, and emotional. Because of the size of this project and the amount of time that has gone into it, my own debts are probably greater than most. Here, I cannot possibly name everyone who has assisted me in various ways. However, I want to acknowledge here at least some of the contributions that have been essential for this dissertation. I apologize in advance to the many colleagues, comrades, and friends who have helped me, but who are not mentioned.

First, I want to thank my entire committee. I owe a special debt to Jonathan Harris. Even before I started working on this dissertation, he encouraged my interest in Trotsky. Throughout this process, he has been a constant source of support, insight, and valuable criticism. Without his assistance, this dissertation never could have been written. Also, over a number of years—and especially during the last phase of this process—Bill Chase has been extraordinarily generous in sharing his time, his knowledge of the Stalin era, and his sense of humor. Additionally, during the final year of this project, both Ron Linden and Ilya Prizel have contributed greatly by the interest they have shown in this project, and by their critical questions.

As a librarian, I have a special appreciation for the assistance I have received with information sources. In this regard, I thank Naomi Allen and the Houghton Library at Harvard for providing me with copies of materials that were especially important for this project, and I thank David Law for permission to quote his dissertation. I want to thank Karen Rondestvedt and

Dan Pennell, the former and the current Slavic bibliographers at Pitt, for their help in answering specific questions, but also for their work in developing Pitt's fine collection of Russian—and especially Trotsky-related—resources. Furthermore, I thank Patricia Colbert, Patricia Duff, and Vicki Redclay in the Interlibrary Loan department of Pitt's Hillman Library for their assistance.

I also want to express my appreciation to the University Library System at Pitt for a six-month professional development leave that made it possible for me to finish a first draft of this dissertation. Related to that, I especially thank all of my colleagues in Hillman—and Wendy Mann and Patricia Sharp in particular—who shouldered extra responsibilities in Reference and Government Publications during my absence.

Among the many friends who have helped, I especially want to thank Paul Le Blanc for his thoughtful and informed comments and insights, as well as for his supportive friendship. Beyond that, Paul's own work has provided for me a model that combines serious scholarship with engaged political commitment.

Most of all, I want to thank my family for their important contributions. I thank my parents for their support and encouragement throughout this process. Beyond that, I want to thank my mother for passing along to me some of her love of history, my father for teaching me about the class struggle, and both for conveying to me the importance of social justice. To my wife Pamela, more than anyone else, I express my deep gratitude for her love and support, and for creating an environment in which it was possible to do productive work. Her own scholarly work often took a back seat during this process, and I recognize and greatly appreciate her sacrifices. Additionally, I want to thank Pamela for her invaluable editorial assistance. Finally, I want to thank my son Noah, who has given me much joy during the later stages of this project.

At the same time, Noah has inspired me with his own keen awareness of justice, as well as with his unique analysis of the struggle between “Fwosky” and “Bad Joseph.”

Just a note on the spelling used in this dissertation: Throughout, for transliterating personal names I have employed the Library of Congress system, making exceptions only for a very few of the best-known, or most common, names. Thus, this work refers to Rakovskii, Osinskii, and Sosnovskii, but also to Trotsky (rather than Trotskii), Natalia (rather than Nataliia) Sedova, and Zinoviev (rather than Zinov’ev).

1.0 INTRODUCTION

For most of the last two decades of his life, the central political and theoretical issue that occupied Leon Trotsky was the problem of Soviet bureaucracy. Even in the years immediately after the Bolshevik Revolution, Trotsky criticized various manifestations of bureaucratic inefficiency in the military and economic organs of the Soviet Union. By late 1923 he had begun to detect the corrosive presence of bureaucratism—involving authoritarianism, excessive centralism, and conservatism—in the Soviet state and the Bolshevik Party. During the party struggle of 1926-1927, Trotsky even more vigorously denounced bureaucratism in the state and party apparatuses, which he saw as increasingly repressive and as highly responsive to bourgeois pressure. This was a view Trotsky continued to develop and apply until 1933. Finally, in later years Trotsky constructed a new theory, most fully articulated in *The Revolution Betrayed*, to explain how a privileged bureaucracy had managed to attain an unprecedented degree of autonomy from all social classes of Soviet society.

An examination of the development of Trotsky's thinking on this question is important for a number of reasons, including its value in explaining the actions of one of the most important political figures of the twentieth century. It is the contention of this dissertation that much of Trotsky's political behavior can be understood only in light of his analysis of bureaucracy. For example, a familiarity with Trotsky's views on *glavkokratiia* in the early 1920s is required to comprehend his early preoccupation with central economic planning. A grasp of

what Trotsky, as well as Lenin, meant by the term *bureaucracy* in late 1922 is needed in order to appreciate the significance of the famous “bloc” the two leaders forged at that time. An understanding of Trotsky’s theory of bureaucracy in 1926-1927 is essential for recognizing the close relationship between the political, economic, and international demands he raised in the party struggle during those years. Similarly, an acquaintance with Trotsky’s 1926-1927 theory is necessary to fathom his refusal to form a broad alliance with the party right in 1928-1929, his readiness to accept at face value the accusations in the show trials of the First Five-Year Plan, his perpetual anticipation of a sharp turn to the right in economic and Comintern policy in the early 1930s, his hesitation over a break with the Comintern in mid-1933, and then the speed with which he subsequently discarded one after another of his preciously held positions in late 1933.

Beyond that, a study of Trotsky’s views on bureaucracy is important from the perspective of the history of ideas. Martin Krygier has noted the impact of Trotsky’s post-1923 writings on both Marxist and non-Marxist students of bureaucracy, observing that Trotsky’s writings “had a considerable influence on the reception of the concept of bureaucracy by later Marxists and by many non- or ex-Marxists.”¹ Perhaps even more significantly, a number of scholars have commented upon the influence of Trotsky’s writings—especially his later work—on serious and scholarly work dealing with the phenomenon of Stalinism. Thus, in 1958 John Plamenatz asserted, “As an indictment of Stalinism, Trotsky’s account of Soviet Russia is formidable. So much so, indeed, that some version or other of it has been adopted by nearly all of Stalin’s more plausible critics.”² More recently, Duncan Hallas has observed that whatever criticisms can be made of Trotsky’s analysis of Stalinism, “it has been the starting point for all *serious* analysis from a Marxist point of view”; and Henry Reichman has asserted that “it is Leon Trotsky’s critique that continues to shape key elements of what many scholars—including some otherwise

hostile to Marxism—regard as Stalinism.”³ Thus, a study of Trotsky’s views on both bureaucracy and Stalinism is important for understanding the origins of more recent analyses of those phenomena.

Finally, a clarification of Trotsky’s developed views on bureaucracy is essential for anyone who would attempt to apply his theory to a study of Soviet history, or to the contemporary process of capitalist restoration in Russia and Eastern Europe. Various scholars have commented upon, not only the past influence, but also the current significance of Trotsky’s analysis of Stalinism. Thus, in 1979 Baruch Knei-Paz asserted that no one had done more than Trotsky “to show the social and historical roots of Stalinism,” and that “it was, and in many ways still is, one of the most perceptive theoretical accounts of it.”⁴ And in 1983 Perry Anderson depicted Trotsky’s general interpretation of Stalinism as being “to this day the most coherent and developed theorization of the phenomenon within the Marxist tradition.”⁵ Furthermore, a number of writers have insisted upon the continuing value of Trotsky’s later theory of bureaucracy for understanding the process of capitalist restoration in Russia and Eastern Europe. For example, in 1995 M. I. Vovyeikov, professor of economics at the Russian Academy of Sciences, noted that “in *The Revolution Betrayed* in the mid 1930s” Trotsky “described with remarkable accuracy that which took place in our country in the early 1990s.”⁶ In 2001 the British Trotskyist Alan Woods observed that Trotsky’s analysis of Stalinism, “with a delay of 60 years,” had been “completely vindicated by history.”⁷ Similarly, in recent years Western social scientists such as Stephen White and Allen C. Lynch have turned to Trotsky’s 1936 observations to illuminate the dynamics of capitalist restoration.⁸ However, to apply Trotsky’s later theory presupposes an intimate familiarity with it; and that in turn requires an understanding of how Trotsky’s views evolved over time. As Trotsky asserted in a 1933 preface to a Greek edition of his 1923 writings

on bureaucracy, “It is impossible to understand correctly either scientific or political ideas without knowing the history of their development.”⁹

Although a number of other works have dealt in one way or another with this topic, in each case the focus, the scope, or the depth of the study has differed from that of the present dissertation. Some have had broader or significantly different concerns; others have concentrated upon a single aspect of Trotsky’s theory or upon an examination of one work; while still others have attempted only a brief sketch of the development of Trotsky’s views on bureaucracy or Stalinism.

Studies that have contained discussions of Trotsky’s analysis of bureaucracy but that have a broader or different focus have included biographies, general examinations of Trotsky’s political thought, works that have compared Trotsky’s views with those of another theorist, and studies of other aspects of Trotsky’s thinking that overlap with his analysis of the problem of bureaucracy. To date, perhaps the most extensive examination of the evolution of Trotsky’s theory of bureaucracy is contained in Isaac Deutscher’s classic three-volume biography—especially in the second and third volumes, *The Prophet Unarmed* and *The Prophet Outcast*.¹⁰ Other biographical works that are noteworthy in this regard include Robert Wistrich’s *Trotsky: Fate of a Revolutionary* and the fourth and fifth volumes of Tony Cliff’s *Trotsky*.¹¹ General studies of Trotsky’s political thought that present outlines of his main, and especially later, ideas on bureaucracy are Duncan Hallas’s *Trotsky’s Marxism*, Baruch Knei-Paz’s *The Social and Political Thought of Leon Trotsky*, Ernest Mandel’s *Trotsky as Alternative* and *Trotsky: A Study in the Dynamic of His Thought*, and John Molyneux’s *Leon Trotsky’s Theory of Revolution*.¹² Books of a comparative nature that include discussions of Trotsky’s views on this topic are Michael M. Lustig’s *Trotsky and Djilas: Critics of Communist Bureaucracy* and Emanuele

Saccarelli's *Gramsci and Trotsky in the Shadow of Stalinism*.¹³ Works focusing upon other aspects of Trotsky's thought, but that also contain significant examinations of his analysis of the problem of bureaucracy, include three unpublished doctoral dissertations: Eileen Braun's "The Prophet Reconsidered: Trotsky on the Soviet Failure to Achieve Socialism," Thomas Egan's "Leon Trotsky: His Political Philosophy in Opposition," and David Law's "Trotsky in Opposition: 1923-1940." Published monographs in the same category are *The Evolution of Trotsky's Theory of Revolution* by Curtis Stokes and *Trotsky, Trotskyism and the Transition to Socialism* by Peter Beilharz.¹⁴

Yet other studies have concentrated more narrowly on one or another aspect of Trotsky's theory of Soviet bureaucracy, or exclusively upon Trotsky's most important work on the subject, *The Revolution Betrayed*. Among the former are works on the class nature of the Soviet Union that include discussions of Trotsky's "workers' state" position, such as *The Bureaucratic Revolution* by Max Shachtman, *State Capitalism in Russia* by Tony Cliff, *Marxism and the U.S.S.R.* by Paul Bellis, *Trotskyism and the Dilemma of Socialism* by Christopher Z. Hobson and Ronald D. Tabor, and *Western Marxism and the Soviet Union* by Marcel van der Linden.¹⁵ Additionally, Jay Bergman, David Law, and Robert Warth all have published articles dealing with Trotsky's use of the Thermidor analogy, while Robert McNeal has written on Trotsky's perception of Stalin.¹⁶ Since 1936 a large number of authors have also written essays, reviews, articles, chapters, and pamphlets explaining, interpreting, extolling, criticizing, or testing the arguments of Trotsky's most complete statement on the problem of Soviet bureaucracy, *The Revolution Betrayed*. These include works by C. A. Arthur, John P. Burkett, Richard B. Day, Theodore Edwards, H. C. Foxcroft, C. L. R. James, David H. Katz, Leszek Kolakowski, Loizos Michail, Deborah Duff Milenkovitch, and John Plamenatz.¹⁷

A fairly small number of studies have focused directly upon the topic of this dissertation: the evolution of Trotsky's theory of Soviet bureaucracy. The most significant of these include Perry Anderson's "Trotsky's Interpretation of Stalinism," Siegfried Bahne's "Trotsky on Stalin's Russia," Martin Krygier's "The Revolution Betrayed? From Trotsky to the New Class," David W. Lovell's *Trotsky's Analysis of Soviet Bureaucratization*, Robert McNeal's "Trotskyist Interpretations of Stalinism," Hillel Ticktin's "Leon Trotsky and the Social Forces Leading to Bureaucracy," and Hillel Ticktin's, "Leon Trotsky's Political Economic Analysis of the USSR, 1929-40."¹⁸ All of these, including David W. Lovell's monograph, are relatively brief essays.

Many of the publications cited here have included important insights that will be incorporated in this dissertation. However, none has systematically and comprehensively examined the history of the evolution of Trotsky's theory of the Soviet bureaucracy. The broader or differing focus of a number of these works has diverted their attention from that particular story. In other cases the narrower concentration upon one aspect of Trotsky's theory or upon just one of his works has limited their contribution to the larger picture that will be examined in this dissertation. Finally, the sheer brevity of all previous works directly devoted to a discussion of the development of Trotsky's views on bureaucracy and/or Stalinism has meant that important aspects of that development have been missed, important writings have been overlooked, and sometimes the significance of Trotsky's other writings has been misjudged.

The goal of this dissertation is to provide a comprehensive account of the development of Trotsky's thinking on the problem of Soviet bureaucracy from shortly after the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917 through the writing of *The Revolution Betrayed* in 1936. As already suggested, Trotsky did not always use the word *bureaucracy* (*biurokratiia*) when dealing with this problem. Sometimes he employed other terms such as *bureaucratism* (*biurokratizm* or

kantseliarshchina), *officialdom* (*chinovnichestvo*), or *red tape* (*volokita*). Throughout this study there is an attempt to note the Russian word Trotsky employed at each point, as well as its closest English equivalent. However, the term *bureaucracy* is also used here in a generic sense—for example, when discussing the Trotsky’s understanding of the “problem of bureaucracy” or “Trotsky’s theory of bureaucracy.” The dissertation begins with 1917 rather than 1923 as other works on this topic commonly do, in order to show the important ways Trotsky’s views on bureaucracy shaped his political positions and behavior from the time of the revolution through 1922, and also to shed new light on the origins of his struggle against “bureaucratism” in the New Course controversy of 1923. It culminates with *The Revolution Betrayed* because this was Trotsky’s most complete and integrated statement on the problem of Soviet bureaucracy. However, that chapter also includes a brief summary of the additional developments in Trotsky’s theory up to his death in 1940.

This study examines Trotsky’s theoretical understanding of the problem of bureaucracy at each point in its development while attempting to identify both the sources of Trotsky’s views and their implications for his perceptions of events and his actions. Special attention is paid to how the political and economic context, and especially Trotsky’s perception of that context, influenced his thinking on the problem of bureaucracy. Throughout, the influence upon Trotsky of other thinkers—such as Marx, Engels, Lenin, Khristian Rakovskii, Victor Serge, and Trotsky’s son Leon Sedov—are examined. At the same time, the dissertation looks at how Trotsky’s understanding of the problem of bureaucracy in turn shaped his perceptions and evaluations of Soviet political developments as well as his own political behavior. At times, this study notes contradictions in Trotsky’s analysis or suggests errors or inadequacies in his interpretation of events in order to highlight some aspect of the development of his views.

However, no attempt is made to evaluate Trotsky's final views from either an empirical or a normative perspective, or to compare Trotsky's ultimate conclusions with those of contemporary scholars.

For a systematic comparison of Trotsky's views across time, a standard set of analytical categories is required. However, Trotsky's views on the problem of bureaucracy changed so dramatically over the years that it is impossible to apply any one highly specific set of categories to all periods. Consequently, for each period the following five general categories of analysis, with occasional variation of terminology for stylistic reasons, are applied: Trotsky's *conception* of the problem of bureaucracy, his understanding of the major *characteristics* of bureaucracy, his explanation of the *causes* of the problem, his beliefs regarding the *consequences* of bureaucracy, and his conclusions regarding the *cure* for the problem.

In each period the *conception* of bureaucracy employed by Trotsky was his general understanding of the problem. Thus, in the first years after the revolution Trotsky consistently associated bureaucracy with inefficiency, most commonly describing it as "*glavkokratiia*"—a flawed system of organizing Soviet industry. By late 1923 he had begun to view the phenomenon of bureaucratism as a variety of political alienation involving excessive centralization of authority in the apparatuses of the state and the party, but also the susceptibility those apparatuses to alien class pressures. This conception received an even sharper expression in 1926-1927 when Trotsky denounced the problem of bureaucratism, or of the Soviet bureaucracy, in terms of the growing centralism, authoritarianism, and repression in all Soviet political institutions, and also in terms of the responsiveness of the party leadership to an increasingly powerful bourgeois layer. In the early 1930s, although he began to describe the bureaucracy as a social formation that had usurped power, Trotsky continued to view it as highly receptive to

bourgeois pressures. However, by the mid 1930s he had concluded that the bureaucracy was a highly autonomous and self-sufficient “caste.” This was an image he would retain for the remainder of his life.

The *characteristics* category involves the most salient features of bureaucracy for Trotsky at any given time. For example, characteristics of *glavkokratiia* in the early years of the revolution included the centralist domination by the industrial *glavki* of regional and local economic organs and enterprises, combined with the inadequate coordination of the activities of the different *glavki* with each other. In later years Trotsky frequently discussed such features as the bureaucracy’s size, its privileges, its attitudes, its political composition and patterns of recruitment, its internal divisions, and its policies.

The *causes* category involves all of Trotsky’s different explanations for the origins of the problem of bureaucracy. Thus, in the early years Trotsky attributed the phenomenon of *glavkokratiia* to mistakes made in constructing socialist economic institutions with no historical precedent. By 1926-1927 he viewed the fundamental source of bureaucratism to be a shift in the balance of class forces that had pushed state and party apparatuses to the right, thereby necessitating restrictions on workers’ democracy. In the mid-1930s Trotsky explained the usurpation of power by the bureaucracy by reference to the various factors contributing to the demoralization of the proletariat, as well as to the function of the bureaucracy in mediating social conflict. Finally, in *The Revolution Betrayed*, while continuing to discuss factors that had weakened the Soviet working class after the revolution, Trotsky began to define the essential function of the Soviet bureaucracy in terms of the distribution of scarce resources in a backward, transitional society.

The *consequences* category includes Trotsky's understanding of both the immediate and the longer term effects of bureaucratization. In his earlier writings Trotsky concentrated upon the relatively short term effects of *glavkokratiia* and other forms of bureaucratic inefficiency in disrupting industrial production and military supply. Beginning with 1923 Trotsky became more concerned with the larger and longer-term prospect that bureaucratism might result in capitalist restoration. This remained a major concern of Trotsky's until his death. However, throughout those years his position varied regarding both the immediacy of the danger and the path that such a restoration might take.

Most broadly, Trotsky's views regarding the *cure* for the problem of bureaucracy fall into three approaches. From 1917-1922 Trotsky focused especially upon the structural reorganization of the Soviet economy. Roughly from 1923-1933 he advocated political reform of Soviet institutions, beginning with the party. Finally, during the years 1933-1940 he called for force or revolution to overturn bureaucratic rule. Furthermore, throughout the years 1923-1940 Trotsky's thinking shifted and evolved regarding such issues as alliances, tactical demands, and the role of the international oppositional movement.

Without exception, the primary sources used for this study were materials that have been published at one time or another. At an early stage of work on this dissertation, a number of previously unpublished documents from the Trotsky Archives at Harvard University were examined. However, Pathfinder Press subsequently published translations of those documents, including translations of several letters done by this author, and since then the original Russian texts also have appeared on the Web. Materials employed include books, pamphlets, resolutions, and articles written for public consumption, but also "circular letters," private letters, and a diary published since Trotsky's death. In light of the fact that most of Trotsky's theoretical writings

were written for publication and the fact that so much additional material has appeared in print and on the Web in recent decades, this does not appear to represent a serious limitation.

The English translations of Trotsky's writings used in this dissertation were primarily those produced by political publishers—Pathfinder and Monad in the U.S., and New Park in the U.K.—plus a few other titles issued by various academic and commercial presses. These works include the following titles listed in roughly chronological order: *The Trotsky Papers, 1917-1922* (in English and Russian); the five-volume series *How the Revolution Armed*; the two-volume collection *The First 5 Years of the Communist International; Terrorism and Communism; Lenin's Fight against Stalinism* (by Lenin and Trotsky); *Problems of Everyday Life*; the three-volume series, *The Challenge of the Left Opposition (1923-1929); Portraits: Political and Personal*; the three-volume series *Trotsky's Writings on Britain; Leon Trotsky on Britain; Leon Trotsky on China; The Stalin School of Falsification; The Third International After Lenin; My Life: An Attempt at an Autobiography*; the fourteen-volume series, *The Writings of Leon Trotsky*; the three-volume work, *The History of the Russian Revolution; The Struggle Against Fascism in Germany; Leon Trotsky on France; Trotsky's Notebooks, 1933-1935* (in English and Russian); *Trotsky's Diary in Exile, 1935; The Serge-Trotsky Papers; The Revolution Betrayed; The Spanish Revolution, 1931-39; The Transitional Program; In Defense of Marxism*; and the biography *Stalin*.¹⁹

To check the translations listed above, and for additional contributions by Trotsky on the problem of bureaucracy that have not yet been translated, a number of Russian-language sources were also utilized. These include two series originally published in the Soviet Union: Trotsky's *Kak vooruzhalas revoliutsiia: na voennoi rabote* and his *Sochineniia* (twelve volumes published in fifteen parts). In this latter series, volume 15, *Khoziaistvennoe stroitel'stvo Sovetskoi*

respubliki, and volume 21, *Kul'tura perekhodnogo perioda* are especially important sources for Trotsky's early views on bureaucracy.²⁰ Additional Russian language sources consulted include the four-volume collection *Kommunisticheskaia oppozitsiia v SSSR, 1923-1927*; the collection (two volumes to date) *Archiv Trotskogo: iz archivov revoliutsii, 1927-1928*; Trotsky's *Stalinskaia shkola falsifikatsii*; his autobiography, *Moia zhizn: opyt avtobiografii*; a facsimile edition in four volumes of his journal *Biulleten' oppozitsii*; the full text of Trotsky's *Biulleten'* on the "Iskra Research" website; a collection of diary entries and letters entitled *Dnevniki i pis'ma*; Trotsky's *Chto takoe S.S.S.R. i kuda on idët?*; his *Stalin*, and the full text of various letters, documents, and publications on the "Lib.Ru: Lev Trotskii" website.²¹ Additional primary sources used include Lenin's *Collected Works* in English and Russian, Stalin's *Works* in English and in Russian, the stenographic reports of the All-Russian Congress of Soviets, stenographic reports of party congresses, and collections of important party resolutions in English and Russian.

Various memoirs and numerous secondary sources were also employed, especially for preparing the historical background sections in each chapter. These secondary sources include general surveys of Soviet political and economic history and the history of Soviet foreign policy and of the Comintern, more specialized monographs and articles on various aspects of Soviet and Comintern history; biographies of Trotsky, Lenin, Stalin, and Bukharin, and all of the works cited above that deal directly or indirectly with Trotsky's analysis of bureaucracy.

The remainder of this dissertation is organized chronologically in nine additional chapters:

Chapter 2 discusses of the meaning of the term *bureaucracy* in popular usage and within the Marxist movement before the Bolshevik Revolution. In its original eighteenth century French

usage, *bureaucracy* meant the “rule of the bureaus” or “the bureaus that rule.” By the mid-nineteenth century the term had migrated throughout Europe, and had acquired a host of secondary meanings and connotations including excessive formalism, apathy, ignorance, and inefficiency on the part of officials. All of these negative meanings and connotations were in popular use in Russia by the early twentieth century where they shaped the thinking of revolutionary socialists such as Lenin and Trotsky.

However, another tradition that contributed even more directly to the understanding of Russian socialists was the classical Marxist analysis of bureaucracy. Marx and Engels, taking their understanding from the primary, popular meaning of the term, viewed bureaucracy in terms of the phenomenon of political alienation. That is, the state apparatus or bureaucracy was seen as an institution that had separated itself from the control of, and that had established its own rule over, society as a whole. In their mature works both writers argued that in normal periods there was a direct relationship between this development and the subordination of the state to the control of the dominant economic class.²² Furthermore, they predicted that the coming socialist revolution would begin to put an end to political alienation and the problem of bureaucracy by transforming the state into a tool of the proletariat and by instituting the radically democratic measures undertaken by the Paris Commune. Ultimately, they envisioned that the state and its bureaucracy would wither away with the abolition of classes and scarcity. Prior to the Bolshevik Revolution, first Trotsky and then Lenin reaffirmed these basic ideas, equating Russian soviets with the Paris Commune as interpreted by Marx and Engels. Lenin presented this view most sharply in *The State and Revolution* where he emphasized that the coming revolution would smash the old state bureaucracy by instituting fuller democracy, and then would begin to

construct a less bureaucratic machine that would make possible the gradual abolition of all bureaucracy.

Chapter 3 discusses various understandings of the problem of bureaucracy that were held within the Bolshevik Party during the first years after the revolution. At that time there was a broad consensus within the party that the revolution had failed to resolve the problem of bureaucracy. However, there was little agreement about exactly what this meant. A series of opposition groupings within the party continued to define the problem in terms of political alienation as the growing centralization of power and exclusion of the masses from participation, and to link this directly to the recruitment of bourgeois specialists to serve as administrators in Soviet political, economic, and military institutions. Lenin, while advocating the use of bourgeois experts, shared some of the concerns of the oppositionists about the bureaucratizing influence of the specialists and about the failure to draw workers and peasants into the administration of the state. Along with the oppositionists, he also occasionally denounced manifestations of hyper-centralism and authoritarianism—especially in Trotsky’s behavior and proposals at the time of the trade union controversy of 1920, and in Stalin’s behavior and proposals regarding the Georgian affair of 1922. At the same time, Lenin frequently condemned “bureaucracy,” understood very differently as inefficiency in the functioning of Soviet institutions.

In contrast to both the oppositionists and Lenin, during this period Trotsky rejected any association of the bureaucracy with either bourgeois specialists or with excessive political centralism. Rather, drawing upon various popular secondary associations of the term “bureaucracy,” Trotsky described the problem almost exclusively as related to inefficiency. Thus, he condemned as “bureaucratic” various oppositions’ resistance to the use of specialists;

and he denounced as “bureaucratic,” and “red-tapist” the inefficient work habits of Soviet officials. However, Trotsky’s most frequent and most developed analysis of bureaucracy during this period was devoted to “*glavkokratiia*”—inefficiency that he perceived in the very structure of Soviet economic institutions, involving the excessive centralism of the *glavki* and an insufficient degree of coordination between them. Against this, Trotsky proposed granting greater autonomy to local institutions and enterprises and the introduction of centralized economic planning. At the same time, Trotsky’s analysis led him to reject Lenin’s recommendations for combating bureaucracy through the Workers’ and Peasants’ Inspectorate and through the creation of a post for Deputy Chairmen of the Sovnarkom. However, in December 1922, in reaction to “bureaucratic” resistance to his repeated proposals for centralized planning and to maneuvering against Trotsky by other party leaders, Trotsky agreed to join Lenin in a “bloc against bureaucracy.”

Chapter 4 discusses the dramatic transformation that occurred in Trotsky’s thinking on the problem of Soviet bureaucracy during the years 1923-1925. From an almost exclusive preoccupation with efficiency, Trotsky shifted the focus of his analysis to the problem of political alienation. At the same time, he increasingly directed his attention from bureaucracy in the state to the phenomenon of bureaucracy in the party. This transformation seems to have been prompted by a number of factors, including the leadership majority’s continued resistance to centralized planning. Early in 1923 Trotsky denounced the tendency toward “bureaucratism,” “departmentalism,” and departmental degeneration” within the party that arose because of the failure to unite specialized jobs through the adoption of real economic and political planning. When the leadership subsequently disregarded the decisions of the Twelfth Party Congress to implement planning and then increasingly resorted to the practices of secretarial appointment and

transfer of dissidents, during the New Course controversy of 1923-1924 Trotsky condemned the leadership's preoccupation with details, but also the "tendency of the apparatus to think and decide for the whole" party.²³ The ultimate danger for Trotsky was that this might result in the complete "opportunist degeneration" of the leadership. Following the defeat of the opposition, Trotsky temporarily retreated both politically and theoretically. However, a number of the anti-bureaucratic themes from Trotsky's New Course writings can be discerned in his speeches and writings from 1924-1925.

Chapter 5 discusses the views on Soviet bureaucracy articulated by Trotsky in the political struggle of 1926-1927. In those years Trotsky returned to the offensive, joining with his former opponents Zinoviev and Kamenev in a United Opposition that sharply challenged the policies of the party leadership concerning the Soviet economy, international affairs, and the party regime. At the same time, building upon his insights from the New Course Controversy, Trotsky developed for the first time a complex yet remarkably elegant and coherent theory of Soviet bureaucracy based entirely upon the classical Marxist analysis of the phenomenon of political alienation.

Specifically, Trotsky now argued that the disease of "bureaucratism" that now affected all Soviet political institutions had two essential aspects. On one hand, it included a further centralization of decision making, mounting authoritarianism, and political repression. At the same time, it included the growing responsiveness of the party leadership to the appeals and pressures of the kulaks and NEPmen, most clearly manifested in a steady drift to the right in economic and international policy. In Trotsky's analysis, the ultimate source of both phenomena was a shift in the relative strength of social classes within the Soviet Union with the weakening of the proletariat due to demoralization and disillusionment, and a strengthening of the self-

confidence and political activity of bourgeois elements. This shift had pushed the apparatus to the right, and at the same time had necessitated ever-greater deviations from workers' democracy. Ultimately, both developments further weakened the proletariat. Trotsky's greatest concern was that this process would culminate in capitalist restoration—most likely through the “Thermidorian” path of gradual, apparently minor, shifts in policy and in the party leadership. However, Trotsky believed that, until such a restoration of capitalism, the Opposition could still hope to reform the state and party by mobilizing the proletarian members of the party to press for an improvement in the party regime and political line.

The years 1928-1929, discussed in Chapter 6, represented the beginning of a crisis in Trotsky's theoretical understanding of Soviet bureaucracy as events increasingly contradicted his predictions.²⁴ Although Trotsky had predicted that the crushing of the Opposition would result in the disintegration of the centrist current and further shifts of policy to the right leading to a restoration of capitalism. Instead, following the defeat of the United Opposition the Stalinist center actually consolidated power while initiating a dramatic shift of economic and Comintern policy to the left. In the face of this widening gulf between theory and reality, many Oppositionists abandoned the theory and capitulated.

In contrast, Trotsky continued to insist upon the validity of his theory, attempting to reconcile it with reality by a series of highly strained interpretations of events and a number of ad hoc theoretical modifications. Consistent with his theory, Trotsky endorsed the party leadership's assertions regarding a “kulak strike” in late 1927 and early 1928, and its claims that the technical specialists in the Shakhty trial of 1928 had engaged in conspiracy to commit sabotage. Beyond that, on the basis of theoretical considerations Trotsky minimized the significance of the left turn, measuring its seriousness in terms of the leadership's failure to reform the party regime. To the

extent that Trotsky recognized a turn had taken place in both Comintern and domestic policy, Trotsky dubiously attributed it to the pressure exerted by the working class and/or the Opposition.

At the same time, the defeat of the party right by Stalin impelled Trotsky to modify his theory by increasingly emphasizing the relative autonomy of the apparatus. Specifically, he now asserted that in certain periods the “logic of the apparatus” had a greater impact upon events than the balance of class forces. In line with this, Trotsky began to suggest that a Stalinist victory could prepare the way for a directly “Bonapartist,” restoration of capitalism. In turn, this suggested to Trotsky the possibility of a “common effort” with the party right around democratic demands. At the same time, manifestations of autonomy by the apparatus reinforced Trotsky’s tendency to redefine the problem in terms of a “bureaucracy” that had usurped power, rather than one of “bureaucratism.” Nevertheless, to a large degree Trotsky largely retained the theory he had developed in previous years, and on that basis repeatedly continued to predict an imminent policy shift to the right.

During Trotsky’s Turkish exile of 1929-1933, discussed in Chapter 7, the contradictions between his theory and developments in Soviet policy continued to widen. Despite Trotsky’s repeated predictions that a deep turn to the right was imminent, the leadership veered ever more sharply to the left in both its economic and Comintern policies, in the process adopting policy orientations so far to the left that they fell entirely outside of the framework assumed by Trotsky’s theory. Furthermore, Trotsky’s theory had depicted the worsening of the state and party regimes as directly related to the leadership’s rightist orientation. Yet, even while implementing its left course, the leadership continued to institute policies that, in Trotsky’s view, deviated more and more from the norms of workers’ democracy.

As in 1928-1929, Trotsky attempted to reconcile his theory with reality by a combination of methods, including forcing the situation into the Procrustean bed of his traditional theory, and introducing ad hoc theoretical modifications that suggested the bureaucracy was more autonomous than he previously imagined. The result was an analysis that was increasingly incoherent. Thus, on different occasions Trotsky found himself explaining the leftist economic orientation of the leadership as inspired by proletarian pressure, bourgeois influence, or the emotional states of an autonomous bureaucracy. At times he asserted the turn had been made *against* the wishes of the bureaucracy; while at other times he insisted it had been made *by* the bureaucracy. Sometimes he argued that the left turn had increased the danger of capitalist restoration, and other times that it had decreased the danger. Trotsky repeatedly defined as “centrist” a grouping that stood to the left of the Left Opposition while criticizing as “rightist” a party current which held views virtually indistinguishable from those of the left. Finally, he continued to denounce the “conservatism” of a leadership which was transforming the Soviet economy dramatically while implementing a radical leftist course internationally.

Chapter 8 discusses the revolution that occurred in Trotsky’s thinking on the problem of Soviet bureaucracy during the period 1933-1936. The disastrous failure of Comintern policy in Germany in 1933 presented a new challenge to Trotsky’s traditional theory, compelling him to make one theoretical change after another that finally liberated his thinking from the theory he had developed in 1926-1927. Immediately, Trotsky gave up on his attempt to reform the Communist Party of Germany (KPD). That break initiated a chain reaction that overturned or modified a whole series of other political and theoretical positions—including Trotsky’s reform perspective for the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks) [AUCP(b)] and Soviet state, his definition of a workers’ state, his views on the relevance of the Thermidor and Bonapartism

analogies, and his explanation for the origins of the bureaucracy's power. All of these changes reinforced his growing perception of the bureaucracy as a highly autonomous entity.

Subsequently, Trotsky applied these insights in explaining the new right shifts on Soviet economic and international policy. Then, on the basis of these interpretations of recent policy developments, Trotsky initiated further theoretical modifications—including a complete revision of his views on Thermidor and Bonapartism, a dropping of the term *centrism*, and a call for a new political revolution—that supplemented and reinforced his new appreciation for the bureaucracy's autonomy.

Chapter 9 explains how the revolution of 1933-1936 in Trotsky's theory culminated in his major theoretical work, *The Revolution Betrayed*. Much of that book restated for a general audience ideas that Trotsky had expressed in the international Trotskyist press since 1933. However, beyond that, *The Revolution Betrayed* contained a number of new ideas and emphases. More clearly than ever before Trotsky defined and stressed the socio-economic context of Soviet bureaucratization. This provided a framework for redefining the functional origins of bureaucratic power, for evaluating Soviet policy in all areas, and for starkly identifying the alternative futures confronting the USSR. Although in subsequent years Trotsky continued to write on Soviet political developments, in all his work after August 1936 he based his analysis on the theory of Soviet bureaucracy outlined in *The Revolution Betrayed*.

Chapter 10 concludes this work with a summary of the development of Trotsky's views on Soviet bureaucracy and with a brief indication of what that story means for our understanding of the theorist. The history of the evolution of Trotsky's thinking on the problem of Soviet bureaucracy was a complex one. At each stage, his theorizing was influenced by his concerns about the principal problems and tasks confronting the Soviet Union and the world revolution, by

preexisting images and analyses of the problem of bureaucracy, and by his perceptions and analyses of current developments. In turn, his political activity and his analyses of events were, to a large degree, directed and shaped by his theoretical analysis of the problem of bureaucracy. The picture of Trotsky suggested by this account is of a man who greatly valued ideas and theories, both as a means of understanding the world and as a guide to changing it.

¹ Martin Krygier, "The revolution betrayed? From Trotsky to the new class," in *Bureaucracy: The Career of a Concept*, ed. Eugene Kamenka and Martin Krygier (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1979), 89.

² John Plamenatz, *German Communism and Russian Marxism* (London: Longmans, Green, & Co., 1954), 303.

³ Duncan Hallas, *Trotsky's Marxism* (London: Bookmarks, 1984), 28; Henry Reichman, "Reconsidering 'Stalinism'," *Theory and Society* 17, no. 1 (January, 1988), 67. Along these same lines, Hillel Ticktin has asserted that Trotsky's articles on the Soviet Union written between 1923 and 1936 "have provided the theoretical basis for practically every serious Marxist analysis of the Soviet Union." Hillel Ticktin, "Leon Trotsky's Political Economic Analysis of the USSR, 1929-40" in *The Ideas of Leon Trotsky*, ed. Hillel Ticktin and Michael Cox (London: Porcupine Press, 1995), 65.

⁴ Baruch Knei-Paz, *The Social and Political Thought of Leon Trotsky* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), 369.

⁵ Perry Anderson, "Trotsky's Interpretation of Stalinism," in *The Stalinist Legacy: Its Impact on Twentieth-Century World Politics*, ed. Tariq Ali (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England: Penguin Books, 1984), 118.

⁶ M. I. Voyeikov, "The Relevance of Trotsky's Ideological Legacy" in *The Ideological Legacy of L. D. Trotsky: History and Contemporary Times*, ed. Marilyn Vogt-Downey. Materials from the International Scientific Conference on Leon Trotsky Held in Moscow November 10-12, 1994. (New York: International Committee for the Study of Leon Trotsky's Legacy, 1994), 6.

⁷ Alan Woods, "The Revolution Betrayed—a Marxist Masterpiece," London: June 6, 2001, Trotsky.net, http://www.trotsky.net/revolution_betrayed.html (accessed 3/22/2008). See also Jim Miles, "Trotsky on the Collapse of the USSR," in Vogt-Downey, *Ideological Legacy*, 61-65; Chris Edwards, "Leon Trotsky and Eastern Europe Today: An Overview and a Polemic," in Vogt-Downey, *Ideological Legacy*, 156-165; Jim Miles, "How Trotsky Foretold the Collapse of the Soviet Union," *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism* (New York) 12, no. 10 (December 1994-January 1995): 29-31, 45-53.

⁸ Stephen White, *Russia's New Politics: The Management of a Postcommunist Society* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 291; Allen C. Lynch, *How Russia Is Not Ruled: Reflections on Russian Political Development* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 77.

⁹ Leon Trotsky, *Writings of Leon Trotsky [1932-33]*, ed. George Breitman and Sarah Lovell (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1972), 87.

¹⁰ Isaac Deutscher, *The Prophet Unarmed, Trotsky: 1921-1929* (New York: Vintage Books, 1965); Isaac Deutscher, *The Prophet Outcast, Trotsky: 1929-1940* (New York: Vintage Books, 1965).

¹¹ Robert Wistrich, *Trotsky: Fate of a Revolutionary* (New York: Stein and Day, 1979); Tony Cliff, *Trotsky: Fighting the Rising Stalinist Bureaucracy, 1923-27* (London: Bookmarks, 1991); Tony Cliff, *Trotsky: The Darker the Night the Brighter the Star, 1927-1940* (London: Bookmarks, 1993). Other significant biographies that discuss Trotsky's views on bureaucracy to varying degrees include Pierre Broué, *Trotsky*, (Paris: Fayard, 1988); Ian D. Thatcher, *Trotsky* (New York: Routledge, 2003); and Dmitiri Volkogonov, *Trotsky: The Eternal Revolutionary*, trans. and ed. by Harold Shuckman (New York: The Free Press, 1996).

¹² Duncan Hallas, *Trotsky's Marxism* (London: Bookmarks, 1984); Baruch Knei-Paz, *The Social and Political Thought of Leon Trotsky* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978); Ernest Mandel, *Trotsky as Alternative* (London: Verso, 1995); Ernest Mandel, *Trotsky: Study in the Dynamic of His Thought* (London: NLB, 1979); and John Molyneux, *Leon Trotsky's Theory of Revolution* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1981).

¹³ Michael M. Lustig, *Trotsky and Djilas: Critics of Communist Bureaucracy* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1989); and Emanuele Saccarelli, *Gramsci and Trotsky in the Shadow of Stalinism: The Political Theory and Practice of Opposition* (New York: Routledge, 2008).

¹⁴ Eileen Braun, "The Prophet Reconsidered: Trotsky on the Soviet Failure to Achieve Socialism" (PhD diss., George Washington University, 1993); Thomas Egan, "Leon Trotsky: His Political Philosophy in Opposition," (PhD diss., Florida State University, 1973); and David Law, "Trotsky in Opposition: 1923-1940" (PhD diss., University of Keele, 1987); Curtis Stokes, *The Evolution of Trotsky's Theory of Revolution* (Washington, D.C.: University Press of America, 1982); Peter Beilharz, *Trotsky, Trotskyism and the Transition to Socialism* (Totawa, NJ: Barnes and Noble Books, 1987).

¹⁵ Max Shachtman, *The Bureaucratic Revolution: The Rise of the Stalinist State* (New York: The Donald Press, 1962); Tony Cliff, *State Capitalism in Russia* (London: Pluto Press, 1974); Paul Bellis, *Marxism and the U.S.S.R.: The Theory of Proletarian Dictatorship and the Marxist Analysis of Soviet Society* (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1979); Christopher Z. Hobson and Ronald D. Tabor, *Trotskyism and the Dilemma of Socialism* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1988); Marcel van der Linden, *Western Marxism and the Soviet Union: A Survey of Critical Theories and Debates Since 1917* (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2007).

¹⁶ On Trotsky's views regarding Thermidor, see Jay Bergman, "The Perils of Historical Analogy: Leon Trotsky on the French Revolution," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 48, no. 1 (Jan.-Mar., 1987): 73-98; David Law, "Trotsky and the Comparative History of Revolutions: the 'second chapter,'" *Sbornik* 13 (1987), Study Group on the Russian Revolution: 4-15; David S. Law, "Trotsky and Thermidor," in *Pensiero e azione politica di Lev Trockij: atti del convegno internazionale per il quarantesimo anniversario della morte*, ed. Francesca Gori (Firenze: Leo S. Olschki, 1982), 2:433-449; Robert D. Warth, "Leon Trotsky and the Comparative History of Revolutions," *Consortium on Revolutionary Europe 1750-1850: Proceedings* 13 (1983): 196-209. On Trotsky's perception of Stalin, see Robert McNeal, "Trotsky and Stalinism," in Gori, *Pensiero*, 2: 377-387; Robert H. McNeal, "Trotsky's Interpretation of Stalin," in *Canadian Slavonic Papers* 5, ed. G. S. N. Luckyj (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1961), 87-97.

¹⁷ C. A. Arthur, "The Coming Soviet Revolution," in *Trotsky: The Great Debate Renewed*, ed. Nicolas Krasso (St. Louis, MO: New Critics Press, 1972), 151-191; John P. Burkett, "Soviet Socioeconomic Development: A Fold Catastrophe?" *Comparative Economic Studies* 29, no. 3 (Fall, 1987): 70-93; Richard B. Day, "Democratic Control and the Dignity of Politics—An Analysis of The Revolution Betrayed," *Comparative Economic Studies* 29, no. 3 (Fall, 1987): 4-29; Theodore Edwards, *The Soviet Union: What It Is—Where It Is Going: A Guide to the Study of Leon Trotsky's The Revolution Betrayed* (New York: Pioneer Publishers, January, 1958); H. C. Foxcroft, "The Revolution Betrayed," *The Quarterly Review*, no. 535 (January, 1938): 1-14; C. L. R. James, "Trotsky's 'Revolution Betrayed,'" *International Socialism* 16 (Spring 1964): 25-29; David H. Katz, "Trotsky's *The Revolution Betrayed*: A Reappraisal," *Midwest Quarterly* 18, no. 3 (Spring 1977): 287-297; Leszek Kolakowski, *Main Currents of Marxism: The Founders, The Golden Age, The Breakdown*, trans. P. S. Falla. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2005), 934-952; Loizos Michail, "Trotsky's *Revolution Betrayed*," *Socialist Europe* 3 (1977): 3-7. Deborah Duff Milenkovitch, "Trotsky's *The Revolution Betrayed*: A Contemporary Look," *Comparative Economic Studies* 29, no. 3 (Fall 1987): 40-69; John Plamenatz, "Deviations from Marxism," *Political Quarterly* 21, no. 1 (Jan.-Mar. 1950): especially pp. 49-55; John Plamenatz, *German Marxism and Russian Communism* (London, Longmans, Green & Co., 1954), 281-305.

¹⁸ Perry Anderson, "Trotsky's Interpretation of Stalinism"; Siegfried Bahne, "Trotsky on Stalin's Russia," *Survey* 41 (April, 1962): 27-42; Martin Krygier, "The revolution betrayed? From Trotsky to the new class," in *Bureaucracy: The Career of a Concept*, ed. Eugene Kamenka and Martin Krygier (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1979), 88-111 [see also Martin Krygier, "'Bureaucracy' in Trotsky's Analysis of Stalinism," in *Socialism and the New Class: Towards the Analysis of Structural Inequality within Socialist Societies*, ed. Marian Sawyer, APSA Monograph No. 19 (Sidney, Australia: Australasian Political Studies Association, 1978), 46-67]; David W. Lovell, *Trotsky's Analysis of Soviet Bureaucratization: A Critical Essay* (London: Croom Helm, 1987); Robert H. McNeal, "Trotskyist Interpretations of Stalinism," in *Stalinism: Essays in Historical Interpretation*, ed. Robert C. Tucker (New York: W. W. Norton and Co., 1977), 30-52; Hillel Ticktin, "Leon Trotsky and the Social Forces Leading to Bureaucracy, 1923-29," in Hillel Ticktin and Michael Cox, eds., *The Ideas of Leon Trotsky* (London: Porcupine Press, 1995), 45-64; and Ticktin, "Leon Trotsky's Political Economic Analysis of the USSR, 1929-40" in Hillel Ticktin and Michael Cox, eds., *The Ideas of Leon Trotsky*, 65-85. [See also H. H. Ticktin, "Trotsky and the Social Forces Leading to Bureaucracy," in Gori, *Pensiero*, 2:451-467.] For still more works that deal with "Trotsky and the

“Russian Question,”” see Wolfgang and Petra Lubitz, *Trotsky Bibliography: An International Classified List of Publications about Leon Trotsky and Trotskyism, 1905-1998* (Munich: K. G. Saur, 1999), 134-147.

¹⁹ Leon Trotsky, *The Trotsky Papers, 1917-1922* ed. Jan M. Meijer (The Hague : Mouton, 1964-1971); Leon Trotsky, *How the Revolution Armed: The Military Writings and Speeches of Leon Trotsky*, trans. Brian Pearce (London : New Park Publications, 1979-1981); Leon Trotsky, *Terrorism and Communism: A Reply to Karl Kautsky* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1972; V. I. Lenin and Leon Trotsky *Lenin’s Fight against Stalinism*, ed. Russell Block (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1975); Leon Trotsky, *Problems of Everyday Life and Other Writings on Culture & Science* (New York : Monad Press, 1973); Leon Trotsky, *The Challenge of the Left Opposition*, ed. Naomi Allen and George Saunders (New York : Pathfinder Press, 1975-1981); Leon Trotsky, *Leon Trotsky on Britain* (New York, Monad Press, 1973), Leon Trotsky, *Leon Trotsky on China*, ed. Les Evans and Russell Block (New York : Monad Press, 1976); Leon Trotsky, *The Stalin School of Falsification*, trans. John G. Wright (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1980); Leon Trotsky, *The Third International After Lenin* , trans. John G. Wright (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1976); Leon Trotsky, *My Life: An Attempt at an Autobiography*, New York: Pathfinder Press, 1970; Leon Trotsky, *The Writings of Leon Trotsky*, ed. Naomi Allen, et al. (New York : Pathfinder Press, 1973-1979); Leon Trotsky, *The History of the Russian Revolution*, trans. Max Eastman (London: Pluto Press, 1977); Leon Trotsky, *The Struggle Against Fascism in Germany* (New York, Pathfinder Press, 1971), Leon Trotsky, *Leon Trotsky on France*, ed. David Salzner (New York : Monad Press: 1979); Leon Trotsky, *Trotsky’s Notebooks, 1933-1935: Writings on Lenin, Dialectics, and Evolutionism*, trans. Philip Pomper (New York : Columbia University Press, 1986); Leon Trotsky, *Trotsky’s Diary in Exile, 1935*, trans. Elena Zarudnaya (New York: Atheneum, 1963); Victor Serge and Leon Trotsky, *The Serge-Trotsky Papers*, ed. D.J. Cotterill (London: Pluto Press, 1994); Leon Trotsky, Leon Trotsky, *The Revolution Betrayed: What is the Soviet Union and Where Is It Going?*, trans. Max Eastman (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, Doran & Co., 1937); Leon Trotsky, *The Spanish Revolution, 1931-39* (New York, Pathfinder Press, 1973); Leon Trotsky, *The Transitional Program for Socialist Revolution*, ed. George Breitman and Fred Stanton (New York : Pathfinder Press, 1973); Leon Trotsky, *In Defense of Marxism (Against the Petty-bourgeois Opposition)*, (New York, Pathfinder Press: 1970); Leon Trotsky, *Stalin: An Appraisal of the Man and His Influence*, ed. and trans. Charles Malamuth (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1941).

²⁰ Lev Trotskii, *Kak vooruzhalas revoliutsiia: na voennoi rabote* (Moskva: Vysshii voennyi revoliutsionnyi sovet, 1923-1925, fiche, Minneapolis, MN: East View Publications, [1991?]); Lev Trotskii, *Sochineniia* (Moscow : Gos. Izd-vo, 1924-1927).

²¹ Iu. Fel’shtinskii, comp., *Kommunisticheskaia oppositsiia v SSSR, 1923-1927: iz arkhiva L’va Trotskogo v chetyrekh tomakh* (Benson, VT : Chalidze Publications, 1988); Iurii Georgievich Fel’shtinskii et al., eds. *Arkhiv Trotskogo: iz arkhivov revoliutsii, 1927-1928* (Kharkov : “OKO,” 1999-2000); Lev Trotskii, *Stalinskaia shkola falsifikatsii: popravki i dopolneniia k literature epiigonov*, ed. P. V. Volobuev et al. (Moscow: “Nauka,” 1990); Lev Trotskii, *Moia zhizn: opyt avtobiografii* (Moscow : Panorama, 1991); *Biulleten oppositsii (bolshevikov-lenintsev)* (New York, Monad Press, 1973); “Iskra Research – Biulleten Oppozitsii,” <http://web.mit.edu/fjk/Public/BO> (accessed December 18, 2008); Lev Trotskii, *Dnevnik i pis’ma*, ed. Iu. G. Fel’shtinskii (Moscow : Izd-vo gumanitarnoi lit-ry, 1994); Lev Trotskii, *Chto takoe S.S.S.R. i kuda on idet?* (Paris, Edité par la IVE Internationale Rouge, 1972); Lev Trotskii, *Stalin*; ed. Iu. G. Fel’shtinskii (Benson, VT: Chalidze Publications, 1985); “Lib.Ru: Lev Trotskii,” <http://www.lib.ru/TROCKII/> (accessed Oct. 5, 2008).

²² However, they also argued that in exceptional periods, such as under Bonapartism, the state was able to achieve both an extreme degree of independence from society as a whole and simultaneously a large measure of autonomy from the dominant economic class.

²³ Trotsky, *Challenge (1923-1925)*, 128.

²⁴ “Theoretical crisis” is used here in the sense employed by Thomas Kuhn. According to Kuhn, crises generally emerge in response to the growing recognition of anomalies or counter-instances to the existing paradigm. If these anomalies call into question explicit and fundamental generalizations of the paradigm, or if they persist over a long period, scientists respond by devising numerous articulations and ad hoc modifications to the theory. If the anomaly continues to resist resolution, this may result in the proliferation of competing articulations of the paradigm, and the blurring of the paradigms rules. [Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970), 77-91.]

2.0 BUREAUCRACY BEFORE OCTOBER

When Bolsheviks, including Trotsky, first began to address the issue of Soviet bureaucracy soon after the October Revolution of 1917, they derived their understanding of that problem from various sources. One of these was popular usage of the word *bureaucracy* in both Russia and Western Europe. In popular usage in the early twentieth century, the primary understanding of bureaucracy remained close to its original meanings. The word was first coined in eighteenth century France to refer to the rule of officials. Shortly after that, it was used to refer to a body of officials who ruled. Secondary definitions and connotations that emerged in the nineteenth century and that persisted into the twentieth included an excessive degree of formalism and paperwork, and the apathy, ignorance, and inefficiency of state officials.

Consistent with the primary popular meaning, Marx and Engels viewed bureaucracy as related to the problem of political alienation. That is, they identified bureaucracy with a state apparatus that had established its independence from the control of society as a whole, and that ruled over society. They believed that in normal periods this alienation was directly related to the domination of the state by an exploitative class. Furthermore, they predicted that the problem of bureaucracy would be greatly reduced by the coming revolution, and that eventually it would wither away altogether. In the years and months preceding the October Revolution both Trotsky and Lenin reaffirmed this traditional Marxist analysis of bureaucracy.

Despite the expectations derived from Marxist theory, shortly after the revolution a wide range of Bolsheviks concluded that the problem of bureaucracy had not been eliminated. As we shall see in the next chapter, some Bolsheviks would define and attempt to understand the problem in terms of traditional Marxist analysis. On the other hand, Trotsky initially would draw upon popular secondary meanings of bureaucracy to define the central problem as one of inefficiency.

2.1 ORIGINAL MEANINGS OF *BUREAUCRACY*

Scholars have identified a variety of meanings of the term bureaucracy in current Western usage. Martin Albrow has counted seven and Fred Riggs has identified eleven contemporary uses of the word.¹ Although it had not yet acquired quite that many meanings in either Western European or Russian discourse at the time of the Bolshevik Revolution, it already had accumulated a wide range of denotations and connotations. Still, the most common popular understanding of bureaucracy remained close to its original meaning.

By most accounts, the term *bureaucratie*, or bureaucracy, was first coined in 1745 by the Vincent de Gournay, the French Physiocrat who was also responsible for creating the expression *laissez faire*.² De Gournay created it by combining the French *bureau*, which referred to offices where officials worked, with the Greek word *kratein*, meaning “to rule.” His intent was to identify a form of rule comparable to systems such as democracy and aristocracy. From the beginning the word was used as a pejorative to indicate the excessive power of state officials, while suggesting their tendency to meddle in areas beyond the bounds of their proper concern. De Gournay’s friend the Baron de Grimm observed in a letter to Diderot in 1764:

We [in France] are obsessed by the idea of regulation, and our Masters of Requests refuse to understand that there is an infinity of things in a great state with which a government should not concern itself. The late M. de Gournay . . . sometimes used to say: We have an illness in France which bids fair to play havoc with us; this illness is called “bureaumania”. Sometimes he used to invent a third or fourth or fifth form of government under the heading of bureaucracy.³

Along the same lines, the following year Grimm remarked, “The real spirit of the laws of France is that bureaucracy of which the late M. de Gournay . . . used to complain so greatly; here the offices, clerks, secretaries, inspectors, and *intendants* are not appointed to benefit the public interest, indeed the public interest appears to have been established so that offices might exist.”⁴

The term *bureaucratie* soon began to appear in French literary and popular discourse. Thus, in 1789 the dramatist and writer Louis Sébastien Mercier explained in his *Le Tableau de Paris* that bureaucracy was a “word recently coined to indicate, in a clear and concise manner, the overgrown power possessed by simple clerks who, in the various offices of the administration, make up and push forward all sorts of projects, which they find most often in dusty drawers in the offices, and which they favor for reasons of their own, good and bad.”⁵ Somewhat more neutrally the 1798 supplement to the Dictionary of the French Academy defined bureaucracy simply as “Power, influence of the heads and staff of governmental bureau.”⁶

In the following years, the word, together with its original meaning, began to find its way into other Western European languages. One of the earliest German uses of the term was the observation by Kant’s colleague Christian Klaus in 1799 that the Prussian state, “far from being an unlimited monarchy . . . is but a thinly veiled aristocracy . . . which blatantly rules the country as a bureaucracy.”⁷ Consistent with this usage, an 1813 edition of a German dictionary of foreign expressions defined bureaucracy as: “the Authority or power which various government departments and their branches arrogate to themselves and their fellow citizens.”⁸ The earliest

uses of the term in English also corresponded with this understanding of the term. Thus, in 1818 the English writer Lady Morgan referred in *Florence McCarthy* to “the *bureaucratie* or office tyranny by which Ireland had been so long governed.”⁹ Similarly, articulating a theme that would become a common one in English writing on the subject, the writer Thomas Carlyle in 1850 condemned bureaucracy as a “Continental nuisance” and observed that there was no “risk or possibility” that bureaucracy would arise in England, since “Democracy is hot enough here.”¹⁰

As the term traveled geographically, its meaning began to evolve. One early important development involved the extension of the term’s referent beyond the rule by officials to include also the body of officials that ruled. For example, in his 1821 book *Europe and the Revolution* the German writer Johann Joseph von Görres described the bureaucracy as a civil institution comparable to the standing army.¹¹ Likewise, in his 1848 work *Principles of Political Economy* the English philosopher John Stuart Mill opposed the concentration of all management skill and power of organized action “in a dominant bureaucracy.”¹²

Meanwhile, a host of secondary characteristics related in various ways to the image of a ruling body of officials also came to be identified closely with the term. Bureaucracies increasingly were seen as concerned primarily with their own group interests. This was the case, for example, in the description in 1821 by Prussian statesman Freiherr vom Stein of the *Bureaulisten* as “a class for themselves—the clerical caste.”¹³ The internal hierarchy of state apparatuses was noted and viewed as related to the domination they exerted externally. Thus, an anonymous Hamburg pamphlet of 1844 compared the hierarchy of the Prussian bureaucracy to that of the military, asserting that in both, hierarchy was designed to maintain the “divine right of despotism” through “blind devotion and the eternally unchangeable acknowledgement of its infallibility.”¹⁴ Furthermore, bureaucracies increasingly were viewed as unproductive and

parasitical upon society. The same anonymous Hamburg pamphlet asserted that bureaucracy was “a powerful cancer [which] feasts voraciously, insatiably, and lives off the marrow and blood of the people.”¹⁵

At the same time bureaucracy also began to be identified with other characteristics less clearly related to the original meaning, but associated in the public consciousness with the internal operations of state apparatuses or the personal characteristics of state officials. Robert von Mohl, professor of political science at Heidelberg, recorded a number of these in 1846, noting that these connotations varied depending upon the social group making the complaint. He observed, for example, that nobles condemned the inconsiderateness of officials, industrialists bemoaned their “indolence and apathy,” scholars derided bureaucratic ignorance, and artisans deplored unnecessary paperwork.¹⁶ A trait mentioned in von Mohl’s own definition that also came to be recognized as one of the hallmarks of bureaucracy was the tendency of officials to be “satisfied with purely formal conduct.”¹⁷ Another popularly perceived feature of bureaucracy was its inefficiency. Thus, an article published in *Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine* in 1836 complained of the bureaucratic organization of the French education system that it was not only despotic but also inefficient.¹⁸ Similarly, in 1867 British essayist Walter Bagehot unfavorably contrasted the inefficiency of bureaucracy with the normal efficiency of the business world and with public administration controlled by a democracy.¹⁹

At times there was also a tendency to identify bureaucracy with a particular form of administration. After 1806, the Prussian system in which a *collegium* of officials took collective responsibility for a government function, was replaced by the bureau system in which responsibility at each level was placed in an individual. Since the bureau system resulted in faster decisions and greater unity and decisiveness of action, it was widely perceived that it also

enhanced the power of officials. Thus, the 1819 edition of the Brockhaus encyclopedia observed, “This bureaucracy becomes increasingly dangerous as the previous custom of conducting business through *collegia* falls into disuse.”²⁰ It was not long before bureaucracy began to be identified, especially in Germany, with the bureau system. For example, in 1845 the socialist Karl Heinzen defined bureaucracy as “an administrative structure where a single official controls the administration, as opposed to a collegial structure.”²¹ At least for some, this in fact suggested that bureaucracy was characterized by a high degree of efficiency, not inefficiency.²²

A final development worth mentioning was the application of bureaucracy to bodies of functionaries outside of the state. This innovation is sometimes associated with the 1911 work *Political Parties* in which the German sociologist Robert Michels diagnosed the “oligarchical tendencies” within the German Social Democratic Party (SPD).²³ However, by the first decade of the twentieth century the left wing of the socialist movement was already referring to the phenomena of bureaucracy and bureaucratism within the labor and socialist movements.²⁴

2.2 BUREAUCRACY IN RUSSIA

The term bureaucracy [*biurokratiia*] seems to have arrived in Russia somewhat later than in Germany or Britain, but it was in use there at least by the mid-nineteenth century. References to bureaucrats [*biurokraty*] appeared in 1856 in “Russkie voprosy,” Nikolai Ogarev’s series of articles on the peasantry, and in 1857 in Nikolai Dobroliubov’s review article of Mikhail Saltykov’s *Gubernskie ocherki*.²⁵ By the end of the nineteenth century bureaucracy and related words were commonly employed in Russia. From the beginning, the connotations of the term there were at least as pejorative as in the West, and perhaps even more so. Various contemporary

writers have noted that in Russia today the meaning of bureaucracy is always negative, never neutral or positive as it sometimes is in the West.²⁶ The same was true in the decades preceding the Russian Revolution.

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries the primary meaning attached to bureaucracy in Russian remained closely tethered to de Gournay's original understanding of the term. For example, in 1891 the Brockhaus and Efron *Entsiklopedicheskii slovar'* explained the first meaning of *biurokratiia* as "the direction which state administration assumes in the countries where all matters are concentrated in the hands of the organs of a central governmental power, acting on orders (of authorities) and through orders (by subordinates)."²⁷ The first definition offered by the *Slovar' russkago iazyka*, published by the Imperial Academy of Science in 1895, included "command by officials" [*chinonachalie*].²⁸ Along the same lines, the 1912 *Tolkovyi slovar' zhivogo velikorusskago iazyka* defined bureaucracy as "administration where official command [*chinonachalie*] rules."²⁹ Finally, about the same time the Granat *Entsiklopedicheskii slovar'* explained that *biurokratiia* meant "an administrative structure which is characterized by its complete alienation from life and by the despotic attachment to society of principles of government alien to its real interests."³⁰

Beyond that, the connotations and secondary definitions of *biurokratiia* provided by these reference works also corresponded closely to the associations and meanings that had evolved in Western Europe. The 1891 Brockhaus and Efron *Encyclopedic Dictionary* provided an extensive discussion of these. It asserted that under bureaucracy "officialdom [*chinovnichestvo*] assumes a special, exceptional position—it feels itself the leading center of all social life and it forms a special caste outside of the people." In fact, this dictionary identified "the alienation of officialdom from the rest of the population, . . . its caste exclusiveness" as one of the distinctive

features of bureaucracy. Among the disadvantages of bureaucracy the same work included the fact that matters requiring state intervention were usually conducted badly; that bureaucracy involved the unnecessary intervention of authorities; and that contact with bureaucratic organs of authority often occurred at the expense of the dignity of the average person. Also, Brokhaus and Efron asserted that, in contrast with “healthy administration” which subordinates form to essence, “bureaucracy observes form for the sake of itself and sacrifices the essence of the matter to it.”³¹ This latter tendency was closely related to the “paper-pushing” [*bumazhnoe mnogopisanie*] which Vladimir Dal’ in his 1912 *Tolkovyĭ slovar’* included as a defining characteristic of bureaucracy.³² Another common association with *biurokratiia* was the notion of internal hierarchy suggested by the frequently offered synonym *chinovnichestvo*, often translated into English as “officialdom.”³³ As Alan Kimball has explained, within the nineteenth century tsarist state,

The word *chinovnichestvo* referred to the formal system of comprehensive national administration by state servitors holding rank—*chin*—up and down the “Table of Ranks”. The Table of Ranks established appropriate, hierarchical rungs for civilian, military, church, and royal court servitors.³⁴

Again, this emphasis upon hierarchy was noted explicitly in the 1912 *Tolkovyĭ slovar’* by Vladimir Dal’, which defined *biurokratiia* in part as “graded subordination; the dependence of every official person on the next higher.”³⁵ Furthermore, the association of *biurokratiia* with the German bureau system was evident in Pavlenkov’s 1918 dictionary of foreign words, which defined bureaucracy as a “system of administration by which the main head executes all orders under his own responsibility; it is contrasted with a collegial system.”³⁶

Reference works included many of these same associations in their definitions of the related term bureaucratism [*biurokratizm*]. For example, Pavlenkov’s 1913 *Entsiklopedicheskiĭ*

slovar' defined bureaucratism as "a system of conducting business by administration by office means, on the basis of the reports of subordinates in accordance with the instructions of higher superiors, not taking into consideration the wishes of the population or its representatives, with the observance of official secrecy."³⁷ Additionally, Pavlenkov's 1918 dictionary of foreign words noted that "bureaucratism . . . signifies a completely formal, clerical carrying out of business, the subordination of truth and fact to form; the useless multiplication of files and business correspondence, and the abuse of power by a superior."³⁸

Both in Russia and in exile, leaders of the Russian socialist movement such as Trotsky and Lenin absorbed and utilized all of these denotations and connotations of bureaucracy and bureaucratism current in Russia and in Western Europe. This wide range of meanings can be seen reflected in an article by Lenin written in April 1905. There, he responded to Menshevik accusations that the Bolsheviks advocated "bureaucratic centralism" in the party and the implementation of a "formal *bureaucratic* principle." First, Lenin based his argument upon various secondary meanings of bureaucracy current in both Russia and Western Europe:

Bureaucratism [*biurokratizm*], taken in general, may denote officialism [*kantseliarshchina*], red tape [*volokita*], formalism [*bumazhnost'*], paper answers [*otpiski*]. This sort of bureaucratism is evil It is clear to every reader who is at all conscientious that this is the kind of bureaucratism meant by the Bureau of Committees of the majority, so that to accuse *Vperyod* [Lenin's paper] of contradicting itself is utter childishness.

Continuing, Lenin again employed an understanding of bureaucracy more closely related to the primary meaning of rule by officials or officials:

Bureaucratism [*biurokratizm*] may [also] mean infringement of the legitimate and, if we may say so, of the "natural" rights of every opposition, a fight waged against a minority by unfair means. Such bureaucratism is possible . . . but there is no principle involved in it. It must be combated by the establishment of constitutional guarantees of the rights of minorities.³⁹

However, in the years before the October Revolution the thinking of Trotsky and Lenin about the question of bureaucracy was not just shaped by popular understanding of that issue. To a large extent it was also influenced by the writings of Marx and Engels on that subject.

2.3 MARX AND ENGELS ON BUREAUCRACY AND POLITICAL ALIENATION

Comments on bureaucracy can be found scattered throughout the writings of Marx and Engels on the state. Although they never explicitly defined the term, their understanding of the problem coincided closely with the popular usage which defined bureaucracy primarily in terms of a ruling body of state officials. Consistently, they used it as a pejorative for a state apparatus that had come to stand over and dominate society as a whole. That is, for both Marx and Engels, bureaucracy was viewed as an embodiment of political alienation.⁴⁰ Although they perceived this problem to be especially pronounced in certain abnormal state forms, in their mature writings Marx and Engels described it as characteristic of all class states. They believed it would only begin to disappear in the proletarian state of the future. Many of these themes first appeared in embryonic form in Marx's 1843 polemics against Hegelian political philosophy, *The Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right* and *On the Jewish Question*.

In his *The Philosophy of Right* Hegel had contrasted two spheres of Prussian society—civil society and the state. In civil society, according to Hegel, men pursued their individual needs and self-interests. Although Hegel viewed the egoism of civil society as beneficial in some respects, he argued that it had engendered an eternal war of each against all that threatened to tear society apart. Fortunately, however, in Prussian society the conflicting private interests of

civil society were reconciled by the second sphere, the state, which promoted the collective, universal interests of society. Hegel believed that three Prussian political institutions participated in this mediation: the monarch, the legislature, and most importantly, the civil service. As opposed to all other classes of civil society, the civil service was a “universal class,” seeking only the common good.⁴¹

The young Marx contemptuously rejected Hegel’s claim that the Prussian state was motivated by universal interests. In his *Critique*, Marx argued that the central institution of the modern state, the “bureaucracy,” was just one more self-seeking corporation, “a *particular, self-contained* society within the state.”⁴² Rather than representing the true interests of society, the bureaucracy simply redefined the common good to correspond with its own particular interests. As Marx put it, “The bureaucracy appears to itself as the ultimate purpose of the state. . . . The bureaucracy holds the state, the spiritual essence of society, in thrall, as its *private property*.”⁴³ The bureaucracy hid this reality from the outside world by the veil of secrecy with which it surrounded all its operations. Internally, it disguised the truth from the bureaucracy’s own members by a “hierarchy of knowledge” in which “the apex entrusts insight into particulars to the lower echelons while the lower echelons credit the apex with insight into the universal, and so each deceives the other.”⁴⁴ In the pursuit of its particular interests the bureaucracy attempted to control all aspects of society:

Its crass spiritualism is revealed in its wish *to do everything*. That is to say, it makes *will* the prime cause because it is nothing but active existence and receives its content from outside itself, and can therefore only prove its own existence by moulding and limiting that content. For the bureaucrat the world is no more than an object on which he acts.⁴⁵

Against Hegel’s claim that the state resolved the conflicts of civil society, in his book *On the Jewish Question* Marx asserted that the state, rising out of these conflicts, depended upon

their continued existence for its legitimacy: “Far from abolishing these *factual* distinctions, the state presupposes them in order to exist It is only in this way, *above* the *particular* elements, that the state constitutes itself as a universality.”⁴⁶ In fact, according to Marx the state only emerged as an institution fully distinct from society in the modern era. Only in modern society with the abolition of all ties between individuals was it possible for the state to appear as the sole repository of the general interest. Having arisen out of the conflicts between particular interests, the state continually sought to perpetuate them. Thus, although the state initially attacked the corporations in the pursuit of its own aims, it ultimately was compelled to ensure their survival by force.⁴⁷

In his early writings Marx was still somewhat vague about how the political alienation characteristic of modern society was to be overcome. However, two conclusions already stood out: First, in his *On the Jewish Question* Marx argued that the separation of the state and its bureaucracy from civil society would have to be abolished through the elimination of the contradictions that divided civil society.⁴⁸ Second, in the “Introduction” to his *Critique* this could only be achieved by a *true* universal class whose interests coincided with those of society as a whole. By late 1843 Marx had discovered this class in the proletariat.⁴⁹

Although Marx and Engels periodically referred to the problem of bureaucracy in later years, they never again dealt as extensively with this term as Marx had in 1843. Nevertheless, from their scattered references it is clear that they continued to associate it with the problem of political alienation. Furthermore, in some respects they continued to describe and explain this alienation in terms quite similar to Marx’s 1843 analysis.

2.4 THE CLASS STATE AND POLITICAL ALIENATION

Not long after Marx explained the conception of the state as a manifestation of political alienation he, together with Frederick Engels, began to develop another conception of the state: as an instrument used by the dominant economic class to defend and extend its own interests. This view of the state appeared in the writings of Engels as early as 1844.⁵⁰ Marx accepted the class state conception by the following year when he and Engels collaborated on their first joint work, *The German Ideology*. At that time they wrote that the state is “nothing more than the form of organisation which the bourgeois are compelled to adopt, both for internal and external purposes, for the mutual guarantee of their property and interests.”⁵¹ Perhaps the best-known expression of this view can be found in the *Communist Manifesto* (1848) where Marx and Engels asserted, “The executive of the modern State is but a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie.”⁵² More generally, Engels later described the state as being “as a rule, the state of the most powerful, economically dominant class, which, through the medium of the state, becomes also the politically dominant class, and thus acquires the means of holding down and exploiting the oppressed class.”⁵³

Two contemporary commentators, Richard Hunt and Robert C. Tucker, have noted the contradiction between the conception of the state expressed in these passages and that contained in Marx’s 1843 writings. Furthermore, they argue that Marx and Engels resolved this contradiction by analyzing the state in normal periods in terms of their class conception, while reserving Marx’s 1843 analysis for “abnormal” state forms such as Bonapartism.⁵⁴ It is true that Marx and Engels discarded aspects of Marx’s 1843 analysis when they first developed their class conception of the state. However, Hunt’s and Tucker’s argument obscures the fact that, throughout the remainder of their lives, Marx and Engels retained Marx’s 1843 view that *all* state bureaucracies manifested political alienation.

Of course, the adoption of the class conception of the state clearly entailed a modification of Marx's earlier position. Most importantly, Marx and Engels abandoned the view that the state apparatus or bureaucracy was driven primarily by self-interest in normal periods. For example, in 1849 Marx explained that in modern bourgeois society, "It inheres . . . that bureaucracy and army, instead of being masters of commerce and industry, be reduced to their tools, and be *made* into mere organs of bourgeois business relations."⁵⁵ Similarly, in 1852 Marx explained that in the period between the two Bonapartes the French state bureaucracy "was an instrument of the ruling class, however much it strove for power in its own right."⁵⁶

At the same time, however, Marx and Engels continued to view the state and its bureaucracy, as Marx had in 1843, in terms of the problem of political alienation. They still described the state as an institution that had established its independence from society and that ruled over it, falsely claiming to represent the general interest. For example, in *The German Ideology*, even while noting the role of the state in enforcing the interests of the bourgeoisie, Marx and Engels characterized the state as "a separate entity, alongside and outside civil society" and explained that this "illusory community, in which individuals have up till now combined, always took on an independent existence in relation to them."⁵⁷ In *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* (1852) Marx described the French "bureaucratic and military organization" as it had developed from the period of absolute monarchy up to the time of Napoleon III as a "frightful parasitic body which surrounds the body of French society like a caul and stops up all its pores." Under this state machinery, "every *common* interest was immediately detached from society, opposed to it as a higher *general* interest, torn away from the self-activity of the individual members of society and made a subject for governmental activity."⁵⁸ Years later, in his *Anti-Dühring* (1878) Engels spoke of the "political authority [which] has made itself

independent in relation to society, and has transformed itself from society's servant into its master."⁵⁹ And in an "Introduction" (1891) to Marx's *The Civil War in France* Engels contended that "the transformation of the state from servants into masters of society" had been "an inevitable transformation in all previous states."⁶⁰

These passages clearly indicate that the mature Marx and Engels saw *all* states as manifesting political alienation comparable in some respects to that observed by Marx in Prussia in 1843. Marx and Engels never explicitly explained how they reconciled the notion that the state stands above and dominates the whole of society with the idea that the state is subordinate to a party of society. However, it is likely they would have asserted that, in serving a privileged minority, the class state dominates a "society," understood as the vast majority of that society's members. Besides that, they might have argued that the class state stands above and dominates even members of the dominant economic class viewed as individual citizens. An examination of the account by Engels of the origins of the state further demonstrates that he, at least, saw the original alienation of the state from society and its subordination to dominant class rule as simultaneous and interdependent processes.

2.5 ENGELS ON THE ORIGINS OF THE STATE

According to Engels the first public authority, the ancestor of the modern state, was created by pre-class society to carry out certain essential functions on behalf of society as a whole. In his *Anti-Dühring* Engels explained that these functions included irrigation, defense against external enemies, the "adjudication of disputes," the "repression of encroachments by individuals on the rights of others," and religious functions.⁶¹ He noted in *The Origin of the*

Family, Private Property and the State (1884) that this authority could not yet properly be called a “state” for it had no coercive power except public opinion and it remained under the control of the entire community.⁶² Over time this authority, as a distinct institution, developed its own particular interests and was able to elevate itself above the control of the rest of society. In a letter to Joseph Bloch in 1890 Engels explained,

The persons appointed for this purpose form a new branch of the division of labour *within society*. This gives them particular interests, distinct, too, from the interests of those who empowered them; they make themselves independent of the latter and—the state is in being.⁶³

However, the primitive public authority was not able to effect this transformation simply by an act of will. Rather, it was only made possible by the simultaneous expansion in the functional significance of its power. In particular, the authority became increasingly indispensable as a mediator of the conflicts that arose between communities with the expansion of productive forces and the division of labor.⁶⁴ With the emergence of social classes, the mediating function of the authority became even more necessary in order to prevent class struggle from tearing society apart. In *The Origin* Engels explained that the state

is a product of society at a certain stage of development; it is the admission that this society has become entangled in an insoluble contradiction within itself, that it is cleft into irreconcilable antagonisms which it is powerless to dispel. But in order that these antagonisms, classes with conflicting economic interests, might not consume themselves and society in sterile struggle, a power seemingly standing above society became necessary for the purpose of moderating the conflict, of keeping it within the bounds of "order"; and this power, arisen out of society, but placing itself above it, and increasingly alienating itself from it, is the state.⁶⁵

Up to this point, the account by Engels of the emergence of the state closely paralleled Marx’s 1843 analysis of the origin of the modern state. The state arose in the context of a society rent by conflicting particular interests as a body claiming to represent the general interest; but in

reality, it was nothing but one more particular institution, “placing itself above” society and “increasingly alienating itself from it.” However, even as the state raised itself above the control of society as a whole, Engels argued, it became the instrument of the dominant economic class. In fact, Engels saw a direct causal relationship between these processes. He indicated this in his article “Ludwig Feuerbach and the Outcome of Classical German Philosophy” (1888):

Society creates for itself an organ for the safeguarding of its general interests against internal and external attacks. This organ is the state power. Hardly come into being, this organ makes itself independent in regard to society; and indeed, the more so, the more it becomes the organ of a particular class, the more it directly enforces the supremacy of that class.⁶⁶

Engels suggested two different ways in which this had occurred. In his *Anti-Dühring* he described a tendency for the rulers of the emergent state to establish *themselves* as the dominant economic class.⁶⁷ But even where the state remained distinct from the dominant class, Engels asserted in *The Origin*, it was transformed increasingly into the servant of that class:

As the state arose from the need to hold class antagonisms in check, but as it arose, at the same time, in the midst of the conflict of these classes, it is, as a rule, the state of the most powerful, economically dominant class, which, through the medium of the state, becomes also the politically dominant class, and thus acquires new means of holding down and exploiting the oppressed class.⁶⁸

By this Engels may have simply meant that the function of ensuring social harmony most directly advanced the interests of the class that most benefitted from the existing economic order. However, it also seems to suggest that, as the early state freed itself from the control of the whole society, it became more vulnerable to conquest by the most powerful of the contending classes.

Conversely, for Engels the transformation of the state into the servant of the dominant class tended to exacerbate the alienation of the state from society. As the emergent state began to represent the interests of the dominant class, its activities on behalf of that class increasingly

precluded communal participation and control. In *The Origin* Engels described this tendency in ancient Greece:

This special power is necessary, because a self-acting armed organization of the population has become impossible since the cleavage into classes. . . . The people's army of the Athenian democracy was an aristocratic public power against the slaves, whom it kept in check; however, a gendarmerie also became necessary to keep the citizens in check.⁶⁹

In the account of Engels, then, the transformation of the original public authority into an institution standing above and dominating society was directly related to its conversion into a tool of class domination. The fundamental cleavages between particular interests gave rise to the state as an institution alienated from society as a whole. This process was facilitated by, and simultaneously encouraged, the subordination of the state to the interests of the dominant class.

However, Marx and Engels also believed that in certain exceptional periods the state was able to achieve not only an extreme degree of independence from society, but also a large measure of autonomy from class control.⁷⁰ For Marx and Engels such exceptional state forms included Oriental Despotism, Caesarism, Absolute Monarchy, Tsarist Autocracy, and Bonapartism.⁷¹ Of these state forms, the two thinkers devoted the greatest attention to Bonapartism.

2.6 BONAPARTISM

Although Marx and Engels spoke of the “Bonapartism” of Napoleon Bonaparte and of Bismarck, their most extensive analyses of that phenomenon dealt with the regime of Louis Napoleon Bonaparte, or Napoleon III.⁷² Following his election as President of France in December 1848, Louis Bonaparte proceeded to extend his control over the state apparatus and army at the expense of the Legislative assembly. Then, in December 1851 he staged a successful

coup against the Second Republic and the following year had himself proclaimed emperor of France. Beginning with Marx's 1852 work *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, Marx and Engels repeatedly attempted to define Louis Bonaparte's regime and explain its origins.

As we have seen, consistent with other writings by Marx and Engels on the normal state, Marx described the French state bureaucracy *prior* to Bonaparte's coup as both an organ of class rule and as a manifestation of political alienation. On one hand the bureaucracy had, since its inception under the absolute monarchy, tended to advance the interests of the bourgeoisie; and in the period between the two Napoleons it had become the mere instrument of the capitalist class.⁷³ On the other hand Marx characterized the pre-Bonapartist bureaucracy as a "parasite" that had risen above society and extended its control into all areas of social concern while legitimizing its power in terms of the general interest.⁷⁴

However, according to Marx, Louis Bonaparte's coup inaugurated two important changes in the character of the French state. First, the state became even more independent from society as a whole:

The state parasite received only its last development during the second Empire. The governmental power with its standing army, its all directing bureaucracy, its stultifying clergy and its servile tribunal hierarchy had grown so independent of society itself, that a grotesquely mediocre adventurer with a band of hungry desperadoes behind him sufficed to wield it.⁷⁵

At the same time, through Bonaparte's coup the state was able to attain such an unprecedented degree of autonomy from the bourgeoisie that it appeared "that all classes fall on their knees, equally mute and equally impotent, before the rifle butt."⁷⁶ Marx described Bonaparte as being "only where he is because he has broken the political power of this middle class, and breaks it again daily."⁷⁷ Thus, in the Bonapartist state Marx and Engels saw an exception to the pattern, observed in the normal state, of a direct relationship between the state's degree of independence from society and its degree of subordination to the dominant economic class.

Marx and Engels offered varying explanations of how the Bonapartist state had attained such a high degree of autonomy from class control and an extreme degree of independence from society. At one point Marx represented this as an *unintended* consequence of conscious bourgeois policy. According to this interpretation, the bourgeoisie had strengthened the state as a sword against the proletariat. However, with Bonaparte's coup the bourgeoisie discovered that the sword was two-edged; the state had become autonomous enough to turn against its master.⁷⁸ In a second explanation Marx contended that the capitalist class *purposefully* had established a state independent of its direct control in order to defuse the political struggle of the proletariat. The French bourgeoisie had "realized instinctively that although the republic made their political rule complete it simultaneously undermined its social foundation, since they had now to confront the subjugated classes and contend with them without mediation, without being concealed by the Crown, without the possibility of diverting the national attention by their secondary conflicts amongst themselves and with the monarchy." Consequently, they had come "to yearn for the return of the previous forms of this rule, which were less complete, less developed, and precisely for that reason, less dangerous."⁷⁹

It was Engels, however, who in *The Origin* provided the best-known explanation, not only for the autonomy of the state under Louis Bonaparte, but also under Napoleon I and the previous absolute monarchs. In each case the state had been able to utilize the "balance" achieved in the class struggle to enlarge its own power and independence:

By way of exception, however, periods occur in which the warring classes balance each other so nearly that the state power, as ostensible mediator, acquires, for the moment, a certain degree of independence of both. Such was the absolute monarchy of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, which held the balance between the nobility and the class of burghers; such was the Bonapartism of the First, and still more of the Second French

Empire, which played off the proletariat against the bourgeoisie and the bourgeoisie against the proletariat.⁸⁰

This balance made it impossible for either class to establish its own direct control over the state. Consistent with this explanation, Marx in *The Civil War in France* (1871) described the Bonapartism of the Second Empire as “the only form of government possible at a time when the bourgeoisie had already lost, and the working class had not yet acquired, the faculty of ruling the nation.”⁸¹

Beyond offering these general interpretations of the origins of Bonapartism, Marx and Engels attempted to identify the various social groups that Louis Bonaparte relied upon in establishing and consolidating his rule. First, and most important in this regard, was the French peasantry. At one point Marx even asserted that Bonaparte “represents the most numerous class of French society, the *small peasant proprietors*.”⁸² However, as a number of commentators have noted, Marx seems to have meant by this that Bonaparte *portrayed* himself as the champion of the peasants and *relied upon* their electoral and military support.⁸³ Second, Marx explained that the lumpenproletariat organized in the Society of December 10 provided Bonaparte with the shock troops necessary for his conquest of power, staging demonstrations on his behalf and beating up his republican opponents.⁸⁴ Third, according to Marx Bonaparte solidified his rule with the support of the state bureaucracy. Although it was already bloated and powerful when Louis Bonaparte assumed the Presidency, he granted it further privileges to ensure its allegiance:

An enormous bureaucracy, with gold braid and a fat belly, is the ‘Napoleonic idea’ which is most congenial of all to the second Bonaparte. It could not be otherwise, for he has been forced to create, alongside the real classes of society, an artificial caste for which the maintenance of his regime is a question of self-preservation. One of his first financial operations was therefore to raise officials’ salaries to their old level and to create new sinecures.⁸⁵

Finally, Marx and Engels described how Bonaparte relied upon the passivity of the French workers in his struggle with their class enemy, and how he even attempted to win their support by granting universal suffrage and promising “socialist” social programs.⁸⁶

Although Marx and Engels saw Bonaparte as courting and obtaining the support of all sectors of French society, and although they argued that he was the servant of no class, in their view there was no doubt about which class benefitted most from his rule. Even while breaking the *political* rule of the capitalist class, he continued to preserve and strengthen its “social power.”⁸⁷ In the pursuit of his own self-interests and those of his state, Bonaparte found himself compelled to promote the coincident interests of the capitalist class. In 1852 Marx explained,

Bonaparte is the executive authority which has attained power in its own right, and as such he feels it to be his mission to safeguard ‘bourgeois order’. But the strength of this bourgeois order lies in the middle class. He therefore sees himself as the representative of the middle class and he issues decrees in this sense.⁸⁸

In 1871 Marx summarized the benefits that the bourgeoisie had derived from the Second Empire:

Under its sway, bourgeois society, freed from political cares, attained a development unexpected even by itself. Its industry and commerce expanded to colossal dimensions; financial swindling celebrated cosmopolitan orgies; the misery of the masses was set off by a shameless display of gorgeous, meretricious and debased luxury.⁸⁹

2.7 THE PROLETARIAN DICTATORSHIP AND THE END OF BUREAUCRACY

In their mature works, as in Marx’s 1843 writings, Marx and Engels clearly believed that the coming socialist revolution would eliminate the problem of bureaucracy, understood in terms of political alienation. They anticipated that the proletarian state that would emerge from the revolution would immediately abolish the worst aspects of the problem, and that ultimately even the relatively “de-alienated” proletarian state would disappear along with class domination. Between the revolution and the withering of the state, the proletariat would need to retain its own state—a “dictatorship of the proletariat”—to enforce its own immediate interests and to lay the

basis for a classless society.⁹⁰ As Hal Draper has demonstrated, the term *dictatorship* as used by Marx and Engels meant “a *domination, a social rule,*” and was *not* opposed to democracy.⁹¹ In fact, throughout their writings Marx and Engels stressed the necessarily democratic character of the workers’ state. The draft of the *Communist Manifesto* by Engels predicted that the revolution would establish “a democratic constitution implying directly or indirectly the political rule of the proletariat.”⁹² Similarly, the *Communist Manifesto* proclaimed that “the first step in the revolution by the working class, is to raise the proletariat to the position of ruling class, to win the battle of democracy.”⁹³

However, it was the experience of the Paris Commune of 1871—the first “dictatorship of the proletariat”⁹⁴—that dramatically reinforced their conviction that the proletarian state would, of necessity, be radically democratic. Marx and Engels fully approved of the Commune’s attempts to institutionalize democracy. In Marx’s *The Civil War in France*, and in the introduction to that work by Engels, the two commended the steps taken by the Commune to fill all posts by election on the basis of universal suffrage, and to provide for the immediate recall of all officials. They supported the Commune’s limitation of the salaries of state officials to the level of “workmen’s wages,” and the election of a majority of “naturally working men, or acknowledged representatives of the working class” to the Commune. They applauded the “suppression of the standing army and the substitution for it of the armed people,” and acclaimed the elimination of “the whole sham of state-mysteries and statepretensions [*sic*]” through the Commune’s publication “of all its doings and sayings.” Finally, they endorsed the democratization of the state through the abolition of the distinction between the executive and legislative branches.⁹⁵

On the basis of this experience Marx and Engels concluded in 1872 that “the working class cannot simply lay hold of the ready-made State machinery, and wield it for its own

purposes.”⁹⁶ Rather, the capitalist state bureaucracy would have to be smashed and a more democratic one substituted in its place. According to Engels, the democratic measures taken by the Commune had brought about both the “shattering of the former state power and its replacement by a new and truly democratic one.”⁹⁷ For Marx the Commune was the “political form at last discovered under which to work out the economic emancipation of labour.”⁹⁸

In part, the endorsement of radical democracy by Marx and Engels was derived from class considerations. Thus, they viewed the democratic measures of the Commune as a means of restricting bourgeois political power while subordinating the state to the interests of the proletariat. As Engels explained in 1891, “In order not to lose again its only just conquered supremacy, this working class must, on the one hand, do away with all the old repressive machinery previously used against it itself, and, on the other, safeguard itself against its own deputies and officials.”⁹⁹ The concern of Engels here seems to have been that, without such democratic norms as those established by the Commune, the state apparatus might break away from working class control. Such a situation could result in the reassertion of control of the state by the capitalist class.

At the same time, Marx and Engels viewed the democratic measures of the Commune as a way to reduce the independence of the state from society, to begin to overcome the ancient problem of political alienation. Engels described the election and recall of officials and the payment of “workmen’s wages” as steps taken “against this transformation of the state from servants of society into masters of society.”¹⁰⁰ In *The Civil War in France* Marx described these steps as the beginning of “the destruction of the State power which claimed to be the embodiment of that unity independent of, and superior to, the nation itself, from which it was but a parasitic excrescence.”¹⁰¹

Similarly, the functions of the post-capitalist state as conceived by Marx and Engels simultaneously would advance the class interests of the proletariat and reduce the level of political alienation in society. Initially, the dictatorship of the proletariat would attempt to satisfy the immediate interests of the working class by abolishing class exploitation and defending the conquests of the workers.¹⁰² At the same time, through its nationalization of the means of production, the state would be transformed from an institution standing above society into “the representative of society as a whole.” By the appropriation of bourgeois property, Engels wrote in *Anti-Dühring*, the proletariat

puts an end to itself as the proletariat, it puts an end to all class antagonisms, it puts an end also to the state as the state. . . . The first act in which the state really comes forward as the representative of society as a whole—the taking possession of the means of production in the name of society—is at the same time its last independent act as a state.¹⁰³

Eventually, even this “state,” which was not quite a state, was expected to vanish as class domination dissolved and scarcity was abolished. In a famous passage from his *Anti-Dühring* Engels described this process:

As soon as there is no longer any class of society to be held in subjection; as soon as, along with class domination and the struggle for individual existence based on the former anarchy of production, the collisions and excesses arising from these have also been abolished, there is nothing more to be repressed which would make a special repressive force, a state, necessary. . . . The interference of the state power in social relations becomes superfluous in one sphere after another, and then ceases of itself. . . . The state is not “abolished,” it *withers away*.¹⁰⁴

This did not mean that under socialism there would be no authoritative coordinating bodies. As Hal Draper has pointed out, the withering of the state for Marx and Engels meant the disappearance of official coercion, not of public authority itself.¹⁰⁵ In an 1872 essay Engels predicted that after the coming social revolution, “public functions will lose their political

character and be transformed into the simple administrative functions of watching over the true interests of society.”¹⁰⁶ Political, that is, repressive, functions would disappear, but “administrative functions” and, presumably, an administrative authority, would persist. Similarly, in *The Civil War in France* Marx spoke of the “legitimate functions” which the Paris Commune would have “wrested from an authority usurping pre-eminence over society itself, and restored to the responsible agents of society” had the Commune survived.¹⁰⁷ Furthermore, in his (1874-75) “conspectus” on Bakunin’s *Statism and Anarchy* Marx seems to have assumed that elections of a non-coercive public authority would continue to occur under socialism: “As soon as the functions [of public authority] have ceased to be political, there exists (1) no governmental function; (2) the distribution of general functions has become a businesslike matter entailing no rule; (3) the election has none of its present political character.”¹⁰⁸

In the absence of class conflict, however, there was little danger that such an authority would elevate itself above societal control. Furthermore, lacking the means of repression, it would never again be able to dominate society. Thus, socialist society would finally eliminate the problem of bureaucracy.

2.8 AFTER MARX AND ENGELS

The leaders of the socialist movement who came later continued to accept the conclusion of Marx and Engels that bureaucracy would cease to be a problem after the socialist revolution. At the same time, however, the leadership of the Second International consistently blunted the anti-bureaucratic, anti-statist thrust of Marx’s and Engels doctrine, particularly regarding the dictatorship of the proletariat. Although some figures in the left wing of the International,

including Trotsky, challenged this “orthodox” view prior to 1917, it was Lenin who in that year most clearly and sharply reaffirmed the expectations of Marx and Engels regarding the anti-bureaucratic and radically democratic character of the revolutionary state.

The continuing tendency within the socialist movement to minimize the threat of post-capitalist bureaucracy is illustrated by the writings of Karl Kautsky, the best known leader and foremost theoretician of the German Social Democratic Party (SPD) and the Second International. In his 1908 work *The Foundations of Christianity* Kautsky briefly considered the potential for the bureaucratization of the socialist movement and for the emergence of a bureaucratic class after the revolution. Neither, he concluded, was a serious danger: “We may maintain not only that Socialism will not develop any internal contradictions in the period preceding this victory [of the proletariat], that will be comparable with those attending the last phases of Christianity, but also that no such contradictions will materialize in the period in which the predictable consequences of their victory are developed.”¹⁰⁹ Kautsky based the latter conclusion on the premise that class differences traditionally have been generated by private ownership of the means of production, and by military and scientific needs. The first of these factors, private property, would be abolished soon after the revolution. At the same time he argued that the economic preconditions already existed for overcoming the tendency of the military and science to give rise to class differentiation. The development of productive forces had eliminated the necessity of confining military training to a small “aristocracy of warriors,” while the growing economic integration of nations had already made war “a piece of ruthless folly.” Capitalism also had created a greater demand for intellectuals, along with the potential for mass education, and had thus reduced the need for a scientific elite.¹¹⁰

Even while sustaining the traditional Marxist optimism regarding the withering away of state and bureaucracy, however, the leaders of the Second International ignored or rejected major

aspects of the views of Marx and Engels on the dictatorship of the proletariat. Most importantly, they minimized the depth of the radical democracy envisioned by Marx and Engels and the distance that separated this democracy from even the most democratic bourgeois republic. As early as the 1890s and consistently thereafter, Kautsky, the central defender of Marxist “orthodoxy,” endorsed *existing* parliamentarism, both as a means by which the proletariat could come to power and the specific form of the dictatorship of the proletariat.¹¹¹ He repeated the call by Marx and Engels for the “conquest of political power,” but made no reference to their views on the need to smash the bourgeois state.¹¹² Furthermore, he rejected the idea of a “government of the people and through the people in the sense that public affairs should be administered not by functionaries but by popular masses working without pay during their spare time.” This, he said, was “a utopia, even a reactionary and anti-democratic utopia.”¹¹³ Although Marx and Engels had assumed the existence of paid functionaries, their emphasis had been precisely upon the “utopian” idea of “government of the people and through the people.”

Kautsky’s response in 1912 to criticisms by the Dutch left-socialist Anton Pannekoek reveals even more sharply the contrast between his views on the revolutionary state and those of Marx and Engels. Pannekoek had rejected the SPD’s and Kautsky’s parliamentary orientation and had revived the call by Marx and Engels for the destruction of the bourgeois state machine. In reply, Kautsky conflated the two issues, dismissing Pannekoek’s views as semi-anarchist while reaffirming the SPD’s perspective: “The goal of our political struggle remains the same as it has been up to now: the conquest of state power through winning a majority in parliament and raising parliament to be the master of government. Not, however, the destruction of state power.”¹¹⁴ None of the existing ministries of bourgeois governments, Kautsky argued, could be eliminated by a revolution. Rather than calling for the destruction of the state, the SPD strove for its subordination to the working class through the election of high officials.¹¹⁵

At this point nearly all Russian socialists, including Lenin, accepted Kautsky's position as authoritative. However, there was little reason for them even to consider the question for most were unified in the view that the coming revolution in Russia would be bourgeois-democratic, not socialist, in nature. Only after the completion of the democratic revolution, Lenin argued in the summer of 1905, would it be appropriate to address the question of the dictatorship of the proletariat.¹¹⁶ Furthermore, Lenin explicitly rejected the slogans of the Paris Commune as inapplicable to the Russian situation.¹¹⁷

However, anticipating his later views on the revolutionary state, during the turbulent year 1905 Lenin suggested that a revolutionary government in Russia could be based upon "soviets." The soviets or workers' councils that appeared in cities throughout Russia during the revolution of 1905 were institutions composed of delegates elected by the workers to direct the revolutionary struggle. In the course of their development they approached the status of alternative governments. Lenin first commented on the soviets in November 1905 while still in exile. Already at that point he had concluded that the St. Petersburg Soviet "should be regarded as the embryo of a *provisional revolutionary government*."¹¹⁸ Assessing the role of the soviets in early 1906, Lenin characterized them as "embryonic forms of a new revolutionary authority" and "embryos of a new, people's, . . . revolutionary government."¹¹⁹

Meanwhile, one of the few Russian Social Democrats who already held a position to the left of Lenin's was Leon Trotsky. In the summer of 1905 Trotsky arrived at the conclusion that would become central to his famous theory of permanent revolution that a successful revolutionary struggle in Russia would bring to power a dictatorship of the proletariat which, in the process of completing the democratic revolution, would be compelled to undertake socialist measures.¹²⁰ Thus, as early as July 1905 Trotsky predicted that the future revolutionary government in Russia would not be a "dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry" as Lenin held, but rather a "dictatorship of the proletariat supported by the peasantry."¹²¹

The imminent prospect of a Russian dictatorship of the proletariat suggested to Trotsky the relevance of the experience of the first dictatorship of the proletariat, the Paris Commune. In December 1905 he wrote,

If a few years ago we were apparently further than any European nation from the traditions of the Paris Commune, then now, in passing through the first phase of our own revolution, which the struggle of the proletariat has made a revolution *in Permanenz*, an uninterrupted revolution, we are confronted by the heritage of the Commune of 1871 more directly than any European nation.

For us, the history of the Commune is now not just a great dramatic moment in the international struggle for liberation, not a mere illustration of some sort of tactical situation; it is a direct and immediate lesson.¹²²

Trotsky's study of writings of Marx and Engels on the Commune led him in turn to a vision of the dictatorship of the proletariat that was far more anti-bureaucratic and anti-statist than Kautsky's. Trotsky proclaimed that the first tasks of the proletariat in power would be "to consolidate its position, arm the revolution, disarm reaction, widen the base of the revolution, reconstruct the state."¹²³ All of these, and particularly the last, required the same radically democratic measures that had been enacted by the Commune: "The abolition of the standing army and the police, the arming of the people, the dispersion of the mandarin bureaucracy, the establishment of the principle of election of all functionaries, the equalization of their salaries, the separation of church and state—these are the measures which, from the example of the Commune, it is necessary to carry through at the very beginning."¹²⁴

Like Lenin, Trotsky also believed that the 1905 soviets had the potential to become institutions of a revolutionary state. In 1905 he characterized the soviets as "indisputably future focal points of support for a provisional government."¹²⁵ Four years later he asserted that the St. Petersburg Soviet had been "a workers' government in embryo" and "the first embryonic organ of revolutionary power."¹²⁶ However, Trotsky went beyond Lenin in observing direct parallels between the democratic and anti-bureaucratic character of the soviets and that of the Paris Commune. He described the St. Petersburg Soviet of 1905 as "the organized power of the mass

itself over its separate parts. It constitutes authentic democracy, without a lower and an upper chamber, without a professional bureaucracy [*biurokratiia*], but with the voters' right to recall their deputies at any moment."¹²⁷

Beyond that, Trotsky predicted that future soviets would dismantle the tsarist state and abolish absolutism, destroying its "material structure" by reform and by "dissolution of the army, annihilation of the police and bureaucracy." Furthermore, the soviets would transform public authorities into "agents of municipal self-government."¹²⁸ Years later, on the eve of the Bolshevik Revolution, Lenin would arrive at similar conclusions.

2.9 THE STATE AND REVOLUTION

In the summer of 1916 the young left-wing Bolshevik, Nikolai Bukharin, submitted an essay for inclusion in a collection of programmatic articles edited by Lenin. In that essay Bukharin repeated the anti-statist heresies of left-Marxists such as Pannekoek that the Marxist goal was the "revolutionary destruction" of the bourgeois state, and that "the difference between Marxists and anarchists is not at all that the Marxists are statist and the anarchists are anti-statists, as many assert" but only that socialists support economic centralization. Lenin at first dismissed Bukharin's views as "semi-anarchism" and accused him of ignoring the need for a post-revolutionary state.¹²⁹ However, Bukharin had prompted Lenin to reconsider the theory of the state.

By February 1917 Lenin's rereading of Marx and Engels led him to the conclusion that, despite "small errors," Bukharin was "*closer* to the truth than Kautsky."¹³⁰ Lenin now agreed that the task of the proletarian revolution was to smash the old bourgeois state machine and to replace it with a new one. At the same time he went beyond Bukharin in accepting a conclusion Trotsky

had reached years earlier—that the form of the dictatorship of the proletariat had manifested itself not only in the Paris Commune, but also in the soviets of 1905. In his notes on the state in early 1917 Lenin wrote,

Marx's fundamental idea: the conquest of *political power* by the proletariat does **not** mean the taking over of a "ready-made" state machinery, *but . . .* its "smashing" and destruction, and its *replacement* by a **new** one One could, probably, . . . express the whole matter thus: *replacement* of the old ("ready-made") state machine **and parliaments** by *Soviets of Workers' Deputies* and **their** trustees.¹³¹

Not long after Lenin wrote these lines he had the opportunity to apply them to living soviets. In one of his first statements after the February Revolution Lenin noted the dual power which had emerged in Petrograd between the Provisional Government and the Soviet of Workers' Deputies. As in 1905 Lenin described the Petrograd Soviet as "an organization of the workers, the embryo of a workers' government, the representative of the entire mass of the *poor* sector of the population." Now, however, he went beyond his old slogan of the "democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry" calling for the preparation of the second stage of the revolution. By implication, this was to involve the establishment of a dictatorship of the proletariat exercised through the soviets.¹³² During the following months Lenin repeatedly explained that the characteristics of soviet power would be those that Marx had admired in the Paris Commune.¹³³

Lenin developed these themes most fully in his pamphlet *The State and Revolution* written in August-September 1917 and published the following January. In that work Lenin again explained that for a certain transitional period after the seizure of power the proletariat would need a state "both to crush the resistance of the exploiters and to *lead* the enormous mass of the population—the peasants, the petty bourgeoisie, and the semi-proletarians—in the work of organising a socialist economy."¹³⁴ However, the type of state that was needed by the proletariat was not the same as that created by the bourgeoisie. The old state was unsuitable because it had

been created for a different purpose, “to maintain exploitation, i.e., in the selfish interests of an insignificant minority against the vast majority of the people.”¹³⁵ Furthermore, the main institutions of the old state machine, the bureaucracy [*chinovnichestvo*] and the standing army, were connected “by thousands of threads” with the bourgeoisie.¹³⁶ Consequently, Lenin described as the most fundamental point of the Marxist theory of the state that “all previous revolutions perfected the state machine, whereas it must be broken, smashed.”¹³⁷ In its place the proletariat would substitute a state designed “to completely abolish all exploitation, i.e., in the interests of the vast majority of the people, and against the insignificant minority.”¹³⁸

The smashing of the old state was to be accomplished “‘only’ by fuller democracy.” However, Lenin noted that this meant, in fact, the replacement of the old institutions by fundamentally different ones.¹³⁹ Lenin asserted that the directly repressive functions of the state could be carried out directly by the armed people “with a very simple ‘machine’, almost without a ‘machine’.” Thus, the standing army could be abolished.¹⁴⁰ Regarding the other post-revolutionary function of the state—the construction of a socialist economy—Lenin believed that this would temporarily require the continued existence of some form of bureaucracy:

Abolishing the bureaucracy [*chinovnichestvo*] at once, everywhere and completely, is out of the question. It is a utopia. But to *smash* the old bureaucratic [*chinovnichnii*] machine at once and to begin immediately to construct a new one that will make possible the gradual abolition of all bureaucracy [*chinovnichestvo*]*—this is not a utopia, it is the experience of the Commune, the direct and immediate task of the revolutionary proletariat.*¹⁴¹

However, this new bureaucracy would be radically different from that of the bourgeoisie. At the outset the “specific ‘bossing’ of state officials” would be replaced “by the simple functions of ‘foremen and accountants.’” These functions, Lenin argued, had been so simplified by capitalist culture that they were “already fully within the ability of the average town dweller.”¹⁴² Thus, it was “quite possible, after the overthrow of the capitalists and the bureaucrats [*chinovniki*], to

proceed immediately, overnight” to replace them with the control and supervision “by the armed workers, by the whole of the armed population.”¹⁴³ Thus, “*all* may become ‘bureaucrats’ [*biurokraty*] for a time and . . . therefore, *nobody* may be able to become a ‘bureaucrat’ [*biurokrat*].”¹⁴⁴

To the extent that a distinct body of state officials was needed, it would be kept subordinate to the society as a whole through the measures that had been implemented by the Paris Commune. All officials were to be elected and subject to recall at any time, and their salaries were to be “reduced to the level of ordinary ‘workmen’s wages’.” Furthermore, democratic control over executive functions would be maintained by turning these over to representative institutions—in the process transforming such institutions “from talking shops into ‘working’ bodies.”¹⁴⁵ To the extent this occurred, functionaries would “cease to be ‘bureaucrats’ [*biurokraty*], to be ‘officials’ [*chinovniki*].”¹⁴⁶ Lenin also foresaw that the proletarian state would continue to need a “scientifically trained staff of engineers, agronomists, and so on.” However, in Lenin’s view the use of these experts posed no threat to popular control over the state: “These gentlemen are working today in obedience to the wishes of the capitalists, and will work even better tomorrow in obedience to the wishes of the armed workers.”¹⁴⁷

Again, for Lenin the dictatorship of the proletariat was only to survive during the transition from capitalism to communism. Ultimately, he believed, the state would cease to exist altogether. In the final analysis the state was only a tool for the suppression of one class by another. When classes ceased to exist a “systematic struggle against a definite section of the population” would no longer be necessary. Although Lenin saw the withering of the state as a lengthy process, he believed it would begin with the abolition of the bourgeois state and its replacement by the dictatorship of the proletariat. Lenin recalled that even the short-lived Paris

Commune was already ceasing to be a state because it had replaced repression of the majority by the minority with repression of the minority by the majority.¹⁴⁸

However, in one passage Lenin indicated that some sort of state would continue to exist for a period even after the threat of a capitalist restoration had finally disappeared. This would be during the lower stage of communism when goods were to be distributed according to work performed. Following Marx, Lenin pointed out that such a system of distribution involved the application of an equal measure of compensation to individuals who had unequal needs. As such, the principle of “equal right” was “a violation of equality and an injustice” and was, in fact, a form of “bourgeois right.” Until the economic prerequisites were created for distribution according to need, a state would be necessary for the regulation of labor and the distribution of goods.¹⁴⁹

Lenin believed that the state would finally wither away completely when the higher stage of communism was reached. At that point production and distribution would be organized according to the principle: “From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs.” Then, when both class rule and bourgeois norms of distribution had ceased to exist, the state with its bureaucracy would no longer be necessary.¹⁵⁰

2.10 CONCLUSION

In the years immediately after the revolution, Bolshevik views on bureaucracy were shaped by various influences, including popular usage of the term and classical Marxist writings on that issue. From popular Russian and European discourse, the Bolsheviks derived an understanding of bureaucracy understood primarily as rule by officials, or as a body of officials

that ruled, and secondarily as a variety of other negative phenomena that included excessive formalism, paperwork, and inefficiency. From Marx and Engels they inherited an analysis that associated the problem of bureaucracy with political alienation—a phenomenon that was viewed as directly related to bourgeois control of the state, that would be curtailed significantly by the dictatorship of the proletariat, and that would ultimately disappear in the socialist society of the future.

Despite expectations derived from the Marxist classics, shortly after the revolution many within the Bolshevik party detected the resurgence of various phenomena that they described as manifestations of bureaucracy or bureaucratism. Some Bolsheviks, such as the various opposition groupings that flourished within the party from 1918 to 1922, continued to define and analyze the problem in traditional Marxist terms. At times, Lenin also characterized the problem of Soviet bureaucracy this way—although on other occasions, drawing heavily upon the secondary meanings and associations of bureaucracy in popular usage, he defined the problem quite differently in terms of inefficiency. During those years Trotsky viewed the problem of Soviet bureaucracy almost exclusively as one of inefficiency. However, in later years Trotsky, too, would come to perceive the relevance of the classical Marxist analysis of bureaucracy for the Soviet situation.

¹ Martin Albrow, *Bureaucracy* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1970). Fred Riggs, “Introduction: Shifting Meanings of the Term ‘Bureaucracy,’” *International Social Science Journal* 31, no. 4 (Nov. 1979): 563-584.

² See Albrow, *Bureaucracy*, 16; Riggs, 563-564; Martin Krygier, “State and Bureaucracy in Europe: The Growth of a Concept” in *Bureaucracy: The Career of a Concept*, ed. Eugene Kamenka and Martin Krygier (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1979), 21-22.

³ Quoted in Albrow, *Bureaucracy*, 16. See also Krygier, “State and Bureaucracy in Europe,” 22.

⁴ Quoted in Albrow, 16. See also Krygier, “State and Bureaucracy in Europe,” 22.

⁵ Louis-Sebastien Mercier, *Panorama of Paris : Selections from Le Tableau de Paris*, ed. Jeremy D. Popkin (University Park, Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999), 172. See also Krygier, “State and Bureaucracy in Europe,” 22..

⁶ Albrow, *Bureaucracy*, 17.

⁷ Quoted in Krygier, “State and Bureaucracy in Europe,” 23.

⁸ Quoted in Albrow, *Bureaucracy*, 17. See also Krygier, “State and Bureaucracy in Europe,” 23.

⁹ Quoted in Krygier, “State and Bureaucracy in Europe,” 23.

¹⁰ Quoted in Albrow, *Bureaucracy*, 21. See also Krygier, “State and Bureaucracy in Europe,” 29.

¹¹ Albrow, *Bureaucracy*, 20.

- ¹² John Stuart Mill, *Principles of Political Economy and Chapters on Socialism*, The World's Classics, ed. Jonathan Riley (Oxford: Oxford University press, 1994), 347. See also Albrow, *ibid.*, 22.
- ¹³ Quoted in Krygier, "State and Bureaucracy in Europe," 24. See also Albrow, *Bureaucracy*, 19.
- ¹⁴ Quoted in Krygier, "State and Bureaucracy in Europe," 25.
- ¹⁵ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁶ Albrow, *Bureaucracy*, 29. Krygier, "State and Bureaucracy in Europe," 25-26. This last trait—the tendency for state officials to generate mountains of paperwork— was in fact a common complaint among more than artisans. For example, in his 1836 novel *Les Employées* Balzac depicted bureaucracy as having "a penchant for categorical statements and reports"; and in 1821 Stein eagerly anticipated the political downfall of "the writing-machine." [Krygier, "State and Bureaucracy in Europe," 24; Albrow, *Bureaucracy*, 18, 19.]
- ¹⁷ Quoted in Krygier, "State and Bureaucracy in Europe," 26.
- ¹⁸ Krygier, "State and Bureaucracy in Europe," 26-27.
- ¹⁹ Albrow, *Bureaucracy*, 23-24.
- ²⁰ Quoted in Albrow, *Bureaucracy*, 27-29. See also Krygier, "State and Bureaucracy in Europe," 28-29.
- ²¹ Quoted in Albrow, *Bureaucracy*, 28.
- ²² See Krygier, "State and Bureaucracy in Europe," 28; Albrow, *Bureaucracy*, 31. The view that bureaucracy was efficient also seems to have been held by John Stuart Mill, who expressed concern about the concentration of all skill and expertise in a dominant bureaucracy. [See Mill, *Principles of Political Economy*, 347.]
- ²³ Robert Michels, *Political Parties: A Sociological Study of the Oligarchical Tendencies of Modern Democracy*, translated by Eden and Cedar Paul (New York: The Free Press, McMillan Publishing Co., 1962). See Albrow, *Bureaucracy*, *ibid.*, 36-37.
- ²⁴ See, for example, Vladimir Il'ich Lenin, *Collected Works* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1960-1970), 7:364, 396-397; Lenin, *Collected Works*, 8:307; Vladimir Il'ich Lenin, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii* (Moscow: Gos. izd-vo polit. lit-ry, 1958-65), 8: 351, 384-385; Lenin, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 10:36; Rosa Luxemburg, *Rosa Luxemburg Speaks*, ed. Mary-Alice Waters (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1970), 196, 204, 214, 216; Rosa Luxemburg, "Rosa Luxemburg: *Massenstreik, Partei und Gewerkschaften*," Marxists' Internet Archive, <http://www.marxists.org/deutsch/archiv/luxemburg/1906/mapage/kap6.htm>, <http://www.marxists.org/deutsch/archiv/luxemburg/1906/mapage/kap7.htm>, <http://www.marxists.org/deutsch/archiv/luxemburg/1906/mapage/kap8.htm> (accessed 5/24/2008).
- ²⁵ *Slovar russkogo iazyka*, ed. A. P. Evgen'eva (Moskva: Izd-vo "Russkii iazyk," 1981-1984), s.v. "Biurokratiia."
- ²⁶ See Anne Wing Hamilton, "Radishchev's Hundred-Headed Monster Lives! The Role of the Bureaucrat Symbol in State-Society Relations in Russia," *The Russian Review* 66 (April 2007): 258; Aleksandr Tarasov, "Biurokratiia kak sotsialnyi parazit," *Skepsis: Nauchno-prosvetitel'skii zhurnal*, *Skepsis. Nauchno-prosvetitel'skii zhurnal*, http://sceptis.ru/library/id_1581.html (accessed 5/24/2008).
- ²⁷ I. E. Andreevskii et al., eds., *Rossiiia: entsiklopedicheskii slovar'* (1898; repr., St. Petersburg: Lenizdat, 1991), s.v. "biurokratiia."
- ²⁸ Imperatorskoi akademii nauk, *Slovar' russkago iazyka* (1895-1927; repr., London: Flegon Press, 1982), s.v. "biurokratiia."
- ²⁹ Vladimir Dal', *Tolkovyi slovar' zhivogo velikorusskago iazyka v chetyrekh tomakh*. (1912; repr., Moscow: Izdatel'skaia gruppa "Progress": "Univers", 1994, s.v. "biurokratiia."
- ³⁰ V. Zehlieznov, et al., eds., *Entsiklopedicheskii slovar' Tovarishchestva "Br. A. i I. Granat i Ko."* (1910-1936; repr. Moscow: "Vasanta," 1993-), s.v. "biurokratiia."
- ³¹ Andreevskii, *Rossiiia: entsiklopedicheskii slovar'*, s.v. "biurokratiia."
- ³² Dal', *Tolkovyi slovar'*, s.v. "biurokratiia."
- ³³ See, for example, Zehlieznov, *Entsiklopedicheskii slovar'*, s.v. "biurokratiia"; Imperatorskoi akademii nauk, *Slovar' russkago iazyka*, s.v. "biurokratiia"; A. Aleksandrov, *Polnyi russko-angliiskii slovar'*, 3rd ed. (St. Petersburg: V Knizhnom, i geograf. magazinie izdanii Glavnago Shtaba, 1899), s.v. "bureaucracy"; A. Aleksandrov, *Polnyi Anglo-russkii slovar'*, 5th ed., revised and enlarged (Berlin: Polyglotte, 1915), s.v. "bureaucracy"; F. Pavlenkov, *Entsiklopedicheskii slovar'*, 5th edition (St. Petersburg: Tip. Spb. T-va Pech. i Izd. diela Trud, 1913), s.v. "biurokratiia."
- ³⁴ Alan Kimball, "The Tsarist State and the origins of Revolutionary Opposition in the 1860s," a presentation to the Northwest Scholars of Russian and Soviet History and Culture, Seattle Washington, November 7, 1998,

<http://www.uoregon.edu/~kimball/stt&pbl.htm> (accessed 5/29/2008). See also Terence Wade, *Russian Etymological Dictionary* (London: Bristol Classical Press, 1996), s.v. “chin.”

³⁵ Dal', *Tolkovyi slovar'*, s.v. “biurokratiia.”

³⁶ F. Pavlenkov, *Slovar' inostrannykh slov, voshedshikh v sostav russkago iazyka/ sostavlen po Entsiklopedicheskomu Slovariu F. Pavlenkova*, 3rd edition (New York: Izd-vo M.N. Maizelia, 1918), s.v. “biuro.”

³⁷ Pavlenkov, *Entsiklopedicheskii slovar'*, s.v. “biurokratizm.”

³⁸ Pavlenkov, *Slovar' inostrannykh slov*, s.v. “biurokratizm.”

³⁹ Lenin, *Collected Works*, 8:307. Translation slightly revised by this author. Lenin, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 10:36. See also Lenin, *Collected Works*, 7:364, 396-397; Lenin, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 8:351, 384-385.

⁴⁰ “Political alienation” is used here in preference to the terms “alienated social power” coined by Robert C. Tucker and “parasite state” employed by Richard Hunt, John Sanderson, and John Plamenatz. “Alienated social power” is too cumbersome to be used conveniently; and, as Hal Draper has pointed out, “parasite state” is inexact. [Robert C. Tucker, *The Marxian Revolutionary Idea* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1969), 56-60; Robert C. Tucker, “Marx as a Political Theorist” in *Marx's Socialism*, ed. Shlomo Avineri (New York: Lieber-Atherton, 1973), 127-130; Richard N. Hunt, *The Political Ideas of Marx and Engels*, 2 vols. (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1974, 1984), esp. vol. 1, *Marxism and Totalitarian Democracy, 1818-1850*, 125-130, and vol. 2, *Classical Marxism, 1850-1895*, 3-6, 126-128, 231-239; John Sanderson, “Marx and Engels on the State,” *Western Political Quarterly* 16 (1963): 951-953; John Sanderson, *An Interpretation of the Political Ideas of Marx and Engels* (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1969), 55-74; John Plamenatz, *German Marxism and Russian Communism* (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1954), 144-151; Hal Draper, *Karl Marx's Theory of Revolution*, vol. 1, *State and Bureaucracy*, bk. 2 (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1977):622-628.]

⁴¹ Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Hegel's Philosophy of Right*, trans. and ed. T. M. Knox (London: Oxford University Press, 1973), 179-208. For useful summaries of Hegel's views and Marx's 1843 response, see Hunt, *Marxism and Totalitarian Democracy*, 53-92; Shlomo Avineri, “The Hegelian Origins of Marx's Political Thought,” in Avineri, ed., *Marx's Socialism*, 1-15; Shlomo Avineri, *The Social and Political Thought of Karl Marx* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 8-64; Joseph O'Malley, editor's introduction to Karl Marx, *Critique of Hegel's 'Philosophy of Right'*, trans. and ed. Annette Jolin and Joseph O'Malley (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), ix-lxii; Andre Lieblich, “On the Origins of a Marxist Theory of Bureaucracy in the Critique of Hegel's ‘Philosophy of Right’,” *Political Theory* 10, no. 1 (Feb., 1982): 77-93.

⁴² Karl Marx, *Early Writings*, trans. Rodney Livingstone and Gregor Benton (New York: Vintage Books, Random House, 1974), 107.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 108.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 108-109.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 219-220.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 232-233, 106.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 234.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 256. On this point see Avineri, *Social and Political Thought*, 57-61; and Avineri, “Hegelian Origins,” 8-9.

⁵⁰ See Hunt, *Marxism and Totalitarian Democracy*, 107-109.

⁵¹ Karl Marx (with Frederick Engels), *The German Ideology: Including Theses on Feuerbach and An Introduction to the Critique of Political Economy* Great Books in Philosophy (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Book, 1998), 99.

⁵² Karl Marx, *The Revolutions of 1848*, vol. 1 of *Political Writings*, ed. David Fernbach (New York: Vintage Books, 1974), 69.

⁵³ Frederick Engels, *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1972), 160.

⁵⁴ Hunt, *Marxism and Totalitarian Democracy*, 125-130; Hunt, *Classical Marxism*, 3-6; Tucker, “Marx as a Political Theorist,” 127-139; Tucker, *Marxian Revolutionary Idea*, 56-60. Both John Plamenatz and John Sanderson have also argued that Marx and Engels held two conceptions of the state that were incompatible. [Plamenatz, *German Marxism*, 151; Sanderson, “Marx and Engels on the State,” 947.] Other works that have noted the persistence of certain themes from Marx's 1843 analysis in the later writings of Marx and Engels include Avineri, *Social and Political Thought*, Avineri, “Hegelian Origins”; Michael Evans, *Karl Marx* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1975), 113; and Eric J. Hobsbawm, “Marx, Engels, and Politics,” in *Marxism in Marx's Day*, ed. Eric J. Hobsbawm. Vol. 1 of *The History of Marxism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982), 230.

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- ⁵⁵ Quoted in Draper, *State and Bureaucracy*, bk. 2:498.
- ⁵⁶ Karl Marx, *Surveys from Exile*, vol. 2 of *Political Writings*, ed. David Fernbach (New York: Vintage Books, Random House, 1974), 238.
- ⁵⁷ Marx and Engels, *German Ideology*, 99, 86.
- ⁵⁸ Marx, *Surveys*, 237.
- ⁵⁹ Frederick Engels, *Herr Eugen Dühring's Revolution in Science (Anti-Dühring)* (New York: International Publishers, 1939), 202.
- ⁶⁰ Frederick Engels, "Introduction," in Karl Marx, *The Civil War in France* (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1966), 16.
- ⁶¹ Engels, *Anti-Dühring*, 198, 165.
- ⁶² Engels, *Origin*, 99, 117.
- ⁶³ Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *The Marx-Engels Reader*, ed. by Robert C. Tucker (New York: W. W. Norton & Co), 644.
- ⁶⁴ Engels, *Anti-Dühring*, 198.
- ⁶⁵ Engels, *Origin*, 159.
- ⁶⁶ Karl Marx, *Selected Works* (Leningrad: Co-operative Publishing Society of Foreign Workers in the U.S.S.R., 1935), 1: 463.
- ⁶⁷ Engels, *Anti-Dühring*, 198.
- ⁶⁸ Engels, *Origin*, 160.
- ⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 159.
- ⁷⁰ Nicos Poulantzas has used the term "relative autonomy" to indicate the degree of independence of the state from the direct control of the dominant economic class. Hal Draper has distinguished between the "independence" of the state from society as a whole and the "autonomy" of the state with regard to every other section of society. Nicos Poulantzas, *Political Power and Social Classes*, translation editor Timothy O'Hagan (London: NLB, 1975); Draper, *State and Bureaucracy*, bk. 1:312n.
- ⁷¹ For discussions of Marx's and Engels' views on Caesarism, Oriental Despotism, Absolute Monarchy, and Tsarist Autocracy, see Draper, *State and Bureaucracy*, bk. 2:464-483, 515-587; and Hunt, *Classical Marxism*, 27-63.
- ⁷² For a discussion of the views of Marx and Engels on the Bonapartism of Napoleon I and Bismark, see Draper, *State and Bureaucracy*, bk. 2:427-437.
- ⁷³ Marx, *Surveys*, 238.
- ⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 237 (see also 186).
- ⁷⁵ Marx, *Civil War*, 164.
- ⁷⁶ Marx, *Surveys*, 236.
- ⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 245. See also Marx, *Civil War*, 230-231.
- ⁷⁸ Marx, *Civil War*, 65-66.
- ⁷⁹ Marx, *Surveys*, 175. (See also *ibid.*, 224).
- ⁸⁰ Engels, *Origin*, 160.
- ⁸¹ Marx, *Civil War*, 66.
- ⁸² Marx, *Surveys*, 238.
- ⁸³ Draper, *State and Bureaucracy*, bk. 2:401-402; Hunt, *Classical Marxism*, 54; Ralph Miliband, "Marx and the State," in Avineri, ed., *Marx's Socialism*, 165-166; and Plamenatz, *German Marxism*, 144-145. Robert C. Tucker, on the other hand, has taken this statement by Marx at face value. Tucker, "Marx as a Political Theorist," 138-139.
- ⁸⁴ Marx, *Surveys*, 197, 204, 206, 234.
- ⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 243.
- ⁸⁶ See Draper, *State and Bureaucracy*, bk. 2:404-406; Hunt, *Classical Marxism*, 56.
- ⁸⁷ Marx, *Surveys*, 190.
- ⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 245.
- ⁸⁹ Marx, *Civil War*, 66.
- ⁹⁰ For exhaustive studies by Draper on the use of the term "dictatorship of the proletariat" by Marx and Engels, see Hal Draper, "Marx and the Dictatorship of the Proletariat," *Etudes de Marxologie*, no. 6 (Sept. 1962): 5-73; Hal Draper, "Marx and the Dictatorship of the Proletariat," *New Politics* 1, no. 4(summer 1962): 91-104; and Hal Draper, *The 'Dictatorship of the Proletariat' from Marx to Lenin* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1987), 11-41.
- ⁹¹ Hal Draper, "Marx and the Dictatorship of the Proletariat," 93.

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- ⁹² Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *The Communist Manifesto of Karl Marx and Frederick Engels* (Calcutta: Radical Book Club, B. Mitra, 1972), 332.
- ⁹³ Marx and Engels, *Marx-Engels Reader*, 352.
- ⁹⁴ The assertion by Engels that the Paris Commune was a “dictatorship of the proletariat” appears in his introduction to Marx’s *The Civil War in France* (p. 18). Hal Draper has demonstrated that Marx also held this view. [Draper, *The ‘Dictatorship of the Proletariat’ from Marx to Lenin*, 31, 37.]
- ⁹⁵ Marx, *Civil War*, 16, 67, 68, 80, 170.
- ⁹⁶ Marx and Engels, *Marx-Engels Reader*, 332.
- ⁹⁷ Engels, “Introduction” to Marx, *Civil War*, 16.
- ⁹⁸ Marx, *Civil War*, 16, 72.
- ⁹⁹ Engels, “Introduction” to Marx, *Civil War*, 15.
- ¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 16.
- ¹⁰¹ Marx, *Civil War*, 69.
- ¹⁰² See, for example, Marx and Engels, *Marx-Engels Reader*, 352-353, 664-665; Karl Marx, “L’Indifferenza in Materia Politica,” quoted in Draper, “Marx and the Dictatorship of the Proletariat,” *New Politics*, 101.
- ¹⁰³ Engels, *Anti-Dühring*, 306-307.
- ¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁰⁵ Hal Draper, “The Death of the State in Marx and Engels,” *The Socialist Register, 1970* (London: Merlin Press, 1970), 288.
- ¹⁰⁶ Frederick Engels, “On Authority.” In Marx and Engels, *Marx-Engels Reader*, 664.
- ¹⁰⁷ Marx, *Civil War*, 69.
- ¹⁰⁸ Draper, “Death of the State,” 296.
- ¹⁰⁹ Karl Kautsky, *Foundations of Christianity: A Study in Christian Origins* (1925; repr., New York: Monthly Review Press, 1972), 468-469.
- ¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 469-472. For a discussion of Kautsky’s views on bureaucracy in this book, see Ernest Mandel, “What is Bureaucracy?” in *The Stalinist Legacy: Its Impact on 20th-Century World Politics*, ed. Tariq Ali (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England: Penguin Books, 1984), 70-71.
- ¹¹¹ Massimo Salvadori, *Karl Kautsky and the Socialist Revolution, 1880-1938* (London: NLB, 1979), 35-38.
- ¹¹² See, for example, Karl Kautsky, *The Class Struggle (Erfurt Program)*, trans. William E. Bohn (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1971); and Karl Kautsky, *The Social Revolution* (Chicago: Charles H. Kerr & Co., 1907). See also Lenin’s later critique of Kautsky in *The State and Revolution* in Lenin, *Collected Works* 25:476-491.
- ¹¹³ Quoted in Salvadori, *Karl Kautsky*, 161.
- ¹¹⁴ Quoted in Marian Sawer, “The Genesis of *State and Revolution*,” *The Socialist Register, 1977* (London: Merlin Press, 1977), 211.
- ¹¹⁵ Salvadori, *Karl Kautsky*, 161.
- ¹¹⁶ Lenin, *Collected Works*, 9:86.
- ¹¹⁷ V. I. Lenin, *On the Paris Commune* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1970), 14.
- ¹¹⁸ Lenin, *Collected Works*, 10:21.
- ¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 155, 243.
- ¹²⁰ For Trotsky’s full exposition of this theory, see his 1906 work *Results and Prospects* in *The Permanent Revolution and Results and Prospects* by Leon Trotsky (New York: Merit Publishers, 1969), 36-122.
- ¹²¹ Quoted in Leon Trotsky, *1905*, trans. Anya Bostock (New York: Vintage Books, Random House, 1972), 310. For the history of the development of Trotsky’s theory of permanent revolution, see Michael Löwy, *The Politics of Combined and Uneven Development: The Theory of Permanent Revolution* (London: Verso Editions and NLB, 1981), 30-69.
- ¹²² Leon Trotsky, *On the Paris Commune* (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1970), 10-11.
- ¹²³ *Ibid.*, 20-21.
- ¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 21. Compare these passages with Marian Sawer’s claim that in 1905 Trotsky, like Lenin, “saw no particular institutional significance in the structure of the Commune.” [Sawer, “Genesis of State and Revolution,” 213.]
- ¹²⁵ Trotsky, *On the Paris Commune*, 25.
- ¹²⁶ Trotsky, *1905*, 251, 253.
- ¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 253. 188. L. Trotskii, *Nasha pervaiia revoliutsiia*, vol. 2 of *Sochineniia*, part 2 (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel’stvo, 1927; reprint Cleveland, OH: Bell and Howell, 1963), 188.

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- ¹²⁸ Quoted in Oscar Anweiler, *The Soviets: The Russian Workers, Peasants, and Soldiers Councils, 1905-1921*, trans. Ruth Hein (New York: Random House, 1974), 90.
- ¹²⁹ Sawer, "Genesis of *State and Revolution*," 214-216; Stephen F. Cohen, *Bukharin and the Bolshevik Revolution: A Political Biography, 1888-1938* (New York: Vintage Books, Random House, 1971), 39-40; Neil Harding, *Lenin's Political Thought: Theory and Practice in the Democratic and Socialist Revolution*, vol. 2, *Theory and Practice in the Socialist Revolution* (Atlantic Highlands, New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1983), 92-93.
- ¹³⁰ Lenin, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 49:388, 390-391, quoted in Cohen, *Bukharin*, 42.
- ¹³¹ V. I. Lenin, *Marxism on the State* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1978), 49, 51.
- ¹³² Lenin, *Collected Works*, 23:304.
- ¹³³ *Ibid.*, 324-328; Lenin, *Collected Works*, 24:23-24, 38-39, 67-71, 145-146
- ¹³⁴ Lenin, *Collected Works*, 25:404.
- ¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 403.
- ¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 407; Lenin, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 33:29.
- ¹³⁷ Lenin, *Collected Works*, 25:406.
- ¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 403.
- ¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 419.
- ¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 463, 419.
- ¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 425; Lenin, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 33:48.
- ¹⁴² Lenin, *Collected Works*, 25:420-421, 426.
- ¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 25:478; Lenin, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 33:100-101
- ¹⁴⁴ Lenin, *Collected Works*, 25: 481; Lenin, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 33: 109.
- ¹⁴⁵ Lenin, *Collected Works*, 25:421, 423.
- ¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 492; Lenin, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 33:115.
- ¹⁴⁷ Lenin, *Collected Works*, 25:473.
- ¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 464, 457, 441.
- ¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 465-468.
- ¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 469.

3.0 REVOLUTION AND THE PROBLEMS OF BUREAUCRACY

Not long after the October Revolution, many Bolsheviks, including opposition groupings, Lenin, and Trotsky, began to realize that the problem of bureaucracy had not died with the old regime. Although there was a general consensus that bureaucracy was a growing problem, there was little agreement on exactly what that problem was, and how to account for its reappearance. A series of leftist opposition groups within the party employed the primary meaning and the classical Marxist analysis of bureaucracy and defined the problem in terms of the rule of state officials, that is, in terms of the growth of political alienation in the Soviet Union. These Bolsheviks saw bureaucracy in the elevation of Soviet political, economic, and military institutions above the control of the working class. Furthermore, consistent with the traditional Marxist analysis, they argued that this problem was directly related to the degree of political power or influence retained by the exploiting classes. At times, Lenin spoke similarly, warning of the bureaucratizing influence of the bourgeois specialists, and denouncing the “bureaucratic” centralism and authoritarianism of some of his comrades. At other times, however, Lenin used the term *bureaucracy* in a wholly different sense to characterize the enormous inefficiency of the Soviet state and party apparatuses. Trotsky, of course, would in later years come to define the problem of Soviet bureaucracy in terms of extreme political alienation. However, during the first period of Soviet power from the revolution until 1922, Trotsky’s understanding of the problem was distinctive in that he rejected the view that Soviet bureaucracy involved the rule of officials

or political alienation, as well as the notion that it was related to the use of bourgeois specialists. Instead, in this period Trotsky viewed the problem of Soviet bureaucracy as related exclusively to the problem of inefficiency in Soviet military and economic organs.

3.1 THE DREAM DEFERRED

On the eve of the Bolshevik insurrection Lenin confidently predicted that the coming revolution would resolve the age-old problems of political alienation and bureaucracy. In *The State and Revolution* he argued that the socialist revolution would establish a dictatorship of the proletariat modeled after the Paris Commune. Through the soviets the masses of workers and, following them, the peasants would take power into their own hands. Popular control over the state would be assured by the dissolution of the standing army, the elimination of the distinction between the state's executive and legislative branches, the introduction of election and recall of all officials, and the limitation of officials' salaries to the level of "workmen's wages." In time, as the need for a distinct, repressive apparatus faded, even this radically democratic proletarian state would wither away.

During the first six months of Soviet power the Bolshevik leaders had good reason to believe that their utopian dreams were about to become a living reality. The insurrection itself, though planned and directed by the party leadership, enjoyed the ardent support of the overwhelming majority of the industrial workers. The day after the insurrection the Bolsheviks handed power over to the Second All-Russian Congress of Soviets, composed in the majority of Bolshevik delegates. In the following weeks and months workers and peasants throughout Russia continued to establish soviets as organs of local government. At all levels soviet deputies were

elected and received only minimal wages; and the soviets concentrated in their hands both executive and legislative power.¹

Outside of the soviets as well, new regime was characterized by a high degree of popular participation. Before and after the seizure of power soldiers at the front responded to Bolshevik appeals and elected committees to arrange a cease-fire with enemy units. In the early months of Soviet power the factory committees established during 1917 first introduced workers' control over the factories, then began to nationalize them outright; workers in Petrograd organized their own tribunals to dispense revolutionary justice; and throughout Russia peasants spontaneously seized the property of the large landowners.²

On the crest of this revolutionary wave the Bolsheviks continued to proclaim the dream of a radically democratic, participatory, and anti-bureaucratic state. In this regard no one was more optimistic than Lenin. Immediately after the insurrection he repeated to the Petrograd Soviet the central refrain of *The State and Revolution*: "The oppressed masses will themselves create a power. The old state apparatus will be smashed to its foundations and a new administrative apparatus set up in the form of the Soviet organisations."³ At the Seventh Party Congress in March 1918 he amplified upon this theme: "Soviet power is a new type of state without a bureaucracy, without police, without a regular army, a state in which bourgeois democracy has been replaced by a new democracy, a democracy that brings to the fore the vanguard of working people, gives them legislative and executive authority, makes them responsible for military defence and creates state machinery that can re-educate the masses."⁴ In the same period Lenin further argued that, besides the soviets, other mass institutions such as the trade unions, factory committees, militia groupings, and peoples' courts could facilitate popular participation in the affairs of state.⁵ Finally, he continued to predict that under socialism the state

would disappear altogether.⁶ At the Seventh Party Congress he noted that, in some respects, the withering of the state had already begun, though he added more cautiously, “We shall have managed to convene more than two congresses before the time comes to say: see how our state is withering away.”⁷

During this period Trotsky also emphasized many of these same anti-bureaucratic and democratic themes. Early in 1918 Trotsky observed, “Yesterday the mass-man was nobody, a slave to the Tsar, the nobles and the bureaucracy [*biurokratiia*].”⁸ However, the revolution had been a “revolt of the peasants against the landlords, of the workers against the capitalists, of the whole people against old tsarist bureaucratism [*biurokratizm*] and against the Tsar himself.”⁹ In the revolution the “former [military] apparatus was smashed along with all the other apparatuses of the bureaucracy [*biurokratiia*].”¹⁰ Along these same lines, on the day of the insurrection Trotsky expressed his confidence that the new state would serve only working people:

We, today, we, the Soviet of Soldiers’, Workers’, and Peasants’ Deputies, are going to undertake an experiment unique in history, the establishment of a government that will have no other aim than the satisfaction of the needs of the soldiers, workers and peasants.

The state must become the instrument of the masses in the struggle for their liberation from all slavery.¹¹

A few months later he again explained that the representation of the interests of working people by the state was guaranteed by the right to elect and recall all officials of the soviets. Because of this, in comparison with the old dumas and zemstvos, there were “in the Soviet incomparably more serious, more profound guarantees of the direct and immediate relation between the deputy and the electors.”¹²

However, by early 1918 the dream of immediately realizing the commune state already had begun to fade. Increasingly, the policies adopted by the party leadership and the emergent

structures of power diverged from the democratic aspirations of *The State and Revolution*. During the civil war that raged from the spring of 1918 until late 1920, highly paid “bourgeois specialists” continued to occupy positions of authority throughout Soviet political, economic and military institutions; working class initiative gave way to centralism in all spheres; the state apparatus, instead of contracting, expanded enormously; the Soviet leadership found itself resorting to coercion, not only against its White Guard enemies, but also against the classes it claimed to represent; and opposition parties were harassed into impotence. Finally, the power of the soviets indeed “withered,” but in its place grew the power of a hierarchically organized party. During these years the goal of a commune state did not entirely disappear from the pronouncements of the party leaders, but it receded further and further into the distance.¹³

It is of course debatable whether the Marxist vision of the commune state could have been realized under the best of circumstances. However, the Bolsheviks never had the opportunity to find out. From the beginning they were beset by difficulties that had not been anticipated in the classics, and that Lenin had not considered in *The State and Revolution*. Marx and Engels had expected that the proletariat would first come to power in the most economically advanced countries. Instead, the revolution had triumphed in the most backward country of Europe. Not only did Russia lack the social surplus necessary to begin socialist construction, it also lacked the degree of literacy required for sustained mass political participation, and even a proletariat large enough to constitute a stable base for the revolutionary regime. Furthermore, Marx and Engels assumed the revolution would be international in scope.¹⁴ In the early years of Soviet power the Bolsheviks continued to count upon the prospect of world revolution to rescue them from the effects of backwardness and imperialist intervention.¹⁵ Yet, despite the revolutionary wave that swept over Europe in the aftermath of the world war, Russia remained

an isolated outpost of socialism surrounded by hostile capitalist powers. Finally, there had been no anticipation before 1917 of the transformative effects of a brutal civil war that would necessitate the militarization of all aspects of public life, inflict devastation upon the proletariat, and bring the economy of the revolutionary state to the brink of collapse.

At the same time, subjective factors also certainly contributed to the erosion of the Marxist vision of the commune state. In the heat of polemics and the desperation of the moment, the Bolshevik leaders frequently painted up harsh policies dictated by necessity as manifestations of revolutionary virtue, while justifying policies which were merely expedient in terms of dire necessity.¹⁶ In doing so, they accelerated and intensified the drift toward authoritarianism, and helped to perpetuate it even after the worst military and economic dangers had receded.

The first deviation from the Marxist vision involved the recruitment of large numbers of bourgeois specialists to serve in the political, economic, and military institutions of the Soviet state. Although in *The State and Revolution* and, even more, in contemporaneous pamphlet *Can the Bolsheviks Retain State Power?*, Lenin had recognized that the dictatorship of the proletariat would need to utilize the administrative, economic, and scientific experts from the old regime, he had not anticipated that the Soviet state would be compelled to pay these “*spetsy*” more than “workmen’s wages” or to entrust them with major decision-making powers.¹⁷ However, by the spring of 1918 the deteriorating economic situation convinced Lenin that “without the guidance of experts in the various fields of knowledge, technique, and experience, the transformation to socialism will be impossible.” Though admitting it was a departure from the principles of the Paris Commune, he now proposed the payment of very large salaries to attract the services of the *spetsy*.¹⁸ This inducement was an immediate success. By August over half the officials in the

commissariats—the ministries of the new government—and nearly 90 percent of the upper-level officials had held some sort of administrative post before the revolution.¹⁹

The influx of bourgeois specialists into industrial administration and the military was comparable. In December 1918, 57 percent of the membership of the most important “chief committees” (*glavki*) of the Supreme Council of the National Economy (VSNKh) in charge of Soviet industry consisted of former employers and employers’ representatives, technicians, and officials from various departments, while 43 percent were workers or representatives of workers’ organizations. By 1921, at least 80 per cent of the “most responsible posts” in VSNKh and 74 per cent of the members of the administrative collegia of the industrial *glavki* consisted of specialists and ex-officials.²⁰ At the factory level, too, the managers appointed by the *glavki* during the civil war were, for the most part, bourgeois specialists.²¹ Meanwhile, Trotsky, the new Commissar of War, insisted that the Soviet armed forces be commanded by the most competent “military specialists” available—the former tsarist officers. By the end of 1918 these constituted 76 percent of the command and administration of the Red Army.²²

The civil war years also witnessed a growing centralization of all political, military, and economic institutions. One form this centralization took in the soviets was the widespread delegation of powers to executive committees. In the center it soon became clear that the All-Russian Congress of Soviets, consisting of a thousand-odd deputies, was too large a body to direct policy effectively or even to convene regularly in the context of a civil war. In its place the fifteen member government—the Council of Peoples’ Commissars (Sovnarkom)—quickly emerged as the dominant state institution. At lower levels, too, soviet executive committees increasingly assumed the powers of the local soviets.²³ Describing the situation in the local soviets at the end of 1919, L. B. Kamenev reported,

We know that because of the war the best workers were withdrawn in large numbers from the cities, and that therefore at times it becomes difficult in one or another provincial or district capital to form a soviet and make it function. . . . The soviet plenary sessions as political organizations often waste away, the people busy themselves with purely mechanical chores. . . . General soviet sessions are seldom called, and when the deputies meet, it is only to accept a report, listen to a speech, and the like.²⁴

Meanwhile, the local soviets and their organs came to be dominated more and more by those of the center. In the early months of power the autonomy of the regional soviets often assumed extreme and disruptive forms.²⁵ This regionalism was partly overcome with the adoption of the 1918 constitution which clearly placed soviets and their executive committees at each territorial level under the control of the corresponding institutions at the next higher level.²⁶ In the following years the need for a unified direction of resources for the war effort further promoted the drift toward centralism. During the civil war local soviets were subordinated not only to higher soviets, but also to the local arms of such central institutions as VSNKh, the Extraordinary Commission for Combating Counter-Revolution and Sabotage (Cheka), and the Military Revolutionary Committee.²⁷

The most centralized institution to emerge in the civil war was the Red Army. In the first months after the revolution the military forces at the disposal of the Soviet government consisted mostly of militia and partisan detachments composed of worker volunteers and commanded by elected officers. Upon assuming the post of Commissar of War in April 1918, Trotsky immediately set about reconstructing a standing army along more traditional lines, insisting that this was necessary for the successful prosecution of the war.²⁸ He reinstated conscription and the appointment of officers, defending this last measure on the grounds that the principle of election of officers had been introduced by the Bolsheviks simply as a means “to break the class resistance of the commanding personnel.” Since political power was now in the hands of the

working class, election of officers had become “politically purposeless and technically inexpedient.” Furthermore, with the establishment of Soviet power, Trotsky claimed, “there can be no antagonism between the government and the masses of the workers . . . and, therefore, there cannot be any grounds for fearing the *appointment* of members of the commanding staff by the organs of the Soviet power.”²⁹

At the same time, a similar process of centralization was proceeding in the economy. In an effort to reverse the progressive disintegration of the economy, in late 1917 and early 1918 the powers of the factory committees and councils of workers’ control were transferred to the more centralized trade unions and to VSNKh.³⁰ By late 1918 the intensification of the war led to the establishment of the system that later became known as “War Communism”—a rigidly centralist command economy entirely subordinated to the needs of war. With the diminishing supply of consumer goods, trade relations between the cities and the countryside broke down. In order to feed the Red Army and the starving cities, the Bolsheviks sent armed detachments from the urban centers to confiscate the peasants’ grain. Private trade was outlawed and price controls and rationing were instituted. At the same time nearly all industry was nationalized and placed under the direction of VSNKh and its organs—the *glavki* (chief committees) and *tsentry* (centers).³¹

Centralization also proceeded in the management of individual factories. Against the resistance of the trade unions, Lenin waged a successful campaign to replace collegial boards with individual factory managers. As Lenin saw it, “large scale machine industry—which is . . . the foundation of socialism—calls for absolute and strict *unity of will*,” and this could only be achieved by “thousands subordinating their will to the will of one.”³² Both Lenin and Trotsky brushed aside objections that “one-man management” subverted proletarian direction of the

economy, arguing that working class rule was assured through the abolition of private ownership and through the power of the soviets, not by the form of industrial management.³³

The attempt under War Communism to centralize all aspects of economic and social life was undoubtedly one of the reasons for the enormous growth of the state apparatus during these years. From the first half of 1918 until the first half of 1919 the membership roles for the trade union of Soviet officials quadrupled, expanding from 114,539 to 529,841.³⁴ Within Moscow, in May 1919 approximately 16 percent of the population and 31 percent of those employed were office workers. Despite decreases in the total number of office workers in Moscow, by 1920 they still comprised nearly a third of the working population.³⁵ One factor besides centralization that contributed to the growth of the state apparatus was the pressure on the state to provide jobs in order to reduce the level of unemployment. As Zinoviev commented in December 1920, “We can make as many resolutions as possible but if, at the same time . . . tens of thousands of people press upon us in many cities, seeking to find some kind of work for themselves, we cannot by any means fight against the swelling of bureaucracy in our apparatus.”³⁶

Also related to the centralization of the economy was the escalation in state coercion, not only against the class enemy and the peasants, but also against the working class. At Lenin’s insistence, piece work and the hated Taylor system of industrial administration were reintroduced in the factories. Furthermore, labor courts were established to punish violators of labor discipline. Lenin explained that “*those* who violate labour discipline at any factory, in any undertaking, in any matter, . . . are *responsible* for the sufferings caused by the famine and unemployment.” We “must know how to find the guilty ones,” he insisted, “to bring them to trial and ruthlessly punish them.”³⁷ During the civil war the trade unions were induced to adopt a productionist orientation and to play an active role in enforcing labor discipline. As Trotsky

asserted in 1920, “The further we go, the more do the unions recognize that they are organs of production of the Soviet state, and assume responsibility for its fortunes—not opposing themselves to it, but identifying themselves with it.” Thus, they were becoming “organizers of labor discipline” and “the apparatus of revolutionary repression against undisciplined, anarchical, parasitical elements in the working class.”³⁸

Under Trotsky’s inspiration economic authoritarianism reached its peak in 1920. By then most of the White Armies were in flight, but the civil war and the inefficiency of War Communism had brought the Soviet economy to a state of ruin. In order to resuscitate industry, Trotsky proposed a scheme for the “militarization of labor” whereby workers would be drafted into labor armies and assigned wherever they were needed. As an initial step in the implementation of this plan, the Third Army of the Urals was transformed into a labor army. According to Trotsky, such methods were not simply necessitated by difficult circumstances; rather, they were “the inevitable method of organization and disciplining of labour-power during the period of transition from capitalism to Socialism.”³⁹ For this reason—and not simply because of bourgeois resistance—the state could be expected to intensify its repressive powers for a period of time after the proletarian revolution: “Just as a lamp, before going out, shoots up in a brilliant flame, so the State, before disappearing, assumes the form of the dictatorship of the proletariat, *i.e.*, the most ruthless form of State, which embraces the life of the citizens authoritatively in every direction.”⁴⁰

In early 1920 Trotsky was assigned the task of reviving the transport system. He created a Chief Political Administration for the Lines of Communication (Glavpolitput’) with the powers to draft party workers and assign them throughout the country. In August he established the Central Transport Commission (Tsektran), which placed all transport workers under his control,

and dismissed railroad union leaders who had criticized his policies. Further, he threatened to “shake up” all the trade unions as he had the transport unions. Finally, at the end of the year Trotsky elaborated a plan for the “statization” of the trade unions that would have subordinated them completely to the authority of the state.⁴¹

Meanwhile, the ideal of soviet democracy also was steadily undermined by the escalating repression of all opposition parties, including those of the left: the Socialist Revolutionaries (S.R.s), the Left S.R.s, the Mensheviks, and the anarchists. *The State and Revolution* had not explicitly discussed the question, but the radically democratic system projected in that work seems most consistent with the toleration of competing parties. Furthermore, there is evidence to suggest that the Bolsheviks initially anticipated some degree of political pluralism in the soviets. For example, in January 1918 Lenin commented that “if the working people are dissatisfied with their party they can elect other delegates, hand power to another party and change the government without any revolution at all.”⁴² However, in late 1917 Bolshevik efforts to establish a multi-party coalition government of the left foundered on what Marcel Liebman has characterized as the “hostility, contempt and refusal to compromise” of the Mensheviks and the S.R.s.⁴³ Then, in 1918, one after the other of the opposition parties, or sections of them, rose in armed revolt against the Bolsheviks. Each in turn was repressed, its leaders arrested, and its newspapers banned. When sections of these parties drew closer to the Soviet government during the civil war, the Bolsheviks permitted them a degree of freedom. Still, they remained under suspicion, and for their semi-loyalty enjoyed at best only semi-legality.⁴⁴

In 1920 Trotsky offered a defense of one-party rule in terms far more sweeping than the necessities of the moment. It was, he claimed, the only means by which the interests and desires of a heterogeneous proletariat could be unified:

The exclusive role of the Communist Party under the conditions of a victorious proletarian revolution is quite comprehensible. The question is of the dictatorship of a class. In the composition of that class there enter various elements, heterogeneous moods, different levels of development. Yet the dictatorship pre-supposes unity of will, unity of direction, unity of action. By what other path can it be attained? The revolutionary supremacy of the proletariat pre-supposes within itself the political supremacy of a party, with a class programme of action and a faultless internal discipline.⁴⁵

Furthermore, Trotsky argued that the historically progressive character of the repression of opposition parties was demonstrated by its effect: “Noske [the rightist German social democrat and minister of military affairs] crushes the Communists, but they grow. We have suppressed the Mensheviks and the S.R.s—and they have disappeared. This criterion is sufficient for us.”⁴⁶

During these years perhaps the most important deviation from the vision of direct, soviet democracy proclaimed in Lenin’s *The State and Revolution* was the usurpation of the powers of the soviets by the Communist Party. Several factors were responsible for this. First, it proved to be far more difficult than Lenin had anticipated to get the masses involved in the administration of the state. By March 1919 Lenin was forced to admit that “the soviets, which by virtue of their programme organs of government *by working people*, are in fact organs of government *for the working people* by the advanced sector of the proletariat.”⁴⁷ In effect, this meant the soviets were organs of government by the party, for that was where the “advanced sector of the proletariat” was concentrated. Second, in the context of the civil war the Bolshevik leadership actively sought political hegemony in the soviets and other mass institutions as a means of ensuring their political reliability. In 1919 the presence of non-party and non-Bolshevik deputies in the local soviets and other organizations prompted the Eighth Party Congress to declare:

The Communist Party makes it its task to win decisive influence and complete leadership in all organizations of the workers The Communist Party strives especially to establish

its programme and its complete leadership in the contemporary state organizations, which are the Soviets.⁴⁸

In line with this, party domination of these organizations at the lower levels was quickly assured by the formation of disciplined party “fractions” within each of them, and by the appointment of party members to important non-party posts.⁴⁹ Third, the difficulties of the war combined with the requirements of efficiency to strengthen the role of the party. As local soviets atrophied during the war, party committees were forced to step in to assume their coordinating functions.⁵⁰ At the summit of power the Central Committee of the party filled the need for a central arbiter and final court of appeal for disputed questions in the soviets and other mass organizations.⁵¹ As Trotsky explained, “This affords extreme economy of time and energy, and in the most difficult and complicated circumstances gives a guarantee for the necessary unity of action.”⁵² Finally, with the progressive expansion of the size of Sovnarkom meetings, the most pressing matters were frequently resolved by the Politburo.⁵³

One consequence of these developments was that the party leaders increasingly tended to equate proletarian rule with party rule. In 1919 Lenin made a virtual slogan of the phrase “dictatorship of the party”: “Yes, the dictatorship of one party! We stand upon it and cannot depart from this ground, since this is the party which in the course of decades has won for itself the position of vanguard of the whole factory and industrial proletariat.”⁵⁴

The following year he characterized any attempt to distinguish between the dictatorship of the proletariat and the dictatorship of the party as evidence of “an unbelievable and inextricable confusion of thought.”⁵⁵ Along the same lines in 1920 Trotsky remarked,

We have more than once been accused of having substituted for the dictatorship of the Soviets the dictatorship of our party. Yet it can be said with complete justification that the dictatorship of the Soviets became possible only by means of the dictatorship of the party.⁵⁶

Even as it usurped the powers of the soviets, the party was transformed by the same processes of centralization that were occurring in the state. At all levels the party also experienced the concentration of power in fewer and fewer hands. Local party committees shrank as their members were mobilized for the war, and the authority of these committees was assumed by the party chairmen, renamed “secretaries” in 1920.⁵⁷ At the center, party congresses, like meetings of the All-Russian Congress of Soviets, soon proved to be too large and too infrequent to define policy. The Central Committee, consisting of fifteen full and seven candidate members in 1918, quickly assumed this role in the party. But its ascendancy was only temporary, for military responsibilities often forced its members to be absent from Moscow. By 1919 the oppositionist Osinskii was complaining that “even the Central Committee as a collegiate body does not, properly speaking, exist,” for “comrades Lenin and Sverdlov decide current questions by way of conversation with each other or with individual comrades in charge of this or that branch of Soviet work.”⁵⁸ That same year this concentration of power was codified by the creation of three new subcommittees of the Central Committee: a five man Politburo responsible for urgent policy decisions; a five man Orgburo entrusted with the overall direction of party work; and a Secretariat, consisting of one secretary and five assistants, which was later placed in charge of day-to-day organizational tasks.⁵⁹

Meanwhile, in the party as in the state, power was gravitating toward the center. This tendency grew especially pronounced as the practice of electing local party officials declined. It became common for local party committees to co-opt new members to replace those who had been lost to the war, and for higher level committees to appoint chairmen of committees at lower levels. The Politburo and Orgburo frequently appointed officials in the provincial party institutions, and often without consulting these bodies in advance. The powers of the local party

committees were further weakened by the creation, at Trotsky's insistence, of centrally appointed "political departments" in charge of all political work in the Red Army and in various local factories and industries.⁶⁰

The conclusion of the civil war brought to the surface all the pent-up frustrations that had accumulated since 1918. In the face of an outpouring of popular discontent, the party leadership was forced to institute economic and political reforms. It scrapped the system of War Communism and promised to decentralize the party. Beyond that, it took steps to curb the party's control over state institutions and to revive the soviets. After the detour of the civil war, there were at last indications that the Soviet state was about to emerge again on the road charted in *The State and Revolution*.

One indication of the growing dissatisfaction with War Communism was the response within the party to Trotsky's plan to "statify" the trade unions. Trotsky's proposal touched off an explosion among party union leaders and oppositionists who were fed up with industrial authoritarianism. Even Lenin turned against Trotsky's authoritarian measures at this point. Lenin agreed with Trotsky that the unions should encourage labor discipline and productivity, but now he placed greater stress on persuasion than coercion. Furthermore, he argued that the unions needed to preserve their independence from an increasingly "bureaucratic" state. The trade union question was resolved at the Tenth Party Congress in 1921 with the adoption of Lenin's perspective.⁶¹

However, the party was confronted with even more serious manifestations of discontent. In the early months of 1921 a wave of strikes swept the factories of Petrograd while peasants rose in open revolt throughout the country. In March the sailors of the Kronstadt naval garrison mutinied in solidarity with the rebelling workers and peasants and demanded an end to Bolshevik

rule.⁶² The Kronstadt and peasants' uprisings were quickly crushed, but at the same time the party began to institute reforms to undercut the economic sources of discontent. The Tenth Party Congress abolished forced requisitioning of grain and replaced it with an agricultural tax in kind. In the following months the other features of the New Economic Policy (NEP) began to take shape: monetary wages replaced rationing, domestic private trade and small-scale private industry were encouraged, and the state began leasing enterprises to their former owners or to producers' cooperatives. Also, the centrally controlled *glavki* were dismantled and replaced by autonomous "trusts" as the basic unit of industrial production.⁶³

In late 1920 and early 1921 efforts were also made to reverse the process of centralization that had transformed the party during the war. This was the thrust of the resolution on party construction adopted by the Ninth Party Conference in September 1920. The resolution called for the frequent convening of local party meetings to discuss important national and local issues, outlined measures to encourage members to criticize local and central party institutions, demanded an end to the practice of appointing party functionaries, and urged the abolition of political departments. Additionally, it established a hierarchy of control commissions to investigate alleged violations of party democracy.⁶⁴ Similarly, the Tenth Party Congress announced the end of the "militarization" of party life, and called for the restoration of "workers' democracy" within the party.⁶⁵

Finally, after the civil war attempts were made to revive the soviets as institutions of power. A series of laws enacted in 1921-1922 strengthened the soviets and restricted the authority of the "extraordinary organs" such as the Cheka that had flourished during the war. Sovnarkom ceded much of the power it had accumulated to the Central Executive Committee (CEC) of the Congress of Soviets and to its Presidium. And, beginning with the Eleventh Party

Congress in 1922, Lenin increasingly insisted upon the need to extricate the party from its direct involvement in state affairs and upon increasing the responsibilities of soviet institutions at all levels.⁶⁶

However, anyone who believed that the commune state was about to become a reality was quickly disillusioned. The genuine revival of soviet democracy presupposed the existence of a powerful and self confident proletariat. But the war years had taken a heavy toll upon the Russian working class: approximately 60,000 industrial workers had died on the battlefield; hundreds of thousands more perished from hunger and disease; others fled in a mass exodus to the countryside to escape starvation; and thousands were absorbed into the swelling state apparatus. Consequently, by 1922 the size of the industrial working class was less than half what it had been in 1917.⁶⁷ With only a little exaggeration, Lenin observed in October 1921 that “the proletariat has disappeared.”⁶⁸

Another precondition for the revival of soviet democracy was the easing of restrictions on opposition parties. However, from the perspective of the Bolsheviks, this too was impossible. At the end of the civil war, dissatisfaction with the regime was so widespread that it was unlikely the Communist Party could win a genuinely democratic election. Yet, the Bolsheviks had no intention of voluntarily surrendering power to the Mensheviks and S.R.s, for to do so would endanger not only their own physical survival, but also the goals for which they had just fought a bloody civil war. Thus, at the Tenth Party Congress Trotsky bluntly asserted the “historic birthright of the party, which is obliged to defend its dictatorship, in spite of temporary vacillation of elements, in spite of temporary vacillation even in the midst of the workers.”⁶⁹ This attitude was reinforced by the prospect of the revival of bourgeois political activity that the Bolsheviks feared would accompany the partial restoration of capitalism under NEP. Instead of

loosening their restrictions on opposition parties, the Bolsheviks now banned them altogether. At the Eleventh Party Congress in 1922, Lenin expressed this mood of intolerance in one of the more authoritarian statements of his career:

And when a Menshevik says, “You are now retreating; I have been advocating retreat all the time, I agree with you, I am your man, let us retreat together,” we say in reply, “For the public manifestations of Menshevism our revolutionary courts must pass the death sentence, otherwise they are not our courts, but God knows what.”⁷⁰

This escalation in the repression of dissent outside the Bolshevik Party had an immediate impact upon democracy within the party as well. Isaac Deutscher has described the dynamic involved:

If the Bolsheviks were now to engage freely in controversy, if their leaders were to thrash out their differences in public, and if the rank and file were to criticize the leaders and their policy, they would set an example to non-Bolsheviks who could not then be expected to refrain from argument and criticism. If members of the ruling party were to be permitted to form factions and groups in order to advance specific views within the party, how could people outside the party be forbidden to form their own associations and formulate their own political programmes?⁷¹

Consequently, the Tenth Party Congress, for the first time in Bolshevik history, imposed a ban on party factions. Afterwards, the 1921 purge of “undesirable elements” from the party was used to eliminate rank and file oppositionists, while opposition leaders were dispersed by reassignment to obscure outposts.⁷²

Meanwhile, the flow of power from the state to the party continued unabated. This process was accelerated by the steady deterioration of Lenin’s health from mid-1921 until his death in 1924. Lenin’s had been the most powerful voice for restricting the prerogatives of the party. In Lenin’s absence Sovnarkom referred even greater numbers of disputed questions to the

more prestigious Politburo.⁷³ At the same time, the Orgburo and Secretariat were amassing ever greater powers through the appointment of party personnel. Partly this was a continuation through inertia of practices initiated during the civil war. Partly, it grew out of the attempt, in the aftermath of the war, to reorganize the party to more effectively direct the machinery of state. And partly, it was a product of institutional self-aggrandizement by the Orgburo and Secretariat. The individual who benefitted most from the growing powers of these bodies was Stalin—the leading figure in the Orgburo and, after April 1922, the General Secretary of the party.⁷⁴

3.2 THE OPPOSITIONS AND BUREAUCRACY

During the period 1918-1922, among the most vocal and consistent critics of Soviet bureaucracy were a series of opposition groupings within the Russian Communist Party. Although they differed on many questions, they were united in the belief that the problem of bureaucracy in the Soviet Union was in the departure from the radically democratic and proletarian ideals expressed in the writings by Marx and Engels on the Paris Commune and in Lenin's *The State and Revolution*. Each group denounced the growing authoritarianism and centralism of Soviet institutions. Also, echoing the writings of Marx and Engels on bureaucracy and political alienation, each linked this problem with the growth of bourgeois power and influence.

The Left Communists came together in early 1918 in opposition to the signing of a peace treaty with Germany, and as proponents instead of a policy of revolutionary war. However, even after the ratification of the Brest-Litovsk treaty in early March, they continued to function as a faction, shifting their focus to economic policies.⁷⁵ At the time, Lenin was attempting to reverse

the progressive deterioration of the economy by halting further nationalization of enterprises, curbing the powers of the factory committees, imposing labor discipline on the workers, and recruiting bourgeois specialists to serve as industrial managers. For the Left Communists these policies represented an impermissible departure from the revolutionary socialist principles that Lenin himself had expressed. Nikolai Bukharin, one of the leaders of the Left Communists, observed, “It is good . . . that the cook will be taught to govern the state; but what will there be if a Commissar is placed over the cook? Then he will never learn to govern the state.”⁷⁶

For the Left Communists the danger of Lenin’s policies lay in the restoration of economic power to a section of the bourgeoisie combined with the introduction of “bureaucratic centralist” methods. By the latter, they seem to have understood any measure that removed direct control of production from the workers and that imposed discipline on the proletariat from without. The Left Communists believed that these measures, like the signing of the Brest-Litovsk treaty, had originated in the willingness of the party leadership to compromise principles for the sake of survival. If taken to their logical conclusion, such policies raised the prospect of the degeneration of the revolution by undermining the independent initiative of the working class.

