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THREEPENCE

On Some Critics of Trotsky

By Marc Loris, U.S.A.

Archives of the Revolution

Extracts from Trotsky's Diary

AND

Two Letters to Bukharin, 1926

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ON SOME CRITICS OF TROTSKY

By MARC LORIS (U.S.A.)

LIBERALS have always distinguished themselves by lack of understanding of revolution. For them it is merely an "excess," an "accident" which interrupts the "normal" course of history. They have no key with which to penetrate the determinism of this accident. This is not surprising. The consciousness of the classes and of their spokesmen depend on their position in society: only those who stand firmly on the ground of revolution can grasp all the aspects of the social forces.

Liberal thought is no better equipped to understand the personalities of the great proletarian revolutionists. Its inability to enter into the dynamics of events leads it to a false conception of men. Everything that the liberals have written on Lenin is barren, revealing the limitations of their thinking rather than Lenin's genius. An even more difficult object of study for them is Trotsky.

One of those who have attempted to explain Trotsky is Max Eastman.* Better equipped than other liberals by his contact with the revolutionary milieu and his personal acquaintance with Trotsky, Eastman reveals only the more clearly the liberal's organic inability to comprehend the personality and historic rôle of a great Marxist.

Trotsky ended the introduction to his autobiography with these words: 'To understand the casual sequence

*Heroes I Have Known, by Max Eastman. New York, 1942.

of events and to find somewhere in the sequence one's own place—that is the first duty of a revolutionary." This duty Trotsky fulfilled to the utmost. For him (or for Lenin) the task of the biographer, just as that of its hero, is to "understand the sequence of events." Only then can the man's real place in history be found and his true rôle established.

Historical materialism does not deny the rôle of the individual in history nor the influence of the different aspects of his character. On the contrary, it reveals for the first time the mechanism of this process by recognizing the individual as the representative of a class or a layer of a class. It thus provides a rational explanation of his historical rôle and at the same time establishes the limits of his activity. All the idealistic jargon about "heroes" loses its mystical and mystifying character. The trajectory described by each historical personality is the result of the interaction of the different social groups, each of which demands different qualifications from its representatives. Of these delicate relationships between a social group and its leaders, liberal thought grasps nothing; history becomes a mere backdrop for the hero, the liberal observer delves more and more deeply into the individual in order to discover his "secret" and that of the events.

For years the liberals insistently explained Stalinism as the product of some original sin of Bolshevism, Lenin's quasi-diabolic invention. As for the defeat of the Left Opposition, from where could it spring if not from some "defect or weakness," as Eastman puts it, in Trotsky's character? He remained isolated, hence "he could not handle men." He was beaten, hence "poorer politician never lived."

Hegel once observed that common sense, when unable to give an explanation, often takes refuge in the type of metaphysics which "explains" that opium causes sleep because of its "dormitive quality." Having separated the party or the individual from the

historical development of the class struggle, the doctors of liberalism then observe them through the metaphysical spectacles of common sense. Thus to give rise to Stalinism, Bolshevism must contain a "dictatorial quality" and the fall of Trotsky can be explained only—obviously—by his lack of "political quality." How simple!

A Bullet or a Cup of Tea?

We are waiting to be told what this "political quality" is. Max Eastman merely points out to us two possible manifestations of this quality. The first would have been for Trotsky to "have gone into the factories with a few forthright speeches and raised every fighting revolutionist in Moscow and Leningrad against the Stalinist cleque." In short, Trotsky should have made an insurrection. The second would have been to invite Kamenev, "who was his brother-in-law," to come take a cup of tea and "talk it over man to man." We leave it to Max Eastman's common sense to reconcile the armed insurrection against the Stalin-Zinoviev-Kamenev *troika* and the cup of tea with the same Kamenev.

An insurrection does not fall from the sky, even when there is someone to lead it. What are the indications that, in 1923 or later, the Soviet working masses were ready to revolt against the rising bureaucracy? An appeal to the masses against the party could have led only to an immense Kronstadt and prepared the entrance of the counter-revolutionary bourgeoisie. As for arousing the party against the bureaucratic tops, precisely this was the task undertaken by the opposition, but it had to begin with the work of educating and gathering together cadres for this task. How can one speak of an armed insurrection when the opposition was in the minority even in the ranks of the party? How call on a party

member to take gun in hand and fight in the street when in his party cell, under pressure of his superiors in the factory or office, through fatigue, through lack of confidence in the forces of the revolution, he voted for the apparatus?

But after all, didn't Trotsky have unequalled popularity in the army? This is true, and there is little doubt that in 1923 it would have been very easy, with the help of the military apparatus, to disperse the *troika*—a matter of only a few hours and very little blood, if any. Here common sense seems to triumph. With such a simple operation all the degradation of Stalinism would have been avoided—and it was not even tried! But history makes a fool of common sense.

