
Stalin, “The Voice of the Party,” Breaks Trotsky: The Rubberstamp Secretary vs. The Fiery Idealist: Sidelights on the Russian Revolution.

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Before the death of the father of the Revolution — now its patron saint — two figures stood at the focus of the world’s attention: Lenin and Trotsky. Since then the figure of Stalin has grown to commanding proportions. Now it is Stalin and Trotsky who dominate the Russian scene. And, as the years go by, they have come to dominate in vividly contrasting ways.

Stalin is undisputed “boss” today. He rules through his commanding position as General Secretary of the dominant party, and from that post influences the appointment chairmen of the Council of People’s Commissars and the heads of politics and industry. He sees practically no foreigners and none of the high non-Communist administrative officers of Government: his work is to keep the party machine organized and efficiently functioning. But that is ultimately the most powerful post in the nation.

Trotsky’s Popularity — So Richly Deserved.

Trotsky, on the other hand, is admittedly broken — politically. After his first defeat three years ago he was still more popular than the whole Central Committee to which he bowed; after his second defeat, a year and a half ago, he was still more popular with the rank and file — more important than any other single individual. But after his last defeat he can hardly claim even wide popularity. His supporters are baffled and scattered. Small groups of Communists from distant village districts even send in resolutions that “folk who persist in keeping up discussion should be thrown out of the party.”

And yet, though he is beaten, deprived of most of his jobs, with his assignment to future work hanging obviously on the week by week decision of the Central Committee, which Stalin controls, it is still Trotsky’s slogans that are followed. His theses on industry, presented three years ago, still furnish the mottoes of this year: “Industrialization” and “Regime of Economy.” His consolidation of the electrical industries, effected by a two weeks’ conference more than a year ago, still determines the program of that most popular industry in Russia. Every fight that he initiates has its effect on policy — a year late. Every practical suggestion he made last spring is now a part of the orthodox program.

Every vital suggestion he makes gets adopted sooner or later, and often without alterations. Only — he himself is never allowed to do the job of carrying them into action. He is attacked for his manner of making criticisms, even when his criticisms are followed.

The Opposition grouped around Trotsky is small, but very able. It contains practically all the names known abroad as makers of the October Revolution: Zinoviev, Kamenev, Radek, Sokolnikov, Piatakov, and many others. These were the men who were abroad in Europe during the Tsarist days of persecution — they learned Western languages, Western industrial technique, Western revolutionary movements. They became internationalists not only in theory, but also in instinct. They comprise all the good orators of the Communist Party. Meetings have become dull since the Opposition was suppressed. Their weakness was a

lack of touch with the peasant and the hinterland of Russia.

Stalin's Backing.

The majority group, around Stalin, consists mainly of those "Old Bolsheviks" who spent their days of exile in the backwoods of Russia and Siberia, knowing no Western languages, but learning to know the peasant and the backward nationalities. They built up the illegal factory organizations and are bound by a thousand ties of dangers, shared with all the far-flung web of the old Bolshevik machine of Russia. In every factory their men are now heroes of pre-revolutionary days, revered leaders of the younger generation of workers growing up around them. Their unity is welded by years of facing death together, and their control of the party machine is apparently unbreakable. They, also, are internationalist by theory, but a certain percentage of their following is nationalist by instinct.

Between these two groups lies a theoretical gulf which to the practically-minded outsider seems remote and unimportant. But to the Communist, for whom ultimate theory and immediate practice rarely get clearly differentiated, this chasm is so wide that the two groups can hardly speak across it with understanding.

From the standpoint of capitalist nations, the area of agreement between the two groups is far greater than is that of disagreement. Both are sincerely convinced that Russia is today engaged in the job of "building Socialism" — and with a considerable degree of success. Both expect, as a matter of faith, an inevitable world revolution. This point of view differs so radically from that of other Governments as completely, to overshadow the internal Communist dissension.

Must Socialism be International?

When carefully examined the point of conflict between the Stalin and Trotsky groups turns on the theoretical question of whether Socialism can be built completely in one land, and that a backward one like Russia, without any help from revolution in other countries. The older view, still held by Trotsky, maintains that more than Russia must be won for the revo-

lution it Socialism is to be a complete success. The newer view, now held by the vast majority of Russian Communists, is that they can do the whole job alone — if they have no foreign war in the meantime.

But this apparently minor difference leads to important practical differences in immediate Soviet policy, such as the industrial program, the peasant problem, and many other matters. If Russia alone is to be the base of the Socialist structure then the peasant must be made an ally of the Government at once; if foreign workers are to help some day then it wiser to hold off the peasant as long as possible and industrialize the country in the meantime.

Personal Cleavage.

Entirely apart from this tactical disagreement, however, the cleavage in function between Stalin and Trotsky, which keeps Trotsky continuously out of any effective action in connection even with programs he has invented, has also a basis in the nature of the two individuals.