With the policy of administering enterprises on the basis of broad participation by capitalists and semibureaucratic centralization it is natural to combine a labor policy directed toward the institution among the workers of discipline under the banner of “self-discipline,” toward the introduction of obligatory labor for workers . . . , piecework payment, lengthening of the working day, etc.

The form of government administration will have to develop in the direction of bureaucratic centralization, the rule of various commissars, the deprivation of local soviets of their independence, and in practice the rejection of the type of “commune state” administered from below.⁷⁷

Ultimately, the Left Communists predicted, the result would be the collapse of the dictatorship of the proletariat and the restoration of some form of capitalism. As Osinskii warned,

The stick, if raised against the workers, will find itself in the hands of a social force which is either under the influence of another social class or in the hands of the soviet power; then the soviet power will be forced to seek support against the proletariat from another class (e.g. the peasantry), and by this it will destroy itself as the dictatorship of the proletariat. Socialism and socialist organization must be set up by the proletariat itself, or they will not be set up at all; something else will be set up—state capitalism.⁷⁸

The only way out of the danger, according to the Left Communists, was through radical economic measures that continued the offensive against capital while expanding workers' democracy. Thus, they advocated the nationalization of all large scale industrial and financial enterprises and the extension of the principle of workers' control. Each enterprise was to be managed by a board, two-thirds of which would be composed of elected workers' representatives. The factory boards, in turn, were to be subordinate to a network of elected economic councils. Production norms were to be set and enforced exclusively by workers' organizations. Although the Left Communists did not entirely reject the use of bourgeois specialists, they insisted that these were to be nominated only by the worker-dominated factory boards and subject to removal from below.⁷⁹

The Left Communists were decisively defeated in May at the Congress of Councils of the National Economy, and by June they had collapsed as an organized opposition. However, soon afterwards they saw part of their program implemented in a Sovnarkom decree that nationalized all large-scale industry.⁸⁰ In the following years many of the leaders of the Left Communists continued to be active in other opposition groupings—particularly the Military Opposition and the Democratic Centralists—that fought to limit the power of the bourgeois specialists.

From the moment when Trotsky first announced his plans for the construction of a Red Army, his policies encountered resistance within the party. By the Eighth Party Congress in March 1919 this discontent had crystallized into what later became known as the Military

Opposition. The Military Opposition was a heterogeneous grouping that included, in addition to former Left Communists, leaders of the partisan detachments that had formed in late 1917 and early 1918. Among these, the local military leaders of Tsaritsyn such as Voroshilov, supported by Stalin, played a prominent role. Like the Left Communists, the Military Opposition resisted the use of bourgeois specialists—in this case, the former tsarist officers. Also, it opposed Trotsky's efforts to introduce a high degree of centralism in the Red Army, his rejection of the principle of election of officers, and his introduction of political departments under the direct supervision of the Central Committee to organize all party work in the army.⁸¹ The Military Opposition did not develop a general analysis of the problem of bureaucracy, but their views on this question seem to have been consistent with those of the Left Communists. At the Eighth Party Congress the former Left Communist V. M. Smirnov decried Trotsky's centralization of all political work in the army "according to a completely bureaucratic model."⁸² Although the Military Opposition's views were rejected by the Eighth Congress, a number of its leaders were already espousing a broader platform in a new opposition grouping—the Democratic Centralists.

The Democratic Centralists appeared as an opposition faction early in 1919, and reached the high point of their influence and activity in 1920-21. They were composed largely of intellectuals who were alarmed by the decline of democracy and the growth of centralism and authoritarianism in the economic, state, and party institutions. These were tendencies that, according to V. V. Osinskii, one of the leaders of the Democratic Centralists, stifled "the creative initiative of the conscious workers."⁸³ Like the Left Communists, the Democratic Centralists saw these as manifestations of "bureaucratism" or "bureaucratic centralism." For example, at the Ninth Party Congress in 1920, V. N. Maksimovskii declared,

We are defending that democratic centralism which is inscribed in the statutes of the party adopted at the December conference. We

are defending democratic centralism in the construction of the organs of Soviet power. . . . The Central Committee is guilty of bureaucratic centralism. . . . It is said that a fish begins to rot from its head. At the top the party is beginning to fall under the influence of this bureaucratic centralism.⁸⁴

Even more sharply, T. V. Sapronov denounced the concentration of power in the hands of a few party leaders as the “dictatorship of the party bureaucracy.”⁸⁵ Although the Democratic Centralists did not clearly define the origins of bureaucratism, at different times they implied it had arisen out of bourgeois influence and the expansion of “military culture” at the expense of civilian culture.⁸⁶

The solution to the problem for the Democratic Centralists was through the implementation of a broad program of proletarian democracy and decentralization. They advocated greater restrictions on the use of bourgeois specialists, vigorously defended collegial management of enterprises, and resisted Trotsky’s efforts in 1920 to militarize the economy. As far as the state was concerned, they attempted to revive the power of the soviets, proposing measures to change the composition of the Central Executive Committee of the All-Russian Congress of Soviets to make it more representative, and a plan to restore to the CEC the legislative powers that had been assumed by Sovnarkom. At the same time they demanded the return of a large measure of power from the central state institutions to the local soviets.

The Democratic Centralists advocated similar measures to combat bureaucratism in the party. They urged that the Central Committee be expanded and proletarianized, and they advocated the “collective principle” for decision making at all levels of the party. Against the flow of power from the local party organizations to the center, they demanded an end to the Secretariat’s practice of appointing local party officials and issuing directives to provincial party organizations, and urged the abolition of the special political departments. The Democratic

Centralists argued that the entire party should have the opportunity to consider all important matters before a decision was reached, and they defended the right of opposition groups to air their differences freely in the party press and at party assemblies.⁸⁷

Meanwhile, yet another dissident group, the Workers' Opposition, appeared as an organized party faction in late 1920. As its name suggests, this group was composed almost entirely of industrial workers. Like the Democratic Centralists, the Workers' Opposition attacked the use of bourgeois specialists, the introduction of individual management in industrial enterprises, and Trotsky's practice of appointing trade union leaders. The most distinctive contribution of the Workers' Opposition was its advocacy of the rapid transfer of the management of industry to the trade unions. Nationally, this was to be exercised by a central organ elected by the unions grouped according to branches of production. Locally, enterprises were to be controlled by elected workers' committees.⁸⁸

The Workers' Opposition's views on bureaucracy were most clearly articulated by Alexandra Kollontai in a pamphlet published in early 1921. According to Kollontai, bureaucracy was a pervasive phenomenon in both state and party institutions. In both cases the problem was the excessive centralization of decision making:

The harm in bureaucracy does not only lie in the red tape The harm lies in the solution of all problems, not by means of an open exchange of opinions or by the immediate efforts of all concerned, but by means of formal decisions handed down from the central institutions. These decisions are arrived at either by one person or by an extremely limited collective, wherein the interested people are quite often entirely absent. *Some third person decides your fate: this is the whole essence of bureaucracy.*⁸⁹

For Kollontai, this hyper-centralism was one example of the “vacillation, inconsistencies, and outright deviations of our Soviet policy from the early expressed class-consistent principles of

the communist programme.”⁹⁰ She singled out Trotsky as one of the most blatant of the “defenders and knights of bureaucracy” among the party leaders.⁹¹

Kollontai attributed the growth of bureaucracy to bourgeois and petty-bourgeois influence in the state and party. This influence was exerted in two ways. First, the state and party had been forced to attempt to reconcile the often antagonistic interests of the heterogeneous classes within the Soviet Union: the proletariat, the peasantry, the petty owners, and the bourgeoisie. In doing so, the Soviet leaders had adapted their policies to classes hostile to the working class, and consequently had begun to distance themselves from the proletariat:

Distrust of the workers by the leaders is steadily growing. The more sober these leaders get, the more clever statesmen they become with their policy of sliding over the blade of a sharp knife between communism and compromise with the bourgeois past, the deeper becomes the abyss between the “ups” and the “downs”, the less understanding there is, and the more painful and inevitable becomes the crisis within the party itself.⁹²

Second, there had been a direct influx of bourgeois and petty-bourgeois elements into the state and party: “These are the elements that bring decay into our Soviet institutions, breeding there an atmosphere *altogether repugnant to the working class*.”⁹³

According to Kollontai, the elimination of the problem of bureaucracy had to begin in the party. “As soon as the party . . . recognises the self-activity of the masses as the basis of our state,” she predicted, “the Soviet institutions will again automatically become living institutions, destined to carry out the communist project.”⁹⁴ To reform the party, she and the Workers’ Opposition demanded the expulsion from the party of all non-proletarians who had joined after 1919, the elimination of all non-working class elements from party administrative positions, the reinstatement of the elective principle for all posts, and the submission of all major questions of policy to the rank and file for discussion.⁹⁵

The Democratic Centralists and the Workers' Opposition participated in the winning of some significant reforms such as the reversal of the growing militarization of labor and the measures adopted by the Ninth Party Conference and Tenth Party Congress for the democratization of the party. However, like the Left Communists, they failed in their efforts to realize the traditional Marxist vision of a commune state. While both groups continued to be active into the mid-1920s, after the Tenth Party Congress they quickly declined in influence under the repression of the party leadership.⁹⁶

Although the opposition groups within the party were quite vocal in their criticisms of bureaucracy, they were not alone in raising these concerns. During the years 1918-1922 central party leaders such as Lenin and Trotsky also spoke out against the dangers of bureaucracy. Of the two, Lenin was in many ways closest to the position of the oppositionists.

3.3 LENIN ON BUREAUCRACY

By the spring of 1918 Lenin had concluded that the danger of economic collapse and the difficulties of involving the masses in the administration of the state temporarily necessitated significant departures from the principles of the commune state. From that point until his death Lenin endorsed measures that were widely denounced by the party oppositions as “bureaucratic”: the extensive employment of bourgeois specialists, the payment of salaries far exceeding “workmen’s wages,” the introduction of strict economic and political centralism, and the use of economic and state coercion against the working class to increase labor productivity. Yet, during these years Lenin also frequently expressed his concerns about the growth of the problem of bureaucracy. As early as April 1918 Lenin noted the “shadow of a possibility” of the

“bureaucratic distortion of the Soviet form of organization.”⁹⁷ In the following years this shadow lengthened and deepened in Lenin’s mind until, by 1922, it had begun to darken his entire outlook on the prospects for socialism in the Soviet Union.

Despite Lenin’s profound differences with the party oppositionists, his concerns about the dangers of bureaucracy at times coincided to a considerable degree with theirs. Like the oppositionists, Lenin expressed the fear that departures from the proletarian and democratic ideals expressed in *The State and Revolution* ultimately might subvert the Soviet state. Lenin, too, saw this problem as related to the steady influx of bourgeois elements into the state apparatus. Also, at times Lenin deplored the bureaucratism displayed by other party leaders in advocating policies that he viewed as excessively centralist or authoritarian. In all these cases, Lenin remained close to the primary popular meaning, and to the traditional Marxist understanding, of that phenomenon. However, there were many other occasions when Lenin utilized a variety of popular secondary meanings of the term bureaucracy when speaking of administrative inefficiency in the state and party apparatuses.

Often when Lenin spoke of bureaucracy and bureaucratism he had in mind the enormous number of old tsarist officials employed by the Soviet state and the attitudes of these officials. In early 1919 he warned that the struggle with bureaucracy was far from over, for the old tsarist bureaucracy was “trying to regain some of its positions.”⁹⁸ Shortly after this, at the Eighth Party Congress, Lenin further elaborated on this point:

We dispersed these old bureaucrats, shuffled them and then began to place them in new posts. The tsarist bureaucrats began to join the Soviet institutions and practise their bureaucratic methods, they began to assume the colouring of Communists and, to succeed better in their careers, to procure membership cards of the Russian Communist Party. And so, they have been thrown out of the door but they creep back in through the window.⁹⁹

The problem with the old tsarist officials was that they were “imbued with bourgeois views” and had retained their “thoroughly bourgeois outlook.”¹⁰⁰ In part, this meant that they were exclusively concerned with their own, narrow self-interests. Thus, on one occasion Lenin denounced those “petty officials, petty bureaucrats accustomed to the old and selfish way of doing things.”¹⁰¹ Beyond that, out of hostility to the workers and the goals of socialism, the old bureaucrats unconsciously subverted Soviet policy or consciously engaged in sabotage. In November 1920 Lenin spoke of the “hundreds of thousands of old officials whom we got from the tsar and from bourgeois society and who, partly deliberately and partly unwittingly, work against us.”¹⁰² Most ominous of all was the danger that the enormous mass of bourgeois officials would be able to redirect Soviet policy toward a restoration of capitalism. Lenin saw this as a distinct possibility during the second year of NEP, observing at the Eleventh Party Congress in the spring of 1922,

If we take Moscow with its 4,700 Communists in responsible positions, and if we take that huge bureaucratic machine, that gigantic heap, we must ask: who is directing whom? I doubt very much whether it can truthfully be said that the Communists are directing that heap. To tell the truth, they are not directing, they are being directed.¹⁰³

Lenin further believed that the bureaucratizing effect of the old officials was not confined to the state apparatus. In November 1920 he noted the growth of bureaucratic tendencies in the party as well, explaining,

It is natural that the bureaucratism that has reappeared in Soviet institutions was bound to have a pernicious effect even on Party organisations, since the upper ranks of the Party are at the same time the upper ranks of the state apparatus; they are one and the same thing. Since the evil is the old bureaucratism which has been able to show itself in the Party apparatus, it is obvious and natural that all the symptoms of this evil are in the Party organisations and institutions.¹⁰⁴

Similarly, at the Eleventh Party Congress in 1922 Lenin asked whether the 4,700 Communists in Moscow in responsible positions had not “come under the influence of an alien culture.”¹⁰⁵ Evidently, Lenin thought that many Communist state and party officials had begun to adopt the attitudes and practices of the tsarist bureaucrats.

If the officials from the old regime were so unreliable, why had they been employed in the first place? According to Lenin this had been necessitated by the lack of effective participation by the masses in the administration of the state. In late 1917 and early 1918 Lenin blamed the low degree of involvement by the proletariat and poor peasantry on their lack of self-confidence.¹⁰⁶ By 1919 and 1920 he was concentrating on another factor—the absence of culture (*kulturnost'*) among the masses of workers and peasants.¹⁰⁷ By this, of course, Lenin did not mean that the masses were insufficiently familiar with the classics of literature or the opera. Lenin, and following him the other Bolshevik leaders, used the term *culture* to refer to literacy and the knowledge of basic organizational and office procedure. The absence of these skills prevented many workers and peasants from getting involved in state administration, and lowered the effectiveness of those who did.

Once employed by the Soviet state, the old tsarist bureaucrats had little trouble evading the control of their Communist bosses, for the culture of Communists was hardly higher than that of the masses. Lenin explained at the Eleventh Party Congress in March 1922,

Their [the old bureaucrats'] culture is miserable, insignificant, but it is still at a higher level than ours. Miserable and low as it is, it is higher than that of our responsible Communist administrators, for the latter lack administrative ability. Communists who are put at the head of departments—and sometimes artful saboteurs deliberately put them in these positions to use them as a shield—are often fooled.¹⁰⁸

However, in spite of the dangers involved in employing the old tsarist officials, Lenin could not agree with the opposition groupings that the use of specialists should be severely curtailed. With all their defects, the specialists were an inherited resource that the Soviet government could not afford to waste. “We cannot live without this apparatus,” Lenin confessed at the Eighth Party Congress in March 1919; “every branch of government creates a demand for such an apparatus.”¹⁰⁹ Instead, for the time being it was necessary to carefully supervise and control their activity. Just as the army had installed commissars to keep an eye on the old tsarist generals, so the state needed to attach “worker commissars” to these bourgeois experts. In time, it could even be hoped that the experts could be “conquered *morally*” once they saw how the proletariat was enlisting broader circles of working people in progressive campaigns.¹¹⁰

Ultimately, however, Lenin’s solution to the problem was to draw the masses of workers and peasants into the work of running the state in order to replace the bourgeois specialists. Again, at the Eighth party Congress Lenin contended, “We can fight bureaucracy to the bitter end, to a complete victory, only when the whole population participates in the work of government.”¹¹¹ Although Lenin finally concluded that it would take years for the masses of workers and peasants to acquire the skills necessary to participate in the administration of the state, he believed they could begin immediately to learn these skills by watching the work of the bourgeois specialists.¹¹² In January 1919 he argued, “We must appoint more workers of average qualifications to the government offices, who would learn their jobs from the specialists and be able to replace them eventually and do the practical work independently.”¹¹³ Similarly, in February 1920 Lenin insisted on the need to “attach groups of workers to these bourgeois experts, to look on, to learn and to take this work into their own hands.”¹¹⁴ Thus, while Lenin

saw the specialists as part of the bureaucratic problem, he believed that they could contribute to its solution.

From 1920 onward, Lenin believed that the masses could best be drawn into the administration of the state by participating in the work of the Commissariat of Workers' and Peasants' Inspection (Rabkrin). Rabkrin was formed in 1920 through the reorganization of the Commissariat of State Control, and was specifically entrusted with the task of fighting bureaucracy in the state apparatus.¹¹⁵ Soon, Rabkrin had replaced the soviets in Lenin's thinking as the institution most conducive to mass political participation. In January 1920 Lenin advised Stalin, the head of Rabkrin, that "*all* working people, both men and *particularly women*, should serve in the Workers' and Peasants' Inspection."¹¹⁶ He proclaimed the goal that "hundreds of thousands and millions of working people should pass through the school of the Workers' and Peasants' Inspection and learn to administer the state (which was something nobody had taught us), so that they might replace hundreds of thousands of bourgeois bureaucrats."¹¹⁷ Other institutions through which Lenin hoped that workers and peasants would learn administrative skills were the trade unions, and the producers' and consumers' cooperatives. Also, he expressed the hope that the general elevation of culture through an expansion of the school system, would create "a large body of young people capable of thoroughly overhauling our state apparatus."¹¹⁸

Meanwhile, Lenin proposed that bourgeois elements who had managed to worm their way into the party, and other Communists infected with bourgeois attitudes, should be purged from the party. In 1919 he suggested an indirect "purging" of the party by making "*steadily increasing demands*" upon its members. One of these demands included "subbotniks," or unpaid days of work. Faced with such demands, Communists who were not seriously committed revolutionaries would leave the party of their own accord.¹¹⁹ In 1921, Lenin recommended a

more direct method of purging the party—the expulsion of “those who have lost touch with the masses,” and “those who have ‘attached’ themselves to us for selfish motives, . . . those who have become ‘puffed-up commissars’ and ‘bureaucrats’.”¹²⁰

Although Lenin accepted the oppositionist view that the problem of bureaucracy was related to the use of the bourgeois specialists, he did not frequently agree with the oppositionist definition of the problem as one of excessive centralism or authoritarianism. However, on at least two occasions Lenin used the term bureaucracy in precisely this sense. In each case, the relevant policies had already provoked, or were threatening to provoke, popular discontent. Also, in each case Lenin concluded that centralism and authoritarianism had outlived its usefulness or had gone too far.

This was the meaning behind Lenin’s denunciation in late 1920 and early 1921 of Trotsky’s trade union policies as “bureaucratic.” Lenin had fully endorsed Trotsky’s “shake up” of the rail union leadership earlier in the year as a necessary measure to revive transport. But with the growth of oppositionist and trade-union discontent, Lenin drew back from these authoritarian measures while Trotsky pressed ahead.¹²¹ Even then Lenin did not entirely reject the measures that Trotsky had employed as head of Tsektran. The problem, Lenin argued, was not that Tsektran had brought pressures to bear, but that it had indulged in pressures to excess. And it had failed to switch to normal trade-union methods at the proper time.¹²²

Trotsky’s persistence in the use of coercion now drew heavy fire from Lenin. Lenin denounced Trotsky’s policy of “shaking up” the trade unions as “irregularities and bureaucratic excesses”; he characterized Trotsky’s further proposals to reorganize the unions by “selecting functionaries” as a “real bureaucratic approach”; he predicted that workers would view Trotsky’s scheme for replacing “workers’ democracy” with “industrial democracy” as a “bureaucratic set-

up”; and he derided Trotsky’s pamphlet containing his trade union proposals as nothing but “bureaucratic projecteering.”¹²³ Lenin believed that Trotsky’s authoritarian tendencies were a result of his approaching economic problems from a military perspective. Thus, he denounced the ““degeneration of centralism and militarised forms of work into bureaucratic practices, petty tyranny, red-tape’.”¹²⁴ Furthermore, he explained that there were two aspects of military experience: a “positive side” consisting of “heroism, zeal, etc.,” and a “negative side of the experience of the worst military types” which included “red-tape and arrogance.” Trotsky’s theses, according to Lenin, played up to the worst in military experience.¹²⁵ Because of “excesses” such as those committed by Tsektran, Lenin rejected Trotsky’s characterization of the Soviet Union as simply a “workers’ state.” More precisely, it was “a workers’ state *with a bureaucratic twist to it.*” In light of this bureaucratic distortion Lenin observed, “We now have a state under which it is the business of the massively organised proletariat to defend itself.” For this reason the working class needed trade unions with a high degree of autonomy from the Soviet state.¹²⁶

Although the dispute was resolved by the Tenth Party Congress, which adopted Lenin’s own position on the trade union question, this episode continued to color Lenin’s perception of Trotsky. It was at least partly for this reason that Lenin spoke, in his “Testament” written at the end of December 1922, of Trotsky’s “excessive preoccupation with the purely administrative side of the work.”¹²⁷ By that time, however, Lenin had begun to perceive Stalin, not Trotsky, as the most “bureaucratic” of the Soviet leaders.

The issue that evoked this characterization was Stalin’s handling of a dispute with the Georgian party leadership in late 1922. In September Lenin clashed with Stalin over a proposal for the new Soviet constitution to be adopted the following year. Stalin had pressed for the direct

incorporation of the Ukraine, Byelorussia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Armenia into the Russian Republic as “autonomous republics.” More concerned about the sensibilities of the traditionally oppressed nationalities, Lenin argued for the creation of a new, federalist structure. Although Lenin easily won this dispute, Stalin proceeded with other plans to incorporate Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan into a Transcaucasian Federation. This was particularly offensive to the leaders of the Georgian party. Near the end of November Lenin grew alarmed over reports of repression directed by Stalin and executed by Ordzhonikidze against the Georgian Central Committee. By the end of the year Lenin had come to fully endorse the Georgian position.¹²⁸

At that point Lenin described the behavior of Stalin, Ordzhonikidze, and Dzerzhinskii—who headed an investigating commission that whitewashed the situation—as typically bureaucratic. Their centralist and authoritarian actions, according to Lenin, were characteristic of “that really Russian man, the Great-Russian chauvinist, in substance a rascal and a tyrant, such as the typical Russian bureaucrat is.”¹²⁹ Lenin seems to have viewed this as a particular problem in Stalin’s case, given his enormous power as General Secretary of the party. In his “Testament” written at the end of December 1922, Lenin remarked that he was “not sure whether he [Stalin] will always be able to use that authority with sufficient caution.”¹³⁰ A few days later, in his notes on the Georgian situation, Lenin denounced “Stalin’s haste and his infatuation with pure administration, together with his spite against the notorious ‘nationalist-socialism,’” and characterized Stalin as a “Great-Russian bully.”¹³¹

Aside from supporting constitutional guarantees of the rights of the national republics, Lenin attempted to combat this bureaucratic authoritarianism through the demotion and exemplary punishment of those responsible for the repression of the Georgians. In an addendum to his “Testament” Lenin urged that Stalin be replaced as General Secretary by someone “more

tolerant, more loyal, more polite, and more considerate to the comrades, less capricious, etc.”¹³² Furthermore, Stalin, Ordzhonikidze, and Dzerzhinskii were to be publicly condemned for their handling of the Georgian affair; and Ordzhonikidze was to be expelled from the party for at least two years.¹³³

Like the opposition groups in the party, then, when Lenin expressed concerns about bureaucracy he was often referring to the problem of political alienation—either in the excessively centralist and authoritarian policies of his comrades, or in the political power of a state apparatus stocked with officials from alien classes. However, the growing alienation of Soviet institutions from the masses and the potential for the political degeneration of the regime were not Lenin’s only concerns. As head of state, he was inevitably more preoccupied than the oppositionists with the possibility that, out of simple inefficiency and incompetence, the Soviet state would prove unable to cope with its vital military, economic, and political tasks. This fear was reflected in many of Lenin’s comments on the problem of bureaucracy. Thus, consistent with popular secondary understandings of bureaucracy, Lenin frequently employed that term, together with *red tape*, to refer to inefficiency, waste, delay, and excessive size in the state apparatus.

Lenin first attacked the inefficiency of the state apparatus as early as December 1918 at the Second Congress of Economic Councils. There, he angrily announced that he had received reports of warehouses filled with goods kept under lock and key while peasants clamored for commodities. In an apparent swipe at party oppositionists, he explained that the origin of this “red tape” was to be found in collegial management, and the consequent decline of individual responsibility.¹³⁴ A few months later he described the Soviet Union as “ground down by red

tape.” Explicitly rejecting the accusations of oppositionists that this was caused by excessive centralism, Lenin argued instead that it was “because we have not got strict centralisation.”¹³⁵

During the following years, Lenin waged a successful campaign to replace collegial administration with individual management. However, the waste and inefficiency continued and even increased. At the beginning on March 1922 Lenin painted a bleak picture of the bureaucratic wasteland of the government apparatus:

We have huge quantities of material, bulky works, that would cause the heart of the most methodical German scientist to rejoice; we have mountains of paper, and it would take Ispart [Commission for Collecting and Studying Materials on the History of the October Revolution and the History of the Russian Communist Party] fifty times fifty years to go through it all; but if you tried to find anything practical in a state trust, you would fail; and you would never know who was responsible for what. The practical fulfillment of decrees—of which we have more than enough . . . is never checked. Are the orders of the responsible Communist officials carried out? Can they get this done? No.¹³⁶

Later in the month, at the Eleventh Party Congress, Lenin continued his assault on bureaucratic inefficiency. There, he informed the delegates of a recent case in which a French capitalist wanted to sell the Soviet government a large supply of badly needed canned meat. Because of the red tape of the Commissariat of Foreign Trade, the transaction was not completed for several weeks—and then only because of Lenin’s initiative. Lenin summed it up as “simply the usual inefficiency of the Russian intellectuals to get things done—inefficiency and slovenliness.”¹³⁷

In the same report Lenin also noted the excessive size of the state apparatus, “that huge bureaucratic machine, that gigantic heap.”¹³⁸ Part of this problem was reflected in the number of state commissions: there were one hundred and twenty of these when, in Lenin’s view, only sixteen were needed.¹³⁹ By November of 1922 Lenin was complaining that since 1918 the

number of state officials just in Moscow had grown from 231,000 to 243,000, even after reductions. And he asserted the state apparatus was inflated to more than twice the needed size.¹⁴⁰

Lenin explained the growth of bureaucratic inefficiency primarily as a consequence of the incompetence of former underground revolutionaries as state administrators.¹⁴¹ Again, what Communists lacked was “culture.” This was, for example, the problem with the officials in the Commissariat of Foreign Trade who were incapable of purchasing canned meat from the French capitalist.¹⁴² Lacking culture, Lenin asserted, Communist officials were constantly drawing up schemes, but were incapable of practical work.¹⁴³ He complained that many Communists were of no use in combating red tape, and some were even a hindrance in this respect.¹⁴⁴ One consequence of this incompetence was that officials were afraid of taking responsibility for their work. This in turn resulted in a proliferation of commissions behind which bureaucrats could take shelter; and it constantly led state bodies to refer petty administrative questions to the highest party institutions.¹⁴⁵

Over the years, Lenin suggested a number of measures to improve the efficiency of the state apparatus. First, he advocated raising the level of individual and departmental responsibility—for example, through the use of individual instead of collegial management. The same principle was emphasized by Lenin in a recommendation of April 1922 concerning the duties of the newly created positions of Deputy Chairmen of Sovnarkom. The Deputy Premiers were to “demand more self-reliance and more responsibility from every Peoples’ Commissar and every government department,” and to see that the responsibilities of Soviet officials were precisely defined.¹⁴⁶

Second, state administration was to be improved through the appointment of competent Communists to responsible posts. In April 1922 Lenin proposed that the Deputy Chairmen supervise the placement of Communists in Soviet offices. They were to become acquainted with Soviet officials “so as to test and choose men, and also to really improve the machinery of Soviet government.”¹⁴⁷ Furthermore, Lenin recommended that the Deputy Chairmen supervise the distribution of Communists to guarantee that they occupied posts in which they could “combat bureaucracy and red tape” and improve the lot of citizens who had to deal with “our utterly inefficient Soviet machinery of administration.”¹⁴⁸

Third, Lenin proposed to punish those who were guilty of inefficiency. For example, Lenin threatened jail for the officials involved in the canned meat affair, and he recommended the same treatment for other officials responsible for red tape.¹⁴⁹ He also urged the Deputy Chairmen to impose penalties for “bureaucratic methods, red tape, inefficiency, neglect, etc.” These were to include dismissal and legal prosecution in widely publicized trials.¹⁵⁰

Fourth, Lenin believed that efficiency could be improved through proper supervision over the methods used in the state institutions. Again, the most important tool in this regard was the Workers’ and Peasants’ Inspectorate. Rabkrin’s duties included studying the methods of “a given office, factory, department, and so forth” and introducing practical changes.¹⁵¹ Another form of guidance in administrative methods was the reorganization of one or a few departments that could serve as models for the rest. In 1922 Lenin charged the Deputy Chairmen with this task.¹⁵² Similarly, in 1923 he suggested Rabkrin do the same, beginning with the most poorly organized state institution—Rabkrin itself.¹⁵³

One final method of improving the state apparatus was to cut severely the number of government commissions, reduce the staffs of departments, and eliminate “unproductive

expenditure.” The sole exception to this last measure was to be the Commissariat of Education.¹⁵⁴ This must have been at least partly due to the role that education played for Lenin in fighting bureaucracy.

3.4 TROTSKY AND BUREAUCRATIC INEFFICIENCY

Although Trotsky’s later writings on the problem of bureaucracy have received a great deal of attention by historians and political activists, very little has been written about his views on this question during the period 1917-1922.¹⁵⁵ Nevertheless, during these years Trotsky, like others within the Bolshevik Party, frequently voiced his alarm about the growth of bureaucracy in the Soviet state apparatus. However, in contrast with party oppositionists and Lenin, in this period Trotsky did not utilize a Marxist analysis of political alienation. That is, he did not denounce political centralism, or the tendency of a political apparatus to stand over and dominate society, nor did he describe the problem of Soviet bureaucracy as related to the surviving influence of exploitative classes upon the Soviet state. Rather, Trotsky viewed the problem of bureaucracy almost exclusively as related to the inefficiency of Soviet military and economic institutions. During the party controversies of these years, these semantic differences occasionally generated confusion when Trotsky, under attack for his “bureaucratic”-authoritarian methods, responded by hurling the charge of “bureaucracy” back at his critics. In fact, the wide differences within the party over the real meaning of *bureaucracy* were a reflection of the vastly differing concerns of those who used the term. No doubt, Trotsky’s almost exclusive preoccupation with efficiency during this period was shaped by his responsibilities as head of the largest of department of the Soviet apparatus, the War Commissariat.

Although, broadly speaking, Trotsky used the term bureaucracy to refer to sources of inefficiency in the Soviet state apparatus, more specifically he employed it in reference to three distinct, though overlapping, problems. First, he denounced as “bureaucrats” (*biurokraty*) those who, out of self-interest, opposed the implementation of military or economic policies that he viewed as most efficient. Second, he employed the terms bureaucratism (*biurokratizm*, *kantseliarshchina*) or red tape (*volokita*) as synonyms to characterize work habits of state officials that he viewed as inefficient, or even obstructionist. Third, and most importantly, Trotsky criticized the inefficient organization of entire areas of work such as military supply during the civil war, or industrial production under War Communism and the early years of NEP as a form of bureaucracy (*biurokratiia*).

In his first comments on the problem of bureaucracy after the revolution, Trotsky used the term to refer to a group of conservative, petty-bourgeois officials who acted in their own self-interest and contrary to the interests of the revolution. We have seen how Lenin and the opposition groupings in the party frequently attacked the bourgeois specialists as “bureaucrats” in this sense. Trotsky, however, the most enthusiastic proponent of the use of these specialists, consistently viewed this accusation as misdirected. In fact, in late 1918 and early 1919 he even leveled the charge of bureaucratism against those who *opposed* the use of bourgeois military experts.

In late 1918 and early 1919 Trotsky reacted sharply to the Military Opposition’s campaign against the use of the former tsarist officers in the Red Army. As Trotsky saw it, this hostility to the military specialists was irrational from a military point of view, and could only be explained as a product of ignorance or concern for personal privilege. Thus, in August 1918 he described one part of the Military Opposition as “people infected with panic or those who are

remote from the entire work of the military apparatus.”¹⁵⁶ The following March he characterized this group as composed of “prominent workers” who were “pretty persistent and independent but inclined to oversimplify every question.”¹⁵⁷ However, for Trotsky the most important part of the Military Opposition consisted of “bureaucrats” (*biurokraty*)—party members assigned to military work who were mainly preoccupied with their own status and privileges. Here, it is evident that Trotsky was referring to the military leadership in Tsaritsyn, supported at the time by Stalin. Trotsky’s sharpest denunciation of this group appeared in his “Letter to a Friend” of January 10, 1919:

Only a wretched Soviet bureaucrat [*biurokrat*], jealous for his new job, and cherishing this job because of the personal privileges it confers and not because of the interests of the workers’ revolution, can have an attitude of baseless distrust towards any great expert, outstanding organiser, technician, specialist, or scientist—having already decided on his own account that ‘me and my mates will get by somehow’.¹⁵⁸

Beyond attacking the members of this group as bureaucrats, Trotsky enumerated their other characteristic shortcomings. Raging against those who, he believed, would ruin the war effort, Trotsky denounced them as ignorant, incompetent, lazy, and conservative. In August 1918 he ridiculed certain “Party military figures” who, he asserted, “are incapable of keeping an eye on anything, behave like satraps, spend their time doing nothing, and, when they meet with failure, shuffle off the blame on to the General Staff officers.”¹⁵⁹ In January the War Commissar expanded upon these accusations:

There are also in the leading Soviet organs not a few half-equipped people who imagine themselves to be know-it-alls. Complacency, resting content with small successes—this is the worst feature of philistinism, which is radically inimical to the historic tasks of the proletariat. . . . Our own bureaucracy [*biurokratiia*], . . . is real historical ballast—already conservative, sluggish, complacent, unwilling to learn and even expressing enmity to anyone who reminds it of the need to learn. . . . [This trend] is nourished by the

moods of limited, envious, complacent (and yet at the same time unsure of itself) philistine-bureaucratic [*biurokraticheskii*] conservatism.¹⁶⁰

Because they threatened to disrupt the war effort with their opposition, these bureaucrats indirectly threatened the very survival of the Soviet Republic. Pioneering a theme later used by Stalin against the Trotskyists, Trotsky accused his opponents of being “worse than any saboteur,” as a “genuine menace to the cause of communist revolution,” and as “genuine accomplices of counter-revolution.”¹⁶¹

Although he rejected the opposition’s argument that that the bourgeois specialists were responsible for bureaucratism, Trotsky also attempted to explain the source of the problem of bureaucracy in class terms. In part, he attributed it to unspecified “petty-bourgeois traditions and influences,” combined with the demoralizing pressures of revolution. Additionally, the allegedly petty-bourgeois origins of a large number of his opponents had contributed to the problem:

The heritage of the past, petty-bourgeois traditions and influences, and finally, just the demand of strained nerves for a rest, all do their work. In addition, there are fairly numerous representatives of the intelligentsia and semi-intelligentsia who have sincerely rallied to the cause of the working class but internally have not yet fused with it, and have retained many qualities and ways of thought which are characteristic of the petty-bourgeois milieu. These, the worst elements of the new regime, are striving to become crystallised as a Soviet bureaucracy [*biurokratiia*].¹⁶²

During the party controversies of 1920 Trotsky again used the term bureaucracy to refer to groups of officials who resisted efficient policies out of narrow self-interest. As we have seen, during that year Trotsky was frequently attacked for his “bureaucratic” authoritarian tendencies in advocating one-man management of enterprises, the militarization of labor, and the “shake up” of the trade unions. In each case, Trotsky dismissed the accusation and countercharged or strongly implied that it was his opponents who were the real bureaucrats.

Early in the year leftist oppositionists and Bolshevik trade unionists joined the Mensheviks in denouncing the attempt to replace collegial with individual management of enterprises. Individual management, the critics claimed, was inherently bureaucratic in that it restricted the self-activity of the proletariat. In reply, Trotsky rejected the notion that the supremacy of the proletariat was in any way related to the form of industrial management; and he forcefully argued on behalf of the greater efficiency of individual authority.¹⁶³ Finally, he observed that a large part of the opposition to individual management originated in the Soviet trade-union bureaucracy:

But the question of “threes” and “fives” [that is, the collegial boards] interests, not the laboring masses, but the more backward, weaker, less fitted for independent work, section of the Soviet labor bureaucracy [*raboचाia biurokratiia*]. The foremost, intelligent, and determined administrator naturally strives to take the factory into his hands as a whole, and to show both to himself and to others that he can carry out his work. While if that administrator is a weakling, who does not stand very steadily on his feet, he attempts to associate another with himself, for in the company of another his own weakness will be unnoticed.¹⁶⁴

Again, the conception of bureaucracy employed by Trotsky was of a group of officials who opposed the implementation of efficient policies out of self interest. No doubt, Trotsky’s reference to the “labor bureaucracy” was intended to conjure up associations with the conservative and self-seeking trade union and socialist bureaucracies of the advanced capitalist countries. Trotsky may have also had this analogy in mind in his response to the critics of his militarization of labor in early 1920. Then, Communist oppositionists joined Mensheviks in denouncing Trotsky as “the new Arakcheev” and his policies as “Arakcheevshchina” after the authoritarian Minister of War who had set up military farming colonies under Alexander I and Nicholas I.¹⁶⁵ Trotsky in turn described this as evidence of his critics’ “petty-bourgeois intelligentsia and trade-unionist prejudices.”¹⁶⁶

Finally, during the trade-union controversy at the end of the year, Trotsky again defended himself against charges of bureaucratism for his authoritarian methods in running Tsektran and his threat to impose similar measures in other unions. While admitting there was bureaucratism in Tsektran, Trotsky suggested it was less than in those unions which had not completed their economic tasks and, “losing ground under their feet become bureaucratized [*biurokratiruiutsia*].”¹⁶⁷ Trotsky’s meaning here is obscure, but he seems to have been saying that in such unions the leadership simply gave up on attempting to fulfill its responsibilities for production and concentrated instead on defending its own narrow interests.

However, when Trotsky spoke of bureaucracy during the years 1919-1922 he more frequently had in mind a different understanding of that problem—one that involved the work habits and attitudes of Soviet officials. Understood in this sense, bureaucracy involved a number of the secondary characteristics that were popularly associated with the term, such as an excessive preoccupation with formalities and paperwork, an attitude of apathy and indolence, and ignorance. Trotsky’s remarks in this regard were not always consistent or clear. Thus, at times he spoke as if these were *defining characteristics* of bureaucracy or bureaucratism, and at times as if they were *sources* of that problem. Also, at times he described bureaucracy exclusively in terms of these negative traits, and at times he contrasted these features with the “good sides” of bureaucracy. However, in each case Trotsky associated these attributes with the problem of bureaucracy, and in each case he blamed them for inefficiency in the functioning of Soviet state institutions.

On a number of occasions, Trotsky spoke of the bureaucratic formalism and apathy that permeated the Soviet state apparatus. Thus, in April 1919 during the White offensive led by Kolchak, Trotsky complained that reinforcements for the Red Army were too slow in coming to

the front, and in general “the necessary effort is not observable in the tempo of work of Soviet institutions.”¹⁶⁸ Decisions, urgent measures, and the transmission of orders from one institution to another were frequently delayed, and the responsible local workers often failed to check on the fulfillment of decisions. Trotsky blamed part of the problem on excessive formalism—the “routine” and “red tape” (*volokita*) that had “accumulated already in our Soviet mechanism.”¹⁶⁹ At the same time he accused local Soviet officials of slothfulness comparable to that of Oblomov in Goncharov’s novel by that title—a “new Soviet Oblomovism.” What was needed in Trotsky’s estimation was greater effort on the part of provincial and *uezd* (county) soviet executive committees and party committees. Furthermore, Trotsky insisted that workers in the provinces who had “become overgrown with the cobwebs of bureaucratism [*kantseliarshchina*] must be removed from their posts.”¹⁷⁰

In June 1919 Trotsky observed an even more blatant example of this formalism and passivity among local state institutions. At Liski on the Southern Front, Trotsky came across a trainload of wounded and sick Red Army soldiers who had not been fed during the entire twelve hours the train had been sitting in the station. Trotsky blamed the medical apparatus of the Southern Front that had failed to notify the station in advance about the train and to instruct it to take the necessary measures to supply the sick. Even more appalling to Trotsky was the failure of the local authorities to respond to the situation: “Can anyone conceive any worse example of obtuse heartlessness and shameless bureaucratism [*kantseliarshchina*] even in the foulest times of foul Tsardom!” Trotsky promised a thorough reorganization of the army medical and communication apparatuses and a “vigorous shake-up of local Soviet institutions that shut their eyes when, under their very noses, soldiers of the Red Army are suffering and dying.” This “shake-up” was to be achieved through the exemplary punishment of apathetic local officials:

“We must show in practice to idlers and saboteurs that an indifferent attitude to wounded and sick Red Army men will be punished by the Soviet Republic in the same way as treason to the socialist fatherland.”¹⁷¹

In February 1920 Trotsky’s own economic work was disrupted by the apathy of local officials. En route to the Urals to direct the organization of the First Labor Army, Trotsky’s train buried itself in the snow and was partially derailed. For nineteen hours Trotsky fumed while the train lay helpless. Although he raged against the specter of “sabotage and kulak-type self-seeking,” it seems the real problem was a pattern of criminal negligence.¹⁷² Local soviets had sent an inadequate number of men to clear the tracks after a major snow storm at the end of January. On the night of the accident the local railway administration in charge of that section of the tracks had failed to warn Trotsky’s train about the drifts. After the accident, it took ten hours for a work team to arrive and more than fifteen hours for a representative from the next station to show up; and some local railway officials declined to put in an appearance at all. Then the head of the Transport Cheka at Sasova, attempting to cover for the local soviet officials, did nothing but summon the head of the sector and the senior track foreman to “present a report on the snowdrifts.”¹⁷³ Trotsky denounced both the negligence of the local officials and the formalist response of the Cheka as examples of bureaucratism. In the end, “the bureaucrat [*biurokrat*] from the Cheka took the transport bureaucrats away from their work in order to submit a useless bureaucratic [*biurokraticheskii*] report.” In this case Trotsky’s solution was to place fifty-five versts of the rail line under martial law and to threaten those responsible with the “maximum punishment” at the hands of a Revolutionary Military Tribunal.¹⁷⁴

However, in late 1920 and early 1921 Trotsky began to focus upon yet another issue related to the work habits of Soviet officials—their widespread ignorance of the most efficient

methods of organizing work. At first, in late 1920, Trotsky characterized this ignorance as an example of their failure to master the “good sides” of bureaucracy. But by early 1921 Trotsky was describing ignorance of organizational technique as a source of Soviet red tape.

Trotsky first raised this theme in late 1920 at the height of the trade union controversy. At that point he was confronted with widespread accusations of bureaucratism for his attempt to “shake up” the trade unions and fuse them with state institutions. Trotsky evaded the accusation by redefining bureaucracy, this time filling it with a *positive* content. To the extent he had been responsible for the bureaucratization of the trade unions, he responded in an article in December, this was not a reproach. In almost Weberian terms Trotsky now defined bureaucracy (*biurokratiia*) as an *efficient* system of administration that included such positive features as “a more special acquaintance with particular branches of administration and the economy, a precise hierarchy of interrelationships, definite methods of work elaborated by long practice, etc.”¹⁷⁵ In a speech delivered in December to the expanded plenum of Tsektran Trotsky’s list of the “good sides” of bureaucracy included the methods of work that had been developed by “German and American bureaucracy [*biurokratiia*],” such as “rationalization, Taylorism, distribution, forms of responsibility, supply, plan, bookkeeping, etc.”¹⁷⁶ Bureaucratism (*biurokratizm*), so understood, was not an invention of tsarism, but rather “an epoch in the growth of humanity, when humanity passes from the medieval mist to the bourgeois order and creates certain skills and methods of administration, creates good and more precise offices with good typewriters . . . along with correct bookkeeping and management.” These were skills it was necessary for the Soviet state to acquire, Trotsky warned, if it did not want “to become lice ridden” and “retire from the scene.”¹⁷⁷

Trotsky never again spoke in such glowing terms about bureaucracy. Perhaps he found this rhetorical device to be too risky given the fact that so many within the party were already uneasy about his “bureaucratic” proclivities. Nevertheless, he continued to berate the organizational incompetence of Soviet officials as a source of bureaucratism. In a speech delivered in January 1921 Trotsky argued that the red tape which remained in the Soviet apparatus was at least three-fourths a product of low culture and poverty. This, he asserted, “cannot be eliminated by organizational measures. Clumsiness and red tape [*volokitnost*] can be overcome only by raising the quality of work, the accumulation of material wealth, and the raising of culture.”¹⁷⁸ Further, he called for a “struggle against bureaucratism [*biurokratizm*], which now means struggle against laxity, ignorance, and slackness in all spheres of our life.”¹⁷⁹

In the fall of 1921 Trotsky launched a campaign to raise the level of Soviet culture in the Red Army. There, the task was to instill discipline in the ranks of the fresh recruits who had replaced the demobilized veterans of the civil war. Trotsky repeatedly attempted to inspire his troops in the mundane tasks of greasing their boots and cleaning their rifles, while chastising them for spitting and dropping cigarette butts in the barracks.¹⁸⁰ Almost immediately Trotsky’s campaign encountered resistance. In September Trotsky noted that certain unnamed party members had begun to grumble about his constant “nagging” over “trifles” and to suggest that this was new evidence of his “bureaucratism.”¹⁸¹ Predictably, Trotsky’s response was to direct the charge back at his critics, implying that they were guilty of a bureaucratism that combined formalism, laziness, and ignorance. “The slovens and sluggards,” he complained bitterly, “love to hide themselves behind the struggle against bureaucratism.” However, they failed to understand the true meaning of the term:

Bureaucratism [*biurokratizm*] means attention to empty form at the expense of content, of the matter actually at hand. Bureaucratism

wallows in formalities, in nonsensicalities, but does not concern itself at all with businesslike details. On the contrary, bureaucratism usually sidesteps the practical details of which the matter itself is composed, being concerned merely to ensure that everything adds up on paper.¹⁸²

Trotsky explained that such red tape had been characteristic of the Russian state since Peter the Great. Peter, too, had struggled against “laziness, immobility and negligence,” but in the process he had achieved only “superficial, formal, bureaucratic [*biurokraticheskii*] precision.” In Peter’s time, as in Trotsky’s, such precision “served merely as a cover for the red tape [*volokita*] . . . inherited from the accursed past, together with poverty and illiteracy.”¹⁸³

3.5 TROTSKY AND *GLAVKOKRATIYA*

Although Trotsky denounced bureaucrats who opposed efficient policies out of self interest as well as bureaucratic inefficiency in the work habits of state officials, the most important notion of bureaucracy for Trotsky during these years involved the inefficiency that he perceived in the very structure of Soviet political, military and, especially, economic institutions. In particular, he criticized the excessive centralism of these institutions and the inadequate coordination between them. From late 1919 until the end of 1922 Trotsky wrote more extensively and more coherently about this form of bureaucracy than any other.

Trotsky first began to denounce the bureaucratism inherent in the inadequate coordination of local soviet institutions in the spring of 1919. In April, during the Kolchak offensive, he complained that reinforcements were slow in arriving at the front because of delays in the supply of uniforms at the local level. The problem was not that there were no uniforms available; rather,

local Soviet institutions work, as often as not, in isolation from each other. Uniforms held by the National Economic Council or the supply committees [of the local soviets] are not available when required by the military commissariat of the province or the *uyezd*.¹⁸⁴

Trotsky urged that it was “necessary to finish decisively with red tape [*volokita*] and disparity between departments, in every *uyezd* and provincial town.”¹⁸⁵ At the time, he offered no specific proposals for reorganization.

Problems of military supply continued to plague the Red Army in the following months. In July Trotsky asserted that deficiencies in supply had been largely responsible for recent military setbacks. “We must eliminate, at all costs, the criminal red tape [*volokita*] of the army supply organs and the barren bureaucratism [*kantseliarshchina*] which has succeeded the chaos which previously prevailed, not replacing but merely supplementing it,” Trotsky urged. His concern was that the supply service was too centralized, given the slowness of Soviet rail transport and the mobile character of the war. By the time requisition orders reached the supply organs of the front and the requested supplies had been dispatched, the units that had requested them had been dissolved or transferred. “As a result,” Trotsky observed, “the boot never reaches the soldier’s foot.” To eliminate the problem Trotsky proposed to decentralize the distribution of supplies, shifting the responsibility from organs of an entire front to those of individual armies and further, to the supply chiefs who would accompany each supply train.¹⁸⁶

By the end of the year, Trotsky’s responsibilities as War Commissar had led him into an examination of the problems of inefficiency in war-related production. There he again discovered a pattern of excessive centralism and inadequate local coordination. At the Seventh Congress of Soviets in December and again at meeting of the Moscow party committee in January he reported that frequently in a province one institution would have cloth; a second,

thread and buttons; and a third, spare sewing shop workers. Yet in the same province there were soldiers who were inadequately clothed. The problem was that the transfer of materials had to be approved by the center, and orders from the center did not always correspond to the local situation. For example, to have overcoats sewn the center sometimes would instruct that cloth was to be taken from one province that had buttons and shipped to another that had none.¹⁸⁷ All in all, Trotsky reported in a speech to the Moscow committee of the party in January 1920, in the previous year he had “sent hundreds of telegrams with protests against superfluous centralism” to VSNKh.¹⁸⁸

By this time Trotsky had begun to shift his attention from specifically military concerns to broader economic questions. As he did so, he immediately perceived the same problems in all branches of the economy. At a meeting of the party fraction of the Central Council of Trade Unions in January Trotsky related the findings of the Moscow provincial economic council. In Moscow, for example, one local factory was inactive for over two months while it waited for the replacement of a driving belt; another had to shut down several times because it had run out of canvas; and a third could not begin to produce silicate brick because it had failed to receive an armature for its steam engine. In each case the necessary parts and materials were available locally, but the existing regulations did not permit their transfer to the factory in need.¹⁸⁹

The following month Trotsky witnessed related problems in the distribution of grain in the Urals. There he saw workers in some areas eating oats or starving, while in other areas the horses were eating wheat or supplies were rotting. The problem was that the provincial supply committees did not have the authority to transfer wheat from one province to another, but were required to send all grain west of the Urals from which it was centrally redistributed. Yet rail transport had broken down to such an extent that the grain could not be shipped. “One cannot

imagine greater idiocy passing under the name of centralism,” Trotsky complained. “A stop must be put to this monstrous bureaucratism [*biurokratizm*].”¹⁹⁰

In addressing this problem before the Ninth Party Congress at the end of March 1920, Trotsky argued that “the question of red tape [*volokita*] and bureaucratism [*biurokratizm*] in the sphere of our economy is not at all reducible to a struggle with isolated bureaucrats [*biurokraty*], with the bureaucratic [*biurokraticeskii*] practices of some specialists, etc.” Though this notion was “fairly widely held,” it was “extremely superficial.” Rather, bureaucratism and red tape were based “in the very structure of our economic institutions.”¹⁹¹ At the time, fifty-odd *glavki* and *tsestry* under VSNKh dominated all industrial production and distribution.¹⁹² Each *glavk* controlled a separate branch of industry down to the level of the enterprise. The problem, as Trotsky saw it, was the rigid central control exercised by the *glavki* over the various industrial trusts and local enterprises, combined with an inadequate degree of coordination between separate *glavki*, trusts, and enterprises. Since 1918 the Democratic Centralists had been complaining about the excessively centralist control of local industry by the *glavki*, calling the system “*glavkism*.” Now, Trotsky renamed it “*glavkokratiia*,” which he defined as “the rule of separate, vertically centralized *glavki*, which are not linked organizationally and which are badly coordinated in their work.”¹⁹³

For Trotsky the lack of coordination was evident from the foundations of industry all the way to the summit. At the Ninth Party Congress Trotsky described the situation at the local level as one in which that there were “no cross-sectional connections, no canals which would combine the trusts or the enterprises of the various trusts with one another.”¹⁹⁴ As far as the summit was concerned, in an article in December 1920 he noted that although VSNKh had been established to direct the economy in accordance with a single plan, this goal had never been realized.

Instead, VSNKh had become, in effect, just one more commissariat—the “Peoples’ Commissariat of Industry”—among many, and had even failed to establish coordination between the *glavki* under its direction: “Even within the Supreme Council of the National Economy, . . . the separate branches of the economy (fuel, metal, textile production, etc.) developed into independent, centralized *glavki*, the coordination of whose work is still, to a significant degree, a task of the future.”¹⁹⁵

According to Trotsky this system had created a host of difficulties, particularly for local institutions. In December 1920 he argued that whenever a local organ wanted to get any practical results out of a decree, it had to “climb up to the summit of a *glavk*, descend, climb again to the summit of another *glavk*, and so on without end.” Thus, the local institution was confronted with a choice: it could either wander through the maze of red tape in an attempt to fulfill decrees, or it could “break the front of red tape [*volokita*]” by the “violation or circumvention of decrees.”¹⁹⁶ The ultimate outcome was the disruption of industrial production, especially that which was locally based. In a speech at an all-city party conference in Moscow at end of March, 1920, Trotsky observed that *glavkokratiia* had “trampled under itself all areas of industry.” He asserted, “At the present time *glavkokratiia* prevents economic growth in the local areas: the programs of the center are fulfilled poorly, in dimensions of three or five percent.”¹⁹⁷

In various statements, Trotsky indicated that numerous factors had contributed to the formation of the system of *glavkokratiia*. Originally, it had arisen as a necessary and healthy reaction against the extreme decentralization of the first period of Soviet power. However, mistakes had been made because there had been no historical precedent to serve as a guide. Also, the vastness of the country, the ruined state of the economy inherited from the old regime, and the devastation of the civil war had greatly complicated the task of planning.¹⁹⁸ Thus, Trotsky

concluded in December 1920, *glavkokratiia* had been “a transitional moment in the construction of a socialist economy.” However, now it was “a transitional form which it is necessary to get over.”¹⁹⁹

Trotsky’s analyses of bureaucracy differed substantially from Lenin’s, both in his exclusive preoccupation with the problem of inefficiency and in his focus on the structural inadequacies of the Soviet economy. Given these differences, it is not surprising that Trotsky also rejected Lenin’s panacea for bureaucracy—the Workers’ and Peasants’ Inspectorate. In part, Rabkrin had been set up to institute workers’ and peasants’ control over the tsarist experts. To the extent that this was Rabkrin’s purpose, Trotsky argued in December 1920, it was irrelevant to the struggle against bureaucracy:

If the problem were conscious criminality or vices brought in from the outside, the Workers’ and Peasants’ Inspectorate could, probably, fulfill its designated task. But the methods of the Inspectorate have turned out to be invalid precisely because the problem is not at all one of exposing and abolishing, but of establishing a correct and coordinated economic organization on new bases.²⁰⁰

For Trotsky the real struggle involved introducing greater efficiency into Soviet economic organs. To the extent that this was the goal of Rabkrin, it was at least on the right track. But in this case, its methods were faulty:

In regard to the basic task which interests us—the control and the establishment of expedient work of the various departments—one can say now with certainty that Rabkrin is not equal to this task. It is impossible to create a separate department which would combine in itself, so to speak, all the state wisdom and would actually be able to check on the work of the other departments, not only from the point of view of the honesty and efficiency of their work, but also from the point of view of the expediency and correctness of the organization of the work as a whole.²⁰¹

In fact, Trotsky claimed, the departments saw Rabkrin as less than useless, for Rabkrin itself was a source of red tape (*volokita*) and arbitrariness. Trotsky pointed to Rabkrin's financial control function as an example. Without a real index of costs—and discounting the ruble that had “ceased to measure anything”—the departments or enterprises were incapable of actually measuring expenditures, etc. In such a situation, the state controller could either approve every estimate and appropriation, or “combining red tape with arbitrariness,” he could “occupy himself with pressures, demand precise estimates which are impossible to give, and impose prohibitions in cases when he cannot understand the matter.” The more cautious controllers would try to steer a course between red tape and arbitrariness.²⁰²

Trotsky's own proposed solution to the problem was to begin to restructure the entire Soviet economy from the level of the enterprises to the summit. What was needed first of all was a degree of economic decentralization. Thus, at the Seventh Congress of Soviets in December 1919, and again at the Eighth in December 1920, Trotsky supported the slogan of “powers in the local areas.”²⁰³ Specifically, Trotsky advocated granting greater autonomy to individual enterprises and local economic organs with regard to the exchange of local resources and products. Though it was necessary to preserve and develop vertical centralism in the *glavki*, he asserted in March 1920, this had to be combined with “the horizontal coordination of enterprises along the lines of the economic *raiony* [districts], where the enterprises of the various departments of industry and of diverse economic significance are compelled to live on the same sources of local raw materials, means of transport, labor power, etc.”²⁰⁴ In line with this, in January 1920 he supported a proposal that would allow nationalized enterprises to supply requests from other institutions in the same locality when these were approved by a *gubsovnarkhoz* (provincial council of the national economy).²⁰⁵

Simultaneously, Trotsky fought for the creation of new institutions to coordinate regional resources. In his original plan for the militarization of labor in December 1919, Trotsky proposed the organization of labor armies along the lines of “territorial and production districts.” He envisioned that these labor armies would be able to assist the revival of local economic centers by helping to coordinate the local exchange of resources.²⁰⁶ By the following March he was able to report to the party congress that, wherever labor armies had been established, regional economic centers had crystallized around them. Each of these, he argued, could unite representatives of local economic institutions with those of the center and take upon itself the tasks of transferring raw materials, labor power, etc. within a region.²⁰⁷

Finally, Trotsky urged greater coordination of the *glavki* and economic commissariats from the top. He anticipated that ultimately this would occur through a single economic plan that would replace *glavkokratiia* with “authentic socialist centralism.”²⁰⁸ At the Eighth Congress of Soviets in December 1920 he suggested that the recent creation of various interdepartmental economic organs had been a step in this direction.²⁰⁹ The next step, he argued, would be to hand over the task of coordinating the work of all the economic departments to one institution. VSNKh had proven incapable of playing this role. Now it was necessary to try again, this time entrusting the job to the Council of Labor and Defense, a body originally set up to coordinate resources for the war effort.²¹⁰

In early 1921 Trotsky had cause to celebrate his successes in the struggle against *glavkokratiia*.²¹¹ The Eighth Congress of Soviets had just endorsed his call for both greater local economic autonomy and a single economic plan, and had assigned the task of working out such a plan as well as the coordination of the work of the economic commissariats to the Council of Labor and Defense.²¹² In February, Sovnarkom decided to create a “state general planning

commission” (Gosplan) attached to the Council of Labor and Defense—a decision that was fulfilled on April 1.²¹³ However, Trotsky soon discovered that, to the extent his war against *glavkokratiia* had been a battle for central economic planning, the struggle was far from over. Although Trotsky had won significant reforms within the context of the system of War Communism, in the following months this system itself was scrapped with the introduction of the New Economic Policy.

Trotsky watched the unfolding of NEP with mixed emotions. On one hand, he welcomed the fact that NEP had dealt a serious blow to the hyper-centralism of War Communism. A series of measures adopted during 1921 released industry completely from the grip of the *glavki*: the growth of small and medium-scale private and cooperative enterprises was permitted; industrial enterprises administered by the state were grouped into new “unions” or “trusts” with the right to buy and sell on the open market without interference from the center; and the *glavki* themselves were abolished.²¹⁴ Thus, in an address to the Fourth Congress of the Comintern in November 1922 Trotsky praised the NEPist reversal of the “policy of a centralized bureaucratic [*biurokraticheskii*] management of industry.”²¹⁵ On the other hand, Trotsky increasingly was concerned about the retreat from comprehensive economic planning that accompanied NEP.²¹⁶ Although in his speech to the Fourth World Congress of the Comintern he argued that NEP was one of the “transitional stages” between capitalism and “complete socialism, with its socially planned economy,” he had already begun to criticize the slow pace of that transition.²¹⁷

Trotsky no longer used the term *glavkokratiia*, but he continued and intensified his struggle against the bureaucratic inefficiency that he saw as arising from the lack of planning and central coordination. As early as May 3, 1921, just one month after the establishment of Gosplan, Trotsky complained to Lenin, “Unfortunately, our work is being done as hitherto without any

plan and without any understanding of the need for one, and the planning commission is more or less a planned negation of the need for a practical business-like economic plan for the near future.”²¹⁸ He returned to this theme in a letter to the Central Committee on August 7, 1921 in which he pointed out that NEP had already evoked “practical muddle and ideological confusion” because of the unsystematic way it was being introduced. Again, the problem was that there was no center that could direct the economy. He reminded the Central Committee that under War Communism, “The constant clashes between economic, trade union, and Party organs, especially over the matter of individual appointments and transfers, were capable of ruining the most thriving industry.” Now under NEP, the problem was compounded by the fact that three-fourths of the business of administrating the economy consisted of selecting and teaming officials—a task that required some “community of purpose” in administration. Furthermore, Trotsky anticipated new conflicts would emerge under NEP between state enterprises, enterprises under contractual obligation to the state, and enterprises leased to private capital. He predicted that, without an authoritative economic center, the relationship between these enterprises and state institutions (especially Rabkrin) would “inevitably become a new source of red tape [*volokita*], carping and abuse.”²¹⁹

Although he continued to recommend “a degree of decentralization, transferring the initiative and the responsibility to the institution on the spot,” this was already a lesser concern. With greater emphasis Trotsky argued again for the intervention of a single economic center “to ensure that *the central economic apparatus does function in such a way as to ensure the genuine and uninterrupted regulation of economic life by actively eliminating bureaucratic [biurokraticheskii] hindrances and assisting in the establishment of straightforward relationships between interdependent organs and establishments.*” Trotsky now believed that, given its

planning responsibilities, the newly created Gosplan was the most likely institution to play this role. However, for it to do so Gosplan would have to be totally reorganized in its composition, redirected from theoretical to practical methods of work, and guided by the needs of large-scale industry.²²⁰ Trotsky would continue to insist on these points during 1922.

3.6 TROTSKY AND BUREAUCRACY, LATE 1921-1922

In late December 1921 Trotsky raised several new observations that suggest an association of bureaucracy with the phenomenon of political alienation. However, this development was primarily significant as an anticipation of themes that would later become prominent in Trotsky's analysis. For the time being, the focus of Trotsky's thinking regarding bureaucracy remained concentrated upon the problem of "glavkokratic" bureaucratic inefficiency. In fact, it was this concern that was largely responsible for bringing Trotsky together with Lenin in an alliance against bureaucracy at the end of 1922.

On December 19, 1921, Lenin sent a letter to members of the Politburo and to CC members Zalutskii and Solts soliciting their reactions to a proposal to restrict new admissions to the party. Following the recent purge of "unsuitable elements" from the party, Lenin supported a draft resolution under consideration by the Eleventh Party Conference to institute a probationary period of one and a half years for workers and three years for everyone else.²²¹ Trotsky replied in a letter of December 21. There is no indication of precisely what Trotsky had observed that prompted his response, but in his letter he vigorously questioned the proposal:

V.I.! I have very big hesitations concerning your prohibitive and restrictive proposals in regard to the admission into the party. Now we probably have 400,000 members, and it will remain almost like

this for 1 ½ years. While keeping the inevitable tendency to charge party members with any important and semi-important posts, we will get a closed party of administrators. For workers, who actually work at factories, we must make joining the party as easy as possible, reducing a period of alternative membership up to ½ year maximum.

It is better to clean a building from time to time, than to cork up all windows and cracks. A party of administrators means a party of those who enjoy privileges. Some people do it cautiously and “tactfully”, others—less cautiously . . . I surely underline only one side of the matter, but it is fraught with big complications.²²²

Immediately, Lenin acceded to Trotsky’s recommendations.²²³

The Russian historian Alexander Pantsov, who discovered Trotsky’s letter, has noted the significance of Trotsky’s remarks in light of his later analysis of Soviet bureaucracy.²²⁴ In fact, these brief paragraphs contain the seeds of four ideas that would later become prominent in Trotsky’s thinking: that party as well as the state was developing negative “administrative” characteristics; that these characteristics were transmitted into the party from the state as a result of the party’s control of the state; that administrative authority in the Soviet Union had become associated with privilege; and that the best way to combat this problem was by enhancing the proletarian composition of the party. Still, these remarks were only a brief anticipation of Trotsky’s later analysis of a layer of privileged administrators, increasingly alienated from the needs, aspirations, and control of the working class. In his letter to Lenin Trotsky did not associate these issues with the term *bureaucracy*. More significantly, it seems he did not return to these concerns for more than a year. Rather, when he addressed the problem of Soviet bureaucracy in 1922, Trotsky referred almost exclusively to the inefficiency he associated with the “glavkokratic” organization of the economy.

Trotsky publicly returned to the problem of bureaucracy in the discussion of Lenin’s political report at the Eleventh Party Congress in March 1922. In that report Lenin attacked the

tendency of high state officials to drag even minor problems before the Politburo or the Central Committee of the party.²²⁵ This was a theme Trotsky could readily endorse, for he had raised it himself in a letter to the Politburo earlier in the month.²²⁶ Trotsky now elaborated upon Lenin's point, noting that the practice occurred at the local level as well. The problem, Trotsky argued, was that it was commonly believed that any complex state question quite suddenly became simple when it was introduced into a party committee:

It is believed that the same economist who could not cope with his economic work when he was in charge of a provincial economic council is anointed with grace when he is appointed gubkom secretary. Precisely by force of such "anointment" he decides, without hesitation, all economic, military, administrative, and all other questions.²²⁷

For the most part these were not questions of principle but such practical questions as how much oil to transfer to one location and how much firewood to another. One consequence of the referral of such questions to party committees, Trotsky continued, was that state institutions lost all sense of responsibility. More important was the effect it had upon the party apparatus: "That which is the worst in bureaucratism [*biurokratizm*], that is, a relationship to matters without knowledge of the essence of things, but an approach only from the point of view of the forms of things, inevitably infiltrates into the party apparatus."²²⁸ The problem of bureaucratism Trotsky was pointing to here was the old one of excessive formalism. However, now for the first time he saw this as a concern in the party as well as the state. In 1923 Trotsky would openly warn that the party, through its preoccupation with details, was in danger of losing its revolutionary perspective. At the Eleventh Party Congress he only hinted at this possibility:

The summary resolution of all things—it is this which constitutes the worst harm of bureaucratism [*biurokratizm*]: bureaucratism does not deal with the essence of things, but with its passing forms. I repeat that, given such a summary resolution of all

questions, not principled, but routine and practical, bureaucratism inevitably takes over party apparatuses.²²⁹

Jerry Hough has suggested that in this contribution Trotsky was raising, for the first time and in a muted form, the question of party democracy.²³⁰ However, this reads too much of Trotsky's later position into his comments. Rather, the fundamental question to which he was alluding was, once again, the need for a central body to coordinate the economy. In the absence of economic leadership by an authoritative state body, economic questions were increasingly resolved on an ad hoc basis by party committees.²³¹ Here was the growing organizational "muddle" Trotsky had anticipated in his letter of August 7, 1921 to the Central Committee. Having been rebuffed by the Central Committee at that time in his effort to grant Gosplan coordinating powers, he evidently felt constrained to confine his remarks at the party congress to mere allusions to this problem. Soon afterwards, however, Trotsky again explicitly returned to the question in his correspondence with the CC.

A few weeks after the party congress, Lenin circulated to the Politburo his proposal to create two Deputy Chairmen of Sovnarkom to combat state bureaucratism. Trotsky's response was quite critical. First, Trotsky predicted that the selection of two Deputy Chairmen would only generate new difficulties. Beyond that, Lenin's plan did nothing to address the inefficiency that was rooted in the structure of the Soviet economy, and in some ways it compounded the problem. "The main thing," Trotsky complained, "is that I still cannot envision the sort of organ, which will in practice be able to control economic work on a day-to-day basis." Again, he argued that, although Gosplan outwardly approximated such an organ, in practice it had become simply an "academic institution." Meanwhile, in the absence of such an organ, the controversies that continually erupted between state economic departments were referred to the Council of Labor and Defense or the Politburo, and were "resolved by rule of thumb . . . when the water is

reaching our throats.”²³² One of the tasks envisioned for the Deputy Chairmen in Lenin’s proposal was the “reduction of the establishment of Soviet institutions.” However, as Trotsky saw it, the tendency to create new bodies was a result of the lack of a real planning and coordinating organ. In the absence of a “forward-looking, controlling economic organ” the Central Committee had been forced to set up “an economic commission, a budgetary commission, a gold commission, and so on and so forth.”²³³ (In a letter several months later, after a third Deputy had been added, Trotsky included the “troika” of Deputies as one more extraneous commission.)²³⁴

Trotsky was equally critical of the role Lenin’s plan envisioned for Rabkrin. Lenin had proposed that the Deputy Chairmen would utilize Rabkrin to combat inefficiency in the work habits of state officials. Repeating his own 1920 critique of Rabkrin, Trotsky contended that the attempt to introduce better methods by means of a separate department was deeply misguided:

This work cannot in any event be done at second hand through the medium of a special department which peeps in from time to time and takes note of everything that is needed. This is Utopia. There never has been such a department anywhere on earth, and in the logic of things there cannot be one.²³⁵

Officially, Trotsky asserted, instructions to the departments were being carried out, but they failed to produce results because of material shortages and “ignorance, incapacity and so forth.” The way to rectify this problem was not by a “swoop from without” on the part of Rabkrin, but through the long and difficult process of raising the level of Soviet education and the organizational competence of officials through a system of schools and training courses for the young, for non-party workers and peasants, and for existing office workers. Furthermore, Trotsky judged Rabkrin to be an unsuitable instrument because it had proven itself to be unfit for serious work of any type. In what may be an indication of his awareness of Stalin’s maneuvering,

Trotsky noted “the extraordinary growth of intrigue in the organs of the People’s Commissariat of Workers’ and Peasants’ Inspection, which has become proverbial throughout the country.”²³⁶

It is not surprising then that, when Lenin’s proposal was approved over Trotsky’s objections, Trotsky repeatedly declined Lenin’s request that he accept the post of Deputy Chairman. It may be, as Isaac Deutscher has suggested, that Trotsky’s pride was hurt “by an arrangement which would have placed him formally on the same footing as the other vice-Premiers who were only Lenin’s inferior assistants.”²³⁷ The weight of evidence, however, provides more support for Deutscher’s other explanation: “He could not, without contradicting himself, accept a post in which he would have had to give effect to an economic policy which in his view lacked focus, and to guide an administrative machinery which he held to be faultily constructed.”²³⁸ This, in fact, was Trotsky’s own explanation.²³⁹

Lenin’s last attempt to convince Trotsky to take on the job occurred in a discussion between the two leaders in December.²⁴⁰ In the course of the conversation, Lenin “spoke of the terrible growth of bureaucratism [*biurokratism*]” in the state apparatus and once more urged Trotsky to become a Deputy Chairman, as a means of getting at the problem.²⁴¹ In reply, Trotsky reviewed his initial objections to the creation of the position, again suggesting that bureaucratism was related directly to the lack of planning. He pointed out that over the previous two years the Orgburo, the Secretariat, and the Politburo repeatedly had made decisions “without reference to the interested department and even behind its back.” These included “piecemeal reductions in the army, instead of planned reductions . . . ; similar phenomena as regards budgetary expenditure and analogous occurrences in the domain of individual appointments.” In Trotsky’s view, this had “utterly destroyed the possibility of proper work, selection and training of officials and of any sort of correct assessment or any sort of anticipation of a planned economy.”²⁴²

At this point in the discussion Trotsky's comments went beyond the issue of organizational efficiency. Evidently Trotsky had noticed the efforts of Stalin, Zinoviev, and Kamenev to promote their own people and block his succession to the leadership. Noting that bureaucratism (*biurokratizm*) was a problem in party as well as state institutions, he reported that in the provinces, the districts, the party locals and the Central Committee, he had observed "a special selection of functionaries and specialists, party and non-party, around certain party personalities and groups." Among these officials, a "mutual shielding" was taking place: "Attacking a functionary you run into the party leader."²⁴³ Once again, the problem was that inefficient policies were defended by bureaucrats pursuing their own, narrow self-interests.

After a moment's reflection Lenin responded, "That is, I propose a struggle with Soviet bureaucratism [*biurokratizm*] and you are proposing to include the bureaucratism of the Organization Bureau of the Party?" "I suppose that's it," replied Trotsky. Lenin then invited Trotsky to join him in a "bloc" against "bureaucratism [*biurokratizm*]" in general, and against the Organizational Bureau in particular.²⁴⁴ Trotsky agreed. Specifically, the bloc was to fight for the creation of a special committee attached to the Central Committee that would "look into the question of the more correct selection, training, and promotion of officials and of more correct organizational relationships." Just before the meeting concluded, Lenin promised to give further thought to the organizational details.²⁴⁵

It is probable that the agreement was viewed somewhat differently by Lenin and Trotsky, but it marked the beginning of the convergence of their views on bureaucracy. No doubt Lenin partly saw it as a way to begin to address, through "more correct selection, training, and promotion," the inefficiency in the state apparatus that was a product of the lack of culture of Communists. Also, he must have hoped to use the committee to curb the "bureaucratic"

authoritarian exercise of power by Stalin, the head of the Orgburo. Trotsky, on the other hand, hoped to use the committee primarily to promote centralized planning and coordination, and to neutralize his opponents, such as Stalin, who obstructed the implementation of planning for selfish political reasons. The bloc never fully materialized due to the rapid deterioration of Lenin's health. But on his sick bed in the following months, the dying leader came to accept two of Trotsky's earlier conclusions: that Rabkrin, as it was constituted at the time, was a virtually useless institution; and that it made sense to grant greater powers to Gosplan.²⁴⁶ At the same time, as we shall see in the next chapter, in early 1923 Trotsky began to embrace many of Lenin's views regarding bureaucracy.

3.7 CONCLUSION

During the years 1917-1922 there was broad agreement within the Bolshevik Party that bureaucracy had not been laid to rest by the proletarian revolution as the Marxist classics had anticipated, but had continued to flourish under the dictatorship of the proletariat. However, there was little agreement on precisely how to define the problem. At one extreme the various leftist opposition groups described bureaucracy in terms closely related to the traditional Marxist analysis. They warned of the growing political alienation of the masses from excessively centralist and authoritarian economic, military, and political institutions; and they related this problem to the growing influence of hostile class elements. At the other extreme stood Trotsky—the ultimate incarnation of bureaucracy in the eyes of the oppositionists. Trotsky consistently rejected the analyses of the opposition groupings, and defined the problem instead as one of inefficiency. Between the two extremes Lenin articulated elements of both views.

In late 1921 Trotsky raised concerns about restrictions on party admission that suggested he was beginning to perceive the problem of bureaucracy in terms of political alienation. However, Trotsky's remarks in this regard represented only a brief anticipation of his later analysis of party bureaucratism. In fact, at the end of 1922 Trotsky's explicit conception of the problem of bureaucracy was not significantly different from the understanding he had articulated during the preceding years. Yet, Trotsky's struggle against bureaucratic inefficiency had brought him into conflict with the majority of the party leadership. In the following year this conflict would intensify, and Trotsky would begin to redefine the struggle as one between bureaucracy and workers' democracy.

¹ Marcel Liebman, *Leninism Under Lenin*, trans. Brian Pearce (London, Merlin Press, 1975), 218; Oskar Anweiler, *The Soviets: The Russian Workers, Peasants, and Soldiers Councils, 1905-1921*, trans. Ruth Hein (New York: Pantheon Books, 1974), 206, 220; Edward Hallett Carr, *Bolshevik Revolution: 1917-1923* (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1966), 1: 154-155; Victor Serge, *Year One of the Russian Revolution*, trans. and ed. Peter Sedgwick (Chicago: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1972), 95.

² Liebman, *Leninism Under Lenin*, 216-217, 326; Anweiler, *The Soviets*, 220-221; Serge, *Year One*, 95-96.

³ Lenin, *Collected Works* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1960-1970), 26:239.

⁴ Lenin, *Collected Works*, 27:133.

⁵ See Neil Harding, *Lenin's Political Thought: Theory and Practice in the Democratic and Socialist Revolutions*, vol. 2, *Theory and Practice in the Socialist Revolution* (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1983), 177, 183-186.

⁶ Lenin, *Collected Works*, 26:466.

⁷ Lenin, *Collected Works*, 27:126, 148.

⁸ Leon Trotsky, *How the Revolution Armed*, trans. Brian Pearce (London: New Park Publications, 1979-1981), 1: 39; Lev Trotskii, *Kak vooruzhalas revoliutsiia: na voennoi rabote* (Moskva: Vysshii voennyi revoliutsionnyi sovet, 1923-1925, fiche, Minneapolis, MN: East View Publications, [1991?]), 1:39.

⁹ Trotsky, *How the Revolution Armed*, 1:413; Trotskii, *Kak vooruzhalas' revoliutsiia*, 1:304. Note modification of the translation.

¹⁰ Trotsky, *How the Revolution Armed*, 1:132; Trotskii, *Kak vooruzhalas' revoliutsiia*, 1:105.

¹¹ Leon Trotsky, *Leon Trotsky Speaks*, ed. Sarah Lovell (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1972), 72.

¹² Leon Trotsky, *From October to Brest Litovsk* (New York: The Socialist Publication Society, 1919), 28-29.

¹³ On this point see Liebman, *Leninism Under Lenin*, 222-227.

¹⁴ See in particular, F. Engels, "Principles of Communism," in *The Communist Manifesto of Karl Marx and Frederick Engels*, Karl Marx and Frederick Engels (Calcutta: Radical Book Club, 1972), 334-335.

¹⁵ For Lenin's statements on this, see Harding, *Theory and Practice in the Socialist Revolution*, 199-200; Liebman, *Leninism Under Lenin*, 360-365.

¹⁶ This tendency was first noted by Rosa Luxemburg in 1918. See Rosa Luxemburg, "The Russian Revolution," in *Rosa Luxemburg Speaks*, Rosa Luxemburg, ed. Mary-Alice Waters (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1970), 367-395.

¹⁷ Lenin, *Collected Works*, 25:473; Lenin, *Collected Works*, 26:105-107.

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- ¹⁸ Lenin, *Collected Works*, 27:248-249.
- ¹⁹ T. H. Rigby, *Lenin's Government: Sovnarkom 1917-1922* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 62.
- ²⁰ Jeremy R. Azrael, *Managerial Power and Soviet Politics* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1966), 46.
- ²¹ Carr, *Bolshevik Revolution*, 2:186-187; Charles Bettelheim, *Class Struggles in the USSR*, vol. 1, *First Period: 1917-1923*, trans. Brian Pearce (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1976), 155-156.
- ²² Leon Trotsky, *Stalin: An Appraisal of the Man and His Influence*, ed. and trans. Charles Malamuth (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1941), 279.
- ²³ Carr, *Bolshevik Revolution*, 1:220-221; Liebman, *Leninism Under Lenin*, 229-230; Richard Sakwa, *Soviet Communists in Power: A Study of Moscow during the Civil War, 1918-1921* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1988), 174-175, 176 (describing the situation in Moscow).
- ²⁴ Quoted in Anweiler, *The Soviets*, 235.
- ²⁵ See Liebman, *Leninism Under Lenin*, 228.
- ²⁶ Carr, *Bolshevik Revolution* 1:144.
- ²⁷ *Ibid.*, 223; Liebman, *Leninism Under Lenin*, 229.
- ²⁸ Trotsky, *How the Revolution Armed*, 1:28-48.
- ²⁹ *Ibid.*, 47.
- ³⁰ Carr, *Bolshevik Revolution*, 2:78-79.
- ³¹ On War Communism, see: *ibid.*, 151-268; Maurice Dobb, *Soviet Economic Development Since 1917* (New York: International Publishers, 1966), 97-124; Silvana Malle, *The Economic Organization of War Communism, 1918-1921* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985; Alec Nove, *An Economic History of the U.S.S.R.* (Middlesex, England: Penguin Books, 1976), 59-78.
- ³² Lenin, *Collected Works*, 27:268, 269.
- ³³ Lenin, *Collected Works*, 30:456; Leon Trotsky, *Terrorism and Communism: A Reply to Karl Kautsky* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1972), 162.
- ³⁴ Serge, *Year One*, 356.
- ³⁵ Sakwa, *Soviet Communists in Power*, 192. According to Marcel Liebman, citing Pietsch, by the end of 1920 the total number of Soviet officials had reached at least 5,880,000. [Liebman, *Leninism Under Lenin*, 321, citing W. Pietsch, *Revolution und Staat: Institutionen als Träger der Macht in der Sowjetrußland (1917-1922)*, Cologne: Köln, 1969, 137.]
- ³⁶ Quoted in Liebman, *Leninism Under Lenin*, 321.
- ³⁷ Lenin, *Collected Works*, 27:266.
- ³⁸ Trotsky, *Terrorism and Communism*, 111.
- ³⁹ *Ibid.*, 143.
- ⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 170.
- ⁴¹ Robert V. Daniels, *The Conscience of the Revolution: Communist Opposition in Soviet Russia* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1960), 124, 129-130; Richard Day, *Leon Trotsky and the Politics of Economic Isolation* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1973), 35-39; Isaac Deutscher, *The Prophet Armed: Trotsky: 1879-1921* (New York: Vintage Books, 1965), 501-502, 507.
- ⁴² Lenin, *Collected Works*, 26:498. On this point, see Paul Le Blanc, *Lenin and the Revolutionary Party* (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press International, 1990), 297-298.
- ⁴³ Liebman, *Leninism Under Lenin*, 241.
- ⁴⁴ See *Ibid.*, 242-257.
- ⁴⁵ Trotsky, *Terrorism and Communism*, 107-108.
- ⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 109-110. See also Leon Trotsky, *The First Five Years of the Communist International* (New York: Monad Press, 1972), 2:121.
- ⁴⁷ Lenin, *Collected Works*, 29:183.
- ⁴⁸ Quoted in Carr, *Bolshevik Revolution*, 1:225.
- ⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 225, 227.
- ⁵⁰ Rigby, *Lenin's Government*, 184.
- ⁵¹ Carr, *Bolshevik Revolution*, 1:225; Rigby, *Lenin's Government*, 182.
- ⁵² Trotsky, *Terrorism and Communism*, 107.
- ⁵³ Rigby, *Lenin's Government*, 182-183.
- ⁵⁴ Quoted in Carr, *Bolshevik Revolution*, 1:236.

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- ⁵⁵ Ibid.
- ⁵⁶ Trotsky, *Terrorism and Communism*, 109. For similar statements by Zinoviev and Kamenev, see Liebman, *Leninism Under Lenin*, 280, and Hal Draper, *'The Dictatorship of the Proletariat' from Marx to Lenin* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1987), 140.
- ⁵⁷ Robert Service, *The Bolshevik Party in Revolution: A Study in Organizational Change, 1917-1923* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1979), 100-101, 121, 140, 147.
- ⁵⁸ Quoted in Carr, *Bolshevik Revolution*, 1:199-200. See also Service, *Bolshevik Party*, 101-102.
- ⁵⁹ Carr, *Bolshevik Revolution*, 1:200-201.
- ⁶⁰ Service, *Bolshevik Party*, 121-122, 127, 136, 140; Daniels, *Conscience*, 114.
- ⁶¹ On the trade-union debate see Daniels, *Conscience*, 129-136; Day, 37-43; Isaac Deutscher, *Soviet Trade Unions: Their Place in Soviet Labour Policy* (London: Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1950), 42-58; Harding, *Theory and Practice in the Socialist Revolution*, 256-274; Leonard Schapiro, *The Origin of the Communist Autocracy: Political Opposition in the Soviet State—First Phase, 1917-1922*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1977), 273-295; Robert Service, *Lenin: A Political Life*, vol. 3, *The Iron Ring* (London: Macmillan, 1995), 152-156.
- ⁶² See Paul Avrich, *Kronstadt 1921* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1970).
- ⁶³ On the early period of NEP, see: Carr, *Bolshevik Revolution*, 2:269-357; Dobb, *Soviet Economic Development*, 125-148; Nove, *Economic History*, 83-92.
- ⁶⁴ *Kommunisticheskaia Partiiia Sovetskogo Soiuz, Kommunisticheskaia Partiiia Sovetskogo Soiuz v rezoliutsiakh i resheniakh s"ezdov, konferentsii i plenumov TsK*, 8th ed. (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Politicheskoi Literatury, 1970), 2:189-195; Service, *Bolshevik Party*, 145.
- ⁶⁵ *Kommunisticheskaia Partiiia, Kommunisticheskaia Partiiia*, 2:206-218; Carr, *Bolshevik Revolution*, 1:209.
- ⁶⁶ Rigby, *Lenin's Government*, 173-176, 211.
- ⁶⁷ Service, *Bolshevik Party*, 136; Liebman, *Leninism Under Lenin*, 346-347; Isaac Deutscher, *The Prophet Unarmed: Trotsky: 1921-1929* (New York: Vintage Books, 1959), 5-7.
- ⁶⁸ Lenin, *Collected Works*, 33:65.
- ⁶⁹ *Desiatyi s"ezd RKP(b). Mart 1921 goda: Stenograficheskiy otchet* (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe Izdatel'stvo Politicheskoi Literatury, 1963), 351.
- ⁷⁰ Lenin, *Collected Works*, 33:282.
- ⁷¹ Deutscher, *Prophet Unarmed*, 16.
- ⁷² Service, *Bolshevik Party*, 163-165, 180-181; Daniels, *Conscience*, 159-165.
- ⁷³ Rigby, *Lenin's Government*, 207-208, 211-212; Service, *Bolshevik Party*, 178.
- ⁷⁴ Service, *Bolshevik Party*, 176-177; Rigby, *Lenin's Government*, 185, 212.
- ⁷⁵ Stephen F. Cohen, *Bukharin and the Bolshevik Revolution: A Political Biography, 1888-1938* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), 62-63.
- ⁷⁶ Quoted in Cohen, *Bukharin*, 75. For a similar remark by Osinskii, see Daniels, *Conscience*, 86.
- ⁷⁷ Robert V. Daniels, ed., *A Documentary History of Communism*, revised edition (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1984), 1:100.
- ⁷⁸ Daniels, *Conscience*, 85-86.
- ⁷⁹ Daniels, *Conscience*, 83, 86-87; Carmen Siriani, *Workers' Control and Socialist Democracy: The Soviet Experience* (London: Verso Editions, 1982), 143-149.
- ⁸⁰ For the reasons behind this decree, see Schapiro, *Origin*, 140-141.
- ⁸¹ On the Military Opposition, see Daniels, *Conscience*, 104-107; Schapiro, *Origin*, 235-252.
- ⁸² *Vos'moi s"ezd RKP(b). Mart 1919 goda: Protokoly* (Moscow, Gosudarstvennoe Izdatel'stvo Politicheskoi Literatury, 1959), 158.
- ⁸³ Daniels, *Documentary History*, 1:125.
- ⁸⁴ *Deviaty s"ezd RKP(b). Mart-April' 1920 goda: Protokoly* (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe Izdatel'stvo Politicheskoi Literatury, 1960), 49.
- ⁸⁵ Ibid., 51.
- ⁸⁶ Ibid., 115.
- ⁸⁷ Daniels, *Conscience*, 109-111, 114, 116; Schapiro, *Origin*, 223-224, 230; Service, *Bolshevik Party*, 108, 130.
- ⁸⁸ Daniels, *Conscience*, 125-129, 133; Schapiro, *Origin*, 221-223, 284-286.

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- ⁸⁹ Alexandra Kollontai, *Selected Writings of Alexandra Kollontai*, trans. Alix Holt (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1977), 191-192.
- ⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 159.
- ⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 190.
- ⁹² *Ibid.*, 169. See also 159, 163, 166, 167.
- ⁹³ *Ibid.*, 164.
- ⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 192.
- ⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 193-196.
- ⁹⁶ On the repression of the Democratic Centralists and Workers' Opposition, see Daniels, *Conscience*, 159-165; Schapiro, *Origin*, 325-337; Service, *Bolshevik Party*, 163-165, 181-182.
- ⁹⁷ Lenin, *Collected Works*, 27:274-275.
- ⁹⁸ Lenin, *Collected Works*, 29:109.
- ⁹⁹ Lenin, *Collected Works*, 29:182-183. See also Lenin, *Collected Works*, 29:32; Lenin, *Collected Works*, 33:428.
- ¹⁰⁰ Lenin, *Collected Works*, 31:421; Lenin, *Collected Works*, 29:179.
- ¹⁰¹ Lenin, *Collected Works*, 31:402.
- ¹⁰² Lenin, *Collected Works*, 33:428-429.
- ¹⁰³ Lenin, *Collected Works*, 33:288.
- ¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 31:421-422; V. I. Lenin, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii* (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe Izdatel'stvo Politicheskoi Literatury, 1958-1965), 42:32-33. Note modification of translation. See also Lenin, *Collected Works*, 31:435.
- ¹⁰⁵ Lenin, *Collected Works*, 33:288.
- ¹⁰⁶ Lenin, *Collected Works*, 26:409, 469.
- ¹⁰⁷ Lenin, *Collected Works*, 31:421. See also, for example, Lenin, *Collected Works*, 29:109, 178-179, 184; Lenin, *Collected Works*, 33:395, 428, 488.
- ¹⁰⁸ Lenin, *Collected Works*, 33:288.
- ¹⁰⁹ Lenin, *Collected Works*, 29:182. See also Lenin, *Collected Works*, 29:178-179, 265.
- ¹¹⁰ Lenin, *Collected Works*, 29:179-180. See also Lenin, *Collected Works*, 29:33, 265; Lenin, *Collected Works*, 30:351; Lenin, *Collected Works*, 33:442.
- ¹¹¹ Lenin, *Collected Works*, 29:183. See also Lenin, *Collected Works*, 31:425-426.
- ¹¹² For comments indicating it would take a long time before workers and peasants could replace the specialists, see, for example, Lenin, *Collected Works*, 29:183; Lenin, *Collected Works*, 33:429.
- ¹¹³ Lenin, *Collected Works*, 28:406.
- ¹¹⁴ Lenin, *Collected Works*, 30:351.
- ¹¹⁵ On the formation of Rabkrin, see Robert C. Tucker, *Stalin as Revolutionary, 1879-1929: A Study in History and Personality* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1973), 207-208; E. A. Rees, *State Control in Soviet Russia: The Rise and Fall of the Workers' and Peasants' Inspectorate, 1920-34* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1987), 12-24.
- ¹¹⁶ Lenin, *Collected Works*, 30:300.
- ¹¹⁷ Lenin, *Collected Works*, 31:434-435. On Rabkrin, see also Lenin, *Collected Works*, 30:327-328, 351-353, 414-416; Lenin, *Collected Works*, 31:434-435; Lenin, *Collected Works*, 32:191.
- ¹¹⁸ Lenin, *Collected Works*, 28:418-419, 428; Lenin, *Collected Works*, 30:328-329; Lenin, *Collected Works*, 33:429.
- ¹¹⁹ Lenin, *Collected Works*, 29:432.
- ¹²⁰ Lenin, *Collected Works*, 33:39-40.
- ¹²¹ See Harding, *Theory and Practice in the Socialist Revolution*, 259.
- ¹²² Lenin, *Collected Works*, 32:56, 37.
- ¹²³ Lenin, *Collected Works*, 32:44, 41, 34, 30.
- ¹²⁴ Lenin, *Collected Works*, 32:45.
- ¹²⁵ Lenin, *Collected Works*, 32:37.
- ¹²⁶ Lenin, *Collected Works*, 32:24-25.
- ¹²⁷ Lenin, *Collected Works*, 36:595.
- ¹²⁸ For accounts of the "Georgian affair," see Moshe Lewin, *Lenin's Last Struggle*, trans. A. M. Sheridan Smith (New York: Vintage Books, 1970), 43-103; Service, *Lenin*, vol. 3, 274-282; Jeremy Smith, "The Georgian Affair of 1922: Policy Failure, Personality Clash or Power Struggle?," *Europe-Asia Studies* 50, no. 3 (May, 1998): 519-544.
- ¹²⁹ Lenin, *Collected Works*, 36:606.
- ¹³⁰ Lenin, *Collected Works*, 36:595.

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- ¹³¹ Lenin, *Collected Works*, 36:606, 608.
- ¹³² Lenin, *Collected Works*, 36:596
- ¹³³ Lenin, *Collected Works*, 36:610.
- ¹³⁴ Lenin, *Collected Works*, 28:378-379.
- ¹³⁵ Lenin, *Collected Works*, 28:405-406.
- ¹³⁶ Lenin, *Collected Works*, 33:224.
- ¹³⁷ Lenin, *Collected Works*, 33:292-296.
- ¹³⁸ Lenin, *Collected Works*, 33:288.
- ¹³⁹ Lenin, *Collected Works*, 33:308.
- ¹⁴⁰ Lenin, *Collected Works*, 33:394.
- ¹⁴¹ Lenin, *Collected Works*, 33:224.
- ¹⁴² Lenin, *Collected Works*, 33:295.
- ¹⁴³ Lenin, *Collected Works*, 33:223.
- ¹⁴⁴ Lenin, *Collected Works*, 33:75, 225.
- ¹⁴⁵ Lenin, *Collected Works*, 33:306-308.
- ¹⁴⁶ Lenin, *Collected Works*, 33:336.
- ¹⁴⁷ Ibid.
- ¹⁴⁸ Lenin, *Collected Works*, 33:338. For other comments on the need to put “the right man in the right place,” see *ibid.*, 300, 304; Lenin, *Collected Works*, 36:566; Lenin, *Collected Works*, 45:498.
- ¹⁴⁹ Lenin, *Collected Works*, 33:295-296; Lenin, *Collected Works*, 36:562.
- ¹⁵⁰ Lenin, *Collected Works*, 33:340.
- ¹⁵¹ Lenin, *Collected Works*, 33:42.
- ¹⁵² Lenin, *Collected Works*, 33:337.
- ¹⁵³ Lenin, *Collected Works*, 33:492.
- ¹⁵⁴ Lenin, *Collected Works*, 33:307, 444, 463.
- ¹⁵⁵ Isaac Deutscher briefly described Trotsky’s remarks in February 1919 on the “bureaucratic” nature of the Military Opposition. Deutscher, *Prophet Armed*, 427-428.
- ¹⁵⁶ Leon Trotsky, *The Trotsky Papers, 1917-1922*, ed. Jan M. Meijer (The Hague: Mouton & Co., 1964, 1971), 1: 106/107-108/109.
- ¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 1: 328/329.
- ¹⁵⁸ Leon Trotsky, *How the Revolution Armed*, 1:223; Trotskii, *Kak vooruzhalas’ revoliutsiia* 1: 171. See also Trotsky, *How the Revolution Armed*, 1:201-202. For a description of the Military Opposition written by Trotsky years later, see Trotsky, *Stalin*, 297-298.
- ¹⁵⁹ Trotsky, *Trotsky Papers*, 1:108/109.
- ¹⁶⁰ Trotsky, *How the Revolution Armed*, 1:222-224; Trotskii, *Kak vooruzhalas’ revoliutsiia*, 1:170-172. Note modification of translation.
- ¹⁶¹ Trotsky, *Trotsky Papers*, 1:108/109; Trotsky, *How the Revolution Armed*, 1:223.
- ¹⁶² Trotsky, *How the Revolution Armed*, 1:222; Trotskii, *Kak vooruzhalas’ revoliutsiia*, 1:170-171. Note modification of translation.
- Trotsky's biographer, Isaac Deutscher, has observed that Trotsky's writings on the Military Opposition contain “in a nutshell . . . the leitmotif of Trotsky's later struggle against Stalin.” [Deutscher, *Prophet Armed*, 427-428.] The parallels certainly are striking. In both cases Stalin was perceived by Trotsky as the representative of a conservative, petty-bourgeois bureaucracy that threatened to derail the revolution in the pursuit of its own, narrow interests. But this is not to say that there was a direct continuity between Trotsky's views in the two struggles. The issues that separated Trotsky and Stalin in later debates were far deeper than Stalin's obstruction of policies that Trotsky perceived to be most efficient. Furthermore, it would be several years before Trotsky would view the problem of Soviet bureaucracy *primarily* in terms of a self-seeking layer of state and party officials. Also, to the extent that Trotsky continued to describe the problem of bureaucracy in these terms, at least until late 1922, his criticisms were not directed against Stalin.
- ¹⁶³ Trotsky, *Terrorism and Communism*, 162-163.
- ¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 164; Trotskii, *Osnovnye voprosy proletarskoi revoliutsii*, vol 12 of *Sochineniia* (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe Izdatel'stvo, 1923), 156.
- ¹⁶⁵ Deutscher, *Prophet Armed*, 492.

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- ¹⁶⁶ Lev Trotskii, *Khoziaistvennoe stroitel'stvo Sovetskoi Respubliki*, vol. 15 of *Sochineniia* (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe Izdatel'stvo, 1927), 113.
- ¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 410.
- ¹⁶⁸ Trotsky, *How the Revolution Armed*, 2:520.
- ¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 2:521; Trotskii, *Kak vooruzhala' revoliutsiia*, 2, bk. 1:367.
- ¹⁷⁰ Trotsky, *How the Revolution Armed*, 2:528; Trotskii, *Kak vooruzhalas' revoliutsiia*, 2, bk. 1:374.
- ¹⁷¹ Trotsky, *How the Revolution Armed*, 2:299; Trotskii, *Kak vooruzhalas' revoliutsiia*, 2, bk. 1 204-205.
- ¹⁷² Trotsky, *How the Revolution Armed*, 3:74.
- ¹⁷³ Trotsky, *How the Revolution Armed*, 3:76.
- ¹⁷⁴ Trotsky, *How the Revolution Armed*, 3:75-77; Trotskii, *Kak vooruzhalas' revoliutsiia*, 2, bk. 2:52-54.
- ¹⁷⁵ Trotsky, *Khoziaistvennoe stroitel'stvo Sovetskoi Respubliki*, 218.
- ¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 419-420.
- ¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 420.
- ¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 233.
- ¹⁷⁹ Trotsky, *How the Revolution Armed*, 4:13; Trotskii, *Khoziaistvennoe stroitel'stvo Sovetskoi Respubliki*, 248.
- ¹⁸⁰ See Trotsky, *How the Revolution Armed*, 4:22-25, 32-33, 74-81, 84-106.
- ¹⁸¹ Trotsky, *How the Revolution Armed*, 4:23-24.
- ¹⁸² *Ibid.*; Trotskii, *Kak vooruzhalas' revoliutsiia*, 3, bk. 1:16.
- ¹⁸³ Trotsky, *How the Revolution Armed*, 4:153; Trotskii, *Kak vooruzhalas' revoliutsiia*, 3, bk. 1:103. Note modification of translation.
- ¹⁸⁴ Trotsky, *How the Revolution Armed*, 2:513.
- ¹⁸⁵ Trotsky, *How the Revolution Armed*, 2:514; Trotskii, *Kak vooruzhalas' revoliutsiia*, 2, bk. 1:363.
- ¹⁸⁶ Trotsky, *How the Revolution Armed*, 2:70-73; Trotskii, *Kak vooruzhalas' revoliutsiia*, 2, bk. 1:54-55. Note modification of translation.
- ¹⁸⁷ Trotskii, *Khoziaistvennoe stroitel'stvo Sovetskoi Respubliki*, 96-97.
- ¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 97.
- ¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 39.
- ¹⁹⁰ Trotsky, *Trotsky Papers*, 2:56/57, 46/47. Note modification of translation. See also Trotskii, *Khoziaistvennoe stroitel'stvo Sovetskoi Respubliki*, 148-149.
- ¹⁹¹ Trotskii, *Khoziaistvennoe stroitel'stvo Sovetskoi Respubliki*, 146-147.
- ¹⁹² On the number of *glavki* and *tsembly*, see Thomas F. Remington, *Building Socialism in Bolshevik Russia: Ideology and Industrial Organization, 1917-1921* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1984), 68; Carr, *Bolshevik Revolution*, 2:182.
- ¹⁹³ Trotskii, *Khoziaistvennoe stroitel'stvo Sovetskoi Respubliki*, 217. Trotsky's first use of "glavkokratiia" appears to have been in a "conversation" recorded on March 23, 1920. [Trotskii, *Khoziaistvennoe stroitel'stvo Sovetskoi Respubliki*, 337.] In a speech of December 2, 1920 he took credit for coining the term. [Trotskii, *Khoziaistvennoe stroitel'stvo Sovetskoi Respubliki*, 415.] For Democratic Centralist criticisms of "glavism," see Carr, *Bolshevik Revolution*, 2:183-184; Malle, *Economic Organization*, 225; Thomas F. Remington, *Building Socialism in Bolshevik Russia: Ideology and Industrial Organization, 1917-1921* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1984), 63-74.
- ¹⁹⁴ Trotskii, *Khoziaistvennoe stroitel'stvo Sovetskoi Respubliki*, 147.
- ¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 217-218.
- ¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 221-222.
- ¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 105.
- ¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 105, 118, 215-217, 218, 416-417.
- ¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 416, 417.
- ²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 222.
- ²⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 222-223. See also *ibid.*, 412; Rees, *ibid.*, 29-30.
- ²⁰² Trotskii, *Khoziaistvennoe stroitel'stvo Sovetskoi Respubliki*, 223-224.
- ²⁰³ *Ibid.*, 225.
- ²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 119. See also, *ibid.*, 151, 226, 243.
- ²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 39.
- ²⁰⁶ Trotsky, *How the Revolution Armed* 3: 48-49.
- ²⁰⁷ Trotskii, *Khoziaistvennoe stroitel'stvo Sovetskoi Respubliki*, 151-152, 119.

- ²⁰⁸ Ibid., 40, 151.
- ²⁰⁹ Ibid., 220-221, 239-240.
- ²¹⁰ Ibid., 227-228.
- ²¹¹ See Trotsky's January 4 report on the Eighth Congress of Soviets, Trotskii, *Khoziaistvennoe stroitel'stvo Sovetskoi Respubliki*, 232-248, esp. 235.
- ²¹² *Resheniia partii i pravitel'stva po khoziaistvennym voprosam* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Politicheskoi Literatury, 1967), 1:192-193.
- ²¹³ Carr, *Bolshevik Revolution* 2: 373; Deutscher, *Prophet Unarmed*, 41.
- ²¹⁴ Dobb, *Soviet Economic Development*, 131-132; Nove, *Economic History*, 87-88; Carr, *Bolshevik Revolution* 2: 296-306.
- ²¹⁵ Leon Trotsky, *First Five Years*, 2:230; Trotskii, *Osnovnye voprosy proletarskoi revoliutsii*, 311.
- ²¹⁶ For a discussion of this retreat, see Carr, *Bolshevik Revolution* 2: 374-377.
- ²¹⁷ Trotsky, *First Five Years*, 2: 233.
- ²¹⁸ Trotsky, *Trotsky Papers*, 2: 450/451.
- ²¹⁹ Ibid., 578/579-582/583.
- ²²⁰ Ibid.
- ²²¹ Lenin, *Collected Works*, 33:138; also reproduced in Leon Trotsky, *The Trotsky Papers, 1917-1922*, ed. Jan. M. Meijer, vol. 2 1920-1922 (The Hague: Mouton, 1971), 648/649-650/651.
- ²²² Quoted in Alexander Pantsov, *The Bolsheviks and the Chinese Revolution, 1919-1927* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2000), 20-21.
- ²²³ Lenin, *Collected Works*, 42:369-370. See also Lenin, *Collected Works*, 33:254-255.
- ²²⁴ Pantsov, *Bolsheviks*, 21.
- ²²⁵ Lenin, *Collected Works* 33: 307.
- ²²⁶ Lenin, *Collected Works* 45: 730 (ft. 627); Rigby, *Lenin's Government*, *ibid.*, 208.
- ²²⁷ *Odinnadtsatyi s"ezd RKP(b), Mart-Aprel' 1922 goda: Stenograficheskii otchet* (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe Izdatel'stvo Politicheskoi Literatury, 1961), 133.
- ²²⁸ Ibid. Similarly, in his military report to the Eleventh Party Congress, Trotsky defined bureaucratism as "an approach which is not practical and concrete but formal: dealing not with the substance of a matter but with circulars and bits of paper." [Trotsky, *How the Revolution Armed* 4: 183.]
- ²²⁹ *Odinnadtsatyi s"ezd*, 133-134.
- ²³⁰ Hough and Fainsod, *How the Soviet Union*, 121.
- ²³¹ In a letter to the Politburo dated January 15, 1923, Trotsky explicitly argued that the constant referral of questions to the Secretariat, Orgburo, and Politburo was a consequence of the lack of a real planning and coordinating body for the economy. [Trotsky, *Trotsky Papers*, 2: 816/817.]
- ²³² Ibid., 730/731-732/733
- ²³³ Ibid., 734/735.
- ²³⁴ Ibid., 748/749. See also Ibid., 816/817.
- ²³⁵ Ibid., 732/733.
- ²³⁶ Ibid., 730/731.
- ²³⁷ Deutscher, *Prophet Unarmed*, 36-37.
- ²³⁸ Ibid., 48.
- ²³⁹ See Trotsky, *Trotsky Papers*, 2: 818/819-820/821
- ²⁴⁰ Trotsky later provided at least four separate accounts of this meeting, each differing from the others in some details. See Trotsky, *Trotsky Papers* 2: 818/819-820/821; Leon Trotsky, *The Stalin School of Falsification*, trans. John G. Wright (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1971), 73-74; Leon Trotsky, *My Life: An Attempt at an Autobiography* (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1970), 478-479; Trotsky, *Stalin*, 365. The version suggested here places greatest weight on the first two versions of this conversation reported by Trotsky (in *The Trotsky Papers* and *The Stalin School of Falsification*) and upon points that appear in multiple accounts.
- ²⁴¹ Trotsky, *Trotsky Papers*, 818/819. Trotsky, *Stalin School of Falsification*, 73; L. Trotskii, *Stalinskaia shkola fal'sifikatsii: popravki i dopolneniia k literature epigonov*, ed. P.V. Volobuev et al. (Berlin: Iz-vo "Granat," 1932; repr., Moscow: "Nauka," 1990), 85; Trotsky, *My Life*, 479; L. Trotskii, *Moia zhizn': opyt avtobiografii* (Moscow: "Panorama," 1991), 454-455.; Trotsky, *Stalin*, 365.
- ²⁴² Trotsky, *Trotsky Papers* 2: 820/821. See also Trotsky, *My Life*, 479.

²⁴³ Trotsky, *Stalin School of Falsification*, 73-74.; Trotskii, *Stalinskaia shkola*, 85; Trotsky, *My Life*, 479; Trotskii, *Moia zhizn*, 455; Trotsky, *Stalin*, 365.

²⁴⁴ Trotsky, *Stalin School of Falsification*, 74; Trotskii, *Stalinskaia shloka*, 86; See also Trotsky, *My Life*, 479; Trotsky, *Stalin*, 365.

²⁴⁵ Trotsky, *Stalin School of Falsification*, 74; See also Trotsky, *Trotsky Papers*, 2: 820/821; Trotsky, *Stalin*, 365. In *My Life* Trotsky says that Lenin asked Trotsky to think over the organizational details. [Trotsky, *My Life*, 479.]

²⁴⁶ Lenin, *Collected Works* 33: 481-496; Lenin, *Collected Works* 36: 593, 598-599.

4.0 FROM INEFFICIENCY TO POLITICAL ALIENATION

The year 1923 represented a watershed in the evolution of Trotsky's thinking on the question of Soviet bureaucracy. When Trotsky addressed the issue of bureaucracy in the first years after the revolution, he consistently defined the problem in terms of factors promoting inefficiency, particularly in state military and economic organs. In 1923 Trotsky began to comment upon manifestations of political alienation in Soviet political institutions, and to associate these features with the problem of bureaucracy. Although in subsequent years Trotsky's views on Soviet bureaucracy would continue to develop and change, his understanding that the fundamental problem was one of political alienation would remain constant.

This shift in Trotsky's focus brought him into line with the dominant tradition in Marxist analyses of bureaucracy. From the earliest political works of Marx and Engels, through the post-revolutionary writings of the various Bolshevik opposition groups, and of Lenin, the term *bureaucracy* was most commonly associated with what we have described as political alienation. Marxists writing within this tradition generally described two fundamental aspects to the problem: the tendency within class societies for political institutions to rise above the control of the masses, and the related tendency for political institutions to fall under the sway of powerful exploitative classes and to begin to represent those class interests. In 1923 Trotsky began to perceive both tendencies in the Soviet state and in the Communist Party.

A number of factors contributed to Trotsky's shift of analysis. These include Trotsky's own deepening political isolation, the influence of Lenin's views upon Trotsky's thinking, the treatment of the Georgian party leadership by Stalin and his supporters, and changes in the party

regime. However, a factor that was especially significant for Trotsky was the leadership majority's continued opposition to economic planning—that is, its resistance to measures that Trotsky saw as necessary to abolish the “glavkocratic” character of the Soviet economy. From this, Trotsky concluded that the bureaucratic inefficiency of the Soviet economic was deeply rooted in the alienation of the political leadership from the needs of Soviet workers and the goals of socialism.

The development of Trotsky's thinking on these questions in the period 1923-1925 occurred in three stages. In the first half of 1923 Trotsky first began to raise the issue of political alienation in both the state and party. During the New Course controversy in the fall and winter of 1923, he denounced political alienation in the party even more sharply. Finally, after the defeat of the 1923 Opposition, Trotsky continued to express some of the same themes while temporarily confining his remarks to the less controversial topics of inefficiency and bureaucratism in the state.

4.1 CONFLICTS WITHIN THE PARTY LEADERSHIP

The winter and spring of 1922-1923 were marked by widening differences within the party leadership around three main questions: economic policy, policy regarding the minority nationalities, and organizational reform of the central party institutions. While these issues brought Trotsky and Lenin closer together, they also contributed to the mounting tensions between Trotsky and the leadership majority, headed by the triumvirate of Zinoviev, Kamenev, and Stalin.

One major cleavage that appeared within the party leadership in this period involved broad differences in economic orientation. The New Economic Policy had been adopted in 1921 to achieve a number of goals. The Bolsheviks hoped first, that the partial restoration of free

enterprise would promote short-run economic revival; second, that elimination of forced requisitioning of grain would overcome the disaffection of the peasantry; and third, that the growing success of agriculture would subsidize the gradual expansion of industry and lay the basis for a socialist economy. By the winter of 1922-23, the first two of these goals were being met. The harvest of 1922 yielded as much as three-fourths of a normal pre-war crop, and the peasants seemed to be generally satisfied. However, industry lagged far behind agriculture, turning out only one-fourth of its pre-war output, and this industrial production was concentrated largely in light industry.¹ At this point disagreement arose within the party leadership over whether or not economic policies should be altered to accelerate the rate of industrial growth.

The majority of party leadership opposed any major change in policy that might endanger the *smychka* (link) between the proletariat and the peasantry. Consequently, they resisted all efforts to increase the peasant's tax burden. Furthermore, majority spokesmen such as Sokol'nikov, the Commissar of Finance, placed great emphasis upon stabilizing the currency to protect the peasants against inflation. To achieve this goal, the majority pursued conservative policies of financial orthodoxy: attempting to establish a gold-based ruble, allocating credits to industry primarily on the basis of short-run profitability, and encouraging grain exports in order to build up Soviet reserves of foreign currency. At the same time, majority leaders resisted an increase in state economic planning, for this sounded too suspiciously like a call for a return to the system of War Communism.²

However, within the upper ranks of the party leadership a minority, which included Trotsky, Iu. Piatakov (the vice president of VSNKh), and the economist E. A. Preobrazhenskii, began to express alarm about the slow tempo of industrial recovery.³ The minority insisted that a more rapid tempo of industrialization was necessary for balanced, short-run economic development, for strengthening the proletarian base of the Soviet regime, and for the ultimate attainment of socialism. In line with this, in late 1922 and early 1923 Trotsky began to call for a program of "primitive socialist accumulation," analogous to the early stages of capital accumulation described by Marx.⁴ Although Trotsky shared the view of the majority that it was

necessary to take steps to stabilize the currency, he saw this concern as subordinate to the need for more rapid industrialization. Thus, he proposed an increase in state subsidies to industry, and argued that these be granted, not on the basis of short-run profitability, but in view of long-term economic need.⁵

Trotsky suggested a number of different methods for obtaining the funds necessary for his industrialization program. In this regard he stressed the need for greater sacrifices on the part of the working class. At the Twelfth Party Congress he even went so far as to tell the Soviet proletariat that “there may be times when the state does not pay wages in full or only pays them by half, and you, the worker, will credit the state at the expense of your wages.”⁶ At the same time, Trotsky suggested using the proceeds from grain exports to purchase foreign industrial machinery. Finally, he asserted that large sums could be saved for reinvestment by reducing overhead expenses in existing industry and by concentrating industrial production in a smaller number of more efficient enterprises. In Trotsky’s view, the key to the implementation of all these recommendations was, once again, a greater emphasis on economic planning.⁷

Between the fall of 1922 and the spring of 1923, these differences provoked a number of clashes between Trotsky and the majority of the Politburo. The first conflict erupted in late 1922 around the question of the state monopoly of foreign trade. In an attempt to promote foreign trade, the October plenum of the Central Committee voted to free the import and export of various commodities from state control. Lenin and Trotsky had been absent from this meeting, but upon hearing of the decision, both vigorously protested this weakening of the state monopoly. Trotsky, viewing this problem as related to the question of central economic planning, used this opportunity to raise that issue again, arguing that Gosplan should be granted powers to regulate foreign trade. Although at this point Lenin still rejected Trotsky’s idea of strengthening Gosplan, he proposed that Trotsky assume the defense of their common position on the trade monopoly at the December plenum. By December 13, Lenin was able to congratulate Trotsky on their victory in overturning the October decision “without a single shot.” Soon afterwards—probably after his discussion with Trotsky about the bloc against

bureaucracy—Lenin came to accept, in part, Trotsky’s position on Gosplan, recommending that the party congress “on certain conditions invest the decisions of the State Planning Commission with legislative force.”⁸

While Trotsky’s and Lenin’s economic views were converging, in early 1923 Trotsky’s differences with the majority of the party leadership continued to widen. In January Stalin suggested the creation of a new supreme economic authority that would have included the Finance Committee, while excluding both VSNKh and Gosplan—the two institutions most likely to articulate the needs of industry. Trotsky succeeded in blocking this proposal, complaining in the discussion about this further confirmation of the “financial dictatorship,” and reasserting the need to strengthen industry and the powers of Gosplan.⁹ The following month Trotsky, as the head of a new committee on industrial policy, came up with a plan for extending credits to the industrial trusts. However, the committee majority—which ultimately included Stalin, Rykov, Sokol’nikov, Kamenev, and Dzerzhinskii—rejected Trotsky’s proposal. The final draft of the committee’s theses represented an uneasy compromise between the views of Trotsky and the majority.¹⁰

Despite his disagreements with the majority, Trotsky was permitted to deliver the report on industry to the Twelfth Party Congress in April. Again, Trotsky’s theme was the urgent need to devote greater resources to industry and greater attention to economic planning. The most noteworthy aspect of the address was Trotsky’s contention that more rapid industrialization was necessary in order to maintain the *smychka* with the peasantry. Trotsky explained that the slow development of industry, combined with the rapid revival of agriculture, had resulted in a dramatic increase in the prices of industrial goods and a decline in the prices of agricultural commodities. He illustrated the situation with a diagram in which the lines representing agricultural and industrial prices crossed in September 1922 and then steadily widened like a pair of scissors. Trotsky’s conclusion was that the “scissors crisis” threatened to deprive the peasants of the benefits of their surpluses. Unable to purchase the goods they needed from the state, the peasants would turn more and more to local village industry, and away from the cities.¹¹

The informed observer easily could have discerned major differences between Trotsky's perspective and that of the leadership majority. Zinoviev, Sokol'nikov, and Kamenev strongly insisted upon the priority of peasant agriculture under NEP, attacked the notion of "the dictatorship of industry," and poked fun at comrades who had been obsessed with planning under War Communism.¹² Nevertheless, majority spokesmen did not directly challenge Trotsky's conclusions, and the congress adopted the theses on industry.

The second issue that divided the party leadership in early 1923 was the nationalities question. By early 1923 Lenin had come to believe that the integration of the national republics into the Soviet Union had to be slowed down and perhaps reversed out of consideration for the sensibilities of those nations which had been systematically repressed under the tsars. At the same time, Lenin also concluded that the Great Russian chauvinism evident in the actions of Stalin, Ordzhonikidze, and Dzerzhinskii reflected the attitudes of the "truly Russian bureaucrat." In a letter to the party congress Lenin singled out these individuals in particular for punishment.¹³

On March 5, 1923, with his health failing rapidly, Lenin turned to Trotsky with the request that he take upon himself the defense of the Georgian case "now under 'persecution' by Stalin and Dzerzhinsky."¹⁴ At the February plenum of the Central Committee Trotsky had expressed serious reservations about Stalin's handling of the Georgian conflict. Now however, citing reasons of ill health, Trotsky declined to take on responsibility for defense of the Georgians. Parenthetically, it is worth noting that this was the first of a series of mysterious illnesses that continued to afflict Trotsky for the remainder of his life. Whatever the source of these illnesses, they seemed to incapacitate him at the most crucial turning points in his political activity. As Trotsky later noted in his autobiography, "My high temperature paralyzed me at the most critical moments, and acted as my opponents' most steadfast ally."¹⁵

Nevertheless, Trotsky asked to review the relevant documents, and promised to look into the question if his health permitted.¹⁶ Soon afterwards, according to his later account, Trotsky presented Kamenev with a series of demands for Stalin. Trotsky did not support Lenin's proposal for the exemplary punishment of Stalin, Ordzhonikidze, and Dzerzhinskii. However, he insisted

upon “a radical change in the policy on the national question” and “a discontinuance of persecutions of the Georgian opponents of Stalin,” as well as a “discontinuance of the administrative oppression of the party, a firmer policy in matters of industrialization, and an honest cooperation in the highest centres.” He further demanded the right to make amendments to Stalin’s report on the national question to the party congress. Finally, Trotsky required that Kamenev, who was on his way to Georgia, “arrange a complete reversal of the policy toward Lenin’s Georgian supporters on the national question.”¹⁷

Fearing an open confrontation with Lenin and Trotsky, Stalin accepted Trotsky’s terms. Meanwhile, however, Lenin’s health continued to deteriorate and a few days after his communication with Trotsky, Lenin suffered another stroke that ended his political career. With Lenin out of the way, Stalin’s confidence returned. At the Georgian party conference in mid-March, the Georgian nationalists were pushed further back by Stalin’s supporters.¹⁸

In the following weeks Trotsky continued to press for a change in policy regarding the national question. On March 19 he wrote an article for *Pravda* denouncing Great Russian chauvinism; in the Central Committee session of March 22 he demanded the recall of Ordzhonikidze from Georgia, attacked the idea of a Transcaucasian Federation, and endorsed the position of the Georgian Central Committee; and, in a speech delivered in Kharkov on April 5, he again took up the defense of the oppressed nationalities.¹⁹ Still, Trotsky did not make public Lenin’s last article on the Georgian situation. The day before the congress convened, Kamenev, learning of Lenin’s article, urged the Central Committee to publish it. Trotsky attempted to justify his silence about the article on the grounds that he did not know what Lenin intended to do with it, and he left the question of publication up to the Central Committee. Subsequently, the presidium of the Twelfth Party Congress passed a motion to withhold the article.²⁰

At the Twelfth Party Congress Stalin delivered the report on the national question amended in accordance with Trotsky’s demands. However, Stalin also defended his own policies in Georgia, and claimed that Georgian nationalism against other oppressed nationalities was on the offensive. The debate on this report was long and heated, but Trotsky did not participate.²¹

Meanwhile, in the early months of 1923 the leadership also was involved in disputes over proposals made by Lenin to reform the central institutions of the state and the party. In a series of notes and articles dictated from his sick bed between late December 1922 and early March 1923, Lenin outlined two sets of recommendations for combating state and party bureaucratism. Both plans contained provisions designed to improve the efficiency of state and party bodies, increase proletarian and peasant representation in the central party institutions, and reduce the power of Stalin.

Lenin advanced his first set of proposals in a letter to the forthcoming party congress, written between late December 1922 and early January 1923. One section of this letter, later called Lenin's "Testament," is best known for its characterizations of a number of leading Bolsheviks. There, Lenin praised Trotsky as "perhaps the most capable man in the present C.C.," while criticizing him for his "excessive self-assurance" and "excessive preoccupation with the purely administrative side of the work." Regarding Stalin, Lenin noted his "unlimited authority" as General Secretary of the party, and questioned "whether he will always be capable of using that authority with sufficient caution." Later, in a post-script evidently inspired by Stalin's handling of the Georgian affair, Lenin described Stalin as "too rude" and recommended that he be removed as General Secretary and replaced by someone "more tolerant, more loyal, more polite and considerate to the comrades, less capricious, etc."²²

The same letter also contained a proposal to increase the size of the Central Committee from 27 full members and 19 candidates to between 50 and 100 members. The new members of the Central Committee were to be "mainly workers of a lower stratum than those promoted in the last five years to work in Soviet bodies." For a number of years they were to go through a course in state management under the guidance of the most qualified members of the Workers' and Peasants' Inspectorate. Rabkrin itself was to be demoted to "an 'appendage' or, in certain conditions, . . . an assistant to these members of the C.C." Lenin argued that the implementation of this plan would have three beneficial effects. First, it would raise the prestige of the Central Committee—apparently in relation to the three central leadership bodies of the party: the

Politburo, the Organizational Bureau, and the Secretariat. Second, it would contribute to the stability of the party threatened by potential antagonism between the proletariat and the peasantry and by “conflicts between small sections of the C.C.” Third, the reform of the Central Committee would “help the workers improve the machinery of the state.”²³

Subsequently, Lenin continued to develop his proposals for institutional reorganization in two articles: “How We Should Reorganize the Workers’ and Peasants’ Inspection,” and “Better Fewer, But Better,” written in late January and early March, respectively. The ideas contained in these articles were clearly based upon the plan Lenin had discussed with Trotsky in December to form a special commission attached to the Central Committee that would attempt to improve the selection, training, and promotion of officials, and encourage more correct organizational relationships in general. As Lenin envisioned it, this commission was to be composed of two reorganized institutions: the Central Control Commission and Rabkrin. The five-member CCC, which had been set up to combat bureaucracy in the party, was to be vastly expanded by the addition of between 75 and 100 workers and peasants. It was to meet with the Central Committee once every two months in a supreme party conference—partly in order to bring the question of bureaucratism into all important party decisions. Specific activities of the new Central Control Commission were to include attending all Politburo meetings and examining all papers and documents pertaining to its work, theoretical study of scientific methods of organizing labor, and taking part in supervising and improving the state machinery.²⁴

This new Central Control Commission was to be “amalgamated” to a refurbished Rabkrin, the organ established to fight bureaucracy in the state. In what appears at least partially to have been a swipe at Stalin, the Peoples’ Commissar of the Workers’ and Peasants’ Inspectorate from 1919-1922, Lenin berated the extreme disorganization of Rabkrin:

Let us state frankly that the Peoples’ Commissariat of the Workers’ and Peasants’ Inspection does not at present enjoy the slightest authority. Everybody knows that no other institutions are worse organised than those of our Workers’ and Peasants’ Inspection, and

that under present conditions nothing can be expected from this Peoples' Commissariat.²⁵

Lenin recommended cutting the staff of Rabkrin from over twelve thousand members to between 300 and 400 officials who would be screened for reliability and tested for their knowledge of the Soviet state apparatus and organizational methods. The tasks of Rabkrin were to include combining and coordinating a number of higher institutions for the organization of labor and rebuilding one model commissariat. The Peoples' Commissar and the collegium of Rabkrin were to continue to direct the staff of Rabkrin, but would also assume the leadership of the new CCC.²⁶ One important new idea in these proposals was the amalgamation of a state institution with a party organ. As in the case of Lenin's proposal to expand the Central Committee, this innovation appears to have arisen from Lenin's recognition of the need to involve higher party circles in any effort to reform the state apparatus.

These recommendations met with mixed reactions within the Politburo. Although Lenin's evaluations of his leading comrades and his proposal to demote Stalin were not disclosed to the party leaders immediately, a section of Lenin's notes on the need to expand and proletarianize the Central Committee was forwarded to Stalin on the day it was written.²⁷ Stalin, perhaps seeing the potential for strengthening his base in an enlarged CC, immediately backed the idea of the expansion. On January 29, his Secretariat delivered to the Central Committee a series of proposed amendments to the party statutes that would increase the size of that committee to 50 full members. However, the "workers" to be added to the Central Committee were to consist of "directors, leaders of oblast organizations, the most authoritative members of the national Communist parties, etc." The power of the Central Committee was to be enhanced by requiring that the Politburo refer to it "especially important political questions."²⁸ Trotsky rejected Lenin's proposal for the Central Committee as interpreted by Stalin, arguing that it would disrupt efficient decision making by the CC and that it would in fact do little to proletarianize that body. At a meeting of the Central Committee on February 22 he explained,

The Central Committee must retain its strict form and capacity for quick decisions. Therefore, its further broadening

makes no sense. It would introduce into the Central Committee only a certain additional number of people of the center (primarily “general-governors”), thus it would do very little to improve the connection with the masses. Meanwhile, the broadening of the composition of the Central Committee and the establishment of new, more complicated relations between the Politburo and the plenum threaten to cause great damage to the accuracy and correctness of the work of the Central Committee.²⁹

At the same time, Trotsky and Stalin also disagreed over Lenin’s suggestion to enlarge the Central Control Commission and amalgamate it with a reformed Rabkrin. However, on this question their positions were reversed. Stalin initially opposed the idea. No doubt he felt seriously compromised by Lenin’s attacks on Rabkrin, and resisted the dismantling of that massive organization that he had constructed between 1919 and 1922. The majority of the Politburo, including Stalin, attempted to prevent the publication of “Better Fewer, But Better” in which the plan was discussed; and Stalin’s supporter V. V. Kuibyshev even suggested printing a dummy copy of *Pravda* to deceive Lenin.³⁰ Trotsky, on the other hand, fully endorsed Lenin’s suggestions, the broad outlines of which he had agreed upon in December.³¹

Ultimately, the Twelfth Party Congress adopted modified versions of both sets of Lenin’s organizational proposals. However, the new members of both the expanded Central Committee and the Central Control Commission were chosen, contrary to Lenin’s intent, from the ranks of the party officialdom, not from the proletariat and peasantry. Furthermore, Lenin’s idea to transform the combined CC and CCC into a supreme party conference that would oversee the work of the central party organs was dropped. The most important consequence of the organizational reforms was to strengthen Stalin, for most of the new members of both the Central Committee and the Central Control Commission were his supporters. Ironically, V. V. Kuibyshev who had proposed printing the dummy copy of *Pravda*, was chosen to chair the Central Control Commission.³²

During this period discussions about bureaucratism were not confined to the leading circles of the party. In particular, two small opposition groups on the periphery of the party were especially vocal in raising this issue. The first was an offshoot of the Workers’ Opposition called

the “Workers’ Group of the Russian Communist Party,” which was founded by the worker Gabriel Miasnikov. After the Tenth Party Congress Miasnikov began to agitate for “freedom of the press for monarchists to anarchists inclusive,” and for this was expelled from the party in 1922. In the following months he continued his political activities underground, forming the Workers’ Group. In early 1923 the Workers’ Group, like the Workers’ Opposition before it, demanded an end to the use of specialists and to managerial authority, the implementation of democratic administration of industry through the unions, and the abandonment of NEP—which it claimed stood for the “New Exploitation of the Proletariat.” It argued that the revolution had degenerated into rule “by a bunch of intellectuals” and called for a new movement of workers against bureaucratic party rule.³³

The second group was known as the “Workers’ Truth.” Founded in the fall of 1921, the Workers’ Truth was largely an organization of intellectuals who drew their ideas from the former Bolshevik leader, A. A. Bogdanov. This group argued that the Soviet Republic had become a “state capitalist” system dominated by a new bourgeoisie composed of NEPmen (the capitalist traders and speculators who flourished under the New Economic Policy), and party, soviet, and trade-union bureaucrats. Furthermore, it asserted that the Communist Party itself was now nothing more than “the party of the organizer intelligentsia.” The Workers’ Truth advocated the formation of a new “Workers’ Party” that would fight for democratic rights and the interests of the proletariat.³⁴

At the Twelfth Party Congress no one admitted supporting either the Workers’ Truth or the Workers’ Group, but the criticisms of these groups were echoed in milder terms by several of the delegates. The two central issues in this regard were the suppression of free speech within the party and the practice of appointing local party secretaries by the Secretariat. Vladimir Kosior protested the fact that many party members were excluded from party and state work or were transferred to different parts of the country simply because they had disagreed with the Central Committee. He further urged the repeal of the 1921 resolution banning party factions. L. A. Lutovinov denounced the growing tendency to view the Politburo as an “infallible pope,” and to

treat every practical criticism of the party as a manifestation of Menshevism. According to Lutovinov, it was the suppression of free speech that was responsible for the formation of oppositions such as the Workers' Truth and Workers' Group. Preobrazhenskii complained that 30 percent of all the secretaries of provincial committees had been "recommended" by the Central Committee.³⁵ In his response to the discussion, Stalin insisted that "never in the past six years has the Central Committee prepared for a congress so democratically as it prepared for this one." Nevertheless, he noted that freedom of discussion of "all questions of war and peace" was necessarily limited by the fact that "we are surrounded by enemies."³⁶ Despite his growing concerns about the erosion of party democracy, Trotsky said nothing during this discussion of Stalin's organizational report.³⁷

A question that has aroused considerable speculation by scholars of this period is why Trotsky failed to attack the leadership majority openly at the Twelfth Party Congress on the issues of the national question and party regime. This question is particularly significant in light of Trotsky's own later estimation that, "if I had come forward on the eve of the twelfth congress in the spirit of a 'block of Lenin and Trotsky against the Stalin bureaucracy, I should have been victorious even if Lenin had taken no part in the struggle."³⁸ It is likely that a number of factors were involved. Trotsky later explained, quite plausibly, that he had feared independent action on his part would be interpreted as a personal bid for power, and that he had still hoped Lenin would recover sufficiently to lead the struggle himself.³⁹ Others have attributed Trotsky's silence to "a lapse in political will power," a lack of "political sense and acumen," or Trotsky's belief that he was still bound by his agreement with Stalin on the Georgian question.⁴⁰ Finally, it has also been suggested by Isaac Deutscher that Trotsky was intensely preoccupied with economic policy, and that he saw this as the "key to all other problems."⁴¹ This last explanation seems to be supported by Trotsky's analysis of bureaucracy during this period; for, to a large degree, this analysis continued to revolve around his understanding of the economic challenges confronting the Soviet Republic.

4.2 INEFFICIENCY AND POLITICAL ALIENATION

In the first few years after the revolution Trotsky defined the problem of bureaucracy in terms of a variety of factors that contributed to the inefficiency of the Soviet military and economic institutions. At times, he characterized as “bureaucrats” those individuals who obstructed policies out of concern for their own power and prestige. In other speeches and writings he criticized Soviet officials for “bureaucratic” tendencies that included apathy, excessive formalism, and organizational incompetence. Finally, and most importantly, he attacked the inefficiency that he saw embodied in the very structure of Soviet economic institutions.

Trotsky reiterated a number of these views, and especially his critique of structural economic inefficiency, in early 1923. In fact, aspects of Trotsky’s analysis of *glavkokratiia* were scattered throughout his statements on bureaucracy in this period. However, at this point major new themes also began to appear in his speeches and writings. To a greater degree than ever before Trotsky began to speak of problems of bureaucracy within the party as well as the state. At the same time, he began to associate the problem of Soviet bureaucracy with political alienation. Specifically, he denounced various attitudes and modes of behavior prevalent within the state apparatus that betrayed a bureaucratic indifference to the needs and concerns of the masses. Even more significantly, he noted a conservative bias in Soviet policy that reflected and encouraged state and party responsiveness to alien class pressures. It is likely that a number of factors were responsible for the emergence of these new themes in Trotsky’s statements on bureaucracy. However, to a large degree they represented Trotsky’s attempt to account for continuing and deepening differences between his views and those of the majority leadership over questions of policy.

In early 1923 Trotsky continued to address problems of structural economic inefficiency in the Soviet economy closely related to the phenomenon of *glavkokratiia* under War Communism. For Trotsky, the system of *glavkokratiia* had involved the excessive centralism of the *glavki* in relation to local economic institutions and enterprises, and the inadequate degree of coordination between the separate *glavki*. During the first two years of the New Economic Policy Trotsky discovered related problems in the structure and operation of the state trusts. Just before and again at the Twelfth Party Congress, Trotsky returned to the theme of the “glavkokratic” character of the state-controlled sector of the economy under NEP. At the Twelfth Party Congress he explained that there were two basic flaws in the organization of the state trusts: they dominated the individual enterprises so completely that they crushed all independence and initiative; and each operated too independently in relation to the state in general and VSNKh in particular.⁴² In Trotsky’s view, the trusts inevitably had assumed a “bureaucratic [*biurokraticheskii*]” and “red-tapist [*kantseliarskii*]” character, for they had been “created by the methods of War Communism, that is, by methods of central *glavkokratic* prediction and direction from above.”⁴³

Once again, Trotsky proposed a reorganization of the trusts along the lines of his earlier proposals for reforming the *glavki*. The task, he asserted, consisted “in establishing the necessary balance between the state, the trust and the factory.”⁴⁴ In part, this involved a degree of decentralization of economic authority, granting greater autonomy to the economic oblasts and national republics and to individual enterprises. Trotsky argued that “a factory has to be able to point out to the trust that it is advantageous to it to act just so and not otherwise or we will have in the trust the old *glavkokratiia*, only made up to correspond to the conditions of the New Economic Policy.”⁴⁵ The other aspect of Trotsky’s solution was to begin to coordinate the entire

economy by means of a central economic plan. In his Kharkov speech of April 5 Trotsky asserted, “The policy of ‘from one case to the next,’ the practice of improvisation, economic guerilla tactics, amateurism, must more and more, under the staunch leadership of the party, yield place to planning methods and the principle of planning.”⁴⁶ Most importantly, he again explained at the Twelfth Party Congress, this involved enhancing the powers of Gosplan.⁴⁷ In Trotsky’s view a stronger Gosplan would not only improve the efficient coordination of the trusts; it would also help in combating the tendency to create “all sorts of temporary and accidental commissions: investigating, directing, verifying, preparatory, etc.”⁴⁸ He explicitly rejected the notion that an ideal plan could be created overnight, for such a course could only lead back to the economic crises of War Communism and the “comprehensive economic constipation” of *glavkokratiia*. Rather, the extension of planning was to be achieved gradually, and only on the basis of accumulated experience.⁴⁹

However, while Trotsky continued to view the problem of bureaucracy at least partially as one of economic inefficiency, in early 1923 he began for the first time to describe the problem of Soviet bureaucracy in terms of political alienation. A number of factors seem to have contributed to this change. Perhaps one of these was Trotsky’s own deepening sense of isolation from the majority of the party leadership. Throughout his career, Trotsky consistently identified his personal fate with that of the revolution. Now, as he became increasingly alienated from the centers of power, Trotsky became more and more aware of manifestations of political alienation he previously had been inclined to overlook. Also, it is clear that Lenin’s last writings had a major impact upon Trotsky’s perception of the problem of bureaucracy in the Soviet state. The previous December Trotsky had accepted Lenin’s offer to form a bloc against bureaucracy, and it appears that the formation of this alliance inspired Trotsky to reconsider and to embrace many of

Lenin's views. However, perhaps even more important to the evolution of Trotsky's thinking were policy developments that suggested to Trotsky the growth of political alienation in the state and party. One of these was the arrogant treatment of the Georgian Central Committee by Stalin and his supporters. Even more significant was the continuing resistance of the majority leadership to the economic planning that Trotsky saw as vital for industrial development. From this, Trotsky concluded that the problem of bureaucracy was far deeper than inefficiency in the organization of the economy; it involved the factors that were responsible for this fundamentally mistaken economic orientation.

Trotsky's most important comments on state bureaucratism during this period appeared in an article written for *Pravda* on April 3 and a speech delivered at a party conference in Kharkov on April 5. In both, Trotsky based his remarks upon Lenin's recently published statements on bureaucracy. In Kharkov Trotsky defined the problem as one in which the party, during the first five years of the revolution, had constructed "a state machine which begins with a young, selflessly devoted but quite inexperienced Communist, goes on through an indifferent office clerk, and ends with a gray-haired expert who sometimes, under irreproachable forms, engages in sabotage." That is, the party had "created this clumsy, creaking machine which to a considerable degree is not 'ours.'"⁵⁰ In these passages, essentially two different notions of bureaucracy were implied.

One problem, once again, was the general inefficiency of the Soviet state apparatus. Thus, in his Kharkov speech Trotsky characterized the state machine as "wretchedly bad," and denounced its low "quality."⁵¹ Similarly, in his *Pravda* article Trotsky complained,

If we could take an impression on a sensitive plate of the manners, replies, explanations, orders and signatures of all the cells of the bureaucratic organism, be it only in Moscow for a single day, the

result obtained would be one of extraordinary confusion. And it is worse in the provinces.⁵²

However, in both his Kharkov speech and his *Pravda* article Trotsky also was referring to another concern: the problem of political alienation, involving the growing separation of the state from needs of the masses and the goals of socialism.⁵³ As Trotsky described it, this alienation had taken a variety of forms, ranging from a lack of interest on the part of bureaucrats in serving working people, to manifestations of rudeness and Great Russian chauvinism by state officials, to acts of conscious sabotage by specialists, to conservative distortions of economic policy.

At its most basic level the problem was that the state officials often demonstrated a “complete indifference to the living human being and his living work” and a “heartless formality.”⁵⁴ When Trotsky previously had criticized state officials for their apathy and excessive formalism, these had been presented as isolated cases of the failure of state officials to fulfill their assigned tasks. Now, he portrayed bureaucratic indifference and formalism as widespread phenomena. He observed that “a Soviet official ought to behave attentively and respectfully to an old, illiterate peasant woman who has come into a big, high-ceilinged hall and gazes around her and doesn’t know before which inkstand to beat her forehead on the ground.” Often, however, this was not what happened: “There sits our red-tapist, directing her with the tip of his finger to number so-and-so, and she hesitates, turning this way and that, in front of number so-and-so, utterly helpless, and leaves her office without achieving anything.” Trotsky acknowledged that this was not a completely balanced description of the behavior of state officials, but he asserted that even if “it is only one-third true to life then there is a frightful abyss between the state machine and the working masses.”⁵⁵

Closely related to this indifference was the “rudeness” of the average Soviet official. Trotsky noted that, even in the “civilized” capitalist democracies of the West, the state

bureaucracy raises “itself above the people as a closely united professional caste” and “treats the workman and peasant arrogantly.” However, in the Soviet Union the problem was even more blatant, for “with us, civility, as a general rule, does not exist.”⁵⁶ It is possible that in his attack upon the rudeness of the state apparatus, Trotsky had in mind Lenin’s recent criticisms of “Orjonikidze’s rudeness and the connivance of Stalin and Dzerzhinsky” in the Georgian affair.⁵⁷ In another article written at the end of April, Trotsky described the state apparatus as deeply infected with great power chauvinism: “In the Soviet administrative machine, including also the military machine, tendencies of this kind [i.e., “Great Power” attitudes] are powerful to an extreme degree—and not only among former generals.”⁵⁸

Beyond that, Trotsky noted more extreme symptoms of the alienation of the state from the aims of socialism. One was the “conscious sabotage” carried out by “gray-haired experts” within the state apparatus.⁵⁹ Even more worrisome for Trotsky was the distortion of Soviet economic policies under the pressure of private capital. Thus, in his April 5 speech in Kharkov Trotsky spoke of “the market relations which engender of themselves currents of centrifugal force that can distract and rob the state machine in the direction of the interests of private capital, wedge the NEP bourgeoisie into it with their interests and ideas, plunder state industry, turning it inconspicuously into the channels of private accumulation.”⁶⁰

In his attempts to account for the causes of both state inefficiency and the alienation of the Soviet state from the masses, Trotsky borrowed heavily from Lenin. Lenin had suggested three sources of bureaucratism in his last writings: the low level of Soviet culture, the difficulties of constructing the Soviet state in the midst of revolutionary turbulence, and the fact that a large part of the administrative apparatus had been inherited from the tsarist state.⁶¹ Trotsky cited all

three of these factors as “principles that maintain and nourish bureaucratism [*biurokratizm*]” in his *Pravda* article of April 3:

Foremost among them, of course, is our lack of culture, backwardness, and illiteracy. The general muddle resulting from a state machinery in continuous process of reconstruction, inevitable during a revolutionary epoch, is in itself the cause of much superfluous friction, which makes up an important part of bureaucratism. It is the heterogeneity of class in the Soviet apparatus, and in particular the presence of aristocratic, bourgeois, and Counsellor of State [i.e., tsarist state official] practices that is responsible for the more repulsive of its forms.⁶²

Two days later, in his Kharkov address, Trotsky offered a similar explanation of the growth of state bureaucratism.⁶³ Trotsky did not explicitly attempt to sort out which of these factors had produced which particular form of state bureaucratism. However, it seems he viewed low culture and the difficulties of state construction as mainly responsible for state inefficiency, and he believed that the employment of aristocratic and bourgeois specialists—itsself necessitated by the low culture of the masses—was the most important source of the alienation of the state from the masses. Although in past years Trotsky had defended the bourgeois experts repeatedly against charges of bureaucratism, now—perhaps because he feared the *spetsy* would ally themselves with the “NEP bourgeoisie”—Trotsky began to take these charges more seriously. He approvingly paraphrased Lenin’s last observations on the excessive power of the bourgeois specialists: “Vladimir Ilyich writes about our state machine that it is neither more nor less than very similar to the czarist state machine, anointed, as they say, colored in the Soviet style, but if you examine it, it is the same old bureaucratic machine.”⁶⁴

However, even more significant as corrupting influences were the anonymous “market relations” of NEP that were exerting pressures upon the state from without, and the members of the “NEP bourgeoisie” who had infiltrated the state machinery. Again, Trotsky’s concern was

that these might divert Soviet policy, distracting and robbing “the state machine in the direction of the interests of private capital.”⁶⁵ Ultimately, this raised the prospect that the Soviet state might come to represent bourgeois interests. In early 1923, however, that seemed only a distant prospect. At this point Trotsky’s greater concern was that all of these different forms of political alienation could disrupt the *smychka* between the workers’ state and the peasantry, or between Russia and the workers and peasants of the non-Russian republics. Trotsky saw the alliance with the entire Soviet peasantry as threatened by the formalism and indifference of the typical state official, and even more by the mistaken economic policies that were provoking the scissors crisis. In the event of such a rupture, the peasantry could “cease to be led by the proletariat and fall under the leadership of the bourgeoisie.”⁶⁶ In the non-Russian republics the threat was even greater, for there Great Russian chauvinism could provoke the rise of national opposition movements, uniting the “bourgeoisie with the toilers, wholly directed against the revolution.”⁶⁷ In either case, Trotsky warned, the outcome of the ensuing civil war “would be doubtful for us.”⁶⁸

In his proposals to reduce state bureaucratism, Trotsky dissociated himself from the more extreme positions of such groups as the Workers’ Truth and the Workers’ Group. Trotsky’s view of state bureaucratism at this time was of a state that was defective in many respects but not, as these groups thought, totally alien to the goals of socialism. Thus, Trotsky could not accept their calls for a new revolution.⁶⁹ Nor could he accept the view articulated in an anonymous opposition pamphlet circulated on the eve of the party congress that called for the liquidation of the party’s leading role in the state. “If there is one question which basically not only does not require revision but does not admit the thought of revision,” Trotsky insisted, “it is the question of the dictatorship of the party, and its leadership in all spheres of our work.” In Trotsky’s

opinion, any party member who challenged this should be “unanimously dumped by all of us on the other side of the barricade [i.e., expelled].”⁷⁰

Instead, in a set of proposals that combined Lenin’s recommendations with his own earlier ideas, Trotsky called for sweeping reforms of the state apparatus. From Lenin, Trotsky took the idea that the principal institution for carrying out this work was a strengthened Central Control Commission amalgamated with a reformed Rabkrin:

Through what agency [should the state be reformed]? Through that which erected it, through the party. And for this party too we need a fresh, improved organ for sounding this machine, a probe which is not only moral but also political and practical—not on the plane of formal state inspection, which has already shown its complete bankruptcy, but on the plane of party penetration to the heart of the matter, to carry out a selection process in the most important fields of work. Again, what this organ will look like at first, and how this Central Control Commission will work in conjunction with the Workers’ and Peasants’ Inspection, is a matter for further experience.⁷¹

Evidently, it was the idea of merging the Workers’ and Peasants’ Inspectorate with a party institution, and thus transforming “formal state inspection” into “party penetration to the heart of the matter,” that enabled Trotsky to overcome his previous hostility to Rabkrin.

At the same time, Trotsky added to Lenin’s proposal his own frequently expressed emphasis on planning, calling for the “*systematic, planned reconstruction of the state machine.*”⁷² He insisted that party leadership of the state had to “assume a more planned character” and the state organs had to “learn to work within the framework of a plan and a system, to construct a plan which looks to the future, not staggering from one case to the next.”⁷³ In other words, the combined CCC-Rabkrin was to function in relation to state institutions as he hoped Gosplan would function in the economic sphere.

As Trotsky envisioned it, the new party-state institution was to concentrate its efforts on evaluating the work of state institutions, and selecting and training state functionaries. He anticipated that all of these activities could help in the struggle against both state inefficiency and political alienation: the new “central party-and-Soviet organ . . . will be able to sound the state machine in a new way both from the angle of its general efficiency and from that of how it responds to a simple illiterate old woman.”⁷⁴ The new body would focus on the “technical improvement of the machine, the decrease of staffs, the introduction of greater order, thoroughness, and accuracy in the work, and other measures of a similar nature.” At the same time, it would also begin to educate “thousands of new workers . . . in the spirit of service, simplicity, and humanity.”⁷⁵ An additional measure that Trotsky probably expected would be carried out by the combined CCC and Rabkrin was the exemplary expulsion from the state apparatus of a hundred civil servants “who showed a rooted contempt . . . for the working masses.”⁷⁶

Trotsky also outlined a number of further proposals, besides measures to be carried out by the Central Control Commission and Rabkrin, to eliminate both inefficiency and political alienation from the state apparatus. One was to increase “the struggle against the low conditions of culture, illiteracy, dirt, and poverty.”⁷⁷ Another was to mobilize public opinion against bureaucratic rudeness. In this regard, Trotsky believed the press could play an important role.⁷⁸ Finally, to root out bureaucratically inspired Great Russian nationalism, Trotsky called for the reeducation of the party on the national question and the stern punishment of chauvinist officials.⁷⁹

While dealing with the issue of political alienation in the state machine, in the early months of 1923 Trotsky also began to address related phenomena in the party. The previous year

he had alluded to the issue of bureaucratism in the party in a speech to the Eleventh Party Congress, and he had mentioned it in his last conversation with Lenin in December. On both occasions Trotsky's remarks were somewhat obscure, but they seem to have been directed primarily against the inefficiency that he saw as arising from the lack of central economic planning. Trotsky returned to the subject in an article for *Pravda* on March 13, 1923 and again in his Kharkov address. Although he continued to see a close connection between party bureaucratism and the lack of planning, he now clearly began to describe the problem in the party, as in the state, as one of political alienation.

Trotsky did not yet openly address issues related to the decline in party democracy, though it is obvious he was beginning to be concerned about this. Thus, in his February 22 remarks to the Central Committee on the organizational reform of the leading party institutions, he spoke of the importance for the CC of “constant, and not only periodic connections with ‘the people at the bottom’ [nizy]” and the need for the Central Committee to have around itself “a constant, living, and active party ‘encirclement’.” He argued that “this would add to the C.C. the living experience of the localities and of the ‘people at the bottom’” and would “exert a needed pressure on the C.C.”⁸⁰ Also, in his demands to Stalin around the Georgian question, Trotsky explicitly called for an improvement in the party regime. However, at this point Trotsky was concerned primarily with another aspect of political alienation in the party—the increasing conservatism in the policies of the party leadership. While he did not make the connection explicit, he again seems to have been responding to the rightward drift of economic policy he perceived in the resistance among party leaders to economic planning.

Trotsky mentioned a number of factors that he saw as responsible for this conservatism, or that threatened to exacerbate it. As in his discussion of state bureaucratism, one was the

“distortion of human relations by market influences,” that “drags around people, wraps them round and corrupts them.”⁸¹ Another potential source of conservatism was the infiltration of NEPmen into the party. However, in Trotsky’s estimation this was less of a problem in the party than in the state, for in the previous year the party had “purged itself of alien elements and added to its proletarian element.”⁸² Instead, in early 1923 Trotsky primarily attributed the growing conservatism of the party leadership, not to external pressures, but to dynamics within the party itself. The most important source of the problem was the increasing specialization of party members involved in the work of state institutions:

The officers of the party, both central and local, consist with few exceptions of comrades who are charged with most responsible state service, almost always of a specialized kind. The same applies also to a very substantial number of party members who are not formally officers of the party but who make up its fundamental cadres. The communists now bring their entire personalities into their administrative, economic, military, diplomatic, and any other sort of work.⁸³

The problem with such specialization, according to Trotsky, was that it could lead to the development of a narrowly specialized outlook within individual communists. Trotsky variously referred to this as the problem of “bureaucratism,” “departmentalism,” “departmental degeneration,” and “the crystallization in the upper strata of the party along the lines of profession and department.”⁸⁴ At the Eleventh Party Congress in 1922 he had warned vaguely that the party’s preoccupation with routine and practical questions could lead to the growth of internal bureaucratism. Now he defined this threat more clearly: “Not a single serious party member will claim that in the sphere of party leadership we have attained perfect and unchangeable forms, and that as our work inevitably becomes more complicated and subdivided the party will not be threatened with the danger of becoming dissolved in this work and losing the ability to see the forest for the trees.”⁸⁵ Trotsky clearly intended to suggest that this already

had occurred to some degree. The specialization of leading party members had narrowed their horizons to such an extent that, in dealing with economic questions, they were unable to perceive the needs of the entire economic forest.

If the growth of this conservative specialization continued unchecked, Trotsky feared it could lead to extreme forms of political degeneration. In this respect, Trotsky found the experience of a number of groups, including the Social Democratic and trade-union leaderships of Western Europe, to be instructive. In the course of their development, these groups had “retreated further and further into day-to-day, purely reformist, detailed work, in practice repudiating revolutionary struggle against capitalism, bowing to the ground before its might.”⁸⁶ However, Trotsky did not believe that specialization inevitably resulted in bureaucratism, conservatism, and political degeneration. In each case where a socialist organization had degenerated, the problem was not simply that the group involved itself with specialized work; rather, it was that petty jobs were “openly or tacitly counterposed to a great historic task.” Furthermore, he argued that “history knows of no big jobs without petty jobs.” Even revolutionary barricade fighting, Trotsky noted, “breaks down into details, assembling logs, overturning carts, erecting barriers, and so on.” In that case the individual tasks of the insurrectionists were linked together “by the revolutionary high tension of the fighters, in the name of a great political aim.” It was this “unity of a great aim” that could elevate the details of socialist construction above “petty-bourgeois hairsplitting,” give inspiration to those participating in that construction, and save the party from degeneration.⁸⁷

Consequently, Trotsky’s solution to the problem of bureaucratism in the party was not to reduce the degree of specialization of its members, but—once again—to increase the extent of planning, particularly in the economic sphere. Trotsky envisioned that the establishment of a real

economic plan would combat the tendency to departmentalism within the party by unifying the work of all its members:

This historic plan, though as yet imperfect and lacking in consistency, must embrace all sections and parts of the work, all its nooks and crannies, in the unity of a great creative conception. . . . Socialist construction is planned construction on the largest scale. And through all the twists and turns of NEP, the party pursues its great plan, educates the youth in the spirit of this plan, teaches everyone to link his particular function with the common task, which today demands sewing on Soviet buttons, and tomorrow readiness to die fearlessly under the banner of communism.⁸⁸

At the same time Trotsky devoted special attention to the role that the new institution for political planning, the merged CCC-Rabkrin, could play in combating party bureaucratism. The creation of this new organ, like the strengthening of economic planning, would help to unify the experience of party members employed in diverse Soviet offices by establishing greater coordination between those institutions. The establishment of the combined CCC-Rabkrin, Trotsky asserted, involved “approaching the state machine in a new way, embracing and evaluating it as a whole in respect of the most important matters and fundamentally, and along these lines subjecting it to regular influence.”⁸⁹ Also, the selection of seventy-five workers and peasants to serve on the CCC would enable the lower levels of the party to exert a “needed pressure” and, Trotsky stressed, “in the case of necessity, a ‘unifying’ pressure” on the Central Committee.⁹⁰ Finally, Trotsky saw the new institution as an instrument for identifying and dealing with party members who had become politically unreliable. The communist who had only begun to degenerate through over-specialization was to be “pulled up with a jerk in good time,” that is, warned to correct his behavior. The member who had “become so ‘specialized’” that he had “lost his moral link with the party” was to be expelled.⁹¹ Similarly, the CCC would

continue to purge bourgeois and petty bourgeois elements that had managed to insert themselves into the party.⁹²

Another method for fighting departmentalism in the party, according to Trotsky, was to elevate the consciousness of the membership about the goals and tasks of communism. He insisted that “there must be a raising of the political and theoretical level of the party.” One way to accomplish this was through “an improvement in the party press, which must give better information, become more interesting, more profoundly comprehensive, and in particular must get rid of departmental trivia and monotonous proclamations which neither instruct nor arouse but put to sleep.”⁹³

Finally, Trotsky also argued that party bureaucratism could be combated by increasing the proletarian composition of its membership.⁹⁴ In part, he saw this as an effective means of insulating the party against the corrupting pressures of the market and the NEPman. Beyond that, he believed that a large proletarian membership would serve as an anchor to prevent the increasingly specialized leadership from drifting away from its revolutionary perspective and pulling the party with it:

It is necessary first and foremost to increase systematically the number of members working at the bench. . . . The more abundantly the underground springs of the party are nourished, the less the crystallization in the upper strata of the party along the lines of profession and department will threaten the party with bureaucratic ossification.⁹⁵

4.3 THE NEW COURSE CONTROVERSY

During the summer and early fall of 1923 the party leadership majority took steps to consolidate its position through new maneuvers against Trotsky, punitive transfers of its critics,

and increasing the practice of appointing party secretaries at the local level. In the Central Committee it was proposed that a number of CC members, including Stalin, should be added to Trotsky's Revolutionary Military Council. Although Trotsky was able to prevent this, he was forced to accept Voroshilov and Lashevich, supporters of Stalin and Zinoviev respectively, on the council. Kuibyshev explained to Trotsky, "We consider it necessary to wage a struggle against you but we cannot declare you an enemy; this is why we must resort to such methods."⁹⁶ In the same period Rakovskii and Osinskii, both of whom had raised sharp criticisms of party policy at the Twelfth Congress, found themselves dispatched abroad on diplomatic assignments.⁹⁷ Finally, the appointment of party secretaries reached such unprecedented levels that even supporters of the leadership majority were compelled to concede the deterioration of party democracy. Dzerzhinskii, for example, complained to the Central Committee that "the dying out of our party, the dying out of its internal life, the prevalence of nomination instead of election, is becoming a political danger and is paralyzing our party in its political leadership of the working class."⁹⁸ A few months later Bukharin observed that in Moscow, "Our cell secretaries . . . are usually appointed by the district committees." Further, he asserted that "in the majority of cases the elections in our party organizations have in fact been transformed into mockery of elections, because the voting takes place not only without preliminary discussion, but . . . according to the formula, 'Is anyone opposed?'"⁹⁹

Meanwhile, during the summer of 1923, the Soviet Republic was afflicted with a series of economic crises. Following the Twelfth Party Congress, industrial prices continued to rise while agricultural prices dropped. The widest opening of the price scissors was reached on October 1 when industrial retail prices stood at 187 percent of the 1913 level, and retail prices of agricultural commodities fell to 58 percent.¹⁰⁰ The high prices of manufactured goods in turn generated a "sales crisis" in which large quantities of consumer products remained unsold in warehouses. Industries were forced to cut back in production, compounding the already serious problem of unemployment, and to reduce the level of wages or to pay them irregularly.¹⁰¹ The leadership majority viewed the scissors crisis not as a symptom of insufficient industrialization,

but as a result of exorbitant price setting by the trusts. Consequently, the policy pursued was one of directly forcing down industrial prices. In August, state credits to industry were restricted to compel enterprises to sell existing stocks at lower prices. However, this measure only exacerbated the problems of industry, leading to higher unemployment and more wage cuts.¹⁰²

In August and September workers in various cities responded to the deterioration in their standard of living with a wave of wildcat strikes. Adding to the concern of the Soviet leadership was the fact that the strikes were encouraged and assisted by members of the Workers' Truth and Workers' Group. The leadership reacted with repression against both the strikers and the opposition groups.¹⁰³

At the end of September the Central Committee established three commissions to come up with solutions to the crises: a commission on the scissors crisis, a commission on wages, and a commission on the internal party situation. The party minority, including Trotsky, boycotted the scissors commission, believing it would fail to address the underlying causes of the crisis.¹⁰⁴ At the same time, the conclusions of Dzerzhinskii's commission on the situation within the party turned out to be just as unsatisfactory to the minority. Instead of addressing the decline in party democracy, the most important recommendation of the commission was that all party members be required to report to the GPU any information they had about the underground factional groups.¹⁰⁵

On October 8 Trotsky wrote a sharp response to the Dzerzhinskii commission proposal. He did not directly challenge the recommendation; rather, he asserted instead that informing on "hostile elements" within the party was "so elementary a duty" that no special resolution to that effect was necessary. However, he further argued that the need for such a resolution was symptomatic of a "dramatic worsening of the inner-Party situation and the increased isolation of the TsK [CC] from the party." Then Trotsky proceeded to criticize the mistaken economic orientation and the steady erosion of party democracy since the Twelfth Party Congress. He concluded by declaring his intention to give his opinion on the current situation in the party "to

every Party member whom I regard as adequately prepared, mature, consistent, and therefore able to help the Party emerge from the deadlock without factional convulsions and shocks.”¹⁰⁶

One week later a group of forty-six prominent party members, perhaps encouraged by Trotsky, sent their own statement to the Politburo. Some of the signatories, including Preobrazhenskii, Piatakov, Antonov-Ovseenko, and I. Smirnov, had supported Trotsky in past struggles; others were former members of the Democratic Centralists. The criticisms of economic policy and the party regime contained in the “Declaration of the Forty-six” were essentially the same as those leveled by Trotsky.¹⁰⁷

The response of a joint plenum of the Central Committee and the Central Control Commission was to condemn Trotsky’s letter as having “objectively acquired the character of a factional action,” and to denounce the Forty-six as a “factional group.”¹⁰⁸ In early November, however, the leadership majority, under pressure from the ranks, shifted their approach from condemnation to concession. On the anniversary of the October Revolution *Pravda* published an article by Zinoviev calling for more workers’ democracy within the party. In a report to a district committee on December 2 Stalin called for more “open discussion” and the application of the “principle of election . . . to all Party bodies and official posts”—barring “insuperable obstacles.” However, he noted that under conditions of NEP, surrounded by a growing bourgeoisie, it was necessary impose certain limits on democracy, such as requiring that party official have a pre-October party standing. Also, he observed that it was necessary to set limits to discussion to keep the party from degenerating into a “debating society.”¹⁰⁹ At the same time *Pravda* opened its pages to a debate on the question of party democracy. This period of concessions culminated on December 5 with the adoption by the Politburo and the Presidium of the CCC of a “New Course Resolution” co-authored by Stalin, Kamenev, and Trotsky.¹¹⁰

For the most part, the analysis and the recommendations of the New Course Resolution reflected Trotsky’s views. The resolution noted the need for greater coordination of all sectors of the economy and “the exceptional importance of Gosplan” and other planning agencies. It also described the “objective contradictions” that had arisen from “the prevailing market relations” of

NEP, from the necessity of employing “capitalist forms and methods of work” by the state, and from the use of non-proletarian elements in the state apparatus. These consequences included:

striking disparities in the material living standards of party members . . . ; the growth of connections with bourgeois elements and the ideological influence of the latter; a departmentalized narrowing of intellectual horizons among officials . . . ; and as a result of this, the weakening of the connections between communists working in different sectors; the danger of a loss of perspective of socialist construction as a whole and of world revolution; the danger . . . of the “NEP degeneration” of a layer of functionaries who . . . come most into contact with bourgeois elements; the process of bureaucratization that can be observed in the party apparatus; and the resulting threat of the party becoming separated from the masses.¹¹¹

To deal with these problems, the resolution called for more “workers’ democracy,” which it defined as “liberty of frank discussion of the most important questions of party life by all members, and the election of all leading party functionaries and commissions by those bodies immediately under them.”¹¹² It outlined measures to increase free discussion within the party, to promote new functionaries from the rank and file, to expand educational work, and to convene party conferences twice yearly. The resolution also rejected the idea that the power of superior bodies to confirm local party secretaries could be converted into a right of appointment.¹¹³

Although Trotsky cosigned the New Course Resolution and many of its ideas were his own, no doubt he viewed certain passages as problematic. Most importantly, the resolution upheld the Tenth Party Congress’s ban on factions.¹¹⁴ While Trotsky did not at this time advocate factional freedom, he understood that this provision could easily be used to justify repression of all dissent within the party. Furthermore, past experience had shown that the right of higher authorities to confirm lower level elections was, in practice, often indistinguishable from the right of appointment. A few days after the publication of the New Course Resolution, an open letter by Trotsky to party meetings appeared in *Pravda*. Trotsky hailed the “exceptional significance” of the resolution, describing it as an “important turning point” in the historical road of the party; but he warned that “now the bureaucrats are ready to ‘take note’ of the ‘new

course,' that is, *to nullify it bureaucratically*." He urged rank and file party members to begin to implement the resolution by their own initiative.¹¹⁵

Trotsky's letter offered fresh encouragement to his sympathizers who had been leading the revolt in local party meetings throughout the previous month. Alarmed by these open manifestations of oppositional activity, the party leadership majority responded with a concerted attack upon Trotsky and the Opposition, developing many of the themes that would characterize the anti-Trotsky campaigns of subsequent years. Trotsky was accused of using democratic slogans for purely factional purposes; he was charged with seeking to drive a wedge between younger and older party generations; he was denounced for having consistently underestimated the importance of peasantry; and the philosophy of "Trotskyism" was depicted as inherently anti-Leninist. To buttress this last accusation, the majority leaders dragged out Trotsky's Menshevik past and reviewed his previous differences with Lenin over the Brest Litovsk Treaty and the trade unions.¹¹⁶

Confined to his apartment by a malarial infection, Trotsky was unable to defend his record and his views at public party meetings. Nevertheless, he responded to his antagonists in a series of articles that were republished in January 1924 in a pamphlet entitled *The New Course*. In this pamphlet that Trotsky provided an extensive explanation of his new thoughts on party bureaucratism.

