Writings of Leon Trotsky [1930-31]
WRITINGS OF
LEON
TROTSKY
[1930-31]

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Leon Trotsky lived in Turkey for four and a half years after being exiled from the Soviet Union in 1929. The present volume, one of five dealing with his writings in Turkey, covers the period from September 1930 through December 1931. His departure from Turkey in mid-1933 coincided with his decision that a new revolutionary International was needed to replace the Communist International. But until then, and throughout his stay in Turkey, he continued to believe that it was possible and necessary to “reform” the Comintern and return it to the role of vanguard of the world revolution that it had played in Lenin’s time.

Toward the end of 1930 Trotsky completed the first volume of *The History of the Russian Revolution*; the full work was not to be finished until 1932. The major reason for that was the attention, time, and thought that he devoted during the same period to the major political developments throughout the world and to the problems of building the International Left Opposition, the Bolshevik-Leninist faction through which he sought to bring about the Comintern’s regeneration.

Internationally, in Trotsky’s opinion, the most decisive events in 1930 and 1931, and the ones most challenging to revolutionaries, were those taking place in Germany, Spain, and the Soviet Union.

In Germany Hitler’s Nazis had just become a serious threat, as measured by the September 1930 Reichstag election. But there was still time to stop them, Trotsky believed, if the powerful German Communist Party could be persuaded to abandon its Moscow-imposed ultraleftism and to seek an antifascist united front
with the German social democracy.

In Spain a mass radicalization shook the country after the fall of a seven-year-long military dictatorship. In April 1931 socialists and liberals swept the municipal elections, the monarch abdicated, and a new government which called itself a “republic of labor” took over. It was an exceptionally favorable prerevolutionary situation, in Trotsky’s view, and he did everything in his power to help the new and inexperienced Spanish section of the Left Opposition take full advantage of its opportunities.

His writings on Germany and Spain in this period are collected elsewhere: in *The Struggle Against Fascism in Germany* (Pathfinder Press, 1971) and *The Spanish Revolution (1931–39)* (Pathfinder Press, 1973). Together, the 1930–31 portions of those books could fill a volume by themselves.

The crisis in the Soviet Union was of another character, but no less severe. After rejecting the Left Opposition’s demands for industrialization in the 1920s, the Soviet bureaucracy under Stalin began a program of headlong, poorly prepared industrial expansion and forced collectivization of the land at the end of the decade. The costs, human and economic, were staggering, the suffering almost unimaginable. The bureaucracy was forced to slow down momentarily: farm collectivization, counted at 58 percent in March 1930, was reduced to 21 percent in September 1930. But its prestige was at stake, perhaps its very power too, and it lurched forward again accelerating the collectivization until it passed 50 percent in 1931. All the bureaucracy had to offer the groaning workers and peasants were scapegoats and repressions—“confession” trials in 1930 and 1931 of secondary figures who were blamed for economic sabotage, and purges of Stalinist officials who had become critical of Stalin and who were labeled as followers of the already crushed Right or Left Oppositions.

All of Trotsky’s articles on these matters are printed here, including the three pamphlet-length documents on the Soviet economy: “The Successes of Socialism and the Dangers of Adventurism,” “Problems of the Development of the USSR,” and “New Zigzags and New Dangers.” Also included are his articles about the sensational “Industrial Party” and “Menshevik Center” trials
and his defense of the expelled and exiled Marxist historian David B. Ryazanov.

In addition, Trotsky concerned himself with the major political and organizational problems facing the national affiliates of the International Left Opposition, which had been constituted in Paris in April 1930. He offered advice to a national conference of the German Left Opposition, he wrote illuminating replies to its leaders’ questions about such matters as Thermidor, Bonapartism, and dual power, and he intervened in an internal German struggle at a crucial juncture to explain cliquism and expound the Bolshevik concept of revolutionary organization. When the second British Labour government fell in 1931 and certain radicals began to delude themselves with theories about Britain on the verge of fascism, he sought to bring them back to earth through several articles that can still be read with profit by students of the Marxist method of analysis. He was equally patient and equally determined to educate in his correspondence with his French, Belgian, Bulgarian, Chinese, Italian, Indochinese, Swiss, and United States comrades.

The last selection in the volume is a letter Trotsky wrote to Moscow in the name of the Left Opposition after Stalin had helped to publicize the fact that a Russian White Guard general was planning to assassinate Trotsky in Turkey and after it had become clear that Stalin had no intention of cooperating with the Left Opposition to protect Trotsky.

Approximately half of the selections in this volume are translated into English for the first time or have appeared in English previously only in Left Opposition internal bulletins with restricted circulation. Several were signed by pen names or were unsigned when first published. The date preceding each selection indicates when it was completed; if that is not known, the date when it was first published is given. The articles before April 1, 1931, were written at Prinkipo; after that date at Kadikoy. Translations originally done in the 1930s have been revised to correct obvious errors and achieve uniformity in spelling of names, punctuation, etc. Acknowledgments about the articles and translations, and explanatory material about the persons and events mentioned in
them, will be found in the section entitled “Notes and Acknowledgments.” “Other Writings of 1930–31” lists the books, pamphlets, and articles from that period which are not included in this volume because they are in print and available elsewhere.

The preparation of this volume was greatly facilitated by the pioneering work done by Louis Sinclair in his Leon Trotsky: A Bibliography (Hoover Institution Press, 1972), and by the courtesies of the Harvard College Library, whose permissions to examine and use material in the “open” section of the Trotsky archives at Harvard are reported in “Notes and Acknowledgments.”

*The Editors*

*AUGUST 1973*
Chronology

1930

**September** – The International Left Opposition publishes a manifesto on China.

**September 14** – The Nazis make big gains in the German Reichstag elections.

**October 1** – The third year of the Soviet Union’s first five-year plan begins.

**October 11–12** – The German Left Opposition holds a national conference in Berlin.

**November** – Trotsky finishes the first volume of *The History of the Russian Revolution*.

**November** – Alfred Rosmer quits the International Secretariat and the French Communist League.

**December 7** – Eight Soviet economic officials, defendants in the “Industrial Party” trial in Moscow, are convicted of conspiring with foreign powers to overthrow the Soviet government.

**December** – S.I. Syrtsov and V.V. Lominadze, longtime Stalinist officials, accused of having organized an “antiparty ‘Left’-Right bloc,” are ousted from the Central Committee of the Russian party.

1931

**February** – Leon Sedov moves from Prinkipo to Berlin, to which publication of *Biulleten Oppozitsii* is transferred.

**March 1** – Trotsky’s home at Prinkipo burns to the ground, after which he moves to Kadikoy.

**March 1** – Moscow announces the purge of 138,000 government employees.

**March 9** – Fourteen defendants in the Moscow trial of the “Menshe-
vik Center” are convicted as counterrevolutionaries.

April 4 – Trotsky writes “Problems of the Development of the USSR.”

April – Republican parties win the municipal elections in Spain, King Alfonso XIII abdicates, and a republic is proclaimed.

August 9 – The German Communist Party and the Nazis, in an unholy united front, send their supporters to the polls in the so-called “red referendum,” an unsuccessful electoral move to oust the Social Democratic-led state government of Prussia.

August 24 – The second British Labour cabinet, headed by Ramsay MacDonald, falls, to be replaced by a coalition “National” government dedicated to “balancing the budget” at the expense of the workers and the unemployed.

September 18–19 – Japanese troops launch an invasion of Manchuria.

October 27 – Supporters of the British “National” government win a sweeping victory in the parliamentary elections.

October 31 – The German Communist Party’s chief newspaper reports the organization of a White Guard plot to assassinate Trotsky in Turkey.

December – The Left Opposition sends a letter to Moscow protesting Stalin’s failure to respond to a proposal for joint action to protect Trotsky.
Leon Trotsky at his desk in Prinkipo, 1931.
During the last few months a peasant movement of considerable scope has again appeared in certain provinces of southern China. Not only the world press of the proletariat, but the press of its enemies as well, is filled with the echoes of this struggle. The Chinese revolution, betrayed, defeated, exhausted, shows that it is still alive. Let us hope that the time when it will again lift its proletarian head is not far off. And in order to be prepared for this, we must put the problems of the Chinese revolution on the agenda of the working class of the world.

We, the International Communist Left Opposition (Bolshevik-Leninists), consider it our duty to raise our voices now in order to attract the attention of all communists, all advanced revolutionary workers, to the task of liberating this great country of East Asia and at the same time to warn them against the false policy of the dominant faction of the Communist International, which obviously threatens to undermine the coming Chinese revolution as it ruined the 1925–27 revolution.

The signs of the rebirth of the Chinese revolution in the countryside indicate its inner forces and immense potentialities. But
the task is to transform these potentialities into reality. The first condition for success is to understand what is happening, that is, to make a Marxist analysis of the motive forces and to estimate correctly the current stage of the struggle. On both counts, the ruling circle of the Comintern is wrong.

The Stalinist press is filled with communications about a “soviet government” established in vast provinces of China under the protection of a Red army. Workers in many countries are greeting this news with excitement. Of course! The establishment of a soviet government in a substantial part of China and the creation of a Chinese Red army would be a gigantic success for the international revolution. But we must state openly and clearly: this is not yet true.

Despite the scanty information which reaches us from the vast areas of China, our Marxist understanding of the developing process enables us to reject with certainty the Stalinist view of the current events. It is false and extremely dangerous for the further development of the revolution.

For centuries the history of China has been one of formidable uprisings of a destitute and hungry peasantry. Not less than five times in the last two thousand years the Chinese peasants succeeded in effecting a complete redivision of landed property. Each time the process of concentration began anew and continued until the growth of the population again produced a partial or general explosion. This vicious cycle was an expression of economic and social stagnation.

Only the inclusion of China in the world economy opened up new possibilities. Capitalism invaded China from abroad. The backward Chinese bourgeoisie became the intermediary between foreign capital and the mercilessly exploited masses of their own country. The foreign imperialists and the Chinese bourgeoisie combine the methods of capitalist exploitation with the methods of feudal oppression and enslavement through usury.

The fundamental idea of the Stalinists was to transform the Chinese bourgeoisie into a leader of the national revolution against feudalism and imperialism. The results of this political strategy ruined the revolution. The Chinese proletariat paid a heavy price
for knowledge of the truth that their bourgeoisie cannot, does not want to, and never will fight either against so-called “feudalism,” which constitutes the most important part of its own system of exploitation, or against imperialism, whose agent it is and under whose military protection it operates.

As soon as it was clear that the Chinese proletariat, in spite of all the obstacles put in its path by the Comintern, was ready to proceed on its own independent revolutionary road, the bourgeoisie, with the help of the foreign imperialists, beginning in Shanghai, crushed the workers’ movement. As soon as it was clear that friendship with Moscow could not paralyze the uprising of the peasants, the bourgeoisie shattered the peasants’ movement. The spring and summer of 1927 were the months of the greatest crimes of the Chinese bourgeoisie.

Frightened by the consequences of its mistakes, at the end of 1927 the Stalinist faction abruptly tried to compensate for its blunders of the past years. The Canton insurrection was organized. The Stalinist leaders assumed that the revolution was still on the rise; actually, it was already on the decline. The heroism of the vanguard workers could not prevent the disaster caused by the adventure of these leaders. The Canton insurrection was drowned in blood. The second Chinese revolution was completely destroyed.

From the beginning, we, the representatives of the International Left Opposition, the Bolshevik-Leninists, were against entering the Kuomintang and for an independent proletarian policy. From the very beginning of the revolutionary upsurge, we urged that the organization of workers’, soldiers’, and peasants’ soviets be initiated; we urged that the workers take their place at the head of the peasant insurrection and carry through the agrarian revolution to its conclusion. Our course was rejected. Our supporters were persecuted and expelled from the Comintern; those in the USSR were arrested and exiled. In the name of what? In the name of a bloc with Chiang Kai-shek.

After the counterrevolutionary coup d’état in Shanghai and Wuhan we, the Communist Left Oppositionists, warned insistently that the second Chinese revolution was finished, that a temporary triumph of the counterrevolution had supervened, and that
an attempt at insurrection by the advanced workers in the face of the general demoralization and fatigue of the masses would inevitably bring additional criminal blows against the revolutionary forces. We demanded a shift to the defensive, a strengthening of the underground organization of the party, the participation in the economic struggles of the proletariat, and the mobilization of the masses under democratic slogans: the independence of China, the right of self-determination for the different nationalities in the population, a constituent assembly, the confiscation of the land, the eight-hour workday. Such a policy would have allowed the Communist vanguard to emerge gradually from its defeat, to reestablish connections with the trade unions and with the unorganized urban and rural masses, and to prepare to meet the new revolutionary upsurge fully armed.

The Stalinist faction denounced our policy as “liquidationist,” while it, not for the first time, went from opportunism to adventurism. In February 1928, when the Chinese revolution was at its lowest point, the Ninth Plenum of the Executive Committee of the Communist International announced a policy of armed insurrection in China. The results of this madness were the further defeat of the workers, the murder of the best revolutionaries, a split in the party, demoralization in the ranks of the workers. The decline of the revolution and a temporary lessening of the struggle between the militarists permitted a limited economic revival in the country. Strikes occurred again. But these were conducted independently of the party, which, not understanding the situation, was absolutely unable to present a new perspective to the masses and to unite them under the democratic slogans of the transitional period. As a result of new errors, opportunism, and adventurism, the Communist Party now counts in its ranks only a few thousand workers. In the Red trade unions, according to the figures given by the party itself, there are about sixty thousand workers. In the months of the revolutionary upsurge there were about three million.

The counterrevolution left its mark more directly and much more ruthlessly on the workers than on the peasants. The workers in China are small in number and are concentrated in the in-
dustrial centers. The peasants are protected to a certain extent by their numbers and their diffusion over vast areas. The revolution­ary years trained quite a few rural local leaders, and the counter­revolution did not succeed in eliminating them all. A considerable number of revolutionary workers hid from the militarists in the countryside. In the last decade a large amount of arms was widely dispersed. In conflicts with local administrators or military units, these arms were obtained by the peasants and Red guerrilla bands were organized. Agitation flared up in the armies of the bourgeois counterrevolution, at times leading to open revolts. Soldiers, with their guns, deserted to the side of the peasants, sometimes in groups, sometimes in whole companies.

It is quite natural, therefore, that even after the defeat of the revolution waves of the peasant movement continued to roll through the various provinces of the country and have now force­fully rushed ahead. Armed peasant bands drive out and exterminate local landlords, as many as can be found in their regions, and especially the so-called gentry and tuchuns [military governors or warlords], the local representatives of the ruling class—the bureaucrat-proprietors, the usurers, the rich peasants.

When the Stalinists talk about a soviet government established by the peasants in a substantial part of China, they not only re­veal their credulity and superficiality; they obscure and misrepre­sent the fundamental problem of the Chinese revolution. The peas­antry, even the most revolutionary, cannot create an independent government; it can only support the government of another class, the dominant urban class. The peasantry at all decisive moments follows either the bourgeoisie or the proletariat. So-called “peas­ant parties” may disguise this fact, but they cannot annul it. Sovi­ets are the organs of power of a revolutionary class in opposition to the bourgeoisie. This means that the peasantry is unable to organize a soviet system on its own. The same holds true for an army. More than once in China, and in Russia and other countries too, the peasantry has organized guerrilla armies which fought with incomparable courage and stubbornness. But they remained guerrilla armies, connected to a local province and incapable of centralized strategic operations on a large scale. Only the predomi-
nance of the proletariat in the decisive industrial and political centers of the country creates the necessary basis for the organization of a Red army and for the extension of a soviet system into the countryside. To those unable to grasp this, the revolution remains a book closed with seven seals.

The Chinese proletariat is just beginning to recover from the paralysis of the counterrevolution. The peasant movement at the present time is advancing, to a large degree, independently of the workers’ movement, according to its own laws and at its own tempo. But the heart of the problem of the Chinese revolution consists in the political coordination and organizational combination of the proletarian and peasant uprisings. Those who talk about the victory of the soviet revolution in China, although confined to separate provinces in the South and confronted with passivity in the industrial North, ignore the dual problem of the Chinese revolution: the problem of an alliance between the workers and peasants and the problem of the leading role of the workers in this alliance.

The vast flood of peasant revolts unquestionably can provide the impulse for the revival of political struggle in the industrial centers. We firmly count on it. But this does not mean in any case that the revolutionary awakening of the proletariat would lead immediately to the conquest of power or even to the struggle for power. The resurgence of the proletariat might at first assume the character of partial economic and political defensive and offensive struggles. How much time would the proletariat, and particularly the Communist vanguard, require to rise to its role as leader of a revolutionary nation? At any rate, more than weeks or months. Bureaucratic command is no substitute for the independent growth of the class and its party.

At this juncture the Chinese Communists need a long-range policy. They must not scatter their forces among the isolated flames of the peasant revolt. Weak and small in number, the party will not be able to take hold of this movement. The Communists must concentrate their forces in the factories and the shops and in the workers’ districts in order to explain to the workers the meaning of what is happening in the provinces, to lift the spirits of the tired
and discouraged, to organize groups of workers for a struggle to defend their economic interests, and to raise the slogans of the democratic-agrarian revolution. Only through the process of activating and uniting the workers will the Communist Party be able to assume leadership of the peasant insurrection, that is, of the national revolution as a whole.

To support the illusions of adventurism and to conceal the weakness of the proletarian vanguard, the Stalinists say that a democratic dictatorship, not a proletarian, is the issue. On this central point their adventurism relies entirely on the premises of opportunism. Not satisfied with their Kuomintang experiment, the Stalinists are devising a new formula for the coming revolution with which to put to sleep and chain the working class, the “democratic dictatorship.”

When the vanguard workers in China advanced the slogan of soviets, they were saying: we want to do what the Russian workers did. Only yesterday the Stalinists replied to this: no, you must not, you have the Kuomintang, and it will do what is necessary. Today the same leaders respond more cautiously: you will have to organize soviets, not for a proletarian but for a democratic dictatorship. They thereby tell the proletariat that the dictatorship will not be in their hands, that there is some other as-yet-undiscovered force which can introduce the revolutionary dictatorship in China. In this way the formula of the democratic dictatorship opens the gates to a new deception of the workers and peasants by the bourgeoisie.

To justify the slogan of the “democratic dictatorship,” the Stalinists describe the Chinese counterrevolution as “feudal-militarist and imperialist.” Thus they exclude the bourgeoisie from the counterrevolution, that is, they again as before idealize the bourgeoisie. In reality the militarists express the interests of the Chinese bourgeoisie, which are inseparable from feudal interests and relations. The Chinese bourgeoisie is too hostile to the people, too closely tied up with the foreign imperialists, and too afraid of the revolution to be eager to rule in their own name by parliamentary methods. The militarist-fascist regime of China is an expression of the antinational, antirevolutionary character of the Chinese
bourgeoisie. The Chinese counterrevolution is not a counterrevolution of feudal barons and slaveowners against bourgeois society. It is a counterrevolution of all property holders—and first of all bourgeois—against the workers and peasants.

The proletarian insurrection in China can and will develop only as a direct and immediate revolution against the bourgeoisie. The peasants' revolt in China, much more than it was in Russia, is a revolt against the bourgeoisie. A class of landlords as a separate class does not exist in China. The landowners and the bourgeoisie are one and the same. The gentry and tuchuns, against whom the peasant movement is immediately directed, represent the lowest link to the bourgeoisie and to the imperialist exploiters as well. In Russia the October Revolution, in its first stage, counterposed all the peasants as a class against all the landlords as a class, and only after several months began to introduce the civil war within the peasantry. In China every peasant uprising is, from the start, a civil war of the poor against the rich peasants, that is, against the village bourgeoisie.

The middle peasantry in China is insignificant. Almost 80 percent of the peasants are poor. They and they alone play a revolutionary role. The problem is not to unite the workers with the peasants as a whole, but with the village poor. They have a common enemy: the bourgeoisie. No one but the workers can lead the poor peasants to victory. Their mutual victory can lead to no other regime but the dictatorship of the proletariat. Only such a regime can establish a soviet system and organize a Red army, which will be the military expression of the dictatorship of the proletariat supported by the poor peasants.

The Stalinists say that the democratic dictatorship, as the next stage of the revolution, will grow into a proletarian dictatorship at a later stage. This is the current doctrine of the Comintern, not only for China but for all the Eastern countries. It is a complete departure from the teachings of Marx on the state and the conclusions of Lenin on the function of the state in a revolution. The democratic dictatorship differs from the proletarian in that it is a *bourgeois*-democratic dictatorship. The transition from a bourgeois to a proletarian dictatorship cannot occur as a peaceful process of
“growing over” from one to the other. A dictatorship of the proletariat can replace a democratic, or a fascist, dictatorship of the bourgeoisie only through armed insurrection.

The peaceful “growing” of a democratic revolution into a socialist revolution is possible only under the dictatorship of one class—the proletariat. The transition from democratic measures to socialist measures took place in the Soviet Union under the regime of the proletarian dictatorship. This transition will be accomplished much faster in China because its most elementary democratic problems have much more of an anticapitalist and anti-bourgeois character than they had in Russia. The Stalinists apparently need one more defeat, paid for by the workers’ blood, before they can bring themselves to say: “The revolution has reached the highest stage, whose slogan is the dictatorship of the proletariat.”

At this moment nobody can tell the extent to which the present peasant insurrection combines the reflection of the second revolution with the summer lightning of the third. Nobody can foretell now whether the hearths of the peasant revolt can keep a fire burning through the whole long period of time which the proletarian vanguard will need to gather its own strength, bring the working class into the fight, and coordinate its struggle for power with the general offensive of the peasants against their most immediate enemies.

What distinguishes this movement in the countryside today is the desire of the peasants to give it the form of soviets, at least in name, and to fashion their own guerrilla armies as much as possible after the Red Army. This shows how intensely the peasants are seeking a political form which would enable them to overcome their dispersion and impotence. From this point of departure, the Communists can proceed successfully.

But it must be understood in advance that in the consciousness of the Chinese peasant the general slogan of soviets does not by any means signify the dictatorship of the proletariat. The peasants cannot speak for the proletarian dictatorship a priori. They can be led to it only through the experience of a struggle which will prove to them in life that their democratic problems cannot
be solved in any way except through the dictatorship of the proletariat. This is the fundamental reason why the Communist Party cannot lead the proletariat to a struggle for power except under democratic slogans.

The peasant movement, although adorned with the name of soviets, remains scattered, local, provincial. It can be elevated to a national movement only by connecting the struggle for land and against oppressive taxes and burdens of militarism with the ideals of the independence of China and the sovereignty of the people. A democratic expression of this connection is the sovereign constituent assembly. Under such a slogan the Communist vanguard will be able to unite around itself the vast masses of workers, the oppressed small townspeople, and the hundreds of millions of poor peasants for an insurrection against foreign and native oppressors.

The organization of workers’ soviets can be attempted only on a rising tide of revolution in the cities. In the meantime we can prepare for it. To prepare means to gather strength. At present we can do it only under consistent and courageous revolutionary-democratic slogans.

And we must explain to the vanguard elements of the working class that a constituent assembly is only a step on the revolutionary road. We are setting our course toward the dictatorship of the proletariat in the form of a soviet regime.

We do not shut our eyes to the fact that such a dictatorship will place the most difficult economic and international problems before the Chinese people. The proletariat in China constitutes a smaller part of the population than the proletariat in Russia did on the eve of the October Revolution. Chinese capitalism is more backward than was Russia’s. But difficulties are conquered not by illusions, not by an adventurist policy, not by hopes in a Chiang Kai-shek or in a “democratic dictatorship.” Difficulties are conquered by clear thinking and revolutionary will.

The Chinese proletariat will take power not in order to resurrect the Chinese Wall and under its protection construct national socialism. By winning power the Chinese proletariat will win one of the most important strategic positions for the international revo-
lution. The fate of China, like that of the USSR, is bound up with the fate of the revolutionary movement of the world proletariat. This is the source of greatest hope and the justification of highest revolutionary courage.

The cause of the international revolution is the cause of the Chinese revolution. The cause of the Chinese revolution is the cause of the international revolution.
Dear Comrades:

In sending your conference my warmest greetings, I want to express myself once more and as briefly as possible regarding the general line of the German Communist Opposition.

It is clear to every one of us that the German Left Opposition is still extremely weak in comparison with the tasks posed before it by the entire situation. This weakness is an inheritance from the past, the result both of objective historical conditions and of false policies, first, of the Maslow-Fischer, then, of the Urbahns leadership. These people thought—and led all oppositionist workers to think—that the official party must inevitably lose influence and collapse, and that the Opposition, reinforced through its struggle with the party, would emerge as a new party on the ruins. Consequently every serious worker felt compelled to ask: If all that has been built during the last ten to twelve years must collapse and new people must build on new ground, what guarantee is there that the results are going to be better? This question is correctly posed. The only guarantee lies in the living experience of the proletarian vanguard, and experience is gained through time
and events. Wide circles of revolutionary workers will begin to follow and have confidence in the Opposition only when they are convinced by their own experience that it not only does not repudiate all the experience accumulated by communism in Germany and in the entire world but, on the contrary, that it bases itself on this experience in order to draw from it, together with the proletarian vanguard, the correct conclusions.

Of course the working class also has its casuists, mere critics who form sects that remain on the periphery of the labor movement for years and who content themselves with impotent criticism, apart from the large tasks and perspectives. These sprouts of ultraleftism rejoice at every failure of the Communist Party and hope that out of the failures of the proletarian vanguard they will miraculously somehow increase their influence.

With these sectarians, who in Germany reflect all the colors of the rainbow, we have not and cannot have anything in common. For us, the victory of our policies depends not on a weakening but on a strengthening of the Communist Party.

Is there any contradiction in this? Do we hear possible objections of even a twofold contradiction? First: can we expect a consolidation of the Communist Party under the present leadership? Second: does not a consolidation of the Communist Party lead to a consolidation of the present leadership, which has proved incapable of leading the proletariat to victory? Both objections are incorrect because they are not dialectical.

The results of the last election have proved again that the influence of the party can grow despite its present incompetent leadership. A correct leadership is the indispensable condition for durable successes and—even more so—for the complete victory of the proletariat. But a party’s influence can grow in spite of the incompetence of its leadership through the intercession of objective factors. We can certainly say that the German party leadership has done nothing, since the March days in 1921 and especially since October 1923 up to this very day, but weaken the revolution and the proletariat. On the other hand, the hopeless international position of Germany, the avaricious and malicious policy of the German bourgeoisie, the infamous and treacherous
role of the social democracy, force huge masses of people onto the revolutionary road.

The fact that by its policy the bureaucratic Stalinist leadership, blind and deaf, self-complacent and ignorant, opportunist and adventurist, prevents the radicalized masses from rallying to the banner of communism becomes in the current situation a major source of strength for National Socialism.16

The increase of Communist votes in the last elections seems important in itself, when measured by a parliamentary yardstick. But it is of very little importance from the point of view of revolutionary possibilities and tasks.

We can say that in the elections the party gained the arithmetical difference between those whom the bourgeoisie and the social democracy have driven toward it and those whom the leadership of the Communist Party has repelled. We can add with full justification that the gains of the German CP, like those of all the other sections of the Comintern, would have been incomparably smaller and their losses far greater were it not for the voice of criticism and admonition of the Left Opposition, its analysis and its prognosis. Weak though we still are organizationally, we have nevertheless already become a serious factor in the internal life of the Communist Party, and a factor for its consolidation at that.

But doesn’t this consolidation lead to the strengthening of the present leadership? And isn’t the present leadership the main obstacle on the road to the proletarian revolution? The second objection is absolutely correct. Thaelmann, Remmele, and Neumann17 combine the worst features of bureaucratic irresponsibility, philistine self-satisfaction, barracks discipline, and the peculiar adventurism of subordinates whereby adventures are executed on command from above and the adventurers know in advance they will not be held accountable.

From political extremism, for which nothing will do except the “conquest of the streets” in the name of the immediate dictatorship of the proletariat (on paper), such a leadership can without a second thought go over to possibilism,18 bending with every wind that blows from the petty bourgeoisie, even to the extent of chauvinism. The head of the officious centrist bureaucrat19 is so con-
structed that all the winds of eclecticism constantly whistle through it. The revolutionary German workers would never voluntarily tolerate this kind of leadership. It is appointed, supported, rescued, and foisted upon the vanguard of the German proletariat by the Stalinist faction in Moscow. This is absolutely indisputable. But is it correct to say that a strengthening of the influence of the Communist Party among the German workers leads to a strengthening of the present leadership? No, this is not correct. This is the essential contention, false to the core, of each and every ultraleft and pseudo-ultraleft sectarian.

The Stalinist bureaucracy was able to attain power in the USSR and on a world scale only thanks to the continuing revolutionary ebb.

The Stalinist faction delivered its first blow against the left wing after the Brandlerite leadership had so disgracefully let the revolutionary situation in 1923 slip by.

The Stalinists subjected the Left Opposition to merciless destruction after Chiang Kai-shek, yesterday’s confederate of Stalin, had destroyed the Chinese revolution.

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.

Thus the defeats of the international revolution, the weakening of the Communist parties, the weakening of the left wing (Bolshevik-Leninists) within the parties, and the growth of the power of the Stalinist apparatus were parallel and interconnected processes.

On the basis of this simple and indisputable generalization alone we can make several predictions. A genuine radicalization of the masses and an influx of workers under the banner of communism will mean, not a consolidation, but a collapse of the bureaucratic apparatus. Thaelmann, Remmele, and Neumann—we repeat—can hold onto their leading positions only through the weakening and impotence of the revolutionary movement, only through the decline in the activity of the workers. An advance of communism
among the masses will mean an acceleration of revolutionary tasks, an increase in requirements of leadership.

The experiences of the last twelve years have not been in vain. They are registered in the minds of thousands and tens of thousands of advanced workers. Although covered up by a crust of formal discipline, the past experiences will break through in full force with the rise of the revolutionary period, and the advanced workers will look with entirely different eyes upon a leadership that must lead them in decisive struggles.

The increase of the Communist vote, along with the growth of the fascist danger, must already have raised the revolutionary consciousness of the proletarian vanguard and its critical spirit toward its leadership as well. This enhances the opportunities for propaganda and agitation by the Bolshevik-Leninists.

The spirit of the street-corner sect, living on defeatism and malice, hopeless and lacking any perspective, could destroy the Left Opposition.

In order to fulfill its historic role the Opposition must be impressed with the inseparable connection between the success of the party and its own success. Only in this way will the Opposition find its way to the ranks of the proletarian vanguard, from which it has been isolated by a combination of forces—the capitalist stabilization, the reprisals of the apparatus, and the mistakes of its own leadership.

Consequently it is clear that an unbridgeable gulf separates us from the Brandlerites and that the split with Urbahns was correct and salutary.

The essence of the situation is that the Stalinist apparatus has become a completely reactionary force, basing itself on capitalist stabilization and political sterility, whereas the Opposition stands to gain from the revolutionary tide and the influx of great numbers under the banner of the party.

Future developments will reveal even more clearly, provided we have a correct policy, that the ruling apparatus has fallen into complete antagonism to the needs of the party, whereas the fate of the Opposition is bound up with the party and the proletarian revolution.
In the last half year the German Opposition has accomplished a good deal of preparatory work. A separation of the fundamental lines has been achieved, a separate organ Der Kommunist has been started and it has struck a correct course in relation to the official party. Finally, in collaboration with the other sections, the basis has been laid for an international organization of the Left Opposition. All this as a whole establishes the conditions for the development of a correct policy and therefore for the growth of the influence of the Bolshevik-Leninist faction. Yet, only an insignificantly small part of the historic work which faces the left wing of communism has been achieved. Loss of time and lack of attention to a revolutionary situation are thoroughly real dangers that face not only official communism but the Opposition as well.

Experience has proved again how much time can be lost by petty conflicts and group struggles, which are an inseparable part of the life of sectarian circles. There is no way of getting rid of this inheritance from the past other than holding up to view the gigantic revolutionary tasks in all their grandeur and mobilizing the spirit of sacrifice and devotion of the best elements of the Opposition for their solution. I wholeheartedly hope that your conference will do justice to this great task.

With firm communist greetings,

L. Trotsky
On the declaration by the Indochinese Oppositionists

The declaration, as far as I can judge from my totally insufficient acquaintance with conditions in Indochina, in its main outlines correctly expresses the tasks of the Indochinese Communists. The following observations have the aim of adding to the declaration, making it more precise, and eliminating possible misunderstandings.

1. It is necessary to speak more clearly, more fully, and more precisely about the agrarian question: the role and significance of the semifudal landed proprietors and of those with large landholdings in general; and about how much land the revolution would have at its disposal and as a fund for land distribution if it expropriated the large landed proprietors in the interests of the poorest peasants. The peasant question is left out of the declaration altogether.

Unless the regime of colonial enslavement is overthrown, the expropriation of the large and medium-size landowners is impossible. These two questions, the national question and the land question, must be linked in the closest possible way in the consciousness of the workers and peasants. Of course this question requires
detailed study. Possibly such research has already been carried out. At any rate the declaration should contain a clear formulation on the *agrarian revolution*.

2. On the second page of the declaration it is said that the masses "believed naively that national independence could free them from poverty; but in the recent period a great many of them have seen their error." This is obviously an incorrect formulation. National independence, as can be seen from the declaration itself, is a necessary element of the Indochinese revolution. However it is hardly likely that the entire Indochinese peasantry has come to understand the necessity for the revolutionary overthrow of French imperialist rule. And it is all the more doubtful that the Indochinese masses have *already* understood the inadequacy and illusoriness of a liberation that would be solely *national*. Here the Communists have before them a vast arena for agitation and propaganda. It would be very dangerous to believe that the masses have already understood something which actually remains to be explained to them, or which can only be explained to them in the living context of the mass struggle. It is precisely in the interest of such explanatory work that it is necessary, as stated above, to link all the needs, demands, and protests of the peasants, for land, financial aid, against militarism, and so forth, with the struggle against foreign imperialism and its "national" agents, that is, the Indochinese bourgeoisie.

3. On page three we find the following: "Every theory of class collaboration constitutes ideological camouflage for the rule of the capitalist class." The thought expressed here is completely correct, but it is put in a way that can provide grounds for misunderstandings. We do not reject all collaboration between classes. On the contrary, there is a certain kind of class collaboration that we seek after with all our strength: that is the collaboration between the proletariat and the *poor peasantry*, as well as with the most oppressed and exploited *lower layers of the urban petty bourgeoisie*. This kind of revolutionary collaboration between classes, which can be made a reality only on the condition of an uncompromising struggle against the national bourgeoisie, is such that it transforms the proletariat into the *true leader of the nation*, if
by the word nation is understood the overwhelming majority of the oppressed and exploited masses of the town and countryside as opposed to the antinational bloc between the propertied classes and imperialism.

4. On page four there is the statement that nationalism, “which at all times has been a reactionary ideology, can only forge new chains for the working class.” Here nationalism is taken abstractly as a transcendent suprasocial idea that always remains reactionary. This is neither a historical nor a dialectical way of posing the question, and it opens the door for incorrect conclusions. Nationalism has not always been a reactionary ideology, not by far, and it is not always one today either. Can one say, for example, that the nationalism of the Great French Revolution was a reactionary force in the struggle against feudal Europe? By no means. Even the nationalism of the late-arriving and cowardly German bourgeoisie in the period from 1848 to 1870 (the struggle for national unification) represented a progressive force against Bonapartism.23

At the present time the nationalism of the most backward Indochinese peasant, directed against French imperialism, is a revolutionary element as opposed to the abstract and false cosmopolitanism of the Freemasons and other democratic bourgeois types, or the “internationalism” of the social democrats, who rob or help to rob the Indochinese peasant.

The declaration states quite correctly that the nationalism of the bourgeoisie is a means for subordinating and deceiving the masses. But the nationalism of the mass of the people is the elementary form taken by their just and progressive hatred for the most skillful, capable, and ruthless of their oppressors, that is, the foreign imperialists. The proletariat does not have the right to turn its back on this kind of nationalism. On the contrary, it must demonstrate in practice that it is the most consistent and devoted fighter for the national liberation of Indochina.

5. Also on page four is the statement that “the Indochinese workers themselves demand” a simultaneous struggle for national independence, democratic freedoms, and socialist revolution. This formulation is open to criticism in many respects. First of all a bare reference to the opinion of the workers is not yet proof: there
are various tendencies and points of view among the workers and many of them are mistaken ones. Furthermore, it is very doubtful that the Indochinese workers have actually brought the national, democratic, and socialist elements of the revolution together as a single whole in their thinking as yet. Here again, a task that should just now become the main content of the work of the Communist Party is presented as one that has already been resolved. Finally, and no less importantly, it is unclear from this formulation what “democratic freedoms” are being discussed. The next sentence speaks openly about the “conquest of democratic freedoms by means of the dictatorship of the proletariat.” This is, to say the least, an imprecise formulation. The concept of democratic freedoms is understood by vulgar democrats to mean freedom of speech and of the press, freedom of assembly, free elections, etc. The dictatorship of the proletariat, instead of these abstract freedoms, places in the hands of the proletariat the material means and instruments for its own emancipation (in particular the printing presses, meeting halls, etc.). On the other hand, the democratic revolution is not confined to the so-called democratic freedoms only. For the peasants the democratic revolution is first of all the solution of the land question and emancipation from the burdens of taxation and militarism, which are impossible without national liberation. For the workers the shorter working day is the keystone of democracy, for that is the only thing that can give them the opportunity to really participate in the social life of the country. All of these tasks can and will be completely solved only under the dictatorship of the proletariat, which bases itself on the semiproletarian masses of the city and countryside. This, of course, is what we should be explaining to the advanced workers even now.

But the dictatorship of the proletariat is something we have yet to come to, that is, the masses numbering many, many millions have yet to be drawn to that perspective. In our agitation of today, though, we are obliged to start from what exists. The struggle against the bloody regime of the French occupation should be conducted with slogans calling for thoroughgoing and consistent democracy. The Communists should be the best and bravest fighters
against military injustice, for freedom of speech and assembly, and for an Indochinese constituent assembly. We cannot arrive at the dictatorship of the proletariat by way of an a priori denial of democracy. Only by struggling for democracy can the Communist vanguard gather the majority of the oppressed nation around itself and in that way move toward the dictatorship which will also create the conditions for transition to a socialist revolution in inseparable connection with the movement of the world proletariat.

It seems to me that much of what was said on this point in the manifesto to the Chinese Communists can also be applied to Indochina.

6. Again on page four it is stated that three communist parties and three nationalist parties recently united into a single Communist Party of Indochina. The reference to this is made in passing and takes up only two lines. However, from the point of view of the Opposition, as well as that of the Indochinese revolution as a whole, this is the central question. What do these six groups stand for—in particular, these three nationalist groups? What are their programs and social composition? Isn’t there a danger that an Indochinese Kuomintang is being created under the name of the Communist Party? The declaration says quite rightly that our task in relation to this newly formed party is to introduce ideological clarity. But in order to do just that, the declaration itself should, as far as possible, define the true nature of the newly formed party more fully and precisely. Only on this basis will it be possible to determine our policy toward it.

7. The slogans with which the declaration closes (page 5) are in part too abstract and in part incomplete. They should be made more precise and enlarged upon in the light of what we have said above (agrarian question, national element, democratic slogans as transitional slogans, eight-hour day, etc.).

In my criticisms I have proceeded on the basis of full confidence in our unanimity of thought, in regard to which the declaration leaves no doubt. The aim of the observations presented here is to arrive at a more carefully formulated declaration. On the other hand it is only too obvious to me that my criticism in turn
suffers from the defect of abstractness owing to my inadequate familiarity with the social structure and political history of Indochina. For that reason I am not proposing any particular formulations. My comments are presented with only one purpose in mind: to point out the direction in which more precise and concrete answers should be sought to the questions of the Indochinese revolution.
The Krestintern and the Anti-Imperialist League

What’s the news about the Krestintern? It was set up by the epi-gones precisely to show how people who correctly evaluate the peasantry conduct politics. From the very outset we considered the whole business moribund, and to the extent that it was not moribund, reactionary. At the Sixth Congress of the Communist International [1928], Bukharin apologized that it was not possible to say anything (i.e., anything good) about the Krestintern. He suggested that we busy ourselves with “helping the Krestintern turn itself into a real live organization.” At the Sixteenth Congress of the All-Union Communist Party of the Soviet Union, Bukharin in his report uttered not one word about the Krestintern, as if it didn’t exist. Does this mean that it had actually not been turned into a “live organization”? But this, you know, was one of the greatest fruits of anti-Trotskyism!

The peasantry is the least international of all classes of bourgeois society. The Peasant International is in itself a contradiction, not dialectical but bureaucratic. The independent international unification of the peasantry, apart from national sections of the Comintern, is—we repeat—either a moribund bureaucratic in-
vention or a conservatory of bourgeois-democratic careerism under a protective blanket. The Krestintern must be openly liquidated, drawing all the necessary conclusions.

It is remarkable that under the shelter of the Krestintern, work in the countryside has achieved practically nothing. At the Sixth Congress, Bukharin was forced to admit: “In peasant regions our influence has not grown, but rather declined, and what’s more, both in France and Germany.” This has happened because “we” approached the peasantry from the standpoint of the Krestintern, i.e., as a whole. In actuality, it turned into a hunt for the petty proprietor as a proprietor. Agricultural workers and semiproletarian peasants were pushed to one side. As a result, communism in the countryside was weakened. Molotov in his report was completely silent about the work in the countryside.

The Anti-Imperialist League is the Krestintern in the language of colonies. Its congresses and proceedings have had a purely decorative character. Muenzenberg has thrown light with a Bengal match on the left-wing careerists of the Second International and yesterday’s executioners of the working masses in the colonies. The Bengal illumination, which cost not a little, left in its wake fumes and smoke, under cover of which the careerists, adventurers, and would-be executioners have gone about their business.

It will not be forgotten that the friendship of the Stalinists for the Kuomintang proceeded parallel to the close bloc with the strike-breakers of the General Council, and the knot of these two friendships was tied in the Anti-Imperialist League.

At the beginning of 1927, Muenzenberg, the impresario of every kind of rotten and inflated production, summoned a session of the League in Brussels. The central organ of the Comintern on February 25, 1927, wrote about it:

“It is no coincidence that the most active, inspiring [!], and leading [!!!] role at the Congress was played by the main active forces of the Chinese revolution: the Chinese trade unions, the Kuomintang, and the People’s Revolutionary Army, on the one hand, and, on the other, by the representatives of the British proletariat on whom fell the central responsibility for organizing the
struggle against intervention” (Kommunisticheskii Internatsional, 1927, number 8, p. 5).

"It is no coincidence”! It is no coincidence that at the Brussels conference an "inspiring" role was played by the Chiang Kai-shek Kuomintang and the dear allies from the Anglo-Russian Committee!

The Anti-Imperialist League is the second-line Kuomintang on the international scale. The liquidation of the League, as of the Krestintern, is an urgent measure of revolutionary sanitation.
A history of the second Chinese revolution is needed

A study of the Chinese revolution is a most important and urgent matter for every communist and for every advanced worker. It is not possible to talk seriously in any country about the struggle of the proletariat for power without a study by the proletarian vanguard of the fundamental events, motive forces, and strategic methods of the Chinese revolution. It is not possible to understand what day is without knowing what night is; it is not possible to understand what summer is without having experienced winter. In the same way, it is not possible to understand the meaning of the methods of the October uprising without a study of the methods of the Chinese catastrophe. In the meantime, the history of the Chinese revolution has been a forbidden topic for the Comintern. There is not a single book which has summed up what the lessons are of the great experiences of the battles and defeats of 1925–27. This book has not been written, and it will not and cannot be written by the Comintern leadership for the same reason that the Roman conclave will not write a scientific history of the Holy Inquisition: it is not possible to demand or expect that any institution should write the history of its own crimes.
The working up of the history of the second Chinese revolution (1925–27) can be done only by the Communist Left Opposition. First place here belongs, clearly, to our Chinese comrades. We think that this question must be included on the agenda of the international conference of the Left Opposition (Bolshevik-Leninists).
Molotov’s prosperity in knowledge

Among other gems presented by Molotov to the Sixteenth Congress, there is the following thought; no, a whole maze of thoughts:

“It is worth recalling in this connection some of Trotsky’s34 declarations made several years ago. Trotsky contended more than once that ‘since the imperialist war in Europe, no development of the productive forces has been possible’ (L. Trotsky, *Europe and America*, 1926), that to Europe’s share remains only ‘absolute stagnation and dismemberment’ (L. Trotsky, *Five Years of the Comintern*). This did not prevent [!] the ‘left’ Trotsky from becoming later on [!] the bard of American prosperity. In reality, his speeches about the fact that America would put Europe on ‘rations’ were a peculiar resinging [?] of the theory of ‘exceptionalism’ which afterward [!] became the fundamental basis of the right-wing renegades in the American Communist Party. In this instance, too, Trotsky, under ‘left’ phrases, dragged a thoroughly right-opportunist line hostile to the Comintern” (*Pravda*,36 July 8, 1930).

Please note the drift of Molotov’s thoughts. Trotsky contended several years ago that Europe is confronted with stagnation and decline. “This did not prevent the ‘left’ Trotsky from becoming
later on the bard of American prosperity.” Why should this par
ticularly have “prevented Trotsky”? Does Europe’s stagnation
exclude the development of America? On the contrary, it was pre-
cisely the growing might of the United States that I connected with
Europe’s stagnation. In one of the reports on this subject, I said:
“The unexampled economic superiority of the United States,
even independently of a conscious policy on the part of the Ameri-
can bourgeoisie, will no longer permit European capitalism to raise
itself. American capitalism, in driving Europe more and more into
a blind alley, will automatically drive her onto the road of revolu-
tion. In this is the most important key to the world situation”
[Europe and America, p. 52].

What is the meaning of the so-called contradiction which Molotov
attempts to accuse me of? It means that our unexpected theo-
retician is time and again inclined to “jump with both feet” into
some kind of a predicament.

Insofar as Europe is concerned, after the war I was not the only
one to say that all roads of development were closed to European
capitalism. This same thought is expressed in all the basic docu-
ments of the Comintern: in the manifesto of the Second Congres-
sess, in the programmatic thesis on tactics of the Third Congress,
in the resolution of the Fourth Congress, and repeated at the Fifth
Congress (when in some respects it had become inadequate). In
the broad historical sense, this contention is true even today. If
Europe’s production is now about 113 percent of the prewar fig-
ure, it means that the per capita income of the adult population
did not grow in sixteen years, and that for the toilers it decreased.
In the report to which Molotov refers, I said:

“European capitalism has become reactionary in the absolute
sense of the term, that is, not only is it unable to lead the nations
forward but also it is even incapable of maintaining for them living
standards long ago attained. Precisely this constitutes the economic
basis of the present revolutionary epoch. Political ebbs and flows
unfold on this basis without in any way altering it” [ibid., p. 58].

Does Molotov perhaps dispute this?

It is undoubtedly true that Europe rose up from the destruc-
tion and decline of the early postwar years, and then a second
time recovered from the convulsions of the Ruhr occupation.\(^{37}\) This became possible, however, only thanks to the continuous chain of defeats of the European proletariat and the colonial movements. When immediately after the war and in 1925, anticipating the great social struggles in England and the revolutionary situation in China, we spoke of the inextricable position of European imperialism, we naturally made our point of departure the victory of the proletariat, not its defeat. At that time we did not really foresee the exploits of Stalin\(^{38}\) and Molotov in England, China, and in other countries as well; at any rate, not to their full extent. It cannot be denied—this is not at all paradoxical—that Stalin and Molotov did more than all the statesmen of Europe to preserve, stabilize, and save European capitalism. Of course they did this unintentionally, but that does not improve matters.

What is meant by “bard” of American prosperity? America has the same advantage over Europe that a big monopoly trust has over dispersed middle and small enterprises competing among themselves. To point out this advantage and to reveal its tendencies does not mean to become a “bard” of the trusts. Muddleheaded petty-bourgeois critics have more than once called Marxists “bards” of big capitalist enterprises.

Molotov, however, forgets that the Fifth Congress of the Comintern simply overlooked America, while the Sixth Congress included in its program a note on this same correlation of America and Europe which Stalin so helplessly attempted to deny. Molotov mentions the rations. Even this prognosis is borne out at every step. What is the Young Plan\(^{39}\) if not a financial ration? And didn’t America put the British navy on rations? This is only the beginning.

Molotov himself finally arrived at the thought—or maybe he was prompted—that “by the Kellogg Pact,\(^{40}\) it [America] strives to make the decision of the question of the future imperialist war dependent upon its will.” Even though not an original admission, nevertheless a valuable one. But this shows precisely that America is striving—and in part succeeding—to put European imperialism on rations. Incidentally, if this is the objective significance of the Kellogg Pact—and this is just what it is—how come Stalin and Molotov dared to endorse it?
In the 1924 report of *Europe and America* (the report Molotov has in mind) we said in connection with the naval rivalry between the United States and Great Britain:

“But we must also add: When England’s position becomes such as to compel her openly to accept rations, this will not be performed directly by Lord Curzon—he will not be suitable, he is too unruly. No, this will be entrusted to a MacDonald. . . . Required here will be the benign eloquence of MacDonald, Henderson, and the Fabians in order to exert pressure on the English bourgeoisie and to convince the English workers: ‘Are we, then, actually to engage in war with America? No, we stand for peace, for agreements.’ And what does agreement with Uncle Sam mean? . . . Accept rations. That’s the only agreement for you, there is no other. If you refuse, get ready for war” [ibid., p. 25].

It so happens that in politics, no matter how artful, some things can be foreseen. Molotov thoroughly despises such an effort. He prefers not to see even what is happening under his very nose.

Besides, why did Molotov drag in “prosperity”? In order to display his own erudition? We really believe that after the designation of Molotov as leader of the Comintern, tongues of flame came down to him, as happened at one time to the apostles, whereupon he immediately began to speak in unknown languages. But “prosperity” is nevertheless irrelevant. Prosperity has a conjunctural significance and means flourishing, in the sense of a commercial-industrial boom. But my comparison of America and Europe was based upon fundamental economic indices (national wealth, income, mechanical power, coal, oil, metal, etc.) and not on the conjunctural fluctuations of those indices. Molotov evidently intended to say: Trotsky glorified the might of America, and yet, look, the United States is going through the most acute crisis. But does capitalist power exclude crises? Didn’t England, in the epoch of its world hegemony, experience crises? Is capitalist development in general conceivable without crises? Here is what we said on this score in “The Draft Program of the Communist International”:

“We cannot here enter into an examination of the special problem of the duration of the American crisis and its possible depth. This is a question of conjuncture and not of program. It goes with-
out saying that in our opinion the inevitability of a crisis is entirely beyond doubt; nor, considering the present world scope of American capitalism, do we think it is out of the question that the very next crisis will attain extremely great depth and sharpness. But there is no justification whatsoever for the attempt to conclude from this that the hegemony of North America will be restricted or weakened. Such a conclusion can lead only to the grossest strategical errors.

“Just the contrary is the case. In the period of crisis the hegemony of the United States will operate more completely, more openly, and more ruthlessly than in the period of boom. The United States will seek to overcome and extricate herself from her difficulties and maladies primarily at the expense of Europe . . .” [in The Third International After Lenin, p. 9].

Further on we expressed regret that “In the draft program of the Comintern absolutely no expression is to be found of this trend of thought” [p. 10].

It so happens that in economics as in politics—even to a greater extent than in politics—some things can be foreseen. But we already know: Molotov does not care for this frivolous effort.

A few words remain to be said on the concluding part of Molotov’s maze of thoughts: Trotsky’s views in regard to America’s placing Europe on rations were, don’t you see, a “peculiar re-singing [?] of the theory of ‘exceptionalism’ which afterward [!] became the fundamental basis of the right-wing renegades in the American Communist Party.” (What kind of re-singing is it that comes before the melody itself? But let us not be severe with Molotov the orator and author; we are occupied here with the thinker.)