Trotsky is a personality: he inspires millions. Stalin is only a perfect Secretary. Yet Stalin wins and Trotsky loses. Trotsky loses because his personality is always in evidence; Stalin wins because he succeeds in making himself forgotten. He is thought of not as a man but as the "Voice of the Party."

Personal allegiances are at a discount among the Communists. Aside from their reverence for Lenin, who is no longer a man but a symbol, they wish to follow, not any individual, but the collective will of the organization. Stalin succeeds by becoming identified with that collective will. A man who can do that is, of course, a great politician.

Stalin the Man.

Because of this it is very hard to obtain any clear impression of Stalin as an individual. No one knows him except the older Communists. He appears seldom at meetings or in the press. A friend of mine who blundered into his rooms in the Kremlin one day received chiefly an impression of an austerity, sunlit, clean, workmanlike, with flowers in the window. Like all the older Communists, Stalin works night and day and is not in good health. "Most of those men who made

the revolution be gone by its 10th anniversary" predicted the Kremlin doctor; and the series of funerals — Lenin, Vorovsky, Dzerzhinsky, Krasin — gives point to his statement. All have suffered imprisonment, exile, hunger, battle since the days of youth. And all still work unceasingly — morning, afternoon, evening, till after midnight.

Stalin is no exception. He won his very name — "Stalin," the "Steel One" — for his work in the Georgian section of the Bolsheviks, the most daringly adventurous group in old Russia. Theirs were the guerilla tactics of trained mountaineers. They made a sport of robbing the special emissaries of the Tsar who were bearing funds to the Persian Embassy or Georgian dependency, and they turned the funds over, untouched by any individual, to the "communized party treasury" for propaganda. On one such occasion, when the seizure of funds led to armed conflict, a venturesome member of the band snatched a cloak and hat from his opponents. Caparisoned as a Tsar's official, he dashed into the melee and "rescued" the treasure while his comrades scattered to a later meeting place to receive it. Other members of this group suffered years of torture without betraying secrets.

Stalin's Real Name.

Such was the daring of the flaming youth who bestowed the name "Stalin, the Steel One," on the man who today is famed for being the "perfect secretary," and who in those days, among many aliases, had the real name Joseph Vissarionovich Dzhugashvili. Son of a peasant cobbler, he was sent on a Tsar's scholarship to a theological school, the only task, it is said, that Stalin ever began and did not finish. He was expelled for revolutionary leanings, began organizing Baku oil workers, and was soon sent to Siberia on the first of many periods of exile.

It was by lonely mail courier across the Siberian snows that Stalin first heard of Lenin. He wrote to a trusted friend to ask if this new prophet, Lenin, was really what he seemed, "the mountain eagle of our party." And it was across the Siberian snows, without attending a congress, that Stalin followed Lenin into the ranks of Bolsheviks at the time of the party split. From that time on he was a devoted disciple, though he saw Lenin very seldom; for while Lenin was in exile

abroad, writing forbidden literature and smuggling it into Russia, Stalin was organizing illegal Bolshevik groups in factories and escaping from frequent prisons and distant Arctic internments. He was unknown outside the party ranks, but was gradually rising within the organization.

Stalin's Mistake: That He Never Makes Mistakes.

It is characteristic of Stalin that he has never made a recognized mistake, as mistakes are interpreted today in Russia. Always he sided with Lenin; and if Lenin himself very often admitted mistakes, these cannot be remembered against any disciple. When Zinoviev deserted, Stalin stood with Lenin and Trotsky when Trotsky erred, Stalin was still with Lenin. The only accusation possible against such a man is the charge of being a rubberstamp; and this charge has been made in the heat of opposition. On one occasion when Stalin was enumerating the mistakes of Preobrazhensky, the latter cried: "At least I worked with my own mind." Stalin merely nodded, adding: "And worked with it badly." Thus he refused to be drawn into a personal defence, maintaining himself as the judging voice of the party.

The Voice of the Party.

How successful he has been in thus maintaining himself is indicated by many incidents. Two years ago a Communist friend said to me: "When Zinoviev says a thing we wait to hear from the Central Committee; when Stalin says a thing we know it is settled." Another friend remarked in connection with Trotsky's second defeat: "Anyone who threatens party unity will be thus dealt with. Zinoviev would be even worse treated, for he is less popular."

"And Stalin?" I asked. "If he threatened party unity?" My friend looked nonplussed. Finally he replied: "But Stalin could not threaten party unity." Stalin could not be thought of in this man's mind aside from the unified voice of the party.

In public appearances Stalin is not a remarkable speaker. His voice is low, his style of delivery poor; he is even hard to understand in a big meeting. But in more intimate party conferences he is effective. One

his personal friends says that the beginning of his speech is not interesting. But as step by step he piles up argument, his words become convincing, then important — and therefore interesting. "He is tiresome, but very wise." He attains emphasis, not by raising his voice, but by lowering it, until men strain to hear.