4.4 TROTSKY AND THE NEW COURSE

In his New Course writings on party, Trotsky moved further from his previous preoccupation with inefficiency, increasingly associating bureaucracy with the phenomenon of political alienation, defined in terms of the growth of centralism and authoritarianism at the expense of workers' democracy. It is possible, of course, to interpret Trotsky's deepening

concern over political alienation as simply an expression of his own growing sense of alienation from the reins of power. Also, it is possible to view Trotsky's apparently sudden advocacy of "workers' democracy" as a cynical maneuver inspired by self interest. This is exactly how it was portrayed by Stalin.¹¹⁷ Perhaps more sincerely, this was also how Shliapnikov, the former leader of the Workers' Opposition, described it, asserting, "In the present controversy the only goal of Comrade Trotsky and the Opposition is simply to seize the apparatus."¹¹⁸ In fact, once again it was likely that the maneuvering against Trotsky by the triumvirate of Stalin, Zinoviev, and Kamenev *did* help sensitize him to manifestations of political alienation within the party. However, from the New Course Resolution signed by Stalin and Kamenev as well Trotsky, and from the admissions of supporters of the majority, it is clear that the changes in the party regime denounced by Trotsky were real enough. Furthermore, it is clear that Trotsky was motivated not simply by considerations of personal power, but perhaps even more by longstanding policy concerns—namely, the continuing divergence of Soviet economic policy from an emphasis on planning and industrialization. While Trotsky explicitly disavowed the advocacy of democracy as an "end in itself,"¹¹⁹ there is no reason to doubt that he saw the transformation of the party regime as the only way to correct the economic orientation of the leadership.

Although the Twelfth Party Congress had adopted Trotsky's recommendations for a greater emphasis upon economic planning and industrialization, in the following months little was done to implement these proposals. In his October 8 letter to the Central Committee Trotsky noted that in violation of the decisions of the Congress,

after the Congress, Gosplan was in fact relegated [to the background]. Its work on reaching individual targets is useful and necessary, but has nothing in common with the planned regulation of the economy as it was passed by the Twelfth Congress. The lack of coordination in planning is especially trying in the work of central and, in general, major state economic bodies. To an even greater extent than before the Twelfth Congress, the most important economic issues are being solved in a hurry, without due preparation, regardless of their planning connections.¹²⁰

Trotsky further contended, “There is no management in the economy, the chaos originates at the top.”¹²¹

In Trotsky’s view, the failure of the majority of the party leadership to implement planning had given rise to a host of other incorrect policies and problems. He spoke of the “self-sufficing, i.e., not subordinate to the general economic plan, character of our financial policy.” As a result of this, the concentration of industry was repeatedly interrupted by “‘political’ (i.e., local)” interests, thereby exacerbating the scissors crisis. Then, rather than proceeding with a planned expansion of industry to strike at the heart of the scissors crisis, the Central Committee had set up a commission to bring about a “mechanical reduction of prices” that would benefit only middlemen. For Trotsky this was evidence “that a policy which ignores the importance of planned flexible regulation, affected by its own inevitable consequences, is returning to the attempts of the War Communism command of prices.”¹²²

At the same time, Trotsky seems to have believed that a planned approach to work in a variety of areas was itself disrupted by narrow political considerations. Instead of the “thorough personal selection of managerial personnel” mandated by the Twelfth Congress that Trotsky thought could be achieved only through a planned approach, decisions about the allocation of personnel increasingly were made “from the point of view of their ability to support or oppose the inner-Party regime, which is secretly though no less actually established by the Orgburo and the Secretariat.”¹²³ A related issue was the growing power of party secretaries. At the Eleventh Party Congress in 1922 he had expressed his concern about the expansion of the economic powers of the party secretaries in the vacuum that should have been filled by rational planning. In similar terms Trotsky now observed,

In the last year or year and a half a specific secretary’s psychology has been formed, its main feature being the conviction that a secretary is able to solve any problem without familiarizing himself with the gist of the matter. At every step we see how comrades who showed no organizational, administrative, or other skills while heading Soviet establishments, begin to authoritatively

solve economic, military, and other questions as soon as they become secretaries.¹²⁴

The leadership's continuing obstruction of economic planning reaffirmed Trotsky's conclusion that the chaos of Soviet economic policy had deep political roots. First, as Trotsky had suggested in early 1923, it indicated the loss of a unifying perspective among the party leaders. Second, the continuing marginalization of Gosplan demonstrated an indifference of the leadership to the decisions of the party. Third, Trotsky now seems to have perceived that the apparent irrationality of many political and economic decisions could be explained in terms of the narrow political interests of the central party leaders. All of these conclusions contributed to Trotsky's growing conviction that the problem of bureaucratism involved the political alienation of the party leadership from the needs of the working class and of socialism.

At the same time, Trotsky began to view developments in the party regime with increasing alarm. Since the Twelfth Party Congress, the party regime had deteriorated to the point that it was "much farther from workers' democracy than the regime of the toughest periods of War Communism." By worker's democracy, Trotsky clearly meant the election of party functionaries and the free discussion within the party of all important issues. Trotsky asserted "In the most severe time of War Communism, [the] practice of appointments was not spread at one-tenth of its present scale." Provincial party secretaries were now almost universally appointed; and once selected, they proceeded in turn to make all other appointments, dismissals, and other important decisions at the provincial level. Whenever anyone opposed the decision of a provincial party secretary, that secretary, "with the help of the Center," simply had the dissident transferred. Consequently, party members were afraid to express their views openly. At the height of the civil war, Trotsky reminded the CC, the party organizations and the public press were centers of lively discussion and debate. Now, there was "no trace of such open exchange of opinions on matters of true importance to the Party."¹²⁵ Together with developments in the economy, the worsening of the party regime indicated to Trotsky that the problem of

bureaucracy essentially involved political alienation. Simultaneously, it brought the question of workers' democracy into the center of Trotsky's analysis for the first time.

As a number of writers have emphasized, in late 1923 Trotsky conceptualized the problem in terms of the disease of bureaucratism that had infected the party, and not yet of a state and party bureaucracy that ruled the Soviet Union.¹²⁶ It was not until later in the 1920s that Trotsky would begin to speak of the bureaucracy. Although at this point he perceived the problem of bureaucratism as a disease or tendency, Trotsky rejected as “unworthy of a Marxist” the notion that bureaucratism was “only the aggregate of the bad habits of officeholders.” In fact, at various times in the past Trotsky had spoken precisely in such terms. At this point, however he insisted it was a “social phenomenon,” that is, “a definite system of administration of people and things.”¹²⁷ By this, Trotsky meant to suggest that bureaucratism involved the breakdown of collective decision making by the rank and file and its replacement by a hierarchical system of authority. Trotsky now asserted that all important party decisions increasingly were made by the apparatus that originally was established to be the mere executor of the will of the entire party. Thus, he noted “a certain tendency of the [party] apparatus to think and to decide for the whole organization,” and he described the party as “living, as it were, on two stories: the upper story, where things are decided, and the lower story, where all you do is learn of the decisions.”¹²⁸

To a large degree, Trotsky observed, the gravitation of power to the “upper story” of the party involved its concentration in the hands of the “Old Guard”—that is, members who had joined the party before the October Revolution. Trotsky did not contest the fact that the Old Bolsheviks had contributed innumerable services to the revolution; nor did he even deny that “they ought to occupy all the leading positions in the party.” Nevertheless, he warned that “the growing discontent over this exclusive and self-contained apparatus of secretaries, who identify themselves with Old Bolshevism, can in the future have grave consequences for preserving the ideological hegemony of the Old Bolsheviks of underground days in the party of contemporary times.”¹²⁹

In passing, Trotsky commented upon a set of characteristic attitudes of the members of the party apparatus. Many of these were features he had noted before in his discussions of bureaucratic inefficiency. Now, he seems to have believed that these traits had arisen out of the impulse of party officials to preserve their own bureaucratic power.

One of these attitudes was excessive “formalism,” or the rigid application of formal principles, described by Trotsky as “the essential attribute of bureaucratism.” He suggested as an example the tendency to “consider every criticism a manifestation of factionalism.” Although he conceded that factions and “every *incorrect* deviation” might become an entering wedge for alien class interests, Trotsky pointed out that this applied to bureaucratism as well. In fact, those who immediately condemned every criticism of the old course as factional were themselves guilty of “*conservative bureaucratic factionalism*.” The lesson was that “concrete Marxist verification” had to be applied to all nuances of opinion, “and not the stereotyped phrases which are the defense mechanism of bureaucratism.”¹³⁰

Closely related to formalism was a preoccupation with tradition that served to legitimize the existing party leadership. In his discussion of bureaucratic traditionalism Trotsky again invoked a number of precedents from the history of the socialist movement, including the example of the tradition-bound Second International. It was true, Trotsky asserted, that “without a continuous lineage, and consequently without a tradition, there cannot be stable progress.” However, the real revolutionary tradition of Leninism was “a method of historical analysis . . . and not a mass of decisions prepared in advance.”¹³¹

Three more bureaucratic attitudes that Trotsky depicted as common within the party apparatus were a “complete disdain for the mood, the thoughts, and the needs of the party,” “bureaucratic smugness,” and “apparatus cliquism.” The first of these was closely related to the indifference and hostility to the masses that, earlier in the year, Trotsky had described as characteristic of a large part of the state apparatus. “Bureaucratic smugness” involved the confidence of party secretaries in their own ability to make important decisions about matters with which they had little or no familiarity. Again, Trotsky had noted this tendency as early as

the Eleventh Party Congress. On the other hand, “apparatus cliquism,” or the “corporatist and departmental spirit of the separate constituent parts of the party,” was a trait only recently diagnosed by Trotsky. This was a particularly menacing phenomenon for it referred to the evolving group consciousness of the party secretaries that reinforced their tendency to crystallize into a distinct social grouping or “bureaucracy.”¹³²

Among Trotsky’s concerns about the consequences of bureaucratism was the fear that it seriously could undermine the internal vibrancy and unity of the party. “Bureaucratism,” wrote Trotsky, “kills initiative and thus prevents the general elevation of the party. That is its cardinal defect.”¹³³ Most important in this regard was the effect that it had upon the party youth. Trotsky argued that if young people were to develop politically, they needed the opportunity to criticize and to think independently. By stifling initiative, the party apparatus was obstructing the education of the next generation of Bolshevik leaders.¹³⁴ At the same time, Trotsky saw bureaucratism as a principal source of disruptive factionalism. When communists had no sense that they were able to participate actively in making decisions affecting the party, and when their questions were ignored or their criticisms repressed, many began “looking for a substitute for independent party activity in the form of groupings and factions of all sorts.”¹³⁵

Even worse was the potentially distorting effect of bureaucratism on the party’s political orientation. In Trotsky’s view the essential advantage of a Leninist party was its ability to utilize the diverse experiences of its members in the formulation of policy, the ability “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 for directing the economy in general and each enterprise in particular.”¹³⁶ However, such a collective approach to the work of the party required the fullest party democracy, and this had been undermined by bureaucratism.

Trotsky believed that the weakening of party democracy already had contributed to the disorientation of the party leadership. It was the absence of democracy in the party, he now

claimed, and not just the lack of planning, that had led to the development of a narrow specialized outlook among the party leaders. Without democracy,

Leadership takes on a purely organizational character and frequently degenerates into order-giving and meddling. The party apparatus goes more and more into the details of the tasks of the Soviet apparatus, lives the life of its day-to-day cares, lets itself be increasingly influenced by it, and fails to see the forest for the trees.¹³⁷

Again, Trotsky was implying that this narrow departmental mentality in turn reinforced the mistaken orientation of Soviet economic policy.

As Trotsky had suggested in the spring, one long-term danger of bureaucratism was that it could lead to the complete “opportunist degeneration” of the leadership:

Does bureaucratism bear within it a danger of degeneration, or doesn't it? Anyone who denied it would be blind. In its prolonged development, bureaucratization threatens to detach the leaders from the masses; to bring them to concentrate their attention solely upon questions of administration, of appointments and transfers; to narrow their horizon; to weaken their revolutionary spirit; that is, to provoke a more or less opportunistic degeneration of the Old Guard, or at the very least of a considerable part of it.¹³⁸

With greater emphasis than earlier in the year, Trotsky pointed to the specter of capitalist restoration. Once more Trotsky asserted that the *economic* preconditions for this were already being prepared by an erroneous economic policy. If the Soviet leadership continued to allow private capital to accumulate at the expense of nationalized industry, the peasantry eventually would fall under the economic and political influence of the capitalist sector. Most immediately, this could happen if the Soviet leadership failed to take steps to close the “scissors” through a more rational organization of industry geared to the peasant market.¹³⁹ At the same time, Trotsky also implied that bureaucratism was creating the *political* prerequisites for capitalist restoration by weakening the party, inciting unhealthy factionalism, and promoting the degeneration of the party leadership. Thus, the political paths by which Trotsky predicted the counterrevolution could occur included “either the direct overthrow of the workers’ party, or its progressive

degeneration, or finally, the conjunction of a partial degeneration, splits, and counterrevolutionary upheavals.”¹⁴⁰

Trotsky said relatively little during the New Course controversy about the underlying causes of party bureaucratism. He was far more concerned at this point with demonstrating its dangers and indicating how these could be combated directly.¹⁴¹ Nevertheless, he stressed that party bureaucratism was “not at all a ‘survival’ of the war period.” If it had been a mere “survival,” the problem would be diminishing, not growing. Rather, it was “the result of the transference to the party of the methods and administrative manners accumulated [in the state] during these last years.”¹⁴² He further asserted that the state apparatus was “the most important source of [party] bureaucratism.”¹⁴³

Combining ideas he had expressed earlier in the year with new and undeveloped insights, Trotsky explained the origins of *state* bureaucratism as follows:

Its profound causes lie in the heterogeneity of society, the difference between the daily and the fundamental interests of various groups of the population. Bureaucratism is complicated by the lack of culture among the broad masses. With us, the essential source of bureaucratism resides in the necessity of creating and sustaining a state apparatus that unites the interests of the proletariat and the peasantry in perfect economic harmony, from which we are still far removed. The necessity of maintaining a permanent army is likewise another important source of bureaucratism.¹⁴⁴

He did not elaborate, but it is clear that Trotsky saw each of these factors as contributing to the growth of centralized, authoritarian, and hierarchical relationships in the state. In turn, these relationships had been transmitted into the party by communists involved in state work and by the party apparatus that had been entrusted with the oversight of the state:

On one hand, it [i.e., the state apparatus] absorbs an enormous quantity of the most active party elements and teaches them the methods of administration of people and things, instead of political leadership of the masses. On the other hand, it largely occupies the attention of the party apparatus, over which it exerts influence by its methods of administration.¹⁴⁵

As a result, a large part of the party now consisted of state and party officials who had learned the “methods of administration” of the state apparatus. These were the “functionaries” who, Trotsky claimed, constituted “one of the fairly stable social groupings” of the Soviet regime.¹⁴⁶

A factor that contributed to the political weight of the functionaries was the relative decline in proletarian membership in the party. Trotsky explained that after the seizure of power, the first concern of the proletariat had been to create its own state apparatus. This had required the transfer of Bolshevik workers from the factories to the “state, cooperative and other apparatuses.” In turn, this had “implied a weakening of the factory cells and an increase in the functionaries in the party, proletarian in their origin or not.”¹⁴⁷ Subsequently, the growth of the working class as a whole, which might have provided new proletarian recruits to the party, had been retarded by the slow development of industry.¹⁴⁸ The result was that now less than one-sixth of the party membership was composed of proletarians actually working at the bench.¹⁴⁹

Trotsky’s ultimate cure for the disease of party bureaucratism was to strike at its foundations by eliminating bureaucratism in the state and by proletarianizing the party. He did not even consider relinquishing party control over the state or abolishing one-party rule to stem the flow of state administrative methods into the party. No doubt he believed that such measures would only weaken the resistance of the Soviet regime to capitalist restoration. However, he called for renewed efforts against state bureaucratism, urging specifically “the education of party youth, based upon personal initiative” so that the young people would learn to “serve the state apparatus in a new manner and to transform it completely.”¹⁵⁰ (By this time Trotsky had given up on the combined CCC-Rabkrin as an anti-bureaucratic tool. In his view this institution had been organized in such a way that it had been “rendered harmless.”¹⁵¹) Also, Trotsky again asserted the need to accelerate industrial expansion and to recruit more workers to the party.¹⁵²

Nevertheless, Trotsky seemed to recognize that in the short run these measures would not be effective in combating party bureaucratism. The struggle against bureaucratism in the state, he emphasized, was “an exceptionally important but prolonged task.”¹⁵³ Furthermore, while he judged the proletarianization of the party to be “the best guarantee that it will retain its

proletarian character,” Trotsky cautioned that “the membership of the party can be altered seriously (so that, for example, the factory cells make up two-thirds of its ranks) only very slowly and only under conditions of noteworthy economic advance.”¹⁵⁴

For the immediate future, then, Trotsky focused less upon the elimination of the ultimate sources of bureaucratism, and more upon the need for a direct assault against bureaucratism itself. This required the immediate implementation of the democratic reforms embodied in the New Course Resolution. In its struggle against bureaucratism, Trotsky insisted, the party could not count upon the leadership. Rather, it had to rely upon its own initiative and “*subordinate to itself its own apparatus* without for a moment ceasing to be a centralized organization.”¹⁵⁵ Trotsky called upon the rank and file to begin to take control of party organizations at every level and to institute workers’ democracy:

Every unit of the party must return to collective initiative, to the right of free and comradely criticism—without fear and without turning back—and to the right of organizational self-determination. It is necessary to regenerate and renovate the party apparatus and to make it feel it is nothing but the executive mechanism of the collective will.¹⁵⁶

There were, however, limits to the degree of democracy Trotsky was ready to advocate, even within the party. Most importantly, he refrained from asserting the right of party oppositionists to organize themselves into factions. In part, this may have been for tactical reasons. A challenge by Trotsky of the Tenth Party Congress’s ban on factions would certainly have been seized upon by his opponents as fresh evidence of his “anti-Leninism.” However, it is also clear that Trotsky accepted the argument of the leadership majority that organized factions could become instruments of alien class interests. The task, then, was to find the line that separated the “calm” of bureaucratically enforced unity from factionalism.¹⁵⁷

Once the party membership asserted its power, Trotsky predicted, it quickly would find allies within the apparatus itself. Of course, there were some “mummified bureaucrats” who would have to be removed from their posts, but in Trotsky’s estimation the “vast majority” of the

members of the apparatus were not yet bureaucratized. He anticipated that the New Course controversy would “teach a good deal to the majority of the apparatus workers and will get them to abandon most of their errors.” Ultimately, when these elements realized the dangers of bureaucratism, they would join enthusiastically with the party in implementing the New Course Resolution.¹⁵⁸

For Trotsky this was not the end of the struggle. He had been aroused to oppositional activity not only by the erosion of democracy within the party, but also by what he perceived to be a fundamentally mistaken economic policy. This policy had shifted the Soviet state off the tracks that led to socialism, and onto rails that ended in capitalist restoration. Thus, he saw the principle of workers’ democracy, as embodied in the New Course Resolution, as only “a means and not an end in itself.” The “weight and value” of the new course in the coming period, he asserted, “will be determined by the degree to which it helps us solve our principal economic task.” That task was the establishment of “centralized, planned management of the economy.”¹⁵⁹

4.5 THE DEFEAT OF THE OPPOSITION

During the debate that raged through December, the Opposition found a considerable degree of support within the party ranks. A stronghold of the Opposition was the Moscow province where the assault on the leadership was led by Preobrazhenskii, Sapronov, and Piatakov. There, the Opposition frequently dominated party meetings, and perhaps even won a majority at the cell level. In the provinces the Opposition was able to capture party organizations in Riazan, Penza, Kaluga, Simbirsk, and Cheliabinsk where there were concentrations of dissident party officials who had been transferred from the center. Social bases of support for the Opposition included Trotsky’s Red Army; the volatile student youth; and, ironically, party members employed in that heartland of bureaucratism—the state apparatus (particularly the

economic bodies). This last grouping was, no doubt, drawn to the Opposition for its advocacy of rapid industrialization and central planning.¹⁶⁰

Nevertheless, the Opposition was severely hampered by internal weaknesses. Most important of these was the inability of the Opposition to differentiate its program clearly from that of the leadership majority. Regarding the question of the party regime, the rank and file could perceive little difference between the majority and the minority, which both claimed to support democratic reforms. Furthermore, the Opposition was unable to present any short-run solution to the problems of low wages and unemployment that were troubling industrial workers. Besides, some workers still remembered the militarization of labor and trade union “shake-up” advocated by Trotsky and his supporters in 1920, and they distrusted the sudden conversion of many of the Opposition leaders to workers’ democracy. Another weakness of the Opposition was in its leadership. Trotsky’s inability to participate actively in the discussion, together with his failure to openly identify himself with the Opposition, left the Opposition without representatives who could match the prestige of Zinoviev, Kamenev, Bukharin, and Stalin. Also, many of the Opposition’s leaders were compromised by their previous association with “anti-Leninist” groupings such as the Left Communists and the Democratic Centralists.¹⁶¹

More important than the internal weaknesses of the Opposition, however, was the overwhelming organizational strength of the majority leadership. Through its control of the party press, the majority was able to limit the access of the membership to the views of the Opposition and to drown criticisms in a flood of counteraccusations. Party members who were inclined to sympathize with the views of the Opposition were intimidated from speaking or voting against the leadership by the fear of dismissal from their jobs, expulsion from the universities, or transfer to other locations. Finally, through the tiered system of election of party conference delegates, the leadership was able to reduce the representation of the Opposition substantially. Thus, while the Opposition received 36 per cent of the votes at district conferences in the Moscow province, they could only claim 18 per cent at the Moscow provincial conference that elected delegates to the Thirteenth Party Conference.¹⁶²

Ultimately, at the Thirteenth Party Conference in mid-January 1924, the Opposition received only three out of 128 voting delegates. As far as economic policy was concerned, the conference endorsed the deepening orientation to the peasant market, and rejected Opposition proposals to increase the degree of central planning and accelerate the tempo of industrialization. In its resolution on the recent party discussion, the conference branded the Opposition a “petty bourgeois deviation,” insisted upon the need for discipline, and reaffirmed the party’s ban on factions.¹⁶³

Trotsky’s persistent fever kept him from attending the conference. Even before its concluding session, he boarded a train for the Caucasus, seeking rest and recovery. In Tiflis on January 21 he received the news of Lenin’s death. The slim possibility that Lenin would recover to join Trotsky in an assault on the leadership majority was gone. Misinformed by Stalin about the date of Lenin’s funeral, Trotsky did not return to Moscow, but continued on to the resort of Sukhum.¹⁶⁴

Meanwhile, the majority leaders found new opportunities to strengthen their own positions. At Lenin’s funeral ceremonies they inaugurated a virtual cult based upon the fallen leader that was used to legitimate their power.¹⁶⁵ In honor of Lenin they opened the doors of the party to over 200,000 industrial workers. A number of contemporary historians have concurred with Trotsky’s later claim that the effect of this “Lenin Enrollment” was to swamp the party with politically unsophisticated and easily manipulated members who would back the leadership majority.¹⁶⁶ Simultaneously, the Central Control Commission began to oust Oppositionists on grounds of “opportunism” and personal defects.¹⁶⁷

Just before the Thirteenth Congress convened in May, the party summit was shaken by the sudden revelation of Lenin’s “Testament” by his widow, Krupskaya. The Testament was potentially devastating to Stalin, for it called for his removal from the post of General Secretary. Zinoviev and Kamenev quickly leapt to Stalin’s defense. According to Trotsky’s account, the Council of Elders, leaders of the provincial delegations, voted over the objections of Krupskaya

to read the Testament only to separate delegations to the Congress and to ban discussion of it by the Congress as a whole.¹⁶⁸

Not one Oppositionist was elected as a delegate with voting rights to the Thirteenth Party Congress; and only a few Oppositionists, including Trotsky, were permitted to speak. The theme and tone of the congress were set by Zinoviev, who called for the unity of the party against its oppositional disrupters. One after the other, delegates filed to the podium to denounce the Opposition's factional activities and its petty-bourgeois orientation.¹⁶⁹

In his address to the congress, Trotsky adopted a conciliatory tone while reasserting the correctness of the views he had expressed in *The New Course*. He defended his positions on both party democracy and economic planning as wholly consistent with the Politburo's New Course Resolution. Although he probably already had serious reservations about the scale and pace of the Lenin Enrollment, his own statements on behalf of party proletarianization compelled him to endorse it. In response to Zinoviev's demand that he admit that he had been wrong in his evaluation of the situation within the party, Trotsky flatly refused, stating simply, "I cannot say so . . . comrades, because I do not think it." However, he simultaneously reaffirmed his own allegiance to the party, declaring that "if it should come to that, I will not be the least soldier on the least Bolshevik barricade!"¹⁷⁰

At the Thirteenth Party Congress and in the months that followed, the leadership took further steps to consolidate its position and to eradicate the Opposition. Once again, the Central Committee was expanded, mostly by the addition of supporters of Stalin. The new Central Control Commission, also expanded, was directed to continue the work of weeding the party membership, particularly in educational and governmental institutions where Oppositionists were concentrated. Meanwhile, the leadership had begun to press the other parties of the Communist International into line behind the anti-Trotsky campaign. Since the founding of the Comintern in 1919, the foreign sections had revered Trotsky as a leader of both the Soviet state and the world revolution. Now, at the Fifth Congress of the International in June 1924, the delegates joined in

the chorus of denunciation against Trotsky. At that Congress, Trotsky was replaced on the Executive Committee of the International by Stalin.¹⁷¹

Barred by party discipline from continuing to criticize the policies of the party leadership, during the summer of 1924 Trotsky turned to historical analysis to vindicate his own record and to cast a shadow on the political biographies of his adversaries. His opponents, depicting themselves as faithful disciples of Lenin, had asserted that Trotsky was an unregenerate Menshevik who had always been anti-Leninist. Trotsky's answer appeared in a preface to his speeches and writings of 1917. In this preface, entitled "Lessons of October," he reviewed the events of 1917. Trotsky described the internal party situation of that year as a struggle between two currents: a left wing led by Lenin (and implicitly, himself) that had pushed consistently for the completion of the proletarian revolution and for an insurrection to achieve that goal, and a right wing led by Kamenev and Zinoviev that had insisted that the Russian Revolution could not go beyond bourgeois-democratic limits and that had opposed the insurrection.¹⁷²

Reviewing the disagreements of 1917, Trotsky asserted that "nothing could be more paltry than an attempt to turn them now, . . . into weapons of attack against those who were at that time mistaken."¹⁷³ However, it was precisely as a "weapon of attack" that Trotsky now wielded the history of the revolution. As Trotsky saw it, the issue was not merely of historical significance. In late 1923 an attempted revolution in Germany had been crushed as a direct consequence, Trotsky claimed, of the failure of the German Communist Party to take decisive action.¹⁷⁴ The obvious implication of "Lessons of October" was that the leaders of the Russian Communist Party who had directed preparations for the German insurrection had repeated the errors of the right wing of the Bolshevik party in 1917. In particular, the blame for the German debacle fell most heavily upon Zinoviev, the President of the Comintern.

The counterattack by the party leadership was massive. In the numerous books, pamphlets, and speeches of the "literary debate" the triumvirs and their supporters denounced Trotsky's interpretation of the events of 1917, in its place supplying their own accounts that increasingly diverged from historical accuracy. At the same time, Trotsky's own political record

was subjected to fresh attacks. The latest allegation, made by Stalin, was that Trotsky persistently had opposed his own theory of permanent revolution to “Lenin’s” view that socialism could be constructed in one country.¹⁷⁵

In January 1925 Trotsky was forced to resign from his position as Commissar of War. A few months later he was reassigned to serve on the Supreme Council of the National Economy under Dzerzhinskii. Within VSNKh, he became chairman of three commissions: the Concessions Committee, the Board of Electro-technical Development, and the Industrial-Technological Commission. In his new assignment Trotsky was able to return to economic issues that had been raised by the Opposition. Thus, in August 1925 he wrote a series of articles entitled “Whither Russia?” that used recently published Gosplan figures on the performance of the national economy to demonstrate the necessity of broadening the scope of economic planning and accelerating the rate of industrialization.¹⁷⁶ In the meantime, however, after the Thirteenth Party Congress Trotsky was forced to retreat from the explosive analysis of party bureaucratism he had developed in *The New Course*.

4.6 THEORETICAL RETREAT

The overwhelming defeat of the Opposition in early 1924 left Trotsky politically isolated and faced with the prospect of expulsion for further manifestations of “factional” activity. Consequently, for the next two years Trotsky refrained from open attacks on the party leadership and from public denunciations of party bureaucratism, and he instructed his supporters to do likewise. The Belgian-born Oppositionist, Victor Serge later recalled how in 1925 Trotsky sent him the following directive: “For the moment we must not act at all: no showing ourselves in public but keep our contacts, preserve our cadres of 1923, and wait for Zinoviev to exhaust himself.”¹⁷⁷ Although Trotsky continued to make occasional remarks on the subject of

bureaucratism in a number of articles and speeches during 1924 and 1925, he now confined himself to relatively innocuous comments on the politically safer topic of bureaucratism in the state. Nevertheless, behind some of these remarks it is possible to perceive the more pointed critique he had developed in *The New Course*.

In his analysis of state bureaucratism during this period, Trotsky reiterated a number of the themes he had developed in early 1923. The problem, as Trotsky again defined it, was a combination of inefficiency and the growing alienation of the Soviet state from the masses. Trotsky deplored the red tape [*kazënshchina, volokita*] in Soviet educational institutions that was responsible for the shortage of books, maps, and trained librarians. He also criticized the bureaucratism [*biurokratizm*] of newspapers that were indifferent to the needs of their readers.¹⁷⁸ Further, he argued that the basic question of the socialist reorganization of society was “how to avoid bureaucratism [*biurokratizm*], dead indifference, suffocating formalism.”¹⁷⁹

At the same time, however, Trotsky also defined the “tendency toward bureaucratism [*biurokratizm*]” as “the resolution of problems through state offices, without the workers and behind their backs.”¹⁸⁰ In this vein Trotsky rebuked the Soviet “chinovnik” who, because he did not like “unnecessary discussions,” obstructed the reporting activities of worker-correspondents. Such a bureaucrat, Trotsky argued, was “a direct or indirect instrument of the kulak,” for he weakened working-class resistance to pro-capitalist forces.¹⁸¹ Trotsky no doubt implicitly directed these remarks against bureaucratism in the party as well as the state. Although he was unable to say so openly, he continued to believe that the bureaucrats of the majority had instituted a regime in the party that was strengthening the position of the kulak.

Again, as in early 1923, Trotsky asserted that the most important sources of state bureaucratism were in the difficulties of socialist construction combined with the backwardness and illiteracy of the Soviet masses: “We are too backward, ignorant, illiterate, and habitually inert; while the practical problems of economic construction on the other hand are too sharp and pressing. This is the spring from which the tendency toward bureaucratism [*biurokratizm*] flows.”¹⁸² He described state tyranny over the masses as arising from “cultural weakness, from

illiteracy, from a feeling of defenselessness whose roots lie in the inability to look into things, read widely, make complaints, consult the right sources.”¹⁸³

Trotsky’s answer to the problem, once again, was to suggest ways to raise the level of mass culture and to encourage mass initiative. He devoted special attention to the role that two specific groups could play in this regard. The worker correspondents of newspapers, through accurate reporting and stylistic clarity, could induce semi-literates to read the paper regularly, and thus could help to raise the level of literacy and the political consciousness of the masses.¹⁸⁴ Trotsky also stressed the duty of worker correspondents to report the effects of state policies on the masses, and the response of the masses to those policies. In so doing, the correspondents could “enlist the newspaper readers to check up on the functioning of the state and gradually prepare them for participation in government themselves.”¹⁸⁵ Librarians were another group that could serve as a conductor of culture to the masses and as a catalyst for popular initiative. Trotsky urged librarians to help readers find books they could use, and to hold meetings of local peasants to discuss and explain newspaper dispatches.¹⁸⁶ To encourage mass initiative, Trotsky revived an idea of Lenin’s to establish general complaint bureaus in the libraries. Librarians should then take up the complaints of the peasant, “advise him, write to a newspaper, make public his grievance, defend him” and generally, help him to overcome his “feeling of defenselessness.”¹⁸⁷

Of course, Trotsky had no illusions that he could successfully storm the walls of Soviet bureaucratism with an army of newspaper correspondents and librarians. While continuing to look for ways to encourage mass initiative, Trotsky was biding his time until a more favorable correlation of forces allowed him to return to the theoretical and political offensive. That opportunity would finally present itself in 1926.

4.7 CONCLUSION

In the course of the years 1923-1925, Trotsky's critique of Soviet bureaucracy underwent a dramatic transformation. In late 1922 he was still describing the problem of Soviet bureaucracy almost exclusively in terms of "glavkokratic" inefficiency in the Soviet economy. However, the continued resistance of the leadership majority to economic planning, along with changes in the party regime, his own growing sense of isolation, and the influence of Lenin's thinking helped convince Trotsky that the problem was a deeper one that could be understood best in terms of the traditional Marxist analysis of political alienation. Consistent with that analysis, early in 1923 Trotsky first perceived manifestations of state and party bureaucratism in Soviet economic policies that reflected and promoted bourgeois influence. Later, in the New Course controversy, he denounced the political alienation embodied in the erosion of workers' democracy in the party. Even in the following two years when political defeat forced him to blunt the edge of his remarks, a similar approach can be discerned in Trotsky's scattered remarks on bureaucracy.

There were a number of serious theoretical and programmatic weaknesses in the perspective developed by Trotsky during these years—particularly as it was expressed in *The New Course*. A first area of weakness, apparent in retrospect, was that it significantly underestimated the depth of the problem. At the end of December 1923 Trotsky expressed his confidence that the criticisms of the party regime articulated in the New Course controversy would be sufficient to convince the overwhelming majority of the party apparatus to return to the methods of workers' democracy—a prediction that proved to be quite unrealistic. In part, this was perhaps a rhetorical device to draw hesitant rank and file members into the struggle. At the same time, it may have been a product of excessive optimism about the degree of pressure the membership would exert in the New Course controversy. Most importantly, however, it appears to have been a result of Trotsky's failure to gauge the depth of resistance to democratization within the party leadership majority. The same failure was expressed in the very term

“bureaucratism” that Trotsky chose to identify the issue. The word suggested that the problem was merely a disease affecting an otherwise healthy organism.

A second area of weakness involved Trotsky’s explanation for the origins of the problem in both the party and state. An obvious omission from his explanation for the origins of party bureaucratism was any reference to the effects of restrictions on party democracy adopted in earlier years. In *The New Course* Trotsky asserted that bureaucratism was not a survival from the civil war period, but a relatively new phenomenon. And in fact, it is clear that the party regime of 1923 really *was* considerably less democratic than in previous years. However, Trotsky clearly understated the degree to which party democracy had been eroded by past measures such as the 1921 ban on factions and punitive transfer of oppositionists. Similarly, Trotsky made no mention of the role of past decisions by the party, such as the ban on opposition parties, as a factor undermining workers’ democracy and promoting bureaucratism in the state. In fact, as far as restrictions on both party and soviet democracy were concerned, in his October 8 letter to the CC, Trotsky explicitly acknowledged the “incompatibility of a complete, highly developed workers’ democracy with [proletarian] dictatorship.”¹⁸⁸ However, even if Trotsky was correct in this assessment, it did not preclude his recognition of the bureaucratizing consequences of earlier decisions. Of course, at the time, Trotsky would not have expressed these views even if he had agreed with them. To have done so would have handed his opponents the final proof they needed to demonstrate that he remained a Menshevik at heart. It was not until the mid-1930s that Trotsky was able to suggest that actions taken by the Bolshevik Party under Lenin had contributed to the growth of the problem of bureaucracy in the Soviet Union.

Additionally, as Isaac Deutscher has suggested, Trotsky’s program for overcoming party bureaucratism at this point contained a number of serious inconsistencies. First was the contradiction between Trotsky’s call for a return to workers’ democracy in the party and his general assessment of the Soviet situation. Trotsky was openly concerned about the growing numbers of NEPmen and kulaks in Soviet society. Largely for this reason, he accepted the ban on opposition parties, fearing that if opposition parties were permitted, they would offer the

NEPmen and kulaks a means by which to translate their own newfound economic strength into political power. Yet, as Trotsky's own statements in support of a party purge indicate, he also recognized the danger that bourgeois elements, blocked from organizing independently, could attempt to take control of the Communist Party. Consequently, to the degree that the argument for restricting democracy in the soviets was valid, it applied equally to the party. This was, of course, the problem to which Stalin alluded when he spoke of the need to retain some restrictions on party democracy in the context of NEP and a growing bourgeoisie. To this, Trotsky validly responded that the leadership could itself become a transmitter of alien class interests. However, with apparently equal validity the leadership could argue that the Old Bolsheviks in the leadership were a better guarantee against degeneration than the de-proletarianized party described by Trotsky.

A related weakness was apparent in Trotsky's proposal to enlarge the sphere of party democracy as a means of achieving a more "proletarian" socialist line in economic policy. As Trotsky himself indicated, in 1923 only one-sixth of the party membership was made up of factory workers. The remainder was composed of factory managers, civil servants, army officers, commissars, party officials, etc. The most that party democracy could hope to achieve in the immediate future was a somewhat greater degree of working class *influence* over policy. Trotsky saw the long term resolution of this dilemma in the gradual proletarianization of the party. In the form this demand actually was implemented in 1924, however, it appears to have reinforced the position of the leadership majority through the addition to the party of a mass of politically inexperienced and passive workers.¹⁸⁹

Finally, it is questionable whether a democratic, proletarian party would have embraced Trotsky's industrialization program as it was articulated in 1923.¹⁹⁰ At this point Trotsky was arguing that primitive socialist accumulation required greater sacrifices on the part of the proletariat. Although the hardships imposed upon the working class in the summer of 1923 were not instituted in the name of a great plan, and although they were perhaps more extreme than the measures advocated by Trotsky, the strike wave that resulted suggests that Soviet workers were

in no mood to listen to calls for new sacrifices. Nor was there an overwhelmingly positive response from the existing working class component of the party to the economic demands of the Opposition during the New Course controversy.

Despite these problems, Trotsky's shift of focus to political alienation represented an enormously important development in his thinking. Although the concept of *glavkokratiia* had been useful for identifying the economic problems of previous years, even then it had been irrelevant for understanding some of the important political concerns that Lenin and the party opposition groups had been able to address. Viewing bureaucracy in terms of political alienation, in 1923 Trotsky was able to paint a convincing, and devastating, portrait of the current state of the party regime, to start to explain the emerging dynamics of Soviet politics, and to formulate the beginnings of a programmatic alternative. Furthermore, building upon this preliminary work, Trotsky was able in subsequent years to construct an elaborate but coherent theory of Soviet bureaucracy based entirely upon the traditional Marxist analysis of political alienation.

¹ Isaac Deutscher, *The Prophet Unarmed: Trotsky: 1921-1929* (New York: Vintage Books, 1959), 38.

² Edward Hallett Carr, *A History of Bolshevik Russia: The Interregnum: 1923-1924* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1954), 3-48; Deutscher, *Prophet Unarmed*, 39.

³ On the economic views of Trotsky and this minority, see Carr, *Interregnum*, 14-15, 20-24; Robert V. Daniels, *The Conscience of the Revolution: Communist Opposition in Soviet Russia* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1960), 202-203; Richard B. Day, *Leon Trotsky and the Politics of Economic Isolation* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1973), 72-73; Deutscher, *Prophet Unarmed*, 39-46.

⁴ For references to "primitive socialist accumulation" by Trotsky, see Leon Trotsky, *The Position of the Soviet Republic and the Tasks of Young Workers*, trans. R. Chappell (London: Young Socialists, 1972), 9; Leon Trotsky, *The First Five Years of the Communist International* (New York: Monad Press, 1972), 2:270; *Dvenadtsatyi s"ezd RKP(b): Stenograficheskii otchet* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Politicheskoi Literatury, 1968), 351.

⁵ *Dvenadtsatyi s"ezd*, 333. Also, see Day, *Leon Trotsky*, 72-73, 80, 82.

⁶ Leon Trotsky, *Leon Trotsky Speaks*, ed. Sarah Lovell (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1972), 144-145; *Dvenadtsatyi s"ezd*, 345. See also Deutscher, *Prophet Unarmed*, 44.

⁷ *Dvenadtsatyi s"ezd*, 323, 324-326, 336-343.

⁸ See the correspondence between Lenin and Trotsky in *The Trotsky Papers: 1917-1922*, Leon Trotsky, ed. Jan M. Meijer (The Hague: Mouton & Co., 1964, 1971), 2:774/775-788/789.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 816/817-822/823. See also Day, *Leon Trotsky*, 77-78.

¹⁰ Day, *Leon Trotsky*, 79-81; Iu. Fel'shtinskii, comp., *Kommunisticheskaia oppozitsiia v SSSR, 1923-1927: iz arkhiva L'va Trotskogo v chetyrekh tomakh* (Benson, VT: Chalidze Publications, 1988), vol. 1 (1923-1926):23-25, 35-48.

¹¹ *Dvenadtsatyi s"ezd*, 319-322.

¹² See Carr, *Interregnum*, 17-19; Day, *Leon Trotsky*, 81-86.

- ¹³ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1960-1970), 36:606, 596, 610. For accounts of the “Georgian affair,” see Moshe Lewin, *Lenin’s Last Struggle*, trans. A. M. Sheridan Smith (New York: Vintage Books, 1970), 43-103; Robert Service, *The Iron Ring*, vol. 3 of *Lenin: A Political Life* (London: Macmillan, 1995), 274-282; Jeremy Smith, “The Georgian Affair of 1922: Policy Failure, Personality Clash or Power Struggle?,” *Europe-Asia Studies* 50, no. 3 (May, 1998): 519-544.
- ¹⁴ Lenin, *Collected Works*, 45:607.
- ¹⁵ Trotsky, *My Life: An Attempt at an Autobiography* (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1970), 522. On Trotsky’s mysterious illness, see also Joel Carmichael, *Trotsky: An Appreciation of His Life* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1975), 288, 338, 364, 406.
- ¹⁶ Leon Trotsky, *My Life*, 483; “Gruzinskii intsident,” *Pravda*, August 12, 1988, 3 [an English translation of this interview with V. V. Zhuravlev can be found in *International Marxist Review* 4 (Autumn 1989): 131-144]; Smith, “Georgian Affair,” 538; Yuri Buranov, *Lenin’s Will: Falsified and Forbidden* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 1994), 50.
- ¹⁷ Trotsky, *My Life*, 486.
- ¹⁸ Daniels, *Conscience*, 183-184.
- ¹⁹ A translation of Trotsky’s article on the nationalities question appears in *Lenin’s Fight against Stalinism*, V. I. Lenin and Leon Trotsky, ed. Russell Block (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1975), 140-148. Trotsky’s summary of his remarks at the March 22 CC plenum can be found in Fel’shtinskii, *Kommunisticheskaia oppozitsiia*, 1:51. A translation of his Kharkov address appears in Trotsky, *Leon Trotsky Speaks*, 135-173.
- ²⁰ Fel’shtinskii, *Kommunisticheskaia oppozitsiia*, 1:53; Carr, *Interregnum*, 280; Daniels, *Conscience*, 183-184, 186.
- ²¹ Carr, *Interregnum*, 280-283; Daniels, *Conscience*, 185-186; Deutscher, *Prophet Unarmed*, 97-98. Trotsky wrote another article on the national question for *Pravda* soon after the party congress. A translation of this has been published as Leon Trotsky, “Leon Trotsky on the National Question,” *International Socialist Review*, Summer 1958: 99-103.
- ²² Lenin, *Collected Works*, 36:594-595, 596.
- ²³ *Ibid.*, 593-594, 596-597. On Lenin’s organizational proposals in early 1923, see Daniels, *Conscience*, 190-191; Neil Harding, *Theory and Practice in the Socialist Revolution*, vol. 2 of *Lenin’s Political Thought: Theory and Practice in the Democratic and Socialist Revolutions* (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1983), 302-308; Lewin, *Lenin’s Last Struggle*, 118-122; E. A. Rees, *State Control in Soviet Russia: The Rise and Fall of the Workers’ and Peasants’ Inspectorate, 1920-34* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1987), 39-49; Service, *Iron Ring*, 295, 301-303.
- ²⁴ Lenin, *Collected Works*, 33:482, 484-485, 493-494.
- ²⁵ *Ibid.*, 490.
- ²⁶ *Ibid.*, 482-484, 490-493.
- ²⁷ Trotsky, *Trotsky Papers*, 2:810n1. For suggestions that Stalin in fact was receiving copies all of Lenin’s notes as soon as they were written, see Rees, *State Control*, 290; Buranov, *Lenin’s Will*, 32.
- ²⁸ Fel’shtinskii, *Kommunisticheskaia oppozitsiia*, 1:19.
- ²⁹ *Ibid.*, 30; Daniels, *Conscience*, 192.
- ³⁰ Leon Trotsky, *The Challenge of the Left Opposition (1923-1925)*, ed. Naomi Allen (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1975), 62; and Leon Trotsky, *The Stalin School of Falsification* (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1972), 72-73.
- ³¹ Fel’shtinskii, *Kommunisticheskaia oppozitsiia*, 1: 31; Deutscher, *Prophet Unarmed*, 88-89.
- ³² Daniels, *Conscience*, 197; Rees, *State Control*, 51-52, 60-63.
- ³³ Carr, *Interregnum*, 80-82; Daniels, *Conscience*, 159-160, 204; Deutscher, *Prophet Unarmed*, 107.
- ³⁴ Carr, *Interregnum*, 79-80; Daniels, *Conscience*, 160-161; Robert V. Daniels, ed., *A Documentary History of Communism*, revised edition (Hanover, N.H.: University Press of New England, 1984), 1:147-148; “1922 Appeal of the Russian Workers’ Truth Group,” *Workers’ Truth* (Chicago) 1, no. 1 (March 1973): 30-31.
- ³⁵ Carr, *Interregnum*, 276-277; Daniels, *Conscience*, 194-195, 204.; Deutscher, *Prophet Unarmed*, 96.
- ³⁶ J. V. Stalin, *Works* (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1952- 1955), 5:227-229.
- ³⁷ See Deutscher, *Prophet Unarmed*, 98.
- ³⁸ Trotsky, *My Life*, 481.
- ³⁹ *Ibid.*, 482.
- ⁴⁰ Daniels, *Conscience*, 206; Carr, *Interregnum*, 272; Deutscher, *Prophet Unarmed*, 98; Carmichael, *Trotsky*, 282.
- ⁴¹ Deutscher, *Prophet Unarmed*, 98; Daniels, *Conscience*, 206.

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- ⁴² *Dvenadtsatyi s"ezd*, 331.
- ⁴³ *Ibid.*, 325.
- ⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 331.
- ⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 332.
- ⁴⁶ Trotsky, *Leon Trotsky Speaks*, 152.
- ⁴⁷ *Dvenadtsatyi s"ezd*, 342-343.
- ⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 679.
- ⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 677; Trotsky, *Leon Trotsky Speaks*, 152.
- ⁵⁰ Trotsky, *Leon Trotsky Speaks*, 157, 156.
- ⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 156.
- ⁵² Leon Trotsky, *Problems of Everyday Life and Other Writings on Culture & Science* (New York: Monad Press, 1973), 49; L. Trotskii, *Kul'tura perekhodnogo perioda*, vol. 21 of *Sochineniia* (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe Izdatel'stvo, 1927), 61-62.
- ⁵³ Trotsky, *Leon Trotsky Speaks*, 157.
- ⁵⁴ Trotsky, *Problems*, 49; Trotsky, *Kul'tura perekhodnogo perioda*, 61.
- ⁵⁵ Trotsky, *Leon Trotsky Speaks*, 156-157.
- ⁵⁶ Trotsky, *Problems*, 48, 49; Trotsky, *Kul'tura perekhodnogo perioda*, 60, 61.
- ⁵⁷ Lenin, *Collected Works*, 45:608. Lenin had sent a copy of this letter to Trotsky. However, it seems that at this point Trotsky had not yet seen Lenin's denunciation of Stalin's "rudeness."
- ⁵⁸ Trotsky, "Leon Trotsky on the National Question," 102.
- ⁵⁹ Trotsky, *Problems*, 50; Trotsky, *Leon Trotsky Speaks*, 156.
- ⁶⁰ Trotsky, *Leon Trotsky Speaks*, 168.
- ⁶¹ Lenin, *Collected Works*, 33:488, 481, 501; 36: 596-597.
- ⁶² Trotsky, *Problems*, 50; Trotskii, *Kul'tura perekhodnogo perioda*, 62. Note modification of translation.
- ⁶³ In his Kharkov address, Trotsky stated,

Where has this "quality" of the state machine come from? From this circumstance, that we did not and do not know how to do very much, but we have been forced to do a lot, and often have enlisted people who know, or only half know, but don't want to do even a quarter properly, and sometimes don't want to do it at all and do it minus a hundred percent. . . . So here we have been constructing a state machine which begins with a young, selflessly devoted but quite inexperienced Communist, goes on through an indifferent office clerk, and ends with a grey-haired expert who sometimes, under irreproachable forms, engages in sabotage. [Trotsky, *Leon Trotsky Speaks*, 156.]

- ⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 155. Trotsky also spoke of "the organic hatred of an aristocracy [employed by the Soviet state] towards the class that deposed it," and he blamed bourgeois and aristocratic officials for the most virulent forms of rudeness in the state apparatus as well as for acts of "conscious sabotage." [Trotsky, *Problems*, 50; Trotskii, *Kul'tura perekhodnogo perioda*, 63.] Note modification of translation.
- ⁶⁵ Trotsky, *Leon Trotsky Speaks*, 168.
- ⁶⁶ Lenin and Trotsky, *Lenin's Fight*, 141.
- ⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 142. See also Trotsky, *Leon Trotsky Speaks*, 162-163.
- ⁶⁸ Trotsky, *Leon Trotsky Speaks*, 164.
- ⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 155-156.
- ⁷⁰ Trotsky, *Leon Trotsky Speaks*, 158, 160.
- ⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 158.
- ⁷² *Ibid.*, 157.
- ⁷³ *Ibid.*, 161.
- ⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 158.
- ⁷⁵ Trotsky, *Problems*, 50; Trotsky, *Kul'tura perekhodnogo perioda*, 62.
- ⁷⁶ Trotsky, *Problems*, 51; Trotsky, *Kul'tura perekhodnogo perioda*, 64.
- ⁷⁷ Trotsky, *Problems*, 50; Trotsky, *Kul'tura perekhodnogo perioda*, 62.
- ⁷⁸ Trotsky, *Problems*, 51.

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- ⁷⁹ Lenin and Trotsky, *Lenin's Fight*, 146-147, 144.
- ⁸⁰ Fel'shtinskii, *Kommunisticheskaia oppozitsiia*, 1:30.
- ⁸¹ Trotsky, *Problems*, 104.
- ⁸² Trotsky, *Leon Trotsky Speaks*, 168
- ⁸³ Trotsky, *Problems*, 102.
- ⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 102-104.
- ⁸⁵ Trotsky, *Leon Trotsky Speaks*, 160-161. See also Trotsky, *Problems*, 103,
- ⁸⁶ Trotsky, *Problems*, 100-101.
- ⁸⁷ *Ibid.*
- ⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 101.
- ⁸⁹ Trotsky, *Leon Trotsky Speaks*, 161. See also Trotsky, *Problems*, 104.
- ⁹⁰ Fel'shtinskii, *Kommunisticheskaia oppozitsiia*, 1:30.
- ⁹¹ Trotsky, *Problems*, 104.
- ⁹² Trotsky, *Problems*, 104.
- ⁹³ *Ibid.*, 103-104.
- ⁹⁴ Trotsky, *Leon Trotsky Speaks*, 169.
- ⁹⁵ Trotsky, *Problems*, 103.
- ⁹⁶ Trotsky, *Challenge (1923-1925)*, 57
- ⁹⁷ Carr, *Interregnum*, 290.
- ⁹⁸ Quoted in Daniels, *Conscience*, 211. On the continuing deterioration of the party regime in 1923, see Deutscher, *Prophet Unarmed*, 105.
- ⁹⁹ Quoted in Trotsky, *Challenge (1923-1925)*, 149.
- ¹⁰⁰ Carr, *Interregnum*, 87.
- ¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 93-94; Daniels, *Conscience*, 209.
- ¹⁰² Carr, *Interregnum*, 97-98; Daniels, *Conscience*, 209.
- ¹⁰³ Carr, *Interregnum*, 93-95, 292-293; Daniels, *Conscience*, 209-210; Deutscher, *Prophet Unarmed*, 106-108.
- ¹⁰⁴ Carr, *Interregnum*, 104-105; Daniels, *Conscience*, 211; Deutscher, *Prophet Unarmed*, 111.
- ¹⁰⁵ Carr, *Interregnum*, 295; Daniels, *Conscience*, 211; Deutscher, *Prophet Unarmed*, 108.
- ¹⁰⁶ Valentina Vilкова, ed., *The Struggle for Power: Russia in 1923* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 1996), 46-47, 57. The translation of Trotsky's letter in *The Challenge of the Left Opposition* published by Pathfinder Press is from the only version of the letter available at the time that book came out: one published by the Menshevik émigré paper, *Sotsialisticheskii Vestnik* in which Trotsky's letter was partially quoted, partially translated, and partially paraphrased.
- ¹⁰⁷ The text of the "Platform of the Forty-six" can be found in Carr, *Interregnum*, 377-373; Trotsky, *Challenge (1923-1925)*, 397-403; and Vilкова, *Struggle for Power*, 82-96.
- ¹⁰⁸ Institute of Marxism Leninism of the Central Committee of the CPSU, *Against Trotskyism: The Struggle of Lenin and the CPSU Against Trotskyism. A Collection of Documents* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1972), 235, 236.
- ¹⁰⁹ Stalin, *Works*, 5:371, 376-378.
- ¹¹⁰ Carr, *Interregnum*, 301-307; Daniels, *Conscience*, 222; Deutscher, *Prophet Unarmed*, 116-119; David S. Law, "The Left Opposition in 1923," in *The Ideas of Leon Trotsky* ed. Hillel Ticktin and Michael Cox (London: Porcupine Press, 1995), 238. The text of the New Course Resolution appears in Trotsky, *Challenge (1923-1925)*, 404-413.
- ¹¹¹ Trotsky, *Challenge (1923-1925)*, 406.
- ¹¹² *Ibid.*, 408.
- ¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 408-410.
- ¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 408.
- ¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 126.
- ¹¹⁶ Carr, *Interregnum*, 315-322; Daniels, *Conscience*, 231-232; Deutscher, *Prophet Unarmed*, 125-126.
- ¹¹⁷ Carr, *Interregnum*, 336-337; Daniels, *Conscience*, 231.
- ¹¹⁸ Quoted in Daniels, *Conscience*, 228.
- ¹¹⁹ Trotsky, *Challenge*, 64.
- ¹²⁰ Vilкова, *Struggle for Power*, 48. See also Trotsky, *Challenge (1923-1925)*, 52.
- ¹²¹ Vilкова, *Struggle for Power*, 48.
- ¹²² *Ibid.*, 48-49, 50.

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- ¹²³ Ibid., 51.
- ¹²⁴ Ibid., 52.
- ¹²⁵ Ibid., 51-52.
- ¹²⁶ See, for example, Perry Anderson, "Trotsky's Interpretation of Stalinism," in *The Stalinist Legacy: its Impact on Twentieth-Century World Politics*, ed. Tariq Ali (Harmondworth, Middlesex, England: Penguin Books, 1984), 118; Paul Bellis, *Marxism and the U.S.S.R.: The Theory of Proletarian Dictatorship and the Marxist Analysis of Soviet Society* (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1979), 58; David W. Lovell, *Trotsky's Analysis of Soviet Bureaucratization* (London: Croom Helm Ltd., 1985), 21; Law, "The Left Opposition in 1923," 242.
- ¹²⁷ Trotsky, *Challenge (1923-1925)*, 91.
- ¹²⁸ Ibid., 128, 69.
- ¹²⁹ Ibid., 56.
- ¹³⁰ Ibid., 80, 84, 85.
- ¹³¹ Ibid., 93-98, 128, 134, 96.
- ¹³² Ibid., 69, 75; Lev D. Trotskii, "Novyi Kurs," Marxists Internet Archive, <http://www.marxists.org/russkij/trotsky/1924/newc.htm#st02> (accessed March 15, 2009). Note modification of translation.
- ¹³³ Ibid., 125.
- ¹³⁴ Ibid., 127.
- ¹³⁵ Ibid., 72. See also, *ibid.*, 127.
- ¹³⁶ Ibid., 77.
- ¹³⁷ Ibid.
- ¹³⁸ Ibid., 72.
- ¹³⁹ Ibid., 88, 89.
- ¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 88.
- ¹⁴¹ This is also noted by Baruch Knei-Paz, *The Social and Political Thought of Leon Trotsky* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), 374.
- ¹⁴² Trotsky, *Challenge (1923-1925)*, 70. Also, see *ibid.*, 76.
- ¹⁴³ Ibid., 91.
- ¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 91-92.
- ¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 91.
- ¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 74
- ¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 73.
- ¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 75.
- ¹⁴⁹ Ibid.
- ¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 62.
- ¹⁵¹ Ibid., 62.
- ¹⁵² Ibid., 92, 74, 90.
- ¹⁵³ Ibid., 92.
- ¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 90, 74
- ¹⁵⁵ Ibid., 124.
- ¹⁵⁶ Ibid., 126.
- ¹⁵⁷ Ibid., 80.
- ¹⁵⁸ Ibid., 126-127, 69, 129.
- ¹⁵⁹ Ibid., 64.
- ¹⁶⁰ Carr, *Interregnum*, 324, 326, 332; Tony Cliff, *Trotsky: Fighting the Rising Stalinist Bureaucracy, 1923-27* (London: Bookmarks, 1991), 44-45; Daniels, *Conscience*, 227-228; Deutscher, *Prophet Unarmed*, 132; Law, "The Left Opposition in 1923," 246.
- ¹⁶¹ Carr, *Interregnum*, 326-328; Daniels, *Conscience*, 229-230.
- ¹⁶² Carr, *Interregnum*, 333; Daniels, *Conscience*, 228-229; Law, "The Left Opposition in 1923," 246-247.
- ¹⁶³ Carr, *Interregnum*, 125-130, 333-341; Daniels, *Conscience*, 233-234.
- ¹⁶⁴ Carr, *Interregnum*, 346; Deutscher, *Prophet Unarmed*, 133.
- ¹⁶⁵ On the beginnings of the Lenin cult, see Carr, *Interregnum*, 347-351; Daniels, *Conscience*, 236-237.

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- ¹⁶⁶ On this point see Daniels, *Conscience*, 238; Deutscher, *Prophet Unarmed*, 135-136; Leon Trotsky, *The Revolution Betrayed* (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1974), 97-98.
- ¹⁶⁷ Carr, *Interregnum*, 356-357; Daniels, *Conscience*, 238-239.
- ¹⁶⁸ Carr, *Interregnum*, 359-360; Daniels, *Conscience*, 239; Deutscher, *Prophet Unarmed*, 137; Lenin and Trotsky, *Lenin's Fight*, 33-34. According to the later account of Boris Bazhanov, secretary of the Central Committee in 1924, the reading was in a session of the CC. [Buranov, *Lenin's Will*, 90-91.]
- ¹⁶⁹ Carr, *Interregnum*, 384-385.
- ¹⁷⁰ For a translation of Trotsky's speech to the Thirteenth Party Congress, see Trotsky, *Challenge (1923-1925)*, 146-162.
- ¹⁷¹ Daniels, *Conscience*, 242; Deutscher, *Prophet Unarmed*, 146-151; T. H. Rigby, *Communist Party Membership in the U.S.S.R., 1917-1967* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1968), 128.
- ¹⁷² A translation of "Lessons of October" appears in Trotsky, *Challenge (1923-1925)*, 199-258.
- ¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, 200.
- ¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 201, 203, 230-231, 233, 249, 250, 251, 254, 256. See also *ibid.*, 93-94, 163-174, 184-185, 189, 195, 269-270, 272. Also on the German Revolution of 1923, see Trotsky, *Leon Trotsky Speaks*, 180-183; Trotsky, *First Five Years*, 1:2-8.
- ¹⁷⁵ Daniels, *Conscience*, 244-252; Deutscher, *Prophet Unarmed*, 154-160.
- ¹⁷⁶ Deutscher, *Prophet Unarmed*, 160-163, 208-212; J. V. Stalin, *On the Opposition (1921-27)* (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1974), 152-159. A translation of "Whither Russia?" appears in Trotsky, *Challenge (1923-1925)*, 319-382.
- ¹⁷⁷ Victor Serge, *Memoirs of a Revolutionary, 1901-1941*, trans. and ed. Peter Sedgwick (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), 209.
- ¹⁷⁸ Trotsky, *Problems*, 152, 157, 154, 171; Trotskii, *Kul'tura perekhodnogo perioda*, 123, 129, 188.
- ¹⁷⁹ Trotskii, *Kul'tura perekhodnogo perioda*, 378.
- ¹⁸⁰ Trotsky, *Problems*, 172; Trotskii, *Kul'tura perekhodnogo perioda*, 189.
- ¹⁸¹ Trotskii, *Kul'tura perekhodnogo perioda*, 205.
- ¹⁸² Trotsky, *Problems*, 171-172; Trotskii, *Kul'tura perekhodnogo perioda*, 189.
- ¹⁸³ Trotsky, *Problems*, 154.
- ¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 163-172.
- ¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 172.
- ¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 149, 156-157.
- ¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 155-157, 154. For a discussion of Trotsky's speech on library work, see William Baker and Jitka Hurych, "Trotsky's Vision of Libraries," *American Libraries* 22, no. 11 (Dec 1991): 1030-1032.
- ¹⁸⁸ Vilkova, *Struggle for Power*, 52.
- ¹⁸⁹ See Deutscher, *Prophet Unarmed*, 128-129.
- ¹⁹⁰ See Deutscher, *Prophet Unarmed*, 131.

5.0 A COHERENT THEORY OF BUREAUCRACY

Soon after the Bolshevik Revolution, Trotsky began to speak of the dangers of “bureaucratism” in the Soviet Union. However, it was only in 1923 that he began to apply in the Soviet context the classical Marxist understanding of bureaucracy as a manifestation of political alienation. In the New Course controversy Trotsky warned of the growing powers of the party apparatus, of the erosion of workers’ democracy in the party, and of the danger that these could lead to rightward shifts in policy and, ultimately, to the restoration of capitalism. After his defeat in that struggle, Trotsky temporarily confined his remarks on bureaucracy to the politically safer topic of bureaucratism in the state. Nevertheless, he was only biding his time until a change in the situation permitted him to return to the political and theoretical offensive.

Realignments within the party in 1925 and 1926 presented Trotsky with the opportunity he had awaited. In 1925 Zinoviev and Kamenev broke with Stalin and the leadership majority over a number of political and economic issues. Implicitly, the arguments of the New Opposition confirmed Trotsky’s warnings about the dangers of party bureaucratism and of a resurgent right within the country. The following year Trotsky and his supporters joined forces with the Zinovievists to form the United Opposition, which sharply challenged the economic, international, and political policies of the party leadership throughout 1926 and 1927. In the fire of this party struggle, Trotsky forged a coherent theory of Soviet bureaucracy based upon the classical Marxist analysis of that problem.

5.1 THE FORMATION OF THE UNITED OPPOSITION

In early 1925 the ruling bloc of Zinoviev, Kamenev, and Stalin began to crumble. From the outset the alliance had been a shaky one. Even in the summer of 1923, Zinoviev had attempted to curb Stalin's growing organizational powers by proposing the addition of Trotsky and either himself, Kamenev, or Bukharin to the party Secretariat. Nothing substantial came of the plan, and soon afterwards the outbreak of the New Course controversy and then the debate over Trotsky's "Lessons of October" reunited the triumvirs against their common enemy.¹ However, the tensions latent within the triumvirate inevitably resurfaced as soon as Trotsky had been neutralized as a political force. The first issue to divide the party chieftains was the question of what was to be done with their defeated opponent. At the meeting of the Central Committee in January 1925, Zinoviev and Kamenev, stung by Trotsky's recent criticisms of their behavior in 1917, proposed that he be expelled from the party, or at least from the Politburo. The Central Committee majority, including Stalin, rejected these recommendations, voting only to accept Trotsky's resignation as Commissar of War. Stalin later explained, "We disagreed with Zinoviev and Kamenev because we knew that the policy of amputation, the method of blood-letting . . . was dangerous, infectious: today you amputate one limb, tomorrow another, the day after tomorrow a third—what will we have left in the Party?"²

Meanwhile, the party leaders resumed their organizational skirmishes against each other. In late 1924 or early 1925 Zinoviev and Kamenev attempted to enlist N. A. Uglanov, the new secretary of the Moscow provincial party committee, in their maneuvers against Stalin. Although Uglanov had been appointed at Zinoviev's and Kamenev's initiative, he resisted their overtures and defected to the Stalinist camp. This was a serious setback for Zinoviev and Kamenev for it effectively destroyed the influence that Kamenev, the chairman of the Moscow soviet, wielded in

the Moscow party organization. Consequently, the developing struggle assumed the form of a contest between the party organization of Moscow and that of Leningrad, where Zinoviev remained the dominant figure.³ In February the Leningrad Komsomol (Communist Youth League), encouraged by Zinoviev, attempted to assert its independence from the Komsomol Central Committee. Subsequently, Stalin was able to have both the secretary of the Leningrad provincial Komsomol committee and the Leningrad party representative on that committee removed.⁴ In the same period, Stalin increasingly began to intervene in the affairs of the German Communist Party in an attempt to undercut Zinoviev's authority as Chairman of the Comintern.⁵

During the summer of 1925, the struggle for power evolved into a debate over policy and doctrine. The most important issue involved the party's orientation to the peasants. Since 1923 the majority leadership had been united in a policy of encouraging the acquisitive inclinations of the peasantry. It was Bukharin who most clearly and consistently articulated the rationale for this approach. Bukharin described the policy of continued economic concessions to the peasantry as essential for the maintenance of political stability. Beyond that, he insisted that a prosperous peasantry was the main prerequisite for the continued economic recovery of the Soviet Union. The future of Soviet industry, Bukharin insisted, depended upon the increased production of industrial crops, and of grain to feed the urban workers and to trade on the world market for industrial equipment. At the same time, Bukharin argued that the expansion of agricultural production would stimulate industry by fueling the growing rural demand for consumer goods and agricultural tools. He anticipated that resources for industrialization could be obtained through the progressive taxation of prosperous peasants and through the investment of peasant savings held by Soviet banking and credit institutions. Consequently, Bukharin concluded that every possible incentive must be utilized to assist production and accumulation in the

countryside. Most immediately, this meant encouraging the most productive sectors of the peasantry—the middle and well-to-do peasants.⁶ Bukharin forcefully expressed this idea in a speech delivered in April 1925:

Our policy in relation to the countryside should develop in the direction of *removing, and in part abolishing, many restrictions which put the brake on the growth of the well-to-do and kulak farm*. To the peasants, to all the peasants, we must say: *Enrich yourselves*, develop your farms, and do not fear that constraint will be put on you.

However paradoxical it may appear, *we must develop the well-to-do farm in order to help the poor peasant and the middle peasant*.⁷

This orientation to the well-to-do peasant received its sharpest policy expression in the spring of 1925. At that point, fearing the growth of peasant disaffection, the party leadership offered new concessions to the peasantry, and especially to its wealthier strata. These were codified in decisions of the April plenum of the Central Committee that discouraged the practice of periodic land redistribution, reduced restrictions on the leasing of land and the hiring of labor, recommended the elimination of price controls on grain, and cut agricultural taxes.⁸

Prior to this, Zinoviev and Kamenev had been among the most vocal supporters of the party's agricultural policy. Together, they had taken the lead in denouncing Trotsky for his alleged "underestimation of the peasantry," and during the fall and winter of 1924-1925, Zinoviev had been responsible for popularizing the slogan "Face to the countryside."⁹ In early 1925 Zinoviev and Kamenev voted for the Central Committee's concessions to the kulak, and then vigorously defended these decisions in public.¹⁰ However, in the spring of 1925 they began to back away from the pro-kulak policies they had helped to inspire. To a large degree this change in orientation may be explained in terms of factional considerations. As E. H. Carr has suggested, once Zinoviev and Kamenev had lost their influence in the Moscow party organization, they began to adapt their views to the sentiments of proletarian Leningrad. There, the industrial workers resented the growing power of the kulaks who were blamed for bread lines and high food prices.¹¹ In early May Zinoviev and Kamenev objected when the majority of the

Politburo decided not to publish an article by Lenin's widow, Krupskaya, in which she attacked Bukharin's pro-kulak philosophy. A few weeks later Zinoviev delivered a speech in Leningrad in which he argued that the slogan "face to the countryside" meant "face to the middle and poor peasant," not "a turning towards the well-to-do strata in the countryside."¹² He continued to press the issue in September in an article entitled "The Philosophy of an Epoch" and in a book, *Leninism*. In both works Zinoviev polemicized against the views of the pro-capitalist economist N. V. Ustrialov, who had expressed his approval of NEP as a policy that could ultimately lead to a phased restoration of capitalism in the Soviet Union. In the course of his argument, Zinoviev warned that the continued growth of the power of the kulak and the NEPman could, in fact, lead to the political degeneration of the proletarian dictatorship. At the same time, Zinoviev took up two related theoretical issues. He attempted to demonstrate that Lenin always viewed NEP as a temporary retreat, and not—as Bukharin alleged—the direct route to socialism. Furthermore, Zinoviev embraced Lenin's definition of NEP as "state capitalism in a proletarian state"—a definition that had been disputed by Bukharin. As far as policy was concerned, the implication of both arguments was that the further advance to socialism required the renewal of class struggle against the kulak.¹³

In the same period Kamenev and Zinoviev began to raise objections to the theory of "socialism in one country," first advanced by Stalin in 1924 in the struggle against Trotsky. Stalin's argument, based upon a strained interpretation of a few passages from Lenin, was that the Soviet Union possessed all the necessary means for constructing socialism, even if the world revolution failed to materialize. Perhaps Zinoviev and Kamenev were genuinely alarmed by Stalin's nationalist revision of Bolshevik doctrine, or perhaps they simply feared it would undermine the significance of Zinoviev's Comintern. At any rate, in September Zinoviev began to challenge Stalin's theoretical innovation. With an abundant use of quotations, Zinoviev demonstrated that Lenin consistently viewed the successful construction of socialism in the Soviet Union as dependent upon international revolution. Zinoviev argued that the Soviet Union could and must *begin* the process of building a socialist society, but insisted that it could not

hope to *complete* this task unless it was aided by the victory of the revolution in a number of other countries.¹⁴

At the October plenum of the Central Committee Zinoviev, Kamenev, Krupskaya, and the Finance Commissar, Sokol'nikov, presented the case for the New Opposition. The two central proposals it raised were for an end to the policy of conciliating the kulak and for an open party discussion of the disputed issues. Although the Central Committee majority rejected the proposal for a party-wide discussion, it was prepared to make concessions regarding agrarian policy. Even within the leadership majority there were growing concerns, arising out of difficulties in grain procurement, over the orientation to the kulak. Although the harvest had been an exceptionally good one, the amount of grain marketed by the peasantry in 1925 was small, leading to soaring prices. At least part of the problem was that the wealthier peasants had consciously withheld their own crops from the market and had purchased and hoarded the harvest of their poorer neighbors in anticipation of rising grain prices. The CC now unanimously adopted a resolution on "party work among the village poor" that condemned two deviations regarding agricultural policy: the underestimation of the importance of the middle peasant and of the *smychka* between the proletariat and the peasantry, and the underestimation of the kulak threat.¹⁵

However, the decisions of the October plenum of the CC marked only a temporary truce in the escalating conflict. About the time of the Central Committee session, the Leningrad provincial committee was pressured into removing its secretary, P. A. Zalutskii, for his allegations that the central party leadership was reestablishing a capitalist state in the name of building socialism. After the October plenum, leaders of both sides reaffirmed the statement of the CC regarding the two deviations in the party; but the Moscow leadership stressed the dangers of ignoring the middle peasantry and the *smychka*, while the Leningraders increasingly emphasized the kulak threat.¹⁶

Meanwhile, Zinoviev and Kamenev attempted to extend the economic debate to the area of industrial policy. Between 1923 and 1925 the party leadership had vacillated repeatedly over

the question of industrialization. However, in early 1925 the leaders finally agreed that the time had come to begin replacing old and worn-out machinery and constructing new, modern factories. Thus, the April plenum of the Central Committee voted substantial increases in allocations and credit to industry, especially heavy industry. Optimism regarding industrial expansion reached its high point in the Gosplan control figures issued in August that projected a thirty-three percent increase in industrial production for 1925-1926. At that point many within the party leadership began to balk at such an ambitious proposal. In the fall of 1925 Zinoviev and Kamenev stepped forward to support a vigorous policy of industrialization, arguing that no further growth of industry was possible without new machinery and new factories.¹⁷

Despite this sudden shift on the part of Zinoviev and Kamenev, the debate between the minority and the majority did not assume the form of a clear-cut struggle between supporters and opponents of industry. One of the foremost leaders of the New Opposition, the Finance Commissar Sokol'nikov, continued to resist "excessive enthusiasm" for industrialization out of fear that it could lead to a return to uncontrolled inflation. Nor were the majority leaders any more united on this question. While Bukharin insisted that socialism—and implicitly, industry—could only be constructed at a "snail's pace," Stalin proclaimed the need to transform the Soviet Union "from an agrarian into an industrial country" and "from one that imports equipment into one that manufactures this equipment."¹⁸

The simmering tensions between the party organizations of Leningrad and Moscow exploded in December at the provincial party conferences that preceded the Fourteenth Party Congress. In Moscow a number of the speakers made particularly insulting remarks about the Leningrad leadership, and the conference adopted a resolution that implicitly criticized its sister organization. Outraged by these attacks, the Leningraders removed all supporters of the leadership majority from their delegation to the party congress and voted unanimously to send a letter of protest to the Moscow conference. The Moscow provincial party committee responded with an even more sharply worded denunciation of Zinoviev and Kamenev. On the eve of the party congress, in an attempt to avert an open rupture between the two organizations, the

leadership majority offered a truce in exchange for major concessions by Leningrad. The proposal was rejected by Zinoviev, who described the terms as “a demand for our capitulation without any guarantees for the future.”¹⁹

At the Fourteenth Party Congress in December, the leaders of the Leningrad Opposition repeated their objections to the majority’s agricultural policies and theoretical positions. Furthermore, they sharply denounced the majority leadership for its violations of party democracy. Zinoviev complained of the persecution of Leningrad by Moscow and urged the Central Committee to offer all the previously defeated minority groupings the opportunity to participate in party work. Kamenev also upheld the right of minorities to express their views, but his most noteworthy contribution to the discussion was his denunciation of Stalin’s growing powers:

*We are against creating the theory of a “leader”; we are against making a leader. We are against having the secretariat combine in practice both politics and organization and place itself above the political organ [i.e., the Politburo]. . . . We cannot regard it as normal, and we think it harmful to the party, to prolong a situation in which the secretariat combines politics and organization, and in fact decides policy in advance. . . . I have reached the conviction that comrade Stalin cannot perform the function of uniting the Bolshevik general staff.*²⁰

In his report to the congress, Stalin reasserted the need to struggle against both the kulak deviation and the underestimation of the importance of the alliance with the middle peasant. However, since the party was already better prepared to deal with the kulak threat, he urged that it “concentrate its fire on the struggle with the second deviation.” Stalin charged that anyone who did not accept the doctrine of socialism in one country was a “liquidator who does not believe in socialist construction.” Such individuals should “make way for those who have retained their courage and staunchness.”²¹ Other majority speakers depicted the Opposition’s attacks upon Stalin as motivated by personal jealousy. In reply to Zinoviev’s complaints of persecution, they reminded him of his own campaign against Trotsky. As Mikoian put it, “When Zinoviev is in the majority, he is for iron discipline . . . when he is in the minority . . . he is against it.”²²

Ultimately, the Leningrad Opposition was overwhelmingly defeated by a vote of 559 for the majority resolution and 65 against.²³

In the following weeks the majority leadership launched a struggle to win control of the Leningrad organization. A team of Central Committee members headed by Molotov toured the factories of Leningrad to explain the decisions of the party congress. This campaign culminated in a special provincial party conference that endorsed the decisions of the party congress and condemned the former chiefs of Leningrad. In the same period the leadership majority began to remove minority leaders from positions of power. Kamenev was forced to relinquish his presidency of the Council of Labor and Defense, chairmanship of the Moscow Soviet, and deputy chairmanship of Sovnarkom, and was demoted from full to candidate member of the Politburo. Temporarily, he was assigned the post of Commissar for Trade. Sokol'nikov was transferred from the position of Finance Commissar to that of deputy chairman of Gosplan, and was stripped of his candidate status on the Politburo. Zinoviev forfeited his chairmanship of the Leningrad Soviet, but for the time being remained a full member of the Politburo and, officially, the head of the Comintern.²⁴

Throughout the contest between the leadership majority and the New Opposition, Trotsky remained silent. As Isaac Deutscher has suggested, part of the reason for this may have been that Trotsky, wrapped up in his scientific and literary work, was largely oblivious to the tensions within the party leadership.²⁵ Beyond that, to the extent that Trotsky was aware of the developing conflict he was inclined to view it as irrelevant to his struggle against bureaucratism. Up to this point he had regarded Zinoviev and Kamenev as the most consistent supporters of the party's right wing and the most authoritarian and anti-democratic of the party leaders. Developments in the early phases of the struggle between Leningrad and Moscow had done little to change this view. Until late 1925 Trotsky seems to have believed that the New Opposition's concerns regarding differentiation in the countryside were exaggerated.²⁶ More importantly, in the early phases of the debate there was no clear difference between the New Opposition and the majority of the party leadership on the economic question that Trotsky still saw as primary: the need for

planned, accelerated industrialization. Neither Zinoviev nor Kamenev addressed this issue until late in the year; and the adherence of Sokol'nikov to the New Opposition tended to confirm Trotsky's suspicions about the conservatism of the Opposition. Furthermore, there was little indication that Zinoviev was any more prepared to institute a democratic regime in the Leningrad party organization than Stalin was in the central party apparatus.

By late 1925 Trotsky began to see the struggle in a new light. Just before the Fourteenth Party Congress Trotsky described Kamenev's new position on industrialization as "a step forward."²⁷ At the same time, the difficulties in grain procurement seem to have convinced Trotsky that the kulak threat described by the New Opposition was a real one.²⁸ In a series of memoranda written during December, Trotsky attempted to clarify for himself the meaning of the dispute. Behind all the demagoguery of the New Opposition, Trotsky now detected the "bureaucratically distorted expression of the political anxiety of the proletariat over the course of our economic development as a whole and over the fate of the dictatorship of the proletariat."²⁹ During the party congress Trotsky discerned an "element of truth" in the majority's accusation that the Leningrad Opposition represented a continuation of the Opposition of 1923-24.³⁰

Still, Trotsky was unwilling to come to the aid of the New Opposition, for he felt that the issues were not yet clearly defined. He noted that throughout 1925 all the important economic decisions of the Central Committee had been adopted without apparent dissent. To the extent that differences had been expressed in public, the debate had been so completely controlled by central party leaders that its real social significance had been obscured. For Trotsky, this explained how the party organizations of the two most important proletarian centers had come to adopt unanimous resolutions attacking each other. This confusion also explained how a conservative like Sokol'nikov had emerged as one of the leaders of the New Opposition. Furthermore, Trotsky was convinced that the isolation of the struggle from the rank and file had imparted an "extremely schematic, doctrinaire, and even scholastic character" to the debate. Such was the case in the dispute over "state capitalism" in which, according to Trotsky, the more correct position had been taken by Bukharin.³¹

However, Trotsky's most important criticism of the New Opposition was that it still did not recognize the central importance of industrialization and planning. Although Trotsky felt that the minority's emphasis on industrialization represented a step forward, he criticized the New Opposition for continuing to focus on the issue of peasant differentiation without explaining that the only solution to this problem was through an expansion in industry. By this, Trotsky apparently meant that only industrialization could provide the tools necessary for increasing the productivity of the poor and middle peasants and for the gradual transition to "socialist" collective farming. Trotsky insisted that the *entire* party leadership, including Zinoviev and Kamenev, had been guilty of underestimating the role of industry "as an element that does not passively adapt itself to the conditions of the market, but dynamically shapes and expands the market." Consequently, the party leadership repeatedly had set its long-term projections for industrialization too low, and then had revised these upwards only under the pressure of demand. Meanwhile, the difficulties in grain collection had arisen because the peasants were disinclined to market their harvest when industrial goods were so scarce. In turn, the grain shortages had resulted in further reductions in the import of industrial machinery. What was clearly needed—and what the New Opposition still refused to demand—was an entirely different approach: "State industry must become the backbone of economic planning, based on the firm and effective coordination of the constituent units of the state-owned and socially owned sectors of the economy."³²

Trotsky anticipated that the continued development of the discussion could lead to a broader regrouping of forces within the party and to the further clarification of the issues. For this reason, he insisted that the democratization of the internal life of the party organizations of both Leningrad and Moscow was a necessary precondition for a successful struggle against the "peasant deviation." Also, he expressed the hope that the removal of the top Leningrad leaders who had been responsible for some of the worst abuses of party democracy would contribute to this process.³³

However, Trotsky did not just passively await the transformation of the internal party regime. At the Central Committee session held immediately after the party congress, he, along with Piatakov and Rakovskii, objected to the Politburo's proposal to appoint a majority supporter as editor of the Leningrad party newspaper, arguing against the nomination of local editors by central party bodies. Instead, they suggested that the central party leadership hold discussions with the Leningrad provincial committee to determine how best to implement the resolution of the congress that had called for "immediate measures to alter and improve the editorial board of *Leningradskaiia Pravda*."³⁴ Additionally, in January Trotsky appealed to Bukharin for a joint effort "to make a transition from the present party regime to a more healthy one" by opening up the party to free discussion, and by reinstating "truly collective work in the Politburo and the Central Committee."³⁵

Despite Trotsky's hopes and expectations, no major regrouping of forces within the party occurred during the months following the Fourteenth Party Congress. The possibility of a bloc with the Zinovievists was discussed among the members of the 1923 Opposition. However, many opposed such an alliance, recalling the persecution they had suffered under Zinoviev and doubting his will to fight. Some of these, such as Karl Radek and Vladimir Antonov-Ovseenko, even argued for an alliance with Stalin.³⁶ Others wanted nothing to do with either side. For example, Sergei Mrachkovskii advised, "Neither with Stalin nor with Zinoviev. Stalin will deceive and Zinoviev will run away."³⁷

Nevertheless, the actions of the party majority continued to push Trotsky toward Zinoviev and Kamenev. Perhaps out of fear that the 1923 and 1925 oppositions would join forces, leaders of the majority resorted to new measures to isolate Trotsky. Under various pretexts Uglanov banned Trotsky from addressing proletarian party cells in Moscow. At the same time, rumors were circulated that Trotsky preferred speaking to capitalists rather than workers. Other rumors alleged that all the disagreements within the Politburo had been stirred up by the Jews—Trotsky, Zinoviev, and Kamenev. Again, Trotsky unsuccessfully approached Bukharin to participate in an investigation of these matters.³⁸

It was the debate over economic policy at the April plenum of the Central Committee that finally united Trotsky with Zinoviev and Kamenev. At that plenum Trotsky presented a series of amendments to Rykov's draft resolution on the economy. Basing his proposals upon the decisions of the Fourteenth Party Congress that vaguely had endorsed industrialization, Trotsky again asserted that a more rapid tempo of industrial construction was essential in order to maintain the *smychka* and to increase agricultural productivity. Trotsky urged that the Central Committee instruct the Politburo to draw up a concrete plan for industrialization for the next five to eight years. During the coming year, capital construction should expand by at least twenty percent over that of the previous year. The resources for industrialization were to come from various sources, including a higher tax on the upper strata of the villages. While Kamenev rejected Trotsky's criticisms of the economic policies of previous years, he endorsed Trotsky's demand for higher taxation of the kulaks, and presented his own amendments to combat differentiation in the countryside. Although Trotsky also criticized Kamenev's proposed amendments, he ended up voting for them after his own were rejected. The convergence between Trotsky and Kamenev was so apparent that at one point Stalin interjected, "What is this? A bloc?"³⁹

Just before or soon after the plenum, Trotsky met with Kamenev and Zinoviev to discuss the possibility of an alliance. In Trotsky's first meeting with Kamenev since early 1923, Kamenev optimistically declared, "It is enough for you and Zinoviev to appear on the same platform, and the party will find its true Central Committee." Trotsky laughed at this "bureaucratic optimism," and reminded Kamenev of the "disintegrating effect on the party of the three years' activity of the trio." In further meetings Trotsky repeatedly cautioned Zinoviev and Kamenev about the need to "aim far ahead" and to "prepare for a long and serious struggle."⁴⁰ To prepare himself physically for that struggle, Trotsky left for Berlin a few days after the CC plenum seeking a cure for his recurrent bouts of fever.

5.2 THE STRUGGLE OF THE UNITED OPPOSITION

Upon his return to Moscow near the end of May, Trotsky set to work with Zinoviev and Kamenev to unite the two oppositional factions. Members of both groups were hesitant. “How,” wondered Trotsky’s supporters, “could we sit at the same table with the bureaucrats who had hunted and slandered us—who had murdered the principles and ideas of the Party?”⁴¹ Initially, leaders of the 1923 Opposition even considered concealing from their new allies the names of some of their members out of fear that the Zinovievists would eventually reunite with Stalin.⁴² Supporters of the Leningrad Opposition were equally uneasy that the projected fusion signified a capitulation to “Trotskyism.” Zinoviev and Lashevich were forced to explain to a group of bewildered Leningraders that the menace of “Trotskyism” had been invented entirely for the purposes of the power struggle.⁴³

While working to allay the misgivings of their supporters, the leaders of the two factions were also busy hammering out the platform around which the United Opposition would struggle. In the end they produced the most comprehensive program ever put together by a Bolshevik opposition group, challenging the orientation of the party leadership in a wide range of economic, political, and international policies. In each sphere, the program of the United Opposition represented a convergence of the views previously articulated by the two dissident factions.⁴⁴

The United Opposition’s critique of official Soviet economic policy revolved around three issues: industrialization, the growth of an exploitative layer in the countryside and towns, and the condition of the Soviet proletariat. Perhaps the most important economic criticism leveled by the Opposition was that the rate of industrialization set by the leadership majority was far too slow. Trotsky had raised this issue repeatedly since the introduction of NEP, and Zinoviev and Kamenev had taken it up by the end of 1925. Now, with one voice the Opposition asserted that “state industry is lagging behind the economic development of the country as a

whole.”⁴⁵ As Trotsky previously had emphasized, this was the source of the chronic “goods famine,” which discouraged peasants from selling grain to the state. Without grain to export, the state was unable to purchase industrial equipment abroad.⁴⁶ Furthermore, the United Opposition declared that the persistence of the goods famine ultimately threatened to undermine the *smychka* between the Soviet proletariat and peasantry.⁴⁷

A second, and closely related, economic criticism was that official economic policy was contributing to the growth in size and power of an exploitative layer of kulaks and NEPmen, and to the further impoverishment of the poor peasant. This concern had been expressed forcefully by the Leningrad Opposition in 1925, but it was one that Trotsky now fully shared. In part, the Opposition attributed these developments to the low level of Soviet industry. Often, poor peasants who needed tools or other industrial goods were forced to purchase them from NEPmen at highly inflated prices. To pay for these goods, poor peasants had to borrow from kulaks at usurious rates, or to lease their own plots or sell their labor to kulaks.⁴⁸ According to the Opposition, the growing problem of social differentiation was reinforced by Soviet tax, credit, and price policies. The Opposition complained that the single agricultural tax and the increasing use of indirect taxes fell hardest upon the poor peasant, and that state credit to agriculture, originally intended to assist the poor peasant, more often went to the better-off strata of the villages. Meanwhile, the maintenance of high retail prices for industrial goods, combined with the reduction of wholesale prices, had enriched the private trader at the expense of the consumer and state industry.⁴⁹

The Opposition offered a balance sheet of these agricultural policies in its *Platform*, written in the summer of 1927. There, the Opposition noted that over the previous four years the number of peasants who tilled little or no land had decreased, largely through economic ruin, by between thirty-five and forty-five percent, while those who tilled ten desiatins (twenty-eight acres) or more had increased by 150 to 200 percent. According to the Opposition’s calculations, roughly ten percent of the peasantry now could be categorized as kulaks. Furthermore, even

official sources had estimated that as much as fifty-eight percent of surplus grain was held by the top six percent of the peasant households.⁵⁰

A third set of economic issues addressed by the Opposition was the steady deterioration in the level of employment, standard of living, and working conditions of the proletariat. Again, the Opposition saw these problems as partially derivative of the slow tempo of industrial development. For the worker, slow industrialization translated into mounting unemployment—approximately two million and increasing in the summer of 1927, a decline in real wages due to rising industrial prices, and a growing housing shortage. By the summer of 1927 the problem of unemployment had been compounded by the laying off of workers as part of an effort to improve industrial efficiency. Meanwhile, working conditions had deteriorated as greater pressures were applied to increase labor productivity. The Opposition complained that all of these developments fell hardest on the woman worker and the young worker.⁵¹

Against the economic policies of the party leadership, the Opposition demanded a more rapid tempo of industrialization, economic restrictions on the kulak, and greater assistance for the worker and the poor and middle peasant. *The Platform of the United Opposition* proposed net budget appropriations to industry of between 500 and 1,000 million rubles per year for the following five years, instead of the 90 to 200 million projected at the time by Gosplan. Regarding agriculture, the Opposition called upon the party leadership to divert the flow of credit from the kulaks to the poor and middle peasants, and to free the poorest forty to fifty percent of all peasant households entirely from the burden of taxation. At the same time, the Opposition suggested that the expansion of industry could pave the way for the gradual introduction of collective farming. On behalf of the proletariat, the Opposition demanded an increase in wages, beginning with the lowest paid workers, to a level at least commensurate with the rising level of labor productivity. Beyond that, the United Opposition appealed for an increase in unemployment benefits and an expansion in the construction of housing.⁵²

The Opposition envisioned that the resources for this program could be obtained from a variety of sources. Most importantly, they argued that the taxes of the kulak and NEPman should

be raised by 150 or 200 million rubles. Furthermore, they demanded the imposition of a forced loan of no less than 150 million puds (2,700,000 tons) of grain from the most prosperous ten percent of the peasantry. A large part of the grain thus acquired was to be exported to the West to finance the import of industrial machinery. Although the Opposition endorsed the reduction in retail prices of industrial goods initiated by the majority on behalf of the consumer, it demanded a simultaneous narrowing of the gap between wholesale and retail prices in order to maintain a greater share of the mark-up in the hands of state industry. The reduction in retail prices was to be achieved mainly by an increase in the volume of production and by cutting the costs of production and overhead.⁵³

While denouncing the orientation of official Soviet economic policy, the United Opposition also launched an attack upon the party leadership's international policies. The Opposition charged that the approach of the leadership in international affairs increasingly paralleled its domestic policies. Just as the majority leaders based their internal economic policies upon the kulak and the NEPman to the detriment of the proletariat and poor peasantry, externally, they had begun to rely upon alliances with petty-bourgeois elements at the expense of the international revolution. In the view of the Opposition, the clearest example of this in 1926 involved the Anglo-Russian Trade Union Unity Committee.⁵⁴

The Anglo-Russian Committee, composed of leading representatives of the trade-union federations of Britain and the Soviet Union, was established in the spring of 1925. Its purpose, as outlined in a joint declaration of trade-union delegations of the two countries, was to promote "the international unity of the workers of all countries" in order to establish "an impregnable force against capitalist oppression" and "an unbreakable pledge of peace and economic security."⁵⁵ From the point of view of the Soviet leadership, the value of the committee was twofold: it could provide a means by which to influence the entire British labor movement in a revolutionary direction; and it would serve as a bulwark against British interventionist attempts against the Soviet Union.⁵⁶ The test of the efficacy of the committee regarding the first of these goals was not long in coming. On May 3, 1926, the General Council of the British Trades Union

Congress (TUC) declared a general strike in solidarity with the striking British coal miners. This action was greeted with enthusiasm in the Soviet Union where hundreds of thousands of workers participated in sympathy demonstrations and contributed millions of rubles to support the strikers. However, Soviet enthusiasm quickly gave way to dismay when the General Council rejected the Soviet offer of financial support. The sense of betrayal was compounded when, on May 12, the General Council called off the general strike.⁵⁷

Soon afterwards, the Anglo-Russian Committee became an issue in the unfolding struggle within the Soviet Union. From the beginning Trotsky had been critical of the party leadership's justifications for the alliance.⁵⁸ Now, six days after the TUC leadership's betrayal of the general strike, Trotsky called upon the party leadership to repudiate the Anglo-Russian Committee.⁵⁹ Probably because he had been involved in setting up the committee, Zinoviev initially hesitated over a complete rupture with that organization.⁶⁰ Nevertheless, by July Zinoviev had been won over to Trotsky's position.

The leaders of the Opposition asserted that the General Council had betrayed the general strike and were preparing for the final betrayal of the miners. In the meantime, the Opposition claimed, the General Council continued to use its association with the Bolsheviks through the Anglo-Russian Committee to cover themselves from the criticisms of the British workers. The Opposition called upon the Politburo to convene a session of the committee immediately in order to use it as a forum for exposing the role of the General Council. Then, the Soviet delegation was to dissolve the ARC. The Opposition argued that such a course would contribute to the radicalization of the British workers and facilitate their break with reformism. Continuing the alliance, leaders of the Opposition claimed, would only strengthen the position of the British trade-union bureaucrats. Against the majority's argument that the committee still provided a shield against war, the Opposition predicted that the betrayers of the British proletariat would "betray the British proletariat even more outrageously—and with them the Soviet Union and the cause of peace—the moment a war threatens." Finally, the Opposition warned that if the Soviets

did not dissolve the Anglo-Russian Committee, the British would do so anyway at a point when the break would be most favorable to them.⁶¹

The third general preoccupation of the United Opposition involved the decline of democracy in the functioning of Soviet political institutions. Previously, both the 1923 and 1925 Oppositions had warned of the erosion of workers' democracy in the party. Now, in response to the growing authoritarianism of the party leadership, the increasing concentration of power at the party summit, and the development of similar tendencies in other important Soviet political institutions, the United Opposition raised this issue more forcefully than ever before.

In the spring of 1926, Trotsky noted that more than five years had passed since the Tenth Party Congress had proclaimed a "course toward party democracy," which was to include "the constant control on the part of the public opinion of the party over the work of its leading bodies." Furthermore, over two and a half years had elapsed since the Central Committee's New Course resolution had defined workers' democracy as "the liberty of frank discussion of the most important questions of party life by all members, and the freedom to have organized discussions on these questions, and the election of all leading party functionaries and commissions from the bottom up." The intervening period had been years of peace, economic growth, working class revival, and party proletarianization—conditions that should have been favorable for the expansion of party democracy. Yet, Trotsky observed, "never before has the party regime been so permeated by the practice of appointment from above, habits of command, suspicion, and administrative pressure, i.e., by an all-embracing principle of apparatus rule."⁶² Trotsky and the other leaders of the Opposition charged that, instead of encouraging the free exchange of views essential to workers' democracy, the majority had stifled all critical discussion. The result was that "those who are dissatisfied, have doubts, or are in disagreement are afraid to raise their voices at party meetings."⁶³

In the view of the Opposition, the sentiments and aspirations of the proletarian section of the party had found a voice in its own program. Yet, throughout 1926-27 the Opposition repeatedly complained that its views were being withheld from the party rank and file by the

refusal of the majority to publish its documents and speeches.⁶⁴ When Oppositionists tried to address party gatherings, their voices were drowned out by the whistling and shouting, and their meetings were broken up violently by “fascist gangs” organized by the party leadership. Meanwhile, the party ranks were subjected to a completely one-sided and slanderous discussion of the issues.⁶⁵ Furthermore, prominent Oppositionists were removed from leading party bodies, and rank and file Oppositionists were threatened with the prospect of exile, expulsion from the party, or loss of employment.⁶⁶

Simultaneously, the Opposition charged that the power of the central party institutions had continued to grow at the expense of the “constant control . . . of the party over the work of its leading bodies.” In the summer of 1927 the Opposition asserted that “the real power 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.”⁶⁷ Most important in this regard was the continued practice of appointing of party secretaries.⁶⁸ According to the Opposition, a similar process was observable in the soviets and trade-union organizations.⁶⁹

Connected with these developments was the growth of majority factionalism first condemned by the 1923 Opposition. At the time of the formation of the United Opposition, Zinoviev and Kamenev had revealed that from 1923-1925 the party had been controlled by a secret factional “Septemvirate” consisting of the chairman of the Central Control Commission and all of the members of the Politburo but Trotsky. Now the Opposition asserted that “a similar factional grouping at the top has no doubt existed since the Fourteenth Congress as well.”⁷⁰ Its purpose was “to deny the party the chance to use the normal means, provided by the party rules, to make changes in the personnel and policies of the party apparatus.”⁷¹ Echoing the Leningrad Opposition, Trotsky now warned that the growing “bureaucratic [*biuokraticeskii*]” practices of appointment, repression, centralization, and majority factionalism were leading “fatally toward one-man rule” in the party.⁷²

The United Opposition called for a return of the soviets, trade unions, and the party to the principle of “workers’ democracy” as defined by the Tenth Party Congress and the New Course

resolution. As a first step in this direction, the Opposition declared, it was necessary for the party leadership to put an end to the repression of oppositionists and to ensure the free discussion of all contested questions, both in the party press and at party meetings. The Opposition demanded the opening of a discussion at least three months prior to the next party congress in which it would have the opportunity to present its program. Against the growing separation of leading bodies of the party from the working class, the Opposition called for the election of all officials, the further proletarianization of the party and its apparatus, and the assignment of a large number of the members of the party apparatus to work in industry and among the rank and file. The budget and the size of the party apparatus were to be cut, and limits were to be imposed on the length of time an individual could hold a party post. Furthermore, the Opposition demanded the restoration of collective leadership and the implementation of Lenin's recommendation to remove Stalin from the post of General Secretary.⁷³

In the early summer of 1926 the Opposition launched a campaign to win party members to its program. Although the United Opposition was quickly joined by the remnants of the Workers' Opposition and the Democratic Centralists, it still remained, in the words of the Stalinist historian Popov, a "staff without an army."⁷⁴ To rectify this situation, the Opposition sent organizers throughout the country to scour the party cells for prospective adherents. In every city clandestine meetings were held in workers' apartments or on the outskirts of town. One such gathering soon became an issue in the party struggle when it was reported to the party leadership. That meeting, held in a wooded area outside of Moscow, was presided over by an official of the Comintern named Belenkii, and was addressed by Lashevich, the Deputy Commissar for War.⁷⁵

Observing the activities of the United Opposition with apprehension, the party majority leadership decided to strike before the July plenum of the Central Committee. In early June a commission of the CCC met to investigate the Lashevich affair. It concluded with a stern condemnation of Lashevich, Belenkii, and five other participants in the "illegal conspiratorial meeting" and recommended the removal of Lashevich from his post as deputy Commissar for

War and from the Central Committee. Finally, the CCC warned both Lashevich and Belenkii that further factional activities would result in their expulsion from the party.⁷⁶

The Opposition counterattacked at the July plenum. Early in the proceedings the leaders of the Opposition read statements in which Zinoviev and Kamenev admitted that the 1923 Opposition had been correct in warning of the dangers of party bureaucratism, and Trotsky asserted that he had made a “gross mistake” in accusing Zinoviev and Kamenev of opportunism. Then the Opposition presented a series of documents that included its indictment of Soviet economic policy, Comintern policy in Britain, and the party’s internal regime.⁷⁷

The majority refused to give ground on any of the issues raised by the Opposition. It rejected the Opposition’s demand for a break with the Anglo-Russian Committee, arguing that the ARC could still contribute to the radicalization of the British working class and the movement against intervention, and charging that the Opposition had abandoned Lenin’s policy of working in the most reactionary trade unions.⁷⁸ Equally, the majority leadership repudiated the Opposition’s economic proposals, asserting that the policy of industrialization adopted by the Fourteenth Party Congress already was being implemented, and that in the coming year industry would be in a better position to supply the peasantry with goods. Against the Opposition’s demand for higher taxation of the kulak, the majority rejected a course that, it claimed, would undermine the peasant’s incentive to produce. The majority also opposed the demand for wage increases, insisting that these, if not tied to rising productivity, would be inflationary and ultimately would hurt the standard of living of the workers. Finally, it dismissed as nonsensical the accusation that the majority leadership was guilty of factionalism. The majority, it asserted, could not have any factional views distinct from those of the collective party since it was the majority that determined the political line of the party.⁷⁹ On the contrary, it was the Opposition that had violated party discipline. For his conspiratorial activities, Lashevich was expelled from the Central Committee and stripped of his post in the War Commissariat. All who had participated in the meeting with Lashevich were banned from party office for two years. Most importantly, Zinoviev, who had been implicated indirectly was removed from the Politburo.⁸⁰

Undaunted, the minority continued its offensive, now taking its case openly to the party rank and file. Increasingly, the Opposition circulated its theses among the party membership, and in late September and early October, its leaders attended and addressed a series of factory cell meetings. There, they were met by organized supporters of the majority who attempted to shout them down. On October 2 the Moscow party committee branded the appearance of Opposition leaders the previous day at the Aviapribor factory as “a crime against the party” and an attempt “to fasten a discussion on the party.” The Politburo, in turn, condemned the Opposition for violating party discipline, and referred the matter to the Central Committee and Central Control Commission for consideration.⁸¹

For the most part, the party membership observed the struggle between the majority and the minority in silence. Aside from the effects of the majority’s campaign of intimidation, the failure of the Opposition to arouse the party ranks in the fall of 1926 may have been partly due to the economic situation. The harvest of that year was especially good; and contrary to the predictions of the Opposition, the grain collection was proceeding well. Also, in August and September the party leadership, reversing its earlier position, suddenly promised a wage increase for industrial workers, thereby undercutting a central demand of the Opposition.⁸²

Faced with defeat and the prospect of severe reprisals, the United Opposition petitioned the leadership for a truce. Stalin agreed, but dictated severe terms: the Opposition was to accept the decisions of the party organs, admit that its factional activities had been harmful to the party, and disavow its domestic supporters who advocated a new party and its foreign sympathizers who had been expelled from their respective sections of the Comintern.⁸³ The Opposition reluctantly complied with Stalin’s conditions and promised henceforth to defend its views “only in the forms established by the statutes and decisions of the congresses and the CC.”⁸⁴

However, soon after the conclusion of the truce, Stalin moved to crush the Opposition. Within a week after the minority’s statement of surrender, the Politburo commissioned Stalin to prepare theses on the Opposition for the upcoming party conference. Trotsky, embittered by the treachery of the majority leaders, protested this violation of the truce and denounced Stalin as

“the grave-digger of the revolution.” Subsequently, the Central Committee removed Zinoviev from the Executive Committee of the Comintern and revoked Trotsky’s membership and Kamenev’s candidate membership on the Politburo.⁸⁵

Although the party leadership clearly had broken the truce, the leaders of the Opposition realized that any immediate renewal of the struggle would result in their expulsion from the party. Consequently, at the Fifteenth Party Conference in late October and early November, they attempted to fulfill the conditions of their surrender by remaining silent during the discussion of the economic situation. Only after Stalin presented his report on the Opposition did Kamenev, Zinoviev, and Trotsky rise to defend themselves.

In his report Stalin denounced the Opposition as a “Social-Democratic deviation within the party,” and explained that its “principal error” was its refusal to admit the possibility of constructing socialism in one country. Stalin admitted that the victory of socialism in the Soviet Union could not be considered “final” until the danger of imperialist intervention had been eliminated by revolutions “in at least several other countries.” Nevertheless, he insisted that, even if the world revolution did not materialize, “the proletarian dictatorship in the U.S.S.R., by its own efforts” was “capable of overcoming the bourgeoisie of the U.S.S.R.,” and of building a “complete socialist society.” The failure of the Opposition to recognize this elementary truth, Stalin asserted, explained both its pessimistic forecasts about the political degeneration of the Soviet state and its economic and international adventurism.⁸⁶

Trotsky responded to these arguments at the party conference and, one month later, at the plenum of the Executive Committee of the Communist International (ECCI).⁸⁷ In the process, he developed a comprehensive critique of the theory of socialism in one country. Trotsky asserted that there was no doubt on the part of the Opposition that the Soviet Union was constructing socialism. Otherwise, what would be the point of the alleged desire of the Opposition to “rob” the peasantry? Rather, the issue was whether or not this process could be completed in one country. To insist that it could, one had to assume both that the world revolution would not materialize for at least thirty to forty years, and that the Soviet Union would not succumb to

external pressures in the meantime. The problem, Trotsky argued, was that both premises were groundless. Regarding the international revolution, the most likely prospect was that European capitalism would continue to decay and decline, presenting the proletariat in a number of countries with the possibility of seizing power. The rejection of this view by the leaders of the majority indicated that it was they, and not the Opposition, who were guilty of pessimism. On the other hand, Trotsky predicted that if capitalism somehow managed to avert revolution through rising prosperity, then “we shall surely be strangled or crushed,” if not through military intervention, then through competition with capitalism on the world market.⁸⁸

Leaving aside the question of world revolution, Trotsky also condemned Stalin’s theory for its implications regarding economic policy. Trotsky argued that contemporary history demonstrated the growth of international economic interdependence. Yet, in the face of this tendency the proponents of socialism in one country glorified the ideal of national self-reliance. Trotsky warned that “if we attempt to ignore the division of labor in world industry, and jump over our economic past that has made our industry what it is now, . . . if, according to the famous ‘socialist’ Monroe Doctrine which is now being preached to us, we are to make everything ourselves, this will unavoidably mean an extreme slowing down of the rate of our economic development.”⁸⁹ This, in turn, would considerably reduce the ability of the Soviet Union to compete with world capitalism.⁹⁰

In the end the conference unanimously endorsed Stalin’s theses and threatened further disciplinary action if the Opposition resumed its struggle. In early December the ECCI confirmed the decision of the party conference, asserting that the Opposition represented “a Right danger within the C.P.S.U., screened by Left phrases.”⁹¹

The winter of 1926-1927 brought a lull in the party struggle. Following the party conference, the Opposition significantly curtailed its factional activities. Internally, it found itself increasingly divided over how to proceed and demoralized over its defeat. Trotsky utilized this “breathing-space” to delve into a number of theoretical questions.⁹² However, in the spring of 1927 the struggle resumed with even greater intensity over developments taking place in China.⁹³

Since 1924 the entire Chinese Communist Party (CCP) had been part of Sun Yat-sen's nationalist organization, the Guomindang (GMD). The CCP had entered the GMD reluctantly, and only under pressure from the Comintern leadership in Moscow. Initially, the entire Central Committee of the CCP had opposed the merger on the grounds that the Guomindang was a bourgeois political party, and that the fusion would obstruct the pursuit of an independent proletarian line by the Chinese Communists.⁹⁴ During the following years, the growth of the revolutionary movement and of Communist influence, rightward shifts by the Guomindang, and the tightening of control over the CCP by the GMD leadership continued to strain the alliance. Repeatedly, Chen Duxiu, the founder and general secretary of the CCP, appealed to the Comintern for permission for the CCP to leave the Guomindang. Each time, his appeals were rejected.

The Comintern leadership justified its position on entry into the Guomindang on the basis of its analysis of the immediate tasks of the Chinese revolution and the class character of the GMD. According to this view China was not yet ripe for proletarian power, but was undergoing a bourgeois-nationalist revolution to unite the country and free it from imperialist control. Furthermore, the Comintern leadership argued that the GMD was not, strictly speaking, a bourgeois party; rather, it was an organization that represented the interests of the broad masses of Chinese society, including the petty-bourgeois intellectuals, peasants, workers, and the revolutionary bourgeoisie. Consequently, it was the responsibility of the CCP to remain within, and to subject itself to the discipline of, the GMD for the time being. (Although at least Stalin seems to have anticipated that the CCP ultimately would seize power within the GMD.)⁹⁵

By late 1926 and early 1927, China was in the midst of a revolutionary upheaval precipitated by Chiang Kai-shek's Northern Expedition against the warlord regimes in central China and Manchuria. In the wake of Chiang's Guomindang armies, peasants throughout central and northern China seized land from their landlords, rose in revolt against their local warlords, and entered the newly-formed peasant associations that were taking control of the villages. Meanwhile, workers engaged in acts of economic sabotage and political strikes against the

warlords, seized concessions from the British, and organized mass trade unions in liberated cities and towns. The spectacular culmination of this rebellion was the successful insurrection in Shanghai in March 1927.

Frightened, Chiang attempted to repress the upsurge, banning strikes and demonstrations, disarming workers, and closing down trade unions and peasant associations. When Chen Duxiu suggested again that the Communists leave the GMD, the ECCI emphatically rejected his proposal. In October 1926 the Soviet party leadership urged the CCP to restrain “peasant excesses” in order to avoid antagonizing the GMD generals. Then, following the Shanghai insurrection, when Chen requested permission from the Comintern to arm the workers of Shanghai in preparation for the imminent clash with Chiang, the CCP was instructed to bury its weapons and avoid clashes with Chiang’s army.

Meanwhile, Trotsky was growing increasingly critical of Comintern policy in China. Years later, he asserted that he had opposed the entry of the CCP into the Guomindang as early as 1923—a claim that has never been confirmed by independent evidence.⁹⁶ Nevertheless, at least by April 1926 Trotsky was demanding in the Politburo that the CCP be permitted to withdraw from the GMD.⁹⁷ Until September 1927 he accepted the view that China was experiencing a bourgeois-democratic revolution. However, for Trotsky this did not imply that the Chinese working class would play only a subordinate role. He observed that, as the Chinese revolution unfolded, the bourgeoisie who controlled the GMD were shifting rapidly to the right. Only the proletariat, supported by the broad masses of the Chinese peasantry, would be able to lead the revolution to victory. To do so, however, the proletariat had to be free to organize its own independent Communist party. Such an independent party, Trotsky argued, would be able to form an alliance with the Guomindang, to the extent that the GMD pursued a revolutionary course.⁹⁸

At Trotsky’s insistence the United Opposition as a whole took up the China question in the last days of March 1927. When Zinoviev and his supporters, along with the Trotskyists Piatakov and Radek, rejected abandoning the Guomindang, Trotsky agreed to refrain from

raising this demand in order to preserve the unity of the United Opposition.⁹⁹ Nevertheless, the Opposition began to urge the party leadership to encourage the CCP to adopt a more independent line. In particular, Trotsky proposed that the CCP begin to form soviets of workers, peasants, and soldiers in order to block a fascist or Bonapartist coup by Chiang Kai-shek, to organize the insurgent workers and peasants, and to prepare for the seizure of power. Simultaneously, he denounced the subordination of the CCP to the bourgeois GMD as analogous to the line pursued by the Russian Mensheviks in 1917.¹⁰⁰

Trotsky's fears of a coup were confirmed on April 12 when Chiang Kai-shek launched a reign of terror against workers and communists in Shanghai and a number of other cities. Soon afterwards, Stalin drafted theses proclaiming a new line for the CCP. Chiang Kai-shek's coup, Stalin argued, had signified the "desertion of the national bourgeoisie from the revolution" and had marked the beginning of a new stage in the struggle. The Chinese communists were to remain within the Guomintang, but now they were to cooperate closely with its left wing in struggle against Chiang. In particular, they were to support the left GMD government in Wuhan, which was destined to become "the organ of a revolutionary-democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry."¹⁰¹

From the point of view of the Opposition, the new line of the party leadership was little better than the old. Trotsky noted that although the Central Committee theses vaguely advised the CCP to "preserve its independence" within the left Guomintang, they said nothing about the need for the Chinese communists to issue their own daily paper, and the need for "relentless criticism" of the left GMD. And although the theses called for the arming of the workers and peasants, they opposed the formation of soviets, which could coordinate the mass struggle. Furthermore, Trotsky argued that the theses were mistaken about the character of the left GMD government. He predicted that it would soon unite with Chiang Kai-shek against the workers and peasants, and would inflict "a new and perhaps even more serious defeat" upon the Chinese revolution.¹⁰² Again, Trotsky's predictions were quickly confirmed. In May and June, troops of the Wuhan government carried out widespread massacres of peasants. On July 15 the left

Guomindang expelled all communists from its ranks and began a campaign of arrests and executions of communists and trade unionists. Finally, in September the remnants of the Wuhan government reunited with Chiang Kai-shek.

Embarrassed by the debacle in China, in the spring and summer of 1927 the majority leadership attempted to silence the Opposition. The Politburo rejected Trotsky's request for a special closed session of the Central Committee to discuss the Chinese question, and the Soviet press refused to publish any statements by Oppositionists on the issue. At a mass public meeting on May 9, Zinoviev protested against this press boycott of the Opposition's views. In response, the Central Committee denounced Zinoviev's speech as a violation of the October truce, and referred the matter to the CCC. Unable to obtain a hearing within the party, Trotsky appealed to the Executive of the Comintern for a chance to present his position.¹⁰³

During the plenum of the ECCI in late May, the conservative British government broke off diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union on the basis of alleged evidence of Soviet espionage. In the Soviet Union this incident immediately gave rise to fears of imminent war with Britain. At the ECCI plenum Stalin utilized this concern against the Opposition, denouncing Trotsky's "attacks on the Party and the Comintern" as an example of "something like a united front from [British foreign secretary] Chamberlain to Trotsky." In the end, the plenum approved Stalin's report on the situation in China and condemned the factional activities of the Opposition.¹⁰⁴

Meanwhile, the Opposition, aroused by the developments in China, was renewing its offensive on a broad range of issues. While the ECCI plenum was still in session, the Opposition presented the Politburo with a comprehensive statement of its views on the economic, political, and international situation, concluding with the demand for a broad discussion of all contested questions in preparation for the Fifteenth Party Congress.¹⁰⁵

The majority retaliated by subjecting the Opposition to a new wave of punitive transfers. Leading members of the United Opposition were sent abroad on diplomatic assignments or transferred to administrative positions in remote corners of the country. When one Opposition

leader, I. T. Smilga, was assigned to a new post on the Manchurian border, a large number of Oppositionists gathered at the Iaroslavl railway station in Moscow to see him off. Both Trotsky and Zinoviev made brief, restrained remarks to this gathering. Immediately, the party leadership charged the Opposition with organizing an unlawful public demonstration. In subsequent weeks, rank and file Oppositionists who had been present at the Iaroslavl station were expelled from the party and *Pravda* ran an editorial accusing the Opposition of disloyalty to the Soviet state in the face of the imperialist threat. In late June the CCC met to consider the expulsion of Trotsky and Zinoviev from the Central Committee for Trotsky's speech before the ECCI and for their organization of the "demonstration" at Iaroslavl station.¹⁰⁶

Addressing the CCC, Trotsky quickly dispensed with the formal accusations. The real significance of the proceedings, Trotsky argued, was to use the war scare "to hound the Opposition and to prepare for its physical annihilation." Although the CCC again condemned the factional activities of the Opposition, it balked at expelling the Opposition's leaders from the Central Committee, and referred the matter to the upcoming joint CC-CCC plenum.¹⁰⁷

Soon afterwards, Trotsky inadvertently provided the majority with further evidence of the Opposition's disloyalty. In a July 11 letter to Ordzhonikidze, the Stalinist head of the CCC, Trotsky attempted to refute allegations that the Opposition would adopt a "defeatist" position in the event of war. Trotsky recalled that during the world war when Paris was threatened by German troops, Clemenceau had denounced the vacillation of French military policy. In so doing, he had been able to win power and rally the French to victory. In a war with Britain, Trotsky implied, the Opposition would behave likewise.¹⁰⁸ The majority leadership immediately proclaimed that Trotsky had admitted that the Opposition favored only a "conditional defense" of the USSR and was prepared to carry out an insurrection in the midst of the imminent war.¹⁰⁹

The CC-CCC plenum that met in late July and early August concentrated on international issues, and again took up the question of Trotsky's and Zinoviev's expulsion from the Central Committee. During the discussion Trotsky warned the majority that the Stalinist line would make a Soviet victory in war difficult, if not impossible. He flatly denied the charges that he advocated

defeatism or insurrection, but reaffirmed his position that it was the duty of oppositionists to attempt to correct a fundamentally false line, even in the midst of war. Nevertheless, the Opposition was able to avert the removal of its leaders from the CC by a conciliatory statement. The Opposition proclaimed its loyalty to the Soviet Union, rejected the view that the party leadership was reinstating capitalism, criticized efforts by its German supporters to set up a new communist party, and rejected factionalism and the formation of a new party in the Soviet Union.¹¹⁰ However, the rift between the Opposition and the party majority was now too deep to be papered over, even temporarily. Soon after the plenum, both sides resumed the struggle. While the majority leadership continued to persecute oppositionists, the Opposition began to draft a platform in preparation for the Fifteenth Party Congress.

5.3 TROTSKY AND THE OPPOSITION ON BUREAUCRATISM

According to the classical Marxist analysis, the problem of bureaucracy was essentially one of political alienation—that is, the tendency for political institutions in class societies to separate themselves from, and to rule over, the masses of society. In normal periods this tendency was seen as closely interrelated with the degree of control exerted by the dominant, exploitative, economic class over the state. Thus, Marx and Engels believed that the more the state was subordinated to the control of an exploitative class, the more it became alienated from the masses of society; and conversely, the more the state separated itself from the control of the masses, the more it was subject to conquest by an exploitative class.

In 1923 Trotsky first perceived the relevance of this analysis for understanding political and economic developments in the Soviet Union. During that year he began to define the problem of Soviet bureaucratism in terms of the growing power of the apparatuses of the party and state in relation to the party rank and file and the Soviet people, respectively. He argued that

part of the source of state bureaucratism was the pressure exerted upon the Soviet state by alien class forces. Furthermore, he warned that the continued growth of political alienation in the state and party could strengthen bourgeois elements within the Soviet Union and, ultimately, could facilitate a restoration of capitalism. During the years 1923-1925, however, Trotsky did not develop these views beyond the level of a loosely connected set of insights and concerns.

With the formation of the United Opposition in 1926, Trotsky returned to, and began to amplify upon, many of the themes he had developed during the New Course controversy. Events in the Soviet Union since 1923 had convinced Trotsky more than ever before that the classical Marxist analysis of bureaucracy provided the key to understanding the current Soviet situation. Utilizing this analysis, Trotsky began, for the first time, to construct a coherent theory of Soviet bureaucracy.

5.3.1 The Conception of Bureaucracy

Consistent with the classical Marxist analysis of bureaucracy, Trotsky's conception of the problem during the years 1926-1927 focused on two developments: the growing alienation of institutions of power from the masses, and the increasing subordination of those institutions to alien class interests. Throughout the years 1926-1927, Trotsky and the United Opposition denounced the "bureaucratism" inherent in the continuing centralization of decision making and in the growing manifestations of authoritarianism within the party, state, and other important Soviet institutions. Simultaneously, Trotsky and the United Opposition sharply condemned the developing links they perceived between Soviet political institutions and capitalist elements within Soviet society, and the responsiveness of Soviet institutions to those elements. More clearly than before, Trotsky and the Opposition argued that these class shifts within Soviet institutions were, in themselves, manifestations of bureaucratism.

During the New Course controversy Trotsky had expressed his concern about the separation of the party apparatus from the control of the average rank and file party member. In particular, Trotsky had criticized the tendency of party officials to decide all questions, including the selection of lower-level officials, and the efforts of party leaders to repress the free discussion of important issues. In 1926-1927 Trotsky and the United Opposition asserted that centralization of decision making within the party had continued to rise, in violation of the principle of workers' democracy. Thus, in the spring of 1926 Trotsky denounced the "unlimited domination of the party apparatus," and the establishment of a "regime based on the absolute authority of the apparatus." These anti-democratic tendencies, Trotsky asserted, constituted the "essence of bureaucracy [*biurokratiia*]." ¹¹¹

However, in the view of Trotsky and the United Opposition, the process of bureaucratic centralization had gone beyond the concentration of all power in the hands of the apparatus. In October 1926 Trotsky spoke of the "concentration of the all-powerful party apparatus in the hands of an ever more restricted leadership core." In particular, Trotsky had in mind the growing authority of the Stalin faction that he described as "*a faction within the ruling faction.*" Repeating the warnings of the Leningrad Opposition, Trotsky observed that this development was leading inexorably toward the creation of "a ruinous regime of one-man rule in the party." ¹¹²

According to the United Opposition, the bureaucratic authoritarianism of the party leadership was also much worse than it had been in 1923. At the time of the New Course controversy, Trotsky and the Opposition were mainly concerned about the stifling of free discussion in the party cells. While the United Opposition complained that this practice had become even more widespread by 1926-1927, it also asserted that the party leadership now was actively engaged in the repression of party dissidents. As we have seen, the methods employed by the majority and denounced by the Opposition ranged from the suppression of Opposition documents to the use of anti-Semitic innuendo, the breaking up of meetings by "fascist" gangs," and the firing of Oppositionists from their jobs. As the party struggle approached its climax in

the summer of 1927, Trotsky predicted that this course could only culminate in the attempt by Stalin to achieve the “physical extermination” of the Opposition.¹¹³

At the same time, the United Opposition described the growth of similar bureaucratic centralist and authoritarian norms in state institutions. In the period 1923-1925, Trotsky had devoted considerable attention to the problem of state bureaucratism. In the *Platform of the Opposition*, submitted to the CC in September 1927, the Opposition described the bureaucratic regime in the soviets as comparable to that in the party:

The soviets have had less and less to do with the settling of fundamental political, economic, and cultural questions. They have become mere appendages to the executive committees and presidiums. The work of administration has been entirely concentrated in the hands of the latter. . . . The elected leaders in important spheres of soviet administration are removed at the first conflict of the chairman of the soviet. They are removed still more quickly in cases of conflict with the secretary of the regional committee of the party. In consequence of this the elective principle is being reduced to nothing, and responsibility to the electors is losing all meaning.¹¹⁴

Furthermore, as Trotsky had done in 1923, the United Opposition condemned the imposition of state “bureaucratism [*biurokratizm*], sustained by the spirit of great power chauvinism” upon the national republics of the Soviet Union.¹¹⁵

Beyond the state and party Trotsky and the United Opposition also had begun to detect the pervasive symptoms of bureaucratism in all social institutions and “all . . . nonparty mass organizations.” Within the factory, “the . . . administrative bodies are striving more and more to establish their unlimited authority. The hiring and discharge of workers is actually in the hands of the administration alone.”¹¹⁶ In the unions “the established regime obstructs the development of activism by the workers and prevents them from setting about the construction of socialism to the fullest extent.”¹¹⁷ Even the Comintern, though not a “Soviet” organization, had been infected with the disease of Soviet bureaucratism. Thus, in January 1927 Trotsky wrote of the “hidden and disguised . . . bureaucratic apparatus regime in the Comintern itself” and the growth of “bureaucratism within the foreign Communist parties” under pressure from Moscow.¹¹⁸

Although Trotsky and the United Opposition usually employed the term bureaucratism in reference to the growth of centralism and authoritarianism, this was not always the case. Following the traditional Marxist analysis of political alienation, during 1923-1925 Trotsky described bureaucratism as related to the growth of alien (i.e., non-proletarian) class influence within the state and party. Trotsky and the Opposition now expanded upon this analysis, at times explicitly *defining* bureaucratism in terms of this influence. This was suggested by Trotsky in a speech before the CCC in the summer of 1927 when he observed that bureaucratism “is not a question of the mere number of functionaries. It is a question of the regime, of the course, of the attitude of the rulers to the ruled.” He noted that ordinary working people were increasingly heard to complain about the treatment they received at the hands of party officials: These voices “signify not only that the number of bureaucrats [*biurokraty*] has increased, but also that the ruling circles are becoming more and more fused with the upper layers of the Soviet-Nep society; and that two floors are being created, two forms of life, two kinds of habits.”¹¹⁹ Even more clearly, the *Platform* characterized the problem as follows:

The question of Soviet bureaucratism [*biurokratizm*] is not only a question of red tape [*volokita*] and swollen staffs. At bottom it is a question of the class role played by the bureaucracy, of its social ties and sympathies, of its power and privileged position, its relation to the NEPman and the unskilled worker, to the intellectual and the illiterate, to the wife of a Soviet grandee and the most ignorant peasant woman, etc., etc. Whose hand does the official grasp? That is the fundamental question which is daily being tested in life’s experience by millions of working people.¹²⁰

As these passages indicate, part of the problem was the shifting class composition of the leading institutions of the state and party. In this regard, the situation was especially bad in the state apparatus. In the “Declaration of the Thirteen” written in July 1926, the leaders of the Opposition observed, “It is quite obvious that the state apparatus in its social composition and standard of living is bourgeois or petty bourgeois to a great extent, and is drawn away from the proletariat and poor peasantry and toward, on the one hand, the comfortably fixed intellectual and, on the other, the merchant, the renter of land, the kulak, and the new bourgeois.”¹²¹

Although party apparatus was more proletarian than the apparatus of the state, the *Platform* deplored the fact that only one-tenth of the members of the “decision-making bodies of the party” were workers in industry (compared with one-third of the party membership as a whole).¹²²

A related development in the eyes of the Opposition was the change in the *political* composition of the party apparatus. In 1923 Trotsky had criticized the virtual monopoly of power of the “Old Guard” who had joined the party before the revolution. His point was that the Old Bolsheviks in the apparatus should make room for younger party members and new ideas. In 1927 the *Platform of the Opposition* described the problem quite differently, warning of the “sapping of the influence of the proletarian and Old Bolshevik nucleus of the party” and noting the rise in the percentage of party officials who had formerly been members of “petty bourgeois” organizations like the Mensheviks and the Social Revolutionaries. The *Platform* pointed out that, at the time of the Fourteenth Party Congress, “38 percent of those occupying responsible and directing positions in our press were persons who had come to us from other parties.” Now, the political composition of the directing organs of the press was even worse, and “about a quarter of the higher cadres of the active elements in the party” were former SRs and Mensheviks.¹²³ Aside from actual changes in the composition of the leading party organs, one factor that was probably partially responsible for this shift in the Opposition’s critique was the changed composition of the Opposition itself. The fusion of Zinoviev’s group with Trotsky’s 1923 supporters had brought into the United Opposition a large number of Old Bolshevik leaders. Thus, by 1927 the Opposition was able to criticize the apparatus from the politically advantageous standpoint of Old Bolshevism.

However, the factor that most convinced Trotsky and the United Opposition of the growth of alien class influences within the party was their perception that the policies of the leadership majority had continued to drift steadily to the right. In 1923, Trotsky had warned that the bureaucratization of the party was raising the prospect of the “opportunistic degeneration” of the apparatus. By 1926-1927 he and the United Opposition concluded that this danger was in the

process of being realized. To indicate the degree of degeneration that had already occurred, they utilized Lenin's analysis of opportunism in the Second International during the world war.

When a majority of the parties of the Second International endorsed the war efforts of their respective countries at the outbreak of the war, Lenin and the Bolsheviks denounced this "opportunist" betrayal of revolutionary socialism. In the pamphlet *Socialism and War*, Lenin and Zinoviev explained that "opportunism expresses bourgeois policies within the working-class movement, expresses the interests of the petty bourgeoisie and the alliance of a tiny section of bourgeoisified workers with their 'own' bourgeoisie, against the interests of the proletarian masses, the oppressed masses."¹²⁴ However, Lenin was even more critical of those groups and individuals, such as Karl Kautsky, who attempted to maintain an intermediate position between full opportunism and revolutionary internationalism. Kautsky, leader of the "Marxist Centre" of the SPD, stated that the outbreak of war had rendered the Socialist International temporarily irrelevant. Furthermore, he argued that all workers should fight to defend their own fatherlands, but that they should be prepared to reunite in the International when the war ended. For Lenin, the "Kautskyites," the "Kautskyan Centre," or simply the "Centrists," were even more harmful than the open chauvinists in the International, for they hid "their advocacy of an alliance with the former [i.e., the chauvinists] under a cloak of plausible, pseudo-'Marxist' catchwords and pacifist slogans." He perceived the Centrists as vacillating "between opportunism and radicalism," that is, between opportunism and revolutionary socialism. However, in the final analysis they were only "only a fig-leaf for opportunism." In contrast to both revolutionary Social-Democracy and blatant opportunism, centrism was not an independent trend for it had no social roots, "either in the masses or in the privileged stratum that has deserted to the bourgeoisie." It was this absence of social roots that accounted for its inconsistent, vacillating behavior.¹²⁵

Although the United Opposition at times criticized various policies of the party leadership as "opportunist" or "Menshevik," it did not perceive the general line of either Soviet

domestic or international policy as *fully* opportunist.¹²⁶ Echoing Lenin, the *Platform* defined “opportunism in its fully developed form” as follows:

Opportunism in its fully developed form—according to the classic definition of Lenin—is a bloc formed by the upper strata of the working class with the bourgeoisie and directed against the majority of the working class. In the conditions now existing in the Soviet Union, opportunism in such fully developed form would express the desire of the upper strata of the working class to compromise with the newly resurrected native bourgeoisie (kulaks and NEPmen) and with world capitalism, at the expense of the interests of the broad mass of the workers and poor peasants.¹²⁷

In contrast, the general line of the party leadership was centrist, occupying a space somewhere between the revolutionary proletarian politics of the Opposition and the complete opportunism of the Second International and the Mensheviks. At times, Trotsky and the Opposition spoke of centrism with regard to international policy, as in September 1926 when Trotsky referred to “the centrist deviation on questions of the world labor movement (the Anglo-Russian Committee, the Guomindang, etc.)”¹²⁸ In other passages Trotsky denounced “the gradual Centrist back-sliding with respect to *internal policies*.”¹²⁹ In both cases the centrism of the party leadership was characterized by political vacillation.¹³⁰

Beyond deepening Trotsky’s 1923 critique of Soviet bureaucratism, during 1926-1927 Trotsky and the United Opposition began to introduce important terminological changes that reflected the beginning of deeper conceptual shifts. One of these was their increasing reference to the “bureaucracy” within each of the major political and social institutions of the Soviet Union. In 1923 Trotsky and his supporters had directed their attacks exclusively at the problem of “bureaucratism [*biurokratizm*]” in the state and party. Although in 1926-1927 they continued to use that term most frequently, at times they now characterized the problem in terms of the “bureaucracy [*biurokratiia*]” of each of the most important institutions of the Soviet Union—and

especially of the state and party. In such passages it seems that Trotsky and the Opposition were suggesting that the problem was not just that a disease had infected these institutions, but that a bureaucratic social formation had usurped power within each of them.¹³¹

Thus, on some occasions Trotsky and the Opposition used the term *bureaucracy* when speaking of the apparatus of the state and of other nonparty institutions. For example, while discussing the “bureaucratic deformations of the workers’ state” in July 1926, the “Declaration of the Thirteen” argued that “the colossal political and economic role of the bureaucracy [*biurokratiia*]” was demonstrated by the large number of “government personnel, professional people, those working in the cooperative network and all other office workers.”¹³² The following year, the *Platform of the Opposition* asserted in its section on the soviets that “the question of Soviet bureaucratism [*biurokratizm*]” was not simply one of red tape, swollen staffs, etc.” Rather, it was fundamentally a “question of the class role played by the bureaucracy [*biurokratiia*], of its social ties and sympathies, of its power and privileged position.”¹³³

Similarly, Trotsky and the Opposition at times utilized bureaucracy or equivalent terms when referring to the secretarial apparatus of the party. For example, in a memorandum written in October 1926 Trotsky asserted, “A *bureaucratized apparatus* [*biurokratizirovannyi apparat*], *imposing its will on the party, inevitably seeks a single will at the top.*”¹³⁴ Along the same lines, in a letter to the Central Committee on June 27, 1927, Trotsky argued that the party was in the midst of a deep crisis, consisting of the fact that “the bureaucracy [*biurokratiia*]” had displaced the vanguard of the proletariat, and “within the bureaucracy [*biurokratiia*]” the upstarts had displaced the old revolutionaries.¹³⁵ A few months later, in its section on the party, *The Platform of the Opposition* insisted that the degeneration of the political course and of the party regime

was giving birth to “an enormous layer of a genuine bureaucracy [*mnogochislennyi sloi podlinnoi biurokratii*].”¹³⁶

There are a couple possible explanations for this shift from bureaucratism to bureaucracy. First, as the manifestations of bureaucratism multiplied quantitatively, the problem was perceived to have changed qualitatively. From the point of view of the Opposition, bureaucratism had become so pervasive among officials of Soviet institutions that it began to seem as if these bodies of officials were themselves inseparable from that phenomenon. Perhaps another contributing factor was the growth in size of the apparatuses of the major Soviet institutions. By the end of 1925 the number of paid party officials had reached approximately 25,600, while by 1926 the number of employees of state institutions exceeded two million.¹³⁷ Thus, the *Platform* complained that “the ‘layer of administrators’—in the party, the trade unions, the economic organs, the cooperatives and the state apparatus—now numbers in the tens of thousands.”¹³⁸ This growth in turn encouraged the perception of Trotsky and the Opposition that these apparatuses were large enough to be considered distinct social groupings.

Even while speaking increasingly of the bureaucracy in the party, the bureaucracy in the Soviet state, etc., Trotsky and the Opposition simultaneously began to introduce another important terminological and conceptual modification. With growing frequency they now spoke as if the organizational apparatuses of all Soviet political and social institutions were really just parts of *one* large social formation: the apparatus or, more frequently, the bureaucracy. In previous years Trotsky always had distinguished clearly between the apparatuses of the state and party. In fact, in 1923 he even had offered different explanations for the growth of bureaucratism in each of those institutions. Now Trotsky and the Opposition began to blur these distinctions. For example, the “Declaration of the Eighty-four” written in May 1927 complained that the

“whole official apparatus both party and soviet [*ves’ ofitsial’nyi apparat, i partinyi i sovetskii*],” was striking out at the left wing of the party.¹³⁹ Similarly, as we have seen, the *Platform* spoke of the singular “layer [*sloi*] of ‘administrators’” in the party, state, etc.¹⁴⁰ Another example appears in Trotsky’s speech before the joint plenary session of the Central Committee and Central Control Commission on August 1, 1927 where he enumerated steps that might be taken on a “Thermidorian path,” including raising and reinforcing “the importance of the bureaucracy [*biurokratiia*], of the administration [*administratsiia*].” The alternative, he suggested, was to “create a political environment in which it would be impossible for “the bourgeoisie and the bureaucracy [*biurokratiia*]” to push aside the workers. Here, Trotsky’s institutional referent was undefined.¹⁴¹

Again, various factors may have contributed to the Opposition’s critique of a single bureaucracy. In part, it may have been promoted by the perception of important similarities in the various apparatuses. According to Trotsky, all of these apparatuses had come to be characterized by the same centralization of authority.¹⁴² In all of them, personnel allegedly were selected and promoted on the basis of their hostility to the revolutionary proletariat and its vanguard.¹⁴³ Furthermore, Trotsky asserted, all of them participated directly in the persecution of the party Opposition.¹⁴⁴ Thus, from the standpoint of the Opposition the specific institutional affiliations must have begun to seem less and less significant. Perhaps another contributing factor was the Opposition’s evolving explanation of the source of the problem. During 1926-1927 the Opposition increasingly described bureaucratism as originating primarily in the shifting relationships between the fundamental classes of Soviet society. As it did so, it tended to view the bureaucracy in the USSR as just one more social grouping, situated among and responding to the conflicting pressures exerted by the various social classes of Soviet society.

However, neither the shift from bureaucratism to the bureaucracies of various institutions, nor the identification of a single social layer, the bureaucracy, should be exaggerated. For the time being, in 1926-1927 Trotsky and the United Opposition still most frequently characterized the problem as one of bureaucratism in all Soviet institutions.

5.3.2 Causes of Bureaucratism

During 1923 Trotsky offered a number of different explanations for the growth of state and party bureaucratism. State bureaucratism, he explained, arose out of a variety of factors that included the low level of Soviet culture, the difficulties of state construction, the need to utilize tsarist experts, the growth of market relations under NEP, the influx of members of the “NEP bourgeoisie” into the state apparatus, and the “heterogeneity of society.” At the same time, he argued that bureaucratism in the party derived from the specialized work of its members employed in state or party offices, was transmitted from the state apparatus, and was exacerbated by the relative decline in the level of proletarian membership.

Although during 1926-1927 Trotsky retained and expanded upon a number of these themes, he explicitly or implicitly discarded a number of others. Most importantly, he moved away from the notion he had inherited from Lenin that the continuing growth of bureaucratism was due to the low level of Soviet culture. In June 1926 Trotsky rejected the argument advanced by the majority that party bureaucratism was a product of the low level of the national culture, combined with the leading role of the party in the state. First, Trotsky argued, “The uncultured character of the country is on the wane while party bureaucratism is on the rise.” Second, he observed that “if the party’s role as a ruling party inevitably entailed its increased bureaucratization, that would imply the destruction of the party.” This was a conclusion Trotsky

was not prepared to accept. He conceded that “lack of culture . . . in the form of illiteracy and the absence of the simplest necessary skills leads mostly to bureaucratism in the state apparatus.”¹⁴⁵ However, even regarding state bureaucratism, Trotsky accorded this explanation a far smaller role than previously. In the same statement Trotsky also appears to reject the idea that party bureaucratism was due to the low percentage of workers in the party. He noted that, as a consequence of the Lenin Enrollment of 1924, “the party, in its basic composition, has become proletarian.” Nevertheless, the party was further from workers’ democracy than ever before.¹⁴⁶ Finally, by September 1926 Trotsky seems to have completely abandoned the view, expressed in early 1923, that party bureaucratism was a product of the specialization of party members. In his New Course writings Trotsky had begun to imply that the overly specialized mentality of the party leadership was more a consequence than a cause of bureaucratism.¹⁴⁷ Now Trotsky made this point more explicit:

Ideological near-sightedness is always bound up with bureaucratism. The leaders of the ruling faction, who are isolating themselves to an ever greater extent, prove incapable of assessing the situation as a whole, foreseeing the future, and issuing broad directives to the party. The policy becomes small-minded or tail-endist.¹⁴⁸

At the same time, Trotsky and the United Opposition retained Trotsky’s 1923 explanations for the growth of bureaucratism which stressed the increasing impact of market forces and the NEP bourgeoisie upon Soviet economic and political institutions. These explanations were now placed within the context of a clearer and more elaborate account of the evolving character of class relations in Soviet society.

In 1926-1927 Trotsky’s and the Opposition’s most basic explanation for the growth of bureaucratism was the change that had occurred in the relative strength of the different social classes within the Soviet Union. As Trotsky explained in June 1926,

The fundamental cause of bureaucratization must be sought in the relations between classes. . . . The bureaucratization of the

party . . . is an expression of the disrupted social equilibrium, which has been and is being tipped to the disadvantage of the proletariat. This disruption of the equilibrium is transmitted to the party and weighs upon the proletarian vanguard in the party.¹⁴⁹

Trotsky's view was that, due to a variety of reasons, the Soviet proletariat had become demoralized since the revolution and had retreated into passivity. Meanwhile, bourgeois elements had grown in size and economic influence and had become more self-confident. This change in the relation of class forces had exerted a rightward pressure upon the apparatuses of the major political and social institutions of Soviet society. Under this pressure, the state and party had adopted policies beneficial to the bourgeois elements, contributing to the further disruption of the class equilibrium. Meanwhile, to implement its rightist course in domestic and international policy, the party leadership had resorted to increasing repression against the section of the party that had retained its revolutionary, proletarian perspective. The defeats of the Opposition also had contributed to the shift in the balance of class forces.

According to Trotsky, since 1917 the Russian proletariat had entered a prolonged period of demoralization and disillusionment. At least in the early phase of Soviet power, this decline of proletarian self-confidence was largely inevitable. In part, it had been a product of the "terrible exertions of the revolution" and the "sufferings of 1917-1921" that had resulted in the "nervous exhaustion" of working class.¹⁵⁰ Besides that, the gap, inevitable in any revolution, between the hopes and expectations of the masses and the realities of revolutionary power had contributed to popular disillusionment:

The hopes engendered by the revolution are always exaggerated. This is because of the class mechanism of society, the terrible plight of the overwhelming majority of the masses, the objective need of concentrating the greatest hopes and efforts in order to insure even the most modest progress, and so on. . . . The conquests gained in the struggle do not correspond, and in the nature of things cannot directly correspond with the expectations of the 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 postrevolutionary period as is the passage into the camp of "law

and order” of those “satisfied” classes or layers of classes that had participated in the revolution.¹⁵¹

Although the proletarian masses had “greatly improved their lot” since 1921, this improvement had been a very gradual one. Consequently, the workers had “grown more cautious, more skeptical, less directly responsive to revolutionary slogans, less inclined to place confidence in broad generalizations.”¹⁵²

Aside from these domestic developments, the defeats of the international revolution—some of which had occurred even before the rightist perversion of Comintern policy—also had an impact. According to Trotsky, the Soviet proletariat had expected that “the European revolution would follow immediately after 1917.” Instead, the period since the revolution had been “years of very big defeats for the European proletariat.” Thus, the “tense, highly concentrated expectation” among the Soviet proletariat in the period of revolutionary upheaval had given way to “deep discouragement.”¹⁵³

Simultaneously, the years since 1917 had witnessed a growth of self-confidence and political activity on the part of bourgeois elements within Soviet society. Partly, this had occurred as a result of the demoralization of the working class. Trotsky explained, “The disillusionment of a considerable section of the oppressed masses . . . and . . . the decline of the political energy and activity of the revolutionary class engender a revival of confidence among counterrevolutionary classes—both among those overthrown by the revolution but not shattered completely and among those who aided the revolution at a certain phase, but were thrown back into the camp of reaction by the further development of the revolution.”¹⁵⁴ Added to this was the effect of the New Economic Policy. Although Trotsky and the Opposition accepted the fact that NEP was “necessary as a road toward socialism,” they argued that it had “revived forces hostile to socialism.”¹⁵⁵ NEP had regenerated “the contradictory petty-bourgeois tendencies among the peasantry” that had been held in check by War Communism. In the process it had resurrected a layer of peasant exploiters (the kulaks) and a layer involved in “trading capital” (the NEPmen) who dreamed of a restoration of capitalism.¹⁵⁶

According to Trotsky and the Opposition, the effect of these developments upon the party and state had been profound. Lenin had warned of the danger that the kulak, NEPman, and bureaucrat would “strive to unite, introduce their own ‘amendments’ into our plans, exercise an increasing pressure on our policy, and satisfy their interests through our apparatus.”¹⁵⁷ Now, it seemed that Lenin’s predictions were being realized. The kulak and NEPman were exerting a growing pressure upon the state and party apparatuses, both from without and from within. The state apparatus, which had been penetrated by bourgeois elements, had been most directly affected. However, because the Communist Party maintained a necessary monopoly of political power, the state apparatus had been able to feed “much that is bourgeois and petty bourgeois into the party, infecting it with opportunism.”¹⁵⁸ The most important consequence of this process had been a “backsliding from the proletarian class line” in economic and international policy.¹⁵⁹

Meanwhile, the implementation of this rightist course had necessitated ever-sharper deviations by the party apparatus from the principle of workers’ democracy. In particular, it had led to the use of repression against the Opposition, which remained true to the principles of revolutionary Marxism and which most clearly articulated the orientation of the proletarian vanguard. The “Declaration of the Thirteen” written in July 1926 explained,

It is quite clear that it is more and more difficult for the leadership to carry out its policies by methods of party democracy, the less the vanguard of the working class perceives these policies as its own. The divergence between economic policies and the thoughts and feelings of the proletarian vanguard inevitably strengthens the need for high-pressure methods and imparts an administrative-bureaucratic character to all politics. All other explanations for the growth of bureaucratism are of a secondary character and do not grapple with the heart of the problem.¹⁶⁰

Similarly, in a letter to a fellow Oppositionist in August 1927, Trotsky argued that the “intolerable” character of the party regime was a direct result of the political line pursued by the majority:

The party regime is a function of the political line. It was precisely because Stalin stakes everything on Chiang Kai-shek and Purcell,

on the bureaucrat and the upper layers of the village, etc., that he feels compelled to carry out his policies, not by relying on the mind and will of the proletarian vanguard but by suppressing the vanguard with administrative-apparatus methods, thereby reflecting and refracting the pressure of other classes upon the proletariat. That is the explanation for the frenzied fight against the Opposition, because it resists and combats that hostile class pressure.¹⁶¹

Once initiated, the growing bureaucratization of the party quickly acquired an internal dynamic that was relatively independent of the shifting balance of class forces. This dynamic helped to explain not only the escalation of repression, but also the continuing constriction of the sphere of power within the party. Trotsky asserted in June 1926, “Any regime develops its own internal logic, and a bureaucratic regime develops it more rapidly than any other.” He explained that the wave of repression that had been unleashed against party dissidents had led to “the fragmentation of the party cadres, the removal from the party leadership of valuable elements representing a significant portion of its accumulated experience, and the systematic narrowing down and ideological impoverishment of the leadership core.” This process had generated “a new and extremely acute contradiction—between the growing might of the apparatus and the ideological enfeeblement of the leading center.” Trotsky predicted that “under these conditions fear of deviations is bound to grow progressively, with inevitable consequences in the form of so-called organizational measures, which narrow down still further the range of those called upon to be part of the leadership and which push them even further down the road of bureaucratization of the party regime.”¹⁶²

While Trotsky and the Opposition believed that the rightward drift in policy and the decline in workers’ democracy ultimately were *caused* by the shift in the relationship of class forces in the Soviet Union, they also argued that these manifestations of bureaucratism, in turn, had contributed greatly to the further disruption of the class balance. This was especially the case regarding the economic policies of the party leadership. The “Declaration of the Thirteen” explained,

The lag of industry behind the economic development of the country as a whole means the lowering of the specific weight of the proletariat in society, despite its numerical growth. The lag in the exertion of influence on agriculture by industry and the rapid growth of kulaks diminishes the social weight of the poor peasants and agricultural workers and lower their confidence in the government and in themselves. The lag in the rise of wages behind the higher living standards of the nonproletarian elements in the cities and the upper strata in the villages inevitably means a reduction in the workers' political and cultural consciousness of themselves as the ruling class.¹⁶³

Similarly, in a memorandum written in October 1926 Trotsky asserted,

Industry lags behind the overall growth of the economy; socialist accumulation lags behind accumulation in the economy as a whole; wages lag behind the generally higher level of the economy. This means that the economic role of the proletariat is not growing rapidly enough and is even shrinking in relative terms. And this cannot help but have political repercussions.¹⁶⁴

The Opposition also believed that the opportunist errors of the party leadership in international policy had facilitated, or had directly produced, major new defeats of the world revolutionary movement. Trotsky argued that these new international defeats had contributed further to the demoralization of the Soviet proletariat. It was this analysis that governed his attitude toward the prospects for the party struggle in the wake of Chiang Kai-shek's coup in Shanghai. At that time many supporters of the Opposition were hopeful that the transparent failure of the majority policy in China would strengthen the Opposition. Trotsky's approach was different:

I tried to show them that the opposition could not rise on the *defeat* of the Chinese revolution. The fact that our forecast had proved correct might attract one thousand, five thousand, or even ten thousand new supporters to us. But for the millions, the significant thing was not our forecast, but the fact of the crushing of the Chinese proletariat. After the defeat of the German revolution of 1923, after the break-down of the English general strike in 1925, the new disaster would only intensify the disappointment of the masses in the international revolution. And it was this same disappointment that served as the chief psychological source for Stalin's policy of national-reformism.¹⁶⁵

At about the same time Trotsky wrote a private letter to Krupskaya in which he addressed the same problem:

The defeat of the German revolution in 1923; the defeats in Bulgaria, in Estonia [where communists had attempted abortive revolutions in 1923 and 1924]; the defeat of the Chinese revolution in April, have severely weakened international communism. . . . Are we really excluded from this worldwide process? The grave defeats of the world revolution and the slowness of our growth surely have an impact on our proletariat, too.¹⁶⁶

Finally, the Opposition argued that the deterioration of the party regime also had weakened the proletariat and had reduced its ability to influence policy. The “Declaration of the Eighty-four” in May 1927 explained that the policy of repression against party dissidents had contributed to the growing apathy within the party and the working class:

The internal regime established for the party in recent times has caused an immense decline in the activity of the party, this leading force of the proletarian revolution. For broad layers of rank-and-file members the opportunities for discussing and helping to solve the essential problems of the revolution in a fully conscious way have been restricted and minimized in the extreme. This could not help but affect the attitude of the working class toward the party and the level of activism of the working class as a whole—and it has affected them in the most negative way.¹⁶⁷

At the same time, the decline of workers’ democracy within the party had cut off the apparatus from rank-and-file, and ultimately, proletarian influence. Freed from the control the working class, the party apparatus had found itself increasingly drawn into orbit around the bourgeois elements within the Soviet Union. In June 1926 Trotsky wrote, “A class with a disorganized vanguard (and the lack of free discussion, of control over the apparatus, and of election rights means a disorganized vanguard) cannot help but become a mere object in the hands of a centralized apparatus, which in turn removes itself further and further from the party and is more and more bound to come under the pressure of hostile class forces.”¹⁶⁸

Thus, according to Trotsky and the Opposition, the party apparatus and leadership found themselves trapped in an enormous vicious circle. Shifting class forces had engendered rightward lurches in policy and increasing repression, all of which had disrupted the class balance even further. For Trotsky and the Opposition, this vicious circle defined the trajectory of the downward spiral of the revolution. The ultimate danger was that this process would culminate in the restoration of capitalism.

5.3.3 The Prospect of Thermidor

As early as 1923 Trotsky had warned that mistaken economic policies and bureaucratism in the party could lead to a restoration of capitalism. At that time Trotsky suggested three “*political* paths” by which the counterrevolution could occur: “either the direct overthrow of the workers’ party, or its progressive degeneration, or finally, the conjunction of a partial degeneration, splits, and counterrevolutionary upheavals.”¹⁶⁹ Trotsky returned to this question in the summer of 1927. He now argued that the three potential scenarios of counterrevolution suggested in 1923 ultimately resolved into two possibilities: either “a decisive and sharp overturn (with or without intervention) or . . . several successive shifts [to the right on the part of the revolutionary party].” Trotsky would not predict categorically which course the counterrevolution might take. Rather, he advised the Opposition to “keep our eyes out for *either* of these variants . . . to weigh the odds, and to note elements contributing to either.”¹⁷⁰ Nevertheless, during this period Trotsky placed the greatest emphasis upon the possibility of the degeneration of the party through “several successive shifts.” Most frequently, he described this as the danger of a Soviet “Thermidor.”

The term “Thermidor” was a historical reference to the ninth of Thermidor, Year II of the French Revolution (July 27, 1794)—the date when Robespierre and his supporters were overthrown. This event had marked a critical turning point in the revolution, inaugurating a period of sharp decline in mass political activity and a retreat on the part of the government from radical social measures. In the view of the Bolsheviks, the regime of Robespierre had represented the interests of the *sans-cullottes* and the petty-bourgeoisie. His fall, it was believed, had paved the way for the assumption of power by the big bourgeoisie.

Long before the formation of the United Opposition, the Bolsheviks were haunted by the prospect that the Russian Revolution might experience a similar fate.¹⁷¹ Apparently, the term Thermidor was first employed by Lenin in early 1921. As Trotsky later recalled, “Before the introduction of NEP and during its first phase, many of us had quite a few discussions with Lenin about Thermidor. The word was in great currency among us.”¹⁷² Also, Trotsky’s supporter Victor Serge later described how, at the time of the Kronstadt rebellion in early 1921, Lenin insisted to one of Serge’s friends, “This is Thermidor.”¹⁷³ It seems that Lenin meant to suggest that a successful uprising at Kronstadt could lead to the extermination of the Bolshevik leadership and the phased restoration of capitalism under the cover of radical slogans. Thus, at the Tenth Party Congress Lenin explained that Kronstadt

was an attempt to seize political power from the Bolsheviks by a motley crowd or alliance of ill-assorted elements, apparently just to the right of the Bolsheviks, or perhaps even to their “left”. . . . The nonparty elements served here only as a bridge, a stepping stone, a rung on a ladder, on which the White Guards appeared. This is politically inevitable.¹⁷⁴

To avoid this eventuality, Lenin proposed that the Bolsheviks themselves institute a “Thermidorian” shift to the right in the form of the New Economic Policy. To Serge’s friend Lenin remarked, “But we shan’t let ourselves be guillotined. We shall make a Thermidor ourselves.”¹⁷⁵ In other words, Lenin was proposing that the Bolsheviks introduce their own

rightward shift in policy in order to retain power.¹⁷⁶ Similarly, in 1922 Trotsky explained that with NEP, “concessions to the Thermidor mood and tendencies of the petty bourgeois, necessary for the purpose of maintaining the power of the proletariat, were made by the Communist Party without effecting a break in the system and without quitting the helm.”¹⁷⁷

By May 1921 Lenin was already considering another possible variant of Thermidor. In notes for a speech, Lenin expressed his concern that the revival of market relations under NEP might increase the possibilities of a Thermidorian reinstatement of capitalism.¹⁷⁸ As we have seen, by 1923 Trotsky had come to share Lenin’s concern about the gradual restoration of capitalism. In fact, in later years Trotsky asserted that the 1923 Opposition explicitly had described this as a danger of “Thermidor.” However, there is no known speech or document of Trotsky’s from this period in which the term itself appears.¹⁷⁹ In his pamphlet *The New Course*, Trotsky raised the question of “historical analogies with the Great French Revolution (the fall of the Jacobins) made by liberalism and Menshevism” only to dismiss these as “superficial and inconsistent.” Unlike the Bolsheviks, Trotsky argued, the Jacobins had been forced to grapple with domestic economic relations that were not yet mature enough to sustain their program, and to confront a Europe that was politically and economically more backward than their own country.¹⁸⁰

According to Trotsky’s later account, the term “Thermidor” surfaced again in the summer of 1925 in a conversation between himself and E. M. Sklianskii, a former deputy in the War Commissariat. In that conversation, Trotsky claimed, he “realized for the first time with absolute clarity the problem of the Thermidor—with, I might even say, a sort of physical conviction.” After defining Stalin as “the outstanding mediocrity in the party,” Trotsky attempted to account for the origins of his power:

“This is the reaction after the great social and psychological strain of the first years of revolution. A victorious counter-revolution may develop its great men, but its first phase, the Thermidor, demands mediocrities who can’t see any farther than their noses.”¹⁸¹

Soon after this, the term became an issue in the escalating conflict between the party majority and the Leningrad Opposition. In a private conversation in October between the secretary of the Leningrad provincial party organization, Peter Zalutskii, and a party member named Leonov, Zalutskii stated that the party leaders were creating a “kingdom of a bourgeois state”; and he allegedly accused the leadership of “degeneration” and attempting to bring about a “Thermidor.” When Leonov reported the discussion to party leaders in Moscow, Zalutskii admitted the substance of Leonov’s report, while denying that he had ever accused the Central Committee of “degeneration” or “Thermidor.” Nevertheless, he was promptly removed from his party office.¹⁸²

Although the discussion of this incident at the Fourteenth Party Congress revived Trotsky’s interest in the question, Trotsky did not raise the question of Thermidor publicly until 1927.¹⁸³ Perhaps he wanted to think the analogy through more carefully, or perhaps he wanted to avoid the furor that the term had provoked in 1925. However, the intensification of the party struggle in 1927 inflamed the passions and the rhetoric on both sides. In the early summer of 1927, A. A. Solts, a member of the Central Control Commission, warned one of Trotsky’s supporters of the implications of the latest declaration of the Opposition: “You know the history of the French Revolution,—and to what this led: to arrests and the guillotine.” At his hearing before the CCC in June, Trotsky seized upon this statement and turned it back against his accusers, challenging Solts, “Do you clearly understand in accordance with what chapter [of the revolution] you are now preparing to shoot? I fear, comrade Solts, that you are about to shoot us in accordance with the . . . Thermidorian chapter.”¹⁸⁴ From this point on, the term *Thermidor* occupied a central place in Trotsky’s polemical and theoretical arsenal.

As Trotsky defined it in the summer of 1927, Thermidor was “a special form of counterrevolution carried out on the installment plan . . . , and making use, in the first stage, of elements of the same ruling party—by regrouping them and counterposing some to others.”¹⁸⁵ On the surface, a Thermidor appeared to involve only a minor change in the revolutionary leadership, “a stepping down one rung on the ladder of revolution—a slight shift of power to the

right as the result of a certain crucial change or break in the psychology of the revolution. At the top, at the helm, there same to be the very same people, the same speeches, the same banners.”¹⁸⁶ This, Trotsky argued, was how it appeared to the French Thermidorian leaders. The day after the arrest of Robespierre, Thermidorians had not said to themselves that they had transferred power to the bourgeoisie. Rather, they had said, “We have destroyed a handful of people who disrupted peace in the party, but now, after their destruction, the revolution will triumph completely.”¹⁸⁷ However, beneath the surface the French Thermidor had marked a fundamental realignment of class forces:

The propertied elements had succeeded by that time in righting themselves, recovering their strength, and gathering courage. Civil order was restored. The new property owners wanted more than anything not to be prevented from enjoying the fruits of their property. They pressured the state apparatus and the Jacobin clubs, many of whose members felt themselves also to be property owners, people of order, and the Jacobin party was forced to regroup itself, to put forward some elements more disposed to swimming with the new stream, to link up with new elements, not of Jacobin origin—and to press back, cast out, incapacitate, and decapitate those elements who reflected the interests and passions of the urban lower classes, the sansculottes. In turn, these lower strata no longer felt the pressure of the new propertied elements and the state apparatus that covered up for the people of property.¹⁸⁸

Trotsky feared a similar event was possible in the Soviet Union. Throughout the country Trotsky perceived the growth of “elements of Thermidor”—particularly among the NEPmen and kulaks, but also within the party’s right wing, led especially by prominent members of the state and trade union apparatuses.¹⁸⁹ He explained that, on the political level, a Soviet Thermidor could occur by means of a rightward shift of power within the Soviet state, or even within the party, “with the banner of communism in one’s hands.”¹⁹⁰ On the deeper level of class relations, a Soviet Thermidor would involve “a shift from the path of proletarian revolution in a petty bourgeois direction,” that would lead ultimately to the restoration of capitalism.¹⁹¹

Trotsky attempted to explain the same idea utilizing analogies from the Russian Revolution. Between the February and October revolutions of 1917, the Bolsheviks believed that a large measure of political power had slipped from the hands of the old ruling classes, but that complete class rule had not yet been achieved by the proletariat. The situation was one of “dual power” in which political control was shared by the Provisional Government, representing the bourgeoisie, and the soviets, controlled by the working class. Now, Trotsky observed, “elements of dual power” were once again emerging in the country.¹⁹² Thermidor would involve the return to a full dual power situation as a transitional stage on the road to the reinstatement of capitalism. It would be “a kind of Kerenskyism in reverse”:

Thermidor is in its essence a transitional regime, a kind of Kerenskyism in reverse. Kerenskyism in 1917 was a screen over dual power, and in that situation it floundered around and, against its will, helped the proletariat to wrest power from the bourgeoisie. A Thermidorian regime would mean the legalization once again of a dual power situation, and once again, against its own will, such a regime would help one class, the bourgeoisie, wrest power from the other, the proletariat.¹⁹³

Some Oppositionists, particularly those who had come from the Democratic Centralist and Workers’ Opposition groupings, believed that the Soviet Thermidor had already occurred.¹⁹⁴ However, despite the fact that the party leadership accused the United Opposition as a whole of sharing this view, the statements and documents of Trotsky and the Opposition repeatedly denied this. In a memorandum written in November 1926 Trotsky argued, “It would be a crude distortion of reality to speak of Thermidor as an accomplished fact. Things have gone no further than the holding of some rehearsals within the party and the laying of some theoretical groundwork.”¹⁹⁵ Furthermore, in June 1927 Trotsky sharply rejected Ordzhonikidze’s accusation that Trotsky believed the revolution had “perished,” and later in the year the United Opposition as a whole disavowed the view that the party or its leadership was Thermidorian.¹⁹⁶

Nor did Trotsky believe that Thermidor was *inevitable* in the Soviet Union as it had been in France. Returning to views he had expressed on this question in 1923, Trotsky pointed out the

advantages of the Russian Revolution. First, it had been made by a developed and class conscious proletariat rather than the weaker “pre-proletariat” of eighteenth-century France. Second, it was surrounded by industrially more advanced neighbors each of which had a strong proletariat, not by backward feudal countries.¹⁹⁷ Nevertheless, Trotsky insisted that a Soviet Thermidor was *possible* as long as the European proletariat failed to take power.¹⁹⁸

Beyond warning of the danger of Thermidor, Trotsky and the Opposition attempted to anticipate how it would unfold in the Soviet Union. They believed that, most probably, it would begin with the crushing of the resistance of the Opposition itself. For example, in a declaration from May 1927 the Opposition argued, “If the new blow being prepared against the left, against the Opposition, is carried out, it will give a completely free hand to the elements of the right, the nonproletarians and antiproletarian elements, which are inside our party but for the most part outside it.”¹⁹⁹ Similarly, in December 1927 Trotsky asserted, “The most important (but not the only) condition for a victory of Thermidor would be to crush the Opposition so thoroughly that it no longer needed to be ‘feared.’”²⁰⁰ This would be followed by deeper shifts to the right in economic and social policy. Trotsky predicted what these would look like in an address to the CCC in August 1927:

As the first step, repeal the monopoly of foreign trade. Give the kulak the opportunity of doubling the export and the import. Enable the kulak to squeeze the middle peasant. Compel the poor peasant to understand that without the kulak there is no other road. Raise and reinforce the importance of the bureaucracy, of the administration. Cast aside the demands of the workers as so much “guildism.” Restrict the workers politically in the Soviets, reestablish last years’ election decree [which restored electoral rights to employers of auxiliary labor] and gradually extend it in favor of the property owners. That would be the road of Thermidor. Its name is—*capitalism on the installment plan*.²⁰¹

Once implemented, these rightist policies would lead in turn to further changes in the political system. As in France, the counterrevolution sooner or later would be forced to remove its revolutionary mask and institute a repressive and dictatorial “Bonapartist” regime. In June 1927 Trotsky asserted that, following a Thermidor, the Soviet bourgeoisie “would subsequently

discard completely the Soviet covering and transform its power into a Bonapartist rule.”²⁰² At the end of the year, he spelled this out in greater detail:

The Thermidorian regime would, by its essence, be of short duration; its objective role would be to cover the bourgeoisie’s acquisition of power with a screen of Soviet forms, to which the workers are accustomed. But there would inevitably be resistance by the proletariat; it would attempt to hold on to its positions or win back those it had lost. To beat back these attempts and to consolidate their hold in a genuine way, the bourgeoisie would soon need, not a transitional regime, but a more serious, solid and decisive kind—in all probability, a Bonapartist or, in modern terms, a fascist regime.²⁰³

5.3.4 Characteristics: Political Divisions

During the years 1926-1927, Trotsky and the United Opposition repeatedly attempted to define the most important political currents and groupings within the Soviet Union, and the relationship of each to the party struggle. Broadly speaking, these attempts focused on the two major aspects of the problem of Soviet bureaucratism. At times, Trotsky and the Opposition concentrated upon the party groupings that were relevant to the growing centralization of political authority. In other statements they tried to map the broad range of political currents in the country along a right/left continuum, and to describe the role played by each current in the shifting balance of class forces.