The “right-wing renegades,” Lovestone and Co., were by 1924 already tired of criticizing my views on the interrelations between America and Europe. It is Molotov who actually is doing the re-singing. The theory of exceptionalism, or of peculiarities, was in fact given its most complete and reactionary expression by Stalin and Molotov, who in 1924 announced to the whole world that, in contrast to every other country, it is possible for the USSR to construct socialism within its national boundaries.

If we start from the fact that the historical mission of our party
is the construction of socialism, it may be said that from the viewpoint of this task the exceptionalism of the USSR has, according to Stalin, an absolute character. Whatever exceptionalism Lovestone and Co. sought for the United States, it could not be higher than the one Stalin secured for the USSR by Comintern decree.

Furthermore, didn’t the program of the Comintern recognize the world capitalist hegemony of the United States? Neither Greece, nor Belgium, nor any number of other countries has this “small” peculiarity. Aren’t we correct, therefore, in saying the world hegemony of the United States represents its exceptional peculiarity? Or perhaps Molotov wants to refute the program of the Comintern that was written by Bukharin several months before he was declared a bourgeois liberal?

“Trotsky drags an opportunist line under left phrases.” In what sense is the statement of the world domination of the United States a “phrase” and just why is it a “left” phrase? It is quite impossible to make anything of this. Instead of thoughts—a sort of rotted chaff. Whatever you touch crumbles.

But the point is that after the Soviet Union is abstracted theoretically from the rest of humanity, Molotov demands that all the other countries give up pretensions of peculiarities, more, of exceptionalism. And, indeed, would it be easy to direct half a hundred communist parties if, basing themselves upon their peculiarities, they would refuse to step forward simultaneously with the left foot at Molotov’s command? After all, one must sympathize with a leader . . .

In the article “Two Conceptions” [printed in the U.S. edition of The Permanent Revolution as the “Introduction to the German Edition,” March 29, 1930] we showed in detail the complete inconsistency of Stalin’s—and so also of Molotov’s—understanding of internationalism. The opportunism of Lovestone, Brandler, and their supporters lies in the fact that they demand recognition for themselves of those national socialist rights which Stalin considers a monopoly of the USSR. Quite understandably these gentlemen carried through the entire campaign against “Trotskyism” hand in hand with Molotov. This campaign embraced, more or less, all the questions of a communist world outlook. Even now
Lovestone declares that what separates him from the Comintern leadership are tactical differences, but that between him and the Left Opposition are not only tactical but programmatic and theoretical differences. And this is absolutely correct.

That America’s position is exceptional will not be denied even by the valorous Czech soldier Schweik who, it is said, has become a fellow champion of Smeral. But Lovestone’s national opportunism does not in the least stem from this exceptionalism. The basis of his opportunism is the program of the Comintern, which speaks of the world hegemony of the United States, that is, of its exceptionalism, but fails to draw any revolutionary conclusions because it does not speak of the inseparable bond between American “exceptionalism” and the “exceptionalism” of the other parts of the world. Here is what our criticism of the program says:

“On the other hand, no mention at all has been made of the fact (and this is just as important a phase of the same world problem) that it is precisely the international strength of the United States and her irresistible expansion arising from it, that compels her to include the powder magazines of the whole world into the foundations of her structure, i.e., all the antagonisms between the East and the West, the class struggle in Old Europe, the uprisings of the colonial masses, and all wars and revolutions. On the one hand, this transforms North American capitalism into the basic counterrevolutionary force of the modern epoch, constantly more interested in the maintenance of ‘order’ in every corner of the terrestrial globe; and on the other hand, this prepares the ground for a gigantic revolutionary explosion in this already dominant and still expanding world imperialist power” [The Third International After Lenin, p. 8].

If Molotov does not agree with this, let him object. We are ready to learn. But instead of analytical objections, he presents us with a declaration of his prosperity in knowledge, which, however, has not yet been demonstrated. In general, it occurs to us that it is in vain that Molotov mortifies the flesh with knowledge. Even in the scriptures it is written: “He that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow.”
October 4, 1930

To the Bulgarian comrades

(An extract from a letter)

What constitutes the basis of the regime in the USSR? Let us recount the essential elements: (a) the Soviet system as the state form; (b) the dictatorship of the proletariat as the class content of this state form; (c) the leading role of the party, in whose hands all the threads of the dictatorship are united; (d) the economic content of the proletarian dictatorship: nationalization of the land, the banks, the factories, the transport system, etc., and the foreign-trade monopoly; (e) the military support of the dictatorship: the Red Army.

All these are closely connected with one another and the elimination of one of them may mean the collapse of the entire system. The weakest link in the chain at present is undoubtedly the party, the cornerstone of the entire system.

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 national-
ORIZATION 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. The probability of a peaceful regeneration of the dictatorship cannot be determined in advance, a priori. It is necessary to await the test of experience. The power of the proletariat must be manifested in action, must be tested in life, in struggle. Such a test can present itself through a growth of the inner contradictions as well as through an attack from without (blockade, war).

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. If the party were excluded from the Soviet system, then the whole system would soon collapse. Freed from the control of the party, the trusts would immediately be converted into, first, state capitalist, then, private capitalist enterprises. The conflicts between the trade unions and the trusts would very quickly become transformed into class struggles. The state would become an organ of the trusts and the banks. The foreign-trade monopoly would be broken in several places even before its abolition. The Red Army would go through a similar process of evolution. All this would probably be accompanied by a whole series of convulsions and outbreaks of civil war.

Since the party as a party does not exist, isn’t the process of degeneration described above and the decline of the regime inevitable, and in the shortest time at that? The fact is that in this official “party”—which together with the youth embraces more than four million people, in order to confound them to silence and obedience—that in this enormous, scattered mass, held together by the bureaucratic apparatus, there are dispersed the elements of two parties. The Bessedovskys, the Kajurovs, the Agabekovs, show
that from the official party there is emerging a party of the counterrevolution, whose elements exist at various stages of maturity. A symmetrical process is taking place at the opposite, at the proletarian pole of the party, above all, in the form of the Left Opposition. The loose mass held together by the apparatus is becoming differentiated in two directions. While the apparatus carries on its bitter struggle against the Left Opposition, which has been and remains its chief enemy, it gives direct support to the Thermidoreans. The main question is: who will prevail? It will be immediately decided, not by the economic statistics of the socialist and capitalist economic tendencies, but by the relation of forces between the proletarian and Thermidorean flanks of the present so-called party.

The axis in the process of crystallization of the proletarian elements of the party is the Left Opposition. At present it is weak, in the sense that the connections between its cadres and the elements tending toward it have been broken. The struggle for the reestablishment of these connections, that is, the patient, illegal work for the reconstitution of the Bolshevik Party, is the fundamental, the most important, and the most urgent task of every Bolshevik.

The first great test of events will show that the Stalinist bureaucracy has no social basis. It will be suspended in mid-air between the Thermidorean elements and the Bolsheviks. The crystallization of the left wing will take place all the more rapidly the better its cadres are prepared, the wider its connections with the working class become. Under similar conditions (international situation, internal conditions) the fate of the proletarian dictatorship will depend upon the relation of forces between the proletarian and Thermidorean wings of the present official party. The results cannot be foretold. We must do everything now to see that it turns out favorably.

Let us, however, assume for a moment that the Thermidorean wing is victorious. That will mean the liquidation of the proletarian dictatorship and a precipitate 180-degree turn toward capitalism. Even in such a hypothetical case the work of the Opposition retains its full force, for it will defend the heritage of the revolutionary party. With the aid of the Soviet state one cannot create
the party. With the aid of the revolutionary party one can, however, create a second Soviet state when the first has collapsed.

However, the tasks of the Opposition are not determined by the situation in the USSR alone. The Comintern in its entirety has become a weapon of the centrist bureaucracy, which undermines and destroys communism and by that alone worsens the conditions in the USSR. The Opposition has finally become an international factor and from this perspective we must also regard the work inside the USSR.
October 12, 1930

To the Executive Committee of the Belgian Opposition

Copy to the International Secretariat in Paris and to the Opposition Group of Charleroi

Dear Comrades:

I can hardly believe that after a year of ideological struggle anything fundamental can be added in this letter to what has already been said on both sides in the press. I will restrict myself here to one question only, namely, to the perspectives of one or two parties in Belgium.

The struggle for the Communist International is the struggle for the vanguard of the world proletariat, for the heritage of the October Revolution, and for the preservation of Bolshevism. We are not at all inclined to believe that the revolutionary heritage of the past is at present incorporated in the “ideals” of the Urbahns group or of some of the Brussels comrades. The revolutionary heritage is mighty. We must learn how to realize it.

Our general line does not exclude the possibility for us in one or another country, according to the relation of forces, to assume the role of an independent political party. Such an exclusive con-
dition in one isolated country would not, however, change in the least our fundamental orientation to regenerate the Comintern. The independent party of the Bolshevik-Leninists in one country would have to act as a section of the Comintern and regard the weaker official party as a faction, applying the tactic of the united front in order to demonstrate to the workers where the responsibility for the split lies.

As you see, this position has nothing in common with the one you defend. But as a perspective for Belgium, the possibility which I regarded as a hypothesis has proved to be unattainable. Two years ago the Belgian Opposition certainly represented a force that had to be taken seriously. But the present Brussels leadership has manifested during this time a lack of decisiveness in principle, an unpardonable wavering on every question, and an inclination to support every group that has opposed the International Opposition on fundamental questions. Openly or in secret, you have supported Urbahns, Paz, Monatte, and others against the Left Opposition, although these groups have nothing in common with each other except their hatred of the Bolshevik-Leninists. The consequences of such a policy are obvious. While in all other countries without exception the Opposition has made serious progress in every direction or at least consolidated itself ideologically, in Belgium the Opposition has become constantly weaker. You can well understand that the International Opposition has no reason to put the responsibility for this tragic state on anyone but the Brussels Executive Committee.

In the minutes of the April international conference I read the following statement of Comrade Hennaut: “I believe that if the Charleroi comrades persist in their irreconcilable point of view, it will be impossible for us to cooperate any more. For the basis of a common struggle, there must be a minimum of confidence.” The International Opposition must apply these words to the Brussels EC today.

The International Secretariat is not a letter-box. It is an organism which unites a faction with common ideas on an international scale. As you well know, I insisted last year that the Charleroi comrades continue to cooperate with you. Together with the French
comrades I had hoped that on the basis of the experiences of collaboration, a conciliation could be brought about. This hope has not been realized. Nothing remains but to say what is, above all, that we do not belong to the same faction, and to draw the necessary conclusions.

I therefore subscribe to the conclusion brought before me by the Charleroi comrades, by the editors of La Verite, and by Comrade Obin in their criticism of your declaration.\textsuperscript{52}

With communist greetings,

L. Trotsky
October 22, 1930

Introduction to the Rakovsky declaration

After delay, we have finally received the declaration of Comrades Rakovsky, Muralov, Kosior, and Kasparova which these comrades addressed to the party shortly before the Sixteenth Congress. Unfortunately, the copies of the declaration sent to us were seized. In spite of this great delay, the document which we publish entirely retains its importance. In spite of terseness of formulation, the document presents clear evaluations of the economic and political processes, calling by their right name the dangers which are approaching.

This declaration is intimately connected to the declaration Rakovsky made at the time when centrism’s turn to the left still preserved its freshness and was not sufficiently checked by experience. Yet these two documents are distinct, as two steps at different stages on the same road. The first declaration recorded the turn of the leadership in the direction the Opposition had defended for the past few years. At the same time, it warned against possible dangers on the new road, demanded the intervention of the party to overcome these dangers, and put the forces of the Opposition at the disposal of the party. This method of posing the question—in
the spirit of a united front—appeared to some “capitulatory” or, at the very least, semicapitulatory. To be sure, these accusations didn’t come from a very serious source.*

At that time we pointed out that politics does not consist of simple repetition of formulas that can serve all situations in life. Rakovsky did not entertain the slightest illusion about the political line of centrism at the time of the left turn. He clearly and openly developed his analysis of centrism in his theses written at the same time as the first declaration.

However, the task was not to simply repeat in the declaration what was said in the theses, but to assist the party, even a small section of it, to assimilate all or at least part of what was presented in the theses. The stifling of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union makes it very difficult to ascertain the immediate repercussions the first declaration had among the ranks. It is beyond doubt, however, that Rakovsky’s declaration, which made a breach in the wall of lies and slanders built up by the Stalinists, was one of the reasons for the renewal of the rabid struggle against the Left Opposition preceding the congress. But we have another verification on this question, from outside the USSR. Comrade Feroci,56 one of the leaders of the New Italian Opposition, has reported in an article the great impression Rakovsky’s declaration made on the Central Committee of the Italian Communist Party, and especially on its left section. So the declaration of Rakovsky not only did not lead anyone to capitulate but, on the contrary, became one of the factors in the formation of the New Italian Opposition.

The new declaration we publish now for the first time draws a balance sheet of the policy of the left turn at the very moment of the implementation of a half-turn to the right. All these developments are clearly analyzed in the document and little can be added

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* The pretty thin character of this criticism was branded above all by the fact that at its head was inscribed Paz, for whom the accusation of capitulation against Rakovsky was necessary only in order to abandon the revolutionary ranks, in which he was but a bird of passage. We cannot forget, however, that in a bloc with Paz against Rakovsky, there was also found Comrade Treint,55 who with all the mistakes he has committed and still commits, we should like to hope is nevertheless no accidental figure in the arena of the revolutionary struggle.
today. We consider it necessary to emphasize only two points.

In the declaration it is mentioned that, although prohibiting the formation of the Union of the Poor Peasantry, the Stalinist leadership nevertheless tolerates this organization in the Ukraine. If the attempt by Stalin-Bukharin-Rykov-Kamenev\textsuperscript{57} and others to suppress the organization of the poor Ukrainian peasantry in 1924–25 did not succeed, it was wholly thanks to the firm resistance of the Ukrainian party under the leadership of Comrade Rakovsky.

The second point we wish to raise here deals with the capitulators. The declaration asserts, with perfect justice and implacability, that such people have lost "any right at all to the confidence of the party and the working class." In keeping with this, the declaration repeats that persecutions will never prevent the Leninist Opposition from fulfilling its duty to the very end.
October 31, 1930

Tasks in the USSR

Dear Comrades,

The centrists are waist-deep in trouble with the five-year plan. At one time they used to accuse us, with no basis whatsoever, of favoring a rigid administrative plan. In actuality they themselves have turned the plan into a fetish. Things cannot be otherwise under a regime in which everything is worked out at the top, behind closed doors, and then handed down to the masses like the tablets from Sinai. The unalterable bureaucratic plan, which has already brought such calamities down on the workers’ heads, has at the same time become a trap for the centrist bureaucracy. It cannot get free of that trap without losing at least one of its paws. But this time, sacrificial victims of the Bauman type will prove no longer sufficient. The party and the country know very well who is responsible for the five-year plan in four years. The Kalinins and Voroshilovs may try, this time, to get free of the trap by chewing off the paw that goes by the name of “general secretary.” Whether their teeth are up to the job will depend not so much on them as on the whole situation. One way or another, a new party crisis is bearing down on us with seven-league boots.
It will differ qualitatively from all the preceding crises in the one respect that the unknown quantities in the party itself have grown to a grotesque degree. The Bessedovskys, Agabekovs, Dmitrievskys, and others now constitute a hard-to-measure but very important element in the whole situation. These types take up the name Thermidoreans of their own accord: after all, you have to call yourself something. Essentially this is the faction of bureaucratic toadies, who have sniffed out the coming danger and are seeking a new master. Stalin based himself on this crowd of cronies in his struggle against us. In that struggle Bessedovskysm “matured,” that is, became rotten to the core. The Bessedovskys also helped Stalin deal with the Right elements such as Rykov, Bukharin, and Tomsky, although the toadies were unquestionably a hundred times more right-wing themselves. The imminent party crisis will inevitably prompt the bureaucratic toadies to intervene. They represent the most immediately dangerous unknown quantity within the party, or more precisely, within its apparatus at this time. Their abundance and their readiness for anything in the face of danger (Bessedovsky’s leap over the class fence was a symbolic gesture) give the coming crisis, to one degree or another, the features of a palace coup. Elements of a coup have been present for some time: the elimination of the elective principle within the party, the intervention of the GPU in the factional struggle, the nakedly plebiscitary regime, and so on. But now a leap in the ongoing process confronts us, a transformation of quantity into quality.

Let us imagine for a moment that in the coming crisis the Bessedovskys bring Stalin down. Is this ruled out? Generally speaking, it is not. But it is necessary to understand what it means. The Bessedovskys can bring down Stalin only in the way that crumbling pillars cause a cupola to fall. The faction of toadies who have jumped over the wall is certainly not capable of playing an independent role. What would develop in such a case on the day after a coup by that faction?

The democratic fools (and sharpies) outside our country have again begun to play with the idea of soviets without communists. Speaking in general, such a historical episode is certainly not ex-
cluded. But if the Soviets, with the Mensheviks and SRs at their head, lasted only eight months before giving way to the Bolsheviks, then soviets without communists—as the reel ran backward—would barely last longer than eight weeks before giving way to some transparent combination of Thermidor and Bonapartism, which in turn would only serve as a short bridge to a “grand R-R-Rooshian” Bonapartism sweeping all before it and mincing no words."

The fact is that in the event of a collapse of the party apparatus, with the toadies coming out into the open, with the party masses completely disoriented, with the two basic classes of the society in a state of profound discontent, “soviets without communists” would only be a fleeting expression of the progressive paralysis of the revolution itself.

The Soviets, without rudder or sails, would themselves begin to look for a savior. The Bessedovskys and the candidates for the same role who exist in the army and GPU—all these Bluechers, Tukhachevskys, Yagodas, Deribases, and so on—would push in that very same direction. And if Klim [Voroshilov] were to lop off the general secretary—basing himself in such an action on the general staff, no doubt, rather than the party, or even the Orgburo—he would give as his justification the argument that “something at least had to be saved.” The same kind of formula would be used by other has-beens, too, people at various stages of degeneration, including of course the Pyatakovs, Radeks, and so on. Klim’s military dictatorship, coupled with certain surviving elements of the Soviet system, would indeed be our own, native-born form of Bonapartism, in its first stage.

It is obvious to what extent all these possibilities and probabilities reduce the likelihood of success for the road of reform. But the odds cannot be measured in advance. The essence of Stalin’s

*There is a pun in the original. Instead of the word rossiiskii, meaning “of the Russian empire,” Trotsky uses rasseiskii, mocking the way a half-educated but zealous chauvinist might pronounce the glorious imperial adjective. At the same time, it is a pun on the root rassei-, meaning “to disperse, scatter, or sweep (someone or something) away,” as a Bonapartist regime would do to opponents, troublesome crowds, etc.—Translator
plebiscitary regime, after all, is to preclude the possibility of a pre-
liminary political orientation being provided that would be at all
concrete. Insofar as the coming party-political crisis will, by all
indications, involve elements of a coup, it is hardly likely to occur
without civil war. But on what scale? Along what lines? Under
what “legal” forms? This cannot possibly be predicted exactly, all
the less so from afar and without any knowledge of the ins and
outs of the party apparatus or of the ties that various groups or
factions may have with nonparty groupings, above all, in the state
apparatus, or that the latter may have with the social classes.

There is absolutely no question, at any rate, that in the light of
the approaching upheavals the Bolshevik-Leninists stand for pre-
serving and maintaining the gains of the October Revolution, i.e.,
above all, the elements of the proletarian dictatorship and the lead-
ing role of the party. In this fundamental sense we remain on the
road of reform. This means, in particular, that we have to do ev-
erything possible to see to it that, in the event of civil war, the
revolutionary proletarian nucleus of the communist movement
starts out from legal positions, that is, fights under the official flag
to defend the surviving elements of the October Revolution within
the existing system, as against those who wish to make a frontal
assault on the system as a whole, or who wish, at first, to attack
“only” the elements of October in the Soviet system. That is what
the line of reform comes down to, in this present period of prepa-
ration for crisis.

It is useful to illustrate this idea by taking up a particular ques-
tion. Several months ago comrades wrote us that C.G. Rakovsky
had come out in favor of a coalition central committee, i.e., one
composed of the right, center, and left. Since the right wing is still
in the Central Committee, what this would actually mean is the
inclusion of the left. Of course there can be no question of the
Stalinists agreeing to such a combination any earlier than the last
twenty-four hours before the onset of the crisis. Even today they
are continuing their crude and fanatical campaign against the left
on an international scale. The proletarian nucleus of the party
senses the approaching danger and is looking for a way out. It will
seek that way—it cannot help but do so—along the road of re-
form. This nucleus cannot set itself the task of handing leadership and power over to the Left Opposition: it does not have that kind of confidence in the Opposition and, even if it did, such a radical change in leadership would look more like a palace coup than a reform of the party to the party masses. The slogan of a coalition central committee is much more suitable as a slogan that, on the eve of crisis or in its midst, could become the slogan of broad layers of the party.

Can there be any objections in principle, on our part, to such a slogan? We do not see any. We have always said, and it was not just an empty phrase, that we remained at the disposal of the party. We did not leave the Central Committee of our own free will. We were expelled because we refused to renounce either our ideas or our right to defend them. The slogan of a coalition central committee presupposes of course that we remain true to the Opposition platform and ready to fight for it on party grounds and with party methods. We cannot approach the problem in any other way.

It may be that a wide layer of opinion in the party would pick up the idea of a three-way coalition at a certain stage, viewing it as the only means of saving the party from a complete collapse, with the danger of its being buried for good. It is quite obvious, too, that Bukharin types in the right wing have as much reason as we to fear the faction of emboldened toadies, even though it was the Bukharinists and Stalinists themselves who originally nursed this crowd along with their intellectual pablum. The party today has become so stagnant, atomized, repressed, and above all, disoriented that the first stages of its reawakening will take place under the most elementary slogans. “Let Stalin, Molotov, Bukharin, Rykov, Rakovsky, and Trotsky unite, if only to clean the riffraff out of the party and state apparatus.” No matter how primitive this idea is, it could play a serious role if it spread among wide-enough layers of the party in time, and first of all, of course, among the proletarian core of the party. We would enter such a coalition—if such a thing proved realizable in the first place—only in the name of much broader aims. We are not renouncing anything. On the contrary, it would be up to others to renounce something (many things, in fact). But the question now is not how this slogan is to
be realized in practice (or not realized, which is more likely). What is important now is that, by being put forward in a timely way, this slogan could bring the masses of the party out of their stupor and bring the Left Opposition out of its present isolation, which constitutes the main danger in the entire situation.

In conclusion it remains to be said that the raising of this or that demand, including such a partial and auxiliary demand as the one for a coalition central committee, presupposes a capacity for regular work on the part of the Opposition, and under present conditions that requires organization. That is a question that must be posed in all urgency. No matter how great the difficulties, they have to be overcome. The inertia of defeat is still making itself felt today. But the opportunities are unquestionably bigger and broader than they seem to many. It is necessary to set to work with a will.
Exposing a real or fictitious bloc between Syrtsov and Lominadze as a bloc of right and “left” (?) elements, Pravda writes: “We have already witnessed such unprincipled blocs many times, beginning with the August bloc.” That the August bloc, designed to reconcile the Bolsheviks with the Mensheviks, was a mistake is irrefutable. But this took place in 1913 and lasted for two or three months. Since then much water has passed under the bridge.

In March 1917, on the eve of Lenin’s arrival [in Russia], Stalin advocated a fusion of the Bolshevik Party with the party of Tsarev. Under the influence of Stalin and others like him, during the February revolution the majority of the social democratic organizations had a unified character, that is, they consisted of the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks. In such proletarian centers as Ekaterinburg, Perm, Tula, Nizhni Novgorod, Sermovo, Kolyma, Yuzovka, the Bolsheviks separated from the Mensheviks only at the end of May 1917. In Odessa, Nikolaev, Elisavetgrad, Poltava, and other places in the Ukraine, the Bolsheviks did not have any independent organization as late as the middle of June 1917. In Baku, Zlatoust, Bezhitsa, Kostroma, the Bolsheviks split decisively
from the Mensheviks at the end of June. Is it in place here to recall the August bloc of 1913?

But there is no need to return to Stalin’s position in 1917. The fictitious Lefts (Lominadze, Shatskin, etc.), who are really despairing centrists, are accused of forming a bloc with Bukharin, Rykov, and Tomsky. Bukharin’s chief guilt is centered on his theory and defense of the kulak—the kulak growing into socialism—and correctly. But the Opposition was expelled from the party precisely because it cut through this theory and policy. And it was Stalin who was in a bloc with Bukharin and Rykov against the Left Opposition—not for two or three months, but for eight years—precisely when Bukharin developed his theory of the kulak growing into socialism, when Rykov relied on the backward village and resisted industrialization. Who, then, was in a bloc with the Rights? Lominadze, Shatskin, Sten, and others are presented as Lefts, “Trotskyists,” and “semi-Trotskyists.” All of them, however, when they were in a bloc with Stalin, wrote into the history of the struggle against Trotskyism a not very glorious but unusually lucid page. Are they really in a bloc with the Right? How is this bloc expressed? What is its program? The party knows nothing about it. The brazenness of Pravda in its internal-party falsifications is unprecedented, and stems from the days of Bukharin. Pravda dresses up some as Lefts, others as Rights, and then throws them all together. It has a free (alas, illiterate) hand in everything. But the party is unable to verify any of it.

The attempt to base the legend of a bloc between the Left Opposition and the Right on ideological considerations and not just on new revelations by the GPU has a very sorry and unwise appearance.

In the first place, says the Stalinist press, both the Rights and the “Trotskyists” are dissatisfied with the regime and accuse it of bureaucratism. As if anyone in the world could be satisfied with a regime of spurious plebiscites, with its inevitable duplicity that grows with the same overwhelming momentum as does the isolation of the Stalinist top from the party and the working class.

We Bolshevik-Leninists never looked upon party democracy as free entry for Thermidorean views and tendencies; on the contrary,
party democracy was trampled underfoot in the promotion of the latter.

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 to really purge the party: to purge the party of the Thermidoreans in principle as well as their unprincipled and careerist cohorts who vote according to command from above, of the tendencies of tail-endism as well as the numerous factions of toadyism, whose title should not be derived from the Greek or Latin but from the real Russian word for toady in its contemporary, bureaucratized, and Stalinized form. This is the reason we need democracy!

The Right suddenly invokes democracy in order to have the possibility to conduct a consistent opportunist policy, which exasperates all the classes and disorganizes the party. But a consistent right-wing policy, whatever the intentions of Bukharin, Rykov, and Tomsky, is the policy of Thermidor. Where, then, is there a basis for a bloc, even a pretense of a bloc?

But, says the Stalinist press, the Left Opposition is “against” the five-year plan in four years and “against” complete collectivization.

Yes, the Left Opposition has not experienced the dizzy-headedness inevitable for the centrist bureaucracy after making its turn of 180 degrees. When the party press in the spring of this year beat the drums for 60 percent collectivization of the peasantry, we exposed this nonsense, self-delusion, and deception—before dizziness was admitted by the responsible director of the zigzag. Stalin very soon made a rebate of 20 percent, expressing the hope that 40 percent of the peasants would remain in the collective farms. Pravda recently wrote that individual farms embrace three-fourths of the peasantry, so that to the share of the collective and Soviet farms are attributed only 25 percent. We see how unreliable all these figures are and how, by one stroke of the pen, tens of millions of peasants are thrown from the camp of socialism into the camp of petty-bourgeois commodity production, which nourishes capitalism.

If the retreat from the general line is 140 percent (25 percent of
those who are now supposed to be in the collectives is what is left of the 60 percent who were driven out of them!), then it is clear that in the arena of the 140 percent turn there is room for Left and Right, not to speak of Stalin himself, who after the fact opposed the maximum policy of his own faction.

But whether there is 20, 25, or 30 percent of the peasantry now in the collectives, we do not consider this sector, as a whole, “socialist” because from these collectives, lacking the necessary industrial base, the kulak must once again emerge. To portray complete collectivization on the present basis as socialism is to revive the Bukharinist theory of the kulak growing into socialism, only in an administratively masked and therefore still more dangerous form.

We are for industrialization and for collectivization. We are against bureaucratic charlatanry, against reactionary utopias in their open Thermidorean or masked centrist form. Where, then, is there a basis for a bloc with the Right?

But we are also against the arbitrary, unprincipled, distorted, bureaucratic Stalinist methods of reprisal against the Right because we are for a general demarcation along the whole party spectrum, not chicanery of the apparatus, exile, the noose. It is precisely to accomplish this demarcation that above all we must have democracy. Where, then, is there a basis for a bloc with the Right?

If it should appear—which is not the case—that there is a tactical coincidence or episodic crossing of the two different, irreconcilable, hostile strategical lines, would that mean the lines are drawing closer together? When Lenin voted with the Mensheviks at the conference of 1907—against all the Bolsheviks, including of course Stalin too—for participation in the Third Duma,71 did that bring Lenin closer to the Mensheviks?

Finally, are the disputed questions limited to the tempo of industrialization and collectivization in the coming year? What contemptible administrative national limitedness! We Marxists do not have a program for the construction of socialism in a single country, like Stalin and Bukharin. We stand on the ground of international socialism. Where is there a common basis with the Right?

The American group of the right wing (Lovestone and Co.)
recently declared in a resolution of principles that they have only tactical differences with the Comintern, that is, Stalin and Molotov, but with the Left Opposition, not only tactical but also programmatic ones. This is absolutely correct. The Brandlerites in Germany, who constantly defend the economic policy of Stalin-Bukharin against us as the only one possible, have the same position. Or perhaps the Workers and Peasants Party [POPy2 in France, which voted for the resolution of the Sixth Congress, is closer to our program than to the official policy of the Comintern, which it supported against us until yesterday? The Right Opposition in Czechoslovakia established its solidarity with the Brandlerites on all basic questions and declared the Left Opposition to be a “caricature of the Comintern,” that is, a worse edition.

All these right-wing organizations stand on the ground of the present program of the Comintern, elaborated by Stalin and Bukharin, that is, the center and the right wing. We reject this program because on the most fundamental points it is a betrayal of Marxism and Bolshevism. It is a program of national socialism and not Marxian internationalism, whose scientific and practical kernel is destroyed by the theory of socialism in one country. On the question of the role of the bourgeoisie in colonial revolutions, this program repeats the treacherous policy which was conducted in China by the bloc of Stalin and Bukharin, including their alliance with Chiang Kai-shek. Under the treacherous slogan of “democratic dictatorship” as opposed to the dictatorship of the proletariat, the program of the Comintern is preparing new defeats for the young proletariat of the colonies. The bloc of the center and the right wing is responsible for this program. This bloc cannot be called an “August” bloc, for it did not last for one or two months, as in 1913, but for eight years (1923–30), and even after a partial rupture still survives in the most authoritative document: in the program of the Comintern. And these people, who have dissipated their basic Marxist principles in unprincipled machinations, have the audacity to speak of our bloc with the Right!
Published November 1930

What next in the campaign against the Russian right wing?73

By the time this issue [of Biulleten Oppozitsii] is off the press, the campaign against the right-wingers will have been concluded by decisive organizational measures: the removal of Rykov, Tomsky, and Bukharin from the Central Committee (perhaps Rykov only from the Politburo). Whether matters will come to the expulsion of the right-wing leaders from the party and to their administrative punishment at the next stage depends partly on the conduct of the leaders of the Right,* but primarily on the degree to which the Stalinist staff will feel impelled to make a turn to the right. For this is how things are at the top now. Just as the smashing of the Left Opposition at the Fifteenth Congress in December 1927 immediately preceded the left turn, which officially was taken on February 15, 1928, so the inevitable turn to the right will have to be preceded by an organizational smashing of the Right Opposi-

* Bukharin has repeated another rite of repentance. The others will probably follow after him. Very little of the nature of things will be changed by this. But the character and the order of administrative punishment may turn out to be different. There is no need to say that our policy does not in the least depend on the waverings within the framework of the autonomous apparatus as a whole.
tion. Why must it be? Because if this turn should be made with
the presence of the Rights on the Central Committee, they would
declare their solidarity with the turn. That would not only make
their expulsion from the party difficult but in addition would mar
the perfection of the general line. But this is only one side of the
matter. There is also another, no less important.

Long before the decisive organizational destruction of the Left
Opposition, a new split was being prepared in the core of the then
leading majority, without which the turn to the left could not even
be thought of, not to speak of the fact that there would be nobody
to blame for yesterday's right-wing course. And now when the
inevitable turn of the general line to the right is being described
on the horizon, one must assume, a priori, that a new split is tak­
ing shape in the ruling circle which will be revealed only after the
turn to the right. It cannot be otherwise. On the one hand, not
only in the party—this goes without saying—but even in the ap­
paratus itself, there are those who took the ultraleft zigzag seri­
ously as a systematic left course; these elements will resist the
approaching turn. On the other hand someone has to bear the re­
sponsibility for the dizzy-headedness and for the turns on a state­
wide scale. One can even guess beforehand along what lines the
split will proceed “theoretically,” or more correctly has already
proceeded, by applying the process of elimination. To attribute
the excesses in industrialization and collectivization to Voroshi­
lov and Kalinin is impossible; everyone knows well enough where
the sympathies of these two captives of the left zigzag lie. To at­
tribute the responsibility for the political dizzy-headedness to Kuiby­
shev, Rudzutak, or Mikoyan is impossible; nobody would believe
it, because political dizzy-headedness requires something akin to
a political head. Therefore there remains only one—Molotov.

The conclusion arrived at by the process of elimination is sub­
stantiated by several Moscow sources. We are told that for some
time Stalin has been very diligently spreading rumors through
various channels that Molotov has become conceited, that he is
not always obedient, and that, pulling at his coattail from the left,
he interferes with him, Stalin, in conducting a completely infal­
lible “general line.” The mechanics of the new zigzag are thus
clear in advance because they reproduce the past we already know. But there is also a difference—an awareness of the mechanics and an acceleration of the tempo. An increasing number of people know how it is done and what phrases it goes by. It is becoming clear to broader and broader circles of the party that the basic source of duplicity is the general secretariat, which systematically deceives the party, saying one thing and doing another. More and more people are coming to the conclusion that Stalin’s leadership is too costly to the party. Thus in the mechanics of the centrist zigzags and the apparatus crackdown a moment arrives when quantity must change into quality.

The Soviet and party bureaucracy lifted Stalin on the wave of reaction against the October Revolution, against War Communism, against the upheavals and dangers inherent in the policy of international revolution. This is the secret of Stalin’s victory. By 1924 new generations were being raised and the old ones re-educated in the spirit of the theoretical and political reaction of a national-reformist character. Stalin’s “left” reservations—reservations of a cautious centrist—did not interest anyone. What pervaded the consciousness were these moods: quietly, little by little, we will build up socialism without any revolutions in the West; one must not skip stages; the slower you go, the further you get. Why not conclude a bloc with Chiang Kai-shek, Purcell, Radich? Why not sign the Kellogg Pact? (Even a piece of string may come in handy on a trip.) And above everything, down with the “permanent revolution”; not the theory, with which the majority of the bureaucrats are not in the least concerned, but the international revolutionary policy, with its disturbances and risks, when in the USSR there is something real at hand.

This is the philosophy on which the Stalinist apparatus, numbering millions of people, was reared. The majority of the real Stalinist bureaucracy feels it has been doublecrossed by its leader since 1928. “A peaceful growing-over” of the October regime into national state capitalism did not and could not take place. 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 tire-
less criticism of the Left Opposition, compelled Stalin to make this turn in spite of the partly active, mainly passive resistance of the majority of the apparatus. The turn took place with a gnashing of teeth by the majority of the bureaucrats. This is the main reason why the new stage of “monolithism” was accompanied by the open and cynical establishment of the plebiscitary-personal regime. Only by utilizing its final remaining inertia can Stalin still carry out the crackdown of the Rights and the new turn, and only at immeasurably higher cost to himself than all the preceding ones.

About a year ago we said that a new squeak was heard in the apparatus. Since then the squeak has become a clatter. Of what importance is the fact that Syrtsov, placed in a high post for the purpose of easing out Rykov, turned out to be the head of the so-called “double-dealers,” that is, people who vote for Stalin officially, but think and, if they can, also act differently. How many such Syrtsovs are there in the apparatus? Alas, such statistics are inaccessible to Stalin. They can be revealed only in action. The official press characterizes Syrtsov as a right-winger. The fact that Syrtsov sought a bloc with left centrists of the Lominadze and Shatskin type not only displays extraordinary confusion in the ranks of the apparatus but also shows that Syrtsov is one of those disoriented right-wing apparatus people who have become frightened by the threat of Thermidor.

There are also others. There are those who vote against Syrtsov and Lominadze, demand the expulsion of Rykov and Bukharin, swear allegiance to the one and only beloved leader, and at the same time have in the back of their minds: how to betray to their own best advantage? These are the Agabekovs and others. The sycophants of the revolution, its bureaucratic toadies, have succeeded in making their way sufficiently well in foreign countries; jumping over the fence, they soon sell themselves to their new boss. How many of them are there in the Soviet apparatus inside the USSR? It is harder to count them than to number the frightened right-wingers and the honestly confused centrists. But there are many of them. Stalin’s successes, with all his zigzags, have resulted in the formation of a core in the apparatus of a faction of
toadies, who remain devoted even “without flattery” up to five minutes before complete betrayal. This human abomination is absolutely incapable of any kind of independent political, much less historical, role. But it can well serve the role of a banana peel on which the plebiscitary perfection of Stalin will slip.

Once it begins to slip, the Stalinist apparatus will be unable to find its former balance. It has no support of its own under its feet. Will it find support at the right? No. There are two sectors: confused and even despairing opportunists, incapable of any initiative, and bureaucratic toadies, capable only of initiative for betrayal. The centrist elements will find no support at the right.

And at the left? Only here, from the left wing, is it possible to repel the Thermidorean-Bonapartist danger, intensified by the policy of the centrists. Does this mean formation of a bloc with Stalin? The struggle of the Bolsheviks against Kornilov, who openly attacked the Provisional Government—was that a bloc with Kerensky? In the face of a direct counterrevolutionary threat, a common struggle with the part of the Stalinist apparatus that will not stand on the other side of the barricades is self-evident.

This, however, is not the main question. The moment the apparatus, split by contradictions and falsehoods, begins to rock, the situation can be saved, not by any part or particle of the apparatus itself, but by the party, the vanguard of the proletariat. This is the task! But the party as an organizational entity is nonexistent. The accumulation of toadies in the apparatus has meant the destruction of Bolshevism and the party. In this lies the historical crime of Stalin. But the components of the Bolshevik Party are extraordinarily numerous, alive, and indestructible. No matter how much the apparatus strives to disorient them, the worker-Bolsheviks draw their own conclusions. Tens of thousands of Old Bolsheviks and hundreds of thousands of young potential Bolsheviks will rise up at the moment of danger. The bourgeois restoration that will attempt to seize power will have its hands chopped off.

The Left Opposition is the vanguard of the vanguard. The same qualities and methods are demanded of it in relation to the official party which under normal conditions are required of the party in relation to the class: an unwavering principled firmness and, at
the same time, a readiness to move even the smallest step forward together with the masses.

Within the party the voice of alarm must be sounded in the nearest future. The party must begin to reassert itself. This must take place; it flows from the whole situation. By what road will this process go forward? It is impossible to foretell. But there will be a deep internal realignment, that is, a selection and welding together of the real revolutionary proletarian party away from the human dust trampled underfoot by the apparatus.

In the face of the sharp convulsions and acute changes in the situation, it would be doctrinaire to bind oneself beforehand by any kind of partial unprincipled organizational-technical slogans, to which the slogan of a coalition central committee is partially related. We wrote on this subject several weeks ago, on the eve of the last campaign against the Rights. Since then much has changed. But we think even now that the slogan of a coalition central committee may appear to the broad circles of the party as the only one capable of finding a way out of the chaos. It is understood that the coalition central committee in itself would not solve anything; but it could make it easier for the party to solve the tasks before it, giving it the possibility to find itself with the least possible convulsions. Without a deep internal struggle this is no longer possible; but we must do everything to keep out of this internal struggle all elements of civil war. An agreement on this basis may do a great service to the party at the most critical moment. It is not the Bolshevik-Leninists who will resist such an agreement. But making it, they can now less than ever before renounce their traditions and their platform. We must say outright: there is no other banner at present!
What is to be learned from the saboteurs’ trial?81

The indictment in the case of the saboteurs’ center (the “Industrial Party”82) is of exceptional interest, not only because of its immediate political significance but also from the point of view of the struggle of the tendencies within the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. The Opposition had maintained, and repeated in all of its documents, that the 1923–28 minimum provisions for industrialization and collectivization were dictated on the one hand by the kulak and on the other by the foreign bourgeoisie, through the agency of the Soviet bureaucracy.

The leading Soviet specialists, called to account, reveal what an intensive struggle they developed in the past for the minimum program of the five-year plan. Thus it is pointed out, especially by Ramzin,83 that the most important measure of the saboteurs in relation to all the basic branches of industry was “the slowing down of the tempo of development, which is particularly evident in the old five-year plan worked out under the influence of the center” (that is, the center of the saboteurs).

The old five-year plan was subjected to an annihilating criticism by the Opposition. It is sufficient to quote its general evalu-
ation of the first five-year plan of Stalin-Ramzin from the platform of the Opposition [1927]: “The gigantic advantages involved in the nationalization of the land, the means of production, the banks, and the centralized organs of administration—that is, the advantages deriving from the socialist revolution—find almost no expression in the five-year plan.”

The Central Committee characterized our criticism of the five-year plan as antiparty. The Fifteenth Party Congress declared that we lacked faith, because we had become “frightened” by the allegedly unavoidable decline in pace during the reconstruction period. In other words, during 1923–28, that is, in the period of the development of the struggle against the Left Opposition, the Central Committee was the unconscious political instrument of the specialist-saboteurs who, in turn, were the hired agents of the foreign imperialists and the Russian emigrant compradors. But haven’t we always asserted that in the struggle against the Left Opposition Stalin was fulfilling the dictates of the world bourgeoisie and disarming the proletarian vanguard? What had been sociological generalizations are now reinforced by the irrefutable juridical proof of the indictment.

The heart of the five-year plan is its tempo. The life of the whole organism depends on the beating of the heart. But who were the ones to determine the rate of the heartbeat? Ramzin gives a very precise answer to this:

“The execution of the basic provisions of the Industrial Party (that is, the party of saboteurs) as to tempo was assured by the fact that the basic organs deciding the given question were wholly in the hands of the Industrial Party.”

This is who directed the Stalinist struggle for a number of years against the “superindustrializers”!

Isn’t it clear that the indictment of the Industrial Party by Krylenko is at the same time an indictment of the Stalinist upper crust, which, in its struggle against the Bolshevik-Leninists, was really the political weapon of world capitalism? But the matter does not end with the old five-year plan. These same defendants show that “beginning with the second half of 1928”—observe the exactitude of the division into two periods!—“a continued reli-
ance upon the slowing up of the tempo became impossible be­
cause,” Ramzin says, “of the energetic execution in life of the gen­
eral line of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union.” The sec­
ond half of 1928 is precisely the time the Central Committee
rejected the five-year plan—the same plan which the Opposition­
ists had criticized and for which criticism they were sent to Sibe­
ría.

But did the sabotage of the specialists cease after 1928? No,
from then on it was intensified because of the expectation of in­
tervention. However, in the words of Ramzin, it took on a differ­
ent character: “The basic measures in the sphere of industrializa­
tion were supposed to be directed towards the deepening of the
economic difficulties, unavoidable in any case.”

But here Ramzin stops short, or else Krylenko does not quote
Ramzin’s testimony completely. In spite of this, the matter is quite
clear. The method of the specialists working under the supervi­
sion of Krzhyzhanovsky85 consisted in the “deepening of the eco­
nomic difficulties,” that is, of increasing the disproportions be­
tween the different branches of industry and in the economy as a
whole. Since, beginning with the second half of 1928, this aim
could not be accomplished by a slowing down of the tempo, the
opposite road was taken: an excessive acceleration of the tempo in
the individual branches of industry. It is quite evident that one
method is just as effective as the other.

Thus we arrive at what may appear to be an unexpec­
ted—but in fact quite natural—explanation of how and why the State Plan­
ning Commission, in which the saboteurs were the basic core and
where they led their “superior” Krzhyzhanovsky by the nose with­
out difficulty, so easily went from minimum to maximum tem­
pos, and without any resistance approved the conversion of the
unverified five-year plan into a four-year plan. The specialists
understood perfectly well that the unrestrained acceleration of
individual branches of industry without verification, without fore­
sight, without capable regulation, results on the one hand in dis­
proportions and on the other hand lowers the quality of produc­
tion, in this way insuring the blowup of the five-year plan at its
next stage. Therefore the indictment itself demonstrates without
any doubt that in the period of its economic slowdown—up to 1928—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 agents of international capital. For the struggle against this “leadership,” the Bolshevik-Leninists were put in jail, exiled, and even shot. This is the naked truth which cannot be disguised by any clever concoction!

The indictment, revealing the saboteurs’ dominance in the State Planning Commission and in the Supreme Council of National Economy, was published in the November 11 issue of Pravda. One day before, this same paper, in an article under the extraordinarily fresh title “Merciless Fire Against the Right-Left Bloc,” wrote the following with regard to the snares of the Opposition:

“And this means the usual factional trick: by attacking, let us say, the State Planning Commission and the control figures for the ‘bureaucraticism of the economic organs,’ they conduct an attack upon the Central Committee, upon the policies of the party and the party leadership.”

This quotation is absolutely incredible. A criticism of the State Planning Commission, for several years a toy in the hands of the bourgeois wreckers, is made identical by Pravda to a criticism of the Central Committee and by that alone is declared to be blasphemous. Didn’t somebody play a “trick” here on Pravda itself? And in the approaching crisis we will learn from a second indictment that the Stalinist supertempos, against which we issued a timely warning, were the orders of the compradors to the saboteurs. Such is the logic of the Stalinist regime!
The fight against war

can allow no illusions

The trial of the saboteurs has brought out with great immediacy and in an unusually concrete way the danger of military intervention. To use these revelations as a way of arousing the masses, strengthening the international solidarity of the revolutionary vanguard, and posing the concrete problems of the struggle against the war danger is now a task of utmost importance. But the first condition for carrying out this task is to fight ruthlessly against illusions, and especially against empty boasting. Instead of that, Pravda, forgetting everything Lenin taught, is sowing illusions. In the November 21 issue a special box, with large, boldface type, carries the following excerpt from a letter by some Czechoslovak workers:

“In the event of war you can firmly rely on the conscious workers of Czechoslovakia. A declaration of war on the Soviet Union will be the signal for civil war to start the very same day.”

Similar quotations from letters by workers in other countries are being published. That the authors of these letters are for the most part completely sincere, and that a section of them are actually ready to fight—of that there can be no doubt. But when they
promise that the day war is declared on the Soviet Union will be the day that civil war begins in the capitalist countries, they merely show that they do not know what war is like, what the first day of a war is like, or what civil war is like. It was in the same light-minded way, although in most cases equally sincerely, that the question was posed before the world war by the French anarcho-syndicalists. They of course did not get any civil war going, and the majority of them, having lost their bearings, turned into patriots.

*Pravda’s* job is not to lead the Soviet workers astray with the help of illusions held by young Czechoslovak workers but, on the contrary, to expose these illusions to the lancet of Bolshevism and to explain how preparations for a revolutionary struggle against military intervention by the imperialists must actually be made.
Concerning the question of Thermidor and Bonapartism, I will only speak very briefly, for I have already expressed myself several times on the necessity of developing this theme in an article. The danger in this question, as well as in every other historical question, consists in the fact that we tend to draw analogies too formally, important and fruitful though they may be, and that we tend to reduce the concrete process to abstractions. Thermidor was a transitory form between Jacobinism and Bonapartism. What was really characteristic of Thermidor was the fact that the government was formally controlled by members of the same party. Part of the Jacobins, or quasi Jacobins, destroyed the other part, the true Jacobins, by an appeal to open civil war. Bonapartism signifies the victory of the bureaucratic-military centralist power over all the various shades of Jacobinism. In the language of the class struggle, this means the gradual shift of power from the sansculottes to the leisure class.

If we take into consideration the theoretical possibility of a counterrevolutionary victory in the Soviet Union, that does not mean that the latter must take on the form of the French Thermi-
dor. It may skip this stage on the way to Bonapartism, or inter­mingle the two, just as the October Revolution intermingled the end of the democratic revolution with the beginning of the social­ist revolution. Such a mixture of historic stages corresponds per­fectly to the social development of Russia and to its entire history.

What we must take into consideration above all is the immense role of the Russian party or rather, at present, of its apparatus; the party is far more advanced than the state apparatus. For example, Rykov, from the point of view of the party, has been entirely liqui­dated, but still remains the head of the state. Thermidorean ele­ments have materialized in the life of the party: genuine “Jacobins” have been replaced by opportunists. But Bonapartist elements have also developed, mainly in the selection of the apparatus according to a single commandant (Stalin). Weakening of the character and the spine is very important preparatory work of Bonapartism.

The counterrevolution has not yet become victorious, the quest­ion is not yet settled, and that is the reason for our implacable struggle against the Korschists89 and the other howlers. One phy­sician says: the man is sick, there is hope of curing him; it is my duty to do all in my power to put him on his feet again. Another says: no, he must die; and turns his back on the patient. What can these two physicians have in common?

But when the counterrevolution does come, will it take a Bo­napartist, a Thermidorean, or a third combined form? It is impos­sible to say, but our duty consists in observing attentively the existing elements of the possible variants of counterrevolution and their dialectical development.

Comrade Landau90 writes me that some comrades have ex­pressed the opinion that the proletariat is the weaker class in Rus­sia. This question cannot be solved nor even correctly posed in cross section. We must look at it dynamically. Theoretically speak­ing, it is not impossible that a victorious counterrevolution will prove that the Russian working class has become so weakened that it is no longer able to hold power in its own hands. But that can only be done by open civil war. Politically we must prevent this possibility by reinforcing the political and economic points of support of the proletariat. There is no economic or political scale
by means of which we can daily weigh the relationship of forces and in this manner decide upon a “point quotation.” The most important fact is that the bourgeoisie is as yet far removed from victory, but that within the present regime the germs of very important elements of its victory are growing.

So much for the present on this question.
November 26, 1930

Thermidor and Bonapartism

Historical analogies must be dealt with properly; otherwise they are easily converted into metaphysical abstractions and do not help to orient but, on the contrary, lead one astray.

Some comrades in the ranks of the Opposition abroad see a contradiction in the fact that we sometimes speak of the Thermidorean tendencies and forces in the Soviet Union and sometimes of the Bonapartist features of the regime in the Soviet Communist Party, and they even draw the conclusion that we have revised our evaluation of the Soviet state. This is a mistake. It flows from the fact that these comrades conceive of the historical terms (Thermidor, Bonapartism) as abstract categories and not as living, that is, contradictory processes.

Successful socialist construction is proceeding in the USSR. But this process advances in an extremely contradictory manner; and because of capitalist encirclement, counteraction of the internal antiproletarian forces, and incorrect policies of the leadership, it falls under the influence of hostile forces.

Can the contradictions of socialist construction, generally speaking, reach a degree of tension under which they would blow up
the foundation of socialist construction established by the October Revolution and strengthened by the subsequent economic successes, particularly by the successes of the five-year plan? They can.

Under such circumstances, what would replace present Soviet society taken in its entirety—economy, classes, state, party?