One cannot use the army like a sword which one puts back in its sheath once the operation is done. Any army which enters the political arena and assures the victory of one of the fighting factions proceeds to pay itself well. The prices would have been, for the officers corps, more security and more privileges. Instead of spreading chiefly through the party apparatus, then, the Thermidorian reaction would have spread through the military apparatus. Undoubtedly, the régime would have had a different coloration than that of Stalin, but the fundamental political reality would have been the same and the process of degeneration probably more rapid. Citing the revolutionary integrity of Trotsky changes none of this. He would have found himself, the day after the Bonapartist *coup d'état*, faced with the demands of an officers corps become conscious of its power in the country. He would then have had to capitulate to the officers, or, in resisting them, fall victim to one of their plots.

Indeed, the army is always a stronghold of bureaucratism. The Red Army was no exception. The military apparatus was not separated from the state apparatus by an air-tight partition, but was part of

it, following the same process of degeneration. In 1921 the war was over, and the heroic epoch of the revolution was succeeded by the hum-drum of daily existence. The difference between the two periods was even greater for the army than for the rest of the population, and could not fail to be reflected in its state of mind. Moreover, the army had been reduced from 5,300,000 men to 600,000 thus greatly increasing the specific weight of the remaining cadres. We must not forget that a not negligible fraction of these remaining cadres came from the Czarist army.

The demobilized part of the army was also a strong factor in the bureaucratisation of the country. Many of the commanders, returning to their villages and provincial towns, found themselves placed, by their prestige and their experience, at the head of the local administration. There they often employed methods differing very little from the military command to which they were accustomed, and they integrated themselves very easily into the Stalinist apparatus. In face of these social realities the prestige of their former leader carried little weight.

Politics, Science of Perspectives

In July 1933 Trotsky was living near Royan; nearby lived a Communist worker, an old influential party member, dissatisfied with the Stalinist line. Lev Davidovitch desired to meet him. The enterprise was risky. His sojourn in France might have been compromised, but the desire to speak with a worker won out. So, one evening, with all possible precautions, this worker was brought into the workroom of Lev Davidovitch. The conversation soon turned to the defeat of the Russian Opposition. "How did you lose the power, comrade Trotsky?"—"Ah, you know, one

does not lose power like one loses his pocket book." Then came an explanation which lasted long into the night.

Power is not a trophy presented to the most clever, but it is above all, through individuals, a relationship between the classes and their social layers. The leader, as a representative of a social group, defends the interests of that group more or less well. But if the position of the group changes, he loses his footing, is suspended in the air, powerless. Thus, on the 9th Thermidor, Robespierre, head of the government, appears before the Convention. The session is so tumultuous that he cannot speak and it is ended by a decree of arrest against him. The following day he is guillotined. Clearly, the forces which supported him were exhausted. Any explanation that would reduce the dynamics of the revolution to a comparison of the personal qualities of Robespierre and of Barras would not get very far.

Never weary of accusing Trotsky of being a poor politician, the philistines rarely take the trouble to expound their own conception of politics. But their accusations show clearly that their lack of understanding of the relationship of the individual to the party, of the parties to the classes, reduces their conception to the most degraded form of politics, the art of personal combinations. Of course, this art is far from being unnecessary. But the first condition for its use is to know its limits. One can deceive men; one cannot deceive history. Stalin thought he could. In 1923 he was merely looking for a "surer" way for the revolution, thought he was avoiding danger by confining the revolution within the frontiers of the USSR and by building socialism in one country. This "ruse" led him to the terrible catastrophe of to-day. The "impractical" theory of the permanent revolution was, on the other hand, full of profound realism. Likewise, one could not, in 1923, skip over

the wave of Thermidorian reaction by such a "ruse" as an insurrection, a military coup d'etat or a cup of tea with "brother-in-law" Kamenev.

In July 1935 Lev Davidovitch was speaking of the France he was leaving: "There is truth in what the French say: politics is the science of proportion. Oh, for them it is the science of small proportions." Thus he described in a single word a striking characteristic of French bourgeoisie. Then he continued: "To be exact one must say that politics is the science of perspectives." If one accepts this definition of politics—and this is the only valid one for Marxists—Trotsky was a great, a very great politician.

Revolution and Reaction

The critics of Trotskyism like to repeat: when it is a question of explaining the defeat of the Left Opposition, you underline the importance of the objective factors, but when it is a matter of accusing Nin of having collaborated in the defeat of the Spanish revolution, you bring to the fore the subjective factor and you place the responsibility on the individual. Precisely! In the Spanish revolution the movement of the masses created the objective conditions of victory. Subjective initiative was lacking and our criticism of Nin rests on his definite acts, such as his entry into the Catalan government, which acted directly against the movement of the masses. Nin and his party did not provide an outlet for the revolutionary energy of the Spanish proletariat. One proof, among others, is the leaderless May 1937 insurrection of the Catalan workers in Barcelona. Was there some analogous insurrection in the USSR during the struggle of the Left Opposition or even some bold movement of the workers? A revolutionary leadership must not let an occasion pass, but it cannot create this occasion as it likes when objective conditions are not ripe.