As part of its effort to establish that the party leadership was undemocratically usurping authority, the Opposition sought to demonstrate that the supporters of the party “majority” actually constituted a minority of the party membership. In October 1926 Trotsky wrote a memorandum in which he explained that, due to the increasingly repressive and undemocratic internal party regime, the “party has at present been artificially divided into three rather sharply marked-off parts: (1) the ruling faction, which

constitutes the backbone of the apparatus selected from above; (2) the Opposition elements, fighting for a rectification of the party line and a restoration of normality in the party regime; and (3) the broad mass of the party in between, atomized, disoriented, and in effect deprived of any chance to actively affect the fate of the party.”²⁰⁴ Thus, although the leadership legitimately could assert that it represented the position of the majority of those involved in the struggle, it could not honestly claim to represent the views of the majority of the rank and file. Similarly, in a series of “Questions and Answers about the Opposition” written in September, Trotsky portrayed the party debate as a contest between the “faction of the majority” and the party minority. “The faction of the majority,” he argued, “uses the party machine to prevent the party from determining by democratic means where the real majority and minority are.”²⁰⁵

At the same time, Trotsky and the Opposition commented upon the extreme centralization of authority *within* the majority faction. First, they noted the division between the lower-level supporters of the majority faction and the “leading factional clique” at the top. According to Trotsky, the latter was merely “the tiny leading group” of the “sealed off [majority] faction.”²⁰⁶ Similarly, the “Declaration of the Thirteen” explained, “The ruling faction has its own [ruling] minority, which places faction discipline above that of the party.”²⁰⁷ Beyond that, the Opposition observed a growing centralization of authority within top leadership of the majority faction. In October 1926 Trotsky argued that Stalin, “relying on a group of comrades who always agree with him,” was attempting to institute a regime of “one-man rule” in the party. Increasingly, the pursuit of this goal was bringing Stalin into conflict with all the other prominent leaders of the ruling faction:

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 Tomsy, 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 Tomsy, and Slepko, Sten, and Company would deglorify Bukharin.²⁰⁸

In other statements Trotsky and the Opposition attempted to describe the attitude of various political currents in the country to the shifting balance of class forces. Broadly speaking, the Opposition perceived the existence of three distinct political currents: the Thermidorians, the centrists, and the genuine revolutionaries.

At the far right of the political spectrum were the Thermidorians. As we have already noted, Trotsky and the Opposition saw this political tendency as especially strong among the kulaks and NEPmen. Politically, its views were most clearly articulated by the economist N. Ustrialov and by the Mensheviks. According to the “Declaration of the Thirteen,” Ustrialov was “the most logical, most principled, and most uncompromising enemy of Bolshevism.”²⁰⁹ Elsewhere, Trotsky described Ustrialov as the “ideologist” of the bourgeois classes, and “the (temporarily) conciliationist representative of the new bourgeoisie.”²¹⁰ Trotsky explained that Ustrialov advocated a gradual and phased restoration of capitalism, or a policy of “going downhill with the brakes on.”²¹¹ Nevertheless, Ustrialov was “realistic in his Thermidorianism” because he recognized that the completion of this process ultimately would require “a Bonapartist-fascist shift—by installments—onto bourgeois rails.”²¹² To achieve this aim, Trotsky noted, in the fall of 1926 Ustrialov explicitly supported Stalin’s war against the Opposition and a “Neo-Nep” consisting of further economic shifts to the right.²¹³

A second political force working for a Thermidor was the Menshevik Party. In contrast with Ustrialov, the Mensheviks feared “a Bonapartist regime, preferring a democracy which would give the petty bourgeoisie a chance to preserve some semblance of a political role.”²¹⁴ Consequently, they advocated replacing the proletarian dictatorship with a system of “bourgeois” parliamentary democracy.²¹⁵ Given the Russian heritage of revolutions and civil wars, Trotsky believed that Bonapartism was “a much more likely road for the return to bourgeois society than [bourgeois] democracy.”²¹⁶ For this reason he dismissed Menshevism as “utopian through and through,” and seems to have considered the Mensheviks as less of a threat than the supporters of Ustrialov.²¹⁷

Trotsky and the United Opposition also perceived the growth of a Thermidorian tendency within the Communist Party. This tendency was composed of two groups. One was described by Trotsky as a “right deviation [within the ruling faction] toward the kulak, the petty bourgeoisie, and middle class elements in general.”²¹⁸ In the words of the *Platform of the Opposition*, this grouping “to a great extent reflects the interests of the ‘economically strong’ middle peasant, toward whom it steers its course and by whose ideals it is inspired.” Its leaders included A. I. Rykov, A. P. Smirnov, M. I. Kalinin, G. Petrovskii, V. Chubar, and G. Kaminskii. Around them was a layer of “‘nonparty’ politicians, . . . and other ‘business agents’ of the wealthy peasantry, more or less openly preaching the doctrines of Ustryalov.”²¹⁹ The second Thermidorian grouping within the party was described by Trotsky in September 1926 as “a trade unionist deviation which is marching hand in hand with the deviation toward the peasant proprietor but which frequently comes into hostile conflict with the latter.”²²⁰ The *Platform* characterized this as a group of “trade union leaders who represent the better-paid class of industrial and office workers.” Its leaders included M. P. Tomskii, G. Melnichanskii, and A. Dogadov. Although there was often tension between the two rightist groupings within the party, they were “at one in the desire to turn the course of the party and the Soviet state to the right, in both international and domestic policies.”²²¹ The *Platform* insisted that neither of the two groupings *consciously* desired a Thermidor.²²² Nevertheless, as Trotsky explained, the political significance of the party’s right

wing was that it served “as a transmitting mechanism” for pressures from the “bourgeois classes who are raising their heads.”²²³ The implication was that the displacement of the Stalinist leadership of the party by the right wing would constitute the beginning of a Soviet Thermidor.

To the left of the Thermidorians were the centrists, consisting of Stalin and his supporters, who had achieved dominance within the party.²²⁴ Unlike the right and the left wings of the party, the centrist tendency had no deep roots in the fundamental classes of Soviet society. The *Platform* stated that “this centrist-official group least of all expresses the attitude of any broad mass, but it is trying—not without success—to substitute itself for the party.”²²⁵ Similarly, in October 1927 Trotsky spoke of “this bureaucratic centrist faction, lacking all class basis.”²²⁶ Its strength was to be found in the apparatuses of the party, the state, the economic institutions, and the mass organizations—which, combined, constituted an enormous “layer of ‘administrators’.”²²⁷ Without any solid base in either the proletariat or the petty bourgeoisie, the centrists were unable to pursue either a consistently revolutionary, or a consistently reformist policy. Instead, they followed an intermediate course, lurching left and right in response to the pressures of antagonistic classes. In October 1927 Trotsky explained,

In reality the whole policy of this centrist faction is itself going forward under the blows of two whips—one from the right and one from the left. . . . This bureaucratic centrist faction, lacking all class basis, staggers between two class lines, . . . systematically sliding away from the proletarian to the petty-bourgeois course. It does not slide away in a direct line, but in sharp zigzags.²²⁸

This represented a refinement in the Opposition’s critique of Soviet domestic and international policy over the analysis it had offered for the previous year and a half. Here, the general orientation of Soviet policy was viewed as a reflection of the political character of the party leadership. The weakening of the proletariat and the strengthening of bourgeois elements had resulted in a shift of political power to the right, but not yet as far right as the Thermidorian tendency. As Trotsky explained in December 1927, “Predominance in the party, and therefore in the country too, is in the hands of the Stalin faction, which has all the features of centrism.”²²⁹

Thus, it was the predominance of this centrist tendency that accounted for the centrism of Soviet policy.

Although Trotsky and the United Opposition recognized Stalin as the preeminent leader of the centrists, they paid little attention to Stalin's personal significance and influence. At least as far as Trotsky was concerned, this was because Stalin *had* little personal significance. In a later account Trotsky recalled explaining his view of Stalin in two conversations with supporters in 1924 and 1925. In both, Trotsky portrayed Stalin as a “mediocrity” who owed his growing power to impersonal social forces. In 1924, Trotsky predicted to I. N. Smirnov that “Stalin will become dictator of the U.S.S.R.” When Smirnov protested that Stalin was nothing but a “mediocrity, a colorless nonentity,” Trotsky responded,

“Mediocrity yes; nonentity no The dialectics of history have already hooked him and will raise him up. He is needed by all of them—by the tired radicals, by the bureaucrats, by the *nepmen*, the *kulaks*, the upstarts, the sneaks, by all the worms that are crawling out of the upturned soil of the manured revolution. He knows how to meet them on their own ground, he speaks their language and he knows how to lead them. He has the deserved reputation of an old revolutionist, which makes him invaluable to them as a blinder on the eyes of the country.”²³⁰

Similarly, in a conversation with E. M. Sklianskii in 1925 Trotsky described Stalin as “the outstanding mediocrity in the party”—one of those mediocrities whose “strength lies in their blindness, like the mill-horse who thinks that he is moving up when really he is only pushing down the belt-wheel.”²³¹

Aside from Stalin, the *Platform* listed V. M. Molotov, N. A. Uglanov, L. M. Kaganovich, A. Mikoian, and S. M. Kirov—a group that was “de facto, the present Politburo”—among the leaders of the centrist tendency. Although the Leningrad Opposition had denounced Bukharin as the leading rightist in the party, the *Platform* now described him, too, as a centrist: “Bukharin, wavering between one side and the other, generalizes the policies of this [centrist] group.” This new evaluation of Bukharin may have been due to the fact that, since 1925, he had been gradually moving toward the left in his economic views.²³²

According to the *Platform*, the centrists were even less inclined to support Thermidor consciously than was the right-wing tendency within the party. Stalin and his supporters were “convinced that, with their powerful apparatus, they can outwit all the forces of the bourgeoisie rather than having to overcome them through an open struggle.” In this, they were “carrying out a typical policy of illusion, self-consolation, and self-deception.”²³³ In particular, the repressive measures enacted by the Stalinists had bolstered the right. Trotsky observed that “when Stalin makes the crushing of the left wing of the party the main focus of his work, . . . he strengthens them [i.e., the Thermidorians] and weakens the positions of the proletariat.”²³⁴

Trotsky and the United Opposition considered both the centrist faction and its alliance with the right wing of the party to be inherently unstable. As far as the centrist faction was concerned, this seems to have been due to its lack of a firm class basis. In August 1927, Trotsky noted that the centrist faction was “already splitting into a Right and a Left wing, both of which are incessantly growing at the expense of the center.” Furthermore, he predicted this process would only accelerate in the event of war when the “Stalinist Center will inevitably melt away.”²³⁵ At the same time, the *Platform* argued that the uneasy alliance between the centrists and the party right was held together only by a mutual animosity toward the Opposition.²³⁶ Throughout 1927 Trotsky and the Opposition repeatedly asserted that the defeat of the Opposition would bring to the surface all the suppressed tensions within the majority. In the summer of 1927, for example, Trotsky prophesied that if “the Opposition were to be ‘smashed,’ then the majority faction backsliding to the right, would immediately begin to be split up into new factional groupings, with all the ensuing consequences.”²³⁷

The final tendency in the Soviet Union, according to Trotsky and the United Opposition, was the far left of the party. Most importantly, this tendency was embodied in the Opposition itself, the “Leninist wing of the party,” which was “fighting for a rectification of the party line and a restoration of normality in the party regime.”²³⁸ Although the Opposition admitted that it was a minority within the party, it predicted that, once the *Platform* was circulated, “the working class sections of the party and all genuine Leninists will be for it.”²³⁹ Included among the

“genuine Leninists” were a large number of the officials within the “agencies of administration and leadership” of the party, state, and mass organizations. Within these institutions, the *Platform* claimed, “there are to be found many thousands of sturdy revolutionists, workers who have not lost their ties with the masses but who give themselves heart and soul to the workers’ cause.”²⁴⁰

5.3.5 The Struggle against Bureaucratism and Thermidor

The strategy pursued by the Opposition flowed directly from the preceding analysis. Most importantly, this analysis dictated that, for the time being, the Opposition would attempt to reform Soviet political institutions, and not to organize a new revolution. In December 1927 Trotsky argued that the struggle of the Opposition against the danger of Thermidor was a “class struggle,” while noting that the class struggle necessarily took different forms in different situations. He explained, “The struggle aimed at tearing the power from the hands of another class is revolutionary.”²⁴¹ Such would be the character of the class struggle in the event of Thermidor when “the Opposition would lead the revolutionary cadres of Bolshevism over to the struggle against the bourgeois state.”²⁴² However, as long as the bourgeoisie had not reconquered the state, political power remained, in some sense, in the hands of the proletariat. Thus, the Opposition was obliged to confine its activities to attempts at reform:

The struggle for changes (sometimes of a decisive character, but still under the rule of the same class) is a reformist struggle. Power has not yet been torn from the hands of the proletariat. It is still possible to rectify our political course, remove the elements of dual power, and to reinforce the dictatorship [of the proletariat] by measures of a reformist kind.²⁴³

Furthermore, since the party itself was still reformable, and since any attempt to establish a second party would set the Opposition on the road of revolution, the United Opposition had to

conduct its struggle within the limits of the Communist Party. Thus, Trotsky explained at the Fifteenth Party Conference,

Those who believe that our state is not a proletarian state, and that our development is not socialist, must lead the proletariat against such a state and must found another party.

But those who believe that our state is a proletarian state, but with bureaucratic deformations formed under the pressure of the petty-bourgeois elements and the capitalist encirclement; . . . these must use party methods and party means to combat that which they hold to be wrong, mistaken, or dangerous.²⁴⁴

The immediate goal of the Opposition was to arouse and mobilize the working class members of the party to press for a correction of the party regime and political line. Thus, the *Platform* declared the conviction of the Opposition that “the fundamental mass of the working class section of the party will prove able in spite of everything to bring the party back to the Leninist road.”²⁴⁵ In a memorandum written in November 1927, Trotsky reaffirmed that “the Opposition is fighting for influence in the party, above all for influence upon the proletarian core of the party.”²⁴⁶ As part of this struggle, the United Opposition addressed its demands, far more than had the 1923 Opposition, to the concerns of the Soviet working class. Throughout 1926-1927 it circulated its statements and manifestos within the party’s working class cells; and, whenever possible, its leaders directly addressed meetings of workers.

However, the United Opposition found it exceedingly difficult to implement this strategy. In particular, they discovered that it was virtually impossible to carry its message to the proletarian core of the party while abiding by officially accepted “party methods.” Whenever leaders of the United Opposition appeared before meetings of workers, or even distributed its statements within factory cells of the party, they were accused of “factionalism” and threatened with expulsion. Although Trotsky and the United Opposition explicitly recognized the legitimacy of the prohibition against party factions, they repeatedly tried to circumvent this ban by defining their activities as those of a loose “grouping,” not a disciplined “faction,” or by claiming that their violations of party rules were justified by exceptional circumstances. Thus, in his June 1926

letter to the Central Committee Trotsky stated, “That a ruling party, under conditions of revolutionary dictatorship, cannot accept a regime of contending factions is absolutely unquestionable.” Nevertheless, he insisted that “under a closed-off apparatus regime, which only gives orders but permits no control over itself, the formation of groupings is generally the only possible way to make corrections in apparatus policy.”²⁴⁷ In other statements the United Opposition openly admitted it had engaged in factional activities, but justified these as a response to the factionalism of the majority.²⁴⁸ At the same time, the Opposition repeatedly demanded that the leadership circulate its speeches, articles, and statements to the entire party and that it open a party-wide discussion in preparation for the Fifteenth Party Congress. However, to avoid expulsion for the party, the Opposition ultimately was compelled to conduct the most important debates of its struggle within the walls of the Kremlin. There, the best they could hope for was to win the sympathies of the “genuine Leninists” remaining in the party apparatus.

When the United Opposition was able to obtain a hearing within the proletarian cells of the party, it encountered an even greater obstacle: the passivity of the Soviet working class. Because of the depth and complexity of this problem, Trotsky had little hope that it could be rectified immediately or in the short run. That is why, at time of the formation of the United Opposition, Trotsky advised Zinoviev and Kamenev that the Opposition “must aim far ahead.” That is also why Trotsky insisted in late 1927 that the principal method of the Opposition was “propaganda, that is, explaining its views, applying them to specific questions, and defending them.”²⁴⁹ Nevertheless, Trotsky and the United Opposition repeatedly declared their confidence that, in the long run and with the aid of the Opposition, the proletarian nucleus would arise and reassert its control over the party. Thus, the *Platform* proclaimed the Opposition’s conviction that “the fundamental mass of the working class section of the party will prove able in spite of everything to bring the party back to the Leninist road.”²⁵⁰ Or again: “This working class section of the party will reawaken. It will find out what is really happening. It will take the fate of the party into its own hands. To help the vanguard of the workers in this process is the task of the

Opposition.”²⁵¹ According to Trotsky, one factor that could contribute to the reawakening of the Soviet proletariat would be an upsurge in the international revolution in the West or the East.²⁵² On the other hand, he believed that the Soviet working class might revive once it clearly perceived the domestic consequences of the rightist economic policies of the party leadership. As Trotsky warned the Central Committee in February 1927, “The increased activism of the nonproletarian classes inevitably will bring the proletariat to its feet. It will arise to defend itself and, when conditions become at all favorable, will go over to the offensive.”²⁵³

5.4 ON THE EVE OF THERMIDOR

In the fall of 1927 the internal party struggle escalated feverishly toward its climax. The Opposition, determined to proceed with the pre-Congress discussion, exerted every effort to bring its program before the proletarian component of the party. At the same time the party leadership was equally determined to silence the Opposition. It resorted to unprecedented methods of repression, culminating in the expulsion of the leaders of the Opposition and a large number of their supporters. On the basis of this repression, Trotsky concluded that the Soviet state was teetering on the brink of Thermidor.

On September 6 the United Opposition again addressed the Politburo and the presidium of the CCC, protesting the persecution of its adherents and demanding the return of banished Oppositionists to participate in a full pre-Congress debate. Furthermore, it called for the publication and circulation of its platform as part of the party discussion. The party leadership rejected the demand for publication of the *Platform* on the grounds that it had no desire to legalize the Oppositional faction. Instead, the leadership was prepared to permit only the publication of brief counter-theses to its own official theses.²⁵⁴

Short of total surrender, the only alternative left to the Opposition was to publish and circulate the *Platform* on its own. On the night of September 12-13 the GPU raided a house where a handful of Oppositionists were duplicating the *Platform* on typewriters. The following day the GPU reported to the CCC that it had uncovered an “illegal printshop, which was publishing the antiparty documents of the Opposition prohibited by the party.”²⁵⁵ Involved in the affair was a former officer of Wrangel’s White Guards who, the GPU alleged, was also tied to a “military conspiracy.” Fourteen Oppositionists involved in the duplication of the *Platform* were expelled from the party, and one, Mrachkovskii, was imprisoned.²⁵⁶

Meanwhile, in response to inquiries from Opposition leaders V. Menzhinskii, the head of the GPU, admitted that the former “Wrangel officer” was an employee of the secret police. The Opposition immediately protested that an *agent provocateur* had been utilized to create the impression that it was working hand in hand with White Guardists and military conspirators.²⁵⁷

To this, Stalin replied,

But is there anything wrong in this former Wrangel officer helping the Soviet authorities to unmask counter-revolutionary conspiracies? Who can deny the right of the Soviet authorities to win former officers to their side in order to employ them for the purpose of unmasking counter-revolutionary organisations?²⁵⁸

On September 27 the presidium of the Executive Committee of the Communist International met to consider the expulsion of Trotsky, Rakovskii, and Vuiović from the ECCI. Again, Trotsky denounced the opportunist deviations of the Comintern and the “Stalinist regime” in the party “which has now been transplanted in its entirety into the Comintern.” He described the incident with the Wrangel officer as an example of “Thermidorian slander” and “Bonapartist frameups.”²⁵⁹ After a heated debate that lasted through the night, the expulsions were approved.

A few weeks later the party leadership abruptly proclaimed a number of leftward revisions in economic policy. On October 10 Bukharin called for “*a reinforced offensive against capitalist elements and, first of all, against the kulak.*” Then, at the opening session of the

Central Executive Committee (CEC) of the Congress of Soviets, Rykov announced that the proportion of peasant households exempted from taxation would be increased from twenty-five to thirty-five percent.²⁶⁰ At the same time, the party leadership unveiled a manifesto in honor of the tenth anniversary of the revolution that announced the introduction of a seven-hour workday and five-day workweek (in place of the eight-hour day and six-day week) with no cut in pay.²⁶¹ To a large degree, these measures seem to have been motivated by the desire of the party leadership to undercut the potential appeal of the Opposition's *Platform* among the working class. At a subsequent session of the CC, Trotsky insisted that these measures did not fundamentally alter the rightist character of the official economic policy:

Today's shouting about "*forced pressure*" on the kulak—that same kulak to whom yesterday they were shouting "Enrich yourselves!"—cannot change the general line. Anniversary celebration surprises, such as a seven-hour workday, cannot change it either. . . . The political line of the present leadership is not defined by these individual adventuristic gestures.²⁶²

Trotsky denounced the shortening of the workday as transparent demagoguery, pointing out that it had been introduced without regard for any of the existing long-term economic plans. Furthermore, the manifesto contained only vague promises to introduce the seven-hour day among certain categories of workers at some indefinite point in the future.²⁶³

Continuing its efforts to win the allegiance of the proletarian section of the party, the Opposition launched a campaign to get 20-30,000 signatures to its *Platform* prior to the Fifteenth Party Congress. (Ultimately, it succeeded only in obtaining 5,000-6,000.) Meanwhile, the Opposition's hopes of a proletarian resurgence were renewed by an event that occurred on October 15. Immediately after the session of the CEC, demonstrations were held in Leningrad to celebrate the seven-hour day. The demonstrators filed past the main body of officials, but recognizing Trotsky and Zinoviev on a separate reviewing stand, gathered in a crowd of thousands around them, waving and shouting greetings. Zinoviev, convinced that this spontaneous demonstration indicated mass support, was immediately optimistic about the

chances of success. Trotsky shared Zinoviev's view that the demonstration indicated deep popular dissatisfaction with the party heads, but warned that it would impel the leadership to accelerate the destruction of the Opposition.²⁶⁴

The October plenum of the CC-CCC convened to approve the majority's economic theses for the Fifteenth Party Congress. However, in the course of the plenum Stalin renewed his demand for the expulsion of Trotsky and Zinoviev from the Central Committee. The session was marked by a high degree of violence. Both Trotsky and Zinoviev were shouted down, and books and a water glass were thrown at Trotsky while he spoke.²⁶⁵ In his address Trotsky repeatedly returned to the theme of "Thermidor." Again, he raised the issue of the "Wrangel officer," describing this as an example of a "Thermidorian amalgam." Stalin's goal, according to Trotsky, was "to split the party, to cut off the Opposition, to accustom the party to the method of physical destruction." To these ends, Stalin and his supporters had resorted to expelling and arresting Oppositionists, and to "fascist methods" such as the shouting down or beating up Oppositionists, and throwing books and stones. In attempting to destroy the Opposition, Trotsky warned, Stalin was carrying out the social orders of Ustrialov. However, the Opposition would not be silenced. Defiantly, Trotsky concluded, "Expel us. You will not stop the victory of the Opposition—the victory of the revolutionary unity of our party and the Communist International!"²⁶⁶ Subsequently, the plenum unanimously approved the expulsion of Trotsky and Zinoviev from the Central Committee.²⁶⁷

Once again the Opposition attempted to take its case to the masses. On the tenth anniversary of the October Revolution, Oppositionists marched in the official parades in Moscow and Leningrad, carrying banners with their own slogans: "Strike against the NEPman and the bureaucrat!", "Down with opportunism!", "Carry out Lenin's testament!", "Beware of a split in the party!", and "Preserve Bolshevik unity!"²⁶⁸ Police and agents of the majority leadership ripped these banners from the hands of the demonstrators and beat up large numbers of Oppositionists. From these incidents, Trotsky concluded that the danger of Thermidor was imminent:

When Bolsheviks are beaten up because they call for turning our fire to the right, against kulak, NEPman, and bureaucrat, then the danger of Thermidor is at hand. Those who do the beating, those who organize the beatings, and those who regard them with indulgence are Thermidorians or connivers at Thermidor.²⁶⁹

In reply to Trotsky's request for a special inquiry into the events in Moscow and Leningrad, the CC and CCC called upon the Opposition cease its illegal, anti-party meetings. When Trotsky and Zinoviev stalked out of this joint session in protest, they were expelled from the party, while five more Oppositionists were removed from the CC and six were dropped from the CCC. A few days later Adolf Ioffe—a prominent Soviet diplomat and a close friend of Trotsky's—committed suicide in protest against Trotsky's expulsion. Ioffe's funeral was the occasion for the last public demonstration of the Opposition and Trotsky's final public speech in the Soviet Union.²⁷⁰

By this point the Opposition was in disarray. Zinoviev and Kamenev now balked at further oppositional activity out of fear that the expulsions would push the Opposition onto the road of a second party, while Trotsky urged a continuation of the struggle. Still, the Opposition managed to close ranks in a final appeal to the Fifteenth Party Congress for unity. In a statement signed by 121 Oppositionists, the United Opposition agreed to accept part of the responsibility for the crisis in the party, promised to renounce factionalism and abide by the decisions of the party congress, and called upon the congress to readmit Oppositionists who had been expelled and release those who had been imprisoned. At the congress, Stalin rejected the Opposition statement as inadequate, and a resolution was passed declaring adherence to the Opposition as incompatible with membership in the party.²⁷¹

Stalin's intransigence immediately provoked a split in the Opposition. On December 10 the Trotskyist and Zinovievist groupings issued separate statements—the Zinovievist statement being the more conciliatory of the two. Again, the congress declared both statements to be inadequate. Subsequently, a special commission expelled 75 more Oppositionists from the party. Finally, on December 19 Kamenev offered the congress a statement of total capitulation in which

the Zinovievists renounced their “anti-Leninist” views. The congress then subjected the Zinovievists to the final insult by rejecting their recantation and granting the expelled Oppositionists only the option of applying individually for readmission after six months had elapsed. Immediately after the congress, 1,500 more Oppositionists were expelled and 2,500 signed capitulatory statements.²⁷²

5.5 CONCLUSION

During the years 1926-1927 Trotsky and the United Opposition developed a theory of Soviet bureaucracy that was able to account for a wide range of political and social phenomena, and yet was remarkably simple and elegant. To a large extent, this theory elaborated upon Trotsky’s previous insights from the period 1923-1925. At the same time, it represented a deepening of Trotsky’s commitment to the traditional Marxist analysis of bureaucracy. According to that understanding, there is a direct interrelationship between the rise of political alienation in a society, and the growing power of exploitative classes. In the period examined in this chapter, Trotsky found considerable evidence—including developments in economic, international, and regime policy areas—that this was increasingly the case in the USSR. It is beyond the scope of this work to attempt a full evaluation of Trotsky’s perception of these developments and the United Opposition’s programmatic alternative. Nevertheless, perhaps a few words in this regard are in order.

For the most part, Trotsky’s views on international policy matters in this period seem to have been generally sound. Although Trotsky probably exaggerated the potential of the British general strike in 1926, his critique of the Anglo-Russian Trade Union Unity Committee made sense, both from the point of view of revolutionary politics and Soviet foreign policy considerations.²⁷³ Even more convincing was his criticism of Comintern policy in China.

Preoccupied with other matters and constrained by his alliance with the Zinovievists, Trotsky was slow in turning his attention to Chinese developments. However when he did so his analysis and predictions proved to be amazingly accurate. There is, of course, no way to know whether Trotsky's approach would have fared better in China than Stalin's. However, it is hard to imagine how it could have fared worse.²⁷⁴ Finally, regarding the main Soviet international doctrine of this period, the theory of socialism in one country, there is little question that Trotsky and the Opposition were on much firmer ideological ground than were their adversaries. Nevertheless, it must be admitted that this ideological correctness counted for little among the Soviet masses who were increasingly cynical about revolutionary appeals.

Trotsky's and the Opposition's economic views were somewhat more problematic. The Opposition convincingly argued the need for a more vigorous industrialization policy to combat a broad range of economic problems, including the growing social differentiation in the countryside, difficulties in grain collection, the inability of state industry to satisfy consumer demand, the expansion of urban unemployment, and shortages in workers' housing. By 1926-1927 even Bukharin had come to recognize the validity of the Opposition's views in this respect.²⁷⁵ Furthermore, in the light of Stalin's later economic successes, it is evident that a rapid tempo of industrialization certainly was possible in the Soviet Union. However, it is unclear whether the Opposition's program of industrialization could have been realized as painlessly as the Opposition suggested, or without a simultaneous curtailment of democracy. In the plan of the Opposition the main resources for industrialization were to be obtained by imposing a forced grain loan and a steeply progressive tax upon the top ten percent of the peasantry. Could this have been done without reducing the incentive of the most productive peasants—the kulaks and the middle peasants who aspired to become kulaks—to produce? The Opposition insisted that it could, arguing, "Our tax policy by no means 'strips' the kulak. It does not hinder him in the least from concentrating in his hands a continually greater accumulation in money and kind."²⁷⁶ We cannot know if the peasant would have agreed.²⁷⁷

More importantly, there is the question of whether the Opposition could have carried out its policy of rapid industrialization while simultaneously implementing its democratic and anti-bureaucratic reforms. It has been suggested that, in advocating rapid industrialization, increased pressure on the kulaks, and collectivization, the Opposition anticipated all of the brutality and repression of Stalin's later "revolution from above."²⁷⁸ As far as the Opposition's explicit program is concerned, this simply is not true. As a number of contemporary scholars have demonstrated, the United Opposition's economic program lay solidly within the gradualist framework of the New Economic Policy. The tempo of industrialization advocated by the Opposition never approached the rate later ordered by Stalin; the Opposition's call for a forced loan and increased taxation of the kulak was far different from Stalin's later de-kulakization campaign; and the collectivization advocated by the Opposition was intended to be fully voluntary.²⁷⁹ However, it is possible that the effort to industrialize by extracting social surplus from the kulaks would have required the use of coercion and would have contributed to the growth of bureaucratism, despite the intentions of the Opposition. Thus, John Molyneaux has argued,

It is unlikely that sufficient surplus could be extracted without the use of force and without provoking a grain strike (as, in fact, happened) Ultimately the problem was that the extraction of a large surplus from a poor workforce . . . on the basis of a low productivity of labor . . . cannot be done by exhortation alone—it requires coercion and it requires a social agency with a material interest in the process. In the Soviet Union this instrument of forced accumulation was the very bureaucracy Trotsky was trying to oppose.²⁸⁰

As far as the political sphere is concerned, Trotsky and the United Opposition provided what appears to be a fully accurate and well-documented critique of the continuing deterioration of the democratic norms and traditions of the Bolshevik Party and of the Soviet state and mass institutions. Furthermore, they offered a real alternative to these developments in their demands for the enforcement of the electoral principle for all offices, for the right of all party members to present their views to the party, and for an end to the persecution of party dissidents. However,

there continued to be serious weaknesses in the Opposition's program for the reform of Soviet political institutions. Most importantly, there was still no admission that one-party rule and the ban on party factions may have had a corrosive effect upon the political activity of the working class. In fact, the *Platform* even went so far as to argue, "The dictatorship of the proletariat imperiously demands a single and united proletarian party as the leader of the working masses and the poor peasantry. Such unity, unweakened by factional strife, is unconditionally necessary to the proletariat in the fulfillment of its historic mission."²⁸¹ It is possible that many of the Opposition leaders, including Trotsky, sincerely believed in the legitimacy of these restrictions on political activity.²⁸² Regarding the question of one-party rule, the Opposition may have feared that the legalization of oppositional parties would strengthen the Mensheviks and other conscious Thermidorians. It is also clear that in the context of the party struggle of 1926-1927 it would have been politically suicidal for the Opposition to advocate openly either freedom for contending factions or a multi-party system. Nevertheless, acceptance of these restrictions also carried a price. To maintain the fiction that they were simply a loose grouping of like-minded party members, the Opposition leaders repeatedly were forced to abandon propaganda work among their natural constituency—party and non-party workers.

Beyond these programmatic points, there is the question of the validity of Trotsky's and the Opposition's perception of the fundamental dynamics involved in Soviet politics in the late 1920s. Was it true that the basic conflict in the Soviet Union was between the proletariat and the exploitative layers of Soviet society? Did the policies of the party leadership largely reflect the prevailing balance of class forces in the Soviet Union? Was the fundamental cleavage within the party really between the party's right and left wings? Was the Soviet Union sliding dangerously close to a Thermidorian restoration of capitalism? All of these views were part of what has been called Trotsky's "somewhat fantastic perception of the USSR in the late twenties and early thirties."²⁸³ Yet, in the context of that time, the analysis of the United Opposition did not appear so fantastic. It is probably true that the Opposition exaggerated the size of the kulak stratum of the peasantry.²⁸⁴ However, it is clear that during the late 1920s the economic power and political

influence of the kulaks and the NEPmen were on the rise, and that this was perceived as a threat by a large part of the party leadership.²⁸⁵ At the same time, intelligent conservative observers such as Ustrialov, believing that the party majority's economic policies could facilitate a restoration of capitalism, supported the majority against the Opposition. In fact, if one does not look beyond 1927, the analysis of Trotsky examined in this chapter offered a plausible account of the dynamics of Soviet politics in the late 1920's.

Nevertheless, subsequent developments demonstrated that Trotsky's analysis in this period was deeply flawed.²⁸⁶ Trotsky anticipated that the party centrists would be unable to resist the pressures from the right without the countervailing pressure exerted by the United Opposition; and he predicted that the defeat of the United Opposition would accelerate the disintegration of the centrist faction, strengthen the right wing in the party, and lead to a Thermidorian restoration of capitalism. In fact, the "centrist faction" proved to be far more durable and more radical than Trotsky's analysis suggested. After crushing the United Opposition in late 1927, Stalin was able to turn on his allies within the party leadership and to destroy the Right Opposition. Far from inaugurating a Thermidor, the defeat of the United Opposition was followed by radical shifts to the left in both economic and international policy. According to Trotsky's theory, the subsequent expropriation of the Soviet kulak and virtual eradication of free enterprise within the USSR should have eliminated the soil upon which political alienation thrived. Instead, by Trotsky's own account, the party regime after 1927 was characterized by the unprecedented centralization of authority, repression of free discussion, and smothering of "workers' democracy." In the years 1928-1933, Trotsky attempted to come to grips with these developments theoretically. Initially, he was inclined to dismiss them as insignificant, or even to view them as confirming the perspective of the United Opposition. Subsequently, he was forced to resort to a series of highly strained interpretations of events and ad hoc theoretical modifications in order to reconcile them with his theory.

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- ¹ Edward Hallett Carr, *The Interregnum, 1923-1924* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1954), 290-291; Robert Vincent Daniels, *The Conscience of the Revolution: Communist Opposition in Soviet Russia* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1960), 207-208.
- ² Edward Hallett Carr, *Socialism in One Country, 1924-1926* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1958-64), 2:31; Daniels, 254; Isaac Deutscher, *The Prophet Unarmed: Trotsky 1921-1929* (New York: Vintage Books, 1959), 241; J. V. Stalin, *Works* (Moscow : Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1952- 1955) 7:390.
- ³ Carr, *Socialism*, 2:52. Daniels argues that Uglanov was already a Stalin supporter at the time of his appointment. Daniels, *Conscience*, 254.
- ⁴ Carr, *Socialism*, 2:96-98; Daniels, *Conscience*, 255; Stalin, *Works*, 7:391-392.
- ⁵ Ruth Fischer, *Stalin and German Communism: A Study in the Origins of the State Party* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1948), 432-455.
- ⁶ For discussions of Bukharin's economic views during this period, see Stephen F. Cohen, *Bukharin and the Bolshevik Revolution: A Political Biography, 1888-1938* (New York: Vintage Books, 1975), 160-212; Moshe Lewin, *Russian Peasants and Soviet Power: A Study of Collectivization* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co. Inc., 1968), 135-142; Alec Nove, "Some Observations on Bukharin and His Ideas," in *Political Economy and Soviet Socialism*, Alec Nove (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1979), 81-99.
- ⁷ Quoted in Carr, *Socialism*, 1:260.
- ⁸ *Ibid.*, 266-269; Daniels, *Conscience*, 258-259.
- ⁹ Carr, *Socialism*, 1:195; Daniels, *Conscience*, 258.
- ¹⁰ Carr, *Socialism*, 1:271-274.
- ¹¹ Carr, *Socialism*, 2:59-60. See also Isaac Deutscher, *The Prophet Unarmed, Trotsky: 1921-1929* (New York: Vintage Books, 1959), 240-241.
- ¹² Carr, *Socialism*, 1:285-286.
- ¹³ *Ibid.*, 300-304; Daniels, *Conscience*, 259; Deutscher, *Prophet Unarmed*, 245.
- ¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 304-305; Deutscher, *Prophet Unarmed*, 245-246.
- ¹⁵ Carr, *Socialism*, 2:66-68; Carr, *Socialism*, 1:290-295, 307-308; Daniels, *Conscience*, 255.
- ¹⁶ Carr, *Socialism*, 2:111-115.
- ¹⁷ Carr, *Socialism*, 1:329-352.
- ¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 350-352; Stalin, *Works*, 7:364.
- ¹⁹ Carr, *Socialism*, 2:119-129.
- ²⁰ Carr, *Socialism*, 2:138; Daniels, *Conscience*, 267-268.
- ²¹ Stalin, *Works*, 7:345-346, 358-359.
- ²² Quoted in Leonard Schapiro, *The Communist Party of the Soviet Union*, 2d ed., rev. (New York: Vintage Books, 1971), 298.
- ²³ Carr, *Socialism*, 2:144.
- ²⁴ *Ibid.*, 151, 153-160; Daniels, *Conscience*, 270; Schapiro, *Communist Party*, 300.
- ²⁵ Deutscher, *Prophet Unarmed*, 248-249.
- ²⁶ Richard B. Day, *Leon Trotsky and the Politics of Economic Isolation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973), 114.
- ²⁷ Leon Trotsky, *The Challenge of the Left Opposition (1923-1925)*, ed. Naomi Allen and George Saunders, with an introduction by Naomi Allen (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1975), 391.
- ²⁸ See Day, *Leon Trotsky*, 153.
- ²⁹ Trotsky, *Challenge (1923-1925)*, 386.
- ³⁰ *Ibid.*, 393.
- ³¹ *Ibid.*, 386-387.
- ³² *Ibid.*, 388-390, 391-393.
- ³³ Trotsky, *Challenge (1923-25)*, 394-396. See also Deutscher, *Prophet Unarmed*, 256.
- ³⁴ Carr, *Socialism*, 2:147-149.
- ³⁵ Leon Trotsky, *The Challenge of the Left Opposition (1926-27)*, ed. Naomi Allen and George Saunders (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1980), 44.
- ³⁶ Leon Trotsky, *Writings of Leon Trotsky [1936-37]*, ed. Naomi Allen and George Breitman (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1978), 119; Day, *Leon Trotsky*, 117. Antonov-Ovseenko later claimed that, at the Fourteenth Party Congress, Trotsky had planned to come out against Zinoviev and Kamenev. [Day, *Leon Trotsky*, 117.] Perhaps Trotsky was

considering this before the congress. However, despite Trotsky's critical remarks about the Leningrad Opposition, it is clear from his notes during the congress that Trotsky had already begun to perceive Zinoviev and Kamenev in a more favorable light.

³⁷ Trotsky, *Writings [1936-37]*, 119.

³⁸ Trotsky, *Challenge (1926-27)*, 44-45.

³⁹ Carr, *Socialism*, 1:326.

⁴⁰ Quoted in Leon Trotsky, *My Life: An Attempt at an Autobiography* (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1970), 521-522.

⁴¹ Quoted in Victor Serge, *Memoirs of a Revolutionary, 1901-1941*, trans. and ed. Peter Sedgwick (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 212.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 213.

⁴³ Leon Trotsky, *The Stalin School of Falsification* (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1971), 92-95.

⁴⁴ Robert V. Daniels has argued to the contrary that the United Opposition's program was taken largely from that of the Leningrad Opposition. See Daniels, *Conscience*, 276.

⁴⁵ Trotsky, *Challenge (1926-27)*, 78. See also *ibid.*, 96, 103, 122, 132, 331.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 50, 122, 132, 331.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 49-50, 79, 80, 103-104, 110, 117, 191, 323, 331, 385.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 80, 104 230, 322-326, 51-52, 142, 230, 231, 331-332.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 304-305, 326-328,

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 324-326.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 78, 103, 121, 154-155, 230, 232, 234, 306, 312, 313-314, 315-316, 318, 330, 331.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 333, 337, 326-330, 318-320.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 337-340.

⁵⁴ The most thorough history of the Anglo-Russian Trade Union Unity Committee can be found in Daniel F. Calhoun, *The United Front: The TUC and the Russians 1923-1928* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976). For the Opposition's views on the ARC, see also Tony Cliff, *Trotsky: Fighting the Rising Stalinist Bureaucracy 1923-1927* (London: Bookmarks, 1991), 167-186; Deutscher, *Prophet Unarmed*, 278

⁵⁵ Carr, *Socialism*, 3, part 1:577. See also Calhoun, *United Front*, 145.

⁵⁶ Calhoun, *United Front*, 192.

⁵⁷ Edward Hallett Carr, *Foundations of a Planned Economy, 1926-1929*, (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1971-), 3, part 2:318-321; Calhoun, *United Front*, 232-236, 239-240; Cliff, *Trotsky: Fighting*, 179-180

⁵⁸ As Trotsky subsequently explained, in early 1925 he had written the book *Whither England?* to challenge "the official conception of the Politbureau, with its hope of an evolution to the left by the British General Council, and of a gradual and painless penetration of communism into the ranks of the British Labor Party and the trades-unions." [Trotsky, *My Life*, 527.]

⁵⁹ See Calhoun, *United Front*, 247.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 262; Deutscher, *Prophet Unarmed*, 269; Trotsky, *My Life*, 528.

⁶¹ Leon Trotsky, *Leon Trotsky on Britain* (New York: Monad Press, 1973), 253-258; Trotsky, *Challenge (1926-27)*, 84-85.

⁶² Trotsky, *Challenge (1926-27)*, 66.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 76.

⁶⁴ See *ibid.*, 118, 123, 235, 247, 353, 383, 384, 410.

⁶⁵ On the whistling, shouting down, and "fascist" attacks, see *ibid.*, 393, 446. On the one-sided and slanderous discussion, see *ibid.*, 118, 123, 247, 249-253, 265, 353-354, 383-384, 411, 413.

⁶⁶ See *ibid.*, 83-84, 87-88, 118, 90-91, 107, 237, 242, 246, 352, 353-354, 355, 403, 408, 410, 411, 413, 440, 448.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 353.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 68, 352.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 342-343, 352.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 87.

⁷¹ *Ibid.* See also, 106, 114.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 72. Iu. Fel'shtinskii, comp., *Kommunisticheskaia oppositsiia v SSSR, 1923-1927: iz arkhiva L'va Trotskogo v chetyrekh tomakh* (Benson, VT: Chalidze Publications, 1988.), 1:238. See also Trotsky, *Challenge (1926-27)*, 116.

⁷³ See *ibid.*, 75, 88, 89, 110, 115, 123-124, 236, 247-248, 255, 294, 358-361, 414.

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- ⁷⁴ N. Popov, *Outline History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union*, part 2 (New York: International Publishers, 1934):272.
- ⁷⁵ Carr, *Foundations*, 2:4; Deutscher, *Prophet Unarmed*, 273-274.
- ⁷⁶ Carr, *Foundations*, 2:5.
- ⁷⁷ Stalin, *Works*, 8:248-249. The major documents of the Opposition at this point were its "Declaration of the Thirteen" and a resolution on the general strike in Britain. See Trotsky, *Challenge (1926-27)*, 73-92; and Trotsky, *Leon Trotsky on Britain*, 253-258.
- ⁷⁸ Stalin, *Works*, 8:185-187; Calhoun, *United Front*, 271.
- ⁷⁹ Carr, *Foundations*, 1, part 1:6-7; Deutscher, *Prophet Unarmed*, 279; A. Rykov, "The Results of the Joint Plenary Meeting of the C.C and of the C.C.C. of the C.P.S.U.," *International Press Correspondence* 6, no. 57 (Aug. 19, 1926), microfilm (London: World Microfilms, 1970), 953, 955.
- ⁸⁰ Carr, *Foundations*, 2:5-8; Daniels, *Conscience*, 279. The central committee filled Zinoviev's vacant seat on the Politburo with Rudzutak. At the same time, it promoted five Stalinists to candidate membership of the Politburo: Ordzhonikidze, Andreev, Kirov, Mikoian, and Kaganovich. The same CC plenum removed Piatakov from his post as deputy president of VSNKh and Trotsky from his membership in that body. Soon after the plenum, the oppositionist Ossovskii was expelled from the party for advocating the freedom to form competing parties, and Kamenev lost his position as Commissar for Internal and Foreign Trade. [Carr, *Foundations*, 2:9, 11-12.]
- ⁸¹ Carr, *Foundations*, 2:13-14.
- ⁸² Carr, *Foundations*, 1, part 1:16-17; Carr, *Foundations*, 1, part 2:522-523; Deutscher, *Prophet Unarmed*, 282-283.
- ⁸³ Stalin, *Works*, 8:220-224.
- ⁸⁴ Trotsky, *Challenge (1926-27)*, 127-129.
- ⁸⁵ Carr, *Foundations*, 2:16-17; Deutscher, *Prophet Unarmed*, 296-297.
- ⁸⁶ Stalin, *Works*, 8:245, 258-294.
- ⁸⁷ Trotsky, *Challenge (1926-27)*, 142-162, 182-188.
- ⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 161.
- ⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 183.
- ⁹⁰ The central thesis of Day's *Leon Trotsky and the Politics of Economic Isolation* is that Trotsky was not against building socialism in one country, but that he believed this could not be done by the Soviet Union without integrating the Soviet economy into the world economy. For a critique of this thesis, see Alec Nove, "New Light on Trotsky's Economic Views," *Slavic Review* 40, no. 1 (Spring 1981): 92-94.
- ⁹¹ Popov, *Outline History*, 2:308.
- ⁹² Deutscher, *Prophet Unarmed*, 308-311; Trotsky, *My Life*, 529.
- ⁹³ The following account of the Chinese revolution and its relationship to the struggle within the AUCP(b) is based upon Deutscher, *Prophet Unarmed*; James Pinckney Harrison, *The Long March to Power: A History of the Chinese Communist Party, 1921-72* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1972); Harold R. Isaacs, *The Tragedy of the Chinese Revolution*, 2d rev. edition (Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1961); Alexander Pantsov, *The Bolsheviks and the Chinese Revolution, 1919-1927* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2000); Peng Shu-tse, "Introduction," and Ch'en Tu-hsiu, "Appendix," in *Leon Trotsky on China*, Leon Trotsky, ed. Les Evans and Russell Block (New York: Monad Press, 1976).
- ⁹⁴ See Ch'en Tu-hsiu, "Appendix," 599-600; Harrison, *Long March*, 49; Pantsov, *Bolsheviks*, 46-47.
- ⁹⁵ See Deutscher, *Prophet Unarmed*, 320; Harrison, *Long March*, 80, 86-87; Isaacs, *Tragedy*, 85, 87. On Stalin's position, see Pantsov, *Bolsheviks*, 84-98, 129.
- ⁹⁶ See Trotsky, *Leon Trotsky on China*, 490; Pantsov, *Bolsheviks*, 102-107; Gregor Benton, *China's Urban Revolutionaries: Explorations in the History of Chinese Trotskyism, 1921-1952* (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1996), 10.
- ⁹⁷ Soon afterwards, Zinoviev supported this position in the Politburo. However, he quickly retreated from this position. [See Pantsov, *Bolsheviks*, 92, 110-111, 118; Benton, *China's Urban Revolutionaries*, 10.]
- ⁹⁸ See Trotsky, *Leon Trotsky on China*, 113-255.
- ⁹⁹ See *ibid.*, 490.
- ¹⁰⁰ See *ibid.*, 128-148.
- ¹⁰¹ Stalin, *Works*, 9:229-231.
- ¹⁰² See Trotsky, *Leon Trotsky on China*, 158-248.
- ¹⁰³ Carr, *Foundations*, 2:24.

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- ¹⁰⁴ Stalin, *Works*, 9:318; Carr, *Foundations* 2:25.
- ¹⁰⁵ See Trotsky, *Challenge* (1926-27), 226-239.
- ¹⁰⁶ Carr, *Foundations*, 2:26-27; Deutscher, *Prophet Unarmed*, 339.
- ¹⁰⁷ Leon Trotsky, *Stalin School*, 130; Carr, *Foundations*, 2:28. On the war scare of 1927, see Alfred G. Meyer, "The War Scare of 1927," *Soviet Union/Union Sovietique* 5, pt.1 (1978), 1-25; John P. Sontag, "The Soviet War Scare of 1926-27," *Russian Review* 37 (June 1975), 66-77.
- ¹⁰⁸ Trotsky, *Challenge* (1926-27), 252-253.
- ¹⁰⁹ Carr, *Foundations*, 2:29-30; Deutscher, *Prophet Unarmed*, 349-350.
- ¹¹⁰ Trotsky, *Challenge* (1926-27), 292-295.
- ¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 65; Fel'shtinskii, *Kommunisticheskaia oppositsiia*, 1:233.
- ¹¹² Trotsky, *Challenge* (1926-27), 118.
- ¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 36, 45-46, 354, 233, 246, 266, 267, 354, 393, 446.
- ¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 343.
- ¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 345; Fel'shtinskii, *Kommunisticheskaia oppositsiia*, 4:142.
- ¹¹⁶ Trotsky, *Challenge* (1926-27), 316.
- ¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 233.
- ¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 196-197.
- ¹¹⁹ Trotsky, *Stalin School*, 148, 149; Fel'shtinskii, *Kommunisticheskaia oppositsiia*, 3:117.
- ¹²⁰ Trotsky, *Challenge* (1926-27), 341; Fel'shtinskii, *Kommunisticheskaia oppositsiia*, 4:139.
- ¹²¹ Trotsky, *Challenge* (1926-27), 81. See also 304, 342, 353, 390, 489.
- ¹²² *Ibid.*, 351.
- ¹²³ *Ibid.*, 308, 351.
- ¹²⁴ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1960-1970), 21:309-310.
- ¹²⁵ Lenin, *Collected Works*, 21:100, 326; Lenin, *Collected Works*, 22:108; Lenin, *Collected Works*, 23:84, 119.
- ¹²⁶ For references to the "opportunist" or "Menshevik" policies of the leadership, see, for example, Trotsky, *Challenge* (1926-27), 196-197, 388; Trotsky, *Leon Trotsky on Britain*, 265, 283, 284, 288; Trotsky, *Leon Trotsky on China*, 165-166, 180.
- ¹²⁷ Trotsky, *Challenge* (1926-27), 388-389.
- ¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 104. See also, Trotsky, *Leon Trotsky on Britain*, 265; Trotsky, *Leon Trotsky on China*, 274
- ¹²⁹ Trotsky, *Stalin School*, 171.
- ¹³⁰ See especially *ibid.*, 173. See also Trotsky, *Challenge* (1926-27), 442-443; Trotsky, *Leon Trotsky on China*, 274.
- ¹³¹ David Law has correctly observed, "In 1923 the Opposition was discussing bureaucratism, the growth of bureaucracy as a system of administration; by 1926 it was beginning to assert the existence of a bureaucracy as an ossifying Party leadership, maintaining itself by the exercise of power." [David S. Law, "The Left Opposition in 1923," in *The Ideas of Leon Trotsky*, ed. Hillel Ticktin and Michael Cox (London: Porcupine Press, 1995), 242.] However, it should be noted that during this period Trotsky and the Opposition time also spoke at times of the "bureaucracy" of the state, and of the combined "bureaucracy" of the state, party, etc.
- ¹³² Trotsky, *Challenge* (1926-27), 81; Fel'shtinskii, *Kommunisticheskaia oppositsiia 1923-1927*, 2:16.
- ¹³³ Trotsky, *Challenge* (1926-27), 341; Fel'shtinskii, *Kommunisticheskaia oppositsiia 1923-1927*, 4:139.
- ¹³⁴ Trotsky, *Challenge* (1926-27), 115; Fel'shtinskii, *Kommunisticheskaia oppositsiia 1923-1927*, 2:79. Italics in the original.
- ¹³⁵ Fel'shtinskii, *Kommunisticheskaia oppositsiia 1923-1927* 3:134. This line is missing from the translated version in Trotsky, *Challenge* (1926-27), 245.
- ¹³⁶ Trotsky, *Challenge* (1926-27), 356; Fel'shtinskii, *Kommunisticheskaia oppositsiia 1923-1927*, 4:151. Note modification of the translation.
- ¹³⁷ Carr, *Socialism*, 2:199-200; Carr, *Foundations*, 2:489.
- ¹³⁸ Trotsky, *Challenge* (1926-27), 356; Fel'shtinskii, *Kommunisticheskaia oppositsiia 1923-1927*, 4:151. Note modification of translation.
- ¹³⁹ Trotsky, *Challenge* (1926-27), 231; Fel'shtinskii, *Kommunisticheskaia oppositsiia 1923-1927*, 3:64-65. Note modification of the translation.
- ¹⁴⁰ Trotsky, *Challenge* (1926-27), 356; Fel'shtinskii, *Kommunisticheskaia oppositsiia 1923-1927*, 4:151. Note modification of the translation.

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- ¹⁴¹ Trotsky, *Stalin School*, 172-173; L. Trotskii, *Stalinskaia shkola falsifikatsii: popravki i dopolneniia k literature epigonov*, ed. P. V. Volobuev et al., reprint edition (Moscow: "Nauka," 1990), 175-176; Fel'shtinskii, *Kommunisticheskaia oppozitsiia 1923-1927*, 4:40. Along the same lines, both the "Declaration of the Eighty-four" and the *Platform* warned of the growing power of "the kulak, the Nepman, and the bureaucrat [*biurokrat*]," leaving unspecified the institution where the bureaucrat resided. [Trotsky, *Challenge (1926-27)*, 230, 379; Fel'shtinskii, *Kommunisticheskaia oppozitsiia 1923-1927*, 3:63; Fel'shtinskii, *Kommunisticheskaia oppozitsiia 1923-1927*, 4:167.]
- ¹⁴² As Trotsky observed in December 1927, "In the party the apparatus is all-powerful; behind the back of the soviet organizations high-ranking bureaucrats give all the orders; and so on." [Trotsky, *Challenge (1926-27)*, 489.]
- ¹⁴³ On the promotion and selection of party and state personnel on the basis of their hostility to the Opposition, see, for example, Trotsky, *Challenge (1926-27)*, 352-353.
- ¹⁴⁴ See, for example, Trotsky, *Challenge (1926-27)*, 246.
- ¹⁴⁵ Trotsky, *Challenge (1926-27)*, 67.
- ¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 66.
- ¹⁴⁷ Trotsky, *Challenge (1923-25)*, 77.
- ¹⁴⁸ Trotsky, *Challenge (1926-27)*, 102-103.
- ¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 68.
- ¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 491, 170.
- ¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 166. See also *ibid.*, 170, 206-207. The *Platform* also gave a perhaps contradictory explanation of working class passivity in which it spoke of the illusions among the masses engendered by a "rapid betterment in the conditions of the workers" after the civil war. See *ibid.*, 392.
- ¹⁵² *Ibid.*, 170.
- ¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, 206. See also 246, 295, 390.
- ¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 166. See also 208, 255.
- ¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 390. See also 306.
- ¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 168-169.
- ¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 303.
- ¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 390-391.
- ¹⁵⁹ See, for example, *ibid.*, 103-104.
- ¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 76.
- ¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 299. See also 103, 254, 256, 355, 403, 407, 445, 452, 474.
- ¹⁶² *Ibid.*, 69-70.
- ¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, 76.
- ¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 122. See also 96.
- ¹⁶⁵ Trotsky, *My Life*, 530.
- ¹⁶⁶ Trotsky, *Challenge (1926-27)*, 241-242. See also *ibid.*, 206, 378.; and Leon Trotsky, *The Third International After Lenin* (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1970), 246.
- ¹⁶⁷ Trotsky, *Challenge (1926-27)*, 233. See also, 76.
- ¹⁶⁸ See *ibid.*, 71-72.
- ¹⁶⁹ Trotsky, *Challenge (1923-25)*, 88. In 1925 Trotsky returned to this possibility in his pamphlet *Whither Russia?* However, in that work he adopted a more optimistic tone, probably in order to avoid new accusations of "pessimism." See *ibid.*, 260-261.
- ¹⁷⁰ Trotsky, *Challenge (1926-27)*, 260-261.
- ¹⁷¹ On the history of the term "Thermidor" among the Bolsheviks, see David Law, "Trotsky and the Comparative History of Revolutions: the 'Second Chapter,'" *Sbornik*, no. 13 (1987), Study Group on the Russian Revolution, 4-15; and David S. Law, "Trockij and Thermidor," in *Pensiero e azione politica di Lev Trockij: atti del convegno internazionale per il quarantesimo anniversario della morte*, ed. Francesca Gori (Firenze: Leo S. Olschki, 1982), 2:433-449.
- ¹⁷² Trotsky, *Challenge (1926-27)*, 258-259.
- ¹⁷³ Serge, *Memoirs*, 131. For Trotsky's own later argument that the success of the rebellion at Kronstadt would have led to a restoration of capitalism in the Soviet Union, see Trotsky, *Challenge (1926-27)*, 259; and V. I. Lenin and Leon Trotsky, *Kronstadt* (New York: Monad Press, 1979), 82, 133, 139.

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- ¹⁷⁴ V. I. Lenin, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii* (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe Izdatel'stvo Politicheskoi Literatury, 1958-1965), 43:24. The translation used is from Trotsky, *Challenge (1926-27)*, 259. See also the Tenth Party Congress resolution "On Party Unity," cited in Law, "Trotsky and the Comparative History," 6.
- ¹⁷⁵ Quoted in Serge, *Memoirs*, 131.
- ¹⁷⁶ This is described as a sort of "managed Thermidor" in Law, "Trotsky and the Comparative History," 13n25.
- ¹⁷⁷ Leon Trotsky, *Social Democracy and the Wars of Intervention in Russia 1918-1921 (Between Red and White)* (London: New Park Publications, 1975), 83.
- ¹⁷⁸ Lenin, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 43:403. This is pointed out in Law, "Trotsky and the Comparative History," 5.
- ¹⁷⁹ See Trotsky, *Challenge (1923-25)*, 394-395; Leon Trotsky, *Writings of Leon Trotsky [1929]*, ed. George Breitman and Sarah Lovell (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1975), 279, 314; Law, "Trotsky and the Comparative History," 7.
- ¹⁸⁰ Trotsky, *Challenge (1923-25)*, 87-88)
- ¹⁸¹ Quoted in Trotsky, *My Life*, 513.
- ¹⁸² Carr, *Socialism*, 2:112-113, Pierre Broué, *Trotsky* (Paris: Fayard, 1988), 465-466. See also Daniels, *Conscience*, 255; Deutscher, *Prophet Unarmed*, 244-245.
- ¹⁸³ Trotsky, *Challenge (1923-25)*, 395. However Trotsky discussed the issue in a memorandum on November 26, 1926. See Trotsky, *Challenge (1926-27)*, 172.
- ¹⁸⁴ Trotsky, *Stalin School*, 142-143.
- ¹⁸⁵ Trotsky, *Challenge (1926-27)*, 263.
- ¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 259.
- ¹⁸⁷ Trotsky, *Stalin School*, 144. See also Trotsky, *Challenge (1926-27)*, 258, 389.
- ¹⁸⁸ Trotsky, *Challenge (1926-27)*, 260.
- ¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 262, 267, 293, 384, 489.
- ¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 490; Trotsky, *Stalin School*, 140-141.
- ¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 390.
- ¹⁹² *Ibid.*, 489, 502-503.
- ¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, 492-493.
- ¹⁹⁴ Deutscher, *Prophet Unarmed*, 292.
- ¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 172.
- ¹⁹⁶ Trotsky, *Stalin School*, 155; Trotsky, *Challenge (1926-27)*, 293, 384. For similar statements made later in 1927, see *ibid.*, 469, 482.
- ¹⁹⁷ Trotsky, *Stalin School*, 158; Trotsky, *Challenge (1926-27)*, 262-263.
- ¹⁹⁸ Trotsky, *Stalin School*, 158; Trotsky, *Challenge (1926-27)*, 258, 260-261, 492.
- ¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 234.
- ²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 490. On the election decree of the RFSFR of October 1925 and its impact upon the Soviet elections of 1925-1926, see Carr, *Socialism*, 2:347-351.
- ²⁰¹ Trotsky, *Stalin School*, 172.
- ²⁰² *Ibid.*, 140.
- ²⁰³ Trotsky, *Challenge (1926-27)*, 493. See also, 401. At this point Trotsky did not discuss in any detail what a Soviet Bonapartist regime would look like. It should also be noted that Trotsky's discussion of the possibility of a Bonapartist regime in the Soviet Union represented an important reversal of his earlier views. In 1918 and 1919 Trotsky explicitly had excluded this possibility. See Leon Trotsky, *How the Revolution Armed*, trans. Brian Pearce (London: New Park Publications Ltd., 1979) *Vol. 1: The Year 1918*, 252-253; *Vol. 2: The Year 1919*, 58.
- ²⁰⁴ Trotsky, *Challenge (1926-27)*, 115-116.
- ²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 102.
- ²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 114.
- ²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 87.
- ²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 116-117.
- ²⁰⁹ Trotsky, *Challenge (1926-27)*, 234.
- ²¹⁰ Trotsky, *Stalin School*, 141; Trotsky, *Challenge (1926-27)*, 402.
- ²¹¹ Trotsky, *Challenge (1926-27)*, 260.
- ²¹² *Ibid.*, 492, 402.

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- ²¹³ Trotsky, *Stalin School*, 141. See also Trotsky, *Challenge (1926-27)*, 234, 446.
- ²¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 402.
- ²¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 492.
- ²¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 402. See also *ibid.*, 492.
- ²¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 492.
- ²¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 108.
- ²¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 355-356.
- ²²⁰ *Ibid.*, 108.
- ²²¹ *Ibid.*, 356.
- ²²² *Ibid.*, 389.
- ²²³ Trotsky, *Stalin School*, 141.
- ²²⁴ Robert McNeal argues that in the late 1920s Trotsky at times equated Stalinism with German Social Democracy and Menshevism. [Robert H. McNeal, "Trotskyist Interpretations of Stalinism," in *Stalinism: Essays in Historical Interpretation*, ed. Robert C. Tucker (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1977), 31.] This is mistaken. Trotsky viewed the German Social Democrats and the Mensheviks as fully opportunist. Although he denounced the "opportunist" and "Menshevist" character of some Stalinist policies, during this period he viewed the general line the Stalinists as centrist.
- ²²⁵ Trotsky, *Challenge (1926-27)*, 356.
- ²²⁶ *Ibid.*, 442.
- ²²⁷ *Ibid.*, 356. See also *ibid.*, 108; Fel'shtinskii, *Kommunisticheskaia oppozitsiia*, 4:151. Note modification of translation.
- ²²⁸ *Ibid.*, 442-443.
- ²²⁹ *Ibid.*, 489-490.
- ²³⁰ Quoted in Leon Trotsky, *Stalin: An Appraisal of the Man and His Influence* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1941), 393.
- ²³¹ Trotsky, *My Life*, 513.
- ²³² Trotsky, *Challenge (1926-27)*, 356. For Bukharin's shift to the left, see Cohen, *Bukharin*, 242-252.
- ²³³ Trotsky, *Challenge (1926-27)*, 389.
- ²³⁴ *Ibid.*, 267.
- ²³⁵ Trotsky, *Stalin School*, 173-174.
- ²³⁶ Trotsky, *Challenge (1926-27)*, 108, 357.
- ²³⁷ *Ibid.*, 108. See also *ibid.*, 357, 497.
- ²³⁸ Trotsky, *Challenge (1926-27)*, 357, 115-116.
- ²³⁹ *Ibid.*, 357.
- ²⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 356.
- ²⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 489.
- ²⁴² *Ibid.*, 496.
- ²⁴³ *Ibid.*, 489. See also *ibid.*, 267, 476.
- ²⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 163. See also *ibid.*, 267, 293, 401.
- ²⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 358.
- ²⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 473.
- ²⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 69.
- ²⁴⁸ See *ibid.*, 102, 106, 128, 163, 174-175, 474.
- ²⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 473.
- ²⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 358.
- ²⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 394. See also *ibid.*, 268, 447, 448.
- ²⁵² *Ibid.*, 495.
- ²⁵³ *Ibid.*, 209. See also *ibid.*, 495, 497.
- ²⁵⁴ Carr, *Foundations*, 2:34-35; Daniels, *Conscience*, 312-313; Deutscher, *Prophet Unarmed*, 356-357.
- ²⁵⁵ Trotsky, *Challenge (1926-27)*, 416-417.
- ²⁵⁶ Carr, *Foundations*, 2:35; Daniels, *Conscience*, 313; Deutscher, *Prophet Unarmed*, 357-358.
- ²⁵⁷ Daniels, *Conscience*, 313; Deutscher, *Prophet Unarmed*, 358-359; Trotsky, *Challenge (1926-27)*, 416-427.
- ²⁵⁸ Stalin, *Works*, 10:193.

²⁵⁹ Trotsky, *Challenge (1926-27)*, 406-412.

²⁶⁰ Carr, *Foundations*, 1, part 1:33.

²⁶¹ Carr, *Foundations*, 1, part 2:496.

²⁶² Trotsky, *Challenge (1926-27)*, 443.

²⁶³ *Ibid.*, 430-431.

²⁶⁴ Carr, *Foundations*, 2:37; Deutscher, *Prophet Unarmed*, 365-366, 370; Trotsky, *My Life*, 532-533.

²⁶⁵ Carr, *Foundations*, 2:38-39; Deutscher, *Prophet Unarmed*, 366-367.

²⁶⁶ Trotsky, *Challenge (1926-27)*, 448.

²⁶⁷ Carr, *Foundations*, 2:39.

²⁶⁸ Deutscher, *Prophet Unarmed*, 373.

²⁶⁹ Trotsky, *Challenge (1926-27)*, 464.

²⁷⁰ Carr, *Foundations*, 2:43-44.

²⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 47-48.

²⁷² *Ibid.*, 48-50.

²⁷³ Thus, though Adam Ulam considers Trotsky's critique of the alliance of Soviet trade-union organizations with those of Britain to have been "silly," he is compelled to admit that this alliance "backfired and was to be a factor in the worsening of the Soviet diplomatic position in 1927-28." [Adam Ulam, *Stalin: The Man and His Era* (New York: Viking Press, 1973), 267; Adam Ulam, *Expansion and Coexistence: The History of Soviet Foreign Policy, 1917-73*, 2nd ed. (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1974), 164.]

²⁷⁴ For positive evaluations of Trotsky's views on China, see Fernando Claudin, *The Communist Movement: From Comintern to Cominform, Part One: The Crisis of the Communist International*, trans. Brian Pearce (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1975), 282, 286; Isaacs, *Tragedy*, 160-161, 185, 189, 315; Michael Löwy, *The Politics of Combined and Uneven Development: The Theory of Permanent Revolution* (London: Verso Editions and NLB, 1981) 75-82. For more critical evaluations, see Charles Bettelheim, *Class Struggles in the USSR, Second Period: 1923-1930*, trans. Brian Pearce (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1978), 379; Conrad Brandt, *Stalin's Failure in China 1924-1927* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1958), ix, 98-99, 155-162; Kostas Mavrikis, *On Trotskyism: Problems of Theory and History*, trans. John Mcgreal (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1976), 132-140. For more ambivalent evaluations, see Ulam, *Expansion*, 170; Daniels, *Conscience*, 215; Baruch Knei-Paz, *The Social and Political Thought of Leon Trotsky* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), 359-366; Alexander Pantsov, *The Bolsheviks and the Chinese Revolution, 1919-1927* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2000); Ian D. Thatcher, *Trotsky* (London: Routledge, 2003), 155-156.

It may be, as Alexander Pantsov and Ian Thatcher have argued, that before the spring of 1927 Trotsky and the Opposition underestimated Stalin's true "leftist intentions" within the Guomindang. [See Pantsov, *Bolsheviks*, 129; Thatcher, *Trotsky*, 155.] Subsequently however, Stalin's April 5, 1927 statement regarding his intention to discard the Chinese bourgeoisie like a "squeezed lemon" did not alter their conclusion that, objectively speaking, Stalin's policy represented a "centrist deviation" under bourgeois pressure. [See Trotsky, *Leon Trotsky on China*, 225-226; Trotsky, *Challenge (1926-27)*, 389.]

²⁷⁵ On the merits of the Opposition's analysis and Bukharin's belated recognition of these, see Cohen, *Bukharin*, 209-211, 244-245; Lewin, *Russian Peasants* 141-142, 151.

²⁷⁶ Trotsky, *Challenge (1926-27)*, 305.

²⁷⁷ For criticisms of the Opposition's economic program along these lines, see Thatcher, *Trotsky*, 151-153.

²⁷⁸ See, for example, Basil Dmytryshyn, *USSR: A Concise History*, 3rd ed. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1978), 142-143; Alfred G. Meyer, "Lev Davidovich Trotsky," *Problems of Communism* 16, no. 6 (November-December 1967): 31-32, 37; Ulam, *Stalin*, 292n3.

²⁷⁹ See E. H. Carr and R. W. Davies, *Foundations*, 1, part 1:265; Stephen F. Cohen, "Bolshevism and Stalinism," in Tucker, *Stalinism*, 21-23; Baruch Knei-Paz, *The Social and Political Thought of Leon Trotsky* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), 278; Lewin, *Russian Peasants*, 142, 147-148, 154-156; John Molyneux, *Leon Trotsky's Theory of Revolution* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1981), 100; Nove, "New Light on Trotsky's Economic Views," 88, 92; Robert C. Tucker, *Political Culture and Leadership in Soviet Russia: From Lenin to Gorbachev* (Brighton, Sussex: Wheatsheaf Books Ltd., 1987), 64, 68, 79.

²⁸⁰ Molyneux, *Leon Trotsky's Theory*, 101. For another argument regarding contradictions between the Opposition's proposals for industrialization and its democratic program, see R. W. Davies, "The Inadequacies of Russian Trotskyism," *Labour Review* 2, no. 1 (July-August 1957), 111-115.

²⁸¹ Trotsky, *Challenge (1926-27)*, 392.

²⁸² Ruth Fischer later claimed that, in late 1925 or early 1926, Zinoviev favored the eventual admission of the Mensheviks and a peasant party into the soviets. [Fischer, *Stalin and German Communism*, 546.]

²⁸³ McNeal, "Trotskyist Interpretations of Stalinism," 32.

²⁸⁴ The *Platform* stated that the kulak stratum include approximately 10% of peasant households. Trotsky, *Challenge (1926-27)*, 337. Contemporary authors place the figure at 3-5% in 1928. See Lewin, *Russian Peasants*, 72, 131, 176; Bettelheim, *Class Struggles, Second Period*, 87-88.

²⁸⁵ See, for example, Lewin, *Russian Peasants*, 186-188, 191-192, 198-210.

²⁸⁶ For various critical assessments of Trotsky's analysis during this period, see Duncan Hallas, *Trotsky's Marxism* (London: Bookmarks, 1979), 38-41; McNeal, "Trotskyist Interpretations of Stalinism," 31-32; Robert C. Tucker, *Stalin as Revolutionary, 1879-1929: A Study in History and Personality* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co. Inc., 1973), 390-393; Robert Wistrich, *Trotsky: Fate of a Revolutionary* (New York: Stein and Day, 1979), 161-163.

6.0 LEFT TURN AND THEORETICAL CRISIS

In 1928-29, Trotsky's theory of bureaucracy entered what could be described as a period of crisis.¹ Repeatedly, unfolding events contradicted the expectations and predictions Trotsky had derived from the theory he had developed in the party struggle of 1926-27. During that struggle, Trotsky had come to view the Opposition as the only force within the party capable of implementing a genuinely leftist, proletarian course. Furthermore, he had predicted that if the Opposition were crushed and no major proletarian upsurge occurred, the most likely results would include the disintegration of the centrist current, the conquest of power by the party right, the shifting of the party's economic and international policies to the right, and the probable restoration of capitalism.² In late 1927 and early 1928 the Opposition was beaten decisively and thousands of Oppositionists, including Trotsky, were exiled to remote regions of the Soviet Union. However, instead of moving to the right, the party leadership actually initiated what could be interpreted as a dramatic policy shift to the *left* that would continue to deepen in the following years. Furthermore, instead of dissolving, the Stalinist current within the leadership ultimately emerged triumphant in a power struggle with its moderate opponents.

In the face of this widening gulf between theory and reality, a growing number of Oppositionists began to reject the theory. Trotsky himself responded to the theoretical crisis as scientists and politicians commonly do: he continued to insist upon the validity of his theory.³ To maintain this position, Trotsky found it necessary to resort to highly strained interpretations of events, squeezing and trimming reality to fit into a Procrustean theoretical bed. On other occasions, he explained various developments by introducing ad hoc modifications into his

analysis, stretching it to accommodate troublesome facts that could not be explained away.⁴ Throughout this period Trotsky's adherence to the theory he had developed in 1926-1927 continued to lead him to make further erroneous predictions. However, during the same period, Trotsky began to revise that theory in a number of significant ways.

6.1 THE BEGINNING OF THE LEFT TURN

During the weeks following the Fifteenth Party Congress, thousands of supporters of the "Trotskyist" wing of the Opposition were arrested and exiled to remote regions of the Soviet Union.⁵ On January 17, 1928 Trotsky himself was apprehended by the G.P.U. and, with his wife Natalia Sedova and son Lev Sedov, was deported to Alma Ata, capital of Kazakhstan.⁶ While reestablishing contact with the scattered colonies of exiles, in the spring of 1928 Trotsky began preparing a series of documents to be submitted to the upcoming Sixth Congress of the Communist International in July.⁷ At the same time, much of his effort during this period was devoted to analyzing important shifts that were already taking place in both Comintern and domestic policy.

The first indications of a turn in the policy of the Communist International were evident in China as early as the summer of 1927. Following the expulsion of the Chinese Communist Party from the Guomindang in July 1927, an Emergency Conference of the CCP was convened in Hankou on August 7. Acting upon instructions from the Comintern, the conference placed the blame for the recent failures of the party on the "opportunist policy of capitulation" allegedly advocated by Chen Duxiu. Furthermore, it endorsed a new strategy of armed insurrection already being implemented at Nanchang. The result of this strategic shift was a series of failed uprisings

that culminated in the Canton Commune of December 11-13, an abortive insurrection in which approximately 5,700 revolutionaries were killed.⁸

During the following months, the turn was tentatively extended to other sections of the Comintern. At the Fifteenth Party Congress Stalin announced that “*Europe is now plainly entering the phase of a new revolutionary upsurge*”; and Bukharin declared that the immediate task of Communists was “to sharpen the struggle against social-democracy and, in particular, against the so-called ‘Left’ social democratic leaders.”⁹ Further indications of a shift to the left were evident at the ninth plenum of the ECCI in February 1928. Although Bukharin devoted the bulk of his report at that plenum to the struggle against “the so-called Trotskyite opposition,” he introduced a new note by stressing the need for “a struggle against Right deviations within the communist parties.” Similarly, the resolutions on the British and French parties approved by the plenum emphasized the themes of mass radicalization and the importance of intensifying the struggle against social democracy.¹⁰

Meanwhile, a parallel left turn also had begun in Soviet economic policy. As we have seen, in October 1927 Bukharin called for a “*reinforced offensive against capitalist elements, and, first of all, against the kulak*.”¹¹ In December, the Fifteenth Party Congress endorsed proposals for a “more decisive offensive against the *kulak*,” and for the “gradual transformation of individual peasant holdings” into large-scale collective farms. However, at this point there was no suggestion that a radical change in policy was being proposed. At the Congress party leaders continued to stress the moderate nature of the anti-kulak measures they were advocating, as well as the necessarily gradual character of collectivization.¹²

The issue that finally precipitated an abrupt revision of economic policy was a crisis in the collection of grain. Through the spring and summer of 1927, grain collections had proceeded

well, even running somewhat ahead of schedule. However, by the end of the year these began to fall off so sharply that the grain collected in November and December totaled less than half the collections of the last two months of 1926. Increasingly, the party leadership grew alarmed over the prospect of food shortages and a general disruption of economic plans. In December 1927 the Central Committee issued two directives to local party organizations urging the intensification of efforts to bring in the grain. Simultaneously, the leadership ordered an increase in supplies of industrial goods to key regions in order to stimulate grain sales. When these measures failed to produce results, on January 6 the Politburo issued a third directive that threatened leaders of local party organizations with severe penalties if they failed “to secure a decisive improvement in grain procurements within a very short time.” Additionally, 30,000 party workers, including some of the highest party leaders, were dispatched throughout the country to assist in the collection.¹³

Contemporary research has suggested that the causes of the procurement crisis were many and complex. Various aspects of the problem included a poor harvest in the main regions of market production, weaknesses in transport, deficiencies in the state collections apparatus, and passivity on the part of state grain collections agencies. However, much of the crisis also was due to conscious withholding of grain by the peasants. To a large degree, this had been made possible by the growing prosperity of a layer of the peasantry. In this period many better-off peasants found themselves in a position to pay their taxes and make necessary purchases out of their savings, while holding onto their grain in anticipation of higher prices in the spring. In 1927 these peasants withheld grain partially in reaction to agricultural price policies set by the state. Late that year official prices of grain were lowered, while prices of livestock products and industrial crops remained relatively high. Quite reasonably, peasants who were in a position to

do so sold livestock products, but kept their grain as a reserve. Furthermore, peasants were discouraged from selling by the general shortage of industrially produced goods that could be purchased with the proceeds of grain sales. That year in particular the chronic “goods famine” was aggravated by the panic buying that accompanied the war scare. At the same time, peasants also hoarded their grain in direct response to the growing threat of war. Finally, it seems that some peasants withheld their grain simply because they anticipated that the string of good harvests they had experienced from 1925 to 1927 could not last for another year.¹⁴

Despite the complexity of the problem, party leaders, and especially Stalin, placed the blame for the grain crisis squarely upon the kulak. As Stalin argued to party officials in western Siberia, the problem was that the Soviet kulak was engaging in “unbridled speculation.”¹⁵ Similarly, an anonymous *Pravda* editorial of February 15—believed by some to have been written by Stalin, despite the fact that Bukharin was the editor of *Pravda*—explained,

The rural economy has increased and prospered. Above all the *kulak* has increased and prospered. Three good harvests have not gone for nothing. An increase in the revenues of the peasants from crops other than grain, from animal husbandry and from industrial earnings, together with the relative backwardness in general in the supply of industrial goods, have given the peasant in general, and the *kulak* in particular, the opportunity to hold back grain products in order to force prices up.¹⁶

As a secondary cause, Stalin argued that speculation had been facilitated by local party and state officials who had been negligent in their struggle against the kulaks. He taunted the Siberian officials, “Can it be that you are afraid to disturb the tranquility of the kulak gentry?!”¹⁷

To deal with the crisis, the party leadership resorted to a series of “exceptional” or “extraordinary” measures. First, it called upon local officials to order the kulaks to deliver all their grain surpluses immediately at government prices. If the kulaks refused, they were to be prosecuted for speculation under Article 107 of the Criminal Code of the RSFSR, and their surpluses were to be confiscated. To ensure the allegiance of the majority of the peasantry, the

leadership attempted to foster class struggle in the countryside by announcing that twenty-five percent of the surpluses collected would be resold to poor and middle peasants at low government prices or distributed in the form of long-term loans. Prosecuting and judicial officials who resisted the application of Article 107 were to be dismissed. None of these immediate measures addressed what was viewed as the ultimate source of the grain crisis—the existence of a powerful kulak stratum among the peasantry. However, in a portent of things to come, Stalin asserted that the final solution to the kulak problem required the collectivization of agriculture.¹⁸

In practice, the extent and severity of the coercive measures applied in the countryside far exceeded those officially endorsed by the party leadership. Local party officials quickly discovered that the bulk of the grain surpluses were not held by the kulak, but by the middle peasant. Faced with demands from the center to collect large quantities of grain on penalty of expulsion from the party, they extended the extraordinary measures to middle and even poor peasants. Markets were forcibly closed so that peasants would be compelled to sell their grain to the state procurement organizations. As in the civil war, grain quotas were assigned to individual households. Peasant hoarders were publicly ostracized, barred from purchasing goods at village cooperative stores, and expelled from the cooperatives. Militia units set up road blocks and conducted illegal house-to-house searches to confiscate grain. Finally, in some areas peasants were forcibly collectivized. During the early months of 1928 the harshness of the procurement campaign revived memories of War Communism to the extent that peasants were heard to observe, “The year ’19 is back.”¹⁹

Although the Politburo had adopted the extraordinary measures unanimously, the implementation of these policies soon generated conflict within the leadership. The first sign of disagreement appears to have surfaced at the Politburo session of February 6. There, Aleksei Rykov, president of the Sovnarkom, reportedly exchanged angry words with Stalin over the latter’s proposal for a wholesale purge of party organizations in Siberia. Subsequently, Rykov, together with Mikhail Tomskii (chairman of the Central Trade Union Council), and Mikhail

Kalinin (president of the Central Executive Committee), were able to restrain Stalin's plan for the purge.²⁰ Beyond that, it is likely that these moderates were responsible for pressuring Stalin and his supporters into disavowing some of the more extreme measures employed in the grain collection. In a *Pravda* article of February 12, the Stalin's supporter Anastas Mikoian condemned some of the administrative measures of the campaign as "*harmful, unlawful, and inadmissible.*" The following day in a letter to local party officials, Stalin defended the use of emergency measures, but denied that these implied an abandonment of NEP, rejected the use of emergency measures against the middle peasants, and condemned the "distortions and excesses" that had occurred.²¹

By April the crisis seemed to be over. Grain collections for January-March 1928 were far higher than those of the corresponding months of the previous year, and the collection for 1927-1928 exceeded that of 1926-1927.²² The resolution adopted by the April plenum of the Central Committee represented a compromise between the Stalinists and the moderates within the party leadership. Although it continued to blame the kulak for the crisis and approved the recent use of extraordinary measures, it also condemned the "excesses" that had occurred, and pledged that the future offensive against the kulaks would be conducted in accordance with the methods of NEP.²³

However, by the end of April, grain collections began to fall off sharply. Partly, this seems to have been due to a poor harvest of winter wheat in the Ukraine and the northern Caucasus; partly, it was because most of the peasant's grain reserves had been confiscated during the preceding three months.²⁴ Again, the party leadership imposed the exceptional measures that had proven so successful in the winter. This time, the widespread "excesses" provoked a wave of discontent among the peasants who rioted and demonstrated in villages throughout the country.²⁵

The renewal of the grain crisis and the growth in peasant discontent further fueled the differences within the party leadership. Increasingly, Stalin and his supporters insisted that the ultimate source of the grain crisis was the private, individual character of Soviet agriculture. The only way out, Stalin argued, was through "the transition from individual peasant farming to

collective, socially-conducted economy in agriculture.”²⁶ At this point the moderates within the party leadership recoiled from both the use of extraordinary measures and from Stalin’s proposals for collectivization. Bukharin, who was beginning to emerge as the principal spokesman for the party right, publicly attacked the idea of a “class war” and “some kind of sudden leap” in agriculture. Privately, in letters to the Politburo in May and June, he warned that the emergency measures were alienating the whole peasantry, and he dismissed Stalin’s proposal for large-scale collectivization as nonsense. He called upon the Politburo to put an end to the emergency measures, to provide aid to the peasants, and to normalize market conditions. Meanwhile, lesser moderates denounced Stalin’s policies in even sharper terms.²⁷

Another domestic issue that contributed to the mounting tensions within the Politburo during this period was the “Shakhty affair.” In March it was announced that the OGPU had uncovered a conspiracy of technical specialists to sabotage production in the Shakhty mines of the Donets Basin of the Ukraine. Many of the fifty-five accused confessed to charges, now recognized as fabricated, of plotting with foreign powers to wreck Soviet industry. Throughout the ensuing show trial in May and June, the Soviet press, echoing Stalin’s pronouncements on the subject, utilized the Shakhty affair to demonstrate the need for greater vigilance against foreign and domestic class enemies, and particularly for closer supervision of the bourgeois specialists. For the moderates in the Politburo, this response represented a serious challenge. Most generally, it called into question their view that socialism could be constructed through the peaceful collaboration of all sectors of Soviet society. More specifically, it tended to discredit Rykov who headed the state apparatus that employed the specialists, and Tomskii who led the trade unions responsible for overseeing them. Rykov, Tomskii, and Bukharin publicly insisted that the Shakhty affair was an isolated incident, and warned against indulging in “specialist baiting.”²⁸

Meanwhile, in early 1928 a series of scandals were exposed in the party organizations of Smolensk and Artemovsk.²⁹ Citing these and the Shakhty affair, on June 3 the Central Committee appealed to party members and workers to participate in the campaign of “self-

criticism” against “bureaucratism” initiated at the April plenum. Stalin clearly viewed this, at least in part, as an invitation to the masses to criticize rightist officials. He denounced “the bureaucratic elements . . . in our Party, government, trade-union, co-operative and all other organisations.” Echoing Trotsky, Stalin explained that “bureaucracy is a manifestation of bourgeois influence on our organizations.” Unable to openly oppose the campaign, the moderates within the party leadership could only warn of its potential “abuses.”³⁰

6.2 EXPLAINING THE TURN

Despite previous signs that the leadership was contemplating a turn in both international and economic policy, Trotsky was unprepared for the events of early 1928. His first reaction to the extraordinary measures was to express satisfaction over this apparent confirmation of the correctness of the Opposition’s economic program. However, in early 1928 a growing number of Oppositionists began to recognize the serious challenge that the turn posed for Trotsky’s theory of bureaucracy and for his general political perspective. In contrast, Trotsky continued to insist upon the validity of his theory. Ultimately, Trotsky’s theory of bureaucratism shaped every aspect of his analysis of the turn. During this period, Trotsky’s theory led him to accept without criticism the Stalinist accounts of both the “kulak strike” and the Shakhty affair. At the same time, his theory led him to minimize the seriousness of the turn, to explain it in terms of shifts in the balance of class forces and/or as a consequence of Oppositional pressure, and to continue to predict that unless a major proletarian upsurge occurred both the left course and the Soviet workers’ state were doomed.

Trotsky had not been at all impressed by the party leadership’s leftist initiatives in economic and Comintern policy in late 1927. In both cases, he viewed the new policies as

temporary maneuvers that would be followed by deeper shifts to the right. As we have seen, he described Bukharin's October call for an offensive against the kulaks and the anniversary declaration of the seven-hour workday as "individual adventuristic gestures" that would not change the general line. Together, according to Trotsky, these constituted a "zigzag to the left," but "only a zigzag."³¹ Similarly, his first reaction to the news of the abortive Canton insurrection was to characterize it as nothing but an "adventurist zigzag by the Comintern to the left," in reaction to the debacle that had resulted from the previous "Menshevik policy" in China. He predicted that the disaster in Canton soon would be followed by "a new and longer zigzag to the right in the field of international politics, especially Chinese."³²

Thus, the turn of early 1928 took Trotsky by surprise. His first reaction to the extraordinary measures was simply to gloat over this tacit admission by the leadership that the Opposition had been correct in its economic analysis. In spite of themselves, the party leaders had been forced to acknowledge the reality of kulak threat.³³ In a letter to Lev Sosnovskii on March 5, Trotsky noted that the February 15 editorial in *Pravda* had attributed the difficulties in grain collection to the kulaks and to state and party officials conciliatory to the kulaks. Trotsky quipped, "Why, you know, this is an antiparty document, not an editorial." He noted that when the Opposition had sounded the alarm about the kulak danger in the past, the leadership had accused it of advocating war communism; but now "when the kulak is squeezing your tail, then the matter is no longer literary and you even remember something from Marxism." The "advantage" of the Opposition, Trotsky observed, was that it had "correctly foreseen."³⁴

However, the truth was that neither Trotsky nor anyone else in the Opposition *had* "correctly foreseen" the turn. In fact, the turn of early 1928 directly contradicted Trotsky's belief that only the Opposition could lead a genuine left turn, as well as his predictions that the

crushing of the Opposition would result in the shifting of policy and power to the right while raising the immediate prospect of a Thermidor.

Early in 1928 a small but growing number of Oppositionists began to recognize and to comment upon this contradiction and to urge that the Opposition seek reconciliation with the party leadership. As Isaac Deutscher has suggested, these “conciliators” were partially responding to the pressures that now confronted the individual members of the Opposition. Many had once held high political office; most had devoted years of sacrifice for the revolution; now all found themselves expelled from their party and subjected to the humiliation and hardship of exile.³⁵ Beyond that, however, as Deutscher also notes, it was the left turn that led many to question the traditional analysis and political perspectives of the Opposition:

The turn that events had taken appeared to call into question some of the Opposition’s major assumptions and predictions, especially its appraisal of the political trends within the party. Had we been right, some Trotskyists began to wonder, in denouncing Stalin as the protector of the kulak? Had we been justified in saying that once the left opposition was defeated, the inner-party balance would be so upset that the Bukharinist right would assert itself and sweep away the Stalinist centre? Had we not overrated the strength of the conservative elements in the party? The Stalinist faction, far from being overwhelmed, was beginning to overwhelm the right—had we then not exaggerated with our Cassandra cries about the dangers of Thermidor? And had we, generally speaking, not gone too far in our struggle against Stalin?³⁶

Within the Opposition the left turn had provoked a theoretical crisis that was rapidly becoming a political one.

The most prominent leaders of the conciliators included E. A. Preobrazhenskii and, by the summer of 1928, Karl Radek. Early in 1928 Preobrazhenskii argued that the party leaders had implemented the extraordinary measures in reaction to the kulak offensive and under the pressure of the mounting class struggle in Europe. In doing so, they had acted as the unconscious agents of historic necessity. Furthermore, Preobrazhenskii predicted that the leadership soon would be forced even deeper to the left as the class struggle in the countryside escalated. Thus,

he concluded that the Opposition seriously had misread the situation, misjudging the role played by the Stalinists and exaggerating the danger from the right. In line with this analysis, Preobrazhenskii proposed that the Opposition request permission to convene a conference for the purpose of establishing an alliance with the party center.³⁷ By the summer of 1928 Karl Radek had arrived at a similar view. Early in the summer he appealed to the Comintern Congress for the readmission of the expelled members of the Opposition. In his theses to the Comintern, Radek suggested that perhaps “a number of party leaders with whom we crossed swords yesterday are better than the theories which they defended,” and he defined the task of the Opposition as one of “fighting ruthlessly . . . against all the evils against which the party is now mobilized.”³⁸

Largely in reaction to the statements of the conciliators, in early 1928 an opposing current began to take shape at the opposite end of the Oppositional spectrum. This grouping, which became known as the “intransigents” or “irreconcilables,” tended to be younger, less concerned about economic questions, and more preoccupied with the issue of party democracy than the conciliators. Its leaders included Lev Sosnovskii, Boris Eltsin, and F. N. Dingel’shtedt.³⁹ In contrast to the conciliators, the intransigents were inclined simply to deny the significance of the extraordinary measures. As Dingel’shtedt wrote to Trotsky in July, “The measures have been provoked by the menace of famine and by economic crisis. [...] Mounting unemployment, the slowing down of industrialization continue: where is this new course?”⁴⁰ Consequently, the intransigents angrily rejected conciliator proposals for a reconciliation with the Stalinists.⁴¹ However, it does not appear that they did so out of loyalty to Trotsky’s theory. During this period, some of the more extreme intransigents were drawn toward the remnants of the old Democratic Centralist grouping, which had concluded that a Thermidor had already occurred and that it was time to form a new revolutionary party.⁴²

Trotsky ultimately adopted a position roughly mid-way between these two extremes. He was too concerned about policy issues, and too much of a realist simply to dismiss the shifts in economic and international policy as meaningless. At the same time, however, he was unwilling to give up the struggle against the leadership or to abandon his theory because of the turn.

Against the intransigents, Trotsky insisted that the shift in policy was real and highly significant; but in contrast with the conciliators, he sharply criticized various aspects of the turn, which he now analyzed entirely from the perspective of his theory of bureaucracy.

In early 1928 Trotsky agreed with the conciliators that a real and significant shift to the left had occurred in both economic and international policy. Thus, on May 9 Trotsky argued in a circular letter to the Opposition that “the decisions on domestic matters (in regard to the kulak, etc.) and the decisions of the recent ECCI . . . are unquestionably a step in our direction, that is, toward the correct path”; and he further described these policy changes as “a serious step to the left.”⁴³ Similarly, in a circular letter written on July 17 Trotsky lectured a group of irreconcilables: “It is impermissible to have a formally negative approach to the left shift, to say: nothing has happened, only machinations; everything remains as before. No. The greatest events have happened and are happening.”⁴⁴

However, even while he was arguing that the new policies were an important development, throughout most of 1928-1929 Trotsky seems to have been somewhat more concerned with combating the tendency he perceived among the conciliators to *exaggerate* the significance of the shift that had occurred. Trotsky’s skepticism was understandable in light of the party leadership’s previous policy record. As he observed in early May, “After the experiences we have gone through, we must be more cautious than ever when a turn comes, giving no unnecessary credit in advance.”⁴⁵ Besides that, Trotsky consistently measured the leadership’s turn against the *entire* program of the Opposition. When he did so in early 1928, he noted that the shift to the left in both economic and international policy fell far short of what the Opposition had demanded.⁴⁶

Beyond these considerations, however, much of Trotsky’s skepticism regarding the turn was inspired directly by his theory of bureaucracy. In this respect, part of Trotsky’s skepticism seems to have derived from the fact that, according to his theory, the party leadership was simply *incapable* of a serious turn to the left. For example, this attitude seems to be reflected in his evaluation of the turn in a May 16 letter to Aleksandr Beloborodov:

The authors of policy are stuck in a situation where some deep-going, serious turn is necessary. But because of their entire position and all their ingrained habits they would like to carry out this unavoidable turn . . . by the methods of a bureaucratic maneuver.⁴⁷

More clearly, however, the influence of Trotsky's theory is evident in the fact that he persistently evaluated the turn in terms of the nature of the party regime. As we have seen, Trotsky's theory suggested a direct relationship between the opportunism of Soviet policy and the absence of proletarian democracy in the most important political institutions of the Soviet Union. One implication that Trotsky now drew from this was that a true left course would have to be accompanied or immediately followed by a profound reform of the party regime. Consequently, he viewed the character of the party regime—and particularly the treatment of the Opposition—as a critical *indicator* of the seriousness of the turn. As he explained in a May 23 letter to Beloborodov,

For us the party regime has no independent significance—it only expresses everything else. That is why any experienced and serious politician must necessarily ask, “If you think that a deep class shift in official policy had occurred, how do you explain the continuing ‘export’ of people who are guilty only of having understood earlier and demanded a class shift earlier? [The treatment of the Opposition] is a faultless gauge of how serious, well thought out, and deep is the shift that has occurred.”⁴⁸

Approaching the same question from another angle, Trotsky asserted that only a healthy regime would enable the party to *maintain* a correct political line once it was established. Trotsky explicitly argued this position in a number of places, including a letter written June 2. In that letter Trotsky endorsed Khristian Rakovskii's observation that “a correct political line is inconceivable without the correct methods for elaborating and realizing it,” and that even if the leadership happened to “stumble onto the tracks of a correct line,” without a dramatic improvement in the party regime there would still be no guarantees that the line would be carried out.⁴⁹ Again, Trotsky's conclusion was that the left turn was completely unreliable.⁵⁰

Even while downplaying the depth and significance of the turn, Trotsky insisted that in one respect it had actually had *confirmed* his own predictions. In his circular letter of May 9 Trotsky reminded the exiled Oppositionists, “We predicted that the *tail would strike the head* and cause a realignment of forces.”⁵¹ Similarly, in his July “Declaration” to the Sixth Comintern Congress Trotsky asserted that the Opposition had foretold that the right-wing “tail” inside and outside the party “would inevitably strike at the [centrist] head, and that such a blow could become the starting point for a profound regroupment within the party.” According to Trotsky, this was exactly what had happened: “The bloodless kulak revolt of 1927-28, which occurred with the assistance of members of the party . . . is precisely a blow struck by the tail at the head.”⁵² However, in his May 23 letter to Beloborodov and again in a circular letter in September Trotsky conceded that he *had* made one small error in prediction. Trotsky admitted that in late 1927 he had anticipated a “rather imminent economic shift to the right under the pressure of aggravated economic difficulties.” In fact, as it turned out, “the next shift was to the left.”⁵³ Nevertheless, in Trotsky’s estimation this was only “a partial mistake” and “one of a completely secondary character, within a correct overall prediction.”⁵⁴

According to Trotsky, this “partial” or “secondary” error hardly justified the major theoretical revisions that the conciliators were proposing. Against Preobrazhenskii’s contention that the “objective logic of the situation” had proven capable of forcing the leadership to turn left, Trotsky replied that the same “objective logic also existed two years and three years and one year ago.”⁵⁵ Furthermore, he abruptly dismissed Preobrazhenskii’s contention that the right had turned out to be much weaker than the Opposition had thought, asserting: “To think that the right is weak is to understand nothing.”⁵⁶ Finally, he ridiculed as non-Marxist Radek’s argument that many party leaders had turned out to be better than their theories:

We Marxists have been accustomed to appraise leaders by their theory, through their theory, by the ability of leaders to understand and apply theory. Now it would seem that there may be excellent leaders who are accidentally armed with reactionary theories on almost all the basic questions.⁵⁷

In contrast to the conciliators, Trotsky was convinced that he could explain the left turn completely without abandoning or even significantly altering his theory. In a March 10 letter to I. N. Smirnov, Trotsky endorsed Smirnov's view that the party leaders had instituted the domestic left turn as "a drastic attempt to get out of the difficulties they blundered into with their eyes closed."⁵⁸ Similarly, in a circular letter of June 24 he argued that the turn in agriculture had been "crudely empirical and at the same time panic-stricken."⁵⁹ But why had the party leadership turned left when confronted with difficulties instead of to the right as the Opposition had predicted? Previously, Trotsky had explained the fundamental dynamics of Soviet politics, including the growth of bureaucratism, in terms of the shifting balance of class forces in the country. Now, he attempted to utilize the same factor to explain the turn. In his "Declaration" to the Sixth Congress of the Comintern, Trotsky asserted that the domestic left turn had been "carried out under pressure, as yet vague and unformed, from the proletarian core of the party."⁶⁰

Perhaps the clearest example of this argument appears in a letter by "an outstanding member of the Russian Opposition" written in April 1928. Although it has never been verified, the style and content strongly suggest that the author was Trotsky.⁶¹ According to this letter, a "revival in the spirit of the Russian working class" had been evident since 1926.⁶² In fact, the entire struggle of the Opposition since 1926 had been "just a reflection" of this working-class revival. Riding on the crest of this wave of proletarian discontent, the Opposition had launched its offensive, "expecting that the working class by simultaneous pressure would force the Central Committee to change its line." Unfortunately, the working class did not come to the aid of the Opposition in time, and the apparatus was able to "stifle the voice of the working class, postpone the effects of its pressure, and meanwhile crush the opposition."⁶³

However, according to the letter, Stalin had crushed the Opposition "at the last possible moment," for "three months later he would not have been able to do so." In early 1928 the working-class upsurge intensified in response to the difficulties in the grain collection and to the "Donets conspiracy," both of which, according to the letter, had completely confirmed the Opposition's analysis. The crisis in grain collections had "revealed the power and influence of

the kulaks, and thus made it clear where such policies were leading.” At the same time the Shakhty affair had “revealed with special trenchancy the inner rottenness of the bureaucratic regime and its counterrevolutionary character.”⁶⁴ (It should be noted that in various other statements from this period, Trotsky also accepted the veracity of Stalinist accounts of both the “kulak strike” and the Shakhty “conspiracy.”⁶⁵) The proletariat had responded to these developments with the only form of protest at its disposal—the wildcat strike. The letter describes how a “mighty strike wave swept over the whole country,” and how “an even greater number of strikes were derailed at the last moment.” Faced with this display of proletarian militancy, “Stalin had no choice but to hastily proclaim a political turn to the left, and, in order to pacify the working class, raise the slogans of the opposition which the day before were characterized as counterrevolutionary.”⁶⁶

There is independent evidence that there really were widespread manifestations of working-class discontent in early 1928.⁶⁷ However, if official strike statistics from this period can be believed, the characterization of these as “a mighty strike wave” appears to be somewhat of an exaggeration.⁶⁸ Perhaps for this reason, in other accounts from early 1928 Trotsky put more emphasis on the role that the Opposition, the political current that most represented the interests of the proletariat, had played in forcing the left turn in agriculture. For example, in a letter to Beloborodov in May Trotsky insisted that “if all our previous work had not existed—our analyses, predictions, criticisms, exposés, and ever newer predictions—a sharp turn to the right would have occurred under the pressure of the grain collections crisis.” According to Trotsky, it was the “good, strong wedge” that the Opposition had driven in that had made it impossible for the party leadership “at this particular time, to seek a way out of the contradictions on the *right* path.”⁶⁹ Trotsky never explained precisely how the Opposition’s criticism had blocked a right turn domestically. Most likely, he meant to suggest that the party leadership were afraid to turn right following the “grain strike” because they believed the workers would see this as a confirmation of the Opposition’s predictions and would rebel.

In the same period, Trotsky offered a variety of explanations of the leftward shift of the Communist International. One of these, contained in a document Trotsky submitted to the Comintern Congress, described the international turn as a by-product of the domestic economic difficulties.⁷⁰ However, in most of his comments on the origins of the shift in Comintern policy Trotsky stressed international factors that closely paralleled his explanations of the domestic turn. Thus, in various circular letters and in his critique of the Comintern draft program, Trotsky asserted that the previous “right-centrist” course of the Comintern had led to serious defeats, landing the leadership in a “blind alley.” Now, it was “trying to find a way out . . . to the left” under the impact of mounting proletarian pressure. Partly, the leadership had turned left in reaction to “the undeniable shift . . . taking place in the mood of the great working masses, principally in Europe and especially in Germany.”⁷¹ Partly, it had been the Opposition’s “four years of struggle” that had “compelled the ECCI . . . to hastily alter the draft program from one of a national type to one of an international type.” In this regard, Trotsky explained that praise of Stalin’s policies by Social Democrats and members of the bourgeoisie had been embarrassing to the party leadership. Consequently, it “became necessary to prove the Opposition was not being exiled for being leftist.”⁷²

From this analysis of the origins of the turn in policy, Trotsky concluded that there was no reason for the Opposition to place any confidence in the party leadership, as the conciliators were inclined to do. Trotsky believed that for the rightists within the leadership, the left turn was nothing but a maneuver. As he explained in his May 23 letter to Beloborodov, the rightists were afraid to engage the centrists in open conflict for they understood that “within the framework of the party the proletarian core, even in its present condition, could crush them to bits in two seconds.” Beyond that, even the rightists recognized the need for a maneuver to the left in the face of working class pressure.⁷³ However, Trotsky did not expect that the rightists would tolerate the left course for long. In a document submitted to the Comintern Congress he asserted that the right intended “to pass from the defensive to the offensive and to take their revenge when the Left experiment will be terminated by defeat.”⁷⁴

Regarding the centrists and the “wide circles of the party” that followed them, in his May 23 letter to Beloborodov Trotsky described the matter as somewhat “more complex.” Within these groupings Trotsky discerned “all shades—from bureaucratic tricksterism to a sincere desire to switch all policies onto the proletarian-revolutionary track.”⁷⁵ Yet, even assuming some of the centrist leaders were sincere about the left turn, Trotsky was convinced that their commitment to the turn soon would collapse unless it was buttressed by mass pressure. Again, this view was most clearly expressed in the previously discussed anonymous letter: “As always the centrist Stalin group will choose the course of least resistance. Just as they are now feigning a left turn under the pressure of the working class, they will quickly make a turn to the right under the combined pressure of the kulak and the Nepman.”⁷⁶ In such an event, a Thermidorian restoration of capitalism was the most likely outcome. Thus, on July 12 Trotsky warned the Comintern Congress that “*never has this danger [from the right] been so great, so threatening, and so imminent as it is now.*”⁷⁷

However, given that the left “maneuver” had originated in the pressure of the Opposition and/or the proletariat, Trotsky believed that it was possible that it could be transformed “into a turn—with very energetic help from below.”⁷⁸ As the author of the anonymous letter put it, “The fate of the ‘left course’ . . . depends upon the degree of activity of the working class at the decisive moment.”⁷⁹ During the spring and summer of 1928 Trotsky perceived signs that the working class was beginning to take the turn seriously, and to take an active part in the official campaign against the right.⁸⁰ Thus, in July Trotsky concluded that “the initial maneuver has grown over into a profound political zigzag, seizing in its vise ever wider circles of the party and wider class strata.” For this reason, Trotsky would not exclude the “*possibility* of the present zigzag developing in a direction of a consistent proletarian course.”⁸¹

The situation described by Trotsky clearly required a carefully balanced approach on the part of the Opposition. On one hand, Trotsky proclaimed the Opposition’s “unconditional” support for the left turn and for the struggle against the party right, insofar as these were real. “Are we ready to support the present official turn?” Trotsky asked the Opposition in May. “We

are,” he answered, “unconditionally and with all our forces and resources.”⁸² Similarly, in his “Declaration” to the Sixth Comintern Congress Trotsky asserted,

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 continue to do so completely independently of whether the center, which continues to look to the right, wants it or not. The Opposition of course does not set any prior conditions for this, demands no agreements, concessions, etc.⁸³

However, the kind of support Trotsky had in mind was not passive endorsement. The task of the Opposition, as Trotsky defined it in his July 12 “Declaration” to the Comintern Congress, was “to see that the present zigzag is extended into a serious turn onto the Leninist road.”⁸⁴ To accomplish that task, Trotsky believed it was essential for the Opposition to denounce all the weaknesses and inadequacies of the turn. As he bluntly explained in his “Declaration,”

The Opposition’s support for every correct move, even a half-hearted one, toward a proletarian line, will never be the mere yeasaying of the party philistine to the centrism of the apparatus . . . ; the Opposition will never pass over in silence the centrists’ inclination to do things only halfway, their incoherence, the errors they continue to commit, and will never hypocritically ignore their revisionist theories, which pave the way for new, even greater mistakes. While supporting against the right every step of the center toward the left, the Opposition should (and will) criticize 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.⁸⁵

In fact, Trotsky viewed criticism as the most important aspect of the Opposition’s *support* for the turn. Thus, he reacted sharply when Radek asserted that the Opposition’s support for the turn “should consist of fighting ruthlessly . . . against all the evils against which the party is now mobilized.” To this Trotsky responded, “But it should not only consist of that. The pitiless unmasking of the half-measures and confusion of centrism in each practical matter or theoretical

question constitutes the most important part of our support for any progressive steps of centrism.”⁸⁶

Again, the perspective from which Trotsky criticized the turn was that outlined in the Opposition’s 1927 *Platform*. In fact, Trotsky insisted that “*a continued fight for the ideas and proposals expressed in the Platform is the only correct, serious, and honest way to support every step by the center that is at all progressive.*”⁸⁷ Beyond that, he again highlighted the connection he saw between party leadership’s policies and the character of the party regime by emphasizing the importance of four new democratic demands: (1) the freeing of the imprisoned Oppositionists, return of the deportees, and readmission of the Opposition to the party; (2) the convening of a Sixteenth Party Congress in 1928 with guarantees for a full discussion and genuine elections; (3) the publication of all of Lenin’s suppressed articles, speeches, and letters, including his “Testament”; and (4) the reduction of the party budget to one-twentieth of its existing size (that is, to five or six million rubles). In Trotsky’s view these particular demands provided “a serious test of the sincerity and honesty of the leadership’s steps toward party democracy.”⁸⁸ Furthermore, Trotsky argued that the first of these demands constituted “the essential proof, the infallible means of verification, and the first indicator of the seriousness and depth of all the recent moves to the left.”⁸⁹

6.3 THE STALINIST OFFENSIVE

By early July tensions within the Politburo were so high that Stalin and Bukharin were no longer on speaking terms. However, the Politburo continued to present a facade of unity, unanimously adopting a resolution on the grain collections for the consideration of the Central Committee. The resolution, written by the Stalinists on the basis of a declaration presented by Bukharin, largely reflected the views of the moderates in the leadership. It emphasized the

importance of the alliance with the middle peasant and the continuation of NEP, terminated the exceptional measures, and raised the price of grain twenty percent. Fearing a premature confrontation with the moderates, who held powerful positions in the party, the state apparatus, the trade unions, and the press, Stalin had retreated.⁹⁰

Nevertheless, at the subsequent July plenum of the Central Committee, Stalin returned to the offensive. In the heated debate on agricultural policy, Stalin insisted that Soviet industrialization could only proceed on the basis of a “tribute” paid by the peasantry. Furthermore, he predicted the escalation of class struggle in the countryside, again defended the emergency measures, and renewed his demand for collectivization of agriculture.⁹¹ During the discussion, the Politburo members Kalinin and Voroshilov unexpectedly abandoned the moderates. Just as unexpectedly, the Ukrainians swung over to Stalin, and the Leningrad delegation disavowed the speech by the moderate Leningrader, Stetskii.⁹²

In despair, while the plenum was still in session, Bukharin visited Kamenev, hoping to conclude an alliance with him and Zinoviev, or at least to dissuade them from supporting Stalin. Bukharin seemed obsessed with Stalin’s vindictiveness and unprincipled maneuvering. He described Stalin as a “Genghis Khan,” and repeatedly predicted that Stalin “will cut our throats.” To Kamenev, Bukharin gave “the impression of a man who knows he is doomed.”⁹³ Meanwhile, in public the moderates behaved like victors. Addressing the Moscow party organization on July 13, Rykov assured his listeners that the emergency measures were now over and would not be revived. According to one account, Rykov also repeated the warning of Klement Voroshilov, the Commissar of War, that if the emergency measures were reintroduced, “This will be the end of the NEP. . . . Then there will certainly be an uprising in the army.”⁹⁴

Soon after this, the Sixth Congress of the Comintern, held from July 17 to September 1, continued the turn begun at the ninth plenum of the ECCI. Although Bukharin delivered the main report to the Congress, his address contained major concessions to the international orientation now advocated by Stalin. Bukharin endorsed the view, first advanced by Stalin at the Fifteenth Party Congress, that the period of world capitalist stabilization was giving way to a “third

period” of “capitalist reconstruction,” which was “accompanied by the growth of the forces hostile to capitalism and by the extremely rapid development of its internal contradictions.” For communists, Bukharin asserted, this change in the world situation required a shift in tactics. Most importantly, it was necessary to intensify the struggle against social democracy, which consciously defended the capitalist state and which had demonstrated “*social fascist tendencies*.” Thus, Bukharin rejected the possibility of alliances between communists and Social Democratic leaders, arguing that “united front tactics must, in most cases, now be applied only from *below*.” Finally, he now argued that the central danger within the Comintern was the “Right deviation.”⁹⁵

The Comintern Congress contributed to the further weakening the right within the AUCP(b) [All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks)]. Although Bukharin’s concessions postponed open conflict, they ultimately helped to legitimize Stalin’s struggle against the party moderates. At the same time, the Stalinists utilized the Congress to undermine Bukharin’s authority. At the beginning of the Congress the Russian delegation embarrassed Bukharin by recalling his theses on the tasks of the Comintern in order to add twenty amendments. Also, throughout the Congress Stalinists conducted a whispering campaign among foreign delegations about Bukharin’s “right deviation” and “political syphilis.”⁹⁶

At this point new differences began to emerge within the leadership regarding economic questions. Though the Stalinists and the moderates had clashed repeatedly over agricultural policy, through the summer of 1928 there were still no clear differences concerning the other fundamental question of Soviet economics—the rate of industrialization. By late September, however, this question too came under dispute. The Fifteenth Party Congress in December 1927 had approved the preparation of a five-year plan, stressing that industrialization should proceed with caution and balance. Throughout 1928 Gosplan attempted to fulfill this charge, but found its efforts repeatedly challenged by VSNKh, which pressed for much higher tempos of industrialization. On September 19 the Stalinist head of VSNKh, Valerian Kuibyshev, addressed the Leningrad party organization in support of VSNKh’s ambitious industrial projections. He rejected the assertions of anonymous individuals that “we are ‘overindustrializing’ and ‘biting

off more than we can chew.”“ Furthermore, he warned that the most serious misproportion . . . is that between the output of the means of production and the requirements of the country.”⁹⁷

On September 30 Bukharin responded with an article in *Pravda* entitled “Notes of an Economist.” Ostensibly, the article was directed against the “‘superindustrializers’ of the Trotskyist variety.” In reality, it was a sustained polemic against the industrial and agricultural policies advocated by the Stalinists. In the face of the mounting clamor for ever higher tempos of industrialization and increased pressure on the peasantry, Bukharin appealed for a policy of moderation. Most importantly, he explained, it was necessary to maintain the proper balance between agriculture and industry. According to Bukharin, the American example had demonstrated that industrial growth requires the presence of a large and prosperous peasantry. Attempting to industrialize faster than the development of agriculture, pumping too much capital out of the peasantry, inevitably would undermine the very basis of industrialization. Simultaneously, excessively forcing the pace of industrialization would create shortages and bottlenecks, further retarding the development of industry. Bukharin’s solution was to increase agricultural productivity by limiting the kulaks, by encouraging the gradual and voluntary collectivization of agriculture and spread of cooperatives, and by adopting a more correct price policy. Although he insisted that the tempo of industrialization could not be accelerated beyond existing levels, Bukharin asserted that it was possible to maintain the current tempo by increasing productivity and efficiency. Soon after “Notes of an Economist” appeared in print, the Stalinist majority of the Politburo censured the article and aggressively began to promote rapid industrialization.⁹⁸

Meanwhile, the Stalinists had been steadily encroaching upon the organizational strongholds of the party right. In the late summer of 1928 they wrested control of *Pravda*, the theoretical journal *Bolshevik*, and the Institute of Red Professors from the moderates. Even more important were the victories achieved by the Stalinists in the Moscow party organization in the early fall. In September and October the central party leadership encouraged insurgents within Moscow to denounce the rightist errors of Uglanov, the secretary of the Moscow party

committee. When the Moscow Committee met on October 18-19, Uglanov found himself politically isolated within his own organization. Stalin personally addressed the meeting to warn against the “Right, opportunist danger in the Party” and against the “vacillations and waverings in the Moscow organisation.” Despite Uglanov’s recantation on October 19, he was severely weakened by the dismissal of a number of his high-level supporters.⁹⁹

Through the month of October Bukharin observed these skirmishes from a vacation retreat in the Caucasus. In early November, hearing that Rykov was beginning to yield to Stalin’s demands regarding industrialization, he returned to Moscow. In the Politburo he presented a list of eleven economic and organizational demands. Only after Bukharin, Rykov, and Tomskii threatened to resign from the Politburo did Stalin agree to a compromise, withdrawing some of his more offensive nominations and, apparently, making certain concessions regarding economic policy.¹⁰⁰

Although the resolutions unanimously presented by the Politburo to the Central Committee contained evidence of the compromise, particularly in the emphasis placed on the needs of agriculture, the November CC plenum represented another clear defeat for the moderates. The Central Committee endorsed Stalin’s demand for rapid industrialization, justified by the need “to overtake and outstrip” the advanced capitalist countries and to collectivize agriculture, and condemned the right deviation as the main danger confronting the party. Finally, it approved a party purge of “socially alien, bureaucratized, and degenerate elements, and other hangers on”—a campaign later applied to rank and file supporters of the moderates in the leadership.¹⁰¹

Following the plenum, Stalin stepped up his organizational campaign against the right. On November 27 Molotov replaced Uglanov as party secretary in Moscow and moderates were removed from office throughout the Moscow party organization. At the Eighth Trade Union Congress held December 10-24, Stalinists assailed Tomskii for the excessive centralism and lack of democracy in the trade unions. Furthermore, the party fraction at that Congress passed a resolution endorsing rapid industrialization and urging an intensification of the struggle against

the right danger. When five Stalinists were elected to the Central Trade Union Council on the recommendation of the party fraction, Tomskii resigned as chairman. Then, when his resignation was rejected, Tomskii refused to return to his post. About this time Bukharin, finding himself unable to control *Pravda*, withdrew from his editorial responsibilities on that paper. Meanwhile, at the ECCI plenum on December 19, Stalin launched an attack upon Bukharin's supporters in the Communist Party of Germany (KPD) for their "craven opportunism," declaring that "the presence of such people in the Comintern cannot be tolerated any longer." Soon afterwards, the KPD began a campaign of expulsions against rightists within its ranks, and in 1929 this was extended to the other sections of the Comintern.¹⁰²

In desperation, Bukharin counterattacked with a series of articles containing a thinly veiled critique of Stalin's economic policies. Most important in this regard was Bukharin's speech, "Lenin's Political Testament," delivered on the fifth anniversary of Lenin's death and published in *Pravda* on January 24. In the midst of renewed difficulties in grain collection and signs that the party leadership was reviving the exceptional measures of the previous year, Bukharin reaffirmed his understanding of Lenin's final comments on the peasant question. Bukharin's message was that a correct agricultural policy involved a prolonged period of expanding market relations and peaceful collaboration with the peasantry.¹⁰³

At about this time tensions between the Stalinists and the moderates were inflamed even further by two new issues, both of which concerned the leaders of the defeated Opposition. The first was the question of what was to be done with Trotsky, who had continued to engage in oppositional activity from exile in Alma Ata. In mid-January 1929 the Politburo majority, against the protests of Bukharin, Rykov, and Tomskii, voted to banish Trotsky from the Soviet Union. This decision was carried out on February 10, with the forcible deportation of Trotsky and his family to Constantinople. The second issue involved Bukharin's July conversations with Kamenev. In late January Trotskyists issued a pamphlet containing an account of Bukharin's July conversation with Kamenev. On January 30 Stalin convened a meeting of the Politburo and members of the CCC to discuss the party right's factional activities. There, he denounced

Bukharin, Rykov, and Tomskii as a “group of Right deviators and capitulators,” and charged that they had attempted to form “a bloc with the Trotskyites against the party.”¹⁰⁴

Bukharin responded that his discussion Kamenev was justified by the “abnormal conditions” within the party. Then, supported by Rykov and Tomskii, he utilized the occasion to indict the growing “bureaucratization” of the party and Stalin’s economic policies. Regarding the former, Bukharin complained that “the party doesn’t participate in deciding questions. Everything is done from above.” He further condemned “that practice where collective control has been replaced by the control of one person, however authoritative.” At the same time, he attacked Stalin’s “Trotskyist” program of rapid industrialization, based on the “impoverishment” of the country and “the military-feudal exploitation of the peasantry.” Subsequently, Bukharin, Rykov, and Tomskii were censured by the Politburo and the CCC for factionalism.¹⁰⁵

6.4 EXPLAINING THE STALINIST OFFENSIVE

In light of the renewed Stalinist offensive against the party right, in the late summer and fall of 1928 Trotsky began to introduce a number of implicit modifications into his theory of bureaucracy, while continuing to reaffirm its principal tenets. Viewing the decisions of the July plenum through the lens of his theory, Trotsky initially concluded that the left turn was over, that the right had defeated Stalin decisively, and that a Thermidor was imminent. However, in the following weeks it became increasingly clear that no major shift to the right was about to occur, and that Stalin had managed to retain and even enhance his organizational power. To account for these developments, Trotsky modified his theory by emphasizing the relative autonomy of the party apparatus. Specifically, Trotsky asserted that in certain periods the “logic of the apparatus” had a more immediate impact upon events than did the balance of class forces. Consistent with this view, he acknowledged for the first time that the Stalinists might actually defeat the right

without the aid of either the Opposition or the working class. In line with his previous analysis, Trotsky continued to insist that capitalism would be restored in the Soviet Union unless the proletariat intervened. However, his new emphasis on the relative autonomy of the apparatus led Trotsky to revise his understanding of how this might occur. Furthermore, it contributed to his increasing emphasis upon democratic demands. When the leadership struggle intensified in the fall, Trotsky again explained the conflict primarily in terms of the logic of the apparatus. However, on the basis of his theory of bureaucracy, Trotsky continued to insist that centrism would soon collapse under mounting pressure from both the left and the right.

It came as no surprise to Trotsky when the July plenum of the CC decided to terminate the exceptional measures and to raise the price of grain. After all, on the basis of his theory Trotsky had predicted that unless the proletariat intervened, the right wing of the party leadership soon would seize power and implement a thoroughly rightist course. Consequently, when the plenum decisions were announced and the text of Rykov's July 13 "victory" speech appeared in *Pravda*, Trotsky concluded that the right had soundly defeated the center. In a statement to the Comintern on July 22 Trotsky asserted, "The right has issued entirely victorious from its first skirmish with the center, after four or five months of 'left' politics."¹⁰⁶ Meanwhile, Stalin, "the vanquished," had been reduced to "turning his back and occupying himself with the manipulation of the apparatus." Trotsky commented, "Stalin is losing time under the impression that he is gaining it. After the feverish shake-up of February we are now again in the presence of tail-endism in all its pitiable impotence."¹⁰⁷

Once again, the threat of Thermidor seemed imminent to Trotsky, who warned that the increase in the price of grain "constitutes, and can only constitute, the beginning of a deep and perhaps decisive turn to the right." Soon, he predicted, the right would attempt further economic concessions such as the abolition of the monopoly of foreign trade. Following that, it would unleash a wave of persecutions that would even exceed the repression that Stalin had inflicted upon the Opposition. "One can imagine," Trotsky shuddered, "what persecutions the right is going to turn loose when relying openly upon the property instinct of the kulak." Again he

sounded the alarm, calling upon the party “to lift up its voice,” and upon the proletarian vanguard to “take its destiny in its own hands.”¹⁰⁸

However, the events of the following weeks and months again failed to confirm Trotsky’s worst fears. There was neither any immediate sign of deeper shifts to the right in policy, nor any indication that a right-wing reign of terror was about to begin. In fact, during this period Oppositionists in Moscow reported rumors that Stalin was preparing to renew his left course, and that both he and the rightists were seeking the support of the left.¹⁰⁹ Although Trotsky continued to speak of “the right turn of July” and the “retreat of the centrists,” by the end of the summer he clearly recognized that the right had not been able to seize control of the party, or to implement a rightist course.¹¹⁰ On this issue he even challenged a group of intransigents who continued to claim that the right had eliminated the center at the July plenum. Responding to the views of this group in a letter of August 30, Trotsky observed that “the centrists still have the apparatus,” and warned that “conflicts are still ahead.” The same day he cautioned a member of the Democratic Centralists that “the important disputes are still ahead, and they are bound to come to the surface.”¹¹¹

Trotsky seems to have modified his estimation of the plenum even further in late October on the basis of a report he received about Bukharin’s hysterical discussion with Kamenev in July.¹¹² From that report Trotsky concluded that Stalin had shifted course at the plenum, not because he had been defeated, but as a maneuver in order to “split the right wing.” By this temporary swing to the tight, Stalin actually had enhanced his own organizational power. In other words, while policies were moving rightwards, the balance of power within the party leadership was continuing to shift to the center. Trotsky was forced to recognize that, at least in this respect, reality was not unfolding in conformity with his theory. As he expressed it, “the development of the apparatus has its own logic, which so far has not coincided with the general shifts of power in the party and the working class, and is even contrary to it.”¹¹³

For the moment it seemed to Trotsky that the social classes were not actively intervening in the party struggle. In their absence, Trotsky suggested, the “logic of the apparatus”—including

the characteristics of individual leaders—was able to play an unusually significant role. He observed,

Naturally, if the classes would speak out loud, if the proletariat should pass over to a political attack, the positioning of these apparatus actors would lose nine-tenths of its meaning; in fact, they would drastically change their positions, moving in one direction or another. But we are passing through an as yet unfinished era in which the apparatus remains all-powerful Stalin and Rykov are the government. And the government plays a role of no little importance.¹¹⁴

Some of the more significant “apparatus” factors that Trotsky saw as shaping the leadership struggle included Stalin’s authority within the party machine and the passivity of the right-wing leaders. For the rightists to win, they would have “to carry their fight against Stalin outside of the apparatus,” openly appealing to the new proprietors and “thundering . . . like the Black Hundreds, like Thermidorians.” However, despite Bukharin’s tentative step in that direction with his “Notes of an Economist,” the leaders of the party right obviously were not prepared for such an all-out struggle.¹¹⁵ (In contrast to the “lower ranks of the right faction,” Trotsky explained in November, the rightist leaders were still constrained by the sentiments of the working-class and by the traditions of Bolshevism.¹¹⁶) Meanwhile, according to Trotsky, Stalin was plotting to eliminate his rivals by a series of policy maneuvers and organizational assaults. Trotsky now realized that the center actually might defeat the right without the assistance of either the Opposition or the working class. “As long as the classes are silent,” he commented, “Stalin’s scheme will work.”¹¹⁷

Trotsky’s new emphasis upon the relative autonomy of the party apparatus did not alter his conviction that, ultimately, the logic of classes was decisive. Thus, he remained convinced that capitalist restoration was inevitable unless the proletariat intervened. In fact, in his circular letter of October 21 Trotsky revised his metaphor of “Kerenskiism in reverse” to emphasize this central conclusion of his theory. He probably did so in reaction to conciliators who were encouraged by Stalin’s new offensive. It will be recalled that in late 1927 Trotsky employed the

expression “Kerenskiism in reverse” to characterize the role that would be played by a future Thermidorian regime—that is, in a “dual power situation, . . . with the bourgeoisie holding the upper hand.”¹¹⁸ Now, in his letter of October 21 Trotsky argued that the Soviet Union was living through a “Kerensky period in reverse” at that very moment. He explained that, whereas under Kerenskii “the power of the bourgeoisie passed over to the proletariat,” under Stalin power was now “sliding over from the proletariat to the bourgeoisie.”¹¹⁹ In other words, the existing Stalinist regime was the last possible stopping place on the road to capitalist restoration.

As in the past, Trotsky reviewed two familiar scenarios by which capitalism might return to Russia. First, there was the possibility of a “Thermidorian overturn,” which would be followed quickly by the establishment of a “Bonapartist” or “fascist” regime. In light of the organizational weakness of the party right, Trotsky viewed this prospect as somewhat less imminent than it had appeared during the summer.¹²⁰ However, Isaac Deutscher’s observation that in this letter Trotsky “virtually abandoned his conception of the Soviet Thermidor” is certainly an exaggeration.¹²¹ In the same letter Trotsky cautioned the Opposition that “the conditions necessary for Thermidor to materialize can develop in a comparatively short time.”¹²² And during the following weeks and months Trotsky referred to the possibility of Thermidor on a number of occasions. In his second scenario, Trotsky suggested that the army or a section of it might stage a “Bonapartist” coup and establish an authoritarian, right-wing regime. According to Trotsky, Rykov had alluded to this possibility in July when he had repeated Voroshilov’s prediction that the army would “answer with an insurrection” if the emergency measures were reintroduced. Trotsky viewed this prediction as a threat; and he concluded that the most likely candidate for the role of Bonaparte—albeit “a third-rate type of Bonaparte”—was Voroshilov.¹²³

However, consistent with his growing recognition of the relative autonomy of the apparatus, Trotsky now suggested that capitalism might return by yet another route, which was actually a variation of the first two: through the “independent victory of the centrists without the Opposition, without the masses.” According to Trotsky, such a centrist victory would not eliminate the “Thermidorian-Bonapartist perspective,” but “only change and postpone it.” He

reasoned that, without the assistance of the Opposition or the masses, the Stalinists could only hope to conquer the right “through increased repression, through a further narrowing of the mass base of centrism,” and “through a further fusion of the centrist faction with the apparatus of governmental repression.” However, Trotsky’s theory of bureaucracy suggested that such a worsening of the party regime would only strengthen rightist tendencies within the country. Thus, Trotsky concluded that an independent victory of the centrists would prepare the way for a “Bonapartist” capitalist regime. In fact, it was even possible that Stalin himself would one day “mount the white horse.”¹²⁴

Perhaps at least partly because he had begun to fear that a victory of Stalinist authoritarianism ultimately posed as great a danger to Soviet power as a victory of rightist conservatism, during this period Trotsky began to stress democratic demands even more than before. In addition to his previous demands, Trotsky now called for the introduction of the secret ballot in the party and the trade unions to help workers combat “bureaucratic pressure.” At this point, Trotsky recommended waiting “until we have the necessary experience” before extending the experiment to the soviets “where different classes take part in the voting.”¹²⁵

Even more important, however, was the fact that for the first time Trotsky now suggested a united front with the party right in the name of democracy. In the past, he had dismissed the possibility of any kind of alliance between the Opposition and the right.¹²⁶ However, by September 1928 he was already beginning to realize that an independent Stalinist victory was possible, and to fear that such a victory might be as dangerous for the revolution as a victory by the right.¹²⁷ At the same time, Trotsky also saw an opportunity in the likelihood that elements of the right would soon be willing to support democratic demands for the sake of their own self-preservation.¹²⁸ In a September 12 letter to a “Rykovist” by the name of Shatunovskii, Trotsky observed that “the regime existing in the party . . . has brought the whole party into a state of illegality, so to speak.” To rectify this situation, he proposed a “common effort” to “restore the ruling party to a condition of legality.” Restating the Opposition’s principal democratic demands, Trotsky declared that “on the basis of these proposals we would even be willing to negotiate with

the rights, because the implementation of these elementary preconditions of party principle would give the proletarian core the opportunity to really call to account not only the rights but also the centrists, i.e., the main support and protection for opportunism in the party.”¹²⁹

When this letter was circulated among the Oppositionists in exile, many responded with dismay. In their view Trotsky had abandoned the traditional position for the sake of an unprincipled “bloc” with the right. In December Trotsky replied that, of course, a real “bloc” between the Opposition and the right, involving a common platform, was still inconceivable. Nevertheless, he predicted the rightists inevitably would come into conflict with the apparatus over the issue of the party regime. When they did so, they would be forced to repeat the Opposition’s democratic demands. Thus, according to Trotsky, it was the rightists who would eventually adopt the positions of the Opposition, “shamefacedly renouncing their theory and practices of yesterday and thus helping us to expose both themselves and the entire party regime.” All he had offered was to “support” the rightists in this “as a rope supports a hanging man.” He had only proposed an “agreement,” like that between two duelists, “about the conditions for an irreconcilable struggle.”¹³⁰

By the end of the year it was clear to Trotsky that the leadership conflict had entered a new phase. As he observed in a letter of November 11, “We are now witnesses of a new centrist campaign against the right-wingers.”¹³¹ Furthermore, he noted in a memorandum written in December that “the campaign against the right has taken an open form and a broad apparatus scale.”¹³² Yet, even more than previously Trotsky stressed the limitations of this conflict, which— in his view—was distinguished by an “extraordinary amount of noise and tumult” but “with a total absence of concrete form politically.”¹³³ In this regard he especially emphasized the inconsistencies of Stalin’s leftism.¹³⁴ Still, the most important indication for Trotsky of the limitations of the official struggle against the right remained the fact that thousands of Oppositionists continued to languish in exile while party rightists occupied positions of power. From all of this Trotsky concluded that the new campaign against the right was “unbalanced, false, contradictory, and unreliable.”¹³⁵

Largely because he could see no clear programmatic differences that could be attributed to class pressures, Trotsky again explained the new leadership conflict primarily in terms of the dynamics of the apparatus. He continued to argue that the entire left turn, including the leadership struggle, was a result of the “political revival” of the working class and the pressure of Opposition. At the same time, however, he immediately added that “like all other processes in the party, the struggle of the centrists and rights must be considered not only from the angle of class tendencies and ideas but also from the narrow angle of the bureaucratic regime.” Approaching the question from this angle, he observed that the rupture between Stalin and the rightist trio of Rykov, Bukharin, and Tomskii had resulted “from the tendency of the bureaucratic regime toward personal power.”¹³⁶ The clear implication of Trotsky’s argument was that the *current phase* of the struggle could best be understood as a manifestation of this tendency.

Of course, Trotsky had referred to the tendency of the regime toward personal power in previous years. In fact, in his November 1928 article “Crisis in the Right-Center Bloc” he recalled that he had written about the tendency toward the “one-man rule of Stalin” as early as 1926, and had even predicted that this would require not only the defeat of the Opposition, but also “the gradual removal of *all authoritative and influential figures in the present ruling faction,*” including Tomskii, Rykov, and Bukharin. To this extent Trotsky was justified in asserting that the leadership conflict had confirmed his previous analysis.¹³⁷ However, the emphasis he now gave to this approach, including the argument that it was necessary to analyze *all* party developments from this point of view, clearly was a new development in his thinking.

During this period Trotsky also suggested one additional “apparatus” explanation for the intensification of the leadership conflict. During the fall of 1928, Trotsky began to detect hints in various statements by Stalinists that the repression of the Opposition was about to be intensified.¹³⁸ In particular, he observed that the Stalinists were stating continually that the views of the right and the Opposition were “basically” the same. In Trotsky’s view such assertions were obviously nonsense if taken literally. However, he reasoned that they made perfect sense

from a tactical point of view if their intent was to prepare the party for a new assault upon the Opposition. Trotsky concluded, “The campaign against the right serves only as a “springboard” for a new monolithic attack upon the left. Whoever has not understood this has understood nothing.”¹³⁹

Trotsky soon found confirmation of this analysis of the leadership struggle. On December 16 he was warned by a GPU official that, unless he immediately ceased all “counterrevolutionary” activity, he would be moved to a new location and completely isolated from all political life. In his reply to the Central Committee Trotsky again charged, “The campaign against the right danger, undertaken with such clamor, remains three-quarters sham and serves above all to conceal from the masses the real war of annihilation against the Bolshevik-Leninists.”¹⁴⁰

Despite the new campaign against the party right and the threat of a new campaign against the left, Trotsky remained convinced that the strength of the centrist grouping in late 1928 was a temporary phenomenon. In the first place, he predicted that the zigzags and war on two fronts characteristic of centrism would lead inevitably to a fragmentation of Stalin’s own political current. “More often than not,” Trotsky observed in November, “these zigzags form the point of departure for a differentiation within centrism, for the separation of one of its layers, of a section of its adherents, for the appearance within the centrist leadership of various groupings, which in turn facilitates the work of Bolshevik agitation and recruiting.”¹⁴¹ Similarly, in early January 1929 he predicted, “As the fight against the right and the left goes on, centrism will extrude from its own midst both right-centrist and left-centrist elements, that is, it will undergo a political differentiation and fall apart.”¹⁴²

At the same time, on the basis of his theory Trotsky predicted that the social classes and elements closely connected to them would continue to gravitate to the left and right of centrism. According to Trotsky, the Soviet proletariat, which would not benefit materially from an independent victory by the Stalinists, would move to the left:

The alert mass will continue to think in its own way about the questions of the right danger. In this the Leninists will help them. On the left flank of centrism there is an open wound which does not heal, but, on the contrary, goes deeper, keeps centrism in a feverish agitation, and does not leave it in peace.¹⁴³

On the other hand, the “proprietor and the bureaucrat” who had supported the center-right bloc in its struggle against the Opposition, were already beginning to view the centrists as “strangers, almost enemies” and to abandon them for the right. In light of this process, Trotsky asserted that “in contrast to centrism, the right wing has great reserves of growth which, from the political point of view, have as yet scarcely broken through.” Thus, in November 1928 he foresaw “the strengthening and clearer demarcation of the wings at the expense of centrism, despite the growing concentration of power in its hands.”¹⁴⁴

6.5 DEFEATING THE RIGHT AND DEEPENING THE TURN

In the following months Stalin completed his victory over the moderates. At the Moscow and Leningrad party conferences and in the press, the Stalinists continued to escalate the campaign against the anonymous “right deviation” within the party. Within the Politburo, they easily defeated attempts by Bukharin, Rykov and Tomskii to moderate the industrial projections of the five-year plan. The final showdown occurred at the April plenum of the Central Committee. There, while professing their support for rapid industrialization, the moderate leaders asserted that this goal was being undermined by “ideological capitulation to Trotskyism” in agricultural policy. The extraordinary measures, they argued, had inflamed relations between the state and the peasantry and were threatening to put an end to NEP. In response, Stalin rehearsed at length the sins of the party right—from their bending to kulak pressure, to their failure to attack “conciliationists” within the Comintern, to their factional activities. In the end, the Central

Committee endorsed the proposed five-year plan; reaffirmed that the right deviation was the greatest danger facing the party; voted to remove Bukharin and Tomskii from their official posts in the Comintern, *Pravda*, and the trade unions; and warned that continued factionalism would result in further reprisals.¹⁴⁵

During the remainder of 1929, Stalin steadily whittled away at the remaining power of the moderates. At the end of the Sixteenth Party Conference in late April, Uglanov forfeited his positions as candidate member of the Politburo and member of the Secretariat; in late May, the All-Union Central Council of Trade Unions formally removed Tomskii as its chairman; and on July 3, the ECCI dropped Bukharin from membership on its presidium and barred him from further Comintern work. Up until this point, the Soviet press had only attacked anonymous rightists within the party. However, at the end of August *Pravda* began to denounce Bukharin by name as “the chief leader and inspirer of the right deviationists,” and to portray his entire political record as anti-Leninist. Finally, at the November CC plenum, Bukharin, Rykov, and Tomskii were forced to recant their errors, and Bukharin was expelled from the Politburo.¹⁴⁶

Meanwhile, the defeat of the moderates had eliminated a major obstacle to radical changes in policy by the Stalinists. As far as Comintern policy was concerned, indications of the change were evident in early July at the tenth plenum of the ECCI. At that meeting the “third period” announced by Bukharin at the Sixth Congress of the Comintern was portrayed as a general radicalization of the world working class. The immediate task proclaimed for communist parties was to conquer the leadership of the workers’ movement in preparation for the seizure of power. More insistently than before, social democracy was equated with fascism. Otto Kuusinen, the Finnish Comintern secretary, explained that, while the slogans and “to some extent” the methods of the two movements differed, their aims were identical. Consequently, communists were permitted to participate only in “united fronts from below” with rank and file socialists, not with Social Democratic leaders. In line with this, the ECCI suggested that in certain circumstances communists should organize revolutionary trade unions in opposition to those controlled by Social Democratic parties.¹⁴⁷

At the same time, projected targets for industrialization continued to climb. In March, Gosplan adopted a minimal and an optimal version of the proposed five-year plan predicated to begin in October 1928. Even the minimal variant was optimistic, projecting a 250 percent increase in total investments by the end of five years, a 340 percent increase in the planned sector of industry, and a rise in total industrial output by 135 percent. The optimal version (based upon such unrealistic assumptions as five consecutive good harvests), was even more ambitious, proposing a growth of total investments by 320 percent, an increase of investments in planned industry of 420 percent, and an expansion of industrial production by 181 percent. It was the latter version that was adopted by the April CC plenum and the Sixteenth Party Conference. During the remainder of 1929, however, even these goals were steadily revised upwards. By September, *Pravda* was declaring that the five-year plan would be fulfilled in four years. And at the beginning of November, Stalin announced that the former “optimum” of the five-year plan had “actually turned out to be a minimum variant.”¹⁴⁸ In the words of contemporary historian Stephen Cohen, “What remained was no longer a plan but a kaleidoscope of escalating figures, a rationalization of the breakneck heavy industrialization of the next three years.”¹⁴⁹

Finally, throughout 1929 the party leadership continued the leftist offensive in agriculture. One form this took was a revival of the extraordinary measures in the collection of grain. During the winter of 1928-1929 the grain procurements campaign again encountered severe difficulties. Part of the problem was a poor harvest in Ukraine and other important grain producing regions of the Soviet Union; part was the fact that peasants with grain were selling it on the free market to take advantage of the much higher prices. Again, the authorities resorted to extraordinary measures, including fines, arrests, imprisonment, internal exile, and the confiscation of the property of peasants engaged in speculation. In response, many peasants simply reduced their sowings, while in some areas whole villages retaliated by withholding grain from the state. In the same period, there were frequent shootings of state procurement agents, and even cases of peasant uprisings. Nevertheless, from July through December, over twice as much grain was collected as in the corresponding months of the previous year. Despite the poor

harvest, by the beginning of December 1929 Mikoian was able to announce that the grain collections plan virtually had been completed.¹⁵⁰

The second aspect of the turn in agriculture in the summer and fall of 1929 was the move towards the mass collectivization of agriculture. Although the five-year plan approved by the Sixteenth Party Conference in April projected modest growth of state and collective farms, it did so within the context of a continuing emphasis on the long-term importance of private farming.¹⁵¹ However, In the summer it became increasingly evident that the difficulties in grain collection were threatening to disrupt the industrialization drive. Probably it was largely in response to this threat that the leadership resolved to put an end to difficulties in grain collection by radically transforming the character of Soviet agriculture. During the summer of 1929 the press began to speak for the first time of “mass collectivization”; party members who were peasants were compelled to join the *kolkhozy*; and state agents, party members, and trade unionists were mobilized to assist in the collectivization drive. Between June and October, the number of collectivized holdings increased from 3.9 to 7.6 percent of the total.¹⁵²

In the fall the central party leadership decided to intensify the campaign even further. On October 31 a *Pravda* editorial called for the transfer of all the forces used in the procurements campaign over to the collectivization drive. A week later, on the twelfth anniversary of the Bolshevik Revolution, *Pravda* published an article by Stalin which claimed that peasants, including middle peasants, were voluntarily enlisting in the collectives “not in separate groups, . . . but by whole villages, volosts, districts, and even okrugs.” The subsequent November plenum of the Central Committee, bowing before this “spontaneous” movement of the peasantry, passed a resolution declaring that the “collective farm movement is already posing the objective of comprehensive collectivization of individual regions.” What has become known as Stalin’s “revolution from above” had begun.¹⁵³

Meanwhile, the events of the year had severely exacerbated the crisis within the Opposition. As in 1928, the renewal of the left course fostered the growth of conciliatory sentiments among Oppositionists in exile. This time, however, the impulse toward reconciliation

with the party was even stronger than a year before. In the first place, the left turn in industry, agriculture, and the Comintern was certainly far deeper than in 1928, reinforcing the perception that the Opposition's program was about to be implemented, with or without the participation of the Opposition. Second, the abrupt shift in economic policy had created a crisis atmosphere, especially in the countryside but also in the city, giving rise to serious concerns within the Opposition that the revolution was in danger. Third, the months of exile had taken their toll upon many Oppositionists who had expected to be welcomed back to the party, if not to the leadership, within a short period of time. Finally, the expulsion of Trotsky from the Soviet Union had removed from the Opposition a powerful force for resistance.

Again, Preobrazhenskii and Radek assumed the leadership of the conciliatory tendency. In April Preobrazhenskii distributed a document to the members of the Opposition in exile calling upon them to recognize that, although Stalin might not be employing methods they had advocated, he was carrying out the program of industrialization and collectivization the Opposition had demanded. Now, Preobrazhenskii asserted, it was time for the Opposition to swallow its pride and come to the aid of the revolution, which was facing its greatest threat since Kronstadt. In May Preobrazhenskii travelled to Moscow to negotiate with the party leadership. There, he was joined in June by Radek and the former irreconcilable, I. T. Smilga. On July 10 the trio signed a document, along with 400 other exiles, renouncing the Opposition and appealing for reinstatement in the party. This was the first significant wave of capitulations by active members of the Trotskyist wing of the Opposition.¹⁵⁴

More capitulations soon followed. From June through most of October another grouping led by Trotsky's close associate I. N. Smirnov bargained with the leadership over the conditions of their return to the party. Smirnov explained his own motivation to a friend: "I can't stand inactivity. I want to build! In its own barbaric and sometimes stupid way, the Central Committee is building for the future. Our ideological differences are of small importance before the construction of great new industries."¹⁵⁵ Aside from such sentiments, it is clear that the theoretical failures of the Opposition also played a part in the defection of this group. Early in

their negotiations Smirnov and his supporters conceded in a draft statement that the Opposition had been mistaken in its prediction that the Central Committee would turn right and initiate a Thermidor. Ultimately, a statement of surrender signed by Smirnov and hundreds of other Oppositionists appeared in *Pravda* on November 3.¹⁵⁶ Altogether, according to Oppositionist Victor Serge, “The movement of surrender to the Central Committee in 1928-1929 carried off the greater part of the 5,000 Oppositionists under arrest.”¹⁵⁷

Not all Oppositionists in exile surrendered at this time. In August 1929 Khristian Rakovskii, V. Kossior, and M. Okudzhava submitted to the Central Committee their own “Declaration,” which, by mid-September, had been signed by approximately 500 Oppositionists. The Rakovskii declaration, moderate in tone, also took the form of an appeal for reinstatement in the party. It expressed support for the five-year plan, for the collectivization campaign, for the party struggle against the right, and for the left turn in the Comintern. Furthermore, it asserted that events had “in part swept away those barriers which have separated the Bolshevik-Leninist opposition from the party.” However, the declaration differed from the statements of the capitulators in its continued insistence upon a number of the basic demands of the Opposition that had not been implemented. Above all, it stressed the need to restore democracy to the state, trade unions, and party. In addition to the democratic demands previously raised by the Opposition, the declaration called upon the CC to bring Trotsky back from his exile in Turkey.¹⁵⁸

6.6 EXPLAINING THE NEW TURN

On February 11, 1929 Trotsky arrived in Constantinople with his wife and son. Within a few weeks, he had settled on the Turkish island of Prinkipo in the Sea of Marmara. This would be his home for the next four years.¹⁵⁹ From the beginning of Trotsky’s arrival in Turkey, his political and literary activities were far more international in scope than they had been in

previous years. His first priority was to explain to the world the significance of the party struggle of recent years within the Soviet Union. During his first year abroad Trotsky attempted to do this through the publication of a series of articles in the international press, several volumes of Opposition documents and an autobiography. In the same period, he was also eager to utilize the new freedom afforded by exile to collaborate with his international co-thinkers. He immediately established contact with many scattered groupings of left communists recently expelled from their respective Communist parties; and he began working to forge these into one cohesive international organization.¹⁶⁰

However, throughout 1929 much of Trotsky's attention remained fixed upon the dramatic events unfolding within the Soviet Union. During his first weeks abroad, Trotsky wrote about his own expulsion and the escalating repression of the Opposition. Soon afterwards, he turned his attention to Stalin's struggle against the party right, and to the latest shifts to the left in economic and international policy. Trotsky's interest in these developments was made especially urgent by the fact that a growing number of Oppositionists had begun to view them as grounds for surrender. In contrast to the capitulators, Trotsky continued to analyze the left turn from the point of view of his theory of bureaucracy. In doing so, he repeated much of his argument from the previous year. While noting the leftist measures taken, Trotsky tended to minimize their significance; to the extent that he recognized that a deepening of the turn was in progress, he explained it as a consequence of the pressure of the Opposition and of the Soviet working class; and finally, he continued to insist that the future success of the turn depended entirely upon the Opposition's intransigence.

In late February, shortly after his arrival in Turkey, Trotsky wrote a series of articles for the international press in which he described his deportation from the Soviet Union, and in which he reported "new arrests—of several hundred people, including a hundred and fifty members of a so-called 'Trotskyist center.'"¹⁶¹ In light of the obvious weakness of the party right, Trotsky attempted to explain these events not as the result of a rightward shift in the balance of class forces, but rather in terms of the "apparatus" factor of Stalin's own motivations. He noted that

both events provided further confirmation of his view that the main objective behind the most recent campaign against the right was to prepare for a new assault upon the left. Beyond that, Trotsky argued that Stalin had felt compelled to take these actions in response to the fact that during 1928 the Opposition had grown “noticeably, especially at major industrial plants.”¹⁶²

Following his first few weeks of exile, however, most of Trotsky’s writings about Soviet events were devoted to the deepening of the turn. During 1929 Trotsky clearly recognized the progress of the campaign against the party right, as well as the leftist character of the economic and international policies introduced by the Stalinists that year.¹⁶³ Nevertheless, Trotsky continued to minimize the significance of these developments, despite the fact that both the struggle against the right and the policy shifts had gone much further than in 1928. Thus, in an article for his new journal, *Biulleten’ oppositsii*, written on June 14 Trotsky described the crushing of the right as “sharp in form but superficial in content”; and in an October letter to Soviet Oppositionists he spoke of the “shrill, theatrical, harsh but not deep-going, break [of the Stalinists] with the right wing.”¹⁶⁴ In a March 31 letter Trotsky rejected assertions by party rightists that Stalin had adopted the Opposition’s economic program, insisting that Stalin had “made use of slivers of the Opposition’s program,” nothing more.¹⁶⁵ As far as the new international line was concerned, Trotsky asserted in a letter of September 25 that “the leadership of the Comintern departs no less, probably, from the Leninist line than it did when it oriented itself toward the Kuomintang and the Anglo-Russian Committee.”¹⁶⁶

Trotsky’s skepticism continued to be based largely upon his adherence to the theory of bureaucracy he had developed in previous years. As far as the struggle against the right was concerned, there was little reason for Trotsky to dismiss it as abruptly as he did except that his theory could not accommodate a real struggle by centrists against the right. Beyond that, his theory suggested that the worsening of the regime involved in an organizational campaign by the centrists might actually strengthen rightist forces in the country. Thus, in a letter to Soviet Oppositionists written in October, Trotsky expressed the concern that the Stalinist repression of

the right was drawing “the noose tighter around the neck of the party and the trade unions.” In Trotsky’s view, this consequence outweighed the “positive features” of the struggle.¹⁶⁷

Trotsky offered a variety of reasons for his critical attitude regarding the new international and economic policies. Already he had begun to criticize some of these—such as the use of “administrative pressure” against the kulaks and the rejection of alliances with “social fascists”—as ultraleft in character.¹⁶⁸ (We will examine these criticisms more closely in the next chapter.) At the same time he complained that both economic and international policy remained grounded in the opportunist perspective of socialism in one country.¹⁶⁹ However, once again, the character of the party regime remained the most important reason for Trotsky’s skepticism regarding the new line. Consistent with his theory of bureaucratism, Trotsky again asserted that a healthy, democratic regime was both the best *indicator* of a correct line and the only *guarantee* that such a line would be maintained. Thus, when Radek, Smilga, and Preobrazhenskii asserted that the “concrete figures of the five-year plan” expressed a genuine program of socialist construction, Trotsky reminded them of the character of the party regime:

Till now, we had thought all five-year plans were valuable insofar as their roots lay in correct methods of economic leadership, particularly in the political leadership of the party and the Comintern. . . .

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.¹⁷⁰

More specifically, Trotsky continued to evaluate the recent policy shifts in terms of the treatment of the Opposition. In a September 25 letter to Oppositionists who had signed Rakovskii’s declaration, Trotsky argued that if all important differences between the Opposition and the leadership had been resolved, as Radek and Preobrazhenskii asserted, then the ongoing repression of the Opposition was nothing more than “naked bureaucratic banditry.” However, Trotsky was no more willing to accept such a conclusion than were the capitulators. Instead, he insisted that the persecution of the Opposition demonstrated that “the leadership, even after

having absorbed officially a good number of our *tactical* deductions, still maintains the *strategic* principles from which yesterday's right-center tactic emerged."¹⁷¹

Nevertheless, to the degree that Trotsky recognized the renewal of the turn, he was again compelled to explain it. Once again, Trotsky's answer was based upon the view that only the proletariat or the Opposition could initiate a real left turn. At times, he argued that the *entire* left turn since early 1928 was *one single process* set in motion by proletarian/Oppositional pressure.¹⁷² However, on a number of occasions Trotsky explicitly argued that the *current* manifestation of the turn was the direct result of *continuing* pressure exerted by the Opposition. Thus, in May Trotsky explained that it was the Opposition's "uncompromising attitude" that was preventing the Stalinists from returning to a more "normal" course.¹⁷³ Again, in an October letter to exiled Oppositionists in the USSR Trotsky wrote that "it was precisely our criticism that forced and is forcing the centrists to go further left than they originally intended to go."¹⁷⁴ And in November Trotsky explained to Soviet Oppositionists that "every week 'the master' [Stalin] threatens his Klims [i.e., Stalin's "Voroshilovs"] with the words: 'We can't deviate to the right just now—that is what the Trotskyists are waiting for.'"¹⁷⁵

Trotsky's belief that external pressure was required for any real shift to the left on the part of the leadership also continued to govern his approach to the tasks of the Opposition. Once again Trotsky urged his supporters to redouble their efforts to push the Stalinists further left. For example, in July he appealed to his wavering comrades: "The centrists will move over to the left only under our whip. That is why there is no reason to give up the whip in our hands. On the contrary, we have to use three whips."¹⁷⁶ Likewise, in November he reminded his Soviet supporters that "an ideologically irreconcilable Opposition remains the best aid to the centrists in the struggle against the Right."¹⁷⁷

Conversely, Trotsky also argued that every capitulation of an Oppositionist actually weakened the left turn. Thus, when Preobrazhenskii and Radek justified their recantations in terms of their desire to assist the party's turn and its war on the right, Trotsky responded by predicting that the wholesale capitulation of the Opposition would mean not only "condemning

ourselves to a Zinovievist vegetable existence,” but that it would also result in “an immediate swerving of the Stalinists to the right.”¹⁷⁸ Similarly, in a November letter to an Oppositionist in a “precapitulationist” frame of mind Trotsky remarked, “If the Opposition were to disappear, the Voroshilovs and their cronies would tomorrow climb into the saddle on the backs of the left centrists.”¹⁷⁹

6.7 REVISING THE THEORY

As far as his general theory of bureaucracy was concerned, during 1928-1929 Trotsky’s primary concern was to apply and defend the perspective he had developed in previous years. However, as we have seen, in late 1928 Trotsky found it necessary to modify that analysis in various ways, largely in order to reconcile it with the successes of the Stalinist campaign against the party right. This section will examine a number of additional ways in which Trotsky altered and elaborated upon his theory during 1928 and, especially, 1929 in response to new developments, influences, challenges, and opportunities. Increasingly, Trotsky defined the problem in terms of a *bureaucracy*, understood as a single social formation that had usurped power, rather than as the disease of *bureaucratism* in the apparatuses of the state, party, and other Soviet institutions. Consistent with this, Trotsky began to revise his explanation of the origins of the problem. Also, he began to sketch a number of the most important traits he perceived as characteristic of the bureaucracy. Against arguments voiced by communists on Trotsky’s left, he insisted that capitalism had not yet been restored in the USSR. In fact, while Trotsky continued to fear that the problem of bureaucracy would lead to restoration, during 1929 he clearly believed that this danger had receded somewhat. However, he now concluded that reform of the party and state could not be achieved without a major party crisis. Finally, during

1929 Trotsky began to redefine the reform strategy of the Opposition to include the activities of his new international collaborators.¹⁸⁰

6.7.1 Conception

During 1928-1929 Trotsky's general conception of the problem of bureaucracy continued to evolve. In the party struggle of 1926-1927 Trotsky and the Opposition most commonly characterized the issue of concern as the bureaucratism that had infected the organizational apparatuses of the party, state, etc. However, in that period they also began to describe the problem in terms of the bureaucracy of each of those institutions. Furthermore, while continuing at times to distinguish between the apparatuses of the party, state, etc., by late 1927 Trotsky and the Opposition were beginning to speak at times of the bureaucracy, as a single social layer or entity that had usurped power in all the major political and social institutions of the Soviet Union. In the course of 1928-1929 Trotsky essentially completed these terminological and conceptual shifts.

Although at times Trotsky still referred to the problem of bureaucratism, with increasing frequency he now spoke of the bureaucracy, the bureaucratic apparatus, the bureaucratic stratum, and the bureaucratic caste—especially within the party.¹⁸¹ For example, in his November 1928 article “Crisis in the Right-Center Bloc” Trotsky asserted that the party line had slid “from the [proletarian] class to the apparatus [*apparat*], that is, to the bureaucracy [*biurokratiia*].”¹⁸² Similarly, in “Where Is the Soviet Republic Going?” written in February 1929 Trotsky anticipated a new party purge, not only of “Trotskyists,” but also “of the most degenerate elements within the bureaucracy [*biurokratiia*].”¹⁸³ In a March 1929 open letter to Soviet workers, Trotsky explained, “It was the bureaucrats [*apparatchiki*] who exiled me, people who

have got the power into their hands and converted themselves into a bureaucratic caste [*biurokraticheskaia kasta*].”¹⁸⁴ Later that year in his autobiography, Trotsky referred to the “party stratum [*sloi*] that held the direct power over the county,” and of the “statum [*sloi*] that made up the apparatus of power,” and described how defeats of the international revolution had strengthened “the Stalin bureaucracy [*Stalinskaia biurokratiia*] against me and my friends.”¹⁸⁵ Again, it is clear that for Trotsky the concern now was less with negative *characteristics* within the various apparatuses, and more with the power of the apparatuses *themselves*.

It is likely that various factors were responsible for this shift in terminology. To a large degree, it was simply a continuation of a process that began in 1926-1927. The previous chapter suggested that at least one of the reasons Trotsky began to substitute *bureaucracy* for *bureaucratism* was that he had begun to see political alienation as so deep and so pervasive in the apparatuses of Soviet organizations that it seemed virtually inseparable from them. If that was the case, then subsequent developments—such as the exile of the Opposition and Trotsky’s own expulsion from the country—that suggested a further deepening of political alienation could only have reinforced this perception. Beyond that, other events in late 1928 and 1929 also may have played a role. As we have seen, in the fall of 1928 Trotsky explicitly recognized that the Stalinist leadership had begun to deviate from the course his theory had suggested it would take. From this, he concluded that the party apparatus was capable of acting far more independently in relation to social classes than he previously believed possible. This, in turn, may have reinforced Trotsky’s inclination to view that apparatus, at least, as a relatively autonomous entity, a bureaucracy, with its own distinct impulses and behaviors.

Meanwhile, Trotsky also increasingly employed the term *bureaucracy* not just in reference to each separate organizational apparatus, but as a label for the single, broad social

layer that, he believed, had assumed power in all Soviet institutions. Of course, where it was important to distinguish between the different organizational apparatuses, Trotsky continued to do so.¹⁸⁶ Furthermore, it seems that at times when Trotsky spoke of an unspecified bureaucracy, as in some of the examples above, he was referring specifically to the party apparatus. However, on other occasions Trotsky utilized the singular *bureaucracy* when speaking of the *combined* apparatuses of the party, state etc. Thus, in a letter to the Democratic Centralist Borodai written in November 1928, Trotsky asserted that the proletariat could “regain full power, overhaul the bureaucracy [*biurokratiia*], and put it under its control by way of party and soviet reform.”¹⁸⁷ The same month in his “Crisis in the Right-Center Bloc,” Trotsky described the “immanent idealism which has become the specific philosophy of the party-soviet bureaucracy [*partiino-sovetskaia biurokratiia*].”¹⁸⁸ In the same article he spoke of the new social role of the “labor bureaucracy [*rabochaia biurokratiia*]”—evidently referring to the party apparatus—but also of “the Soviet bureaucracy [*sovetskaia biurokratiia*] in general”—apparently speaking of the broader bureaucratic layer.¹⁸⁹ The following month, in his essay “Philosophical Tendencies of Bureaucratism,” after describing the bureaucratic degeneration in the trade unions, party, state, etc., Trotsky depicted the situation as one in which a single “bureaucratic hierarchy [*biurokraticheskhaia ierarkhiia*] . . . , with all its ministries and departments, has raised itself over above society.”¹⁹⁰

Again, a variety factors may have fostered Trotsky’s tendency to ignore institutional distinctions in his evolving analysis of bureaucracy. One was his perception that the hierarchies of the various apparatuses shared important similarities in outlook, personnel, and mode of functioning, and—perhaps most significantly—that they all participated in the persecution of the Opposition. Consistent with this view, Trotsky spoke in his letter to Borodai in November 1928

of the “autocracy of the party apparatus, which is fusing with the state apparatus.”¹⁹¹ Likewise, in a May 1, 1929 preface to a collection of his oppositional writings entitled *La Révolution Défigurée*, Trotsky described the “interlocking system” formed by the functionaries of the state, the trade unions, and the cooperatives, as well as by members of the liberal professions and middlemen. “Ultimately,” Trotsky argued, “the party functionaries should be counted among them as well, inasmuch as they form a definitely constituted caste, which assures its own permanence more through the state apparatus than by internal party means.”¹⁹²

At the same time, theoretical developments also promoted Trotsky’s inclination to view the apparatuses of all major Soviet political and social institutions as part of a single bureaucracy. As in 1926-1927, Trotsky’s continuing tendency to explain major Soviet developments in terms of shifting class relations encouraged Trotsky to perceive the bureaucracy as one more social grouping, comparable in some respects to the major classes of Soviet society. Beyond that, Trotsky’s thinking on this question may have been influenced by the analysis of the party/state bureaucracy put forward in this period by his friend Khristian Rakovskii in his now famous “Letter to Valentinov.”¹⁹³ On August 8, 1928 in a letter to a fellow Oppositionist, N. V. Valentinov, Rakovskii traced the emergence of a single “soviet-party bureaucracy [*sovetskaiia partiinaia biurokratiia, sov-partbiurokratiia*]” or “party-soviet bureaucracy [*part-sovetskaia biurokratiia*]” in the Soviet Union after the revolution.¹⁹⁴ Trotsky clearly was greatly impressed by Rakovskii’s analysis. In a letter of September 18, 1928 he described Rakovskii’s letter as “interesting” and “significant” and suggested that it had mapped out “for investigation some topics of exceptional importance.”¹⁹⁵ As already noted, in his “Crisis in the Right-Center Bloc,” Trotsky echoed Rakovskii in characterizing the combined apparatuses as the “party-soviet bureaucracy [*partiino-sovetskaia biurokratiia*].”¹⁹⁶ Then, in a February 1929 article for the

international press, Trotsky spoke approvingly of the “remarkable letter dealing with the phenomenon of degeneration” in which Rakovskii had “shown in a very striking fashion that, after the conquest of power, an independent bureaucracy [*samostoiatel’naia biurokratiia*]” differentiated itself out from the working-class milieu.”¹⁹⁷

At any rate, these terminological and conceptual shifts had important implications for Trotsky’s general analysis of Soviet bureaucracy. From this point onwards, Trotsky defined the problem not as a disease infecting various Soviet institutions, but as a single social layer that had usurped power throughout the country. In turn, this posed new questions related to the causes of the problem, including: how had this bureaucracy arisen in the first place; what was its role in Soviet society; and how was this grouping able to wrest power from the proletariat? At the same time, Trotsky’s recasting of the issue inspired new explorations of the characteristics of the problem, including examinations of the distinctive features of the bureaucracy as a social layer.

6.7.2 Causes

In his account of the origins of the problem of bureaucracy, even more clearly than in his definition of the problem, Trotsky’s thinking was greatly influenced by Rakovskii’s “Letter to Valentinov.” In that letter Rakovskii offered his own explanation for the tremendous rise of despotism, corruption, and scandal within Soviet political institutions, and for the passivity of the Soviet masses in the face of these developments. Rakovskii agreed with Trotsky that these developments were related to such factors as the shifting balance of class forces and the international isolation of the Soviet Union. However, he argued that such explanations were inadequate, for “these difficulties would continue to exist up to a certain point, even if we

allowed for the moment, that the country was inhabited only by proletarian masses and the exterior was made up solely of proletarian states.”¹⁹⁸

According to Rakovskii, the root of the problem was that “any new directing class” encounters “inherent difficulties” that can be described as “the professional dangers of power.”¹⁹⁹ Although an insurgent class is bound together by the great aim of revolution during a revolutionary offensive, Rakovskii argued, this cohesion begins to dissolve as soon as the class takes power. First, some of its members assume political and administrative responsibilities and constitute themselves into a bureaucracy in order to deal with the new tasks of power:

When a class takes power, one of its parts becomes the agent of that power. Thus arises bureaucracy [*biurokratiia*]. In a socialist state, where capitalist accumulation is forbidden by members of the directing party, this differentiation begins as a functional one; later it becomes a social one. I am thinking here of the social position of a communist who has at his disposal a car, a nice apartment, [etc.].²⁰⁰

At the same time, many functions previously exercised by the revolutionary class or party as a whole become “the attributes of power,” that is, they are taken over by the bureaucracy.