The present regime, transitional from capitalism to socialism, could give way only to capitalism. It would be capitalism fraught with contradictions that exclude the possibility of its progressive development. For all those contradictions, which according to our hypothesis might bring about the blowup of the Soviet regime, would immediately reappear as internal contradictions in the capitalist regime, and would very soon acquire even greater explosiveness. This means that within the capitalist counterrevolution there would be elements of a new October Revolution.

The state is a superstructure. To think it is independent of the character of the productive relations and the forms of ownership—as, for example, Urbahns does in relation to the Soviet state—is to renounce the basis of Marxism. But the state is no more a passive superstructure than is the party. Under the influence of the convulsions emanating from the class basis of society, new processes occur in the state and party superstructure which—within certain limits—have an independent character and, when combined with processes of the economic foundation itself, may acquire decisive significance for the class nature of the whole regime and for a considerable period turn its development in one or another direction.

It would be the worst form of doctrinaireism, “Urbahnsism” turned inside out, to think that the nationalization of industry, supplemented by the high rate of its development, in itself assures an uninterrupted development to socialism, irrespective of the processes taking place in the party and the state. To think this is not to understand the functions of the party, its double and triple functions, in the only country of the proletarian dictatorship, an economically backward country at that. If we assume for a moment that those in charge of industry on the one hand and the top strata of the workers on the other break loose from party
discipline, which is fused with that of the state, then the road to socialism would be blocked: nationalized industry would begin to be differentiated between the struggling groups, the conflicts between the trust administration and the workers would begin to take on an open character, the trusts would acquire an ever-greater independence, the beginnings made in planning would naturally be reduced to zero, dragging along the monopoly of foreign trade as well. All these processes driving to capitalism would inevitably mean the crushing of the proletarian dictatorship.

Does the present party regime, in spite of the economic successes, endanger the party with the disintegration of its bonds and discipline? Undoubtedly. To underestimate the danger of the decay of the party and the state fabric, because of the economic successes, would be criminal. The party, as a party, does not exist today. The centrist apparatus has strangled it. But the Left Opposition, which the centrist apparatus fears like the plague and under whose spur it performs its zigzags, does exist. It is precisely this relation between the Left Opposition and the centrist apparatus that is a substitute for the party and holds the Right in check. Even with complete and open disruption of party bonds, the party will not disappear. Not because there is an apparatus—it will be the first victim of its own crimes—but because there is a Left Opposition. Whoever does not understand this, understands nothing.

But what we are considering now is how and by what paths the Opposition can fulfill its basic task: to help the proletarian vanguard prevent the counterrevolution from overcoming the socialist development. Hypothetically, we will make our point of departure the assumption that we did not succeed in this in order to visualize more concretely the historical consequences of such a failure.

The smashing of the dictatorship, we have said, could only mean the restoration of capitalism. But the political forms this restoration would assume, their alternation and combination—this is an independent and complicated question.

Only the blind can think that the rebirth of comprador capitalism is compatible with “democracy.” To anyone with vision, it is clear that a democratic counterrevolution is excluded. But the concrete question of the possible political forms of the counterrevo-
olution allows only a conditional answer.

When the Opposition spoke of the danger of Thermidor, it had in mind primarily a very significant and widespread process within the party: the growth of a stratum of Bolsheviks who had separated themselves from the masses, felt secure, connected themselves with nonproletarian circles, and were satisfied with their social status, analogous to the strata of bloated Jacobins who became, in part, the support and prime executive apparatus of the Thermidorean overturn in 1794, thus paving the road for Bonapartism. In this analysis of the processes of Thermidorean degeneration in the party, the Opposition was far from saying that the counterrevolutionary overturn, were it to occur, would necessarily have to assume the form of Thermidor, that is, of a more or less lasting domination by the bourgeoisified Bolsheviks with the formal retention of the Soviet system, similar to the retention of the Convention by the Thermidoreans. History never repeats itself, particularly when there is such a profound difference in the class base.

The French Thermidor had its roots in the contradictions of the Jacobin regime. But these very contradictions were also the foundation of Bonapartism, that is, the regime of the military-bureaucratic dictatorship, which the bourgeoisie tolerated so that under its cover it could all the more securely take over the domination of society. Already included in the Jacobin dictatorship were all the elements of Bonapartism, even though in an undeveloped form, particularly the struggle with the sansculotte elements of the regime. Thermidor was a necessary preparatory step toward Bonapartism, and that is all. It is not accidental that Bonaparte created the bureaucracy of the Empire out of the Jacobin bureaucracy.

In revealing the elements of Thermidor and the elements of Bonapartism in the present Stalinist regime, we by no means fall into a contradiction, as is thought by those to whom Thermidor and Bonapartism represent abstractions, not living tendencies that grow over one into the other.

The state form that a counterrevolutionary overthrow in Russia would assume were it to succeed—and that is far from simple—
depends upon the combination of a number of concrete factors: firstly, on the degree of acuteness of the economic contradictions at the moment, the relation between the capitalist and socialist elements in the economy; secondly, on the relation between the proletarian Bolsheviks and the bourgeois "Bolsheviks" and on the relation of forces in the army; and finally, on the specific gravity and character of foreign intervention. In any event, it would be the height of absurdity to think that a counterrevolutionary regime must necessarily go through the stages of the Directorate, the Consulate, and the Empire in order to be capped by a restoration of czarism. Whatever form the counterrevolutionary regime might take, Thermidorean and Bonapartist elements would find their place in it, a larger or smaller role would be played by the Bolshevik-Soviet bureaucracy, civil and military, and the regime itself would be the dictatorship of the sword over society in the interests of the bourgeoisie and against the people. This is why it is so important today to trace the formation of these elements and tendencies within the official party, which, under all conditions, remains the laboratory of the future: under the condition of uninterrupted socialist development or under the condition of a counterrevolutionary break.

Does what was said above mean that we identify the Stalinist regime with the regime of Robespierre? No, we are as far from vulgar analogies in relation to the present as we are in relation to either the possible or probable future. From the standpoint that interests us, the essence of Robespierre's policy consisted in an ever-greater accentuation of the struggle on two fronts: against the sansculottes, the propertyless, as well as against the rotten "degenerates," the Jacobin bourgeoisie. Robespierre conducted the policy of a petty bourgeois, attempting to elevate himself to the position of absolute ruler. Thus the struggle against the left and against the right. A proletarian revolutionist may also be compelled to conduct a struggle on two fronts, but only episodically. The basic struggle is the one against the bourgeoisie: class against class. But petty-bourgeois revolutionists, even in the epoch of their historical apogee, have always and unalterably been compelled to conduct a struggle on two fronts. This is what caused the gradual
strangulation of the Jacobin party, the decline of the Jacobin clubs, the bureaucratization of the revolutionary terror, that is, the isolation of Robespierre that made it possible for the bloc of his enemies on the right and the left to remove him so easily.

The features of similarity with the Stalinist regime are very striking. But the differences are deeper than the similarities. Robespierre’s historic role was to mercilessly purge society of the feudal rubbish; but in the face of the future society, Robespierre was powerless. The proletariat as a class was nonexistent; socialism could have only a utopian character. The only perspective possible was the perspective of bourgeois development. The fall of the Jacobin regime was unavoidable.

The lefts of those days, basing themselves on the sansculottes, the propertyless plebeians—a very insecure prop!—could not play an independent role. Because of this, the bloc with the rights was predetermined, inevitable, just as Robespierre’s supporters, in their vast majority, later supported the rights. This was the political expression of the victory of the bourgeois development over the utopian pretensions of the petty bourgeoisie and the revolutionary outbursts of the plebeians.

It is unnecessary to say that Stalin has no basis for any claim to Robespierre’s role; the purging of Russia’s feudal rubbish and the crushing of the restorationist attempts were accomplished in the Leninist period. Stalinism grew out of the break with Leninism. But this break was never a complete one, nor is it now. Stalin conducts, not an episodic, but a continuous, systematic, organic struggle on two fronts. This is the inherent character of a petty-bourgeois policy: at the right of Stalin, the unconscious and conscious capitalist restorationists in varying degrees; at the left, the proletarian Opposition. This analysis has been tested in the fire of world events. The strangulation of the party by the apparatus is demanded not by the necessity of a struggle against the bourgeois restoration—on the contrary, this struggle requires the greatest activity and alertness on the part of the party—but by the necessity of a struggle against the left; to put it more precisely, by the necessity for the apparatus to free itself for constant maneuvering between the right and the left. This is the similarity with Robes-
pierre’s position. These were the roots which nourished the Bona-partist features of his ruin. But Robespierre had no choice: his zigzags denoted the convulsions of the Jacobin regime.

Is a consistent revolutionary policy in the Soviet Union—on a proletarian basis which Robespierre did not have—possible or impossible today? And if it is possible, can it be anticipated that this policy will be supported in time by a revolution in other countries? On the answer to these two questions depends the evaluation of the perspective of the struggle of the antagonistic tendencies in the economy and in the politics of the Soviet Union. We Bolshevist-Leninists reply in the affirmative, and will continue to reply in the affirmative, to both these questions so long as history does not prove the contrary by facts and events, that is, by a merciless life-and-death struggle.

In this way and only in this way can the problem arise for revolutionists who feel themselves to be the living forces in the process, in distinction from doctrinaires who observe the process from the sidelines and dissect it into lifeless categories.

We expect to return to this question in another connection in the coming issue [of Biulleten Oppozitsii]. Here we wished only to sweep away the most crude and dangerous misunderstandings. The Left Opposition, for its part, has no reason to revise its standpoint as long as this revision is not placed on the order of the day by great historical events.
Doubts and objections about the Bulgarian manifesto

I have only today found an opportunity to inform you about a few reflections on the subject of your manifesto. I appreciate very much your expose of the zigzags in the Stalin-Bukharin policies in Bulgaria; you have revealed the complete identity of the general line “in Bulgaria with that same line in Russia, in China, etc.” In various countries and in different forms, opportunism and adventurism, succeeding and complementing one another, have revealed everywhere the same essential features. As for myself, two important facts have been disclosed to me by your manifesto: the opportunist electoral bloc in 1926 and the upward swing of the trade-union movement in the same year. It would be very useful for you to make a short historical analysis for our international press with a study of the minute details and the concrete conditions in which these two stages took place.

Finally allow me to express in all frankness several doubts as well as a few objections. It is possible that in one case or the other I will be knocking on open doors, that is to say, I will raise objections to points of view and tendencies which you do not at all uphold and which unfortunate wording in the manifesto wrongly
attributes to you. If that is so, all the better. In politics a certain amount of scolding from one side or the other is far better than indifference and negligence.

1. You correctly condemn the tactic of individual and mass terror when it is applied in conditions other than those of mass revolution. But I believe that you attach to your judgment an excessively moral and unfortunate character. You speak of the “inglorious epoch of the Russian Social Revolutionaries.” I for my part should not have expressed myself in that manner. In the tactics of the Social Revolutionaries there was indeed an adventurist element which we condemned, but we never spoke of an inglorious epoch, even in regard to the heroic acts of individual terror, although we warned against policies of this sort. The Social Revolutionary Party became inglorious after it had given up the revolutionary struggle altogether and made a bloc with the bourgeoisie.

2. On page 6 you speak of the adventurism of the “illegal Communist Party” and on page 8 you speak of the “joy of the workers” when they witnessed the birth of the Labor Party as “the legal political organ of the workers’ movement.” These two quotations give the impression that you condemn every sort of illegal organization in general, counterposing to it a legal form as the only form of organization fit for a mass movement. It is evident that such a point of view is entirely wrong, and I have no doubt at all that you do not share it. It is quite possible that you were restricted in this question by the censorship. Of course we must take this into account. But if the censorship can restrain us from saying what we have in mind, it cannot in any case force us to say what we do not have in mind, especially when it is so basic a question as that of the relation between legality and illegality in the revolutionary movement.

3. For the same reasons I consider it sufficient to characterize the attempted assassination in April as indiscreet, but it is superfluous to add into the bargain that it was “monstrous and criminal.” We cannot in any case make concessions of this sort to bourgeois public opinion, despite all the reservations we may make as to the revolutionary usefulness of these terrorist acts. On this point, I would advise you to read the letter of Engels to Bernstein
and the correspondence between Engels and Marx (on the question of the attempts on the life of Bismarck, Napoleon III, etc.).

4. On page 7 you put the blame for the decomposition of the trade-union movement on Pastoukhov and on Dimitrov, placing yourselves on neutral territory between the two. Here too it is only a question, I hope, of an unfortunate formulation and not of a principled deviation. Pastoukhov is an agent of the bourgeoisie, that is to say, our class enemy. Dimitrov is a confused revolutionary who combines proletarian aims with petty-bourgeois methods. You say that the one as well as the other wants to be the “sole ruler” of the trade-union movement. Every socialist or communist tendency wants to exert maximum influence in the trade-union movement. When your organization will become a force, you too will be accused of claiming the role of “absolute ruler” of the trade-union movement—and I wish with all my heart that you merit as soon as possible such an accusation. It is not a question of the tendency of one group or the other to try to gain influence in the trade unions (that is inevitable), but of the content of the ideas and the methods that each brings into the trade-union movement. Pastoukhov tends to subordinate the trade-union movement to the interests of the bourgeoisie. The Dimitrovs are opposed to that, but by their false policies they assure, in spite of themselves, the success of Pastoukhov. We cannot put them all on the same level.

5. I cannot see clearly how the successes of the liquidationist group around Novy Pont can consolidate the Marxist group around Osvobozhdenie (page 13).

6. On page 14 you write that your task does not consist in creating “a sort of new political workers’ group” which will compete with the Labor Party. You counterpose to that the creation of a Marxist group with purely ideological tasks. It is possible that this hazy formulation is also conditioned by considerations of the censorship. At any rate, a Marxist group which wants to influence the party and the entire labor movement cannot be anything but a political grouping. It is not an independent party that competes with the official party, but it is an independent faction which sets itself the task of taking a part in the life of the party and of the working class.
These are all my objections. I shall be very pleased to hear that you have made progress in the immediate task that you have set yourselves—the creation of a weekly paper.

Communist greetings,

L. Trotsky
Remarks on Frank’s work on collectivization

1. This work is quite interesting; it contains many valuable ideas; some chapters and parts of chapters are well worked out theoretically. And it is a successful work in literary respects.

2. Politically it looks very much like an attempt to liquidate ties with the Opposition. Fortunately for the Opposition, this attempt is based upon a number of theoretical and factual errors.

3. The analogy drawn between the contradictions of the October Revolution and those of collectivization is the most erroneous feature: because conditions were “ripe,” in the former case, for the dictatorship of the proletariat but not for socialism, it supposedly follows that in the latter case, conditions are “ripe” for collectivization despite the inadequacy of the technical base. The author severely chides “vulgar Marxists” (i.e., the Biulleten Oppozitsii) for failure to understand the dialectical interrelations between the superstructure and the technical base. In fact, the author has made a trite formula out of the Marxist application of dialectics and has applied it where it is completely out of place. The dictatorship of the proletariat is a purely political concept, which, as theory tells us and experience has shown, can be abstracted from the economic
base within certain limits. Collectivization has an economic content only and without that becomes nothing but an empty shell.

When we say that conditions in Russia were ripe for the dictatorship of the proletariat, what we have in mind is an absolutely specific qualitative and quantitative fact: the establishment of proletarian rule within the borders of a particular country. The sentence which the author constructs by analogy—conditions in the Soviet Union are ripe for collectivization—is lacking in both quantitative and qualitative content, and so lacks any content whatsoever. Ripe for what percentage of collectivization? Ten percent? Twenty-five percent? Or 100 percent? For collectivization with the kulak held in check? Or for collectivization as a new breeding ground for the kulak?

The author gives provisional answers to all these questions (and to that extent, he is right), but he thereby renders his own analogy inapplicable.

The whole question is one of rates, of timing. To state, as one’s reply on the question under dispute, that “conditions are ripe”—“in general”—without saying for what rate or on what scale, is to replace the concrete problem with a catch-all formula, however well it may be disguised.

The author has forgotten that the proletarian dictatorship cannot be 10 percent or 90 percent. Collectivization, though, can be either. The whole problem is located somewhere between these two poles. But for the author—in the part of his work where he does his theorizing (polemicking in partly disguised fashion against the Biulleten)—this problem disappears.

4. In the spring of this year, the Stalinist leadership proclaimed that 62 percent of all farms had been collectivized and that it was planning to collectivize 100 percent in the next year and a half or two years. Without waiting for any admissions of dizzy-headedness, we cried out in a number of letters to Russia and, later, in the Biulleten as well: “Pull back, or you’ll plunge into the abyss.” At that time, our critic grew indignant: “How can you say ‘Pull back’? Retreat is now no longer possible!”

A month or two later, Stalin declared that if 40 percent of the more than 60 percent were to remain collectivized, that would be
all right too. Our author is now using 25 percent as a working figure for the extent of collectivization, maintaining all the while his “summertime” line of argument in its entirety. Thus it seems that retreat did turn out to be “possible” after all—as much as 37 percent, in fact, no more no less. But what that means is something on the order of ten million peasant households. A reduction approximately equal to the population of Germany—a mere trifle!

During the summer the view was (according to the method of the sanctified analogy) that conditions were “ripe” for 62 percent collectivization, but now those “conditions” are invoked to justify only 25 percent. And in both cases, the figures are post factum—after the fact. Isn’t what we have here, under the cover of a highly sophisticated dialectic, an impermissible fatalism, or—to put it another way—THEORETICAL TAIL-ENDISM?

5. That the Soviet Union was “ripe” for a certain amount of collectivization was something the Opposition was able to guess a long time ago. Instead of an ambiguous and purely personal defense of Trotsky (on the question of the kulaks), the author would have done better to have quoted from the official documents of the Opposition, as a current of thought within communism, on the question of collectivization itself. That is how one ought to proceed if one is to take a serious attitude toward the tendency to which one supposes (?) oneself to belong.

An element of “spontaneity” in collectivization was inevitable, but here again it is entirely a question of DEGREE, of QUANTITY, of the relations between the leadership and processes among the masses. The spontaneous character of the rush forward gave rise to spontaneity in the roll backward. The author sings dithyrambs to spontaneity, forgetting that this is going on in the thirteenth year of the revolution and that the degree of “spontaneity” in the process, from the point of view of revolutionary politics, constitutes in itself a far more reliable index of how much it has of a socialist nature than do any isolated statistical examples.

6. The author has rejected the theory of administrative pressure [on the peasants to collectivize] with the argument that the bureaucracy tail-ended the process. This is correct against the liberals and Mensheviks, but absolutely inadequate (and to that ex-
tent, incorrect) for evaluating the role of leadership, planning, and foresight in socialist construction. In his very first pages, the author properly counterposes capitalist development, which unfolds automatically on the basis of the law of value, to socialist development as a consciously regulated process (in its very essence). But in his subsequent presentation not even a trace of this counterposition remains (at least not in his polemic against the Opposition).

7. The author tries to show that the outburst of collectivization was predetermined. What does that mean? The sudden and panicky attack upon the kulak in order to get grain, the fruit of the prokulak policy of the last several years, was the most immediate and powerful spur to collectivization. The author rightly repeats this point several times. Was it conceivable to have a systematic policy, thought out in advance, for clipping the kulak’s wings in a planned way (loans of grain, a tax in kind, and so on)? Of course it was. Would such a policy have reduced the catastrophic nature of collectivization? Unquestionably!

The consequences of mistakes by the government authorities, who command the entire economy, are transformed into objective conditions leading to results that the leadership did not at all foresee. And even though the leadership tail-ended, as far as the unfolding process of collectivization was concerned, that still does not change the fact, in any way, that the catastrophic outburst of collectivization was to a very great extent produced by the administrative actions and mistakes of the preceding period. The dialectical interaction of the various elements in the process conditioning one another is replaced by the author with mechanical determinism. An unavoidable conclusion follows from that: theoretical tail-ending is transformed into an apology for the political tail-ending of the leadership. The author’s critical observations, scattered here and there, give this apology the appearance of a “higher impartiality.”

8. When the author—so magnanimously opening wide his embrace to all accomplished facts—tries to remind himself about the tasks of revolutionary politics, he, alas, falls into the stance of a rationalizing bureaucrat. Thus he tries to indicate, for the entire collective-farm movement, the best “principle” for distributing
income, according to the quantity and quality of labor: in this way, supposedly, the socialist character of the collective farms will best be assured. He forgets a small detail: the accumulation of collective-farm capital. Each collective farm will want to obtain the savings of its members in order to purchase livestock, machinery, and so forth. No one will want to give up his savings, the result of higher wages, “for nothing.” If the payment of interest is forbidden, the collective farms will find a way to do it secretly. The socialist “principle” of distribution under conditions of scarcity in the means of production very quickly turns into its opposite. Here again the whole question comes down to one of determining the most advantageous, the optimum, tempo and scale as the basis on which to appeal, not to the peasants’ prejudices, but to their judgement, in order to reduce to a minimum the catastrophic advances and retreats, during one of which the dictatorship of the proletariat itself may get buried.

9. I will not dwell on a number of other mistaken propositions which are rather narrow and particular in theme: the question of absolute rent, the question of the party and the general line, etc., etc. I will only note that on the question of the party the author has moved completely away from the Bolshevik conception of the party as the vanguard, and has theoretically dissolved it into the class, in order once again to cover for the policies of the bureaucracy, which consciously seeks to dissolve the party into the class in order to free itself from the party’s control.

Let me summarize: The chapters and pages directed against bourgeois and social democratic critics are quite good and in some places are even excellent, insofar as the author does not distract both himself and the reader by bringing in criticism of the Left Opposition in contraband fashion. In the sphere of such criticism the author is wrong through and through, and he has only intensified the error pointed out by the editors of the Bulletin. Many of his mistakes, and perhaps all, could be removed by a perceptive author himself, if he did not choose to lighten his task in advance by giving his polemic a disguised character.
You are quite right when you point out that the Russian Opposition, as late as the first half of 1927, did not demand openly the withdrawal from the Kuomintang. I believe, however, that I have already commented on this fact publicly somewhere. I personally was from the very beginning, that is, from 1923, resolutely opposed to the Communist Party joining the Kuomintang, as well as against the acceptance of the Kuomintang into the “Kuomintern.” Radek was always with Zinoviev against me. The younger members of the Opposition of 1923 were with me almost to a man. Rakovsky was in Paris and not sufficiently informed. Up to 1926, I always voted independently in the Politburo on this question, against all the others. In 1925, simultaneously with the theses on the Chinese Eastern Railroad which I have quoted in the Opposition press, I once more presented the formal proposal that the Communist Party leave the Kuomintang instantly. This was unanimously rejected and contributed a great deal to the baiting later on. In 1926 and 1927, I had uninterrupted conflicts with the Zinovievists on this question. Two or three times, the matter stood at the breaking point. Our center consisted of approximately equal
numbers from both of the allied tendencies, for it was after all only a bloc. At the voting, the position of the 1923 Opposition was betrayed by Radek, out of principle, and by Pyatakov, out of unprincipledness. Our faction was furious about it, and demanded that Radek and Pyatakov be recalled from the center. But since it was a question of splitting with the Zinovievists, it was the general decision that I must submit publicly in this question and acquaint the Opposition in writing with my own standpoint. And that is how it happened that the demand was put up by us so late, in spite of the fact that the Politburo and the plenum of the Central Committee always contrasted my view with the official view of the Opposition. Now I can say with certainty that I made a mistake by submitting formally in this question. In any case, this mistake became quite clear only by the further evolution of the Zinovievists. At that time, the split with them appeared to the overwhelming majority of our faction as absolutely fatal. Thus, the manifesto [on China of the International Left Opposition] in no way contradicts the facts when it contends that the Russian Opposition, the real one, was against the Communist Party joining the Kuomintang. Out of the thousands of imprisoned, exiled, etc., hardly a single one was with Radek in this question. This fact too I have referred to in many letters, namely, that the great majority of the capitulators were not sure and firm in the Chinese and the Anglo-Russian question. That is very characteristic! . . .
We have always emphasized the universal and historical importance of the experiences and the economic successes of the USSR, and it would be superfluous repetition on our part to emphasize it here again. Nothing better reveals the marked degradation of the world social democracy today than its openly expressed desire to return the USSR to the path of capitalism and its active political solidarity with the imperialist conspirators and the bourgeois saboteurs. Nothing better characterizes the cowardice and vileness of the ruling classes of bourgeois society, the social democracy included, than their protestations against forced labor in the USSR at a time when the clerk of the hereditary slaveholders MacDon­ald, with the aid of the Second International, is oppressing three hundred millions in India and keeping the Hindu people in colo­nial servitude. Can a comparison be made for one moment be­tween the scurryings of the “coalition” or “oppositional” social democracy and the gigantic work which the people aroused by the October Revolution are accomplishing toward a new life?

That is precisely why we Marxists are obliged to forcefully and insistently put the working class of the whole world on guard
against the growing dangers that are threatening the dictatorship of the proletariat, dangers which are the result of the false policy of a leadership that has lost its head.

The official leaders, the press, the economists—everybody recognizes that the work of the five-year plan converted into a four-year plan is being accomplished under extreme tension. The administrative method of “ emulation” shows that the tempos are being attained largely at the expense of human muscle and nerve. Not for a moment do we doubt that a certain stratum of the workers, above all among the communists, brings a genuine enthusiasm into the work, and that the broader mass of the workers is at times drawn into various undertakings by this enthusiasm. But you would have to be totally ignorant of human psychology, and even physiology, to believe in the possibility of mass “enthusiasm” for an effort that continues for a whole number of years.

Production is carried on today with the same methods that were used during the civil war. During the war, as is known, our experience and our munitions were hardly adequate. The masses made up for the deficiencies by their superiority in numbers, their daring, their enthusiasm. But even during the war the enthusiasm was not general, especially among the peasantry. The evaders and deserters played the same role at that time as the drunkards who are frequently absent from work and the “floaters” who are constantly changing jobs. But in certain periods, under attack by the Whites, not only the workers but also the peasants flung themselves into the struggle with a genuinely revolutionary spirit. That is how we triumphed.

The civil war lasted three years. Toward the end of the civil war the general tension had reached its limit. We gave up the second Polish campaign, despite the onerous conditions of the Riga treaty. A profound reaction against the tension and the privation of three years of civil war swept over the masses of peasants and workers. Among the peasantry this reaction led to risings which included the navy and the army. Among the workers, it was translated into strikes and so-called “stalling.” Inside the party, the “Workers’ Opposition” began to gain in influence. Its strength obviously did not lie in the semisyndicalist naivete of its lead-
ers—in general, the dispute at that time did not at all concern the trade unions, as is taught by the stupid official manuals—but in the protest of the masses against a continuing exertion and in the demand for respite.

In the famous discussion of 1920–21, the principal argument against the “Trotskyists” of those days that produced the greatest effect on the masses was: “They want to carry on the work of economic construction with the same methods employed to wage war.”*

It was in this atmosphere of the reaction against the period of the civil war and War Communism that the economic policy of the present majority of the Stalinist faction took form: “slow but sure.” The concessions to the private peasant economy, the contempt for methods of planning, the defense of minimum tempos, the estrangement from world revolution—this constituted the essence of Stalinism during the 1923–28 period. But the well-to-do middle peasant, the prop and hope of this policy, by the very nature of things developed into the rich peasant, who then seized the dictatorship of the proletariat, whose industrial base was so terribly limited, by the throat. These conceptions and the policy of indulgence toward the peasant were replaced by a policy of panic and precipitousness. The slogan became “Overtake and outstrip in the shortest possible time.” The minimum program of the five-year plan of Stalin-Kryzhayzhanovsky, approved in principle at the Fifteenth Congress [1927], was replaced by the new five-year plan, whose essential elements were borrowed from the platform of the Opposition. This is what shaped the character of Rakovsky’s declaration to the Sixteenth Congress [1930]: You have adopted a plan which can become a more serious step on the correct road and we are prepared to offer you our most loyal coop-

* In reality, under the conditions of very backward productive forces, more accurately, of misery, without the New Economic Policy, that is, without the stimulation of personal incentive on the basis of the market, there were not and could not be any other methods than those of War Communism. Before the NEP, the discussion always skirted the issue. The introduction of the NEP caused the very point of the discussion to disappear. Only Zinoviev and to a certain extent Tomsky continued to repeat the rigmarole on the ABC of trade-union questions, without ever having understood what it was all about.106
eration, without giving up any of our ideas and reserving the right to defend them in all the disputed questions.

When the Opposition defended first the very need to elaborate a five-year plan and then to set definite tempos (life has sufficiently proved that the tempos we had proposed were not at all illusory, as all the present members of the Politburo,\textsuperscript{107} without exception, clamored at the time), in a word, when the Opposition fought for accelerated industrialization and collectivization against the policy of 1923–28, it regarded the five-year plan not as dogma but as a realizable hypothesis. Collective verification of the plan must be made in the process of work. The elements of this verification do not lie only in the figures of socialist bookkeeping but also in the muscles and nerves of the workers and in the political moods of the peasants. The party must take all this into account, probe it, verify it, sum it up, and generalize it.

In reality, the economic turn toward industrialization and collectivization took place under the whip of administrative panic. This panic still rages. It is reflected on the front pages of all the Soviet papers today. There is a complete adaptation to the slogans, the formulas, and the appeals employed during the civil war: front, mobilization, breach in the front, cavalry, etc., and all of it at times dressed up with sports terminology: start, finish, etc. How this must sicken the serious workers and disgust everybody! Whereas under the terrible conditions of the civil war we introduced, not without hesitation, the Order of the Red Flag as a provisional measure (Lenin was at first opposed to it and only accepted it later as a temporary measure), today, in the thirteenth year of revolution, there are four or we do not know how many more different Orders. More significant than this is the introduction of the continuous workweek, the compulsory assignment of the worker to the job, the extreme intensification of labor.

If the introduction of these exceptional measures has been possible, it is due to the fact that in the minds of the vanguard layers they have a provisional character, closely tied up with the goals of the five-year plan. Just as during the period of the civil war the workers and peasants used all their strength to crush the enemy in order to insure their right to work and to rest, so today the
vanguard elements of the working class sincerely count on “overtaking and outstripping” the advanced capitalist countries in order to protect themselves against economic and military dangers. Theoretically, politically, and psychologically, the idea of the five-year plan has become for the masses the problem of the construction of a Chinese wall around socialism in one country. The workers find this the only justification for the extreme tension imposed upon them by the party apparatus.

On the twelfth anniversary, Stalin wrote: “We shall yet see which countries are to be counted among the most backward and which among the most advanced.” Such declarations and others still more categorical were published and reprinted endlessly. They set the main tone to all the work of the five-year plan. These questions are posed to the masses in a half-deliberate and half-unconscious deceitful manner by the bureaucracy, which wants the masses to believe that the realization of the five-year plan will put the USSR ahead of the capitalist world. Does not the Kautsky of the apparatus, Varga, believe that the theory of socialism in one country, however absurd in itself, is nevertheless necessary to encourage the workers: deception by the priest for the good of the soul?

Stalin’s ‘overtaking and outstripping’

In preparation for his report to the Sixteenth Congress, Stalin called for statistics, among many other figures, to prove that at the end of the five-year plan the USSR “will overtake and outstrip” the capitalist world. Traces of these are found in Stalin’s speech. On the central point in the report of the relations between the Soviet economy and world economy, the reporter confined himself, unexpectedly, to the following: “We are damnably behind the advanced capitalist countries as regards level of development of industry.” And he promptly added: “Only the further acceleration of the development of our industry will enable us to overtake and outstrip the advanced capitalist countries technically and economically” [“Political Report to the Sixteenth Congress of the CPSU,” June 27, 1930, reprinted in Works, volume 12]. Is this premised on a single five-year plan or on a series of five-year plans? Of that nothing is known!
Limited in basic theory as he is, Stalin was plainly frightened by the unexpected information which he himself had unearthed; but instead of presenting the party with the exact data of our backward state and showing the real extent of the task involved in "overtaking and outstripping," Stalin confined himself to sneaking in a few words on "our damnable backwardness" (so if need be to use it as an alibi; therein lies his art of politics). And the mass propaganda continues in the spirit of pretension and deception.

This is not limited only to the Soviet Union. The official publications of all the parties of the Comintern never cease repeating that at the end of the five-year plan the USSR will be among the most advanced of the industrial countries. If that were true, the problem of socialism would be solved on a world scale simultaneously. Having caught up with the advanced countries, the Soviet Union, with its population of 160 million and with its enormous area and wealth, would in the course of the second five-year plan, that is, in three or four years, necessarily reach the position, in relation to the rest of the capitalist world, of much greater dominance than that enjoyed today by the United States. The proletariat of the whole world would be convinced in life that socialism in one of the most backward countries can create in a few years a standard of living for the people incomparably higher than that of the advanced capitalist countries. The bourgeoisie would not be able to restrain the upsurge of the working masses for another day. Such a path for the liquidation of capitalism would be the simplest, the most economical, the most "humane," and the most certain, if it were . . . possible. In reality it is nothing but a fantasy.

Some comparative coefficients

The development of the five-year plan began in 1928–29 at a level very close to that of prewar Russia, that is, at a level of misery and barbarism. Through 1929–30, enormous successes were achieved. Nevertheless the Soviet Union still finds itself today, in the third year of the five-year plan, much closer to czarist Russia than to the advanced capitalist countries from the point of view of its productive forces. Here are some facts and figures.

Four-fifths of the whole productive population is engaged in
agriculture. In the United States, for each person engaged in agriculture there are 2.7 engaged in industry.

Industry is five times more productive than agriculture. In the United States, agriculture is twice as productive as ours and industry 3.5 times. Per capita net production in the United States is thus nearly ten times higher than in our country.

The power of primary mechanical installation in industry in the United States is calculated at 35,800,000 horsepower; in the USSR it is 4,600,000, almost one-tenth as much. If a unit of horsepower is compared to the power of ten men, it can be said that in the United States three steel slaves are at work in industry for every inhabitant while in the USSR there is but one steel slave at work for every three inhabitants. If mechanical motive power is taken into account not only in industry, but also in transportation and in agriculture, the comparison would be even more unfavorable. Yet mechanical motive power is the surest measure of the power of man over nature.

If the entire electrification program should be completed at the end of the five-year plan, the Soviet Union will dispose of one-fourth of the electric power of America, one-sixth if the difference in population is taken into account, and of a still smaller fraction if the difference in area is considered; and this coefficient assumes that the Soviet plan is completely achieved and that the United States does not advance one step.

In 1928 the United States produced 38,000,000 tons of pig iron, Germany 12,000,000 tons, the Soviet Union 3,330,000; steel: the United States 52,000,000, Germany 14,000,000, the Soviet Union 4,000,000. In the first year of the five-year plan our metal production was equal to that of the United States in 1880; just half a century ago, the United States produced 4,300,000 tons of metal, with a population equivalent to about a third of the present population of the USSR. In 1929 the USSR produced about 5,000,000 tons of crude metal. This means that the consumption of metal for each person of the Soviet republic today is about one-third of what it was half a century ago for each person in the United States.

Metallurgical production in the United States at present is 28 percent higher than agricultural production; our metallurgical
production is almost one-eighteenth of agricultural production. At the end of the five-year plan this relationship should be 1:8. It is needless to explain the significance of metallurgy for industrialization as well as for collectivization of the agricultural economy.

At the conclusion of the five-year plan, coal consumption per inhabitant in the USSR will be one-eighth that of the United States. Soviet production of oil is 7 percent of world production, the United States producing 68 percent of it, ten times as much.

More favorable relations exist in the textile industry, but even here the difference to our disadvantage is enormous: the United States has 22.3 percent of the weaving machines, England 34.8 percent, the Soviet Union 4.2 percent. These figures become all the more striking if one relates the number of weaving machines to the population figures.

The five-year plan will expand the Soviet railway system by 18,000 to 20,000 kilometers and will thus reach 80,000 kilometers as against the 400,000 kilometers of American railways. Out of every 100 square kilometers in area, the United States has 51.5 kilometers of railway, Belgium has 370, the European part of the USSR 13.7, and only 1 in the Asiatic part.

The figures for the merchant marine are still less favorable. England’s share in the world merchant marine is 30 percent, that of the United States 22.5 percent, that of the Soviet Union 0.5 percent.

The United States, in 1927, had almost 80 percent of the world total of automobiles, while the Soviet Union’s share could not even be calculated in tenths of a percent. At the end of the five-year plan, 158,000 automobiles are to be provided; one automobile for more than a thousand people (today there is one for every seven thousand people). According to Osinsky, at the end of the five-year plan we “will easily outstrip Poland”—if it remains at its present level.

Have we entered into the ‘period of socialism’?

False theory inevitably brings mistakes in policy. From the false theory of “socialism in one country” flows not only a distorted general perspective, but also a criminal tendency to paint up the present Soviet reality.
The second year of the five-year plan is characterized in all speeches and articles in this manner: “The national economy of the country has entered into the period of socialism.” Socialism exists “in its foundation.” Everybody knows that socialist production, even if only in “its foundation,” is production that satisfies at least elementary human needs. However in our country, with its frightful scarcity of goods, heavy industry increased last year by 28.1 percent and light industry by only 13.1 percent, hampering the basic program. Even if this proportion is asserted to be ideally correct—which is far from the truth—it will nevertheless follow that in the interest of a kind of “primitive socialist accumulation” the population of the USSR will be compelled to tighten its belt more and more. But precisely this indicates that socialism on a low level of production is impossible; only the preparatory steps toward socialism can be taken.

Is it not monstrous? The country cannot overcome its scarcity of goods, food shortages occur daily, children lack milk—and the official philistines declare: “The country has entered into the period of socialism.” Could socialism be more fraudulently discredited?

In spite of all the economic successes in industry and agriculture, the collection of grain today has more the character of a political campaign than an economic activity. In other words, it is accomplished through state coercion. During the reign of the epigones the term smyutchka [alliance between worker and peasant] was bandied about on every occasion, but they forgot to apply it in its only correct sense, that is, in the creation of economic relations between town and country which permit the villages to exchange their goods for industrial products voluntarily and with ever-increasing motivation. Thus success of the alliance with the peasantry lies in reducing political methods, that is, coercion, for the collection of grain. This can be attained only by closing the scissors of industrial and agricultural prices. But Stalin has affirmed, thirteen years after the October Revolution, that the scissors is only a “bourgeois prejudice.” In other words, he acknowledged that the scissors is spreading instead of closing. There is nothing surprising in the fact that the very word smyutchka has
completely disappeared from the official dictionary.

A grain-storage official, to explain the delay in the accumulation of grain stocks because of insufficient pressure by the local authorities on the kulak, makes the following observation: “The calculations and maneuvers of the kulak are not at all complicated. If his tax is three tons, he can withhold them for a fine of 400 rubles. It is enough for him to sell half a ton on the speculative market in order to recover more than his fine, plus an added sum, and also retain two and a half tons of grain for himself.” This striking example means that on the speculative market the price of grain is at least six times higher than the state price, perhaps even eight or ten times higher, since we do not know the additional amount accrued. This is how the scissors, which is only a bourgeois prejudice to Stalin, pierces through the pages of Pravda and shows its points.

Communications on the progress of grain storage are printed daily in Pravda under the heading: “The struggle for grain is the struggle for socialism.” But when Lenin employed this phrase he was far from the thought that the country had “entered” into the period of socialism. The fact that one is compelled to fight—yes, to fight!—for grain, simply grain, shows that the country is still extremely far from a socialist regime.

The elementary foundations of theory cannot be trampled upon with impunity. One cannot limit oneself to the socialist forms of the productive relations—forms which are immature, rudimentary, and, in agriculture, exceedingly fragile and conflicting—and make an abstraction of the principal factor of social development, the productive forces. Socialist forms themselves have or can have an essentially different content according to the level of technique. Soviet social forms on the basis of American production—that is socialism, at least in its first stage. Soviet forms on the basis of Russian technique—that is only the first step in the struggle for socialism.

If one takes into consideration the level of Soviet life today, the daily life of the toiling masses, the rate of illiteracy, that is, the cultural level; if one does not lie, does not rationalize, does not deceive oneself or others; if one is not addicted to the vice of bu-
reaucratic demagogy—then it must be honestly recognized that 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. And this in no way is in contradiction to the dictatorship of the proletariat, the Soviet regime, and the enormous successes in the economy. All this is the supporting framework for the future edifice, or rather for only one of the corners of this edifice. To tell the workers who are erecting this framework with bricks and cement, who frequently do not satisfy their hunger, who may suffer fatal accidents, that they can already move into this building—“we have entered into socialism!”—is to mock both the builders and socialism.

Four years or five?

We are decidedly opposed to the light-mindedness with which the five-year plan, not yet tested, has been converted into a four-year plan. What do the facts tell us on this subject?

The official figures of the increase in industrial production for the second year rose 24.2 percent. The increase projected for the second year of the five-year plan—21.5 percent—is thus exceeded by 2.7 percent. But it falls behind the schedule of the four-year plan by almost 6 percent. If one takes into account that with regard to the quality and the retail price there is considerable retardation and that the calculable coefficient is attained by compulsion, it will be clear that in reality the second year went according to the tempos of the five-year plan, not at all to the pace of a four-year plan.

In the field of basic construction, the goals for the year 1929–30 fall short of fulfillment by almost 20 percent. The greatest shortcoming is in the construction of new gigantic metallurgical factories, in the installation of coke production, in elementary chemical and electrical construction, that is, in the fields which are basic to industrialization as a whole. At the same time, the decline in construction costs of 14 percent provided for in the plan has been realized only to 4 percent. The significance of this bookkeeping figure of 4 percent, dragged in by the hair, needs no comment: we
can be thankful if construction costs have not actually increased. The combined coefficient of retardation of the plan will thus be more than 30 percent, not 20 percent. This is the background for the third year in the field of capital construction.

The “gaps” in the plan cannot be filled at the expense of light industry, as was generally done during the first two years, since the greatest lag in the plan is to be observed precisely in the production of finished goods. According to the five-year plan, light industry should have expanded by 18 percent in 1929–30; according to the four-year plan, by 23 percent. But it rose only 11 percent (according to some data, 13 percent). Yet the scarcity of goods demands extraordinary efforts in the sphere of light industry.

It has been stated that one of the specific tasks of the supplementary quarter* introduced between the second and “third” years was the “stabilization by every possible means of monetary circulation and the entire financial system.” This is an official admission for the first time that the financial system is shaky at the end of the first two years of the five-year plan carried through by a leadership proceeding empirically, devoid of all planning. Monetary inflation signifies nothing less than an uncertified loan contracted at the expense of the years to come. Therefore it will be necessary to repay this loan in the next few years. The appeal for the stabilization of monetary circulation demonstrates that, although “we have entered into the period of socialism,” it is necessary to keep the chervonets [gold monetary unit] intact, not to liquidate it. As to theory, they have simply turned it upside down.

All the errors, the false calculations, the abrupt starts, the disproportions, the gaps, the false turns, and the dizziness of the economic leadership of the centrists is summed up in the sick state of the chervonets; this is the heritage of the first two years of the five-year plan. To surmount the momentum of inflation is not an easy task. The application of the financial plan in the first month of the supplementary trimester bears witness to that. But above all we must know that success in the stabilization of the chervo-

* This year the termination of the economic year has been advanced from October to January, which inserts a supplementary quarter.
nets—which is absolutely indispensable—bears the germs of a no less sharp decline in industry and in the economy as a whole. Uncertified loans and especially hidden loans are made at the expense of the future and must be paid for.

The figure for the general growth of industrial production in the last two years is 52 percent as against the 47 percent designated in the plan. If we include the deterioration in quality, we can say with certainty that at best in the first two years we have approached the schedules of the plan only “as a whole,” disregarding a whole series of internal disproportions.

The characterization that we have made of the heavy backlog of the first two years of the five-year plan does not in the least minimize the significance of the successes that have been achieved. These successes are enormous in their historical importance and all the more significant because they were obtained despite the uninterrupted errors of the leadership. But these achievements not only do not justify the light-mindedness with which a jump is being made from five years to four years, they do not even guarantee the completion of the plan in five years. In order to do that the disproportions and “gaps” created in the first two years will have to be overcome in the course of the three years to come. The less the leadership proves capable of foresight, of opening its ears to warnings, the heavier will be the debt.

The chief task of economic direction is to verify the progress made by the five-year plan, to keep an eye on some branches, to curb others, not on the basis of a priori figures that inevitably are imprecise and conditional, but on the basis of a conscientious survey of experience. But the fulfillment of such a task presumes democracy in the party, in the trade unions, and in the Soviets. Salutary progress of socialist construction is impeded by the ridiculous and monstrous principle of the infallibility of the “general” leadership—more accurately, an inconsistent leadership that is the source of the general danger.

*Pravda* itself (on October 27) is compelled to observe: “We are experiencing difficulties in the supply of food and industrial commodities for current use.

“We are still experiencing a great shortage of metal, coal, elec-
trical energy, and building materials for full assurance of the tem­
pos undertaken in the socialist construction.

"The transportation of industrial and agricultural products is
far from guaranteed by our transportation system.

"The national economy is experiencing an acute shortage of
factory hands and cadres of skilled workers."

Does it not follow then that the jump from the five-year to the
four-year plan was out-and-out adventurism? For everyone but
da, "despite the absence of objective causes, was a pretext for the
agents of the kulaks in the party—the right-wing opportunists—
to raise new howls on the subject of the intolerable tempos adopted
by the party" (November 3). In this way the Stalinists, better than
anyone else could, are paving the way for the right wing by re­
ducing the difference between them to this dilemma: four or five
years? This question, however, can be decided not in a “principled”
manner but only empirically. It is still difficult to define two dis­
tinct lines in this dispute, measured by a difference of twelve
months. Yet in this bureaucratic manner of posing the question
we get the exact measure of the disagreement between the right­
wingers and the centrists according to the evaluation of the cen­
trists themselves. The relation between them is as four to five,
which makes a 20 percent difference. And what if experience should
demonstrate that the plan will not be accomplished in four years?
Would that mean that the right wing is correct?

The so-called supplementary trimester (October, November, De­
cember 1930) was inserted between the second and third years. The
third year of the five-year plan now begins officially on January
1, 1931, without taking this supplementary trimester into account.
The difference with the right wing is thus reduced from 20 to 15
percent. What purpose do these worthless methods of procedure
serve? They serve the purpose of “prestige,” not of socialism.

The gaps that they are compelled to bridge with the supple­
mentary trimester developed, according to Pravda, “despite the
absence of objective causes.” This is a very consoling explanation
but it produces neither the uncompleted factories nor the unmanu­
factured commodities. The trouble is that subjective factors, like
“incompetence,” “the absence of initiative,” etc., are governed by the subjective element, the bureaucratic apparatus, only to a certain extent and beyond these limits the subjective factors become objective ones, since they are determined in the last analysis by the level of technique and culture. Even the “gaps” which are actually engendered by subjective causes, for example, the myopia of the “general” leadership, themselves become objective factors limiting the possibilities of further development. If opportunism is characterized by a passive adaptation to objective conditions (“tail-endism”), adventurism, the antipode of opportunism, is characterized by its wanton and disdainful attitude toward objective factors. The leitmotiv of the Soviet press today is: “Nothing is impossible for a Russian.”

The articles in Pravda (Stalin himself keeps prudently silent) prove that foresight, collective experience, and flexibility in economic direction will, in the future as in the past, be displaced by the “general” knout. Pravda acknowledges, in a series of cases, that “faltering was liquidated less by production than by the revolutionary pressure of the masses” (November 1). The meaning of this is quite clear.

It is obvious that if it were really a question of outstripping the advanced capitalist countries in the next few years and in this way insuring the invulnerability of the socialist economy, then temporary pressure, however wearing on the muscles and nerves of the workers, would be understandable and even justifiable. But we have seen the ambiguity, deceit, and demagoguery with which this question is presented to the workers. The continuous pressure threatens to provoke a reaction among the masses incomparably graver than the one that developed at the end of the civil war.

The danger is all the more acute and menacing since not only will the problem of “overtaking and outstripping” not be solved, even if the five-year plan were to be completely fulfilled, but the plan itself will never be achieved in four years, despite the utmost exertion of forces. What is still more serious is that the adventurism of the leadership makes the accomplishment of the plan in five years less and less likely. The stupid and blind obstinacy of maintaining the plan as it is to the letter for the sake of “general”
prestige inevitably prepares a whole series of crises which can stifle economic development and provoke an open political crisis.

The USSR and the world market

Thus, the summary results of the increase in production at this point, exceptionally sweeping though they are, do not present a true picture of the situation, for they do not delineate the unfavorable conditions, economic and political, in which the third year of the five-year plan began (October 1, 1930). A more concrete analysis of the economy reveals that the arbitrary statistics of the successes hide a series of profound contradictions: between the city and the country (the price scissors: lack of food products and raw materials and lack of industrial commodities in the village); between heavy and light industry (factories not supplied with raw materials and shortage of commodities); between the real and the nominal purchasing power of the chervonets (inflation); between the party and the working class; between the apparatus and the party; within the apparatus.

And apart from these so-called internal contradictions, there is a contradiction which, by the very nature of things, acquires increasing significance: the contradiction between the Soviet economy and the foreign market.

The reactionary utopia of an enclosed socialist economy developing harmoniously on its internal foundations with the safeguard of the monopoly of foreign trade constituted the point of departure of the entire plan. The specialists of the State Planning Commission, meeting the “bosses” halfway and relating their harmful aims to the prejudices of the authorities, prepared the first draft of the five-year plan not only with a declining curve in the industrial rate but also with a declining curve in foreign trade: at the end of ten or twelve years, the USSR would have completely ceased importation. The same plan provided for an increasingly abundant harvest and consequently greater possibilities for export. A question remained unanswered: what would be done with the surplus grain and the other surpluses that the country could produce? Surely the surpluses were not to be dumped into the ocean.

However, before the first draft of the five-year plan was re-
vised in principle under the pressure of the Opposition, the very course of events produced fissures in the theory and practice of an isolated economy.

The world market presents immense and prodigiously inexhaustible resources to the economy of every country, socialist as well as capitalist. The growth of Soviet industry creates both technical and cultural needs and new contradictions, thus compelling it to resort more and more to the resources of foreign trade. Simultaneously, the development of industry, uneven because of natural conditions, engenders a pressing need to export in various sectors (for example, oil, wood) long before industry as a whole has begun to satisfy the elementary requirements of the country. Revival of economic life in the USSR therefore leads from all sides not to its economic isolation but on the contrary to the growth of its relations with the world economy and, consequently, of its dependency on the world economy. The character of this dependency is defined partly by the specific gravity of the Soviet economy within the world economy, but more directly by the relationship between the net cost of the Soviet products and the net cost of those in the advanced capitalist countries.

The entry of the Soviet economy on the world market, therefore, has not taken place on the basis of a broad perspective and the stipulations of the plan, but, on the contrary, despite the plan, under the pressure of stark necessity, when it became clear that the importation of machinery, of necessary types of raw materials and auxiliary materials was a matter of life and death for all the sectors of industry.

There cannot be an increase in imports except through an extension of exports. The Soviet state exports because it cannot help doing so and it sells at prices which are determined by the world economy. Thus the Soviet economy not only falls to an increasing degree under the control of the world market but, in addition, it is drawn—in a refracted and altered way, of course—into the sphere of influence of the oscillations of the world capitalist conjuncture. Exports for the year 1929–30, far from being realized according to the plan, have been considerably hurt financially because of the world crisis. This is how one of the many discussions between the
Left Opposition and the centrists finds its conclusion. In the struggle about the necessity to elaborate the five-year plan, we advanced the idea that the five-year plan was only the first stage, that we would have to pass over in the shortest possible time to a plan with a perspective of eight to ten years, in order to embrace an average period for the renewal of tool stocks and also to adapt ourselves to the world conjuncture. A stabilization of postwar capitalism, no matter how tenuous, would lead inevitably to the reappearance of the commercial-industrial cycles postponed by the war, and we would be obliged to develop our plans not upon alleged independence of the world conjuncture, but upon intelligent adaptation to this conjuncture, that is, in such a manner as to gain as much as possible from the economic upturn and to lose as little as possible from the crisis. It is useless to repeat today the national-socialist commonplaces which the official leaders, beginning with Stalin and Bukharin, set up against these factors which are operative today. The less the leaders of the economy foresaw the simple logic of the situation, the more does export today assume a chaotic character.