Marxism gives great importance to the initiative and audacity of an individual or a small group in the carrying out of the insurrection, but at the same time it establishes precise rules for determining the moment of that insurrection, which does not just happen at any time but crowns the revolutionary rise of the masses. History demands so much from a revolutionary leadership precisely because the lost occasion cannot be recreated at will. The impossibility of acting when objective conditions are lacking and the obligation of resolutely intervening when they materialize—these are two sides of the same coin.

The defeat of the Left Opposition was too complete to allow us to attribute it to some tactical error of its leader. Naturally, this does not mean that events necessarily had to happen as they did. Numerous variants were possible, but the general trend leaves little doubt. Trotsky's personal qualities have their importance in determining his place: it is not by chance that he led the opposition and that Stalin was the agent of the reaction.

In 1926, when she still felt fairly close to Lenin's last ideas, Krupskaja declared: "If Ilyitch were alive, he would be in prison to-day." By these words she wished above all to denounce the lie of Stalin's so-called "Leninism" and to show the reality of the struggle, that of the bureaucratic reaction against the revolutionary wing. However, Krupskaja's words also seem to contain, in their own way, a reproach directed to the Left Opposition: if Lenin were alive, he would have led the struggle against the bureaucratization of the Soviet state with such vigor that he would already have been in prison, while the opposition was still in the party. Surely we have the right to discern this criticism in Krupskaja's words, but in this case we must not forget the conclusion: Lenin himself could not have overcome the bureaucracy, "he would be in prison today."

To place the problem on the level of personal qualities alone leads, willy nilly, to a great exaggeration of the stature of Trotsky's adversaries. Thus, it is characteristic of liberal thought to confer some demoniacal power on Stalin when in reality Stalin's motivations were very simple and very narrow: the fear of revolutionary risk, the absence of perspectives, envy of a more brilliant rival, mediocrity and provincial grossness. But it was precisely these qualities that the apparatus required of its leader.

Does this mean that the struggle of the Left Opposition was futile? This mechanical and abstract way of posing the question betrays a fatalism foreign to Marxism. History does not give its verdict like an oracle. The relationship of forces can be determined only by the struggle itself. No one can measure in advance the depth and the duration of the reaction. A proletarian victory outside the USSR could have reopened the question. Above all there was the duty of assuring the revolutionary future. Where would we be without the struggle of the Left Opposition?

“The Tribe of Philistines”

While Max Eastman's lack of comprehension holds a good deal of naïveté, amusingly simple, that of J. R. Johnson* is mixed with a large dose of hypocrisy. His failure to understand “the casual sequence of events” leads him directly to conscious falsification, which is not amusing. Johnson broke from the Fourth International after a bitter factional struggle in which Trotsky actively participated—not on Johnson's side, as everyone knows—and Johnson tries to take revenge.

In Eastmanian terms he depicts Trotsky as a “very

*“Leon Trotsky—His Place in History,” by J. R. Johnson. *The New Internationalist*, September 1940.

defective politician," who "in the hands of Kamenev and Stalin was a child." His entire criticism, superficial and impressionistic, without serious discussion of facts and texts, is sterile from a historical and political point of view. But Johnson quickly arrivès at the *raison d'être* of his article. If he tries so hard to prové that Trotsky was a "child in Stalin's hands," it is to show that he was also a child in Cannon's hands at the time the Burnham-Shachtman group, to which Johnson belonged, left the Fourth International:

"Despite his unwillingness he (Trotsky) was cunningly manoeuvred into a position in which his authority and energy were unscrupulously used for an aim he did not have in mind. When he recognized what was happening, it was too late."

What baseness in this last sentence! What is Johnson hinting at in this hypocritical innuendo? He is careful not to be too precise. Yes indeed, Trotsky "recognized what was happening" and called it by its name: "a petit-bourgeois opposition opening a struggle against Marxism with ideological charlatanism." All this is well known. As for the split, Trotsky wrote:

"The discussion in the Socialist Workers Party of the United States was thorough and democratic. The preparations for the convention were carried out with absolute loyalty. The minority participated in the convention, recognising thereby its legality and authoritativeness. The majority offered the minority all the necessary guarantees permitting it to conduct a struggle for its own views after the convention. The minority demanded a license to appeal to the masses over the head of the party. The majority naturally rejected this monstrous pretension."

And again:

"We have the fact that the minority split away from us, in spite of all the measures taken by the majority not to split. This signifies that their inner social feeling was such that it is impossible for them to go together with us. It is a petty-bourgeois tendency, not a proletarian."

No, Mr. Johnson, it is not so easy to make Trotsky out as a political simpleton whom Cannon leads around by the nose.

To support his fable of Trotsky, the "very defective politician," incapable of judging men, Johnson has one last argument: his assassination. Here is what he writes:

"Not the least significant was the tragic circumstances of his death. He had been warned against his murderer, but this GPU agent earned his favor by an exaggerated devotion to Trotsky's political position. For six months he discussed politics with the greatest living master of politics and Trotsky never detected a false note, apparently set no trap for him. We can be certain that whoever else might have been deceived by an imposter. Mr. Joseph Stalin would not have been. In the end the idea expressed was more important and interesting to Trotsky than the person expressing it. It was his strength, the cause of some of his greatest triumphs, but it was his weakness, the cause of some of his greatest failures."