According to Rakovskii, both of these processes occur because, to a large degree, the revolutionary class always is uneducated and politically inexperienced.²⁰¹

Although Rakovskii agreed with Trotsky that the French Revolution provided the classic model of the degeneration of revolution, the pattern he described differed somewhat from that traced by Trotsky. According to Trotsky, the degeneration of the French Revolution primarily involved the transfer of class power from the revolutionary *sans-culottes* to the bourgeoisie at the time of Robespierre’s overthrow. For Rakovskii, on the other hand, “the political reaction which began even before Thermidor consisted *in this, that the power began to pass both formally and effectively into the hands of an increasingly restricted number of citizens.*”²⁰² Applying this

analysis to the Soviet experience, Rakovskii argued that, since the revolution, the conquest of power had introduced a functional differentiation into the bosom of the proletariat. As a result, the psychology of the officials of the state apparatus had “changed to such a point that they . . . have ceased to be a part of this very same working class.” Meanwhile, “the same differentiation” had occurred in the party, leading to the creation of a combined state/party apparatus so autonomous that, according to Rakovskii, “The bureaucracy [*biurokratiia*] of the soviets and of the party constitutes a new order.”²⁰³

For Rakovskii, this image of a highly autonomous bureaucracy helped to explain the leadership’s left turn of early 1928. In fact, it is likely that he developed his theory largely in response to the left turn. Rakovskii rejected the view put forward by the conciliator Ishchenko—but also partially held by Trotsky—that “the collection of the wheat and the self-criticism are due to the proletarian resistance of the party,” arguing,

Unfortunately it has to be said this is not correct. These two facts result from a combination arranged in high places and are not due to the pressure of the workers’ criticism; it is for political reasons and sometimes for group reasons, or should I say faction, that a part of the top men in the party pursue this line. It is possible to speak of only one proletarian pressure—that guided by the opposition. But it has to be clearly said, this pressure had not been sufficient to maintain the opposition inside the party; more, it has not succeeded in changing its political line. I agree with Leon Davidovich [Trotsky] who has shown, . . . the true and positive revolutionary role which certain revolutionary movements have played by their defeat However, the effects of such conquering defeats are of short duration if they are not reinforced by a new revolutionary upsurge.²⁰⁴

Thus, according to Rakovskii the turn had been introduced by the leadership for “political” reasons, or reasons of “faction.”

Trotsky was so impressed with Rakovskii’s analysis that he immediately adopted portions of it, combining them with arguments from his own, earlier explanation of the process

of bureaucratization. As in the past, Trotsky continued to argue that the problem of political alienation had arisen *primarily* as a consequence of shifts in the balance of class forces in the Soviet Union since the civil war. Thus, in one of his February 1929 articles for the international press, Trotsky attributed Stalin's victory over the Opposition to the "significant shifts that have occurred in class relations in the revolutionary society."²⁰⁵ Again, Trotsky divided the history of the Soviet revolution into two stages, separated by Lenin's illness and the beginning of the struggle against "Trotskyism." The first period had been characterized by "the active intervention and initiative of the masses . . . numbering in the millions"; the second, "by an unquestionable reduction in the level of direct mass intervention."²⁰⁶ Along the same lines, in his May 1, 1929 preface to *La Révolution Défigurée* Trotsky explained that in the second period, "the proletariat . . . was pushed aside, forced into the background, as a result of a series of objective and subjective factors of both an international and external nature."²⁰⁷

However, at this point in Trotsky's account the influence of Rakovskii's letter became apparent. First, Trotsky accepted Rakovskii's argument that the proletariat had lost much of its political power because it was poorly prepared to rule. As Trotsky asserted in his preface to *La Révolution Défigurée*, "centuries of oppression" had resulted in the fact that the proletariat possessed "neither the historical traditions of rule, nor, even less, an instinct for power."²⁰⁸ More importantly, he accepted Rakovskii's view that the *administrative apparatuses* of the important institutions of Soviet society had actively promoted and directly benefited from the period of reaction after the revolution. Thus, in his February article "Where Is the Soviet Republic Going?" Trotsky explained how in the second period,

Over and above the masses the centralized administrative apparatus [*apparat*] rises higher and higher. . . . The apparatus acquires more and more a self-sufficient character. The government official is increasingly filled with the conviction that

the October Revolution was made precisely in order to concentrate power in his hands and assure him a privileged position.²⁰⁹

Finally, Trotsky also embraced Rakovskii's explanation of how the bureaucracy had taken shape in the first place. In his "Crisis in the Right-Center Bloc" written in November 1928 Trotsky endorsed Rakovskii's argument that during the period of reaction after the revolution, "differentiation [within the proletariat] set in with a bureaucracy [*biurokratiia*] emerging at the top and acting more and more in its own interests."²¹⁰ Again in "Where Is the Soviet Republic Going?" written in February 1929, Trotsky repeated that the "independent bureaucracy [*samostoiatel'naia biurokratiia*]" had "differentiated itself out from the working-class milieu."²¹¹ Furthermore, in that latter work Trotsky observed that Rakovskii had shown that this differentiation "at first only functional, . . . later became social."²¹² In later years Trotsky would elaborate upon this idea at length.

However, commenting in "Where Is the Soviet Republic Going?" that "naturally, the processes within the bureaucracy developed in relation to the very profound processes under way in the country," Trotsky quickly reverted to his previous *class* explanation for the growth of political alienation within the Soviet Union. Thus, he argued that, parallel with the emerging independence of the bureaucracy from the working class, bourgeois and petty bourgeois elements in the Soviet Union accumulated considerable economic and political power during the NEP. Increasingly, "broad sections of officialdom [*chinovnichestvo*]" found themselves attracted to the lifestyle of these elements, "drew close to the bourgeois strata and established ties with them."²¹³ Furthermore, a large section of the combined state/party bureaucracy grew responsive to bourgeois pressures and was ultimately transformed into "the effective agent of bourgeois conceptions and expectations."²¹⁴ In the process, the bureaucracy came to perceive popular initiative and criticism as interference, and began to exert pressure against the masses.²¹⁵

6.7.3 Characteristics

As Trotsky shifted from viewing the problem as a disease to defining it as a thing, he also increasingly emphasized features he saw as characteristic of the bureaucracy as a social formation. Foremost among these were a series of attitudes, moral-psychological traits, and patterns of recruitment and promotion that all emerged within the bureaucracy as it first began to differentiate itself from the proletariat.

Perhaps the most important attitude that Trotsky saw as characteristic of the bureaucracy was the preoccupation of its members with privilege and power. As David Law has suggested, the exposure in early 1928 of various cases of corruption, such as those involved in the Smolensk affair, seems to have helped focus Trotsky's attention upon the issue of material privilege.²¹⁶ In a discussion of these scandals in one of the documents he submitted to the Comintern in June 1928, Trotsky noted the "great encrustations of interests and connections around the apparatus."²¹⁷ By 1929 Trotsky had begun to describe the pursuit of privilege and power and the central preoccupation of the bureaucracy. In February 1929 Trotsky described how during the early 1920s the Soviet government officials became increasingly convinced that the revolution had been made "precisely in order to concentrate power in his hands and assure him a privileged position."²¹⁸ Similarly, in his March 29 "Open Letter to the Workers of the USSR," Trotsky spoke of the "bureaucratic caste bound together by a solidarity of privilege"; while in his autobiography he described how, over the course of time, the "stratum that made up the apparatus of power developed its own independent aims and tried to subordinate the revolution to them."²¹⁹

A closely related issue for Trotsky was the general loosening of the moral standards he perceived within the bureaucracy. Again, the importance of this issue seems to have been suggested by the revelations in early 1928 regarding chronic drunkenness, promiscuity, and

sexual exploitation by party officials in Smolensk and other cities.²²⁰ In one of his statements to the Comintern in June 1928, Trotsky asked,

Who is the hero, in the social sense of the term, of the Artemovsk, Smolensk, etc. affairs? He is a bureaucrat who had freed himself from the active control of the party and who has ceased to be the banner-bearer of the proletarian dictatorship. 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 *Derjimorda* [the inspector in Gogol's *Inspector-General*].²²¹

In 1929 Trotsky described in his autobiography how this decline of moral standards became typical within the bureaucracy as a whole during the “second period” of the revolution. Although, according to Trotsky, many members of the apparatus had devoted themselves selflessly to the revolution in the first period, during the period of reaction, “the traits of the man in the street, the sympathies and tastes of self-satisfied officials revived in them.”²²² The prevalent outlook became one of “moral relaxation, self-content, and triviality.” Trotsky recalled that members of the bureaucracy increasingly amused themselves with “philistine gossip” and “vulgarity,” and that they grew especially fond of visiting one another, attending the ballet regularly, and participating in drinking parties. In the presence of Bolsheviks such as Trotsky who would not share their new interests, they displayed shame and resentment.²²³

Also related to the growing preoccupation with power and privilege on the part of the bureaucracy, was its increasing social and political conservatism. In his article “Where Is the Soviet Republic Going?” Trotsky asserted,

The majority of this officialdom [*chinovniki v bol'shinstve*] which has risen up over the masses is profoundly conservative. They are 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.²²⁴

In fact, according to Trotsky this “layer” was so politically conservative that it was “inclined to go much further to the right, in the direction of the new propertied elements, than Stalin himself or the main nucleus of his faction.” Trotsky argued that it was the conservatism of this layer that accounted for the struggle between Stalin and the “right wing.”²²⁵

As Robert McNeal has observed regarding a slightly later period, Trotsky’s various statements at this time regarding the extent of the bureaucracy’s political conservatism appear—at least at first glance—to be inconsistent.²²⁶ For example, in contrast to passages that suggest that the majority of the state/party bureaucracy was fully opportunist, in late October 1928 Trotsky asserted, “The right wing is more weakly represented in the [party] apparatus than the center is.”²²⁷ Furthermore, a few weeks later he argued that the “social and historical origin of our bureaucracy” had given the “centrist elements an obvious and undeniable predominance over the right”; and that “Centrism is the official line of the apparatus.”²²⁸ The probable explanation has to do with the different senses in which Trotsky used the term *bureaucracy* in this period. Most likely, Trotsky meant to suggest that the overwhelming majority of the members of the state apparatus—and hence, of the combined state/party *bureaucracy*—were opportunist, while the majority of the members of the party bureaucracy were centrist.

Other distinctive characteristics that Trotsky previously had touched upon but now emphasized included the criteria for recruitment and promotion within the party apparatus. By late 1923, Trotsky asserted, the apparatus had begun to replace the most gifted and independent individuals in the party machinery with adaptable “mediocrities who owed their positions entirely to the apparatus.” Once again, Trotsky suggested that the foremost among the mediocrities selected by the apparatus was Stalin himself.²²⁹ Subsequently, according to Trotsky, the apparatus had made selection and promotion, even at the lowest levels, dependent upon the candidate’s vigor in the campaign against “Trotskyism.”²³⁰

6.7.4 Consequences

For years Trotsky and the Opposition had predicted that the rightward drift of policy combined with the steady deterioration of the party and state regimes might result in a restoration of capitalism. In 1928-1929 Trotsky continued to defend this view, not only against Oppositionists who now concluded that these fears had been exaggerated, but also against other left communists who believed that these fears already had been realized. In response to the latter, Trotsky advanced a number of arguments to demonstrate that the class nature of the Soviet state had not yet changed fundamentally. Beyond that, Trotsky argued that the left turn actually had reduced the danger of restoration. Nevertheless, he remained convinced that, without profound party and state reform, restoration was inevitable in the long run.

In 1928 and 1929, the defeat of the Opposition convinced some left-wing communists within the Soviet Union and abroad that that a Thermidor already had occurred and that the counterrevolution had triumphed. The first to raise these views were members of the Democratic Centralist group in the USSR. In October 1928, the Democratic Centralist leader Borodai wrote to Trotsky from exile in Tiumen demanding that he admit that both the party and state had “degenerated,” that the “dictatorship of the working class” had ceased to exist, and that the situation within the party and the proceedings of the Sixth Congress of the Comintern were evidence of a “Thermidor with a dry guillotine.”²³¹ The following year Trotsky confronted similar arguments from Hugo Urbahns, leader of the Leninbund, a German Zinovievist organization of several thousand members.²³² Urbahns asserted that Trotsky's expulsion from the Soviet Union constituted an event analogous to the execution of Robespierre and his followers, implying that the proletarian dictatorship had been replaced by a bourgeois state in the USSR.²³³ Against these challenges, Trotsky put forward a number of arguments he would reiterate frequently in the following years to demonstrate that, despite the degeneration, the Soviet state remained ultimately proletarian in character.

Trotsky's first argument involved the question of class political power. Again, for Trotsky the leadership's current shift to the left demonstrated that the line of the party leadership could be corrected by proletarian pressure. As Trotsky explained to Borodai in November 1928, "The functionary of the party, the trade unions, and other institutions, . . . in spite of everything, . . . depends upon the working masses and seems to be obliged in recent times to take these masses into account more and more."²³⁴ At least partially for that reason he insisted to Borodai that the proletariat was still able to "regain full power, overhaul the bureaucracy, and put it under its control by *the road of reform of the party and the soviets*."²³⁵ In that sense and to that extent, then, he believed the working class retained political power in the USSR.²³⁶ Thus, at another point in the same letter Trotsky challenged Borodai,

Is the proletarian core of the party, assisted by the working class, capable of triumphing over the autocracy of the party apparatus, which is fusing with the state apparatus? Whoever replies in advance that it is *incapable* thereby speaks not only of the necessity of a new party on a new foundation but also of the necessity of a second and new proletarian revolution.²³⁷

Following his expulsion from the Soviet Union, he raised the same argument in his polemic with Urbahns. As in his response to Borodai, Trotsky insisted that the left turn was the result of proletarian pressure, demonstrating that the Soviet state remained reformable and based upon the proletariat. Thus, in "Defense of the Soviet Republic and the Opposition," a response to Urbahns written September 7, 1929, Trotsky argued that in the previous two years,

Stalin found himself driven, simultaneously with the crushing of the Left Opposition, to plagiarize partially from its program in all fields, to direct his fire to the right, and to convert an internal party maneuver into a very sharp and prolonged zigzag to the left. This shows that despite everything the proletariat still possesses powers to exert pressure and that the state apparatus still remains dependent upon it.²³⁸

A second major argument put forward by Trotsky for the proletarian character of the Soviet state involved the notion that power could only be transferred from one class to another

through civil war. Since no new civil war had occurred, it was clear to Trotsky that there had been no fundamental change in the class nature of the Soviet state. In embryonic form, Trotsky first advanced this argument in his November 1928 letter to Borodai. After asserting that the situation within the Soviet Union was characterized by growing elements of dual power, Trotsky observed, “A condition of dual power is unstable by its very essence. Sooner or later, it must go one way or another. But as the situation is now, the bourgeoisie could seize power only *by the road of counterrevolutionary upheaval.*”²³⁹ Trotsky developed this idea more fully in his September 1929 in his polemic against Urbahns. There, he enumerated again the advantages of the Russian Revolution over the French, including a larger, more homogeneous, and more resolute revolutionary class; a revolutionary leadership that was “far more experienced and perspicacious”; and the inauguration of far deeper political, economic and cultural changes. Given all these advantages, Trotsky argued, how could the Russian Revolution be defeated peacefully when the victory of the French Thermidor had required a civil war? For Trotsky, such a conception of Thermidor was “nothing else but *inverted reformism.*”²⁴⁰

Trotsky’s third major argument for the proletarian nature of the Soviet state was economic. Trotsky believed that a victorious Thermidor would abolish the property relations introduced by the Bolshevik Revolution.²⁴¹ The fact that this had not happened indicated that the counterrevolution had not yet triumphed. Trotsky did not raise this argument in his response to Borodai. According to Max Shachtman, this was because the economic criterion was relatively unimportant to Trotsky during this period.²⁴² However, it seems at least as likely that Trotsky did not raise the issue because Borodai was arguing a Thermidor had just occurred. If that was the case, a Thermidorian state might not yet had have had time to overturn property relations. At any rate, Trotsky articulated this argument forcefully the following year, insisting that “ultraleftists”

such as Urbahns focused all of their attention on the damaged "shell" of the revolution while ignoring the "socio-economic kernel of the Soviet republic" that still survived:

The means of production, once the property of the capitalists, remain to this day in the hands of the Soviet state. The land is nationalized. The exploiting elements are still excluded from the soviets and from the army. The monopoly of foreign trade remains a bulwark against the economic intervention of capitalism. All these are not trifles.²⁴³

Despite its many crimes and blunders, Trotsky observed, "Soviet centrism" still defended "the social system that originated from the political and economic expropriation of the bourgeoisie."²⁴⁴

Beyond rejecting arguments that the counterrevolution already had triumphed, in 1929 Trotsky continued to perceive that the danger of capitalist restoration actually had diminished somewhat. As we have seen, Trotsky's fear of an imminent Thermidor began to subside in the fall of 1928 with the launching of the Stalinist offensive against the party right. During 1929 he was further reassured by Stalin's victory over the right. In "Defense of the Soviet Republic and the Opposition" Trotsky explained, "By the power of its attack, the Opposition has forced the centrists to deliver a number of blows . . . to the Thermidorean class forces and the tendencies that reflect them inside the party."²⁴⁵

However, this does not mean that Trotsky was no longer concerned about restoration. He remained convinced that ultimately such a restoration was inevitable unless the proletariat succeeded in reforming the party. Thus, Robert McNeal is mistaken in asserting that in 1929 Trotsky was "sufficiently impressed by the leftward swing of the Stalin regime to drop the matter [of Thermidor and Bonapartism] temporarily."²⁴⁶ In fact, even while noting Stalin's blows against the right in his article of September 7, Trotsky stressed that these were "of course by no means mortal and decisive"; and he warned that "the classes have not yet spoken their final word."

Furthermore, in the same article he again emphasized the danger of capitalist restoration by reaffirming his characterization of Stalinism as “inverted Kerenskyism,” and explaining that “ruling centrism is, on the road to Thermidor, the *last* form of the rule of the proletariat.”²⁴⁷ Similarly, in an October 1929 letter to Soviet Oppositionists, Trotsky asserted that the right was still strong enough within the apparatus that “at the first serious push by the elemental Thermidorean mass, not only Bukharin and Rykov but, even before them, Kalinin, Voroshilov, and Rudzutak would overturn the Stalinists” if the Stalinists tried to resist.²⁴⁸

6.7.5 Cure

A final important area of change during this period was in Trotsky’s understanding of how the problem of bureaucracy could be corrected. Despite Stalinist accusations to the contrary, in these years the strategy advocated by Trotsky remained one of reform, not revolution. In his letter to Borodai in November 1928 Trotsky insisted that efforts for “reviving and consolidating the October Revolution and the dictatorship of the proletariat” had not yet been “tried to the very end.”²⁴⁹ Explaining his reform perspective in his September 1929 polemic against Hugo Urbahns, Trotsky asserted that the left turn had demonstrated that “the proletariat still possesses powers to exert pressure and that the state apparatus remains dependent on it.” On this basis, Trotsky concluded, it was necessary for the Russian Opposition to maintain its traditional strategy, a “*policy of reform and not of revolution.*”²⁵⁰ Similarly, in an October 1929 letter to the Soviet Opposition published in the *Bulletin* following the rejection of Rakovskii’s declaration by E. Iaroslavskii, member of the presidium of the party’s Central Control Commission, Trotsky argued that “our line remains as before the line of reform.”²⁵¹ However, he quickly added that “we are not ready to fight for these reforms within the limits of legality that Stalin and Yaroslavsky, in their struggle for self-preservation, constantly narrow.” In particular, Trotsky

insisted upon the need for Bolshevik-Leninists to increase their efforts to organize as a “faction within communism.”²⁵²

Nevertheless, by late 1929 Trotsky had become convinced that reform was impossible except as the result of a major party crisis. No doubt, Trotsky’s pessimism here represented a reaction to repeated failures by the Opposition to bring about reform, and perhaps also to the recent wave of defections from the Opposition. The most likely form such a crisis would take, according to Trotsky, was a renewed attempt by Thermidorian forces to restore capitalism. Thus, in a letter to Oppositionists in October, he observed,

Short of a party crisis of the most profound kind, which would in all likelihood be the result of a subterranean push by the Thermidorean forces, a transition to a new stage is, unfortunately, no longer conceivable. Such a new stage could be either a stage of revival or the Thermidor stage. A party crisis would be accompanied by a new crystallization of the Bolshevik Party out of the present apparatus-stifled ideological chaos.²⁵³

A further development in Trotsky’s reform strategy during 1929 was his redefinition of the Opposition as an international current. As we have noted, during Trotsky’s first weeks and months abroad he began to establish contact with various groups of international supporters, most of whom had been expelled from their own Communist parties in recent years.²⁵⁴ From the beginning, it was clear that Trotsky envisioned that these groups would play a role in relation to their own Communist parties analogous to the role played by the Soviet Opposition *vis-à-vis* the AUCP. Just as he rejected the idea of forming a new party in the Soviet Union, Trotsky similarly dismissed as “utter rubbish” the idea that he would attempt to organize his international supporters into a “Fourth International” as a rival to the Comintern. As he explained to a Japanese correspondent in April and again to his American supporters in May, the Opposition had no intention of surrendering the banner of the Comintern. It had been Stalin, not the Opposition, who had abandoned its ideas and principles. Besides, as he again asserted, centrism was inherently unstable and would soon be “ground away between the millstones of social democracy and communism.”²⁵⁵

Instead, Trotsky characterized the Left Opposition as an “international current” that was preparing to transform itself into a more disciplined “international faction” of the Comintern. Its purpose was to work for the reform of the various Communist parties and of the Communist International, much as the Soviet Opposition was working for the reform of the AUCP and the Comintern.²⁵⁶ In line with this, Trotsky stressed the need to begin “right away” to elaborate an international platform that could “serve as a bridge to a future program of the Communist International.” He explained optimistically, “it is absolutely self-evident that the regenerated Communist International will require a new program.”²⁵⁷

In the meantime, Trotsky stressed the need for clear ideological criteria to evaluate the various groupings attracted to the Left Opposition. He saw this as especially important because centrism was driving into opposition not only leftist critics of Stalinism, “but also the more consistent opportunists.”²⁵⁸ Trotsky identified “three classic questions” that could be used to sort out these various tendencies: “(1) the policy of the Anglo-Russian Committee; (2) the course of the Chinese revolution; (3) the economic policy of the USSR, in conjunction with the theory of socialism in one country.”²⁵⁹ Significantly, he omitted from this list the issue of the “party regime,” or “bureaucratism.” This omission was completely intentional, for as Trotsky explained, “A party regime has no independent, self-sufficient meaning. In relation to party policy it is a derivative magnitude.”²⁶⁰ Furthermore, Trotsky noted that “heterogeneous elements,” including Mensheviks, claimed to oppose “Stalinist bureaucratism” when their real target was “revolutionary centralism.” As far as these elements were concerned, Trotsky commented, “Obviously, they cannot be our cothinkers.”²⁶¹

6.8 CONCLUSION

In retrospect, it is clear that Trotsky's perception of developments in the Soviet Union during 1928-1929 was severely distorted. Throughout these years Trotsky consistently accepted at face value the simplistic Stalinist account of the "grain strike" and the false allegations regarding the "Shakhty conspiracy." To his credit, and in contrast with the extreme intransigents, during these years Trotsky recognized that an important change was occurring in Soviet economic and international policy. Nevertheless, throughout this period, and especially in 1929, he greatly underestimated the significance of the shift in policy, even at various points refusing to describe it as a "turn." At the same time, during this period he continued to reaffirm his erroneous predictions from 1927 that only the Opposition could lead a genuine left turn; that the "centrist" current would soon dissolve; and that without a major proletarian upsurge, the leadership would soon turn back to the right and a section of it would participate in the restoration of capitalism.

Furthermore, although aspects of Trotsky's analysis are persuasive, his main explanation for the turn is implausible. It seems quite likely, as Trotsky argued, that the leadership shifted left in early 1928 at least partly in reaction to a series of economic and international crises, precipitated to some degree by previous Soviet policy. Furthermore, it is conceivable that worker unrest at home and growing working-class militancy abroad were factors that played a role in pushing the leadership to the left. Beyond that, it is clear that many of the policies adopted by the leadership during this period were influenced by the Opposition's program. However, Trotsky's argument that the Opposition was mainly responsible for blocking a right turn or forcing a left turn in late winter/early spring 1928 is highly questionable. Following the Fifteenth Party Congress, the Opposition still maintained a following among the Soviet working class; and it was perceived by the leadership as enough of a threat (or annoyance) to merit repression. Nevertheless, in the winter of 1927-1928 it remained a relatively small grouping, seriously

weakened by the defeat it had just suffered.²⁶² Abroad, it was virtually nonexistent. It is highly doubtful that fear of the Opposition, or the growth of proletarian sympathy for the Opposition's views, would have been able to bring about a turn. To the extent that the Opposition was a factor, it seems more likely that it was the organizational defeat and silencing of the Opposition in late 1927 that made a left turn politically acceptable for the leadership.

If Trotsky's argument that the Opposition was primarily responsible for the turn in 1928 is dubious, his assertion that it forced the deepening of the turn in 1929 seems almost absurd. After a flurry of activity in working-class districts and some significant growth in 1928, by the middle of 1929 the Opposition found itself weakened by defections, increasingly demoralized, and on the brink of collapse.²⁶³ According to Victor Serge, in 1929 the Opposition was reduced to a handful of leaders, plus, "a few hundred comrades" in prison, and "in deportation a few hundred others." Of that period, he remarked, "Our intellectual activity is prodigious, our political action nil. Altogether there must be less than a thousand of us."²⁶⁴ Another Oppositionist, Ante Ciliga, also subsequently described the general mood of demoralization that swept the Opposition in 1929.²⁶⁵ Meanwhile, the Left Opposition was only beginning to organize itself internationally. In such a state of disintegration at home and of disorganization abroad, the Opposition was hardly in a position to exert serious pressure on the leadership.

A number of writers have commented upon the failure of Trotsky's analysis to anticipate or comprehend the developments discussed in this chapter and the next.²⁶⁶ Of these, several have argued that Trotsky's essential problem was that he was misled by his Thermidorian analogy. For example, Stephen Cohn has asserted, "The analogy would obsess and finally mislead Trotsky, blunting his perception of what was happening in the Soviet Union."²⁶⁷ Similarly, Robert Wistrich has argued,

The Thermidorian analogy misled him into thinking that the 'film of revolution' was running *backwards* from Bolshevism to capitalism with the *kulaks* and the *nepmen* at the end of the road. In fact the film was running *forwards* towards industrialization, a

planned economy and collectivization at an unimaginable cost in human lives.²⁶⁸

Taken literally, however, this argument is mistaken. As we have seen in this and the previous chapter, and as we will see again in subsequent chapters, the “Thermidorian analogy” was used in various ways at different times by Trotsky and the other Bolsheviks. In each case, although the reference was always to the “Ninth of Thermidor” in the French revolutionary calendar, the understanding of the significance of that date varied considerably. For example, in the early 1920’s Lenin even asserted that, by introducing NEP, the Bolsheviks were making a Thermidor themselves. Similarly, in 1922 Trotsky argued that the Bolsheviks had retained power by making “concessions to the Thermidor mood and tendencies of the petty bourgeoisie.”²⁶⁹ That is to say, the concept of “Thermidor” was never one simple yardstick by which Soviet reality could be measured, correctly or incorrectly. By itself, the use of “Thermidor” could not lead Trotsky into making any specific predictions or evaluations of Soviet reality. Furthermore, one might equally argue that Trotsky’s errors during this period were the fault of other analogies he used to explain his analysis, including comparisons to the history of the Second International (“centrism” and opportunism”); or to the history of the Russian Revolution and the Russian socialist movement (“dual power,” “Kerenskiism in reverse,” and “Menshevism”).

However, the principal source of Trotsky’s errors during this period was not in the analogies he employed, but in the assumptions behind those analogies. As Robert Wistrich has also suggested, one of the most important of Trotsky’s mistaken assumptions at this time was his view that the bureaucratized state and party apparatuses were incapable of any significant degree of autonomy in relation to social classes.²⁷⁰ In fact, it was this assumption that lay behind Trotsky’s particular understanding of “Thermidor” during this period, and also behind his use of analogies from the history of the Second International and of the Russian revolutionary movement. More importantly, this assumption was central to the entire theory of bureaucratism developed by Trotsky in 1926-1927. Although that theory had seemed a compelling one when it was first articulated, events of 1928 and 1929 began to demonstrate how flawed it really was.

Despite various adjustments and modifications, the theory of bureaucracy defended by Trotsky in late 1929 was essentially the theory he developed in previous years. By the end of 1929, it was already in crisis. As Stalin's left turn continued to deepen in the following years, this crisis would become even more pronounced.

¹ Tony Cliff also has written about the "ideological crisis" of the Left Opposition during this period. See Tony Cliff, *Trotsky: The Darker the Night the Brighter the Star, 1927-40* (London, Chicago, Melbourne: Bookmarks, 1993), 13, 14, 73-74.

² For these predictions, see "At a New Stage" in Leon Trotsky, *The Challenge of the Left Opposition (1926-27)* (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1980), 488-509. It should be noted that this was actually a fairly optimistic article written following the expulsion of the Opposition. Trotsky was arguing against Oppositionists who claimed that Thermidor had already been accomplished. He was hopeful that a major proletarian upsurge in the near future would prevent a Thermidor.

³ For a discussion of this phenomenon among natural scientists, see Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 2nd ed., enl., (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1970), 77-91. For a discussion of the "theoretical crisis" in the world Trotskyist movement after World War II, see Alex Callinicos, *Trotskyism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1990), 23-38.

⁴ Callinicos notes a similar reaction within the Trotskyist movement to theoretical crisis after World War II. Following Karl Popper, he describes such reactions as "'conventionalist stratagems', designed to protect the hard core [of a theory] from the persistent refutation of its auxiliary hypotheses." [Callinicos, *Trotskyism*, 29.] For Popper's discussion of "conventionalist stratagems," see Karl Popper, *The Logic of Scientific Discovery* (New York: Harper & Row, 1968), 78-84.] For Kuhn on the proliferation of articulations and ad hoc modifications to a theory in periods of crisis, see Kuhn, *Structure*, 78.

⁵ According to Victor Serge's later account, during 1928-1929 there were approximately 5,000 Oppositionists under arrest. Victor Serge, *Memoirs of a Revolutionary, 1901-1941*, trans. and ed. Peter Sedgwick (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963), 253. Natalia Sedova reported that in 1928 she and Trotsky had calculated that a minimum of 8,000 Oppositionists had been arrested, imprisoned, or deported. [Victor Serge and Natalia Sedova Trotsky, *The Life and Death of Leon Trotsky* (New York: Basic Books, 1975), 158.] In 1937 Trotsky estimated that approximately 11,000 Oppositionist were imprisoned or deported in 1928. [Preliminary Commission of Inquiry, *The Case of Leon Trotsky: Report of Hearings on the Charges Made Against Him in the Moscow Trials* (New York: Merit Publishers, 1968), 331-332.]

⁶ Edward Hallett Carr, *Foundations of a Planned Economy, 1926-1929*, vol. 2 (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1971), 53; Isaac Deutscher, *The Prophet Unarmed: 1921-1929* (New York: Vintage Books, 1959), 390-396, 401-402; Serge, *Memoirs*, 235-236. Trotsky's other son, Sergei, accompanied his family part of the way to Alma Ata, then returned to Moscow to continue his studies. [Deutscher, *Prophet Unarmed*, 395.]

⁷ Two of these documents later appeared in English under the title *The Third International after Lenin*—a work that has been described by Perry Anderson as "probably the most important text" between 1923 and 1933 for Trotsky's views on the problem of Stalinism. [Perry Anderson, "Trotsky's Interpretation of Stalinism," in *The Stalinist Legacy: Its Impact on Twentieth-Century Politics*, Tariq Ali (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England: Penguin Books, 1984), 119.] In fact, these documents contain a fairly clear restatement of the theory Trotsky developed in 1926 and 1927. [In this regard, see especially Leon Trotsky, *The Third International After Lenin* (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1970), 243-244, 256-257, 265, 294-296.] However, aside from their special emphasis on the problem of bureaucratism in the Comintern [see especially *ibid.*, 236-243, 264], these documents offered nothing new on the general question of bureaucracy.

⁸ Edward Hallett Carr, *Foundations of a Planned Economy, 1926-1929*, vol. 3 (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1976), pt. 3, 819-845; James Pinkney Harrison, *The Long March to Power: A History of the Chinese Communist Party, 1921-1972* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1972), 123-139; Franklin W. Houn, *A Short History of Chinese Communism* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1967), 32-37; Harold R. Isaacs, *The Tragedy of the*

Chinese Revolution, 2d rev. ed. (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1961), 278-292; Peng Shu-tse, "Introduction," in *Leon Trotsky on China*, Leon Trotsky, ed. Les Evans and Russell Block (New York: Monad Press for the Anchor Foundation, 1976), 74-78.

⁹ Edward Hallett Carr, *Foundations*, 3, pt. 1:153.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 163-164; Carr, *Foundations*, 3, pt. 2:363-366, 505-506; Robert Vincent Daniels, *The Conscience of the Revolution: Communist Opposition in Soviet Russia* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1960), 334-335.

¹¹ Edward Hallett Carr and R. W. Davies, *Foundations of a Planned Economy, 1926-1929*, vol. 1 (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1969), pt. 1:33.

¹² Edward Hallett Carr and R. W. Davies, *Foundations*, 1, pt. 1:38-44; Moshe Lewin, *The Making of the Soviet System: Essays in the Social History of Interwar Russia* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1985), 95-96; M. Lewin, *Russian Peasants and Soviet Power: A Study of Collectivization*, trans. Irene Nove with assistance of John Biggart (New York: The Norton Library, W. W. Norton & Co., 1975), 198-210, Michael Reiman, *The Birth of Stalinism: The USSR on the Eve of the "Second Revolution,"* trans. George Saunders (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), 40.

¹³ Carr and Davies, *Foundations*, 1, pt. 1:24, 30-31, 44-45, 49, 50; Lewin, *Russian Peasants*, 214, 216, 217; J. V. Stalin, *Works* (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1952-1955), 11:13.

¹⁴ Carr and Davies, *Foundations*, 1, pt. 1:44-48; Deutscher, *Prophet Unarmed*, 403; Lewin, *Making of the Soviet System*, 91-97; Lewin, *Russian Peasants*, 236-237; Reiman, *Birth of Stalinism*, 41-43; Lewis H. Siegelbaum, *Soviet State and Society Between Revolutions, 1918-1929* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 191; Lynne Viola, *Peasant Rebels under Stalin: Collectivization and the Culture of Peasant Resistance* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 21; Lynn Viola, et al., eds., *The War against the Peasantry, 1927-1930: The Tragedy of the Soviet Countryside*, trans. Steven Shabad (New Haven, Yale University Press, 2005), 17-18, 28, 52; Chris Ward, *Stalin's Russia*, 2nd ed. (London: Oxford University Press, 1999), 73-74.

¹⁵ Stalin, *Works*, 11:4-5. See also *ibid.*, 14; Carr and Davies, *Foundations*, 1, pt. 1:51-52.

¹⁶ Carr and Davies, *Foundations*, 1, pt. 1:52. For the allegation that Stalin was the author, see Ante Ciliga, *The Russian Enigma*. trans. Fernand G. Fernier, Anne Cliff, Margaret and Hugo Dewar (London: Ink Links, 1979), 28.

¹⁷ Stalin, *Works*, 11:15-16, 18, 5.

¹⁸ Carr and Davies, *Foundations*, 1, pt. 1:50-51; Lewin, *Russian Peasants*, 218-219; Stalin, *Works*, 11:4-11.

¹⁹ Carr and Davies, *Foundations*, vol. 1, pt. 1:53-58; Edward Hallett Carr, *Foundations of a Planned Economy, 1926-1929*, vol. 2 (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1971), 135; Lewin, *Russian Peasants*, 219-230.

²⁰ Daniels, *Conscience*, 325. See also Stephen F. Cohen, *Bukharin and the Bolshevik Revolution: A Political Biography, 1888-1938* (New York: Vintage Books, 1973), 278-279; and Lewin, *Russian Peasants*, 295.

²¹ Cohen, *Bukharin*, 279; Lewin, *Russian Peasants*, 231; Stalin, *Works*, 11:12-22.

²² Carr and Davies, *Foundations*, 1, pt. 1:58-59.

²³ *Ibid.*, 58-59, 62-63; Cohen, *Bukharin*, 282-283; Lewin, *Russian Peasants*, 234-238, 296-297.

²⁴ Carr and Davies, *Foundations*, 1, pt. 1:63-64; Lewin, *Russian Peasants*, 238-239.

²⁵ Carr and Davies, *Foundations*, 1, pt. 1:64-65; Daniels, *Conscience*, 327-328; Lewin, *Russian Peasants*, 239-241.

²⁶ Stalin, *Works*, 11:91-92.

²⁷ Cohen, *Bukharin*, 284-286. See also Carr and Davies, *Foundations*, 1, pt. 1:74-75; Daniels, *Conscience*, 328; Lewin, *Russian Peasants*, 298-299.

²⁸ Kendall Bailes, *Technology and Society under Lenin and Stalin: Origins of the Soviet Technological Intelligentsia, 1917-1941* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978), 69-94; Carr and Davies, *Foundations*, 1, pt. 2:584-587; Cohen, *Bukharin*, 281; Robert Conquest, *The Great Terror: Stalin's Purge of the Thirties*, rev. ed. (New York: Collier Books, 1973), 730-733; Daniels, *Conscience*, 326; Reiman, *Birth of Stalinism*, 58-66; Robert C. Tucker, *Stalin in Power: The Revolution from Above, 1928-1941* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1990), 76-79.

²⁹ See Carr, *Foundations*, 2:136-142. On the Smolensk scandal, see also Merle Fainsod, *Smolensk under Soviet Rule* (New York: Vintage Books, Random House, 1958), 48-52.

³⁰ Carr, *Foundations*, 2:298-299; Cohen, *Bukharin*, 281-282; Daniels, *Conscience*, 326; Stalin, *Works*, 11:137.

³¹ Trotsky, *Challenge (1926-27)*, 443.

³² Trotsky, *Leon Trotsky on China*, 274. See also *ibid.*, 275; Trotsky, *Challenge (1926-27)*, 490. By March-April 1928 Trotsky arrived at the relatively more sympathetic evaluation of the Canton commune that it had contained only "elements of adventurism." [Trotsky, *Leon Trotsky on China*, 282.]

³³ This exuberant reaction is described in Deutscher, *Prophet Unarmed*, 405.

³⁴ Leon Trotsky, *The Challenge of the Left Opposition (1928-29)*, ed. Naomi Allen and George Saunders (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1981), 56-58.

³⁵ Deutscher, *Prophet Unarmed*, 407, 413.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 406-407.

³⁷ Pierre Broué, *Trotsky* (Paris: Fayard, 1988), 569, 571; Carr, *Foundations*, 2:59; Cliff, *Trotsky: The Darker the Night*, 75-76, 77; Deutscher, *Prophet Unarmed*, 417-418.

³⁸ Quoted in Trotsky, *Challenge (1928-29)*, 163, Broué, *Trotsky*, 574. See also Deutscher, *Prophet Unarmed*, 421-422.

³⁹ Deutscher, *Prophet Unarmed*, 413-414, 429-430.

⁴⁰ Quoted in Broué, *Trotsky*, 569.

⁴¹ Thus, Eltsin insisted in a letter to Trotsky in May, “Centrism is twice as dangerous when it plays at a left policy.” [Quoted in Broué, *Trotsky*, 571.]

⁴² Deutscher, *Prophet Unarmed*, 414, 431-432.

⁴³ Trotsky, *Challenge (1928-29)*, 77, 78. See also *ibid.*, 98; Trotsky, *Third International*, 257, 258, 275; and Trotsky’s May 26 letter to Mikhail Okudzhava, quoted in Leon Trotsky, *My Life: An Attempt at an Autobiography* (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1970), 552.

⁴⁴ Trotsky, *Challenge (1928-29)*, 155.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 78.

⁴⁶ Thus, in a letter to an exiled Oppositionist on May 26 Trotsky explained that for the party leadership to carry out the new tasks in agriculture, it needed to formulate these tasks “clearly and distinctly, ruthlessly condemning the old approach,” and “to assure the selection of people who understand these new tasks and who want to resolve them, not out of fear, but out of conviction.” Neither of these had yet been done. [*Ibid.*, 106-107.] Furthermore, in his circular letter of May 9, Trotsky insisted that the left turn on the “kulak question” was subordinate to the need for “farsighted management of the state economy,” and in particular, to “the question of industrialization.” [*Ibid.*, 79-80. See also *ibid.*, 138.] However, at this point Trotsky still saw no indication that the Stalinists were serious about economic planning or about accelerating industrial construction. Furthermore, Trotsky insisted that a correct domestic policy was “inconceivable without a correct policy for the Comintern.” [*Ibid.*, 135. See also *ibid.*, 80; Trotsky, *Third International*, 130.] However, in Trotsky’s view the international left turn was even more eclectic and internally contradictory than the domestic. For Trotsky, this was most clearly indicated by the draft program of the Comintern which, in his view, was really nothing more than “a program for the construction of socialism in one country, i.e., a program of social patriotism, not Marxism.” He further complained that the chapter on strategy in the draft program had drawn “none of the lessons flowing from the experience of the last decade,” and, in effect, had sanctioned “the disastrous policies of the past five years.” [Trotsky, *Challenge (1928-29)*, 130. See also *ibid.*, 113, 161-162; and Trotsky, *Third International*, 235, 257-258.]

Perhaps one additional reason why Trotsky minimized the significance of the turn initially was that he did not have a very clear picture of what was happening in the countryside. One Oppositional letter from April 1928 that appears to have been written by Trotsky characterized the left turn in the grain collections campaign as mostly a matter of “general declarations,” and asserted that the leadership actually had not gone any farther than “violent denunciations” against the kulak. [N., “Stalin’s Left Course and the Tasks of the Opposition,” point 13. This is an unpublished translation of N., “Stalins Linderkurs und die Aufgaben der Opposition,” *New Yorker Volkszeitung*, August 19, 1928. The translation was supplied to this author by Naomi Allen of Pathfinder Press.]

⁴⁷ Trotsky, *Challenge (1928-29)*, 98. Perhaps it is also reflected in Trotsky’s July 12 “Declaration” to the Comintern Congress in which he asserts that “the Opposition will never pass over the centrists’ inclination to do things only halfway, their incoherence, the errors they continue to commit.” [*Ibid.*, 143.]

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 91-92. See also *ibid.*, 139, 149; N., “Stalin’s Left Course,” Pt. #13; Trotsky, *Third International*, 299-301.

⁴⁹ Trotsky, *Challenge (1928-29)*, 114. See also *ibid.*, 128, 138, 153; Trotsky, *Third International*, 299-301.

⁵⁰ It should be noted that although some conciliators such as Radek saw Stalin’s “self criticism” campaign as a serious attempt to reform the party regime, Trotsky did not. In his view, this campaign was “nothing but a way of venting rank-and-file discontent by denouncing the errors of secondary importance and sacrificing one or two hundred bureaucrats as scapegoats.” [Trotsky, *Challenge (1928-29)*, 145. See also *ibid.*, 99-100, 102-103, 128, 159-160; and N., “Stalin’s Left Course,” point #13.]

⁵¹ Trotsky, *Challenge (1928-29)*, 79. See also *ibid.*, 107.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 139-140.

⁵³ Ibid., 98.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 257.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 129.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 98.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 163.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 60.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 128.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 147.

⁶¹ The letter discussed here is “Stalin’s Left Course and the Tasks of the Opposition. (See note 46 above.) The quotation is from an editorial note in the *New Yorker Volkszeitung*. Regarding the fact that the authorship of this letter has never been established, see Louis Sinclair, *Trotsky: A Bibliography*, vol. 1 (Aldershot, Great Britain: Scholar Press, Gower Publishing Co., 1989), 439, entry 280400(8).

⁶² N., “Stalin’s Left Course,” point #6. Later in the year, Trotsky argued that, to a large degree, this revival was based upon the reconstruction of Soviet industry. [Trotsky, *Challenge (1928-29)*, 306.]

⁶³ N., “Stalin’s Left Course,” points #6-#7.

⁶⁴ Ibid., points #7-#8.

⁶⁵ On the “kulak strike,” see Trotsky, *Challenge (1928-29)*, 55-58, 92, 96, 140; Trotsky, *Third International*, 293. On the “Shakhty affair,” see Trotsky, *Challenge (1928-29)*, 96, 115, 141, 149, 218, 330; Trotsky, *Third International*, 293. Trotsky later revised his view of the Shakhty affair. [See Leon Trotsky, *Writings of Leon Trotsky [1935-36]*, ed. Naomi Allen and George Breitman (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1977), 552-553.]

⁶⁶ N., “Stalin’s Left Course,” pts. #6-#10.

⁶⁷ In the Donbass in late 1927 there was considerable labor unrest, including repeated wildcat strikes, as a result of tensions between mine workers on one hand, and mine administrators, engineers, and technicians on the other. [See Reiman, *Birth of Stalinism*, 58.] Also, in late 1927 and early 1928 numerous work stoppages related to issues of production quotas, job classifications, and wages occurred in the textile industry throughout the Soviet Union. [Ibid., 54; Chris Ward, *Russia’s Cotton Workers and the New Economic Policy: Shop-floor Culture and State Policy, 1921-1929* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 219.] Finally, during early 1928 official reports described a wave of labor indiscipline in coal-mining and heavy industry, attributed in part to the bad relations between workers and specialists engendered by the Shakhty affair. [Carr and Davies, *Foundations*, 1, pt. 2:508-509; William J. Chase, *Workers, Society, and the Soviet State: Labor and Life in Moscow, 1918-1929* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1990), 280.]

⁶⁸ According to an official trade union report, the number of Soviet workers involved in strikes actually declined during the first half of 1928. [Carr and Davies, *Foundations*, 1, pt. 2:567.]

⁶⁹ Trotsky, *Challenge (1928-29)*, 98. See also *ibid.*, 78, 106, 258.; Trotsky, *Third International*, 273.

⁷⁰ Trotsky, *Third International*, 165. See also *ibid.*, 265-266.

⁷¹ Trotsky, *Challenge (1928-29)*, 154, 161; Trotsky, *Third International*, 258. See also *ibid.*, 165-166. In this regard Trotsky noted a growing strike wave in Europe, and an increase in the Communist vote in France and Germany. [Ibid., 259-260. See also Trotsky, *Challenge (1926-27)*, 502.]

⁷² Trotsky, *Challenge (1928-29)*, 262, 258.

⁷³ Ibid., 99. See also Trotsky, *Third International*, 289-290.

⁷⁴ Trotsky, *Third International*, 291. Similarly, in the anonymous April letter previously discussed, the author asserts that once “those parts of the population whose moods they [the rightists] reflect start moving, they will ruthlessly launch an attack.” [N., “Stalin’s Left Course,” point #14. See also Trotsky, *Challenge (1928-29)*, 79.]

⁷⁵ Trotsky, *Challenge (1928-29)*, 99. See also *ibid.*, 98.

⁷⁶ N., “Stalin’s Left Course,” point #14. See also Trotsky, *Challenge (1928-29)*, 139, 159.

⁷⁷ Trotsky, *Challenge (1928-29)*, 139. See also N., “Stalin’s Left Course,” point #2.

⁷⁸ Trotsky, *Challenge (1928-29)*, 99. See also *ibid.*, 159; Trotsky, *Third International*, 291-292.

⁷⁹ N., “Stalin’s Left Course,” point #15.

⁸⁰ In this regard Trotsky agreed with Sosnovskii about the symptomatic significance of an incident in Kharkov. There, a machinist named Bleskov, taking the left turn and the self-criticism campaign seriously, had written a letter to the local party boss, Zatonskii, criticizing party policy in terms borrowed from the Opposition. Zatonskii, “by virtue of a certain purity of soul and a certain swelling of the head,” and viewing the letter as “‘remarkable,’ genuinely proletarian, deeply sincere, and deserving of full attention,” insisted that Bleskov’s letter be printed in the

newspaper *Kharkov Proletarian*. Subsequently, Zatonskii was denounced for this “petty bourgeois deviation.” For Trotsky the episode indicated the possibility that the maneuver could be transformed into a turn—“with very energetic help from below.” He predicted that “no small number” of Bleskovs would appear in the future, and that Zatonskii would be “only the first victim of these increased complications.” [Trotsky, *Challenge (1928-29)*, 99-100, 102-103, 128.]

⁸¹ Trotsky, *Third International*, 291. See also Trotsky, *Challenge (1928-29)*, 107, 155.

⁸² Trotsky, *Challenge (1928-29)*, 80.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 142.

⁸⁴ Trotsky, *Third International*, 292.

⁸⁵ Trotsky, *Challenge (1928-29)*, 143.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 163. See also *ibid.*, 70-71, 129, 145; N., “Stalin’s Left Course,” point #15.

⁸⁷ Trotsky, *Challenge (1928-29)*, 143.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 149-150, 153. See also *ibid.*, 161.

⁸⁹ Trotsky, *Challenge (1928-29)*, 149.

⁹⁰ Cohen, *Bukharin*, 287-289; Daniels, *Conscience*, 329; Deutscher, *Prophet Unarmed*, 427.

⁹¹ Stalin, *Works*, 11:165-196.

⁹² From Kamenev’s report of a conversation with Bukharin in Trotsky, *Challenge (1928-29)*, 378-382. Soon afterwards, Bukharin commented regarding Kalinin and Voroshilov, “I think Stalin has some special hold on them.” Bukharin believed that Stalin had “bought the Ukrainians by taking Kaganovich [general secretary of the Ukrainian party] out of the Ukraine,” and that the Leningraders, “got frightened when the possibility of replacing Stalin came up.” [*Ibid.*, 381.]

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 382-384.

⁹⁴ A., Rykov, “Tekushchii moment i zadachi partii,” *Pravda*, 15 July, 1928, 3-4; Daniels, *Conscience*, 333. See also Lewin, *Russian Peasants*, 309. For Trotsky’s reaction to Rykov’s speech, see Trotsky, *Challenge (1928-29)*, 166-175, 275.

⁹⁵ N. I. Bukharin, “Bukharin on Three Periods of Postwar Development and the Tasks of the Communist International,” in *Soviet Foreign Policy 1928-1934, Documents and Materials*, vol. 1, ed. Xenia Joukoff Eudin and Robert M. Slusser (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1966), 106-120; Carr, *Foundations*, 2: 69-70; Carr, *Foundations*, 3, pt.1: 196-197; Cohen, *Bukharin*, 292-293; Daniels, *Conscience*, 334-335.

⁹⁶ Carr, *Foundations*, 2:69; Cohen, *Bukharin*, 293-294; Daniels, *Conscience*, 335-337.

⁹⁷ Robert V. Daniels, ed., *A Documentary History of Communism*, rev. ed., vol. 1, *Communism in Russia* (Hanover, NH: Published for the University of Vermont by the University Press of New England, 1984), 210. See also Carr and Davies, *Foundations*, 1, pt.1: 303-317, and *Foundations*, 1, pt. 2:874-881; Cohen, *Bukharin*, 295; Daniels, *Conscience*, 351-352.

⁹⁸ N. I. Bukharin, *Selected Writings on the State and the Transition to Socialism*. trans., and ed. Richard B. Day (New York: M. E. Sharpe, 1982), 301-330. See also Carr and Davies, *Foundations*, 1, pt. 1:89-90, 317-319; Cohen, *Bukharin*, 295-296; Daniels, *Conscience*, 352, 356-357.

⁹⁹ Carr, *Foundations*, 2:62-63, 76-77; Cohen, *Bukharin*, 296-298; Daniels, *Conscience*, 337-341; Stalin, *Works*, 11:231-248.

¹⁰⁰ Carr, *Foundations*, 2:78-81; Cohen, *Bukharin*, 298-299; Daniels, *Conscience*, 342; Leonard Schapiro, *The Communist Party of the Soviet Union*, 2d ed. (New York: Vintage Books, Random House, 1971), 374.

¹⁰¹ Carr, *Foundations*, 2:81, 142-143; Cohen, *Bukharin*, 300; Daniels, *Conscience*, 342-343, 353; Fainsod, *Smolensk*, 211-212; *Kommunisticheskaia Partiiia Sovetskogo Soiuza, Kommunisticheskaia Partiiia Sovetskogo Soiuza v rezoliutsiakh i resheniiakh s’ezdov, konferentsii, i plenumov TsK*, 8th ed. (Moscow: Izdatel’stvo Politicheskoi Literatury, 1970), 4:122-157; Richard Gregor, ed., *Resolutions and Decisions of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union: The Early Soviet Period: 1917-1929*, vol. 2 of 4 vols., gen. ed. Robert H. McNeal (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974), 338-341; Schapiro, *Communist Party*, 374-375; Stalin, *Works*, 11:255-302. J. Arch Getty has noted that, according to a report by Iaroslavskii in 1930, only 1 percent of the members expelled in this purge were eliminated for “‘fractional’ or oppositional activity.” [J. Arch Getty, *Origins of the Great Purges: The Soviet Communist Party Reconsidered, 1933-1938* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 46-47.] However, Fainsod’s discussion of this purge in Smolensk suggests that supporters of the party right were often expelled as “alien elements,” or for their connection with “alien elements.” [Fainsod, *Smolensk*, 212.]

¹⁰² Carr, *Foundations*, 2:81; Carr, *Foundations*, 3, pt.2:451-454, 457; Carr and Davies, *Foundations*, 1, pt. 2:556-560; Cohen, *Bukharin*, 300-301; Daniels, *Conscience*, 344-348; Stalin, *Works*, 11:307-324.

¹⁰³ On the difficulties in grain collection during the winter of 1928-1929, see Carr and Davies, *Foundations*, 1, pt. 1:100-103; Lewin, *Russian Peasants*, 287-288. On Bukharin's articles in *Pravda*, see Carr, *Foundations*, 2:86-87; Cohen, *Bukharin*, 301-304; Lewin, *Russian Peasants*, 325-329; Schapiro, *Communist Party*, 376-377.

¹⁰⁴ Carr, *Foundations*, 2:82-84, 87; Cohen, *Bukharin*, 304-305; Daniels, *Conscience*, 363-364; Isaac Deutscher, *The Prophet Outcast: Trotsky: 1929-1940* (New York: Vintage Books, Random House, 1965), 1-2; Shapiro, *Communist Party*, 377; Stalin, *Works*, 11:332-340; Trotsky, *My Life*, 565.

¹⁰⁵ Cohen, *Bukharin*, 304-308. See also, Carr, *Foundations*, 2:87-90; Daniels, *Conscience*, 363-364; Schapiro, *Communist Party*, 377.

¹⁰⁶ Trotsky, *Challenge (1928-29)*, 168.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 172-173.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 173-175.

¹⁰⁹ Deutscher, *Prophet Unarmed*, 440. For a discussion of the hints dropped by Stalin during this period about a possible reconciliation with the Trotskyists, see *ibid.*, 443-445.

¹¹⁰ For remarks on "the right turn of July," see Trotsky, *Challenge (1928-29)*, 252, 258, 276.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 177, 180. See also *ibid.*, 276-277. On September 18 Trotsky reminded a Rykovist, Shatunovskii, who had reprimanded him for oppositional activities that Shatunovskii himself was a member of a "right oppositional" grouping. [*Ibid.*, 247.]

¹¹² Both Isaac Deutscher and Pierre Broué have suggested that Trotsky was already aware of the Bukharin-Kamenev discussion by early September. [See Deutscher, *Prophet Unarmed*, 447-448; Broué, *Trotsky*, 556, 576.] However, the editors of Trotsky, *Challenge (1928-29)* have noted that Trotsky's first reference to the meeting appeared in his circular letter of October 21, and have plausibly suggested that the Moscow Trotskyists had received the report about the July meeting from Kamenev in a meeting of September 22. [Ed. note, Trotsky, *Challenge (1928-29)*, 270.]

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 271. In the same letter, however, Trotsky commented upon the correspondence between 'class logic' and 'apparatus logic' as far as the Comintern was concerned. Trotsky noted that at the Sixth Congress, "The number of hours Bukharin spoke . . . was in inverse ratio to his influence, which fell from day to day." Trotsky explained that the rightist policy within the Soviet Union was "distasteful to the foreign party bureaucrats in view of the radicalization of the masses and the pressure of the Opposition." Besides, he argued, "the apparatus is in the hands of Stalin, and in the Comintern the religion of the apparatus is no weaker than in the AUCP." [*Ibid.*, 272-273.]

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 273.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 273, 319-320.

¹¹⁷ Trotsky described Stalin's reasoning as follows:

If I get out of these difficulties by means of centrist measures, then I will denounce the panicky right-wingers as capitulators, and drop them a peg or two in the organization. If, on the other hand, the situation gets worse, then I will steer to the right myself, that is, I will weaken the right faction by robbing it politically. I will declare that it has invented the disagreements, that it is trying to split the party, and thus lower it a peg. If these right measures do not work, I will make my right allies responsible for the failure, give them the boot, and again steer a course to the left by giving Kamenev and Zinoviev a little longer leash." [*Ibid.*, 272.]

¹¹⁸ Trotsky, *Challenge (1926-27)*, 492.

¹¹⁹ Trotsky, *Challenge (1928-29)*, 274.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 274-275. Trotsky observed, "At first glance, it seems reassuring that the political parties of the possessing class are shattered, that the new proprietors are politically atomized, that the right wing inside the party, . . . cannot decide to rely openly upon the new proprietors." [*Ibid.*, 274.]

¹²¹ Deutscher, *Prophet Unarmed*, 458.

¹²² Trotsky, *Challenge (1928-29)*, 274. See *ibid.*, 307, 314, 316, 318-320, 321-328, 334-335, 337, 338, 363; Leon Trotsky, *Writings of Leon Trotsky [1929]*, ed. George Breitman and Sarah Lovell (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1975), 49-50.

¹²³ Trotsky, *Challenge (1928-29)*, 274-275. In this document Trotsky mistakenly dates Rykov's remark as having occurred in June, instead of July. [On Trotsky's prediction, see also Deutscher, *Prophet Unarmed*, 458-460.] According to Roy Medvedev, in 1928-1929 Voroshilov frequently objected to Stalin's offensive against the peasantry because he feared that policy would undermine the morale of the army. Medvedev attributes Trotsky's fears that Voroshilov might lead a "peasant uprising" to exaggerated rumors about these objections. [Roy Medvedev, *All Stalin's Men.*, trans. Harold Shukman (Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, Anchor Press/Doubleday, 1985), 11.]

¹²⁴ Trotsky, *Challenge (1928-29)*, 275-276. Consistent with this, in November 1928 Trotsky argued that although a victory of the center over the right might result in "the elimination from the party of the most arrogant Ustryalovist elements and the retarding or abatement of the backsliding and degeneration," it would also lead to "a new disorganization of the mind of the party, by further weakening the Marxist method and by preparing even more confused and more dangerous new stages in the development of the party." [Ibid., 302.] In December 1927 Trotsky had suggested that Stalin might "succeed in changing horses, mounting the one on the right, and eliminating Rykov by simply taking his place." [Trotsky, *Challenge (1926-27)*, 498.] This was slightly different from the "Bonapartist" role he now suggested that Stalin might play.

¹²⁵ The open ballot, Trotsky argued, had been introduced after the revolution so that "the enemy could not vote against the proletarian dictatorship." But now the situation was such that "the proletariat cannot vote for the dictatorship, through fear of pressure from the bourgeoisie reflected through the apparatus." [Trotsky, *Challenge (1928-29)*, 281-283. For later statements on the secret ballot, see *ibid.*, 368; Trotsky, *Writings [1929]*, 58-59, 113-114, 291.]

¹²⁶ For example, in his declaration to the Sixth Comintern Congress, recalling how the left Jacobins had joined forces with the Right to overthrow Robespierre, Trotsky had observed, "There have been such combinations between the right and the left in [past] revolutions. Such combinations have also ruined revolutions." [Trotsky, *Challenge (1928-29)*, 142.]

¹²⁷ Thus, on September 12 Trotsky warned the Rykovist Shatunovskii, "They have great resources in their hands . . . They will try to strangle you, while in essence carrying out your policies, although only by installments." [Trotsky, *Challenge (1928-29)*, 248.]

¹²⁸ In his September 12 letter to the rightist Shatunovskii, Trotsky described the party right as a "clandestine faction." [Ibid., 246-247.] Isaac Deutscher, Pierre Broué, and Tony Cliff have suggested that Trotsky's modification of his position on this question represented his response to Bukharin's July appeal for an alliance against Stalin. [See Broué, *Trotsky*, 41; Cliff, *Trotsky: The Darker the Night*, 84; Deutscher, *Prophet Unarmed*, 447-448.] This is possible, although Trotsky probably had not yet received the full written report about Bukharin's July meeting with Kamenev. As the editors of Trotsky, *Challenge (1928-29)* have noted, Trotsky's first reference to this meeting appeared in his circular letter of October 21. Furthermore, they have plausibly suggested that the Moscow Trotskyists had received the report of the meeting from Kamenev who met with them September 22. [Ed. note, Trotsky, *Challenge (1928-29)*, 270.]

¹²⁹ Trotsky, *Challenge (1928-29)*, 248-249.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 336-343.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 295. A few weeks later Trotsky again ridiculed intransigents who persisted in believing that the Stalinists had been politically destroyed in July. Trotsky remarked, "Those comrades judged very hastily who thought that the July plenum put an end to the fight of the centrists and the right." [Ibid., 302, 303-304.]

¹³² In December Trotsky noted that "the campaign against the rights has taken an open form and a broad apparatus scale." [Ibid., 336.]

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 302.

¹³⁴ These included Stalin's refusal to name the rightist leaders, the ambiguity of his position on industrialization and collectivization, his continued adherence to the doctrine of socialism in one country, and his failure to support an increase in workers' wages. [Ibid., 323-331.]

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 303, 363.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 306, 308-311.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 308-309. For the original statement, see Trotsky, *Challenge (1926-27)*, 116-117.

¹³⁸ At the same time, Trotsky found himself subjected to an increasingly restrictive postal blockade which prompted his wife to remark to a friend, "Things will not stop at this, of course. We are awaiting something worse." Also,

during this period rumors circulated within the Opposition that Trotsky was about to be removed to an even more isolated location than Alma Ata. [Deutscher, *Prophet Unarmed*, 453-454.]

¹³⁹ Trotsky, *Challenge (1928-29)*, 332.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 363.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 332.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, 371.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 333.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 333-334. See also 371.

¹⁴⁵ Carr and Davies, *Foundations*, 1, pt. 1:248-252 and 1, pt. 2:889-891; Carr, *Foundations*, 2:90-92; Cohen, *Bukharin*, 308-311; Daniels, *Conscience*, 364-366. Stalin's long speech in reply to the discussion appears in Stalin, *Works*, 12:1-113.

¹⁴⁶ Carr and Davies, *Foundations*, 1, pt. 2:562; Carr, *Foundations*, 2:93, 95-96; Carr, *Foundations*, 3, pt. 1:256; Cohen, *Bukharin*, 329-335; Daniels, *Conscience*, 367-369; Schapiro, *Communist Party*, 380-381.

¹⁴⁷ Carr, *Foundations*, 3, pt. 1:247-254; Cohen, *Bukharin*, 329-330. For excerpts from Kuusinen's remarks on "Social-Fascism," see Eudin and Slusser, *Soviet Foreign Policy* 1:199-201.

¹⁴⁸ Carr and Davies, *Foundations*, 1, pt. 2:888-890, 894, 981; Cohen, *Bukharin*, 311; Lewin, *Russian Peasants*, 344-347, 374-375; Stalin, *Works*, 12:129.

¹⁴⁹ Cohen, *Bukharin*, 330.

¹⁵⁰ Carr and Davies, *Foundations*, 1, pt. 1:100-105; Cohen, *Bukharin*, 330-331; R. W. Davies, *The Socialist Offensive: The Collectivization of Soviet Agriculture, 1929-1930*, vol. 1 of *The Industrialization of Soviet Russia* (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 1980), 56-104, 427; Lewin, *Russian Peasants*, 383-395, 414.

¹⁵¹ Cohen, *Bukharin*, 311-312; Lewin, *Russian Peasants*, 352-353.

¹⁵² Davies, *Socialist Offensive*, 116-137; Lewin, *Making*, 104-113; Lewin, *Russian Peasants*, 368-364.

¹⁵³ Cohen, *Bukharin*, 333-334; Davies, *Socialist Offensive*, 155-174; J. V. Stalin, *Problems of Leninism* (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1976), 443; Lewin, *Making*, 113-114; Lewin, *Russian Peasants*, 454-465.

¹⁵⁴ Isaac Deutscher, *The Prophet Outcast: Trotsky: 1929-1940* (New York: Vintage Books, 1963), 63-74. See also Carr, *Foundations*, 2:97-98; Daniels, *Conscience*, 374-375. Tony Cliff gives an especially detailed account of the capitulatory stampede of 1929. See Cliff, *Trotsky: The Darker the Night*, 85-100. On Radek's capitulation, see also Warren Lerner, *Karl Radek: The Last Internationalist* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1970), 151-152; Jim Tuck, *Engine of Mischief: An Analytical Biography of Karl Radek*, Contributions to the Study of World History, number 11 (Westport, CN: Greenwood Press, 1988), 97. The Trotskyists Piatakov, Antonov-Ovseenko, and Krestinskii all capitulated in early 1928. However, all of these had been working in diplomatic assignments abroad in recent years and had not actively participated in the final phase of the Opposition's struggle. [See Carr, *Foundations*, 2:55.]

¹⁵⁵ Quoted in Serge, *Memoirs*, 252-253. According to Pierre Broué, Smirnov's group did not really capitulate at this time, "but were trying to fool the apparatus." [Pierre Broué, "Party Opposition to Stalin (1930-1932) and the First Moscow Trial," in *Essays on Revolutionary Culture and Stalinism: Selected Papers from the Third World Congress for Soviet and East European Studies*, ed. John W. Strong (Columbus, Ohio: Slavica Publishers, 1989), 104.]

¹⁵⁶ Deutscher, *Prophet Outcast*, 76-78.

¹⁵⁷ Serge, *Memoirs*, 253.

¹⁵⁸ For the text of the "Declaration," see *Biulleten' oppositsii* 6 (October 1929), 3-7; Christian Rakovsky, *Selected Writings on Opposition in the USSR 1923-30*, ed. Gus Fagan (London: Allison & Busby, 1980), 137-144. See also Broué, *Trotsky*, 635-636; Deutscher, *Prophet Outcast*, 78-81.

¹⁵⁹ For a first-hand account of Trotsky's life on Prinkipo by his secretary, see Jean van Heijenoort, *With Trotsky in Exile: From Prinkipo to Coyoacán* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1978). For various first-hand accounts of life with Trotsky in Turkey, see Albert Glotzer, *Trotsky: Memoir and Critique* (Buffalo, NY: Prometheus Books, 1989), 28-82; Van Heijenoort, *With Trotsky in Exile*, 1-48; Arne Swabeck, "Visiting Trotsky at Prinkipo," *Studies in Comparative Communism* 10, nos. 1 & 2 (Spring/summer 1977): 152-159; Sara Weber, "Recollections of Trotsky," *Modern Occasions* (Spring 1972): 181-194.

¹⁶⁰ Deutscher, *Prophet Outcast*, 6-10, 21-23, 28-33.

¹⁶¹ Trotsky, *Writings [1929]*, 31.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, 48-49, 25. See also 60-62. For evidence on the growth of Opposition activity in late 1928, see Carr, *Foundations*, 2:73-74; Reiman, *Birth of Stalinism*, 97.

¹⁶³ For example, regarding the struggle against the right, a March 20 article published in the American Trotskyist paper *The Militant* and probably written by Trotsky reported that “the Stalinists are crowing; they have achieved a complete and easy victory.” [Trotsky, *Writings [1929]*, 67.] Similarly, in a June 14 article for *Biulleten’ oppositsii* Trotsky spoke of “the present crushing of the Right.” [Ibid., 162. See also *ibid.*, 48, 109.] Concerning the turn in economic policy, Trotsky remarked in a March 31 letter to his international supporters that “Stalin’s attempt to increase industrialization brings him outwardly closer to the Opposition.” [Ibid., 85.] And in an article for his *Biulleten’* on July 27 he described the new five-year plan as “an attempt to express in figures the Opposition’s criticism,” and as “a kind of zigzag towards the Opposition.” [Ibid., 200. See also *ibid.*, 56, 376.] Finally, as far as Comintern policy was concerned, in a letter of September 25 Trotsky spoke of the recent “sharp turn” [Ibid., 328]; while in an article of October 17 he noted, “From the union with Chiang Kai-shek, the theory of the ‘bloc of four classes,’ the call for a workers’ and peasants’ party, . . . the Comintern in twentyfour hours switched to the slogan: no agreement with the reformists; fight social fascism for the conquest of the streets.” [Ibid., 367.]

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 162,369. See also *ibid.*, 109, 327.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 84-85.

¹⁶⁶ Trotsky, *Writings [1929]*, 328.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 359. See also *ibid.*, 109-110, 184.

¹⁶⁸ Even in the summer of 1928 Trotsky spoke critically of the “measures of administrative violence” and the “emergency methods from the arsenal of war communism” which had been used against the kulaks. [Trotsky, *Challenge (1928-29)*, 168; Trotsky, *Third International*, 279.] In September of 1929 Trotsky spoke of the “gradations from open opportunism to ultraleftism” in the new Comintern policy. [Trotsky, *Challenge (1928-29)*, 258. For Trotsky’s 1929 remark on the use of “administrative pressure” against the kulaks, see Trotsky, *Writings [1929]*, 376. For his criticisms in 1929 of the ultraleft character of Comintern policy, see *ibid.*, 171-173, 223, 230, 328, 391-393.]

¹⁶⁹ Regarding the fact that the five-year plan continued to be based upon the perspective of socialism in one country, see *ibid.*, 84-85, 327-328. Regarding the fact that Comintern policy was based upon this theory, see *ibid.*, 233.

¹⁷⁰ Trotsky, *Writings [1929]*, 200, 202. For other cases in which Trotsky evaluated the five-year plan in terms of the overall degree of democracy in the party, see *ibid.*, 359-360, 376-377. The issue of democracy in economic planning will be taken up in the next chapter.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 327. See also *ibid.*, 135-136; Leon Trotsky, *The Permanent Revolution and Results and Prospects* (New York: Merit Publishers, 1969), 134.

¹⁷² For this argument regarding the turn in economic policy, see Trotsky, *Writings [1929]*, 251, 280, 281, 367. For this argument regarding Comintern policy, see *ibid.*, 229. However, regarding Comintern policy, Trotsky also spoke of the Stalinists’ need to save their own revolutionary reputation [Ibid., 136], and to screen from the eyes of international workers the physical repression of the Opposition. [Ibid., 223. On the role of the Opposition in forcing the Stalinists to struggle against the party right, see *ibid.*, 109, 162.]

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, 136. See also *ibid.*, 200.

¹⁷⁴ Leon Trotsky, *Writings of Leon Trotsky: Supplement (1929-33)* (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1979), 19.

¹⁷⁵ Trotsky, *Writings [1929]*, 398. Trotsky’s argument here was consistent with his belief, expressed in March 1929, that during the previous year the Opposition had “grown considerably” and had “become an important political factor in the life of the working masses.” [Ibid., 61.]

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 211. See also *ibid.*, 212.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 398. See also *ibid.*, 399.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 136. See also *ibid.*, 201.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 398. Although Trotsky was adamant in rejecting capitulation, he tentatively endorsed, as a tactical maneuver, Rakovskii’s conciliatory declaration to the Central Committee in August 1929. For Trotsky’s comments on this declaration, see *ibid.*, 325-328, 340-344, 358-361, 397, 400; Trotsky, *Writings: Supplement [1929-33]*, 19.

¹⁸⁰ Important theoretical statements on the problem of bureaucracy can be found scattered throughout Trotsky’s books, articles, interviews, and correspondence during late 1928 and 1929. However, the most important sources for statements of his revised theory in these years include his article “Crisis in the Right-Center Bloc,” written in November 1928; a series of articles entitled *Chto i kak proizoiolsho?* written for the international press in February 1929; a May 1, 1929 preface to a collection of his oppositional writings published in France under the title *La Révolution Defigureé*; and his autobiography, completed in the summer of 1929.

- ¹⁸¹ For references to “bureaucratism,” see, for example: Trotsky, *Challenge (1928-29)*, 245, 389, 390; L. Trotsky, “Veseda nachistotu s dobrozhelatel’nym partiitseem,” in Lev Trotskii, *Pis’ma iz ssylki*, ed. Iu.G. Fel’shtinskii. http://www.lib.ru/TROCKIJ/Trotsky-Pisma_iz_ssyliki.txt (accessed Oct. 5, 2008); L. Trotsky, “O filosofskikh tendentsiakh biurokratizma,” in L. D. Trotskii, *Arkhiv v 9 tomakh: tom 4*, ed. Iu.G. Fel’shtinskii. http://lib.ru/TROCKIJ/Arhiv_Trotskogo_t4.txt (accessed October 5, 2008); Trotsky *Writings [1929]*, 40, 81, 171; L. D. Trotskii, *Chto i kak proizoshlo? Shest’ statei dlia mirovoi burzhuaznoi pechati* (Paris: H. Vilain, 1929), 31; *Biulleten’ oppozitsii* 1-2 (July 1929): 21, 35.
- ¹⁸² Trotsky, *Challenge (1928-29)*, 313; L. Trotsky, “Krizis pravo-tsentristskogo bloka i perspektivy,” in Lev Trotskii. *Arkhiv v 9 tomakh: tom 4* (accessed October 5, 2008). Note modification of translation.
- ¹⁸³ Trotsky, *Writings [1929]*, 48; Trotskii, *Chto i kak proizoshlo?* 42.
- ¹⁸⁴ Trotsky, *Writings [1929]*, 77; *Biulleten’ oppozitsii* 1-2 (July 1929), 4.
- ¹⁸⁵ Trotsky, *My Life*, 505; L. Trotsky, *Moia zhizn: opyt avtobiografii*, (Moscow, “Panorama,” 1991), 476, 479.
- ¹⁸⁶ For example, in a letter written in November 1928 Trotsky observed, “There is no doubt that the degeneration of the Soviet apparatus [*sovetskii apparat*] is considerably more advanced than the same process in the party apparatus [*partyni apparat*].” [Trotsky, *Challenge (1928-29)*, 293; L. Trotsky. “V chem raznogliasiia s DTs (Gruppa 15-ti) (Otveta na pis’mo ssyl’nogo rabochego, chlena gruppy DTs),” in Trotskii, *Pis’ma iz ssylki*, (accessed Oct. 5, 2008).]
- ¹⁸⁷ Trotsky, *Challenge (1928-29)*, 295; Trotskii. “V chem raznogliasiia s DTs (Gruppa 15-ti).” Note modification of translation.
- ¹⁸⁸ Trotsky, *Challenge (1928-29)*, 314; Trotskii, “Krizis pravo-tsentristskogo bloka i perspektivy.” Note modification of translation.
- ¹⁸⁹ Trotsky, *Challenge (1928-29)*, 315; Trotskii, “Krizis pravo-tsentristskogo bloka i perspektivy.”
- ¹⁹⁰ Trotsky, *Challenge (1928-29)*, 391, 392; L. Trotsky, “O filosofskikh tendentsiakh biurokratizma.”
- ¹⁹¹ Trotsky, *Challenge (1928-29)*, 293.
- ¹⁹² Trotsky, *Writings [1929]*, 118. The original French also uses the term “caste.” [Léon Trotsky, *La Révolution Défigurée* (Rieder: Paris, 1929), 10.]
- ¹⁹³ This letter was first published in *Biulleten’ oppozitsii* 6 (October 1929): 14-20. Subsequently, an English translation was published in *The New International* (November 1934): 105-109. Since then, an excerpt has appeared in Irving Howe, ed., *Essential Works of Socialism* (New York: Bantam Books, 1971), 370-382; and a complete translation has been published in Christian Rakovsky, *Selected Writings on Opposition in the USSR 1923-30*, ed. Gus Fagan (London: Allison & Busby, 1980), 124-136.
- ¹⁹⁴ Rakovsky, *Selected Writings*, 131, 132; Kh. Rakovskii, “Pis’mo Kh.G. Rakovskogo o prichinakh pererazhdeniia partiia i gosudarstvennogo apparata,” *Biulleten’ oppozitsii* 6 (October 1929): 17, 18.
- ¹⁹⁵ Trotsky, *Challenge (1928-29)*, 261.
- ¹⁹⁶ Trotsky, *Challenge (1928-29)*, 314; Trotskii, “Krizis pravo-tsentristskogo bloka i perspektivy.” Note modification of translation.
- ¹⁹⁷ Trotsky, *Writings [1929]*, 47; Trotskii, *Chto i kak proizoshlo?*, 47.
- ¹⁹⁸ Rakovsky, *Selected Writings*, 125.
- ¹⁹⁹ Ibid.
- ²⁰⁰ Ibid., 126; Rakovskii, “Pis’mo,” 15.
- ²⁰¹ Rakovsky, *Selected Writings*, 126-127.
- ²⁰² Ibid., 128. Fagan discusses the difference between Trotsky and Rakovskii regarding Thermidor. (See Gus Fagan, “Introduction,” in *ibid.*, 52.) Rakovskii further argued that the process of functional/social differentiation in France had been supplemented by the antidemocratic actions of Robespierre, including the “liquidation of all elements on the left” and “the gradual elimination of the elective principle and its replacement by the principle of *nominations*.” [Ibid., 128.]
- ²⁰³ Ibid., 130, 131; Rakovskii, “Pis’mo,” 17.
- ²⁰⁴ Rakovsky, *Selected Writings*, 132-133.
- ²⁰⁵ Trotsky, *Writings [1929]*, 43.
- ²⁰⁶ Ibid., 46
- ²⁰⁷ Ibid., 118.
- ²⁰⁸ Ibid., 121.

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- ²⁰⁹ Ibid., 46-47; Trotskii, *Chto i kak proizoshlo?*, 39. Similarly, in his preface to *La Révolution Defigurée*, Trotsky described how, after Lenin's death, non-proletarian layers, including various groupings of functionaries, "began to push themselves up." [Trotsky, *Writings [1929]*, 118.]
- ²¹⁰ Trotsky, *Challenge (1928-29)*, 305; Trotskii, "Krizis pravo-tsentristskogo bloka i perspektivy."
- ²¹¹ Trotsky, *Challenge (1928-29)*, 305; Trotskii, "Krizis pravo-tsentristskogo bloka i perspektivy"; Trotsky, *Writings [1929]*, 47; Trotskii, *Chto i kak proizoshlo?*, 47.
- ²¹² Trotsky, *Writings [1929]*, 47.
- ²¹³ Ibid; Trotskii, *Chto i kak proizoshlo?*, 40.
- ²¹⁴ Trotsky, *Writings [1929]*, 118. See also *ibid.*, 119-121, 47.
- ²¹⁵ Ibid., 47.
- ²¹⁶ David Law, "Trotsky in Opposition: 1923-1940" (PhD diss, University of Keele, 1987), 324.
- ²¹⁷ Trotsky, *Third International*, 305.
- ²¹⁸ Trotsky, *Writings [1929]*, 47.
- ²¹⁹ Ibid., 77; Trotsky, *My Life*, 502.
- ²²⁰ In part, he was also probably influenced by Rakovskii's and Sosnovskii's discussion of this theme. [See Rakovsky, *Selected Writings*, 126, 128.]
- ²²¹ Trotsky, *Third International*, 303. See Law, "Trotsky in Opposition," 324.
- ²²² Trotsky, *My Life*, 502-503.
- ²²³ Ibid., 504.
- ²²⁴ Trotsky, *Writings [1929]*, 48; Trotskii, *Chto i kak proizoshlo?*, 42.
- ²²⁵ Trotsky, *Writings [1929]*, 48.
- ²²⁶ Robert H. McNeal, "Trotskyist Interpretations of Stalinism," in *Stalinism: Essays in Historical Interpretation*, ed. Robert C. Tucker (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1977), 33.
- ²²⁷ Trotsky, *Challenge (1928-29)*, 274.
- ²²⁸ Ibid., 315, 316. For Trotsky's discussion in the same article of the rightists within the bureaucracy, see *ibid.*, 319-320.
- ²²⁹ Trotsky, *My Life*, 501, 512-513; Trotsky, *Writings [1929]*, 36.
- ²³⁰ Trotsky, *Writings [1929]*, 41-42. See also Trotsky, *My Life*, 500-501.
- ²³¹ Trotsky, *Challenge (1928-29)*, 292, 293, 294, 297.
- ²³² On the Leninbund, see Robert J. Alexander, *International Trotskyism, 1929-1985: A Documented Analysis of the Movement* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1991), 407-411.
- ²³³ Trotsky, *Writings [1929]*, 247, 282-283, 287-288, 314. Although apparently all of these positions were developed in unsigned articles in the press of the Leninbund, Trotsky assumed they were the positions of Urbahns who seems to have run that organization in a fairly authoritarian manner. [See Trotsky, *Writings [1929]*, 273. Also see Alfred Rosmer's remarks about Urbahns, quoted in Alexander, *International Trotskyism*, 410.]
- ²³⁴ Trotsky, *Challenge (1928-29)*, 296.
- ²³⁵ Ibid., 295.
- ²³⁶ Along these lines, Max Shachtman later argued that in his letter to Borodai, Trotsky's decisive criterion for a "workers' state" was "Does the working class still have political power, in one sense or another, even if only in the sense that it is still capable of bringing a straying and dangerous bureaucracy under its control by means of reform measures?" [Max Shachtman, *The Bureaucratic Revolution: The Rise of the Stalinist State* (New York: The Donald Press, 1962), 92.]
- ²³⁷ Trotsky, *Challenge (1928-29)*, 293. Although Trotsky's main point here was to demonstrate the contradiction between Borodai's support for a new party and his hesitation over the question of revolution [see *ibid.*, 300], it is clear that in this passage Trotsky was again indicating the centrality of political power as a criterion for the class nature of the state.
- ²³⁸ Trotsky, *Writings [1929]*, 280.
- ²³⁹ Trotsky, *Challenge (1928-29)*, 295.
- ²⁴⁰ Trotsky, *Writings [1929]*, 283-284.
- ²⁴¹ See, for example, Trotsky's July 1928 prediction to the Comintern Congress concerning the economic consequences of Thermidor:

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 unrestrained save by the relation of forces. The state ownership of the means of production will be first transformed into a juridical fiction, and later on, even the latter will be swept away. [Trotsky, *Third International*, 300.]

²⁴² Shachtman, *Bureaucratic Revolution*, 93.

²⁴³ Trotsky, *Writings [1929]*, 284, 289. See also *ibid.*, 54-55.

²⁴⁴ Trotsky, *Writings [1929]*, 286. In 1929 and later Trotsky also exposed a number of internal contradictions he perceived in the position of Urbahns. One of these was that the Leninbund had failed to explain whether it continued to support planning, nationalization of industry, the monopoly of foreign trade, and restriction on capitalist accumulation in the USSR. Trotsky argued that if the Soviet Union was a capitalist state, then Marxists could only view these as “utopian and reactionary hindrances to the development of the productive forces.” [Leon Trotsky, *Writings of Leon Trotsky [1930]*, ed. George Breitman and Sarah Lovell (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1975), 248. See also Trotsky, *Writings [1929]*, 289-290.] Another contradiction was that although Urbahns had denied that the Soviet state was capitalist, he had raised the general demand, judged by Trotsky to be appropriate only under capitalism, for “freedom to organize.” [See Leon Trotsky, *Writings of Leon Trotsky [1930-31]*, ed. George Breitman and Sarah Lovell (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1973), 287, 290-292.]

²⁴⁵ Trotsky, *Writings [1929]*, 284.

²⁴⁶ Robert H. McNeal, “Trotsky’s Interpretation of Stalin,” in *Stalin*, ed. T. H. Rigby (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1966), 148; Robert H. McNeal, “Trotsky’s Interpretation of Stalin,” in *Canadian Slavonic Papers* 5, ed. G. S. N. Luckyj (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1961), 92.

²⁴⁷ Trotsky, *Writings [1929]*, 284, 287. See also *ibid.*, 118, 122.

²⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 359. On the prospect of Thermidor, see also *ibid.*, 49-51, 59, 199, 233, 338, 360-361, 400. As in the past, Trotsky continued to argue that a Soviet Thermidor would be followed quickly by the installation of a “Bonapartist” or even a “fascist-imperialist” regime. [*Ibid.*, 56, 57, 279, 323, 338.]

²⁴⁹ Trotsky, *Challenge (1928-29)*, 294.

²⁵⁰ Trotsky, *Writings [1929]*, 280. See also *ibid.*, 57, 75, 340.

²⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 344.

²⁵² *Ibid.* See also *ibid.*, 361.

²⁵³ *Ibid.*, 360.

²⁵⁴ According to Isaac Deutscher, during this period Trotsky established contact with groups of supporters in France, Germany, Italy, Spain, Holland, Belgium, China, Indochina, Indonesia, Ceylon, the United States, and Mexico. [Deutscher, *Prophet Outcast*, 31-33.]

²⁵⁵ Trotsky, *Writings [1929]*, 108-109, 134. See also Trotsky, *Third International*, xxxvi.

²⁵⁶ Trotsky, *Writings [1929]*, 180, 233. In 1929 Trotsky believed that national organizations of the Communist Left Opposition in the USSR, Germany, and France should function as factions “fighting for influence upon the proletarian nucleus of the official party.” However, in Belgium, where the CP was “entirely insignificant,” and in the US, where the situation was “closer to that in Belgium than to that in Germany,” he proposed that the Opposition organize itself as an independent party. [*Ibid.*, 370.] Trotsky changed his mind about the Belgian and US sections of the Opposition the following year. [Trotsky, *Writings [1930]*, 294.]

²⁵⁷ Trotsky, *Writings [1929]*, 88. The “instrument” for elaborating this international program, according to Trotsky, was to be a monthly or biweekly “*international organ of the Opposition*.” [*Ibid.*] This publication, as Trotsky envisioned it in the spring of 1929, never got off the ground.

²⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 81.

²⁵⁹ *Ibid.* For a grouping to be admitted into the Left Opposition, Trotsky insisted that it accept the position of the 1927 Platform on all three questions. [*Ibid.*, 80-85, 86-87, 111, 232-233.]

²⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 81.

²⁶¹ *Ibid.*

²⁶² Michal Reiman, who tends to emphasize the extent of Opposition support, has argued that after the Fifteenth Party Congress, “sympathy for the Opposition persisted among a section of the working population.” However, “the influence of the Opposition was gradually waning,” and “it was fragmented by repression.” [Reiman, *Birth of Stalinism*, 55.]

²⁶³ On the increase of Opposition activity in Moscow and of Trotskyist influence among party officials during the spring and summer of 1928, see Ciliga, *Soviet Enigma*, 34. On the growth of Opposition activity and influence within working-class districts in the summer and fall of 1928, see Cliff, *Trotsky: The Darker the Night*, 69-73; Deutscher, *Prophet Unarmed*, 456; Reiman, *Birth of Stalinism*, 97; Stalin, *Works*, 11:288-289; Chris Ward, *Russia's Cotton Workers*, 220.

²⁶⁴ Serge, *Memoirs*, 253-254.

²⁶⁵ Ciliga, *Russian Enigma*, 59, 84-88.

²⁶⁶ See Cliff, *Trotsky: The Darker the Night*, 45-51; Cohen, *Bukharin*, 132; Deutscher, *Prophet Unarmed*, 457-468; Duncan Hallas, *Trotsky's Marxism* (London: Bookmarks, 1984), 38-44; McNeal, "Trotskyist Interpretations," 31-32; Max Shachtman, "The Struggle for the New Course," in *The New Course and the Struggle for the New Course*, Leon Trotsky and Max Shachtman (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1965), 201-210; Robert C. Tucker, *Stalin as Revolutionary, 1879-1929: A Study in History and Personality* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1973), 390-393; Robert Wistrich, *Trotsky: Fate of a Revolutionary* (New York: Stein and Day, 1979), 161-162.

²⁶⁷ Cohen, *Bukharin*, 132.

²⁶⁸ Wistrich, *Trotsky*, 161. See also Tucker, *Stalin as Revolutionary*, 390-392. To complicate the "film" analogy, Isaac Deutscher suggests that the film of history was running "partly in a different direction--but not backwards." [Deutscher, *Prophet Unarmed*, 462.]

²⁶⁹ Serge, *Memoirs*, 131; Leon Trotsky, *Social Democracy and the Wars of Intervention in Russia 1918-1921 (Between Red and White)* (London: New Park Publications, 1975), 83.

²⁷⁰ Wistrich, *Trotsky*, 161-162; Tucker, *Stalin as Revolutionary*, 391-392. Another assumption of Trotsky's theory justifiably criticized by both Wistrich and Tucker was Trotsky's view of Stalin as the mere instrument of the bureaucracy. [See Wistrich, *Trotsky*, 163; Tucker, *Stalin as Revolutionary*, 392-394.]

7.0 THE TURN AND THE THEORETICAL CRISIS DEEPEN

From late 1929 through early 1933 Trotsky continued his Turkish exile, living most of this period with members of his family and a small number of supporters on the island of Prinkipo off the coast of Istanbul. During these years Trotsky spent part of his time writing his monumental *History of the Russian Revolution*; another portion he devoted to assisting his supporters in resolving the myriad political and organizational questions that confronted the International Left Opposition (ILO), founded in Paris in April 1930. However, he also dedicated a great deal of time and energy to analyzing developments in Soviet economic policy, Comintern policy, and policy related to the party/state regime of the USSR.

Throughout these years, reality continued to diverge sharply from the theory of bureaucracy developed by Trotsky in 1926-1927. On the basis of that theory, had Trotsky predicted in 1928-1929 that, without an increase in proletarian and/or Oppositional pressure, a deep turn to the right by the leadership was imminent. Instead, in 1929-1933 Trotsky perceived the leadership as veering sharply to the left, adopting orientations in economic and international policy so radical that they fell entirely outside of the framework assumed by Trotsky's theory. Furthermore, Trotsky had viewed the worsening of the state and party regimes as directly related to the leadership's rightist orientation. However, even while implementing its left course, the leadership continued to institute a regime in the party and state that, to Trotsky, seemed to

deviate more and more from the norms of workers' democracy. In this context, the crisis in Trotsky's theoretical perspective that first had appeared in 1928-1929 deepened dramatically.

In *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, Thomas Kuhn has described the phenomenon of theoretical crisis in the natural sciences. According to Kuhn, crises generally emerge in response to the growing recognition of the existence of anomalies or counter instances to the existing paradigm. However, Kuhn further argues that for an anomaly to evoke a crisis, it usually must be more than just an anomaly. It may call into question explicit and fundamental generalizations of the paradigm; or it may persist over a long period of time. In each such case, scientists respond by devising numerous articulations and ad hoc modifications to the theory. Nevertheless, the anomaly continues to resist resolution. Ultimately, this situation results in the proliferation of competing articulations of the paradigm, and in the blurring of the paradigm's rules.¹

The preceding paragraph in many ways describes the situation that confronted Trotsky and his supporters in the early 1930s. The left turns of the leadership, combined with the continued worsening of the regime, were anomalies that challenged the most fundamental assumptions of Trotsky's theory of bureaucracy. At the same time, these anomalies were persistent: they had appeared as early as 1928, and they continued into 1933. As in 1928-1929, Trotsky responded to these anomalies in part by a series of strained interpretations of reality, but also by devising various theoretical articulations and ad hoc modifications. Meanwhile, Left Oppositionists within Soviet prisons created their own diverse articulations of the theory—a development that resulted in the proliferation of contending Trotskyist groupings. Ultimately, even within Trotsky's own writings on bureaucracy, there was growing theoretical confusion and blurring.

As in 1928-1929, Trotsky repeatedly attempted to force the unfolding situation into the Procrustean bed of his traditional theory. His efforts to do so again resulted in a number of analyses and formulations that today seem fundamentally mistaken. These included Trotsky's acceptance of the validity of the charges in the show trials of specialists, his belief that in the main collectivization was accomplished voluntarily, his explanation of the ultraleftism of the First Five-Year Plan in terms of capitalist sabotage, his insistent predictions that the *kolkhozy* would foster the development of a new layer of kulaks, and his repeated forecasts that the leadership was about to veer sharply back to the right, perhaps even instituting capitalism.

There are a number of likely explanations—theoretical, political, and personal—for why Trotsky continued to interpret reality in terms of a theory that appears in retrospect to be so misguided. One theoretical reason certainly involved the previous successes of Trotsky's theory. As we have seen, in 1926-1927 that theory provided a fairly convincing account of a variety of developments, including the conservative drift in Soviet economic and international policies and the steady worsening of the party and state regimes. In light of those theoretical successes, it is understandable that Trotsky was reluctant to abandon his traditional approach. At the same time, there was no apparent theoretical alternative that was persuasive. Of course, alternatives were advanced at the time by other Oppositionists and left communists. Various conciliators argued that the leadership had proven to be "better than their theories" or more responsive to objective necessity than the Opposition had imagined. On the other hand, some extreme irreconcilables and left communists insisted that a Thermidorian restoration already had occurred. However, from Trotsky's perspective, all of these alternatives involved theoretical problems that were even greater than those of his own theory.

Aside from theoretical concerns, there also were good political reasons for Trotsky, as the central leader of the Opposition, to continue to uphold the fundamentals of the traditional theory. The Opposition's program, its past activities, and its entire self-definition were all bound up with the theoretical perspective articulated by Trotsky in 1926-1927. If Trotsky had abandoned that perspective, it could have called into question the entire meaning of the Opposition's recent struggle. Furthermore, as far as the theoretical innovations advocated by the conciliators and the extreme intransigents were concerned, from Trotsky's perspective all of these led to political positions—either capitulation or dead-end sectarianism—that precluded serious activity on behalf of reform. At the same time, Trotsky must have recognized the value of his own reaffirmation of the traditional theory for strengthening the political center of the Opposition, and thus minimizing the defection of Oppositionists to the Stalinists or to the “sectarians.”

A final factor that helps to explain Trotsky's ability to uphold the theory he had developed in 1926-1927 was his own personality. Trotsky was an extraordinarily strong-willed individual. This is evident from his years of political activity independent of both the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks before the revolution; from his ongoing debates with other Bolshevik leaders, including Lenin, after the revolution; and from his persistence in isolated oppositional activity during his years in exile. It is likely that this stubborn streak contributed to Trotsky's ability to persist in reasserting the essentials of his traditional theory, even in the face of mounting counterevidence.

Nevertheless, and despite all of these factors, the obvious discrepancies between Trotsky's traditional theory and reality during the years 1929-1933 repeatedly compelled Trotsky to introduce implicit and explicit ad hoc modifications and adjustments into his theory. Thus, at times Trotsky was forced to explain major shifts in policy, not in terms of class pressure, but in

terms of factors such as the panic, excitement, or stupidity of the leadership or the bureaucracy. Similarly, he increasingly was compelled to attribute the worsening of the regime, not to the shifting balance of class forces, but to the conscious efforts by the bureaucracy or the Stalin group to advance their own interests. Along the same lines, in this period Trotsky found it necessary to introduce into his more general theoretical formulations a whole series of adjustments, all of which emphasized the autonomy of the bureaucracy.

Although these revisions seemed to bring Trotsky's analysis into a closer correspondence with reality, the result was a theoretical orientation that was increasingly incoherent. Thus, on occasions Trotsky found himself explaining the leftist economic policies of the leadership as inspired by proletarian pressure, bourgeois influence, or the emotional states of an autonomous bureaucracy. At times he asserted the turn had been made *against* the wishes of the bureaucracy; while other times he insisted it had been made *by* the bureaucracy. He variously argued that the left course had either increased or decreased the danger of capitalist restoration, and that it had increased the probability such a restoration would take either the Thermidorian or the Bonapartist path. He repeatedly described as "centrist" the grouping that stood to the left of the Left Opposition, while criticizing as "rightist" a party current that held views indistinguishable from those of the left. Finally, he continued to denounce the "conservatism" of a leadership that was dramatically transforming the Soviet economy while implementing a radical left course internationally. The result of these modifications was to stretch Trotsky's traditional theory nearly to the breaking point.

Eventually, Trotsky was able to break free of his old theory and to construct a new one that resolved many of the problems mentioned above. However, that process was not precipitated directly by the left turns in policy of the early 1930s, but by the disastrous failure of Comintern

policy in Germany in 1933. Following that event, Trotsky began a long and painful process of theoretical reconstruction. We will take up that story in the next chapter.

7.1 ECONOMIC UPHEAVAL

In late 1929 the leadership dramatically deepened the turn in economic policy it had initiated in 1928. In industry, this policy shift took the form of a frenetic campaign to fulfill ever higher production targets. In the countryside, it involved a declaration of war against the kulaks and the complete restructuring of the Soviet system of agriculture. Together, during the years 1930-1933 these policies transformed the face of the Soviet Union.

7.1.1 The Soviet Industrial Revolution

At the end of the summer of 1929 the leadership began to push industrial goals higher even than those envisioned in the optimal variant of the plan adopted in April. In August VSNKh estimated that industrial output in the economic year 1929-1930 would increase 28 percent instead of the previously projected optimum of 21.5 percent. The November plenum of the Central Committee increased this figure again to 32.1 percent; and by the following February many production goals for the plan had doubled. Still the targets continued to climb.² At the Sixteenth Party Congress in June 1930 the General Secretary publicly endorsed the demand to “carry out the Five-Year Plan in four years.” Even more ambitiously, he went on to declare that “in quite a number of branches of industry, we can carry it out in three years, or even two and a half years.”³

To achieve these goals, the Soviet leadership called upon the workers to exert themselves to the maximum. In this campaign the leadership relied in part upon moral incentives, utilizing the trade unions to mobilize the latent idealism of the Soviet working class. Throughout the country young workers responded with heroic acts of self-sacrifice for the sake of industrialization, enlisting in “shock brigades” engaged in “socialist competition.” However, physical coercion also played a significant role in the leadership’s drive to industrialize. During these years the OGPU set hundreds of thousands of prisoners to work digging canals, building roads, felling timber, and laboring in coal mines.⁴

Despite these efforts, by the summer of 1930 Soviet industry was already in crisis. A number of industries failed to meet planned targets, and production in others—such as coal, iron, steel, and copper—even began to fall. Rail transport proved incapable of meeting the demands placed upon it; the overall quality of goods deteriorated dramatically; and attempts by the leadership to fill the gap between revenues and expenditures by the unplanned issue of currency resulted in serious inflation. At the same time, the industrial work force expanded far more rapidly than anticipated, straining the supply of consumer goods, housing, and public services, and contributing to a sharp decline in the standard of living of Soviet workers.⁵ An additional problem in this period was the increase in labor turnover: by 1930 the average worker was changing jobs every eight months, and the average coal miner every four, seriously undermining efforts by the Soviet leadership to create a skilled work force.⁶

The leadership attempted to address the deepening crisis in a variety of ways. Its initial reaction to the shortage of food and consumer goods was to extend the rationing system that had been in effect since 1928. During 1930, a hierarchy of towns and consumer groups was established with preferential rations going to factory and rail workers and to technicians and engineers in key industrial cities and regions. For industrial workers, the effect was to increase their level of consumption in relation to the rest of the urban population, while greatly equalizing consumption among the industrial workers themselves.⁷ However, in the context of the deepening crisis the Soviet leadership soon grew concerned that rationing was reducing the

incentive of skilled workers to produce. From the fall of 1930 through early 1931, party officials increasingly began to denounce the practice of wage leveling. On June 23, 1931, in a speech to a conference of economic executives, Stalin condemned the “‘Leftist’ practice of wage equalization” for undermining the development of skilled labor and promoting the “fluidity of manpower.” Soon afterwards, the leadership began to introduce significant wage differentials, especially in priority industries, to benefit skilled workers. “Shock workers” (i.e., workers who carried out obligations that exceeded the norm) were also granted special privileges, including extra rations of meat and fat and preferential access to consumer goods and housing. At the same time, an extensive system of privileges was established for higher officials of the party, state, and other Soviet organizations. In line with these changes, in 1932 the leadership officially abandoned the old Bolshevik principle that limited the income of all party members to that of skilled workers.⁸

The leadership also dealt with the crisis by utilizing administrative coercion to reduce rates of labor turnover and absenteeism. A Central Committee resolution adopted on October 20, 1930 and a governmental decree of December 15 deprived job changers of the use of the labor exchanges and of unemployment benefits for six months, while requiring that enterprises hire only through the labor exchanges. A decree of January 19, 1931 made absenteeism grounds for immediate dismissal. Subsequently, a decree of November 15, 1932 declared that workers absent without cause for even one day were to be dismissed and evicted from enterprise housing, and were to have their ration cards confiscated. In practice, it seems that none of these measures was particularly effective, for they were easily circumvented by factory managers desperate for workers.⁹

Another response to the crisis by the leadership was to place the blame for it upon the wrecking activities of “saboteurs.” In the early 1930’s Soviet leaders uncovered a number of such “conspiracies,” now generally viewed as fictitious by Western historians. Two of these cases were especially important. In November and December 1930 eight technical specialists, mostly high officials in Gosplan and VSNKh, confessed to having organized a

counterrevolutionary “Industrial Party” of some two thousand members. The specialists were accused of conducting sabotage in a wide variety of industries in preparation for a coup and for the military intervention of France and Britain. As part of their wrecking activities, the defendants allegedly drew up economic targets that they believed to be unrealistically high, but that unexpectedly turned out to be achievable. The court convicted all the accused. Five of the specialists were condemned to death, but their sentences were ultimately commuted to imprisonment. Another important show trial held in March 1931 involved fourteen members of a “Union Bureau” of the Menshevik Party. Most of the accused in this case were former Mensheviks who recently had held responsible positions in Soviet economic and planning agencies. After rejoining the Mensheviks in the late 1920s, the defendants allegedly engaged in various wrecking activities, including attempts to slow Soviet economic development by lowering economic goals. Furthermore, it was charged, they had plotted a counterrevolutionary insurrection in collaboration with the Industrial Party and a group called the “Toiling Peasant Party.” On the basis of confessions, all fourteen defendants were convicted and sentenced to various terms of imprisonment.¹⁰

Despite these various responses by the leadership, the economic crisis continued to deepen. By the winter of 1932-33, the entire Soviet economy seemed to teeter on the brink of collapse. Bottlenecks and shortages appeared in all branches of the economy. Labor productivity failed to rise as anticipated and, by some accounts, actually began to fall. Growth rates for industrial output declined steadily, and actual production in various industries began to drop. Furthermore, the quality of industrially produced goods continued to deteriorate. Meanwhile, inflation mounted ever higher, and Soviet workers experienced what Alec Nove has described as “the most precipitous peacetime decline in living standards known in recorded history.”¹¹

At that point, on January 7, 1933, Stalin announced that the First Five-Year Plan had been completed successfully in four years and three months. (Three months had been added to the fourth year to make the economic year coincide with the calendar year.) According to Stalin, the entire plan had been fulfilled by 93.7 percent, and the plan for heavy industry had been

fulfilled by 108 percent.¹² In fact, during the First Five-Year Plan, production in most areas increased both absolutely and relatively, and in some industries it showed considerable gains. Furthermore, the First Five-Year Plan laid the foundations for even greater industrial expansion in the mid-1930s. However, as most Western scholars have observed, the first *piatiletka* was not nearly as successful as described by Stalin. Production of coal, pig iron, and steel fell far short of the planned targets; many branches of light industry did not grow at all; and textile production actually declined. In fact, the only area in which the plan was exceeded was the machinery and metalworking group, the final figures of which were subject to significant statistical inflation.¹³

In early 1933, reacting to the economic crisis and to these overall failures in the plan, the leadership began to retreat from the extremism of the First Five-Year Plan. During the previous year the Seventeenth Party Conference, resolving to continue the offensive, had adopted high targets for the Second Five-Year Plan. However, Stalin modified these projections at the Central Committee plenum of January 1933, calling for “less speedy rates” of industrialization, and proposing as a minimum a “3-14 per cent average annual increase in industrial output” in place of the 22 percent annual increase allegedly achieved in the first plan.¹⁴

7.1.2 Mass Collectivization and Dekulakization

Meanwhile, a comparable revolution was taking place in agriculture. As we saw in the last chapter, during the summer of 1929 the party leadership began to accelerate the tempo of collectivization, apparently in an attempt to resolve the chronic difficulties of grain collection. Agitators were dispatched from the cities to harangue the peasantry about the merits of collective farming, while the state extended promises that tractors and credits would be supplied to the *kolkhozy*. A combination of political pressure and coercion was utilized to convince peasants

who resisted. As a result of these efforts, from June to October, the overall level of collectivization rose from 3.9 to 7.6 percent of all peasant households.¹⁵

Still, the leadership continued to press for higher levels of collectivization. On October 31 a *Pravda* editorial called for the reassignment of all the forces employed in the procurements campaign, as well as the mass mobilization of all party and soviet personnel, for the collectivization drive. A week later, on the twelfth anniversary of the Bolshevik Revolution, *Pravda* published an article by Stalin in which he asserted that peasants were voluntarily joining the collectives “not in separate groups, . . . but by whole villages, volosts, districts, and even okrugs.” Speaking for the Politburo at the November plenum of the Central Committee, Molotov announced that the time had come for “a decisive move in the matter of the economic rehabilitation and collectivization of millions of peasant households.” He predicted that by the following autumn “we shall already be in a position to say definitely that, for all essential purposes, collectivization has been completed, not just in one *oblast*, and not only in the North Caucasus.” At the same plenum the Central Committee, bowing before this “spontaneous” influx of poor and middle peasants into the *kolkhozy*, endorsed the “continued acceleration of the process of collectivization and sovkhov construction,” and resolved to mobilize at least 25,000 industrial workers for the effort.¹⁶

During the winter, collectivization brigades managed to bring about a massive influx of peasants into collective farms. To a large extent, this was accomplished by coercion or threats of coercion. Many joined the collectives to avoid being persecuted as kulaks or kulak supporters. Peasants who attempted to evade collectivization often found themselves subject to increased taxation, fines, or arrest. Some recalcitrant villages were surrounded by armed units and driven into the *kolkhozy* by force. By March 1, 1930 the total level of collectivization had climbed to 14.6 million peasant households—57.2 percent of the total.¹⁷

Closely related to the collectivization campaign was the simultaneous intensification of the offensive against the kulaks. When asked at the November plenum whether or not kulaks should be admitted to the collectives, Molotov advised: “Treat the kulak as a most cunning and

still undefeated enemy.” In December local authorities initiated “dekulakization” drives, expropriating kulaks and sometimes arresting or deporting them. Stalin endorsed these measures in a speech on December 27, calling for a policy of “*eliminating* the kulaks as a class.”¹⁸ Moshe Lewin has argued persuasively that the leadership initiated the campaign against the kulak “to ‘convince’ the peasants that all roads, save those that led to the *kolkhoz*, were barred to them,” and at the same time to accumulate property that was to be used for setting up the new *kolkhozy*.¹⁹

In late January and early February 1930 local authorities received their first instructions on how to implement the campaign. Kulaks who were most actively hostile to collectivization were to forfeit their property. Additionally, they were to be imprisoned, sent to concentration camps [*kontslageri*], or shot; and their families were to be exiled. “Economically strong” kulaks were to be expropriated and deported with their families to remote areas of the country or to remote districts within their region. The remaining kulaks who were considered loyal to the regime were to have part of their means of production confiscated and were to be resettled on inferior land within their own districts. Altogether, over a million families were to be dekulakized.²⁰

The dekulakization drive was led by local soviet, party, and GPU officials, and was carried out by special detachments consisting of local party or Komsomol cadres, members of the militia or GPU, poor peasants, and industrial workers. As implemented, the campaign actually turned out to be more massive and more brutal than projected by the center. In violation of stated policy, local authorities often dekulakized areas not scheduled for mass collectivization. Frequently, they applied the label of “kulak” or “ideological kulak” to middle or even poor peasants who resisted collectivization. Also, officials who found themselves short of real kulaks often simply branded peasants as kulaks in order to fill quotas. In violation of policy the brigades seized not only land, tools, and animals, but also personal property. Beyond that, the conditions of deportation were so horrible that large numbers of deportees died en route of exposure, starvation, and disease.

In numerical terms the campaign was a great success, by some accounts vastly over fulfilling the original plans of the center.²¹ However, both the dekulakization and collectivization campaigns provoked significant resistance among the peasantry. In early 1930 large numbers of peasants began to leave the collective farms. At the same time, a wave of peasant demonstrations and uprisings swept the Soviet Union. Arson, sabotage, murder of communists, and peasant suicides were common. Perhaps most significant for the future of Soviet agriculture was the widespread slaughter of livestock, which peasants assumed would be confiscated for the *kolkhozy*. It has been estimated that between 1929 and 1934 over half of the county's horses, cattle, and pigs, and two thirds of its sheep and goats disappeared, most slaughtered in the first two months of 1930.²²

In the face of such resistance, and reportedly under pressure from other members of the Central Committee, Stalin sounded the retreat. In an article published in *Pravda* on March 2, 1930, Stalin conceded that serious excesses had been committed. He placed the blame upon overzealous local officials who had become "dizzy with success." Although Stalin called upon the party to "consolidate" its successes, he insisted that the collective-farm movement should be "voluntary." Stalin's article immediately touched off a mass exodus from the collective farms. By June 1, only 24.8 percent of the total of peasant households remained collectivized; and by September 1, this figure was down to 21.5 percent.²³

However, the leadership had no intention of abandoning its plans for wholesale collectivization. In the fall of 1930 the campaign was resumed anew. As part of this drive, a massive new assault was launched against kulak and "better-off" peasants. Also, "hard obligations" of extraordinarily high volumes of grain were imposed upon private farms in order to encourage collectivization. Peasants who were unable to deliver the required amount of grain could have their lands sold and were subject to fines and imprisonment. By July 1932, 61.5 percent of Soviet peasants found themselves back in the *kolkhozy*.²⁴

The most devastating tragedy associated with mass collectivization was the famine of 1932-1933. In the early 1930's agricultural production stagnated, at least partly because of the

low productivity of the collective farms. Nevertheless, in order to collect the grain needed for a growing urban population, for the army, and for export, the leadership continued to push procurement targets ever higher while keeping prices low. During the summer and fall of 1932 many collectivized peasants withheld grain for personal consumption or to sell on the recently reopened markets, while others simply refused to work on the *kolkhozy*. The leadership responded with force. Refusal to deliver grain for state procurements was made a capital offense. Mass arrests were carried out in the rural areas, and large numbers of “pro-kulak” elements were expelled from the party. Ultimately, even grain set aside for seed and fodder was taken from the peasantry. The resulting famine was particularly acute in the Ukraine, the North Caucasus, the lower and middle Volga, the southern Urals, and Kazakhstan. By all accounts, millions of peasants died from starvation.²⁵

7.2 TROTSKY’S RESPONSE TO THE TURN

Not surprisingly, the abrupt shift in economic policy generated extreme confusion within the ranks of unrepentant Left Oppositionists in the Soviet Union. The Yugoslav oppositionist, Ante Ciliga, has described the situation he encountered among the imprisoned Bolshevik-Leninists in the Verkhne-Uralsk isolator in November 1930: “The burning problems put by the revolution, and in particular by the Five Year Plan in its present stage, produced the greatest animation in this circle and a state of ideological crisis singularly favourable to the breaking up of opinion into small sections.” The small Trotskyist organization in the isolator had split into three sections with three different programs. The “Right section” argued that the turn had met the essential demands of the Opposition, and that it should be supported while the Opposition continued to criticize the exaggerated pace of the plan as well as the Stalinist regime. According to Ciliga, this group hoped for reform from above, expecting that increasing difficulties would

force the leadership to modify its policies, but it opposed appeals to the masses because it feared “the ‘Thermidor front might well include the working class’.” In contrast, the leftist “Militant Bolsheviks” declared that the entire industrialization drive was mere bluff. It insisted that reform could only come from below through a split in the party, and it called for reliance upon the working class. Between the other two groupings, the “Centre section” advocated methods of reform from above and below.²⁶

Meanwhile, Trotsky was also having difficulties comprehending the new situation. Although he had not anticipated the deepening of the turn, he shifted his critique quickly—perhaps because he was becoming accustomed to abrupt policy shifts by the leadership. By early 1930 he was denouncing the leadership’s ultraleftism just as sharply as he previously had condemned its conservatism. However, throughout this period Trotsky struggled to understand the origins of the turn and to predict where it was heading. By veering to the left, the leadership had acted directly counter to expectations Trotsky had derived from his theory of bureaucracy. In an effort to understand what was happening, Trotsky now returned to his theory. However, he repeatedly found himself forced to introduce implicit modifications in order to reconcile his theory with unfolding developments.²⁷

7.2.1 Trotsky’s Critique of the Left Turn

In certain respects Trotsky was inclined to view the new economic course positively. In the first place, for Trotsky it represented yet another indication that the Opposition’s program had been correct. Early in 1930 he recalled that just a few years previously the leadership had attacked the Opposition as “‘romantics,’ ‘fanatics,’ and ‘superindustrializers’” for advocating a mere 20 percent annual growth rate in industry. Furthermore, when the Opposition had demanded more attention to collectivization, “three-quarters of the Politburo and 90 percent of

the government apparatus had their orientation to the . . . kulak.” Now he observed, “Experience has shown that the Opposition was right.”²⁸

Beyond that, throughout the early 1930s Trotsky repeatedly acclaimed the achievements of the plan as a clear demonstration of the superiority of socialist economic methods over those of capitalism. As early as February 1930 he spoke of the “universal significance” of the successes of industrialization, insisting that these had provided empirical evidence of the infinite potentialities inherent in socialist methods.²⁹ Subsequently, Trotsky praised Soviet industrial accomplishments as “enormous in their historical importance,” and as “the most colossal phenomenon of contemporary history.”³⁰ Similarly, in April 1930 he spoke of the “deeply progressive and creative significance of collectivization.”³¹ A year later he even characterized “the present tempos of collectivization” as signifying the birth of “a new epoch in the development of humanity, the beginning of the liquidation ‘of [what Marx described as] the idiocy of rural life.’”³²

Yet, despite such statements such as these, throughout the early 1930s Trotsky continued to criticize Soviet economic policy at least as sharply as he had in the past. In one respect, Trotsky’s critique was familiar. Echoing his earlier statements on Soviet economic policy, he denounced the plan’s isolationism, which he saw as flowing inevitably from the doctrine of socialism in one county. In his March 1930 “Open Letter” to the party Trotsky characterized this isolationism as “the fundamental flaw of the entire economic plan.”³³ The following December he observed that, in spite of the fact that the expanding Soviet economy soon would need to increase its reliance upon the world market, the point of departure of the plan had been the vision of “a reactionary utopia of an enclosed socialist economy developing on its internal foundations.”³⁴

However, as Trotsky himself repeatedly acknowledged, during these years most of his critique of Soviet economic policy was leveled not from the left, but “from the right.”³⁵ In this regard, he insisted, it was the party leadership that had changed positions, making a “curve of 180 degrees” over the heads of the Opposition and adopting the extreme leftist policies it

previously had denounced as “Trotskyism.”³⁶ In industrial policy this ultraleftism was evident in the tempo of the industrialization effort and the virtual elimination of the role of the market in planning. In agricultural policy it could be seen in the leadership’s attempt to eliminate the kulaks as a class, and in the tempo and scale of collectivization.

The central theme of Trotsky’s new critique of industrial policy was that the goals of the plan were insanely high. Repeatedly, Trotsky denounced the pace of the industrialization drive, and especially the decision to fulfill the goals of the plan in four years, as sheer economic madness. He ridiculed the leadership’s “industrialization races,” its “hazardous bureaucratic superindustrializations,” its “racetrack-gallop approach” and its “*sporting* method,” characterizing these as manifestations of “bureaucratic adventurism” and “ultraleft lunacy.”³⁷ For Trotsky, the problem was not simply that the overall goals of the plan could not hope to be achieved—though he was certain they could not. Beyond that, he was convinced that the attempt to reach them would lead inevitably to *unevenness* if the fulfillment of the plan. In turn, Trotsky insisted, this unevenness would result in serious disproportions and bottlenecks between industries and between different sectors of the economy. As early as December 20, 1929 he warned that “we are heading for a disturbance of the total economic equilibrium and consequently of the social equilibrium.”³⁸ By the following February he was noting that “disproportions in production are accumulating in different branches of industry.” These, he predicted in April, would only continue to worsen, “and may manifest themselves sharply, if not in the first year then in the second or third year . . . , which would result in an arrest of growth.”³⁹ By late 1932, on the basis of economic reports from the Soviet press, Trotsky concluded that his prophecies had been realized. “The whole trouble,” he observed, “is that the wild leaps of industrialization have brought the various elements of the plan into dire contradiction with each other.”⁴⁰

Another concern repeatedly expressed by Trotsky was that excessive investment in industry was reducing the resources that could be allotted to consumption and to raising the standard of living of the working class.⁴¹ Already in March 1930 he was noting that the living

standard of workers was falling.⁴² The following summer he asserted that the economic position of the proletariat had “extraordinarily worsened” in recent years.⁴³ Subsequently, using examples from the Soviet press, he painted a bleak picture of deteriorating working conditions, and of dwindling supplies of food, housing, and consumer goods.⁴⁴ Trotsky saw this issue as intrinsically important, for he believed that the standard of living of workers, together with their role in governing the state, constituted “the highest criteria of socialist successes.”⁴⁵ Beyond that, he insisted that improving the material and cultural level of the proletariat, “the main producing force,” was necessary for rapid industrialization.⁴⁶ Along these lines, Trotsky argued that the decline in the standard of living of industrial workers was at least partially responsible for the labor shortage, for it had meant that fewer peasants were attracted to the urban centers.⁴⁷ Furthermore, he asserted, low incomes and unbearable working conditions had contributed to high rates of labor turnover by forcing workers to wander from factory to factory in order to improve the quality of their lives. Finally, he observed that poor nutrition, abominable working conditions, and nervous exhaustion were generating indifference among workers regarding the proper care of machinery, the general conditions within the factories, and the quality of goods produced.⁴⁸ Ultimately, Trotsky warned in April 1930, this decline in quality would affect not only the individual consumer, but also the rate of industrialization, “for industry itself is the chief consumer of products.”⁴⁹ Repeatedly during the following years he noted accounts in the Soviet press that confirmed this prediction as well.⁵⁰

According to Trotsky a further inevitable consequence of the excessive tempo of industrialization was rampant inflation. As he explained in an open letter to the AUCP(b) in March 1930,

An accelerated pace which runs ahead of existing possibilities soon leads to the creation of imaginary resources where there are no real ones. That is called inflation. All the symptoms of it are already present and they are also the symptoms of a threatening economic crisis.⁵¹

Three years later he insisted that inflation was a serious problem that was contributing to the declining standard of proletarian life while distorting planning.⁵²

While condemning the excessive pace of industrialization, Trotsky also denounced the leadership for proceeding without regard for two factors that he viewed as essential for correct planning: the market and democracy.⁵³ Again echoing the arguments of the party right, Trotsky asserted that the market was necessary during the entire transition period between capitalism and socialism. In part, it was needed for consumers to be able to express their needs “by the direct pressure of supply and demand.” Besides that, it was indispensable as a means of checking by “commercial calculation” on the “economic efficacy” of the plan.⁵⁴ However, as Trotsky complained in October 1932, the Stalinists had prepared and implemented the First Five-Year Plan without any concern for the market, abolishing NEP and replacing market mechanisms with “methods of compulsion.”⁵⁵

The second factor missing from Stalinist planning, according to Trotsky, was proletarian democracy. Previously, Trotsky had only insisted upon the *political* necessity of democracy. Now he began to insist that it was also crucial from the *economic* standpoint.⁵⁶ As he observed in February 1930, the preparation of a five-year plan was a complex task requiring the participation “by all related industries and by the working class.” In particular, popular involvement was needed not only to determine what the workers and peasants wanted to consume, but also what they were able and willing to set aside for accumulation.⁵⁷ However, Trotsky noted in October 1930, the existing plan had been “worked out at the top, behind closed doors, then handed down to the masses like tablets from Sinai.”⁵⁸

Trotsky advanced a wide range of demands to correct the industrial policies of the First Five-Year Plan. Against the isolationism of the plan, he urged the leadership to work aggressively for the integration of the Soviet economy into the world market. Toward this end Trotsky called upon the leadership of the Comintern and the Soviet Union to approach Social Democratic parties of the West with a public appeal for joint economic cooperation: Western powers could be called upon to provide the Soviet Union with machinery and agricultural

implements in exchange for raw materials and consumer products. Trotsky predicted that the workers of the West would respond positively to such an appeal as a way to eliminate unemployment and food shortages. If these workers pressured their Social Democratic leaders into supporting such a plan, the Soviet Union might receive much-needed machinery and equipment. On the other hand, even if the Social Democratic leaders ultimately rejected the proposal, Trotsky believed the USSR would benefit politically. Simply by raising the proposal the Soviet leadership would forge a bond with workers of the West while driving a wedge between them and their reformist leaders.⁵⁹

Throughout these years Trotsky also urged the Soviet leadership to slow the pace of industrialization, specifically imploring it to abandon the effort to complete the five-year plan in four years.⁶⁰ Beyond that, in October 1932 he proposed that the leadership delay inauguration of the Second Five-Year Plan for one year, and that it use 1933 as a “buffer year in which economic disproportions could be rectified and gaps filled.”⁶¹ In March 1933 he additionally suggested that the starting point for industrial growth targets in 1933 should be the 8.5 percent actually attained in 1932, rather than the 16 percent projected in the Second Five-Year Plan.⁶² He saw such cutbacks as necessary for establishing strict financial discipline and stabilizing the ruble.⁶³ Furthermore, he suggested that the resources freed by the reducing the pace of industrialization could be utilized to improve the living standards and working conditions of the Soviet proletariat.⁶⁴

Finally, Trotsky addressed the issue of the planning process. He openly admitted that the Opposition had no “a priori plan” that would painlessly extricate the Soviet economy from the “mud” into which it had been driven. Rather, he argued that the plan for building socialism could only be developed through “broad soviet democracy.”⁶⁵ As a first step in this direction, he called upon the party leadership to submit the experiences of the five-year plan for discussion by a democratically-convened party congress.⁶⁶

Trotsky’s critique of agricultural policy during these years, like his critique of industrial policy, was “from the right.” Trotsky condemned the leadership’s dekulakization drive as

unnecessarily violent and as futile. Beyond that, he denounced the campaign for mass collectivization as hopelessly premature, and predicted it would decimate Soviet agriculture while providing cover for the regeneration of a new stratum of kulaks.

Although in previous years the Opposition had demanded increased pressure upon the kulaks, it had proposed to implement this through tax increases and the imposition of a “forced loan.” Now, upon learning of the leadership’s dekulakization drive in the fall of 1929, Trotsky repudiated the brutality of the campaign, characterizing it as nothing but “naked bureaucratic violence.”⁶⁷ However, Trotsky’s primary concern was not with the ethics of the operation, but with his belief that it could not hope to succeed. In line with this, in early 1930 Trotsky ridiculed the attempt to liquidate the kulak “by administrative order” as “a bureaucratic adventure, spiced with theoretical charlatanism.” Of course, he conceded, it was technically possible to liquidate every kulak with just “two policemen (well-armed).” However, preventing the reappearance of a stratum of kulaks was quite another matter: “For that, an industrial and cultural revolution is necessary.”⁶⁸ The ambitious projections of the First Five-Year Plan notwithstanding, Trotsky did not see such a revolution on the horizon.

At greater length Trotsky denounced the tempo and scale of the collectivization drive. Although the Opposition had called for greater collectivization, it had intended to collectivize gradually and voluntarily. In Trotsky’s view, the current pace of collectivization, like that of industrialization, had nothing to do with rational planning. This was clearly indicated by the fact that the plan adopted in early 1929—presumably on the basis of technical and economic considerations—had projected the collectivization of only 20 percent of the peasantry by 1933. Yet, by early 1930 already 40 percent of the peasants were inside *kolkhozy*, and it appeared that the remainder would be joining them there shortly. For Trotsky, such a prospect was disastrous.⁶⁹

The biggest problem with the tempo of collectivization in Trotsky’s estimation was that it was outpacing the development of industry. Trotsky repeatedly insisted that true collectivization required the mechanization of agriculture, and that this in turn presupposed a strong industrial

base. Attempting to collectivize without such mechanization, he argued in February 1930, was like trying “to build a ship out of a flock of shipping boats”:

A collective farm is above all *large*. The rational size for the farm is determined, however, by the character of the means and methods of production being applied. With the aid of peasant plows and peasant nags, even all of them put together, it is not possible to create large agricultural collectives, even as it is not possible to build a ship out of a flock of fishing boats. The collectivization of agriculture can be achieved only through its mechanization. From this it follows that the general level of industrialization of a country determines the possible speed of the collectivization of its agriculture.⁷⁰

Unfortunately, Trotsky observed, Soviet industry was still quite backward, and would remain so for years to come. He calculated that if that the Soviet Union remained isolated it would take at least ten to fifteen years to create the industrial base necessary for total collectivization.⁷¹

One result of wholesale collectivization under these circumstances, Trotsky predicted, would be the lowering of individual initiative and therefore of agricultural productivity. In April 1930 he warned that “with the artificial, i.e., too-precipitate formation of large collective farms,” agricultural productivity actually could be “inferior to that in individual peasant holdings.”⁷² By October 1932, he found evidence in the Soviet press that this prediction also had been verified. It seemed that 100 percent collectivization, had “destroyed the incentive of the small commodity producer long before it was able to replace it by other and much higher economic incentives,” and had resulted in “100 percent overgrowth of weeds on the fields.”⁷³

A further concern repeatedly expressed by Trotsky was that the new collectives would facilitate the regeneration of a new layer of kulaks. He suggested several ways in which this might occur. First, the *kolkhozy* would necessarily provide a higher income to any peasant who brought more horses or other “capital” into the farms. Otherwise, no peasant would surrender his horses, and the state would be faced with the impossible task of providing all the *kolkhozy* with machinery.⁷⁴ Second, differentiation would occur if families with several adult workers received higher incomes than families with only one. Third, inequality from either of these sources could

grow even larger if the collective borrowed part of this income to invest in machinery and then repaid the loan with interest.⁷⁵ Fourth, Trotsky believed that Stalin's restoration of open markets in 1932 would enrich the *kolkhozy* situated closest to the cities while also promoting "differentiation within the collectives."⁷⁶ For these reasons, in his March 1930 "open letter" to the AUCP Trotsky predicted that, by proclaiming the collectives to be socialist enterprises, the leadership actually had provided "camouflage for the kulaks within the collectives."⁷⁷

Throughout the First Five-Year Plan Trotsky called upon the leadership to retreat from both dekulakization and massive collectivization. First, he called for an end to the policy of the "administrative abolition of the kulak." In its place, he proposed "a policy of severely restricting the exploiting tendencies of the kulak," and the creation of a system of tough contracts that would require the kulak to surrender specific products at predetermined prices.⁷⁸ Regarding the collectivization drive, beginning in March 1930 Trotsky demanded a retreat from complete to "selective collectivization," concentrating resources in the most viable of the collective farms, and reorganizing these according to the wishes of the peasants.⁷⁹ In early 1933 Trotsky suggested that this might involve a reduction in the extent of collectivized agriculture from 60 to 40, or even 25 percent.⁸⁰

7.2.2 Analyzing the Turn

During this period Trotsky struggled to understand the turn in Soviet economic policy. As in 1928-1929, he attempted to analyze the turn in terms of the theory of bureaucracy he had developed in previous years. Again, however, events continually challenged those views, compelling Trotsky to modify his analysis by emphasizing the autonomy of the bureaucracy. This was especially the case regarding three important questions: (1) what was the attitude of the

state and party bureaucracy to the turn; (2) why had the turn occurred; and (3) what was the most likely outcome of the turn?

Throughout the course of the First Five-Year Plan Trotsky made various statements about precisely who was responsible for the change of policy. Most frequently he simply characterized the turn as a change initiated by the individual, individuals, or group standing at the summit of political power. Thus, at times Trotsky attributed the turn to “Stalin,” the “Stalinists,” the “Stalinist leadership,” or simply the “leadership,” leaving undefined the attitude of the state and party apparatuses to the new policy orientation.⁸¹ However, in a number of apparently contradictory passages he explicitly discussed this question.

As we have seen, in previous years Trotsky defined the party/state bureaucracy as a social formation greatly influenced by bourgeois pressure and deeply conservative in its political and economic orientation. For Trotsky, it was difficult to imagine such a formation supporting a radical shift to the left in economic policy. Consequently, on at least two occasions he asserted that the turn had been made *against* the desires of the bureaucracy. For example, in an article of October 17, 1929 he stated that, after years of acting like economic Mensheviks, the “apparatus [*apparat*] . . . received an order to change course, but “the apparatus—both the Communists and the specialists—was absolutely unprepared for this assignment.” In the same article Trotsky further predicted that implementation of the plan would encounter significant opposition within the apparatus—“nine-tenths of the apparatus being more right-wing than the official right wing.”⁸² Similarly, in an article written approximately a year later Trotsky explained that the “Soviet and party bureaucracy [*Sovetskaia i partiinaia biurokratiia*]” lifted Stalin on a wave of reaction, but now the “majority of the real Stalinist bureaucracy [*bol’shinstvo podlinoi stalinskoi biurokratii*]” felt betrayed by Stalin:

The majority of the real Stalinist bureaucracy feels it has been doublecrossed by its leader since 1928. . . . [Various factors] compelled Stalin to make this turn in spite of the partly active, mainly passive resistance of the majority of the apparatus

[*apparat*]. The turn took place with a gnashing of teeth by the majority of the bureaucrats [*biurokraty*].⁸³

Still, as a Marxist Trotsky could hardly attribute such a major policy shift to the autonomous actions of individuals. Rather, it was necessary to identify the social formation that was responsible for the turn. Thus, in a series of passages that seem to contradict directly those just cited, Trotsky explicitly attributed the turn to the “Stalinist bureaucracy,” to the “bureaucracy,” or to the “apparatus.” For example, in an article of February 13, 1930 he observed that the “Stalinist bureaucracy [*Stalinskaia biurokratiia*] after its years of opportunist policy—is going through a period of brief but thorough ultraleft lunacy.”⁸⁴ In his draft theses on the Russian question written in April 1931, Trotsky characterized the turn as “an attempt of the bureaucracy [*biurokratiia*] to adapt itself to the proletariat.”⁸⁵ On July 15, 1931 he wrote that it was “precisely the Stalinist bureaucracy [*stalinskaia biurokratiia*] which, contrary to us, posed as a practical task the liquidation of the kulak.”⁸⁶ On March 1, 1932 Trotsky described how in 1928 “the Stalinist bureaucracy [*stalinskaia biurokratiia*] . . . made a whirlwind turn of 180 degrees over our heads” and then plunged into “monstrous economic and political adventurism.”⁸⁷ And on October 22, 1932 he complained that during the First Five-Year Plan the “bureaucracy [*biurokratiia*]” disastrously instituted “administrative collectivization” and “liquidated the NEP.”⁸⁸

Trotsky might have attempted to reconcile these statements by arguing that the overwhelming majority of the state bureaucracy opposed the turn, while a majority of the party bureaucracy supported it. Such an explanation is suggested by Trotsky’s draft theses on the Russian question of April 1931. In that work Trotsky asserted that the “bourgeois elements of the state bureaucracy” first “gained considerable strength on the basis of the NEP.” Later, and partly by supporting itself on this “strengthened and emboldened petty-bourgeois and bourgeois bureaucracy,” the “centrist bureaucracy [*tsentristskaia biurokratiia*]” or “centrist apparatus [*tsentristskii apparat*]”—evidently, of the party—was able to triumph. Trotsky then went on to describe the left turn as just the latest of “the political zigzags of the apparatus”—again,

apparently referring to the party bureaucracy.⁸⁹ However, while this explanation seems to resolve the apparent contradiction in Trotsky's statements, it only underlines his difficulty in explaining how a "centrist" apparatus could have been responsible for such a radical turn to the left. We shall return to this problem later.

During the early 1930s Trotsky also offered various explanations for precisely *why* the leadership or the bureaucracy initiated the turn in late 1929. At times, in line with his traditional theory, he attempted to explain the turn in class terms. On other occasions, when compelled to recognize that such statements were problematic, Trotsky explained the turn as the subjective, emotional response of the leadership/bureaucracy to economic developments.

Previously, Trotsky had explained the left turn of 1928 as the leadership's response, under mounting pressure from the proletariat and Opposition, to the "kulak strike" of 1928. Now, confronted with the radical deepening of the turn, Trotsky reiterated this argument, depicting the *entire* left turn since 1928 as a single process set in motion by these same factors. For example, in an article published in November 1930 he asserted,

Coming to the edge of the capitalist precipice, Stalin—even though he is no lover of jumps—made a breakneck jump to the left. The economic contradictions, the dissatisfaction of the masses, the tireless criticism of the Left Opposition, compelled Stalin to make this turn.⁹⁰

Similarly, in his April 1931 draft theses on the Russian question Trotsky argued, "The course of 1928-31—if we again leave aside the inevitable waverings and backslidings—represents an attempt of the bureaucracy to adapt itself to the proletariat."⁹¹

Even if such statements explained the *initial* turn of 1928-1929, they hardly accounted for the radical *deepening* of the turn between late 1929 and early 1933. Through the summer of 1929 Trotsky had insisted that an increase in proletarian or Oppositional pressure was needed just to *maintain* the existing policy orientation. However, no such upsurge occurred. In fact, by the fall of 1929 all but a handful of Oppositionists had capitulated, and most of the remainder were in prison. Beyond that, even if the Opposition had remained an active force, this could not have

helped explain a policy orientation that, by Trotsky's own admission, was far more radical than anything the Opposition had demanded. Finally, Trotsky was not at all inclined to accept credit on behalf of the Opposition or the proletariat for policies that he considered to be so seriously misguided. Consequently, Trotsky found himself forced to supplement his class explanations of the turn with others. In these, he stressed the autonomy of the leadership and/or bureaucracy in relation to all social classes.

Most frequently during these years Trotsky explained the turn as the product of various emotional states of the leadership and/or bureaucracy. Thus, he argued repeatedly that the radical shift to the left in economic policy was largely a product of the "*panic*" experienced by the leadership when confronted with the disastrous results of its own previous policies. In his March 23, 1930 "Open Letter" to the party, Trotsky explained that after its first revisions of the plan, "the leadership, alarmed at its own indecisiveness, no longer knew any restraint."⁹² In December 1930 he asserted that "the economic turn toward industrialization and collectivization took place under the whip of administrative panic."⁹³ Similarly, in April 1931 Trotsky insisted that the "abruptness" of the Stalinists' leap to the left "corresponded to the extent of the panic created in their ranks by the consequences of their own policy."⁹⁴

On other occasions Trotsky argued that the leadership had gotten carried away with *excitement* in the face of the first achievements of the plan. For example, in an article dated February 13, 1930 Trotsky explained that, after revising the initial Five-Year Plan upwards, the Soviet leaders discovered to their surprise that the first-year projections really could be realized. At that point, they "abandoned their petty doubts and rushed to the opposite extreme," trading their former "passive possibilist position" for one of "unrestrained subjectivism."⁹⁵ That same month Trotsky elaborated upon this argument in a discussion with a visiting American supporter, Max Shachtman. When Shachtman asked how Stalin had come to adopt an economic program even more radical than the Opposition's, Trotsky responded that "requirements of the economic situation" had initially forced Stalin's centrist faction to revise the five-year plan upwards. Then,

The startling successes of the first year—startling to the centrists, who never really believed such a rapid tempo possible—not only demonstrated the enormous latent possibilities for industrial development under a proletarian dictatorship . . . , but immediately produced an extreme boldness born precisely out of centrism’s previous timidity. Almost overnight, the initial successes of the plan gave rise to the wildest kind of exaggerations.⁹⁶

Regarding the turn in agriculture, Trotsky occasionally offered an explanation that was slightly more complex, but that equally stressed the role of subjective emotional states in the behavior of the leadership. First, in February 1930 Trotsky described the initial phase of mass collectivization in 1929 as a *peasant* response to the “hail of administrative blows” inflicted upon the top layer of the peasantry. According to Trotsky, the blows directed against the top layer in the countryside discouraged the peasantry from any hope of improving its lot through the market. Consequently, the peasants began joining the collectives *en masse*: “The gate of the market was padlocked. The peasants stood frightened in front of it awhile, and then rushed through the only open door, that of collectivization.”⁹⁷ Up to this point, Trotsky essentially accepted the leadership’s characterization of collectivization as a spontaneous movement by the peasantry. Undoubtedly, Trotsky’s credulity in this regard was due to his continuing adherence to his traditional theory of bureaucracy. He simply could not imagine a bureaucratic leadership—by definition, highly responsive to bourgeois pressure—initiating such an assault upon private property.

However, at this point in Trotsky’s account the leadership’s subjective reaction became the decisive factor in the process. In the face of this spontaneous self-collectivization of the peasantry, the leadership was overwhelmed with excitement. Anticipating Stalin’s “dizzy with success” argument in an article of February 13, 1929, Trotsky explained,

The leadership itself was no less surprised by the sudden rush of the peasants into the collectives than the peasants were surprised by the liquidation of NEP. After getting over its astonishment, the leadership created a new theory: the building of socialism has entered into its “third” stage: there is no longer any need for a market; in the future the kulak as a class will be liquidated.⁹⁸

Similarly, in April 1930 Trotsky described how, after the initial peasant influx into the collectives,

the bureaucracy not only proclaimed this policy as its greatest victory—”If we’re going for a ride, let’s really ride!” cried the parrot as the cat dragged it off by the tail—but also developed a mad pressure on the peasantry under the banner of the liquidation of classes. Tail-endism was transformed directly into adventurism.⁹⁹

It is likely that Trotsky was uncomfortable attributing such independence to the leadership/bureaucracy, and with explaining such major policy shift in terms of such subjective factors as “panic” and “excitement.” At any rate, as soon as developments suggested an alternative explanation that was more consistent with his theory, Trotsky seized upon it.

The key Trotsky discovered was in the confessions by the technical specialists convicted of sabotage in late 1930 and early 1931. Incredibly, Trotsky accepted these confessions, like those in the “Shakhty affair,” at face value, perceiving them as a clear confirmation of his own previous analysis.¹⁰⁰ Thus, in November 1930 Trotsky endorsed the confessions of Ramzin and his codefendants. Trotsky noted that the Opposition had argued consistently that the slow pace of industrialization and collectivization in the period 1923 -1928 were “dictated on the one hand by the kulak and on the other by the foreign bourgeoisie, through the agency of the Soviet bureaucracy.” Now, these “sociological generalizations” had been confirmed by Ramzin’s own admission that he and his colleagues had plotted during that period to slow the tempo of development.¹⁰¹ Similarly, during the Menshevik trial of March 1931 Trotsky asserted that the “connection of the Mensheviks with the saboteurs . . . and the imperialist bourgeoisie” had been “irrefutably confirmed by the members of the Menshevik center.” For Trotsky it followed that the centrists, in their struggle against the Opposition, unconsciously had “carried out the tasks of the capitalist general staff abroad.”¹⁰²

Trotsky was convinced that these confessions also explained the ultraleft character of current economic policy. In connection with the trial of Ramzin and the Industrial Party, Trotsky reasoned that, since 1928 saboteurs would not have been able to deepen Soviet economic

difficulties by slowing the pace of industrialization. Thus, “the opposite road was taken: an excessive acceleration of the tempo in the individual branches of industry.” Trotsky concluded that “the indictment itself demonstrates . . . that in the period of economic slowdown . . . as well as in the period of its economic adventurism—beginning with the second half of 1928—the Stalinist economic leadership acted under the dictation of the saboteurs’ center, that is, a gang of the agents of international capital.”¹⁰³ Trotsky reiterated this argument after the trial of the “Menshevik Center.” Thus, in March 1931 he predicted that the next trial would reveal the saboteurs had been guilty of “disruptive acceleration of disproportionate rates” through “complete collectivization” and “administrative dekulakization,” and that many Menshevik economists had become “veritable superindustrializers” in 1928 in order “to prepare, by means of economic adventurism, the political downfall of the dictatorship of the proletariat.”¹⁰⁴ The following month, in his draft theses on the Russian question Trotsky again referred to the “Menshevik-saboteur program of industrialization and collectivization.”¹⁰⁵ And once again, in an article written September 2, 1931 he reaffirmed, “The artificial speedup of the rates of industrialization and collectivization can be just as much an act of sabotage as the artificial slowing-down.”¹⁰⁶

Even Trotsky must have sensed the absurdity of suggesting that the entire left turn was little more than a capitalist plot. Consequently, by March 1932 he returned to his “panicky leadership” explanation, attributing the adventurism of the Stalinist bureaucracy to its having been “hit over the head by the kulaks.”¹⁰⁷ Again, one year later he asserted that the members of the Politburo, “threw themselves into the adventure of 100 percent collectivization.” because they were “frightened by the consequences of their own negligence.”¹⁰⁸

Trotsky’s predictions regarding the ultimate outcome of the left turn were also contradictory. At times, influenced by his traditional theory of bureaucracy, Trotsky insisted that the new collective farms would regenerate a layer of kulaks and also that a major turn to the right in both industrial and agricultural policy was imminent. However, by late 1932 Trotsky’s growing apprehension regarding the economic crisis seems to have convinced him that, instead,

the independent course of the bureaucracy might bring about complete economic collapse, perhaps combined with a counterrevolutionary upheaval that would unite elements of all classes against it.

Trotsky's economic forecast from this period that has received the greatest criticism from contemporary scholars was his repeated prediction that the collective farms would mask, and ultimately foster, the regeneration of a new stratum of kulaks.¹⁰⁹ In fairness to Trotsky, it should be noted that he was not the only observer who was worried about differentiation within the collectives; it was also a concern to the Stalinists. In November 1930 the head of *Pravda's* department of agricultural affairs warned in a series of articles that *kolkhozy* with a small degree of socialization provided the conditions for the reemergence of economic inequality.¹¹⁰ Beyond that, the fact is that during this period a significant degree of differentiation actually did take place, both within and between *kolkhozy*.¹¹¹

Nevertheless, as Isaac Deutscher argued, while Trotsky grasped a real tendency when he spoke of differentiation within the collectives, he overemphasized its strength. In particular, Deutscher notes, Trotsky did not foresee that the leadership would be able to control the development of private property "by a combination of economic measures and terror."¹¹² To this we might also add that, even though Trotsky foresaw that collectivization would lower the productivity of Soviet agriculture, he did not anticipate that it could do so to the extent that it would eliminate the surplus required to sustain a new layer of kulaks. The most likely explanation for Trotsky's erroneous predictions regarding the collectives has been suggested by Alec Nove: Trotsky "was unable to grasp what was happening in the villages," at least partly "because he mistakenly identified the interests of the 'Stalinist bureaucracy' with the village rich."¹¹³ Once again, Trotsky's perception was distorted by his continuing adherence to his traditional theory of bureaucracy.

Another conviction of Trotsky's that obviously was inspired by his traditional theory was his belief that the leadership inevitably would revert to conservative economic policies. During the First Five-Year Plan Trotsky repeatedly suggested this concern in his frequent

characterization of the turn as a left “zigzag.”¹¹⁴ Even more clearly, it was expressed in his explicit predictions regarding the imminence of a new right turn. For example, in February 1930 Trotsky asserted,

The more frenzied the character of the present course, the sooner and sharper its contradictions will break out. Then to the former 180-degree curve, the leadership will add another, returning close to its starting point from the other end. So it has been, so it will be again.¹¹⁵

In the same article he further predicted that, “after the present precarious offensive” of collectivization, “a panicky retreat will follow, elemental down below, and allegedly ‘maneuvered’ from above.”¹¹⁶ Soon after this, Trotsky perceived Stalin’s “Dizzy with Success” speech to be the signal for the beginning of the retreat. In a March 14 article he asked, “At what point will this retreat come to a halt? It is as yet impossible to tell. It is probable that this time also the retreat will go much further than the objective conditions require.”¹¹⁷ Even more categorically, at about the same time Trotsky predicted to Max Shachtman that “Stalin, who is on the road leading away from the recent ultraleft zigzag in Russia, will not come to a halt until he has reached the other extreme and accepted the original program of the right wing.”¹¹⁸

In line with this view, during the following years Trotsky carefully scrutinized Soviet economic policy for evidence of the anticipated shift to the right. In the fall of 1930, seeing the Stalinists as “waist-deep in trouble with the five-year plan,” he observed that the renewed campaign against the party right suggested that Stalin himself was about to initiate “an inevitable turn to the right.”¹¹⁹ In the summer of 1931, Trotsky described Stalin’s reintroduction of piecework as a new turn to the right.¹²⁰ And in late 1932 and early 1933 Trotsky saw Stalin’s restoration of open markets and his abrupt reduction of the goals of the Second Five-Year Plan as evidence of a right turn that could lead to the weakening in the state monopoly of foreign trade.¹²¹

However, by late 1932 and early 1933, Trotsky began to perceive another danger as even more menacing. The deepening of the economic crisis convinced Trotsky that the leadership had

brought the Soviet Union to the brink of collapse. As early as March 23, 1930 he warned in his “Open Letter” to the party that the policy of the leadership was “pushing the country full speed toward the most dangerous crisis and the worst catastrophe.”¹²² By October 1932 Trotsky concluded that the economy had “*suffered a rupture* from excessive and poorly calculated exertion”; and in March 1933 he asserted that the leadership had “brought the national economy to the brink of chaos.”¹²³ A result of this crisis, according to Trotsky, was growing disaffection—especially among the peasantry, but also among the proletariat. In January 1933 Trotsky summarized this development:

The hungry workers are discontented with the party’s policy. The party is discontented with the leadership. The peasantry is discontented with the industrialization, the collectivization, and the town. A part of the peasantry is discontented with the regime.¹²⁴

The most ominous prospect for Trotsky was that a disruption of the economic *smychka* would “break the political alliance between the proletariat and the peasantry.” For Trotsky, this was especially dangerous because, in his view, the collective farms had become “organized formations for peasant strikes against the state.”¹²⁵ Trotsky’s ultimate fear here was a peasant revolt, perhaps even assisted by certain elements of the proletariat.

7.3 THE LEFT COURSE IN THE COMINTERN

Meanwhile, during these same years the leadership of the Comintern was deepening the radical international course inaugurated in 1928-1929. Comintern leaders continued to assert that the world had entered a “Third Period,” characterized by a general sharpening of the contradictions of imperialism and by the intensification of international class conflict. For them, this prognosis was confirmed by the onset of the Great Depression following the Wall Street crash of October 1929. In this context, the leadership proclaimed that the task of communists in

the capitalist world was to prepare the proletariat for an imminent struggle for power. Most immediately, it was necessary to wage a merciless struggle against the “social fascists” of the Second International, who were instituting fascism in the name of socialism. To this end, the Comintern banned all alliances of Communist parties with Social Democratic leaders, declaring that the only acceptable form of collaboration with Social Democrats was a united front “from below” with socialist workers.¹²⁶ The most important testing ground for the “Third Period” strategy of the Comintern was in Germany.

As the tidal wave of the Great Depression swept across Europe, it brought severe economic dislocation to Germany. Foreign loans and trade that had fueled German economic prosperity since 1923 suddenly disappeared, industrial production faltered, banks were forced to close, and thousands of small businesses were wiped out. Unemployment in Germany climbed from 1.32 million in September 1929, to over 6 million in the early months of both 1932 and 1933.¹²⁷

In turn, the deepening economic crisis gave rise to political destabilization. In March 1930, the coalition government led by the Social Democratic Chancellor Hermann Müller collapsed in a conflict over the unemployment insurance fund. Subsequently, President Hindenburg appointed Heinrich Brüning of the Center Party as Chancellor. Confronted with parliamentary resistance to his austerity program, Brüning asked Hindenburg to dissolve the Reichstag. In the ensuing elections of September 14, the Social Democratic Party as well as the traditional center and right parties lost ground, while the parties at the left and right extremes of the German political spectrum made significant gains. The Communist Party (KPD) improved its position with a vote of 4.6 million—up 40% from its totals in 1928. Even more remarkable was the success of the National Socialist Party, which increased its support from 810,000 votes in 1928 to over 6.4 million—making the Nazis the second strongest party in the Reichstag.¹²⁸

The Communist Party leadership was not impressed by the Nazi electoral successes. The day after the elections, the KPD paper *Die Rote Fahne* asserted that although the election had been Hitler’s “greatest day,” it had also signaled “the beginning of the end” for the Nazis.¹²⁹

Addressing the Eleventh Plenum of the ECCI the following April, KPD leader Ernst Thälmann similarly observed,

After 14 September, following the sensational successes of the National Socialists, their adherents all over Germany expected great things from them. We, however, did not allow ourselves to be misled by the mood of panic which showed itself . . . in the working class, at any rate, among the followers of the Social Democratic Party. We stated soberly and seriously that 14 September was in a sense Hitler's best day after which there would be no better but only worse days.¹³⁰

When the economic crisis deepened in late 1930 and 1931, Brüning began to institute austerity measures by emergency decree. Still, the SPD leadership continued to support Brüning, viewing him as the lesser evil in comparison with the Nazis. In contrast, the KPD declared that Brüning's dictatorial rule demonstrated that fascism already had triumphed, and insisted that the SPD's support for Brüning only confirmed that the Social Democrats were truly "social fascists."¹³¹

As communist hostility to the Social Democrats mounted through 1931, the KPD found itself promoting, from the left, tactics that in certain respects mirrored those of the far right. During this period, the KPD increasingly adapted itself to the nationalist sentiments that had been so effectively utilized by the National Socialists. Thus, it began to call for a "peoples' revolution" for the social and national liberation of Germany from the unjust burden of the Versailles Peace.¹³² Even more striking was the KPD's endorsement of a Nazi-sponsored referendum against the coalition government of Prussia led by members of the SPD. In the summer of 1931 the Nazis successfully demanded a plebiscite on a proposal to dissolve the Prussian Landtag and hold new elections. Initially, the KPD leadership resolved to boycott the plebiscite. However, on July 20 the ECCI sent a telegram insisting upon a change of policy. The following day the KPD leadership presented the Prussian government with the demand that it join the Communists in a united front. When this overture was rejected, the KPD endorsed the Nazi-sponsored initiative, labeling it the "Red Referendum." Ultimately, on August 9 the

plebiscite was defeated in the polls, at least partly because large numbers of communist workers boycotted the referendum.¹³³

By the fall of 1931 pressure was building for a unified response by the KPD and SPD to the threat of Nazism. Within Germany, the most vocal advocates of such an alliance were the members of a number of relatively small splinter groupings from the KPD and SPD, including the minuscule Trotskyist organization, the Brandlerites (German supporters of Bukharin), and the Socialist Workers' Party (founded primarily by left-wing dissidents from the SPD). However, when the idea of unity also was taken up briefly by Rudolf Breitscheid—a leader of the SPD—in November, Thälmann abruptly rejected this proposal, asserting that the most serious danger confronting the Communist Party was the influence of social democracy over revolutionary workers. Furthermore, at the subsequent plenum of the Central Committee of the KPD in February 1932, he denounced local party organizations that had mistakenly interpreted the slogan “united front from below” to include direct alliances with SPD organizations. Though it appeared that the KPD was about to reverse this position in the spring of 1932 with the formation of a broad alliance, the “Anti-Fascist Action,” a Central Committee declaration of June 5 clarified that “reformist organizations” were not to be included.¹³⁴

Meanwhile, the strength and aggressiveness of the National Socialists continued to grow. In the presidential elections of March-April 1932 Hindenburg was reelected with Social Democratic support. However, Hitler took 30.1 percent of the vote in the first round and 36.8 percent in the second—more than doubling the Nazi totals of September 1930. Hindenburg then dismissed Brüning as Chancellor following Brüning's attempt to outlaw Hitler's swelling organization of storm troopers. When the new Chancellor, Franz von Papen, rescinded the ban on June 15, the SA immediately unleashed a wave of terror against the left.¹³⁵

Soon afterwards, Papen fulfilled a long-held dream of the Nazis by dissolving the socialist-led Prussian government and placing Prussia under military rule. Although the SPD had declared its intention to resist such a coup by force, it quickly capitulated. Furthermore, the German workers ignored the KPD's appeal to respond with a nationwide general strike. The

consequent demoralization of the left and the invigoration of the far right were reflected in the elections of July 31, in which the Nazis received 14 million votes, making them the largest party in the Reichstag.¹³⁶

At its twelfth plenum in September 1932 the ECCI seemed oblivious to the impending catastrophe. In the official resolutions of the plenum, all Communist parties were instructed to continue to direct their “main blows against social-democracy,” still characterized as “social fascism.” In Germany, it was asserted, the SPD had helped prepare the way for the establishment of the “fascist dictatorship” of the Papen government.¹³⁷ In his remarks Thälmann emphatically continued to reject appeals by the Trotskyists and others for joint action with the SPD against the Nazis. According to Thälmann, Trotsky’s advocacy of such an alliance represented merely another attempt by this “utterly bankrupt Fascist and counter-revolutionary” to “lead the working class astray.”¹³⁸

When the new Reichstag convened on September 12, nearly all parties, including the KPD, SPD, and the Nazis, united in a vote of no confidence in the Papen government. Soon afterwards, the Reichstag recognized its own dissolution. In the elections of November 6 the Nazis polled two million fewer votes than they had in July, although they remained the largest party in the Reichstag, while the SPD vote also declined slightly. The vote for the Communist Party increased by 20 percent. In the press of the Comintern and the KPD, the election was portrayed as a great victory for the KPD, and as a sign that the Nazis had passed their peak.¹³⁹

However, events quickly revealed that such optimism was premature. On December 2 Hindenburg formed a new government under General Kurt von Schleicher—a government characterized by the Comintern press as “a sharpened stage of the Fascist regime.” As Chancellor, Schleicher unsuccessfully attempted to win the support of both the trade-union movement and a dissident wing of the Nazi Party. In the process, he succeeded only in alienating influential business, financial, and land-owning interests. On January 28, conceding his inability to obtain a working majority in the Reichstag, Schleicher resigned after only 57 days in office. Two days later, Hindenburg appointed Adolf Hitler Chancellor of Germany.¹⁴⁰

7.4 TROTSKY AND THE COMINTERN'S NEW STRATEGY

During the years 1929-1933 Trotsky denounced Comintern policy, as he criticized Soviet economic policy, primarily “from the right.” In particular, he condemned the ultraleftism of the Comintern line in Germany, where he saw it as contributing to the growth, and potentially to the victory, of Nazism. As in the case of Soviet economic policy, the left turn of the Communist International had contradicted Trotsky’s expectations derived from his theory of Soviet bureaucracy. Here too Trotsky attempted to analyze the origins of the leftist course and to predict its probable outcome. In doing so, he turned first to the traditional assumptions of his theory of bureaucracy. However, in this area as well he repeatedly found himself forced to modify that theory implicitly by emphasizing the autonomy of the bureaucracy.¹⁴¹

7.4.1 Criticizing Comintern Policy from the Right

Since the beginning of 1928, Trotsky had denounced various aspects of Comintern policy as “ultraleft.” In that year he condemned the “putschism” and “adventurism” of the Canton Commune of the previous December, as well as the “ultraleftism” involved in the Comintern’s refusal to recognize the seriousness of the defeat suffered by the revolution in China in 1927.¹⁴² In 1929, he further criticized the “element of adventurism” in the KPD’s May Day demonstration in Berlin for “conquest of the streets”—a demonstration that was brutally repressed by the police. Subsequently, he also condemned the “adventurism” of the international demonstrations of August 1, 1929, called to avenge the victims of May 1; to combat imperialist war; and to demonstrate again that the working class was capable of achieving the “conquest of the streets.”¹⁴³

By late 1929 Trotsky began to attack the ultraleftism of the entire “Third Period” line. For example, on September 25, 1929 Trotsky warned Oppositionists who had signed Rakovskii’s conciliatory August 22 declaration to the Central Committee that the new Comintern line combined “ultraleft conclusions with Right principles.”¹⁴⁴ Furthermore, in an article for the twelfth anniversary of the Bolshevik Revolution Trotsky asserted that the “Third Period” line of the Comintern was “as if especially timed for “sowing illusions” and for “encouraging adventurous undertakings.”¹⁴⁵

Trotsky raised a variety of specific objections to the Comintern’s new line. Most broadly, he rejected the methodology involved in the notion that the entire world revolutionary movement had entered its final period. He considered it absurd to suggest that a revolutionary situation could emerge simultaneously throughout the whole world. Beyond that, he insisted that the issue of whether or not the revolutionary struggle had entered its final period was “a question of the relation of forces and the changes in the situation,” and that these were factors that could only be tested through action.¹⁴⁶ Finally, at least through September 1930, Trotsky believed that the world revolutionary movement actually had declined—not intensified—since 1927, due to the defeats in Britain and China and in the wake of a brief economic boom in several of countries.¹⁴⁷ However, for Trotsky, the greatest problem with the Comintern line was its disastrous effect in Germany. There, he believed it was disorienting and disarming the KPD and the German proletariat in the face of the growing menace of National Socialism.

According to Trotsky, the mass support enjoyed by German Nazism—especially among the German petty bourgeoisie—could be explained by two factors: “a sharp social crisis” and “the revolutionary weakness of the German proletariat.”¹⁴⁸ He argued that in the face of economic ruin, the German middle classes increasingly found themselves compelled to seek radical solutions to their difficulties. In such a situation, he asserted, it was quite possible for a revolutionary party to win the allegiance of the petty bourgeoisie. However, if the party of the working class proved incapable of inspiring such confidence, the petty bourgeoisie would blame the workers for the endless strikes and political disturbances, and would turn instead to fascism,

“the *party of counterrevolutionary despair*.”¹⁴⁹ In Trotsky’s view, this was what was happening in Germany.

Meanwhile, he argued, the big German capitalists had begun financing Nazism in order to carry out a fundamental shift in their method of rule. Trotsky explained that in the pre-war era of capitalist upsurge, the capitalist classes of the imperialist countries had found it expedient to legitimize their rule through “orderly, pacific, conservative, democratic forms.”¹⁵⁰ In doing so, they had leaned “primarily upon the working classes, . . . held in check by the reformists.”¹⁵¹ However, since the war, capitalism, together with all of its democratic forms of domination, had entered an era of decline. Consequently, the German capitalist class was no longer concerned with introducing new reforms; now its energies were focused upon abolishing the old ones. Although the German capitalists initially continued to rely upon the assistance of the SPD leadership to implement social retrenchment, as the crisis intensified they had begun to view this solution as unsatisfactory. Now, the bourgeois class wanted to “rid itself of the pressure exerted by the workers’ organizations.” For this purpose, German capitalism had begun assisting the development of a mass fascist movement.¹⁵²

Repeatedly, Trotsky warned that the assumption of power by the Nazis would be catastrophic for the proletariat, both within Germany and internationally. Regarding domestic consequences, Trotsky explained that “when a state turns fascist, . . . it means, primarily and above all, that the workers’ organizations are annihilated; that the proletariat is reduced to an amorphous state; and that a system of administration is created which penetrates deeply into the masses and which serves to frustrate the independent crystallization of the proletariat.”¹⁵³ Thus, within Germany a Nazi victory would result in “the extermination of the flower of the German proletariat, the destruction of its organizations, the eradication of its belief in itself and in its future.”¹⁵⁴ Internationally, a Nazi government would be free to conduct foreign policy without regard for the domestic constraints that encumbered normal bourgeois parliamentary governments. As early as November 1931 Trotsky predicted that a Hitler government, acting as

the “executive organ of world capitalism as a whole,” would launch a war against the Soviet Union.¹⁵⁵

However, as Trotsky repeatedly insisted up until 1933, the cause was not yet lost. In fact, the German capitalist class as a whole had not yet decided whether or not to resort to fascism. Although the bourgeoisie did not doubt that, ultimately, Hitler would be “a submissive instrument of their domination,” they still feared the social upheaval that would accompany the installation of a Nazi regime.¹⁵⁶ For the time being they preferred more traditional authoritarian regimes such as those of Brüning or Papen—governments that Trotsky regarded as “Bonapartist” dictatorships, “enforced by means of the army and the police” and basing themselves upon the apparent balance between the organizations of the fascist petty bourgeoisie and the proletariat.¹⁵⁷ Thus, according to Trotsky, it was grossly inaccurate and politically disorienting for the KPD to characterize these governments as fascist. Under Bonapartism, it was still possible to organize an effective defense of workers’ organizations; under fascism, these would be quickly swept away. For a working-class organization to claim that there was no difference between Brüning or Papen and Hitler, was the equivalent of saying that “it makes no difference whether our organizations exist, or whether they are destroyed.”¹⁵⁸

Even more disorienting, according to Trotsky, was the Stalinist identification of social democracy with Nazism. Trotsky did not dispute the fact that the SPD served the interests of German capital; nor did he doubt that it shared a large part of the political responsibility for the growth of Nazism.¹⁵⁹ However, he sharply rejected Stalinist assertions that social democracy was simply a variant of fascism, insisting to the contrary that these movements represented two very different forms of bourgeois rule. He explained that social democracy derived its support from the workers and their organizations, and was “the chief representative of the parliamentary-bourgeois regime.” In contrast, fascism based itself largely upon the petty bourgeoisie, and established itself in power by destroying parliamentarism and the organizations of the workers.¹⁶⁰ Because of this difference, the Social Democratic leaders correctly perceived fascism

as a “mortal danger,” that threatened the “role which the Social Democracy fulfills in the bourgeois regime and the income which the Social Democracy derives from playing its role.”¹⁶¹

Ironically, Trotsky argued, the KPD’s refusal to recognize this difference actually had helped to strengthen reformism. He explained that it was easy for the SPD leaders to demonstrate the real antagonism between their own organizations and those of the Nazis. Furthermore, the “social fascist” epithet absolved the Social Democratic leadership of the need to prove it was not “the democratic servant of capitalism.” Thus, the practical effect of the accusation was to spread distrust of communism among the masses of workers who followed the SPD, and to strengthen the bond between those masses and their reformist leaders.¹⁶²

More importantly, however, Trotsky condemned the theory of “social fascism” as an obstacle to the formation of the united front that was necessary for the defeat of Hitler. Because of the refusal of the KPD to pursue such an alliance, Trotsky asserted that “the Stalinist bureaucracy bears the direct and immediate responsibility for the growth of fascism before the proletarian vanguard.”¹⁶³ In fact, he charged, the KPD had shown far less reluctance to join in a “united front with Hitler” by collaborating with the Nazis to bring down the Social Democratic government of Prussia.¹⁶⁴

Trotsky believed that the immediate task of the Opposition was to do all that it could to pressure the Comintern and its sections to abandon its ultraleft and sectarian line, especially in Germany. With mounting desperation, he urged the KPD to drop the rhetoric about “social fascism” and to forge a united front with the SPD. The purpose of such a front would be the armed defense of German working-class institutions against Nazi attacks. As Trotsky explained in September 1930, the united front would protect “those material and moral positions which the working class has managed to win in the German state,” including specifically such institutions as “workers’ political organizations, trade unions, newspapers, printing plants, clubs, libraries, etc.”¹⁶⁵

While he saw the immediate struggle in Germany as a defensive one, Trotsky suggested that this could change quickly. He explained that the first repulse of a rightist attack would elicit

a “redoubled offensive on the part of fascism.” In turn, this Nazi offensive “would immediately weld together the ranks of the united front, extend the tasks, compel the utilization of more decisive measures, throw out the more reactionary layers of the bureaucracy from the united front, extend the influence of Communism by weakening the barriers between the workers, and thus prepare for the transition from the defensive to the offensive.” At that point, the KPD would be in a position to discard the defensive united front and lead an offensive struggle for power.¹⁶⁶ In Trotsky’s view, it was this prospect that most frightened the leaders of the SPD. Nevertheless, Trotsky believed that the Social Democratic leadership could be induced to join such a front under the pressure of its working-class supporters and for the sake of “its mandates, its meetings, its periodicals, treasuries, and finally for its own head.” Even if the SPD leadership rejected the united front, Trotsky reasoned, the campaign for such an alliance would be valuable, for it would attract thousands, or even millions, of Social Democratic workers to the KPD for a militant struggle against fascism.¹⁶⁷

According to Trotsky, to achieve such a correct line in Germany, as in Soviet economic policy, required a restoration of party democracy, both within the KPD and the Comintern. As Trotsky explained in September 1932,

A correct policy requires a healthy regime. Party democracy, at present a plaything of the bureaucracy, must rise again as a reality. The party must become a party; then the masses will believe it. Practically, this means to put upon the order of the day an extraordinary party convention and an extraordinary congress of the Comintern.¹⁶⁸

7.4.2 Trotsky’s Analysis of the Third Period Strategy

Trotsky’s analysis of Comintern strategy during this period, like his analysis of Soviet economic policy, contained contradictory approaches. As in his writings on economics, Trotsky attempted to explain the leadership’s left turn and to predict its most likely outcome in the class

terms derived from his theory of bureaucracy. However, he quickly found himself compelled to modify that theory significantly by attributing the turn to autonomous characteristics of the bureaucracy and by warning that the autonomous policies of the Comintern bureaucracy might even result in a Nazi victory.