Some elementary conclusions, very important for the future, must be drawn from the brief history of Soviet foreign trade and the difficulties encountered last year in the export trade, always very inadequate in volume despite its forced character. The greater the success of the development of the Soviet economy in the future, the more extensive foreign economic relations will have to be. The contrary theorem is even more important: it is only through a growing extension of exports and imports that the economy will be able to overcome in time the partial crises, to diminish the partial disproportions, and to balance the dynamic equilibrium of the various sectors in order to assure an accelerated rate of development.

It is precisely at this point, however, that in the final analysis we run into decisive problems and difficulties. The possibility of making use of the resources of the world market for the development of the socialist economy is directly determined, as we have said, by the relations between the domestic and the world net cost of a commodity of fixed, standard quality. But the bureaucratic course of the acceleration of the tempos up to now has not permitted us to
gain any results in this field or even to pose the question correctly.

In his report to the Sixteenth Congress Stalin said that the quality of our production is sometimes "disgraceful"—it is with such explanations that the bureaucracy plugs up every hole. This is on a par with the expression concerning our "damnable" backwardness. Instead of exact data, we are handed expressions which sound very strong, but which are only a cowardly cover for the reality: the backwardness—"damnable"; the quality—"disgraceful." Yet, two figures, two average comparative coefficients would have given the party and the working class an incomparably more valuable orientation than all the mountains of cheap journalistic statistics that fill the ten-hour speeches of the sages of our times and which, in this field also, replace quality by quantity.

The sale of Soviet products even at prices lower than their net costs is, in the interests of imports, inevitable to a certain degree and is fully justified from the point of view of the general economy. But only to a certain degree. In the future the increase of exports will encounter ever-greater obstacles, as a result of the difference in domestic and world net costs. Thus the problem of comparative coefficients of the quality and quantity of domestic and world products is necessarily and sharply posed. The fate of the Soviet economy is decided economically in the knot of foreign trade, just as it is decided politically in the knot which binds the Communist Party of the Soviet Union to the Comintern.

The world capitalist press has described the increase in Soviet exports as dumping, and the mercenary bourgeoisie of the Russian emigres and its domesticated "democrats" have seized upon this catchword. There is nothing astonishing in this, just as there is nothing astonishing in the fact that the mercenary emigrant press publishes the revelations of the national defense secrets of the USSR in the interests of Rumania, Poland, and the sharks of more substantial size. It is not their dastardliness which is astonishing; it is their stupidity, which for that matter is not surprising either: do not look for too much intelligence from the mercenary bourgeoisie. By presenting Soviet "dumping" as a threat to the world economy, the liberals and the democrats affirmed by that alone that Soviet industry had attained such a degree of power that it is in a position to
shake the world market. Unfortunately, that is not the case.

Suffice it to say that Soviet export, its present volume considerably augmented, constitutes only one and a half percent of world exports. This cannot overturn capitalism, rotten though it is. Only outright fools, nonetheless knaves for that, can attribute to the Soviet government the intention of provoking the world revolution by one and a half percent of exports.

What are described as the inroads of the Soviet economy into the world economy are rather the inroads of the world market into the Soviet economy. This process will be extended until it becomes more and more an economic duel between the two systems. In the light of this perspective, we see how infantile is the narrow philosophy according to which the construction of socialism is guaranteed by victory over the bourgeoisie of one’s own country, after which the relationship with the world abroad is limited to the struggle against military intervention.

At the beginning of the world crisis, the Opposition proposed the launching of an international proletarian campaign for the strengthening of economic collaboration with the USSR. In spite of the fact that the crisis and unemployment lent urgency to the campaign, it was rejected with all sorts of inept pretexts; in fact it was rejected because the Opposition had initiated the proposal. Today, in view of the world attack against Soviet “dumping,” the sections of the Comintern are compelled to conduct the campaign for economic collaboration with the USSR that we had proposed. But how pitiful and eclectic is their campaign, without either clear ideas or perspectives; a campaign of a disordered defense instead of a well-prepared offense. Once more we see that behind the bureaucratic clamor is concealed the same “tail-endism,” the same incapacity to take political initiative in a single important question.

Conclusions

1. To acknowledge publicly that the decision to achieve the five-year plan in four years was a wrong one.
2. To submit the experiences of the first two years and the inserted trimester for study and free and cogent discussion in the party.
3. To establish as the criteria of this discussion: the optimum
tempos, those which are most reasonable, that is, the tempos which not only permit the application of the present goals, but even more the dynamic equilibrium of rapid growth expansion for a number of years to come; the systematic increase of real wages; the closing of the scissors of industrial and agricultural prices, that is, the strengthening of the alliance with the peasantry.

4. To follow attentively the inevitable process of differentiation within the collectives, as well as between different collectives; in no case to identify the collective farms with socialism.

5. To pose openly and within the framework of the plan the problem of stabilizing the monetary system; otherwise the danger of a panic which bureaucratic deflation may engender will be just as threatening as inflation.

6. To pose the problem of foreign trade as a cardinal one in the perspective of the extension of relations with the world economy.

7. To work out a system of comparative coefficients between Soviet production and the production of the advanced capitalist countries as a guide to the practical needs of exports and imports and also as the only correct criterion in the question of “overtaking and outstripping.”

8. To put an end to being guided in the economy by bureaucratic considerations of prestige: not to gloss over realities, not to keep silent about the truth, not to deceive; not to label as socialism the present transitional Soviet economy which, at its present level, is much closer to the czarist-bourgeois economy than to advanced capitalism.

9. To abandon the false national and international perspectives of economic development which flow inevitably from the theory of socialism in one country.

10. To finish once and for all with the Catholic church dogma of “general” infallibility, disastrous in practice, humiliating for a revolutionary party, and profoundly stupid.

11. To revive the party by shattering the bureaucratic dictatorship of the apparatus.

12. To condemn Stalinism; to return to the theory of Marx and the revolutionary methodology of Lenin.
Leon Trotsky at his desk in Prinkipo, 1931.
Publish December 1930

Notes of a journalist

KNIGHTS OF ANTI-TROTSKYISM

Pravda accuses Riutin—of Trotskyism, and the party must listen and suffer this. This is what we have come to! Let us recall the past briefly. The initiators of the struggle against Trotskyism were Zinoviev and Kamenev. After a time they themselves came over to the banner of Trotskyism; the fact that they later deserted this banner does not alter this. The principal or, rather, only theoretician of anti-Trotskyism was Bukharin, who fostered the whole campaign. He—Bukharin, the author of the Comintern program!—turned out to be “a bourgeois liberal” and “an agent of the saboteurs inside the party.” His repeated repentance does not change this. The Moscow organization was entrusted to Uglanov, especially to carry on the struggle against Trotskyism. His services along this line were more than once given official recognition. But as soon as he had crushed Trotskyism in Moscow, he himself was exposed as an echo of the kulak-Nepman. At the head of the Moscow Central Control Commission which was expelling Trotskyists was the not unknown Moroz. As soon as he completed his work of expulsions, it was decided at the joint session of the Moscow committee and the control commission under Stalin’s di-
rection that Moroz, who had been the personification of the "conscience of the party" on the Moscow scale, in fact had no conscience at all (literally!). At the head of the Krasnopresnensk district, the main proletarian district in Moscow, stood Riutin, the pillar and hope of Uglanov, the main theoretician of anti-Trotskyism in the Moscow organization. Now he has been labeled a former Menshevik, a renegade, a saboteur, and is expelled from the party. Nevertheless, between his allegiance to Menshevism in 1917 and his wrecking activities in 1930, he succeeded in performing the chief work of the Moscow organization in its struggle against Trotskyism.

We could continue this sketch indefinitely, beyond the confines of the USSR. In all the sections of the Comintern the majority of those who directed the struggle against Trotskyism proved to be right-wingers, counterrevolutionaries, and renegades.

Did not their renegacy consist precisely in the fact that they conducted a struggle for the extermination of the only Marxist, the only Leninist faction of contemporary communism?

HECKERT TEACHES LIEBKNECHT

Fritz Heckert writes on the defeat of the German revolution of 1918–19 in an anniversary article of Pravda: "It was a great mistake that the Spartacus League considered itself merely a propagandist group in the ranks of the Social Democratic Party." Further on he accuses Karl Liebknecht, Rosa Luxemburg, and Leo Jogisches of "not having understood the role of the revolutionary party."

There is a grain of truth in this remark, although expressed pedantically and torn out of its historical context. But we are not concerned with this now.

If it can be considered a mistake that Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht maintained the Spartacists as a revolutionary faction inside the Social Democratic Party for too long a time and by doing so impeded the victory of the German revolution, then what can be said about the gentlemen who forcibly compelled the young Communist Party of China to enter a purely bourgeois party, to abide by its discipline, and even to forsake its duty of counterpos-
ing Marxism to Sun Yat-senism?\textsuperscript{115}

But it was precisely this crime that was committed during 1923–28 by the Comintern leadership. And it was Fritz Heckert who unfailingly defended this criminal policy of the right-centrist bloc against the Left Opposition. Shouldn’t Heckert be a bit more careful in his comments on Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg?

**STALINIST RECRUITMENT**

The newspapers publish in almost every issue: “We nonparty workers, in reply to the duplicity of the opportunists, declare our adherence to the party.”

This is always followed by a list of workers with a note attached to each name: twenty years of industrial experience, twenty-five, twenty-nine, and even thirty-three. Thus these are workers who are forty or fifty years old. All of them were mature at the time of the October Revolution and the civil war. This did not prevent them from remaining outside the party. Only the duplicity of the two chairmen of the Council of People’s Commissars, Rykov and Syrtsov, induced them to join the party.

What kind of workers are these who succeeded in retaining their jobs in a factory, often in the same factory, for a period of fifteen to twenty years prior to the revolution? These are the most meek, the most submissive, often simply servile elements, participants in religious processions, those who bring birthday presents to the boss. In the first years of the revolution they did not even dare to think of joining the party. But once it is ordered by the bosses, the authorities, they cannot refuse. These are the elements inside the working class to whom centrism more and more looks for support, while at the same time it silences the most advanced workers.

**THE GREATEST CRIME**

*Pravda* has now formulated a new type of crime: “the Trotskyists’ methods of discrediting the best pupil of Lenin and the recognized
leader of the party, Comrade Stalin.” Unfortunately, the most serious beginning of this Trotskyist method was made in Lenin’s testament,\(^{116}\) where the “best pupil” is accused of rudeness, disloyalty, and the tendency toward the abuse of power, and where the party is urged to remove him from his post.

‘EVERYBODY REMEMBERS’

The paper *Za Industrializatsiiia* [For Industrialization], which incidentally is edited in a very careless manner, writes: “Everybody remembers the idea, advanced at one time by the wreckers of the southern metal industry, that the Dnieprostroy power station should be constructed only when there would be consumers for the power. In other words, only after the factories have demanded power should the construction of the station begin. This was directed against the Dnieprostroy” (November 3).

“Everybody remembers”! But some also remember that all these arguments were the basic ones of the Politburo in 1926–27. Stalin, Molotov, Voroshilov, Kalinin, Rykov—all were against the Dnieprostroy project, with the exception of the Ukrainians, who were for Dnieprostroy for their own reasons. Stalin maintained that construction of the Dnieprostroy station should be compared to a peasant’s purchase of a phonograph instead of a cow. Voroshilov clamored that it would be ridiculous to construct a power station for factories that did not yet exist.

All this is preserved in the stenographic minutes of the Central Committee meetings.

THE OPPOSITION’S YESTERDAY

In a lengthy article (November 21) *Pravda* criticizes the errors of A.P. Smirnov, the former commissar of agriculture, and his successor Teodorovich, and reveals their adherence to the Kondratiev.\(^{117}\) The article is basically a paraphrasing of the written declarations which the Opposition presented to the Central Committee in 1926—
27, and which were indignantly rejected by Stalin, Molotov, and the others. And so poor Pravda repeats the Opposition’s yesterday.

**THE MYSTERY OF REPENTANCE**

*Sovetskaya Sibir* [Soviet Siberia] informs us that in Kalachinsk “the chief activity and concern of the communists of late has been the recognition of errors and self-flagellation, which is carried out with particular pleasure and levity.”

Only in Kalachinsk?

They now repent as easily as they blow their nose. The well-known Bogushevsky, who for a number of months was generally associated with the extreme right (actually he was not a right-winger; he simply did not get the signal in time and continued to play the old record), is now not only the editor of *Za Industrializatsiia* but is also conducting a furious campaign against the right-wingers. What was required of him for this high post? Nothing in particular: to cut his hair, take a bath, and repent. And the fellow is again as good as new—until the moment of a new zigzag.

After these lines had been written, the Moscow papers brought the latest news: Bogushevsky has been called on the carpet for labeling Bukharin’s repentance a fraud. Again, he did not get the signal in time and overreached himself. It can’t be helped; it’s the risk of the trade.

**BALD-HEADED COMMUNIST YOUTH**

Why do you keep silent, Nikolai Ivanovich?

A few lines to you and Rykov we are ready to devote.

This is a fragment of verse by Bezymensky,118 the accuser of those who cannot defend themselves. He calls Nussinov, who was expelled from the party, “a most villainous abomination.”* There’s

* This is a play on the Russian name Nussinov. Gnusny means abomination.—Translator
a bold and quick-witted poet for you! Further on he speaks of “the villainous carrion of all oppositions” even though the eminent Bezymensky himself once belonged to one of the oppositions. And all this is in the style of bald-headed communist youth.
National conferences and internationalism

To the Executive Committee of the Communist League [of France]
Copy to the Administrative Secretariat

Dear Comrades:

In a private letter of December 15, which I have received today, December 22, Comrade Naville informs me that the national conference of the League has been set for the middle of January. In other words, provisions have been made to deprive all sections of the possibility of expressing themselves in regard to disputed questions, upon the solution of which the future existence of our international organization depends.

The circular of the Administrative Secretariat concerning the European conference reads (in International Bulletin number 2):

“The conference of our German section, which is taking place at this moment, will undoubtedly contribute very important material toward the evaluation of the political situation and the tasks of the Opposition. The preparation of the conference of the French League will take place in the same sense.”

The deplorable example of the German conference shows where
the subordination of international and revolutionary tasks in general to second-rank organizational questions leads. To fix the date of the conference of the League for the middle of January would mean virtually the liquidation of the international organization of the Bolshevik-Leninists. Because for a Marxist, internationalism consists first of all of the active participation of every section in the life of the other sections. Only under these conditions is there any sense in calling an international conference later on.

In the same letter Comrade Naville informs me of his solidarity with my communication to Comrade Gourget concerning the trade-union question. I would be only too happy were the actual facts to permit me to attach the necessary political weight to this declaration. The line of La Verite on the trade-union question during the last few months has taken a directly opposite direction, for which neither the Russian nor, I believe, the International Opposition can bear responsibility. In my opinion, the national conference must evaluate this line and reject it, in order to open up the possibility for a correct policy on the trade-union question.

Comrade Naville believes, to conclude from his letter, that the trade-union differences are the only ones. I cannot concur in this, unfortunately. It is true that at the present moment the trade-union question is posed most sharply. But experiences of an entire year force me to the conclusion that there has not been a single important question on which there have not been serious and sharp differences between the editorial board of the Russian Bulletin and the group (or subfaction) of Comrade Naville.

On the question of our relations with the party and the working class, the group of Comrade Naville has represented and carried out in practice a completely false line. This is proved not only by a series of articles by Comrades Naville and Gerard in La Verite. The question of the demonstrations in the days of the “third period,” the question of solidarization with the victims of the “frame-up” [of CP leaders by the police], the question of the Indochinese demonstration, the question of l’Humanite, and a series of others have formed for some time the subject of internal differences of opinion, in which I have always had to verify the
The fact that the Naville group adopted a wrong position on all these questions because it based itself on a wrong point of departure.

The objection may be raised that all this concerns the past. I myself would like to think so. Unfortunately, however, the policy of the Naville group in regard to the tactical "turn" in the party proves that the same old differences still exist under the cloak of a more careful phraseology. The mistake in this connection is all the greater since many comrades in the League have taken a position that is (in essence) quite correct, but for which they were subjected to a ruthless attack by the editors of La Verite. When we review the whole past period in its entirety, we can only come to the conclusion that the group or the subfaction of Comrade Naville—of course against its will—has helped the party bureaucracy to extricate itself from the convulsions of the "turn" almost unpunished. Can we leave this important political experience without a national and international evaluation? I don't believe we can.

No less important is the question of the relation between the national and international organizations. Here too the differences arose almost on the day the group of Comrade Naville joined the Left Opposition. The struggle, which was carried on mainly in private letters and conversations, has lasted nearly one and a half years. The group of Comrade Naville estimates the role of the international organization for Bolshevik-Leninists altogether wrongly, a fact that has already brought us great damage during the last year. The tendency to carry through the League conference without the participation of the international organization is in itself a sufficiently graphic expression of the basic error of the group of Comrade Naville on the question of internationalism.

The leading comrades of the League are already familiar with the systematic and persistent divergences between the group of Comrade Naville and the editors of the Russian Bulletin. The serious correspondence over the disputed questions could fill a book. To these same questions I devoted my circular number 1, of June 21, 1930. For completely obvious reasons I avoided giving names and in general setting the dot on the i, as long as I still nurtured the hope that a mutual agreement could be reached privately; unfortunately my efforts brought no results. The experiences of the last
few months have shown that the differences of opinion are just as great at present as they were a year and a half ago.

In politics there is nothing more dangerous than an apparent, external solidarity that covers up differences in fundamental tendencies. Under such conditions the struggle around ideas is inevitably replaced by personal conflicts and quarrels that poison the whole atmosphere.

I therefore subscribe to Comrade Naville’s opinion that the question of further collaboration and the basis for it can only be solved by means of an open, principled discussion. But contrary to Comrade Naville I believe that this discussion must take on an international character. It is understood that the League, like every other section, is autonomous in its decisions. However, before it reaches these decisions, on which its unity and its place in the International Left Opposition depend, the League must also give the other sections an opportunity to express themselves, in order not to confront them with an accomplished fact. For this purpose it is indispensable that a period of at least four weeks be set aside between the publication of the draft theses and the call for a conference. At any rate, I appeal to you most urgently in the name of the Russian section to that effect, since I see in this way the only possibility to assure an actually international collaboration in the future.

I do not doubt that the crisis in the League, which has become a crisis of our international organization, can be solved without convulsions and splits. For this purpose two conditions are necessary: political clarity and goodwill on both sides.

With communist greetings,

L. Trotsky
Another victim of Stalin

Comrade Kote Tsintsadze close to death

We have received the following communication:

For a month now Comrade Kote Tsintsadze lies close to death. Twice there has been serious hemoptysis: the blood ran in a fountain and he lost about five cups of precious blood. The hemorrhages were accompanied by heart attacks; the sick man nearly suffocated. The doctors almost despaired of saving him. The only hope, in their opinion, was an immediate move to Sukhumi, for the Crimean climate was fatal in Comrade Kote’s case. The comrades acted to obtain a transfer. Ordzhonikidze promised to arrange the transfer two months ago now, but to date no permission has been granted. . . . Clearly, it will be forthcoming when Comrade Kote Tsintsadze is already dead.

Kote Tsintsadze is an old member of the Bolshevik Party, which he joined in 1903 and in whose ranks he has fought continuously. Today, as supporters of Stalinism, there lords the type of “Old Bolshevik” who after the defeat of the revolution of 1905 right up to the revolution of 1917 stayed outside the revolutionary movement, who fought against October, and sided with it only after the victory. These “Old Bolsheviks” Lenin in his time proposed to
consign “to the archives.” In contrast to those gentlemen, Comrade Kote is a genuine Bolshevik-revolutionist. In his youth he was a party militant operating where circumstances demanded the same confidence and courage with bomb and revolver as in other circumstances with leaflets and propaganda speeches. Kote suffered czarist imprisonment and exile. At the time of the revolution, he fought against the class enemy in his native Caucasia where in the heroic period he was chairman of the Caucasian Cheka. From 1923, Comrade Kote was in the Opposition and one of its leaders in Caucasia. In 1928, he was sent into exile, this time Stalinist. Comrade Kote’s health, undermined by imprisonment, exile, and militant party work, deteriorated still further. Comrade Kote has an acute form of tuberculosis of the lungs. The conditions of Stalinist exile sharply aggravate his painful condition. In the spring of this year, Kote’s condition was threatening: continuous hemoptysis; at that time he lost almost fifteen pounds and was confined to bed for many months. Comrade Kote Tsintsadze’s friends and relatives throughout the long months vainly raised the question of his transfer to Sukhumi. Finally, the above communication speaks of Comrade Kote’s critical state. Despite that, he was not allowed to move to Sukhumi. The Stalin-Ordzhonikidze clique seeks Comrade Kote’s death. Under its protection, rogues and careerists are playing with the life of an old and irreproachable revolutionist. They know that Comrade Kote is a zealous Bolshevik, that Comrade Kote does not budge. They know that Comrade Kote, even gravely ill, in bed, continues in letters and speech to fight for Leninist ideas against the Stalinists and against capitulation. For that they hate him, for that Stalin condemns Kote to certain death.
It took altogether extraordinary conditions like czarism, illegality, prison, and deportation, many years of struggle against the Mensheviks, and especially the experience of three revolutions to produce fighters like Kote Tsintsadze. His life was entirely bound up with the history of the revolutionary movement for more than a quarter of a century. He participated in all the stages of the proletarian uprising, beginning with the first propaganda circles up to the barricades and the seizure of power. He carried out the onerous work of illegal organization, and any time revolutionists were caught in the net of the police he devoted himself to freeing them. Later he was head of the special Cheka commission in Caucasus, the very center of power during the most heroic period of the proletarian dictatorship.

When the reaction against October had changed the composition and the character of the party apparatus and its policies, Kote Tsintsadze was one of the first to begin a struggle against these new tendencies hostile to the spirit of Bolshevism. The first conflict occurred during Lenin’s illness. Stalin and Ordzhonikidze, with the help of Dzerzhinsky, had pulled off their coup in Georgia, re-
placing the core of Old Bolsheviks with careerist functionaries of the type of Eliava, Orakhelashvili, and that ilk.¹² It was precisely on this issue that Lenin prepared to launch an implacable battle against the Stalin faction and the apparatus at the Twelfth Congress of the party. On March 6, 1923, Lenin wrote to the Georgian group of Old Bolsheviks, of which Kote Tsintsadze was one of the founders: “I am following your case with all my heart. I am indignant over Ordzhonikidze’s rudeness and the connivance of Stalin and Dzerzhinsky. I am preparing for you notes and a speech” [Collected Works, volume 45].

The subsequent course of events is sufficiently well known. The Stalin faction crushed the Lenin faction in the Caucasus. This was the initial victory for reaction in the party and opened up the second chapter of the revolution.

Tsintsadze, suffering from tuberculosis, bearing the weight of decades of revolutionary work, persecuted by the apparatus at every step, did not desert his post of struggle for a moment. In 1928 he was deported to Bakhchi-Sarai, where the wind and dust did their disastrous work on the remnants of his lungs. Later he was transferred to Alushta, where the chill and rainy winter completed the destruction.

Some friends tried to get Kote admitted to the Gulripsch Sanatorium at Sukhumi, where Tsintsadze had succeeded in saving his life several times before during especially acute sieges of his illness. Of course, Ordzhonikidze “promised”; Ordzhonikidze “promises” a great deal to everyone. But the cowardliness of his character—coarseness does not exclude cowardice—always made him a blind instrument in the hands of Stalin. While Tsintsadze was literally struggling against death, Stalin fought all attempts to save the old militant. Send him to Gulripsch on the coast of the Black Sea? And if he recovers? Connections might be established between Batum and Constantinople. No, impossible!

With the death of Tsintsadze, one of the most attractive figures of early Bolshevikism has disappeared. This fighter, who more than once risked his life and knew very well how to chastise the enemy, was a man of exceptional mildness in his personal relations. A good-natured sarcasm and a sly sense of humor were combined in this
tempered terrorist with a gentleness one might almost call feminine.

The serious illness from which he was not free for a moment could neither break his moral resistance nor even succeed in overcoming his good spirits and tender affection for humanity.

Kote was not a theoretician. But his clear thinking, his revolutionary passion, and his immense political experience—the living experience of three revolutions—armed him better, more seriously and firmly, than does the doctrine formally digested by those who lack the fortitude and perseverance of Tsintsadze. Like Shakespeare’s Lear, he was every inch a revolutionary. His character revealed itself perhaps even more strikingly during the last eight years—years of uninterrupted struggle against the advent and entrenchment of the unprincipled bureaucracy.

Tsintsadze instinctively fought against anything resembling treachery, capitulation, or disloyalty. He understood the significance of the bloc with Zinoviev and Kamenev. But he never supported this group morally. His letters reveal a natural repugnance—it is impossible to find another word—toward revolutionists who, wanting to insure their formal membership in the party, betray it by renouncing their ideas.

Number 2 of the Biulleten Oppozitsii published a letter from Tsintsadze to Okudzhava. It is an excellent document of tenacity, clarity of thought, and conviction. Tsintsadze, as we said, was not a theoretician, and he voluntarily let others formulate the tasks of the revolution, the party, and the Opposition. But any time he detected a false note, he took pen in hand, and no “authority” could prevent him from expressing his suspicions and from making his replies. His letter written on May 2 last year and published in the number 12–13 issue of the Biulleten testifies best to this. This practical man and organizer safeguarded the purity of doctrine more attentively than did some theoreticians.

We often encounter the following phrases in Kote’s letters: “a bad ‘institution,’ these waverings”; “woe to the people who can’t wait”; or, “in solitude weak people easily become subject to all kinds of contagion.” Tsintsadze’s unshakable courage buoyed up his dwindling physical energy. He even viewed his illness as a revolution-
ary duel. In one of his letters several months before he died he wrote that in his battle against death he was pursuing the question: “Who will conquer?” “In the meantime, the advantage remains on my side,” he added, with the optimism that never abandoned him.

In the summer of 1928, speaking of himself and his illness, Kote wrote to me from Bakhchi-Sarai: “... many of our comrades and friends have been forced to end their lives in prison or somewhere in deportation. Yet in the final analysis this will be an enrichment of revolutionary history: a new generation will learn the lesson. The Bolshevik youth, learning from the struggle of the Bolshevik Opposition against the opportunist wing of the party, will understand on whose side the truth lies. . . .”

Tsintsadze could write these simple yet superb words only in an intimate letter to a friend. Now that he is no longer alive, it can and must be published. It summarizes the life and the morale of a revolutionist of high order. It must be made public because the youth must be instructed not only by theoretical formulas but also by examples of revolutionary tenacity.

The Communist parties in the West have not yet brought up fighters of Tsintsadze’s type. This is their besetting weakness, determined by historical reasons but nonetheless a weakness. The Left Opposition in the Western countries is not an exception in this respect and it must well take note of it.

Especially for the Opposition youth, the example of Tsintsadze can and should serve as a lesson. Tsintsadze was the living negation of any kind of political careerism, that is, the inclination to sacrifice principles, ideas, and tasks of the cause for personal ends. This does not in the least rule out justified revolutionary ambition. No, political ambition plays a very important part in the struggle. But the revolutionary begins where personal ambition is fully and wholly subordinated to the service of a great idea, voluntarily submitting to and merging with it. Flirtation with ideas or dilettante dabbling with them for personal advantage is what Tsintsadze pitilessly condemned both through his life and his death. His was the ambition of unshakable revolutionary loyalty. It should serve as a lesson to the proletarian youth.
January 8, 1931

To the Chinese Left Opposition

Dear Comrades:

During the last few months I have received from you a great number of documents and letters in English, French, and Russian, as well as a large number of Opposition publications in Chinese. Pressing work, followed by illness, prevented me from answering you sooner. During the last days I have carefully studied all the documents received—except, alas, the Chinese—in order to be able to answer the questions you have raised.

To begin with, I will say that in studying the new documents I finally became convinced that there is no difference in principle at all among the various groups that have entered on the road to unification. There are nuances in tactics, which in the future, depending on the course of events, could develop into differences. However, there are no grounds for assuming that these differences of opinion will necessarily coincide with the lines of the former groupings. Further on, I will attempt to analyze the controversial and semicontroversial questions as I see them from here.

1. The entrance of the Communist Party into the Kuomintang was a mistake from the very beginning. I believe that this must be
stated openly—in one or another document—especially since in this instance the Russian Opposition to a large extent shares the guilt. Our group (the 1923 Opposition) was from the first, with the exception of Radek and a few of his closest friends, against the entry of the Communist Party into the Kuomintang and against the admission of the Kuomintang into the Comintern. The Zinovievists held the opposite position. With his vote, Radek put them in a majority in the Opposition center. Preobrazhensky and Pyatakov thought that we should not break our bloc with the Zinovievists because of this question. As a result, the United Opposition took an equivocal position on this question, which was reflected in a whole series of documents, even in the Opposition platform. It is worthy of note that all the Russian Oppositionists who adopted the Zinovievist or a conciliatory position on this question subsequently capitulated. On the other hand, all the comrades who are today in jails or in exile were from the very beginning opponents of the entry of the Communist Party into the Kuomintang. This shows the power of a principled position!

2. The slogan "dictatorship of the proletariat and the poor" does not contradict the slogan "dictatorship of the proletariat" but only supplements the latter, and makes it more understandable to the people. In China the proletariat is only a small minority. It can only become a force by uniting around it the majority, i.e., the city and village poor. This idea is in fact expressed by the slogan "dictatorship of the proletariat and the poor." Naturally, we must point out in the platform and in programmatic articles clearly and distinctly that the role of leadership is concentrated in the hands of the proletariat, which acts as the guide, teacher, and defender of the poor. However, in agitation it is completely correct to employ the term "dictatorship of the proletariat and the poor" as a short slogan. In this form, it has nothing in common with "democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry."

In a long document (December 15, 1929) signed by Chen Tuhsiu and others, the problem is formulated in the following manner:

"The tasks of the bourgeois democratic revolution in China (national independence, state unity, and agrarian revolution) can be solved only on condition that the Chinese proletariat in alli-
ance with the city and village poor and as their leader seizes political power. In other words, the conclusion and the victory of the bourgeois democratic revolution in China can only be attained in the Russian way, i.e., by way of a Chinese October.”

I believe that this formulation is completely correct and excludes the possibility of any misunderstandings whatever.

3. On the question of the character of the Chinese revolution the Comintern leadership has reached an impasse. The experience of the events and the critiques of the Left Opposition have completely destroyed the conception of a “democratic dictatorship.” However, if this formula is given up, then no other recourse is left except to turn to the theory of the permanent revolution. The pathetic “theoreticians” of the Comintern stand between these two theories in the unenviable position of Buridan’s ass. The anniversary article (Pravda, November 7, 1930) of Manuilsky is the very latest revelation on this subject. A baser mixture of ignorance, cretinism, and villainy cannot be imagined. The Buridanish theory of the Stalinist bureaucrats has been analyzed in the last number of the Biulleten Oppozitsii (number 17–18). 132 On this fundamental question at any rate we do not have the least difference with you, as all your documents demonstrate.

4. In some letters, complaints have been made about some groups or individual comrades taking a wrong position with regard to the Chinese “Red Army” by likening its detachments to bandits. If that is true, then a stop must be put to it. Of course, lumpenproletarian elements and professional bandits are joining the revolutionary peasant detachments. Yet the movement as a whole arises from wellsprings deep in the conditions of the Chinese village, and these are the same sources from which the dictatorship of the proletariat will have to nourish itself later on. The policy of the Stalinists toward these detachments is a policy of criminal bureaucratic adventurism. This policy must be mercilessly exposed. We do not share or encourage the illusions of the leaders and the participants of the partisan detachments. We must explain to them that without a proletarian revolution and the seizure of power by the workers the partisan detachments of the peasantry cannot lead the way to victory. However, we must con-
duct this work of clarification as real friends, not detached onlook­ers and—especially—not as enemies. Without abandoning our own methods and tasks, we must persistently and courageously de­fend these detachments against the Kuomintang repression and bourgeois slander and persecution. We must explain the enormous symptomatic significance of these detachments. Naturally, we can­not throw our own forces into the partisan struggle—at present we have another field of endeavor and other tasks. Nevertheless, it is very desirable to have our people, Oppositionists, at least in the larger divisions of the “Red Army,” to share the fate of these detachments, to observe attentively the relations between these detachments and the peasantry, and to keep the Left Opposition informed.

In case of a postponement of the revolution, of a new economic revival in China, and of a development of parliamentary tenden­cies (all these are interconnected), the detachments will inevitably degenerate, antagonizing the poor peasantry. Therefore it is all the more necessary for us to keep an eye on these detachments, in order to be able to adjust our position as necessary.

5. In several let­ters, the question of a national assem­bly is brought up anew. The problem of our political tasks is lost be­neath guesses as to whether a national assembly will be set up, in what form, the relationship that might develop between the na­tional assembly and the soviets, etc. Running through such specu­lation is a strong thread of political scholasticism. Thus, for in­stance, one of the communications reads:

“We believe that the national assembly will most likely not be realized. Even if it should be realized, it could not be transformed into a ‘Provisional Government,’ since all the material forces are in the hands of the Kuomintang militarists. Regarding the gov­ernment that will be organized after the insurrection, that will undoubtedly be the government of the proletarian dictatorship, and in that case it will not convocate a national assembly.”

This supposition is extremely incomplete and one-sided, and therefore, leaves considerable room for misunderstandings and mistakes.

(a) First of all, we must not exclude the possibility that the bour-
geois classes themselves may be forced to convok something like a national assembly. If the reports of the European papers are correct, Chiang Kai-shek is nursing the idea of substituting control over some kind of sham parliament for his control over the Kuo-mintang Party which is now restricting him. Certain circles of the big and the middle bourgeoisie which have come into conflict with what they find to be an exasperating party dictatorship may look with favor upon such a project. At the same time, a “parliament” would serve better as a cover for the military dictatorship in face of American public opinion. As the papers report, Chiang Kai-shek has adopted Americanized Christianity in the not unfounded hope that this will facilitate his credit rating with the Jewish bankers in Wall Street; Americanized Christianity, American Jewish moneylenders, and a Chinese pseudoparliament—all these harmonize splendidly with one another.

In case of a parliamentary variant, the urban petty bourgeoisie, the intellectuals, the students, a “third party”—all will be set into motion. The questions of a constitution, suffrage, and parliamentarism will come onto the agenda. It would be nonsense to contend that the masses of the Chinese people have already left all this behind them. Up to the present they have only gone through the Stalin-Chiang Kai-shek school, i.e., the basest of all schools. The problems of democracy will inevitably, for a certain period, absorb the attention not only of the peasantry, but of the workers also. This must take place under our leadership.

Will Chiang Kai-shek convok his own parliament? It is quite possible. But it is possible that the constitutional-democratic movement will go beyond the bounds planned by Chiang Kai-shek, and this will force him to go further than he wants to at present. It is possible even that the movement will sweep away Chiang Kai-shek together with all his plans. No matter what the constitutional-parliamentary variants, we will not remain on the sidelines. We shall participate in the struggle under our slogans; above all, under the slogans of revolutionary and consistent (“100 percent”) democracy. If the revolutionary wave does not immediately sweep away Chiang Kai-shek and his parliament, we will be forced to participate in this parliament, exposing the lies of comprador par-
liamentarism, and advancing our own tasks.

(b) Can we assume that the revolutionary-democratic movement may take on such dimensions that Chiang Kai-shek will no longer be able to keep the military apparatus under control, while the Communists are not yet in a position to seize power? Such a transitional period is very likely. It could advance some sort of Chinese variety of dual power, a new provisional government, a bloc of the Kuomintang with a third party, etc., etc. Such a regime would be very unstable. It could only be a step toward the dictatorship of the proletariat. But such a step is possible.

(c) “After the victorious insurrection,” says the document which we have quoted, “a proletarian dictatorship might be instituted and in that case a national assembly would not be convoked.” Here, too, the question is oversimplified. At what moment will the insurrection take place and under what slogans? If the proletariat has assembled the poor peasantry under the slogans of democracy (land, national assembly, etc.) and in a united onslaught overthrows the military dictatorship of the bourgeoisie, then, when it comes into power, the proletariat will have to convocate a national assembly in order not to arouse the mistrust of the peasantry and in order not to provide an opening for bourgeois demagogy. Even after the October insurrection the Bolsheviks had to convocate the Constituent Assembly. Why should we conclude that this variant is impossible for China? The peasantry does not develop at the same rate as the proletariat. The proletariat can anticipate many things, but the peasantry will only learn from the facts. It may be that the Chinese peasantry will need to go through the living experience of a national assembly.

Since the bourgeoisie in Russia delayed convoking the Constituent Assembly for a long time, and the Bolsheviks exposed this, they were compelled, after they had come into power, to convocate the Constituent Assembly rapidly, on the basis of the old election results, which put them in a minority. The Constituent Assembly came into conflict with the Soviets before the eyes of all the people and it was dissolved.

In China we can conceive of another variant. After it comes to power, the proletariat may, under certain conditions, postpone con-
voking a national assembly for several months, develop a broad agitation in the countryside, and assure a Communist majority in the national assembly. The advantage would be that the Soviet system would be formally sanctioned by the national assembly, immediately depriving the bourgeoisie of a popular slogan in the civil war.

6. Of course, the variations we have considered above are only historical hypotheses. There is no way of predicting what the actual course of developments will be. The general course, toward the dictatorship of the proletariat, is clear in advance. We should not engage in speculation over possible variations, stages, and combinations, but instead intervene as the revolutionary factor in what is happening and develop powerful agitation around democratic slogans. If we take the initiative in this field, the Stalinist bureaucracy will be brushed aside and the Bolshevik-Leninists will become within a short time a powerful political force.

7. The question of determining what possibilities may open up in the near future for Chinese capitalism is not a matter of principle but of fact. To decide in advance that capitalist development in China can no longer take a step forward would be the purest doctrinaireism. A significant inflow of foreign capital into China is not at all excluded. Because of the world crisis, idle capital is accumulating that needs a field of investment. It is true that at present even American capital, the most powerful of all, is paralyzed, perplexed, apprehensive, and deprived of initiative, since only recently it fell from the peaks of prosperity into the depths of the depression. But it has already begun to look for an international bridgehead as the springboard from which it could touch off a new economic upsurge. It is beyond doubt that under these conditions China offers serious possibilities. To what degree will these be realized? This is not easy to predict either. Here we must not guess a priori, but watch the actual economic and political processes. All the same, it is not at all excluded that while the bulk of the capitalist world is still struggling in the grip of the crisis, the inflow of foreign capital will create an economic revival in China. We must be prepared for this variant, too, by focusing our attention in good time on organizing and strengthening the trade unions and assuring them a correct leadership.
Naturally, an economic upsurge in China would postpone immediate revolutionary perspectives for some time, but this revival will in turn open up new possibilities, new forces, and new sources of strength for victory. In any case, the future belongs to us.

8. Some of the letters from Shanghai pose the question: Should we carry out a complete unification in the individual localities, fuse the press of all the groups, and convene a conference on the basis of the unification that has already been achieved, or should we permit separate groups to continue within the united Opposition until all the tactical problems have been solved? In such organizational matters, it is difficult to offer advice from afar. It is even possible that the advice would arrive too late. Still, I cannot refrain from saying this to you: Dear friends, fuse your organizations and your press definitively this very day! We must not drag out the preparations for the unification a long time, because in that way, without wanting to, we can create artificial differences.

By this I do not mean to say that all the questions have already been settled and that you (or more correctly, we) are assured that no differences will arise in the future. No, there is no doubt that the day after tomorrow and the day after that, new tasks will arise, and with them new differences. Without this the development of a revolutionary party is impossible. But the new differences will create new groupings in the framework of the united organization. We must not tarry too long over the past. We must not mark time. We must go onward toward the future.

9. That new differences are inevitable is proved by the experiences of all the sections of the Left Opposition. The French League, for example, was formed from various groups. Thanks to its weekly journal, the League has accomplished very serious and very valuable work, not only from the national, but from the international point of view as well. It has demonstrated that the unification of the different groups was a progressive step. But in recent months some very serious differences have arisen in the League, particularly on the trade-union question. A right wing has formed and taken a position that is false to the core. This question is so important and so profound that it can even lead to a new split. Naturally, absolutely everything will have to be done to avoid this. But
if that does not succeed, it will not at all prove that the unification of yesterday was a mistake. We do not make a fetish of unity, nor of splits. It all depends upon the conditions of the moment, on the depth of the differences, on the character of the problems.

10. In Spain, conditions are apparently different from those in all the other countries. Spain is at present going through a period of clear and definite revolutionary upsurge. The heated political atmosphere should greatly facilitate the work of the Bolshevik-Leninists as the boldest and most consistent revolutionary wing. The Comintern has smashed the ranks of Spanish communism, it has weakened and rendered lifeless the official party. As in all other important cases, the Comintern leadership has let a revolutionary situation slip by. The Spanish workers have been left to their own devices at a most crucial moment. Left almost without leadership, they are developing a struggle through revolutionary strikes of notable scope. Under these conditions, the Spanish Bolshevik-Leninists are issuing the slogan of soviets. According to the theory of the Stalinists and the practice of the Canton insurrection, it appears that soviets must be created only on the eve of the insurrection. Disastrous theory and disastrous practice! Soviets must be created when the real and living movement of the masses manifests the need for that type of organization. Soviets are formed at first as broad strike committees. This is precisely the case in Spain. There is no doubt that under these conditions the initiative of the Bolshevik-Leninists (Opposition) will receive a sympathetic response from the proletarian vanguard. A broad perspective can open up in the near future for the Spanish Opposition. Let us wish our Spanish friends complete success.133

11. In conclusion, I come once more to the question of unity, in order to point out the extremely pitiful experiences of Austria in this domain.

For a year and a half, three Austrian groups occupied themselves with “unification” and each thought up in turn such conditions as to make the unification impossible. This criminal game only reflected the generally sorry state of the Austrian Opposition which has been overcome by the decay of the official Communist Party. This year each of the Austrian groups has succeeded
in more than amply demonstrating that it is ready to give up the ideas and principles of the International Opposition but in no case its own sectarian pretensions. The more barren the ideological base of these groups, the more venomous the nature of their internal struggles. They delight in dragging the banner of the International Opposition into the mud and demand that the International Opposition use its authority to cover up their unworthy work.

Obviously the International Opposition is not going to do this. To bring unprincipled groups into the International Opposition would mean poisoning one’s own organism. In this respect, strict selection is demanded. I hope that at its conference the International Opposition will adopt the “twenty-one conditions” for the admission of organizations into its ranks and that these conditions will be sufficiently severe.\textsuperscript{134}

In contrast to the Austrian Opposition, the Chinese Opposition did not develop on the basis of petty back-room intrigues, but from the experiences of a great revolution that was lost by an opportunist leadership. Its great historic mission places exceptional responsibilities on the Chinese Opposition. All of us here hope that the Chinese Opposition will rid itself of the spirit of clannishness, and, rising to its full height, prove equal to the tasks it faces.\textsuperscript{135}

Yours,

\textit{L. Trotsky}
Critical remarks about Prometeo’s resolution on democratic demands

...And now a few words about our Bordigist friends. If you leave out the third paragraph of their resolution, which has been put in by them in a completely mechanical way, without any connection with the text, then the matter looks this way to them: democracy is a principle of the exploiters; the revolutionary parties have not hitherto understood this; the Russians in 1917 hesitated between democracy and dictatorship; the Bordigists were the first to discover the true principle of dictatorship. Now that this principle has been discovered, any use of democratic slogans becomes reactionary; in other words, the dialectic of social development is replaced by the metaphysics of the development of a sectarian group. The Bordigists’ train of thought is in complete accord with the spirit of rational Enlightenment of the eighteenth century: formerly errors and prejudices prevailed, but now the true principle of society has been discovered, and it must continue existing on that basis; since now we, the Enlighteners, have understood that, there remains only a detail—to reconstruct society. The curious thing is that the Enlighteners discovered precisely the principle of democracy, which they formally contrasted to the
entire preceding development of humanity as an absolute beginning. The Bordigists have discovered nothing, but merely borrowed from the Russian Revolution the principle of the dictatorship of the proletariat, so as to oppose it, freed of any historical reality, as an absolute truth against the absolute error of democracy. This proves that they have understood absolutely nothing either of the theory and practice of the Russian Revolution or, for that matter, of Marxism as a whole. They do not take the trouble to explain what they actually understand by democracy. Apparently only parliamentarism. But what is to happen with such a detail as for example the independence of India from Great Britain? That is a purely democratic slogan. It concerns the liberation of one nation from another one. (The Bordigists will of course immediately explain to us that there are class-nations, which we poor sinners have never dreamt of; but the essence of the matter is precisely that it is a case of the liberation of a nation of the bourgeois-feudal colonial type from another of the bourgeois imperialist type.) What then is to happen with the democratic slogan of national independence? Our wise critics have overlooked that question.

Should communists fight against violence and provocations by the police, directed against the freedom of the press, strike, and assembly? And what does that mean if not the struggle for democracy?

What is to happen in that same India or in Hungary or in many other countries with the agrarian question? We know that the peasants’ land hunger can make them support the dictatorship of the proletariat even in such a backward country as India. But in order to realize this possibility there must be a series of concrete historical conditions, including a correct understanding of the agrarian-democratic problem. The Indian peasants do not know the dictatorship of the proletariat, and will not get to know it until it has been realized, with their half-conscious support. I say half-conscious, because the Indian peasant, with all the unclarity of his political views, still very consciously wants to take the land into his own hands, and expresses this desire in the formula that the land should belong not to the landlords but to the people. That is
not a pure revolutionary program, which means the liquidation of all kinds and vestiges of feudalism. What will the Bordigists say to the peasants? Your program is democratic, and therefore reactionary; we propose to you a program of proletarian dictatorship and socialism. No doubt the peasant will answer them with some Indian strong language. But what do we say to the peasant? Your democratic land program means a big historical step forward in social development. We communists are pursuing a more radical historical goal, but we support your democratic task fully and completely and for the present period make it our own. Only in this way can one bring the peasantry round to supporting the dictatorship of the proletariat in the course of their own struggle.

The curious thing is that the Bordigists are here serving up as a discovery of their own the same humbug that the Stalinists and Zinovievists imputed to me as permanent revolution (skipping over democracy, the peasantry, etc.).

It has already been remarked above that the Bordigists evince an inverse parliamentary cretinism by apparently completely reducing the problem of democracy to the question of the national assembly and of parliament in general. But even within the limits of the parliamentary frame of reference they are completely in the wrong. Their antidemocratic metaphysics inevitably implies the tactic of boycotting parliament. Comrade Bordiga took this stand at the time of the Second Congress, but later he departed from it. (I think in general that in polemic one should strictly distinguish Bordiga from the Bordigists. We do not know his views, since the conditions in which he exists deprive him of the opportunity of expressing himself. But we believe that Bordiga would hardly take on the responsibility for the parody-like views of the group of his pupils concerned.) It would not be a bad thing to ask the Bordigists outright whether they are for a boycott or for participation in parliament. If a communist deputy is arrested in violation of his immunity, will the Bordigists then call upon the workers to protest against this treading on our democratic rights?

These doctrinaires refuse to understand that we carry on half, three-quarters, or, in certain periods, even 99 percent of the preparation of the dictatorship on the basis of democracy, and in doing
this we defend every inch of democratic positions under our feet. But if one can defend the democratic positions of the working class, then perhaps one may fight for them where they do not yet exist?

Democracy is a weapon of capitalism, our critics tell us; yes, but a contradictory one, just as capitalism as a whole is contradictory. Democracy serves the bourgeoisie, but within certain limits it can also serve the proletariat against the bourgeoisie. The unfortunate thing is that the Bordigists do not grasp democracy and the dictatorship of the proletariat as historical institutions which can replace one another dialectically, but as two naked principles of which one embodies good, the other evil.

Finally, I should like to refer to point 5, concerning Russia, as an incredible curiosity. It is asserted there that the Bolsheviks supported the slogan of a national assembly “for a fairly short period, from the fall of czarism to the attempt at restoration of capitalist rule . . . .” In reality, the social democracy put forward the slogan of a national assembly from the start of its existence, i.e., from 1883. This slogan played a gigantic role in the education of the proletariat and the party from the first years of this century. The 1905 revolution grew under this slogan. The whole work of the Bolsheviks between the two revolutions went under the slogans of: 1. a democratic republic; 2. the land to the peasants (democratic-agrarian reform); 3. the eight-hour day (demand for workers’ democracy).

The Bordigists will certainly explain that all this was a complete error, that it belongs to the dark period in which the truth of the proletarian dictatorship had not yet been discovered.
In the article devoted to the fraternization of Monatte with the reformists and social-patriots, we pointed out that Monatte is concealing from the workers and supplying a cover for the most monstrous betrayals by the social-patriots, and in this way is facilitating such betrayals. What does Monatte say in reply to this? Trotsky, he says, is himself connected with Cachin, who played a shameful role during the war. From modesty, Monatte does not mention that he himself, having entered the Communist Party provisionally, worked alongside Cachin. But that has nothing to do with what we are talking about. The fact that the Comintern admitted into its ranks Cachin and other former social-patriots is placed by Monatte on the same level as his “fraternization” with Dumoulin, Zyromsky, and the others. That is the argument of a man who, fallen into a desperate situation, is obliged to use the petty maneuvers of an advocate without choice.

We did not go to Cachin; Cachin came to us. To get into the Comintern, he was obliged not only to condemn openly his part and the past of the French Socialist Party—especially in the war period—but also to break organizationally with the reformists and
social-patriots. He was obliged to sign the twenty-one conditions we had laid down. Let Monatte read this document again: each one of the twenty-one paragraphs applies a white-hot brand to the wounds of reformism and patriotism. Independently of Cachin’s own qualities—we are not speaking of the person but of the politician—the former social-patriots’ shift to the side of the October Revolution and Bolshevism signified one of the most severe blows to the social-patriots. We had no illusions from the beginning. We said that each one of the “recruits” will be tested in the struggle before the advanced workers. Revolutionary selection and communist reeducation will form a truly proletarian party in France. Despite all the mistakes and crimes of the epigones, and independently of the personal qualities of one Cachin or another, our foresight was incontestably correct. It retains its validity even today.

How do things stand with Monatte? He broke with communism. He abandoned the concept of the revolutionary party of the proletariat, i.e., the proletarian revolution.

After that, he went over to the camp of Dumoulin, Zyromsky, and the others who do not even think of breaking with the social democracy and national syndicalism. They remain the “left” wing of the enemy camp which defends the bourgeois state and bourgeois property. By breaking with communism Monatte has associated himself with this “left” wing of the class enemy.

That is how things stand in the matter. Woe to the “revolutionist” who is obliged to mask his position with the petty maneuvers of an advocate.
January 31, 1931

Problems of the German section

To the Administrative Secretariat of the ILO
Copies to the Secretariats of the German and French Oppositions

The crisis of the German Left Opposition, which has taken on particularly acute form these last few weeks, compels me to express several opinions:

1. Among other documents, I have received a copy of the correspondence between Comrade Well and the Berlin Executive. I cannot consider correct the characterization that Comrade Well attaches to the false and extremely dangerous policy conducted by the Executive under the leadership of Comrade Landau. The tone of Comrade Well’s letter can only be explained by an extreme nervous condition, caused by heavy personal blows, but politically it cannot be justified, especially in official correspondence.