Natalia Trotsky has already had occasion to indicate the direct and factual lies in these few lines: there was no warning, no favour earned by an exaggerated devotion, no six months of political discussion.* None of that existed. But we must ask ourselves why Johnson had to use such means.

Let us glance back and we will find a historical precedent which will enlighten us. In his old age Kautsky wrote of Marx and Engels: "Neither of them were great judges of men." Just like Johnson, Kautsky had a very precise object in making such a judgment. It was both self-defense and revenge. After Kautsky's first visit with Marx, the latter wrote to his daughter Jenny:

"He is a mediocrity with a small-minded outlook, super-wise (only 26), very conceited, industrious in a certain sort of way, he busies himself a lot with statistics but does not

*"Natalia Trotsky Answers a Foul Slander," *Socialist Appeal*, October 26, 1940.

read anything very clever out of them, belongs by nature to the tribe of the philistines, but is otherwise a decent fellow in his own way."

These lines were written in 1881 and rereading them now, with Kautsky's whole life before our eyes, we can only marvel at the power of insight which had penetrated so deeply into the young man of 26 years. We can easily understand why Kautsky could not let himself acknowledge Marx as a great judge of men."

To justify this appraisal of Marx, Kautsky wrote:

"In 1852 Marx gave his fullest confidence to the Hungarian journalist Bangya, even turning over to him a manuscript in which various 'great men of the emigration' were portrayed. And then it turned out that this Herr Bangya was a spy in the service of the Prussian government into whose hands he delivered Marx's manuscript."

To try to save themselves personally Kautsky and Johnson must build up a Marx and a Trotsky incapable of judging men. But, as there is no material for such a construction, both must have recourse to a completely artificial case, that of a spy-provocateur, a case which has no bearing on the understanding of men by men, but rather on the art of divination. What a striking parallel!

Trotsky's Methods

It is on such foundations of sand that Johnson tries to build a judgment of Trotsky and to establish "his place in history." After having presented Trotsky as "cunningly manoeuvred" and "unscrupulously used" by Cannon, having described him as unable to "detect a false note" in his murderer, Johnson does not hesitate to conclude:

"To the end he remained what he was, a man incapable of leaving his main work and concentrating his powerful intellect on the tricks and dodges which are inseparable

from politics. Unscrupulous men not fit to clean his pen could gain his confidence and get the better of him."

While Johnson believes he has discovered a deep characteristic of Trotsky, of important political consequence, he in reality just repeats an old and despicable calumny. Since the appearance of the Left Opposition on the international arena, Trotsky has had to break with a number of groups and individuals after attempts at collaboration. Not surprising: the Fourth International was born in a period of general retreat of the labor movement. Independently of each other, most of those from whom Trotsky had to separate repeated the same accusations: Trotsky's ideas are excellent, but he understands nothing of organization, he does not know how to judge men, he allows himself to be manoeuvred; immersed in his theoretical work, he lets himself be misled by the false information and the intrigues of those who follow him, etc. . . . Not once, but dozens and dozens of times these same re-creations came from the different countries of Europe. Souvarine, whom Johnson knows well, is especially brilliant in this kind of rhetoric. For a long time Leon Sedoff was the target of these accusations. Rudolph Klement also suffered from them—in fact, all those who were close to Trotsky. For many deserters it was the only explanation of their break with the Fourth International. The thinness of this explanation betrays their lack of understanding of political reality as well as their resentment: it is not possible that Trotsky is really against me!

Whoever is even slightly familiar with Trotsky's methods of work can only shrug his shoulders at such accusations. Trotsky applied the same scientific conscientiousness in all that he did, whether it was writing a history of the revolution or intervening in an impassioned faction fight within a group of ten persons. In his office he studied the letters received like a scientist in his laboratory observing his test-tubes. He

knew how to collate evidence and to hold back until he had been able to form a clear picture of the situation. But once he had formed an opinion, he entered the fight with firmness and decision. Personal relations counted for little then and became entirely subordinated to political judgment. Numerous adversaries were disconcerted by this attitude. Incapable of penetrating to the bottom of political reality and its requirements, they tended invariably to slip over to another plane; they appealed to personal relations in order to re-establish an understanding which had become impossible. Or, as Trotsky expressed it in referring to one of them, they were like a child who shakes the watch whose spring he has broken in order to make it go again. Then in spite, they placed the responsibility for the break on the maneuvers and false information of which Trotsky had been the victim.