Trotsky's explanation of the origins of the Comintern's ultraleft binge was similar to his explanation of the economic turn in the Soviet Union. In part, he suggested that the turn was a reaction by the Stalinist leadership to its previous defeats. In part, drawing again upon his traditional analysis, he described it as a response by the bureaucracy to the pressure exerted by the Left Opposition. Thus, in August 1929 Trotsky commented that "the Stalinist leadership, under the pressure of the growing danger of the Right and the whip of criticisms made by the Opposition, was forced to carry out its left turn" in Comintern policy.¹⁶⁹ Similarly, in his April 1931 theses on the Russian question Trotsky argued that the international "left course of Stalin" had sprung "from an attempt to undermine the roots of the Left Opposition."¹⁷⁰ And in an article on the German situation in August 1931, Trotsky asserted that "having been frightened by the Left Opposition, the Stalinist bureaucracy started to imitate the left platform bit by bit."¹⁷¹ However, as in his writings on the economic turn, Trotsky stopped short of attributing the extremes of the new line to the pressure of the Opposition. Again, it would have been difficult to establish that connection since the Comintern leadership's international policy was far to the left of the orientation demanded by the Opposition; and again, Trotsky wanted no credit for it.

Since there was no apparent basis for characterizing the Comintern's new policy orientation as prompted by bourgeois "saboteurs," Trotsky's only alternative was to explain the extremes of the Comintern line in terms of the bureaucracy's own autonomous behavior. Thus, Trotsky concluded that the leadership's rejection of all political alliances with reformists was

simply an *overreaction* to the failures of its previous attempts at united fronts. Furthermore, he suggested that the explanation for this overreaction was nothing more than the leadership's *stupidity*. In late December 1929 Trotsky asserted that Molotov's recent rejection of alliances with reformists represented a reaction by the centrists to the fact that they had "burned their hands" in the Anglo-Russian Committee and now hoped "to guard against scandals in the future" by avoiding all alliances. However, in Trotsky's view the errors involved in the Anglo-Russian Committee had nothing to do with an "episodic agreement with reformists." Rather, in that situation one problem was that the leadership had not confined its agreement to "concrete practical goals clear to the working class." Another mistake was that the leadership had failed to break the alliance when the General Council turned against the general strike. Unfortunately, Trotsky concluded, the "strategists" of the Comintern still had "not understood the lessons of the Anglo-Russian Committee."¹⁷² In a pamphlet written in January 1932, Trotsky similarly asserted that the bureaucracy had adopted the new international line in a mistaken reaction to the catastrophic failures of its own ill-conceived attempts at alliances:

The Stalinist bureaucracy chose to behave like the nearsighted monkey in the fable; after adjusting the spectacles on its tail and licking them to no result, the monkey concluded that they were no good at all and dashed them against a rock. Put it as you please, but the spectacles are not at fault.¹⁷³

To a large degree, Trotsky's expectations regarding the ultimate prospects for the international turn continued to be influenced by his belief in the opportunist inclinations of the bureaucracy. One concern repeatedly expressed by Trotsky was that the leadership would soon reverse itself and revert to its former rightist course. As in economic policy, this idea was clearly suggested by Trotsky's persistent characterization of the turn as merely a left "zigzag."¹⁷⁴ Beyond that, Trotsky offered various suggestions of how such a turn might materialize. In an

article of January 8, 1930 he explained that in the course of a mass proletarian radicalization it would become necessary for the party to initiate alliances with Social Democratic leaders pushed to the left. In such a situation, the party leadership would be forced to abandon its current opposition to all alliances with reformists and shift back toward the right. At that point it would overshoot the mark once again and all the “Molotovs” would enter “with ‘both feet’ into a period of opportunist experiments like the Anglo-Russian Committee and the workers’ and peasants’ Kuomintang.”¹⁷⁵ Alternatively, he suggested in an article of December 1932, the Soviet leadership might turn right in its international policy under the growing pressure of world capitalism: “The more the Stalin faction turns its back on the international revolution, the more it will feel its dependency on world capital, the more it will cling to it convulsively ‘with both hands.’”¹⁷⁶

However, as the Comintern persisted in its “Third Period” strategy, Trotsky became increasingly concerned about another very different danger—that the ultraleft course autonomously set by the Comintern and KPD would result in a Nazi victory. During the years 1930-1933 the alarm in Trotsky’s writings about this prospect increased from month to month until February 5, 1933 when Trotsky for the final time pleaded with the KPD to propose a united front: “What is at stake is the head of the working class, the head of the Communist international and—let us not forget it—the head of the Soviet republic!”¹⁷⁷

7.5 DEVELOPMENTS IN THE PARTY REGIME

As far as the party regime was concerned, two developments stand out as most notable during these years. First, there was the continuing persecution of a variety of opposition groups

and individuals—from former leaders of the Right Opposition to unrepentant supporters of the Left, to party members who previously had supported the Center. Second, there was the emergence of a new cult of public adulation for Stalin.

From late 1929 through 1930 the leadership continued its offensive against the former leaders of the party right. At the end of August 1929 *Pravda* published denunciations of Bukharin marking the opening shots of a massive campaign that impugned his entire political record. Subsequently, at the November plenum of the Central Committee, a group of second rank moderates led by Uglanov were pressured into repudiating the Right Opposition. At the same time, Bukharin, Rykov, and Tomskii submitted a declaration that, while recognizing the “positive results” of the majority’s economic policies, continued to urge moderation. In response, Stalin and Molotov denounced the document, and on November 17 the plenum expelled Bukharin from the Politburo. Just eight days later the three moderate leaders relented and signed a statement of recantation. When required to elaborate upon their confessions at the Sixteenth Party Congress in June 1930, in Bukharin’s absence Rykov, Tomskii, and Uglanov all complied. After subjecting the moderates to enormous verbal abuse, the Congress dropped Tomskii from the Politburo, demoted three of his trade-union supporters from the Central Committee to candidate status, and removed Uglanov together with three of his Moscow supporters from the Central Committee. Ultimately, Bukharin was induced to acknowledge his own errors in a statement signed in November 1930, in a speech to a joint plenum of the CC and CCC in December 1930, at the Seventeenth Party Conference in January-February 1932, and—together with Rykov and Tomskii—again at the Central Committee plenum of January 1933.¹⁷⁸

Still, the treatment of the defeated moderates was mild in comparison to the punishment that had been inflicted upon the left. For example, Rykov was allowed to retain both his seat on

the Politburo and his position as chairman of the Sovnarkom until the end of 1930; and Bukharin, Rykov, and Tomskii all remained full members of the Central Committee until 1934, when they were demoted to candidate status.¹⁷⁹ As far as their supporters were concerned, a relatively small number were expelled in the 1929 *chistka*, or purge, of the party.¹⁸⁰ However, it seems no supporters of the party right were arrested immediately for oppositional activity.

Meanwhile, the leadership continued to justify its continuing repression of the Left Opposition with new accusations regarding the Opposition's "counterrevolutionary activities." Stalin raised these allegations first in a memorandum to the Politburo, reprinted with minor stylistic changes as an editorial in *Pravda* on January 24, 1929. There, he charged that the Opposition had transformed itself completely from "*an underground antiparty group into an underground anti-Soviet organization*," and he asserted that "*an impassable gulf* has opened up between the former Trotskyist opposition inside the ACP (b) and the present anti-Soviet Trotskyist underground organization outside the ACP (b)."¹⁸¹ He returned to this same theme in a letter to the journal *Proletarskaia revoliutsiia* in October 1931, asserting,

Trotskyism has long since ceased to be a faction of communism. As a matter of fact, Trotskyism is the advanced detachment of the counter-revolutionary bourgeoisie, which is fighting against communism, against the Soviet regime, against the building of socialism in the U.S.S.R.¹⁸²

Along these lines, the leadership leveled various specific charges against the Left Opposition. For example, Trotskyists were accused of sabotaging Soviet railroads, while Trotsky himself was denounced for establishing alliances with European fascism and Japanese imperialism against the Soviet Union.¹⁸³ For such counterrevolutionary activities, the Central Executive Committee of the Soviets stripped Trotsky and his son Leon Sedov of their Soviet citizenship on February 20, 1932.¹⁸⁴

The raising of these accusations was accompanied by new arrests of Left Oppositionists. By late 1929 the bulk of those who had remained faithful to the Opposition were already

languishing in political “isolator prisons” or Siberian exile.¹⁸⁵ In 1930-31 the leadership added to their number most of the Oppositionists who had managed until then to avoid incarceration. According to Victor Serge’s account, 300 Oppositionists were apprehended in Moscow in January 1930; an additional 400-500 were arrested in May; several hundred more were picked up in August; and by “1931-1932 there were no more Oppositionists at large.”¹⁸⁶ A report from the Soviet Union published in Trotsky’s *Biulleten’ oppositsii* in late 1930 claimed that there were over 7,000 Left Oppositionists “in exile, under surveillance, or in prison,” and the number was growing.¹⁸⁷

Even more ominous was the introduction of capital punishment as a method for persecuting the Opposition. The first to be executed was Iakov Bliumkin, an official of the GPU and a longtime supporter of Trotsky’s. In the summer of 1929 Bliumkin visited Trotsky in Turkey where Trotsky gave him a message for Oppositionists in the Soviet Union. Upon his return to Moscow, Bliumkin was arrested, charged with treason, and executed.¹⁸⁸ Soon after this, Trotsky published reports that two lesser-known Oppositionists, Silov and Rabinovich, had been accused of industrial sabotage and executed.¹⁸⁹

Despite these developments, by 1930 it seemed to many that peace finally had been established within the party. Following the defeat of the Right Opposition, no differences were apparent within the Politburo or the Central Committee, and none were expressed at the Sixteenth Party Congress in June-July 1930.¹⁹⁰ However, it was not long before new oppositional groupings began to emerge in response to the economic strains of the period. Predictably, each of these met with repression.

The first new dissident grouping to appear was a collection of former Stalinists who came together under the leadership of S. I. Syrtsov and V. V. Lominadze in the autumn of 1930. Traditionally, Syrtsov had associated himself with the right wing of the Stalinist leadership, and Lominadze with the Stalinist left. The extent of their real oppositional activity is unclear. However, it seems that they at least participated in discussions in which they criticized official economic policy and agreed upon a number of demands, including the need for a reduction in the

number of capital projects and for a relaxation of pressure upon the peasantry. When their meetings were reported, Syrtsov and Lominadze were denounced for forming a “Left-Right Bloc,” and attacked as “double-dealers” who had “capitulated to right opportunism.” In December 1930 the Politburo and the presidium of the Central Control Commission removed them from the Central Committee. A number of their supporters were expelled from the party or removed from their posts.¹⁹¹

As the economic crisis deepened and dissatisfaction increased throughout the country, oppositional sentiment also continued to rise within the party.¹⁹² Again, this was the case even among formerly staunch supporters of Stalin. Thus, in June 1932 Alexandra Kollontai, the former leader of the Workers’ Opposition and now the Soviet ambassador to Sweden, remarked that the “old hands” were criticizing everything. And in September or October 1932 Zinoviev stated to the CCC that a “fairly significant section of party members have been seized by the idea of retreat.”¹⁹³

Meanwhile, the crisis also was stimulating a revival among former dissidents on the party right. One grouping composed of former rightists was led by M. N. Riutin, formerly a Moscow secretary closely aligned with Uglanov. In the summer of 1932 Riutin’s group circulated an appeal “To All Members of the AUCP(b)” and a 200-page platform that indicted Stalin’s economic policies and the party regime. Particularly striking was the platform’s denunciation of Stalin as “the evil genius of the Party and the revolution, who, actuated by vindictiveness and lust for power, had brought the Revolution to the edge of the abyss.” The documents demanded a reduction in the rate of industrialization, the abolition of forced collectivization, the removal of Stalin, and the restoration of party democracy.¹⁹⁴ In November 1932 three other prominent rightists—A. P. Smirnov, the former Commissar of Agriculture, and N. B. Eismont and G. G. Tolmachev, officials of the RSFSR—privately criticized the rate of industrialization and the methods of collectivization and allegedly discussed the removal of Stalin. However, it is unclear to what extent they actually were involved in further oppositional activity.¹⁹⁵

Even more significant stirrings were evident on the left in this period. Scattered groupings of the Left Oppositionists had continued to be active even after 1929. However, more were roused to action by the crisis of 1932. In July of that year Left Oppositionists in Moscow and Leningrad prepared a draft program that they smuggled out of the country to Trotsky. The document called for a reduction in state expenditures, the dissolution of collective farms that were not viable, and economic cooperation with capitalist countries. It also offered collaboration with the ruling faction to defend the country from external danger and to overcome the economic crisis, and it demanded a restoration of party democracy. In September, former oppositionist I. N. Smirnov transmitted to Sedov in Berlin an article on the economic situation with data culled from a confidential Gosplan report.¹⁹⁶ By this time, Smirnov also seems to have established a dissident grouping with Preobrazhenskii and N. I. Ufimtsev.¹⁹⁷ In December 1932 Trotsky observed, “Many hundreds, perhaps even thousands, of former capitulators, particularly workers, have returned to the path of the Opposition.”¹⁹⁸

Another leftist current, the Zinovievists, were also growing increasingly restive. Reportedly, Zinoviev, Kamenev, and their supporters were especially concerned about Comintern policy in Germany, and now regretted their surrender to Stalin. In the fall of 1932 Zinoviev allegedly stated in an oppositional meeting that the biggest political error of his career was his capitulation in 1927. Meanwhile, a collection of former Zinovievists who had broken with Zinoviev and Kamenev at the time of their surrender had formed their own oppositional group under the leadership of Safarov and Tarkhanov.¹⁹⁹

In the summer of 1932, a number of these disparate groupings came together to establish an alliance. Included in this coalition were former left-Stalinists previously associated with Syrtsov and Lominadze and led by J. E. Sten and Lominadze; Zinoviev’s supporters; former Left Oppositionists led by Smirnov, Preobrazhenskii, and Ufimstev; and internationally, Trotsky’s own opposition. In addition, the Zinovievist Safarov-Tarkhanov group and the “Rightist” Riutin group were still considering joining the bloc. At this point, the purpose of the alliance—at least from Trotsky’s perspective—was to share information.²⁰⁰

However, this union was short-lived, for all of these oppositional groupings soon were decimated in a wave of repression during the fall and winter of 1932-1933. Riutin and a group of his supporters were arrested in September and charged with forming a “bourgeois-kulak organization” to restore capitalism. Reportedly, Stalin demanded Riutin’s execution, but the majority of the party leaders balked at this. The presidium of the CCC expelled eighteen members of Riutin’s group. Subsequently, the OGPU sentenced Riutin to solitary confinement for ten years and sentenced the remaining seventeen members to imprisonment or exile. Other sympathizers throughout the country, including Sten and Uglanov, were also expelled. Zinoviev and Kamenev, who had seen the Riutin platform without reporting it, were expelled from the party for the second time and again sent into exile.²⁰¹ Betrayed by an informant, in January 1933 I. N. Smirnov and Preobrazhenskii were arrested and expelled from the party. Smirnov was sentenced to five years imprisonment, while Preobrazhenskii was dismissed from his position and sent into exile. Hundreds of other former Left Oppositionists were also arrested.²⁰² Meanwhile, the Rightists Eismont, Tolmachev, and A. P. Smirnov were convicted in January 1933 of forming an underground factional group dedicated to the restoration of capitalism. Smirnov was removed from the CC, and the other two were expelled from the party.²⁰³

Another significant development in the party regime during this period was the origin of what in subsequent years would become known as the “cult of personality” around Stalin. Up until this point the only political icons to whom the party leadership paid regular homage were Marx, Engels, and Lenin. That changed abruptly on Stalin’s fiftieth birthday. On December 21, 1929 the Soviet press exploded in a frenzy of adulation for Stalin, “the most outstanding continuer of Lenin’s work and his most orthodox disciple, the inspirer of all the party’s chief measures in its struggle for the building of socialism . . . the universally recognized leader of the party and the Comintern.”²⁰⁴ The flow of eulogies subsided somewhat briefly following the Sixteenth Party Congress in the summer of 1930, but resumed again at the end of 1931. Old works were revised and new articles and books were published in ever-increasing volumes to

proclaim Stalin's outstanding qualities and achievements as a revolutionary and a Marxist theoretician.²⁰⁵

7.6 TROTSKY AND THE REGIME

Throughout the years 1930-1933 Trotsky vigorously attacked what he perceived to be the party leadership's continuing deviations from proletarian democracy. As in the past, he denounced the apparatus for its ongoing usurpation of power through the enforcement of undemocratic norms and through its active, often brutal, repression of oppositionists to its left and right. Beyond that, he now also condemned the further concentration of power in the hands of Stalin and his closest supporters, the recent development of a "cult of infallibility" around Stalin, and the first uses by the core of the Stalinist leadership of threats and repression against members of the bureaucracy itself.

In this period Trotsky offered a variety of explanations for the continuing deterioration of the regime. In the light of his theory of bureaucracy, he was inclined to blame bourgeois influence upon the apparatus for this trend. However, in this area too, Trotsky repeatedly found himself forced to explain policy developments in terms of the autonomous behavior the bureaucracy, or of Stalin and his faction.

7.6.1 Trotsky's Critique of Developments in the Party Regime

During these years Trotsky continued to criticize the leadership for introducing a variety of norms that, he believed, effectively deprived the party ranks any degree of power. One of these was the campaign begun in 1929 for the mass recruitment of industrial workers to assist

with the tasks of the Five-Year Plan. From January 1928 until January 1933 party membership climbed from 1,304,471 to over three and a half million.²⁰⁶ In his March 1930 open letter to the party Trotsky castigated this drive as he had denounced the “Lenin levy” of 1924 as “nothing less than the dissolution of the party into the class, that is, the abolition of the party.”²⁰⁷ His point was that the leadership had again swamped the party in a mass of raw, and easily manipulated, recruits.

Another familiar practice again denounced by Trotsky was the centralized control of local party organizations. Thus, in his April 1931 “Draft Theses” on the Russian question he observed,

Not a trace remains of party democracy. Local organizations are selected and autocratically reorganized by secretaries. New members of the party are recruited according to orders from the center and with the methods of compulsory political service. The local secretaries are appointed by the Central Committee.²⁰⁸

Additionally, Trotsky accused the apparatus of usurping power from the party by continuing to diminish the significance and authority of the party congress. In April 1930, shortly before the Sixteenth Party Congress, he again recalled that party congresses had convened once or even twice a year during the civil war; in contrast, the leadership had called the Sixteenth Congress only after a delay of two and a half years.²⁰⁹ Beyond that, on the eve of the congress Trotsky noted recent threats that had been made against members who criticized the line of the Central Committee, and concluded that for the first time pre-congress discussions actually had been “completely *forbidden*.”²¹⁰ He further charged that the delegates to the congress had been selected entirely according the principle “whoever is for Stalin gets to go.”²¹¹ On this basis he predicted that the congress would be nothing but “a carefully selected and sufficiently intimidated legislative body whose decisions on every fundamental issue have been prescribed beforehand, while the implementation of these decisions will cease to be binding as far as the

Stalinist faction is concerned the morning after the congress adjourns.”²¹² To indicate the degree to which the party ranks had been deprived of power, Trotsky now coined a new expression, arguing that the party, as a party, had “ceased to exist.” In a letter written in late 1929 or early 1930 Trotsky explained that the Communist Party was no longer “a party in the literal sense of the word, for its composition and life are regulated by methods that are of a purely administrative character.”²¹³ Similarly, in October 1930 Trotsky wrote,

It has been said above that the weakest link in the chain is at present the party. We speak of the party as a party, that is, as a free selection of the proletarian vanguard, and as an apparatus merged in one system with the state. One could say with a certain justification that the party as a party does not exist today. The essential functions of the party: collective elaboration of views and decisions, free election of functionaries and control over them—all these have definitely been liquidated.²¹⁴

Meanwhile, throughout the years 1930-1931 Trotsky also commented upon the intensification of the repression against party dissidents of all persuasions, beginning with the party right. In February 1930 Trotsky noted the recent “extortion” of “penitent documents” and “ritualist capitulations” from Bukharin, Rykov, and Tomskii. In May he further observed that the three had been “barred from all activity,” and (incorrectly) predicted that they would be formally removed from all positions of authority soon after the Congress. In November 1930 he also predicted that the mounting “campaign against the right-wingers” would soon culminate in their removal from the Central Committee. (In fact, again, all remained full members until 1934, and candidate members after that.)²¹⁵

However, Trotsky clearly believed that the most extreme repression still was reserved for adherents of the Left Opposition. Throughout these years he noted the various “literary campaigns” against the Opposition in the Soviet and international Communist press, especially during the second half of 1930 and the first half of 1932.²¹⁶ He protested the waves of arrests

inflicted upon Left Oppositionists in the Soviet Union and the various forms of physical abuse they were forced to endure in Soviet prisons and deportation camps.²¹⁷ He condemned the repeated episodes of physical attacks and even assassination attempts by Stalinists against his international supporters.²¹⁸ Finally, he bitterly denounced the first executions of Oppositionists in the USSR, gravely observing regarding in January 1930 regarding the execution of Bliumkin that “Stalin is trying intimidation of the last of the Opposition still in his hands by the method of—shooting.”²¹⁹

Although Trotsky viewed the foregoing as examples of the continued worsening of the party regime, he also saw them as representing familiar phenomena—the usurpation of power by the apparatus, and the bureaucracy’s repression of its opponents. However, over the course of the early 1930s Trotsky for the first time noted similar developments taking place *within* the apparatus itself. That is, he perceived a constriction of the circle of power within the apparatus, accompanied by the development of a “cult of infallibility” around the leader. Beyond that, he noted the first threats of repression, and the actual use of repression, against Stalin’s critics within the apparatus.

During these years Trotsky repeatedly observed that Stalin and his closest supporters were amassing increasing powers within the bureaucracy. For example, in March 1930, discussing the recent, abrupt turn in economic policy, Trotsky commented, “The top-level Stalinist group has taken command in the most undisguised manner.”²²⁰ The following May he predicted that the upcoming Sixteenth Party Congress would “sanctify the system of ‘one-man rule,’” and he asserted that the party “has only one right: to agree with Stalin.”²²¹ In April 1931 he declared that a “plebiscitary regime” had been established within the party whereby “selection for the whole apparatus takes place around the ‘chief.’”²²² And in March 1932 he observed, “The

apparatus, independent of the working class and of the party, has set the stage for Stalin's dictatorship which is independent of the apparatus."²²³

Accompanying this, Trotsky noted, had been the increasingly frequent claims of Stalin's infallibility. In May 1930 Trotsky asserted that Stalin's "official coronation as the infallible leader accountable to no one," had occurred in 1929.²²⁴ And in March 1932 he commented,

Now to pledge loyalty to the "Leninist Central Committee" is almost the same as to call openly for insurrection. Only an oath of loyalty to Stalin may be taken—this is the only formula permitted. The public speaker, the propagandist, the journalist, the theoretician, the educator, the sportsman—each must include in his speech, article, or lecture the phrase about the infallibility of the policy of the Central Committee "under Stalin's leadership," which means the infallibility of Stalin who rides on the back of the Central Committee.²²⁵

In the early 1930s Trotsky also observed repeated situations in which members of the apparatus, including previously loyal Stalinists, were subjected to threats of repression or actual repression. Trotsky first detected this development in April 1930 in connection with a recent denunciation by Iaroslavskii of the Opposition's economic views. He suggested that Iaroslavskii's real intention was "to frighten the lower ranks of the Stalin apparatus" who, under pressure from below, were beginning to lose faith in the leadership.²²⁶ Soon afterwards, in November 1930 Trotsky commented upon the actual persecution of former Stalinists in the Syrtsov-Lomindadze case. While Trotsky was inclined to believe that Syrtsov really was a "right-winger," he dismissed the charge that Lominadze and others allegedly involved were "Leftists." Rather, they were nothing but "despairing centrists," part of the "majority of the real Stalinist bureaucracy" that felt "doublecrossed by its leaders since 1928."²²⁷ In January 1932 Trotsky commented upon further evidence of the growing threat of repression against members of the apparatus. The previous November Stalin had unexpectedly discovered "Trotskyist contraband" even in Iaroslavskii's history of the party. According to Trotsky, this was a clear indication of the "conspiracy against the apparatus" that Stalin and his "narrow faction" were organizing.²²⁸

Trotsky continued to put forward a variety of demands to facilitate the restoration of “workers’ democracy.” As in the past, Trotsky called for the gradual introduction of the secret ballot in the soviets and the trade unions.²²⁹ However, he still viewed the issue of party reform as paramount, for as he explained in the autumn of 1932, a change in the party regime was a “prerequisite for fundamental reform of the workers’ state.”²³⁰ In this regard his most important demand was his call for an open party discussion of the entire “general line” since the time of Lenin. Thus, In March 1930 Trotsky explained in a circular letter to his Russian supporters that the Opposition was demanding the opening of “a free discussion in the party of the ‘general line,’ going back to 1923” as the basis for the preparation of the Sixteenth Party Congress.²³¹ And in March 1932, upon being deprived of Soviet citizenship, Trotsky called upon the Presidium of the Central Executive Committee to place its trust in the party, and to “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 and cleanse it ruthlessly from all the accumulated filth.”²³²

In Trotsky’s view, such a discussion necessarily required the participation of the Left Opposition. This was because, as he explained in his open letter to the AUCP in March 1930, “Only the Left Opposition is capable in the present circumstances of fearlessly criticizing and explaining all that is happening in the country and the party, to the extent that it is the result of the whole preceding course of development.”²³³ Consequently, he repeatedly called upon the leadership to cease all forms of repression against the Opposition, and to grant its members the right to return to the party with the opportunity for normal work.²³⁴

However, Trotsky also appealed for an end to the persecution of the party right, demanding that it too be permitted to participate in a party-wide discussion. This was not because he endorsed freedom for all party currents on principle. In an article of November 21, 1930 he explained, “What we mean by the restoration of party democracy is that the real revolutionary proletarian core of the party win the right to curb the bureaucracy and really purge the party: to purge the party of the Thermidoreans in principle as well as their unprincipled and

careerist cohorts.” Nevertheless, he explained that the Opposition opposed “Stalinist methods of reprisal against the Right” because it believed in the necessity of “a general demarcation along the whole party spectrum, not chicanery of the apparatus, exile, the noose.”²³⁵

A related demand embraced by Trotsky in October 1930 was Khristian Rakovskii’s appeal for a “coalition central committee, i.e., one composed of the right, center, and left.” Trotsky argued that the “proletarian nucleus” of the party did not yet have sufficient confidence in the Left Opposition to hand power directly over to it, 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.” In contrast, the slogan of a coalition central committee as an “organization commission for the reconstruction of the party” could have mass appeal within the party in a time of crisis as “the only means of saving the party from a complete collapse.”²³⁶

As far as the growth of Stalin’s personal power was concerned, in March 1932 Trotsky urged the Central Executive Committee “to carry out at last Lenin’s final and insistent advice: remove Stalin!”²³⁷ However, as we shall see, when the slogan “Down with Stalin” seemed to be gaining popularity within the USSR some months later, Trotsky actually rejected it.

7.6.2 Trotsky’s Analysis of Developments in the Regime

Consistent with the theory of bureaucracy he had developed on 1926-1927, Trotsky continued to blame bourgeois influence for the crushing of workers’ democracy within the USSR and the party since the early 1920s. However, in light of the left turn Trotsky was forced to provide an alternative explanation for the continued worsening of the regime in the early 1930s. As in the spheres of economic and international policy, in this area too Trotsky found it necessary to explain the actions of the leadership in terms of the autonomous behavior of the party apparatus, or even the autonomous behavior of Stalin and his faction.

During the early 1930s Trotsky still maintained that the fundamental source of the worsening of the regime since the time of Lenin was bourgeois influence within the party apparatus. As he wrote in an article published in February 1930,

More than once we have had occasion to explain that the party regime does not take shape independently, but is a function of policy, which in turn carries through the interests and reflects the pressures of classes. The bureaucratization of the Communist Party, beginning in 1922, has paralleled the growth of the economic strength and political influence of the petty bourgeoisie, basing itself on NEP, and the stabilization of the bourgeois regimes in Europe and the whole world, resulting from the successive defeats of the proletariat.²³⁸

However, at a time when the kulaks and NEPmen were being liquidated along with the remnants of Soviet capitalism, it was clearly implausible to blame bourgeois influence for increasing violations of proletarian democracy. As in 1928-1929, Trotsky found himself forced to explain the continuing deterioration of the regime in terms of the autonomous actions of the bureaucracy. Thus, he completed the preceding passage with the following observation:

But the party regime is not merely a passive reflection of these deep-going processes. The party is a living force of history, particularly the ruling party in a revolutionary dictatorship. Bureaucratism is not without a material base. Its vehicle is the large solidified bureaucracy with a whole world of self-serving interests. In this way, like any other secondary and superstructural factor, the party regime—in certain very broad limits—acquires an independent role.²³⁹

Similarly, in an article dated May 31, 1930 Trotsky emphasized the role played by the “self-sufficient” bureaucracy in the “systematic deterioration of the regime” over the previous eight years:

In addition to the pressure from hostile class forces from without, . . . the regime is under direct and heavy pressure from an internal factor of immense and continually growing strength: namely the party and state *bureaucracy*. The bureaucracy has been transformed into a “self-sufficient” force Making use of the means and methods with which the [proletarian] dictatorship has

armed it, the bureaucracy more and more subordinates the party regime, . . . to its own interests.²⁴⁰

In contrast, it should be noted that in this period there were Left Oppositionists who still believed that all deviations from proletarian democracy were a direct reflection of bourgeois influence. From this premise they logically concluded that the left turn, by undercutting that influence, should give rise to a healthier party regime. In April 1930, Trotsky responded to M. Okudzhava and other such “unsteady elements of the Opposition,” who were arguing that “a more healthy regime should ‘hatch’ by itself from the present ‘left’ Stalinist policy.” Trotsky characterized this view as “optimistic fatalism” and the “worst caricature of Marxism.” Again emphasizing the autonomy of the leadership, he observed, “The present leadership is not a blank sheet of paper. It has its own history, intimately bound up with its ‘general line’ from which it cannot be separated.”²⁴¹

At various times during this period Trotsky attempted to explain more specifically the origins of the threat that the leadership was attempting to crush. For example, in early 1930 he suggested that the leadership was exerting pressure to destroy resistance within the party to its economic zigzags. In April 1930 he wrote,

The “left” turn in the present leadership is entirely a function of yesterday’s right course. The sharper the turn was, the more pitiless was the bureaucratic pressure so as not to give the party time to get its bearings in the contradictions between yesterday and today.²⁴²

By 1932 Trotsky concluded that the bureaucracy had escalated its repression in response to growing proletarian dissatisfaction, which had risen as the self-confidence of the working class was bolstered by the successes of the plan. Thus, in January 1932 he asserted,

The general state of mind of the proletariat now is no longer what it was in 1922-1923. The proletariat has grown numerically and culturally. Having accomplished the gigantic labor of restoring and uplifting the national economy, the workers are now experiencing the restoration and uplift of their self-

confidence. This growing inner confidence is beginning to change into dissatisfaction with the bureaucratic regime.²⁴³

In fighting for its positions, he continued, the apparatus “is forced to turn the screws still tighter and to forbid all forms of ‘self-criticism’ other than the Byzantine flattery addressed to its leaders.”²⁴⁴

As the economic situation deteriorated, in late 1932 and early 1933 Trotsky explained the growth of opposition within the party as a reflection of the unrest among workers and peasants over the decline in their standard of living. Thus, in October 1932 he stated, “The growth of economic disproportions, the worsening of the conditions of the masses, the growth of dissatisfaction among the workers and peasants, the confusion in the apparatus itself—these are the prerequisites for the revival of each and every kind of opposition.” Against this revival, “The bureaucracy, caught in a blind alley, immediately replies with repression, in a large measure as a preventative.”²⁴⁵

According to Trotsky, Stalin and the bureaucracy had begun to see *all* potential opposition as a threat.²⁴⁶ However, Trotsky believed that the bureaucracy had singled out the Bolshevik-Leninists for the most severe repression because the Left Opposition represented the greatest threat to the bureaucracy’s power and interests. In January 1932 Trotsky explained that the Opposition was especially hated because it “talks openly about the bureaucracy, . . . thus revealing the secret that the general line is inseparable from the flesh and blood of the new national ruling stratum, which is not at all identical with the proletariat.”²⁴⁷ More specifically, he believed that the bureaucracy feared the Left Opposition could become a pole of attraction for dissatisfied workers. In a May 1930 letter to Soviet Oppositionists Trotsky explained that the apparatus had been “forced to start ‘working over Trotskyism’ again . . . to try to prevent a link-up between the criticism and dissatisfaction in the party and the slogans of the Opposition.”²⁴⁸ By early 1933 he was convinced that this “link-up” had begun to occur. In an article dated March 3, Trotsky observed that the chief blows were “directed against the Bolshevik-Leninists, the only faction whose authority has grown immeasurably and continues to grow.”²⁴⁹

As far as the further constriction of power within the apparatus and the threat or use of repression against previously loyal Stalinists was concerned, Trotsky explained both developments in terms of the growth of dissatisfaction within the apparatus itself. In November 1930 Trotsky attributed this dissatisfaction to the fact that the “majority of the real Stalinist bureaucracy feels it has been doublecrossed by its leader.”²⁵⁰ More frequently, however, he argued that the dissatisfaction within the apparatus was a reflection of mounting unrest within the population at large. For example, in April 1930 he explained, “Under the pressure from below, the alarm in the apparatus is growing, the doubts in the leadership are growing, and the voices condemning the latest zigzag are growing.”²⁵¹ And in early 1932 he observed, “As the workers become more impatient with the orders of the bureaucracy, the apparatus becomes more distrustful of the leadership of Stalin; the two processes are interconnected.”²⁵²

Faced with these deepening divisions within its own ranks, Trotsky argued, the apparatus itself had responded by ceding power to a referee. In an article of April 22, 1930 he explained, that “an apparatus that sees itself forced to find within itself sanctions against itself cannot help being dominated by one person. The bureaucracy needs a superarbiter and for this it nominates the one who best meets its instinct for survival.”²⁵³ A year later in his “Draft Theses” on the Russian question, Trotsky elaborated upon this idea, explaining that the apparatus had appointed an arbiter to stand over it in order to avoid having to resolve its internal differences by turning to the masses below:

Having conquered and strangled the party, the bureaucracy cannot permit itself the luxury of differences of opinion within its own ranks, so as not to be compelled to appeal to the masses to settle the disputed questions. It needs a standing arbitrator, a political superior.²⁵⁴

Meanwhile, Trotsky argued, Stalin had begun to exercise his growing autonomy by conspiring against members of his own apparatus who challenged, or even threatened to challenge, his policies and power. For example, in November 1930 Trotsky argued that Stalin’s “open and cynical establishment of the plebiscitary-personal regime” in the party had been in

response to the resistance within the apparatus to the left turn. At the same time, he predicted that Stalin's imminent shift back to the right would be accompanied by blows against those within the apparatus "who took the ultraleft zigzag seriously" and who resisted "the approaching turn."²⁵⁵ Furthermore, in March 1932, after noting that the apparatus was becoming "increasingly distrustful of Stalin," Trotsky warned the presidium of the Central Executive Committee, "the conspiracy against the apparatus is pushed full speed ahead, while the apparatus is still in conspiracy against the party."²⁵⁶

7.7 MODIFYING THE THEORY

According to the theory of bureaucracy developed by Trotsky in 1926-1927, the basic policy orientations of the Soviet leadership in the post-Lenin period were determined largely by the pressure exerted upon Soviet state and party apparatuses by bourgeois elements. However, as we have seen, during the period from late 1929 to early 1933 Trotsky often found it necessary to analyze the left turns in economic and international policy in terms of the actions of a highly autonomous bureaucracy. Similarly, in order to explain the continuing deterioration of the party regime in the new economic context, Trotsky found it necessary to emphasize the autonomy of the bureaucracy—and within the bureaucracy, the autonomy of Stalin and his closest supporters. Taken together, these analyses in themselves constituted significant, if implicit, ad hoc modifications of Trotsky's traditional theory.

In turn, this new emphasis in his analysis of policy compelled Trotsky to introduce explicit revisions into other aspects of his theory. In each of these, while continuing to characterize the bureaucracy as responsive to bourgeois pressure, Trotsky increasingly

emphasized the bureaucracy's autonomy in relation to all social classes. Responsive yet autonomous—the appearance of these two apparently contradictory evaluations in nearly every aspect of Trotsky's thinking regarding the bureaucracy created a conceptual tension that ran throughout his theory during this period.

7.7.1 Trotsky's Conception of Bureaucracy

During the years 1926-1927 Trotsky had portrayed bureaucratism primarily as a disease affecting the apparatuses of the state, party, etc., and characterized by the growing separation of those apparatuses from popular control and by the steady drift of policy to the right. For Trotsky, both features were related to the responsiveness of those apparatuses to bourgeois pressure and influence. In 1928-1929, as Trotsky increasingly emphasized the autonomy of the state and party apparatuses in relation to social classes, he began to refer more and more frequently to the bureaucracy in each of those institutions. Beyond that, he increasingly portrayed the problem of concern in terms of the usurpation of power in all Soviet institutions by a single, distinct, social layer—the bureaucracy. In the early 1930s Trotsky described the problem similarly, while continuing to insist that the bureaucracy remained responsive to bourgeois pressure and influence. At the same time, under the impact of the deepening turns in economic and Comintern policy, Trotsky emphasized the autonomy of the bureaucracy even more than previously.

As he had since 1928, during the years 1929-1933 Trotsky described the problem under consideration primarily in terms of a single social formation, the bureaucracy. There were still occasions when Trotsky employed the term *bureaucratism*. However, he now utilized this term fairly infrequently, and when he did so he employed it in reference to the repressive or excessively centralist organizational practices of the bureaucracy, viewed as a social formation.

Thus, for example, in an article published in February 1930 Trotsky asserted that “bureaucratism [*biurokratizm*] is not without a material base. Its vehicle is the large solidified bureaucracy [*biurokratiia*] with a whole world of self-serving interests.”²⁵⁷ Also, in this period and later Trotsky continued to use the term *bureaucracy* when speaking of one or another specific apparatus—especially that of the Communist Party. At the same time, however, Trotsky commonly employed the term *bureaucracy* to identify the single social layer, composed of members of the combined apparatuses, which he believed had usurped power from the Soviet proletariat. For example, in May 1930 Trotsky wrote of “an internal factor of immense and continually growing strength: namely the party and state *bureaucracy*”; and in the fall of that year, he described how the “Soviet and party bureaucracy” lifted Stalin on a wave of reaction.²⁵⁸ As in 1928-29, Trotsky’s references to the combined bureaucracy of the party and state may be related at least in part to his perception that the party apparatus had come to share important similarities in function, outlook, behavior, personnel, etc. with the state apparatus. Thus, as we have seen, in a letter written in October 1930 Trotsky described the party as “an apparatus merged in one system with the state,” and he explained that the “essential functions of the party: collective elaboration of views and decisions, free election of functionaries and control over them—all these have definitely been liquidated.”²⁵⁹

Regardless of the exact referent of the term, for Trotsky an essential aspect of the problem was still the responsiveness of the bureaucracy to bourgeois pressure. This was evident, for example, in an article of April 25, 1930 where Trotsky asserted that the “workers’ bureaucracy” in both the West and the Soviet Union, “besides constituting an instrument for the proletariat to influence other classes, constitutes equally an instrument through which other classes influence the proletariat.”²⁶⁰ In support of this idea, Trotsky repeatedly pointed to new

evidence that, he believed, showed that both the state and party apparatuses were infested with pro-capitalist elements. As we have seen, in 1930 and 1931 he proclaimed that the confessions of the “specialist-saboteurs” demonstrated this.²⁶¹ Similarly, during this period Trotsky frequently cited the defections of three Soviet diplomats—Bessedovskii, Agabekov, and Dmitrievskii—as further proof of bourgeois influence in the state and party apparatuses. For example, in September 1931 Trotsky observed,

To what extent is not only the state but also the party apparatus riddled with Bessedovskys, Dmitrievskys, Agabekovs—in general, class enemies—who stifle the Rakovskys and expel the Ryazanovs? To what extent will this apparatus prove to be a weapon of the dictatorship of the proletariat at the decisive moment? But this means that the state apparatus of the proletarian dictatorship has assumed a contradictory character, that is, is riddled with elements of dual power.²⁶²

However, during these years Trotsky also increasingly emphasized the autonomy of the bureaucracy in many of his statements about the bureaucracy’s essential nature. As we have seen, Trotsky often spoke of the “self-sufficient” character of the bureaucracy—no doubt largely in reaction to the deepening turns in economic and Comintern policy. Again, in his open letter to the party on March 23, 1930 Trotsky observed, “The bureaucratic apparatus . . . is acquiring ever more self-sufficiency.”²⁶³ In an article two months later he asserted that “the party and state *bureaucracy*. . . has been transformed into a ‘self-sufficient’ force; it has its own material interests, and develops its outlook, corresponding to its own privileged position.”²⁶⁴ Along the same lines, in his April 1931 theses on the Russian question Trotsky asserted that the bureaucracy was so independent that it was even capable of shaping the development of social classes:

The bureaucracy . . . is not a passive organ which only refracts the inspirations of the class. Without having absolute independence, . . . 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.²⁶⁵

7.7.2 Causes of Bureaucratic Power

An even clearer emphasis upon autonomy was evident in Trotsky's statements regarding the origins of the problem of bureaucracy. Since the mid-1920s Trotsky had explained the alienation of the state and party apparatuses from the Soviet proletariat primarily in terms of pressure exerted upon the apparatuses by bourgeois (or petty bourgeois) elements. In this process, bourgeois elements played the active role, while the party and state apparatuses passively responded to bourgeois pressure. However, this argument must have begun to seem less and less plausible after the leadership launched its all-out assault upon these same bourgeois elements. Consequently, in his explanation of the origins of bureaucratic power Trotsky now demoted the significance of bourgeois pressure while emphasizing the autonomous efforts of the bureaucracy itself. Although in a number of statements during this period Trotsky continued to assert that bourgeois pressure had played a major role in the process of bureaucratization, he now attributed less importance to it. In these accounts the ultimate significance of bourgeois pressure was that the bureaucracy had been able to *utilize* it as a battering ram against the Soviet proletariat.

One variant of this explanation appeared in Trotsky's April 1931 theses on the Russian question, where Trotsky depicted bureaucratization as having occurred in two phases. In his description of the first phase, petty-bourgeois and bourgeois elements within the country and within the state bureaucracy were strengthened by the weariness and disillusionment of the proletariat combined with the revival of capitalism under NEP:

After the heroic straining of forces in the years of revolution and civil war, a period of great hopes and inevitable illusions, the proletariat could not but go through a lengthy period of weariness, decline in energy, and in part direct disillusionment in the results of the revolution. By virtue of the laws of the class struggle, the reaction in the proletariat resulted in a tremendous flow of new hope and confidence in the petty-bourgeois strata of the city and village and in the bourgeois elements of the state

bureaucracy who gained considerable strength on the basis of NEP.²⁶⁶

Here, Trotsky's analysis closely resembled his 1926-1927 explanation of the origins of bureaucratism. However, in his discussion of the second phase of bureaucratization Trotsky downgraded bourgeois pressure to a secondary role, arguing that the party apparatus had simply utilized the "petty bourgeois and bourgeois bureaucracy" of the state for its own ends. He explained that in the context of a series of international defeats the "centrist [party] apparatus" forged a "bloc" with the "forces of Thermidor." Then, "supporting itself on the strengthened and emboldened petty-bourgeois and bourgeois bureaucracy, exploiting the passivity of the weary and disoriented proletariat, and the defeats of the revolution the world over, the centrist apparatus crushed the left revolutionary wing of the party in a few years."²⁶⁷

Trotsky presented a more condensed version of this same argument in a document he wrote for the preconference of the International Left Opposition in January 1933. Here again, the autonomous bureaucracy was depicted as simply using petty-bourgeois pressure to defeat the Opposition:

The bearer of the reaction against October was the petty bourgeoisie, particularly the better-off elements of the peasantry. The bureaucracy, which is closely connected with the petty bourgeoisie, put itself forward as the spokesman of this reaction. Supported by the pressure of the petty bourgeois masses, the bureaucracy won a large measure of independence from the proletariat. . . . The left wing of the proletariat fell under the blows of the Soviet bureaucracy in alliance with the petty-bourgeois, predominantly peasant, masses and the backward strata of the workers themselves.²⁶⁸

In other accounts during this period Trotsky emphasized the autonomy of the bureaucracy even more by dropping explicit mention of bourgeois or petty-bourgeois influence altogether. In these statements Trotsky asserted simply that the bureaucracy had usurped power in the political vacuum created by the decline of proletarian activity and enthusiasm after the revolution. For example, a letter Trotsky wrote on September 17, 1930 to a conference of the German Left Opposition provided this analysis of the party bureaucracy's rise:

The years of capitalist stabilization were the years of consolidation for the Stalinist apparatus. And that is by no means accidental. Only the decline in mass activity and the change from a revolutionary mood to one of apathy permitted the enormous growth of the party bureaucracy, which supported itself on the state apparatus for material means and for means of repression.²⁶⁹

Similarly, in January 1932 Trotsky argued that the bureaucracy had been able to take power because of the passivity of the masses:

The years of the revolutionary earthquake and the civil war left the masses in desperate need of rest. . . . The workers were ready to give the bureaucracy the broadest powers, if only it would restore order, offer an opportunity to revive the factories, and furnish provisions and raw materials from the country. In this reaction of weariness, quite inevitable after every great revolutionary tension, lies the chief cause of the consolidation of the bureaucratic regime and the growth of the personal power of Stalin, in whom the new bureaucracy has found its personification.²⁷⁰

7.7.3 Characteristics

Trotsky's comments during this period about some of the bureaucracy's more significant characteristics reveal a similar tension between his traditional emphasis upon responsiveness to bourgeois pressure and his new emphasis upon bureaucratic autonomy. On one hand, his statements about the bureaucracy's conservatism and his continuing characterization of its economic and international policies as "centrist" were clearly derived from his traditional understanding of the influence of bourgeois elements upon the bureaucracy. On the other hand, Trotsky's subtle revisions of his understanding of "centrism," his statements regarding the size of the bureaucracy and its preoccupation with privilege, and some of his general descriptions of the party regime seem more closely related to his view of the bureaucracy as autonomous.

Throughout these years Trotsky frequently referred to bureaucratic characteristics that revealed the influence of bourgeois elements upon the state and party apparatuses. Such was the case in his continued references to the “conservatism” or “conservative habits of thinking” of the bureaucracy. For example, in January 1932 Trotsky defined Stalinism as “the policy of a conservative bureaucracy,” and then further ridiculed the bureaucracy as a “moderate stratum, reflecting the demand for ‘law and order.’”²⁷¹ The following January he derided the bureaucracy’s “conservative habits of thinking.”²⁷² The incongruity of such statements in the context of the early 1930s has been noted by Alec Nove, who has asked, “Is it the typical action of . . . conservative bureaucrats to undertake a vast revolution from above?”²⁷³ However, the obvious basis for these observations is evident in Trotsky’s longer description of the bureaucracy’s conservatism in January 1932: “In the course of a number of years the Stalinist faction demonstrated that the interests and psychology of the prosperous peasant, engineer, administrator, Chinese bourgeois intellectual, and British trade-union functionary were closer and more comprehensible to it than the psychology of the unskilled laborer, the peasant poor, the Chinese national masses in revolt, the British strikers, etc.”²⁷⁴ All of these examples referred to Soviet economic policies or Comintern policies in the middle to late 1920s. Trotsky’s perception of the bureaucracy’s conservatism was clearly based upon his continuing commitment to the belief, forged during that earlier period, that the bureaucracy was greatly influenced by bourgeois elements.

Also related to this view was Trotsky’s general characterization of Soviet economic and international policies in the early 1930s. Even more than before, Trotsky insisted upon labeling these policies as “centrist” or, beginning in 1932, as “bureaucratic centrist.”²⁷⁵ As in previous years, Trotsky often defined this centrism as a political orientation to the *right* of communism or

Marxism. For example, at various times he explained that centrism was “intermediate,” or “transitional,” or that it “vacillated,” between “reformism and communism,” between “reformism and Marxism,” or between a “proletarian revolutionary line and a national reformist petty-bourgeois line.”²⁷⁶ Again, statements such as these were clearly based upon Trotsky’s view of bureaucracy developed in the late 1920s, and they represented a reasonable assessment of Soviet policies in that period. However, they made little sense by the early 1930s when Soviet economic and international policies had moved far to the *left* of those advocated by the Opposition.

However, there were times when Trotsky seemed to recognize this. In each of these cases, he ended up elaborating upon his analysis in ways that emphasized the independence of the bureaucracy. For example, in the pamphlet *What Next?*, written in January 1932, Trotsky addressed the question of how a “centrist” bureaucracy could swing so far to the left. He explained that, in contrast with Western centrist groupings, Soviet centrism was “equipped with a much more solid and organized base in the shape of a multimillioned bureaucracy”; and he concluded, “The oscillations of this bureaucratic centrism, in conformity with its power, its resources, and the acute contradictions in its position have attained an altogether unheard-of sweep” ranging from “ultraleft adventurism” to out and out opportunism.²⁷⁷

Of course, this argument still did not explain how a prolonged *ultraleft* policy could be characterized as “centrist.” In a series of statements in late 1932 Trotsky dealt with this problem by simply repositioning the leftmost limit of centrist vacillation. For example, October 1932 in the preface to a Polish edition of Lenin’s *Left-Wing Communism*, Trotsky described “bureaucratic centrism” as alternating “ultraleft mistakes with opportunist practice,” or “radicalism and opportunism.”²⁷⁸ Similarly, in a letter written the same month to the editors of a

German left communist paper Trotsky asserted, “In actual fact, the Stalinists are zigzagging between *ultraleftism* and *opportunism*”; and he explained, “it is precisely in this that is expressed the centrist character of the Stalinist faction.”²⁷⁹ Finally, in a speech delivered in Copenhagen in November 1932 Trotsky defined the centrism of the AUCP and Comintern as follows:

The less the functionary is controlled by the masses, the less consistent he is, the more subject to outside influences he becomes, and the more inevitably his political oscillations resemble the graph of a delirious fever. That is centrism. The destruction of democracy clears an area for the development of petty bourgeois, opportunist, or ultraleft influences.²⁸⁰

Trotsky’s comments regarding the size of the bureaucracy during this period were perhaps also related to his new emphasis upon the bureaucracy’s autonomy. In 1927 the *Platform of the Opposition* had complained that the “‘layer of administrators’—in the party, the trade unions, the industrial agencies, the cooperatives and the state apparatus—now numbers in the tens of thousands.”²⁸¹ By late 1930 Trotsky was describing the “Stalinist apparatus” as “numbering millions of people.”²⁸² In January 1932 he estimated the number of “functionaries” as “a few million,” and referred to “this ruling stratum of many millions,” and the “multimillioned bureaucracy.”²⁸³ Finally, in October 1932 he spoke of the “millions of bureaucrats” that supported the “Stalinist tendency.”²⁸⁴ One possible basis for these new estimates of the bureaucracy’s size was the rapid growth of the apparatuses of the state and party during the First Five-Year Plan. However, it is also possible that as Trotsky came to perceive the bureaucracy as a highly autonomous social formation, he began to emphasize its size and to redefine large numbers of officials as its members.

Another characteristic noted by Trotsky during this period that seems related to his emphasis upon the bureaucracy’s autonomy was the bureaucracy’s preoccupation with its own material privileges. In January 1932 Trotsky graphically described the typical Soviet functionary as bearing “the least resemblance to an incorporeal spirit. He eats and guzzles and procreates and grows himself a respectable potbelly.”²⁸⁵ As suggested in the previous chapter, when Trotsky

first introduced this theme in 1928-1929, it was apparently related to his growing perception of the bureaucracy as an autonomous social formation with its own interests. A similar connection is suggested by various passages in 1932 where Trotsky spoke of the “ruling stratum with its own interests and pretensions,” and where he referred to the “separate caste interests of the bureaucracy,” and to the “privileged position of the bureaucracy.”²⁸⁶

Trotsky’s new emphasis on autonomy was also evident in his general characterization of the leadership’s organizational practices during this period. On the basis of both the general deterioration of the regime and the growing concentration of power in Stalin’s hands, in early 1930 Trotsky began to compare the party regime to the highly autonomous states of Napoleon and Louis Bonaparte. Thus, in February 1930 he asserted that the methods used against the party right represented “a new stage in the process of the Bonapartist degeneration of the party regime.”²⁸⁷ In May of the same year when former Oppositionist Piatakov asserted “*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,*” Trotsky described this as a “general formula for the new stage,” the “dogma of the Bonapartist party.”²⁸⁸ Again, in his draft theses on the Russian question in April 1931, Trotsky denounced the “Bonapartist system of administering the party.”²⁸⁹ Finally, in an implicit reference to Louis Bonaparte’s practice of legitimizing his own dictatorial rule by plebiscite, during these years he also frequently described the regime as “plebiscitary.”²⁹⁰ Periodically, Trotsky explained he did not mean to imply by such statements that the Stalinist regime was literally Bonapartist, for that would imply it was capitalist. Rather, as he observed in an article in July 1930, he meant to indicate only that the degeneration of organizational norms had completed “the preparatory work within the party for Bonapartism.”²⁹¹

7.7.4 Consequences

Throughout these years Trotsky continued to fear that the ultimate consequence of bureaucratization would be the restoration of capitalism. In the late 1920s Trotsky had based this prognosis upon his perception of a steady, rightward drift in economic policy. However, the unexpected policy shift of 1930 raised serious questions. Was the turn a retreat from the brink of restoration, or had it made restoration more likely? Beyond that, what were the implications of the turn for the most likely form a restoration would take? Trotsky's answers to these questions were confused, alternately drawing upon his images of the bureaucracy as highly responsive to bourgeois pressure and highly autonomous. However, of one thing Trotsky remained certain: the counterrevolution he feared had not yet occurred.

Through much of this period Trotsky seems to have been uncertain whether the net effect of recent events had been to increase or decrease the probability of capitalist restoration. On one hand, as he admitted in his April 1931 theses on the Russian question, the left turn had significantly weakened the forces of capitalism within the country:

Through the combined effect of economic successes and administrative measures, the specific gravity of the capitalist elements in the economy has been greatly reduced in recent years, especially in industry and trade. The collectivization and the dekulakization have strongly diminished the exploitative role of the rural upper strata. The relationship of forces between the socialist and capitalist elements of the economy has undoubtedly shifted to the benefit of the former.²⁹²

On the other hand, as he insisted in the same theses, there were various reasons for believing that the threat of restoration remained strong. First, although capitalist elements within the country had been liquidated, this had “coincided with the accelerated appearance of the USSR on the world market” where it was forced to compete with imperialism. Second, though the “Nepman, middleman, and kulak” had been weakened, the trials of the “specialist-saboteurs” and Mensheviks had demonstrated that the bureaucracy still contained within itself a “mighty

agency of world capital.” Third, in Trotsky’s view the “elements of dual power” in the country had become even “stronger as the plebiscitary degeneration of the apparatus . . . progressed.”²⁹³ Thus, it was unclear whether restoration was now more or less likely.

Trotsky expressed a similar ambivalence in an interview with the *New York Times* in February 1932 where he noted that “active and passive Thermidorean tendencies” within the Soviet Union were “very strong,” but their victory was still “far off.”²⁹⁴ However, as the Soviet economic crisis deepened in the following months, Trotsky’s concern about the danger of restoration continued to mount until early 1933 when he warned that “catastrophe looms over the Communist Party of the Soviet Union.”²⁹⁵

Throughout these years Trotsky continued to describe two main paths by which capitalism might be restored. On one hand, as he noted in his draft theses on the Russian question, there was the possibility of a “*Thermidorean* overthrow” that would involve “a decisive shift of power from the proletariat to the bourgeoisie, but accomplished formally within the framework of the Soviet system under the banner of one faction of the official party against the other.”²⁹⁶ In general, this variant suggested that the bureaucracy was highly responsive to bourgeois pressure. On the other hand, there was the danger of a “*Bonapartist* overthrow,” that is, a “more open, ‘riper’ form of the bourgeois counterrevolution, 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.”²⁹⁷ Broadly speaking, insofar as this form of restoration implied a coup against a significant portion of the bureaucracy as well as against the Soviet system, it suggested a high degree of bureaucratic independence from bourgeois influence. Finally, Trotsky frequently repeated that a counterrevolution might combine these two variants.²⁹⁸

Trotsky seems to have been uncertain about which of these forms of restoration was most likely. Just in the year 1930 he reversed his position on this question several times. At the beginning of the year, he still believed that a counterrevolution would probably follow the Thermidorian route. As we have seen, in that period he frequently warned that the leadership was about to reverse economic policy and implement a thoroughly rightist course. However, by late

October he had concluded that the centrists were “waist-deep in trouble with the five-year plan,” and he was predicting that the “Kalinins and Voroshilovs” might try “to get free of the trap by chewing off the paw that goes by the name of ‘general secretary.’” That is, he anticipated a Bonapartist coup, though assisted by conscious “Thermidoreans” such as Bessedovskii, Agabekov, and Dmitrievskii.²⁹⁹ The following month Trotsky changed his mind again, warning that Stalin was about to implement the “inevitable turn to the right,” and in the process, perhaps unwittingly unleash the “Thermidorean-Bonapartist” danger—that is, a Thermidor followed closely by the introduction of Bonapartism.³⁰⁰

By 1931 Trotsky seems to have decided that a Bonapartist coup was most likely. As we have seen, during these years Trotsky argued that the use of “plebiscitary” or “Bonapartist” methods was helping to prepare the way for a truly “Bonapartist” regime.³⁰¹ In mid-1931 he explicitly asserted that, while the left turn had significantly *reduced* the likelihood of a *Thermidor*, the deterioration of the regime had greatly *increased* the chances of a Bonapartist overthrow of the workers’ state:

The crushing of the right wing of the party and its renunciation of its platform diminish the chances of the first, step-by-step, veiled, that is Thermidorean form of the overthrow. The plebiscitary degeneration of the party apparatus undoubtedly increases the chances of the Bonapartist form.³⁰²

However, by late 1932 and early 1933 Trotsky had changed his assessment once again, concluding that the danger of Thermidor was quite near. In October 1932 at the time of the discovery of the “Riutin conspiracy,” Trotsky described Riutin and Uglanov as having represented up until then “the most thoroughgoing Thermidorean wing in the camp of the Right”; and he complained that the growing economic crisis resulting from ultraleftist economic policies had given rise to a “new upsurge of the Right-Thermidorean tendencies.”³⁰³ In this same period Trotsky also expressed concern that the slogan “Down with Stalin!” might strengthen Stalin’s Thermidorean enemies.³⁰⁴ Early in the following year Trotsky continued to warn that the mounting crisis might propel the Soviet Union down the Thermidorean road. Thus, in an article

of January 11, 1933 Trotsky counted three groupings that might support a Thermidor: the peasantry, a section of the proletariat, and a section of the Stalinist apparatus.³⁰⁵

Of course, all of this presupposed that the Soviet Union remained a “workers’ state.” During this period Trotsky addressed no major new challenges to his position on the class character of the Soviet Union.³⁰⁶ Nevertheless, on a number of occasions he returned to this issue when considering the degree of degeneration that had occurred to that point. In doing so, he continued to argue that the USSR remained a workers’ state, basing his position on the three criteria he had put forward in previous years: (1) that the Soviet state still defended the property forms established by the October Revolution and embodied in the nationalization of the means of production and the state monopoly of foreign trade; (2) that a counterrevolutionary civil war had not yet occurred; and (3) that the party and state could still be reformed by the proletariat.

In a letter to his Bulgarian supporters in October 1930, Trotsky included all three criteria in condensed form:

Does the proletarian dictatorship still exist in the USSR? Yes, despite everything, it still exists. In spite of all the disastrous policies, in spite of all the turns in the economy toward the right and toward the left, the government continues to defend the nationalization of the means of production and the foreign-trade monopoly. The transition of power into the hands of the bourgeoisie can take place only by means of a counterrevolutionary insurrection. In the meantime, the regeneration of the proletarian dictatorship is still possible by peaceful means.³⁰⁷

Trotsky also restated these same points in his “Draft Theses” in April 1931. In the first paragraph of this document, Trotsky included both the “property forms” and the “absence of civil war” criteria:

The character of the social regime [in the USSR] is determined first of all by the property relations. The nationalization of land, of the means of industrial production and exchange, with the monopoly of foreign trade in the hands of the state, constitute the bases of the social order in the USSR. The classes expropriated by the October Revolution, as well as the elements of the bourgeoisie

and the bourgeois section of the bureaucracy being newly formed, could reestablish private ownership of land, banks, factories, mills, railroads, etc., only by means of a counterrevolutionary overthrow. These property relations, lying at the base of class relations, determine for us the nature of the Soviet Union as a proletarian state.³⁰⁸

Later in the same theses he inserted his “reformability” criterion, asserting that “the recognition of the present Soviet state as a workers’ state not only signifies that the bourgeoisie can conquer power only by means of an armed uprising but that the proletariat of the USSR has not forfeited the possibility of subordinating the party to it, of reviving the party again, and of regenerating the regime of the dictatorship—without a new revolution, with the methods and on the road of *reform*.”³⁰⁹

At least as far as his third criterion was concerned, Trotsky’s conviction that the Soviet Union remained a workers’ state actually was reinforced during these years by the turn. Since Trotsky partially attributed the turn to proletarian pressure, he believed that the turn confirmed his view that the party and state remained reformable. Reiterating the argument he had made against the German left communist Hugo Urbahns in September 1929, Trotsky asserted in an article of April 1930, “Nowhere is it written and nobody has shown that the present party, . . . capable . . . of silently turning the leadership through 180 degrees, could not, given the necessary initiative, regenerate itself internally.”³¹⁰ Similarly, in his *Problems of the Development of the USSR* in April 1931, Trotsky stated,

The experience of the whole post-Lenin period bears witness to the incontestable influence of the Left Opposition upon the course of the development of the USSR. All that was creative in the official course—and has remained creative—was a belated echo of the ideas and slogans of the Left Opposition.³¹¹

7.7.5 Cure

One area of Trotsky's theory that remained relatively unaffected by the turn was his fundamental strategy for resolving the problem of bureaucracy. Trotsky had developed his approach to this question on the basis of his basic understanding of the problem. Against the growing responsiveness of the state and party apparatuses to bourgeois pressure and the growing independence of these apparatuses from proletarian control, in 1926-1927 Trotsky had advocated the exertion of countervailing proletarian pressure to push the apparatuses back to the left and to subordinate them again to the working class. He saw this reform strategy as the only appropriate orientation as long as capitalism had not been restored in the USSR. In the early 1930s Trotsky continued to insist upon essentially the same approach, both within the USSR and the Comintern.

Throughout this period Trotsky explicitly defined his position regarding the Soviet Union as reformist. As we have seen, since 1928 this orientation had been challenged by the Democratic Centralists within the Soviet Union, and by Hugo Urbahns and his supporters in Germany. However, as we have seen, a reform strategy was already implicit in Trotsky's continuing characterization of the Soviet Union as a "workers state," for this label indicated to Trotsky not only that the Soviet Union still could be reformed, but also that there was still something worth preserving in the Soviet Union. In a letter to Soviet Oppositionists on October 31, 1930 Trotsky asserted,

There is absolutely no question . . . that in light of the approaching upheavals the Bolshevik-Leninists stand for preserving and maintaining the October Revolution, i.e., above all, the elements of the proletarian dictatorship and the leading role of the party. In this fundamental sense we remain on the road of *reform*.³¹²

As we have seen, during these years Trotsky's reformism regarding the Soviet Union was reinforced by the turn. In fact, there was only one implicit difference between this general reform orientation and Trotsky's earlier perspective, though it was a major one. Previously, for Trotsky

reform had involved pushing the bureaucracy to the left; now it involved pressing the bureaucracy back to the right.

As in the past Trotsky insisted that the only force capable of bringing about reform was the Soviet proletariat. More precisely, it was the proletarian core within the party, leading broader layers of non-party workers to reform the party and then the state. Thus, Trotsky stated in February, 1930, only “the proletarian nucleus of the party, relying on the working class” could “take from the usurpers’ apparatus the power that has been usurped from the party.”³¹³ As in the past, Trotsky viewed the Left Opposition, “vanguard of the vanguard,” as the natural leader of this nucleus.³¹⁴

How was the Opposition to conduct this struggle? Again in contrast to Urbahns, and despite the fact that virtually all Bolshevik-Leninists had been expelled from the party, Trotsky insisted that the Opposition continue to define itself as a faction of the AUCP. In part, he saw this approach as flowing logically from his reformist orientation, since he believed any attempt to found a new party would necessarily push the Opposition down the path of revolution. As he explained in a draft document for the ILO in January 1933, “The policy of a *second party* there [in the USSR] would mean a policy of armed insurrection and a new revolution. The policy of the *faction* means steering a course toward internal reform of the party and the workers’ state.”³¹⁵

Beyond that, Trotsky also feared that a new party orientation would alienate the masses of revolutionary workers within the Soviet Union who remained loyal to the AUCP. In an article of November 1931 he explained,

To these masses we say today and will say tomorrow: “The centrist bureaucracy conquered the apparatus of the party, thanks to certain historical conditions. But you, worker-communists, cling to the party, not in the name of the bureaucrats, but in the name of its great revolutionary past and its possible revolutionary future. We understand you fully. Revolutionary workers do not leap blithely from organization to organization like individual students. We Bolshevik-Leninists are fully ready to help you worker-communists regenerate the party.”³¹⁶

Trotsky remained convinced, as he had been since 1928, that the reform of the party and state were no longer possible without a “profound internal crisis” and “a deep internal struggle.”³¹⁷ He seems to have believed that such a movement for reform would most likely develop in the course of a struggle against capitalist restoration. In his 1931 draft theses Trotsky explained that the task of the Opposition in such a crisis would be “to assemble and push ahead the proletarian wing promptly, without letting the class enemy gain time.”³¹⁸ To prepare itself for this moment, it was necessary that the Opposition “develop as a firm faction, that it analyze all the changes in the situation, formulate clearly the perspectives of development, raise fighting slogans at the right time, and strengthen its connections with the advanced elements of the working class.”³¹⁹

In the meantime, Trotsky hoped to strengthen the position of the Opposition in part through alliances with other party groupings. In this respect, too, he continued to follow his traditional approach, advocating a “bloc” with the party center against forces further to its right. Thus, in November 1930 Trotsky argued that, just as the Bolsheviks had forged a bloc with Kerenskii against Kornilov, likewise, “In the face of a direct counterrevolutionary threat, a common struggle [by the Opposition] with the part of the Stalinist apparatus that will not stand on the other side of the barricades is self-evident.”³²⁰

As the economic crisis in the Soviet Union worsened, Trotsky appealed to dissident Stalinists in increasingly conciliatory tones for just such an alliance.³²¹ In fact, it was partially for the sake of an alliance that in late 1932 Trotsky even renounced the slogan “Down with Stalin!” As we have seen, earlier that year Trotsky had called upon the Soviet leadership to “carry out Lenin’s final and insistent advice: remove Stalin!”³²² However, when he received reports that “Down with Stalin!” was gaining popularity within party circles, Trotsky repudiated this demand. In part, he was concerned that, in the midst of the deepening crisis, “Down with Stalin” might strengthen Thermidorian forces for whom it signified “Down with the Bolsheviks.”³²³ Beyond that, he feared that the slogan might become an obstacle to the formation of a left-center

alliance since it would be interpreted by Stalinists “as a call to smash the Stalinist faction, expel its members from the party, etc.”³²⁴

As in the past Trotsky’s attitude to the party right remained hostile. However, one important difference was that, because of the turn, it was becoming increasingly difficult to explain exactly what issues separated the right from the left. At this point both equally denounced the ultraleftism of Stalinist economic and international policy and the authoritarianism of the party regime. Somewhat awkwardly, in October 1932 Trotsky dismissed this coincidence as temporary and limited, explaining that, in contrast with the left, the right wing was a “faction for permanent retreat,” and that, despite its “limited, temporary, and conjunctural ‘correctness,’” its position remained fundamentally false.³²⁵ Consequently, Trotsky continued to reject the idea of a “bloc”—that is, an alliance around a broad, common program—with the right against the center.³²⁶

Still, the defeat of the Right Opposition in the party struggle had increased Trotsky’s willingness to consider limited alliances with the right for the purpose of restoring party democracy. He first suggested such a possibility in his 1928 letter to Shatunovskii in which he proposed a “common effort” to restore the party “to a condition of legality.”³²⁷ In the same spirit in October 1930 Trotsky endorsed Rakovskii’s appeal for a coalition central committee that would include the left, center, and right. Trotsky observed that since the right was still in the Central Committee with the center, implementing this slogan would actually just mean including the left. Of course, he noted, the Stalinists were unlikely to agree to such a combination except in a crisis.³²⁸ In such a situation, he asserted the following September, a coalition CC “would be in essence an organizational commission for the reconstruction of the party.”³²⁹

Beyond this, in 1932 Trotsky participated in a more realistic attempt to construct an alliance with party rightists, among others. In October 1932 Sedov wrote to his father from Germany announcing that a “bloc” had been formed with the Zinovievists, with Trotskyist capitulators around I. N. Smirnov, and with a grouping of former Stalinists led by Lominadze and Sten. Sedov also reported that negotiations were proceeding with Safarov’s dissident

Zinovievists, and even with a group of rightists led by Riutin and Slepko. In his response Trotsky approved of the plan in general, emphasizing that it was to be “a bloc and not a unification,” and insisting that all participants retained the right to criticize each other freely. Although Trotsky explicitly used the term “bloc,” this clearly was not to be an alliance around a broad, common platform. At least for the time being, Trotsky insisted, the purpose of the alliance was simply to provide “mutual information” to the participating groups. In light of the limited goals, Trotsky did not reject the participation of the right—even of a “thoroughgoing Thermidorean” such as Riutin. However, he urged the participants not to wait for the right to join since waiting would “mean leaving the ground to the Rightists.”³³⁰

During these same years Trotsky’s position also remained reformist with regard to the Comintern. That is, he continued to reject the formation of a new international socialist organization, insisting instead that his supporters in the ILO confine their efforts to reforming the Comintern and its sections.³³¹ As in his position regarding the USSR, Trotsky’s reform strategy for the Comintern was based largely upon his understanding of the consciousness of the typical communist worker. He insisted that revolutionary workers would not yet understand or support the formation of a new International. As he explained in an interview in August 1932,

The worker thinks slowly, he must mull everything over in his mind, I would say. He knows that the party has enlightened him and trained him as a conscious worker, and therefore he does not change as easily as the intellectual. He learns not from discussions but from historical events.³³²

For this reason, Trotsky remained convinced that, under existing circumstances, a new International would inevitably degenerate into a sterile sect. Thus, in 1930 he warned that adopting Urbahns’ perspective of a new International would raise “the danger of becoming isolated from the communist masses.”³³³ In June 1932 he even speculated that the Stalinists actually wanted to push the Opposition into founding a new International since “a fatal error of this type on the part of the Opposition would slow up its growth for years, if not nullify all its successes altogether.”³³⁴

Nevertheless, during these years Trotsky conceded that, in the face of some “great historic event” comparable to the betrayal of social democracy in 1914, the revolutionary proletariat would abandon all hope for the Comintern. In that case, it would be necessary for the Opposition to prepare for the construction of a new International.³³⁵ For Trotsky, two possible events of such magnitude included the restoration of capitalism in the USSR, and the victory of fascism in Germany. In January 1933 in a draft document on the tasks of the ILO Trotsky asserted,

Such a historical catastrophe as the collapse of the Soviet state would, of course, sweep away with it the Third International too. Similarly, the victory of fascism in Germany and the smashing of the German proletariat would hardly allow the Comintern to survive the consequences of its disastrous policies.³³⁶

However, in Trotsky’s mind these two possibilities were not entirely distinct. In fact, Trotsky was so convinced that a Nazi victory would entail the inevitable collapse of the USSR that he repeatedly linked the events together. Thus, in a letter published in January 1932 he asserted,

Should the German proletariat be defeated by the fascists, then all will be lost for the Comintern and possibly also for the Soviet Union. For the world proletariat, that would be a setback for many years to come. Under such tragic conditions, the Left Opposition will take over the task of continuing to develop the Marxist program, but certainly no longer within the formal framework of the Third International.³³⁷

Similarly, in a discussion in August 1932 about developments that might require the founding of a new International, Trotsky specified,

Such an event would be the victory of fascism in Germany. But the victory of fascism in Germany does not only mean in all probability the collapse of the Comintern, but also includes the defeat of the Soviet Union. Only if that takes place . . . will we have the right to talk about a new party, about a fourth international.³³⁸

7.8 CONCLUSION

Over the course of the period from late 1929 to early 1933 the gulf between Trotsky's expectations and developments in Soviet policy continued to widen. In previous years Trotsky had asserted repeatedly that, without a proletarian upsurge and/or an increase in Oppositional pressure, the leadership would revert inevitably to its previous rightist course. However, in late 1929—with no evident increase in pressure from the Opposition or the proletariat—the leadership dramatically revised its economic and international orientation, inaugurating policies that clearly were far more radical than even those advocated by the Left Opposition. Furthermore, in previous years Trotsky had insisted that there was a direct relationship between the leadership's rightist orientation and the repressive and undemocratic character of the party/state regime. However, from Trotsky's perspective, between 1929 and 1933 the regime continued to worsen, despite the leadership's radical shifts to the left in economic and international policy.

As reality increasingly diverged from Trotsky's expectations, the crisis in his theory deepened. For the first time Trotsky found himself denouncing Soviet economic policy and Comintern policy as "ultraleft." Even as he did so, he continued to attempt to analyze these policies and developments in the party/state regime in terms of his traditional theory of bureaucracy. The result was an analysis that was increasingly implausible. In the same period, Trotsky also attempted to reconcile his theory with reality by means of a series of ad hoc modifications that greatly emphasized the autonomy of the bureaucracy. But in the process, his theoretical perspective grew more and more incoherent.

In the following period, Trotsky finally was able to break free of the constraints of the theory he had developed in 1926-1927. The event that initiated that change was the dramatic

failure of Comintern policy in Germany. In response to that failure, Trotsky revised one after another of his traditional positions. Subsequently, new developments in Soviet policy led to even more revisions. Ultimately, during the years 1933-1936 Trotsky constructed a new theory of Soviet bureaucracy.

¹ Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 2nd edition, enlarged (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970), 77-91.

² Hiroaki Kuromiya, *Stalin's Industrial Revolution: Politics and Workers, 1928-1932* (Cambridge: UK: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 144. See also R. W. Davies, *The Soviet Economy in Turmoil, 1929-1930*, *The Industrialisation of Soviet Russia*, vol. 3 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), 187-194; Maurice Dobb, *Soviet Economic Development Since 1917* (New York: International Publishers, 1966), 242; Alec Nove, *An Economic History of the U.S.S.R.* (Middlesex, England: Penguin Books, 1976), 187; Naum Jasny, *Soviet Industrialization, 1928-1952* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press), 73; Moshe Lewin, *Russian Peasants and Soviet Power: a Study of Collectivization*, trans. Irene Nove with assistance of John Biggart (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1968), 453.

³ J. V. Stalin, *Leninism*, vol. 2 (New York: International Publishers, 1933), 331. In February 1931 Stalin went on to proclaim the goal of completing the plan “*in three years in all the basic, decisive branches of industry.*” [Italics in original. J. V. Stalin, *Problems of Leninism* (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1976), 519-520.]

⁴ See R. W. Davies, *Crisis and Progress in the Soviet Economy, 1931-1933*, *The Industrialisation of Soviet Russia*, vol. 4 (Houndsmills, Basingstoke, UK: Macmillan Press, 1996), 31-37; R. W. Davies, *Soviet Economy in Turmoil*, 258-261; Donald Filtzer, *Soviet Workers and Stalinist Industrialization: The Formation of Modern Soviet Production Relations, 1928-1941* (London: Pluto Press, 1986), 69-72, 76; Kuromiya, *Stalin's Industrial Revolution*, 113-128, 194-197, 300; Nove, *Economic History*, 190-192, 206, 209; Chris Ward, *Stalin's Russia*, 2nd ed. (London: Arnold, Hodder Headline Group, 1999), 46, 57-59.

⁵ R. W. Davies, introduction to “The Five Year Plan in Crisis,” by Christian Rakovsky, *Critique: A Journal of Soviet Studies and Socialist Theory*, no. 13 (1981): 11; Davies, *The Soviet Economy in Turmoil*, 346-352, 372, 384; Filtzer, *Soviet Workers*, 44, 51-53, 58-59, 91-92, 116-117; Kuromiya, *Stalin's Industrial Revolution*, 140, 151, 157-160, 228-233; Ward, *Stalin's Russia*, 55-57.

⁶ Davies, *The Soviet Economy in Turmoil*, 279-280, 371; Davies, *Crisis and Progress*, 75-76; Kuromiya, *Stalin's Industrial Revolution*, 209-210, 212, 221.

⁷ Davies, *The Soviet Economy in Turmoil*, 289-300; Kuromiya, *Stalin's Industrial Revolution*, 234, 248-249.

⁸ Davies, *Crisis and Progress*, 67, 71-72; Isaac Deutscher, *Stalin: A Political Biography*, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967), 338-340; Filtzer, *Soviet Workers*, 96-99; Kuromiya, *Stalin's Industrial Revolution*, 280-285; Nove, *Economic History*, 209; Lewis H. Seigelbaum, *Stakhanovism and the Politics of Productivity in the USSR, 1935-1941* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 40, 44; Stalin, *Problems of Leninism*, 536-540; Robert C. Tucker, *Stalin in Power: The Revolution from Above, 1928-1941* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1990), 110-114.

⁹ Filtzer, *Soviet Workers*, 108-115; Kuromiya, *Stalin's Industrial Revolution*, 221-222; Nove, *Economic History*, 208.

¹⁰ Kendall E. Bailes, *Technology and Society under Lenin and Stalin: Origins of the Soviet Technical Intelligentsia, 1917-1941* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1978), 95-121; Robert Conquest, *The Great Terror: Stalin's Purge of the Thirties*, rev. ed. (New York: Macmillan Company, Collier Books, 1973), 733-736; Davies, *Crisis and Progress*, 26-31, 287; Kuromiya, *Stalin's Industrial Revolution*, 142-143, 165-168, 171-172; Roy A. Medvedev, *Let History Judge: The Origins and Consequences of Stalinism*, trans. Coleen Taylor, eds. David Joravsky and George Haupt (New York: Vintage Books, 1973), 113-137; Tucker, *Stalin in Power*, 98-100, 167-170.

¹¹ Davies, *Crisis and Progress*, 362-379; Jasny, *Soviet Industrialization*, 104-109, 114-117; Kuromiya, *Stalin's*

Industrial Revolution, 291-292; Kuromiya, *Stalin's Industrial Revolution*, 288-292; Moshe Lewin, "The Disappearance of Planning in the Plan," *The Slavic Review* 32, no. 2 (June 1973), 282; Nove, *Economic History*, 207; Ward, *Stalin's Russia*, 47-48, 55-57.

¹² Stalin, *Problems of Leninism*, 596.

¹³ Davies, *Crisis and Progress*, 466-472; Kuromiya, *Stalin's Industrial Revolution*, 287-288; Nove, *Economic History*, 191-195; Ward, *Stalin's Russia*, 47.

¹⁴ Nove, *Economic History*, 219; Stalin, *Problems of Leninism*, 602; Ward, *Stalin's Russia*, 48-49.

¹⁵ R. W. Davies, *The Socialist Offensive: The Collectivisation of Soviet Agriculture, 1929-1930*, The Industrialisation of Soviet Russia, vol. 1 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1980), 109, 116-137; Lewin, *Russian Peasants*, 406-439; Tucker, *Stalin in Power*, 130, 134.

¹⁶ Stephen F. Cohen, *Bukharin and the Bolshevik Revolution: A Political Biography, 1888-1938* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), 333-334; Davies, *The Socialist Offensive*, 157-174; Lewin, *Russian Peasants*, 454-464; Stalin, *Problems of Leninism*, 443; Tucker, *Stalin in Power*, 133-135; Ward, *Stalin's Russia*, 76.

¹⁷ Robert Conquest, *The Harvest of Sorrow: Soviet Collectivization and the Terror-Famine* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 147-153; Davies, *The Socialist Offensive*, 203-228, 442; Basil Dmytryshyn, *USSR: A Concise History*, 3rd edition (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1978), 168; Merle Fainsod, *Smolensk Under Soviet Rule* (New York: Vintage Books, Random House, 1958), 251-253; Moshe Lewin, *The Making of the Soviet System: Essays in the Social History of Interwar Russia* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1985), 112; Lewin, *Russian Peasants*, 514-515; Tucker, *Stalin in Power*, 181; Nove, *Economic History*, 163; Ward, *Stalin's Russia*, 76-79.

¹⁸ Davies, *The Socialist Offensive*, 165, 183-185, 197-198; Lewin, *Russian Peasants*, 487; Stalin, *Problems of Leninism*, 471; Tucker, *Stalin in Power*, 138.

¹⁹ Lewin, *Russian Peasants*, 493-495.

²⁰ Conquest, *Harvest of Sorrow*, 120-121; V. Danilov et al., eds. *Tragediia sovetskoi derevni: kollektivizatsiia i raskulachivanie: dokumenty i materialy v 5 tomakh, 1927-1939, Tom 2. Noiabr' 1929-Dekabr' 1930* (Moscow: "Rossiiskaia polit. entsiklopediia," 2000), 126-127; Davies, *The Socialist Offensive*, 234-236; Lewin, *Russian Peasants*, 495-497; Nove, *Economic History*, 167-168; Lynn Viola, et al., eds., *The War against the Peasantry, 1927-1930: The Tragedy of the Soviet Countryside*, trans. Steven Shabad (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2005), 209-210, 228-229; Ward, *Stalin's Russia*, 76-77.

²¹ Conquest, *Harvest of Sorrow*, 119, 128-143; Davies, *The Socialist Offensive*, 245-251; Fainsod, *Smolensk*, 245-251; Lewin, *Russian Peasants*, 497-506, 508; Nove, *Economic History*, 167; Tucker, *Stalin in Power*, 175, 177-178, 180-181. Lewin estimates that ten million persons or more were deported as kulaks. [Lewin, *Russian Peasants*, 508.]

²² Cohen, *Bukharin*, 339; Conquest, *Harvest of Sorrow*, 154-160; Davies, *The Socialist Offensive*, 255-261, 325, 333; Fainsod, *Smolensk*, 253-254; Tucker, *Stalin in Power*, 181-183.

²³ Conquest, *Harvest of Sorrow*, 160-167; Davies, *The Socialist Offensive*, 269-283, 311-330, 443; Dmytryshyn, *USSR*, 168; Medvedev, *Let History Judge*, 87-88; Nove, *Economic History*, 171; Stalin, *Problems of Leninism*, 483-491; Tucker, *Stalin in Power*, 183-186; Ward, *Stalin's Russia*, 78-79.

²⁴ Conquest, *Harvest of Sorrow*, 167; Nove, *Economic History*, 175; Tucker, *Stalin in Power*, 186-187; Ward, *Stalin's Russia*, 80.

²⁵ Zhores A. Medvedev, *Soviet Agriculture* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1987), 86-95; Nove, *Economic History*, 176-181; Tucker, *Stalin in Power*, 190-195; Ward, *Stalin's Russia*, 82-83, 93-94.

²⁶ Ante Ciliga, *The Russian Enigma*, part one translated by Fernand G. Fernier and Anne Cliff; part two translated by Margaret and Hugo Dewar (London: Ink Links, 1979), 210-213.

²⁷ For secondary sources that deal with Trotsky's views on the First Five-Year Plan, see Tony Cliff, *Trotsky: The Darker the Night the Brighter the Star, 1927-40* (London, Chicago, Melbourne: Bookmarks, 1993), 45-67; Isaac Deutscher, *The Prophet Outcast: Trotsky 1929-1940* (Vintage Books, Random House: New York, 1963), 92-110; David Law, "Trotsky in Opposition: 1923-1940," (PhD diss., University of Keele, 1987), 110-117; Ernest Mandel, *Trotsky as Alternative*, trans. Gus Fagan (London: Verso, 1995), 66-69; Alec Nove, "New Light on Trotskii's Economic Views," *Slavic Review* 40, no. 1 (Spring 1981), 84-96; Alec Nove, "A Note on Trotsky and the 'Left Opposition, 1929-31,'" in *Political Economy and Soviet Socialism* (London: George Allen & Unwin, Ltd., 1979), 46-52; Alec Nove, "Trotskij, Collectivisation and the Five Year Plan," in *Pensiero e Azione Politica di Lev Trotskij*, ed. Francesca Gori (Firenze: Leo S. Olschki, 1982), 2:389-404; Ian D. Thatcher, *Trotsky* (London: Routledge, 2003), 166-175.

²⁸ Leon Trotsky, *Writings of Leon Trotsky [1930]*, ed. George Breitman and Sarah Lovell (New York: Pathfinder

Press, 1975), 169, 172-173, 106. See also Leon Trotsky, *Writings of Leon Trotsky [1930-31]*, ed. George Breitman and Sarah Lovell (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1973), 91; Leon Trotsky, *Writings of Leon Trotsky [1932]*, ed. George Breitman and Sarah Lovell (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1973), 36.

²⁹ Trotsky, *Writings [1930]*, 105.

³⁰ Trotsky, *Writings [1930-31]*, 99; Trotsky, *Writings [1932]*, 42. “Against the background of decaying world capitalism,” Trotsky asserted, socialism had “demonstrated its title to historic victory, not on the pages of *Capital*, but by the praxis of hydroelectric plants and blast furnaces.” [Trotsky, *Writings [1932]*, 260. See also Trotsky, *Writings [1930]*, 193; Trotsky, *Writings [1930-31]*, 183, 205; Trotsky, *Writings [1932]*, 42, 66; Leon Trotsky, *Writings of Leon Trotsky [1932-33]*, ed. George Breitman and Sarah Lovell (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1972), 96.]

³¹ Trotsky, *Writings [1930]*, 173.

³² Trotsky, *Writings [1930-31]*, 205. At the same time, however, Trotsky contemptuously rejected some of the more fantastic claims of the party leadership regarding the goals and achievements of the plan. Thus, in December 1930 Trotsky dismissed Stalin’s assertion that the Soviet Union would “overtake and outstrip” the capitalist world by the end of the five-year plan as “pretension and deception,” and “nothing but a fantasy.” Even more absurd, Trotsky argued, was the Stalinist boast—made in the midst of generalized scarcity—that the Soviet Union had “entered into the period of socialism.” In fact, Trotsky insisted, “the heritage of bourgeois and czarist Russia constitutes 95 percent of the daily life, morals, and customs of the overwhelming majority of the Soviet population, while the elements of socialism represent only 5 percent.” To assert otherwise, to claim that the construction of a socialist society was nearly completed when it had hardly begun, was “to mock both the builders and socialism.” [Trotsky, *Writings [1930-31]*, 93, 96-98. See also *ibid.*, 206; Trotsky, *Writings [1932]*, 260.]

³³ Trotsky, *Writings [1930]*, 137.

³⁴ Trotsky, *Writings [1930-31]*, 103. See also *ibid.*, 208-209; Trotsky, *Writings [1932]*, 266.

³⁵ See Trotsky, *Writings [1930]*, 66, 96, 169-170.

³⁶ Trotsky, *Writings [1930]*, 116; Trotsky, *Writings [1930-31]*, 58; Trotsky, *Writings [1932]*, 66.

³⁷ See, for example, Trotsky, *Writings [1929]*, 402; Trotsky, *Writings [1930]*, 115, 116, 124, 130, 147; Trotsky, *Writings [1930-31]*, 98, 100, 182-183, 230; Trotsky, *Writings [1932]*, 66, 261.

³⁸ Trotsky, *Writings [1929]*, 402.

³⁹ Trotsky, *Writings [1930]*, 107, 170. See also Trotsky, *Writings [1930-31]*, 98-100, 182-183, 206; Trotsky, *Writings [1932]*, 37.

⁴⁰ Trotsky, *Writings [1932]*, 265-266, 277.

⁴¹ Trotsky, *Writings [1932]*, 37. See also, Trotsky, *Writings [1930-31]*, 288; Trotsky, *Writings [1932]*, 268.

⁴² Trotsky, *Writings [1930]*, 138.

⁴³ Trotsky, *Writings [1930-31]*, 284.

⁴⁴ Trotsky, *Writings [1932]*, 267-269; Trotsky, *Writings [1932-33]*, 101.

⁴⁵ Trotsky, *Writings [1930-31]*, 228. See also *ibid.*, 284; Trotsky, *Writings [1932]*, 269.

⁴⁶ Trotsky, *Writings [1930]*, 115, 170.

⁴⁷ Trotsky, *Writings [1930-31]*, 283-284.

⁴⁸ Trotsky, *Writings [1930]*, 138; Trotsky, *Writings [1932]*, 268-269; Trotsky, *Writings [1932-33]*, 97-98.

⁴⁹ Trotsky, *Writings [1930]*, 170.

⁵⁰ For example, in October 1932 Trotsky summarized as follows the various consequences of rushing the pace of the mining and sorting of coal:

Coal, hastily mined and poorly sorted, hampers the operation of coke-producing enterprises. Excessively high contents of moisture and cinders in the coke not only reduce the quantity of produced metal by millions of tons but also lower its quality. Machines of poor metal produce inferior products, result in breakdowns, force inactivity upon the workers, and deteriorate rapidly. [Trotsky, *Writings [1932]*, 263. See also *ibid.*, 262-264; Trotsky, *Writings [1930-31]*, 183.]

⁵¹ Trotsky, *Writings [1930]*, 137.

⁵² Trotsky, *Writings [1932-33]*, 98. See also Trotsky, *Writings [1930-31]*, 99, 102, 207; Trotsky, *Writings [1932]*, 275-276.

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- ⁵³ Trotsky most clearly explained this view in October 1932, when he declared as a general law that “the correct direction of the economy” in the transitional epoch between capitalism and socialism required “the interreaction of . . . state planning, the market, and Soviet democracy.” [Trotsky, *Writings [1932]*, 275.]
- ⁵⁴ Trotsky, *Writings [1932]*, 274. On the necessity of a market for the expression of consumer needs, see also Trotsky, *Writings [1932-33]*, 223. On the importance of a stable currency see also Trotsky, *Writings [1932-33]*, 98, 222-225. Alec Nove has emphasized the significance of the market for Trotsky in contrast to the common perception that he was consistently hostile to it. [See Nove, “New Light on Trotsky’s Economic Views,” 95-96; Nove, “Trockij, Collectivization and the Five Year Plan,” 399-401.]
- ⁵⁵ Trotsky, *Writings [1932]*, 275. See also, *Writings [1929]*, 360, 376-377; Trotsky, *Writings [1930-31]*, 99; Trotsky, *Writings [1932]*, 273.
- ⁵⁶ On this point, see Deutscher, *Prophet Outcast*, 101.
- ⁵⁷ Trotsky, *Writings [1930]*, 117. See also Trotsky, *Writings [1930-31]*, 100, 287; Trotsky, *Writings [1932]*, 260, 275. In March 1933 Trotsky asserted, “Even if the Politburo consisted of seven universal geniuses, of seven Marxes or seven Lenins, it would still be unable, all on its own, with all its creative imagination, to assert command over the economy of 170 million people.” [Trotsky, *Writings [1932-33]*, 96.]
- ⁵⁸ Trotsky, *Writings [1930-31]*, 51. See also Trotsky, *Writings [1929]*, 377; Trotsky, *Writings [1930]*, 116-117; Trotsky, *Writings [1930-31]*, 100, 287, 291; Trotsky, *Writings [1932]*, 274; Trotsky, *Writings [1932-33]*, 96.
- ⁵⁹ Trotsky, *Writings [1930]*, 125-129, 131, 147, 175-176, 353-354; Trotsky, *Writings [1930-31]*, 106-107, 209.
- ⁶⁰ Trotsky, *Writings [1930]*, 118, 124-125, 130-131, 147, Trotsky, *Writings [1930-31]*, 106; Trotsky, *Writings [1932]*, 37, 254, 279.
- ⁶¹ Trotsky, *Writings [1932]*, 280-281, 284.
- ⁶² Trotsky, *Writings [1932-33]*, 111.
- ⁶³ Trotsky, *Writings [1930]*, 118, 131, 147; Trotsky, *Writings [1930-31]*, 107; Trotsky, *Writings [1932]*, 282; Trotsky, *Writings [1932-33]*, 112.
- ⁶⁴ Trotsky, *Writings [1932-33]*, 111. See also, Trotsky, *Writings [1930]*, 130, 147; 1931-32, 106, 231; Trotsky, *Writings [1932]*, 282.
- ⁶⁵ Trotsky, *Writings [1930]*, 117-118. See also *ibid.*, 137; Trotsky, *Writings [1930-31]*, 291.
- ⁶⁶ Trotsky, *Writings [1930]*, 117, 137; Trotsky, *Writings [1930-31]*, 106, 291; Trotsky, *Writings [1932]*, 275, 284; Trotsky, *Writings [1932-33]*, 78, 96.
- ⁶⁷ Trotsky, *Writings [1929]*, 360. This was not the first time Trotsky had criticized the administrative excesses employed by the leadership against the kulaks. As early as the summer of 1928 Trotsky had described the exceptional methods employed in the grain collection campaign as “methods from the arsenal of war communism,” “measures of administrative violence,” and “measures of desperation.” Furthermore, he had denied that these methods had anything in common with a correct course. However, he had also asserted that these methods had been made “inevitable” by the “entire preceding policy.” [Leon Trotsky, *The Third International After Lenin*. Trans. John G. Wright (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1970), 279; Leon Trotsky, *The Challenge of the Left Opposition (1928-29)*, ed. Naomi Allen and George Saunders (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1981), 168, 236. See also Deutscher, *Prophet Outcast*, 447, Moshe Lewin, “The Disappearance of Planning in the Plan,” 279.]
- ⁶⁸ Trotsky, *Writings [1929]*, 360; Trotsky, *Writings [1930]*, 111-112. See also *ibid.*, 135-136, 145.
- ⁶⁹ Trotsky, *Writings [1930]*, 109. See also *ibid.*, 173.
- ⁷⁰ Trotsky, *Writings [1930]*, 109-110. See also *ibid.*, 136, 173, 200-201.
- ⁷¹ Trotsky, *Writings [1930]*, 110, 203.
- ⁷² Trotsky, *Writings [1930]*, 201.
- ⁷³ Trotsky, *Writings [1932]*, 270.
- ⁷⁴ Trotsky, *Writings [1930]*, 113. Trotsky predicted that if payment of interest were forbidden, the collective farms would “find a way to do it secretly.” [Trotsky, *Writings [1930-31]*, 85.]
- ⁷⁵ Trotsky, *Writings [1930]*, 113.
- ⁷⁶ Trotsky, *Writings [1932]*, 276. Furthermore, Trotsky suggested that even greater differentiation would result if collectivization were relatively successful, for any increase in agricultural productivity would create millions of surplus workers which industry would not be able to absorb. Then, alongside the growth of a “semiproletarian, semipauperized population” in the countryside would occur “the growth at the other pole of rich collectives and more wealthy peasants inside the poor and medium collectives.” [Trotsky, *Writings [1930-31]*, 207.]
- ⁷⁷ Trotsky, *Writings [1930]*, 135-136. See also *ibid.*, 96. For other predictions about the growth of a kulak stratum

within the collectives, see Trotsky, *Writings [1930-31]*, 58; Trotsky, *Writings [1932-33]*, 73, 110-111.

⁷⁸ Trotsky, *Writings [1930]*, 130, 147; Trotsky, *Writings [1930-31]*, 232, Trotsky, *Writings [1932]*, 284. It is evidently on the basis of such remarks as these and Trotsky's remarks on the possibility of the growth of a kulak layer within the collectives that Robert McNeal has misleadingly claimed that Trotsky was "eager to associate himself" with the "destruction of the kulaks (which Trotsky considered insufficiently thorough)." [Robert McNeal, "Trotskyist Interpretations of Stalinism," in *Stalinism: Essays in Historical Interpretation*, ed. Robert C. Tucker (W. W. Norton & Company: New York, 1970), 32.

⁷⁹ Trotsky, *Writings [1930]*, 124, 130, 147; Trotsky, *Writings [1932]*, 283-284.

⁸⁰ Trotsky, *Writings [1932-33]*, 110.

⁸¹ For example, "Stalin" in Trotsky, *Writings [1930-31]*, 63; "Stalinists" in Trotsky, *Writings [1930-31]*, 215; "Stalinist leadership" in Trotsky, *Writings [1930]*, 137; "leadership" in Trotsky, *Writings [1930]*, 107, 111, 112, 136.

⁸² Trotsky, *Writings [1929]*, p. 367; *Biulleten' oppositsii* 7 (November-December 1929), 3.

⁸³ Trotsky, *Writings [1930-31]*, 62, 63; *Biulleten' oppositsii* 17-18 (November-December 1930), 23.

⁸⁴ Trotsky, *Writings [1930]*, 115; *Biulleten' oppositsii* 9 (February-March 1930), 6.

⁸⁵ Trotsky, *Writings [1930-31]*, 215; *Biulleten' oppositsii* 20, (April 1931), 7.

⁸⁶ Trotsky, *Writings [1930-31]*, 286; *Biulleten' oppositsii* 23 (Aug. 1931), 6.

⁸⁷ Trotsky, *Writings [1932]*, 66; *Biulleten' oppositsii* 27 (March 1932), 3.

⁸⁸ Trotsky, *Writings [1932]*, 275; *Biulleten' oppositsii* 31 (Nov. 1932), 9. See also Trotsky, *Writings [1930-31]*, 58; *Biulleten' oppositsii* 17-18 (November-December 1930), 25.

⁸⁹ Trotsky, *Writings [1930-31]*, 214-215.

⁹⁰ Trotsky, *Writings [1930-31]*, 63.

⁹¹ Trotsky, *Writings [1930-31]*, 215. For additional passages largely attributing the turn to a reaction by the leadership to kulak resistance, see Trotsky, *Writings [1930]*, 108-109, 136; Trotsky, *Writings [1930-31]*, 91; Trotsky, *Writings [1932]*, 48; Trotsky, *Writings [1932-33]*, 97. For additional passages stressing the role of pressure by the Opposition and/or working class, see Trotsky, *Writings [1929]*, 367; Trotsky, *Writings [1930]*, 106, 136; Trotsky, *Writings [1930-31]*, 103, 227; Trotsky, *Writings [1932-33]*, 49.

⁹² Trotsky, *Writings [1930]*, 136-137.

⁹³ Trotsky, *Writings [1930-31]*, 215.

⁹⁴ Trotsky, *Writings [1930-31]*, 91.

⁹⁵ Trotsky, *Writings [1930]*, 106-107.

⁹⁶ Leon Trotsky, *Writings of Leon Trotsky: Supplement (1929-33)* (New York, Pathfinder Press, 1979), 24-25. Shachtman's *Militant* article was dated March 1930. Peter Drucker has placed Shachtman's visit in February. [Peter Drucker, *Max Schachtman and His Left: A Socialist's Odyssey through the "American Century"* (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1994), 48.]

⁹⁷ Trotsky, *Writings [1930]*, 108-109, 110-111. See also *ibid.*, 132, 179; Trotsky, *Writings [1930-31]*, 84.

⁹⁸ Trotsky, *Writings [1930]*, 111.

⁹⁹ Trotsky, *Writings [1930]*, 179. See also Trotsky, *Writings [1932-33]*, 97.

¹⁰⁰ As David Law has noted,

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 characterized his self-defence in the wake of the Moscow trials. His hasty judgments were clearly founded upon political predispositions. [David Law, "Trotsky in Opposition: 1923-1940," 169.]

¹⁰¹ Trotsky, *Writings [1930-31]*, 66-69. See also Trotsky, *Writings [1930-31]*, 200.

¹⁰² Trotsky, *Writings [1930-31]*, 198, 200-201. See also Trotsky, *Writings [1930-31]*, 192-195. In late 1930 Trotsky also accepted the validity of the accusations in the trial of the "Toiling Peasants' Party." Noting that *Pravda* had revealed the "adherence" of A. P. Smirnov and I. A. Teodorovich, both former Commissars of Agriculture, "to the Kondratievs," and he commented that the article was "basically a paraphrasing" of the declarations of the Opposition during 1926-1927. [Trotsky, *Writings [1930]*, 112.] Regarding the Menshevik trial, Trotsky's sole doubt was that Riazanov had participated in the conspiracy along with the Mensheviks. Trotsky argued that Riazanov would have been incapable of such treason, for his entire career had been devoted to the struggle against

revisionism, social democracy, and Menshevism. [Trotsky, *Writings [1930-31]*, 192-197.]

¹⁰³ Trotsky, *Writings [1930-31]*, 67-68.

¹⁰⁴ Trotsky, *Writings [1930-31]*, 201. In his April 4, 1931 draft theses on the Russian Question Trotsky also spoke of the “Menshevik-saboteur program of industrialization and collectivization. [Trotsky, *Writings [1930-31]*, 216. See also *ibid.*, 206, 219.] And in an article written September 2, 1931, Trotsky reaffirmed, “The artificial speedup of the rates of industrialization and collectivization can be just as much an act of sabotage as the artificial slowing-down. [Trotsky, *Writings [1930-31]*, 307.]

¹⁰⁵ Trotsky, *Writings [1930-31]*, 216. See also *ibid.*, 206, 219.

¹⁰⁶ Trotsky, *Writings [1930-31]*, 307.

¹⁰⁷ Trotsky, *Writings [1932]*, 66.

¹⁰⁸ Trotsky, *Writings [1932-33]*, 97.

¹⁰⁹ See R. W. Davies, *The Soviet Collective Farm, 1929-1930*, The Industrialisation of Soviet Russia, vol. 2 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1980), 79-80; David Law, “Trotsky in Opposition: 1923-1940,” 1:113-114; Alec Nove, “New Light on Trotsky’s Economic Views,” 94; Alec Nove, “Trockij, Collectivisation and the Five Year Plan,” 395; and Alec Nove, “Trotsky and the ‘Left’ Opposition, 1929-21,” 49.

¹¹⁰ Davies, *The Soviet Collective Farm*, 279-80.

¹¹¹ Thus, in 1937 the recently exiled Oppositionist Victor Serge described the situation in the countryside as follows:

There are rich *colkhozes* and there are poor ones. Within the *colkhozes* themselves, the distribution of work and of profits is unequal in the extreme. The administrators and their entourage of “activists” are first served. Then there are the poor agriculturalists, the rich, and the average. That depends upon the individual parcel of land, upon the relations you have with the managers, and upon the number of workers and of mouths there are in the family. [Victor Serge, *Russia Twenty Years After*, trans. Max Schachtman, new ed. prepared by Susan Weissman (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1996), 36.]

Similarly, Isaac Deutscher described a “new social differentiation” that occurred in the countryside during this period. [Isaac Deutscher, *Stalin: A Political Biography*, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967), 331.] More recently, R. W. Davies has observed that in 1930, “As a result of the strengthening of the personal economy of the collective farmers, and the restoration of the free market, inequality between former poor peasants and former middle peasants persisted, as the supporters of socialization had feared.” [R. W. Davies, *The Soviet Collective Farm*, 161.] Stephan Merl has noted that “differences in the social well-being of *kolkhozniki* within the same district were obviously much stronger in the 1930s than between collective farms in the 1920s.” [Stephan Merl, “Social Mobility in the Countryside” in *Social Dimensions of Soviet Industrialization*, ed. William G. Rosenberg and Lewis H. Siegelbaum (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1993), 42.] Sheila Fitzpatrick has also commented upon the rapid stratification of the *kolkhozy* in this period into a privileged layer of “white collar” workers and machine operators on one hand, and a layer of “*lumpen*” field workers on the other. [Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Stalin’s Peasants: Resistance and Survival in the Russian Village after Collectivization* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 139-142.]

¹¹² Deutscher, *Prophet Outcast*, 106.

¹¹³ Alec Nove, “New Light on Trotsky’s Economic Views,” 94.

¹¹⁴ See, for example, Trotsky, *Writings [1929]*, 284; Trotsky, *Writings [1930]*, 15, 96, 106, 179, 208; Trotsky, *Writings [1930-31]*, 64, 78, 215, 280, 291; Trotsky, *Writings [1932]*, 42, 43, 67, 228; Trotsky, *Writings [1932-33]*, 49.

¹¹⁵ Trotsky, *Writings [1930]*, 116.

¹¹⁶ Trotsky, *Writings [1930]*, 114.

¹¹⁷ Trotsky, *Writings [1930]*, 123. See also Trotsky, *Writings [1930]*, 138-139, 174, 204. Subsequently, Trotsky also viewed Stalin’s reintroduction of piecework in June 1931 and his unexpected reduction of the industrial targets for the Second Five-Year Plan in January 1933 as turns to the right precipitated by crisis.

¹¹⁸ Trotsky, *Writings, Supplement (1929-33)*, 25.

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- ¹¹⁹ Trotsky, *Writings [1930-31]*, 51, 61.
- ¹²⁰ Trotsky, *Writings [1930-31]*, 285
- ¹²¹ Trotsky, *Writings [1932]*, 276; Trotsky, *Writings [1932-33]*, 46, 49, 75, 80, 102-103.
- ¹²² Trotsky, *Writings [1930]*, 135. See also *ibid.*, 96, 114, 123, 126, 138, 172, 174, 200, 202-204; Trotsky, *Writings [1930-31]*, 51, 61, 102, 183-184, 291, 295.
- ¹²³ Trotsky, *Writings [1932]*, 280; Trotsky, *Writings [1932-33]*, 97-98, 96. See also Trotsky, *Writings [1932]*, 121-122, 259, 277-279; Trotsky, *Writings [1932-33]*, 45-46, 75-77, 96-99, 100, 103.
- ¹²⁴ Trotsky, *Writings [1932-33]*, 75. See also Trotsky, *Writings [1930]*, 172, 174.
- ¹²⁵ Trotsky, *Writings [1932-33]*, 77, 75.
- ¹²⁶ For examples of this line during the years 1930-1933, see Jane Degras, ed., *The Communist International 1919-1943: Documents*, vol. 3, 1929-1943 (London: Frank Cass and Company Limited, 1971), 102-109, 112-114, 157-164, 190-192, 221-230.
- ¹²⁷ William L. Shirer, *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich: A History of Nazi Germany* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1960), 136; Alan Bullock, *Hitler: A Study in Tyranny* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1952), 135-137.
- ¹²⁸ Deutscher, *Prophet Outcast*, 129-130; C. L. R. James, *World Revolution, 1917-1936: The Rise and Fall of the Communist International* (New York: Pioneer Publishers, 1937), 320-322; Shirer, *Rise and Fall*, 137-138.
- ¹²⁹ Quoted in James, *World Revolution*, 329; Deutscher, *Prophet Outcast*, 130. See also E. H. Carr, *Twilight of the Comintern, 1930-1935* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1982), 25-26.
- ¹³⁰ Quoted in Deutscher, *Prophet Outcast*, 130-131.
- ¹³¹ Carr, *Twilight of the Comintern*, 26-28; James, *World Revolution*, 329-330.
- ¹³² Carr, *Twilight of the Comintern*, 31-32; Deutscher, *Prophet Outcast*, 152; Fischer, *German Communists*, 105; James, *World Revolution*, 330-331.
- ¹³³ Carr, *Twilight of the Comintern*, 41-43; Deutscher, *Prophet Outcast*, 152; Ben Fowkes, *Communism in Germany under the Weimar Republic* (London: Macmillan Press Ltd., 1984), 164-165.
- ¹³⁴ Carr, *Twilight of the Comintern*, 50, 56-59, 61; Fowkes, *Communism in Germany*, 165-166; James, *World Revolution*, 333-334.
- ¹³⁵ Deutscher, *Prophet Outcast*, 158; Shirer, *Rise and Fall*, 165-166.
- ¹³⁶ Carr, *Twilight of the Comintern*, 61-62; Deutscher, *Prophet Outcast*, 158; Fowkes, *Communism in Germany*, 166-167; James, 341-346; Shirer, 165-166.
- ¹³⁷ Degras, *Communist International*, 3:224-226. See also James, *World Revolution*, 346-348.
- ¹³⁸ Degras, *Communist International*, 3:213; Deutscher, *Prophet Outcast*, 143.
- ¹³⁹ Carr, *Twilight of the Comintern*, 74, 77; Fowkes, *Communism in Germany*, 168; James, *World Revolution*, 350; Shirer, *Rise and Fall*, 170-172.
- ¹⁴⁰ Carr, *Twilight of the Comintern*, 79-82; Fowkes, *Communism in Germany*, 168-169; Shirer, *Rise and Fall*, 172-182.
- ¹⁴¹ For other accounts of Trotsky's views on Comintern policy during this period, see Kunal Chattopadhyay, *The Marxism of Leon Trotsky* (Kolkata: Progressive Publishers, 2006), 506-515; Cliff, *Trotsky: The Darker the Night*, 108-138; Deutscher, *Prophet Outcast*, 131-144; Duncan Hallas, *Trotsky's Marxism* (London: Bookmarks, 1979), 66-71; Baruch Knei-Paz, *The Social and Political Thought of Leon Trotsky* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), 350-358; Ernest Mandel, introduction to *The Struggle against Fascism in Germany*, by Leon Trotsky (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1971), 9-46; Ernest Mandel, *Trotsky: A Study in the Dynamic of His Thought* (London: NLB, 1979), 88-98; Mandel, *Trotsky as Alternative*, 106-126; John Molyneaux, *Leon Trotsky's Theory of Revolution* (New York: St. Martin's Press, Inc., 1981), 151-156; Thatcher, *Trotsky*, 175-182; and Robert Wistrich, *Trotsky: Fate of a Revolutionary* (New York: Stein and Day, 1979), 176-194.
- ¹⁴² Leon Trotsky, *Leon Trotsky on China*, ed. Les Evans and Russell Block (New York: Monad Press, 1976), 275, 282-283, 317, 346, 350-353; Trotsky, *Challenge of the Left Opposition (1928-29)*, 33, 76-77, 113, 154.
- ¹⁴³ Trotsky, *Writings [1929]*, 170, 224. See also *ibid.*, 432-433, 436.
- ¹⁴⁴ Trotsky, *Writings [1929]*, 328.
- ¹⁴⁵ Trotsky, *Writings [1929]*, 367-368.
- ¹⁴⁶ Trotsky, *Writings [1930]*, 53; Trotsky, *Struggle against Fascism*, 64.
- ¹⁴⁷ Trotsky, *Struggle against Fascism*, 56. See also Trotsky, *Writings [1930]*, 53.
- ¹⁴⁸ Trotsky, *Struggle against Fascism*, 122. See also *ibid.*, 59.
- ¹⁴⁹ Trotsky, *Struggle against Fascism*, 59. See also *ibid.*, 59, 155, 266, 284.

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- ¹⁵⁰ Trotsky, *Struggle against Fascism*, 143, 280.
- ¹⁵¹ Trotsky, *Struggle against Fascism*, 158. See also *ibid.* 143, 281.
- ¹⁵² Trotsky, *Struggle against Fascism*, 281, 144, 155. See also *ibid.*, 58, 158, 280-282.
- ¹⁵³ Trotsky, *Struggle against Fascism*, 155.
- ¹⁵⁴ Trotsky, *Struggle against Fascism*, 125.
- ¹⁵⁵ Trotsky, *Struggle against Fascism*, 126.
- ¹⁵⁶ Trotsky, *Struggle against Fascism*, 278. See also *ibid.*, 58, 282, 285-286.
- ¹⁵⁷ Trotsky, *Struggle against Fascism*, 160. See also *ibid.*, 144, 156, 161-162, 276, 277-278.
- ¹⁵⁸ Trotsky, *Struggle against Fascism*, 161.
- ¹⁵⁹ Trotsky explained that the SPD was a “party that leans upon the workers but serves the bourgeoisie.” [Trotsky, *Struggle against Fascism*, 153-154. On this point, see also *ibid.*, 284; Trotsky, *Writings [1929]*, 392.] At the same time, Trotsky asserted that the SPD had facilitated the rise of Nazism by its failure to inspire the petty bourgeoisie with a revolutionary proletarian alternative. [Trotsky, *Struggle against Fascism*, 284-285. See also *ibid.*, 70, 144-145, 148-149, 152, 318.] Furthermore, he insisted that Social Democracy was paving the way for a fascist takeover by supporting the Brüning and Papen governments which were transitional regimes on the road to fascism. [Trotsky, *Struggle against Fascism*, 150, 275-277.]
- ¹⁶⁰ Trotsky, *Struggle against Fascism*, 154-155.
- ¹⁶¹ Trotsky, *Struggle against Fascism*, 288. See also *ibid.* 70, 145, 155; 1929, 391-392.
- ¹⁶² Trotsky, *Writings [1930]*, 140; Trotsky, *Writings [1929]*, 393.
- ¹⁶³ Trotsky, *Struggle against Fascism*, 70, 285. See also *ibid.*, 125. The KPD did, on a number of occasions, appeal to the ranks of the SPD for a united front. However, in Trotsky’s view, “in each of these instances only a purely formal, declamatory application of the united front was inaugurated.” [Ibid., 183.] Such, for example, was the case with a pamphlet on the need for an “antifascist united front,” written by Thälmann and published in July 1932. In that pamphlet Thälmann urged rank-and-file-Social Democratic workers to join the KPD front group, the Antifascist Alliance, for “a struggle against the whole system, against capitalism.” [Ibid., 290, 292, 295.] At the same time, Thälmann rejected any alliance between the KPD and SPD, and the possibility of negotiations with the SPD leadership. [Ibid., 295-296.] In Trotsky’s view, such an approach was a clear example of “ultraleft ultimatism.” [Ibid., 249, 295.] First, it was unrealistic to believe that masses of SPD workers would enlist in a militant struggle against capitalism. “The Social Democratic workers,” Trotsky explained, “remain Social Democrats precisely because they still believe in the gradual, reformist road to the transformation of capitalism into socialism.” [Ibid., 292.] Beyond that, Trotsky argued that the masses of Social Democratic workers had not yet been convinced that a genuine struggle against fascism entailed a break with their own leadership. It was “the task of the Communist Party to really show them whether or not the Social Democratic leaders want to fight.” To do so, the KPD had to subject the leadership of the SPD to a test by repeatedly appealing to it, “in the factory and workshop, in town and county, in the whole nation, today and tomorrow,” to join in a united front. [Ibid., 296.]
- ¹⁶⁴ See Trotsky’s “Against National Communism! (Lessons of the ‘Red Referendum’),” Trotsky, *Struggle against Fascism*, 93-114.
- ¹⁶⁵ Trotsky, *Struggle against Fascism*, 72. See also *ibid.*, 108-109, 138-139, 171-172. Trotsky also suggested at various times that the KPD apply a policy of the united front in industry “on the basis of a definite program of demands,” that it elaborate with the SPD a “system of joint measures” against “the regime of emergency decrees and Bonapartism,” and that it press Social Democracy “to the wall with a concrete plan of collaboration with the USSR.” [Trotsky, *Struggle against Fascism*, 257, 321-322.] Nevertheless, Trotsky stressed the necessarily limited goals of the united front, rejecting the notion that the front would advance a broad political program shared by all its participants. In this regard, Trotsky stressed that he was not proposing that the KPD conclude any electoral agreement or work out any joint platform with the SPD, or even suggesting that the two parties share common publications, placards, or banners. [Trotsky, *Struggle against Fascism*, 138-139.] Beyond that, he repeatedly insisted that within the united front the KPD must not surrender its political and organizational independence, including the independent leadership of “strikes, demonstrations, and political campaigns,” as well as the right to denounce its reformist ally. [Trotsky, *Struggle against Fascism*, 163, 179, 256.]
- ¹⁶⁶ Trotsky, *Struggle against Fascism*, 248-249. See also *ibid.*, 72-73.
- ¹⁶⁷ Trotsky, *Struggle against Fascism*, 72-73, 137, 171-172, 179, 296, 304. Trotsky further argued that a similar tactic could be utilized to expose the Social Democratic leadership on the question of war. To this end, in June 1932 Trotsky urged the Comintern and its trade-union organization, the Profintern, to propose to the Second International

and its International Federation of Trade Unions, “a definite, carefully considered program of practical measures against the war danger.” In Trotsky’s view, it was far less likely that the Social Democratic leaders would agree to such an alliance than to a united front against fascism, for “experience has shown that war opens up heady careers for the reformist leaders.” Thus, such a proposal could be utilized to expose “the deceit and the decay of Social Democratic pacifism.” [Trotsky, *Writings [1932]*, 114-115. See also Trotsky, *Struggle against Fascism*, 307.]

¹⁶⁸ Trotsky, *Struggle against Fascism*, 323,

¹⁶⁹ Trotsky, *Writings [1929]*, 229.

¹⁷⁰ Trotsky, *Writings [1930-31]*, 227.

¹⁷¹ Trotsky, *Struggle against Fascism*, 103.

¹⁷² Trotsky, *Writings [1930]*, 59.

¹⁷³ Trotsky, *Struggle against Fascism*, 183.

¹⁷⁴ As Trotsky noted in an article of October 17, 1929, the left “zigzag” based on the theory of “the Third Period” was “as if especially timed for sowing illusions, encouraging adventurous undertakings and preparing for the next turn to come—to the right.” [Trotsky, *Writings [1929]*, 367-368. See also, for example, Trotsky, *Writings [1930]*, 140, 179-180; Trotsky, *Writings [1930-3]*, 215-216; Trotsky, *Writings [1932]*, 102, 167; Trotsky, *Struggle against Fascism*, 111, 170, 215-216.]

¹⁷⁵ Trotsky, *Writings [1930]*, 61-62.

¹⁷⁶ Trotsky, *Writings [1932-33]*, 22-23. Trotsky’s reference here was to a recently reported interview of Stalin with Thomas Campbell, an American specialist in agricultural machinery, in which Stalin took Campbell’s hand in both of his.

¹⁷⁷ Trotsky, *Struggle against Fascism*, 346.

¹⁷⁸ Cohen, *Bukharin*, 334-335; 349-350, 354; Robert Vincent Daniels, *The Conscience of the Revolution: Communist Opposition in Soviet Russia* (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 1960), 368-369, 378; J. Arch Getty and Oleg V. Naumov, eds., translations by Benjamin Sher, *The Road to Terror: Stalin and the Self-Destruction of the Bolsheviks, 1932-1939*, 45-40, 95-97; Medvedev, *Let History Judge*, 68; Leonard Shapiro, *The Communist Party of the Soviet Union*, 2nd ed. (Vintage Books, Random House: New York, 1971), 380-381, 393, 395. Getty and Naumov note that these “mandatory recantations were designed not only to show a united face to the world but also to ‘disarm’ the lower-level followers of the leading oppositionists.” [Getty and Naumov, *Road to Terror*, 45.]

¹⁷⁹ Cohen, *Bukharin*, 355; Daniels, *Conscience*, 378, 429-432; Shapiro, *Communist Party*, 394.

¹⁸⁰ Officially, one percent of the 170,000 expelled at this time were removed for oppositional activity—probably mostly Rightists—and it is possible that more supporters of the Right were expelled under other criteria. See J. Arch Getty, *Origins of the Great Purges: The Soviet Communist Party Reconsidered, 1933-1938* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 46. See also Daniels, *Conscience*, 343, Davies, *The Soviet Economy in Turmoil*, 134; Fainsod, *Smolensk*, 211-219, Shapiro, *Communist Party*, 439.

¹⁸¹ Quoted in Tucker, *Stalin in Power*, 126.

¹⁸² Stalin, *Problems of Leninism*, 574; see also Tucker, *Stalin in Power*, 153.

¹⁸³ See Trotsky, *Writings [1930]*, 230, 260-261, 345-346, 389-390; Trotsky, *Writings [1930-31]*, 273, 279; Trotsky, *Writings [1932]*, 31-32, 40-41, 53, 62-64, 69, 122-124, 389; Trotsky, *Struggle against Fascism*, 222.

¹⁸⁴ Davies, *Crisis and Progress*, 143. For Trotsky’s response to this action, see Trotsky, *Writings [1932]*, 62-72.

¹⁸⁵ At this time, according to Victor Serge, members of the Left Opposition still at large numbered less than a thousand. [Victor Serge, *Memoirs of a Revolutionary, 1901-1941* (London: Oxford University Press, 1963), 254.]

¹⁸⁶ Serge, *Russia*, 114.

¹⁸⁷ *Biulleten’ oppositsii* 17-18 (November-December 1930), 39. For descriptions of the circumstances of incarceration of Oppositionists during this period, see especially Ante Ciliga, *Russian Enigma*, 151-152, 189, 200-202.

¹⁸⁸ Deutscher, *Prophet Outcast*, 84. See also Rex Winsbury, “Jacob Blumkin, 1892-1929,” *History Today* 27, no. 11 (November 1977): 712-718.

¹⁸⁹ Trotsky, *Writings [1930]*, 157, 389; Deutscher, *Prophet Outcast*, 91.

¹⁹⁰ This point is made in R. W. Davies, “The Syrtsov-Lominadze Affair,” *Soviet Studies* 33, no. 1 (January 1981): 29. See also Davies, *The Soviet Economy in Turmoil*, 335; Shapiro, *Communist Party*, 393-394.

¹⁹¹ Cohen, *Bukharin*, 342-343; Conquest, *Great Terror*, 51; Daniels, *Conscience*, 378-379; Davies, *The Soviet Economy in Turmoil*, 411-415; Davies, "The Syrtsov-Lominadze Affair," 29-50; Medvedev, *Let History Judge*, 142; Shapiro, *Communist Party*, 395; Tucker, *Stalin in Power*, 209.

¹⁹² Police reports from this same period indicate that many ordinary people described themselves as "us," and the regime as "them," and hostility to the regime was expressed in popular poems and songs. [J. Arch Getty and Oleg V. Naumov, eds., *The Road to Terror: Stalin and the Self-Destruction of the Bolsheviks, 1932-1939* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), 64.]

¹⁹³ Davies, *Crisis and Progress*, 250.

¹⁹⁴ Quoted in Cohen, *Bukharin*, 343-344. See also Conquest, *The Great Terror*, 52; Daniels, *Conscience*, 379-380; Davies, *Crisis and Progress*, 248-249; Medvedev, *Let History Judge*, 142-143; Boris I. Nicolaevsky, *Power and the Soviet Elite: "The Letter of an Old Bolshevik" and Other Essays by Boris I. Nicolaevsky*, ed. Janet D. Zagoria (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor Paperback, 1975), 28-29; Tucker, *Stalin in Power*, 211. A copy of the platform was published in *Izvestiia TsK*, nos. 8-12, 1990. A translated excerpt can be found in Getty and Naumov, *Road to Terror*, 54-58.

¹⁹⁵ Conquest, *The Great Terror*, 55-56; Davies, *Crisis and Progress*, 254-255.

¹⁹⁶ Davies, *Crisis and Progress*, 244-246. Smirnov had met Sedov in July 1931 while on assignment in Berlin, and had promised at that time to send information to the Left Opposition. Further communication between Smirnov and Sedov was transmitted by the Soviet official Gol'tsmann. In June of that year Trotsky asserted that "the Left Opposition is now achieving a second enrollment throughout the entire country." [Trotsky, *Writings [1932]*, 124.]

¹⁹⁷ Pierre Broué, "Party Opposition to Stalin (1930-1932) and the First Moscow Trial," in *Essays on Revolutionary Culture and Stalinism: Selected Papers from the Third World Congress for Soviet and East European Studies*, ed. John W. Strong (Columbus, OH: Slavic Publishers, 1989), 100.

¹⁹⁸ Trotsky, *Writings [1932-33]*, 33. An additional example of activity by Left Oppositionists was noted in a secret party report from the North Caucasus in September 1933. It stated that "since Autumn 1932 a counterrevolutionary . . . organization headed by 'a group of Bolshevik-Leninists'" had existed in Krasnodar. [Getty & Naumov, *Road to Terror*, 66.]

¹⁹⁹ Broué, "Party Opposition to Stalin," 104.

²⁰⁰ The first scholar to discover the existence of the 1932 oppositional bloc was Pierre Broué. See Pierre Broué, "Trotsky et le bloc des oppositions de 1932," *Cahiers Leon Trotsky*, no. 5 (January-March 1980): 5-37; and Broué, "Party Opposition to Stalin," 98-111. Also see Davies, *Crisis and Progress*, 246-247; J. Arch Getty, *Origins of the Great Purges*, 121; J. Arch Getty, "Trotsky in Exile: The Founding of the Fourth International," *Soviet Studies* 38, no. 1 (January 1986): 28-29; Getty & Naumov, *Road to Terror*, 62-63; Law, "Trotsky in Opposition," 133-137.

²⁰¹ Broué, "Party Opposition to Stalin," 105-106; Cohen, *Bukharin*, 343-344; Conquest, *Great Terror*, 53-55; Daniels, *Conscience*, 380; Davies, *Crisis and Progress*, 253; Nicolaevsky, *Power and the Soviet Elite*, 29-30; Medvedev, *Let History Judge*, 142-143; Serge, *Memoirs*, 259.

²⁰² Broué, "Party Opposition to Stalin," 105; Davies, *Crisis and Progress*, 254-255n333; Medvedev, *Let History Judge*, 107; Serge, *Russia*, 114. For Trotsky's discussion of the wave of arrests of Left Oppositionist in late 1932 and early 1933, see Trotsky, *Writings [1932-33]*, 107-108. In October 1932 Trotsky noted that the international press was reporting "new mass arrests among the Trotskyists." (Trotsky, *Writings [1932]*, 253); Trotsky *Writings [1932-33]*, 79. See also *ibid.*, 107.] On March 3, 1933, asserting that the new repressions had "assumed a mass character such as did not occur even in 1928," he noted that the "chief blows, naturally, are directed against the Bolshevik-Leninists." [Trotsky, *Writings [1932-33]*, 107.]

²⁰³ The joint CC-CCC also reprimanded Rykov, Tomskii, and V. V. Schmidt for allegedly supporting these "anti-party elements." [Daniels, *Conscience*, 380; Davies, *Crisis and Progress*, 254-255n333; Medvedev, *Let History Judge*, 155.]

²⁰⁴ Cohen, *Bukharin*, 335. See also Tucker, 146-171; Isaac Deutscher, *Stalin: A Political Biography*, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1966), 317.

²⁰⁵ Davies, *The Soviet Economy in Turmoil*, 470-471; Tucker, *Stalin in Power*, 128-129, ; Medvedev, *Let History Judge*, 147.

²⁰⁶ Shapiro, *Communist Party*, 439.

²⁰⁷ Trotsky, *Writings [1930]*, 144.

²⁰⁸ Trotsky, *Writings [1930-31]*, 211. See also Trotsky, *Writings [1930]*, 145, 253.

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- ²⁰⁹ Trotsky, *Writings [1930]*, 204. See also Trotsky, *Writings [1930-31]*, 166. Even then, according to Trotsky, it was being held against the “wishes of ‘the top.’” [Trotsky, *Writings [1930]*, 204.] The basis for this assertion seems to have been reports Trotsky received of rumors that Stalin wanted to postpone the Congress again until the autumn. [See Trotsky, *Writings [1930]*, 185]
- ²¹⁰ Trotsky, *Writings [1930]*, 254-256.
- ²¹¹ Trotsky, *Writings [1930]*, 257.
- ²¹² Trotsky, *Writings [1930]*, 253. See also Trotsky, *Writings [1930]*, 145, 204; Trotsky, *Writings [1930-31]*, 166, 211-212.
- ²¹³ Trotsky, *Writings [1930]*, 15.
- ²¹⁴ Trotsky, *Writings [1930-31]*, 45. See also Trotsky, *Writings [1930]*, 145, 209; Trotsky, *Writings [1930-31]*, 74, 166, 211; Trotsky, *Writings [1932-33]*, 104, 112.
- ²¹⁵ Trotsky, *Writings [1930]*, 79, 80, 255-256; Trotsky, *Writings [1930-31]*, 61; Cohen, *Bukharin*, 355; Daniels, *Conscience*, 378, 429-432; Shapiro, *Communist Party*, 394.
- ²¹⁶ See Trotsky, *Writings [1930]*, 230, 260-261, 345-346, 389-390; Trotsky, *Writings [1930-31]*, 273, 279; Trotsky, *Writings [1932]*, 31-32, 40-41, 53, 62-64, 69, 122-124, 389; Trotsky, *Struggle against Fascism*, 222.
- ²¹⁷ Trotsky, *Writings [1932-33]*, 107]. Regarding physical abuse, in early 1930 Trotsky denounced the continued detention of Rakovskii in the harsh climate of Barnaul after two heart attacks. The following year he accused Stalin of intentionally permitting the prominent Oppositionist, Kote Tsintsadze, to die of tuberculosis in the Crimea instead of transferring him to a sanatorium in Sukhumi as requested by his friends. And in January 1932 Trotsky reported information he had received regarding “the most frightful injuries and acts of violence at the isolation camp in the Upper Urals,” where Oppositionists on a hunger strike had been beaten and force-fed. [See Trotsky, *Writings [1930]*, 79, 157-158; Trotsky, *Writings [1930-31]*, 118-123; Trotsky, *Writings [1932]*, 15; 358n 4.]
- ²¹⁸ In October 1930 Trotsky spoke of the “raids and beatings (as, for example in Leipzig)” to which the supporters of the ILO had been subjected in various countries. In fascist Italy the Communist Party had published names of Oppositionists, thereby “exposing them to attacks by the police”; the prominent Spanish Oppositionist Andres Nin had been expelled from the USSR “to reactionary Estonia”; and in Greece and China, “assassinations are perpetrated in ambush.” [Trotsky, *Writings [1930]*, 389-390. See also Trotsky, *Writings [1929]*, 95, 97, 183-408; Trotsky, *Writings [1930]*, 391; Trotsky, *Writings [1930-31]*, 365-366; Trotsky, *Writings [1932]*, 91; Trotsky, *Writings [1932]*, 166-168, 237.] Among the victims of Stalin, Trotsky included his daughter Zinaida Volkova, who committed suicide in Berlin on January 5, 1933. Trotsky explained that Zinaida’s disturbed mental condition was largely the result of Stalinist persecution. [Trotsky, *Writings [1932-33]*, 69-72.]
- ²¹⁹ Trotsky, *Writings [1930]*, 23. For additional comments on the execution of Bliumkin, see Trotsky, *Writings [1930]*, 22-25, 120-122, 146, 157, 160-161, 305-307, 342, 389.) Shortly afterwards, Trotsky denounced the “treacherous assassination” of the Oppositionists Silov and Rabinovich. [Trotsky, *Writings [1930]*, 157. See also *ibid.*, 389; Trotsky, *Writings [1932]*, 38, 65.] In June 1932 Trotsky also warned that Stalin “wants to use the war danger [with Japan] for a new, and if possible, physical annihilation of the Bolshevik-Leninists.” [Trotsky, *Writings [1932]*, 124.]
- ²²⁰ Trotsky, *Writings [1930]*, 145.
- ²²¹ Trotsky, *Writings [1930]*, 232, 258.
- ²²² Trotsky, *Writings [1930-31]*, 217.
- ²²³ Trotsky, *Writings [1932]*, 68. See also Trotsky, *Writings [1930]*, 206, 253, 257; Trotsky, *Writings [1930-31]*, 63; Trotsky, *Writings [1932]*, 18.
- ²²⁴ Trotsky, *Writings [1930]*, 257. It had been in 1929 that Piatakov had asserted at the time of his capitulation, “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.” [Ibid.]
- ²²⁵ Trotsky, *Writings [1932]*, 68. See also Trotsky, *Writings [1930]*, 80, 144, 206, 253, 257; Trotsky, *Writings [1930-31]*, 63; Trotsky, *Writings [1932]*, 18.
- ²²⁶ Trotsky, *Writings [1930]*, 176, 184.
- ²²⁷ Trotsky, *Writings [1930-31]*, 56-57, 63-64.
- ²²⁸ Trotsky, *Writings [1932]*, 40-41, 67, 69; Trotsky, *Struggle against Fascism*, 222.
- ²²⁹ Trotsky, *Writings [1932-33]*, 113-114.
- ²³⁰ Trotsky, *Writings Supplement (1929-33)*, 171.

²³¹ Trotsky, *Writings [1930]*, 131. At about the same time, he asserted in his open letter to the party that “a general examination of the general line” was needed as a first step towards “internal democracy within the party.” [Trotsky, *Writings [1930]*, 150.]

²³² Trotsky, *Writings [1930]*, 71. Other important demands included Trotsky’s call for an end to the dissolution of the party into the class, and an end to the Stalinist practice of “self-criticism.” [See Trotsky, *Writings [1930]*, 131, 150; Trotsky, *Writings [1930-31]*, 232.]

²³³ Trotsky, *Writings [1930]*, 150. See also *ibid.*, 185, 261; Trotsky, *Writings [1932]*, 254.

²³⁴ See for example, Trotsky, *Writings [1930]*, 150; Trotsky, *Writings [1930-31]*, 291; Trotsky, *Writings [1932]*, 71-72, 125-126; Trotsky, *Writings [1932-33]*, 112, 114, 142.

²³⁵ Trotsky, *Writings [1930-31]*, 57, 58. See also Trotsky, *Writings [1932-33]*, 88, 166. Similarly, in March of 1933, Trotsky argued on behalf of free criticism for all currents within the party and Komsomol, explaining, “The Bolshevik elements in the party will not be able to find each other, link up, reach agreements, and come out actively unless they differentiate themselves from the Thermidorean elements and from the passive mass; and this differentiation is unthinkable in turn without open criticism, without a platform, without discussions, without factional groups, i.e., without all the internalized sicknesses of the present official party being brought to the surface.” [Trotsky, *Writings [1932-33]*, 166. See also *ibid.*, 114; Trotsky, *Writings [1930-31]*, 106.]

²³⁶ Trotsky, *Writings [1930-31]*, 54-55, 308. In September 1931 Trotsky rejected the idea of applying the same slogan to the European sections of the Comintern. [Trotsky, *Writings [1930-31]*, 307.]

²³⁷ Trotsky, *Writings [1932]*, 71.

²³⁸ Trotsky, *Writings [1930]*, 86.

²³⁹ Trotsky, *Writings [1930]*, 86. See also *ibid.*, 259-260.

²⁴⁰ Trotsky, *Writings [1930]*, 259-260.

²⁴¹ Trotsky, *Writings [1930]*, 208.

²⁴² Trotsky, *Writings [1930]*, 208. See also *ibid.*, 184; Trotsky, *Writings [1930-31]*, 78.

²⁴³ Trotsky, *Struggle against Fascism*, 221. See also Trotsky, *Writings [1932]*, 42-43, 47-48, 66-67.

²⁴⁴ Trotsky, *Struggle against Fascism*, 221-222.

²⁴⁵ Trotsky, *Writings [1932]*, 253. See also Trotsky, *Writings [1932-33]*, 103-104.

²⁴⁶ See Trotsky, *Writings [1930]*, 80; Trotsky, *Writings [1932]*, 250.

²⁴⁷ Trotsky, *Struggle against Fascism*, 214.

²⁴⁸ Trotsky, *Writings [1930]*, 230-231.

²⁴⁹ Trotsky, *Writings [1932-33]*, 107. See also Trotsky, *Writings [1930]*, 144, 260-261; Trotsky, *Writings [1932]*, 69, 122-123; Trotsky, *Struggle against Fascism*, 222.

²⁵⁰ Trotsky, *Writings [1930-31]*, 63.

²⁵¹ Trotsky, *Writings [1930]*, 184.

²⁵² Trotsky, *Writings [1932]*, 67. See also Trotsky, *Writings [1930-31]*, 63, 300; Trotsky, *Writings [1932]*, 252; Trotsky, *Struggle against Fascism*, 222.

²⁵³ Trotsky, *Writings [1930]*, 206.

²⁵⁴ Trotsky, *Writings [1930-31]*, 217. See also Trotsky, *Writings [1932-33]*, 104.

²⁵⁵ Trotsky, *Writings [1930-31]*, 62-63. On the basis of rumors circulating in Moscow at the time, Trotsky predicted that Stalin would blame Molotov for the ultraleftist errors of the industrialization and collectivization drive. He also argued that the turn would be preceded by new measures against the Right Opposition. [*Ibid.*, 61-62.]

²⁵⁶ Trotsky, *Writings [1932]*, 69.

²⁵⁷ Trotsky, *Writings [1930]*, 86; *Biulleten' oppositsii* 9 (February-March, 1930), 15. Similarly, in his April 1931 theses on the Russian question he observed, “The gigantic difference between the bureaucratism [*biurokratizm*] of 1923 and the bureaucratism of 1931 is determined by the complete liquidation of the dependence of the apparatus upon the party that took place in this span of years, as well as by the plebiscitary degeneration of the apparatus itself.” [Trotsky, *Writings [1930-31]*, 211; *Biulleten' oppositsii* 20 (April 1931), 5.) See also Trotsky, *Struggle against Fascism*, 214; Trotsky, *Writings [1930]*, 254.]

²⁵⁸ Trotsky, *Writings [1930]*, 259-260; Trotsky, *Writings [1930-31]*, 62. For the most part, Trotsky simply used the term *bureaucracy*, though at various times he also spoke of the “Stalinist bureaucracy” [see Trotsky, *Writings [1930]*, 144, 204, 261; Trotsky, *Writings [1930-31]*, 26, 46, 63, 286, 288; Trotsky, *Struggle against Fascism*, 183, 208, 216]; “Stalinist apparatus” [see Trotsky, *Writings [1930]*, 144, 204; Trotsky, *Writings [1930-31]*, 28]; “centrist bureaucracy” (see Trotsky, *Writings [1930]*, 259; Trotsky, *Writings [1930-31]*, 46, 51, 307; Trotsky, *Writings*

[1932-33], 49], “centrist apparatus” [see Trotsky, *Writings [1930-31]*, 75]; “Bonapartist bureaucracy” [see Trotsky, *Writings [1930]*, 261]; “workers’ bureaucracy” [see Trotsky, *Writings [1930]*, 204; Trotsky, *Struggle against Fascism*, 214]; “bureaucratic apparatus” [see Trotsky, *Writings [1930]*, 144, 256; Trotsky, *Writings [1930-31]*, 45, 306; Trotsky, *Struggle against Fascism*, 213]; bureaucratic “caste” [see Trotsky, *Writings [1932]*, 227]; and bureaucratic “stratum” [see Trotsky, *Writings [1932]*, 35; Trotsky, *Struggle against Fascism*, 214].

²⁵⁹ Trotsky, *Writings [1930-31]*, 45.

²⁶⁰ Trotsky, *Writings [1930]*, 204.

²⁶¹ Thus, in September 1931 he remarked, “If the saboteurs were the agents of the bourgeoisie, that signifies that the state apparatus which they—under their own supervision—directed to so significant a degree is not a reliable apparatus of the proletariat, but included within itself very important elements of the power of a different class.” [Trotsky, *Writings [1930-31]*, 306. See also *ibid.*, 219.]

²⁶² Trotsky, *Writings [1930-31]*, 307. See also 1929, 359; Trotsky, *Writings [1930]*, 15, 305-306, 341; Trotsky, *Writings [1930-31]*, 45, 51; Trotsky, *Writings [1932]*, 67.

²⁶³ Trotsky, *Writings [1930]*, 144.

²⁶⁴ Trotsky, *Writings [1930]*, 259-260. For a reference to the “self-sufficient bureaucracy” in the Comintern, see Trotsky, *Struggle against Fascism*, 216.

²⁶⁵ Trotsky, *Writings [1930-31]*, 215.

²⁶⁶ Trotsky, *Writings [1930-31]*, 214.

²⁶⁷ Trotsky, *Writings [1930-31]*, 214-215.

²⁶⁸ Trotsky, *Writings [1932-33]*, 48-49.

²⁶⁹ Trotsky, *Writings [1930-31]*, 26-27.

²⁷⁰ Trotsky, *Writings [1932]*, 39. See also Trotsky, *Writings [1930]*, 206-207.

²⁷¹ Trotsky, *Writings [1932]*, 34, 35.

²⁷² Trotsky, *Writings [1932-33]*, 49. In part, Trotsky suggested, this conservatism was due to the bureaucracy’s recruitment during the “second phase” of the revolution of “men of the new crowd”—men who had never participated in the Revolution, including a sizable minority actually drawn from “the camp of its open enemies.” [Trotsky, *Struggle against Fascism*, 213; Trotsky, *Writings [1932]*, 35.] Also, it could be explained in part by the “ruling and uncontrolled position of the Soviet bureaucracy” which was “conducive to a psychology which in many ways is directly contradictory of a proletarian revolutionist.” [Trotsky, *Struggle against Fascism*, 215. See also Trotsky, *Writings [1932]*, 227.]

²⁷³ Nove, “Trockij, Collectivisation and the Five Year Plan,” 389.

²⁷⁴ Trotsky, *Struggle against Fascism*, 215.

²⁷⁵ For some specific references to the “centrist bureaucracy,” see for example, Trotsky, *Writings [1930]*, 250; Trotsky, *Writings [1930-31]*, 46, 215, 226, 229, 307; Trotsky, *Writings [1932]*, 122; Trotsky, *Writings [1932-33]*, 106, 109. For “bureaucratic centrism” see Trotsky, *Struggle against Fascism*, 215; Trotsky, *Writings [1932]*, 223; Trotsky, *Writings [1932-33]*, 49; 108.

²⁷⁶ For definitions of centrism, see 1929, 232-233; Trotsky, *Writings [1930]*, 236, 237; Trotsky, *Struggle against Fascism*, 211

²⁷⁷ Trotsky, *Struggle against Fascism*, 215.

²⁷⁸ Trotsky, *Writings [1932]*, 223.

²⁷⁹ Trotsky, *Writings [1932]*, 228. Italics in original.

²⁸⁰ Trotsky, *Writings [1932]*, 326.

²⁸¹ Leon Trotsky, *The Challenge of the Left Opposition (1926-27)*, ed. Naomi Allen and George Saunders (New York: Pathfinder Peers, 1980), 356; Iu. Fel’shtinskii, comp., *Kommunisticheskaia oppozitsiia v SSSR, 1923-1927: iz arkhiva L’va Trotskogo v chetyrekh tomakh* (Benson, VT: Chalidze Publications, 1988.), 4:151. Note modification of translation. The “Declaration of the Thirteen,” written in July 1926 estimated the number of “office workers” in the country as numbering at least three million, and observed “This statistical comparison, by itself testifies to the colossal political and economic role of the bureaucracy.” [Trotsky, *Challenge (1926-27)*, 81.] However, Trotsky evidently did not count all of these as members of the bureaucracy.

²⁸² Trotsky, *Writings [1930-31]*, 63.

²⁸³ Trotsky, *Struggle against Fascism*, 213, 215.

²⁸⁴ Trotsky, *Writings [1932]*, 227.

²⁸⁵ Trotsky, *Struggle against Fascism*, 213.

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- ²⁸⁶ Trotsky, *Writings [1932]*, 35, 227; Trotsky, *Writings [1932-33]*, 49.
- ²⁸⁷ Trotsky, *Writings [1930]*, 82.
- ²⁸⁸ Trotsky, *Writings [1930]*, 257.
- ²⁸⁹ Trotsky, *Writings [1930-31]*, 217. See also Trotsky, *Writings [1930]*, 131, 207-208, 255; Trotsky, *Writings [1930-31]*, 72, 76; Trotsky, *Writings [1932]*, 20; Trotsky, *Writings [1932-33]*, 103; Trotsky, *Struggle against Fascism*, 218.
- ²⁹⁰ See for example, Trotsky, *Writings [1930]*, 131, 325; Trotsky, *Writings [1930-31]*, 63, 166, 211, 214; Trotsky, *Struggle against Fascism*, 218. Regarding Louis Bonaparte's tendency to resort to plebiscites, M. Boivin has described plebiscite as, "together with universal manhood suffrage the key political concept of the Second Empire. Bonapartism posited authoritarian government sanctioned by popular approval, expressed regularly in elections exceptionally in plebiscites." [M. Boivin, "Plebiscite," in *Historical Dictionary of the French Second Empire, 1852-1870*, ed. William E. Echard (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1985), 492.]
- ²⁹¹ Trotsky, *Writings [1930]*, 335. On this point, see also Trotsky, *Writings [1930]*, 258, 337; Trotsky, *Writings [1930-31]*, 165, 217, 222; Trotsky, *Writings [1932]*, 68.
- ²⁹² Trotsky, *Writings [1930-31]*, 218.
- ²⁹³ Trotsky, *Writings [1930-31]*, 218-219.
- ²⁹⁴ Trotsky, *Writings [1932]*, 47.
- ²⁹⁵ Trotsky, *Writings [1932-33]*, 95.
- ²⁹⁶ Trotsky, *Writings [1930-31]*, 221.
- ²⁹⁷ Trotsky, *Writings [1930-31]*, 221. For other passages during this period in which Trotsky defined Thermidor and/or Bonapartism, see Trotsky, *Writings [1930]*, 206; Trotsky, *Writings [1930-31]*, 71, 76; Trotsky, *Writings [1932]*, 47; Trotsky, *Writings [1932-33]*, 76-77.
- ²⁹⁸ Trotsky, *Writings [1930-31]*, 71-72, 76. At the same time, he continued to predict that even a relatively pure Thermidor would ultimately result in the elevation of a Bonapartist regime to power. [Trotsky, *Writings [1930-31]*, 52, 76, 221-222.]
- ²⁹⁹ Trotsky, *Writings [1930-31]*, 51.
- ³⁰⁰ Trotsky, *Writings [1930-31]*, 61, 64. In another article from November 1930, Trotsky noted the growth of "Bonapartist elements" in the party regime, but also asserted that "Thermidorean elements have materialized in the life of the party: genuine 'Jacobins' have been replaced by opportunists." [Trotsky, *Writings [1930-31]*, 72.]
- ³⁰¹ On this point, see Trotsky, *Writings [1930]*, 131, 206, 207, 257-258; Trotsky, *Writings [1930-31]*, 72, 167, 217; Trotsky, *Writings [1932]*, 68. See also Trotsky, *Writings [1930]*, 257-258. Contrasting his own position with Karl Kautsky's, Trotsky made clear that he did not believe that the existing party regime was literally Bonapartist. [See Trotsky, *Writings [1930-31]*, 217.]
- ³⁰² Trotsky, *Writings [1930-31]*, 221.
- ³⁰³ Trotsky, *Writings [1932]*, 249, 254.
- ³⁰⁴ Trotsky, *Writings, Supplement (1929-33)*, 168-169.
- ³⁰⁵ Trotsky, *Writings [1932-33]*, 77-78. Trotsky explained that "administrative collectivization" and "expropriation by force," had brought the peasants "into confrontation with the Soviet state in a way no less sharp than in the winter of 1920-2," while supplying them with "an organization for resistance" in the form of the collective farm. Regarding the proletariat, Trotsky argued that millions of workers recently arrived from the village continued to share the attitudes of the peasantry; and he warned that disastrous economic policies together with the "stifling of workers' democracy" had made them susceptible to petty bourgeois ideas. Finally, Trotsky observed that there was a section of the Stalinist apparatus—the "Bessedovskys and Agabekovs"—who only needed "a sufficient blow from the petty bourgeoisie . . . to recognize themselves and to jump over the wall separating them from the class enemy."
- ³⁰⁶ In 1930 Hugo Urbahns, Trotsky's principal opponent during this period on the issue of the class nature of the Soviet Union, split from the International Left Opposition with his group, the Leninbund. [Robert J. Alexander, *International Trotskyism 1929-1985: A Documented Analysis of the Movement* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 410-411.) Two statements of the position that the Soviet Union was now "state capitalist" in nature were articulated in this period in a pamphlet by the former Workers' Oppositionist, Gavril Miasnikov, now in exile, published in 1932, and by the Austrian Social Democrat, Friedrich Adler, in an article also published in 1932. [See Marcel van der Linden, *Western Marxism and the Soviet Union: A Survey of Critical Theories and Debates Since 1917* (Leiden, The Netherlands: Koninklijke Brill NV, 2007), 51-54.]
- ³⁰⁷ Trotsky, *Writings [1930-31]*, 44.

³⁰⁸ Trotsky, *Writings [1930-31]*, 204.

³⁰⁹ Trotsky, *Writings [1930-31]*, 225. In the same document, Trotsky rejected the position he now attributed to Urbahns that the Soviet Union was “a ‘neutral’ state that has remained in some way without class rulers.” According to Trotsky, this position was “theoretically inadequate and politically equivalent to a surrender in whole or in part of the fortress of the world proletariat to the class enemy.” Also, it was “incompatible with the principles of revolutionary Marxism.” [Trotsky, *Writings [1930-31]*, 224-225. On the need for a civil war for the introduction of “state capitalism,” see also Trotsky, *Writings [1930]*, 384.]

³¹⁰ Trotsky, *Writings [1930]*, 209. See also Trotsky, *Writings [1930-31]*, 227. For the same argument in 1929, see Trotsky, *Writings [1929]*, 280.

³¹¹ Trotsky, *Writings [1930-31]*, 227.

³¹² Trotsky, *Writings [1930-31]*, 53. See also Trotsky, *Writings [1932-33]*, 55.

³¹³ Trotsky, *Writings [1930]*, 117. See also *ibid.*, 146.

³¹⁴ Trotsky, *Writings [1930-31]*, 65.

³¹⁵ Trotsky, *Writings [1932-33]*, 55. See also Trotsky, *Writings [1930]*, 16.

³¹⁶ Trotsky, *Writings [1930-31]*, 341. See also, Trotsky, *Writings [1930-31]*, 53-54.

³¹⁷ Trotsky, *Writings [1930]*, 209; Trotsky, *Writings [1930-31]*, 65.

³¹⁸ Trotsky, *Writings [1930-31]*, 225. See also *ibid.*, 205.

³¹⁹ Trotsky, *Writings [1930-31]*, 226.

³²⁰ Trotsky, *Writings [1930-31]*, 64. See also Trotsky, *Struggle against Fascism*, 217.

³²¹ This point is also made by David Law, “Trotsky in Opposition,” 125. In this regard, compare Trotsky’s March 1930 open letter to the party. [Trotsky, *Writings [1930]*, 135-150] to his more conciliatory March 1932 open letter to the Presidium of the CEC [Trotsky, *Writings [1932]*, 62-72.]

³²² Trotsky, *Writings [1932]*, 71. Earlier, in February 1930 Trotsky insisted that it was “necessary to remove the present leadership” because the Stalinist position on international questions was threatening the proletarian vanguard with disasters. [Trotsky, *Writings [1930]*, 119.]

³²³ Trotsky, *Writings: Supplement (1929-33)*, 168. At about this same time Trotsky wrote to his son Sedov,

If we were strong now . . . there would be no danger at all in advancing this slogan. But at present Miliukov, the Mensheviks, and Thermidorians of all sorts . . . will willingly echo the cry ‘remove Stalin’ Yet, it may still happen within a few months that Stalin will have to defend himself against Thermidorian pressure and that we may have temporarily to support him. [Quoted in Deutscher, *Prophet Outcast*, 175.]

³²⁴ Trotsky, *Writings: Supplement (1929-33)*, 171. Similarly, Trotsky publicly repudiated the slogan in an article of March 3, 1933:

We are motivated by considerations of revolutionary expediency and not by revenge. We make no exceptions beforehand. We are ready to work hand in hand with everyone who is willing to reconstitute the party and prevent a catastrophe. [Trotsky, *Writings [1932-33]*, 113.]

As alternatives to “Down with Stalin!” Trotsky proposed “Down with the personal regime,” “For an honest party regime!” and “For Soviet democracy!” [Trotsky, *Writings: Supplement (1929-33)*, 173; Trotsky, *Writings [1932-33]*, 113.]

³²⁵ Trotsky, *Writings [1932]*, 254. In the summer of 1930 Khristian Rakovskii also tried to explain the difference between the position of the party left and that of the party right during this period. Rakovskii argued, “Pursuing the military analogy, we could say that the difference between us and the Right is that between an army in orderly retreat and deserters fleeing the field of battle.” [Rakovsky, “The Five Year Plan in Crisis,” 50.]

³²⁶ Thus, in November 1930 he contemptuously dismissed assertions in *Pravda* that the left and right had concluded a “bloc.” Trotsky explained that the Bolshevik Leninists wanted democracy in order to purge the party of Thermidorians; while the right invoked democracy on behalf of a consistently opportunist policy. “Where, then,” he asked, “is there a basis for a bloc, even a pretense of a bloc?” In contrast with the right, the left stood “for industrialization and collectivization” and “against bureaucratic charlatantry, against reactionary utopias in their

Thermidorean or masked form.” “Where, then,” Trotsky inquired again, “is there a basis for a bloc with the Right?” Finally, in contrast with both Stalin and Bukharin the Left stood for international socialism, not socialism in one country. Once more Trotsky asked, “Where is there a common basis with the Right?” [Trotsky, *Writings [1930-31]*, 58-59.] Similarly, in October 1932 at the time of the arrest of the Riutin opposition Trotsky asserted,

As early as 1928 Uglanov and Riutin began to assert that the Left Opposition had been correct in its stand on the question of the party regime “Solidarity” on the question of party democracy, however, cannot cause a change of heart of the Left Opposition in relation to the Right Opposition. Party democracy is not an abstract idea; least of all is it designed to serve as a screen for Thermidorean tendencies. [Trotsky, *Writings [1932]*. 248-249.]

³²⁷ Trotsky, *Challenge (1928-1929)*, 248-249.

³²⁸ Trotsky, *Writings [1930-31]*, 54-55. See also *ibid.*, 65.

³²⁹ Trotsky, *Writings [1930-31]*, 308

³³⁰ Broué, “Party Opposition to Stalin (1930-1932) and the First Moscow Trial,” 100-101.

³³¹ See, for example, Trotsky, *Writings [1930]*, 18, 189; Trotsky, *Writings [1930-31]*, 341; Trotsky, *Writings [1932]*, 120; 1933-34, 54.

³³² Trotsky, *Writings [1932]*, 178-179. See also Trotsky, *Writings [1930]*, 369-370; Trotsky, *Struggle against Fascism*, 326-327.

³³³ Trotsky, *Writings [1930]*, 19.

³³⁴ Trotsky, *Writings [1932]*, 125.

³³⁵ See for example, Trotsky, *Struggle against Fascism*, 326-327.

³³⁶ Trotsky, *Writings [1932-33]*, 54. See also Trotsky, *Struggle against Fascism*, 326.

³³⁷ Trotsky, *Writings [1932]*, 23.

³³⁸ Trotsky, *Writings [1932]*, 179. According to Trotsky, the conversation was quoted “broadly correctly.” [*Ibid.*, 179.]

8.0 THEORETICAL REVOLUTION

Although Trotsky's theory of Soviet bureaucracy was badly shaken by the left turns of 1928-32, it was not overturned. Throughout those years Trotsky dealt with the contradictions between his theory and reality by various strained interpretations of reality, and by a series of ad hoc revisions that emphasized the ability of the bureaucracy to behave autonomously. Despite those revisions, Trotsky continued to see the bureaucracy as a social formation that was highly and immediately responsive to external class pressures. However, that was about to change. In *The Image*, sociologist Kenneth Boulding has explained that sometimes a new piece of information or "message" strikes "some sort of nucleus or supporting structure" in a worldview or image, and then "the whole thing changes in quite a radical way." The result is "revolutionary change," that is, the "sudden and dramatic" reorganization of the image.¹ Similarly, Thomas Kuhn has described a scientific revolution as "a reconstruction of the field from new fundamentals" in which "an older paradigm is replaced in whole or in part by an incompatible new one" in a process that is "non-cumulative," and "relatively sudden."² Something like that happened with Trotsky's theory during the years 1933-36.³

The event that sparked the revolution in Trotsky's thinking was not some new left turn. Rather, it was Hitler's consolidation of political power in Germany in early 1933—a development that, for Trotsky, signaled the ultimate failure of Comintern policy. In response, Trotsky immediately abandoned his attempt to reform the Communist Party of Germany (KPD),

then called for a break with the Comintern and then with the AUCP(b). Thus began a chain reaction that within months toppled a whole series of Trotsky's major theoretical positions. There were probably various reasons why developments in Germany had this effect upon Trotsky's theory when the turns in Soviet economic and Comintern policy did not. In part, it may have been because in 1933 Trotsky's theory had been severely weakened by the experiences of the previous five years. Perhaps more importantly, the implications of the German debacle struck directly at central "nuclei" or "supporting structures" of Trotsky's theory that had been unaffected by the policy shifts to the left: Trotsky's reform orientation for the USSR and his criteria for a workers' state. Trotsky's change of position on these issues quickly led to a reassessment of the extent of the bureaucracy's autonomy, and from that to a revision of his views on such issues as the relevance of the concepts of *Thermidor* and *Bonapartism*, and the origins of the problem of Soviet bureaucracy.

Over the course of the following two and a half years, Trotsky's new theoretical insights informed his analysis of events, while his analysis of unfolding developments led in turn to further theoretical revisions. As far as Trotsky's interpretation of events was concerned, he increasingly explained the previous turn to the left as well as new shifts to the right in terms of the highly autonomous and self-interested behavior of the bureaucracy. At the same time, he applied his recent explanation of the origins of bureaucratic power to the continued worsening of the party regime. In turn, Trotsky's analysis of current events evoked reinterpretations of the concepts of *Thermidor* and *Bonapartism*, an enhancement of the significance of *bureaucratic caste* and *labor aristocracy*, a dropping of *centrism*, another revision of Trotsky's criteria for a workers' state, a redefinition of Soviet foreign and Comintern policy as opportunist, and a call for a political revolution. By the middle of 1936 Trotsky had created the elements of a new

theory that, far more than his previous ad hoc revisions, emphasized the autonomy of the Soviet bureaucracy.

8.1 BREAKING WITH THE PAST

In early 1933, from the Turkish island of Prinkipo Trotsky followed the deepening economic crisis in the Soviet Union and the darkening political situation in Germany with growing alarm. When the Nazis consolidated power in Germany in February and early March, Trotsky immediately called upon his German supporters to abandon their efforts to reform the KPD, which he blamed directly for the Nazi victory. Largely because of the constraints imposed by his traditional theory of the Soviet bureaucracy, he hesitated before taking the next logical step. Shortly afterwards, however, following the logic of his break with the KPD, he called upon his supporters to break similarly with the Comintern, and then with the AUCP.