    Comrade Well sets up as the task of his struggle the removal of Comrade Landau from the ranks of the Opposition. Needless to say I cannot agree with the way this question is posed. The task consists in changing the entire character of the work of the Ger-
man Opposition and its international orientation. This cannot be achieved at one blow. In France the struggle has a far clearer principled content. Nevertheless, the left wing of the League does not set itself the task, as far as I can see, of expelling Comrade Naville from the organization, although it is now the majority in the League. I, for my part, believe that it is necessary to do everything—aside from concessions in principle—to preserve the possibility of mutual work. I extend this completely and fully to include Comrade Landau; the character of his mistakes has not accidentally brought him closer to Naville.

2. In the European Opposition we have predominantly young comrades who joined the Opposition before they had the opportunity to participate seriously and for any length of time in the party and in mass struggles. In addition to that, the Opposition is developing under the conditions of a continuing revolutionary ebb that breeds sectarianism and “circle” sentiments. Austria serves as a good example of the type of characters who are inclined to seek refuge under the banner of the Left Opposition. This example is at the same time a serious lesson and a serious warning. In the first place—addressed to Comrade Landau.

Comrade Landau bears a twofold responsibility for the Mahnrufl group. He not only ignored all warnings in regard to the group but allowed himself also to make unwarranted attacks on Comrades Mill and Molinier, who had given a fully objective evaluation of the Mahnrufl group. The last turn of this group punished Comrade Landau severely, showing that organizational combinations and personal relations do not replace political education on the basis of a definite program.

The ideas of Comrade Graef were yesterday still his personal property. Whoever knew his evolution during the last few years could not be in doubt that Graef was slipping from the Marxist position on all the important questions of revolutionary policy. Of course, I did not conceal this opinion from him. Had Comrade Graef come forward with his views in the press (he was preparing a German pamphlet), naturally he would have received the necessary evaluation. The polemics on principles might have lent impetus to the ideological development of the Opposition. What po-
sition Graef himself would have developed subsequently—that is a personal question which I cannot answer.

However, what characterizes Austro-oppositionism—to use the excellent expression of Comrade Frankel—is this: combinations of little circles and adventurism behind the scenes. The splinter Frey group, which in common with it has passed through all its mistakes of the last months and years, plus the Mahnrun group, which has undergone all vacillations possible for a circle, plus Graef, who considered both groups incapable—these three groups adopted new views at their conference, which up to the present have not been discussed in the press and on which the ranks of the ILO have not been given an opportunity to express their opinion. Can anyone imagine a more pitiful ideological lack of principle than the basis of organizational adventurism?

Comrade Landau demands that the Mahnrun group give up its new views inside of twenty-four hours. As if that would change anything or advance anything even a single step. On the contrary, the new turn would only prove the complete ideological inadequacy of this group.

In regard to the Austrian groups I fully subscribe to the Administrative Secretariat decision that is up for confirmation before all sections and before the forthcoming European conference.

In regard to Comrade Landau the conclusion appears to me to be no less clear. It must be recognized and openly expressed—it would be best if Comrade Landau were to do this himself—that in the Mahnrun question, despite his closeness to this group, he proved least able to evaluate it correctly; and since Comrade Landau is the outstanding leader of this group, we must draw the conclusion that the methods employed by him were not appropriate for their purpose. That means Comrade Landau must revise his methods radically. We will help him in this.

3. The conduct of the German Executive in the French crisis only completes and confirms this conclusion. If the German Executive was not informed about the development of the crisis, it is to be regretted. But this does not hold true for Comrade Landau. He was informed as well as any comrade living in another country could be. Comrade Landau did not lack information, but the
correct criterion, i.e., the Marxist conception of revolutionary policy, which can be attained through experience and through reflection. Unfortunately, Comrade Landau has displayed an extraordinary disregard for questions of principle. In relation to France as well as in relation to Austria he concerned himself more about personal and organizational combinations than about their principled basis. That is unquestionably the most troubling sign of all. Comrade Landau needs a new orientation. He must reorient or the positive qualities that he possesses will turn out to be harmful rather than advantageous to the revolutionary movement.

4. The Austrian and the French lessons throw a piercing light on the work of Comrade Landau in Germany. Comrade Landau conducted an inexorable and uninterrupted struggle for the leadership, while no one knows definitely just what the principled basis of this struggle was. At any rate, Comrade Landau seems to have conducted the personal struggle with apparent success. However, it was a success achieved at the expense of the organization as a whole. A continuation on this path would have transformed the German Opposition into a second edition of the Mahnruf group.

5. In this case are not the comrades justified in demanding the removal of Comrade Landau from the ranks of the Left Opposition as a solution to the question? No. This “solution” rests completely on the maneuvers and methods of Landau himself. If we had an organization that knew its way clearly and firmly, with consolidated cadres, the removal of one or another person could be the solution of a given personal question. However, this is not the situation in Germany. The organization as a whole needs a Marxist education. The first task consists in helping the entire organization to an understanding, an examination, and an evaluation of the mistakes of the present leadership headed by Landau. Without this, the organization will not move an inch. The evaluation must proceed with the publication of definite theses made available to the entire ILO. Only in this manner can genuinely revolutionary cadres be formed for whom all other considerations are subordinated to constant concern over the ideological firmness, consolidation, and revolutionary steadfastness of the inter-
national faction. Only in this way can the future political fate of each individual comrade be decided.

6. In the letter of January 13 the Executive declared that it would make a decision on the French crisis and that this decision would be binding for all members of the German organization inside as well as outside Germany. This arrangement alone—I should never have thought it possible if I had not read it with my own eyes—shows into what an impenetrable swamp the organizational-combinatory approach to principled questions leads. How can the Executive order the members of the organization to adopt a certain position, and one that concerns a subject of international discussion at that? Here national discipline—conceived in a caricatured manner—is raised to a higher level than international discipline, and, what is even more serious, higher than the principled basis itself on which alone discipline rests. The result is that a German comrade who is staying in France temporarily and is working in the League must vote on the disputed questions not as a communist but as—a German.

But even in Germany we must consider such a communist useless who subordinates himself to an Executive that orders him to take a certain position in the discussion. No wonder that with such ultrabureaucratism the Berlin Executive is in a state of civil war with most of its important organizations in the provinces.

7. On July 7 of last year, I wrote to the Executive of the German Opposition through Comrade Mueller: “In general, I must say the following: If the leadership wants to gain authority (and it is duty-bound to want this) it must not proceed as if it already possesses unshatterable authority and must at first base itself as little as possible on its purely formal rights. The Executive must retain a quiet, friendly tone and show its utmost patience, especially towards its opponents. The Executive cannot gain any authority if it does not show in actuality to the entire organization its complete objectivity and conscientiousness in all sorts of conflicts and its concern about the organization as such. Only on this kind of authority, which cannot be achieved in one day, can organizational steps, disciplinary measures, etc., be based. Without this, the organization cannot live. The attempt to use disciplinary mea-
sures without the necessary authority and without the conviction of the organization as to the correctness of these measures leads inevitably not to a strengthening of the organization but to its weakening, and above all to the collapse of the authority of the Executive itself.”

My heartiest advice was therefore: while retaining firmness on the political line, exercise the greatest caution and mildness, the greatest possible tolerance and tactfulness in all personal conflicts and misunderstandings. At present, too, I can only repeat these words. In the time that has passed since the communication quoted above, the Executive has unfortunately increased administrative measures enormously without increasing its authority in the least.

The way out of the crisis of the German Opposition can at the present moment take the path only of a well-prepared and conscientiously organized conference.

L. Trotsky
You of course know, through the office of the Soviet ambassador in Berlin, that my case against the Dresden publisher Schumann, owner of the firm K. Reissner, has been taken to the next court of appeals on the initiative of the publisher, who had lost the case at the first two trial levels, in Berlin and Dresden.

As you also know, through the Berlin office, which entered into close relations with the Dresden publisher from the very beginning of my dispute with him and which has provided him with a big order from the Soviet government, Schumann is demanding of me the manuscript of my book *Lenin and the Epigones*, obviously assuming that possession of this manuscript would further improve his relations with certain agencies of the Soviet government.

The new court (the Oberlandesgericht) has decided that it cannot limit itself to the purely juridical aspect of the case, but must clarify its political basis. With this aim in mind, it has found it necessary to call in expert opinion, based on the recommendations of Leipzig University. The following questions were posed by the court for the expert to investigate. I quote verbatim:
“(1) How should the relations between Trotsky and Kerensky be regarded?

“(a) In what way did the political views of the two men contradict one another?

“(b) How did these contradictions affect the personal relations between Trotsky and Kerensky?

“In particular, did the latter seek the personal destruction of Trotsky?

“(2) Is it possible, at the present level of historical research, to establish the existence of objectively untrue statements in Kerensky’s book in regard to Lenin and Bolshevism? If so, to what extent do they refer injuriously to Trotsky other than to mention him by name?”

The political importance of these questions goes far beyond the limits of my suit against Schumann. Although the Leipzig court, naturally, does not represent history’s last stage of appeal, nevertheless an unfavorable or ambiguous political argument in the written opinion explaining the court’s ruling* could provide fresh fuel not only for the Russian emigres but for the bourgeoisie of the whole world for a considerable time to come. On the other hand, a clear and unambiguous resolution by the court of the questions it has raised itself could strike quite a telling blow to the most vicious enemies of the October Revolution and Bolshevism.

In itself, Kerensky’s slander is so crude and contradictory that the court ought to arrive, regardless of its political leanings, at the proper answers to the above-cited questions if the attorneys and academic expert can simply be provided with all the necessary documents and references.

Quite clearly, no foreign attorney, even one who is completely conscientious, is in a position to thoroughly investigate the testimony of Kerensky and others on the alleged “venality” of the

* I consider my personal victory in the practical side of the case to be assured. However, the ruling of the court might be phrased in such ambiguous terms as: “Regardless of how Kerensky’s allegation of Bolshevik ties with the German general staff may be viewed, an issue on which historical scholarship can as yet make no definitive pronouncement,” etc., etc.
Bolsheviks. As is surely no secret to you, I will not have the opportunity, when the case is argued, to be present in Germany in order to provide the necessary clarifications and refutations on the spot.

Stuck as I am in Constantinople, where there is no library and where no Soviet publications are available at all, I have not even been able to draw up a selection of the necessary printed materials for use by the attorney and academic expert, not even the most important documents on the case against the Bolsheviks after the July days.

In appealing to you with this letter, I completely leave aside all the questions that divide us, in particular the circumstances that brought you into alliance with Schumann in the fight to obtain the manuscript of my book. The course of events has now brought this legal suit to a new plane, on which a united front has become absolutely obligatory for us. There is no need for me to indicate to you the various ways appropriate for you to intervene in this case to help the court establish the truth. You have in your possession all the necessary printed and archival materials. On the other hand, the Berlin office, which is abreast of all the particulars in the trial, could without difficulty place the necessary materials at the disposal of the academic expert and of the person representing my interests—interests which, as must be clear to everyone, coincide with those of the party of Lenin.

I await with equanimity whatever actions you will find incumbent upon yourselves to take.
February 17, 1931

The crisis in the German Left Opposition

A Letter to all Sections of the International Left

The development of the International Left Opposition is proceeding amidst sharp crises that cast the fainthearted and the shortsighted into pessimism. In reality these crises are completely unavoidable. One has only to read the correspondence of Marx and Engels attentively, or to preoccupy oneself seriously with the history of the development of the Bolshevik Party to realize how complicated, how difficult, how full of contradictions the process of developing revolutionary cadres is.

If the first chapter of the Russian Revolution (1917–23) gave a mighty impulse to the revolutionary tendencies of the world proletariat, then the second chapter, after the year 1923, brought terrible confusion into the ranks of the revolutionary workers. When we review this period in its entirety, we are forced to say: only a frightful earthquake can bring such devastation in the field of material culture as the administrative conduct of the epigones has brought about in the field of the principles, ideas, and methods of Marxism.
It is the task of the Left Opposition to reestablish the thread of historic continuity in Marxist theory and policies. However, the different groups of the Left Opposition in the various countries arose under the influence of the most diverse national, provincial, and purely personal factors, and have often, cloaked in the banner of Leninism, brought up their cadres in a completely different and sometimes even in a contrary spirit.

We must not shut our eyes to the facts. We must openly say: many opposition groups and groupings represent a caricature of the official party. They possess all its vices, often in an exaggerated form, but not its virtues, which are conditioned by the numerical strength of the workers within them alone, if by nothing else.

The most complete negative example of a “Left Opposition” is undoubtedly the Austrian. In my pamphlet *The Austrian Crisis and Communism*, I attempted to outline an explanation of the strength and the power of resistance of the Austrian social democracy. To come back to this question here is impossible. The fact is that the Austrian Communist Party, which has done everything possible to help the social democracy, is dragging out a woeful existence in the backyard of the labor movement. All the maladies of the Communist International find their sharpest expression in the Austrian Communist Party. The opposition splinters of the Austrian party—without international ground under their feet, without an international method in their heads, without contact with the masses, with a narrow Austrian horizon before their eyes—very rapidly degenerate into unprincipled cliques. These groups enter and leave the International Opposition like a cafe.

In this respect, the fate of the Mahnrf group is very instructive. Every Oppositionist, not only in Austria but in every country and especially in Germany, must reflect upon the scandalous history of this group. During the last two years, in the course of which I have had an opportunity to observe this group through its press and through correspondence with its representatives, the group has passed through the following evolution: (1) at first it swore movingly in the name of the Russian Opposition; (2) then it declared unexpectedly that it would not join any international
faction; (3) then it made the attempt to unite all the groups, including the Rights; (4) following this it dissolved its bloc with the Brand­lerites and swore, anew, loyalty to the International Left; (5) later on it adopted—to bring about unification, so to speak, but in reality for self-preservation—a platform in the spirit of Comrade Landau; (6) next it rejected the platform of Comrade Landau and adopted the capitulationist platform of Comrade Graef; (7) finally it split off from Graef and declared itself once more to stand on the platform of the International Left. Seven vacillations in their ideas in the course of two years, some of these vacillations taking place in the period of a few days. Undoubtedly, there are in the confines of this group a small number of honest but confused workers. However, we must take the group as a whole, with its leadership and its “tradition.” Can we have the slightest confidence in this group? Can we allow such groups within the confines of the International Left?

Although it changes its position on the basic questions of Marxism, the Mahnruf group at the same time displays unheard-of energy to save its leadership, stopping not even at the most poisonous tricks.

No matter how deplorable it is to waste our own and others’ time with trifles, it is nevertheless necessary to use the sorry experiences of the Mahnruf group in the same manner as we use vaccination against sickness. I am taking an example that appears to me to be decisive.

One of the members of the Mahnruf group, a certain K, went over to the Frey group (which is somewhat larger in numbers and has passed through fewer vacillations, but which stands at a far enough distance away from us). The move of K from one group to the other was sufficient for the Mahnruf group to proclaim K a provocateur and to accuse the Frey group of shielding a provocateur. Proofs? None! The Russian revolutionary organizations, which for decades led an underground existence, had sufficient experiences in the field of struggle against provocation, suspicions, accusations, spying, etc., and the question entered not rarely into the struggle among the different factions (Bolsheviks, Mensheviks, Social Revolutionaries, anarchists, etc.). But I can hardly remem-
ber an instance of such criminal toying with serious accusations as is the case with the Mahnruf group. From the point of view of the revolutionary self-preservation of the organization, it is entirely irrelevant to us whether the Mahnruf group itself believed in these accusations or not, insofar as K or the Frey group is concerned (the last accusation at any rate they could not believe at all). In both cases, we witness the complete absence of revolutionary morale and a feeling of political responsibility. These symptoms alone suffice for us to say: we have before us a combination of light-headedness and cynicism, i.e., features that are very characteristic of one-half communist and one-fourth communist-bohemian circles, but which are entirely in contradiction to the psychology of a proletarian revolutionist. If we had really revolutionary groups in Vienna, carrying on a serious ideological struggle against one another, they would have to expel mutually and unanimously, despite their differences, all such elements from their ranks as poisoning the well of the revolution. That would contribute much more to the revolutionary education of the younger comrades than the unprincipled polemical flurries of journalists, who give themselves the appearance of “irreconcilables.”

A revolutionary organization selects and educates people not for intrigues among cliques but for great struggles. That imposes very heavy demands upon the cadres and even greater ones upon the “leaders” or the candidates for the role of leadership. Moments of crisis, no matter how painful they may be, have this political significance in every organization—they disclose the real political character of its members: what sort of spirit animates them, in whose name they struggle, whether they have the power of endurance, etc.

Naturally, the political evaluation of people, especially of younger people, is not of a decisive character in most cases. People can learn on the basis of their experiences, repress some features and develop others. However; it is precisely in order to achieve just such a collective education that the International Left in general and the various sections in particular must diligently pursue the development of every single one of its members, and especially that of the responsible workers; and with extreme atten-
tiveness in times of crisis. They must not leave unpunished toy­ing with principles, journalistic light-mindedness, moral looseness, and pseudo “irreconcilability”—in the name of personal caprice. Only in this manner can the organization be secured against cata­strophic surprises in the future. The spirit of circle chummi­ness (you for me, and me for you) is the most abominable of organiza­tional sicknesses. With the aid of chumminess, one can gather a clique around oneself but not a faction of cothinkers.

The International Secretariat expressed itself in this sense when it considered both of the Austrian groups unfit to belong to the International Left. As is generally known, the Frey group left the International Opposition of its own accord, after it had arrived at the conclusion that its road was not the same as ours. The Mahnruf group is branded by all its actions as an alien body in our midst. I believe that all the sections will have to reinforce this proposal of the Secretariat with full unanimity and thereby transform it into a final decision.*

German conditions are sharply distinguished from those in Austria, if only by the existence of a strong Communist Party. However, when we evaluate the history of Germany since 1914, we must say that the present Communist Party is the weakest of all Communist parties that could have been formed under the ex­ceptional conditions of German development. The objective con­ditions worked for communism; the party leadership against communism. The result was—a profound shake-up of the party, disappointment and distrust of the party leadership, the growth of

* We do not touch upon the third group now that arose suddenly out of the splinters of the other groups. Comrade Graef, the leader of this group, has, in conformity with the customs of Austro-oppositionism, revised his ideological baggage radically within a brief time and elaborated a platform in which every­thing is comprehensible, except for one thing: why and to what purpose does Graef include himself in the Left Opposition? Graef’s platform is the platform of the camp followers of the Stalinist bureaucracy, i.e., of the leftist philistines who have attached themselves to the victorious revolution. Barbusse could subscribe to this platform,156 as well as all the other “friends of the Soviet Union,” who are of as much use as milk that comes from a billy goat, but who are always prepared to go to Soviet anniversaries and, on the side, to accuse Rakov­sky of “Kautskyism.” Apparently, in order not to deviate from the styleline of Austrian caricature, Graef has proposed with the most serious face that his
skepticism, etc. All this creates in the working class a mass of dispersed, unsatisfied, and oppositional elements, some of whom are completely fatigued, spent (only the revolution can bring them to the surface again), while others have retained their revolutionary freshness but cannot find a correct line and a trustworthy leadership. We must add: not only the history of the party as a whole, but that of the left faction as well, is full of contradictions, zigzags, mistakes, and disappointments; therefore—a considerable number of sects, with their customary proscriptions “against” participation in the trade unions, “against” parliamentarism, etc. This means that the Left Opposition must be created on a soil that is overcrowded with the remnants and splinters of former breakdowns. Under these conditions, the role of the leadership takes on exceptional significance.

What critically thinking left workers, not only outside the party but inside it as well, demand at present of the leadership, above all, is not political infallibility—this is impossible—but revolutionary devotion, personal firmness, revolutionary objectivity, and honesty. These criteria, which were formerly taken for granted in the revolutionary party, have today gained exceptional significance in view of the bureaucratic decay that has set in during the last few years: leaders are appointed from above, apparatus people are hired as the businessman hires clerks, party functionaries change their opinions on command and persecute and lie when they are told to do so, etc.

The process of disintegration may—it is not at all impossible—seize single intermediary layers of the Opposition insofar as the Opposition, especially in its first stages, attracted not only revolu-
tionists but also all sorts of careerists. This in turn leads to a sentiment of skeptical indifference among oppositionist workers on the question of leadership: “All are careerists more or less, but one, for instance, can at least write articles, whereas the other cannot even do that.” This explains first of all why many critically inclined workers can reconcile themselves to the party regime—they have never seen another! Secondly, why the majority of the oppositionist workers remain outside of the organization. Thirdly, why inside the Opposition the less pretentious workers reconcile themselves to the presence of intriguers, since they look upon them as “specialists,” as an unavoidable evil, i.e., as the Russian worker looks upon the bourgeois engineers. All this is the result of great defeats on the one hand and of the disintegrating bureaucratic regime on the other.

The German Opposition is not developing in a vacuum. Not only in the Leninbund but in the organization of the Bolshevik-Leninists as well I have within the last two years observed methods which have absolutely nothing in common with the regime of a proletarian revolutionary organization. More than once I have asked myself in astonishment: do these people think such methods are methods of Bolshevik education? How can intelligent German workers tolerate disloyalty and absolutism in their organization? I attempted to express my objections in letters to several comrades, but I have been convinced that fundamentals which appeared to me elementary for a proletarian revolutionist have found no echo among some of the leaders of the Opposition, who have developed a definite conservative psychology. It can be characterized in the following manner: extreme, often sickly sensitivity in relation to everything that concerns their own circle, and the greatest indifference in relation to everything that concerns the rest of the world. I attempted in circulars and articles, without mentioning any names, i.e., without striking at the egoism of the younger comrades, to call attention to the necessity of a decisive revision of the internal regime in the Left Opposition. I did not run up against any objections; on the contrary, I found the very selfsame formulations in the official publications of the German Opposition. However, in practice, the directly opposite road was
taken. When I again broached the question of this disparity, in my letters, I met only with irritability.

A whole year passed with these attempts to regulate the matter without a sharp organizational crisis. The comrades whose policies appeared particularly dangerous to me occupied themselves in the course of this time mainly with the consolidation of the position of their own circle. They achieved a measure of success in this—at the expense of the ideological and organizational interests of the German Opposition. In the general work of the latter, there can be noticed a certain lack of initiative, stagnation, laxity. Nevertheless, a fierce struggle is being conducted for the self-preservation of the leading circle. In the final analysis this leads to a deep internal crisis, the basis of which consists of the contradiction between the progressive needs of the development of the Left Opposition and the conservative policies of the leadership.

In the course of the last few years I have received from Saxony, Berlin, and Hamburg a series of highly disturbing communications and documents, and also urgent demands that the International Opposition intervene in the German crisis. These are the circumstances that force me to unfold a whole series of questions that are bound up with this crisis before all sections of the International Left for their judgment.

One of the extreme representatives of this circle-conservatism is Comrade Landau. His school is the typically “Austrian” school in the sense referred to above. Landau is the founder, the educator, and the protector of the Austrian Mahnruft group. We have seen this group in action. It can surrender its ideas, but not its leaders. The mere fact that Landau has decided to defend the Mahnruft group in the revolutionary milieu and to demand a leading place for it in the Opposition is eloquent enough. That these people are today with Brandler, tomorrow with us, then unite with Graef, and finally return to their old empty place again; that these people have fought for their empty place in the camp of the Left Opposition with poisoned weapons—all these may have been “mistakes” (today Landau realizes that), but all these mistakes fall to the background before the fact that these people are the political clients of
Landau. That is in fact the picture of the clique, i.e., a group that cares about persons, not about ideas.*

No less wrong is the position of Comrade Landau on the French question, especially since unfortunately it is harder for the German worker to pursue the development of the ideological struggle from Germany than from Austria.

*Syndicalism* is at present the specific form of opportunism in France. The departure from communism and the proletarian revolution most often and most easily takes on syndicalist forms in France. To recognize the opportunist content underneath this form and to unmask it is the first task of the French communists. The old leadership of the French League did not do this, in spite of warnings and advice. This led to the fact that a semisyndicalist faction formed itself inside the League, which, working in the trade unions, became a high *wall* between the League and the trade unions instead of a *link* between them. As a result, the growth of the Left Opposition was retarded for a number of months. Comrade Landau had the opportunity to pursue the developments of the French crisis, since he reads French and since he collaborates in the French press. I, for my part, insisted in a series of letters that, in view of the extreme seriousness of the situation, they make themselves familiar with the French crisis and help the French comrades by means of their German experiences. Therein, indeed, consists internationalism in practice! Since, however, the personal connections of Landau were with the French group that was conducting a false policy, Landau systematically prevented the German Opposition from taking a correct position on this central question. The policy of concealment, reservations, and maneuvers on the French question is being continued by the German leadership to this very day. More than that! Comrade Landau lets no opportunity pass to attack the new leadership of the League, which strives to correct the old mistakes. That is the unvarnished truth,

* With what conscientiousness Comrade Landau informs the local organization is shown by a letter from Ludwigshafen directed to me on February 2 which says: “As far as the position of Comrade Landau is concerned in the Austrian question, the events in Germany have confirmed it.” Is any further commentary needed?
which will be clear to every Opposition worker tomorrow!

The politics of the circle, the politics of personal connections and combinations, appears to us in even crasser form when we see how Comrade Landau behaves toward those elements of the Left Opposition in Germany, and even toward whole organizations of workers, who allow themselves a critical attitude toward his actions.

The Leipzig organization is the strongest and most active organization of the Left Opposition in Germany. The positive features of this organization are indisputable: active and successful attempts to penetrate into the ranks of the party; proletarian objectivity; organizational initiative. In general, just those qualities that the Opposition has been lacking until now. Precisely for this reason, because the Leipzig organization could sense its growth and stand on its own feet, it expressed an anxiety for its independence, and demanded that its communications and views be given a place in the organ of the faction and did not tolerate peremptory commands over its head. We must not forget that even if we are centralists, we are democratic centralists who employ centralism only for the revolutionary cause and not in the name of the “prestige” of the officials. Whoever is acquainted with the history of the Bolshevik Party knows what a broad autonomy the local organizations always enjoyed; they issued their own papers, in which they openly and sharply, whenever they found it necessary, criticized the actions of the Central Committee. Had the Central Committee, in case of principled differences, attempted to disperse the local organizations or to deprive them of literature (their bread and water) before the party had had an opportunity to express itself—such a central committee would have made itself impossible. Naturally, as soon as it became necessary, the Bolshevik Central Committee could give orders. But subordination to the committee was possible only because the absolute loyalty of the Central Committee toward every member of the party was well known, as well as the constant readiness of the leadership to hand over every serious dispute for consideration by the party. And, finally, what is most important, the Central Committee possessed extraordinary theoretical and political authority, gained gradually in the
course of years, not by commands, not by shouting down, not by beating down, but by correct leadership, proved by deeds in great events and struggles.

The misfortune of the Berlin Executive, led by Comrade Landau, is that it has not and could not attain even the slightest authority. It is sufficient to recall the fact that this Executive held an extremely miserable conference in October, which did not adopt a resolution on a single important question. There are not many such examples in the history of revolutionary organizations! The weakness of the Executive on questions of real revolutionary leadership is obvious. This weakness is entirely comprehensible in itself. Lack of preparation and experience can be overcome only in the course of time. However, the deep mistake of the Executive and particularly of Comrade Landau consists in the fact that the less its leadership gives to the organization, the more blind obedience it demands from it.

In the last letter I quoted the decision of the Executive of January 13 which orders that on the question of the policy of the French League—consequently not on a question of immediate practical action in Germany, but on a question of a principled international discussion—all members of the organization are to express not their own opinions but those of the Executive. What opinions? The ones which the Executive does not have? It is only preparing an elaboration of its opinions. I read this decision over and over again and rubbed my eyes. And even now I must still remind myself that it is not a question of a poor joke but a fact. This example permits us more than any journalistic exercise to penetrate into the consciousness of many an Opposition leader. When a man holds mass for the soul of his deceased father, I would without knowing anything about him say with certainty: he has nothing in common with materialism. In the same manner, when I read the decision of the German Executive, which forbids its membership to think differently concerning the French question from Comrade Landau (who has not found the time to think it over himself) I must say: here is such a combination of journalistic pride and premature bureaucratism as surpasses, in its barrenness and absurdity, all the examples offered by the Stalin-Thaelmann
bureaucracy. A milder evaluation I cannot find.*

It is not at all remarkable, with such customs, that the independence of the Saxony organization appeared to the infallible Executive as "federalism" and such similar deadly sins. A war broke out on the part of the Executive that was puny, devouring, and unprincipled. For months I observed this struggle with increasing anxiety, attempting to induce the Berlin and the Leipzig comrades to come to a practical agreement, since there were not any differences in principle, so that the conference which was held last fall would not be devoted to petty wrangling, but to questions of revolutionary struggle. Above all, it was a question of Comrade Landau as the acknowledged leader of the Executive and Comrade Well as the acknowledged leader of the Saxony organization.

After a series of urgent letters from me, Landau answered on September 5 last year with a communication that made a very favorable impression on me. I cite a quotation from this letter verbatim: "At present quiet rules over here, apparently. I hope very much that a peaceful and loyal collaboration between Well and ourselves will be achieved permanently. Personally, this seems all the more important to me, since Well is the only one who will be able to continue to direct the political work should I leave Germany. These reflections do not proceed from factional machinations, but from the fact that we 'emigrants' from the Comintern very often fall victim to diseases of emigration. Subordinate political and tactical mistakes or differences lead, under conditions of tense and hostile personal relations, to heavy shocks which can be avoided if their causes and dangers are known."

These lines are completely correct in essence. Especially interesting for us is the evaluation given of Well as the only person

* It is not superfluous to remark that whereas he demands absolute obedience from the local organizations, Landau has not shown the slightest intention of submitting to the decisions of the International Opposition. After the bureau had adopted the draft platform of the Austrian Opposition with two votes against that of Landau, Landau proposed behind the back of the bureau, in which he had remained in the minority, to elements near to him in Vienna that they ignore the draft of the bureau and adopt his, Landau's, draft. That is no accident. People lacking internal discipline demand it from others all the more boldly.
capable of directing the entire organization in case Landau leaves. Since it concerns a revolutionary proletarian organization, it is clear that Landau, with this characterization, considers Well a revolutionary, firm in principle and destined for a leading role. A more praiseworthy characterization can hardly be given.

On January 30 this same Landau writes to me: “And the Well group? We will expose the centrist character of this group thoroughly before the International Opposition. It will be hard for you to consent to the views to which the Well group subscribes. It will be still harder for the Well faction to prove their slanders and to prevent their liquidation by the Executive.”

The Executive itself speaks in its February 5 letter of “cleaning the German Opposition by expelling the centrist Well faction.” At the meetings there is talk of the inevitability of the expulsion of the Well group, i.e., of a split. In this manner Comrade Well has been transformed in the course of a few weeks, which, moreover, he spent outside of Germany, from the best (according to Landau himself) and only (in case of Landau’s absence) leader of the German Opposition—into a centrist, who must be crushed, expelled, and destroyed. It is not a question of one person alone, but of an entire organization.

What does this mean? What are the political criteria Landau employs that permit him so easily to transform the best into the worst? And can we remain serious in regard to the evaluations that Comrade Landau gives in such important questions?

In his letter of January 6 Comrade Frankel quoted among other things the above flattering estimate of Well.* What does Landau, convicted by such crushing contradictions, do then? He keeps silent for some time—for five days—and lets the Executive answer. Here is what the latter writes on January 25: “The Nation-

* In replying to the letter of Comrade Frankel with little twists Comrade Landau, as is always the method in unprincipled struggles, seeks to discredit Frankel personally: a green student, Trotsky’s secretary, etc. If I am not mistaken, Comrade Landau belongs to the same category of employees as Frankel. Despite his youthfulness, Comrade Frankel has participated in the revolutionary movement for seven years, since 1927 in the ranks of the Opposition in Czechoslovakia and France, where he represented the Czech group at the April confer-
al Committee [Executive] declares that the estimate of Comrade Well given by Comrade Landau has nothing in common with the point of view of the NC. The National Committee sees in such an estimate an expression of the well-known conciliatory attitude of Comrade Landau in regard to an unprincipled and politically completely defeated faction (Well) raised upon the yeast of Saxony federalism, etc.

Thus the Executive “disavowed” Landau who, it has been seen, is known (!) for his conciliatory attitude toward the “unprincipled faction” of Well. We are not interested in whether Comrade Landau has written these lines himself, or whether he had someone else write them. That is a question of technique. The whole game is quite transparent. Pontius is unmasking Pilate. But politically the question is extremely deplorable, for the Executive as well as for Landau. What is conciliationism? Conciliationism is hidden, masked opportunism or centrism. If Comrade Landau is “known” for his conciliationism toward an unprincipled faction, that means that his hidden opportunism or semiopportunism is “well known.” But why then does the Executive act as if it were only a trifle? Why is Pontius so considerate to Pilate?

However, the matter is far worse. Wherein and how is this conciliationism toward centrism disclosed in action? In the fact that the conciliator does not take into account the danger of centrism, and is, therefore, inclined to moderate his opposition toward it. This is at present the position of Graef. He is a typical conciliator toward centrism. But the position of Landau in September has nothing in common with this. Landau does not say: we must moderate our struggle against the centrist Well. No. Landau says: we must put Well at the head of the organization since he is the only man fit to direct it. Wherein does his conciliationism lie?

In reality, the Executive says something altogether different.ence of the International Opposition at a time when I knew nothing whatever of his existence. If Frankel does aid me in my work, then it is because it is our common work, in which he has no less a right to his own views and to defend them than Landau has. But the difference consists in this—that the letter of Frankel contains indisputable facts and political criticism, whereas Landau’s reply is full of tricks and insinuations.
Comrade Landau is incapable of differentiating between a person who must be put at the head of the organization and one who must be expelled. That is what the Executive says! But, alas, Comrade Landau says the same thing about himself. For, after he has forgotten about his “well-known” conciliationism, he repeats five days later (January 30) the words of the Executive concerning the necessity of crushing the Well faction, this time in his own name!

The fact that the conciliator Landau is so irreconcilable toward the Saxony faction becomes particularly eloquent in comparison with the attitude of Landau toward the Mahnruf group. Here we are concerned with a group that is with the Left Opposition on Monday, with Brandler on Tuesday, on Thursday with Graef; but still it is “his” group. Anyone who criticizes it is his enemy. Comrades Mill and Molinier, who gave a completely unprejudiced account of this group, are subjected to entirely impermissible attacks by Landau. The Saxony organization is another matter. To be sure, it has not vacillated from the left to the right. But—it wants to reflect and judge independently, participate in decisions, and not simply subordinate itself to commands from a higher body. This organization must be crushed, the national organization must be cleansed of it. Here we have two different gauges. What is this due to? To a communist criterion? To revolutionary interests? Landau himself has told us in the letter quoted above, dated September 5. He called his own sickness the emigration sickness, and described it correctly as artificial kindling of political differences due to hostile personal relations. The word “emigration” does not at all hit the mark here. The word clique is more exact. Then the crying contradictions are completely solved. They arise from the changing requirements of a clique that is fighting for its existence and for its domination at all costs, everything else notwithstanding.

We have been promised proof in the near future that the “Well faction” must be destroyed. But up to now this has not yet been proved. No one has as yet read a single article in which these accusations have been justified. In the meantime, the destruction has already begun. In Hamburg, comrades have been expelled for solidarity with Leipzig against Berlin. The relations between Berlin and Leipzig have practically been broken off. The Leipzig mem-
bers are no longer invited to the sessions of the Executive. What is
the basis in principle of these splitting tactics? Landau promises to
explain them “very thoroughly” to us, apparently after the split
will have been promulgated. Unfortunately, everything is stood
on its head. Wherever it has been a matter of struggle around
tendencies and not between cliques, the process has assumed an
entirely contrary character: first political differences of some sort
arise; they are clarified at meetings and in the press; responsible
revolutionists see to it that the discussion of principles does not
disturb the organizational unity; the foreign organizations are
given an opportunity to express their opinions, etc. Only after
this wholesome ideological struggle shows as its result that the
two standpoints are irreconcilable, only then does the hour of split
strike. This was the case with the Leninbund, where the profound
discussion of principles assumed an international character be­
fore Urbahns abandoned the International Left. This was the case
with the Belgian Opposition, where the discussion was conducted
at meetings and in the press for months, with the participation of
the Russian and the French Oppositions, before the split took place.
In France the discussion was held twice (on the question of the
“turn” in the Comintern and on the trade-union question) in the
columns of the press and at meetings, with the participation of
other national sections, in which the change of the political line
was achieved without a split.

What is the situation in Germany? The Executive has already
proclaimed the split a fact. On the other hand, the polemic on
principles is promised only for the future. The clique struggle is a
caricature of the ideological struggle. And in caricatures, the feet
often take the place of the head and the head that of the feet.

As we were writing these lines, the February issue of the Ber­
lin Kommunist came in, with the article “Centrist Currents.” The
article bears a purely ritualistic character. This is an All Souls’
mass for the murdered and not an open discussion. Fortunately,
the murdered are still alive and well and we hope to fight in com­
mon with them against the class enemy. We hope at the same
time that Landau too—although not immediately—will find his
place in our ranks and that he will learn to differentiate ideologi­
At first sight, the article in the Kommunist shows that the editorial board is not capable of making this distinction. Formally, the article is directed against Graef and even against the Mahnruf group. Actually, it has the task of justifying the destruction of the so-called Well faction. The whole article is a masking, an imitation, if not a falsification, of ideas. Landau grasps ideas in general very easily and formulates them easily. But I fear it is just for this reason that he does not think them through to the end. If we should want to submit the article to serious criticism, then even if we were ten times more considerate than Landau in his criticism against the Saxons we would have to express a very severe judgment. Landau’s arguments against Graef bear a verbose character and most often miss their mark. Landau dismisses economic arguments with general formulas, which do not answer the questions posed by Graef.

Insofar as Graef claims against the bourgeoisie and the social democracy that the prime reason for the upward swing of the collectives was not administrative but economic factors, he is correct. Just as soon as Landau turns against this summarily, he makes incorrect use of the correct ideas of others and facilitates Graef’s task.

When Landau speaks of the growth of capitalist elements in the USSR, without defining what he means by them, he hands a weapon to Graef, who, in distinction from Landau, knows the facts and figures and follows the economic life of the USSR, even though he draws from this knowledge conclusions that are false to the core.

In the same manner, Landau shows in his conference theses, which represent a sloppy hodgepodge from old works of the Russian Opposition, how lightly and carelessly he regards programmatic questions by hastily snatching up ready-made formulas, without grasping, at all times, their connection with the living process of development. I would prefer to speak of all this in an entirely different tone, in propaganda articles, in private letters to Landau calling attention to his mistakes, aiding him to master these questions. But for that it is necessary for Landau to have the
desire to learn seriously. Unfortunately, Landau’s entire attention is turned in a different direction. Without conscientiously attempting to clarify himself on all the questions he finds unclear or disputable, he sets all sorts of insinuations into motion behind the scenes against all those who are disinclined to smash the “Well faction” together with him. This alone forces me to point out that the excessive determination of our surgeon can be explained by the fact that he does not know anatomy and is always prepared to carve, no matter where it leads, as long as this is required by considerations of “prestige.”

The real object of the article in the Kommunist is to unloose Landau’s barbs not only against the Saxons, but also against the International Secretariat, against the Russian Opposition, against the majority of the French Opposition, and, I take it, against the majority of the other national sections. In order to facilitate his task, Landau begins by creating an alibi for the heroic deeds of his Vienna friends, the Mahnruf group. Landau corrects the Mahnruf group, gives it a paternal reprimand, and scorns his disciples for not having shown that “irreconcilable attitude” which Landau expected from them. Yes, all the Mahnruf group lacks is an “irreconcilable attitude”!

At the same time it can be seen clearly from this article, which is politically false from beginning to end, that Landau in opening his arms wide to the Mahnruf group, is preparing to crush the Saxons, the Hamburg people, the International Secretariat, and all others. At any rate, all those who permit themselves to be crushed.

But still, wherein does the centrism of the Saxons lie? The whole matter refers, it appears, to a disputable formulation regarding the USSR. The Saxony comrades object to the expression “elements of dual power” in the USSR that I have employed, since according to their opinion such an expression can lead to false conclusions in the sense of Urbahns, namely, that the dictatorship of the proletariat no longer exists in the USSR. It is best, however, to quote the formulation of the Saxony comrades themselves, as expressed in their document of January 23:

“The formulation, ‘elements of dual power,’ means more [than
elements of Thermidor, elements of Bonapartism—L.T.]. It refers to the concrete situation between February and October 1917, when beside the bourgeois ruling apparatus, the Provisional Government, there existed already the proletarian state apparatus, the Soviets. Applied to the present situation in Russia, that would mean that beside the proletarian state apparatus, the Soviets, there exists an apparatus of the counterrevolution, which in case of a counterrevolution would play the same role as the Soviets in the inverted case. Such an apparatus does not exist at present in our opinion, has not been proved to us to exist in the course of the discussion. We are against the use of the expression ‘elements of dual power’ for the reason that, aside from the fact that it adds new fuel to the old Urbahnsist confusion, it can give occasion to false political prognoses. We believe that in rejecting this expression, we act in the spirit of Comrade Trotsky, who, in the recent past, has turned quite sharply against the schematic application of historical analogies. . . . After all this, we believe that there is no contradiction between our rejection of the formulation ‘elements of dual power’ and our agreement with the International Opposition on the fundamental questions of the situation in Russia."

The most elementary conscientiousness would have required that the Kommunist, as soon as it had decided to open up a polemic with the Saxony comrades, publish its own formulation on this question. That would have offered the reader a possibility of judging the real extent of the differences. The Russian Opposition has been protesting for years against the outrageous methods of the Stalinist bureaucracy, which snatched out single phrases or even words from our documents and on this basis opened up a furious persecution against the Opposition. Honest information is the basis of ideological life in the party. Honest information is the first letter of party democracy. The editorial board of the Kommunist does not give honest information. It cannot bring itself to cite literally the quotation on the basis of which it builds up its entire accusation. By a simple indication that the Saxons deny the elements of dual power, the Kommunist compares them with Graef. All this is necessary in order to somehow construe the ideology of centrism. Landau, known in September for his conciliationism and
in February for his irreconcilable attitude, explains: “This ques-
tion is the main criterion for the International Opposition.” Which
question? The essence of the question or its formulation? The entire
theory of the split is built up on a substitution of form for content,
on a flat sophism, on a play of words.

I believe that the fears of the Saxony comrades regarding my
formulation are incorrect. I do not see in them, however, any dif-
fferences in principle. The Saxony comrades are wrong when they
say that I have employed the disputed expression only once. It is
to be found even in the platform of the Russian Opposition, al-
though in a more careful, extremely moderate form. On one of
the first pages of the platform the cutting off of the growth of the
enemy forces is designated as one of the tasks of the party, by
“preventing them from establishing that actual, although con-
cealed, dual-power system toward which they aspire.” This for-
mulation was the result of long discussions. I am defending a cat-
egorical expression, which contains the direct indication of the fact
that certain elements of dual power already exist. Some comrades
had objections in general, because of very nearly the same rea-
sons as the Saxony comrades, to the mention of dual power. After
some dispute, we came to the above careful formulation. No one
among us considered the dispute on the formulation as a prin-
cipled dispute. Basically we were in agreement, and judged the
effect of one or the other formulation from a propagandistic point
of view.

The Saxony comrades are right when they say that we have
become used to connecting dual power only with the period from
February to October 1917 in Russia. In reality, dual power, or rather
elements of dual power (which is hardly the same thing) charac-
terize all revolutionary and counterrevolutionary periods, or, more
generally speaking, all epochs in which the change of classes at
the helm of power is being prepared or carried out. But I cannot
pause at this highly important question; a chapter of my History
of the Russian Revolution is devoted to it. It is to appear at the
beginning of April. I will only mention one thing here: in general,
historical analogies are justified only within certain limits. It is
possible to misuse Thermidor and Bonapartism too—no less than
elements of dual power. But without historical analogies it is not possible to think politically, for mankind cannot start its history anew every time.

The Saxony comrades admit “that the proletarian state apparatus is permeated with elements (partly, members of the party) who are driving in the direction of a counterrevolutionary overthrow.” This is a literal quotation. But insofar as these elements permeate the state apparatus, they have consequently some part of the state power in their hands and push the state machine, to use an expression of Lenin, not there where the proletariat needs it, but there where it is needed by the bourgeoisie. That means that beside the apparatus of the proletarian power there also exist elements of the power of a different class. The regime as a whole displays thereby elements of dual power. But the counterrevolutionaries do not as yet possess such an apparatus—the Saxony comrades will rejoin—as the revolution had during the Kerensky period. Quite correct! Precisely for this reason we speak not of dual power but of elements of dual power.

The dispute has, as we see, a formal, almost terminological character. The Saxony comrades themselves consider the differences of opinion in the same light. They write: “For this reason we held a broad discussion on this subject to be superfluous. It is significant that attempts are constantly made to stir up a discussion on this subject, whereas all discussion about the burning German problems is skillfully avoided. Quite different aims than purely objective ones appear to be at the root of this.” Completely true! And the reason is fully clear. It is entirely a question of petty diplomacy. Since the Saxony comrades have expressed themselves against a certain formulation of the Russian Opposition, Landau hopes thereby to stir up in this manner artificial differences of opinion between ourselves and the Saxony organization. And for such things in the main, Comrade Landau expends his forces, his inventive powers, his whole attention. In this way he forces us too to waste time in unravelling knots tied in advance. Woe to the leader who carries confusion instead of clarity into the heads of the workers.

It is worthwhile to note that concerning my words “The preparation of Bonapartism on the scale of the party has been com-
pleted,” the same article in the Kommunist states: “We do not demand that anyone consider these words untouchable.” Why then should the Saxons consider a different formulation, i.e., different “words,” as untouchable? With Landau there always exists one law for “his own people” and another for “strangers.” That is the hitch!

Neither formulation, naturally, is “untouchable”; it would be ridiculous to even speak of it. Yet the difference between Landau and the Saxons consists in the fact that the latter express quite clearly and unequivocably with what they agree in my formulation and with what they disagree, while Landau restricts himself to the very mysterious sentence: “We do not demand that anyone consider these words untouchable.” This shows very clearly that Landau disagrees with something in the formulation. Why does he not say clearly with what? In the meantime, I have been informed that Landau and his friends accuse Rakovsky of Urbahnism at meetings, and Trotsky, in turn, of conciliationism toward Rakovsky. But Landau always likes to have an alibi up his sleeve. He cannot force himself to bring this nonsense into the press. In order, however, that his friends should not accuse him of a lack of intellectual courage, he makes a remark in his article, a phrase, he bats his eyes. Unfortunately, precisely such tricks are proof of a lack of intellectual courage.

“The preparation of Bonapartism on the scale of the party has been completed.” What does this mean? The party is the most essential weapon of the proletariat in the struggle against the counterrevolution. Is that which we have until now understood to be a party still in existence in Russia? No, it is no longer in existence. When all decisions are arrived at independently of the party; when the convention can be postponed for one, two, three years, without anyone daring to protest against it; when Syrtsov, the chairman of the Council of People’s Commissars, is forced to discuss the mistakes of the five-year plan at an illegal (!) meeting while Bessedovsky holds the chairmanship of the party cleansing commission on the eve of his leap over the wall—then the party exists no longer. It lives in the traditions of the proletariat, in the consciousness of the most advanced workers, in the silent psychic
processes of the masses, in the secret consultations of little grouplets, in the slogans of the Left Opposition. But these are only splinters and elements of the party, whose forces we cannot gauge, whose evolution we cannot submit to an examination. The official party has become a purely plebiscitary organization. Naturally, this degeneration has taken place on the basis of the proletarian dictatorship, which is being maintained not by the official party, but by other, deeper forces and tendencies as yet unformed. As far as the official party is concerned, at the moment of the destruction of the right wing the domination of the apparatus over the class and the domination of Stalin over the apparatus reached its very peak. It is impossible to continue along this path. What part of the party apparatus and what part of the rank and file will prove to be on the other side of the barricades in case of a counter-revolution? There is no method with which to anticipate this. The plebiscitary regime has made control of the changed relationship of class forces impossible. The GPU is—unfortunately!—not sufficient, all the more so since the GPU, which shoots the Blumkins\(^{157}\) and replaces them with the Agabekovs, must itself be put under control. In this sense, I say that on the scale of the party everything has been done to facilitate a Bonapartist overthrow. This part of the process has been completed. Graef sees Kautskyism in this sort of an analysis. But Graef is not original in this: Bukharin accused us of Kautskyism at the time we first raised the question of the Thermidorean danger. Landau believes that the sentence concerning the preparation of Bonapartism is not “untouchable.” Isn’t it possible to be clearer, more exact and bolder?

Unfortunately, because of lack of space, I cannot dwell on the specific and unbearable “love of the workers” which forms the nerve of Comrade Landau’s demagogy. When he defends his Austrian clients, who have committed unworthy actions, he defends “workers against charges brought by intellectuals.” When he attacks the Saxony organization, it is because “intellectuals” are heading it. This flattery of the workers by the intellectual Landau covers methods which are absolutely alien and hostile to the spirit of proletarian organization. How pitilessly Marx and Engels combated such tricks! What the workers need is not flattery, but a correct policy.
With the substance of the tasks of the German Opposition, I have particularly preoccupied myself in my pamphlet The Turn in the Communist International and the Situation in Germany. In the process of the preparation of a real conference, I will try my best to further participate in the discussion of the programmatic, political, and organizational tasks of the German Left Opposition and urgently call upon all the informed comrades in the other national sections to do likewise.

At the present moment it is a question of averting an opportunist blow and of helping the German Opposition to issue forth from the crisis with the least difficulty and the smallest losses.

The necessity of this letter arose, as we said, from the fact that all the preceding attempts to convince Comrade Landau by means of private correspondence of the incorrectness of his manner of action and of the destructiveness of his methods went to naught, or, more correctly expressed, led to the opposite result; Landau, at the present time, is more preoccupied with work behind the scenes for the creation of an international faction of his own than with the revolutionary tasks of the German Opposition. Carried away by the logic of his own false position, Comrade Landau has opened up a completely unheard-of campaign of agitation, not only against his opponents in Germany, but against the International Opposition as well, and particularly against the Secretariat, which carries on highly responsible work, and against the majority of the French Opposition and the Russian Opposition. Under such circumstances, no other alternative remains except that of bringing the disputed questions into open discussion. That which could not be achieved on an individual basis (by conviction, correspondence) can, perhaps, be obtained on a collective basis. The German and the International Opposition must, it seems to me, reject the methods of Comrade Landau, call him to order, point out more correct methods of work and more healthy forms of organization.

One of Landau’s most “daring” exploits is his declaration that I am about to liquidate his group with “administrative methods.” He counterposes to this on his part the demand for an open ideological struggle. Again we have before us imitation, mimicry, and the repetition of others’ views. His behind-the-scenes maneuvers,
expulsions, and destruction of organizations and groups, without any principled motivation, Landau calls—ideological struggle. My proposal to put a stop to these organizational maneuvers and to honestly prepare a conference he calls “mechanical administrative measures.” Does Landau really believe, in all seriousness, that he can convince people or strengthen confidence in him by this sort of acrobatics?

Needless to say, I am far from the thought that the Leipzig organization must be regarded as exemplary (it does not think so itself, I hope), and I am hardly prepared to take upon myself the responsibility for all of Comrade Well’s actions. On the contrary, I have disagreed with him more than once, and have never concealed my opinion from him when I thought that he committed mistakes. On the whole they consisted in the fact that in the course of his defense and in outbreaks of, for the most part, justifiable indignation, Well took the path of Landau, seeing no other avenue except split. The solution, “expulsion of Landau,” is incorrect, dangerous, and harmful. The trouble is not that Landau uses impermissible methods, but rather that many worker-oppositionists tolerate such methods. The real task is to convince these workers of the impossibility of coordinating Landau’s regime with the regime of a revolutionary proletarian organization. And as soon as we succeed in this, perhaps Landau too—I, for one, at least hope so—will himself reevaluate the past and rearm. So, and only so, the question stands today. How it will stand tomorrow, the next days will tell. Much depends upon the conduct of Landau himself, for we must not overlook the fact that for the preservation of unity, goodwill on the part of both sides is needed. On our part, this fully exists. Comrade Landau has yet to prove his.