Johnson tries to raise this gossip to a theoretical and historical level, and present a Trotsky clever in the world of ideas but incapable of reading men. The facts decisively contradict such a fabrication. Among the great Marxists, Trotsky is incontestably the one who was the most interested in following the course of men through events. The correspondence of Marx and Engels does not lack penetrating estimates of the men of their epoch, in spite of what Kautsky might have thought. But Trotsky was able to draw much more rounded portraits. Before 1917 there were already numerous silhouettes among his writings: Victor Adler and Bebel, Ebert and David, Jaures and Vaillant, Plekhanov and Martov, Ledebour and Rakovsky—practically all the figures of the international movement. But it is in the writings of his third exile that Trotsky becomes master of the art of integrating the individual into the "casual sequence of events." His *History of the Russian Revolution* contains portraits of practically all the actors in the drama, from Nicholas

to Kerensky, from Miliukov to Martov. With no artificiality! The men are in the places, with their words, their gestures, their intonations. The complex mechanism whereby each historical task chooses its men is revealed to us. Trotsky's other writings of the same period—his criticism of the program of the Communist International, his autobiography, etc.—reveal the same power of perception through his study of other individuals—the epigones of Leninism. The death of the old Bolsheviks, the Moscow Trials, furnished him with the occasion to paint portraits of Lenin and Stalin. The future historian will have to pause long over Trotsky's pile of manuscripts on these men before hoping to be able to say something new.

From the time he left Moscow to his murder in the sunny office at Coyoacan, from the end of 1927 to August 1940, Lev Davidovitch carried on an active political correspondence. At first, during the year spent at Alma Ata, this consisted of the hundreds of letters to the oppositionists deported throughout Siberia. Then in the 11 years of his last exile, there were thousands of letters to his co-thinkers in some 30 countries. New contacts, polemics, splits—all were present during this period and all that correspondence is full of his estimates of men. Although written for the immediate occasion, when re-read after a lapse of several years they are often astonishing in their depth and their keenness. In a few strokes, an individual's fundamental characteristics are painted with profound verity. More than once Lev Davidovitch predicted the road which an individual was going to follow when less perspicacious eyes were still far from discerning it. Certainly there were errors, but in the main they were astonishingly rare and the greater part of his judgments was confirmed by future developments.

Lev Davidovitch had an extraordinary capacity for drawing out people. By the questions he asked, by the discussion he started, he knew how to make his visitor

reveal his background, his prejudices, his manner of approaching problems:

In explaining the defeat of the Left Opposition, Eastman always says that Trotsky did not know the art of personal relations and he adduces his own experience, that sometimes "you feel that he was not present in reality at all." Certainly Lev Davidovitch did not have much taste for sitting around over a cup of tea speaking of little nothings and eternal problems. Any conversation without a precise purpose greatly irritated him. When he grew weary of it, he developed, it is true, an air which might be termed "absent"; his politeness then became somewhat mechanical and affected as though he had to force himself. But he was very much present when contact was established with his visitor. Above all, the conversation had to have an object: comrades discussing political problems, young people whom he felt a desire to teach or, finally, someone having a branch of knowledge from which he wished to profit. Faced with visitors from whom he could learn nothing and whom he could teach nothing, he was somehow disarmed.

The great gift of Trotsky in dealing with men was that he knew how to mobilize them. He knew how to paint the grandeur of an aim, to inspire enthusiasm, to fortify the will. Lenin marvelled at Trotsky's ability to rally many technicians to the Soviet power, to inspire them with confidence and to win them over to work in defense of the country. In his last exile, in problems small or big, he knew how to gain the cooperation and the devotion of people who were not directly tied to him by ideas and who could expect no recompense of any kind. His secret, if one wishes to use the word, was always to demand of an individual the best in him. Trotsky addressed himself to the best in men, for on the rest he knew, one can build nothing durable.

ARCHIVES OF THE REVOLUTION

THREE three historical documents date back to the year 1926, a crucial year in the struggle of the Left Opposition against the bureaucratic degeneration of the party. They have not been published before in any language.

The first of these documents comprises extracts from Trotsky's diary, in which, in November 1926, he jotted down for future reference — in thesis form — a series of basic propositions concerning the development of the USSR... They provide additional irrefutable evidence that Trotsky never cherished any illusions about the meaning and gravity of the struggle against the bureaucratic tendencies which had then gained the ascendancy in the state apparatus, in the party, and in the country. These November, 1926, theses were later expanded by Trotsky in a large number of speeches, articles, and books.

Here, in the most generalized form, is Trotsky's analysis of the most complex historical problem, namely, the mechanic of class society as expressed in the oscillations between revolutionary epochs and events and those of reaction and counter-revolution. To young Bolsheviks these theses supply an object lesson in the method of Marxism. Trotsky here applies the dialectic to explain how the struggle for the emancipation of the working class is conditioned and determined by vast social processes, their political ebbs and flows, their effects on the psychology of the masses and other phenomena in the superstructure. From this kind of analysis and synthesis is derived our program which alone makes possible a conscious intervention in events. Above all, these theses teach the lesson that in our epoch the decisive struggle is the struggle for the correct inter-relationship between the party and the class.

The other two documents which likewise pertain to this same year (1926) cast a graphic light on the conditions under which Trotsky conducted this great struggle. The ideological leader of the rising bureaucracy was none other than Bukharin to whom these two personal letters are addressed.