8.1.1 Breaking with the KPD

In early 1933 Trotsky concluded that the crisis in the Soviet economy had become so severe that the very survival of the USSR was endangered. In an article of January 11, responding to Stalin's recent economic report to the Central Committee, Trotsky drew his own balance sheet of the First Five-Year Plan. Despite some real economic successes, he observed, hungry workers were dissatisfied with the party's economic policy; the party was unhappy with the leadership; the peasants were discontented with industrialization and collectivization; and a section of the peasantry was hostile to the regime. In fact, Trotsky asserted, the economic

policies of the leadership had “enormously strengthened the danger of Thermidor.”⁴ In the following weeks Trotsky’s concern over the Soviet economic condition continued to mount. In a private letter written on February 15, he described the situation as “tragic” and expressed the conviction that “the months to come will be decisive.”⁵ Then, in a March 3 article entitled “Alarm Signal!” Trotsky declared that “catastrophe looms over the Communist party of the Soviet Union.” The bureaucratic leadership had “brought the national economy to the brink of absolute chaos” by its extreme tempos of industrialization and collectivization. “An acute feeling of disillusionment” now possessed the masses. Even the leadership’s recent shift to the right in economic policy was “absolutely incapable of leading to a way out of the great wreckage.”⁶

In this same period Trotsky was growing increasingly concerned about events in Germany. On January 30, 1933 Hindenburg appointed Hitler as Chancellor of a coalition cabinet. Although Trotsky viewed this as “a fearful blow for the working class,” he did not yet see the defeat as irrevocable since the opposing sides in Germany had not yet tested their forces in battle.⁷ Anticipating a new phase of struggle, he turned first to the KPD, pleading once more in an article of February 5 for a defensive alliance.⁸ Then, in a pamphlet of February 23 he appealed again to Social Democratic workers to take up the cause of the united front.⁹ Finally, in the article “Alarm Signal!” on March 3 Trotsky advised the Comintern that it could be saved from “further degeneration and complete collapse only by a radical change of all its policies, first of all in Germany.”¹⁰ Still, both the SPD and KPD resisted collaboration. While the SPD leaders now formally advocated a united front, as a precondition for such an alliance they demanded a “non-aggression pact” between the two parties and refused to participate in any actions that might provoke civil war. At the same time, the KPD leadership continued to direct its sharpest

attacks at the socialists, while directing appeals for a united front only to local organizations of the SPD.¹¹

Meanwhile, the National Socialists proceeded with their offensive, banning Social Democratic and Communist Party newspapers; dispersing socialist, communist, and trade union meetings; and replacing masses of government officials and police. When the Dutch anarchist Marinus van der Lubbe set fire to the Reichstag building on the evening of February 27, the Nazis blamed communists for the arson. At that point the Communist Party was outlawed; the entire Social Democratic press was shut down; thousands of socialist and communist officials and candidates were arrested; and constitutional guarantees of individual and civil liberties were suspended. In the subsequent March 5 elections the Nazis won a plurality with 43.9 percent of the vote. Then, on March 23 the new Reichstag granted Hitler dictatorial powers.¹²

Recognizing the completeness of the Nazi victory, Trotsky abruptly shifted strategy in Germany. In previous years he had insisted upon a reform perspective for the entire Communist International and its sections, basing this view on the belief that the vast majority of revolutionary workers remained loyal to the Comintern. However, Trotsky also had asserted that if KPD policy permitted the Nazis to come to power, it would be necessary to form a new communist party in Germany. Furthermore, he had predicted repeatedly that a “great historic event, such as the victory of fascism in Germany,” would shake the confidence of workers in the Comintern and necessitate the founding of a new International. Thus, in his February 5 article, Trotsky warned the KPD,

The party’s renunciation of the united front and of the creation of local defense committees, i.e. future soviets, signifies the capitulation of the party before fascism, an historic crime which is tantamount to the liquidation of the party and the Communist International. In the event of such a disaster, the proletariat,

through mounds of corpses, through years of unbearable sufferings and calamities, will come to the Fourth International.¹³

Consistent with this, in a letter to the International Secretariat of the ILO on March 12 Trotsky asserted, “The KPD today represents a corpse.” Writing under the name “G. Gurov,” he explained that now the slogan of reform would seem ridiculous to German workers who had been betrayed by the KPD bureaucracy. Comparing the debacle to the collapse of Social Democracy on August 4, 1914 when the German, French and Belgian socialist parties all endorsed their own nations’ war efforts, Trotsky declared, “The Fourth of August is an accomplished fact.” Finally, he called for preparations for constructing a new communist party in Germany.¹⁴

8.1.2 Breaking with the Comintern and the AUCP

Although Trotsky also held the leadership of the Communist International responsible for the disaster in Germany, he hesitated until mid-July before abandoning the Comintern and its leading section. Subsequently, he admitted that the break with the Comintern should have come on April 5, when the Executive Committee of the Comintern adopted a resolution declaring that the policies of the KPD “before and at the time of the Hitler coup” had been “quite correct.”¹⁵ However, Trotsky explained that it had been important “to bring about a decisive turn without leading to a split” with comrades in the ILO who disagreed with the call for a new party in Germany. Besides that, it “was also necessary to see what the influence of the German catastrophe would be on other sections of the Comintern.”¹⁶

Other explanations also have been advanced for the delay in Trotsky’s break with the Comintern. One account, offered by the contemporary historian J. Arch Getty, has dismissed

Trotsky's explanations for the delay as "self-justifying," and has argued instead that the decision to abandon the Comintern and the timing of that decision were related to Trotsky's maneuverings to regain personal power. An alternative account, previously sketched by this author in response to Getty, combines Trotsky's own stated reasons for the delay with an additional explanation that stresses the importance of theory for Trotsky as a guide to his political behavior.¹⁷

According to J. Arch Getty, Trotsky's break with the Comintern and its timing can best be explained by reference to two "secret strategies" of Trotsky's to return to the leadership of the AUCP. The first of these involved a secret letter to the Politburo on March 15, 1933 in which Trotsky allegedly promised that the Opposition would hold agitation for its program "in abeyance for an indefinite period" or even "refrain from criticism" altogether if the leadership would only recall him to power. According to Getty, Trotsky never published this letter because it contradicted his previous conditions and demands. Furthermore, Getty claims that Trotsky wrote his March 12 letter breaking with the KPD as a ploy to pressure the leadership of the AUCP into taking him back, and that he signed it with a pseudonym so that he could disavow it later if he was recalled to power. After waiting more than a month and a half for an answer, Getty argues, Trotsky gave up on this strategy and informed the Politburo on May 10 that he intended to begin to agitate among lower levels of the bureaucracy.¹⁸ Still, Trotsky hesitated over the break with the Comintern. According to Getty this was because Trotsky continued to have hopes for his second secret strategy, the opposition bloc of 1932. However, the capitulations of Zinoviev and Kamenev shortly afterwards "decapitated the 1932 bloc." With all his hopes for a return to power dashed, Trotsky finally issued the call for a break with the Comintern.¹⁹

Although Getty's construction is imaginative, nearly every aspect of it is contradicted by the available evidence. Of course, there is no doubt that Trotsky wanted to return to power. In

fact, in previous *public* statements, Trotsky repeatedly had called for the creation of a “coalition central committee” that would contain representatives of the Left Opposition—including, presumably, himself. If the Politburo had responded to his March 15 letter, it is likely that Trotsky would have raised this issue in negotiations. However, Trotsky’s March 15 letter to the Politburo mentioned nothing about leadership positions, and in fact asserted, “There is a far, far greater issue at stake than that of power for your faction or for the Left Opposition.” Rather, the letter requested only “the opportunity for normal work within the party”—a position completely consistent with Trotsky’s public demands.²⁰

Nor did Trotsky propose delaying a discussion indefinitely, or promise to abstain from criticism altogether. In his March 15 letter Trotsky offered only to negotiate the details of a party-wide discussion in the context of a highly explosive situation: “Concerning the manner of presenting and defending this [the Opposition’s] program before the Central Committee and the party, not to mention the manner of putting it into effect, there can and must be achieved a preliminary agreement with the goal of preventing shocks and splits.”²¹ Trotsky never published the Politburo letter, probably because its approach soon was superseded by his decision to break with the AUCP. However, on March 30, while still waiting for a reply from the Politburo, Trotsky wrote an article for his *Biulleten’* in which he *publicly* called for an “inner-party agreement” with the leadership and “an honorable agreement before the eyes of the party and of the international proletariat” regarding preparations for a discussion and the organizational framework within which such a discussion would occur:

Of course we cannot refuse to criticize centrism But mutual criticism, in itself unavoidable and fruitful, may have a different character depending on the extent to which it is consciously prepared by both sides and in what organizational framework it takes place. In this field . . . the Left Opposition is

prepared to come to an agreement in which it will ask for itself only the restoration of its right to fight in the common ranks.²²

Furthermore, on May 13, 1933, three days after forwarding the Politburo letter to responsible party and government personnel, Trotsky wrote a brief note for the *Biulleten'* confirming the existence of his March 15 letter and accurately describing its offer "to carry out any work in its interests on the condition that we retain our right to defend our point of view within the limits of the party statutes and the Soviet constitution."²³

An additional problem with Getty's first "secret strategy" is that Trotsky could not possibly have imagined that a threatened "split" in the Comintern would have pressured the leadership of the AUCP into taking him back. He clearly understood that the vast majority of his supporters were already outside of the Comintern, having been expelled from their respective parties in previous years.²⁴ Beyond that, Trotsky did not retain the option of disavowing his break with the KPD by signing his March 12 letter with a pseudonym, for between March 12 and May 10 he wrote and published under his own name at least two statements proclaiming the death of the KPD and the need for a new party in Germany.²⁵ It should also be noted that there was nothing unusual about Trotsky's use of a pseudonym in his March 12 letter. From 1929 through 1934 Trotsky employed "G. Gourov" or variations of that pseudonym at least twenty-four times, especially in his contributions to the internal discussion of the ILO.²⁶ Finally, if Getty's account were correct, Trotsky should have dropped the pseudonym after the failure of this strategy. In fact, he signed the first two of his articles calling for a break with the Comintern "G. Gurov."²⁷

Getty's discussion of the second "secret strategy" is no more successful than his account of the first. Trotsky may have hoped that the opposition bloc eventually would develop into a political force that could help to pressure the leadership into readmitting the expelled

oppositionists. However, there is no reason to believe that he entered the bloc out of “personal motives,” *as opposed to* the goal of reforming the AUCP. Since 1927, Trotsky and the entire Left Opposition had demanded their own readmission as a necessary part of the process of reform. As Trotsky publicly explained in his article “Alarm Signal!” on March 3, 1933, “It is impossible to revive the party without the return of the Opposition to its ranks.”²⁸ Beyond that, it is not clear that Trotsky abandoned hopes for the bloc only after hearing of the capitulations.²⁹ However, perhaps the biggest problem for Getty’s “second strategy” is related to timing. The whole purpose of Getty’s discussion of the bloc is to fill the delay between Trotsky’s final May 10 communication with the Politburo and his decision to break with the Comintern. Even if Trotsky abandoned hopes for the bloc when he first heard of the capitulations, this accounts for just thirteen days, leaving more than seven weeks still unexplained.³⁰

In fact, there were probably several reasons for the delay in Trotsky’s break with the Comintern, including the two offered by Trotsky. Supporting his first explanation, there is abundant evidence that Trotsky was quite serious about convincing his comrades of the need for a break with the KPD. Even in his March 12 letter Trotsky warned, “This sharp turn in our policy, . . . will not be absorbed all at once by all our comrades. That is why it is necessary to analyze the question in our own ranks and, above all, among the German comrades.”³¹ Subsequently, he urged the International Secretariat of the ILO to open an international discussion on the question; and in the following months he submitted no less than five contributions attempting to persuade members of the ILO, and especially the Germans, of the need for a change in orientation.³²

Trotsky also explained the delay in terms of the need to see if outrage over the consequences of the Comintern’s policies in Germany would elicit a rebellion within any of the

parties of the International. Even in his letter of March 12 to the International Secretariat, Trotsky suggested that “the catastrophe itself could provoke a healthy reaction in some of the sections” of the Comintern.³³ Similarly, in a statement of March 29 he observed, “We cannot know in advance what the reaction inside the other sections of the Comintern will be to the victory of fascism. To this belongs the test of events—with our active assistance.”³⁴ Of course, at this point Trotsky was quite pessimistic about the Comintern reversing its position. Even while calling for a break with the KPD he declared, “The collapse of the KPD diminishes the chances for the regeneration of the Comintern.” And reviewing the experiences of the previous months in July, Trotsky wrote,

The Left Opposition was guided by this theoretical possibility [of reform] when, after advancing the slogan of a new party for Germany, it still left open the question of the fate of the Comintern. It was clear, however, that the next few weeks would bring an answer and there was far too little hope that the answer would be a favorable one.³⁵

Still, in the spring of 1933 a “theoretical” possibility remained, and until that was exhausted, Trotsky viewed a break with the Comintern as impermissible.³⁶

Nevertheless, Trotsky’s stated explanations were not the only reasons for his hesitation. Perhaps even more important was his recognition that a break with the Comintern would have far reaching implications for his political approach to, and theoretical understanding of, the USSR. Ultimately, it would call into question his entire understanding of the bureaucracy as highly responsive to external class pressure. More immediately, it would challenge three crucial positions derived from that understanding: his reform orientation toward the AUCP, his reform strategy for the Soviet state, and one of his central criteria for a workers’ state.

In previous years Trotsky had based his reform orientation for the Comintern on the view that it continued to command the loyalty of revolutionary workers. However, his reform strategy for the AUCP was grounded additionally upon the recognition that a policy of a “second party” inevitably “would mean a policy of armed insurrection and a new revolution” in the USSR. In

turn, Trotsky's commitment to a reform orientation for the Soviet Union was tied directly to his perception of it as a worker's state.³⁷ This presented a potential dilemma: what course should the Opposition take if a "great historic event" demonstrated the bankruptcy of the Comintern, but its leading section remained the ruling party in the USSR? Until March 1933 the question was not sharply posed. Since early 1932 Trotsky had suggested that either a decisive victory of fascism in Germany or the collapse of the Soviet workers' state would require the formation of a new International. However, since he also believed that a Nazi victory would greatly increase the chances of capitalist restoration in the USSR, this prospect did not necessarily present a theoretical difficulty.³⁸

Once Trotsky concluded that fascism had conquered power in Germany, he found himself directly confronted with the dilemma. He immediately called for a break with the KPD, which he saw as most directly responsible for the debacle. Yet, he balked at the prospect of abandoning the entire Comintern. One of Trotsky's secretaries at that time, Jean van Heijenoort, later recalled, "The problem of the USSR was the greatest obstacle in Trotsky's mind before reaching the conclusion that there remained no other alternative than to form a Fourth International." Heijenoort explained,

The problem was: how to discard the policy of reform of the Bolshevik Party and at the same time retain the perspective of reforming the workers' state? How to proclaim the Fourth International before the Stalinist bureaucracy has led the USSR to its collapse?³⁹

That this was a central concern of Trotsky's is also suggested by his writings. Even in his initial call for a break with the KPD Trotsky rejected a similar rupture with the Comintern in part because "the question has not been settled for the USSR where proclamation of the slogan of the second party would be incorrect."⁴⁰

For a time, Trotsky attempted to avoid a decision regarding the Comintern, given the possibility that the dilemma would be resolved by reality. Most optimistically, he still hoped the USSR and/or the Comintern might be transformed under the impact of the crises. As he wrote on

March 29, “We do not give up our efforts to save the Soviet power from the ruin to which it is being driven by the Stalinists. We cannot know in advance what the reaction inside the other sections will be to the victory of fascism.”⁴¹ More pessimistically, he feared that the economic crisis might result in the collapse of the USSR. In line with this, on April 9, in response to the question of whether the break with the KPD meant a break with the Comintern, Trotsky asserted, “If the Stalinist bureaucracy will bring the USSR to ruin . . . it will be necessary to build a Fourth International.”⁴²

By the early summer it was clear that neither Trotsky’s most optimistic hopes nor his worst fears were about to materialize. With no publicly dissenting voices, on April 1 the Presidium of the Executive Committee of the Communist International (ECCI) endorsed the policies of the KPD as “completely correct.”⁴³ Meanwhile, Trotsky’s appeals to the Soviet leadership and bureaucracy elicited no response, and the Soviet economy appeared to be emerging from the worst of the economic crisis.⁴⁴ In discussions with supporters Trotsky now proposed abandoning the Comintern; but, restrained by his position on the class nature of the USSR, he still rejected a rupture with the AUCP. Again, Jean van Heijenoort recalled Trotsky’s formulation in private discussions at this time:

“Since April we have been for reform in every country except Germany, where we have been for a new party. We can now take a symmetrical position, that is, to be for a new party in every country except the U.S.S.R., where we shall be for the reform of the Bolshevik party.”⁴⁵

However, in light of Trotsky’s perception that the AUCP controlled the Comintern, this position was clearly untenable and, as Heijenoort notes, Trotsky quickly abandoned it.⁴⁶ On July 15, 1933, in an article entitled “It Is Necessary to Build Communist Parties and an International Anew,” he concluded, “In all our subsequent work it is necessary to take as our point of departure the historical collapse of the official Communist International.”⁴⁷ Five days later, in his article “It is Impossible to Remain in the Same International with the Stalins, Manuilskys, Lozovskys & Co. (A Conversation)” he admitted that it was impossible simply “to ‘proclaim’ a

new International.” However, he insisted that from that point on it was necessary “to proclaim the necessity of creating a new International.”⁴⁸

As far as the Soviet section of the Comintern was concerned, Trotsky now reiterated with added significance his previous observation that it no longer existed as a party. Thus, on July 15 he asserted, “The present CPSU is not a party but an apparatus of domination in the hands of an uncontrolled bureaucracy.”⁴⁹ Then, on July 20 he removed all doubts about his position regarding the AUCP: “To speak now of the ‘reform’ of the CPSU would mean to look backward and not forward, to sooth one’s mind with empty formulas. In the USSR it is necessary to build a Bolshevik party again.”⁵⁰ On August 19, the International Secretariat of the ILO endorsed Trotsky’s new position, voting for the creation of a new International.⁵¹

8.2 REVISING THE THEORY

For Trotsky, the change of position regarding the Comintern and the AUCP coincided with a major geographical relocation. After four and a half years in Turkey, he was finally granted a visa to live in France. On July 24 Trotsky arrived at Marseilles, accompanied by his wife, two secretaries, a typist, and an American supporter. Initially, he settled near the small town of Saint-Palais, a few miles north of Royan—the first of many residences he would have in France. There, he held frequent meetings with his own supporters and with representatives of various left socialist organizations from Britain, Holland, and Germany in preparation for founding a Fourth International. He also participated in organizing a conference of groups interested in a new International held in Paris on August 27-28. For the conference he also drafted “The Declaration of the Four on the Necessity and Principles of a New International,” signed by four of the fourteen participating parties and organizations.⁵²

Soon afterwards, Trotsky's shift in position on reform of the AUCP led him to revise his political strategy and his theoretical understanding of the USSR in a number of other important ways. First, it compelled him to modify his position on the peaceful reform of the Soviet state. In turn, this forced Trotsky to redefine of his position on the class nature of the Soviet Union. In the process of responding to opponents who held divergent positions on that question, he expanded upon the notion of bureaucratic "parasitism." At the same time, Trotsky's new appreciation for the extent of the bureaucracy's autonomy suggested to him a revised understanding of Bonapartism; it prompted him to reconsider the relevance of his traditional understanding of Thermidor; and it induced him to develop a new explanation for the origins of the bureaucratic power. Finally, the apparent divergence between Trotsky's new evaluation of the Soviet leadership's international and domestic policies compelled him to account for this discrepancy.

When Trotsky finally decided to break with the AUCP, he immediately confronted the problem he had sought for months to avoid. If abandoning the AUCP necessarily implied the need for revolution, how could this be reconciled with his understanding of the Soviet Union as a workers' state? Even while first calling for a break with the AUCP, Trotsky attempted to reduce this dilemma by implicitly revising his position on the implications of that step for his reform perspective regarding the USSR. Thus, in his article of July 20 Trotsky wrote, "We abandon the slogan of reform of the CPSU, and we build up the new party as the instrument for the reform of the Soviet Union."⁵³ Trotsky explained that the Bolshevik-Leninists, organized as a separate party, could reform the state while fighting alongside a section of the bureaucracy in the civil war that was already in progress and that "would only become more acute." The opponents in this battle were "the counterrevolution on the offensive and the Stalinist bureaucracy on the defensive." At the decisive moment, Trotsky predicted, the bureaucracy would disintegrate and its fragments would "meet again in the two opposing camps." Then the Bolshevik-Leninists would forge a united front with a section of the Stalinists against the forces

of reaction.⁵⁴ Thus, there was no need for force against the bureaucracy. Rather, the new party was to direct its force against the counterrevolution.⁵⁵

Of course, this position, too, was untenable. As Trotsky had recognized previously, it was plainly inconsistent to call for the creation of a new, illegal party but to limit the party's methods to peaceful reform. Consequently, on October 1, 1933 in one of his most important theoretical works, the pamphlet *The Class Nature of the Soviet State*, Trotsky concluded: "No normal 'constitutional' ways remain to remove the ruling clique. The bureaucracy can be compelled to yield power into the hands of the proletarian vanguard only by *force*."⁵⁶

Still, Trotsky did not call for a new revolution in the USSR. In *The Class Nature of the Soviet State* Trotsky again insisted that "a real civil war" could only occur between the proletariat and supporters of capitalist counterrevolution.⁵⁷ Instead, against the bureaucracy only "measures of a police character" would be necessary:

When the proletariat springs into action, the Stalinist apparatus will remain suspended in midair. Should it still attempt to resist, it will then be necessary to apply against it not the measures of civil war but rather the measures of a police character. In any case, what will be involved is not an armed insurrection against the dictatorship of the proletariat but the removal of a malignant growth upon it.⁵⁸

Alternatively, Trotsky described the task as the "rock-bottom [or radical] reform [*korenniaia reforma*]" of the Soviet state.⁵⁹

However, Trotsky's call for a break with the AUCP and for the use of force against the bureaucracy immediately necessitated a revision of his position on the class nature of the Soviet Union. Since 1928, Trotsky had insisted that three criteria demonstrated that the USSR remained a workers' state: 1) the Soviet state still defended the property forms established by the October Revolution; 2) a counterrevolutionary civil war had not yet occurred; and 3) the Soviet proletariat remained capable of peacefully reforming the state through the reform of the AUCP. Even though Trotsky attempted to minimize the amount of force that would be necessary, his

new recognition that force would be required to remove the bureaucracy from power, as well as his call for a break with the AUCP, clearly contradicted his third criterion. Whether he chose to retain or abandon his characterization of the Soviet Union as a workers' state, he clearly needed to redefine that term.

Although concerns related to his perception of the Soviet Union as a workers' state delayed his break with the Comintern and AUCP, once Trotsky had made that leap it does not appear to have been difficult for him to decide how to address the question of the class nature of the USSR. In the first place, two of his traditional criteria for a workers' state remained intact. Besides that, abandoning his workers' state position would have necessitated even greater theoretical and political adjustments than the partial modification of a definition. Thus, even in his first appeals for a new International and a new party, Trotsky reaffirmed the proletarian character of the Soviet Union.⁶⁰ Then, on October 1 in *The Class Nature of the Soviet State* Trotsky provided an extended defense of the workers' state position, while implicitly redefining the meaning of that term.⁶¹

Again, Trotsky insisted upon the traditional "methodological position" of Marxism that the class nature of a state could not be changed, except through civil war:

The class theory of society and historical experience equally testify to the impossibility of the victory of the proletariat through peaceful methods, that is, without grandiose class battles, weapons in hand. How, in that case, is the imperceptible, "gradual," bourgeois counterrevolution conceivable?⁶²

For Trotsky, those who argued otherwise, asserting that capitalism had been restored in the USSR, were just "running backwards the film of reformism."⁶³ At the same time, Trotsky reaffirmed that the class nature of the Soviet state was still defined by the economic relations established by the revolution: "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.”⁶⁴

However, missing entirely from Trotsky’s argument was any mention of the ability of the proletariat to reform the state peacefully through the reform of the party. In light of the change in his position on party and state reform, Trotsky simply omitted this criterion without comment, apparently hoping to avoid drawing attention to this theoretical shift.⁶⁵ Nevertheless, the significance of the omission was enormous. As the former Trotskyist leader Max Shachtman observed some years later, Trotsky “found himself obliged to alter his criterion radically from what it had previous been, not only for him but without exception for the entire revolutionary Marxian movement.”⁶⁶

Having reaffirmed a redefined workers’ state position, Trotsky proceeded in the same work to criticize the positions advanced by political opponents who previously had argued that a new revolution was necessary. Clearly, Trotsky wanted to prevent his critics from deriving political benefit from his own change of position on reform.

One view examined by Trotsky was that of Lucien Laurat, an Austrian socialist theoretician and member of the French SFIO.⁶⁷ In recent years Laurat had developed a theory that the Soviet Union represented an entirely new form of class society in which the bureaucracy not only ruled the politically, but also exploited the proletariat economically.⁶⁸

Trotsky, who frequently had spoken of the bureaucracy’s enormous privileges himself, readily agreed with Laurat that the bureaucracy devoured “no small portion of surplus value.” Nevertheless, he argued that it was technically incorrect to describe the bureaucracy as “exploiting” the proletariat, since the bureaucracy derived its privileges “not from special property relations peculiar to it as a ‘class,’ but from those property relations created by the

October Revolution and that are fundamentally adequate for the dictatorship of the proletariat.”⁶⁹ To the extent that the bureaucracy robbed the people, Trotsky insisted, what was involved was not “*class exploitation*, in the scientific sense of the word, but . . . *social parasitism*, although on a very large scale.”⁷⁰

On a few previous occasions Trotsky, no doubt intentionally echoing Marx’s characterizations of the French state bureaucracy under the absolute monarchy and Second Empire, had referred in passing to the “parasitism” of the Soviet bureaucracy.⁷¹ However, in *The Class Nature of the Soviet State*, Trotsky offered a more extensive discussion of bureaucratic parasitism, utilizing that notion to suggest the transience and dispensability of bureaucratic rule. According to Trotsky, the bureaucracy was concerned, by virtue of its function and for the sake of its privileges, with the cultural growth of the USSR. However, development ultimately tended to undermine “the very base of bureaucratic domination” by strengthening the position of the Soviet proletariat. At the same time, the leadership’s wasteful and economically disruptive policies retarded growth, raising the prospect of economic and social collapse, capitalist restoration, and again, the downfall of the bureaucracy. Thus, from whatever angle the question was considered, it appeared that bureaucratic rule was ephemeral and that the bureaucracy was “not an independent class, but an excrescence [*narost*] upon the proletariat.” Trotsky concluded that, while a tumor might “grow to tremendous size and even strangle the living organism,” a tumor could “never become an independent organism.”⁷²

In the same article Trotsky also took up the current views of his old adversary Hugo Urbahns. Recently, Urbahns had begun to characterize the economic systems of Stalin’s USSR, Hitler’s Germany, Mussolini’s Italy, and Roosevelt’s United States as “state capitalist”—allegedly a necessary and progressive stage in the development of society. As far as the USSR

was concerned, Urbahns claimed to have taken this position from Lenin. In his response Trotsky pointed out that, since the World War, the forms of state economic intervention in the West that Marxists had characterized as “state capitalist” were not progressive, but “reactionary through and through.” Furthermore, he observed that Lenin had applied the term “state capitalism” within the Soviet Union to the concessions and mixed companies of NEP, not to the state-owned trusts that had developed into the gigantic Soviet industries of the 1930s. Thus, he concluded, not one of the traditional Marxist understandings of “state capitalism” could be applied “from any side to the present Soviet economy.”⁷³

In contrast, however, Trotsky now saw something of value in the earlier writings of Urbahns. Before developing his most recent “state capitalist” position, Urbahns had described the Soviet regime as a Bonapartist government, standing between classes. Again, Trotsky made short work of this theoretical confusion, observing that it was nonsense to speak of a “supraclass, or an interclass” state, and insisting that historically Bonapartism was “only one of the varieties of capitalist hegemony.”⁷⁴ Although Trotsky himself had described the AUCP as “plebiscitary,” or even “Bonapartist,” he had done so to indicate broad parallels between the norms of the Stalinist party and those of a Bonapartist state, as well as to suggest that these norms were facilitating the installation of a truly Bonapartist (capitalist) regime in the USSR.⁷⁵ He had not meant to suggest that the Soviet state was literally Bonapartist. Now, however, Trotsky abruptly announced that, as long as the class nature of the Soviet state was clearly and accurately defined, he was prepared to embrace the label completely:

If Urbahns wants to extend the concept of Bonapartism to include the present Soviet regime, then we are ready to accept such a widened interpretation—under one condition: if the social content of the Soviet “Bonapartism” will be defined with requisite clarity. It is absolutely correct that the self-rule of the Soviet bureaucracy was built on the soil of veering between class forces

both internal as well as international. Insofar as the bureaucratic veering has been crowned by the personal plebiscitary regime of Stalin, it is possible to speak of Soviet Bonapartism.⁷⁶

Of course, Trotsky was not suggesting this change because he was only now becoming aware of the bureaucracy's "self-rule," or of its "veering between class forces," or of Stalin's "personal plebiscitary regime." He had commented upon each of these features frequently in the past. Rather, it is likely that Trotsky's provisional redefinition of Soviet Bonapartism was due to his new appreciation, derived from his conclusion that force would be required to remove the bureaucracy from power, of the *extent* of the bureaucracy's autonomy. Again, however, Trotsky hesitated in the face of a theoretical leap. It would be more than a year before he would begin to apply the Bonapartist label consistently to the Soviet regime.⁷⁷

Meanwhile, Trotsky's thinking was also changing regarding the relevance of Bonapartism's twin concept, *Thermidor*. As David Law has pointed out, in late 1933 the term virtually disappeared from Trotsky's writings. Law explains that the concept "ceased, in its old form, to be useful to Trotsky" because "although the restoration of capitalism might still be an ultimate destination it was no longer thought of as immediately proximate." In one work Law attributes this shift to Trotsky's recognition of the transformation of the peasantry under collectivization.⁷⁸ However, the extent of collectivization had not changed significantly since the spring of 1933 when Trotsky frequently spoke of Thermidor.⁷⁹ Rather, to the extent that Trotsky was influenced on this question by economic developments, his concern about imminent restoration may have diminished as the economic situation began to improve in 1933. Perhaps even more significantly, as Law observes in another work, Trotsky's October 1933 change of position regarding the use of force implied a rejection of the view that restoration was the "greatest immediate danger" in favor of "a concentration upon, and greater respect for, the

current political regime.”⁸⁰ In other words, Trotsky’s previous concerns about Thermidor made far less sense in light of his new emphasis upon bureaucratic autonomy.

A further consequence of Trotsky’s change of position on reform of the Soviet state was to prompt him to rethink his explanation of the origins of the problem of bureaucracy. In the late 1920s Trotsky attributed the growth of bureaucratism primarily to the effects of bourgeois pressure on the state and party apparatuses. In the early 1930s, he partially amended this explanation to emphasize the role of the party apparatus in promoting its own autonomy. However, nowhere did he attempt to answer the more basic question of how the bureaucracy had come into being as a distinct social formation. Nor did he attempt to identify the objective factors that continued to enhance its autonomy. This second absence became even more glaring with Trotsky’s shift of position on reform of the Soviet state. At the same time, the tentative revision of Trotsky’s thinking on the question of Soviet Bonapartism may have suggested a new answer to these questions.

On December 4, 1933 in the *International Bulletin* of Trotsky’s recently renamed international organization, the International Communist League (ICL), Trotsky responded to a sympathizer who had asserted that Russian national backwardness was irrelevant to the issue of the construction of socialism in one country. In part, Trotsky rejected the sympathizer’s position on the grounds that Soviet backwardness had fostered social contradictions that threatened the very survival of the USSR. In his explanation of why this was the case, Trotsky offered a functional account of the origins of the bureaucracy and of the continuing growth of its autonomy:

The bureaucracy in the USSR is neither a moral nor a technological factor but a social one, i.e., a class factor. The struggle between the socialist and capitalist tendencies assumed primarily the character of a struggle between the social interests

represented by the state and the personal interests of the consumers, the peasants, the civil employees and the workers themselves. In the given situation, the overcoming of class antagonisms means the harmonizing of the social interests of production with the personal interest of the consumers, while during the present stage of development personal interest still remains the prime mover of the economy. Has this harmonizing been accomplished? No! The growth of bureaucratism reflects the growth of the contradiction between the private and social interests. Representing the “social” interests, the bureaucracy identifies them to a large measure with its own private interests. It draws the distinction between the social and the private in accordance with its own private interests. This creates a still greater tension between the contradictions and consequently leads to a further growth of bureaucratism. At the bottom of these processes lie the backwardness of the USSR and its isolation in its capitalist environment.⁸¹

As he had since the 1920s, Trotsky insisted here that the problem of bureaucracy had fundamental social or even class bases. However, in this passage Trotsky did not identify the contending class forces with the social formations usually specified: the proletariat, various layers of the peasantry, etc. Rather, he spoke more abstractly of the competing “socialist and capitalist tendencies,” including, most importantly, the “social interests” represented by the state, and the “personal” or “private interests” of the “consumers,” including the workers. Furthermore, although he blamed contending class forces for the emergence of the bureaucracy, he no longer attributed the problem of bureaucracy to the *external pressures* exerted by alien classes. Rather, he explained the origin of the bureaucracy in terms of the *functions* of a post-capitalist state in a backward and isolated society. In doing so, Trotsky for the first time gave specific content to his agreement with Khristian Rakovskii in 1929 that the “differentiation of the bureaucracy from the working class milieu “was at first functional, then later became social.”⁸²

Drawing heavily upon the Marxist classics, Trotsky characterized the essential function of the Soviet bureaucracy as the mediation of social conflict. In their 1846 work *The German Ideology* Marx and Engels described how the early state had arisen as the representative of the “common interest” as opposed to “particular” interests.⁸³ Years later in *The Origins of the Family, Private Property and the State*, Engels explained how, “in order that these antagonisms,

classes with conflicting economic interests, might not consume themselves and society in sterile struggle, a power seemingly standing above society became necessary for moderating the conflict.”⁸⁴ Along the same lines Trotsky now identified the basic function of the Soviet state as the “overcoming of class antagonisms” and the “harmonizing” competing social interests. More specifically, he explained this function in terms of the role of the state in production and distribution. In *The State and Revolution* Lenin had defined the essential functions of the state during the first phase of communist society as “safeguarding the common ownership of the means of production” while protecting the “bourgeois” norms of “equality in labor and in the distribution of products.”⁸⁵ Similarly, Trotsky now asserted, “In the given situation, the overcoming of class antagonisms means the harmonizing of the social interests of production with the personal interest of the consumers.”

Having come into being to represent the “social” interests, Trotsky argued, the Soviet bureaucracy began to identify these with its own private interests, and then to interpret the distinction between social and private in this light. Again, Trotsky’s debt to the Marxist classics is evident. In his *Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right*, Marx noted a tendency for the modern state to identify its own interests with those of society: “The bureaucracy holds the state, the spiritual essence of society, in thrall, as its *private property*.”⁸⁶ Likewise, in *The German Ideology* Marx and Engels argued that “because individuals seek *only* their particular interest, which for them does not coincide with their common interest, the latter is asserted as an interest ‘alien’ [*fremd*] to them, and ‘independent’ of them, as in its turn a particular and distinctive ‘general’ interest.”⁸⁷ Engels described this same process even more clearly in a letter in 1890:

Society gives rise to certain common functions which it cannot dispense with. The persons appointed for this purpose form a new branch of the division of labour *within society*. This gives them particular interests, distinct, too, from the interests of those who empowered them; they make themselves independent of the latter and—the state is in being.⁸⁸

According to Trotsky, the ultimate effect of this identification of social interests with the bureaucracy's private interests had been to create even "greater tension between the contradictions." In turn, this had necessitated even more mediation, fostering further growth of "bureaucratism."

Here, it is likely that Trotsky had in mind the mediating role of the state in periods of extreme class tension, which the Marxist classics had described as characteristic of Bonapartism.

Thus, in *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, Engels observed,

By way of exception, however, periods occur in which the warring classes balance each other so nearly that the state power, as ostensible mediator, acquires, for the moment, a certain degree of independence of both. Such was the . . . Bonapartism of the First, and still more of the Second French Empire, which played off the proletariat against the bourgeoisie and the bourgeoisie against the proletariat.⁸⁹

Now Trotsky was able to explain the continuing expansion of the autonomy of the bureaucracy in terms of the same functional imperatives that had called it into existence in the first place.

A final consequence of Trotsky's change of position on reform was the emergence of an apparent inconsistency between his new evaluation of the international policies and the domestic policies of Stalinism. In *The Class Nature of the Soviet State* Trotsky explained that the bureaucracy had "completely squandered" the meaning of the Comintern as an "international revolutionary factor." Yet, as far as domestic policy was concerned, the bureaucracy continued to "preserve a part of its progressive meaning as the gatekeeper of the social conquests of the proletarian revolution."⁹⁰ Trotsky was especially concerned with resolving this apparent discrepancy because for years he had castigated the German "Brandlerites" for supporting the domestic policies of the USSR while denouncing its international policies. In contrast, he asserted in his October 1 article, "We Marxists were never patrons of the double bookkeeping system."⁹¹

In fact, Trotsky contended, there really was no fundamental difference between the bureaucracy's domestic and international policies. In a declaration of the ICL written on August 17, 1933 Trotsky characterized both as being of the "same principled nature."⁹² Similarly, in *The Class Nature of the Soviet State*, he spoke of the bureaucracy's "identical methods in USSR and in the international arena."⁹³ The difference, Trotsky explained, was in the objective results of the policies, which were determined in each case by the "external conditions, or to use the language, of mechanics, the resistivity of the material." On one hand, the Comintern was "an instrument for overthrowing capitalism," and its sections in the West lacked any "inherited capital." In contrast, the Soviet government represented "an instrument for the preservation of an already accomplished overturn," and "nine-tenths of the strength of the Stalinist apparatus" was concentrated "not in itself but in the social changes wrought by the victorious revolution."⁹⁴

8.3 NEW POLICY SHIFTS

The period from the fall of 1933 through the end of 1934 witnessed major changes and initiatives in all areas of Soviet policy. In the economic sphere the leadership retreated from the extreme tempos and excesses that characterized the First Five-Year Plan and began to initiate market reforms. Internationally, it began to seek alliances against growing threats to the East and West, and to promote a shift in the Comintern toward active collaboration with other parties against fascism. Within the party it initiated a new *chistka*, or cleansing operation, while welcoming the return of repentant former oppositionists to the Seventeenth Party Congress in 1934.

Meanwhile, as Ian Thatcher has observed, "For several years following the return to Europe, Trotsky wrote less on the USSR than at any other time in his career."⁹⁵ To a large extent this was probably because, when he gave up on peacefully reforming the Soviet state, Trotsky

concluded that the “revolutionary center of gravity” had shifted to the West, and he redirected his political attention elsewhere.⁹⁶ Besides that, living now in France, Trotsky spent more time consulting with his international comrades. Additionally, he began writing a major biography of Lenin. Finally, in this period he found his work frequently interrupted by a series of forced changes of residence until mid-July 1934 when he settled in the town of Domène at the foothills of the Alps.⁹⁷

However, in various statements during this period Trotsky expressed deep concerns about the new direction of Soviet policy in all areas. For the first time in years he found himself warning of the potentially disastrous consequences of the *rightist* course of the Soviet leadership in the economy and in international affairs. At the same time, he condemned the leadership’s continuing assaults upon critics of the bureaucracy and of Stalin. In each case, Trotsky’s growing theoretical emphasis upon bureaucratic autonomy significantly influenced his analysis of these policy developments.

8.3.1 Economic Retreat and Recovery

Following the crisis of 1932-early 1933, the Soviet economy entered a period of moderation, recovery, economic progress, and market reforms that would continue through the end of the Second Five-Year Plan in 1937. In his few statements on Soviet economic policy between late 1933 and early 1935 Trotsky noted this overall economic improvement, while expressing new concerns about the new rightward drift of policy. He explained the new policies, as he had explained previous shifts to the right, in terms of external class pressure. However, both his silences regarding Thermidor and his retrospective explanations of the left turn of previous years revealed a new emphasis upon bureaucratic autonomy.

In early 1933 the Soviet leadership called for a retreat from the excesses of the first *piatiletka*. At the Central Committee plenum in January 1933 Stalin abruptly modified the high targets for the Second Five-Year Plan adopted in 1932 by the Seventeenth Party Conference. Stalin now called for “less speedy rates” of industrialization and proposed as a minimum a “13-14 per cent average annual increase in industrial output” in place of the 22 percent annual increase allegedly achieved in the first plan.⁹⁸ This moderating trend continued in January 1934 when the Seventeenth Party Congress adopted relatively modest goals in a redrafted five-year plan. Regarding industry, it approved Stalin’s proposals to overcome the lag in iron and steel production, to expand production of consumer goods, to increase labor productivity, and to improve quality. As far as agriculture was concerned, the Congress endorsed Stalin’s recommendations to improve the maintenance of farm machinery; to introduce proper crop rotation; to pay greater attention to livestock farming; and to regionalize the production of vegetables, dairy products, grain, and meat. Gone was the previous rhetoric about overcoming the market, eradicating money, and eliminating differences between town and country.⁹⁹

Meanwhile, the economic crisis of 1932-33 was beginning to recede. The recovery started with an improved harvest in 1933. That, combined with the impressive overall figures for industrial construction in the First Five-Year Plan contributed to a sense of relief and optimism among the delegates to the Seventeenth Party Congress. Sergei Kirov, secretary of the Leningrad organization, perhaps best captured this spirit when he joyously proclaimed, “Our successes are really tremendous. Damn it all, to put it humanly, you just want to live and live—really, just look what’s going on. It’s a fact!”¹⁰⁰

From 1934 to 1936 the industrial outlook grew steadily brighter. To a large degree the great expansion of industrial production during this period was due to the completion of the

construction of plants begun during the first *piatiletka*. Machinery and metalworking industries experienced remarkable growth; coal production increased substantially; after 1934 the situation in rail transport improved significantly; and the production of consumer goods increased, though not as rapidly as projected in the plan.¹⁰¹

At the same time the situation in agriculture also continued its upward turn. Although crop yields remained low and even continued to fall, the total output of grain slowly increased, and the supply of potatoes and vegetables as well as the population of livestock climbed steadily.¹⁰² Much of the credit for the recovery in agriculture belonged to a series of trade and agricultural reforms. In the spring of 1932 the government legalized markets where *kolkhozy* could sell their surplus products at free prices. Subsequently, a decree of January 1934 reaffirmed this right, while specifically forbidding the application of administrative pressure to influence collective farmers and peasants to sell their grain. The *kolkhoz* markets were such a success that the state itself soon introduced sale of its own surpluses at high prices in commercial stores without rations. Furthermore, in November 1934 the government announced it was eliminating rationing of bread and all cereal foods, a measure that took effect on January 1, 1935.¹⁰³ An additional reform was the abolition in late 1934 of the political departments in the machine tractor stations (MTSs), and the assumption of their duties by local party committees and by newly created deputy MTS directors for political affairs.¹⁰⁴

Trotsky wrote little during this period about Soviet economic developments. In addition to the reasons already suggested, it is likely that some of his earlier concern about Soviet economic policy diminished when he realized the situation was beginning to improve. His awareness of this improvement was evident by at least December 12, 1933 when he referred to the “good harvest in the Ukraine,” as well as on March 31, 1934 when he remarked regarding

Kirov's speech at the Seventeenth Party Congress: "That Kirov rejoices over technical successes and the mitigation of the food scarcity is understandable. There is not an honest worker in the whole world who does not rejoice over this."¹⁰⁵

However, in scattered comments on the Soviet economy during these years Trotsky expressed serious concern about the shift to the right he perceived in the recent policy changes. In an article of January 11, 1933 he noted Stalin's reduction of the goals of the Second Five-Year Plan at the Seventeenth Party Conference, characterizing this as "a turn to the right," and a "new bureaucratic zigzag."¹⁰⁶ Two weeks later he described this "reversal" as a "new emergency zigzag."¹⁰⁷ Although in the context of the economic crisis Trotsky welcomed the shift, he had no hope that it signified the adoption of a correct, long-term course. This was because, as he asserted on January 26, "the bureaucracy arrived at this moderation of tempos not by Marxist foresight but belatedly, after its head had collided against the disastrous consequences of its own economic adventurism."¹⁰⁸ Or, as he similarly observed in an article of March 3, "Under the blows of the crisis, which it did not foresee and which it does not openly admit even now after it has broken out, the leadership has been forced to retreat in the sphere of industrialization even as it had begun to retreat earlier in the sphere of collectivization."¹⁰⁹ Trotsky concluded, "The new zigzag in Stalinist policies is unmistakable proof of the profound dislocation of the Soviet economy, but it is absolutely incapable of leading to a way out of the great wreckage."¹¹⁰

Two years later, Trotsky complained about the further shift to the right embodied in the recent market reforms and the de-rationing of bread. In the article "Where is the Stalin Bureaucracy Leading the USSR?" on January 30, 1935 he described "the general direction" of both the economic and international turns during the previous year and a half as "to the *right*, *more to the right and still further to the right*."¹¹¹ Just a few years before, he recalled, Stalin had

declared his intention to send the NEP “to the devil” and had ridiculed insistence upon currency stability as a “bourgeois superstition.” In contrast, now the bureaucracy found “itself compelled to apply to ‘the devil’” for a return of the market, and forced to eliminate ration cards in an effort to stabilize the *chervonetz*. In 1933 Stalin had instituted political sections “to exercise ruthless control over the collective farms.” Now even this “ripest product of the ‘Leader’s genius mind’” had been liquidated, almost without announcement.¹¹²

Trotsky did not object to the leadership’s attempt to stabilize the currency. On the contrary, he saw at least this aspect of the turn as another vindication of the Opposition’s foresight. However, he expressed deep concerns about the methods employed in this “Neo-NEP,” about their likely consequences, and about their implications for future policy. First, Trotsky objected that it was the Soviet working class—and especially its poorest sections—that was being forced to pay for the previous mistakes of the bureaucracy through the abolition of rationing. Beyond that, he predicted that the regeneration of market relations would lead to “the strengthening of individualistic and centrifugal tendencies in rural economy and the growth of differentiation between the collective farms, as well as inside the collectives.” Finally, Trotsky was apprehensive about the significance of the shifts for the future. The unplanned reforms had been introduced “to a large measure under pressure of the peasantry.” Where the retreat would stop, he warned, could not yet be known.¹¹³ Although in this last passage Trotsky hinted that Soviet economic policy might shift even more disastrously to the right, it is noteworthy that he did not use the term “Thermidor.” Again, largely because of his increased perception of the bureaucracy’s autonomy, Trotsky seems to have concluded that the danger of Thermidor was not imminent.

Trotsky’s explanation for this latest turn to the right in economic policy was similar to the

explanation he had offered for the conservative economic policies of the late 1920s: external class pressure. Thus, in his January 30, 1935 article he asserted that the reforms were adopted “under pressure of the peasantry” and that the bureaucracy was “retreating before the moujik.”¹¹⁴ The tendency to explain policies of the bureaucracy in terms of class pressure would never disappear from Trotsky’s writings. However, in explaining major policy developments, from this point onwards Trotsky increasingly emphasized the role of conscious decisions made by the bureaucracy in the pursuit of its own interests.

The latter approach was evident in Trotsky’s attempts during this period to explain the previous *left* turn in Soviet economic policy. In the past, Trotsky usually had attributed that turn to pressure from the Opposition, supplemented by “panic” and/or “excitement” on the part of the bureaucracy. Trotsky still continued to view the Opposition’s pressure as an important source of that policy shift. In an article of March 31, 1934 he wrote that the Left Opposition won the fight for industrialization and collectivization “in a certain sense, namely in that, beginning with 1928 the whole policy of the Soviet government represents a bureaucratically distorted application of the principles of the Left Opposition.”¹¹⁵ Now, however, Trotsky was inclined to stress the role of self-interest on the part of the bureaucracy. Thus, in his article “The Stalinist Bureaucracy and the Assassination” on December 28, 1934, he explained that in the previous “heroic” epoch of the bureaucracy, “with no initiative, with no horizons, with no understanding of the historical dynamic forces, the bureaucracy, after a stubborn resistance, found itself compelled *by the logic of its own interests* to adopt the program of industrialization and collectivization.”¹¹⁶ Similarly, on February 1, 1935 in “The Workers’ State, Thermidor, and Bonapartism” Trotsky wrote that “in the struggle for its own positions,” the bureaucracy “found itself compelled to take from the program of the Left Opposition all those measures that alone

made it possible to save the social basis of the Soviet state.”¹¹⁷

8.3.2 The New Turn in France

During the same period, the Communist International also initiated a major reorientation in policy. Following the disastrous defeat in Germany, the focus of Comintern activity shifted to France, where an increasingly active right-wing movement had appeared. In the face of this growing threat, the Communist Party of France rejected its earlier “third period” line, and began pursuing a broad antifascist alliance. Although Trotsky welcomed a retreat from the Comintern’s previous policies, he soon began to criticize the new orientation in France from the left.

Consonant with his increasing emphasis upon bureaucratic autonomy, he attributed the right turn, and the centrism of Comintern policy in general, to the emotional reactions and inherent political characteristics of the Soviet bureaucracy.

In early 1934 aggressive actions by organizations on the extreme right in France shocked the left, impelling it to seek unity. On the evening of February 6, 1934 fascist and royalist groups converged in a demonstration in the Place de la Concorde in Paris, and marched upon the Chamber of Deputies, meeting in the Palais Bourbon. In the ensuing battle with police, approximately 19 demonstrators were killed and hundreds of police and demonstrators were injured. Although the riot did not overthrow the Republic, as some rightist leaders apparently hoped, it succeeded in bringing down the government of Eduard Daladier, leader of the left wing of the moderate left Radical-Socialist Party, and in bringing to power Gaston Doumergue of the Radical-Socialist right. The day after the riot the Executive of the French Section of the Labor International (SFIO) appealed to the central committee of the Communist Party of France (PCF) for joint action against the fascist threat; and organizations of the PCF and SFIO on the local level

began to discuss collaboration. On February 12, with the belated endorsement of the PCF, communists participated with socialists in a one-day general strike and a mass demonstration in Paris.¹¹⁸

Still, for a time the PCF leadership continued to reiterate its “third period” line. In this, it was supported by the ECCI, which declared in a statement issued on March 3 that the only way to form the united front was by fighting ruthlessly to destroy the “treacherous Second International.” However, sentiment within the French left for a united front remained high. In May 1934 the congress of the SFIO voted to ask the Bureau of the Second International to approach the Comintern again for discussions concerning a united front.¹¹⁹

At this point, the position of the Communist Party began to shift. In late May the PCF called for a national party conference on the question of a united front; and it appealed to the SFIO for collaboration on behalf of the victims of Nazi persecution. The leadership of the Socialists responded positively to this proposal, but demanded a “non-aggression pact” in exchange. When verbal attacks by the Communist Party continued, the executive committee of the SFIO terminated negotiations on June 20.¹²⁰ However, shortly afterwards, acting upon telegraphic instructions from the Comintern, the united front conference of the PCF accepted the Socialists’ demand. The Communists pledged to “refrain mutually from all attacks, insults and criticisms against each other’s organizations and party members.”¹²¹ A pact between the PCF and the SFIO, providing for joint actions in defense of democracy, against war preparations, and against fascist terror in Germany and Austria was signed on July 27, 1934.¹²²

Within a few months, the PCF proposed an even broader alliance against fascism. In a speech of October 10, 1934, Maurice Thorez, general secretary of the PCF, called for an electoral alliance that would include not only the SFIO, but also the Radical-Socialist Party.¹²³ In the

following weeks the PCF leadership insistently appealed to the Radicals to join in “a popular front of freedom, labor, and peace”; and on November 25 it presented to the National Council of the SFIO a “Popular Front Program” of limited social reforms judged to be acceptable to the Radicals.¹²⁴ The SFIO leadership immediately complained that this program did not include “a single measure of a socialist nature,” and proposed the addition of measures for the “socialization of the main means of production and exchange.” In turn the PCF, concerned that explicitly socialist demands would frighten the peasantry and petty bourgeoisie away from an anti-fascist front, rejected these proposals. Negotiations between the two parties then terminated in January 1935.¹²⁵

Immediately following the rightist riot of February 6, 1934, Trotsky concluded that France was beginning to replay the recent history of Germany. As in Germany, the capitalist class, incapable of providing the people with either bread or peace, was using fascist bands to smash democracy and the organizations of the working class. Again, the fascists were drawing their popular support from the middle classes ruined by capitalism, whose anger and frustration had been redirected against the proletariat.¹²⁶ At the moment, the sharpening conflict between classes had raised Doumergue to power as a Bonapartist “savior” and “arbiter.” Most immediately, according to Trotsky, the situation demanded “*active proletarian self-defense*,” organized by a united front of working class organizations. Beyond that, it required an audacious struggle for workers’ and peasants’ power.¹²⁷

By late 1934 and early 1935 Trotsky began to criticize the new orientation of the PCF from the left. Although he welcomed the fact that the Comintern finally had abandoned its ultraleft line, he now condemned it for adopting a policy that could prove to be equally ruinous.¹²⁸ Both SFIO and the PCF had rejected proposals to organize workers’ militias, calling instead upon

the French government to disarm the fascist leagues. In Trotsky's view this was an approach that strengthened the hand of the state while leaving organizations of the working class defenseless against the fascists who would only be rearmed by the police.¹²⁹ Beyond that, he criticized the PCF's courting of the Radical Socialists, the party employed by the big bourgeoisie to preserve petty bourgeois hopes for "a progressive and peaceful improvement of its situation." In the current situation, he insisted, the Radicals were no longer able to play this role, as the petty bourgeoisie were looking for extreme solutions from either the left or the right. Consequently, by tying itself to the Radicals, the Communist Party was driving the peasants and small shopkeepers into the arms of the fascist Leagues.¹³⁰ Finally, Trotsky denounced the PCF's agreement to refrain from mutual criticism of the SFIO. By this agreement, he asserted, the communists had "thrown overboard the revolutionary program."¹³¹

To Trotsky, the new line—which he saw as originating in Moscow—revealed a complete lack of confidence in the working class by the Comintern leadership. Thus, in a letter of August 10, 1934 he explained to a leader of a French teachers' union that, having blamed its failures on the Western proletariat, the Comintern leadership had concluded, "For the security of the USSR, we have to look elsewhere for help. Since the conservative proletariat is attached to democracy, nothing remains but for us to attach ourselves to it, to support and preserve democracy."¹³² However, Trotsky explained, since French "democracy" was embodied in the Radical Party, since the Radicals needed Socialist support to rule, and since the SFIO could only support the Radicals if the PCF stopped criticizing it, the "overriding plan of the Soviet bureaucracy" was to reestablish the regime of the Radical Herriot, by freeing the SFIO from the criticism of the PCF.¹³³

Beyond that, Trotsky attributed the policy change in France to fear on the part of the Soviet bureaucracy. In the past, Trotsky had explained right turns in Comintern policy in terms of external class pressure. Now, consistent with his growing emphasis upon bureaucratic autonomy, he asserted that the right turn—like the *left* turn of 1929-33—represented an overreaction to defeats. As he stated in an “Open Letter to the Bolshevik-Leninists in the USSR,” in August 1934, “When the waters of fascism rose up to the Comintern’s neck in France, frightened, it accomplished in several days, if not in several hours, a turn unprecedented in political history.”¹³⁴

8.3.3 Shifts in Foreign Policy

During these years the Soviet leadership also began pursuing military alliances against the growing threat from both Japan and Germany. These efforts culminated in the U.S. recognition of the Soviet Union and the signing of a mutual assistance pact with France. Although Trotsky viewed the attempt to forge pacts with imperialist powers as necessary in the existing context, he simultaneously denounced as “anti-Marxist” many of the statements made by Soviet leaders in order to obtain these alliances. In line with his current emphasis upon the bureaucracy’s independence, he attributed these developments to the conservatism of the bureaucracy fostered by its own material self interests.

Since the occupation of Manchuria in September 1931, the Soviet Union had watched Japan with growing concern. Lacking resources to deter Japanese expansion, the Soviets initially opted for a policy of appeasement. Thus, in December 1931 the USSR offered Tokyo a non-aggression pact—a proposal that was rejected. The following year the Soviets offered to sell Japan the Chinese Eastern Railway (CER), already partially occupied by the Japanese. Although Japan responded favorably, the Soviets broke off negotiations in September 1933 after

authorities of Manchukuo arrested six Soviet employees of the CER in an attempt to pressure the USSR into dropping the price.¹³⁵

While strengthening its military forces in the Far East, the Soviet Union also began actively seeking international alliances to counterbalance Japan. The Japanese threat apparently inspired Soviet participation in the conference of the League of Nations' preparatory commission on disarmament that convened in Geneva in February 1932. At the conference Maxim Litvinov, Commissar for Foreign Affairs, repeated earlier Soviet statements of support for general and complete disarmament, but also indicated Soviet willingness to endorse the proposal of U.S. President Hoover for a one-third reduction of all armaments by all nations. An additional Soviet statement of some significance at the Conference was Litvinov's attempt to provide an exact definition of aggression.¹³⁶ In the fall of 1933 the Soviet Union also seized upon the invitation from Franklin Roosevelt, newly elected President of the United States, to discuss recognition. On November 16 the two countries exchanged notes in which the United States recognized the Soviet Union and the Soviets pledged to settle its outstanding debts and to prevent activity on its territory by any organization attempting to overthrow the U.S. government.¹³⁷

In the same period the Soviet Union began to revise its foreign policy in Europe in light of the German threat. Despite Hitler's self-proclaimed hostility to the USSR, the Soviet leadership initially hoped that German policy toward the Soviet Union would not change substantially under the Nazis. When on May 5, 1933 Germany ratified the Berlin protocol extending the 1926 Treaty of Berlin with the USSR, it seemed that this wish would be granted. However, during 1933 the Soviets grew increasingly concerned about attacks on Soviet institutions and citizens within Germany, about Hitler's efforts to revise Versailles, and about an Italian proposal for a pact that would exclude the USSR. Consequently, by late 1933 the Soviet

leadership had begun to pursue new alliances in Europe. In December 1933, the Politburo endorsed a French proposal for a mutual assistance pact against Germany and a suggestion that the USSR join the League of Nations. Beyond that, the Politburo expanded the prospective alliance to include Poland, Belgium, Czechoslovakia, Lithuania, Latvia, and Finland. At the subsequent meeting of the Central Executive Committee, Litvinov justified the pact by distinguishing between the “deeply pacifist” and the more militaristic imperialist powers. Negotiations over this expanded alliance continued through the following year. Then, in September 1934 the USSR joined the League; and on December 5, 1934 it concluded a protocol with France expressing the intention of both countries to pursue an eastern pact.¹³⁸

By June 1934 Trotsky concluded that Soviet foreign policy, as well as Soviet economic policy and Comintern policy, was undergoing a “sharp turn to the right,” a “decidedly anti-Leninist turn.”¹³⁹ Aspects of this shift included Litvinov’s “purely formalistic presentation of the problems of war and peace” and the projected Soviet entry into the League of Nations.¹⁴⁰ Again, Trotsky did not perceive either action as inherently wrong. In fact, he suggested that both were perhaps at least partially necessitated by the weakened position of the USSR.¹⁴¹ Nevertheless, he insisted that the Soviet leadership had gone far beyond what was permissible in its statements about disarmament and the League of Nations. He observed that for Marxists, disarmament was ineffective in preventing war, and issues of “defense” and “aggression” were just “questions of practical expediency.” To say otherwise, as the Soviet leadership had done repeatedly, was “to mislead the workers for the sake of a common front with petty-bourgeois pacifists,” while providing cover for Social Democratic leaders who had a stake in the status quo.¹⁴² Furthermore, Trotsky argued that, although it might be necessary for the USSR to enter the League, to acclaim this “bloc of allies and vassals of French imperialism” as a center for peace, and then to present

the Soviet entry as a victory, had “nothing in common with the policy of the international proletarian party.”¹⁴³

Along the same lines, Trotsky noted, the Stalinists had begun portraying one group of imperialist powers as defenders of peace. In recent statements Soviet leaders had declared that Roosevelt represented “peaceful American capitalism.”¹⁴⁴ More generally, they had begun distinguishing between the “peaceful, democratic and pacifist” capitalist states, and “warlike, fascist and aggressive” countries. Although Trotsky recognized that the purpose of such statements was to win allies against a possible attack from Germany and Japan, he believed they represented an “anti-Marxist political philosophy.” Instead of relying upon world revolution, Stalinism was counting upon military alliances with capitalist countries and “the insane theory of socialism in one country.” One certain consequence would be to further demoralize the German masses who were already being told that the Soviet Union had concluded an alliance with France against them.¹⁴⁵

Again, in previous years Trotsky had explained major policy shifts to the right by the Soviet Union as responses by the leadership to bourgeois pressure. Now, given his growing emphasis upon bureaucratic autonomy, he began to attribute the recent shifts to the right he perceived in Soviet foreign policy primarily to the conservative nature of the bureaucracy itself. For example, in an interview with a dissident member of the PCF in June 1934, Trotsky described the right turn as a reaction to the defeat in Germany, and then further explained, “A policy hostile to unity of action [with the Socialists] and a policy that presents the entry of the USSR into the League of Nations as a victory is one and the same policy, that of the ruling bureaucracy of the USSR, whose horizon is limited to the Soviet Union and that neglects and even fears the revolutionary struggle in other countries.”¹⁴⁶ Similarly, in an interview with

Louise Bryant in late 1934 or early 1935, Trotsky asserted that the Soviet bureaucracy had become a “national and conservative force” and that Soviet diplomacy, in particular, “defends the status quo.” Trotsky explained that the conditions of the Soviet bureaucrats’ existence, “as an uncontrolled privileged layer, accustomed only to giving orders, inevitably cause them to grow conservative.”¹⁴⁷

8.3.4 Developments in the Party Regime

Two of the most important political events within the USSR during this period were the new *chistka* of 1933-34 and the convening of the Seventeenth Party Congress in 1934. For Trotsky, both events—as well as other regime-related developments during this period—were significant as attempts to reinforce two basic features he perceived in the Soviet regime: the self-rule of the bureaucracy, and the personal plebiscitary regime of Stalin. Trotsky explained the persistence of both characteristics in terms of his new account of the origins of bureaucratic autonomy.

In early 1933 the party leadership initiated a new mass *chistka*, or cleansing, of the party organization. A resolution adopted the April 1933 plenum of the CC explained that the mass admissions of 1931-32 had led to an influx of “alien” elements and “double dealers” into the party, while inadequacies of political education had resulted in the fact that large numbers of members were “insufficiently unstable” or “politically almost illiterate.” Individuals to be purged included 1) class alien and hostile elements; 2) “double dealers” who concealed their true aspirations while striving to undermine party policy; 3) violators of discipline who failed to carry out decisions of the party and state, and who chattered about their “lack of realism”; 4) degenerates, including those who did not want to struggle against the kulaks; 5) careerists, self-

seekers and bureaucratic elements; and 6) morally corrupt elements.¹⁴⁸ As various authors have noted, there was a clear political thrust to several of these categories. In particular, they seem to have been directed at critics of the leadership's policies regarding collectivization, dekulakization, and industrialization.¹⁴⁹ However, as J. Arch Getty has emphasized, of the 18 percent of party members ultimately expelled in the *chistka*, a majority were removed for such relatively nonpolitical reasons as passivity and corruption.¹⁵⁰

A second development with important implications for the party regime was the convening in late January and early February 1934 of the Seventeenth Party Congress, the "Congress of Victors." Again, this first party congress to be held since the launching of the great offensive in industry and agriculture, celebrated the party's weathering of the tumultuous storms of the previous four years. Climaxing a year-long intensification of the Stalin cult, speaker after speaker rose to credit one man for the party's victory.¹⁵¹ Newly repentant oppositionists delivered some of the most hyperbolic eulogies. Zinoviev acclaimed Stalin for implementing the socialist construction that Lenin had only imagined, while Kamenev described the "Stalin epoch" as historically equal to the era of Lenin. Bukharin asserted, "It is the duty of every party member to rally round Comrade Stalin as the personal embodiment of the mind and will of the party, as its leader, its theoretical and practical leader."¹⁵²

If the Seventeenth Congress was a Congress of Victors, as Robert Tucker has observed it also seems to have been designed to be a "congress of reconciliation."¹⁵³ The fact that former oppositionists were allowed to speak and were treated respectfully suggested that the years of party struggle were finally at an end. Stalin himself seemed to encourage this view in his address to the Congress. Noting that at the Fifteenth Congress it had been necessary to struggle against

the Trotskyites and at the Sixteenth, against the “Right deviators,” he observed, “At this congress . . . , there is nothing to prove and, it seems, no one to fight.”¹⁵⁴

However, there were also more ominous themes in the General Secretary’s long address to the Congress. Although the opportunists and deviators had been smashed, Stalin warned that “remnants of their ideology” lived on in the minds of some party members.¹⁵⁵ For example, some comrades, influenced by Right deviators, believed that the advancement of the Soviet Union toward a classless society indicated that the dictatorship of the proletariat was about to wither away. Against this view, Stalin declared that a classless society could only be built “by strengthening the organs of the dictatorship of the proletariat, by intensifying the class struggle, by abolishing classes, by eliminating the remnants of the capitalist classes, and in battles with enemies, both internal and external.”¹⁵⁶

For Trotsky, there was never any doubt that the primary intent of the *chistka* of 1933 was political—to shore up the “self-rule of the bureaucracy” and “the personal plebiscitary regime of Stalin.” This is not to say that Trotsky believed that no purge was necessary. In fact on March 30, 1933 he observed that there was no reason for the party to have two million members, and he offered the Opposition’s assistance in purging “the raw material, the ballast” to make the party a more effective instrument for combating Thermidor.¹⁵⁷ However, he had no confidence in any *chistka* initiated and conducted by Stalinists. Thus, on March 3, 1933 he declared, “We do not trust the selections of Stalin-Menzhinsky-Yagoda; they have as their criteria not the interests of the proletarian revolution but the interests of the clique.”¹⁵⁸

Despite the variety of purge criteria, Trotsky viewed the *chistka* mainly as an attempt to prevent the revival of genuine party discussion. As he wrote on July 20, 1933, “The purges and expulsions were at first intended to disorganize the party, to terrorize it, to deprive it of the

possibility of thinking and acting; now the repressions are aimed at preventing the reorganization of the party.”¹⁵⁹ With the announcement of the forthcoming party congress, Trotsky concluded that the purpose of the *chistka* was to prevent the surfacing of dissent at that gathering. On December 12 he wrote, “The chief aim of the *chistka* was to terrorize the party prior to the congress. . . . This time, everybody was to be kicked out who had ever evinced the slightest inclination toward party discussion.”¹⁶⁰

More specifically, Trotsky saw the cleansing operation as aimed at party members who shared at least some of the Opposition’s views. On January 4, 1933 when the *chistka* was first announced he observed, “This cleansing begins and ends . . . with the repression of the comrades who share our views and with the destruction of all criticism and all Marxist thinking within the party.”¹⁶¹ Later in the year he pointed out that press reports emphasized the role of the *chistka* in rooting out Trotskyists. Thus, on December 12 he noted, “Through all the articles and notices on the *chistka*, there runs the red thread of ‘Trotskyism.’”¹⁶²

For Trotsky this did not mean that many, if any, of those being expelled in the *chistka* were actually Bolshevik-Leninists. He thought some were compromised bureaucrats, hated by the populace, but labeled “Trotskyists” to load upon Trotskyism “the guilt for the crimes of the Stalinists.” At the same time, he argued that the Stalinists were branding as “Trotskyist” all “criticism of bureaucratism in general.” Their intent was to “remind those who have a tendency to reflect and to be critical and who are courageous” that if they let themselves be carried away, they would be treated in a manner befitting Trotskyists.¹⁶³

However, during this period Trotsky also perceived indications that Stalin was preparing a new wave of persecution against true Bolshevik-Leninists. In 1933 Soviet delegates to a conference of teachers held in Rheims announced that a trial in the USSR would soon

demonstrate that Trotskyists had participated in counterrevolutionary activities. Soon afterwards, Western newspapers reported that a few dozen “Trotskyists” arrested in Ukraine had been charged with sabotage and state treason. Trotsky vigorously denied the charges, insisting, “If real saboteurs have been arrested in the Ukraine, they cannot and do not have any relation to the Left Opposition; if adherents of the Left Opposition are arrested in the Ukraine, they cannot and do not have any relation to sabotage.” In part, he believed Stalin’s motive was to justify the incarceration and exile of Left Oppositionists since 1928. Beyond that, the Stalinists were growing increasingly alarmed over the popular sympathy for the Bolshevik-Leninists in the Soviet Union and over the gains of the Opposition internationally.¹⁶⁴

Although the Seventeenth Party Congress was the scene of reconciliation with newly repentant oppositionists, Trotsky did not expect that it would mark any improvement of party regime. Rather, in an article entitled “On the Eve of the Congress,” written on January 20, 1934 six days before the congress convened, Trotsky anticipated that the congress would once again confirm that the party was dead as a revolutionary organization. For Trotsky, this had been indicated already by the delay, in violation of the party statutes, of nearly four years in convening the congress.¹⁶⁵ He believed it would further be demonstrated by the lack of any serious discussion at the congress, as ensured by the *chistka*. Trotsky concluded that the congress was not being called to determine policies, but simply to endorse the leadership, the economic plan, and the work of the Comintern.¹⁶⁶ Taken together, the arbitrary convening of congresses, the violation of statutes, the elimination of criticism, the arbitrary purges, and the deification of the leader, all signified, again, “the liquidation of the party as an active political whole that checks, elects, and renews its apparatus.”¹⁶⁷

For Trotsky the real question confronting the congress was “where and why did the Bolshevik Party disappear?” In this connection Trotsky noted again the discrepancy between the claims that the construction of socialism in the USSR was nearing completion, and the fact that state coercion actually was intensifying. To explain this contradiction, he reviewed and expanded upon his recent account of the origins of bureaucratic autonomy. Again, Trotsky insisted, the USSR was still far from socialism. In 1932, his former friend and collaborator Karl Radek had attempted to dispute this in a response to Trotsky published in the German newspaper *Das Berliner Tageblatt*. Radek had argued that socialism meant only the nationalization of production and distribution, and that shortages of milk were due to the absence of cows, not of socialism. Trotsky now replied that, on the contrary, socialism requires the ability to meet *all* human needs: “If the cows are nationalized, but their number is insufficient or their udders dry, this is still not socialism, because for lack of milk conflicts arise: between the city and village, between the kolkhozes, sovkhoses and individual peasants, between all the toilers and the bureaucracy.” Amplifying upon his December 1933 remarks, Trotsky spoke here not only of the struggle between the state and consumers, but also of the conflicts among the various groupings of consumers. These conflicts, which inevitably took on a “social and in their tendencies, a class character,” in turn required “the powerful intervention from above, that is, state coercion.” Once again, Trotsky concluded, “The real key to bureaucratic omnipotence lies in these simple facts.”¹⁶⁸

Meanwhile, according to Trotsky, power at the national summit, as well as within each geographic territory of the USSR, continued to concentrate in the hands of one leader who was increasingly deified in the press. In the same article Trotsky restated his functional explanation for this process as well, connecting it with the emergence of “bureaucratic omnipotence”:

Since the workers are denied the possibility of reelecting and directing their apparatus, some other instance is necessary to solve state problems. Disagreements within the uncontrolled bureaucracy must be settled from above, by the 'leader,' who is but the personification of the apparatus.¹⁶⁹

8.4 THE KIROV ASSASSINATION

On December 1, 1934 an event occurred that would have enormous impact upon the Soviet political regime in the coming years—the assassination of Sergei Kirov. What is known for certain is that at approximately 4:30 PM a young, unemployed, former Communist named Leonid Nikolaev fatally shot Kirov in the Leningrad party headquarters. A debate still rages among historians about other aspects of the case, including especially the question of Stalin's complicity.¹⁷⁰ However, the consequences are clear. Immediately, the murder was used as a pretext for the arrest of Stalin's critics within the party; and in subsequent years it would become the pivotal event in a series of trials that would culminate in the execution of tens or hundreds of thousands, and the arrest of at least hundreds of thousands more.¹⁷¹ Nine days after Kirov's death Trotsky put forward a preliminary analysis, distributed to sections of the ICL as a confidential circular. Subsequently, in response to queries from American friends, he returned repeatedly to the case, ultimately reexamining the assassination and its aftermath in five more articles and a press statement.¹⁷² Through all of these writings, to a large degree Trotsky's interpretation of events was shaped by his perception of the political context within the USSR, and more specifically by the current version of his theory of Soviet bureaucracy.

Shortly after the arrest of Nikolaev and his family and acquaintances, the Soviet leadership responded to the assassination by striking at enemies on the "right." From December

5 to 18 the Military Collegium of the Supreme Soviet sentenced 102 “White Guardists” in Leningrad, Moscow, Kiev, and Minsk to death on charges of preparing terrorist acts against Soviet officials. Allegedly, the accused were sent into the Soviet Union from abroad to carry out acts of terrorism.¹⁷³

By the end of the month the focus of the investigation and reprisals shifted to the left. An indictment published on December 26 charged that Nikolaev had participated with thirteen others, including members of the Leningrad Komsomol, in an underground Zinovievist terrorist organization that had planned the murders of Stalin, Molotov, and Kaganovich, as well as Kirov. It was also alleged that Nikolaev had received 5,000 rubles from an unnamed foreign consul, later identified as Latvian, who had offered to put the conspirators in touch with Trotsky. All fourteen were found guilty and were shot on December 29.¹⁷⁴

In mid-December Zinoviev, Kamenev, and other former leaders of the Leningrad Opposition were also arrested. Due to lack of evidence, a special board of the NKVD took charge of the cases of Zinoviev, Kamenev, and seven others to consider sentences of summary exile. However, on January 17 *Pravda* announced that a secret tribunal in Moscow had found the Zinovievists guilty of organizing a “Moscow Center” that had inspired terrorist sentiments within the Leningrad group directly responsible for the assassination. Zinoviev reportedly confessed, “The former activity of the former opposition could not, by the force of objective circumstances, but stimulate the degeneration of those criminals.” All of the defendants in this trial received sentences of 5-10 years.¹⁷⁵

Subsequently, on January 23, 1935, the Military Collegium of the Supreme Court tried twelve members of the leadership of the Leningrad NKVD, including its head, Filipp Medved, for criminal negligence in the Kirov affair. It was alleged that, even though they “had at their

disposal information about the preparations for the assassination of Comrade Kirov,” they “had shown not merely carelessness, but criminal negligence in regard to the basic requirements of the defense of state security and had not taken the necessary measures.”¹⁷⁶ Eleven received fairly light sentences of two to three years in labor camps; only one received the heavier sentence of ten years.¹⁷⁷

Meanwhile, the leadership was launching a broader campaign against the left. A press campaign against Trotskyism and the “rotten liberalism” that tolerated it gained in intensity, and libraries were again purged of works by Trotsky, Zinoviev, Kamenev, and other oppositionist leaders. Party organizations throughout the Soviet Union exposed and expelled “Trotskyists” and “Zinovievists,” many of whom were then arrested. Former members of the Trotskyist Oppositionist, recently released, were rearrested and incarcerated or sent to remote regions; while family members and individuals more remotely connected to the Opposition were arrested and deported. At the same time, hundreds, perhaps thousands, of former supporters of the Leningrad Opposition were arrested.¹⁷⁸

In his first letter devoted to the issue Trotsky examined and rejected a variety of hypotheses regarding the motives for the murder, and concluded that this was a political assassination directed against “the party in power, its policies, and its leaders.”¹⁷⁹ Although he argued that the leadership’s response confirmed this interpretation, it is clear that he accepted it primarily because it coincided with his own perception of the current political context. Speculating on Nikolaev’s intent, he observed that “the Stalinist regime at times drives honest people into the blind alley of despair”; and he blamed “Stalinist policies and the regime” for the counterrevolutionary tendencies that were appearing “even among elements that are not hostile

to the regime.” The very existence of these terrorist tendencies, he concluded, reflected “the profound political crisis” of the Russian Revolution.¹⁸⁰

Furthermore, as David Law has observed, Trotsky’s perspective on the general situation within the USSR initially predisposed him to accept the leadership’s allegations regarding a Komsomol conspiracy.¹⁸¹ In “The Stalinist Bureaucracy and the Assassination” on December 28 Trotsky commented that there was no apparent reason to dispute this charge because the bureaucracy had “not confessed it with an easy heart.” However, he then noted the “great symptomatic significance” of the conspiracy, for it simply confirmed the extent of popular discontent within the Soviet Union: “The hostility to the leaders in power must have been widespread and must have assumed the sharpest forms for the terrorist group to crystalize . . . within the ranks of the party youth.”¹⁸²

Of course, Trotsky was not willing to believe all of the leadership’s accusations. In the same article he repudiated the charges that leading Zinovievists were involved, ridiculing the notion that Old Bolshevik leaders could have embraced either the alleged goal of capitalist restoration or its terrorist means.¹⁸³ In Trotsky’s estimation these accusations represented just another “juridical ‘amalgam’” of the type the leadership had employed repeatedly against the Opposition since 1927. The obvious goal was “to terrorize completely all critics and oppositionists, and this time . . . by the firing squad.”¹⁸⁴

To explain why this was occurring, Trotsky drew upon his recent analysis of the origins of bureaucratic autonomy. Once more, he located the ultimate source of this autonomy in the struggle “of each against all” for the satisfaction of “essential elementary needs.” To regulate the contradictions, the bureaucracy assumed the necessary role of “controller, judge, and executioner,” but then proceeded to exploit this role to enhance its own power and material

welfare. Ultimately, the bureaucracy's "national conservatism, appropriative instincts and its spirit of caste privilege" began to paralyze its progressive work. Unrestricted bureaucratic domination generated perpetual economic crises, which in turn created a permanent political crisis. In defense of the "dictatorship of the bureaucracy," the ruling Stalinist faction found it necessary to resort to "ever more violent methods" and to circulate "ever more envenomed" amalgams.¹⁸⁵

Although Trotsky saw this amalgam as directed at all critics, two targets in particular stood out. First, the charges against the Zinovievists suggested that the amalgam was aimed, at least in part, at disaffected elements within the middle and lower levels of the bureaucracy now inhabited by the former opposition leaders.¹⁸⁶ As in previous years, Trotsky believed that these strata were experiencing mounting levels of demoralization. Linking this observation with his recent theoretical insights, he observed, "When the bureaucracy comes into contradiction with the necessities of development and the consciousness of the class that has raised it to power, it begins to decompose and to lose faith in itself." Bureaucrats who found themselves outside of the constricting circle of power were beginning to grumble and to harbor liberal thoughts. Trotsky speculated that Zinoviev and Kamenev, infected by the mood of their environment, had ridiculed Stalin in private. When word of this reached Stalin, he decided to make examples of them in order to teach the "vacillating and decomposing bureaucracy a lesson."¹⁸⁷

Beyond that, Trotsky also saw the amalgam as aimed at the Bolsheviki-Leninists. Even in his circular letter of December 10 Trotsky suggested that Stalin might attempt to implicate the ICL—though at that point he still considered this "not very probable."¹⁸⁸ Nevertheless, after *Le Temps* reported rumors of Trotsky's involvement and after the arrest of the Zinovievist leaders, Trotsky asserted, "Using the Zinovievist group as a footstool, Stalin is aiming to strike a blow at

Trotskyism.”¹⁸⁹ Perhaps because there was no evidence that the Bolshevik-Leninists were growing within the Soviet Union, he saw the blow as directed specifically at international Trotskyism. At any rate, Trotsky related this conclusion as well to his current views on the bureaucracy. He reiterated that internationally “the Stalinist bureaucracy plays a demoralizing and fatal role from beginning to end.” In fact, the Stalinist leadership had long since given up on the Comintern, swapping dreams of revolution for hopes in the League of Nations. However, Stalin now feared that the lies supporting the bureaucracy domestically would crumble once Soviet workers learned of the growing international influence of Trotskyism. Consequently, the amalgam suggested to Trotsky that Stalin was preparing to launch a campaign against the “terrorist” threat posed by international Trotskyism to the security of Europe.¹⁹⁰

Shortly afterwards, Nikolaev’s confession validated these concerns, while providing Trotsky with new insights into the assassination itself. To Trotsky, the story that a foreign consul gave Nikolaev 5,000 rubles and offered to deliver a letter to Trotsky suggested a frame up. In an article of December 30 he deduced that the Soviet secret police were “financing Nikolaev and attempting to link him up” with Trotsky “through the medium of an actual or fake consul.” He saw this as subsequently confirmed by the dismissal of all the leading representatives of the NKVD in Leningrad, and by their conviction for criminal negligence.¹⁹¹ “Can one admit for a single moment,” asked Trotsky on January 26, “that such pillars of the GPU as Medved could show negligence when dealing with the preparation, known to them beforehand, of the assassination of Kirov?”¹⁹²

Furthermore, NKVD complicity immediately suggested an even more sensational conclusion: Stalin, too, was directly involved. On January 26 Trotsky asserted, “Without the direct agreement of Stalin—more precisely, without his initiative—neither Yagoda nor Medved

would have decided to mount such a risky enterprise.”¹⁹³ This was not to say that either Stalin or the NKVD intended to kill Kirov. “We have no facts for such a supposition,” Trotsky observed.¹⁹⁴ Besides that, he apparently saw no motive for such a murder since, in his view, Kirov had “played no independent role.”¹⁹⁵ Rather, he concluded that the entire objective of the conspiracy was to establish a link between the terrorists and Trotsky. For this purpose the NKVD hoped to get an incriminating note from Zinoviev and a letter to Trotsky from Nikolaev. However, Nikolaev acted too quickly. Detaching himself from the NKVD and his own terrorist group before the amalgam could be established, he shot Kirov—contrary to Stalin’s plans.¹⁹⁶

A few days later, Trotsky modified his explanation of the post-assassination amalgam once more in light of reports from the Soviet Union. In an article of January 30, 1935 he noted that an increasingly virulent and bizarre campaign in the Soviet press had begun denouncing “Trotskyism”; new “Trotskyists” were being discovered in “schools, universities, periodicals and commissariats”; and arrests and exiles had again “assumed a mass character.” Furthermore, he asserted in an apparent reference to the recent *chistka*, that “about 300,000 individuals, 15 to 20 percent” had been removed from “the many-times-purged party.” For Trotsky all of these developments, combined with the arrest and conviction of the leading Zinovievists, constituted a “rabid attack against the left wing of the party and the working class.”¹⁹⁷

8.5 REVISING BONAPARTISM AND THERMIDOR

On February 1 1935, in his major theoretical article “The Workers’ State, Thermidor, and Bonapartism,” Trotsky announced a dramatic revision in his thinking regarding the important theoretical concepts of *Thermidor* and *Bonapartism*—redefining both terms and embracing both

as applicable to the Soviet Union.¹⁹⁸ He seems to have made these changes largely in response to regime developments and to the recent rightward shifts in economic and international policy that again suggested the relevance of the concept of Bonapartism to the Soviet situation. The redefined terms would become key elements in his newly emerging theory of a highly autonomous Soviet bureaucracy. At the same time, Trotsky's change of position on Thermidor and Bonapartism immediately resulted in other important theoretical changes: it led Trotsky to drop centrism as a characterization of Stalinism; it enhanced the significance of other theoretical concepts Trotsky previously had employed; and it compelled Trotsky once again to redefine workers' state.

As far as past debates over the issue of Thermidor were concerned, in his February 1 article Trotsky remained convinced that the position of the Left Opposition had been essentially correct. He recalled that in 1926-27 the Democratic Centralists had asserted, "Thermidor is already accomplished!" which meant that a "regenerating bourgeois regime" had already come to power in the USSR. Against this, Trotsky argued that the Left Opposition had insisted rightly that, although "elements of dual power" had appeared, the USSR remained a workers' state.

However, Trotsky now admitted that in making this point the Opposition had been mistaken in accepting the term Thermidor for capitalist restoration. In this regard, he observed, the Thermidor analogy "served to becloud rather than to clarify the question." Since the revolution of 1789-1793 was bourgeois in character, Trotsky explained, a "corresponding" social counterrevolution would have restored feudal property relations. In fact, "Thermidor did not even make an attempt in this direction." Rather, the significance of Thermidor in France was to transfer "power into the hands of the more moderate and conservative Jacobins, the better-to-do elements of bourgeois society"—doing so entirely "on the basis of the new bourgeois society and

state.”¹⁹⁹ Trotsky further argued that Napoleon Bonaparte’s coup of the Eighteenth of Brumaire had comparable significance. After Thermidor, the rise of Napoleon represented “the next important stage on the road of reaction.” Again, however, there had been no attempt to restore old property forms. Rather, Napoleon guarded bourgeois property “against both the ‘rabble’ and the claims of the expropriated proprietors.”²⁰⁰

In light of these reinterpretations, Trotsky now saw both terms as highly relevant for describing the Soviet experience. Regarding Thermidor, he observed, “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.”²⁰¹ Specifically, he now dated the beginning of the Soviet Thermidor approximately back to 1924 when the Left Opposition was first defeated.²⁰² As far as Bonapartism was concerned, Trotsky noted that, just as Napoleon struggled against both the feudal word and the “rabble” on behalf of a new bourgeois aristocracy, Stalin now guarded “the conquests of the October Revolution not only against the feudal-bourgeois counterrevolution but also against the claims of the toilers, their impatience and their dissatisfaction.” To reinforce his point about the dual nature of Stalinist policy, Trotsky emphasized that he was comparing Stalin’s regime to the youthful Bonapartism of Napoleon I, “that was not only the gravedigger of the political principles of the bourgeois revolution but also the defender of its social conquests,” not to the completely reactionary “Bonapartism of decay” typified by the regimes of Napoleon III, or Schleicher, or Doumergue.²⁰³

Although Trotsky first explained his new positions on both Thermidor and Bonapartism in the same article, there are reasons to believe that the decision to revise his understanding of Bonapartism came first. Statements by Trotsky over the preceding year and a half—in particular,

his comments on Bonapartism in October 1933 and his subsequent functional account of the origins of bureaucratic autonomy—already had made his redefinition of the term Bonapartism a much shorter theoretical leap than his reinterpretation of Thermidor. Beyond that, in the weeks preceding the February 1 article Trotsky applied the term Bonapartism to the Soviet Union earlier and more frequently than the term Thermidor, suggesting that he viewed the Bonapartist analogy to be more significant.²⁰⁴ Furthermore, to the extent that his understanding of recent events evoked the revisions, these more clearly suggested Bonapartist rather than Thermidorian characteristics. Finally, it appears that, to a large degree, Trotsky arrived at his new position on Thermidor by deriving it logically from his revised understanding of Bonapartism.²⁰⁵

Of course, Trotsky did not redefine either term because he had just learned that neither Thermidor nor the reign of Napoleon I had restored feudalism in France. Rather, he did so because recent events suggested that these revisions would promote a better understanding of the current Soviet situation. As Trotsky explained in his February 1 article, “The disclosure of the error was greatly facilitated by the fact that the very processes of the political degeneration, which are under discussion, have in the meantime assumed much more distinct shape.”²⁰⁶ In particular, policy developments since the fall of 1935 helped Trotsky overcome his hesitation about applying the Bonapartist label to the Soviet system.

Most important in this regard were events related to the state and party regime, and especially those related to the Kirov assassination, that suggested similarities between Stalinism and Bonapartism. As we have seen, in October 1933 Trotsky listed “the self rule of the bureaucracy” and the “personal plebiscitary regime of Stalin” as two of the defining characteristics of Stalinism.²⁰⁷ During the following months he perceived that these characteristics were reinforced by the *chistka*, by the new arrests of “Trotskyists,” and by the

growing “deification of the leader” prior to the Seventeenth Party Congress. Furthermore, he saw both characteristics as strengthened even more dramatically in December and January by the post-assassination amalgams and by the repression of the Zinovievists, representing dissident elements within the bureaucracy, and of the Trotskyists, representing the proletarian vanguard. Thus, in his February 1 article Trotsky observed that the Bonapartist features of the party regime were more apparent than ever before: “The domination of the bureaucracy over the country, as well as Stalin’s domination over the bureaucracy have well-nigh attained their absolute consummation.”²⁰⁸

Beyond that, it is also likely that aspects of the Kirov assassination and subsequent amalgams reminded Trotsky of specific historical parallels in Napoleon Bonaparte’s rise to power. As he noted on February 1, “One is literally hit between the eyes by the resemblance between the present Soviet regime and the regime of the First Consul, particularly at the end of the Consulate when the period of the empire was nigh.”²⁰⁹ Or, as he wrote a month later, “The Stalin regime, which is the translation of Bonapartism in the language of the Soviet state, reveals, . . . a certain number of supplementary features resembling the regime of the Consulate (or of the empire, but still without a crown).”²¹⁰

One event that played a key role in Napoleon Bonaparte’s transition from First Consul to Emperor was an assassination conspiracy in early 1804. As described by Alphonse Aulard, prominent historian of the French Revolution whose work was known to Trotsky, the plot was organized by a group of royalist exiles in Britain headed by Georges Cadoudal, but secretly encouraged by Bonaparte’s agents. According to Aulard, the Consular police hoped to “tarnish the glory” of Bonaparte’s “sole rival in point of military honor,” Moreau, by putting the conspirators in touch with him. The conspirators were arrested in February 1804, before the

attempt could be carried out. Bonaparte then used the incident to justify the elimination of his enemies on both the right and the left. Subsequently, to discourage further assassination attempts, his supporters proposed the conversion of Bonaparte's life consulate into a hereditary empire—a proposal that was confirmed by a national plebiscite in the wave of Bonapartist adulation that swept France following the exposure of the conspiracy.²¹¹ Trotsky may have had this episode in mind in a discussion with his secretary Jean van Heijenoort shortly after the Kirov murder:

In a conversation with me at the time, Trotsky sketched his theory of what he called “crowned socialism.” You will see, Stalin will get himself crowned.” He thought that, after the Kirov assassination, Stalin would assume some majestic title, like Bonaparte adopting the name of Napoleon.²¹²

Aside from developments in the party regime, recent shifts in Soviet international and domestic policy also may have contributed to Trotsky's change of position on Bonapartism. In October 1933 Trotsky had listed the bureaucracy's “veering between class forces,” as the third characteristic of Soviet Bonapartism.²¹³ In the following months, Trotsky saw further evidence of this “veering” in the introduction of the economic “NeoNEP” and the new line in international policy—turns Trotsky viewed as the sharpest and most significant since 1928-29. Thus, on January 30, 1935 he included the “*diplomatic retreat before the world bourgeoisie and before reformism*” and “*the economic retreat before the petty-bourgeois tendencies within the country*” as two elements (along with the “*political offensive against the vanguard of the proletariat*”) in the “tripartite formula of the new chapter in the development of Stalinist Bonapartism.”²¹⁴

Of course, since the late 1920s Trotsky had characterized the leadership's zigzags as an indication, not of Bonapartism, but of bureaucratic centrism. Through 1934 Trotsky continued to apply the term bureaucratic centrism frequently, especially to Comintern policy.²¹⁵ In fact, on a left-right continuum this designation seemed to fit the policies of 1934-1935 far better than it fit

the “ultraleftist” policies of previous years. As Trotsky expressed in late January and early February 1935, the Comintern had returned to the “old organic course” practiced in China in its alliance with the Guomindang.²¹⁶ However, despite Trotsky’s stretching of the concept of centrism in recent years, that term still suggested that the bureaucracy stood between classes, passively responding to their external pressures. In contrast, Trotsky now viewed the bureaucracy as an independent entity, standing *above* classes and mediating their conflicts. Although classes could sometimes pressure the bureaucracy into changing course, the bureaucracy also was capable of actively choosing policies in its own self-interest—an understanding better captured by Bonapartism than by centrism. Consequently, in his February 1 article Trotsky announced that he was dropping centrism, explaining that the centrist phase of Stalinism had been superseded by the “hypertrophy of bureaucratic centrism into Bonapartism.”²¹⁷

Similar reasoning suggested the need for a revision of Thermidor. If the bureaucracy was autonomous enough to choose its own policies, then it seemed less likely it could be pushed into a covert restoration of capitalism. Largely because of his new emphasis on bureaucratic autonomy, Trotsky had stopped using the term for more than a year. Now, the accumulating policy shifts to the right demanded that Trotsky address the question directly:

Where does this course lead? The word “Thermidor” is heard again on many lips. Unfortunately this word has become worn from use; it has lost its concrete content and is obviously inadequate for the task of characterizing either that stage through which the bureaucracy is passing or the catastrophe that it is preparing.²¹⁸

At this point Trotsky might have been tempted to discard the term altogether. However, his revised understanding Bonapartism suggested the relevance of a redefined Thermidor. From

the conclusion that the Soviet Union was Bonapartist, Trotsky deduced that it already had gone through a Thermidorian phase:

Enough to mention that we ourselves often speak—and with ample cause—of the plebiscitary or Bonapartist regime of Stalin. But Bonapartism, in France, came after Thermidor. If we are to remain within the framework of the historical analogy, we must necessarily ask the question: Since there has been no Soviet “Thermidor” as yet, whence could Bonapartism have arisen? Without making any changes in essence in our former evaluations—there is no reason whatever to do so—we must radically revise the historical analogy.²¹⁹

Explaining how Thermidor had occurred in the USSR, Trotsky noted further similarities between the French and Soviet experiences in terms of the processes involved, the economic preconditions of stabilization, and the political types of the individuals who rose to power. In both France and the USSR, he observed, power shifted to a bureaucracy through a political process involving repression, attrition, cooptation, and careerism.²²⁰ In both countries the new phase of political stabilization was based upon an upsurge of productive forces that benefited a privileged stratum linked to the bureaucracy, while the masses fell into prostration and apathy.²²¹ Finally, in both countries the phase of reaction brought to power functionaries who in “their manner of living, their interests, and psychology” differed dramatically from the revolutionaries who had first struggled for power. In this regard, Trotsky noted the prominent role of former Mensheviks and right-wing Social Revolutionaries in the Stalinist AUCP, and even more in the Soviet diplomatic service.²²²

In order to explain of how the regime became Bonapartist, Trotsky returned once more to his recent *functional* account of the origins of bureaucratic autonomy and one-man rule. Trotsky portrayed the initial phase of this process as overlapping historically with the process of Thermidor. Initially, he repeated, the bureaucracy raised itself above the masses to carry out the

necessary task of regulating the contradictions between “the city and the village, between the proletariat and the peasantry,” etc. At the same time, it used this regulatory function “to strengthen its own domination.” Trotsky noted that during this phase the bureaucracy’s regulation of conflicts had constituted the “social base of *bureaucratic centrism*, of its zigzags, its power, its weakness and its influence on the world proletarian movement that has been so fatal.” When the bureaucracy’s uncontrolled rule then generated new social contradictions, it exploited these to create “a regime of bureaucratic absolutism.” Meanwhile, contradictions within the bureaucracy itself “led to a system of handpicking the main commanding staff; the need for discipline within the select order that has led to the rule of a single person and to the cult of the infallible leader.” Now, this process was nearing completion: “As the bureaucracy becomes more independent, as more and more power is concentrated in the hands of a single person, the more does *bureaucratic centrism* turn into Bonapartism.”²²³

At the end of his February 1 article, fearing that opponents on the left would attempt to capitalize upon his theoretical changes, Trotsky added a postscript in which he minimized the significance of his revisions:

It is in no case a question of *changing* our principled position as it has been formulated in a number of official documents, but only a question of rendering it more *precise*. Our “self-criticism” extends not to the analysis of the class character of the USSR or to the causes and conditions for its degeneration but only to the historical clarification of these processes by means of establishing analogies with well-known stages of the Great French Revolution.²²⁴

However, the implications of Trotsky’s revisions were far more important than he admitted. Most generally, they codified and reinforced Trotsky’s view of the bureaucracy as a highly autonomous social formation. In line with this, Trotsky’s revision of position on Bonapartism immediately resulted in his dropping of bureaucratic centrism—a development that

would have important implications for his analysis of Soviet policy. Beyond that, Trotsky's revisions of his understanding of Thermidor and Bonapartism enhanced the significance of two other concepts he had used in the past—bureaucratic caste and labor aristocracy—while requiring yet another redefinition of workers' state.

Once concept affected by Trotsky's redefinition of Thermidor and Bonapartism was the notion of a bureaucratic caste. By 1935 Trotsky had been using this term in reference to the Soviet bureaucracy for several years, but actually the concept was much older. Hal Draper has noted that, due to a "vogue for things Indian," the term caste was already popular in Germany in the early nineteenth century as "a swear-word directed especially against Old Regime strata seen as fossilized, such as the old nobility, officer élite, and so on, as well as the bureaucracy."²²⁵ As we have seen, in 1821 the Prussian statesman Freiherr vom Stein characterized the Prussian *Bureaulisten* as "a class for themselves—the clerical caste."²²⁶ Furthermore, the expression was in use in Russia by the late nineteenth century. There, in 1891 the Brockhaus-Efron *Entsiklopedicheskii slovar'* argued that, under bureaucracy, officialdom formed "a special caste outside of the people," and it asserted that "caste exclusiveness" was one of the distinctive features of bureaucracy.²²⁷

By the 1930s, the concept of a bureaucratic caste also was a familiar one within the Marxist movement. Marx and Engels frequently had employed the term caste in their descriptions of relatively autonomous state apparatuses of Bonapartist regimes. For example, in his 1852 work *The Eighteenth Brumaire*, Marx commented that Louis Bonaparte had "been forced to create, alongside the real classes of society, an artificial caste for which the maintenance of his regime is a question of self-preservation."²²⁸ Similarly, in his first draft of

The Civil War in France written in 1871, Marx described how, in the state of Louis Bonaparte, administration and governing were treated as “mysteries, transcendent functions only to be trust to the hands of a trained caste—stateparasites.” Against this, the Paris Commune had made public functions into “*real workmen’s functions*, instead of the hidden attributes of a trained caste.”²²⁹ As Hal Draper has observed, in such passages Marx and Engels utilized caste as “a loose term for a social stratum which does not play the role of a separate class.”²³⁰ The Bolsheviks also used bureaucratic caste in this broad sense. For example, in an important work written during the First World War, Zinoviev denounced the “caste of labor bureaucrats”—that is, the officials of the Social Democratic parties and trade unions of the West—as a major source of the opportunism and social chauvinism of the Second International.²³¹

No doubt Trotsky was thinking especially of these examples from the Marxist classics when he first applied the term to the Soviet bureaucracy.²³² It seems that Trotsky’s first references to a bureaucratic caste in the Soviet Union appeared in early 1929 in statements where he was beginning to stress the autonomy of the party-state bureaucracy.²³³ At that time Trotsky asserted that the bureaucrats who had exiled him were “people who have got the power into their hands and converted themselves into a bureaucratic caste,” and he characterized the party apparatus as “a definitely constituted caste.”²³⁴ In the following five years, Trotsky referred to the bureaucratic caste in the USSR on just a few more occasions.²³⁵

However, at the end of December 1934 and in early 1935, the importance of the notion of a bureaucratic caste was underlined by Trotsky’s emerging understanding of Thermidor and Bonapartism. By redefining the rise of the bureaucracy as a fundamental transfer of power, Trotsky’s new position on Thermidor and Bonapartism called into question of the precise nature of the dominant social formation. Trotsky’s answer was this was not a class, but a bureaucratic

caste. Thus, at this time Trotsky suddenly began using the term caste more frequently and insistently, and in ways that more clearly suggested a class-like degree of autonomy.²³⁶ For example, in his January 12, 1935 article on the investigation into the Kirov assassination, Trotsky described the “vile amalgam” of the consul as a typical measure used by the Stalinist bureaucracy “in the struggle for its caste positions.”²³⁷ In his January 26, 1935 article on the investigation into the assassination he observed, “The need for amalgams emerges when a bureaucracy rises above the revolutionary class as a ruling caste, with its special interests, secrets, and machinations.”²³⁸ And in his February 1, 1935 article on Thermidor and Bonapartism Trotsky asserted, “The Stalinist bureaucracy smashed the Left Opposition in order to safeguard and entrench itself as a privilege caste.”²³⁹ From this point on, the concept of bureaucratic caste occupied a more significant place in Trotsky’s theory.

Another term that received enhanced significance from Trotsky’s redefinition of Thermidor and Bonapartism was labor aristocracy. Again, the Bolsheviks used this term frequently during the war, referring to a stratum within the working class in the imperialist countries that, with the labor bureaucracy, had been transformed by privileges into an opportunist tool of the bourgeoisie.²⁴⁰ It seems that Trotsky first employed the term in writings on the Soviet bureaucracy in July 1931 when he condemned the increasing use of piecework as an attempt to create a stratum of more prosperous workers: “The program of the Stalinist bureaucracy leads it inexorably to the necessity of supporting itself upon the ever more privileged labor aristocracy.”²⁴¹

Trotsky’s reconsideration of Rakovskii’s 1928 letter on the “professional dangers of power” in light of his own revised understanding of Thermidor may have contributed to his renewed interest in the concept. Rakovskii had observed that the reaction following the French

Revolution had transferred power from the bourgeois class as a whole to a bureaucracy and to the upper strata of the highly differentiated bourgeoisie. As far as the USSR was concerned, Rakovskii noted that in 1928 “workers and employees” were divided into eighteen different categories, including a layer described by “semi-vagabonds,” as the ““new nobility’.”²⁴² Along the lines of Rakovskii’s analysis, Trotsky now asserted that after a proletarian revolution, a “bureaucracy and a workers’ aristocracy connected with it begins to take form.” Furthermore, he argued that the smashing of the Opposition in 1924 transferred power to “the more conservative elements among the bureaucracy and the upper crust of the working class.”²⁴³

At the same time, Trotsky’s reading of French history also suggested the utility of the concept of labor aristocracy for understanding Soviet Bonapartism. Recalling Napoleon Bonaparte’s creation of the Legion of Honor, the imperial court, and a new titled nobility, Trotsky observed that Napoleon had “concentrated the fruits of the regime” in the hands of a new bourgeois aristocracy.”²⁴⁴ Similarly, he observed, Stalin was now creating a “new aristocracy by means of an extreme differentiation in wages, privileges, ranks, etc.”²⁴⁵ (Here, Trotsky was speaking of the growing layer of privileged Soviet shock workers, increasingly differentiated by titles such as “best of the shock workers” and “best of the best,” and by medals such as the Order of the Red Banner of Labor and the Order of Lenin.²⁴⁶) Like Napoleon, Stalin was relying upon his new aristocracy for political support: “Leaning for support upon the topmost layer . . . against the lowest—sometimes vice versa—Stalin has attained the complete concentration of power in his hands.”²⁴⁷

Despite Trotsky’s claim that his “self-criticism” regarding Thermidor and Bonapartism did not extend “to the analysis of the class character of the USSR,” in fact it immediately involved a revision in this area as well. Although Trotsky now explicitly rejected the view that

either the French or the Soviet Thermidor involved a *social* counterrevolution, he still viewed Thermidor as a counterrevolution of sorts. Thus, he observed: “Was Thermidor counterrevolutionary? The answer to this question depends upon how wide a significance we attach, in a given case, to the concept of ‘counterrevolution.’”²⁴⁸ As a form of counterrevolution, a Thermidor necessarily required a civil war. For this reason—and perhaps thinking of comparisons to the waves of repression and White terror that followed the French Thermidor—Trotsky now described the violence and repression employed against the Opposition as a “number of minor civil wars waged by the bureaucracy against the proletarian vanguard.”²⁴⁹ Even though Trotsky qualified this assessment with the observation that, in comparison with the French edition, the Soviet Thermidor had maintained “a comparatively ‘dry’ character” at least initially, he could no longer use the absence of a civil war to demonstrate that the Soviet Union remained a workers’ state.²⁵⁰ Consequently, in the section of “The Workers’ State, Thermidor, and Bonapartism,” in which he again defended his worker’s state position, this criterion too was now absent. Trotsky’s sole remaining argument for his workers’ state position was that “*the social content of the dictatorship of the bureaucracy is determined by those productive relations that were created by the proletarian revolution.*”²⁵¹

8.6 DEEPER SHIFTS, REPRESSION, AND A CONSTITUTION

From February 1935 into the summer of 1936 the Soviet leadership deepened its latest turns in economic and international policy, while combining elements of repression and conciliation in its internal political policy. In the economy, it offered new economic incentives to the peasantry. Internationally, it persisted in its efforts to establish military alliances with

imperialist powers, while promoting “antifascist” alliances of Communist parties with Socialist and/or liberal parties within the capitalist world. Regarding internal political policy, the leadership continued the post-assassination repression of its critics. At the same time, it initiated two new membership accounting operations that included elements of repression. However, in late 1935 and early 1936 the leadership also promised liberalizing reforms in a new constitution.

Meanwhile, until mid-June 1935 Trotsky remained in the French town of Domène. At that point, under threat of expulsion from France, Trotsky obtained a visa for Norway. Trotsky arrived in Oslo with his wife and two secretaries on June 18, 1935.²⁵² In this period Trotsky continued his relative silence on Soviet affairs, especially in the economic sphere. However, in various statements on Soviet policy he applied his new insights, especially in depicting the motivation for Soviet policy initiatives in terms of the self-interests of a highly autonomous bureaucracy, or of the Stalinist leadership within the bureaucracy. New developments in his thinking, which would become important aspects of his theory of bureaucracy, included his characterizations of Soviet international policy as essentially opportunist in nature, and his conclusion that a political revolution was necessary to remove the bureaucracy from power.

8.6.1 New Initiatives in Economic Policy

While the overall economic situation continued to improve, during this period the Soviet leadership introduced important policy initiatives to enhance productivity in both agriculture and industry. In agriculture, the leadership adopted a new *kolkhoz* statute that permitted peasants on collective farms to own and farm small plots and to own livestock. In industry, it promoted the Stakhanovite movement, calling upon workers to make heroic efforts in production. In his few remarks on economic questions during this period Trotsky noted the general improvement in the

situation, while continuing to express apprehensions about the right turn in agricultural policy. Trotsky's new analysis of the bureaucracy was evident in his silence concerning "Thermidorian" restoration, in his explanation of the right turn, and in his ongoing interest in the "labor aristocracy."

The economic upturn of 1933-34 persisted into the first half of 1936. In particular, this period saw an expansion of consumer industries—although, at least partially because of unanticipated increases in defense spending, this was not nearly as great as projected in the plan. Meanwhile, living standards, while still low, continued to improve in the city and, even more, in the countryside.²⁵³

In February 1935, in an effort to enhance agricultural productivity, the Central Committee convened the Second All-Union Congress of Kolkhoz Activists to adopt a "model" statute to be used, with local adaptations, by collective farms throughout the Soviet Union. One of the compulsory provisions of the statute recognized the right of each *kolkhoz* household to a private plot of land of $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ hectares. Once obligatory deliveries to the state were met, *kolkhoz* members were free to consume or sell the remaining produce from these plots. Additionally, to promote the recovery of Soviet livestock decimated by the mass slaughters that accompanied collectivization, individual households were permitted to have a limited number of animals, excluding horses, for personal use.²⁵⁴

Regarding industry, a major new development in this period was the rise of the Stakhanovite movement. On the night of August 30-31, 1935 Alexei Stakhanov, a pick operator in the Central Irmino mine in the Donbas region of Ukraine, managed to produce more than fourteen times the average shift output of coal. Stakhanov's feat was accomplished by a combination of a division of labor, special advance preparations, and hard work. With the

encouragement of *Pravda*, the Stakhanovite movement quickly spread to other mines and industries, turning into a mass campaign to increase labor productivity. In December the plenum of the Central Committee endorsed the movement, using it to justify an upward revision of technological and labor norms.²⁵⁵

Again, during these years Trotsky devoted relatively little attention to Soviet economic matters.²⁵⁶ As before, this was probably at least partially due to his belief that the economic upturn was diminishing both the dangers of restoration and the opportunities for “forcible reform.” Trotsky explicitly noted the economic improvement and the effect it was having on workers and peasants in a conversation with a Canadian supporter, Earle Birney, in November 1935:

In the last two years a very important economic improvement has taken place, both in agriculture and industry. As a result, not only have the privileged sections secured more privileges and the bureaucracy added new top layers, but also the lower strata are better off than before. Moreover, the situation of the poor peasants and workers had been so bad that a slight improvement (comparatively) made for a large improvement in their minds.²⁵⁷

However, Trotsky’s few remarks on Soviet economic matters in 1935 and early 1936 revealed two major concerns. One was the continuing shift of policy to the right. In particular, Trotsky was troubled about the market reforms embodied in the model statutes adopted by the Second Kolkhoz Conference, fearing that these were part of a deeper retreat. As he wrote in his diary on February 14, 1935,

Le Temps has published a very sympathetic report from its Moscow correspondent about the new privileges granted to the *kolkhozniks* . . . , especially in regard to their acquiring ownership of horses, cattle, and other livestock. Certain further concessions to the petty bourgeois tendencies of the peasant seem to be in preparation. At this stage it is hard to predict the point at which they will manage to hold the line against the present retreat At the present time the retreat is proceeding at full speed.²⁵⁸

In another diary entry on April 27 he noted that the recently announced May Day slogans “spoke only of the struggle against the Trotskyists and the Zinovievists and did not mention the right opposition at all.” From this, Trotsky concluded, “This time the turn to the right will go farther than ever before, much farther than Stalin foresees.”²⁵⁹ Still, in light of his recent theoretical revisions, Trotsky did not predict that a Thermidorian restoration of capitalism was imminent. Although Trotsky’s remarks in his February 15 diary entry about “concessions to the petty bourgeois tendencies of the peasant” and managing to “hold the line” suggest that he saw the right turn in agricultural policy as, to some degree, dictated by external class pressures, his characterization of the retreat as a reaction “brought on by the extremely crude bureaucratic illusions of the preceding period” clearly implied a greater degree of autonomy on the part of the bureaucracy.²⁶⁰

Trotsky’s second concern, consistent with his recent remarks about the fostering of a new Soviet aristocracy, was with the growing economic inequality in the USSR. Again, in his November conversation with Birney, he noted that, with the recent improvement in the economic situation, “the privileged sections secured more privileges and the bureaucracy added new top layers.”²⁶¹ This concern was also suggested by Trotsky’s wholehearted endorsement on December 31 in a note to the sections of the ICL of a recent article by Leon Sedov on the Stakhanovite movement:

The article is based on very important documentation and, in my opinion, gives a totally correct picture of the character and the role of this movement which is glorified by the Stalinists not only uncritically, but also in a totally dishonest fashion. I would like to call the attention of all comrades to this article.²⁶²

Although Trotsky did not elaborate, a main conclusion of Sedov’s article was that the Stalinist leadership was “putting the Stakhanovists in a very privileged position” to promote “the

differentiation of the working class,” with the aim of creating a more stable base of support in the “labor aristocracy.”²⁶³

8.6.2 Further Shifts in International Policy

Important developments in Soviet foreign policy and Comintern policy in 1935 and 1936 included the communiqué signed by Stalin and French foreign minister Pierre Laval in May 1935, the formation of the Popular Front in France, the endorsement of the popular front strategy by the Seventh Congress of the Comintern, and the implementation of the Popular Front in the French elections and the working-class upsurge of 1936. Trotsky denounced all of these, as well as Stalin’s comments in an interview in 1936, as evidence of the counterrevolutionary character of Soviet international policy. To a degree, this evaluation coincided with his belief since 1933 that the Soviet Union had “completely squandered” its significance as an “international revolutionary factor.” However, Trotsky now went far beyond his earlier analysis, characterizing Stalinist policy as social patriotic, Menshevik, and worse than traditional opportunism; and describing the Comintern as essentially social democratic. This shift in Trotsky’s evaluation of Soviet international policy was facilitated by the fact that in February 1935 Trotsky began to describe Soviet policy as Bonapartist, rather than bureaucratic centrist. The Bonapartist characterization left open the question of where Soviet policy fell on a left-right continuum. For Trotsky, that question was answered by the similarities he perceived during this period between Soviet and traditional social democratic policy. However, throughout this period he explained the counterrevolutionary character of Soviet policy largely in terms of the self-interested motivations of the Soviet bureaucratic caste, rather than simply in terms of external class pressure.

Continuing Soviet efforts to obtain a defensive alliance against Germany, on May 2, 1935 V. P. Potemkin, Soviet ambassador to France, signed a treaty of Material Aid with Laval obliging each nation to come to the assistance of the other in the event of an attack by a third party.²⁶⁴ Two weeks later Stalin explicitly approved French rearmament for national defense in a communiqué issued jointly with Laval:

It is precisely for the sake of maintaining peace that these States are obliged, above all, not to weaken in any way their means of national defense. On this point, in particular, Comrade Stalin expressed complete understanding and approval of the national defense policy pursued by France with the object of maintaining its armed forces at a level consistent with its security requirements.²⁶⁵

The statement from Moscow immediately elicited mixed reactions from the French left. The PCF endorsed both the alliance and the Stalin-Laval communiqué. Communist posters appeared across France proclaiming, “Stalin is right.” and in a speech of May 17 Thorez explained that if an imperialist state sided with the USSR in war, “the war would not be a war between two imperialist camps.”²⁶⁶ The SFIO, on the other hand, was less enthusiastic. Leon Blum argued that the communiqué was “a slap in the face” of all who had campaigned against French militarism, and asserted, “We socialists refuse to make common cause with the ideas and the military planning of the bourgeoisie.”²⁶⁷

Despite these disagreements, the PCF persisted through the spring of 1935 in its attempt to establish an electoral alliance that would include both Socialists and Radicals. Though the PCF’s new support for a strong national defense repelled the Socialists, it impressed the Radicals positively.²⁶⁸ At the same time, the benefits derived by all three parties from an informal bloc in the municipal elections of May 1935 generated new support for the alliance.²⁶⁹ Ultimately, the efforts of the PCF paid off with the formation of the Popular Front on July 14, 1935 at a mass demonstration on the anniversary of the storming of the Bastille. Forty-eight national organizations and an estimated crowd of 570,000, with Daladier, Blum, and Thorez at their head, participated in the procession from the Place de la Bastille to the Place de la Republique. The

assembled throng sang both the *Marseillaise* and the *Internationale* and pledged “to defend the democratic liberties won by the people of France, to give bread to the workers, work to the young, and to the world the great peace of mankind.”²⁷⁰

Still, tensions between the PCF and the SFIO continued during the subsequent fall and winter. In contrast to the SFIO, the PCF opposed the inclusion of demands for nationalization in the draft program of the front, and it proposed to invite conservative parties such as the “Democratic Alliance” to join.²⁷¹ At the same time, the PCF indignantly rejected socialist proposals for a Popular Front government, and it condemned the SFIO for its participation in the Radical government of Sarraut formed in June 1936.²⁷²

However, in January 1936 the PCF, the SFIO, and the Radical Socialists negotiated an agreement for the mutual support of each other’s candidates in the second round of balloting in the upcoming parliamentary elections. The outcome of the election in late April and early May was an enormous success for the Popular Front parties, which won an absolute majority in the Chamber with 334 out of 618 seats. On June 4, 1936 Blum assumed the office of Prime Minister at the head of a Socialist-Radical government. To preserve their freedom to criticize, the Communists declined Blum’s invitation to participate.²⁷³

The election results immediately sparked an explosion of accumulated discontent within the French working class. Heartened by the victory of the left, workers spontaneously struck and occupied factories across France. The movement progressively swelled until, by the beginning of June, nearly two million workers were on strike. From the beginning, the leaderships of both the Socialist and Communist parties attempted to moderate to resolve the crisis as quickly as possible. Two days after assuming office, Blum invited workers’ and employers’ representatives to a conference at the Hotel Matignon for negotiations. Jacques Duclos of the PCF explained his party’s aim: “We are concerned about two things—first, to avoid any disorder, and second, to get talks going as soon as may be, with a view to a quick settlement of the conflict.”²⁷⁴ In the face of the escalating class war the PCF called a meeting of its Parisian membership on June 11. At that gathering Thorez urged Communists to use their influence to end the strike, arguing, “While it is

important to lead well a movement for economic demands, . . . it is also necessary to know how to end it. There is at present no question of taking power.”²⁷⁵ In reply to Marceau Pivert of the SFIO left who had just declared, “Now everything is possible for those who are bold enough,” Thorez responded, “No, everything is not possible at the present.”²⁷⁶ The following day, a meeting of the Communist-influenced metal workers voted to return to work. The majority of strikes were settled within a few days; and together, the Socialist and Communist parties were able to end most strikes by the beginning of August.²⁷⁷

Meanwhile, the Comintern as a whole was embracing the French Popular Front strategy. At the Seventh Congress of the Comintern, which convened in Moscow on July 25, 1935, Georgi Dimitrov delivered the main report.²⁷⁸ In essence the report represented an endorsement and extension of the French Popular Front tactic to all countries of the world. Dimitrov called first for a “proletarian united front” with Social Democratic parties and reformist trade unions against the class enemies of the proletariat, promising for the sake of unity that Communists would not attack any allies in the united front. Furthermore, Dimitrov advocated an “anti-fascist People’s Front” that would include parties and organizations controlled by the “agents of big capital.” Going beyond the position of the PCF, he declared that Communists were prepared even to share responsibility for forming a Popular Front government. Finally, he proposed the ultimate unification of Social Democratic and Communist parties, and pledged that Communists would take the initiative in achieving this.²⁷⁹

Aside from the question of the Popular Front against fascism, the Seventh Congress also addressed the struggle against war. In his report on this question Palmiro Togliatti called for a vigorous struggle against the chief sources of the threat to peace—German fascism and Japanese militarism. The method of fighting for peace was to be through a united front of “all those who want to defend and preserve peace.” In particular, Togliatti urged that Communists unite with the “pacifist masses,” while continuing to expose their “pacifist illusions.”²⁸⁰

Although in early 1935 Trotsky noted signs that the PCF was beginning to back away from its traditional “revolutionary defeatism,” he was shocked by the Stalin-Laval communiqué.

On the day after it was issued, he confessed in his diary that he could not believe his eyes when he first read it. To Trotsky, this was “an act of treason in the fullest sense, signed and notarized.”²⁸¹ Trotsky explained his reaction in an open letter to the world proletariat on May 25, and an open letter to the workers of France on June 10. While he had serious reservations about the value of the treaty for the Soviet Union, he did not criticize Stalin for that agreement. Practical agreements with the class enemy, he asserted, “may be correct or wrong, but they cannot be rejected on principle.”²⁸² Rather, Stalin’s crime was in signing the communiqué. For the first time, Stalin had “openly said what is.” That is, he had openly “repudiated revolutionary internationalism and passed over to the platform of social patriotism.”²⁸³

Beyond that, Trotsky argued that the Comintern, by endorsing the communiqué, had become “the diplomatic agent of Stalinism” which had just taken “the decisive step on the road to civil peace.”²⁸⁴ He explained that when a working class party announces its readiness to support national militarism, it transforms itself into the “domestic beast of capital.” By approving the communiqué the Comintern had demonstrated it was “the principal obstacle on the historic road of the working class.” In fact, Trotsky asserted, the Stalinists now stood at the extreme right wing of the working-class movement” and were “immeasurably more harmful than the old, traditional opportunists” because they covered themselves with the authority of the October Revolution.²⁸⁵

Trotsky offered differing explanations for the treaty and the communiqué. He viewed the treaty as a legitimate adaptation “*to the imperialist factor,*” forced upon the Soviet leadership by a series of international defeats.²⁸⁶ In contrast, he attributed the communiqué to the bureaucracy’s lack of confidence in, and actual hostility to, the world revolution—attitudes derived from the material interests of the bureaucracy. In his open letter of June 10, Trotsky asserted:

The betrayal of Stalin and of the leadership of the Communist International is explained by the character of the present ruling stratum in the USSR; it is a privileged and an uncontrolled bureaucracy, which has raised itself above the people

and which oppresses the people. Marxism teaches us that *existence determines consciousness*. The Soviet bureaucracy, above all, fears criticism, movement and risk; it is conservative; it greedily defends its own privileges. Having strangled the working class in the USSR, it has long since lost faith in the world revolution. It promises to build “socialism in one country,” if the toilers shut up, endure and obey.²⁸⁷

Instead of relying upon the revolutionary proletariat, the bureaucracy was putting its hopes in diplomacy and alliances. Beyond that, fearing that the workers might frighten its new allies, the bureaucracy had decided “to put a brake upon the class struggle of the proletariat in the ‘allied’ countries.” Thus, for Trotsky the source of Stalin’s betrayal was “the national conservatism of the Soviet bureaucracy, its outright hostility to the proletarian revolution.”²⁸⁸ The communiqué, so closely resembling the Social Democratic betrayal of August 4, 1914, once again demonstrated that the Comintern was dead as a political organization.²⁸⁹

At the time of the formation of the Popular Front, Trotsky also sharply condemned the PCF’s alliance with the Radicals, reiterating and amplifying upon his previous arguments. Against claims in *Pravda* that the Radicals were a “bloc between the middle and petty bourgeoisie,” Trotsky quipped on March 28, 1936 that “a horseman is not a bloc between a rider and a horse.” In fact, he insisted, “The Radicals are the democratic party of French imperialism—any other definition is a lie.”²⁹⁰ While the masses were abandoning the Radical Party, the Socialist and Communist leaders were trying to save it, forcing their parties in the process to limit their activities to the program of the Radicals. Thus, Trotsky characterized the People’s Front as a “society for insuring Radical bankrupts at the expense of the capital of working class organizations.” Its purpose was to put “*a brake upon* the mass movement, directing it into the channels of class collaboration.”²⁹¹

Trotsky perceived both domestic and international inspirations for the PCF’s efforts to construct the front. On August 23, 1935 he observed that after the riot of February 1934, PCF leaders who had denounced Radicals as fascists and Social Democrats as social fascists, “completely lost faith in themselves and their banner” and decided to seek an alliance with both

parties. However, he also parenthetically noted that the decision was made “at the direct bidding of Moscow.”²⁹² On March 28, 1936 he explained Soviet motivations as follows:

Under pressure of the danger threatening from Hitler’s Germany, the policy of the Kremlin turned towards France. Status quo—in international relations! Status quo—in the internal relations of the French regime! Hopes for the social revolution? Chimeras!

Again he concluded, “The policy of Stalin, determined by the interests of the privileged bureaucracy, has become conservative through and through.”²⁹³

For Trotsky, the events of the spring of 1936 further demonstrated the counterrevolutionary role of the PCF and of the Comintern as a whole. In an article of June 5, 1936 he saw this as evident first of all in the 1936 French election results. Far from demonstrating the popular mandate for the Popular Front as claimed by both the SFIO and the PCF, the outcome represented a vote against it. The Communists had drawn dramatic gains from the SFIO; the Socialists had increased their vote at the expense of the Radicals; the Neo-Socialists, outspoken advocates of a bourgeois-proletarian alliance, had been rejected; and despite hopes of the SFIO and the PCF for a Radical government, the masses had imposed a Blum ministry. A class polarization was taking place in France, yet the PCF and the SFIO persisted in frustrating the popular will by imposing a Popular Front from above. Even worse than the SFIO’s governmental collaboration with the Radicals was the PCF’s post-election pledge to support the Blum government from without—as Trotsky explained, “in order the better to subject the working masses to the People’s Front, i.e., to the discipline of capitalism.”²⁹⁴

As the upsurge of June 1936 unfolded, Trotsky excitedly followed events in France by radio from a Norwegian village. On June 9 he proclaimed, “The French revolution has begun!”²⁹⁵ To coordinate the offensive, he called for the election of representatives from the

factories and industries—or in other words, for the creation of “*soviets of workers’ deputies*.” In this regard, he even took up the recently discarded slogan of the Comintern, “Soviets everywhere!”²⁹⁶ For Trotsky, the difference between this perspective and that of the PCF was a measure of how far Stalinism had fallen from revolutionary politics. He viewed the leaders of the PCF, together with those of the SFIO, as actively hostile to the revolutionary movement, afraid that the strike might “spoil all their blueprints for a Popular Front.” Especially revealing in this regard was PCF leader Marcel Cachin’s comment that “We are all of us . . . confronted by the fact of the strike.” As interpreted by Trotsky, Cachin was saying that “the strike is our common misfortune.”²⁹⁷ Reviewing the record of the strike in July, Trotsky asserted that if the “Communist” party had been genuinely communist, it would have broken with the Radicals on the first day of the strike, called for the creation of factory committees and soviets, and would have proceeded to establish dual power in the country. Then, in his sharpest criticism of French Stalinism to date, Trotsky denounced the PCF as “merely one of the tools of French imperialism.”²⁹⁸ Regarding the international role of Stalinism as a whole, he observed,

The Stalinist bureaucracy is a far more threatening and treacherous obstacle on the road of the world revolution than the autocratic czar once was. The Comintern covers a policy of social patriotism and Menshevism with the authority of the October Revolution and the banner of Leninism.²⁹⁹

For Trotsky the principal significance of the Seventh Congress of the Comintern was its extension of the “opportunist turn” of the PCF to the rest of the world.³⁰⁰ In “The Comintern’s Liquidation Congress” written on August 23, 1935, Trotsky asserted that the congress, while endorsing and generalizing the French experience on both the Popular Front and the question of war, “liquidated Lenin’s teaching, making an abrupt about-face to opportunism and patriotism.”³⁰¹ In particular, the congress had rejected Lenin’s views that the proletariat could not

take power within the framework of bourgeois democracy or with its methods, that even the most “left” bourgeois parties ultimately served finance capital, that the real culprit in imperialist war was imperialism itself, and that “revolutionary defeatism” was the appropriate policy within all imperialist countries.³⁰² According to Trotsky, nothing now distinguished the Communists from the Social Democrats “except the traditional phraseology.”³⁰³

One final development in this period that again demonstrated to Trotsky the enormous gulf separating Stalinism and Leninism was Stalin’s interview with Roy Howard of the Scripps-Howard newspaper chain on March 1, 1936. From a practical point of view, Trotsky observed in an article of March 18, the most important aspect of the interview was Stalin’s warning that the Soviet Union immediately would respond militarily to a Japanese invasion of Outer Mongolia. Because of the strategic significance Mongolia in a war between Japan and the USSR, Trotsky approved of this reply “in the main.”³⁰⁴

However, Trotsky was far more critical of Stalin’s answers to questions about the cause of war. Although Stalin had placed the blame for war on capitalism, Trotsky noted that as soon as Stalin passed “from dim theoretical recollections to real politics,” he began talking about “individual evil-minded cliques” that could not grasp the benefits of peace, and arguing that the “friends of peace,” using instruments such as the League of Nations, were growing stronger against the “enemies of peace.”³⁰⁵ Trotsky asserted that in describing imperialist countries, it would be more appropriate to speak of the friends and enemies of the status quo, which was characterized by the oppression of the overwhelming majority of mankind by a minority. Furthermore, as the Bolshevik Party program of 1919 had observed, the League was merely one of the tools used by capitalists “for the systematic exploitation of all the peoples on earth.” By embellishing its imperialist allies and the League, and by duping workers with slogans about

disarmament and collective security, both the Soviet government and the Comintern in effect had been “transformed into the *political agency of imperialism in relation to the working masses*.”³⁰⁶

Finally, Trotsky focused on the best-known aspect of the interview: Stalin’s remarks on the Soviet position regarding world revolution. When Howard asked if the USSR had abandoned its plans for world revolution, Stalin responded that the Soviet Union “never had such plans and intentions,” and characterized the contrary view as the product of a “tragicomic” misunderstanding. For Trotsky, Stalin’s answer was “inappropriate and indecent.” He observed that the Bolsheviks had organized the Comintern to promote revolution, and had proclaimed repeatedly the duty of the victorious proletariat in one country to provide assistance—even with armed force—to other “rising peoples.” In contrast, Stalin was now advocating a theory of “revolution in one country,” in the process transforming the Comintern “into a comedian.” According to Trotsky, Stalin had “compromised himself so cruelly” because of his need to break with the past. In fact, he suggested that Stalin would have been more convincing to both Howard and the world bourgeoisie if he had admitted, “Your comical misunderstanding . . . consists in the fact that you take us for the continuators of Bolshevism, whereas we are its gravediggers.” However, Stalin could not yet speak so frankly, because “The past binds him, the tradition hampers him, the phantom of the Opposition frightens him.”³⁰⁷

8.6.3 Repression, Party Purges, and a New Constitution

As far as situation regarding the state and party regime was concerned, the period from 1935 to the middle of 1936 was characterized by a combination of harsh political reprisals, further organizational operations within the party, and signs of growing liberalization. The repression initiated after the Kirov assassination continued and expanded in the early months of

1935. That year and the next the party leadership initiated two new membership-accounting operations, involving large numbers of new expulsions. At the same time, news regarding the drafting of a new constitution raised widespread hopes of liberal reform. During these years Trotsky analyzed these and other regime developments in terms of his theory, arguing that the acts of repression, the party expulsions, and the liberal reforms all were designed to shore up the domination of the bureaucratic caste and/or the personal rule of Stalin. One further important development in Trotsky's thinking, reinforced by news about the planned Soviet constitution, was his decision to call for a new political revolution in the USSR.

In early 1935 the leadership continued the repression against the left initiated after the Kirov assassination, while extending it to broader strata of Soviet society. In March, large numbers of former aristocrats, civil servants, officers, and business people, together with thousands of Leningrad workers and their families, were sent into exile or to prison camps in Siberia, while smaller numbers were deported from Moscow.³⁰⁸ Then in the early summer of 1935 Zinoviev and Kamenev were brought back to Moscow to stand trial with more than 100 others for an alleged Kremlin plot against Stalin. Two of the defendants were shot and others received prison or camp sentences of five to ten years. Kamenev, who denied everything, received a sentence of an additional five years.³⁰⁹ At this point only one member of the political elite was affected by the reprisals. Avel' Enukidze, the secretary of the Central Executive Committee of the Soviets and a long-time friend of Stalin's, was accused of providing assistance to the terrorists of the Kremlin plot. On June 7, the Central Committee voted to expel him from both the Central Committee and the party.³¹⁰

Meanwhile, in October 1934, the party leadership decided to conduct a general registration of party membership, the Verification (*proverka*) of Party Documents. The original

impulse for the campaign was the extreme disorganization and chaos in party membership records, especially in the local party organizations, revealed by the 1933 *chistka*. However, in the wake of the Kirov assassination the leadership also began to perceive the administrative confusion as a security threat. A May 13, 1935 letter from the Central Committee to local party organizations alleged that party cards had fallen into the hands of adventures, enemies of the party, and foreign spies. The letter also outlined procedures for verifying party documents, and for expelling members with invalid or unsupported credentials.³¹¹ In his final report on the *proverka* in December 1935 N. Ezhov announced that 177,000 members, or 9.1 percent of the party membership, had been expelled. Again, it seems the majority were dropped for nonpolitical reasons, such as lying to the party, having false membership documents, or personal corruption.³¹² As of December 1935, 2.9 percent of those expelled in the *proverka*—or a little over 5,000 members—were removed as Trotskyists or Zinovievists. However, from the emphasis given to these groups in reports, it is clear that the “Trotskyists” and “Zinovievists” were viewed—at least by Ezhov, the NKVD, and the Soviet press—as far more significant than their numbers warranted.³¹³

Immediately after the *proverka*, the party leadership undertook yet another administrative campaign, the 1936 Exchange of Party Documents (*obmen partdokumentov*). In the *proverka* it had been discovered that party documents were badly worn and in need of replacement. Additionally, the *obmen* was initiated to reconsider questionable cases of party membership that had arisen in the *proverka*. In particular, the Central Committee urged party organizations to redirect their attention from “penetrations of the party by enemies,” etc., to the elimination of individuals who did not actively participate.³¹⁴ Thus, the announced goals of the exchange were even less political than those of the *proverka*. Nevertheless, by the end of 1936 the portion of

those expelled as “Trotskyists” or “Zinovievists” in 1935-36 rose to 5.5 percent.³¹⁵ Furthermore, in a reversal of the previous instructions from the Central Committee, a March 15, 1936 editorial in *Pravda* asserted that the purge should be directed less against passive elements, and mainly against “enemy and alien elements.”³¹⁶

Meanwhile, news reports of preparations for a new constitution were raising hopes, even among higher party circles, that a genuine political liberalization was about to begin. On Stalin’s motion, the Central Committee session of February 1935 established a constitutional commission headed by Stalin with the goal of “further democratizing” the Soviet system—a step justified on the grounds of the society’s advance toward socialism. A draft of the new constitution was approved by the Politburo on May 15, 1936 and by the Central Committee in early June, and was published on June 12 for national discussion. In his interview with Roy Howard in March 1936 Stalin outlined some of the most important provisions that would appear in the constitution: suffrage was to be universal, in contrast with the earlier disenfranchisement of employers and clergy; it was to be equal, replacing the differential representation of workers and peasants; it was to be direct, instead of the previous tiered election of higher soviets by lower; and it was to be secret, as opposed to the former open system of voting. Stalin explained that, since there were “no classes,” and “a party is part of a class,” no parties aside from the AUCP were to be permitted. However, “all sorts of public, non-Party organizations” would be able to nominate candidates.³¹⁷

Reiterating his analysis in January, in various statements during early 1935 Trotsky continued to characterize the ongoing post-assassination repression as directed by the bureaucracy against the left in order to implement the right turn. Thus, on February 15, referring to the decision of the *kolkhoz* conference to grant *kolkhoz* households the right to own livestock,

he wrote in his diary, “At the present time, the retreat in is proceeding at full speed. For this very reason Stalin is once again forced to cut down everyone and everything that stands to the left of him.”³¹⁸ Similarly, upon reading of a statement by Litvinov announcing the termination of aid for propaganda to Communist parties in Britain and its dominions, Trotsky asserted in a diary entry of April 4, 1935, “The turn to the right in the sphere of both foreign and domestic policies forces Stalin to strike out at the left with all his might: this is his insurance against an opposition.”³¹⁹

More specifically, Trotsky saw the Bolshevik-Leninists as the primary target of the repression. During these months Trotsky repeatedly warned that the Soviet leadership would attempt a new amalgam against the Bolshevik-Leninists to compensate for the failure of its previous attempt.³²⁰ Indications along these lines soon appeared in the Soviet press. On March 20 *Pravda* reported that the 1,074 former aristocrats, high tsarist officials, etc. apprehended in Leningrad were being prosecuted for “activity against the state in the interest of foreign nations.”³²¹ Five days later the paper amended its description of the arrested in a denunciation of the “foul dregs of the Trotskyists, the Zinovievists, the old princes, counts, gendarmes, *all this refuse*” working “according to the instructions of foreign information bureaus.”³²² In an article of March 31 Trotsky concluded that the leadership had resolved “to prepare new bloody repressions against the Oppositionists.” Since no terrorist act was available, *Pravda* was instructed to link these repressions to the arrests of the old proprietors, etc.³²³

However, in light of what he judged to be the provocative, implausible, and frankly “stupid” character of the charges involved, on March 29 Trotsky speculated in his diary that perhaps the amalgam was really directed against “some third element, not belonging to either the princes or the Trotskyists.” Consistent with his theory and previous analysis, he identified the likely targets as Stalin’s opponents within the bureaucracy: “liberal tendencies” within the

bureaucracy, that is, “some closer and more intimate enemies of Stalin’s Bonapartism.” In this connection Trotsky wondered again what form a Bonapartist coup might take, rejecting both the crown and the title of leader for life as presenting too many “technical” difficulties. Regardless of the form, he concluded darkly, “Some new stage is being prepared, by comparison with which Kirov’s murder was only an ominous portent.”³²⁴ Trotsky clearly had a similar analysis in mind in a diary entry of June 20 where he asserted that the recent expulsion of Enukidze really was directed at Kalinin. On the basis of that and the continuing propaganda campaign against the Trotskyists and Zinovievists he concluded, “Stalin’s dictatorship is approaching a new frontier.”³²⁵

In late 1935 and early 1936 Trotsky analyzed recent accounts of the imprisonment and exile of Bolshevik-Leninists similarly. One of these accounts was by “A. Tarov,” pseudonym of the mechanic Arven Davtian, who had escaped after serving more than three years in exile and nearly four in prison. Another was by Ante Ciliga, a former leader of the Yugoslavian party, who had served more three years in Soviet prisons and two years in Siberian exile before his release in December 1935. A third was by the Belgian writer and Opposition leader Victor Serge, who was arrested in 1933 and who served eighty days in solitary confinement and three years in deportation before an international campaign secured his release in April 1936.³²⁶ Upon their arrival in the West, all told similar stories of the horrible conditions experienced by Oppositionists in prisons, labor camps, and exile.³²⁷

For Trotsky, the accounts confirmed that the main target of the repression was the “proletarian vanguard” represented by the Bolshevik-Leninists, and also that the twofold purpose of the repression was to defend the interests of the bureaucratic caste and the personal rule of Stalin. Thus, in an article of September 6, 1935 Trotsky observed that the traditional Bolshevik

revolutionary terror against the oppressors had been “completely supplanted by the cold-blooded and venomous terror of the bureaucracy, which fights like a mad beast for its posts and sinecures, for its uncontrolled and autocratic rule—against the proletarian vanguard.” The Stalinist terror was “an instrument for crushing the party, the trade unions, and the soviets, and for establishing a personal dictatorship which lacks only . . . an imperial crown.”³²⁸

At the same time Trotsky also perceived the verification and exchange campaigns within the party of 1935 and 1936 as directed against the Bolshevik-Leninists. In an article of January 11, 1936 he noted the diversity, indicative of another “Thermidorean amalgam,” of the categories of members expelled in the Verification of Documents campaign: “Trotskyists, Zinovievists, opportunists, double-dealers, alien elements, swindlers, adventurers, . . . [and] spies of the foreign agencies.” He explained that part of the reason the Trotskyists were listed first was that the “Bolshevik-Leninists were and remain the most irreconcilable enemies of the bureaucracy, which seeks to perpetuate its position as a ruling case.”³²⁹ Beyond that, he mistakenly believed that the prominence of “Trotskyists” in the list was due to the fact that they were the largest group numerically. From local figures reported in *Pravda*, he estimated that at least 5 percent—and probably between 5 and 20 percent, or 10,000-25,000 individuals—of those purged were expelled as “Trotskyists” or “Zinovievists.”³³⁰ Shortly afterwards, on the basis of the prominent place accorded to Trotskyists and Zinovievists in reports of the more than 17,000 expulsions in Moscow and Leningrad, he amended this estimate, asserting that “not less than 10,000” from these two categories “were expelled in the two capital cities alone.”³³¹

From these estimates Trotsky concluded that the Bolshevik-Leninists were experiencing remarkable growth within the USSR. Guessing that no more than “tens” or “hundreds” of those purged had participated in the Opposition during the years 1923-28, on January 11 he judged that

these must be “new recruits,” especially from the youth. Consequently, he concluded, “If not as a doctrine, then as a mood, as a tradition, a banner, our tendency has a mass character in the USSR, and today it is obviously drawing to itself new and fresh forces.” Despite all of the persecutions and capitulations, the Fourth International still had “*its strongest, numerically largest, and most tempered section in the USSR.*”³³² Viewed from the standpoint of his theory, this was not an unexpected development. As Trotsky explained in an article written a few months later, there was no doubt that opposition groupings in the working class were “revived precisely by the new pressure upon the workers, accompanied with new and monstrous privileges for the bureaucracy and the ‘best people.’” Furthermore, he asserted, in contrast with groups like the Workers’ Opposition and Democratic Centralists, the Bolshevik-Leninists were growing rapidly because the “advanced workers” supported their position on the class nature of the Soviet Union.³³³

Trotsky anticipated that the 1936 Exchange of Party Documents also would be aimed at Bolshevik-Leninists. Noting on January 11, 1936 the “rigid proviso” that new cards were only to be issued to those who had earned “confidence,” he commented, “Perhaps six months later we shall learn how many new Bolshevik-Leninists will thereby be promoted from the party to the concentration camps.”³³⁴ Two months later, he saw evidence that the leadership was using the exchange to target Bolshevik-Leninists while preparing new reprisals against them. On March 25 he commented upon the recent statement in *Pravda*, which he presumed was authored by Stalin, that the party was continuing to rid itself of “Trotskyists, Zinovievists, White Guards, and other filth.” Noting again that the “Trotskyists” occupied first place, he explained, “This means that the heaviest blows are directed against them.” Beyond that, he perceived a threat in the article’s condemnation of the practice of depriving everyone expelled, even a man who was not an

“enemy,” of the right to work. In fact, Trotsky concluded, Stalin’s order had condemned tens of thousands of Oppositionists to unemployment and homelessness, even in exile.³³⁵

In early 1936 Trotsky utilized his theory of bureaucracy, and especially his recent understanding of Soviet Bonapartism, to analyze the new Soviet constitution. Although the draft text was not yet available, he responded to statements about the constitution that had appeared in *Pravda*, in Stalin’s interview with Roy Howard, and in an interview with Molotov published in *Le Temps*. In an article of April 15, 1936 Trotsky asserted that the justification for the new constitution in terms of the “socialist” character of the Soviet Union was contradicted by the fact that there was still no mention of the withering of repression, of the bureaucracy, or of the secret police.³³⁶

Still, Trotsky believed the bureaucracy had important reasons for introducing constitutional reforms at this time. One, he suggested, was to combat corruption within the state apparatus itself. In his interview with Howard, Stalin explained that secret suffrage would “be a whip in the hand of the population against the organs of government which work badly.” For Trotsky, this was an admission that “Stalin’s autocratic rule” had created an entire system of corruption that even threatened the existence of the Soviet state as a source of the power and privileges of the bureaucracy. “Taking fright at their own handiwork,” he concluded, “the chiefs of the Kremlin turn to the population with a plea to help it cleanse and straighten out the apparatus of administration.”³³⁷ Or as he had asserted in “The Workers’ State, Thermidor, and Bonapartism,” Stalin, as a Bonapartist, sometimes found it necessary to lean on the lowest layers of the new social hierarchy against the “topmost layer.”³³⁸

However, a significant limit on participation noted by Trotsky was the continuing ban on opposition parties, justified by Stalin in terms of the “classless” character of Soviet society. By

this line of reasoning, Trotsky observed, there was no need for even a *single* party. Nor was Trotsky impressed by Stalin's promise that "all sorts of public, nonparty organizations" would participate in nominating candidates, for he noted that the "active role" in organizations such as trade unions was "played exclusively by the representatives of the privileged summits," and on every important question the final decision was made by the AUCP, "the political organization of the ruling stratum." Consequently, he concluded, the electoral participation of nonparty organizations would lead to nothing but rivalry between different bureaucratic cliques within limits set by the top leadership. In fact, Trotsky asserted, that was a second reason for the constitutional reforms: "to learn in this manner some secrets hidden from it and to refurbish its regime, without at the same time permitting a political struggle which must inevitably be directed against itself."³³⁹

However, in Trotsky's estimation an even more important purpose behind the new constitution was to prevent the soviets from becoming again militant institutions of proletarian power. Although Trotsky believed that the soviets had lost their political significance long before, he now suggested that in time they might have revived with the growth of new social antagonisms. To prevent this from occurring, he asserted, "The new constitution abolishes the soviets, dissolving the workers into the general mass of the population."³⁴⁰ While the basic state institutions were still to be called "soviets," these were to be transformed into something entirely different. The equalization of worker and peasant representation was intended to smother working-class protest against inequality with the weight of the more backward peasantry. In this regard, Trotsky noted that "Bonapartism, . . . always leans upon the village against the city."³⁴¹ The elimination of factory representation in the urban soviets was to reduce workers to atomized citizens, voting "each one for himself."³⁴² Finally, the introduction of direct election of state

officials and higher soviets was to create Bonapartist plebiscites in which citizens were given a chance periodically to vote “*For or against the Leader.*”³⁴³ By these measures, Trotsky concluded, the new constitution would establish the legal sanction for Bonapartism that he had been anticipating since the Kirov assassination: “The new constitution is thus intended to liquidate juridically the outworn Soviet system, replacing it by *Bonapartism on a plebiscitary basis.*”³⁴⁴

In July 1936 Trotsky’s understanding of the new constitutional provisions reinforced his recent conclusion that a political revolution would be required to overthrow the bureaucracy. Although in October 1933 Trotsky first recognized that force would be necessary to remove the bureaucracy from power, he avoided the term revolution and continued to minimize the violence that would be needed. In fact, as we have seen, at that time he insisted that a “real civil war” could only occur between the proletariat and the supporters of capitalist counterrevolution, and that against the bureaucracy, only measures of a “police character” would be necessary.³⁴⁵ However, Trotsky’s revision of position on Thermidor and Bonapartism in February 1935 provided new reasons for changing his position on revolution. In part, it constituted a new milestone in his recognition of the extreme autonomy of the bureaucracy. At the same time, Trotsky’s argument that Thermidor, though not a *social* counterrevolution, was a counterrevolution of sorts suggested the possibility of a new revolution that was not a *social* revolution.

Trotsky first outlined his new position on this question on January 1, 1936 in a letter to comrades who had asked about the direction of development of the USSR. In his response, Trotsky utilized the old Marxist distinction between a social and a political revolution, explicitly suggesting that a new political revolution would be necessary in USSR:

What perspective opens before us? Very probably a new revolution. This will not be a social evolution, but a *political* revolution. In its evolution the bourgeoisie too has known of “great” revolutions, i.e., social revolutions, and purely political revolutions which took place on the basis of already established property. The theoretical prognoses of Marx and Lenin did not foresee, in any case, the possibility of political revolutions on the basis of property nationalized by the proletariat. But they did not foresee the Bonapartist degeneration of the proletarian dictatorship, either.³⁴⁶

For Trotsky, the new Soviet constitution of 1936 provided additional justification for this position. On July 8, 1936, in a resolution on the Soviet Union for the first International Conference for the Fourth International, Trotsky argued that the new constitution liquidated “de jure” the ruling position of the proletariat that had been liquidated “de facto” years before. By sealing “the dictatorship of the privileged strata . . . over the producing masses,” the constitution eliminated the possibility of the peaceful withering of the state and had opened legal roads for capitalist restoration. With the “last possibility of a legal reformation of the state” gone, Trotsky asserted, the struggle against the bureaucracy necessarily became revolutionary:

If a *social counterrevolution* . . . is necessary for the return of the USSR to capitalism, then for the further development of socialism a *political revolution* has become inevitable, i.e., the violent overthrow of the political rule of the degenerated bureaucracy while maintaining the property relations established by the October Revolution. The proletarian vanguard of the USSR, basing itself upon the toiling masses of the whole country and upon the revolutionary movement of the whole world, will have to batter down the bureaucracy by force, restore Soviet democracy, eliminate the enormous privileges, and assure a genuine advance to socialist equality.³⁴⁷

8.7 “SMALL OR LARGE INTELLECTUAL CATASTROPHES”

In September 1914, shortly after concluding that the Second International was dead as a

revolutionary organization, Lenin began taking intensive notes on Hegel's *Science of Logic*. Michael Löwy, among others, has suggested that in light of the unexpected betrayal by the Socialist International, Lenin had either "a simple desire to return to the sources of Marxist thought," or an intuition that the methodological weakness of the Second International was its "noncomprehension of the dialectic." Whatever the reason, Löwy argues, Lenin's vision of the Marxist dialectic and his positions on a number of important political questions were profoundly altered by the experience.³⁴⁸

In the fall of 1933, shortly after calling for a break with the Comintern, Trotsky similarly began taking notes on Hegel's *Science of Logic*.³⁴⁹ One passage from Trotsky's notes, written in June 1934, stands out for its relevance to the development of his theory during the years covered in this chapter:

Historically humanity forms its "conceptions"—the basic elements of its thinking—on the foundation of experience, which is always incomplete, partial, one-sided. It includes in "the concept" those features of a living, forever changing process, which are important and significant for it at a given moment. Its future experience at first is enriched (quantitatively) and then *outgrows* the closed concept, that is, in practice negates it, by virtue of this necessitating a theoretical negation. But the negation does not signify a turning back to tabula rasa. Reason already possesses: a) the concept and b) the recognition of its unsoundness. This recognition is tantamount to the necessity to construct *a new concept*, and then it is inevitably revealed that the negation was not absolute, that it affected only certain features of the first concept. . . .

Thus, in the domain of thinking (cognition) as well, the quantitative changes lead to qualitative ones, and then those transformations haven't a [steady] evolutionary character but are accompanied by *breaks in gradualness*, that is, by small or large intellectual catastrophes. In sum, this also means that the development of cognition has a *dialectical character*.³⁵⁰

As we have seen, the concept of bureaucracy formed in 1926-27, incorporating features "important and significant" for Trotsky at that moment, at first appeared to enrich his

understanding of Soviet reality. However, with the experience of the left turn and then the deepening of the turn, reality increasingly seemed to outgrow Trotsky's "closed concept" of bureaucracy from that earlier period. Finally, after years of ad hoc adjustments, in 1933 Trotsky was compelled to recognize that the disastrous failure of Comintern policy in Germany negated his reform perspective in practice. In turn, this necessitated a "theoretical negation" through the ultimate construction of a "new concept" that emphasized the autonomy of the bureaucracy. Although he retained some features of the old theory, in one "large intellectual catastrophe" Trotsky broke with the KPD, then with the Comintern, and then with the AUCP; revised his position on peaceful reform; modified his criteria for a workers' state; tentatively suggested a revision of position on the concept of Bonapartism; amplified upon the notion of bureaucratic parasitism; developed a new, functional explanation for the origins of bureaucratic autonomy; and attempted to account for the discrepancy between his evaluations of Soviet international and domestic policy. During the following year and a half, Trotsky's interpretation of policy developments provoked a series of somewhat smaller theoretical "catastrophes." In this period he completely revised his understanding of Thermidor and Bonapartism; dropped the term bureaucratic centrism; emphasized the notions of caste and labor aristocracy; again modified his criteria for a workers' state; redefined Soviet international policy as fully opportunist; and called for a new revolution to overthrow the bureaucracy. By the summer of 1936 the combined theoretical catastrophes of 1933-35 had replaced Trotsky's old theory with elements of a new one. In August Trotsky assembled these elements into a coherent whole in his masterwork on Soviet bureaucracy, *The Revolution Betrayed*.

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- ¹ Kenneth Boulding, *The Image: Knowledge in Life and Society* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1956), 8-9.
- ² Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1970), 85, 92, 122.
- ³ The argument here is not that Trotsky's theory experienced a Kuhnian paradigm shift. There were major differences between the Left Opposition and the "scientific communities" discussed by Kuhn, between Trotsky's theory and a Kuhnian paradigm, and between the process of change discussed in this chapter and the one described in Kuhn's book. However, there were also a few striking similarities.
- ⁴ Leon Trotsky, *Writings of Leon Trotsky [1932-33]*, ed. George Breitman and Sarah Lovell (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1972) 75, 76.
- ⁵ Leon Trotsky, *Writings of Leon Trotsky: Supplement (1929-33)*, ed. George Breitman (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1979), 189.
- ⁶ Trotsky *Writings [1932-33]*, 95, 96, 101, 103.
- ⁷ Leon Trotsky, *The Struggle Against Fascism in Germany*, ed. George Breitman and Merry Maisel (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1971), 341, 343.
- ⁸ Trotsky, *Struggle*, 346.
- ⁹ *Ibid.*, 349-369.
- ¹⁰ Trotsky, *Writings [1932-33]*, 114.
- ¹¹ Julius Braunthal, *History of the International*, vol. 2: 1914-1943, trans. John Clark (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1967), 381-382; E. H. Carr, *Twilight of the Comintern, 1930-1935* (New York: Pantheon Books, Random House, 1982) 83-84; Jane Degras, ed., *The Communist International, 1919-1943: Documents*, vol. 3, 1929-1943 (London: Oxford University Press, 1965), 249-250; Trotsky, *Struggle*, 352-354, 357-358, 362.
- ¹² Braunthal, *History of the International*, 2: 381-384; Alan Bullock, *Hitler: A Study in Tyranny* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1952), 233-240; Richard J. Evans, *The Coming of the Third Reich* (New York: Penguin, 2004), 328-354; William L. Shirer, *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich: A History of Nazi Germany* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1960), 190-198; Trotsky, *Struggle*, 371; Christian Zentner and Friedemann Bedürftig, eds., *The Encyclopedia of the Third Reich* (New York, Macmillan, 1991), s.v. "Reichstag fire."
- ¹³ Trotsky, *Struggle*, 348. See also *ibid.*, 326-327; Leon Trotsky, *Writings of Leon Trotsky [1932]*, ed. George Breitman and Sarah Lovell (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1973) 23, 178-179; Trotsky, *Writings [1932-33]*, 54.
- ¹⁴ Trotsky, *Writings [1932-33]*, 137-139. Trotsky's main argument was that revolutionary German workers would soon abandon the KPD. See also *ibid.*, 140, 161, 191; Trotsky, *Struggle*, 384.
- ¹⁵ For a discussion of the ECCI resolution, see Carr, *Twilight of the Comintern*, 90.
- ¹⁶ Leon Trotsky, *Writings of Leon Trotsky [1933-34]*, ed. George Breitman and Bev Scott (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1975), 26. In a discussion on September 2, 1933 with Pierre Rimbert, formerly a member of the French Trotskyist group the Ligue Communiste, Trotsky similarly explained that the delay was due to the possibility that other sections of the Comintern would "correct their line," and to the need "for our sections to assimilate the new orientation." [Trotsky, *Writings: Supplement (1929-33)*, 287.]
- ¹⁷ J. Arch Getty, "Trotsky in Exile: The Founding of the Fourth International," *Soviet Studies* 33, no. 1 (January 1986), 27. This author responded to Getty in Thomas Twiss, "Trotsky's Break with the Comintern: A Comment on J. Arch Getty," *Soviet Studies* 39, no. 1 (January 1987): 131-137. Getty replied in J. Arch Getty, "Reply to Thomas Twiss," *Soviet Studies* 39, no. 2 (April 1987): 318-319. For other discussions of Trotsky's break with the KPD, the Comintern, and the AUCP, see Daniel Bensaid, *The Formative Years of the Fourth International (1933-1938)*, Notebooks for Study and Research, no. 9, (Amsterdam: International Institute for Research and Education, 1988), 5-10; Kunal Chattopadhyay, *The Marxism of Leon Trotsky* (Kolkata: Progressive Publishers, 2006), 525-533; Isaac Deutscher, *The Prophet Outcast, Trotsky: 1929-1940* (New York: Vintage Books, 1963), 198-215; Pierre Frank, *The Fourth International: The Long March of the Trotskyists*, trans. Ruth Schein (London: Ink Links, 1979), 45-48; David Law, "Trotsky in Opposition: 1923-1940" (PhD diss., University of Keele, 1987), 155-158; Jean van Heijenoort, "How the Fourth International Was Conceived," in *Towards a History of the Fourth International Part II*, Education for Socialists (New York: National Education Department, Socialist Workers Party, 1973), 3-5.
- ¹⁸ Getty, "Trotsky in Exile," 29-31.
- ¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 31.

²⁰ Trotsky, *Writings (1932-33)*, 142; Lev Trotskii, *Dnevnik i pis'ma*, ed. Iu.G. Fel'shtinskii (Tenafly, NJ: Ermitazh, 1990), 45. For similar private and public statements during this period, see Trotsky, *Writings [1932]*, 125-126; Trotsky, *Writings: Supplement [1929-33]*, 173; Trotsky, *Writings [1932-33]*, 168.

²¹ Quoted in Getty, "Trotsky in Exile," 30. (Getty's translation) For the original, see Trotskii, *Dnevnik i pis'ma*, 45. The Pathfinder Press translation appears in Trotsky, *Writings [1932-33]*, 142.

Challenged on this point, Getty quietly dropped his original claim that Trotsky's letter contained an offer to hold discussion "in abeyance for an indefinite period of time" or to "refrain from criticism." Then Getty claimed, "What was new in the secret letter was Trotsky's offer to defer, modify, or negotiate 'the manner of presenting and defending this programme . . . not to mention the manner of putting it into effect.'" [Getty, "Reply," 318-319.]

²² Trotsky, *Writings (1932-33)*, 167-168. In this same period, Trotsky summarized his March 30 article in a letter to a supporter: "For Germany we say, the Communist Party is dead. But for the USSR, we propose an agreement with the top circle of the party." [Trotsky, *Writings: Supplement (1929-33)*, 225-226.] In response to this point, Getty argues,

Twiss' myopic interpretation of Trotsky's 15 March secret letter . . . misses its importance What was new in the secret letter was Trotsky's offer to defer, modify, or negotiate 'the manner of presenting and defending this programme . . . not to mention the manner of putting it into effect.'" [Getty, "Reply," 318-319.]

What Getty misses is that Trotsky's call on March 20 for an "agreement" with the leadership regarding "the extent to which [mutual criticism] is consciously prepared by both sides and in what organizational framework it takes place" was in fact a *public* call to "negotiate 'the manner of presenting and defending this programme.'"

²³ Trotsky, *Writings [1932-33]*, 235. The note was published in the July edition of Trotsky's *Biulleten'* ["Pochtovyi iashchik," *Biulleten' oppositsii* 35 (July 1933), 32.]

²⁴ As Trotsky observed in December 1932, "It would be ridiculous to behave as if we belonged, in fact, to the official organizations of the Comintern." [Trotsky, *Writings [1932-33]*, 30.]

²⁵ These statements were: "The Tragedy of the German Proletariat: The German Workers Will Rise Again—Stalinism, Never!," dated March 14 and signed "Leon Trotsky" [Trotsky, *Struggle*, 375-384; Leon Trotsky, "The Tragedy of the German Proletariat . . .," *The Militant* 6, no. 2 (April 8, 1933), 1, 4]; and "The Collapse of the KPD and the Tasks of the Opposition," dated April 8 and signed "Leon Trotsky." (Trotsky, *Writings [1932-33]*, 189-197; Leon Trotsky, "The Collapse of the C.P.G. and the Opposition's Tasks," *The Militant* 6, no. 25 (May 6, 1933), 1, 2, and *The Militant* 6, no. 26 (May 13, 1933), 3.) Another statement making this point, signed—perhaps ambiguously—"L.D." for Lev Davidovitch [Trotsky], was also published in this period. This was an excerpt of a letter to the International Secretariat, dated March 28, 1933. [The excerpt is available as "KPD or New Party (II)," in Trotsky, *Writings [1932-33]*, 140. The full text of the letter appears in Leon Trotsky, *Writings: Supplement (1929-33)*, 221-222. See Louis Sinclair, *Leon Trotsky: A Bibliography*, vol. 2 (Brookfield, VT: Scolar Press, Gower Publishing Company, 1989), 679.] Yet another statement containing this position, a letter to a "friend," written on April 27 and signed "L. Trotsky," was first published in France in May, though the date it first appeared is unclear. [Trotsky, *Writings [1932-33]*, 210-214. See Louis Sinclair, *Leon Trotsky: A Bibliography*, 2: 685.]

²⁶ See Sinclair, *Leon Trotsky: A Bibliography*. Letters and articles related to the break with the KPD written between March and May 1933 and signed "Gurov" or "Gurov" appear in Trotsky, *Writings [1932-33]*, 137-139, 161-163, 206-209; Trotsky, *Struggle*, 385-387.

Trotsky's use of a pseudonym may have had more to do with where he published statements, than with the content of the statements. A concern of Trotsky's may have been that contributing an article to an internal discussion bulletin under his own name would jeopardize his ability to obtain a visa in France or another Western European country. To obtain and keep his visa in France, Trotsky maintained that he was not directly involved in the political activity of any organizations. [See especially Trotsky, *Writings: Supplement (1929-33)*, 249. See also *ibid.*, 188; Leon Trotsky, *Writings of Leon Trotsky: Supplement (1934-40)*, ed. George Breitman (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1979), 564.] It appears that all of the "Gurov" statements listed here were first published in internal discussion bulletins of the ILO. Again, the March 28 letter to the International Secretariat signed "L.D." was also first published in an internal discussion bulletin. On the other hand, the March 14 and April 8 statements on this topic signed "Leon Trotsky" first appeared as articles in public newspapers of Trotskyist groups. The April 27 statement

signed “L. Trotsky” first appeared in an internal discussion bulletin, but in the form of a personal letter that was being reprinted in the bulletin. [See Sinclair, *Leon Trotsky: A Bibliography*.]

²⁷ Trotsky, *Writings (1932-33)*, 304-311; Leon Trotsky, *Writings [1933-34]*, 17-24.

²⁸ Trotsky, *Writings (1932-33)*, 112. See, also, for example, Leon Trotsky, *Writings of Leon Trotsky [1930]*, ed. George Breitman and Sarah Lovell (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1975), 150, 185; Trotsky, *Writings [1932]*, 254. Trotsky summarized his own view of the relationship between personal ambition and the revolution in an article written January 7, 1931: “Political ambition plays a very important part in the struggle. But the revolutionary begins where personal ambition is fully and wholly subordinated to a great idea, voluntarily submitting to and merging with it.” [Leon Trotsky, *Writings of Leon Trotsky [1930-31]*, ed. George Breitman and Sarah Lovell (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1973), 123.]

²⁹ Pierre Broué, who first discovered the opposition bloc, suggested that the bloc was terminated by the arrests of Zinoviev, Kamenev, and other leading dissidents in the fall of 1932. [Pierre Broué, “Trotsky et le bloc des oppositions de 1932,” *Cahiers Leon Trotsky* 5 (Jan.-Mar. 1980), 19.] In another article Broué suggests that the bloc withered away following the arrests and the subsequent cessation of opposition activity by the Zinovievist group. [Pierre Broué, “Party Opposition to Stalin (1930-32) and the First Moscow Trial” in *Essays on Revolutionary Culture and Stalinism: Selected Papers from the Third World Congress for Soviet and East European Studies*, ed. John W. Strong (Columbus, OH: Slavica Publishers, 1989), 105-106.] At one point in his article Getty himself, somewhat inconsistently, also describes these arrests in the fall of 1933 as “the decapitation of the bloc.” [Getty, “Trotsky in Exile,” 29.]

³⁰ Getty attempts to fill this seven-week gap by referring to a “bitter article” of July 6, 1933 in which Trotsky “railed against” the capitulators and “denounced their capitulations in strong terms.” [Getty, “Trotsky in Exile,” 31.] Getty misrepresents this statement by Trotsky. In fact, it was a restrained, one-paragraph introduction (admittedly, dripping with sarcasm) to a 1927 speech by Zinoviev. Kamenev was not mentioned. [See “Zinov’ev o rezhime VKP,” *Biulleten’ oppozitsii* 38-39 (Feb. 1934), 22-23. For a translation, see Trotsky, *Writings, [1932-33]*, 286.] More importantly, reference to this paragraph does nothing to account for the seven-week delay.

³¹ Trotsky, *Writings [1932-33]*, 137.

³² Trotsky, *Writings [1932-33]*, 140, 161-163, 189-197, 206-209; Trotsky, *Struggle*, 375-384. In reply to this point, Getty reasserts that “Trotsky did not consult with his German comrades and only discussed his decision with them ‘in the ensuing months’—much as Stalin would have done.” [Getty, 318.] Whether or not Trotsky’s behavior resembled Stalin’s in this respect is beside the point. However, Trotsky clearly believed that the most effective way to convince hesitant comrades was to convince the International Secretariat first, and then to organize an international discussion. Thus, in his March 12 “Gourov” letter, Trotsky argued, “This task [of analyzing the change in policy] will be made easier if the Secretariat immediately adopts a firm and resolute position.” [Trotsky, *Writings [1932-33]*, 137.] Similarly, in a letter to the International Secretariat of March 28, Trotsky explained, “My aim in sending this article [of March 15 on the need for a break with the KPD] to you was to reach an agreement with you before we could start a broader action.” [Trotsky, *Writings: Supplement (1929-33)*, 221.]

³³ Trotsky, *Writings [1932-33]*, 138.

³⁴ Trotsky, *Writings [1932-33]*, 163. See also *ibid*, 193.

³⁵ Trotsky, *Writings [1932-33]*, 305.

³⁶ Furthermore, some evidence suggests Trotsky’s hopes in this regard were not entirely unfounded. Even after the April 1 declaration of the Presidium of the ECCI that the line of the Comintern had been “quite correct,” there was a bitter assessment of the debacle in Germany from Hermann Remelle of the KPD, and a flurry of appeals to the ECCI from Klement Gottwald of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia as well as from the French and Austrian sections for negotiations with the Second International for a united front. [Carr, *Twilight of the Comintern*, 91.]

³⁷ On the implications of a “second party” policy, see Trotsky *Writings [1932-33]* 55; see also Trotsky, *Writings [1930]*, 16. On criteria for a workers’ state, see, for example: Leon Trotsky, *The Challenge of the Left Opposition (1928-29)*, ed. Naomi Allen and George Saunders (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1981), 293-294; Trotsky, *Writings [1930]*, 16; Trotsky, *Writings [1930-31]*, 44, 225.

³⁸ To the extent that Trotsky entertained the possibility that the Nazis could come to power in Germany without a resulting collapse of the USSR, he was clearly undecided how he would respond. Thus, in January 1932 he wrote ambiguously,

Should the German proletariat be defeated by the fascists, then all will be lost

for the Comintern and possibly also for the Soviet Union. For the world proletariat, that would be a setback for many years to come. Under such tragic conditions, the Left Opposition will take over the task of continuing to develop the Marxist program, but certainly no longer within the formal framework of the Third International. [Trotsky, *Writings [1932]*, 23.]

However, in a discussion in August 1932 Trotsky seems to suggest that only the collapse the USSR would lead to a break with the Comintern:

You must not forget that a new fourth international is only possible after a great historic event. . . . Such an event would be the victory of fascism in Germany. But the victory of fascism in Germany does not only mean in all probability the collapse of the Comintern, but also includes the defeat of the Soviet Union. Only if that takes place—it need not necessarily take place, . . . only then will we have a right to speak about a new party, about a fourth international. [Trotsky, *Writings [1932]*, 178-179.]

On the other hand, in “The International Left Opposition, Its Tasks and Methods” in January 1933 Trotsky seems to be indicating that a Nazi victory by itself would necessitate the founding of a new International: “The victory of fascism in Germany and the smashing of the Germany proletariat could hardly allow the Comintern to survive the consequences of its disastrous policies.” [Trotsky, *Writings [1932-33]*, 54.]

³⁹ Van Heijenoort, “How the Fourth International Was Conceived,” 4.

⁴⁰ Trotsky, *Writings [1932-33]*, 138.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 163.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 193. In the same passage Trotsky also again suggested the possibility that some of the sections of the Comintern could be reformed.

⁴³ Carr, *Twilight of the Comintern*, 90. Additionally, Trotsky charged that, by failing to put up a serious struggle, in May the Austrian Communist Party permitted itself to be banned by the authoritarian Christian-Social Chancellor, Dolfuss. This failure immediately prompted Trotsky to extend his conclusion regarding the KPD to the Austrian section. [See Trotsky, *Writings [1932-33]*, 276. See also *ibid.*, 269-270, 282-283.]

⁴⁴ Isaac Deutscher, reporting the account of Trotsky’s secretary Pierre Frank, describes the intense intellectual, almost physical, anguish experienced by Trotsky in this period:

During the weeks and months when Trotsky tried to make up his mind on these points his secretaries saw him every day walking in his room for hours, silent, tense, and absorbed in his dilemmas. ‘His face was profusely covered with sweat; and one sensed the physical exertion of his thought and hesitancy.’ [Deutscher, *The Prophet Outcast*, 202n2.]

⁴⁵ Quoted in Jean van Heijenoort, *With Trotsky in Exile: From Prinkipo to Coyoacán* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978), 39; Van Heijenoort, “How the Fourth International Was Conceived,” 4-5.

⁴⁶ See Van Heijenoort, *With Trotsky in Exile*, 3. Isaac Deutscher similarly attributed Trotsky’s decisions to break with the Comintern, and then with the AUCP to the logic of his break with the KPD. [See Deutscher, *Prophet Outcast*, 201-202.]

⁴⁷ Trotsky, *Writings [1932-33]*, 306.

⁴⁸ Trotsky, *Writings [1933-34]*, 22.

⁴⁹ Trotsky, *Writings [1932-33]*, 309. For earlier statements of the position that the AUCP was not really a party, see Trotsky, *Writings [1930]*, 15, 145, 209; Trotsky, *Writings [1930-31]*, 45, 74, 166, 211; Trotsky, *Struggle*, 214.

⁵⁰ Trotsky, *Struggle*, 430; Trotsky, *Writings [1933-34]*, 20.

⁵¹ The text of this resolution appears as Appendix A, “The International Opposition and the Communist International” in George Breitman, *The Rocky Road to the Fourth International 1933-1938*, Education for Socialists series, (New York: Pathfinder Press, November 1979), 15-17.

⁵² Van Heijenoort, *With Trotsky in Exile*, 49-52. On this period of Trotsky’s French exile, see *ibid.*, 49-91; Deutscher, *Prophet Outcast*, 262-266; Pierre Broué, *Trotsky* (Paris: Fayard, 1988), 769-773. On the Declaration of

the Four, see also Robert J. Alexander, *International Trotskyism, 1929-1985: A Documentary Analysis of the Movement* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1991), 60-263; George Breitman, *The Rocky Road to the Fourth International, 1933-38*, Education for Socialists (New York: National Education Department, Socialist Workers Party, Nov. 1979), 7; Frank, *The Fourth International*, 48-49; Bensaïd, *The Formative Years of the Fourth International (1933-1938)*, 11-13.

⁵³ Trotsky, *Struggle*, 431; Trotsky, *Writings [1933-34]*, 21. See also Frank, *The Fourth International*, 46.

⁵⁴ Trotsky, *Struggle*, 430-431; Trotsky, *Writings [1933-34]*, 20-21.