Trotsky's Effect.

Utterly different is Trotsky's effect on a meeting. In the old days, when he entered any auditorium, tumultuous, continued applause interrupted whoever was speaking. Cheers and inspiring emotion punctuated his addresses, and he never spoke without leaving some phrases that passed into the nation's vocabulary as slogans. He had a journalist's training and he thinks naturally in headlines. Headlines and slogans may stir a nation to battle and save a revolution; but they are always a trifle inaccurate and unsafe as a logical statement of party program. They are always an oversimplification of a problem.

"There are two men whom responsible party workers really go to hear," a Russian Communist said to me before the last party discussion. "Trotsky for the thrill of getting a new idea and the joy of its brilliant presentation; Stalin for the cold but accurate formulation of one's next task and duty."

Only indirectly may one obtain a glimpse of Stalin's personal ideals for himself as organizer of men. It is given in his appreciation of Sverdlov whom he calls "aside from Lenin, the only great organizer our party has yet produced." It is clear that Stalin does not consider Trotsky a great organizer, although Trotsky's genius created the Red Army. Stalin outlines calmly and completely "what it means to be an organizer under our conditions." Here we can see his own ideal — a stern and colorless one, but terrific in its singleness of purpose:

To be an organizer means first to know one's men, their strong and weak qualities; to know them dispassionately, what each is good for.

It means, next, to place one's men so that their strong points have full exercise and their weak points are corrected or neutralized or, even made into elements of strength; so that each man feels that he has the chance to express the utmost he has in him to give to the revolution.

It means, third, to relate one's men to each other in such fashion that the joint result of their work shall produce, not uneven disjointedness, but a steady crescendo of the

work as a whole; and so that, lastly, this work shall be clearly and increasingly directed toward the aims for which the whole organization came into being.

Such, freely paraphrased, is Stalin's ideal of an organizer. With it inevitably goes, if a man is to succeed in practical politics, a keen ruthlessness not too squeamish to undermine an opponent who is troublesome, and brutally efficient in the tactics of doing so. Yet there is a certain cool appraisal of human values, and of the scarcity of good men in Russia, which leads the secretariat of the Russian Party never utterly to destroy men, but rather to place them in other jobs, where they can be useful — and not dangerous.

Stalin's Way with Opponents.

Thus a prominent Communist whose flair for elegance discredited him in ascetic Moscow, was given a high post in an Eastern embassy, where that quality strengthened his reputation. Thus, also, the members of the Opposition, most of them marked by familiarity with Western languages, are sent to be Ambassadors and heads of trading organizations where they will be out of politics — but useful. It is the aim of the Russian Communist Party to waste nobody, and to exalt nobody.

Trotsky's Loyalty.

There is little doubt that in the last three years Trotsky has been deliberately "broken" by Stalin — brutally, yet not maliciously. It took a long time. Trotsky is no politician, and Stalin is a very able one. Year after year Trotsky was out-generated into the position of the "man starting discussion." Of course no side ever entirely starts discussion; it only answers an earlier statement of the other side. But Stalin has been able to put Trotsky in the place of the "irreconcilable debater." It is this, and not the right or wrong aspect of his views, that has broken Trotsky. It has made him appear to threaten the unity of his party. This is the one thing that will not be tolerated in Russia.

After every discussion Trotsky received a chance to submit. And always he submitted in a way that the Western world would call humiliating — offering to "take any work at any post, or any work without a post, as the Central Committee assigns"; or, later, stat-

ing that "inasmuch as his tactics had seemed to the rank and file to threaten a real split in the party, he considered that his tactics had been thoroughly wrong, and he would not repeat them."

Trotsky's Individuality.

But his submission has never been complete enough to satisfy the standards of Russian Communism. He has always maintained some corners of his soul that were unsubmitting; he has criticized not only when criticism was called for, but even in the hour of action. He has never ceased to be Trotsky.

So he is considered always "unsafe," "irregular" by the central machine of the party. That is why they felt that he must be broken.

The loss of Trotsky takes much thrill and color out of life in Moscow. When he ceased to receive the new recruits in the Red Square and to administer the oath of devotion he himself had written, the parades became commonplace. All revolutionary festivals are duller for the loss of Trotsky; all revolutionary life is less enthusiastic. For he was, and might be again, the great inspirer of enthusiasm. It was his unique gift to lift each man's task to the plane of an important battle for Socialism.

There used to be tens of thousands of men who would die with enthusiasm for Trotsky, or even for Trotsky's mistakes; there are many still today; though fewer. No one would die for Stalin. But increasing hundreds of thousands would wear out health and life; would die without enthusiasm but as part of the day's job for the organization of which he is Secretary and accepted voice.

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