In a certain sense, they constitute an appeal to Bukharin; at the same time they sound a warning about the disastrous consequences of the course on which Bukharin had embarked, and for which he paid with his own life, twelve years later, in the third of the Moscow Frame-up Trials.

THE EDITORS.

The Inter-Relationship between Revolution and Counter-Revolution

November 26, 1926.

1. Revolutions have always been followed by counter-revolutions in history. Counter-revolutions have always thrown society back, but never back as far as the starting point of the revolution. The succession of revolutions and counter-revolutions is the product of certain fundamental features in the mechanics of class society, the only society in which revolutions and counter-revolutions are possible.

2. Revolution is impossible without the participation of the masses. This participation is in its turn possible only in the event that the oppressed masses connect their hopes for a better future with the slogan of revolution. In this sense the hopes engendered by the revolution are always exaggerated. This is due to the mechanics of class society, the terrible plight of the overwhelming majority of the popular masses, the

objective need of concentrating the greatest hopes and efforts in order to insure even the most modest progress and so on.

3. But from these same conditions comes one of the most important—and moreover one of the most common—elements of the counter-revolution. The conquests gained in the struggle do not correspond with and in the nature of things cannot directly correspond with the expectations of the broad backward masses, who are awakened for the first time in the course of the revolution itself. The disillusionment of these masses, their return to routine and to futility is as much an integral part of the post-revolutionary period as the passage into the camp of "law and order" of those "satisfied" classes or layers of classes who had participated in the revolution.

4. Closely bound up with these processes, parallel processes of a different and, to a large measure, of an opposite character take place in the camp of the ruling classes. The awakening of broad backward masses upsets the ruling classes from their accustomed equilibrium, deprives them of direct support as well as confidence, and thus enables the revolution to seize a great deal more than it is later able to hold.

5. The disillusionment of a considerable section of the oppressed masses in the immediate conquests of the revolution and—directly connected with this—the decline of the political energy and activity of the revolutionary class engender an influx of confidence among counter-revolutionary classes—both among those overthrown by the revolution but not shattered completely, as well as among those which aided the revolution at a certain phase, but were thrown back into the camp of reaction by the further development of the revolution.

The Conditions for the Rise of Stalinism

20. It would be wrong to ignore the fact that the proletariat to-day (1926) is considerably less receptive to revolutionary perspectives and to broad generalizations than was the case during the October overturn and in the ensuing few years. The revolutionary party cannot passively align itself in accordance with every shift in the moods of the masses. But it cannot ignore any alteration which is produced by causes of profound historical order.

21. The October revolution, to a greater extent than any other in history, aroused the greatest hopes and passions in the popular masses, first of all, the proletarian masses. After the maximum sufferings of 1917-1921, the proletarian masses improved their status considerably. They cherish this improvement, hopeful of its further development. But at the same time their own experience has shown them the extreme gradualness of this process of improvement which has only to-day reached the pre-war standard of living. This living experience is of incalculable significance to the masses, especially the older generation. They have grown more cautious, more skeptical, less responsive to revolutionary slogans, less receptive to major generalizations. These moods which unfolded after the ordeals of the civil war and after the successes of economic restoration, and which still remain undisturbed by new shifts of class forces—these moods constitute the basic political background of party life. These are the moods of which bureaucratism—as an element of “law and order” and “tranquillity”—banks on. The attempt of the opposition to pose new questions before the party ran up against precisely these moods.

22. The older generation of the working class, who made two revolutions, or the last one, beginning with 1917, is now nervous, exhausted, and, in large measure, fearful of all convulsions bound up with the perspectives of war, havoc, famine, epidemics and so on.

A bogie is being made out of the theory of the permanent revolution precisely for the purpose of exploiting the psychology of a considerable section of the workers, who are not at all careerists, but who have put on weight, acquired families. The theory of the permanent revolution which is being utilised in this sense, is, of course in no way related to old disputes, long relegated to the archives, but simply raises the phantom of new convulsions—heroic “invasions,” violations of “law and order”; a threat to the conquests of the reconstruction period: a new zone of great efforts and sacrifices. Making a bogie out of the permanent revolution is, in essence, speculation upon the moods of that section of the working class, including party members who have grown smug, fat and semi-conservative.

The Inter-Relation between the Party, the Youth and the Class

24. The young generation, only now growing up, lacks experience of the class struggle and the necessary revolutionary temper. It does not explore for itself, as did the older generation, but falls immediately into an environment of the most powerful party and governmental institutions, party tradition, authority, discipline, etcetera. For the time being this renders an independent role more difficult for the young genera-

tion. The question of the correct orientation of the young generation of the party and of the working class acquires a colossal importance.

25. Parallel with the above-indicated processes, there has been an extreme growth in the role played in the party and the state apparatus by a special category of old Bolsheviks, who were members or worked actively in the party during the 1905 period; who then left the party in the period of reaction, adapted themselves to the bourgeois regime and occupied a more or less prominent position within it; who were defensists together with the entire bourgeois intelligentsia and together with the latter were propelled forward in the February revolution (of which they did not dream at the beginning of the war); who were staunch opponents of the Leninist program and of the October overturn; but who returned to the party after victory was secured or after the stabilization of the new regime about the same time that the bourgeois intelligentsia stopped its sabotage. These elements, who more or less accommodated themselves to the June 3rd regime, can be, naturally, only elements of the conservative type. They are in general in favor of stabilization, and generally against every opposition. The education of the party youth is largely in their hands.