⁵⁵ Shortly after this, in September, Trotsky's rejection of the perspective of a new revolution in the USSR was also suggested by his answer to a comment by Pierre Rimbert, who had recently left the French section of the ICL. Rimbert remarked, "On the question of the Fourth International, you once wrote that the construction of a new International would have the revolution in the USSR as its logical consequence." To this, Trotsky responded,

That was a reply to people like Urbahns who held that the USSR was not a workers' state and as a result it was necessary to have a new International. Things are turning out differently than we had expected. We outlined this perspective, which seemed the most likely to us: "If the USSR falls, it will take the whole Comintern with it." What we saw as decisive was that the fall of the dictatorship in the USSR would take the Comintern with it. But events decided differently: the workers' state, though degenerated, . . . still exists. But because of the German events, the Comintern has suffered a complete and irreparable collapse. [Trotsky, *Writings: Supplement (1929-33)*, 288.]

⁵⁶ Trotsky, *Writings [1933-34]*, 118. Emphasis in the original.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 119. *Biulleten' oppositsii* 36-37 (October 1933), 10. Various authors have described Trotsky's October 1933 position as essentially the same as his 1936 call for a "political revolution": Deutscher, *Prophet Outcast*, 203; Duncan Hallas, *Trotsky's Marxism* (London: Bookmarks, 1984), 41; Van Heijenoort, "How the Fourth International Was Conceived," 5; Law, "Trotsky in Opposition," 158; John Molyneaux, *Leon Trotsky's Theory of Revolution* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1981), 114. For works that stress the difference between Trotsky's October 1933 position and his 1936 position, see James P. Cannon, "Trotsky of Deutscher?" *Fourth International*, 15 (Winter 1954): 12; Chester Hofla, "When 'Political Revolution' Replaced 'Political Reform,'" *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism* 17 (April 1985): 25-29. On at least one occasion Trotsky subsequently asserted that, shortly after Hitler came to power, the Opposition declared, "The cadres, of the bureaucracy, can be removed only by a new political revolution." [Preliminary Commission of Inquiry. *The Case of Leon Trotsky: Report of Hearings on the Charges Made Against Him in the Moscow Trials*. New York: Merit Publishers, 1968, 271.] However, it is likely that in this passage Trotsky was simplifying the development of his position to make it easier for the Dewey Commission to follow it.

⁶⁰ Trotsky, *Writings [1932-33]*, 308-309; Trotsky, *Writings [1933-34]*, 19-20, 41-42, 51.

⁶¹ This work was published in Trotsky's *Biulleten'* as an article, "Klassovaia priroda sovetskogo gosudarstva," ["The Class Nature of the Soviet State"], *Biulleten' oppositsii* 36-37 (October 1933), 1-12. It was also published in a number of countries as a pamphlet, *The Soviet Union and the Fourth International* [See Sinclair, *Trotsky: A Bibliography*, 2: 717; Trotsky, *Writings [1933-34]*, 354.]

⁶² Trotsky, *Writings (1933-34)*, 102.

⁶³ Ibid., 103.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 104. Along the same lines, later in the same work Trotsky argued that "if in the USSR today the Marxist party were in power, it would renovate the entire political regime; it would shuffle and purge the bureaucracy and place it under the control of the masses; it would transform all of the administrative practices and inaugurate a series of capital reforms in the management of the economy; but in no case would it have to undertake an *overturn in the property relations, i.e., a new social revolution.*" [Ibid., 115.]

⁶⁵ In fact, the closest Trotsky came in this article to suggesting "reformability" as a criterion was the observation that by simply continuing to *tolerate* the bureaucracy in the face of the rise of fascism in the West, the Soviet proletariat "in this sense recognizes it as the bearer of the proletarian dictatorship." [Ibid., 105.]

⁶⁶ Max Schachtman, *The Bureaucratic Revolution: The Rise of the Stalinist State* (New York: The Donald Press,

1962), 91.

⁶⁷ “Lucien Laurat” was the pseudonym of Otto Maschl. [See Marcel van der Linden, *Western Marxism and the Soviet Union: A Survey of Critical Theories and Debates Since 1917* (Leiden, The Netherlands: Koninklijke Brill NV, 2007), 69.]

⁶⁸ For various statements of Laurat’s theory, see Lucien Laurat, *L’Économie Soviétique: Sa dynamique. Son mécanisme* (Paris: Librairie Valois, 1931); Lucien Laurat, *Économie planée contre économie enchaînée* (Paris: Librairie Valois, 1932), 113-119; Lucien Laurat, *Marxism and Democracy*, trans. Edward Fitzgerald (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd., 1940). See also Linden, *Western Democracy*, 69-73.

⁶⁹ Trotsky, *Writings [1933-34]*, 114.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.* For Trotsky, the parasitism of the bureaucracy was comparable in this limited sense to the parasitism of the American clergy.

⁷¹ In January 1930 Trotsky explained that Stalinist centrism ruled the Comintern as an “ideologically parasitic tendency.” [Trotsky, *Writings [1930]*, 50]. In May 1930 he argued, “When it is not justified by a sufficient technological base, the collective farm leads inevitably to the formation of a parasitic economic bureaucracy.” [Ibid., 202.] More recently, in April 1933 he had described the bureaucracy as a “parasitic growth” which had “wrapped itself around the trunk of the October Revolution.” [Trotsky, *Writings (1932-33)*, 225.]

In *The Eighteenth Brumaire* Marx characterized the “enormous bureaucracy and military organization” of France as “this frightful parasitic body, which surrounds the body of French society like a caul and stops up all its pores.” [Karl Marx, *Surveys from Exile, Political Writings*, vol. 2, ed. David Fernbach (Vintage Books, Random House, 1974), 237. In *The Civil War in France* Marx similarly depicted the state machinery under Louis Bonaparte as a power that claimed to embody of the nation’s unity, “independent of, and superior to, the nation itself, from which it was but a parasitic excrescence.” [Karl Marx, *The Civil War in France* (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1966), 69.] For a useful discussion of the concept of “state parasite” in Marx, see Hal Draper, *Karl Marx’s Theory of Revolution*, vol.1, *State and Bureaucracy*, bk. 2 (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1977): 622-626.]

⁷² Trotsky, *Writings (1933-34)*, 115; *Biulleten’ oppozitsii* 36-37 (October 1933), 8. It is likely that in this passage, Trotsky was thinking of Marx’s use of “parasitic excrescence” in Marx, *Civil War in France*, 69.

⁷³ Trotsky, *Writings (1933-34)*, 108-111.

⁷⁴ Trotsky, *Writings (1933-34)*, 107. For an earlier criticism by Trotsky of the position of Urbahns that the USSR was a “state standing between classes,” see Trotsky, *Writings (1930-31)*, 224-225.

⁷⁵ For earlier references by Trotsky to the “plebiscitary” or “Bonapartist” nature of the party regime, see Leon Trotsky, *Writings of Leon Trotsky [1929]*, ed. George Breitman and Sarah Lovell (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1975), 111; Trotsky, *Writings [1930]*, 25, 83, 131, 206-208, 255, 257, 258, 261, 335, 337; Trotsky, *Writings [1930-31]*, 63, 72, 76, 166, 211, 214, 217-218; Trotsky, *Writings [1932]*, 20, 68; Trotsky, *Writings [1932-33]*, 103, 113; Trotsky, *Struggle*, 218.

⁷⁶ Trotsky, *Writings [1933-34]*, 107-108.

⁷⁷ In fact, in December 1934 Trotsky was still warning about the danger of Bonapartism in the Soviet Union. [Trotsky, *Writings: Supplement (1934-40)*, 545.]

⁷⁸ David Law, “Trotsky in Opposition,” 289, 291. See also David S. Law, “Trockij and Thermidor,” in Francesca Gori, ed, *Pensiero e azione politica di Lev Trockij: atti del convegno internazionale per il quarantesimo anniversario della morte* (Firenze: Leo S. Olschki, 1982), 2:440; David Law, “Trotsky and the Comparative History of Revolutions: the ‘Second Chapter’,” *Sbornik*, no. 13 (1987), Study Group on the Russian Revolution, 8.

⁷⁹ Thus, in his March 3 “Alarm Signal!” Trotsky warned of impending political and economic collapse, and called for “the purge from the party of real opportunists, to say nothing of the Thermidorians.” [Trotsky, *Writings [1932-33]*, 112.] On March 30 in “We Need an Honest Inner Party Agreement,” he asserted that the AUCP was “measuring the force of resistance of the Thermidorean tendencies”; and he observed that “in the process of struggle with the Thermidorean groupings,” collaboration between the Bolshevik-Leninists and the centrists might take various forms. [Ibid., 167.] On July 15, in “It Is Necessary to Build Communist Parties and an International Anew,” Trotsky contended that the two parties—“the proletarian and the Thermidorean-Bonapartist”—were crystallizing within the framework of the AUCP.

⁸⁰ David S. Law, “Trockij and Thermidor,” 440. However in this passage Law also ties Trotsky’s shift on Thermidor to the adoption of a perspective of “political revolution” in October 1933. As we shall see, Trotsky did not use this term until 1936.

⁸¹ Trotsky, *Writings [1933-34]*, 167.

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- ⁸² Trotsky, *Writings [1929]*, 47.
- ⁸³ Karl Marx with Frederick Engels, *The German Ideology*, Great Books in Philosophy (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 1998), 53.
- ⁸⁴ Frederick Engels, *The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State* (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1972), 159.
- ⁸⁵ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1960-1970), 25: 467.
- ⁸⁶ Karl Marx, *Early Writings*, trans. by Rodney Livingston and Gregor Benton (New York: Vintage Books, Random House, 1975), 108. In September 1930, Trotsky published a letter from Soviet oppositionists that seems to refer to this passage: “‘The bureaucracy owns the state as private property,’ wrote Marx (Critique of civil law of Hegel).” [*Biulleten’ oppositsii* 15-16 (September 1930), 63.]
- ⁸⁷ Marx and Engels, *German Ideology*, 53.
- ⁸⁸ Frederick Engels, “Letters on Historical Materialism,” in Robert C. Tucker, ed., *The Marx-Engels Reader* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1972), 644; See also Frederick Engels, “Ludwig Feuerbach and the Outcome of Classical German Philosophy,” in Karl Marx, *Selected Works in Two Volumes* (Moscow: Co-operative Publishing Society of Foreign Workers in the U.S.S.R., 1935), vol. 1: 463; Frederick Engels, *Herr Eugene Dühring’s Revolution in Science (Anti-Dühring)*, New York: International Publishers, 1939) 198; Engels, *Origin*, 159.
- ⁸⁹ Engels, *Origin*, 160. For similar passages, see Marx, *Civil War in France*, 66; Draper, *Karl Marx’s Theory of Revolution*, 1, bk. 2: 403, 406, 415, 425.
- ⁹⁰ Trotsky, *Writings [1933-34]*, 102. Trotsky posed this distinction even more sharply in an article written in late December 1934. There, he asserted that although the bureaucracy played a “dual” role within the Soviet Union, combining protection of the workers’ state with extreme disorganization of Soviet economic and cultural development, within the international working class movement, “not a trace remains of this dualism; here *the Stalinist bureaucracy plays a disorganizing demoralizing and fatal role from beginning to end.*” [Ibid., 124.]
- ⁹¹ The full sentence reads: “We Marxists were never patrons of the double bookkeeping system of the Brandlerites, according to which the policies of the Stalinists are impeccable in the USSR but ruinous outside the boundaries of the USSR.” [Ibid., 101.] The Brandlerites were the German Right Opposition. For other comments on the “double bookkeeping: system of the Brandlerites,” see *ibid.*, 102. For earlier criticism of this contradiction in the position of the Brandlerites, see Trotsky, *Writings [1930-31]*, 226; Trotsky, *Writings [1932]*, 21; Trotsky, *Struggle*, 226-227.
- ⁹² Trotsky, *Writings [1933-34]*, 42.
- ⁹³ *Ibid.*, 102.
- ⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 101-102.
- ⁹⁵ Ian D. Thatcher, *Trotsky* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 190. See also Law, “Trotsky in Opposition,” 176.
- ⁹⁶ Trotsky, *Writings (1933-34)*, 120. See also Trotsky, *Writings (1932-33)*, 309.
- ⁹⁷ See Deutscher, *Prophet Outcast*, 260, 269-275; Van Heijenoort, *With Trotsky in Exile*, 49-78.
- ⁹⁸ Alec Nove, *An Economic History of the U.S.S.R.* (Middlesex, England: Penguin Books, 1976), 219; J. V. Stalin, *Problems of Leninism* (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1976), 602; Chris Ward, *Stalin’s Russia*, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 82-83.
- ⁹⁹ Nove, *Economic History*, 202, 224-227; Stalin, *Problems of Leninism*, 704-705, 716-720; Ward, *Stalin’s Russia*, 48-49.
- ¹⁰⁰ Nove, *Economic History*, 238. Kirov quoted in Robert C. Tucker, *Stalin in Power: The Revolution from Above, 1928-1941* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1990), 251.
- ¹⁰¹ Maurice Dobb, *Soviet Economic Development Since 1917* (New York: International Publishers, 1966), 279-281; Naum Jasny, *Soviet Industrialization, 1928-1952* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961), 142-146; Nove, *Economic History*, 228-231, 234; Ward, *Stalin’s Russia*, 49. Roberta Manning has argued that major problems began to develop in Soviet industry, as well as agriculture, in the first half of 1936. [Roberta T. Manning, “The Soviet Economic Crisis of 1936-40 and the Great Purges,” in J. Arch Getty and Roberta T. Manning, eds. *Stalinist Terror: New Perspectives* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 116-141.]
- ¹⁰² Jasny, *Soviet Industrialization*, 122-123, 139-140; Nove, *Economic History*, 238-239; Ward, *Stalin’s Russia*, 49.
- ¹⁰³ Nove, *Economic History*, 185, 247, 248; Leonard E. Hubbard, *The Economics of Soviet Agriculture* (London: Macmillan & Co., 1939), 201.
- ¹⁰⁴ Nicholas S. Timasheff, *The Great Retreat: The Growth and Decline of Communism in Russia* (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., 1946), 146; Nove, *Economic History*, 244; Robert H. McNeal, ed., *Resolutions and Decisions of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union*, vol. 3, *The Stalin Years: 1929-1953* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press,

1974), 153-155.

¹⁰⁵ Trotsky, *Writings [1933-34]*, 176, 276.

¹⁰⁶ Trotsky *Writings [1932-33]*, 80.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 85, 86.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 86.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 103.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 103.

¹¹¹ Leon Trotsky, *Writings of Leon Trotsky [1934-35]*, ed. George Breitman and Bev Scott (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1974), 157.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 158-160.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 159-160.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 160.

¹¹⁵ Trotsky, *Writings [1933-34]*, 130. Similarly, on November 12, 1935 Trotsky observed regarding that turn, "Under the lash of the Opposition the bureaucracy was forced to make important borrowings from our platform." [Leon Trotsky, *Writings of Leon Trotsky [1935-36]*, ed. Naomi Allen and George Breitman (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1977), 179.]

¹¹⁶ Trotsky, *Writings [1934-35]*, 130. Emphasis in the original.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 170. See also Trotsky, *Writings [1935-36]*, 308.

¹¹⁸ Braunthal, *History of the International*, 2: 416; Carr, *Twilight of the Comintern*, 189; Brian Jenkins, "Historiographical Essay: The Six Fevrier 1934 and the 'Survival' of the French Republic," *French History* 20, no. 3 (Sept. 2006): 333-351; Edward Mortimer, *The Rise of the French Communist Party, 1920-1947* (London: Faber and Faber, 1984), 209-211; Robert Soucy, *French Fascism: The Second Wave, 1933-1939* (New Haven, CN: Yale University Press, 1995), 30-33.

¹¹⁹ Braunthal, *History of the International*, 2: 420-425; Carr, *Twilight of the Comintern*, 189; Fernando Claudin, *The Communist Movement, From Comintern to Cominform*. Pt. 1, *The Crisis of the Communist International*, trans. Brian Pearce (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1975): 173-174; Degras, *Communist International*, 3: 309; Edward Mortimer, *The Rise of the French Communist Party, 1920-1947* (London: Faber and Faber, 1984), 211-214. The ECCI statement was specifically in response to events in Austria.

¹²⁰ Carr, *Twilight of the Comintern*, 192-193; Braunthal, *History of the International*, 2: 424-425.

¹²¹ Carr, *Twilight of the Comintern*, 194; Braunthal, *History of the International*, 2: 426.

¹²² Carr, *Twilight of the Comintern*, 195.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 197.

¹²⁴ Mortimer, *Rise of the French Communist Party*, 228-229.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 229.

¹²⁶ Leon Trotsky, *Leon Trotsky on France* (New York: Monad Press, 1979), 30, 36.

¹²⁷ Trotsky, *Writings [1933-34]*, 240-245.

¹²⁸ Some authors have claimed that during this period Trotsky reversed his earlier support of a policy of united front. [See Monty Johnstone, "Trotsky and the Popular Front," *Marxism Today*, October 1975, 308-316, and November 1975: 346-352; Guilana Procacci, "Trotsky's View of the Critical Years, 1929-1936," *Science and Society* 27, no. 1 (Winter 1963): 62-69.] However, even while desperately urging a united front upon the KPD and SPD in Germany, he had stressed the specific nature, goals and limits of such a front. It was to be an alliance of working class organizations, most immediately created to organize proletarian self-defense. Furthermore, even while united for the common struggle, all the participating organizations were to retain their political and organizational independence, including the freedom to criticize each other and to lead independent strikes and campaigns. Thus, Trotsky rejected electoral agreements and political compromises as well as the sharing of platforms, publications, banners, and placards between the Communist and Social Democratic Parties. [See Trotsky, *Struggle*, 138-139, 164, 179.] For discussions of the differences between Trotsky's united front and the Comintern's popular front strategies, see Deutscher, *Prophet Outcast*, 276-277; Ernest Mandel, *Trotsky as Alternative* (London: Verso, 1995), 121-124; Ernest Mandel, *Trotsky: A Study In the Dynamic of His Thought* (London: NLB, 1979), 95-98; Molyneaux, *Leon Trotsky's Theory of Revolution*, 136. For a more extensive Trotskyist discussion of the popular front strategy, see James Burnham, *The Peoples Front: The New Betrayal* (New York: Pioneer Press, 1937).

¹²⁹ Trotsky, *Leon Trotsky on France*, 41-42. See also, Trotsky, *Writings, [1934-35]*, 84.

¹³⁰ Trotsky, *Leon Trotsky on France*, 33, 36, 43.

¹³¹ Trotsky, *Writings [1934-35]*, 84. See also *ibid.*, 66, 70; Trotsky, *Leon Trotsky on France*, 58.

¹³² Trotsky, *Writings [1934-35]*, 65.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 66. In case that strategy failed, Trotsky explained, the Comintern leadership was prepared to allow the left wing of the Comintern to break with the united front, and attempt to take its workers with it.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, 70.

¹³⁵ Louis Fischer, *Russia's Road from Peace to War: Soviet Foreign Relations, 1917-1941* (New York: Harper & Row, 1969), 213; Jonathan Haslam, *The Soviet Union and the Threat from the East, 1933-41: Moscow, Tokyo and the Prelude to the Pacific War* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1992), 5, 8, 11, 22-23; Harriet L. Moore, *Soviet Far Eastern Policy, 1931-1945* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1945), 7-33.

¹³⁶ Kathryn Davies, *The Soviets at Geneva: The U.S.S.R. and the League of Nations, 1919-1933* (Westport, CT: Hyperion Press, Inc., 1977), 169-183. Jonathan Haslam, *Soviet Foreign Policy, 1930-1933: The Impact of the Depression* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1983), 93-96. According to Litvinov, the label of aggressor could be applied to any state that was the first to make or participate in a: "1) declaration of war, 2) armed occupation of territory, 3) bombardment or attack by armed forces, 4) military invasion without permission of the local government, and 5) naval blockades against another State." [Quoted in Davies, *Soviets at Geneva*, 183.]

¹³⁷ Fischer, *Russia's Road*, 213-220; Haslam, *The Soviet Union and the Threat from the East*, 30-34; Adam Ulam, *Expansion and Coexistence: Soviet Foreign Policy, 1917-73*, 2nd ed. (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1974), 212-215.

¹³⁸ Jonathan Haslam, *The Soviet Union and the Struggle for Collective Security in Europe, 1933-39* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1984), 6-20, 27-45. Ulam, *Expansion and Coexistence*, 194-197. The text of the protocol appears in Jane Degras, ed., *Soviet Documents on Foreign Policy*, vol. 3, *1933-1941* (London: Oxford University Press, 1953), 96-97.

¹³⁹ Trotsky, *Writings [1933-34]*, 294; Trotsky, *Writings [1934-35]*, 17.

¹⁴⁰ Trotsky, *Writings [1933-34]*, 293, 312, 314-316.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 312, 314-315. Although Trotsky thought entry into the League might become necessary, he considered it to be of "the greatest danger both to the USSR and to the world revolution." [*Ibid.*, 315. See also Trotsky, *Writings [1934-35]*, 19.]

¹⁴² Trotsky, *Writings [1933-34]*, 312-313.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 293-294, 314-315; Trotsky, *Writings [1934-35]*, 18-19.

¹⁴⁴ Trotsky, *Writings [1933-34]*, 17. In December 1932 Trotsky already criticized previous statements in which the Soviet leadership had supported and even praised American policies in order "to win the trust of American capital." Most recently, at the Geneva disarmament conference Litvinov had supported Herbert Hoover's proposal for "partial disarmament." Trotsky observed,

The Soviet press did not expose Hoover's demand but only those imperialists who did not want to go along with it. Hoover's proposal, just like the Kellogg Pact, has as its aim neither disarmament nor prevention of war, but the concentration of control over war and peace in the hands of the USA. [Trotsky, *Writings [1932-33]*, 21, 22.]

¹⁴⁵ Trotsky, *Writings [1934-35]*, 18-20.

¹⁴⁶ Trotsky, *Writings [1933-34]*, 294.

¹⁴⁷ Trotsky, *Writings: Supplement (1934-40)*, 565. See also Trotsky, *Writings [1933-34]*, 312.

¹⁴⁸ J. Arch Getty and Oleg V. Naumov, *The Road to Terror: Stalin and the Self-Destruction of the Bolsheviks, 1932-1939*, translations by Benjamin Sher (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), 126-127; *Kommunisticheskaia partiia Sovetskogo Soiuz, Kommunisticheskaia partiia sovetskogo soiuz v rezoliutsiakh i resheniakh s"ezdov, konferentsii i plenumov TsK*, 8th ed. (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo politicheskoi literatury, 1971), 5:98-100; McNeal, *Resolutions and Decisions*, 3: 124-126.

¹⁴⁹ See Getty and Naumov, *Road to Terror*, 125; Ward, *Stalin's Russia*, 109.

¹⁵⁰ J. Arch Getty, *Origins of the Great Purges: The Soviet Communist Party Reconsidered, 1933-1938* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 48-57; Getty and Naumov, *Road to Terror*, 127-128. See also T. H. Rigby, *Communist Party Membership in the U.S.S.R., 1917-1967* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968), 200-204.

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- ¹⁵¹ Roy A. Medvedev, *Let History Judge: The Origins and Consequences of Stalinism*, trans. Colleen Taylor, ed. David Joravsky and Georges Haupt (New York: Vintage Books, Random House, 1973), 147-148; Tucker, *Stalin in Power*, 243-247.
- ¹⁵² Tucker, *Stalin in Power*, 248, 250-251; Dmitri Volkogonov, *Stalin: Triumph and Tragedy*, ed. and trans. Harold Shukman (New York: Grove Weidenfeld, 1991), 197-198.
- ¹⁵³ Tucker, *Stalin in Power*, 248.
- ¹⁵⁴ Stalin, *Problems of Leninism*, 734.
- ¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 735-736.
- ¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 737.
- ¹⁵⁷ Trotsky, *Writings [1932-33]*, 167.
- ¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 112.
- ¹⁵⁹ Trotsky, *Writings [1933-34]*, 20.
- ¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 176. See also *ibid.*, 223.
- ¹⁶¹ Trotsky, *Writings [1932-33]*, 66.
- ¹⁶² Trotsky, *Writings [1933-34]*, 176. See also *ibid.*, 70. Thus, J. Arch Getty is clearly mistaken in asserting that “for Trotsky, the 1933 *chistka* was not a matter of ideology.” [Getty, *Origins of the Great Purges*, 232n60.]
- ¹⁶³ Trotsky, *Writings [1933-34]*, 176-177.
- ¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 69-70.
- ¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 223. See also *ibid.*, 20.
- ¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 222. See also *ibid.*, p. 176.
- ¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 224; “Nakanunie s”ezda,” *Biulleten’ oppozitsii*, 38-39 (February 1934), 1-2. See also Trotsky, *Writings [1933-34]*, 176. One anticipated decision that would have some significance, according to Trotsky, would be the adoption of new party statutes. Among other things, as passed the new statutes created “integral industrial-branch sections” in leading party bodies from the Central Committee down to the oblast committees. Each of these were to be responsible in a different branch of the economy for implementation of party directives and verification of decisions by state and party organs. [McNeal, *Resolutions and Decisions*, 3: 144-145.] Apparently in reference to this, Trotsky observed in his article of January 20, 1934, that the new party statutes made “a decisive turn towards the merging of the state and party . . . by a final and formal replacement of the party as well as the mass Soviets by the single bureaucratic apparatus.” Trotsky’s conclusion was that this was not the “withering” away of the state as described by Engels, “but, on the contrary, of its further bureaucratic concentration.” [Trotsky, *Writings [1933-34]*, 225.]
- ¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 22. For another passages containing this functional account of the origin of bureaucratic autonomy, see: Trotsky, *Writings: Supplement (1934-40)*, 523-524, or an alternative version in Trotsky, *Writing, [1934-35]*, 78.
- ¹⁶⁹ Trotsky, *Writings [1933-34]*, 224, 226. Trotsky had given this explanation for the origins of Stalin’s personal power repeatedly since 1930: Trotsky, *Writings [1930]*, 206; Trotsky, *Writings [1930-31]*, 217; Trotsky, *Writings [1932-33]*, 104.
- ¹⁷⁰ Relatively recent works that argue that Stalin was responsible for the assassination include Robert Conquest, *Stalin and the Kirov Murder* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989); and Amy Knight, *Who Killed Kirov?: The Kremlin’s Greatest Mystery* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1999). Works that challenge this view include Getty, *Origins of the Great Purges*, 207-210; J. Arch Getty, “The Politics of Repression Revisited,” in Getty & Manning, *Stalinist Terror*, 40-62; Alla Kirilina, *Neizvestnyi Kirov: Mify i real’nost’* (St. Petersburg: Izdatelskii dom “Neva,” 2001); Alla Kirilina, *Rikoshet, ili skol’ko chelovek bylo ubito vystrelom v Smoln’nom* (St. Petersburg: Ob-vo “Znanie” Rossii, 1993); Matt Lenoe, “Did Stalin Kill Kirov and Does It Matter?” *The Journal of Modern History* 74, no. 2 (Jun. 2002): 352-380; Robert W. Thurston, *Life and Terror in Stalin’s Russia, 1934-1941* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), 20-22.
- ¹⁷¹ For a summary of various estimates of arrests and executions for “counter-revolutionary crimes” in the late 1930s, see Ward, *Stalin’s Russia*, 132-134. For figures based on archival research since the collapse of the Soviet Union, see J. Arch Getty, Gabor T. Ritterspoon, and Viktor N. Zemskov, “Victims of the Soviet Penal System in the Pre-War Years: A First Approach on the Basis of Archival Evidence,” *The American Historical Review* 98, no. 4 (Oct. 1993): 1017-1049.
- ¹⁷² Trotsky, *Writings Supplement (1934-40)*, 543-547; Trotsky, *Writings [1934-35]*, 112-156.
- ¹⁷³ Conquest, *Stalin and the Kirov Murder*, 44-47; Tucker, *Stalin Power*, 297.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid, 55-58; Robert Conquest, *The Great Terror: Stalin's Purge of the Thirties*, revised ed. (New York: Collier Books, Macmillan Co. 1973), 89- 90; Knight, *Who Killed Kirov?*, 218-220; Lenoë, "Did Stalin Kill Kirov," 354; Trotsky, *Writings [1934-35]*, 132; Tucker, *Stalin in Power*, 299-300.

¹⁷⁵ Conquest, *The Great Terror*, 88, 91-92; Conquest, *Stalin and the Kirov Murder*, 54-55, 59-66; Knight, *Who Killed Kirov?*, 221-222; Lenoë, "Did Stalin Kill Kirov," 354; Tucker, *Stalin in Power*, 304; Ward, *Stalin's Russia*, 110.

¹⁷⁶ Quoted in Conquest, *Stalin and the Kirov Murder*, 69-70.

¹⁷⁷ Conquest, *The Great Terror*, 93; Conquest, *Stalin and the Kirov Murder*, 70; Knight, *Who Killed Kirov?*, 223; Tucker, *Stalin in Power*, 296.

¹⁷⁸ Ante Ciliga, *The Russian Enigma*, pt. 1, trans. Fernand G. Fernier and Anne Cliff; pt. 2, trans. Margaret and Hugo Dewar (London: Ink Links, 1979), 296; Getty and Naumov, *Road to Terror*, 147-149, 151-156, 181-184; Roy Medvedev, *Let History Judge*, 166-167; "Novye raspravly c 'trotskistami,'" *Biulleten' oppositsii* 43 (April 1935), 15; Victor Serge, *Memoirs of a Revolutionary, 1901-1941*, trans. and ed. Peter Sedgwick (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963, reprinted 1980), 313-314; Victor Serge, *Russia Twenty Years After*, trans. Max Shachtman, new ed. prepared by Susan Weissman (New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1996), 199, 203; Service, *Stalin*, 316; Tucker, *Stalin in Power*, 305, 314, 399.

¹⁷⁹ Trotsky, *Writings: Supplement (1934-40)*, 545.

¹⁸⁰ Regarding the regime, Trotsky specifically observed that the "personalization of the regime . . . where only the leaders count, can only work in favor of terrorist tendencies." [Ibid., 545-546.]

¹⁸¹ Law, "Trotsky in Opposition," 173.

¹⁸² Trotsky, *Writings [1934-35]*, 122.

¹⁸³ Ibid., 115-116. Thus, Trotsky was hardly surprised when in January 1935 the secret tribunal failed to find the Zinovievists guilty of actual complicity in the assassination, when the tribunal mentioned no "counterrevolutionary activities" after 1932, and when Zinoviev and Kamenev confessed to nothing more than "'political' responsibility" for the assassination. [Ibid., 147-150, 154-155.]

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., 117.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., 117-120. See also *ibid.*, 131, 142-143, 156.

¹⁸⁶ Zinoviev and Kamenev were now working in the administration of the Central Trade Union Council and in the publishing house of the Academy of Sciences respectively. [Medvedev, *Let History Judge*, 164; K. A. Zaleskii, *Imperiia Stalina: biograficheskii entsiklopedicheskii slovar'* (Veche: Moskva, 2000), 185, 208; Joseph L. Wiczynski, ed., *The Modern Encyclopedia of Russian and Soviet History* (Gulf Breeze, FL, 1980), s.v. "Kamenev, Lev Borisovich."]

¹⁸⁷ Trotsky, *Writings, [1934-35]*, 122-123, 147.

¹⁸⁸ Trotsky, *Writings: Supplement (1934-40)*, p. 547. Five years earlier, immediately after the execution of Iakov Bliumkin, Trotsky had predicted that the Stalinists would try to connect the Opposition with alleged "terrorist acts." [See Trotsky, *Writings [1930]*, 25; Trotsky, *Writings, [1934-35]*, 146.]

¹⁸⁹ Trotsky, *Writings [1934-35]*, 124.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid., 124-129. See also Leon Trotsky, *Trotsky's Diary in Exile, 1935*, trans. Elena Zarudnaya (New York: Atheneum, 1963), 26.

¹⁹¹ Trotsky, *Writings [1934-35]*, 133-134. This was further confirmed for Trotsky when it was announced that the Latvian consul responsible was, at the time of the verdict, on leave in Finland "not in the hated USSR, not in his native Latvia, but in 'neutral' Finland." Trotsky observed that this was a "consul with foresight who must have friends warning him!" He considered it suspicious that Stalin had not even attempted to bring the question of diplomatic criminal terrorists before the League of Nations. Furthermore, he suggested that it was odd that the consul, when safely out of the Soviet Union, had remained silent about his sworn enemies, the Soviets. [Ibid., 155-156.]

¹⁹² Ibid., 152-153. Throughout, Trotsky continued to use the old name for the Soviet secret police, the "GPU." For a brief organizational history of the GPU/OGPU through its abolition on July 10, 1934, see Robert Warth, "GPU," in *The Modern Encyclopedia of Russian and Soviet History*, ed. Joseph L. Wiczynski (Gulf Breeze, FL: Academic International Press, 1979), 13:87-90.

¹⁹³ Ibid., 153. For earlier hints that Trotsky believed Stalin was involved, see *ibid.*, 134, 144.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid., 134.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., 115.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid., 144, 51, 153.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid., 161. Trotsky did not give the source of his figures on the removal of “about 300,000 individuals, 15 to 20 percent” from the party, but he may have based these numbers on Ian Rudzutak’s announcement on Feb. 1, 1934 at the Seventeenth Party Congress that, of the 1,149,000 party members examined in the *chistka* by the end of 1933, 17 percent (or 195,000) had been expelled, and 6.3 percent (or approximately 73,400) had been transferred to candidate status. (Combined, these numbers total 23.3 percent, or approximately 268,400.) [Kommunisticheskaia partiia Sovetskogo Soiusa, *XVII s’ezd Vsesoiuznoi kommunisticheskoi partii (b): 26 ianvaria-10 fevralia 1934 g.: stenograficheskii otchet*, reprint edition (Nendeln, Liechtenstein: Krays-Thomson, 1975), 287.] Years later, it was reported that 18 percent of party members (or nearly 600,000 members) were expelled in this purge. [See Getty, *Origins*, 52, 53.]

¹⁹⁸ Trotsky’s revision of his understanding of Thermidor and Bonapartism in February 1933 is one of the most frequently discussed developments in the evolution of his theory of Soviet bureaucracy. For other accounts of this, see Paul Bellis, *Marxism and the U.S.S.R.: The Theory of Proletarian Dictatorship and the Marxist Analysis of Soviet Society* (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1979), 64-66; Jay Bergmann, “The Perils of Historical Analogy: Leon Trotsky on the French Revolution,” *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 48, no. 1 (1987): 87-98; Deutscher, *The Prophet Outcast*, 314-318; Hallas, *Trotsky’s Marxism*, 41-42; Baruch Knei-Paz, *The Social and Political Thought of Leon Trotsky* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), 396-400, 402-403; Law, “Trotsky and Thermidor,” 441-442, 445-449; Law, “Trotsky in Opposition,” 291-292, 295-298, 302; Law, “Trotsky and the Comparative History of Revolutions,” 7-8, 11-12; David Lockwood, “Rival Napoleons? Stalinism and Bonapartism,” *War & Society* 20, no. 2 (2002): 57-58; David W. Lovell, *Trotsky’s Analysis of Soviet Bureaucratization* (London: Croom Helm, 1985), 49; Robert H. McNeal, “Trotskyist Interpretations of Stalinism,” in Robert C. Tucker, ed., *Stalinism: Essays in Historical Interpretation* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1977), 34; Robert H. McNeal, “Trotsky’s Interpretation of Stalin,” in T. H. Rigby, ed., *Stalin*, Great Lives Observed, (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1966), 148; Robert H. McNeal “Trotsky’s Interpretation of Stalin,” in *Canadian Slavonic Papers* V, ed. G. S. N. Luckyj (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1961), 92; Robert H. McNeal, “Trotsky and Stalinism”, in Gori, *Pensiero*, 2:382; Robert D. Warth, “Leon Trotsky and the Comparative History of Revolutions,” in Clarence B. Davis, ed., *The Consortium on Revolutionary Europe 1750-1850, Proceedings 1983* (Athens, Georgia: The Consortium on Revolutionary Europe, 1985), 202-204; Robert Wistrich, *Trotsky: Fate of a Revolutionary* (New York: Stein and Day, 1979), 166-168.

¹⁹⁹ Trotsky, *Writings [1934-35]*, 168, 174.

²⁰⁰ Ibid., 169.

²⁰¹ Ibid., 174.

²⁰² Ibid.

²⁰³ Ibid., 181.

²⁰⁴ Thus, after more than a year during which he avoided using either term, Trotsky again spoke of the “Bonapartist principle of the infallibility of a lifetime leader” in his December 28 article on the Kirov assassination; on January 23 he referred to the “Thermidorean-Bonapartist bureaucracy”; and on January 30 he employed *Bonapartist* or *Bonapartism* four more times in characterizations of the Soviet system. [Trotsky, *Writings [1934-35]*, 120, 155, 162, 163, 164, 165; Van Heijenoort, *With Trotsky in Exile*, 75.]

²⁰⁵ Others who have argued that Trotsky’s change regarding Bonapartism came first include: Knei-Paz, *Social and Political Thought*, 396-397; Bergman, *Perils*, 91. For those who suggest Trotsky first changed his position on Thermidor, see Law, “Trotsky in Opposition,” 302; Lovell, *Trotsky’s Analysis*, 49.

²⁰⁶ Trotsky, *Writings [1934-35]*, 184.

²⁰⁷ Ibid., 107-108.

²⁰⁸ Ibid., 169.

²⁰⁹ Ibid., 175.

²¹⁰ Ibid., 209.

²¹¹ A. Aulard, *The French Revolution: A Political History, 1789-1804*, vol. 4, *The Bourgeois Republic and the Consulate, 1797-1804* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1910), 261-269. An earlier incident of this kind involved an attempt on life of the First Consul on Christmas Eve, 1800. Although royalists were found to be responsible, Bonaparte also used the attempt to justify a wave of repression against opponents his left. [Ibid., 184-188.] For Trotsky’s citation of Aulard’s history, see Leon Trotsky, *The Stalin School of Falsification* (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1971), 145-146.

²¹² Van Heijenoort, *With Trotsky in Exile*, 75. However, Trotsky never publicly drew this parallel—perhaps because he wanted to emphasize that when he used *Bonapartism* without qualification he had “in mind not historical analogies but sociological definition,” and because he considered it “banal pedantry” to try to fit stages of the Russian Revolution precisely “to analogous events in France.” [Trotsky, *Writings [1934-35]*, 175, 208.]

²¹³ *Ibid.*, 108. Trotsky may have taken this idea from Engels. As Engels wrote in 1897-1888 regarding Bismarkian Bonapartism in *The Role of Force in History*, “As things stood in 1871 in Germany, a man like Bismark was indeed thrown back on a policy of tacking and veering among the various classes.” [Quoted in Draper, *Karl Marx’s Theory of Revolution*, 1, bk. 2:425.]

²¹⁴ Trotsky, *Writings [1934-35]*, 163

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 86. See also *ibid.*, 72, 86, 108, 124; Trotsky, *Writings [1933-34]*, 234-235, 328; Trotsky, *Writings: Supplement (1934-40)*, 531.

²¹⁶ Trotsky, *Writings [1934-35]*, 158, 166.

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 180. Trotsky used the term *bureaucratic centrism* just a few more times. [See Trotsky, *Leon Trotsky on France*, 121; Trotsky, *Writings [1935-36]*, 145.] Perhaps on these occasions he used it out of habit. Or perhaps he used it because *Bonapartism* did not clearly indicate where Stalinism stood on a left-right continuum, and at this point Trotsky was only beginning to argue that Stalinism was fully opportunist. However, on October 3, 1937 Trotsky admonished “some comrades” for continuing to use the term *bureaucratic centrism*—a characterization he judged to be “totally out of date.” He explained, “On the international arena, Stalinism is no longer centrism, but the crudest form of opportunism and social patriotism. See Spain!” [Leon Trotsky, *Writings of Leon Trotsky [1936-37]*, ed. Naomi Allen and George Breitman (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1978), 478.]

²¹⁸ Trotsky, *Writings [1934-35]*, 166.

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 173.

²²⁰ *Ibid.*, 174.

²²¹ In the Soviet Union, Trotsky noted that this economic upsurge began in 1923. [*Ibid.*, 174-175.]

²²² *Ibid.*, 174-178.

²²³ *Ibid.*, 170-171, 180.

²²⁴ *Ibid.*, 184.

²²⁵ Hal Draper, *Karl Marx’s Theory of Revolution*, 1, bk. 2:505.

²²⁶ Quoted in Krygier, 24. See also Albrow, 19.

²²⁷ *Rossiiia: entsiklopedicheskii slovar’*, ed. I. E. Andreevskii et al., (St. Petersburg: Lenizdat, 1991; Reprint. Originally published: St. Petersburg: I. A. Efron; Leipsig: F.A. Brokgauz, 1898), s.v. “*biurokratiia*.”

²²⁸ Marx, *Surveys*, 243.

²²⁹ Marx, *Civil War in France*, 169, 170. This draft was first published in English and Russian in 1934. Editor’s note, Marx, *Civil War in France*, 105. For other references to bureaucratic castes in Marx and Engels, see also Draper, *Karl Marx’s Theory of Revolution*, 1, bk. 2:415, 416, 504, 508.

²³⁰ Draper, *Karl Marx’s Theory of Revolution*, 1, bk. 2., 415. For a useful discussion of the use of the term *caste* by Marx and Engels, see *ibid.*, 1, bk. 2, 505-510.

²³¹ See, for example, Gregory Zinoviev, “The Social Roots of Opportunism,” in John Riddell, ed., *Lenin’s Struggle for a Revolutionary International: Documents: 1907-1916, The Preparatory Years* (New York: Monad, 1984), 480-486. Hal Draper notes that in his 1921 work *Historical Materialism*, Nikolai Bukharin “adopted caste as his generic term for a juridically established legal-political category, hence inclusive of estate.” [Draper, *Karl Marx’s Theory of Revolution*, 1, bk. 2:508.] Bukharin explained that in contrast to a social class—a “category of persons united by a common role in the production process”—a social caste was “a group of persons united by their common position in the juristic or legal order of society.” Thus, he characterized landlords as a class, but the nobility as a caste. [Nikolai Bukharin, *Historical Materialism: A System of Sociology* (Ann Arbor, MI; Ann Arbor Paperbacks for the Study of Communism and Marxism, University of Michigan Press, 278-279.)]

²³² Obviously, Trotsky was not equating the bureaucratic caste in the Soviet Union with the social castes of India. In September 1939 he observed that the “make-shift character of the term” was “clear to everybody, since it would enter nobody’s mind to identify the Moscow oligarchy with the Hindu caste of Brahmins.” [Leon Trotsky, *In Defense of Marxism (Against the Petty-Bourgeois Opposition)* (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1970), 6.]

²³³ Available translations of the 1927 *Platform of the Opposition* incorrectly contain three passages with the term *caste* used in reference to the Soviet bureaucracy. [Leon Trotsky, *The Challenge of the Left Opposition (1926-27)* ed. Naomi Allen and George Saunders (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1980), 356; *The Platform of the Joint*

Opposition (1927) (London: New Park Publications, 1973), 67.] In fact, in all three passages the term used in the *Platform* was *sloi* [layer], not *kast*. [Iu. Fel'shtinskii, comp., *Kommunisticheskaia oppozitsiia v SSSR, 1923-1927: iz arkhiva L'va Trotskogo*, 4 vols. (Benson, VT : Chalidze Publications, 1988), 4:151.] However, the *Platform* used *kast* in one passage referring to state bureaucracies in bourgeois countries. [Trotsky, *Challenge (1926-27)*, 340; Fel'shtinskii, *Kommunisticheskaia oppozitsiia*, 4: 139.] One of the earliest characterizations of the Soviet bureaucracy as a caste seems to have appeared in a statement by the Democratic Centralists on June 27, 1927. [Fel'shtinskii, *Kommunisticheskaia oppozitsiia*, 3:138.]

²³⁴ Trotsky, *Writings [1929]*, 77, 118; *Biulleten' oppozitsii* 1-2 (July 1929), 4; Léon Trotsky, *La Révolution Défigurée* (Rieder: Paris, 1929), 10.

²³⁵ In the issues of *Biulleten' oppozitsii* published in the five and half years after July 1929 and before January 1935, the term *caste* used in reference to the Soviet bureaucracy appears in Trotsky's writings only three times. [Search of the website Iskra Research—*Biulleten' Oppozitsii*. <http://web.mit.edu/fjk/Public/BO>, December 18, 2008. See *Biulleten' oppozitsii* 32 (December 1932), 28 (Trotsky, *Writings [1932]*, 227); *Biulleten' oppozitsii* 35 (July 1933), 18 (incorrectly translated in Trotsky, *Writings [1932-33]*, 276); *Biulleten' oppozitsii* 36-37 (October 1933), 19 (Trotsky, *Writings [1932-33]*, 304).

²³⁶ In the issues of *Biulleten' oppozitsii* published in 1935, the term *caste*, used in reference to the Soviet bureaucracy, appears in Trotsky's writings five times. [Search of the website Iskra Research—*Biulleten' Oppozitsii* <http://web.mit.edu/fjk/Public/BO>, December 18, 2008. See *Biulleten' oppozitsii* 41 (January 1935):5 (Trotsky, *Writings [1934-35]*, 119); *Biulleten' oppozitsii* 42 (February 1935), 6 (Trotsky, *Writings [1934-35]*, 143); *Biulleten' oppozitsii* 42 (February 1935), 12 (Trotsky, *Writings [1934-35]*, 156); *Biulleten' oppozitsii* 43 (April 1935), 4-5 (Trotsky, *Writings [1934-35]*, 170); *Biulleten' oppozitsii* 46 (December 1935), 12 (Trotsky, *Writings [1935-36]*, 162).

Trotsky's secretary Joseph Hansen noted the change in Trotsky's use of the term *caste* in this period, observing that in his February 1, 1935 article Trotsky "brought fresh insight into the nature of the bureaucratic *caste*." Hansen explained, "In its greed its reactionary conservatism, its opportunism, and its ruthless insistence on retaining power, [the bureaucracy] has the characteristics of a decayed ruling class." [Joseph Hansen, "Introduction," *Towards a History of the Fourth International*, pt. 5, Max Shachtman, *Ten Years: History and Principles of the Left Opposition*, Education for Socialists (New York: National Education Department, Socialist Workers Party, April 1974), 4.]

²³⁷ Trotsky, *Writings [1934-35]*, 143; *Biulleten' oppozitsii* 42 (February 1935), 6.

²³⁸ Trotsky, *Writings [1934-35]*, 156; *Biulleten' oppozitsii* 42, (February 1935), 12. Note correction of translation.

²³⁹ Trotsky, *Writings [1934-35]*, 170; *Biulleten' oppozitsii* 43 (April 1935), 4-5.

²⁴⁰ On the labor aristocracy, see for example, V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, 21:223, 243; *ibid.* 23: 112-113; Gregory Zinoviev, "The Social Roots of Opportunism," 486-496. For discussions of Lenin's uses of labor aristocracy, see Steve Clark, "The Development of the Marxist Position on the Aristocracy of Labor," *New International* 1, no. 2 (Winter 1983-84): 59-94; Eric Hobsbawm, "Lenin and the 'Aristocracy of Labor,'" *Monthly Review* 21, no. 11 (April 1970): 47-56; Martin Nicolaus, "The Theory of the Labor Aristocracy," *Monthly Review* 21, no. 11 (April 1970): 91-101. For an account of discussions between Fritz Sternberg and Trotsky on the "labor aristocracy" in imperialist countries, see Fritz Sternberg, "Conversations with Trotsky," *Survey* 47 (April 1963): 150-152.

²⁴¹ Trotsky, *Writings [1930-31]*, 288-289.

²⁴² Christian Rakovsky, *Selected Writings on Opposition in the USSR, 1923-30*, ed. Gus Fagan (London: Allison & Busby, 1980), 126-127, 130.

²⁴³ Trotsky, *Writings [1934-35]*, 174.

²⁴⁴ Trotsky, *Writings [1934-35]*, 181. Regarding the Legion of Honor and Napoleon's new aristocracy, see for example, Aulard, *The French Revolution*, 4:245-246; Susan P. Connor, *The Age of Napoleon* (Westport, CN: Greenwood Press, 2004), 49-53.

²⁴⁵ Trotsky, *Writings [1934-35]*, 181. Lewis H. Siegelbaum, *Stakhanovism and the Politics of Productivity in the USSR, 1935-1941* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 50-51.

²⁴⁶ On shock work, see Donald Filtzer, *Soviet Workers and Stalinist Industrialization: The Formation of Modern Soviet Production Relations, 1928-1941* (London: Pluto Press, 1986), 97-100; Siegelbaum, *Stakhanovism*, 40-53.

²⁴⁷ Trotsky, *Writings [1934-35]*, 181.

²⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 168.

²⁴⁹ Ibid., 172. For the episodes of violence following the overthrow of Robespierre noted by authors with whom Trotsky was familiar, see Peter Kropotkin, *The Great French Revolution*, trans. N. F. Dryhurst (New York: Schocken Books, 1971), 569-571; A. Aulard, *The French Revolution: A Political History, 1789-1804*, vol. 3, *The Revolutionary Government, 1793-1797* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1910), 207, 228-229, 244-248; Aulard, *The French Revolution*, 4: 44-46. [For evidence that Trotsky was familiar with these writings on the French Revolution see Trotsky, *Stalin School of Falsification*, 142-143, 145-146.]

²⁵⁰ Trotsky, *Writings [1934-35]*, 174.

²⁵¹ Ibid., 173.

²⁵² Deutscher, *Prophet Outcast*, 289-292; Van Heijenoort, *With Trotsky in Exile*, 77-79.

²⁵³ Dobb, *Soviet Economic Development*, 278-281, 286-289; Nove, *Economic History*, 225, 228-231, 244-251.

²⁵⁴ Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Stalin's Peasants: Resistance and Survival in the Russian Village after Collectivization* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 117-118, 121-122; Zhores A. Medvedev, *Soviet Agriculture* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1987), 102-105, Nove, *Economic History*, 240-242, 248; *Resheniia partii i pravitel'stva po khoziaistvennym voprosam* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Politicheskoi Literatury, 1967), 2: 519-530.

²⁵⁵ Dobb, *Soviet Economic Development*, 468-476; Nove, *Economic History*, 232-234; Siegelbaum, *Stakhanovism*, 3-6, 63-98, 184-190, 301-302.

²⁵⁶ In a note to sections of the ICL at the end of December 1935 Trotsky admitted that comrades from various countries had "complained of a lack of general articles concerning the USSR," and promised to "take energetic steps to remedy this in the next period." Trotsky, *Writings [1935-36]*, 222.

²⁵⁷ Trotsky, *Writings: Supplement (1934-40)*, 627-628.

²⁵⁸ Trotsky, *Diary*, 20-21.

²⁵⁹ Ibid., 90

²⁶⁰ Ibid., 20.

²⁶¹ Trotsky, *Writings: Supplement (1934-40)*, 627.

²⁶² Trotsky, *Writings [1935-36]*, 222.

²⁶³ N. Markin, "The Stakhanovist Movement," *The New International* 3, no. 1 (February 1936): 11. For additional brief remarks on the Stakhanovist movement by Trotsky, see Trotsky, *Writings [1935-36]*, 233-234.

²⁶⁴ Braunthal, *History of the International*, 2: 430; Carr, *Twilight of the Comintern*, 150; Ulam, *Expansion and Coexistence*, 223-224.

²⁶⁵ Degras, *Soviet Documents*, 3: 132.

²⁶⁶ Communist posters quoted in Claudin, *Communist Movement*, 1:180; Mortimer, *Rise of the French Communist Party*, 234. Thorez quoted in Carr, *Twilight of the Comintern*, 204. See also Braunthal, *History of the International*, 2:432.

²⁶⁷ Braunthal, *History of the International*, 2:431.

²⁶⁸ Ibid., 433; Mortimer, *Rise of the French Communist Party*, 234.

²⁶⁹ The PCF and SFIO both made substantial gains, and the Radical-Socialists minimized what otherwise would have been a significant electoral loss. [Braunthal, *History of the International*, 2:433-434; Mortimer, *Rise of the French Communist Party*, 231-232.]

²⁷⁰ Braunthal, *History of the International*, 2:435; Carr, *Twilight of the Comintern*, 207. Mortimer, *Rise of the French Communist Party*, 236-237.

²⁷¹ Mortimer, *Rise of the French Communist Party*, 238.

²⁷² Ibid., 238-240.

²⁷³ Braunthal, *History of the International*, 2:435. Unexpectedly, the SFIO emerged as the leading parliamentary party for the first time in its history, increasing its number of delegates from 97 to 146 in spite of a decline in its popular vote. Second came the Radicals who retained 116 of its previous 159 seats, after losing approximately 350,000 votes to the parties on its left and right. The big winner in the elections, however, was the third placed PCF, which increased its parliamentary delegation from 10 to 72 and nearly doubled its previous popular vote. [Ibid., 435; Claudin, *Communist Movement*, 1:200.]

²⁷⁴ Duclos quoted in Claudin, *Communist Movement*, 1:202. See also Braunthal, *History of the International*, 2:436.

²⁷⁵ Quoted in Claudin, *Communist Movement*, 1:203.

²⁷⁶ Quoted in *ibid.*, 203.

²⁷⁷ Daniel R. Brower, *The New Jacobins: The French Communist Party and the Popular Front* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1968), 152-154. The strike brought significant economic gains for French workers. The

employers' representatives were forced to concede wage increases of 7-15%, a forty-hour work week without loss in pay, a two week paid vacation, and the recognition of trade unionism and trade councils as the legitimate representatives of factory workers. [Braunthal, *History of the International*, 2:437.]

²⁷⁸ Georgi Dimitroff, *The United Front: The Struggle Against Fascism and War* (San Francisco: Proletarian Publishers, 1975), 9-93. An abbreviated version of the report appeared in *The Communist International*, Series 2, 12, no. 17-18 (Sept. 30, 1935): 1188-1247.

²⁷⁹ Dimitroff, *The United Front*, 30-32, 33, 37, 40, 70, 87-91.

²⁸⁰ M. Ercoli [pseudonym for Togliotti], "The Communist International and the Fight for Peace," *Communist International*, Series 2, 12, no. 17-18: 1248-1258. The quotation appears on p. 1257.

²⁸¹ Trotsky, *Diary*, 120.

²⁸² Trotsky, *Writings [1934-35]*, 309. See also *ibid.*, 298.

²⁸³ Trotsky, *Writings [1934-35]*, 291.

²⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 305-306, 310, 312. See also Trotsky, *Diary*, 141-142. Besides signifying a renunciation of the struggle for power, in Trotsky's estimation the new line of the PCF actually undermined the defense of the USSR. Again, he insisted that an anti-Hitler alliance of the French proletariat with its own bourgeoisie would only reinforce Nazi racial propaganda and strengthen Hitler. Furthermore, even if a coalition of the Soviet Union and the western imperialist powers managed to defeat Hitler, a policy of class collaboration would still endanger the Soviet Union, for when the imperialist allies turned on the Soviet Union after defeating Hitler, it would be impossible to separate abruptly the western workers, deluded by social patriotism, from their bosses. [*Ibid.* 294; Trotsky, *Writings [1935-36]*, 60, 64.]

²⁸⁶ Trotsky, *Writings [1934-35]*, 298.

²⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 309. See also *ibid.*, 299.

²⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 309. In his May 25 letter Trotsky also argued that the theory of socialism in one country, The theory of socialism in one country "severing the fate of the USSR from the fate of the world proletariat," had played a role in this process by creating a national base for the Soviet bureaucracy" that had allowed it to concentrate all the power in its own hands." [*Ibid.*, 299.]

²⁸⁹ On May 25, 1935, he recalled that some had objected to that prognosis on the grounds that the capitulation of Social Democracy been a conscious betrayal, whereas the Comintern's capitulation before Hitler "was the inevitable consequence of a false policy." It was now clear that such psychological evaluations were superficial:

The capitulation [to Hitler] was the expression of the internal degeneration, a consequence of accumulated blunders and crimes. This degeneration implied in its turn the capitulation to imperialist war and a prelude to the capitulation before the imperialist bourgeoisie, which is preparing for war. That is why the "August 4" of the Third International was already lodged in the capitulation to Hitler. [*Ibid.*, 299-300.]

²⁹⁰ Trotsky, *Leon Trotsky on France*, 145.

²⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 129-130, 142, 143.

²⁹² Trotsky, *Writings [1935-36]*, 90. In contrast, Monte Johnstone claims that Trotsky rejected the view that the Comintern was 'merely the instrument of Stalin's foreign policy' in private, while publicly asserting that the Popular Front was entirely dictated by Moscow. [Johnstone, *Trotsky and the Popular Front*, 311.]

²⁹³ Trotsky, *Leon Trotsky on France*, 141, 142.

²⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 157-159.

²⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 162.

²⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 166-167.

²⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 164.

²⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 178.

²⁹⁹ Besides the Comintern's Popular Front strategy, in this passage Trotsky also denounced "GPU" (that is, NKVD) collaboration with imperialism against the Fourth International. [*Ibid.*, 180-181.]

³⁰⁰ Trotsky, *Writings [1935-36]*, 126.

³⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 87.

³⁰² *Ibid.*, 86-89

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- ³⁰³ Ibid., 93. Nevertheless, Trotsky was unwilling to predict whether or not the two Internationals would actually merge. In his view there were no programmatic obstacles since the French Social Democrats had promised to defend the Soviet Union, and the Communists had promised to defend the French republic. However, there remained the “question of the traditions of the two closed bureaucratic apparatuses and of the mutual interests of a considerable number of people who are bound up with the apparatuses.” Only time would tell “whether the united pressure of fascism and Moscow diplomacy” would overcome this obstacle. [Ibid., 93.]
- ³⁰⁴ Ibid., 270-271. See “Stalin Howard Interview,” *The Communist International* 13, no. 4 (April, 1936): 487.
- ³⁰⁵ Trotsky, *Writings [1935-36]*, 272. See “Stalin Howard Interview,” 488.
- ³⁰⁶ Trotsky, *Writings [1935-36]*, 274.
- ³⁰⁷ Trotsky, *Writings [1935-36]*, 275-277. See “Stalin Howard Interview,” 489.
- ³⁰⁸ Knight, *Who Killed Kirov?*, 243-244; Serge, *Memoirs*, 314; Serge, *Russia*, 199-200; Tucker, *Stalin in Power*, 305.
- ³⁰⁹ Ciliga, *Russian Enigma*, 297-298; Conquest, *The Great Terror*, 133; Getty and Naumov, *Road to Terror*, 160-161; Tucker, *Stalin in Power*, 314.
- ³¹⁰ For a recent account of the Enukidze case based on archival documents, see Getty and Naumov, *Road to Terror*, 160-177. Older accounts include Ciliga, *Russian Enigma*, 71; Conquest, *Great Terror*, 133; Serge, *Russia*, 202. A year after Enukidze’s expulsion, Stalin proposed that he be allowed to rejoin the party. [Getty and Naumov, *Road to Terror*, 178, 234-235.]
- ³¹¹ Getty, *Origins of the Great Purges*, 54, 58-61; Service, *Stalin*, 216-217; Ward, *Stalin’s Russia*, 109.
- ³¹² These are J. Arch Getty’s conclusions regarding the *proverka* in Smolensk. [Getty, *Origins of the Great Purges*, 81. See also Getty and Naumov, *Road to Terror*, 202.]
- ³¹³ Getty, *Origins of the Great Purges*, 66, 68-69; Getty and Naumov, *Road to Terror*, 198-201, 205; Tucker, *Stalin in Power*, 311-313; Ward, *Stalin’s Russia*, 109. See also Trotsky’s conclusions, based on press reports in Trotsky, *Writings [1935-36]*, 235-236, 237-239, 281-282.
- ³¹⁴ Getty, *Origins of the Great Purges*, 86-87, 89.
- ³¹⁵ Getty and Naumov, *Road to Terror*, 197-202; Getty, *Origins of the Great Purges*, 87-91; Tucker, *Stalin in Power*, 311-313; Ward, *Stalin’s Russia*, 109.
- ³¹⁶ Quoted in Tucker, *Stalin in Power*, 313. For comments by Stalin and Ezhov at the June 1936 CC plenum on the excessive expulsions of “passives,” and the insufficient expulsion of “enemies”—especially former “Trotskyists” and “Zinovievists,” see Getty and Naumov, *Road to Terror*, 232-233, 236.
- ³¹⁷ Edward Hallett Carr, *The Bolshevik Revolution, 1917-1923*, vol. 1 (Baltimore: Penguin Books, Macmillan & Co., 1950), 152; Stephen F. Cohen, *Bukharin and the Bolshevik Revolution: A Political Biography, 1888-1938* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), 356-357; “Stalin-Howard Interview,” 492-493; Boris I. Nicolaevsky, *Power and the Soviet Elite: “The Letter of an Old Bolshevik” and Other Essays by Boris I. Nicolaevsky*, ed. Janet Zagoria (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1965), 26-27; Tucker, *Stalin in Power*, 305, 353-354.
- ³¹⁸ Trotsky, *Diary*, 20-21. See also *ibid.*, 16, 90 and Trotsky, *Writings [1934-35]*, 313 where Trotsky vaguely implies the repression was in anticipation of the recent pact with Laval.
- ³¹⁹ Trotsky, *Diary*, 66.
- ³²⁰ See Trotsky, *Writings [1934-35]*, 151, 219; Trotsky, *Diary*, 131.
- ³²¹ Quoted in Trotsky, *Writings [1934-35]*, 235.
- ³²² Quoted in *ibid.*, 235-236.
- ³²³ *Ibid.*, 236. See also Trotsky, *Diary* 52-53, 60-62.
- ³²⁴ Trotsky, *Diary*, 52-53.
- ³²⁵ *Ibid.*, 144.
- ³²⁶ For Serge’s life story, see Serge, *Memoirs*; Susan Weissmann, *Victor Serge: The Course Is Set on Hope* (London: Verso, 2001).
- ³²⁷ Trotsky summarized some of these in an article of January 15, 1936:

Eighteen years after the October Revolution, . . . revolutionists who are unwaveringly devoted to the cause of communism but who do not recognize the dogma of the infallibility of the Stalinist clique are clapped into jail for years; incarcerated in concentration camps; compelled to do forced labor; subjected, if they attempt to resist, to physical torture; shot in the event of real or fictitious

attempts to escape; or deliberately driven to suicide. When hundreds of prisoners, in protest against the intolerable harassment, resort to the terrible means of a hunger strike, they are subjected to forced feeding, only in order to be placed later under even worse conditions. When individual revolutionists, finding no other means of protest, cut their veins, the GPU agents, i.e., the agents of Stalin, “save” the suicides only in order then to demonstrate with redoubled bestiality that there is no real salvation for them. [Trotsky, *Writings [1935-36]*, 245. See also *ibid.*, 117, 324-325.]

³²⁸ *Ibid.*, 119. See also *ibid.*, 263. Similarly, on May 22 in “Political Persecution in the USSR” Trotsky argued, “It is perfectly safe to state that nine tenths of the acts of political repression are serving not the defense of the Soviet state, but the defense of the autocratic government and privileges of the bureaucratic section within the state.” [Trotsky, *Writings [1935-36]*, 324. See also *ibid.*, 123.]

³²⁹ *Ibid.*, 236, 239.

³³⁰ *Ibid.*, 236, 237-239. For repetitions of the 10,000 figure, see *ibid.*, 255; Trotsky, *Writings: Supplement (1934-40)*, 635, 638, 642, 648.

³³¹ Trotsky, *Writings [1935-36]*, 281-282. See also *ibid.*, 314.

³³² *Ibid.*, 240, 241. Victor Serge disagreed with Trotsky’s assessment of the arrested “Bolshevik-Leninists.” arguing that the classifications used by the bureaucracy had little resemblance to reality:

Viewed from close quarters, the vast majority of these so-called Trotskyists are absolutely worthless: informers, alcoholics, part philistine. We certainly have genuine reserves as big or bigger elsewhere in the party and even outside the party. [Victor Serge & Leon Trotsky, *The Serge-Trotsky Papers*, ed. D. J. Cotterill (London: Pluto Press, 1994), 61.]

For Trotsky’s response to Serge, see Trotsky, *Writings: Supplement (1934-40)*, 670-671.

³³³ Trotsky, *Writings [1935-36]*, 281, 282.

³³⁴ *Ibid.*, 239.

³³⁵ *Ibid.*, 285-286. Shortly afterwards, Trotsky noted an even more explicit and ominous threat in an announcement published in the June 5 issue of *Pravda* that the Central Committee had accepted a draft of a new constitution. The paper demanded “increased vigilance” against “class forces hostile to socialism,” warning:

Too weak for a direct attack, the remains of the counterrevolutionary groups, the White Guardists of all colors, *especially the Trotskyists and Zinovievists*, have not given up their base, *spying, sabotage, and terrorist work*. With a firm hand we will continue in the future to strike down and *destroy the enemies of the people, the Trotskyist vermin and furies*, however skillfully they may disguise themselves. [Quoted by Trotsky in *ibid.*, 342.]

While noting the “hallucinatory character” of the statement, Trotsky observed that “this does not detract from the terrible reality of the threat of destruction.” Once again, he explained that the Soviet bureaucracy, “in the struggle for the maintenance of its power and privileges” was “destroying a group which is trying to express the protest and discontents of the toiling masses.” [Ibid., 342, 343. See also *ibid.*, 358.]

³³⁶ *Ibid.*, 302.

³³⁷ *Ibid.*, 304-305. See also *ibid.*, 310.

³³⁸ Trotsky, *Writings [1934-35]*, 181.

³³⁹ Trotsky, *Writings [1935-36]*, 307-308.

³⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 310.

³⁴¹ *Ibid.*

³⁴² *Ibid.*, 300.

³⁴³ *Ibid.*, 357.

³⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 310-311.

³⁴⁵ Trotsky, *Writings [1933-34]*, 118.

³⁴⁶ Ibid., 325. For earlier Marxist statements on political revolution, see for example, Karl Marx, *Early Writings*, trans. Rodney Livingstone and Gregor Benton (New York: Vintage Books, Random House, 1974), 232-234; Shlomo Avineri, *The Social and Political thought of Karl Marx* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968), 185-201; Karl Kautsky, *The Social Revolution*, trans. A. M. and May Wood Simons (Chicago: Charles H. Kerr & Co., 1907), 8-9, 22, 26, 34, 35. For a discussion of Trotsky's call in 1936 for a new revolution in the USSR, see also Chester Hofla, "When 'Political Revolution' Replaced 'Political Reform,'" 28.

³⁴⁷ Trotsky, *Writings [1935-36]*, 358-359.

³⁴⁸ Michael Löwy, "From the 'Logic' of Hegel to the Finland Station in Petrograd," in *On Changing the World: Essays in Political Philosophy, from Karl Marx to Walter Benjamin*, by Michael Löwy (New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1993), 81-84. See also Michael Löwy, *The Politics of Combined and Uneven Development: The Theory of Permanent Revolution* (London: Verso, 1981), 60. The most extensive discussion of Lenin's reading of Hegel's *Science of Logic* appears in Kevin Anderson, *Lenin, Hegel, and Western Marxism: A Critical Study* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1995), 28-97.

³⁴⁹ It is unclear if Trotsky, in part, was consciously retracing Lenin's steps. Philip Pomper has explained that Trotsky's main purpose in taking notes on Hegel was in preparation for writing an appendix devoted to Max Eastman's views on dialectics for his projected biography of Lenin. [Philip Pomper, "Notes on Dialectics and Evolutionism," in *Trotsky's Notebooks, 1933-1935*, by Leon Trotsky, trans. Philip Pomper (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 41-45.]

³⁵⁰ Trotsky, *Trotsky's Notebooks*, 99-101.

9.0 *THE REVOLUTION BETRAYED*¹

In the summer of 1935, Trotsky's American publisher Simon and Schuster suggested to Trotsky, living in exile in Norway, that he write a new preface for a projected one-volume edition of his *History of the Russian Revolution*. Under pressure of financial considerations and at the urging of his American translator Max Eastman, Trotsky reluctantly agreed. His initial plan was to spend two to three months at most on the project, using it to summarize his recent writings on USSR. However, in early 1936 he found himself consumed by the project. As he recalled in a letter to his former secretary Sara Weber, "I became the prisoner of the subject. I could not produce a superficial work on the USSR. I became more and more engrossed in the theme—with frenzy and desperation."² By the time Trotsky completed the work in early August 1936, it had grown into a book-length manuscript entitled *Chto takoe S.S.S.R. i kuda on idet?* [*What Is the USSR and Where Is It Going?*]. At that point Simon and Schuster rejected it, but Doubleday, Doran and Co. picked it up for publication in the United States. At the suggestion of Trotsky's French publisher, Trotsky adopted *The Revolution Betrayed* as the final title, demoting the original name to a subtitle.³

In terms of its influence as an analysis of Soviet history and politics, the significance of *The Revolution Betrayed* can hardly be exaggerated. In 1963 Trotsky's biographer Isaac Deutscher eulogized the book as a "profound political treatise and a tract for the time," as "one of the seminal books of the century," and as a "classic of Marxist literature."⁴ In 1977 historian

Robert McNeal characterized it as “a pioneer work in describing the emergence of a new elite in Stalin’s Russia.”⁵ The same year David Katz depicted it as “a seminal study which influenced a whole generation of Sovietologists.”⁶ In 1984 Marxist scholar Perry Anderson asserted that it “remains a topical masterpiece to this day.”⁷ Three years later, on the fiftieth anniversary of its publication, political economist Richard Day argued that the work continued “to be an indispensable starting point for any attempt to address the question posed by its subtitle: *What Is the Soviet Union and Where Is It Going?*”⁸ Furthermore, even since the collapse of the Soviet Union and into the twenty-first century it remains a popular title in libraries, and it continues to be cited frequently in academic literature.⁹

However, as far as the development of Trotsky’s thinking on the problem of Soviet bureaucracy is concerned, the significance of *The Revolution Betrayed* is more ambiguous. In this respect as well, writers as diverse as John Plamenatz, C. L. R. James, Baruch Knei-Paz, John Molyneaux, Robert Wistrich, David Lovell, and Ian Thatcher have emphasized its importance, describing it as Trotsky’s “best,” “most complete,” “most comprehensive,” “most sustained,” and “fullest” analysis of the Soviet Union under Stalinism.¹⁰ On the other hand, scholars such as Siegfried Bahne, David Law, and Ian Thatcher have noted that much of the content of *The Revolution Betrayed* was not new, and that for the most part that work merely summarized his observations from recent years.¹¹

In fact, both sets of evaluations are correct. It is true that much of *The Revolution Betrayed* restated for a general audience views Trotsky had expressed in the international Trotskyist press since 1933. These included a description of the bureaucracy as a caste, a functional account of the origins of the problem of bureaucracy, a recognition of the relevance of the concepts of Thermidor and Bonapartism to the Soviet experience, a description of the

bureaucracy's privileges as parasitic, an application of the term *labor aristocracy* to broader privileged strata in the USSR, a characterization of Soviet international policy as counterrevolutionary, a revised explanation of why the USSR could still be considered a workers' state, the conclusion that a new political revolution was necessary to remove the bureaucracy from power, and Trotsky's recognition that a new revolutionary party was required to organize and lead such a revolution.

However, *The Revolution Betrayed* was also a highly important work in the development of Trotsky's thinking. Most significantly, it was Trotsky's first systematic and comprehensive presentation of his views on Soviet bureaucracy since the late 1920s, codifying his recent insights that portrayed the bureaucracy as a highly autonomous social formation. Beyond that, *The Revolution Betrayed* contained a number of new ideas and emphases. More clearly than ever before Trotsky defined and stressed the socio-economic context of Soviet bureaucratization. In turn, this provided Trotsky with a framework for redefining the functional origins of bureaucratic power, for evaluating Soviet policy in all areas, and for starkly identifying the alternative potential futures confronting the USSR. Other elements introduced at this time included a recognition of the corrupting effects of the ban on party factions adopted under Lenin, a greater attempt to sketch the fundamental features of the bureaucratic caste, a characterization of the Soviet regime as totalitarian, and the outlining of a program for the political revolution that included support for the freedom of competing Soviet parties. With these additions, *The Revolution Betrayed* brought to a conclusion the revolution in Trotsky's theory of Soviet bureaucracy that had begun in 1933.

9.1 THE CONTEXT AND CONCEPTION OF THE PROBLEM

Perhaps the most important innovation in *The Revolution Betrayed* was Trotsky's clear definition and emphasis upon the socio-economic context of Soviet bureaucratization. The Soviet Union, Trotsky explained, was a backward society in transition from capitalism to socialism. Of course, he had commented frequently in the past upon both the backwardness of the USSR and upon the transitional character of Soviet society and/or of the epoch through which it was passing.¹² However, he never focused so sharply upon this context or placed it so squarely in the center of his analysis as he did now. It seems that Trotsky arrived at this new approach through reflection upon the broad dynamics of the Russian Revolution and a consideration of recent descriptions of Soviet society by the Stalinist leadership.

It is likely that Trotsky's enhanced emphasis upon Soviet backwardness was inspired by his original plan to write a new preface to *The History of the Russian Revolution*. The central theme of that work was how a socialist revolution could first occur in a backward country.¹³ Trotsky recapitulated that explanation in the first chapter of *The Revolution Betrayed*, describing the triumph of the Russian proletariat in terms of the laws of "uneven and combined development." He explained that the uneven development had created a Russian bourgeoisie too weak to resolve "the democratic tasks of backward Russia." Consequently, in accordance with the law of combined development, "Socialization of the means of production had become a necessary condition for bringing the country out of barbarism." However, unevenness ultimately had exacted its revenge: "Entering upon the socialist revolution as 'the weakest link in the capitalist chain,'" the Soviet Union was still attempting, nearly two decades later, "to solve those problems of technique and productivity which were long ago solved by capitalism in the advanced countries."¹⁴

This was not to say that the Soviet Union had failed to make substantial gains since 1917. To the contrary, Trotsky noted the monumental achievements of the first two Five-Year Plans. The centralized, planned economy created by the revolution had made it possible for Soviet economic growth dramatically to outstrip that of Germany, Britain, France, the United States, and Japan. However, Trotsky insisted that a balanced view required comparing the level of productivity of the Soviet Union with that of the West. Doing so revealed that the average output of Soviet workers lagged far behind that of their Western counterparts. Trotsky concluded that the preparatory stage of borrowing technology and culture from the West was “far from finished,” and would “occupy a whole historic period.”¹⁵

If the gap between Soviet and Western productivity was great, the contrast between the level of development in the USSR and that required for a communist society was even greater. In this regard, Trotsky reaffirmed the traditional Marxist view that the “material premise of communism should be so high a development of the economic powers of man that productive labor, having ceased to be a burden, will not require any goad, and the distribution of life’s goods, existing in continual abundance, will not demand . . . any control except that of education, habit and social opinion.”¹⁶ It was true that Marx had discussed a lower stage of communism—called “socialism” by Lenin—that would precede the elimination of all material inequality and want. This was the stage that the Soviet leadership now claimed that the USSR had attained, as evidenced by “the dominance of the state trusts in industry, the collective farms in agriculture, the state and co-operative enterprises in commerce.” However, Trotsky insisted that for Marx even the lowest stage of communism was “a society which stands higher in its economic development than the most advanced capitalism.” Thus, it was more accurate to characterize the

Soviet Union, as Bolsheviks traditionally had described it, as a “*preparatory* regime transitional from capitalism to socialism.”¹⁷

Later in *The Revolution Betrayed*, Trotsky spelled out the implications of this observation in his explanation of the origins of the extreme autonomy of the bureaucracy. As in all his recent writings, in this work Trotsky depicted the problem of Soviet bureaucracy in terms of the extraordinary degree of independence from Soviet society as a whole and from all of its social classes that had been attained by the bureaucracy. By way of comparison, Trotsky again recalled how Lenin had anticipated in *The State and Revolution* that the proletarian revolution would resolve the age-old problem of bureaucracy by abolishing “the necessity of a bureaucratic apparatus raised above society—and above all, a police and standing army.” Following Marx and Engels, Lenin had asserted that the need for a bureaucracy arises when social antagonisms need to be “softened” and “regulated,” in the interests of the privileged. Upon seizing power, the proletariat would “shatter the old bureaucratic machine and create its own apparatus out of employees and workers.” To prevent these workers from turning into bureaucrats, the proletarian state would institute the variety of practical measures outlined by Marx and Engels: election and recall of all officials; reduction of the salaries of officials to the level of workmen’s wages; and the participation of all in control and supervision so that “all may for a time become ‘bureaucrats’, and therefore nobody can become a bureaucrat.” Thus, from its inception the dictatorship of the proletariat was to cease being a “state” in the old sense—“a special apparatus, . . . for holding in subjugation the majority of the people.” Rather, power was to be exercised by “workers’ organizations such as soviets”; and the bureaucratic apparatus of the state was to begin “to die away on the first day of the proletarian dictatorship.”¹⁸

For Trotsky, the contrast between this vision and the actual state headed by Stalin could not be more striking. Not only had the Soviet state not even “begun to ‘die away’” after nearly two decades of Soviet power, it had “grown into a hitherto unheard of apparatus of compulsion.” Instead of dissolving in a system of mass participation, the bureaucracy had “turned into an uncontrolled force dominating the masses.”¹⁹ In Trotsky’s estimation, the degree of political alienation even exceeded that in exceptional state forms such as Bonapartism, as described by Marx and Engels. Trotsky noted that never before had “a bureaucracy achieved such a degree of independence from the dominating class,” even in fascist Italy or Germany.²⁰ “In this sense,” Trotsky admitted, it was actually “something more than a bureaucracy.” It was “in the full sense of the word the sole privileged and commanding stratum in the Soviet society.”²¹

9.2 CAUSES OF THE PROBLEM

In recent years Trotsky had offered two types of explanations for the extreme divergence between the vision of Marx, Engels, and Lenin, and the realities of Soviet power. On several occasions he had put forward a functional account of the origins of the bureaucracy and of the continuing growth of its power and autonomy. At the same time he had listed various factors that had contributed to the weakening of the Soviet working class in its struggle with the bureaucracy for political hegemony. In *The Revolution Betrayed* Trotsky expanded upon both themes, redefining his functional explanation in light of the backward and transitional character of Soviet society, and also noting the negative impact of political norms introduced in the first years of the revolution.

In at least five different articles during the previous four years Trotsky had explained the origins of the problem of Soviet bureaucracy in functional terms, arguing that bureaucratic power had arisen out of the struggle of “each against all” over basic necessities and articles of consumption. Although, according to Trotsky, this struggle had taken various forms, including conflicts between different groups of consumers, between the city and the village, etc., it was in essence a class struggle. Representing social interests, the bureaucracy had been called upon to harmonize and control these conflicts. However, the bureaucracy had then utilized this function to enhance its own power and privileges. In doing so it had further exacerbated social tensions, creating even greater need for regulatory intervention.²² Along the same lines in the *Revolution Betrayed* Trotsky now argued, “The social demand for a bureaucracy arises in all those situations where sharp antagonisms require to be ‘softened,’ ‘adjudicated,’ ‘regulated,’ (always in the interests of the privileged, the possessors, and always to the disadvantage of the bureaucracy itself.”²³ Now, however, he amplified upon this explanation, explicitly relating it to the functions of a proletarian dictatorship in a backward, transitional society that had been suggested by Marx, Engels, and Lenin.

Trotsky explained that the basic tasks of any proletarian dictatorship included its “fundamental mission” to construct a society “without classes and without material contradictions” and the “‘incidental’ task” of preparing for its own dissolution. Both goals had been implied by Frederick Engels in his 1878 work, *Anti-Dühring*: “‘When, together with class domination and the struggle for individual existence created by the present anarchy in production, those conflicts and excesses which result from this struggle disappear, from that time on there will be nothing to suppress, and there will be no need for a special instrument of suppression, the state.’”²⁴ The problem, Trotsky observed, was that even the “socialization of the

means of production” does not automatically eliminate “the struggle for individual existence.” In this regard he noted that even a socialist state in America, basing itself upon the most advanced capitalism, “could not immediately provide everyone with as much as he needs,” and would initially “be compelled to spur everyone to produce as much as possible” by resorting to the inequities of the capitalist system of wage labor. That was why Marx had recognized in his *Critique of the Gotha Program* that “bourgeois law” would be “inevitable in the first phase of the communist society, in that form in which it issues after long labor pains from capitalist society.”²⁵ That was also why Lenin, in *The State and Revolution*, had argued that “under Communism not only will bourgeois law survive for a certain time, but also even a bourgeois state without the bourgeoisie!”²⁶

From these premises Trotsky reasoned that any proletarian dictatorship would have a dual character from its inception, “socialistic” in its defense of social ownership of production, and “bourgeois” in its distribution of goods “with a capitalistic measure of value and all the consequences ensuing therefrom.”²⁷ Furthermore, experience had shown that this dual function inevitably affects the structure of the state. Since “the majority cannot concern itself with the privileges of the minority,” in order to defend bourgeois law, the workers’ state must create “a ‘bourgeois’ type of instrument—that is, the same old gendarme, although in a new uniform.” In fact, Trotsky concluded, when a post-revolutionary state grows increasingly despotic, and when the “bureaucracy rises above the new society” instead of withering, this is because of the “iron necessity to give birth to and support a privileged minority as long as it is impossible to guarantee genuine equality.”²⁸

If the “tendencies towards bureaucratism” would be present anywhere after a proletarian revolution, Trotsky argued that they were especially strong in a backward country such as

Russia. Again, he found an anticipation of this insight in the classics. In *The German Ideology* Marx had asserted, ““A development of the productive forces is the absolutely necessary practical premise [of Communism], because without it want is generalized, and with want the struggle for necessities begins again, and that means that all the old crap must revive.””²⁹ According to Trotsky, Marx failed to develop this idea because he did not foresee the possibility of a socialist revolution in a backward county. However, Trotsky also observed that even Lenin was not able to draw all the necessary conclusions regarding a backward and isolated proletarian state because he and all the Bolsheviks had assumed the Russian Revolution would soon receive material assistance from socialist Europe.³⁰ It was only in light of experience that Trotsky was able to elaborate the implications of Marx’s warning for a backward, transitional society:

The basis of bureaucratic rule is the poverty of society in objects of consumption, with the resulting struggle of each against all. When there is enough goods in a store, the purchasers can come whenever they want to. When there is little goods, the purchasers are compelled to stand in line. When the lines are very long, it is necessary to appoint a policeman to keep order. Such is the starting point of the power of the Soviet bureaucracy. It “knows” who is to get something and who has to wait.³¹

In this important passage Trotsky offered a “distributive” variant of his previous functional account of the origins of Soviet bureaucratization.³²

Acknowledging that this explanation seemed to suggest that rising material and cultural levels should have undermined both privilege and bureaucracy within the USSR, Trotsky suggested two reasons for why the reverse had occurred. First, although the early Soviet regime was far less bureaucratic and far more egalitarian than that of 1936, this had been an “equality of general poverty.” Only later economic growth made it possible to provide significant privileges for a minority. Second, there had been “the parallel political factor in the person of the

bureaucracy itself.” That is, the bureaucracy consistently had sought to enhance its own privileges:

In its very essence it is the planter and protector of inequality. It arose in the beginning as the bourgeois organ of a workers’ state. In establishing and defending the advantages of a minority, it of course draws off the cream for its own use. Nobody who has wealth to distribute ever omits himself. Thus out of a social necessity there has developed an organ which has far outgrown its socially necessary function, and become an independent factor and therewith the source of great danger for the whole social organism.³³

Beyond that, the bureaucracy actively had promoted inequality by fostering the development of a labor and peasant aristocracy to strengthen its own rule.³⁴

In conjunction with this functional explanation, Trotsky once more offered a political and historical account of the Thermidorean process. Reviewing the history of debates over Soviet economic policy, Trotsky noted the apparent contradiction between the political success of the Stalinists and the defeat of “the more penetrating group,” the Left Opposition. Trotsky’s explanation for this discrepancy was that a “political struggle is in its essence a struggle of interests and forces, not of arguments.” Underlying the political contest at the Soviet summit had been shifts “in the relations between classes,” and in the “psychology of the recently revolutionary masses.”³⁵

Again, Trotsky observed that every revolution in history had been followed “by a reaction, or even a counterrevolution,” due to the effect of prolonged revolutionary upheaval upon the consciousness of the insurgent class:

A revolution is a mighty devourer of human energy, both individual and collective. The nerves give way. Consciousness is shaken and characters are worn out. Events unfold too swiftly for the flow of fresh forces to replace the loss. Hunger, unemployment, the death of the revolutionary cadres, the removal of the masses from administration, all this led [in the French

Revolution] to such a physical and moral impoverishment of the Parisian suburbs that they required three decades before they were ready for a new insurrection.³⁶

According to Trotsky, the effects of combined and uneven development had enhanced this phenomenon in the Soviet Union. He explained that the Soviet proletariat, though “still backward in many respects,” accomplished in a few months “an unprecedented leap from a semifeudal monarchy to a socialist dictatorship.” Thus, when the revolution ran into obstacles, the backwardness reasserted itself in an “inevitable” reaction within the proletariat.³⁷

Trotsky explained that the reaction began as early as the civil war. In those years the isolated revolution experienced intervention after intervention, together with the disappointment of prolonged destitution instead of the anticipated reign of prosperity. Leading representatives of the proletariat either died in the war or were lifted up into the bureaucracy. The period of extreme tension, and of hopes and illusions, gave way to “weariness, decline and sheer disappointment in the results of the revolution.” A “flood of pusillanimity and careerism” replaced the ebbing mood of “plebeian pride.” Upon this wave, Trotsky asserted, “the new commanding caste rose to its place.”³⁸

The reaction continued after the war with the introduction of military methods into the local Soviets by demobilized Red Army commanders. Subsequently, the sickness and death of Lenin removed a powerful opponent of the bureaucracy from the scene. Meanwhile, the introduction of NEP infused new confidence into the urban and rural petty bourgeoisie, permitting the bureaucracy to perceive itself as a “court of arbitration” between the classes. Also, through the 1920s the world revolution experienced a whole series of defeats—most significantly in Germany in 1923 and in China in 1926-1927—for which the bureaucracy was largely to blame. As a result, the masses experienced another “cold wave of disappointment” upon which

the bureaucracy was able to capitalize in its struggle against the Opposition. Eventually, Trotsky argued—again emphasizing the autonomy of the bureaucracy in relation to other classes—the bureaucracy was able to utilize its petty bourgeois ally, together with more backward strata of the proletariat, to defeat the Opposition.³⁹

Meanwhile, according to Trotsky, the reaction was facilitated by the “degeneration” of the Bolshevik Party. Returning to a theme he had raised first in 1923, Trotsky spoke of the closeness, and “and at times actual merging” of the party and the state apparatus which had transferred state methods of administration into the party. Another contributory factor, which Trotsky had touched upon briefly in an article in August 1934, had been the banning of oppositional parties.⁴⁰ Initially, Trotsky now asserted, the Bolsheviks had hoped to preserve “freedom of political struggle within the framework of the Soviets.” However, during the civil war alternative parties were outlawed, one after another, in “an episodic act of self defense.” Trotsky now admitted that this was “obviously in conflict with the spirit of Soviet democracy.” As a consequence, “underground oppositional currents” in the country began to exert pressure upon the only legal party.⁴¹ Then in 1921, at the time of the Kronstadt revolt, the Tenth Party Congress responded in turn by banning opposition factions within the party. Trotsky described this measure too as “an exceptional measure to be abandoned at the first serious improvement in the situation,” and observed that initially the Central Committee applied this rule very cautiously. However, for the first time he publicly conceded that this measure also “proved to be perfectly suited to the taste of the bureaucracy.”⁴² Finally, in 1924 the “Leninist levy” threw the doors of the party wide open to masses of new recruits, effectively freeing the bureaucracy from the control of the proletarian vanguard. At that point the bureaucracy was able to replace democratic

centralism with “bureaucratic centralism,” and to reshuffle personnel “from top to bottom” based on the “Bolshevik” criterion of obedience.⁴³

Near the end of *The Revolution Betrayed* Trotsky returned to a discussion of the mediating role of the bureaucracy, employing it to explain both the extreme hypertrophy of bureaucratic autonomy in recent years, and the growth of Stalin’s individual power. Again, Trotsky observed, “Caesarism, or its bourgeois form, Bonapartism, enters the scene in the 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, he argued, was “a variety of the same system” in a workers’ state, based upon the “antagonism between an organized and armed soviet aristocracy and the unarmed toiling masses.”⁴⁴ Meanwhile, a similar dynamic had led to the concentration of political power in Stalin’s hands. Just as the various consumer groups and classes of Soviet society found it necessary to grant the bureaucracy regulatory powers, the bureaucracy itself, torn by internal contradictions, had discovered a need for its own mediator. Thus, Trotsky explained,

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 him 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 total 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’etat—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.⁴⁵

9.3 CHARACTERISTICS: SIZE, PRIVILEGES, CONSCIOUSNESS

In *The Revolution Betrayed* Trotsky devoted special attention to internal characteristics of the bureaucracy that he only had touched upon in the past. These included the size of the bureaucracy and the extent of its privileges. Additionally, Trotsky remarked again upon aspects of the consciousness of the caste as a whole, as well as of its various layers.

Although for many years Trotsky had denounced the enormous size and privileges of the Soviet bureaucracy, he never attempted to estimate either with any precision. Now, he attempted to fill this gap with an analysis of “the social physiognomy of the ruling stratum.”⁴⁶ In doing so, he began with the caveat that it was impossible to find accurate numbers to describe the Soviet bureaucracy. In part, this was because of the difficulties in delineating the “administrative apparatus” in a country where the state is almost the sole employer. In part, it was because Soviet statisticians etc., as well as “foreign friends” of the USSR were maintaining “an especially concentrated silence” on the question.⁴⁷

As far as the size of the bureaucracy was concerned, Trotsky’s previous estimates were quite vague. As we have seen, in the 1927 *The Platform of the Opposition* described the “layer of ‘administrators’—in the party, the trade unions, the industrial agencies, the cooperatives and the state apparatus” as numbering “in the tens of thousands.”⁴⁸ By the early 1930s Trotsky’s estimates for the entire bureaucracy were much higher, but no less hazy. Thus, he spoke of the “millions of people” in the Stalinist apparatus, of the “few million” functionaries, of the “many millions” in the “ruling stratum,” of the “multimillioned bureaucracy,” and of the “millions of bureaucrats” who supported the Stalinist tendency.⁴⁹

Now Trotsky attempted a more precise estimate, beginning with the summit of the bureaucracy. He noted that, as of November 1, 1933, there were 55,000 directing personnel in

the central state apparatus. However, that figure had grown considerably in recent years, and it excluded some departments, the co-operative centers, various “social organizations,” the governmental apparatuses of the republics, as well as the “general staffs” of the trade unions, party, etc. Including these in his calculations, Trotsky concluded, “We will hardly be exaggerating if we number the commanding upper circles of the Soviet Union and the individual republics at 400,000 people”— or maybe as large as half a million. These were not the “functionaries,” but the “dignitaries” or “leaders” of the bureaucracy—“a ruling caste in the proper sense of the word,” perhaps approximately the same group described in the 1927 *Platform* as “a layer of administrators.”⁵⁰

Below the top level was a “heavy administrative pyramid with a broad and many faceted foundation.” This group included the executive committees of provincial town and district soviets, and parallel organs in the party, the trade unions, the Communist Youth, local organs of transport, commanding staffs of the army and fleet, agents of the secret police, and the presidents of the town and village soviets. It also included the administrative and technical personnel of industrial enterprises, the presidents and party organizers of 250,000 collective farms, and the elders of trade departments and cooperatives. By Trotsky’s calculation, “This whole stratum which does not engage directly in productive labor, but administers, orders, commands, pardons and punishes . . . must be numbered at five or six million.”⁵¹ This was the bureaucracy in its entirety. Related to the bureaucracy was another social stratum Trotsky recently had begun to focus upon—the “labor and collectivized peasant aristocracy.” Together, Trotsky guessed, this stratum totaled perhaps another five to six million.⁵² Finally, to arrive at an estimate of the portion of the Soviet population truly represented by the top leadership, Trotsky added the figures for the bureaucracy and the aristocracy and then, treating this group as analogous to a

social class, also included estimates for their families. From this, Trotsky concluded that twenty to twenty-five million people, or twelve to fifteen percent of the Soviet population, constituted “the authentic social basis of the autocratic ruling circles.”⁵³

Regarding income, Trotsky observed, “There is no possibility of estimating what share of the national income is appropriated by the bureaucracy.” Again, in part this was because information on the incomes of the bureaucracy was carefully hidden. Also, the problem of estimating was complicated by the fact that an accurate figure would have to include the “immense gifts” exchanged among the bureaucracy, as well as the significant embezzlement of state funds at all levels. Beyond that, it was necessary to include the bureaucracy’s “almost monopolistic enjoyment of the . . . conquests of civilization,” such as theaters, rest palaces, hospitals, resorts, etc. However, as rough approximation Trotsky guessed that, including salaries, semi-legal incomes, and privileges, perhaps 15-20 percent of the Soviet population enjoyed “not much less of the wealth than is enjoyed by the remaining 80 to 85 percent.”⁵⁴

Related to the material position of the bureaucracy, according to Trotsky, was its consciousness—that is, its attitudes or its psychological makeup. This was a theme Trotsky had commented upon frequently in the past. Here, he only touched upon it briefly. In the context of Soviet poverty, Trotsky suggested, the opportunities for self-enrichment available to the bureaucracy had created a common set of attitudes. These attitudes included acquisitiveness, caste solidarity, fear of the masses, and subservience to Stalin:

Where a separate room and sufficient food and neat clothing are accessible only to a small minority, millions of bureaucrats, great and small, try to use the power primarily in order to guarantee their own well-being. Hence the enormous egoism of this stratum, its firm inner solidarity, its fear of the discontent of the masses, its rabid insistence upon strangling all criticism, and finally its hypocritically religious kowtowing to “the

Leader”, who embodies and defends the power and privileges of these new lords.⁵⁵

At another point in *The Revolution Betrayed* Trotsky spoke of the “moral decay of the uncontrolled apparatus.” Citing articles by Oppositionists Rakovskii and Sosnovskii, he observed that the bureaucracy had acquired distinctly non-proletarian tastes for luxury and for young women with bourgeois backgrounds. Also, Soviet authorities had become used to treating the masses with a “lordly ungraciousness.”⁵⁶

Additionally, Trotsky noted variations in the consciousness of diverse layers and divisions of the bureaucracy. For example, he asserted that the contrast between life-styles of bureaucrats at the bottom of the pyramid and those at the top, analogous to differences between “the petty bourgeoisie of the backwoods” and “the big bourgeoisie of the capitals” in capitalist countries, had produced corresponding differences in “habits, interests and circles of ideas.”⁵⁷ Furthermore, he noted the similarities between the outlooks of various bureaucratic occupational groupings and their counterparts in the West. Thus, Soviet trade union leaders had “the same scornfully patronizing relation to the masses, the same conscienceless astuteness in second-rate maneuvers, the same conservatism, the same narrowness of horizon, “ etc. as Western trade-union bureaucrats. Similarly, Soviet diplomats had taken from diplomats in the West not only their tailcoats, but their modes of thought.”⁵⁸

9.4 CHARACTERISTICS: POLICIES

Considering an even broader range of issues than he had in previous years, in *The Revolution Betrayed* Trotsky again attempted to demonstrate the divergence of contemporary

Soviet behavior from ideal socialist policy and/or previous Bolshevik practice. In each area Trotsky's discussion was framed by his discussion of the socio-economic context. Thus, in policy after policy Trotsky conceded that part of the deviation had been necessitated by the backwardness and transitional character of Soviet society. However, in each case he also attributed a major portion of the reaction to efforts by the bureaucratic caste to maintain and enhance its own power and privileges.

9.4.1 Economic Policy

In his discussion of economic policy, Trotsky devoted special attention to the issue of inequality. In light of the low level of social productivity and the transitional character of the society, he explained that at least some degree of inequality was unavoidable. In 1935 the Stalinists had been forced to retreat from planned distribution to trade, just as the Bolsheviks had been compelled to retreat from "socialist distribution" to the market of NEP. Inevitably, Trotsky admitted, this "raising of the productivity of labor on the basis of commodity circulation," had entailed "a growth of inequality."⁵⁹ However, reviewing the extremes of inequality promoted by the bureaucracy, Trotsky concluded that much of it was unnecessary from an economic standpoint, and was introduced only to feed the privileges and reinforce the power of the bureaucracy.

The most profound economic differentiation noted by Trotsky was between the "privileged minority," including the bureaucracy and the labor and peasant aristocracies, and "the majority getting along on want."⁶⁰ Workers and collective farmers lived in crowded housing or huts, while bureaucrats complained of the lack of domestic servants. The average Soviet citizen competed for vacant seats on filthy passenger trains, while the bureaucracy reserved for

itself parlor cars, special trains and steamers, and the best automobiles and airplanes. Even while recognizing “the historic necessity of inequality for a prolonged period,” Trotsky observed, “questions remain open about its admissible limits and its social expediency in each concrete case.” He predicted that the question of whether or not the existing structure was socialist would be decided “by the attitude toward it of the masses themselves,” and not by “the sophisms of the bureaucracy.”⁶¹

At the same time, Trotsky noted the growing income disparities within the proletariat. At one extreme were the unskilled workers who lived in a “regime of destitution,” earning 1200 to 1500 rubles per year or less, and living in rundown, common dwellings. At the other extreme were the Stakhanovites who received incomes and privileges twenty to thirty times the earnings of lower categories of workers. “In scope of inequality in the payment of labor,” Trotsky observed, “the Soviet Union has not only caught up to, but far surpassed the capitalist countries!”⁶²

At least part of the inequality associated with Stakhanovism, according to Trotsky, was necessary to spur production. Against the claims of the Stalinist leadership, Trotsky asserted that there was nothing “socialist” about Stakhanovism; rather, it was just a variant of the hated system of piecework payment described by Marx as “the most suitable to capitalistic methods of production.” Nevertheless, in light of the low degree of Soviet economic development, the adoption of a piecework system was completely appropriate; it was a question of “abandoning crude illusions.”⁶³

However, the *degree* of inequality associated with Stakhanovism, which had provoked furious resistance among workers, was another matter entirely. Trotsky argued that the “flagrant differences in wages, doubled by arbitrary privileges,” were not designed to promote

productivity. Rather, they were employed by the bureaucracy to introduce “sharp antagonisms” into the proletariat in accordance with the maxim “Divide and rule!” Furthermore, many of the more extreme examples of privilege represented attempts by local bureaucrats “to escape from their isolation” by allowing an upper stratum of workers to share in their benefits.⁶⁴

Trotsky noted even more pronounced disparities within agriculture. On the surface it seemed that “collective tendencies” had triumphed over “individualistic” or bourgeois tendencies in the civil war over collectivization. In fact, he observed, the struggle continued within the collectives themselves. Bourgeois tendencies were evident in the recent state transfer land to the *kolkhozy* for their “eternal” use; in the restoration of small private plots, viewed by the peasant as “no less significant than the collectives”; and in the increasingly common, though illegal, practice of renting land. According to Trotsky these were all contributing to a growing differentiation within the village. Other factors included differences in climate, soil, crop produced, and proximity to industrial centers. The end result had been the growth of “a species of bourgeois collectives, or ‘millionaire collectives.’”⁶⁵

Again, Trotsky expressed mixed feelings about the disparities. On one hand, some degree of differentiation was necessary in light of the backwardness of Soviet agriculture: “To attack the kulak collectives and members of collectives would be to open up a new social conflict with the more powerful ‘progressive’ layers of the peasantry, who are only now, after a painful interruption, beginning to feel an exceptionally greedy thirst for a ‘happy life.’”⁶⁶ At the same time, however, Trotsky perceived that a significant part of the differentiation was designed simply to buttress the rule of the bureaucracy. In agriculture as in industry, the bureaucracy sought the support of strong “‘Stakhanovists of the fields,’ of millionaire collectives.” Trotsky concluded:

Thus in agriculture immeasurably more than in industry, the low level of production comes into continual conflict with the socialist and even co-operative (collective farm) forms of property. The bureaucracy, which in the last analysis grew out of this contradiction, deepens it in turn.⁶⁷

9.4.2 Social Policy

Trotsky employed a similar approach in his discussion of “family, youth and culture,” themes he had last focused upon in 1923 and 1924.⁶⁸ In the early years of the revolution, Trotsky recalled, the Bolsheviks had attempted heroically to liberate women through a variety of measures. In particular, the traditional housekeeping and child-rearing functions of the family were to be socialized through the introduction of maternity houses, crèches, kindergartens, schools, social dining rooms, social laundries, etc. Again, the Bolsheviks had run up against the constraints of poverty. Now, nearly twenty years after the revolution the number and quality of institutions providing these services remained shockingly inadequate. At the same time, widespread poverty, together with the growth of a privileged layer, had fostered the growth of prostitution.⁶⁹

However, in Trotsky’s view the reaction in policy regarding women and the family had gone much further than necessity required. Lacking the resources to provide safe and sanitary abortions, the state recently had reversed traditional Bolshevik policy and had banned them altogether. Then, making a virtue of necessity, a leading representative of the bureaucracy had justified the new policy by extolling the “joys of motherhood.” Beyond that, the bureaucracy had begun to glorify the family as the “sacred nucleus of triumphant socialism,” and in the process had initiated a campaign against frequent and easy divorces. Trotsky argued that these extreme forms of reaction were dictated not by necessity, but by bureaucratic interest: “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 40,000,000 points of support for authority and power.”⁷⁰

As far as Soviet national policy was concerned, Trotsky recognized that contradictions inevitably arose between the cultural demands of the non-Russian nationalities and the requirements of Soviet economic construction during the transition period:

The cultural demands of the nations aroused by the revolution require the widest possible autonomy. At the same time, industry can successfully develop only by subjecting all parts of the Union to a general centralized plan. But economy and culture are not separated by impermeable partitions. The tendencies of cultural autonomy and economic centralism come naturally from time to time into conflict.⁷¹

Still, he believed it was possible to reconcile these contradictions with the “actual participation” of the various nationalities by drawing “the necessary lines between the legitimate demands of economic centralism and the living gravitations of national culture.”⁷²

However, for Trotsky, this was precisely where the problem arose as far as the bureaucracy’s national policy was concerned. Instead of collaborating with the various national groupings to establish policy, the bureaucracy approached “both economy and culture from the specific interests of the ruling stratum.”⁷³ The extreme centralization of bureaucratic control meant that Soviet national policy was Great Russian policy in fact, if not in intent: “Since the Kremlin is the residence of the authorities, and the outlying territories are compelled to keep step with the center, bureaucratism inevitably takes the color of an autocratic Russification, leaving to the other nationalities the sold indubitable cultural right of celebrating the arbiter in their own language.”⁷⁴

Likewise, Trotsky insisted that bureaucratic control of culture had greatly exceeded what was needed. While reaffirming that science and art under socialism would be free of “even any shadow of compulsion,” Trotsky asserted that a transitional regime necessarily establishes “severe limitations upon all forms of activity, including spiritual creation.” According to Trotsky, in the early years the Bolshevik Party always viewed such restrictions as a temporary evil, and even in the civil war had never presumed to pass judgment on artistic and scientific questions.⁷⁵ However, since that time, the bureaucracy had vastly outstripped the requirements of political necessity in its control over culture:

The present ruling stratum considers itself called not only to control spiritual creation politically, but also to prescribe its roads of development. The method of command-without-appeal extends in like measure to the concentration camps, to scientific agriculture and to music. The central organ of the party prints anonymous directive editorials, having the character of military orders, in architecture, literature, dramatic art, the ballet, to say nothing of philosophy, natural science, and history.⁷⁶

As the powers of the bureaucracy increased, natural and social sciences and the arts were all conscripted to glorify the regime, Stalin, and the latest zigzags in policy. According to Trotsky, the central concern of the bureaucracy regarding art was to make sure that it incorporated the bureaucracy’s interests, and to present these in a manner that would “make the bureaucracy attractive to the popular masses.”⁷⁷ Predictably, Trotsky concluded, the end product was less than impressive: “In reality, in spite of individual exceptions, the epoch of the Thermidor will go into the history of artistic creation pre-eminently as an epoch of mediocrities, laureates and toadies.”⁷⁸

9.4.3 Military and International Policy

Regarding international affairs, Trotsky argued that the dangerous situation in which the USSR now found itself had been created by a combination of objective factors, including its backwardness and isolation, and subjective factors, including the confusion and demoralization of the world proletariat. Of the two, Trotsky viewed the subjective as more important:

The danger of a combined attack on the Soviet Union takes palpable form in our eyes only because the country of the soviets is still isolated, because to a considerable extent this “one sixth of the earth’s surface” is a realm of primitive backwardness, because the productivity of labor in spite of the nationalization of the means of production is still far lower than in capitalist countries, and finally—what is at present most important—because the chief detachments of the world proletariat are shattered, distrustful of themselves and deprived of reliable leadership.⁷⁹

Furthermore, according to Trotsky, the primary blame for the weakened state of the subjective factors fell on the bureaucracy. “The fact is,” he asserted, “that in its capacity as leader of the Communist International, the nationally limited and conservative, ignorant and irresponsible Soviet bureaucracy has brought nothing but misfortunes to the workers’ movement of the world.” In this regard, he pointed in particular to the defeat of the Chinese revolution in 1925-27, and “the shattering of the German proletariat.”⁸⁰

In his discussion of recent Soviet international policy Trotsky drew a sharp line between legitimate compromises dictated by necessity, and the unprincipled concessions of the Soviet leadership. According to Trotsky, “no serious revolutionary statesman would deny the right of the Soviet state to seek supplementary supports for its inviolability in temporary agreements with this or that imperialism.”⁸¹ In fact, he recalled that in the first years after the revolution the Soviet government had concluded a whole series of treaties with bourgeois governments,

including the Brest-Litovsk peace of 1918, a treaty with Estonia in 1920, the Riga peace with Poland in 1920, and the Rapallo agreement with Germany in 1922.⁸²

However, at the same time he observed, “It could never have entered the mind of the Soviet government as a whole, nor any member of it, to represent its bourgeois counteragents as ‘friends of peace,’ and still less to invite the communist parties of Germany, Poland, or Esthonia to support with their votes the bourgeois governments which had signed these treaties.”⁸³ Yet that was exactly what the Soviet government, and even the Communist International, had done in connection with the Soviet entry into the League of Nations and the Franco-Soviet pact. By painting up the episodic allies of the USSR, Trotsky observed, the Comintern had become “a political agent of the imperialists among the working classes.”⁸⁴ He explained this shift in perspective in terms of the evolving mentality of the Soviet bureaucracy:

Having betrayed the world revolution, but still feeling loyal to it, the Thermidorean bureaucracy has directed its chief efforts to “neutralizing” the bourgeoisie. For this it was necessary to seem a moderate, respectable, authentic bulwark of order. But in order to seem something for a long time, you have to be it. The organic evolution of the ruling stratum has taken care of that.⁸⁵

Recent developments in the Red Army afforded Trotsky further examples of the Thermidorian reaction. One of these involved policy related to the militia system. Trotsky recalled that the Eighth Party Congress in 1919 had set a long-range goal of transforming the army into a militia system organized on a territorial basis. However, according to Trotsky, even though a militia system is cheaper than a regular army, it requires a “high economic basis” in the form of established railroads, highways, etc. Consequently, in the early years of Soviet power the emphasis was always upon the more expensive regular army. In this regard Trotsky remarked, “There is nothing here to wonder at. It is exactly because of its poverty that the Soviet society has hung around its neck the very costly bureaucracy.”⁸⁶

Trotsky noted that policy regarding the militia system changed rapidly when his opponents took over the War Commissariat in 1925. Hoping to avoid wars by “neutralizing” the world bourgeoisie, and thus relatively unconcerned about defense, they quickly reorganized 74 percent of the Red Army on a militia basis. However, with the rise to power of Hitler and the rearmament of Germany, the Soviet government was forced to take the needs of defense more seriously. Again it reversed course, rapidly shifting the balance to 77 percent regular and 23 percent territorial divisions. Although Trotsky agreed that, within limits, the “productive foundations of society” had necessitated a shift, he regarded the rapid slide from 74 to 23 percent as “excessive.” In part, he suggested, this had been done under pressure from the French general staff; beyond that, it was motivated by “political” considerations—specifically, the “undesirable closeness of the army to the people” as indicated by the “keen discontent” in the army during the First Five-Year Plan.⁸⁷

Further manifestations of Thermidor in military policy noted by Trotsky included the restoration of the hated cossack troops and the reinstatement of the officers’ corps abolished by the revolution. Of the former, Trotsky asked, “Is it possible to doubt that these riders of the steppes are again on the side of the privileged against the oppressed?”⁸⁸ Regarding the latter, Trotsky asserted that the “purely political aim” of this measure was “to give a new social weight to the officers.”⁸⁹

9.4.4 Regime

In his discussion of the Soviet regime Trotsky again denounced various aspects of repression, including the “continual purgations” of the party and Soviet organization to prevent “the discontent of the masses from finding a coherent political expression,” the spread of “spying

and tale bearing,” the judicial conviction in court of the bureaucracy’s political enemies by means forgeries, and the exacting of confessions by threat of the firing squad. He charged that the “the sword of the dictatorship,” which had been used against those who would restore privilege, was now directed against those who revolted against privilege. In particular, the Thermidorians directed the repression against the Oppositionists who reminded them of the past, and made them “dread the future.” The Oppositionists had been expelled and arrested by the “tens of thousands” and sent to exile or prisons and concentration camps, where hundreds had been shot or had died of hunger strikes or suicide.⁹⁰

However, the largest part of Trotsky’s discussion of regime developments was devoted to the new draft constitution of the USSR. Much of this simply repeated remarks Trotsky had made in recent months. As in previous articles, he derided the undemocratic way this “most democratic” of constitutions was being introduced and dismissed many of the democratic guarantees as mere window dressing. Again he exposed the sophistry of Stalin’s justification of one-party rule. Again he suggested that the constitution was being introduced in part to provide, through the secret ballot, a “whip” to be used for the reform of the bureaucracy. And again he argued that in part it was being introduced to forestall a revival of militant worker and Red Army soviets by liquidating them juridically.⁹¹

An important new aspect of Trotsky’s analysis was his explicit examination of the constitution in the context of the backwardness and transitional character of Soviet society. For Trotsky, this context was relevant for deciphering the true significance of the opening chapter of the constitution, which declared, “The principle [of work] applied in the U.S.S.R. is that of socialism: ‘From each according to his ability, to each according to his work.’”⁹² For Trotsky, this slogan made a mockery of Marx’s assertion that labor and remuneration in the more

advanced phase of communist society would be characterized by the formula: “From each according to his abilities, to each according to his needs!”⁹³ By this, Trotsky explained, Marx had meant that work under communism would cease to be an obligation, and would become instead an individual need, rewarded generously and without “humiliating control.” In fact, the Soviet Union, still lacked the means of fulfilling either half of the formula. Consistent with the level attained by Soviet society, payment was really nothing but the old capitalist system of wage labor. But instead of “frankly acknowledging that bourgeois norms of labor and distribution” still prevailed, the authors of the constitution had completely distorted Marx’s principle, “and upon this falsification erected the structure of their constitution!”⁹⁴

Another aspect of the Soviet constitution that became clear in light of the backward and transitional nature of Soviet society was Article 10, which guaranteed the “personal property right of citizens.”⁹⁵ Of all the provisions of the constitution, Trotsky regarded this article as undoubtedly “of greatest practical significance in the economic sphere.” He explained that, in part, its purpose was to defend the property of peasants and workers from frequent and arbitrary seizures by members of the bureaucracy—a measure necessary for stimulating labor productivity. Beyond that, however, it was designed to protect the more substantial accumulations of members of the bureaucracy: “The bureaucrat’s automobile will certainly be protected by the new fundamental law more effectively than the peasant’s wagon.”⁹⁶

Trotsky also examined the new methods of electing soviets from the perspective of the transitional character of Soviet society. Besides eliminating the legal possibilities of reviving the soviets, he now suggested, these measures also facilitated a restoration of capitalism. He described these reforms as “an immense step back from socialist to bourgeois principles,” which paralleled “the same historic course” embodied in the rightward shifts in foreign policy, in the

family, and in social inequality. “By juridically reinforcing the absolutism of an ‘extra-class’ bureaucracy,” Trotsky warned, “the new constitution creates the political premises for the birth of a new possessing class”—that is, for capitalist restoration.⁹⁷

One final development in Trotsky’s analysis of the regime that is worth noting was his characterization of the regime as *totalitarian*. This term had been in use for some time, having been coined in the early 1920s by the Italian philosopher Giovanni Gentile, and then adopted by Italian fascists themselves. In the late 1920s and early 1930s both the popular press and social scientists began to employ it in reference to both fascist and socialist parties and regimes.⁹⁸ Apparently the first description of the USSR as totalitarian by a partisan of the far left appeared in a letter by the Oppositionist Victor Serge, written shortly before his arrest on February 1, 1933 and published soon afterwards in the French paper *La Révolution prolétarienne*.⁹⁹ Trotsky may have picked up the term either from the popular press or from a reconsideration of Serge’s article.¹⁰⁰

On a few occasions previously Trotsky had compared aspects of the Soviet regime to those in fascist Italy and Nazi Germany. Thus, on January 20, 1934 in an article devoted to the upcoming Seventeenth Party Congress, Trotsky remarked that “in the last period the Soviet bureaucracy has familiarized itself with many traits of victorious fascism, first of all by getting rid of the control of the party and establishing the cult of the leader.”¹⁰¹ Similarly, in an article of May 22, 1936 written in light of the recent revelations of Tarov, Ciliga, and Serge, Trotsky observed, “The concentration camps are now spread over the whole periphery of the country and are imitations of the camps in Hitler Germany.”¹⁰² However, until now Trotsky had not applied one label to the political systems of Italy, Germany, and the USSR.

Now, besides noting again the “deadly similarity” in the features of Stalinism and fascism,¹⁰³ in *The Revolution Betrayed* Trotsky employed the term totalitarian five times in reference to the Soviet regime. Describing the “unlimited hierarchy of party secretaries” that reigned in the party, the state, the trade unions, the cooperatives, etc., he asserted that the “regime had become ‘totalitarian’ in character several years before this word arrived from Germany.”¹⁰⁴ He observed that, instead of withering, the Soviet state had “acquired a totalitarian-bureaucratic character.”¹⁰⁵ He commented upon the ruinous “effect of the ‘totalitarian’ regime upon artistic literature.”¹⁰⁶ He insisted that in a nationalized economy the production of quality goods required democracy and freedom to criticize—“conditions incompatible with a totalitarian regime of fear, lies and flattery.”¹⁰⁷ Finally, after asserting that Stalin’s faction had eliminated the party’s traditional struggle against bureaucracy and had subjected the party to its own apparatus while merging the latter with the apparatus of the state, he observed, “Thus was created the present totalitarian regime.”¹⁰⁸

Although Trotsky did not explicitly define totalitarian here, these passages suggest a few of the general features he had in mind. These included the concentration of enormous powers in the hands of a single “deified” leader, the elimination of popular control over the leadership, the use of extreme repression, and the elimination of contending loci of power. One additional similarity, according to Trotsky, was that both could be described as having the same ultimate, general cause: “the dilatoriness of the world proletariat in solving the problems set for it by history.”¹⁰⁹

9.5 CONSEQUENCES

Since the early 1920s, the fear that had haunted Trotsky was that bureaucratization could result in capitalist restoration. Trotsky returned to this concern in *The Revolution Betrayed*. Once more he asserted that, for the time being, the Soviet Union remained a workers' state. Nevertheless, he insisted that the transitional character of the Soviet regime did not mean that a transition to socialism was assured. "In reality, he concluded, "a backslide to capitalism is wholly possible."¹¹⁰ Specifically, Trotsky now suggested that restoration might occur either through a Soviet defeat in the coming war, or through the efforts of a section of the bureaucracy.

As in the past, Trotsky continued to insist that the Soviet Union remained a workers' state. After repeated modifications of his position on this question over the previous three years, he was left now with one central criterion for this: the property relations as codified by Soviet law remained those established by the Bolshevik Revolution. Trotsky explained,

Classes are characterized by their position in the social system of economy, and primarily by their relation to the means of production. In civilized societies, property relations are validated by laws. The nationalization of the land, the means of industrial production, transport and exchange, together with the monopoly of foreign trade, constitute the basis of the Soviet structure. Through these relations, established by the proletarian revolution, the nature of the Soviet Union as a proletarian state is for us basically defined.¹¹¹

Even though he admitted that the Soviet bureaucracy was extraordinarily autonomous, he insisted that it was not yet a new ruling class for it had "not yet created social supports for its domination in the form of special types of property."¹¹²

At the same time, Trotsky again challenged the position most commonly held by critics to his left—that the Soviet Union was state capitalist. He conceded that it was theoretically possible to conceive of a state capitalist system in which the entire bourgeoisie of a country

would constitute itself a stock company that would own and administer the national economy of a country through the state. However, he argued that such a system could never exist in the real world because of the “profound contradictions among the proprietors themselves,” and because such a state would be “too tempting an object for social revolution.” Furthermore, for Trotsky the state capitalist designation clearly did not apply to the Soviet Union where the bureaucracy owned neither stocks nor bonds, where its members were recruited in the manner of an “administrative hierarchy,” where sons and daughters of bureaucrats could not inherit rights to exploit the state apparatus, and where the bureaucracy was forced to conceal its income and its very existence as a group. Again, Trotsky concluded that the bureaucracy’s “appropriation of a vast share of the national income has the character of social parasitism,” rather than of exploitation.¹¹³

Still, for Trotsky it was all too possible that capitalism in its traditional form might be restored in the Soviet Union. One way this could occur would be through foreign intervention in the coming world war. In light of the overwhelming technical, economic, and military superiority of imperialism, Trotsky predicted, “If the war should remain only a war, the defeat of the Soviet Union would be inevitable.” Furthermore, because Soviet property forms were “sharply out of accord with the economic basis of the country,” the inevitable result of such a defeat by imperialism would be a change in property relations. Still, Trotsky professed optimism about Soviet chances of surviving a world conflict, given “the probability, and even the inevitability of revolution” in the event of a war.¹¹⁴

Trotsky also perceived domestic forces that were working toward restoration. In the late 1920s and early 1930s he had seen the domestic restorationist threat as emanating from alien class elements that were exerting pressure upon the state and party apparatuses. In contrast, he

now saw this danger as arising directly out of the dynamics of the Soviet regime. “To the extent that, . . . it develops the productive forces,” he observed, the regime “is preparing the economic basis of socialism.” However, “To the extent that, for the benefit of an upper stratum, it carries to more and more extreme expression bourgeois norms of distribution, it is preparing a capitalist restoration.” Ultimately, Trotsky asserted, “Either the bourgeois norms must in one form or another spread to the means of production, or the norms of distribution must be brought into correspondence with the socialist property system.”¹¹⁵

Although Trotsky asserted that limited economic progress had awakened “petty bourgeois appetites” within all social groupings of Soviet society, he identified the bureaucracy as the primary source of the threat of restoration. At least for the time being, he argued, the bureaucracy was compelled to defend state property both “as the source of its power and its income” and out of fear of the proletariat. However, in the absence of legally sanctioned property rights, the privileges of the bureaucracy were unstable and unable to be transferred by inheritance. Thus, Trotsky predicted that the bureaucracy inevitably would “seek supports for itself in property relations.” If it was successful, he warned, it would mean the conversion of the bureaucracy “into a new possessing class,” that is, a new capitalist class.¹¹⁶

Trotsky further sketched how the process of restoration might appear both from the summit of power and from the level of the individual enterprise. Upon coming to power, he predicted, a bourgeois party—whether formed by foreign capitalists, by a section of the bureaucracy, or by other indigenous pro-capitalist elements, “would probably have to clean out fewer people [within the present bureaucracy] than a revolutionary party.” Immediately, it would proceed to promote capitalist relations in agriculture and to denationalize industry:

First of all, it would be necessary to create conditions for the development of strong farmers from the weak collective farms, and

for converting the strong collectives into producers' cooperatives of the bourgeois type—into agricultural stock companies. In the sphere of industry, denationalization would begin with the light industries and those producing food. The planning principle would be converted for the transitional period into a series of compromises between state power and individual “corporations”—potential proprietors, that is, among the Soviet captains of industry, the émigré former proprietors and foreign capitalists. Notwithstanding that the Soviet bureaucracy has gone far toward preparing a bourgeois restoration, the new regime would have to introduce in the matter of forms of property and methods of industry not a reform, but a social revolution.¹¹⁷

At the same time, Trotsky reiterated a description he had offered several times previously of how a restoration would appear from below in the event of a disintegration of the regime:

A collapse of the Soviet regime would lead to the collapse of the planned economy, and thus to the abolition of state property. The bond of compulsion between the trusts and the factories within them would fall away. The more successful enterprises would succeed in coming out on the road of independence. They might convert themselves into stock companies, or they might find some other transitional form of property—one, for example, in which the workers should participate in the profits. The collective farms would disintegrate at the same time, and far more easily. The fall of the present bureaucratic dictatorship, if it were not replaced by a new socialist power, would thus mean a return to capitalist relations with a catastrophic decline of industry and culture.¹¹⁸

9.6 CURE

Nevertheless, Trotsky believed that the dynamics of the regime, even while fostering restorationist tendencies, were strengthening forces that supported the transition to socialism. According to Trotsky, one consequence of Soviet bureaucratization had been the growth of discontent among the Soviet masses. He explained, “The bureaucracy is not only a machine of compulsion but also a constant source of provocation. The very existence of a greedy, lying and

cynical caste of rulers inevitably creates a hidden indignation.”¹¹⁹ Furthermore, the improvement of the economic situation of the workers, by “increasing their self-respect and freeing their thought for general problems of politics,” actually had promoted this antagonism. Thus, the “vast majority of the Soviet workers” was already “hostile to the bureaucracy”; while the peasants hated the bureaucrats “with their healthy plebeian hatred.”¹²⁰

For the time being, Trotsky conceded, the proletarian struggle against the bureaucracy was muted. He explained that the Soviet working class feared that an attempt to remove the bureaucracy might open the door to restoration. However, he confidently predicted that, as soon as they were able to see an alternative, Soviet workers would rise to throw out the bureaucracy. For that to occur, it was “necessary that in the West or the East another revolutionary dawn arise.”¹²¹

Again, Trotsky suggested that the struggle within the USSR might begin as a legal battle, made possible by the liberal reforms contained in the constitution, against “badly working organs of power.” However, Trotsky insisted that in order to succeed the struggle would have to become revolutionary in nature: “No devil ever yet voluntarily cut off his own claws. The Soviet bureaucracy will not give up its position without a fight. The development leads obviously to the road of revolution.”¹²² To prepare the assault and to lead the masses in this political revolution, required the efforts of a revolutionary vanguard organization—the Soviet section of the Fourth International. Trotsky admitted that for the moment this section was weak and driven underground. However, he asserted that violence against a revolutionary vanguard could never save a caste that had outlived its usefulness.¹²³

Trotsky would not predict the precise program of the new revolution, for he argued that this would depend upon various factors, including the timing of the revolution, the level of

Soviet economic development, and the international situation. However, he provided a general outline that included democratic, economic, and cultural aspects:

It is not a question of substituting one ruling clique for another, but of changing the very methods of administering the economy and guiding the culture of the country. Bureaucratic autocracy must give place to Soviet democracy. A restoration of the right of criticism, and a genuine freedom of elections, are necessary conditions for the further development of the country. This assumes a revival of freedom of Soviet parties, beginning with the party of Bolsheviks, and a resurrection of the trade unions. The bringing of democracy into industry means a radical revision of plans in the interests of the toilers. Free discussion of economic problems will decrease the overhead expense of bureaucratic mistakes and zigzags. Expensive playthings—palaces of the Soviets, new theaters, show-off subways—will be crowded out in favor of workers' dwellings. "Bourgeois norms of distribution" will be confined within the limits of strict necessity, and in step with the growth of social wealth, will give way to social equality. Ranks [in the military] will be immediately abolished. The tinsel of decorations will go into the melting pot. The youth will receive the opportunity to breathe freely, criticize, make mistakes, and grow up. Science and art will be freed of their chains. And finally, foreign policy will return to the traditions of revolutionary internationalism.¹²⁴

Most significant here, and consistent with Trotsky's recent admission of the corrosive effects of the ban on opposition parties, was his new demand for "a revival of freedom for Soviet parties." Trotsky did not define here precisely which parties he had in mind, or suggest a method by which these would be selected. However, in his "Transitional Program" in 1938 Trotsky amplified a bit on this point, explaining, "The workers and peasants themselves by their own free vote will indicate what parties they recognize as soviet parties."¹²⁵

9.7 LATER DEVELOPMENTS

Of course, *The Revolution Betrayed* was not Trotsky's final word on the Soviet bureaucracy. Until his assassination in 1940 Trotsky continued to comment upon developments in Soviet policy and within the USSR, to propose demands for the coming political revolution, to revise previous political assessments, to defend aspects of his theory against critics, and to introduce modifications into his theory.¹²⁶ As far as his analysis of events is concerned, most important were his writings on the Moscow trials of 1936-1938,¹²⁷ on Comintern policy in Spain in 1936-38,¹²⁸ on the German-Soviet nonaggression pact of 1939,¹²⁹ on the Soviet invasion of eastern Poland in September 1939 and the subsequent transformation of property relations there, and on the Soviet invasion of Finland at the end of November 1939.¹³⁰ Major new demands proposed by Trotsky during these years included his 1938 call for the removal of all bureaucrats from the soviets,¹³¹ and his 1939 proposal for an independent, Soviet Ukraine.¹³² One reversal of position, consistent with his enhanced emphasis upon the autonomy of the bureaucracy, included Trotsky's admission in 1936 that he had been mistaken in believing the charges in the trials of the "Industrial Party" in 1930 and the Menshevik specialists in 1931.¹³³ Even more significant was his conclusion in 1938 that, from the point of view of the bureaucracy, the Right Opposition had represented a "left danger."¹³⁴ The most important of Trotsky's writings in defense of his theory of bureaucracy were his contributions in 1937 and in 1939-40 to debates within the international Trotskyist movement on the class nature of the Soviet Union.¹³⁵ One significant terminological development during these years was Trotsky's characterization in 1938 of the USSR as a "*degenerated workers' state*."¹³⁶ A theoretical modification worth noting was Trotsky's concession in 1938 that in "completely exceptional circumstances" Stalinist parties could break with their own capitalists to form a "workers' and farmers' government."¹³⁷ Other

important revisions in 1939 included Trotsky's admission of the theoretical possibility that the Stalinist bureaucracy could *become* a new exploiting class if the war did not result in revolution, and his suggestion that events could compel the redefinition of the bureaucracy as a new class if a victorious Western proletariat ceded power to a bureaucracy.¹³⁸ Nevertheless, despite these various applications, innovations, and adjustments, in all of his writings on the USSR after August 1936 Trotsky based his analysis in a fundamental sense upon the theory of Soviet bureaucracy codified in *The Revolution Betrayed*.

¹ Works that contain significant discussions of Trotsky's *The Revolution Betrayed* include Perry Anderson, "Trotsky's Interpretation of Stalinism," in Tariq Ali, ed., *The Stalinist Legacy: It's Impact on Twentieth-Century World Politics* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England: Penguin Books, 1984), 118-128; C. A. Arthur, "The Coming Soviet Revolution," in Nicolas Krasso, ed., *Trotsky: The Great Debate Renewed* (St. Louis, MO: New Critics Press, 1972), 151-191; Peter Beilharz, *Trotsky, Trotskyism and the Transition to Socialism* (Totowa, NJ: Barnes & Noble Books, 1987), 59-68; Paul Bellis, *Marxism and the U.S.S.R.: The Theory of Proletarian Dictatorship and the Marxist Analysis of Soviet Society* (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1979), 56-92; Eileen Braun, "The Prophet Reconsidered: Trotsky on the Soviet Failure to Achieve Socialism," (PhD diss, George Washington University, 1989), 101-124; John P. Burkett, "Soviet Socioeconomic Development: A Fold Catastrophe?" *Comparative Economic Studies* 29, no. 3 (Fall, 1987): 70-93; Kunal Chattopadhyay, *The Marxism of Leon Trotsky* (Kolkata: Progressive Publishers, 2006), 537-542; Richard B. Day, "Democratic Control and the Dignity of Politics—An Analysis of The Revolution Betrayed," *Comparative Economic Studies* 29, no. 3 (Fall, 1987): 4-29; Isaac Deutscher, *The Prophet Outcast, Trotsky: 1929-1940* (New York: Vintage Books, Random House, 1965), 298-234; Theodore Edwards, *The Soviet Union: What It Is—Where It Is Going: A guide to the Study of Leon Trotsky's The Revolution Betrayed* (New York: Pioneer Publishers, January, 1958); Thomas Egan, "Leon Trotsky: His Philosophy in Opposition," (PhD diss, Florida State University, 1978), 269-321; H. C. Foxcroft, "The Revolution Betrayed," *The Quarterly Review*, no. 535 (January, 1938): 1-14; Louis Gottschalk, "Leon Trotsky and the Natural History of Revolutions," *The American Journal of Sociology* 44, no. 3 (November 1938: 339-354; Duncan Hallas, *Trotsky's Marxism* (London: Bookmarks, 1984), 27-47; Christopher Z. Hobson and Ronald D. Tabor, *Trotskyism and the Dilemma of Socialism* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1988), especially 225-264; C. L. R. James, "Trotsky's 'Revolution Betrayed,'" *International Socialism* 16 (Spring 1964): 25-29; David H. Katz, "Trotsky's *The Revolution Betrayed*: A Reappraisal," *Midwest Quarterly* 18, no. 3 (Spring 1977): 287-297; Baruch Knei-Paz, *The Social and Political Thought of Leon Trotsky* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), 385-392; Martin Krygier, "'Bureaucracy' in Trotsky's Analysis of Stalinism," in *Socialism and the New Class: Towards the Analysis of Structural Inequality within Socialist Societies*, ed. Marian Sawer, APSA Monograph No. 19 (Sidney, Australia: Australasian Political Studies Association, 1978), 46-67; Martin Krygier, "Marxism and Bureaucracy," (PhD diss, Australian National University, 1979), 182-195, 202-203; Martin Krygier, "Marxism and Bureaucracy: a paradox resolved," *Politics: Journal of the Australasian Political Studies Association* 20, no. 2 (November 1985): 58-69; Martin Krygier, "The revolution betrayed? From Trotsky to the new class," in Eugene Kamenka and Martin Krygier, eds., *Bureaucracy: The Career of a Concept* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1979), 88-111; David Law, "Trotsky in Opposition: 1923-1940," (PhD. diss, University of Keele, 1987), 160-162, 333-35; David W. Lovell, *Trotsky's Analysis of Soviet Bureaucratization: A Critical Essay* (London: Croom Helm, 1985), 36-57; Ernest Mandel, *Trotsky: A Study in the Dynamic of His Thought* (London: NLB, 1979), 75-87; Robert H. McNeal, "Trotskyist Interpretations of Stalinism," in *Stalinism: Essays in Historical Materialism*, ed. Robert C. Tucker (New York: W.

W. Norton & Co., 1977), 30-52; Robert H. McNeal, "Trotsky's Interpretation of Stalin," in *Canadian Slavonic Papers* 5, ed. G. S. N. Luckyj (1961): 87-97; Loizos Michail, "Trotsky's *Revolution Betrayed*," *Socialist Europe* 3 (1977): 3-7; Deborah Duff Milenkovitch, "Trotsky's The Revolution Betrayed: A Contemporary Look," *Comparative Economic Studies* 29, no. 3 (Fall, 1987): 40-69; John Molyneux, *Leon Trotsky's Theory of Revolution* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1981), 113-134; John Plamenatz, "Deviations from Marxism," *Political Quarterly* 21, no. 1 (Jan.-Mar. 1950): especially pp. 49-55; John Plamenatz, *German Marxism and Russian Communism* (London, Longmans, Green & Co., 1954), 281-305; Robert Wistrich, *Trotsky: Fate of a Revolutionary* (New York: Stein and Day, 1979), 170-173.

² Leon Trotsky, *Writings of Leon Trotsky: Supplement (1934-40)*, ed. George Breitman (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1979), 714.

³ On the history of *The Revolution Betrayed*, see Deutscher, *The Prophet Unarmed*, 296, 298; Law, "Trotsky in Opposition," 161; J. C. Shapiro, "On the Accuracy of Economic Observations of *Chto Takoe SSSR* in Historical Retrospect," *Comparative Economic Studies* 29, No 3 (Fall, 1987): 45-69. 45, Leon Trotsky, *Writings: Supplement (1934-40)*, 664, 714; Sara Weber, "Recollections of Trotsky," *Modern Occasions* 2, no. 2 (Spring 1972): 190.

⁴ Deutscher, *The Prophet Outcast*, 298, 322.

⁵ McNeal, "Trotskyist Interpretations of Stalinism," 35.

⁶ Katz, "Trotsky's *The Revolution Betrayed*," 294.

⁷ Anderson, "Trotsky's Interpretation of Stalinism," 124.

⁸ Day, "Democratic Control and the Dignity of Politics," 4.

⁹ A search of the OCLC WorldCat database on June 6, 2006 turned up 1151 library holdings of all English language editions of *The Revolution Betrayed*, indicating this is a popular title for libraries. [According to the "brief test" methodology devised by Howard White, holdings above 751 indicate that libraries, even with only "minimal" coverage in that book's subject area, frequently own it. See Howard White, *Brief Tests of Collection Strength: A Methodology for All Types of Libraries* (Westport CT: Greenwood Press, 1995), 123-129.] A search of the ISI Web of Science databases (*Social Sciences Citation Index*, *Arts and Humanities Citation Index*, and *Science Citation Index*) on June 20, 2006, revealed 51 citations in scholarly literature for all English language editions of *The Revolution Betrayed* during the years 1992-2006. By way of comparison, there were 52 citations for Trotsky's *The History of the Russian Revolution*; 22 citations for all English language editions of Roy Medvedev's *Let History Judge*, and 10 citations for all English language editions of Stephen Cohen's *Bukharin and the Bolshevik Revolution*.

According to Russian general and historian Dmitri Volkogonov, the publication of *The Revolution Betrayed* also had fatal consequences for Trotsky and for Stalin's opponents within the USSR. Volkogonov claims that *The Revolution Betrayed* was the "last straw" that provoked Stalin into plotting Trotsky's assassination and that convinced him of the need for "a determined and final liquidation of all potential enemies inside the country." [Dmitri Volkogonov, *Stalin: Triumph and Tragedy*, ed. and trans. Harold Shukman (New York: Grove Weidenfeld, 1991), 260. See also Dmitri Volkogonov, *Trotsky: The Eternal Revolutionary*, trans. and ed. Harold Shukman (New York: The Free Press, 1996), 371.]

¹⁰ Plamenatz, *German Marxism and Russian Communism*, 289; James, "Trotsky's 'Revolution Betrayed,'" 25; Knei-Paz, *The Social and Political Thought of Leon Trotsky*, 382; Molyneux, *Leon Trotsky's Theory of Revolution*, 114; Wistrich, *Trotsky: Fate of a Revolutionary*, 170, Lovell, *Trotsky's Analysis of Soviet Bureaucratization*, 36; Ian D. Thatcher, *Trotsky* (London: Routledge, 2003), 191.

¹¹ Thus, Siegfried Bahn has argued that *The Revolution Betrayed*, "for anyone who knows [Trotsky's] shorter pamphlets and articles . . . offers little that is new." [Siegfried Bahne, "Trotsky on Stalin's Russia." *Survey* 41 (April, 1962): 40.] David Law has noted that, while "legitimately considered a fundamental work," for the most part it is "essentially a summary of the ideas developed by Trotsky in earlier pieces, and textually very close in some places." [Law, "Trotsky in Opposition," 161-162.] And as Ian Thatcher has similarly observed, "*The Revolution Betrayed* did not mark a new development in Trotsky's views on the USSR. It contained a summary of previously held beliefs and conceptions." [Thatcher, *Trotsky*, 191.]

¹² For example, one entire volume of Trotsky's collected works published in the Soviet Union was devoted to the "*Culture of the Transitional Period*." Various statements by Trotsky in the early and mid-1930s on the transitional character of the period and/or Soviet society, can be found in Leon Trotsky, *Writings of Leon Trotsky [1930-31]*, ed. George Breitman and Sarah Lovell (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1973), 204, 205; Leon Trotsky, *Writings of Leon Trotsky [1932]*, ed. George Breitman and Sarah Lovell (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1973), 278; Leon Trotsky, *Writings of Leon Trotsky [1932-33]*, ed. George Breitman and Sarah Lovell (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1972),

215-216; Leon Trotsky, *Writings of Leon Trotsky [1933-34]*, ed. George Breitman and Bev Scott (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1975), 113-114; Leon Trotsky, *Writings of Leon Trotsky [1934-35]*, ed. George Breitman and Bev Scott (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1974), 118, 119, 170. The two most famous discussions during the 1920s on the transition period were Bukharin's 1920 work, *The Economics of the Transition Period*, and Preobrazhenskii's *New Economics* in 1926. For a brief summary of Bolshevik views in the 1920s on the transitional period, see Catherine Samary, "Mandel's Views on the Transition to Socialism," in Gilbert Achcar, ed., *The Legacy of Ernest Mandel* (London: Verso, 1999), 153-154.

¹³ See Leon Trotsky, *The History of the Russian Revolution*, trans. Max Eastman (London: Pluto Press, 1977), chapter 1, 25-37.

¹⁴ Leon Trotsky, *The Revolution Betrayed: What Is the Soviet Union and Where Is It Going?*, trans. Max Eastman (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, Doran & Co., 1937), 5, 6. See also *ibid.*, 300.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 9-20.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 45-46.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 45-47.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 49-51. See V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1960-1970), 25:386-387, 395-396, 419-421, 441, 463, 473-474, 481.

¹⁹ Trotsky, *The Revolution Betrayed*, 51-52.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 248.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 249.

²² Trotsky, *Writings [1933-34]*, 167, 226-227; *Trotsky Writings [1934-35]*, 117-120, 170-171; Trotsky, *Writings: Supplement (1934-40)*, 523-524.

²³ *Ibid.*, 50.

²⁴ Quoted in Trotsky, *The Revolution Betrayed*, 52. See Frederick Engels, *Herr Eugen Dühring's Revolution in Science (Anti-Dühring)* (New York: International Publishers, 1939), 306-307.

²⁵ Quoted in Trotsky, *The Revolution Betrayed*, 53. See Karl Marx, *The First International and After, Political Writings*, vol. 3 (London: Penguin Books, 1974), 346-347.

²⁶ Quoted in Trotsky, *The Revolution Betrayed*, 53. Lenin, *Collected Works*, 25:471.

²⁷ Trotsky, *The Revolution Betrayed*, 54.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 55.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 56. See Karl Marx (with Frederick Engels), *The German Ideology, including Theses on Feuerbach and Introduction to the Critique of Political Economy*, Great Books in Philosophy (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 1998), 54.

³⁰ Trotsky, *The Revolution Betrayed*, 56, 58-59.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 112.

³² It seems that the first person to note the significance of the theoretical innovation was the Belgian Oppositionist, Victor Serge, who was translating Trotsky's manuscript into French. In a letter to Trotsky on August 10, 1936 Serge remarked, "(I was pleased with your radically new formulation on the question of the state. It is a major contribution to theory.)" [D. J. Cotterill, ed. and introd., *The Serge-Trotsky Papers* (London: Pluto Press, 1994, 92.) On August 19 Trotsky proudly but modestly replied, "I am very glad about your comments on the theory of the state. I had a feeling myself that I succeeded in clearing up certain points." [*Ibid.*, 95. For an alternative translation, see Trotsky, *Writings: Supplement (1934-40)*, 683.]

³³ Trotsky, *The Revolution Betrayed*, 112, 113.

³⁴ See *ibid.*, 125, 126-128, 134-135.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 86-88.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 88-89.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 89.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 89.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 89-92.

⁴⁰ In "Soviets in America?" on August 17, 1934 Trotsky asserted that the "bureaucratization of our soviets," was "a result of the political monopoly of a single party." [Trotsky, *Writings: Supplement (1934-40)*, 524.]

⁴¹ Trotsky, *The Revolution Betrayed*, 96.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 97-98.

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- ⁴⁴ Ibid., 278.
- ⁴⁵ Ibid., 277.
- ⁴⁶ Ibid., 135.
- ⁴⁷ Ibid., 135-136.
- ⁴⁸ Leon Trotsky, *The Challenge of the Left Opposition (1926-27)*, ed. Naomi Allen and George Saunders with introduction by Naomi Allen (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1980), 356; Iu. Fel'shtinskii, comp., *Kommunisticheskaia oppositsiia v SSSR, 1923-1927: iz arkhiva L'va Trotskogo*, 4 vols. (Benson, VT : Chalidze Publications, 1988.), 4: 150. Note modification of the translation.
- ⁴⁹ Trotsky, *Writings [1930-31]*, 63; Leon Trotsky, *The Struggle against Fascism in Germany* (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1971), 213, 215; Trotsky, *Writings [1932]*, 227.
- ⁵⁰ Trotsky, *The Revolution Betrayed* , 136.
- ⁵¹ Ibid., 136-138.
- ⁵² Ibid., 139.
- ⁵³ Ibid.
- ⁵⁴ Ibid., 141-142.
- ⁵⁵ Ibid., 139.
- ⁵⁶ Ibid., 100-105.
- ⁵⁷ Ibid., 139, 140.
- ⁵⁸ Ibid., 140.
- ⁵⁹ Ibid., 115.
- ⁶⁰ Ibid., 116.
- ⁶¹ Ibid., 116-120, 122.
- ⁶² Ibid., 124-125.
- ⁶³ Ibid., 81.
- ⁶⁴ Ibid., 125, 127-128. Trotsky also criticized inappropriate uses of Stakhanovism by the bureaucracy “to leap over difficulties” in violation of both “labor power and technique.” The result, he noted, was that “ a growth in the number of Stakhanovists” was often accompanied by “ a decrease in the general productivity of the enterprise.” [Ibid., 84-85.]
- ⁶⁵ Ibid., 128-134.
- ⁶⁶ Ibid., 134.
- ⁶⁷ Ibid., 134-135.
- ⁶⁸ In *The Revolution Betrayed*, see chapter 7, “Family Youth and Culture,” 144-185. For Trotsky’s writings on these questions in 1923 and 1924, see articles in Leon Trotsky, *Problems of Everyday Life, and Other Writings on Culture and Science* (New York: Monad Press, 1973).
- ⁶⁹ Trotsky, *The Revolution Betrayed*, 144-150.
- ⁷⁰ Ibid., 150- 153.
- ⁷¹ Ibid., 170.
- ⁷² Ibid., 170-171.
- ⁷³ Ibid., 171.
- ⁷⁴ Ibid., 178.
- ⁷⁵ Ibid., 180.
- ⁷⁶ Ibid., 181-182.
- ⁷⁷ Ibid., 185.
- ⁷⁸ Ibid., 185.
- ⁷⁹ Ibid., 190.
- ⁸⁰ Ibid., 191-192.
- ⁸¹ Ibid., 198.
- ⁸² Ibid., 187-188.
- ⁸³ Ibid., 188.
- ⁸⁴ Ibid., 193-196, 198
- ⁸⁵ Ibid., 192.
- ⁸⁶ Ibid., 216-217.
- ⁸⁷ Ibid., 218-220.

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- ⁸⁸ Ibid., 221.
- ⁸⁹ Ibid., 220-224.
- ⁹⁰ Ibid., 279-283.
- ⁹¹ See *ibid.*, chapter 10, “The Soviet Union in the Mirror of the New Constitution,” 257-272.
- ⁹² J. Stalin, *On the Draft Constitution of the U.S.S.R.; Constitution (Fundamental Law) of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics* (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1950), 73.
- ⁹³ Karl Marx, *The First International and After: Political Writings*, vol. 3 (London: Penguin Books, 1974), 347.
- ⁹⁴ Trotsky, *The Revolution Betrayed*, 258-259.
- ⁹⁵ Stalin, *On the Draft Constitution*, 72.
- ⁹⁶ Trotsky, *The Revolution Betrayed*, 259-260.
- ⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 272.
- ⁹⁸ In 1928 the German sociologist Robert Michels commented upon similarities between Bolshevik and fascist parties. In the following year, *The Times* of London spoke of a “‘totalitarian’ or unitary state, whether Fascist or Communist.” In 1934 political theorist George Sabine used it to describe fascist and communist single-party regimes. [See Herbert J. Spiro, “Totalitarianism,” in *The International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, ed. David L. Sills (New York: Macmillan, 1968), vol. 16, 106-107; R. Fine, “Totalitarianism: Impact on Social Thought,” in *International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences*, edited by Neil J. Smelser & Paul B. Baltes (Amsterdam: Elsevier, 2001), vol. 23, 15791; Juan J. Linz, *Totalitarian and Authoritarian Regimes* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2000), 51-52.]
- ⁹⁹ Susan Weissman, *Victor Serge: The Course Is Set on Hope* (London: Verso, 2001), 141. In fact, Serge later claimed to be “the first person to define the Soviet State as a totalitarian State.” [Victor Serge, *Memoirs of a Revolutionary, 1901-1941*, trans. and ed. Peter Sedgwick (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), 281.]
- ¹⁰⁰ The term does not appear in the correspondence between Serge and Trotsky in 1936. [See Cotterill, *The Serge-Trotsky Papers*.]
- ¹⁰¹ Trotsky, *Writings [1933-34]*, 224.
- ¹⁰² Trotsky, *Writings [1935-36]*, 325. In his article “The Class Nature of the Soviet State” on October 1, 1933 Trotsky also compared the parasitism of the Italian and German fascist bureaucracies to that of the Soviet bureaucracy. [See Trotsky, *Writings [1933-34]*, 119.]
- ¹⁰³ Trotsky, *The Revolution Betrayed*, 278.
- ¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 100.
- ¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 108.
- ¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 183.
- ¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 276.
- ¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 279.
- ¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 278. Later comments on totalitarianism by Trotsky included additional features and alternative formulations. For example, in an article of January 1, 1937 he listed as characteristic of totalitarianism: “the suppression of all freedom to criticize; the subjection of the accused to the military; examining magistrates, a prosecutor and judge in one; a monolithic press whose howlings terrorize the accused and hypnotize public opinion.” [Leon Trotsky, *Writings of Leon Trotsky [1936-37]* ed. Naomi Allen and George Breitman, (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1978), 63.] In an article of August 17, 1940 Trotsky wrote: “The Kremlin oligarchy is *totalitarian* in character, i.e., subjugates to itself all functions of the country’s social, political, and ideological life and crushes the slightest manifestations of criticism and independent opinion.” [Leon Trotsky, *Writings of Leon Trotsky [1939-40]*, ed. Naomi Allen and George Breitman (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1973), 348.]
- It is clear that Trotsky’s concept of totalitarianism was not the same as the totalitarianism of Sovietologists after the Second World War. For example, Trotsky’s concept was far less clearly defined than the best-known model developed by Carl Friedrich and Zbigniew Brzezinski. Furthermore, it did not share all of the core assumptions of that model. For example, regarding both Stalinism and fascism Trotsky would have stressed the importance of ideology far less than Friedrich and Brzezinski, and would have rejected totalitarianism’s alleged transformational role—especially in the Stalinist case. Also, Trotsky would have denied that “central control and direction of the entire economy” was applicable to fascism. [See Carl J. Friedrich and Zbigniew K. Brzezinski, *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1965), 9-10.] Additionally, Trotsky’s understanding of totalitarianism rejected many of the supplementary views associated with the Friedrich-Brzezinski model, including the characterization of Leninism as totalitarian, a fundamental commitment to anticommunism, the

tendency to see political structures in “totalitarian” societies as monolithic (in contrast, for Trotsky one-man rule presumed deep divisions within the bureaucracy), and the static character of totalitarianism (for Trotsky, both the Stalinist and fascist variants of totalitarianism were inherently unstable). Similarly, Susan Weissman has noted the differences between Serge’s use of “totalitarian” and that employed later by the totalitarian school. [See Weissman, *Victor Serge*, 8.]

¹¹⁰ Trotsky, *The Revolution Betrayed.*, 254.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 248.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 248-249.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 245-246 249-250.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 226-227, 232-233.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 244.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 235-236, 249, 251 255, 254. Trotsky also argued that limited economic progress had awakened “petty bourgeois appetites, not only among the peasants and representatives of ‘intellectual’ labor, but also among upper circles of the proletariat.” *Ibid.*, 235-236.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 253.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 250-251. See also, for example, Leon Trotsky, *The Third International After Lenin*, trans. John G. Wright (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1970), 300; Trotsky, *Writings [1930-31]*, 220-221; Trotsky, *Writings [1933-34]*, 117, 316.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 284-285.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 285.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 286..

¹²² *Ibid.*, 288.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 287.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 289-290. See also *ibid.*, 252-253.

¹²⁵ Leon Trotsky, *The Transitional Program for Socialist Revolution* (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1977), 146. Apparently overlooking this passage, Leszek Kolakowski has suggested that Trotsky was proposing that only a vanguard party would have the right to determine which parties were “Soviet” and which were not. Thus, he concludes “In Trotsky’s eyes, the upshot seems to be that socialist freedom means freedom for Trotskyists and no one else.” [Leszek Kolakowski, *Main Currents of Marxism: The Founders, The Golden Age, The Breakdown*, trans. P. S. Falla (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2005), 945.]

¹²⁶ For sources that that provide overviews of these developments, see Deutscher, *The Prophet Unarmed*, 331-336, 410-413, 458-477; Law, “Trotsky in Opposition,” vol. 1, 192-195, 209-216; McNeal, “Trotskyist Interpretations,” 36-39.

¹²⁷ See, for example, Trotsky, *Transitional Program*, 142-144; Leon Trotsky, *Writings of Leon Trotsky [1935-36]*, ed. Naomi Allen and George Breitman (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1977), 410-412, 413; Trotsky, *Writings [1936-37]*, 102-103, 121, 188-189, 201-202, 330-331, 336, 348-349, 357, 393; Leon Trotsky, *Writings of Leon Trotsky [1937-38]*, ed. Naomi Allen and George Breitman (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1976), 28, 112, 204-205, 276, 303; Leon Trotsky, *Writings of Leon Trotsky [1938-39]*, ed. Naomi Allen and George Breitman (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1974), 346-347; Preliminary Commission of Inquiry, *The Case of Leon Trotsky: Report of Hearings on the Charges Made against Him in the Moscow Trials* (New York: Merit Publishers, 1968), 580-585.

¹²⁸ See, for example, Leon Trotsky, *The Spanish Revolution (1931-39)*, ed. Naomi Allen and George Breitman (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1973), 256-257, 269, 282-283, 307, 314, 322-324, 332-333; Trotsky, *Writings [1936-37]*, 93, 327, 407-409, 429, 478; Trotsky, *Writings [1937-38]*, 26, 28, 111. For a discussion of Trotsky’s analysis of the Moscow Trials, see Thomas Ray Poole, “‘Counter-Trial’: Leon Trotsky and the Soviet Purge Trials” (PhD diss, University of Massachusetts, 1974).

¹²⁹ Trotsky, *Writings [1938-39]*, 200-203; Trotsky, *Writings [1939-40]*, 76-79, 81-83, 116, 139-141, 197, 290-291.

¹³⁰ Leon Trotsky, *In Defense of Marxism (Against the Petty-bourgeois Opposition)*, (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1970), 18-19, 24-29, 56-57, 70-71, 87-90, 130-137, 173-176; Trotsky, *Writings [1939-40]*, 90-91, 113-114, 117, 122, 142-146, 163, 166, 197-200.

¹³¹ Trotsky, *Transitional Program*, 145

¹³² Trotsky, *In Defense of Marxism*, 20, 38; Trotsky, *Writings [1938-39]*, 301-306; Trotsky, *Writings [1939-40]*, 44-54.

¹³³ See “Ot redaksii,” *Biulleten’ Oppozitsii*, 51 (July-August, 1936), 15; Trotsky, *Writings [1935-36]*, 419, 552-553; Trotsky, *Writings [1936-37]*, 57; Preliminary Commission of Inquiry, *The Case of Leon Trotsky*, 251-252.

¹³⁴ Trotsky, *Transitional Program*, 143.

¹³⁵ Trotsky, *Writings [1937-38]*, 34-44, 60-61; Trotsky, *In Defense of Marxism*, 3-21, 23-30, 47-58, 121-123.

¹³⁶ Trotsky, *Transitional Program*, 142.

¹³⁷ Trotsky, *The Transitional Program*, 135.

¹³⁸ Trotsky, *In Defense of Marxism*, 9.

10.0 CONCLUSION

The story of the development of Leon Trotsky's views on Soviet bureaucracy is a complex one. In his various writings on the subject Trotsky expressed three main understandings of the nature of that problem: Shortly after the revolution he denounced inefficiency in the distribution of supplies to the Red Army and scarce resources throughout the economy as a whole. By 1923 he had become concerned about the growing independence of the state and party apparatuses from popular control and their increasing responsiveness to alien class pressures. Then in later years Trotsky depicted the bureaucracy as a distinct social formation, motivated by its own narrow interests, which had attained a high degree of autonomy from all social classes. Throughout the course of this evolution, Trotsky's thinking was influenced by a combination of factors that included his own major concerns at the time, preexisting images and analyses of bureaucracy, and his perception and analysis of unfolding events. In turn, at each point Trotsky's understanding of the general nature of the problem directed and shaped his political activities and his analyses of new developments. From all of this, the image of Trotsky that emerges is of an individual for whom ideas and theories were supremely important, both as means of understanding the world, and as a guide to his own attempts at changing it.

Soon after the revolution, many Bolsheviks derived their understanding of *bureaucracy* from the primary popular understanding of that term, as well as from the traditional Marxist analysis of political alienation. Thus, they perceived the problem of Soviet bureaucracy in terms

of the excessive centralization of political power, and as related in various ways to the presence of bourgeois influence in the state apparatus. However, in this period Trotsky viewed the problem quite differently. Largely concerned about the effective operation of the war machine and of the economy as a whole, and drawing upon popular secondary meanings of bureaucracy, Trotsky defined the problem of Soviet bureaucracy almost exclusively in terms of inefficiency. Thus, during the civil war Trotsky began to focus especially on the phenomenon of *glavkokratiia*—an inefficient system he described as characterized by both the excessive concentration of economic power in the industrial *glavki* and *tentry* and by the inadequate degree of central coordination between them. This understanding influenced Trotsky's policy choices and his political behavior in a number of important ways. Most immediately, it led him to advocate a greater emphasis upon economic planning—a concern that would become a lifelong preoccupation. At the same time, it impelled him to dismiss the value of Lenin's favorite institutional solution for the problem of bureaucracy: the Workers' and Peasants' Inspectorate. Then, in late 1922 Trotsky's understanding of bureaucratic inefficiency helped bring him into an anti-bureaucratic alliance with Lenin.

Beyond that, however, Trotsky's focus upon the need for economic planning to address *glavkokratiia* also contributed greatly to his development of a new understanding of the problem of Soviet bureaucracy in 1923. Facing continued opposition by the leadership majority to a strengthened emphasis upon planning—even after it had been endorsed by the Twelfth Party Congress—Trotsky attempted to account for this resistance in terms of the classical Marxist analysis of political alienation. The problem, he argued, was that market forces and alien class pressures, as well as the specialization of officials, had pushed the state and party leadership to the right. This process had been facilitated by the bureaucratization of the party, understood in

terms of the widening separation of the party apparatus from the control of the ranks. Ultimately, Trotsky warned, such bureaucratism could lead to the opportunist degeneration of the party leadership, and even to the restoration of capitalism within the USSR. Again, Trotsky's analysis of the problem of Soviet bureaucracy played a major role in guiding his political behavior, leading him in late 1923 into oppositional activity on behalf of party democracy, largely as a means of bringing about the changes in economic policy he sought.

Though defeated in the party struggle of 1923, Trotsky returned to the political and theoretical offensive in 1926-1927 with the formation of the United Opposition. At that point, Trotsky's perception of a further deterioration of the party regime and a continuing drift to the right in economic and international policy convinced him even more that there was a direct relationship between the phenomenon of bureaucratism and the growth of alien class pressures. Consequently, in 1926-1927 Trotsky advanced a comprehensive and coherent theory of Soviet bureaucracy grounded entirely in that understanding. Even more sharply than before, he argued that a general shift in the balance of class forces had pressured the leadership into implementing rightist policies while repressing workers' democracy. On the basis of that theory Trotsky warned again that the consequent weakening of the proletariat threatened to culminate in a capitalist restoration—most likely by a gradual and phased “Thermidorian” route. His theory also led him to conclude that only the Opposition, representing the proletarian vanguard, could hope to reform the party by pushing it back to the left and compelling the restoration of workers' democracy.

Ultimately, the Opposition was beaten and thousands, including Trotsky, were sent into internal exile. However, this was followed, not as Trotsky had predicted, by a strengthening of the party right and the restoration of capitalism, but by a dramatic series of leftist initiatives in

economic and Comintern policy, and by the defeat of the right wing of the party by the Stalinist center. Continuing to insist upon the validity of his theory, Trotsky attempted to reconcile the contradictions between his theory and reality by means of a series of ad hoc theoretical modifications and strained interpretations of events. Thus, while increasingly emphasizing the autonomy of the apparatus, Trotsky tended to downplay the significance of the “leftist” policy changes, and to explain these in terms of proletarian and/or Oppositional pressure. Furthermore, Trotsky’s theory led him to predict that, unless the left turns were supplemented by Oppositional pressure, they would quickly collapse.

Still, between late 1929 and early 1933 Trotsky perceived the leadership as veering even more sharply to the left, dramatically accelerating industrialization, instituting mass collectivization and a campaign to eliminate the kulak, and deepening the “Third Period” line of the Communist International. At the same time, he noted that, while repressing dissidents of all persuasions, the leadership had inaugurated a cult of public adulation for Stalin. Trotsky denounced all of these shifts and innovations at least as sharply as he had criticized the policies of earlier years. Even more than before, the shifts in policy impelled him to push the limits of his old theory by introducing ad hoc modifications that emphasized the autonomy of the bureaucracy. However, probably due to a variety of factors—including the apparent successes of Trotsky’s theory in explaining events in 1926-1927, the absence of an acceptable theoretical alternative, his responsibilities as leader of the Opposition, and sheer stubbornness—Trotsky continued to insist upon the relevance of his image of the bureaucracy as highly responsive to alien class pressures. The result was an analysis of current developments that, in various respects, seemed both increasingly divorced from reality and increasingly incoherent.

Ultimately, the event that precipitated a radical revision of Trotsky's theory of bureaucracy was Hitler's conquest and consolidation of power—a development that for Trotsky represented a failure of Comintern policy as profound as the capitulation of the Second International at the outset of World War I. Trotsky's consequent break with the KPD initiated a chain reaction that overturned or modified a whole series of his other positions, in each case reinforcing his appreciation of the autonomy of the bureaucracy. Subsequently, Trotsky utilized a number of these insights to analyze new shifts to the right in Soviet economic and international policy, new developments in the party regime, and the wave of repression unleashed by the leadership following the Kirov assassination. Reciprocally, in early 1935 these interpretations of policy developments, combined with a rethinking of the history of the French Revolution, led Trotsky to initiate a new round of theoretical modifications, including a redefinition of Thermidor and Bonapartism, that culminated in 1936 in his call for a political revolution in the USSR.

Trotsky's new theory of bureaucracy received its most complete expression in his major theoretical work of 1936, *The Revolution Betrayed*. In that book Trotsky defined the bureaucracy as a social entity that had attained unprecedented independence from society as a whole, as well as from all social classes. His most important innovation, perhaps prompted by a reconsideration of his argument in *The History of the Russian Revolution*, was a discussion of the problems of a backward, transitional society. That notion provided a context for his reformulated account of the functional origins of bureaucratic power, a framework for evaluating Soviet policies in all spheres, and a basis for his stark identification of the alternatives confronting the USSR as either political revolution or capitalist restoration.

This story of the development of Trotsky's theoretical position on the question of Soviet bureaucracy suggests a number of conclusions about the theorist himself. One of the most striking of the features that emerges is Trotsky's enormous theoretical creativity. His passion for comprehending the political world was often expressed in his paraphrase of Spinoza's recommendation: "It is necessary . . . , not to laugh, not to weep, but to understand!"¹ The method Trotsky chose for achieving this understanding was through theorizing. Trotsky's secretary, Jean van Heijenoort, has recalled Trotsky's ability and tendency to construct theories even about personal matters at a moment's notice and on the basis of limited evidence.² The same characteristic is evident in Trotsky's writings on Soviet bureaucracy. Over the course of two decades Trotsky developed three distinct conceptions of the problem of Soviet bureaucracy, but also a host of lesser theories on every aspect of reality related to each those conceptions.

Nevertheless, despite this ability to construct theories quickly and easily, Trotsky could be quite conservative regarding theoretical change. He frequently demonstrated this trait in the contempt he expressed for anyone who attempt to "update" Marxism to reconcile it with current fashion—a practice he disparagingly characterized as "trimming Marx's beard."³ In this study, this trait was also evident in the way Trotsky clung to his own central ideas regarding Soviet bureaucracy. Most strikingly, this was apparent in Trotsky's attempts to uphold key aspects of his 1926-1927 theory of bureaucracy as late as 1933, despite substantial evidence suggesting that these should be altered. Although there were various reasons for this, one certainly was that—for better or worse—his thinking could be inflexible when it came to his most deeply held beliefs.

Another distinctive characteristic of Trotsky's was the extent to which he utilized theories to guide his behavior. In fact, the purpose behind his theorizing was seldom simply understanding for its own sake. Rather, Trotsky was attempting to comprehend the world in

order to be in a better position to change it. As he explained in his autobiography, “To understand the causal sequence of events and to find somewhere in that sequence one’s own place—that is the first duty of a revolutionary. And at the same time it is the greatest personal satisfaction possible for a man who does not limit his tasks to the present day.”⁴ Throughout this study, we have seen repeated examples from every period of how, in the “causal sequences” he identified, Trotsky repeatedly sought a place for himself and his supporters.

Finally, as the previously quoted passage also indicates, this study suggests that Trotsky’s ultimate and consistent purpose was not focused upon narrow, personal interests, but rather upon the advancement of socialism and the revolution. As Trotsky explained in his “Testament” in February 1940,

For forty-three years of my conscious life I have remained a revolutionist; for forty-two of them I have fought under the banner of Marxism. If I had to begin all over again 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 My faith in the communist future of mankind is not less ardent, indeed it is firmer today, than it was in the days of my youth.⁵

There were times when his own immediate concerns influenced his broader perspective—as when the problems he encountered in military supply shaped his general analysis of *glavkokratiia*. Furthermore, it seems there were times when interests of personal power may have sensitized him to larger issues—such as when his own growing isolation contributed to his perception of the erosion of workers’ democracy in 1923. Beyond that, there were times—as in the party struggle of 1926-1927 and afterwards—when Trotsky sought to enhance his own and the Opposition’s political power as a means of reform. However, there were no apparent cases in which Trotsky sought personal power in opposition to the

advancement of the revolution, or in which he cynically redefined the needs of the revolution to coincide with his own personal interests.

¹ Leon Trotsky, *Leon Trotsky Speaks*, ed. Sarah Lovell (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1972), 292. See also, for example, Leon Trotsky, *History of the Russian Revolution*, trans. Max Eastman (London; Pluto Press, 1970), 511.

² On one occasion, van Heijenoort was told as a joke that his companion had given birth to twins. Believing the story, van Heijenoort passed the news along to Trotsky: “‘The mixture of races is always very fertile,’ he said immediately. Gaby was short and dark, I tall and blond. This difference was all that Trotsky needed to construct a theoretical explanation.” [Jean van Heijenoort, *With Trotsky in Exile: From Prinkipo to Coyoacán* (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 1978), 75.]

³ See, for example, Jean van Heijenoort, “Lev Davidovich,” in *Leon Trotsky: The Man and His Work*, by Joseph Hansen et al. (New York: Merit Publishers, 1969), 46.

⁴ Leon Trotsky, *My Life: An Attempt at an Autobiography* (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1970), xxxv.

⁵ Leon Trotsky, *Trotsky's Diary in Exile*, trans. Elena Zarudnaya (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1958), 165-166.

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