Leaders not only teach, they also learn. The German worker-oppositionists must create such conditions that Comrades Landau and Well will march in common harness, supplementing each other.

Neither the Saxony organization nor the Landau group today represent independent currents, and even less so irreconcilable ones. But the unprincipled organizational struggle can, if it is not discontinued in time, unnoticeably become filled with an alien political content. Landau has, indeed, already busied himself with
artificial ideological justification for his policy, and, unnoticed to himself, has turned his struggle against Well into a struggle against the International Left. One does not have to be a prophet to foretell that in this manner the Landau group—without theoretical baggage, without revolutionary traditions, without political experience—can land only in a hopeless swamp. We, therefore, say to the Berlin leaders: Hold on, as long as it is not yet too late! And we warn the workers who are with Landau: You are being led into dangerous roads!

How to return to the right path? That cannot happen for the German comrades without active international aid. These unavoidable measures result clearly from the situation that has been created.

1. It is necessary to put a stop to all reprisals, expulsions, and removals in connection with the factional struggle in the German Opposition. Insofar as it is a question of purely individual cases, the questions must be examined on request, with the participation of representatives of the International Secretariat.

2. A special Control Commission, as authoritative as possible, must cooperate with the International Secretariat in examining the appeal made by the comrades (in Hamburg, etc.) who have already been expelled, and give its decision.

3. The conference must be prepared in advance in such a manner that the mode of representation will allow no ground for suspicions and accusations.

4. In all cases where organizational conflicts and objections come to the fore, an examination must be referred to the International Secretariat, in cooperation with especially trustworthy and unprejudiced comrades from other sections.

5. The Kommunist must open its columns to the articles of both groups for discussion.

6. The theses and countertheses for the German national conference must be published in the International Bulletin in several languages, not less than four weeks before the opening of the conference.

If these proposals or others in the same spirit are accepted by the International Secretariat and the sections of the International Left, there remains only one question: are they acceptable to the
Landau group? This question can be asked even now. From the point of view of political expediency and from the point of view of democratic centralism, the proposals cited above are completely beyond dispute. If we are internationalists, not in words but in deeds, we cannot reject the control of the international organization over its national sections. It is true, our international organization is as yet extremely imperfect. But the national sections do not stand on a higher level. At any rate, the international organization possesses more authority, more experience, which in this case is particularly important, and more impartiality than the national leadership, which has been transformed into the staff of one of the two fighting factions.

Can the Berlin Executive reject the aid of the International Opposition which is concerned with preserving the unity of the German Opposition and assuring the convocation of a well-prepared and conscientiously organized conference?

I believe the Berlin Executive has neither the right nor the choice to refuse the cooperation that the International Opposition is at all times obliged to give.

The Berlin Executive has the floor!

Leon Trotsky
The five-year plan and the world

World opinion on the five-year plan has consisted until recently of two fundamental assertions that are absolutely contradictory: first, that the five-year plan is utopian and that the Soviet state is on the verge of economic failure; secondly, that Soviet export trade involves dumping, which threatens to upset the pillars of the capitalist order. Either of these two assertions can be used as a weapon with which to belabor the Soviet state, but together they have the great disadvantage of being radically opposed to one another. To upset capitalist economy by offering goods at low prices would require an unprecedented development of productive forces. If the five-year plan has suffered a check and Soviet economy is gradually disintegrating, on what economic battlefield can the Soviet Union marshal its ranks to open a dumping offensive against the most powerful capitalistic states in the world?

Which, then, of these two contradictory assertions is correct? Both of them are false. The five-year plan has not suffered a check; this is demonstrated by the efforts to transform it into a four-year
Personally I regard this attempt at acceleration as premature and ill-judged. But the mere fact that it is possible, the fact that hundreds of Soviet economists, engineers, works directors, and trade unionists have admitted the possibility of such a transformation, shows that the plan is far from being the failure it is declared to be by those observers in Paris, London, and New York who are accustomed to study Russian affairs through a telescope.

But suppose we admit that this gigantic plan may become a reality, should we not, then, admit the possibility of dumping in the near future? Let us consult statistics. Industrialization in the USSR is increasing at the rate of 20 to 30 percent per annum—a phenomenon unparalleled in economic history. But these percentages indicate a rise from the economic level that the Soviet Union inherited from the former owning class, a level of appalling backwardness. In the most important branches of its economy the Soviet Union will remain, even after the realization of the five-year plan, far behind the more advanced capitalist states. For instance, the average consumption of coal per person in the USSR will be eight times less than it is in the USA today. Other figures are more or less analogous. At the present time—that is, during the third year of the five-year plan—Soviet exports represent about 1½ percent of the world’s export trade. What percentage would suffice, in the opinion of those who fear dumping, to upset the balance of world trade? Fifty percent, perhaps, 25 percent, 10 percent? To attain even the last figure Soviet exports would have to increase seven or eightfold, thereby instantly causing the ruin of the Russian domestic economy. This consideration alone, based as it is on undisputed statistics, demonstrates the falseness of the philippics of such men as the Locker-Lampsons in England and Representative Fish in America. It matters not whether such philippics are the product of bad faith or of sincere panic; in either case, they are deceiving the public when they assert that the Soviet economy is failing and at the same time claim that enough Russian goods can be sold abroad below cost price to menace the world market.

The most recent form of attack called forth by the five-year plan appeared in the French newspaper Le Temps, which pur-
sues the same aims as the British diehards and may without exaggeration be described as one of the most reactionary papers in the world. Not long ago this journal drew attention to the rapid advance being made in the industrialization of the USSR, and called on all the Western states to coordinate their economies for the purpose of boycotting Soviet trade. In this instance there was no question of dumping; rapidity with which economic development is occurring was in itself considered a menace to be opposed by vigorous measures. One point should be emphasized: in order to remain effective, an economic blockade would have to become more and more stringent, and this would eventually lead to war. But even if a blockade were established and war ensued, and even if the Soviet system were overthrown by such a war—which I do not for a moment consider possible—even then the new economic principle of state planning that has proved its efficacy in the Soviet system would not be destroyed. Such a course would merely result in sacrificing many lives and arresting the development of Europe for decades.

But to return to our former question: Will the five-year plan be realized? First we must know just what we mean by “realization,” and this is not a matter that can be determined with minute precision, like a sporting record. I see the five-year plan as a working hypothesis used as the basis of a gigantic experiment whose results cannot be expected to coincide exactly with the hypothesis. The relations between the various ramifications of an economy over a period of years cannot be established a priori with any exactitude. Compensatory corrections must be made during the progress of the work itself. However, I am certainly of the opinion that, allowing for necessary corrections and alterations, the five-year plan is realizable.

You ask wherein my opinion on this matter differs from that of the present Soviet government. Let us put aside entirely the political question and the question of the Communist International, since these matters have no bearing on the use of large-scale hypothetical perspectives in economic planning. On the contrary, for several years I defended this method against those who now apply it. I am of the opinion that the five-year plan should have
been undertaken earlier. It should be mentioned here that the first projects for the plan envisaged an annual increase starting at 9 percent and gradually dropping to 4 percent. It was against the diminution, which was then sponsored by the Stalin-Rykov group, that the Opposition raised a vehement protest. That is why it was accused of superindustrialization. As a result of our criticism, the second project, elaborated in 1927, provided for an average annual increase of 9 percent. The Opposition found this figure wholly inadequate in view of the possibilities inherent in a nationalized economy. Capitalist industry in czarist Russia yielded nearly a mean 12 percent of profit, of which one-half was consumed by the owners while the other half was used to increase production. Now, under nationalization, almost the entire 12 percent can be used to increase production. To this must be added the savings effected by the absence of competition, the centralization of works according to a unified plan, unity of financing, and other factors. If a well organized trust enjoys an enormous advantage over isolated industrial enterprises, what must be the advantage of a nationalized industry, a veritable trust of trusts? This is why, from 1922 on, I based the possible yearly increase of industry at over 20 percent. This percentage, indeed, finally became accepted as the basis of the five-year plan, and experience has not only proved the soundness of this hypothetical calculation, but shown that it is likely to be exceeded.

Under the influence of this success, for which the present leadership itself was unprepared, there has been a tendency to go to the opposite extreme. Though Russia is not sufficiently prepared for it, the realization of the plan in four years is being attempted, and the task is pursued almost as a problem in sport. I am wholly opposed to this excess of bureaucratic maximalism, which imperils the large-scale increase of nationalized industry. In the course of the last year I have several times issued a warning against speeding up the collectivization of agriculture too much. Thus the roles now seem to be exchanged: the Left Opposition, which for years struggled for industrialization and collectivization, now feels itself duty-bound to apply the brakes. Moreover, I consider the attitude of those officials who talk as if Russia had already entered
into socialism with the third year of the five-year plan as false and likely to prejudice their reputations. No, the Russian economy is still in a transitional stage, and conceals within itself wide contradictions that may possibly lead to economic crises and temporary setbacks. To shut one's eyes to this would be unforgivable. I cannot here go more closely into this complex question, but it should be recognized that all those contradictions, difficulties, possible crises, and setbacks in no degree minimize the epoch-making significance of this gigantic experiment in economic planning, which already has proved that a nationalized industry, even in a backward country, can increase at a tempo that none of the old civilized nations could possibly attempt. This alone transforms the lesson of the past and opens up an entirely new perspective.

As an illustration of what I mean, let us take a hypothetical example. In England Mr. Lloyd George is promoting a plan of public undertakings worked out by Liberal economists with the double object of liquidating unemployment and of reorganizing and rationalizing industry. Now let us suppose, for purposes of demonstration, that the British government were to sit at a round table with the government of the USSR in order to work out a plan of economic cooperation over a number of years. Let us suppose that this plan embraced all the most important branches of the economy of the two countries and that the conference, unlike many others, resulted in concrete, cut-and-dried mutual agreements and undertakings: for such and such a number of tractors, electro-technical units, textile machines, and so forth, England would receive an equivalent quantity of grain, timber, perhaps later, raw cotton—all naturally, according to the prices current on the world market. This plan would begin modestly but would develop like an inverse cone, coming in the course of the years to include an ever-larger number of undertakings so that ultimately the most important economic branches in both countries would dovetail into one another like the bones of the skull. Can one doubt for a moment that, on the one hand, the coefficient of increase now contemplated by the Soviet government would, with the help of British technique, be vastly increased; and that, on the other, the Soviet Union would enable Great Britain to satisfy her most
vital importing needs under the most favorable conditions? It is impossible to say under what political auspices such collaboration would be possible. But when I take the principle of a centralized economic plan as it is being carried out today in a poor and backward country and apply it in imagination to the mutual relations of the advanced nations with the Soviet Union and with one another, I see therein a spacious outlook for mankind.

America discovers the world

The most striking feature of American life during the last quarter century has been the unprecedented growth of economic power and the equally unprecedented weakening of the political mechanism in the face of that power. Two episodes—one from the past, the other from the present—will illustrate what I mean. Perhaps the most important, and certainly the most vigorous activity of Theodore Roosevelt,¹⁶² who ranks as the most noteworthy of recent presidents, was his struggle against the trusts. What remains of that activity today? Vague memories among the older generation. The struggles of Roosevelt and the enactment of restrictive legislation were followed by the present formidable expansion of the trusts.

Now consider President Hoover.¹⁶³ To him the trusts form almost as natural a part of the social system as material production itself. Hoover, who is credited with the possession of an engineering mind, believed that the powerful trusts, on the one hand, and the standardization of production, on the other, would be instruments capable of assuring uninterrupted economic development, free from any crisis. His spirit of engineering optimism pervaded, as is well known, the Hoover Commission’s investigation of recent economic changes in the United States. The report of the commission, which was signed by seventeen apparently competent American economists, including Hoover himself, appeared in 1929. But a few months before the greatest crisis in American history Hoover’s report painted a picture of untroubled economic progress.

Roosevelt sought to dominate the trusts; Hoover sought to dominate the crisis by giving rein to the trusts, which he considered the highest expression of American individualism. The sig-
nificance of these two failures differs, but both the engineering prudence of Hoover and the obstreperous impulsiveness of Roosevelt reveal a helpless empiricism in the fundamental problems of social life.

The approach of an acute crisis was for long easily perceptible. The Hoover Commission might have found weighty economic advice in the Russian press had it not been so laden with self-sufficiency. I myself wrote in the summer of 1928: “It goes without saying that in our opinion the inevitability of a crisis is entirely beyond doubt; nor, considering the present world scope of American capitalism, do we think it is out of the question that the very next crisis will attain extremely great depth and sharpness. But there is no justification whatsoever for the attempt to conclude from this that the hegemony of North America will be restricted or weakened. Such a conclusion can lead only to the grossest strategical errors.

“Just the contrary is the case. *In the period of crisis the hegemony of the United States will operate more completely, more openly, and more ruthlessly than in the period of boom.* The United States will seek to overcome and extricate herself from her difficulties and maladies primarily at the expense of Europe . . .” [The Third International After Lenin, p. 9].

It must be admitted that only that part of this forecast has been fulfilled which deals with the imminence of a crisis, and not that part which prophesies an aggressive economic policy toward Europe on the part of the United States. In regard to this I can only say that the transatlantic empire is reacting more slowly than I anticipated in 1928. I remember, during a meeting of the Council of Labor and Defense in July 1924, exchanging some short notes with the late Leonid Krasin,164 who had just then returned from England. I wrote him that in no case should I have confidence in so-called Anglo-Saxon solidarity, which was merely a verbal remnant of war cooperation, and would shortly be torn to shreds by economic reality. He answered me as follows (I have the note still—a leaf torn out of a notebook): “I regard increasing friction between England and America in the immediate future as improbable. You cannot imagine how provincial the Americans are in regard to world
politics. Not for years yet will they dare to quarrel with England.”
I replied: “With a checkbook in his pocket even a provincial will
soon enough find occasion to behave like a man of the world.”

Certainly it cannot be disputed that the Americans have no ex­
perience or training in “Weltpolitik”; they have grown too quickly,
and their views have not kept up with their bank accounts. But the
history of humanity, and especially English history, has amply
illustrated how world hegemony is attained. The provincial visits
the capitals of the Old World, and he reflects. Now the material
basis of the United States is on a scale heretofore unknown. The
potential preponderance of the United States in the world market
is far greater than was the actual preponderance of Great Britain
in the most flourishing days of her world hegemony—let us say
the third quarter of the nineteenth century. This potential strength
must inevitably transfer itself into kinetic form, and the world
will one day witness a great outburst of Yankee truculence in ev­
ery sector of our planet. The historian of the future will inscribe
in his books: “The famous crisis of 1930–3-? was a turning point
in the whole history of the United States in that it evoked such a
reorientation of spiritual and political aims that the old Monroe
Doctrine, ‘America for the Americans,’ came to be superseded by a
new doctrine, ‘The Whole World for the Americans.’”

The blustering militarism of the German Hohenzollerns at the
end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centu­
uries,165 which rose with the yeast of the rapid development of capi­
talism, will appear as child’s play before that accompanying the
growing capitalist activity of the United States. Of Wilson’s Four­
teen Points,166 which even at the moment of their formulation
possessed no real content, there will remain still less, if that be
possible, than remains of Roosevelt’s fight against the trusts. To­
day dominant America has not yet extricated herself from the
perplexing situation caused by the crisis, but this state of affairs
will pass. It will be followed by an effort on her part to safeguard
in every corner of the world positions that will act as safety valves
against a new crisis. The chapter of her economic expansion may,
perhaps, begin with China, but this will in no way hinder her from
expanding in other directions.
The so-called “limitation of armaments” stands in no sort of contradiction to the forecasts outlined above, certainly not in contradiction to the direct interests of America. It is entirely obvious that a reduction of armaments prior to a conflict between two nations benefits the stronger far more than the weaker. The last war showed that hostilities between industrial nations last not months but years, and that war is waged not so much with weapons prepared beforehand as with those forged during combat. Consequently, the economically stronger of two nations has an interest in limiting the military preparedness of its prospective opponent. The preponderance of standardized and “trustified” industry in the United States is capable, when deflected to war production, of endowing that country during a war with such a preeminence as we can today scarcely imagine.

From this standpoint parity of navies is in fact no parity. It is a predominance assured beforehand to the one backed by the stronger industry. Quite apart from all possible doctrines, political programs, sympathies, and antipathies, I believe that the naked facts and cold logic keep us from considering accords over parity of fleets or any agreements of a like kind as guarantees of peace, or, indeed, as even any lessening of war danger. If a pair of duelists or their seconds agree beforehand on the caliber of the revolvers, it in no way prevents one of them from being killed.

Mr. MacDonald esteems the results achieved on his American journey as the loftiest triumph of peace politics. As I am speaking here in an interview, wherein one does not so much explain one’s opinion as proclaim it, I shall allow myself to turn to a speech that I made in 1924 about the relations between America and Europe. At that time, if I remember aright, Curzon was foreign minister and was engaging in saber-rattling against Soviet Russia. In a polemic against Lord Curzon (which now, of course, has lost all political interest) I observed that he was only treading on Russia’s heels in consequence of the unsatisfactory position in which England was being placed by the growing power of the United States and by the world situation generally. His protests against Soviet Russia were to be interpreted as the result of his dissatisfaction at having to negotiate accords with the United States that were not
of equal advantage to both parties. “When it comes to the point,” I said, “it will not be Lord Curzon who will execute this unpleasant task; he is too spirited. No, it will be entrusted to MacDonald. All the pious eloquence of MacDonald, Henderson, and the Fabians will be needed to make that capitulation acceptable.”

You ask me what my conclusions are? But I do not feel obliged to draw any in this interview. Conclusions are a matter of practical politics and therefore depend upon one’s program and the social interests behind it. In these respects your newspaper and I differ very much. That is why I have confined myself scrupulously to facts and processes, which, since they are indisputable, must be taken into account by any and every program that is realistic and not fantastical. These facts and processes tell us that the next epoch will develop beneath the shadow of powerful capitalist aggression on the part of the United States. In the third quarter of the fifteenth century Europe discovered America; in the second quarter of the twentieth century America will discover the world. Her policy will be that of the open door, which, as is well known, opens not inward but only outward in America.
Nina Vorovskaya has died at the age of twenty-three, consumed by raging tuberculosis. Daughter of V.V. Vorovsky, the old Bolshevik revolutionist murdered in Switzerland by White terrorists [in 1923], Nina inherited from her father an independent and stubborn character, all-round talents, and a penetrating fire in her eyes—alas—also the terrible ailment.

What we know of Nina’s psychology explains sufficiently how and why she joined the Opposition at an early age. Once she joined, she knew neither doubt nor vacillation. Her room in Moscow was one of the meeting places of the Young Communist League and the party Opposition. Nina broke with friends when they broke from the Opposition. Vorovskaya was excluded from the Young Communist League when it was decided by the party that free speech could not be tolerated.

From her father—it seems also from her mother—Nina inherited artistic gifts: she was an original graphic artist. Illness, chronic from her earliest years, encroached upon her life painfully, and hindered the development of her artistic gifts.

At the beginning of 1929, Nina went abroad for medical treat-
ment. Despite her painful condition, her letters displayed her as she was: stalwart, observant, and ironical.

"X is out of work," she reported in a letter of February 21, 1929, "because he had made up his mind beforehand he would be." In a later letter, about B, she reported that he had been imprisoned in a political isolation section—along with fifty comrades. A comrade passing through from Leningrad made comforting prophecies about the general mood; in her words, "We are growing bigger: instead of one mud-slinging there are two new ones."

Abroad, she underwent a painful (chest) operation. Before Nina had time to recover, she was urgently recalled to Moscow through the embassy. Semiofficially, they explained to her the suddenness of the call was due to financial considerations. In reality, the authorities had established beyond all question Nina’s connection with Oppositionists abroad, and decided at once to cut short her stay.

"Nina V," a friend wrote us from Berlin, "left on Monday, the 22nd, for Moscow. Greatly horrified that she has left, I very much dread that she will have a relapse. She certainly should still be convalescing."

In Moscow, Nina soon fell quickly into a decline. But in her last letters, written in the interval when illness weighed on her with little relief, she retained all her stamp of independent ideas, intransigence, ironic perception.

She wrote with maturity about the men and women who had capitulated, without sparing people closest to her.

Fate did not allow Nina to develop her personality to the full. But all who knew her preserve in their memory her beautiful and tragic image.
The extra quarter (October to December, 1930) showed a high rate of industrial development. At the same time, however, it showed that the conversion of the five-year plan into four was a light-minded adventure which raises a threat to the basic plan.

The economic year in Russia, unlike the calendar year, begins not on January 1 but on October 1. This came about because of the need to fit economic calculations and operations to the agricultural cycle. What is the reason for suddenly disrupting the arrangement introduced as we see for serious reasons? For the reason that bureaucratic prestige has to be exalted. As the fourth quarter of the second year of the five-year plan showed the impossibility of fulfilling the plan in four years, the decision was taken to add an extra quarter, i.e., to extend the four years by three more months. It was assumed that in this period, with the help of redoubled pressure on the muscles and nerves of the workers, the fetish of the infallible leadership would encourage success.

But as the extra quarter did not have any special magic power (there is no heat you know when the thermometer drops to zero), at the end of the quarter it turned out—as might have been ex-
pected and as we foresaw before it started—notwithstanding that the workers were lashed with the knout of the party members, of the soviets, and of the unions, the supertempos proved to be impracticable.

The ferrous-metal industry in the south and center fulfilled 80 percent of the extra-quarter plan. The metal industry as a whole underfilled the plan by approximately 20 percent (Pravda, January 16). The Donbas produced 10 million tons of coal instead of the programmed 16 million tons, no better than 62 percent. The superphosphate factories fulfilled their industrial tasks only up to 62 percent. In other branches of industry the underfulfillments of the plan are not so large (we still don’t have the full reports), but on the whole the so-called “gap” in the plan is very significant, especially and in particular in capital construction.

Matters are worse, however, with the qualitative indices. The newspaper Za Industrializatsiia, speaking of coal production, says: “The gap for qualitative indices is much wider than for quantitative indices” (January 8). In connection with the output of Krivoy Rog iron ore, the newspaper writes: “The qualitative indices have fallen” (January 7). Have fallen! But we know that even earlier they stood at an extremely low level. On nonferrous metals and gold the same newspaper states: “Prices are higher instead of lower.” It is possible to bring forward a whole series of similar references. As for the significance of, for example, the deterioration in the quality of coal, our correspondent says of this, in application to transport (see “Letter from a trade unionist” in the same issue): reduced number of runs, damaged engines, increased number of breakdowns; in general, the dislocation of transport is the automatic response to the deterioration in the quality of the fuel. In its turn, the disorganization of rail transport which—we notice at once—lagged particularly badly in the period of the extra quarter, was felt heavily in all other fields of the economy. The sporting method of the leadership substituted for prudent, businesslike, and flexible planning signifies an everincreasing accumulation of backlogs (often concealed and therefore particularly dangerous) which carry the threat of severe, critical explosions.

Tempos in the extra quarter are very high in themselves and
they offer fresh magnificent demonstrations of the immense gains inherent in planned economy. Under a correct leadership—which takes account of the real economic processes and introduces the necessary changes into the plan as it is being implemented—the workers would be able to feel rightly a sense of pride in successes achieved. However, quite the opposite result comes out into the open: economists and workers quite often see the plan is impracticable but don’t dare say it aloud; they work under pressure, with concealed resentment; honest and efficient administrators don’t dare look the workers in the eye. Everyone is dissatisfied. The bookkeeping is adjusted on instructions; the quality of the article is adjusted by the bookkeeping—all economic processes are wrapped in the smoke of falsehood. That is how the way is prepared for a crisis.

What is the reason for all this? The reason is the prestige of the bureaucracy, which has finally replaced the conscious and critical confidence of the party in the leadership. It must be said that this deity—prestige—is not only diabolically exacting and cynical but also fairly foolish: it is not, for example, shy to acknowledge that wreckers are fulfilling the plans, which is equal to saying that neither Krzhizhanovsky nor Kuibyshev nor Molotov nor Stalin showed any ability to recognize for himself this wrecking in the economic symptoms. On the other hand, neither does this great deity agree to acknowledge that establishing the four-year period, emerging as a result of a combination of wrecking and ignorant adventurism, has shown itself to have been a mistake.

We recall once more that when we gave warning at the very outset against light-minded, unmotivated, unprepared steps, Yaroslavsky—_the troubadour of prestige_—proclaimed in all languages that our warning was a fresh demonstration of the counterrevolutionary nature of “Trotskyism.”
Notes of a journalist

WHAT IS HAPPENING IN THE CHINESE COMMUNIST PARTY?

Pravda of December 25, 1930, tells us: “In the fall of 1930, the Chinese Communist Party numbered 200,000 members. The party has uprooted the remnants of the ideas of Chen Tu-hsiu and has destroyed Trotskyism ideologically.]

“However, the complicated circumstances of struggle have recently given rise to certain reservations of a ‘leftist’ semi-Trotskyist character inside the party. A whole number of leading comrades, who believe that a revolutionary situation has matured on an international scale, have posed the question of beginning an immediate struggle for power on a full national plane, ignoring the necessity of consolidating the Soviet power in the regions already occupied by the Red Army. Proceeding from such an estimate, they consider it possible to cease the economic struggle of the proletariat and to liquidate the revolutionary unions.”

This quotation gives one an idea of the chaos that reigns in the minds of the leading functionaries of the Chinese party. They have destroyed Trotskyism “ideologically”—that goes without saying—
but immediately following this destruction, reservations of a “semi-Trotskyist character” rise anew. Such things have happened time and again. These reservations have arisen even among a “number of leading comrades.” That also has happened before.

What are these new semi-Trotskyist reservations? They manifest themselves, first of all, in the demand to begin an “immediate struggle for power on a full national plane.” But the Left Opposition since the fall of 1927 has advanced the exact opposite demand: to withdraw the slogan of armed insurrection as an immediate slogan. Even today our Chinese comrades put on the agenda not the armed uprising, but the mobilization of the masses around the social demands of the proletariat and the peasantry and the slogans of revolutionary democracy; not adventurist experiments in the countryside, but the building up of the trade unions and the party! If Pravda is not indulging in slander (which is very likely), if the new opposition really voices demands “to cease the economic struggle of the proletariat and to liquidate the unions,” then this is directly contrary to the proposals of the Left Opposition (Bolshevik-Leninists).

We read further on that the new opposition ignores “the necessity of consolidating the Soviet power in the regions already occupied by the Red Army.” Instead of such consolidation, it is as though the opposition were calling for a general national uprising. This too has nothing in common with the position of Bolshevik-Leninists. If the Chinese “Red Army” is regarded as the weapon of a proletarian uprising, then the Chinese Communists must be guided by the laws of every revolutionary uprising. They must take the offensive, extend their territory, conquer the strategic centers of the country. Without this, every revolutionary uprising is hopeless. To delay, to remain on the defensive instead of taking the offensive, spells defeat for the uprising. In this sense, the new opposition, if its point of view has been correctly stated, is far more consistent that the Stalinists, who believe that “Soviet power” in the countryside can be maintained for years or that Soviet power can be transported from one end of the country to another in the baggage car of the partisan detachments labeled the “Red Army.” But neither position resembles our own; both
flow from a wrong point of departure. They renounce the class theory of soviet power. They dissolve the revolution into provincial peasant revolts, linking up the entire fate of the Chinese Communist Party with them in an adventurist manner.

What does the Communist Party represent? Quite unexpectedly we learn from this article that the Communist Party in the fall of 1930 numbered about “200,000 members.” The figure is given without explanation. Last year, however, the Chinese party numbered only about six to seven thousand members. If this tremendous growth of the party during the last year is a fact, then this should be a symptom of a radical change in the situation in favor of the revolution. Two hundred thousand members! If in reality the party were to number fifty, forty, or even twenty thousand workers, after it had experienced the second Chinese revolution and had absorbed its lessons, we would say that this is a powerful force, and invincible; with such cadres, we can transform all of China. But we would also have to ask: Are these twenty thousand workers members of the unions? What kind of work are they carrying on within them? Is their influence growing? Are they linking up their organizations with the masses of the unorganized and of the rural periphery? And under what slogans?

The fact is that the leadership of the Comintern is concealing something from the proletarian vanguard. We can be certain that the lion’s share of these 200,000—let us say from 90 to 95 percent—come from regions where the detachments of the “Red Army” are active. One has only to imagine the political psychology of the peasant detachments and the conditions under which they carry on their activity to get a clear political picture: the partisans, most probably, are almost all enrolled in the party, and after them the peasants in the occupied regions. The Chinese party, as well as the “Red Army” and the “Soviet power,” has abandoned the proletarian rails and is heading toward the rural districts and the countryside.

In seeking a way out of the impasse, the new Chinese opposition advances, as we have read, the slogan of a proletarian uprising on a national plane. Obviously this would be the best outcome, if the prerequisites for it were to exist. But they do not exist today. What,
then, can be done? We must develop slogans for the interval between revolutions, the length of which no one can tell in advance. These are the slogans of the democratic revolution: land to the peasants, the eight-hour workday, national independence, the right of national self-determination for all people, and, finally, the constituent assembly. Under these slogans the provincial peasant uprisings of the partisan detachments will break out of their provincial isolation and fuse with the general national movement, linking their own fate with it. The Communist Party will emerge, not as the technical guide of the Chinese peasantry, but as the political leader of the working class of the entire country. There is no other road!

STALIN AND THE COMINTERN

Lominadze, in the course of his struggle against Stalin, circulated a conversation he had had with him about the Comintern: “The Comintern represents nothing and it ekes out its existence only because of our support.” Stalin, as is his custom, denied he had said this. All those who know Stalin and his attitude toward the Comintern, however, do not doubt for a moment that Lominadze was telling the truth.

By this we do not want to imply that Stalin’s statement corresponds to the reality. On the contrary, the Comintern lives irrespective of the support of Stalin. The Comintern lives by virtue of the ideas on which it is based, by virtue of October, and, primarily, by virtue of the contradictions of capitalism. In the past—and we hope in the future—these factors have been stronger than the bureaucratic financial noose which Stalin calls support.

But the “aphorism” which we have quoted expresses better than anything else the real attitude of Stalin and Co. toward the Comintern and supplements perfectly the theory of socialism in one country.

In 1925, when the kulak course of that policy was in full bloom, Stalin did not feel at all ashamed to express his contempt for the Comintern and for the leaders of its sections. When Stalin with Zinoviev’s consent proposed at the Politburo to pull Maslow out
of the archives and send him to Germany, Bukharin, then a follower of Stalin and Zinoviev but not taken into confidence about all their plots, objected: “Why Maslow? . . . You know this person very well. . . . It is impossible, etc. . . .” To which Stalin replied: “They have all been baptized with the same holy water. In general there are no revolutionaries among them. Maslow is no worse than the others.”

During a consultation concerning a certain concession [to foreign capitalist investors], one of the members of the Politburo remarked: “To grant it for forty or for fifty years makes no difference. We must assume that by that time the revolution will not have left any trace of the concessionaires.” “The revolution?” Stalin rejoined. “Do you think the Comintern will accomplish this? Forget it. It will not bring about a revolution in ninety years.” Is it necessary to recall once again the contemptuous remarks of Stalin about the “emigres,” that is, about the Bolsheviks who had worked in the parties of the European proletariat?

Such was the general spirit in the Politburo. A haughty and contemptuous attitude toward the West European Communists was required for good form. “Do you really think that Purcell and Cook will make the revolution in England?” asked the Oppositionists. “And you perhaps think that your British Communists will make the revolution?” was Tomsky’s retort.

The attitude toward the Communist parties of the East was still more contemptuous, if that is possible. Only one thing was required of the Chinese Communists: to keep quiet so as not to disturb Chiang Kai-shek in the performance of his work.

It is not at all difficult to imagine the juicy expression this philosophy takes from the mouth of Voroshilov, with his inclination to all types of chauvinism. In the sessions of the delegation of the Russian Communist Party, immediately preceding the plenum of the Executive Committee of the Comintern in 1926, Voroshilov “defended” Thaelmann with his characteristic competence, almost like this: “Where can they find better ones? They haven’t any revolutionaries. Of course, if we could give them our Uglanov, he would conduct their affairs in an entirely different manner. For them, Uglanov would be another Bebel.” This became a winged
phrase. Uglanov in the role of a communist Bebel in Germany! At that time Voroshilov apparently had not foreseen that Uglanov would someday become a “pillar of the kulaks” and an “agent of the saboteurs.” Yet even today Voroshilov himself does not doubt that the 1925 policy was the best of all policies.

So we see that Lominadze has reported nothing new. His testimony only bears witness to the fact that the attitude toward the Comintern expressed within the top inner circle has not changed after all these years. And how could it? Lominadze’s testimony fades, becomes absolutely superfluous before the fact that the leadership of the international proletarian vanguard is today wholly abandoned to the Manuilskys, the Kuusinens, and the Lozovskys, the people who in the USSR are not and cannot be taken seriously.

No. The Comintern does not live because of the support of the Stalinist bureaucracy, but despite it. The sooner it frees itself from this support, the sooner it will regenerate itself and rise to the level of its historic tasks.

**THE GROWTH OF TOADYISM**

In Pravda on December 28 of last year a collective article was published, a huge special feature section, devoted to—what would you expect?—“the anniversary of Comrade Stalin’s speech at the First Conference of Marxist Agrarian Specialists.” This special feature, like the similar earlier article by a certain Borilin, is, if not a striking, then certainly a vile document of academic careerism, a “platform” of small people who are transforming Stalin’s scandalous speech at the conference into a cover for their own trivial slander, denunciations, intrigues, and lustful ambitions.

We subjected Stalin’s speech to detailed criticism in an earlier issue of the Biulleten (“Stalin as a Theoretician,” number 14) [Writings 30]. We showed that this speech was a conglomeration of rudimentary errors from beginning to end. If you did not know Stalin and his “theoretical” level, you might have thought the speech was a crude forgery fabricated by some body else. Larin, Kritsman, and even Milyutin—people who are ready enough to line up for the
leadership—did not have it in them to swallow all of Stalin’s theoretical discoveries. The journal *Na Agrarnom Fronte* [On the Agrarian Front] had to cautiously avoid a number of burning issues in agrarian theory simply because Stalin had trodden upon these questions with his left boot. And the young Red professors sensed this caution. They understood without difficulty that the game involved no risk for them: all they had to do was launch a campaign against Kritsman, and against Milyutin—that erudite academician of platitudes—accusing them of the mortal sin: of disagreeing with Stalin’s discoveries or of not accepting them with enough enthusiasm. It was impossible for Kritsman and Milyutin to agree with these “discoveries,” since after all they do know the ABC’s of economic theory. But they could not remain silent either. Thus, the young academicians, by means of an open attack which had been underwritten in advance, were able to—arrive at theoretical truth? No. But they could secure a place on the journal *Na Agrarnom Fronte* and in a number of other institutions in the bargain.

And because socialist creative work must be penetrated with the collective spirit, these prize hunters gave their slander a strictly collective character. The signatures on the article were as follows: D. Lurye, Ya. Nikulikhin, K. Soms, D. Davydov, I. Laptev, Neznamov, V. Dyatlov, M. Moiseev, and N.N. Anisimov. We spelled out these names not because they are well known to us; on the contrary, they are totally unknown. But we have no doubt that one way or another they will become well known. Indeed, the name Besedovsky was also unknown before the man who bore that name jumped over the back fence [of the Soviet embassy in Paris]. Will these gentlemen have to leap over a fence and just what kind will it be? The future will tell. But it is absolutely clear that we have before us, in these people, an academic collective made up of a far-flung faction of toadies.

**WHOSE PHONOGRAPH IS THIS?**

A certain S. Gorsky, an ex-Oppositionist, repented last summer. We do not deny anyone the right to repent, or to wallow in his
repentance. Nor are we inclined to object to the form that the repentance takes, for the laws of esthetics—and those of anti­
esthetics—require the form and content to correspond. Never­
theless, it seems to us that there are some limits at which even debase ment multiplied by light-headedness should stop. It appears
that Gorsky has succeeded in overstepping all these limits. It is
not a question of “Trotsky frightening people with his impossible
rate of industrialization,” nor of the fact that on this subject Gorsky
identifies Trotsky with Groman, and Groman with the saboteurs.175
So far Gorsky still remains within the limits of the of ficial ritual.
It is only after he has completed the prepared section that Gorsky
introduces a distinctly personal note into his repentance, drag­
ging in the Dnieprostroy station—which Trotsky fought against
and Stalin rescued. Gorsky ends his article with the following
words: “Those who compared the Dnieprostroy to a ‘phonograph’
are dancing on their own political tomb. Unfortunately, to the tune
of their music, I myself once danced.—S. Gorsky” (Za Industrial­
izatsiia, number 2544).

What is this? It is unbelievable! One doubts one’s eyes. In 1925–
26 Trotsky was the chairman of the governmental commission of
the Dnieprostroy. Partly for this reason but mostly because at that
time the leading echelons of the party held fast to the idea of a
“declining curve” of industrialization, all the other members of
the Politburo were unanimously opposed to the hydroelectric sta­
tion on the Dnieper. At the plenum of the Central Committee in
April 1926, in his programmatic speech on the economy directed
against the “superindustrializer” Trotsky, Stalin declared: “For us
to build the Dnieprostroy would be just the same as to buy the
peasant a phonograph instead of a cow.” The debates were steno­
graphed and printed, as all the minutes of the plenums are, in the
printing plant of the Central Committee. Stalin’s phrase about
the phonograph created something of a sensation and was often
repeated in the speeches and documents of the Opposition. The
phrase ended up as a byword. But since Gorsky has decided to
repent completely, without omitting anything, he attributes (of his
own accord or under instructions from Yaroslavsky?) the economic
philosophy of Stalin, including the immortal phrase, to Trotsky.
Now, what follows from this? "Those who compared the Dnieprostroy to a phonograph are dancing on their own political tomb." On their own political tomb! But it was Stalin who called the Dnieprostroy a phonograph. Then who is dancing on his own tomb? Say what you will, Gorsky’s repentance sounds dubious. Is it sincere? Is this really repentance? Isn’t there something in the back of his mind? Isn’t Gorsky trying to discredit Stalin in Aesopian language? And why does the editor Bogushevsky stand by and look on, Bogushevsky, who knows a few things? And what about Yaroslavsky? Why doesn’t he put two and two together? All in all, what are we headed for?
March 8, 1931

The case of Comrade Ryazanov

At the moment we write these lines, we know nothing about the expulsion from the party of Ryazanov except what is communicated in the official dispatches by Tass [the Soviet Press agency]. Ryazanov has been expelled from the party, not for any differences with the so-called general line, but for “treason” to the party. Ryazanov is accused—no more and no less—of having conspired with the Mensheviks and the Social Revolutionaries who were allied with the conspirators of the industrial bourgeoisie. This is the version in the official communique. What does not seem clear at first sight is that for Ryazanov the affair is limited to expulsion from the party. Why has he not been arrested and arraigned before the Supreme Tribunal for conspiracy against the dictatorship of the proletariat? Such a question must pose itself to every thoughtful person, even to those who do not know the accused. The latest communiques say that Ryazanov is named in the indictment by Krylenko. To be a defendant tomorrow?

The Mensheviks and the Social Revolutionaries represent parties which seek the reestablishment of capitalism. The Mensheviks and the Social Revolutionaries are distinguished from other
parties of capitalist restoration by the fact that they hope to give the bourgeois regime in Russia “democratic” forms. There are very strong currents in these parties which believe that any regime in Russia, regardless of its political form, would be more progressive than the Bolshevik regime. The position of the Mensheviks and the Social Revolutionaries is counterrevolutionary in the most precise and objective sense of the word, that is, in the class sense. This position cannot but lead to attempts to utilize the discontent of the masses for a social uprising. The activity of the Mensheviks and the Social Revolutionaries is nothing but the preparation for such an uprising. Are blocs of the Mensheviks and the Social Revolutionaries with the industrial bourgeoisie excluded? Not at all. The policy of the social democracy throughout the world is based upon the idea of a coalition with the bourgeoisie against the “re- action” and the revolutionary proletariat. The policy of the Mensheviks and the Social Revolutionaries in 1917 was entirely based upon the principle of the coalition with the liberal bourgeoisie, republican as well as monarchical. The parties which believe that there is no way out for Russia other than a return to a bourgeois regime cannot but make a bloc with the bourgeoisie. The latter cannot refuse aid, including financial aid, to its democratic auxiliaries. Within these limits everything is clear, for it flows from the very nature of things. But how could Comrade Ryazanov happen to be among the participants in the Menshevik conspiracy? Here we are confronted by an obvious enigma.

When Syrtsov was accused of “double-dealing,” every conscious worker must have asked: How could an Old Bolshevik who, not so long ago, was put by the Central Committee into the post of chairman of the Council of People’s Commissars suddenly become the illegal defender of opinions which he refuted and condemned officially? From this fact one could only establish the extreme duplicity of the Stalinist regime, in which the real opinions of the members of the government are established only by the intervention of the GPU.

But in the Syrtsov case, it was only a matter of a conflict between the centrists and the right-wingers of the party, and nothing more. The Ryazanov “case” is incomparably more significant
and more striking. All of Ryazanov’s activity was manifested in the realm of ideas, of books, of publications, and by that fact alone it was under the constant scrutiny of hundreds of thousands of readers throughout the world. Finally, and most importantly, Ryazanov is accused not of sympathy for the deviation of the right-wingers in the party, but of participation in the counterrevolutionary conspiracy.

That numerous members of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, theoreticians and practitioners of the general line, are Mensheviks without knowing it; that numerous former Mensheviks, who have changed their names but not their essence, successfully occupy the most responsible posts (people’s commissars, ambassadors, etc.); and that within the framework of the CPSU no mean place is occupied, alongside the Bessedovskys, the Agabekovs, and other corrupted and demoralized elements, by direct agents of the Mensheviks—on that score we have no doubts at all. The Stalinist regime is the breeding ground of all sorts of germs of decomposition in the party. But the Ryazanov “case” cannot be set into this framework. Ryazanov is not an upstart, an adventurer, a Bessedovsky, or any sort of agent of the Mensheviks. Ryazanov’s line of development can be traced year by year, in accordance with facts and documents, articles and books. In the person of Ryazanov we have a man who for more than forty years has participated in the revolutionary movement; and every stage of his activity has in one way or another entered into the history of the proletarian party. Ryazanov had serious differences with the party at various times, including the time of Lenin or, rather, especially in the time of Lenin, when Ryazanov participated actively in the day-to-day formulation of party policy. In one of his speeches Lenin spoke directly of the strong side of Ryazanov and of his weak side. Lenin did not see Ryazanov as a politician. Speaking of his strong side, Lenin had in mind his idealism, his deep devotion to Marxist doctrine, his exceptional erudition, his honesty in principles, his intransigence in defense of the heritage of Marx and Engels. That is precisely why the party put Ryazanov at the head of the Marx-Engels Institute which he himself had created. The work of Ryazanov had international importance, not only of a historico-scienc-
tific but also a revolutionary and political character. Marxism is inconceivable without the acceptance of the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat. Menshevism is the bourgeois-democratic refutation of this dictatorship. In defending Marxism against revisionism, Ryazanov, by all of his activity, conducted a struggle against the social democracy and consequently against the Russian Mensheviks. How then is Ryazanov's principled position to be reconciled with his participation in the Menshevik conspiracy? To this question there is no reply. And we think that there cannot be a reply. We are absolutely certain that Ryazanov did not participate in any conspiracy. But in that case, where does the accusation come from? If it is invented, then by whom and toward what end?

To this we can give only hypothetical explanations, based, nevertheless, upon a sufficiently adequate acquaintance with the people and the circumstances. We will assist ourselves, moreover, with political logic and revolutionary psychology. Neither the one nor the other can be abolished by Tass dispatches.

Comrade Ryazanov directed a vast scientific institution. He required numerous qualified personnel as collaborators: people initiated in Marxism, the history of the revolutionary movement, the problems of the class struggle, and those who knew foreign languages. Bolsheviks having the same qualities occupy, almost without exception, responsible administrative posts and are not available for a scientific institution. On the other hand, among the Mensheviks there are numerous idle politicians who have retired from the struggle or who, at least, pretend to have retired. In the domain of historical research, of commentary, of annotation, of translation, of important correction, etc., Comrade Ryazanov based himself to a certain extent on this type of Menshevik in retreat. In the institute they played about the same role that the bourgeois engineers play in the State Planning Commission and the other economic bodies. A communist who directs any institution, as a general rule defends "his" specialists, sometimes even those who lead him around by the nose. The most illuminating example of this is given by the former chairman of the State Planning Commission, member of the Central Committee Krzhyzhanovsky, who
for many years, foaming at the mouth, defended against the Opposi-
tion the minimum programs and plans of his saboteur-subor-
dinates. The director of the Marx-Engels Institute felt impelled to
assume the defense of his Menshevik collaborators when they
were threatened with arrest and deportation. This role of defender,
not always crowned with success, has not been practiced by Ryazanov
only since yesterday. Everybody, including Lenin, knew it;
some joked about it, understanding perfectly well the “adminis-
trative” interests that guided Ryazanov.

There is no doubt that certain Menshevik collaborators,
perhaps the majority, used the institute to cover up their conspira-
trial work (concealment of archives and documents; correspondence,
contacts abroad, etc.). One can imagine that Ryazanov was not
always sufficiently attentive to the admonitions coming from the
party, and showed an excessive benevolence toward his perfidious
collaborators. But we think that this is the extreme limit of the
accusation that might be leveled against Comrade Ryazanov. The
books edited by Ryazanov are before the eyes of everybody: there
is neither Menshevism nor sabotage in them, as in the economic
plans of Stalin-Krzhyzhanyovsky.

But if one accepts the fact that Ryazanov’s mistake does not
exceed credulous protection of the Menshevik-specialists, where
then does the accusation of treason come from? We know from
recent experience that the Stalinist GPU is capable of sending an
officer of Wrangel into the ranks of irreproachable revolutionists.
Menzhinsky and Yagoda would not hesitate for a moment to at-
tribute any crime whatsoever to Ryazanov as soon as they were
ordered to do so.¹⁷⁸ But who ordered it? Who would have gained
by it? Who sought this international scandal around the name of
Ryazanov?

It is precisely on this that we can advance explanations that are
compellingly dictated by all the circumstances. In recent years Rya-
zanov had withdrawn from active politics. In this sense he shared
the fate of many old members of the party who, despair in their
hearts, left the internal life of the party and shut themselves up in
economic or cultural work. It is only this resignation that permit-
ted Ryazanov to insure his institute against devastation in the
whole post-Leninist period. But in the last year it became impossible to maintain oneself in this position. The life of the party, especially since the Sixteenth Congress, has been converted into a continual examination of loyalty to the chief, the one and only. In every unit, there now are agents fresh from the plebiscite who on every occasion interrogate the hesitant and the irresolute: Do they regard Stalin as an infallible chief, as a great theoretician, as a classic of Marxism? Are they ready on the New Year to swear loyalty to the chief of the party—to Stalin? The less the party shows itself capable of controlling itself through ideological struggle, the more the bureaucracy is forced to control the party with the aid of agent-provocateurs.

For many years Ryazanov was able to hold his tongue very prudently—too prudently—on a whole series of burning questions. But Ryazanov was organically incapable of cowardice, of platitudes; any ostentatious display of the sentiment of loyalty was repugnant to him. One can imagine that in the meetings of the institute he often flew into a passion against the corrupted youngsters of that innumerable order of young professors who usually understand very little of Marxism but can excel in falsehood and informing. This type of internal clique, no doubt, for a long time had its candidate for the post of director of the institute and, what is still more important, its connections with the GPU and the secretariat of the Central Committee. Had Ryazanov alluded somewhere, even if only in a few words, to the fact that Marx and Engels were only forerunners of Stalin, then all the stratagems of these unscrupulous youngsters would have collapsed and no Krylenko would have dared to make a complaint against Ryazanov for his benevolence toward the Menshevik translators. But Ryazanov did not accept this. As for the general secretariat, it was unable to make any further concessions.

Having acquired the power of the apparatus, Stalin feels himself weaker than ever internally. He knows himself well and that is why he fears his own position. He needs daily confirmation of his role of dictator. The plebiscitary regime is pitiless: it does not reconcile itself with doubts, it demands perpetual enthusiastic acknowledgment. This is why Ryazanov’s turn came. If Bukharin
and Rykov fell victim to their “platform,” which it is true they have renounced two or three times, Ryazanov fell victim to his personal honesty. The old revolutionist said to himself: to serve while holding one’s tongue with clenched teeth—good; to be an enthusiastic lackey—impossible. That is why Ryazanov fell under the justice of the party of the Yaroslavskys. Then Yagoda furnished the elements of the accusation. In conclusion, Ryazanov was declared a traitor to the party and an agent of the counter-revolution.

In the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and in the Western parties of the Comintern, there are many who observe with consternation the activities of the Stalinist bureaucracy. But they justify their passivity, saying: “What can be done? One must hold one’s tongue in order not to shake the foundation of the dictatorship.” This possibilism is not only cowardly, it is blind. Instead of the foundation of the dictatorship, the apparatus of the official party is more and more being converted into an instrument for its disintegration. This process cannot be arrested by silence. Internal explosions are occurring more and more frequently, each time in a more threatening form. The struggle against the Stalinist regime is a struggle for the Marxist foundation of a proletarian policy. This cannot be won without party democracy. The plebiscitary regime of Stalin by its very nature is not durable. So that it shall not be liquidated by class enemies, it is indispensable to liquidate it by the efforts of the advanced elements of the Communist International. This is the lesson of the Ryazanov “case”!
The real disposition of the pieces on the political chessboard

The trial of the ‘Menshevik center’

The connection of the Mensheviks with the saboteurs on the one hand and with the imperialist bourgeoisie on the other is not unexpected. The discovery of this connection, irrefutably confirmed by the confessions of the members of the Menshevik center, has, however, a great demonstrative significance because it proves in a particularly striking manner that a policy, in spite of all the democratic abstractions with which one wants to cover it, is inevitably filled with a class content and embodies the interests of this class. One cannot go toward “pure” democracy without going toward capitalism. One cannot go toward capitalism without becoming the agent of the imperialist bourgeoisie. By its class content, the role of the Mensheviks in the USSR is in no way distinguished from the role of the Labour Party in Great Britain or of the social democrats in Germany. The form and the methods are different; the essence is the same. The struggle against the social democracy is a struggle against the democratic wing of socialism.

In the trial of the Mensheviks, however, there is a circumstance which may appear secondary at first sight or even escape our attention but which in reality clarifies in a harsh light the political
disposition of the defendants. All the accused are of an age varying from forty-five to fifty-six years; only two, the youngest of them, are thirty-nine and forty-one years old. They are representative of the older generation, of the founders of Menshevism, of its theoretical and organizational leaders in the first revolution [1905], in the years of the reaction, during the war period, in the months of the February revolution, and during the first years of the Bolshevik regime. Yet there is an interruption in their party connection which coincides with a certain period of the Soviet regime. All fourteen Mensheviks, with one possible exception, broke their connections with the Menshevik Party for a number of years ranging from three to nine, and the majority of them worked in this period in Soviet institutions on the basis of the official policy and not in accordance with directions of the Menshevik center. During the period which runs from 1923–24 and 1926–27, almost none among the accused had any connections, not even formal ones, with the Menshevik Party and with its center abroad. The reestablishment of the official Menshevik organization was effected on the initiative of the accused only three years ago.