Such is the combination of circumstances which in the recent period of party development has determined the change in the party leadership and the shift of party policy to the right.

The Soviet Thermidor

26. The official adoption of the theory of "socialism in one country" signifies the theoretical sanction of those shifts which have already taken place; and of the first open break with Marxist tradition.

27. The elements of bourgeois restoration lie in: (a) the situation of the peasantry, who do not want the return of the landlords but are still not interested materially in socialism (hence flows the importance of political ties with the peasant poor); (b) in the moods of considerable layers of the working class, in the lowering of revolutionary energy, in the fatigue of the older generation, in the increased specific weight of the conservative elements.

Two Letters to Bukharin

January 8, 1926.

Nikolai Ivanovich:

You will perhaps recall that two years ago during a session of the Politbureau at my home I said that the mass of the Leningrad party* was muzzled more than was the case elsewhere. This expression (I confess, a very strong one) was used by me in an intimate circle, just as you used in your personal note the words: "unconscionable demagogy."

To be sure, this did not prevent my remark concerning the muzzling of the party mass by the Leningrad party apparatus from being broadcast through meetings and through the press. But this is a special item and—I hope—not a precedent . . . But doesn't this mean that I **did** see the actual state of things? However in contrast to certain comrades, I **saw** it a year and a half, and two and three years ago. At that time, during the same session I remarked that everything in Leningrad goes splendidly (100%) five minutes before things get very bad. This is possible only under a super-apparatus regime. Why then do you say that I did not see the actual state of things? True, I did

* Controlled by Zinoviev-Kamenev allied in 1924 with Stalin.

not consider that Leningrad was separated from the rest of the country by an impenetrable barrier. The theory of a "sick Leningrad" and a "healthy country" which was held in high respect under Kerensky was never my theory. I said and I repeat now that the traits of apparatus bureaucratism, peculiar to the whole party, have been brought to their extreme expression in the regime of the Leningrad party. I must however add that in these 2½ years (i.e., since the autumn of 1923) the apparatus-bureaucratic tendencies have grown in the extreme not only in Leningrad but throughout the entire party.

Consider for a moment this fact: Moscow* and Leningrad** two main proletarian centres, adopt simultaneously and furthermore unanimously (think of it: unanimously!) at their district party conferences two resolutions aimed against each other. And consider also this, that our official party mind, represented by the press, does not even dwell on this truly shocking fact.

What are those special (?) social (?!) conditions in Leningrad and Moscow which permit such a drastic and "unanimous" polar opposition? No one seeks for them, no one asks himself about them. What then is the explanation. Simply this, that everybody silently says to himself: **The 100 per cent. opposition of Leningrad to Moscow is the work of the apparatus.** This, N. I., is the gist of the "genuine state of things."

But Leningrad does not stand alone as regards "day-to-day routine." In the past year we had on the one hand, the Chita business, and on the other, that in Kherson. Naturally you and I understand that the

* Controlled at the time (1926) by the Right wing of Bukharin-Rykov-Uglaçov in a bloc with Stalin.

** Controlled at the time (1926) by Zinoviev and Kamenev who had broken with Stalin and entered into a bloc with the Left Opposition.

Chita and Kherson abominations* are exceptions precisely because of their excesses. But these exceptions are **symptomatic**. Could the things that happened in Chita have occurred had there not been among the Chita summits a special, binding, mutual amnesty, with independence from the rank and file as its basis? Did you read the report of Schlichter's investigating committee on Khersonovism? The document is instructive to the highest degree—not only because it characterizes some of the Khersonovist personnel, but also because it characterizes certain aspects of the party regime as a whole. To the question why all the local communists, who had known of the crimes of the responsible workers, kept quiet, apparently for a period of two-three years, Schlichter received the answer: "Just try to speak up—you will lose your job, you'll get kicked into a village, etc., etc." I quote, of course, from memory, but that is the gist of it. And Schlichter exclaims apropos of this: "What! Up to now only oppositionists have told us that for this or that opinion they have been **allegedly** (?) removed from posts, kicked into a village, etc., etc. But now we hear from party members that they do not protest against **criminal actions** of leading comrades for fear of being removed, thrown into a village, expelled from the party, etc." I cite again from memory.