The first figure in this trial is Groman. His contact with the Menshevik Party, whose most prominent economist he was, was broken in 1922, that is, at the time when, with Lenin ill and separated little by little from the work, preparations were begun in the apparatus for a whispered, but intensive, struggle against “Trotskyism.” Groman returned to the ranks of the Mensheviks in 1926. Ginzburg, after having influenced the Supreme Council of National Economy for a number of years, returned to the ranks of the Mensheviks after an interlude of six years in 1927, just like the other pillar of the council, Sokolovsky. The others returned in 1928, some not until 1929. “The Bureau of the Union,” that is, the Central Committee of the Mensheviks in Russia, was finally set up, according to the indictment, at the beginning of 1928. The significance of this date is pointed up by the following quotation from the indictment: “The evolution from the positions of peace in 1924 to the positions of armed insurrection within the country and armed intervention from without is the evolution of the Menshevik social democracy during the period from 1924 to 1930.”
Now all is clear. It is precisely during the years when the Stalinist bureaucracy intensified its "armed" struggle against the Left Opposition that the Mensheviks disarmed, or finally broke with their party, considering that what was necessary would happen without it. Or they occupied themselves with peaceful politics, with cabinet politics, which also served as a basis for their hopes in the bourgeois evolution of the Bolsheviks. The pogrom against the Left Opposition was the preliminary condition for the conciliation of the Mensheviks with the Stalinist regime. This is the principal fact registered tersely but precisely in the indictment of February 23, 1931.

When did Stalin's course to the left begin? On February 15, 1928, when it was for the first time decreed openly in the lead article of Pravda. The Bureau of the Union was definitely formed, as we know, at the beginning of 1928. The political turns of both processes coincide completely. At the very moment when the Stalinist bureaucracy, out of fear of the Opposition which was subjected to pogroms but not vanquished, felt obliged to make an abrupt turn to the left, the Mensheviks rallied around the banner of the struggle for the overturn of the Soviet regime.

The indictment in the trial of the saboteur-specialists established on the basis of the testimony of the defendants that, during the period between 1923-28, the essential work of the sabotaging engineers in the State Planning Commission, in the Supreme Council of National Economy, and in the other directing economic centers consisted of artificially slowing down the rate of industrialization and collectivization. It is precisely upon the basis of the technical and economic data of Ramzin and Osadchy on the one hand, and of Groman, Ginzburg, and Sokolovsky on the other that the Central Committee conducted a furious attack upon the "superindustrializers" in defense of a pseudo-Leninist line. As for the rate of industrialization, the main defendant Ramzin declared: "The principal organs which decided these questions were entirely in the hands of the Industrial Party." The Mensheviks served the industrial center abroad. In his struggle against the Opposition, Stalin was the mouthpiece for the two parties: the Menshevik Party and the Industrial Party.
Beginning in 1928, according to the confessions of Ramzin and the others, legal sabotage, in the form of artificial slowing down of the rate of industrialization, became impossible because of the too-abrupt turn of the official policy. It was at this very moment that the Menshevik “Bureau of the Union” was formed, which completed the abrupt turn in the Menshevik methods of struggle against the Soviet power. The bureau drew closer in this work to the counterrevolutionary specialists and the emigrant bourgeoisie.

There exist only two firm and serious lines: the line of the imperialist bourgeoisie and the line of the revolutionary proletariat. Menshevism is the democratic mask of the first line. Stalinism is the centrist deformation of the second. In the heat of the struggle against the consistent revolutionary proletarian faction, the centrists found themselves in a bloc, not formal but all the more efficacious, with the Mensheviks; thus, the centrists did unconsciously what the Mensheviks did consciously, that is, they carried out the tasks of the capitalist general staff abroad. Beginning with the moment when the centrists, under the pressure of the Left Opposition, abruptly leaned to the left—early in 1928—the Mensheviks made their abrupt turn in the spirit of an open bloc with the world bourgeoisie. That is the real and incontestable disposition of the pieces on the political chessboard.

The Ramzins, the Osadchys and the Mensheviks have confessed. The question of knowing to what extent these confessions are sincere is not of great interest to us. It is, however, beyond doubt that the next trial will reveal the transgressions of the saboteurs guilty of the disruptive acceleration of disproportionate rates in the complete collectivization, in the administrative dekulakization; the trial will show that if the Menshevik economists in the years 1923–28 saw, and with reason, the path to the bourgeois degeneration of the Soviet system in the retardation of industrialization, many of them beginning in 1928 became veritable superindustrializers so as to prepare, by means of economic adventurism, the political downfall of the dictatorship of the proletariat.
I await criticism from the sections

To the International Secretariat
For all Sections of the International Left Opposition

Dear Comrades:

This is to accompany the draft platform of the International Left Opposition on the Russian question. This document draws the balance sheet on several years of collective work by the Left Opposition. My task was to formulate as clearly and precisely as possible our commonly held views. I await from all the sections criticism of the most attentive and even supermeticulous kind, since what is involved here is not an article but a programmatic document, in which every phrase must be carefully weighed.

This document gives the Secretariat the opportunity to open a discussion, which should be the first step in preparing for the international conference.

Simultaneously with this it is necessary, in my opinion, to begin drawing up theses dealing with the present world situation, in particular the world crisis, and the revolutionary prospects. I think that the most efficient thing to do would be to establish an inter-
national commission on this question, the main nucleus of which would presumably work in Paris in close collaboration with the Secretariat. I would be very happy to take part in the work of this commission, in the capacity of corresponding member.

If circumstances allow me, I will also try to draw up theses on the role of democratic demands and tasks in the strategy of the world proletarian vanguard. More than this, unfortunately, I cannot promise, since my time for the next few months will be completely and entirely taken up with the second volume of the *History of the [Russian] Revolution*.

I hope that the attached draft of the platform on the Russian question will also be placed on the agenda of the French and German national conferences. These, naturally, should precede the international conference; otherwise the conference might run the danger of trying to function in a vacuum.

It would also be highly desirable for conferences of other national sections to be held as part of the process of preparation for the international conference, as long as there were no insurmountable obstacles to doing that.

With communist greetings,

* L. Trotsky
Problems of the development of the USSR

Draft theses of the International Left Opposition on the Russian question

1. Economic contradictions of the transition period

The class nature of the Soviet Union

The contradictory processes in the economy and politics of the USSR are developing on the basis of the dictatorship of the proletariat. The character of the social regime 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.

The defense of the USSR from foreign intervention and from attack by internal enemies—from the monarchists and former landowners to the “democrats,” the Mensheviks and Social Revo-
lutionaries—is the elementary and indisputable duty of every revolutionary worker, all the more so of the Bolshevik-Leninists. Ambiguity and reservations on this question, which in essence reflect the waverings of petty-bourgeois ultraleftism between the world of imperialism and the world of the proletarian revolution, are incompatible with adherence to the International Left Opposition.

World historical significance of the high tempo of economic development

The possibility of the present truly gigantic successes of the Soviet economy was created by the revolutionary overturn of the property relations which established the preconditions for a planned elimination of market anarchy. Capitalism never gave and is incapable of giving that progression of economic growth which is developing at present on the territory of the Soviet Union. The unprecedentedly high tempos of industrialization, which have unfolded in spite of the expectations and plans of the epigone leadership, have proved once and for all the might of the socialist method of economy. The frantic struggle of the imperialists against so-called Soviet “dumping” is an involuntary but for that an all the more genuine recognition on their part of the superiority of the Soviet form of production. In the field of agriculture, where backwardness, isolation, and barbarism have their deepest roots, the regime of the proletarian dictatorship also succeeded in revealing a mighty creative power. No matter how great future setbacks and retreats may be, the present tempos of collectivization, possible only on the basis of the nationalization of the land, credit, and industry, with the workers in the leading role, signify a new epoch in the development of humanity, the beginning of the liquidation “of the idiocy of rural life.”

Even in the worst case historically conceivable, if blockade, intervention, or internal civil war should overthrow the proletarian dictatorship, the great lesson of socialist construction would retain all its force for the further development of humanity. The temporarily vanquished October Revolution would be fully justified economically and culturally, and consequently would be reborn. The most important task of the proletarian vanguard, how-
ever, is to bar the doors to this worst historical variant, by defend­
ing and strengthening the October Revolution and by transform­
ing it into a prologue to the world revolution.

Basic contradictions of the transition period

Absolutely false is the official doctrine of fatalistic optimism prevailing today, according to which the continued speedy growth of industrialization and collectivization is assured in advance and leads automatically to the construction of socialism in a single country.

If a highly developed socialist economy is possible only as a harmonious, internally proportionate, and consequently free-from-crisis economy, then, on the contrary, the transitional economy from capitalism to socialism is a crucible of contradic­tions where, moreover, the deeper and sharper ones lie ahead. The Soviet Union has not entered into socialism, as the ruling Stalin­ist faction teaches, but only into the first stage of the development in the direction of socialism.

At the core of the economic difficulties, the successive crises, the extreme tension of the whole Soviet system and its political convulsions, lie a number of contradictions of diverse historical origin which are interlinked in various ways. Let us name the most important ones: (a) the heritage of the capitalist and precap­italist contradictions of old czarist-bourgeois Russia, primarily the contradiction between town and country; (b) the contradiction between the general cultural-economic backwardness of Russia and the tasks of socialist transformation which dialectically grow out of it; (c) the contradiction between the workers’ state and the capitalist encirclement, particularly between the monopoly of for­eign trade and the world market.

These contradictions are not at all of a brief and episodic char­acter; on the contrary, the significance of the most important of them will increase in the future.

Industrialization

The realization of the five-year plan would represent a gigan­tic step forward compared to the impoverished inheritance which
the proletariat snatched from the hands of the exploiters. But even after achieving its first victory in planning, the Soviet Union will not yet have issued out of the first stage of the transition period. Socialism as a system of production not for the market but for the satisfying of human needs is conceivable only on the basis of highly developed productive forces. However, according to the average per capita amount of goods, the USSR even at the end of the five-year plan will still remain one of the most backward countries. In order really to catch up with the advanced capitalist countries, a number of five-year plan programs will be needed. Meanwhile the industrial successes of recent years in themselves do not at all assure an uninterrupted growth in the future. Precisely the speed of industrial development accumulates disproportions, partly inherited from the past, partly growing out of the complications of the new tasks, partly created by the methodological mistakes of the leadership in combination with direct sabotage. The substitution of economic direction by administrative goading, with the absence of any serious collective verification, leads inevitably to the inclusion of the mistakes in the very foundation of the economy and to the preparation of new “tight places” inside the economic process. The disproportions driven inward inevitably return at the following stage in the form of disharmony between the means of production and raw materials, between transport and industry, between quantity and quality, and finally in the disorganization of the monetary system. These crises conceal within themselves all the greater dangers the less the present state leadership is capable of foreseeing them in time.

Collectivization

“Complete” collectivization, even were it actually to be carried out in the coming two or three years, would not at all signify the liquidation of the kulaks as a class. The form of producers’ cooperatives, given the lack of a technical and cultural base, is incapable of stopping the differentiation within the small commodity producers and the emergence from their midst of capitalist elements. Genuine liquidation of the kulak requires a complete revolution in
agricultural technique and the transformation of the peasantry, alongside of the industrial proletariat, into workers of the socialist economy and members of the classless society. But this is a perspective of decades. With the predominance of individual peasant implements and the personal or group interest of their owners, the differentiation of the peasantry will inevitably be renewed and strengthened precisely in the event of a comparatively successful collectivization, that is, with the general increase in agricultural production. If we should further assume that collectivization, together with the elements of new technique, will considerably increase the productivity of agricultural labor, without which collectivization would not be economically justified and consequently would not maintain itself, this would immediately create in the village, which is even now overpopulated, ten, twenty, or more millions of surplus workers whom industry would not be able to absorb even with the most optimistic plans. Corresponding to the growth of surplus, that is, of semiproletarian, semipauperized population unable to find a place in the collectives would be the growth at the other pole of rich collectives and more wealthy peasants inside the poor and medium collectives. With a shortsighted leadership, declaring a priori that the collectives are socialist enterprises, capitalist-farmer elements can find in collectivization the best cover for themselves, only to become all the more dangerous for the proletarian dictatorship.

The economic successes of the present transition period do not, consequently, liquidate the basic contradictions but prepare their deepened reproduction on a new, higher historical foundation.

The USSR and the world economy

Capitalist Russia, in spite of its backwardness, already constituted an inseparable part of the world economy. This dependence of the part upon the whole was inherited by the Soviet republic from the past, together with the whole geographic, demographic, and economic structure of the country. The theory of a self-sufficient national socialism, formulated in 1924–27, reflected the first, extremely low period of a revival of the economy after the war;
when its world requirements had not yet made themselves felt. The present tense struggle for the extension of Soviet exports is a very vivid refutation of the illusions of national socialism. The foreign-trade figures increasingly become the dominating figures in relation to the plans and tempos of socialist construction. But foreign trade must be continued; and the problem of the mutual relation between the transitional Soviet economy and the world market is just beginning to reveal its decisive significance.

Academically, it is understood, one can construct within the boundaries of the USSR an enclosed and internally balanced socialist economy; but the long historic road to this “national” ideal would lead through gigantic economic shifts, social convulsions, and crises. The mere doubling of the present crop, that is, its approach to the European, would confront the Soviet economy with the huge task of realizing an agricultural surplus of tens of millions of tons. A solution to this problem, as well as to the no less acute problem of growing rural overpopulation, could be achieved only by a radical redistribution of millions of people among the various branches of the economy and by the complete liquidation of the contradictions between the city and the village. But this task—one of the basic tasks of socialism—would in turn require the utilization of the resources of the world market in a measure hitherto unknown.

In the last analysis, all the contradictions of the development of the USSR lead in this manner to the contradiction between the isolated workers’ state and its capitalist encirclement. The impossibility of constructing a self-sufficient socialist economy in a single country revives the basic contradictions of socialist construction at every new stage on an extended scale and in greater depth. In this sense, the dictatorship of the proletariat in the USSR would inevitably have to suffer destruction if the capitalist regime in the rest of the world should prove to be capable of maintaining itself for another long historical epoch. However, to consider such a perspective as the inevitable or even the most probable one can be done only by those who believe in the firmness of capitalism or in its longevity. The Left Opposition has nothing in common with
such capitalist optimism. But it can just as little agree with the theory of national socialism which is an expression of capitulation before capitalist optimism.

The world crisis and economic ‘collaboration’ between the capitalist countries and the USSR

The problem of foreign trade in its present exceptional acuteness caught the leading bodies of the USSR unawares, and by that alone became an element of disruption of the economic plans. In the face of this problem, the leadership of the Comintern also proved to be bankrupt. World unemployment made the question of developing the economic relations between the capitalist countries and the USSR a vital problem for broad masses of the working class. Before the Soviet government and the Comintern there opened up a rare opportunity to attract the social democratic and nonparty workers on the basis of a vital and burning question and so to acquaint them with the Soviet five-year plan and with the advantages of the socialist methods of economy. Under the slogan of economic collaboration and armed with a concrete program, the communist vanguard could have led a far more genuine struggle against the blockade and intervention than through repetition of one-and-the-same bare condemnations. The perspective of a planned European and world economy could have been raised to unprecedented heights and in this manner could have given new nourishment to the slogans of the world revolution. The Comintern did almost nothing in this field.

When the world bourgeois press, including the social democratic press, was suddenly mobilized for a campaign of incitement against alleged Soviet dumping, the Communist parties marked time at a loss for what to do. At a time when the Soviet government, before the eyes of the whole world, seeks foreign markets and credits, the bureaucracy of the Comintern declares the slogan of economic collaboration with the USSR a “counter-revolutionary” slogan. Such shameful stupidities, as if especially created for confusing the working class, are a direct consequence of the ruinous theory of socialism in one country.
2. The party in the regime of the dictatorship

The dialectical interrelationship between economics and politics

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

The present official teaching, according to which the growth of nationalized industry and collectives automatically and uninterruptedly strengthens the regime of the proletarian dictatorship, is a product of vulgar "economic" and not dialectic materialism. In reality, the interrelationship between the economic foundation and the political superstructure has a far more complex and contradictory character, particularly in the revolutionary epoch. The dictatorship of the proletariat, which grew out of bourgeois social relations, revealed its might in the period preceding the nationalization of industry and collectivization of agriculture. Later on, the dictatorship passed through periods of strengthening and weakening, depending upon the course of the internal and world class struggle. Economic achievements were often bought at the price of politically weakening the regime. Precisely this dialectic interrelation between economy and politics directly produced sharp turns in the economic policy of the government, beginning with the New Economic Policy and ending with the latest zigzags in collectivization.

The party as a weapon and as a measure of success

Like all political institutions, the party is in the last instance a product of the productive relations of society. But it is not at all an automatic recorder of the changes in these relationships. As the synthesis of the historical experiences of the proletariat, in a certain sense of the whole of humanity, the party rises above the conjunctural and episodic changes in the economic and political conditions, which only invest it with the necessary power of fore-
It can be considered entirely irrefutable that the dictatorship was achieved in Russia and afterwards withstood the most critical moments because it had its center of consciousness and determination in the form of the Bolshevik Party. The inconsistency and, in the final analysis, the reactionary nature of all species of anarchists and anarcho-syndicalists consists precisely in the fact that they do not understand the decisive significance of the revolutionary party, particularly at the highest stage of the class struggle, in the epoch of the proletarian dictatorship. Without a doubt, social contradictions can reach such an acute point that no party can find a way out. But it is no less true that with the weakening of the party or with its degeneration even an avoidable crisis in the economy can become the cause for the fall of the dictatorship.

The economic and political contradictions of the Soviet regime intersect within the leading party. The acuteness of the danger depends, with each succeeding crisis, directly upon the state of the party. No matter how great the significance of the rate of industrialization and collectivization may be in itself, it nevertheless takes second place before the problem: has the party retained Marxist clarity of vision, ideological solidity, the ability to arrive collectively at an opinion and to fight self-sacrificingly for it? From this point of view, the state of the party is the highest test of the condition of the proletarian dictatorship, a synthesized measure of its stability. If, in the name of achieving this or that practical aim, a false theoretical attitude is foisted on the party; if the party ranks are forcibly ousted from political leadership; if the vanguard is dissolved into the amorphous mass; if the party cadres are kept in obedience by the apparatus of state repression—then it means that in spite of the economic successes, the general balance of the dictatorship shows a deficit.

**Replacement of the party by the apparatus**

Only blind people, hirelings, or the deceived can deny the fact that the ruling party of the USSR, the leading party of the Comintern, has been completely crushed and replaced by the apparatus. The gigantic difference between the bureaucratism of 1923
and the bureaucratism of 1931 is determined by the complete liq-
uidation of the dependence of the apparatus upon the party that
took place in this span of years, as well as by the plebiscitary de-
generation of the apparatus itself.

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 with the methods of compulsory political service. The local
secretaries are appointed by the Central Committee, which is of-
officially and openly converted into a consultative body of the gen-
eral secretary. Congresses are arbitrarily postponed, delegates are
selected from the top according to their demonstration of solidar-
ity with the irreplaceable leader. Even a pretense of control over
the top by the lower ranks is removed. The members of the party
are systematically trained in the spirit of passive subordination.
Every spark of independence, self-reliance, and firmness, that is,
those features which make up the nature of a revolutionist, is
crushed, hounded, and trampled underfoot.

In the apparatus there undoubtedly remain not a few honest
and devoted revolutionists. But the history of the post-Leni
period—a chain of ever-grosser falsification of Marxism, of unprin-
cipled maneuvers, and of cynical mockeries of the party—would
have been impossible without the growing predominance in the
apparatus of servile officials who stop at nothing.

Under the guise of spurious monolithism, double-dealing per-
meates the whole of party life. The official decisions are accepted
unanimously. At the same time, all the party strata are corroded
by irreconcilable contradictions which seek roundabout ways for
their eruption. The Bessedovskys direct the purging of the party
against the Left Opposition on the eve of their desertion to the
camp of the enemy. The Blumkins are shot down and replaced by
Agabekovs. Syrtsov, appointed chairman of the People’s Commis-
sars of the RSFSR in place of the “traitor” Rykov, is very
soon accused of underground work against the party. Ryazanov,
the head of the most important scientific institution of the party,
is accused, after the solemn celebration of his jubilee, of being a
participant in a counterrevolutionary plot. In freeing itself of party
control, the bureaucracy deprives itself of the possibility of controlling the party except through the GPU, where the Menzhinskys and Yagodas put up the Agabekovs.

A steam boiler, even under rude handling, can do useful work for a long time. A manometer, however, is a delicate instrument which is very quickly ruined under impact. With an unserviceable manometer the best of boilers can be brought to the point of explosion. If the party were only an instrument of orientation, like a manometer or a compass on a ship, even in such a case its derangement would spell great trouble. But more than that, the party is the most important part of the governing mechanism. The Soviet boiler hammered out by the October Revolution is capable of doing gigantic work even with poor mechanics. But the very derangement of the manometer signifies the constant danger of explosion of the whole machine.

_Dissolution of the party into the class?_

The apologists and attorneys for the Stalinist bureaucracy attempt at times to represent the bureaucratic liquidation of the party as a progressive process of the dissolution of the party into the class, which is explained by the successes of the socialist transformation of society. In these theoretical throes, illiteracy competes with charlatanry. One could speak of the dissolution of the party into the class only as the reverse side of the easing of class antagonisms, the dying away of politics, the reduction to zero of all forms of bureaucratism, and primarily the _reduction of the role of coercion_ in social relations. However, the processes taking place in the USSR and in the ruling party have a directly opposite character in many respects. Coercive discipline is not only not dying away—it would be ridiculous even to expect this at the present stage—but, on the contrary, it is assuming an exceptionally severe character in all the spheres of social and personal life. Organized participation in the politics of the party and the class is actually reduced to zero. The corruption of bureaucratism knows no limits. Under these conditions, to represent the dictatorship of the Stalinist apparatus as the socialist dying away of the party is a mockery of the dictatorship and of the party.
The Brandlerite justification of plebiscitary bureaucratism

The right-wing camp followers of centrism, the Brandlerites, try to justify the strangulation of the party by the Stalinist bureaucracy with references to the "lack of culture" of the working masses. This does not at all prevent them, at the same time, from awarding the Russian proletariat the dubious monopoly in the construction of socialism in one country.

The general economic and cultural backwardness of Russia is unquestionable. But the development of historically retarded nations has a combined character: in order to overcome their backwardness, they are compelled in many fields to adopt and to cultivate the most advanced forms. The scientific doctrine of proletarian revolution was created by the revolutionists of backward Germany in the middle of the nineteenth century. Thanks to its retardation, German capitalism later outstripped the capitalism of England and France. The industry of backward bourgeois Russia was the most concentrated in the whole world. The young Russian proletariat was the first to show in action the combination of a general strike and an uprising, the first to create soviets, and the first to conquer power. The backwardness of Russian capitalism did not prevent the education of the most farsighted proletarian party that ever existed. On the contrary, it made it possible.

As the selection of the revolutionary class in a revolutionary epoch, the Bolshevik Party lived a rich and stormy internal life in the most critical period of its history. Who would have dared, prior to October or in the first years after the revolution, to refer to the "backwardness" of the Russian proletariat as a defense of bureaucratism in the party! However, the genuine rise in the general cultural level of the workers which had occurred since the seizure of power did not lead to the flourishing of party democracy, but, on the contrary, to its complete extinction. The references to the stream of workers from the village explain nothing, for this factor has always been in operation and the cultural level of the village since the revolution has risen considerably. Finally, the party is not the class, but its vanguard; it cannot pay for its numerical growth by the lowering of its political level. The Brandlerite defense of plebiscitary bureaucratism, which is based upon a trade-
union and not a Bolshevik conception of the party, is in reality self-defense, because in the period of the worst failures and the degradation of centrism, the right-wingers were its most reliable prop.

Why did the centrist bureaucracy triumph?

To explain as a Marxist why the centrist bureaucracy triumphed and why it was compelled to strangle the party in order to preserve its victory, one must proceed not from an abstract “lack of culture” of the proletariat, but from the change in the mutual relations of the classes and the change in the moods of each class.

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 the NEP. The crushing of the Bulgarian uprising in 1923, the inglorious defeat of the German proletariat in 1923, the crushing of the Estonian insurrection in 1924, the treacherous liquidation of the general strike in England in 1926, the crushing of the Chinese revolution in 1927, the stabilization of capitalism connected with all these catastrophes—such is the international setting of the struggle of the centrists against the Bolshevik-Leninists. The abuse of the “permanent,” that is, in essence, of the international revolution, the rejection of a bold policy of industrialization and collectivization, the reliance upon the kulak, the alliance with the “national” bourgeoisie in the colonies and with the social imperialists in the metropolis—such are the political contents of the bloc of the centrist bureaucracy with the forces of Thermidor. 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 the course of a few years.
The zigzag course

The political zigzags of the apparatus are not accidental. In them is expressed the adaptation of the bureaucracy to conflicting class forces. The course of 1923–28, if we leave aside occasional waverings, constituted a semicapitulation of the bureaucracy to the kulaks at home and the world bourgeoisie and its reformist agency abroad. Having felt the increasing hostility of the proletariat, having seen the bottom of the Thermidorean abyss to whose very edge they had slid, the Stalinists leaped to the left. The abruptness of the leap corresponded to the extent of the panic created in their ranks by the consequences of their own policy, laid bare by the criticism of the Left Opposition. 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, but without abandoning the principled basis of its policy or, what is most important, its omnipotence. The zigzags of Stalinism show that the bureaucracy is not a class, not an independent historical factor, but an instrument, an executive organ of the classes. The left zigzag is proof that no matter how far the preceding right course had gone, it nevertheless developed on the basis of the dictatorship of the proletariat. The bureaucracy, however, is not a passive organ which only refracts the inspirations of the class. Without having absolute independence, the illusion of which lives in the skulls of many bureaucrats, the ruling apparatus nevertheless enjoys a great relative independence. The bureaucracy is in direct possession of state power; it raises itself above the classes and puts a powerful stamp upon their development; and even if it cannot itself become the foundation of state power, it can, with its policy, greatly facilitate the transfer of power from the hands of one class into the hands of another.

The policy of zigzags is incompatible with the independence of the proletarian party

Standing above all the other problems of the bureaucracy is the problem of self-preservation. All its turns result directly from its striving to retain its independence, its position, its power. But the policy of zigzags, which requires a completely free hand, is
incompatible with the presence of an independent party, which is accustomed to control and demands an accounting. From this flows the system of the violent destruction of party ideology and the conscious sowing of confusion.

The kulak course, the Menshevik-saboteur program of industrialization and collectivization, the bloc with Purcell, Chiang Kai-shek, La Follette, and Radich, the creation of the Peasants’ “International,” the slogan of a two-class party— all this was declared to be Leninism. On the contrary, the course of industrialization and collectivization, the demand for party democracy, the slogan of soviets in China, the struggle against the two-class parties on behalf of the party of the proletariat, the exposure of the emptiness and falsehood of the Krestintern, the Anti-Imperialist League, and other Potemkin villages—all these were given the name of “Trotskyism.”

With the turn of 1928, the masks were repainted but the masquerade continued. The proclamation of an armed uprising and soviets in China at a time of counterrevolutionary ascent, the adventurist economic tempos in the USSR under the administrative whip, the “liquidation of the kulak as a class” within two years, the rejection of the united front with reformists under all conditions, the rejection of the slogans of revolutionary democracy for historically backward countries, the proclamation of the “third period” at a time of economic revival—all this was now called Leninism. On the contrary, the demand for realistic economic plans adapted to the resources and needs of the workers, the rejection of the program of the liquidation of the kulaks on the basis of the peasant inventory, the rejection of the metaphysics of the “third period” for a Marxist analysis of the economic and political processes throughout the world and in each country—all this was now declared to be “counterrevolutionary Trotskyism.”

The ideological connection between the two periods of the bureaucratic masquerade remains the theory of socialism in one country, the basic charter of the Soviet bureaucracy which it holds over the world proletarian vanguard and which it uses to sanctify in advance all its actions, turns, errors, and crimes. The fabric of party consciousness is created slowly and requires constant renewal by
means of a Marxist evaluation of the road passed, of an analysis of the changes in the situation, of a revolutionary prognosis. Without tireless critical internal work, the party inevitably falls into decline. However, the struggle of the bureaucracy for self-preservation excludes an open contrast of today’s policy with that of yesterday, that is, the testing of one zigzag by the other. The heavier the conscience of the ruling faction, the more it is transformed into an order of oracles, who speak an esoteric language and demand an acknowledgment of the infallibility of the chief oracle. The whole history of the party and the revolution is adapted to the needs of bureaucratic self-preservation. One legend is heaped upon the other. The basic truths of Marxism are branded as deviations. Thus, in the process of zigzagging between classes for the last eight years, the basic fabric of party consciousness has been ripped apart and torn to pieces more and more. Administrative pogroms did the rest.

The plebiscitary regime in the party

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. The selection for the whole apparatus takes place around the “chief.” That is how the plebiscitary apparatus regime has come into being.

Bonapartism is one of the forms of the victory of the bourgeoisie over the uprising of the popular masses. To identify the present Soviet regime with the social regime of Bonapartism, as Kautsky does, means consciously to conceal from the workers, in the interests of the bourgeoisie, the difference in class foundations. Notwithstanding this, one can speak with full justification of the complete plebiscitary degeneration of the Stalinist apparatus or of the Bonapartist system of administering the party as one of the preconditions for a Bonapartist regime in the country. A new political order does not arise out of nowhere. The class which has come to power builds the apparatus of its domination from the elements that are at hand at the moment of the revolutionary or the coun-
terrevolutionary overthrow. The Soviets led by the Mensheviks and the Social Revolutionaries were, in Kerensky’s day, the last political resource of the bourgeois regime. At the same time, the Soviets, above all in their Bolshevik form, were the crucible of the dictatorship of the proletariat which was in the process of creation. The present-day Soviet apparatus is a bureaucratic, plebiscitary, distorted form of the dictatorship of the proletariat. It is also, however, a potential instrument of Bonapartism. Between the present function of the apparatus and its possible function, the blood of civil war would still have to flow. Yet the victorious counterrevolution would find precisely in the plebiscitary apparatus invaluable elements for the establishment of its domination, just as its very victory would be unthinkable without the transfer of decisive sections of the apparatus to the side of the bourgeoisie. That is why the Stalinist plebiscitary regime has become a main danger for the dictatorship of the proletariat.

3. Dangers and possibilities of a counterrevolutionary upheaval

The relationship of forces between socialist and capitalist tendencies

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 thedekulakization have strongly diminished the exploitive role of the rural upper strata. The relationship of forces between the socialist and the capitalist elements of the economy has undoubtedly been shifted to the benefit of the former. To ignore, or even to deny this fact, as the ultralefts or the vulgar oppositionists do, repeating general phrases about Nepman and kulak, is entirely unworthy of Marxists.

It is no less false, however, to regard the present percentual relationship of forces as assured or, what is worse yet, to measure the degree of the realization of socialism by the specific gravity of state and private economy in the USSR. The accelerated liquidation
of the internal capitalist elements, with methods of administrative dizziness here as well, coincided with the accelerated appearance of the USSR on the world market. The question of the specific gravity of the capitalist elements in the USSR, therefore, should not be posed independently of the question of the specific gravity of the USSR in the world economy.

Nepman, middleman, and kulak are undoubtedly natural agents of world imperialism; the weakening of the former signifies at the same time the weakening of the latter. But this does not exhaust the question: besides the Nepman there still exists the state official. Lenin recalled at the last congress in which he participated that not infrequently in history did a victorious people, at least its upper stratum, adopt the customs and mores of the culturally superior people conquered by it, and that analogous processes are also possible in the struggle of classes. The Soviet bureaucracy, which represents an amalgam of the upper stratum of the victorious proletariat with broad strata of the overthrown classes, includes within itself a mighty agency of world capital.

Elements of dual power

Two trials—against the specialist-saboteurs and against the Mensheviks—have given an extremely striking picture of the relationship of forces of the classes and the parties in the USSR. It was irrefutably established by the court that during the years 1923–28 the bourgeois specialists, in close alliance with the foreign centers of the bourgeoisie, successfully carried through an artificial slowdown of industrialization, counting upon the reestablishment of capitalist relationships. The elements of dual power in the land of the proletarian dictatorship attained such a weight that the direct agents of the capitalist restoration, together with their democratic agents, the Mensheviks, could play a leading role in all the economic centers of the Soviet republic! How far, on the other hand, had centrism slipped down in the direction of the bourgeoisie when the official policy of the party for a number of years could serve as the legal cover for the plans and methods of capitalist restoration!

The left zigzag of Stalin, objective evidence of the powerful
vitality of the proletarian dictatorship, which turns the bureaucracy around on its own axis, in any case created neither a consistent proletarian policy nor a full-blooded regime of the proletarian dictatorship. The elements of dual power contained in the bureaucratic apparatus have not disappeared with the inauguration of the new course, but have changed their color and their methods. They have undoubtedly even become stronger as the plebiscitary degeneration of the apparatus has progressed. The wreckers now invest the tempos with an adventurist scope and thereby prepare dangerous crises. The bureaucrats zealously hang the banner of socialism over the collective farms in which the kulaks are hiding. Not only ideological but also organizational tentacles of the counterrevolution have penetrated deeply into the organs of the proletarian dictatorship, assuming a protective coloration all the more easily since the whole life of the official party rests upon lies and falsification. The elements of dual power are all the more dangerous the less the suppressed proletarian vanguard has the possibility of uncovering them and purging its ranks in time.

The party and socialist construction

Politics is concentrated economics, and the politics of the dictatorship the most concentrated of any politics conceivable. The plan of economic perspectives is not a dogma given at the outset, but a working hypothesis. Collective examination of the plan must take place in the process of its execution, in which the elements of verification are not only bookkeeping figures but also the muscles and the nerves of the workers and the political moods of the peasants. To test, to check up, to summarize, and to generalize all this can only be done by an independent party, acting of its own free will, sure of itself. The five-year plan would be inconceivable without the certainty that all the participants in the economic process, the managements of the factories and trusts on the one hand and the factory committees on the other, submit to party discipline, and that the nonparty workers remain under the leadership of the central units and the factory committees.

Party discipline, however, is completely fused with administrative discipline. The apparatus showed itself—and still shows
itself even today—as all-powerful, insofar as it has the possibility of expending the basic capital of the Bolshevik Party. This capital is large, but not unlimited. The overstraining of bureaucratic command reached its highest limits at the moment of the crushing of the right wing. One can go no further on this road. But this has prepared the way for the collapse of administrative discipline.

From the moment when party tradition for some and fear of it for others ceases to hold the official party together, and hostile forces break through to the surface, the state economy will suddenly feel the full force of the political contradictions. Every trust and every factory will cancel the plans and directives coming from above, in order to insure their interests by their own means. Contracts between single factories and the private market behind the back of the state, will become the rule instead of the exception. The struggle between the factories for workers, raw materials, and markets will automatically impel the workers to struggle for better working conditions. The planning principle, inescapably abrogated in this manner, would not only signify the reestablishment of the internal market but also the disruption of the monopoly of foreign trade. The managements of the trusts would quickly approach the position of private owners or agents of foreign capital, to which many of them would be compelled to turn in their struggle for existence. In the village, where the types of collective farms which are not very capable of offering resistance would hardly have time to absorb the small commodity producers, the collapse of the planning principle would precipitously unleash elements of primitive accumulation. Administrative pressure would be unable to save the situation if only for the fact that the bureaucratic apparatus would be the first victim of the contradictions and centrifugal tendencies. Without the idealistic and cementing force of the Communist Party, the Soviet state and the planned economy would consequently be condemned to disintegration.

Degeneration of the party and the danger of civil war

The collapse of plebiscitary discipline would not only embrace the party, administrative, economic, trade-union, and cooperative
organs, but also the Red Army and the GPU; under certain conditions, the explosion might begin with the latter. This already shows that the passage of power into the hands of the bourgeoisie could in no case be confined simply to a process of degeneration alone, but would inevitably have to assume the form of an open violent overthrow.

In what political form could this take place? In this respect, only the main tendencies can be revealed. By Thermidorean overthrow, the Left Opposition always understood 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. In contrast to this, the Bonapartist overthrow appears as 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. 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. However, Thermidor and Bonapartism represent no irreconcilable class types, but are only stages of development of the same type—the living historic process is inexhaustible in the creation of transitional and combined forms. One thing is sure: were the bourgeoisie to dare to pose the question of power openly, the final answer would be given in the mutual testing of class forces in mortal combat.

The two camps of the civil war

In the event that the molecular process of the accumulation of contradictions were to lead to an explosion, the unification of the enemy camp would be accomplished under fire around those political centers which yesterday were still illegal. Centrism, as the commanding faction, together with the administrative apparatus, would immediately fall victim to political differentiation. The elements of its composition would divide into opposite sides on the
barricades. Who would occupy the main place at first in the camp of the counterrevolution: the adventurist-praetorian elements of the type of Tukhachevsky, Bluecher, Budenny,\textsuperscript{186} downright refuse of the type of Bessedovsky, or still weightier elements of the type of Ramzin and Osadchyy? That will be determined by the time and the conditions of the turn of the counterrevolution to the offensive. Still the question itself could only be of episodic significance. The Tukhachevskys and Bessedovskys could serve only as a step for the Ramzins and Osadchys; they, for their part, will only be a step for the imperialist dictatorship that would very soon fling aside both, should it not succeed in leaping over them immediately. The Mensheviks and Social Revolutionaries would form a bloc with the praetorian wing of centrism and serve to cover for the imperialists on the precipitous decline of the revolution as they sought to cover for them in 1917 during the revolution’s sharp ascent.

In the opposing camp, a no less decisive regrouping of forces would take place under the banner of the struggle for October. The revolutionary elements of the Soviets, the trade unions, the cooperatives, the army, and, finally and above all, the advanced workers in the factories would feel, in the face of the threatening danger, the need to join together closely under clear slogans around the tempered and tested revolutionary cadre which is incapable of capitulation and betrayal. Not only the centrist faction but also the right wing of the party would produce not a few revolutionists who would defend the October Revolution with arms in hand. But for this they would need a painful internal demarcation, which cannot be carried out without a period of confusion, vacillation, and loss of time. Under these decisive circumstances, the faction of the Bolshevik-Leninists, sharply marked out by its past and steeled by difficult tests, would serve as the element for a crystallization within the party. All around the Left Opposition would take place the process of the unification of the revolutionary camp and the rebirth of the true Communist Party. The presence of a Leninist faction would double the chances of the proletariat in the struggle against the forces of the counterrevolutionary overthrow.
4. The Left Opposition and the USSR

Against national socialism
For permanent revolution

The democratic tasks of backward Russia could be solved only through the road of the dictatorship of the proletariat. Having captured power at the head of the peasant masses, the proletariat could not, however, stop short at the democratic tasks. The democratic revolution was directly interwoven with the first stage of the socialist revolution. But the latter cannot be completed except on the international arena. The program of the Bolshevik Party formulated by Lenin regards the October upheaval as the first stage of the proletarian world revolution, from which it is inseparable. This is also the kernel of the theory of the permanent revolution.

The extraordinary delay in the development of the world revolution, which creates gigantic difficulties for the USSR and produces unexpected transitional processes, nevertheless does not change the fundamental perspectives and tasks which flow from the world-embracing character of capitalist economy and from the permanent character of the proletarian world revolution.

The International Left Opposition rejects and condemns categorically the theory of socialism in one country, created in 1924 by the epigonés, as the worst perversion of Marxism, as the principal achievement of Thermidorean ideology. Irreconcilable combat against Stalinism (or national socialism), which has found its expression in the program of the Communist International, is a necessary condition for correct revolutionary strategy, in the questions of the international class struggle as well as in the sphere of the economic tasks of the USSR.

Elements of dual power in the regime of the proletarian dictatorship

If we proceed from the incontestable fact that the Communist Party of the Soviet Union has ceased to be a party, are we not thereby forced to the conclusion that there is no dictatorship of the proletariat in the USSR, since this is inconceivable without a
ruling proletarian party? Such a conclusion, entirely consistent at first sight, is nevertheless a caricature of the reality, a reactionary caricature that ignores the creative possibilities of the regime and the hidden reserves of the dictatorship. Even if the party as a party, that is, as an independent organization of the vanguard, does not exist, this does not yet mean that all the elements of the party inherited from the past are liquidated. In the working class, the tradition of the October overthrow is alive and strong; firmly rooted are the habits of class thought; unforgotten in the older generation are the lessons of the revolutionary struggles and the conclusions of Bolshevik strategy; in the masses of the people and especially in the proletariat lives the hatred against the former ruling classes and their parties. All these tendencies in their entirety constitute not only the reserve of the future, but also the living power of today, which preserves the Soviet Union as a workers’ state.

Between the creative forces of the revolution and the bureaucracy there exists a profound antagonism. If the Stalinist apparatus constantly comes to a halt at certain limits, if it finds itself compelled even to turn sharply to the left, this occurs above all under the pressure of the amorphous, scattered, but still powerful elements of the revolutionary party. The strength of this factor cannot be expressed numerically. At any rate, it is today powerful enough to support the structure of the dictatorship of the proletariat. To ignore it means to adopt the bureaucratic manner of thinking and to seek out the party wherever the Stalinist apparatus commands and nowhere else.

The Left Opposition categorically rejects the analysis of the Soviet state not only as a bourgeois or petty-bourgeois state, but also as a “neutral” state that has remained in some way without class rulers. The presence of elements of dual power in no way signifies the political equilibrium of the classes. In evaluating social processes, the establishment of the degree of maturity attained and the point of termination is especially important. The moment of change from quantity to quality has a decisive significance in politics as well as in other fields. The correct determination of this moment is one of the most important and at the same time most
difficult tasks of the revolutionary leadership.

The evaluation of the USSR as a state standing between the classes (Urbahns) is theoretically inadequate and politically equivalent to a surrender in whole or in part of the fortress of the world proletariat to the class enemy. The Left Opposition rejects and condemns categorically this standpoint as incompatible with the principles of revolutionary Marxism.

_The road of the Left Opposition in the USSR:_

_The road of reform_

The analysis given above of the possibilities and chances of a counterrevolutionary overthrow should in no sense be understood to mean that the present contradictions must _absolutely_ lead to the open explosion of civil war. The social sphere is elastic and—within certain limits—opens up various possibilities, in accordance with the energy and the penetration of the battling forces, with the internal processes dependent upon the course of the international class struggle. The duty of the proletarian revolutionist consists under all circumstances in thinking out every situation to the end and also of being prepared for the worst outcome. The Marxist analysis of the possibilities and chances of a Thermidorean-Bonapartist overthrow has nothing in common with pessimism, just as the blindness and bragging of the bureaucracy has nothing in common with revolutionary optimism.

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 also that the proletariat of the USSR has not forfeited the possibility of subordinating the bureaucracy 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_.

It would be sterile pedantry to undertake to calculate in advance the chances of proletarian reform and of the attempts at a bourgeois upheaval. It would be criminal lightheartedness to contend that the former is assured, the latter excluded. One must be prepared for all possible variants. In order, at the moment of the inevitable collapse of the plebiscitary regime, to assemble and to
push ahead the proletarian wing promptly, without letting the class enemy gain time, it is absolutely necessary that the Left Opposition exist and 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.

*The Left Opposition and the Brandlerites*

The attitude of the Left Opposition to centrism determines its attitude to the Right Opposition, which only constitutes an uncompleted bridge from centrism to the social democracy.

In the Russian question, as well as in all others, the international right wing leads a parasitic existence, nourishing itself chiefly upon the criticism of the practical and secondary mistakes of the Comintern, whose opportunist policy it approves in fundamental questions. The unprincipledness of the Brandlerites shows itself most nakedly and cynically in the questions which are bound up with the fate of the USSR. In the period of the government’s betting on the kulaks the Brandlerites completely supported the official course and demonstrated that no policy other than that of Stalin-Rykov-Bukharin could be carried out. After the turn of 1928, the Brandlerites were reduced to an expectant silence. When the successes of the industrialization, unexpected by them, showed themselves, the Brandlerites uncritically adopted the program of the “five-year plan in four years” and the “liquidation of the kulaks as a class.” The right-wingers demonstrated their complete incapacity for a revolutionary orientation and Marxist foresight, coming forward at the same time as the advocates of the Stalinist regime in the USSR. The characteristic feature of opportunism—to bow before the power of the day—determines the whole attitude of the Brandlerites to the Stalinists: “We are prepared to acknowledge uncritically everything you do in the USSR, permit us only to carry out our policy in our Germany.” The position of the Lovestoneites in the United States, of the Right Opposition in Czechoslovakia, and their related semi-social democratic, semi-communist groups in other countries, bears a similar character.
The Left Opposition conducts an irreconcilable struggle against the right-wing camp followers of the centrists, especially and principally on the basis of the Russian question and at the same time endeavors to liberate from the disintegrating influence of the Brandlerite leaders those worker-revolutionists who were driven into the Right Opposition by the zigzags of centrism and its worthless regime.

*The principle of the Left Opposition: To say what is*

The petty-bourgeois camp followers, the “friends” of the Soviet Union, in actuality friends of the Stalinist bureaucracy, including also the officials dependent upon the Comintern in the various countries, lightheartedly close their eyes to the contradictions in the development of the Soviet Union, in order later, at the first serious danger, to turn their backs upon it.

Political and personal conflicts, however, not infrequently also push into the ranks of the Left Opposition frightened centrists or, still worse, unsatisfied careerists. With the sharpening of the repressions, or when the official course is having momentary success, these elements return to the official ranks as capitolators, where they constitute the chorus of the pariahs. The capitulators of the Zinoviev-Pyatakov-Radek type are only very little distinguished from the Menshevik capitolators of the type of Groman-Sukhanov, or from the bourgeois specialists of the type of Ramzin. With all the distinctions in their points of departure, all three groups now meet in recognition of the correctness of the present “general line,” only to scatter in different directions at the next accentuation of the contradictions.

The Left Opposition feels itself a component part of the army of the proletarian dictatorship and of the world revolution; it approaches the tasks of the Soviet regime not from without but from within, fearlessly tears down the false masks, and exposes the real dangers, in order to fight against them with self-sacrifice and to teach others to do the same.

The experience of the whole post-Lenin period bears testimony to the incontestable influence of the Left Opposition upon the course of 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. The half breach in the right-center bloc resulted from the pressure of the Bolshevik-Leninists. The left course of Stalin, springing from an attempt to undermine the roots of the Left Opposition, ran into the absurdity of the theory and practice of the “third period.” The abandonment of this attack of fever, which led to the downright catastrophe of the Comintern, was once more the consequence of the criticism of the Opposition. The power of this criticism, despite the numerical weakness of the left wing, lies in general where the power of Marxism lies: in the ability to analyze, to foresee, and to point out correct roads. The faction of the Bolshevik-Leninists is consequently even now one of the most important factors in the development of the theory and practice of socialist construction in the USSR and of the international proletarian revolution.

_The living standard of the workers and their role in the state are the highest criteria of socialist successes_

The proletariat is not only the fundamental productive force, but also the class upon which the Soviet system and socialist construction rest. The dictatorship can have no powers of resistance if its distorted regime leads to the political indifference of the proletariat. The high rate of industrialization cannot last long if it depends on excessive strain which leads to the physical exhaustion of the workers. A constant shortage of the most necessary means of existence and a permanent state of alarm under the knout of the administration endanger the whole socialist construction. “The dying away of inner-party democracy,” says the platform of the Opposition of the USSR, “leads to a dying away of workers’ democracy in general—in the trade unions and in all the other non-party mass organizations.” Since the publication of the platform, this process has made more ravaging advances. The trade unions have finally been degraded to auxiliary organs of the ruling bureaucracy. A system of administrative pressure has been built up, under the name of shock troops, as if it were a question of a short mountain pass and not of a great historical epoch. In spite of this, the termination of the five-year plan will find the Soviet economy
before a new, still steeper ascent. With the aid of the formula “overtaking and outstripping,” the bureaucracy partly misleads itself but mainly misleads the workers in regard to the stage attained, and prepares a sharp crisis of disappointment.

The economic plan must be checked on from the point of view of the actual systematic improvement of the material and cultural conditions of the working class in town and country. The trade unions must be brought back to their basic task: the collective educator, not the knout. The proletariat in the USSR and in the rest of the world must stop being lulled by exaggerations of what has been attained and the minimizing of the tasks and the difficulties. The problem of raising the political independence of the proletariat and its initiative in all fields must be put in the foreground of the whole policy. The genuine attainment of this aim is inconceivable without a struggle against the excessive privileges of individual groups and strata, against the extreme inequality of living conditions, and, above all, against the enormous prerogatives and favored position of the uncontrolled bureaucracy.

5. Conclusions

1. The economic successes of the USSR, which have made a way for themselves in spite of the long-lasting alliance between centrists, right-wingers, Mensheviks, and saboteurs in the field of planning, represent the greatest triumph of the socialist methods of economy and a powerful factor of the world revolution.

2. To defend the USSR, as the main fortress of the world proletariat, against all the assaults of world imperialism and of internal counterrevolution is the most important duty of every class-conscious worker.

3. The crises in the economic development of the USSR spring from the capitalist and precapitalist contradictions inherited from the past, as well as from the contradiction between the international character of modern productive forces and the national character of socialist construction in the USSR.

4. Built upon the lack of understanding of the latter contradiction, the theory of socialism in one country in turn appears as the source of practical mistakes, which provoke crises or deepen them.
5. The strength of the Soviet bureaucracy has unfolded on the basis of the abrupt decline in the political activity of the Soviet proletariat after a number of years of the highest exertion of forces, a series of defeats of the international revolution, the stabilization of capitalism, and the strengthening of the international social democracy.

6. Socialist construction, under the conditions of class contradictions at home and of capitalist encirclement abroad, demands a strong, farsighted, active party as the fundamental political precondition for planned economy and class maneuvering.

7. Having reached power with the direct support of social forces hostile to the October Revolution and after the crushing of the revolutionary internationalist wing of the party, the centrist bureaucracy could nevertheless only maintain its domination by measures of suppression of party control, election, and the public opinion of the working class.

8. Now that the centrist bureaucracy has strangled the party, that is, has lost its eyes and ears, it moves along gropingly and determines its path under the direct impact of the classes, oscillating between opportunism and adventurism.

9. The course of development has completely confirmed all the essential principles of the platform of the Russian Opposition, in their critical parts as well as in their positive demands.

10. In the last period, the features of the three fundamental currents in the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and in the Communist International have emerged with particular lucidity: the Marxist-Leninist, the centrist, and the right. The tendency of ultraleftism makes its appearance either as the crowning of one of the zigzags of centrism or at the periphery of the Left Opposition.

11. The policy and the regime of the centrist bureaucracy became the source of the most acute and direct dangers for the dictatorship of the proletariat. The systematic struggle against ruling centrism is the most essential part of the struggle for the rehabilitation, the strengthening, and the development of the first workers' state.

12. The ignoring of the material state and the political mood of the working class constitutes the most essential feature of the
bureaucratic regime which, with the aid of the methods of naked command and administrative pressure, hopes to construct the realm of national socialism.

13. The bureaucratic forcing of the tempos of industrialization and collectivization, based upon a false theoretical position and not verified by the collective thought of the party, means a relentless accumulation of disproportions and contradictions, especially along the lines of the mutual relations with the world economy.

14. The property relations in the USSR, like the reciprocal political relations of the classes, prove incontestably that the USSR, in spite of the distortions of the Soviet regime and in spite of the disastrous policy of the centrist bureaucracy, remains a workers’ state.

15. The bourgeoisie could come to power in the USSR in no other way than with the aid of a counterrevolutionary upheaval. The proletarian vanguard still has the possibility of putting the bureaucracy in its place, subordinating it to its control, insuring the correct policy, and, by means of decisive and bold reforms, regenerating the party, the trade unions, and the soviets.