I know that certain comrades, possibly you among them, have been carrying out until recent times a plan somewhat as follows: give the workers in the nuclei the possibility of criticizing factory, guild and regional matters, and at the same time, crack down resolutely on every "opposition" emanating from the upper ranks

* In 1925-26 numerous cases were laid bare of criminal abuse of power by ranking provincial bureaucrats. The Chita and Kherson affairs were the most notorious instances at the time of corruption, grafting, terrorization of the party membership and of the populace, and other crimes.

of the party. In this way, the apparatus-regime as a whole was to be preserved by providing it with a broader base. But this experiment was not at all successful. The methods and habits of the apparatus-regime inevitably seep down from the top. If every criticism of the Central Committee and even criticism inside the Central Committee is equated, under all conditions, to a factional struggle for power, with all the ensuing consequences; then the Leningrad Committee will carry out the self-same policy in relation to those who criticize it in the sphere of its plenipotentiary powers, and under the Leningrad Committee there are districts and sub-districts.

When in 1923 the opposition arose in Moscow (without the aid of the local apparatus, and against its resistance) the central and local apparatus brought the bludgeon down on Moscow's skull under the slogan: "Shut up! You do not recognize the peasantry." In the same apparatus-way you are now bludgeoning the Leningrad organization, and crying, "Shut up! You don't recognize the middle peasant." You are thus terrorizing in two main centres of proletarian dictatorship the best proletarian elements, re-educating them from expressing aloud not only their views, correct or erroneous alike, but also their alarm concerning the general questions of the revolution and socialism. And meanwhile, the democratic rights granted to the rural areas are entrenched.

Can't you see all the dangers that flow from this?

March 4, 1926
Personal

N(ikolai) Ivanovich,

I write this letter in longhand (although I have grown unaccustomed to it) inasmuch as it is embarrassing to dictate to a stenographer what I have to say.

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Can't you see all the dangers that flow from this? *

* * * *

March 4, 1926
Personal

N(ikolai) Ivanovich,

I write this letter in longhand (although I have grown unaccustomed to it) inasmuch as it is embarrassing to dictate to a stenographer what I have to say.

You are of course aware that in accordance with the Uglanov* line there is being conducted against me in Moscow a half-concealed struggle with all sorts of sallies and insinuations which I refrain from characterizing here as they deserve.

By all sorts of machinations—in part and wholly unworthy of and degrading to our organization—I am not permitted to speak at workers' meetings. At the same time rumours are being spread systemically through the workers' nuclei that I give lectures "for the bourgeoisie" and refuse to speak to workers. Now just listen to what luxuriates on this soil, and this, once again, not at all accidentally. I cite verbatim from a letter of a worker party member.

"In our nucleus the question has been posed why you arrange to give paid reports. The prices of admission to these reports are very high and the workers cannot afford them. Consequently only the bourgeoisie attends. The secretary of our nucleus explains to us in his talks that for these reports you charge fees, percentages for your own benefit. He tells us that for every one of your articles and for your by-line you also take a fee, that you have a big family and, says he, you run shy of funds. Does a member of the Polit-bureau really have to sell his by-line? etc., etc. You will ask: isn't this silly nonsense? No, to our sorrow, it is not nonsense. I have verified it. At first it was decided to write a letter to the Central Control Commission (or Central Committee), signed by several members of the nucleus, but then they decided not to, saying: "They will drive us out of the factory, and we have families." . . .

In this way a fear has seized the worker-party member that if he tries to verify the most infamous slander

* Uglanov was one of the Right-wing leaders of the inquisitions and purges against the Left Opposition during the period of the Right-Centre Bloc (1925-1929).

against a member of the Politbureau, he, a party member, can be driven from the factory, for following party procedure. And you know, were he to ask me, I could not in all sincerity say that this would not happen. The same secretary of the same nucleus says — and again not at all accidentally: "In the Politburo the sheenies are running wild." And again no one dared to say anything about it to anyone — for the selfsame openly formulated reason: they will drive us out of the factory.

Another item. The author of the letter which I cited above, is a Jewish worker. He, too, did not dare to write about the "sheenies who agitate against Leninism." The motive is as follows: "If the others, the non-Jews, keep quiet, it would be awkward for me . . ." And this worker — who wrote me to ask whether it is true that I sell my speeches and my by-line to the bourgeoisie — is now also expecting that he will be driven any hour from the factory. This is a fact. Another fact is that I am not at all sure that this won't happen — if not immediately, then a month from now; there are plenty of pretexts. And everybody in the nucleus knows "that's how it was, that's how it will be" — and they hang their heads.

In other words: members of the communist party are afraid to report to the party organs about Black-Hundred agitation, thinking that it is they who will be driven out and not the Black-Hundred gangster.

You will say: Exaggeration! I, too, would like to think so. Therefore I have a proposal to make: Let us both take a trip to the nucleus and check up on it: I think that you and I — two members of the Politbureau — have after all a few things in common, enough to calmly and conscientiously verify: whether it is true, whether it is possible that in our party, in Moscow, in a workers' nucleus, propaganda is being conducted with impunity which is vile and slanderous, on the one hand, and antisemitic, on the other; and

that honest workers are afraid to question or to verify or try to refute any stupidity, lest they be driven into the street with their families. Of course you can refer me to the "proper bodies." But this would signify only closing the vicious circle.

I want to hope that you will not do this; and it is precisely this hope which prompts this letter.

Yours,

L. TROTSKY.

Read

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READ

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