16. Yet, with the maintenance of the Stalinist regime, the contradictions accumulating within the framework of the official party, especially at the moment of the sharpening of the economic difficulties, must lead inevitably to a political crisis, which may raise the question of power anew in all its scope.

17. For the fate of the Soviet regime, it will be of decisive significance whether the proletarian vanguard will be in a position to stand up in time, to close its ranks, and to offer resistance to the bloc of the Thermidorean-Bonapartist forces backed by world imperialism.

18. The Left Opposition can fulfill its duty towards the proletarian vanguard only by uninterrupted critical work, by Marxist analyses of the situation, by the determination of the correct path for the economic development of the USSR and for the struggle of the world proletariat, by the timely raising of living slogans, and by intransigent struggle against the plebiscitary regime which fetters the forces of the working class.

19. The solution of these theoretical and political tasks is con-
ceivable only under the condition that the Russian faction of the Bolshevik-Leninists strengthens its organizations, penetrates into all the important units of the official party and other organizations of the working class, and at the same time remains an inseparable part of the International Left Opposition.

20. One of the most urgent tasks consists in making the experience of the economic construction in the USSR the object of an all-sided free study and discussion within the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and the Communist International.

21. The criteria for the discussion, the elaboration and verification of the economic programs, are: (a) systematic raising of the real wages of the workers; (b) closing of the scissors of industrial and agricultural prices, that is, assuring the alliance with the peasantry; (c) closing of the scissors of domestic and world prices, that is, protection of the monopoly of foreign trade against the onslaught of cheap prices; (d) raising of the quality of production, to which the same significance should be attached as to its quantity; (e) stabilization of the domestic purchasing power of the chevroletets, which together with the principle of planning will for a long time to come remain a necessary element of economic regulation.

22. The administrative chase after "maximum" tempos must give way to the elaboration of optimum (the most advantageous) tempos which do not guarantee the fulfillment of the command of the day for display purposes, but the constant growth of the economy on the basis of its dynamic equilibrium, with a correct distribution of domestic resources and a broad, planned utilization of the world market.

23. For this it is necessary above all to abandon the false perspective of a complete, self-sufficient national economic development which flows from the theory of socialism in one country.

24. The problem of the foreign trade of the USSR must be put as a key problem in the perspective of a growing connection with the world economy.

25. In harmony with this, the question of the economic collaboration of the capitalist countries with the USSR should be made one of the current slogans of all the sections of the Comintern, especially in the period of the world crisis and unemployment.
26. The collectivization of peasant farms should be adjusted in accordance with the actual initiative of the agricultural proletariat and the village poor, and their alliance with the middle peasants. A serious and all-sided reexamination of the experiences of the collective farms must be made the task of the workers and the advanced peasants. The state program of building collective farms must be brought into harmony with the actual results of experience and with the given technical and total economic resources.

27. The bureaucratic utopia of the “liquidation of the kulaks as a class” in two to three years on the basis of the peasants’ stocks should be rejected. A firm policy of the systematic restriction of the exploitive tendencies of the kulaks must be conducted. Toward this end, the inevitable process of differentiation within the collective farms, as well as between them, must be followed attentively, and the collective farms in no case identified with socialist enterprises.

28. Stop being guided in the economy by considerations of bureaucratic prestige: no embellishment, no concealment, no deception. Don’t pass off as socialism the present transitional economy of the Soviet Union, which remains very low in the level of its productive forces and very contradictory in its structure.

29. There must be an end once and for all to the ruinous practice, unworthy of a revolutionary party, of the Roman Catholic dogma of the infallibility of the leadership.

30. The theory and practice of Stalinism must be condemned. Return to the theory of Marx and to the revolutionary methodology of Lenin.

31. The party must be reestablished as the organization of the proletarian vanguard.

Regardless of the greatest economic successes on the one hand and the extreme weakening of the Comintern on the other, the revolutionary specific weight of Bolshevism on the world political map is infinitely more significant than the specific weight of the Soviet economy on the world market. While the nationalized and collectivized economy of the USSR is expanded and developed by all means possible, the correct perspective must be retained. It must not be forgotten for a minute that the overthrow
of the world bourgeoisie in the revolutionary struggle is a far more real and immediate task than “overtaking and outstripping” the world economy, without overstepping the boundaries of the USSR in doing it.

The present profound crisis of capitalist economy opens up revolutionary possibilities to the proletariat of the advanced capitalist countries. The inevitable rise in the militant activity of the working masses will sharply delineate all the problems of the revolution again, and will tear the ground from under the autocracy of the centrist bureaucracy. The Left Opposition will enter into the revolutionary period armed with a clear understanding of the road already traversed, of the mistakes already committed, of the new tasks and perspectives.

The complete and final way out of the internal and external contradictions will be found by the USSR on the arena of the victorious revolution of the world proletariat, and only there.
April 14–May 28, 1931

Two letters to the Prometeo group

APRIL 14, 1931

Dear Comrades:

I must really apologize for not being able to supply you the promised preface. The reason is political, and I am sure you will understand its importance. I should have liked in the preface to summarize the differences which divide us, which implies a solid basis of common principles and methods.

Certain articles and declarations by you lead me to suppose that the differences are deeper than I had thought. Your theses on democratic slogans were a revelation. They seem to me to be in irreconcilable contradiction with everything I consider Marxist theory and communist politics. Were I to write now on our differences, my conclusions would be entirely negative. I have not yet lost all hope of seeing you yourselves correct your theses, which are not tactical theses but theoretical ones. That is why I find it impossible for the moment to give a general appreciation of our differences and of the possibility for us to work together. I await the development of the discussion before forming a final judg-
ment. In these circumstances, giving a trifling preface would amount to deceiving the readers and myself on the importance of our differences.

Communist greetings,
L. Trotsky

MAY 28, 1931

Dear Comrades:

I do not at all oppose publication by you of my articles which are at the disposition of any workers’ organization, including hostile ones. But I wanted only to make clear that I cannot accept any responsibility either for your selection or for the publication itself, especially now when any trace of solidarity with you on the question of democracy would, in my eyes, be the worst crime against the Spanish revolution.

Communist greetings,
L. Trotsky
The March 12 issue of Pravda published a note entitled “Marx on K. Kautsky,” signed by the “Marx-Engels Institute.” This note subsequently was reproduced without comment by the world press of the Comintern. On the surface, the center of gravity of this note lay in the remarkable passage from a letter by Marx in 1881 which made a crushing characterization of Kautsky, a characterization which was later fully verified.

The publication of the note formally signed by the whole institute has, however, another aim: to besmirch the person who created and headed the Marx-Engels Institute. This is how the note concludes: “The original letter was turned over to Ryazanov by the well-known Menshevik Lydia Zederbaum-Dan as long ago as 1925. Ryazanov had carefully concealed the letter.”

During the Menshevik trial, Ryazanov was publicly accused by the prosecutor of collaboration in the conspiracy against the dictatorship of the proletariat. A few months after this accusation, the whole world is now told of another crime committed by Ryazanov. He had, it seems, into the bargain, concealed the quotation from Marx’s letter of 1881. Their need to advance such circumstances, all
out of proportion to the first accusation, in order to strengthen their case against Comrade Ryazanov shows that the Messrs. Accusers have an uneasy conscience. These people make their discoveries by adding rudeness to disloyalty, only to betray the fragility of their case.

We gave a hypothetical explanation at the time of how the accusation against Ryazanov originated. Everything that has been written to us from Moscow about this fully confirms our suppositions. It is not difficult to reveal the mechanism of the supplementary accusation launched today by the same accusers under the pseudonym of the Marx-Engels Institute.

The “Menshevik Lydia Zederbaum” turned over Marx’s letter to Ryazanov back in 1925. Why did she give it to him? As a token of Ryazanov’s friendship with the Mensheviks and of their future collaboration in the conspiracy against the dictatorship of the proletariat? Not a word from the “institute” on this. The term “Menshevik” ought to shut the mouth of any who hesitate, especially since Ryazanov “carefully concealed” the letter since 1925. Why did he conceal it? Obviously in order to safeguard the interests of Kautsky and world Menshevism. It is true that between 1925, when Ryazanov entered into a conspiracy with the Mensheviks to conceal the historic document, and 1931, when he was involved in the conspiracy against the dictatorship of the proletariat, Ryazanov published not a few documents and works which caused Menshevism considerable vexation. But to no avail. The readers of the Comintern press must be guided by the ancient formula of the devout: “I believe it no matter how absurd it is.”

Good, the reader will say, but what are the facts about the letter? Is it authentic? Did Ryazanov really hide it? And if he did, why? A look at the quotation is enough to prove the authenticity of the letter: Marx cannot be falsified, even by Yaroslavsky in collaboration with Yagoda. On the question of the “concealment” of the letter, we can, again, only propose a hypothesis, whose likelihood, however, is guaranteed a hundred percent by all the circumstances of the case.

Ryazanov could receive the letter only from those who had it. The management of the works of Engels had fallen into Bernstein’s
hands by virtue of the same historical logic of the epigones which today permits Yaroslavsky to take charge of the works of Lenin. Ryazanov displayed exceptional perseverance and ingenuity in gathering together the writings of Marx and Engels. Like the Lenin Institute, the Marx-Engels Institute bought numerous documents from the Mensheviks and through their intermediaries. For example, archives were bought by the Lenin Institute from Potresov. Without a doubt, the “Menshevik Lydia Zederbaum” did not simply turn over the letter to Ryazanov but probably sold it to him as an intermediary for Bernstein or someone among the old men who had Marx’s letter. It is quite likely that with the sale of this letter, which draws a devastating picture of Kautsky, Bernstein or some other owner of the document from the same circle attached the condition that the letter not be published while Kautsky or the seller was alive. The rigorous manner in which Bernstein applied this kind of censorship over the correspondence of Marx and Engels is sufficiently well known. Comrade Ryazanov had no alternative. In order to get possession of the letter, he was obliged to accept the condition imposed. Anyone else in his place would have done the same. Having accepted this condition, he naturally carried it out. Thanks to his extreme prudence and loyalty in all matters of this kind, Ryazanov was able to secure from our adversaries precious material from the heritage of our classics.

We think it is now clear why Ryazanov “concealed” the letter. Whoever knows Ryazanov knows that he, more than anyone else, must have ached to publish his valuable find. But he waited for the proper moment to do it. By means of a raid, Marx’s letter was discovered in the possession of Ryazanov. It was not only made public, thereby violating the agreement made by Ryazanov, but it was then converted into proof against Ryazanov. What should we call such a procedure? Let us call it by its right name: procedure a la Stalin.
May 23, 1931

Part of the responsibility

(Excerpts from a letter to Max Shachtman)

Together with Comrade Frankel, we are very glad that you have halfway overcome your reservations regarding Landau. Your explanation, allow me to say, does not appear very convincing to me. You write that you wanted to avoid a premature split. Do you feel that I did want to bring about or hasten this split? And if not, what practical steps did you propose to achieve this aim? I, for my part, have done everything that appeared possible and expedient to me. Aside from this, it seemed to me that if the leading comrades of the national sections had exercised proper pressure on Landau in time, he may—I say may—have been saved. Unfortunately that was not the case and you bear a small part of the responsibility for this. The lion’s share, after Landau, is naturally borne by Naville, who encouraged Landau with false hopes, sent equivocal information, etc. Now Landau wants to have nothing to do with the International Secretariat and is energetically working to form a new International, with the Gourget people, with the Prometeo people, with Overstraeten, and, it is reported, with—Weisbord for America. More than that: while he has done everything to pre-
vent unification in Austria, and to destroy it in Germany, he accuses me of having split all the national sections, particularly in America. So, my dear Shachtman, I bear the responsibility for your not being on good terms with Weisbord. I am afraid that Naville will have to take the same road. His closest friends have deserted him, and not by accident. Those whom he influences are hostile to us, and mean it earnestly. Naville, however, is playing with ideas and has never meant it seriously and honestly. He remains in the League in order to sabotage it from within and in order to help Landau build his new International. The principle involved in this I have written about in a letter which my son will send you.

It is obvious that decisions must be arrived at according to the principled lines of the different tendencies, and I understand quite well the caution taken by your organization in this field. But this criterion must not be conceived pedantically and so formalistically. The Bordigists are a tendency and they must be judged according to their fundamental principles. Gourget is a tendency and Van Overstraeten is a tendency—naturally an unfortunate one. But what shall we say of the Mahnrufl group that changes its “tendency” seven times in the interests of the self-preservation of the old clique and in doing this does not halt before the dirtiest methods? Judgment must be based on the fact that it is an altogether unprincipled clique, demoralized by the methods, splits, and intrigues of the Comintern, which does not take ideas seriously, and with whom we must watch not their theses but their fingers. What is important is not the theses that Landau will present tomorrow, but the fact that he approves everything on China, even on America and the other countries, insofar as it does not touch his position of power. What is characteristic of Landau is not to be found in his trade-union theses, but in the fact that he kept up a deadly silence on the trade-union question in France because Naville is his friend. The programs, the theses, the principles, are highly important when they represent a reality. However, when they are only an adornment and a mask for clique struggle, then they must be booted aside in order to uncover the gentlemen concerned and represent them in natura.

Yours,

L. Trotsky
On Comrade Treint’s declaration

1. Comrade Treint adhered to the Opposition in the latter half of 1927, that is, at a time when the immediate victory of the Opposition was not to be hoped for. Since that time, despite the fact that the Opposition was crushed and the Stalinist bureaucracy triumphed, Treint has made no attempt to return to the Stalinist ranks, either by a partial capitulation or a complete one. These facts unquestionably speak in Treint’s favor. The comrades who have observed Treint close at hand acknowledge that he has a revolutionary temperament, the ability to carry on a struggle under difficult conditions, tenacity, and so on. All these are qualities of undoubted worth. To reach an understanding with Treint, to draw him into the work both of the League and of the International’s apparatus would be most desirable. The rather large number of French comrades with whom I have had talks since the spring of 1929 concerning the French Opposition and the International Opposition know that I have insisted all along on the need for Treint to be drawn into leadership work in the Opposition and that in so doing I had invariably run into objections on all sides. What these objections have come down to is that the way Treint conducted
himself during the 1923–27 period, that is, during the years when the victory of the centrist bureaucracy over the Leninist wing of the party was in essence prepared and assured in full, made him completely unacceptable in the ranks of the Opposition—all the more so because he was in no way inclined (so many comrades said) either to comprehend the full extent of the evil he had done or to reject the methods he had acquired in the school of Zinoviev, Stalin, and Manuilsky. Without denying the weight of these arguments, I have nevertheless insisted that an honest attempt at collaboration—under new conditions and on a new basis—should be made before any conclusions be drawn one way or another. In every meeting with French comrades, whatever the various shades of opinion, I have always posed the question of Comrade Treint along the lines thus indicated—without exception.

Today we have before us the draft of a declaration that is supposed to give the motivation behind Comrade Treint’s readiness to enter the League. What form does Treint’s position take today?

2. Treint begins by reprimanding all other groups for not having immediately joined the Redressement group, led by him. I do not think this is a serious way to pose the question, or that it strengthens Treint’s position. As I said before, the other groups distrusted Treint so much that they considered it impossible even to accept him into their midst. That feeling is still strong (in saying this, I do not close my eyes at all to the fact that in some cases comrades who have sharply opposed collaboration with Treint have had the same shortcomings he has, without having his positive qualities). It is quite strange and out of place, under these circumstances, for him to make accusations in retrospect against those who did not recognize the leading role of the Redressement group, especially when it was in existence for only about a year and a half (autumn 1927–spring 1929). One cannot ask for something in advance that can only be won through joint effort.

3. Treint refers to the fact that he has taken his stand on the basis of the first four congresses of the Comintern. But he forgets to add that he also stands upon the Fifth Congress, and that that stand means support to the smashing of the German revolution, contributing to the defeat of the Chinese revolution, to the vic-
tory of British Labourism, to the crushing of the Left Opposition, etc. Two or three issues of a magazine are totally insufficient for determining to what extent a given group (or individual) has freed itself from such theory and practice as that of the Fifth Congress. It would be wrong to exclude the Redressement group, but to grant it hegemony, a priori, would be criminal light-mindedness. The Paz group also had pretensions to hegemony. It referred back not only to the four congresses but also to its solidarity with the Russian Opposition since 1923 and to the fact that it was free of any taint of the Fifth Congress. From a formal standpoint the Paz group had much more right to such a claim than the Treint group, but we did not judge formally. The real problem was for a truly revolutionary nucleus to be crystallized out of the variety of rather heterogeneous groups, all of which were relatively untried politically. This could not be achieved in any other way than through an experience in which all the groups professing the same principles would work together in common. That was precisely the course taken by the initiating elements of the Left Opposition. In spite of all the mistakes and wavering within and around the League, we have no reason to regret the course that has been taken.

4. Comrade Treint is absolutely right when he refuses to acknowledge the infallibility of the 1923 Opposition. As far as I know, no one has asked him to do so. Treint is right, too, when he stresses the heterogeneity of the 1923 Opposition. But Zinoviev, who was the leader of Treint’s international faction, admitted on the record in 1926 that the main nucleus of the 1923 Opposition was right on all fundamental questions. By departing from this viewpoint in his declaration, Treint fails to dispel the mistrust felt towards him; on the contrary, he feeds it.

Treint considers it appropriate to pass an extremely sharp judgment on one of Comrade Rakovsky’s statements. At first glance this episodic element in and of itself seems to have but a secondary importance. But it is to the highest degree characteristic of Comrade Treint, that is, of his negative traits. The course of Comrade Rakovsky’s political career is public knowledge. The “declaration” Treint speaks of is one of many that have been signed or written by Comrade Rakovsky in recent years. Even if the particular state-
ment were as unfortunate and contradictory as Treint makes out, it would be necessary even then to view this particular isolated step in connection with the entire course of Rakovsky’s political career, which has been laid out in unbroken continuity in documents and in his correspondence with the Russian Opposition. To all this Treint closes his eyes. The only fact of significance to him is that he, Treint, once upon a time had something negative to say about one of Rakovsky’s statements. And that is sufficient grounds for Treint to include in his own declaration, consisting of two and a half short printed pages, a harsh condemnation of Rakovsky’s statement, regardless of his political record on the whole. This single small detail speaks more eloquently than the lengthiest tracts!

5. Further on, Comrade Treint declares that he has differences with Trotsky’s cothinkers on a whole series of major questions: he cites the questions of permanent revolution, capitalist realignments, and the real situation of the Russian Revolution as those requiring more extensive discussion. Fine. But if that is the case, then he is more unjustified than ever in accusing Trotsky’s cothinkers retroactively for not having recognized the hegemony of Redressement in advance and for having proposed “more extensive discussions” on the basis of joint work. Can it be that Comrade Treint really doesn’t see the extent to which he is violating all proportions and perspectives?

6. Personally I fully agree that a discussion on the questions of the permanent revolution, the situation in the USSR, etc., is necessary. It was precisely as a basis for such discussion that I first formulated my theses on permanent revolution, and wrote a pamphlet on the subject, and it was as such that I formulated my theses on the USSR some time ago, which I have proposed as a draft platform on that question. A discussion on these points is greatly needed, and Comrade Treint’s participation in it is greatly to be desired.

Nevertheless Comrade Treint is, to say the least, incautious when, in two short lines, he counterposes Lenin’s internationalist point of view to Trotsky’s permanent revolution. In my works I have tried to show—and thus far no one has even tried to refute
what I consider proven—that if disputes in the area of literary
prognostication are left aside and Lenin’s conception and mine are
taken as they were manifested in the experience of the revolution
and as they were formulated by Lenin and myself on the basis of
that experience, it is impossible not to acknowledge the identity
of these positions. The entire politics of the epigones, and their poli­
cies in China in particular, are based on counterposing Lenin’s and
my positions. As late as the May 1928 plenum [of the Executive
Committee of the Communist International], Comrade Treint still
voted for the official resolution on the China question (with a
statement of reservations). By this he showed how far away he
had been during the years 1923–27 from the very foundations of
Lenin’s views. Since then he has taken no part in the discussions
on the question of permanent revolution based on the experiences
in China, India, the recent experience in Spain, etc. Nonetheless,
he finds it possible to counterpose Lenin’s internationalism to
Trotsky’s permanent revolution, thus actually echoing Manuilsky’s
worn-out phrases.

What Comrade Treint has in mind by the phrase “capitalist
realignments” is unclear to me: is he objecting to the slogan of “a
Soviet United States of Europe”?

What can we conclude? Comrade Treint’s declaration shows
that there is much truth in his opponents’ objections and warn­
ings. Nevertheless I consider the conclusions drawn by these op­
ponents to be incorrect. Though Treint is inclined to demand a
priori recognition of his leadership—that, after all, is what the
main points in his letter come down to—it would be wrong to
reply with an a priori refusal to attempt collaboration with him.
Some may say that no a priori refusal is involved, since we have
had experience with Treint. But that is wrong. Times change, con­
ditions change, and people change along with them. It is neces­
sary to make an attempt at collaboration. What form should it
take? That should be left to the comrades who would be respon­
sible for carrying out such collaboration. It would be good if, in
that effort, Comrade Treint could be persuaded to abandon the
most inappropriate parts of his declaration—above all, the one
relating to Comrade Rakovsky, who does not even have the chance
to reply, not even with one small document, to this openly abusive act on Treint’s part. If the declaration were to be published in *La Verite* in its present form or a modified one, the editors would do well to print the appropriate rebuttal along with it. That would not greatly facilitate the process of collaboration. But then the responsibility would fall entirely on Comrade Treint.
Nothing can be done about it: Manuilsky is at present the leader of the Comintern. His strongest side is that he does not take himself seriously. This is evidence that he is inclined to self-criticism. Whether it is because Stalin does not take the Comintern seriously, or for some other reason, it was decided that Manuilsky, who does not take himself seriously, is the right man for the job. And who else could be put there?

Were a complete collection of Manuilsky’s “works” to be gathered we would have, if not an instructive, at any rate an entertaining book. Manuilsky was always somebody’s shield-bearer. Moreover, he changed his “knights” many times; he stayed longest with the not unknown Alexinsky. Currently Manuilsky, serving as Yaroslavsky’s shield-bearer, is one of the prosecution apprentices in matters of Trotskyist ideology. Under his own name or under pseudonyms, he has again and again proved the irreconcilability of Trotskyism with Leninism. But he has not always spoken this way. In 1918 Manuilsky issued a pamphlet in which he wrote that
the “honor of liberating Bolshevism from national limitedness and transforming it into a theory of international proletarian revolution belongs to L.D. Trotsky.”* At one of the plenums of the Comintern [Seventh Plenum, 1926], Trotsky quoted this citation, “famous” in its way, in the presence of Manuilsky and with full justification ridiculed both the citation and its author. This pamphlet was written by Manuilsky after the October Revolution; what is more, after its publication not a single hair fell from his head. This is true, it may be said, but it was written prior to the “trade-union discussion,” and Manuilsky later changed his views. Not so. Recently we came across a quotation from an article by Manuilsky written in 1922 and therefore at the time when Lenin’s illness was drawing the final balance of the relationship between Lenin and Trotsky. In the article, dedicated to the memory of Chudnovsky, Manuilsky wrote: “The Sotsial-Demokrat [Social Democrat], published in Switzerland by Comrades Lenin and Zinoviev, and the Paris Golos [Voice], which subsequent to its suppression by the French police was renamed Nashe Slovo [Our Word], edited by Comrade Trotsky, for the future historian of the Third International will be the fundamental fragments out of which the new revolutionary ideology of the international proletariat has been hammered out” (Letopis Revolyutsy [Annals of the Revolution] 1922, number 1, p. 229).

Today Manuilsky proves that during the war Trotsky was a pacifist and a Kautskyan, that Leninism and Trotskyism are irreconcilable entities; but in 1922 he maintained, neither more nor less, that ”the new revolutionary ideology of the international proletariat,” that is, the ideology of modern communism, was created by Lenin and Trotsky. Just when did Manuilsky see the light of day? Neither in 1914–16, when he worked with Trotsky on the Paris paper Nashe Slovo, nor in 1917–22, when Manuilsky together with the whole party worked under the leadership of Lenin, did he see the light. Only after illness and death took Lenin from our ranks and the epigones, spurred on by the wave of Ther-

* Unfortunately, I am obliged to give this quotation from memory, but I fully guarantee the accuracy of the thought.
midorean reaction, declared war upon the ideological heritage of Lenin under the name of “Trotskyism” did Manuilsky begin to recover his sight. Incidentally, not all at once. The triumvirate (Stalin, Zinoviev, Kamenev) kept him in the background for a long time, and only after it had thus brought him to partial repentance did it present him with an ultimatum: open up a campaign against Rakovsky as an introduction to a campaign against Trotsky. Manuilsky, after hesitating (Rakovsky’s prestige was too high), accepted the condition and thus bought himself a place on the Central Committee of the party. This deal was no secret in the broad party circles because Manuilsky himself, with his characteristic cynicism, talked about it in talking about the people involved, revealing his great talent as a raconteur of national and other anecdotes. We repeat, this man never took himself seriously, either politically or morally. And he has now been put at the head of the Communist International! And he is now working out the road for the Spanish revolution!

**AVERBACH CAUGHT WITH THE GOODS**

In Moscow there is published a *Literaturnaya Gazeta* [Literary Gazette], the organ of the Federation of Soviet Authors. The critic on this paper is Averbach. His right to be an authority on literature is determined on the one hand by the fact that he deserted soon enough the ranks of the Opposition, into which he came accidentally, for the ranks of the bureaucracy, where he is quite at home (I.N. Smirnov used to say about him, “he won’t stay with us—he’s too gluttonous”), and on the other hand by the fact that he has absolutely no literary flair, to which every line of his writings testify. In the *Literaturnaya Gazeta* of February 19 Averbach wrote a very long article entitled “Tempos of Self-exposure (on Trotsky, Mayakovksy, and Fellow-Traveling).” Reproduced in the center of the article is a citation from Trotsky devoted to Mayakovksy’s suicide. From this Averbach extracts a quotation concerning proletarian literature. The “self-exposure” consists in the fact that Trotsky has at last openly recognized the complete
opposition of his views to the views of Lenin on the question of proletarian culture and proletarian literature. Let us produce the quotation from Trotsky’s article in the form in which it is presented by Averbach, along with his own parenthetical remarks.

“The struggle for ‘proletarian culture’ (quotation marks by Trotsky—L.A.)—something on the order of the ‘total collectivization’ (his own quotation marks—L.A.) of all humanity’s gains within the span of a single five-year plan—had at the beginning of the October Revolution the character of utopian idealism. It is significant that in this field, even then, the conflict between Lenin and the author of these lines was exposed.”

The whole paragraph, as we see, is in quotation marks, and Averbach also points out correctly the single quotation marks made by Trotsky. Averbach is exact and scrupulous. But despite this, the Averbachian style of the quotation and particularly its last sentence—“It is significant that in this field, even then, the conflict between Lenin and the author of these lines was exposed”—is puzzling. For Trotsky not only points out that he had disagreements with Lenin on a definite question, but he even hurries to emphasize the “significance” of the fact that these disagreements were exposed “even then,” that is, it would appear that Trotsky was aiming for self-exposure. This does sound odd. Averbach, however, does not spare comment. “First of all, what is most obvious,” he says, “is the frank declaration about the disagreements with Lenin.” Yes, Averbach is correct. There is something obvious. Further on: “We must be grateful; what is more pleasant to read than the acknowledgment by Trotsky himself of Lenin’s disagreement with his views on literature and general questions of culture.” The sentence is poor, like the majority of Averbach’s sentences, but it can be understood. The article concludes: “The speed of the self-exposure is significant.”

Thus in the year 1930, Trotsky exposed the fact that he did not agree with Lenin’s views on literature. On this score, Averbach celebrates a victory and speaks of the speed of self-exposure. But in the year 1928, Trotsky was exiled to Alma-Ata and, in the year 1929, was expelled from the country for counterrevolutionary activity and preparation of an armed uprising against the Soviet
power. Of what significance, in comparison with this, is Trotsky’s disagreement with Lenin’s views on proletarian literature? Where and in what does the speed (!) of self-exposure lie? Is it not the other way around? Does not this “disproportion” in the accusations expose—Averbach’s employers? This is the political side of the matter. But there is also another side.

The fact is that Averbach lied from beginning to end. The quotation which he gave is not a quotation; it is a falsification, crude, illiterate, insolent—a la Averbach. Here, word for word, is the excerpt from Trotsky’s article which Averbach distorted:

“The struggle for ‘proletarian culture’—something on the order of the ‘total collectivization’ of all humanity’s gains within the span of a single five-year plan—had at the beginning of the October Revolution the character of utopian idealism, and it was precisely on this basis that it was rejected by Lenin and the author of these lines.”

Thus Trotsky says that the philosophy of proletarian culture “was rejected by Lenin and the author of these lines.” But Averbach says “even then, the conflict between Lenin and the author of these lines was exposed”—neither more nor less! The man who poses as a proletarian critic simply turns out to be a low literary swindler. This time he has been caught with the goods too crudely and it isn’t necessary to say another word. We cannot help commenting, however, that Averbach’s dishonesty is even more reprehensible because he himself is very well informed about Lenin’s and Trotsky’s attitude toward the Averbachian margarine of literary and cultural philosophy. Averbach knows how strenuously Lenin came out against the theoreticians of so-called “proletarian culture” in the years when this movement had a revolutionary content and was not yet in the grips of the bureaucratic charlatans. Averbach knows that if Trotsky had “disagreements” with Lenin on this question, they were perhaps expressed in the fact that Trotsky had a softer attitude than Lenin to the infatuations of the ideologists of proletarian culture and at times defended them to Lenin. Averbach knows that Trotsky wrote his book on literature in agreement with Lenin, who insisted more than once that Trotsky first of all work on the chapter devoted to proletarian cul-
ture and publish it in *Pravda*. Incidentally, its publication was not accompanied by any comments or footnotes by the editor. Yaroslavsky—Yaroslavsky himself!—wrote to Trotsky that he agreed with the viewpoint he expressed. All this is known to Averbach, because as one of the young aspirants to “proletarian literature” he had attempted a number of times to find in Trotsky a defender against Lenin’s views, but invariably met with a rebuff.

Really, whatever aspect you touch, the ideology of the centrist bureaucracy is built upon lies, falsifications, distortions of the past. Just think of it. This Averbach comes forward as an instructor and tutor of the proletarian youth! He, Averbach, paves the way for “proletarian” (!) “culture” (!!). People who can judge by symptoms will understand from this example alone what a fatal danger the current party regime represents for the development of a socialist society and a socialist culture.

**FRAGMENTS OF TRUTH UNDER THE RUBBISH OF SLANDER**

In 1924 Zinoviev put in circulation a charge against Trotsky that by issuing the railway “Order No. 1042” Trotsky almost ruined the transportation system. With this for a canvas, Stalin, Yaroslavsky, and Rudzutak later embroidered various designs. In its day the legend made the rounds of all the publications of the Comintern. Lenin’s and Dzerzhinsky’s real opinions concerning Order No. 1042 and its import for transportation are quoted in a letter by Trotsky to the Bureau of Party History. But there is a comment of more recent origin. In *Yezhegodnik* [Yearbook of the Comintern] issued in 1923, that is, on the eve of the campaign against Trotsky, the article entitled “The Transportation System of the RSFSR and Its Reestablishment” states the following:

“At that time the transportation system was already completely disorganized. Not only was there no talk of reestablishing it but matters had reached such a stage that in the Council of Labor and Defense, Professor Lomonosov, a member of the collegium of the People’s Commissariat of Transport, made a report to the effect that the transportation system was on the verge of a complete and
inevitable breakdown. Comrade Trotsky, on taking charge of trans­
portation, advanced two slogans which proved of decisive signifi­
cance not only for transportation but for the economy of the coun­
try as a whole. . . . Order No. 1042 is an historical event. According
to that order, the locomotive yard should have been restored in
five years. Communist propaganda based on that order and com­
munist zeal called forth by it must be regarded as the highest
level attained by the enthusiastic readiness of the masses for he­
roic achievements in labor” (*Yezh godnik*, Publishing House of
the Comintern, Petrograd-Moscow, 1923, p. 363).

And so on and so forth. As we see, the function of “Order No.
1042” was different at different times.
June 5, 1931

Principled and practical questions facing the Left Opposition

Dear Friend:

I haven’t written to you in several days because I have been completely absorbed by my book. I have finished three more chapters. Right now I don’t have time to write articles and circular letters, and I don’t anticipate having time for this in the next two or three months. That is why I would like to take up in this letter a series of principled and practical questions facing the International Left Opposition, so that you can use this material in one form or another with comrades who may be interested in the points considered here.

1. The Brandlerites say that we are a “sect” while they are for a “mass movement.” Generally speaking, this is the classic accusation that the Mensheviks hurled against the Bolsheviks. In counterrevolutionary periods, the Mensheviks adapted—to a certain extent they simply followed closely all the turns of the workers’ movement—while the Bolsheviks selected and educated cadres. Today, in another situation, under other conditions, at another stage of development, precisely the same difference is the basis of the conflict between the left and the right. The enormous differ-
ence in the present situation results from the fact that many of the oppositions, both left and right, are influenced by the official parties, which represent different forces in different countries, but which, as a whole, are nevertheless an enormous factor in the international workers’ movement. It is Urbahns’s total inability and Naville’s partial inability to understand this that renders their positions sterile. The official party, particularly in Germany, is an enormous factor. But it is necessary to make a precise evaluation of the very special nature of this fact. What accounts for the strength of the German Communist Party? (a) the profound social crisis on a national scale in Germany; (b) the tradition of the October Revolution, and, above all, the existence of the USSR. These two factors are very important; but they are not sufficient to create “the essence of the party.” The stability of the party and its own strength are determined by the internal ideological attachment of the cadres to their activity, tested by experience before the eyes of the masses.

In the Comintern today, it is precisely this element of the party, in the German party as well, that is extraordinarily weak. This weakness is best exemplified by the person of Thaelmann. If you can imagine for a moment that the USSR did not exist and that the CP were deprived of all official support, it is not difficult to see that the German party would immediately break ranks ideologically on an enormous scale, and that the organization would begin to disintegrate. Belief in the Soviet state and the October Revolution is centered in the person of Thaelmann. Without these two props, Thaelmann’s apparatus is an empty shell.

In the projected platform [Theses of the International Left Opposition on the Russian Question], the state of the Bolshevik Party, which rests entirely upon an administrative apparatus, is described in detail. The ideology that holds the party together is today so formalistic and full of contradictions that the party will shatter into several pieces at the first severe shock. Thus, within the Comintern there are at least two large sections that are strong as organizations, but extremely weak as parties. It is precisely this fact that determines our role as a faction with respect to the official party in the immediate future. First of all we are creating the
elements and preconditions for a Marxist crystallization within the official party. We are creating cadres. Whether we are a sect or not will be determined not by the quantity of the elements who are at present grouped around our banner, nor even by the quality of these elements (for we are very far from the point where all are of the highest quality), but rather by the totality of the ideas, the program, the tactics, and organization our particular group can bring to the movement. This is why at the present stage the struggle of the Left Opposition is above all a struggle for program and for strategic principles. To say that we must speak to the needs of the masses, and to counterpose this truism to the Left Opposition means to fall to a fatal level of vulgarity; for our task is precisely to know with what ideas to address ourselves to the masses, with what perspective to develop their demands, including their partial demands. At one time the Stalinists in China appealed to huge masses. But what did they appeal with? With the program and methods of Menshevism. They destroyed the revolution. When the Brandlerites say “We can’t feed the German masses with the Chinese revolution,” they are not demonstrating their fancied realism but their vulgar opportunism. Spanish commu­nists who have not assimilated the lessons of the Chinese revolu­tion can destroy the Spanish revolution. And when a revolution­ary situation develops in Germany, the German workers will look for cadres whose flesh and blood have been nourished by the les­sons of the Russian, Chinese, and Spanish revolutions. At a time when we are just beginning to educate and reeducate the cadres, the Brandlerites counterpose mass work to cadre education. That is why they will have neither one nor the other. Because they have no principled positions on basic questions and therefore are unable to really educate and temper their cadres, they spend their time carrying out a caricature of mass work.

But in this domain the social democracy on the one hand and the Communist Party on the other are incomparably stronger than we are. The very fact that desperate Brandlerites turn to us for answers to basic questions, even if they only accept them halfway and faintheartedly, is an indication of how the Left Opposition will add new cadres to its ranks, not just at the expense of the
Brandlerites, but above all at the expense of the official party.

2. The Brandlerites, Urbahns, and Sneevliet\textsuperscript{203} all agree that our politics are sectarian. Fundamentally, Frey, Landau, Naville are moving in their direction, only they do not see the logical conclusion of their train of thought, and they do not fully express what they are thinking. Take Urbahns. In his paper he has already repeated more than once: “The Left Opposition demands that you accept Trotsky down to the last comma.” We can only thank Urbahns for posing the question so clearly and openly. Serious, thinking members of the Left Opposition should not be embarrassed by the raising of the question on this level since it has been posed in this way by opponents. Our differences with Urbahns concern nothing more nor less than the class nature of the Soviet Union and the questions: Are we a party or a faction? And when there is danger of war should we be on the side of the Soviet Union, or should we simply open the discussion about whose side we are on? For counterrevolutionary China or the Soviet republic? These are the questions that Urbahns calls “Trotsky’s commas.” In this way he reveals his tremendous light-mindedness, and his bohemian or [lumpen] proletarian cynicism. This reveals that he is concerned only with his own outfit and not with the fundamental questions of the world revolution. But even more, in talking about “Trotsky’s commas” Urbahns leaves aside the Russian Opposition and all its experience, all its struggles on various fronts, and its platform as well. Our intransigent attitude toward the Myasnikov group, our break with the “Sapronovists”\textsuperscript{204}—is all this one of “Trotsky’s commas”?

And the hundreds and thousands of revolutionaries, young and old, with their rich experience, who have spent years in prison or in exile, continuing the struggle against Sapronovism there—is it possible that they do all this because of one of Trotsky’s commas? Is this not shameful and outrageous?

Finally, if according to Urbahns all of this comes down to nothing more than a comma, what right does he have to break with the International Left Opposition and stay outside its ranks over a punctuation mark? His position is based on charlatanism and ideological adventurism.
Is it necessary to pause at Sneevliet? He swears that he has nothing in common with the Second International. But we don’t believe in oaths. He works shoulder to shoulder with Roland Holst and supports Monatte up and down the line, systematically reprinting his articles. Roland Holst is for the unification of the Second and Third Internationals. Monatte stands between the reformists and the communists, closer to the reformists than to the communists, and blocs with the reformists against the communists; and Sneevliet blocs with Roland Holst and Monatte against us. And to absolve himself of this direct act of treason against communism, Sneevliet says: “They demand of us that we accept Trotsky down to the last comma.” What does this mean? It means that Sneevliet feels constrained to justify for some of his workers his policy of collaboration with Roland Holst and not with the revolutionaries. Rather than giving an honest answer: “Roland Holst is closer to me on fundamental questions than these people are,” Sneevliet says: “Those people over there demand that you take an oath on every punctuation mark.” Isn’t this the purest form of charlatanism? Can people who argue this way be taken seriously? Or worse yet: Can you respect political people who throw dust in the eyes of the workers like this?

3. Among the remarks made by the Brandlerites there is one that really merits attention. They accuse us of not yet having provided a concrete analysis of the situation in Germany in 1923. That is true. I have already many times reminded the German comrades of the necessity to produce such a work. I will not be able to undertake such a study myself in the near future. But how did I personally come to a conclusion about the German situation of 1923 without a “concrete analysis”? It was very easy: I applied myself to an evaluation not after the fact, but by going through the 1923 situation politically, following it in the press, through discussions with German comrades, etc. I formed my picture of the German situation just as I did of the Russian situation in 1905 and 1917. Of course now, after the fact, above all for the sake of the young generation, it is necessary to theoretically reconstruct the situation, facts and figures in hand. The Left Opposition should do this work and it will do it. But here, once again, we stand apart
from the Brandlerites on this as on all basic questions of world development. Thalheimer evaluates the 1923 situation with a scholarly air. But has he learned anything from the Chinese situation of 1927? Or from the Russian situation during the right-centrist period? Or from the British situation during the time of the Anglo-Russian Committee? Does he have any attitude to the problem of what is called the permanent revolution, an issue that has become a burning question in Spain? To the Brandlerites it will always seem as though people are accusing them in bad faith for 1923 because in 1931 they have maintained and even deepened their opportunist positions.

4. Frey, Landau, and to a great extent Naville are in the process of developing a new political passport for themselves, one of exceptional profundity: In politics, they say, they are in agreement with Trotsky, but look, his organizational methods are bad. None of them has taken the pains to formulate on paper clearly and precisely just exactly what he means by “organizational methods.” The persons mentioned along with certain others always begin to complain about organizational methods at the very moment it becomes necessary to criticize them politically. Take Frey, for example. For several years he carried out his national opposition in a single country, displaying a colossal indifference to everything that went on beyond its borders, including in the USSR. He entered the Left Opposition only in order to have the cover of international “authority” for his national affairs and his only condition was to be recognized as a leader and then be left in peace. When this condition was not met, he left the ranks of the Left Opposition on the pretext that its organizational methods were bad. Does this seem right on a principled basis? Isn’t the prime duty of Marxist revolutionaries to help other national sections free themselves from incorrect organizational methods? Can one desert the Left Opposition simply because it has incorrect organizational methods? At the same time Frey asks to rejoin the Austrian CP with his organization even though, it would seem, incorrect methods hold sway there too. In this way Frey reveals that his internationalism is purely verbal, superficial, for show, and for cover. Now, Frey is basically an Austro-Marxist. It is not a ques-
tion of “organization” at all. The most fundamental positions are involved. Frey broke with us because he is not an internationalist-minded revolutionary. And he covers himself with the organizational “comma” because it is not advantageous for him to explain the basis of his break with us.

5. Landau is in all respects a disciple of Frey, and at the same time a caricature of him, a malicious caricature. In my circular letter I showed (a great deal was already demonstrated in Comrade Frankel’s letter) how light-mindedly Landau accepts and approves without criticism or verification all proposals concerning the USSR, China, Spain, etc. No one has written such immoderate and uncalled-for panegyrics on the Russian Opposition and its leaders as Landau. But he is ready at once to reject, to disapprove, to condemn everything as soon as his own petty national affairs are brought into question. As if the question of Mahnruf were an organizational question! No, it is a question of ideological honesty and revolutionary propriety. We can have nothing in common with a group that changes its principled positions at every step and without any basis accuses a man who has left it of espionage. It is necessary to sweep such individuals and such groups out of a revolutionary organization. What about organizational methods in this case?

Landau didn’t know anything at all about French affairs! The poor fellow! Meanwhile Naville along with Gourget were carrying out an anticommmunist line on the trade-union question. But as soon as Molinier made an obviously grave tactical error on the strike question, it turns out that Landau knows all about this and immediately begins writing circulars on the subject. This shows that he doesn’t give a damn about French affairs but that he needs Naville for his Austrian and German affairs and if Naville is carrying out a non-Marxist trade-union line during this time, it is nothing for Landau to worry himself about. Without doubt Landau parrots internationalism in words, but we go by deeds and not words.

Following his model Frey to the letter, Landau complains about organizational methods. We have not even arrived at organizational methods on an international scale. We are still in a period of
preliminary selection and differentiation. We must say straight out that in various countries the most heterogeneous elements are united under the name of the Left Opposition, and unfortunately elements that are not always of high quality. Far, far too many have masked their ambitions for their groups, their petty-bourgeois conservatism, their national narrow-mindedness, with generalities expressing solidarity with the Russian Opposition. It is only in the last two years that the testing of this solidarity has begun with respect to questions of program, strategy, and the living facts of the struggle. Landau, who breaks with the Russian Opposition in favor of Mahnrf, cannot of course openly and honestly say that he doesn’t give a damn about anything outside his national circle. He cannot (that is, at present he does not yet dare) invent principled differences with the Russian Opposition as he attempted to do with Leipzig on the Russian questions. What then does he have left? The organizational “comma.”

Landau’s attempts to use unprincipled intrigue left and right in order to unify with the Prometeo group compromise him in a most severe manner. Prometeo is a group with ideas, serious, and very principled for its type. In this respect it is diametrically opposed to Landau. This group never declared solidarity with the Russian Opposition. Just this past year they declared that their differences with us were not only very great, but were increasing systematically. On the question of democratic demands the Prometeo group has developed certain theses that throw it back to the era of pre-Marxist socialism. In Spain at the present moment the communists have as their task the development of a determined offensive campaign around democratic slogans in order to win the workers away from the republicans and the socialists. If the Spanish comrades had adopted a Bordigist position, it would have been a disaster for the Spanish revolution. We must mercilessly reject this line. We cannot bear even a shadow of responsibility for this semianarchist sectarian reaction. We would be traitors if we gave the slightest support to these prejudices. What does Landau do? He tries to bloc with the Bordigists against the nucleus of the Left Opposition. Is it because he agrees with the Bordigists on the question of democracy? Oh, no! Landau is not preoccupied
with this. He is concentrating on correcting Trotsky’s organizational ways, and for this he needs allies. The whole business can be explained by Landau’s “organizational” needs.

Of course, Landau will say: “We have serious differences with the Bordigists, but” . . . etc., etc. . . . (All opportunists and adventurers sing this song.) “the differences do not prevent us from working together.” Landau, as we know, is quite generous, liberal, and broadminded when it comes to Italy, Spain, or China. But, alas, all this changes when it comes to Leipzig or Hamburg. Landau is the type of narrow sectarian nationalist who takes on protective coloration and imitates internationalism. But this coloration disappears as the first reaction to any serious test or criticism.

6. Landau tries to find the consummation of his theory (i.e., what he has borrowed from Frey without indicating his sources) in Lenin’s testament. Several comrades have written me that Landau is taking the road of Stalin and Zinoviev on this question. No, that is not right. Despite everything Stalin and Zinoviev recognize the facts and despite everything they still approach political questions, even the petty ones, much more seriously. Lenin speaks [in the testament] of my overestimation of administrative methods on the question of the reciprocal relations between the state apparatus and the economy. He is referring pointedly to the experience of the commissariat of transport. In my autobiography and in some other works I have explained what this was about. Administrative methods were not sufficient to bring the economy out of an impasse. But as long as the party held to the terrain of War Communism, there were no methods other than administrative ones. We were debating in a vicious circle in a situation that had never occurred before in history. Our differences with Lenin arose from this vicious circle of War Communism which led us both to the NEP and the elimination of the differences. At present it is not a question of anything like this. There exists the experience of eight years of struggle by the Russian Opposition. In this struggle the question of the party regime, beginning with my pamphlet The New Course (and also before), occupied the most important place. Thousands, even tens of thousands, of party members grouped together on this basis. Where then and from whom
then has Landau acquired all of his wisdom about centrism, about the centrist bureaucracy, if not from the Russian Opposition? And now it turns out that the Russian Opposition did not notice all of this and that Landau did and exposed it. Can one take this seriously?

Is it possible that we broke with the Stalins, Zinovievs, Bukharins, and Tomskys in order to unify with or adapt to the Brandlers, the Sneevliets, the Mahnrufs? No, that is a bad joke. We defend a definite set of ideas that have emerged from the broad experience of the Russian and the world proletariat. There is sufficient room for all sorts of groups, grouplets, sects, Mahnrufs, etc., outside the Left Opposition. The question does not come down to whether Peter or Paul or their very respectable niece or aunt in Vienna is with us today. It is a question of systematic development and of adapting the fixed capital of ideas to events, and thereby educating real revolutionary Marxist cadres. To do this we must purge ourselves of the accidental passers-by who have joined us out of curiosity or by mistake. We will defend our views with the greatest diligence and patience before any young worker who wants to know the truth and is ready to learn. But in the future we will display a tenfold increased intransigence toward all the confusionists, intriguers, and adventurers who want to pitch their tent under the banner of the International Left Opposition and gather their good friends and acquaintances around it. No, this trick will not work.

L. Trotsky

MAY 8

P.S. The more facts one collects the more two fundamental traits are revealed that separate the groups mentioned here from the International Left Opposition: their excessive and outright sectarian intolerance within the cadres of their national circle, and their generous liberalism in the international arena. Landau, who demands absolute monolithism in Germany (in addition to which he has not been able up to now to explain just what this consists of), is ready to unify and bloc with anyone at all in the interna-
tional arena, under one absolute condition: support against the
Russian Opposition and the central nucleus of the International
Left Opposition. In order more conveniently to hide the absence
of principles the struggle is fought, ostensibly, against the Inter­
national Secretariat. But this is only a conventional sign for the
standards and methods that have formed the basis of the Left Op­
position for eight years. If Frey did not happen by chance to have
a rival group in Austria, Landau would have been in his arms long
ago. The same is true with respect to Urbahns. If he led the Lenin­
bund in Spain rather than in Germany, Landau would be fighting
in the same ranks with him against the International Left Opposi­
tion. Only one thing is important: there should be no dangerous
rivalries, and dangerous rivalries are to be found only in Germany
and Austria. In contrast, it is permissible to unify with the Prometeo
group and through it to attempt to unify with Overstraeten. Re­
ally, it is not the fault of the International Secretariat if Over­
straeten has shown himself to be a capricious dilettante who comes
to political decisions with the aid of inspiration, who arouses the
wrath of Oppositional Belgian workers with his somersaults. For
a whole year I held the Charleroi group back from a break with
Overstraeten. The former leadership of La Verite acted in the same
manner. But when all was said and done, it turned out that the Charle­
roi workers were completely correct and that Overstraeten did
not belong in the International Left Opposition—not on the basis
of his fundamental principles, or of his political conclusions, or of
his organizational methods. On the Russian question he stands
with Urbahns, on the trade-union question with Monatte, on the
Belgian question, having behind him a dozen comrades, he is for a
second party. But what significance can all this have compared to
the fact that Overstraeten is opposed to the International Secre­
tariat—that is, against the basic nucleus of the International Left
Opposition?

Clearly, all the groups and national cliques who have nothing
in common save their hostility toward the consistent politics of
the International Left Opposition must be helped to create a rival
international organization with the sole principle: “Live and let
live.” That means no interference into the internal affairs of other
cliques. While the International Left Opposition rids itself of accidental alien elements that belong elsewhere (this predictable process of elimination is called the "crisis of the International Opposition" by the phrasesmongers) we will see at the other pole the efforts of this collected debris to create a shadow international organization. That will be a very instructive if not very engaging spectacle. We can predict the outcome of this attempt. Since none of these groups will tolerate the intervention of the others in its affairs, and since because of their national sectarian traits none of them feels the need for such an intervention (this is demonstrated by their entire past history), after some time it will turn out that this international organization that was just created will be of no use to anyone or anything. Q.E.D.

The closer these elements move toward one another, the more their lack of principle will come to the fore, and the more they will compromise themselves by revealing that most of them have nothing more in mind than cultivating their own garden.

It would be well to reveal to one of these sages that he explains the relationship between politics and organization on the basis of counterposing one to the other. All of them, under the leadership of Frey, are building their own "politics" and their own "organization." No one has written about "the organization of the October insurrection and the organization of the Red Army" with such sympathetic pathos as Landau. It would be interesting to ask him how he understands organization in this case—as pure politics, or as pure organization independent of politics, or as some combination of the two that makes organization the vehicle for politics? The counterposition that Landau takes flows from the fact that for him, as the leader of a clique, organizational methods have a totally independent character, sufficient unto themselves: whisper to one, trip up a second, circulate insinuations about a third, ingratiate yourself with a group of workers who are not too critical-minded by flattering their prejudices—these organizational methods really have nothing in common with politics, at least with Marxist politics. But it is precisely our task to rid our ranks of these poisoned and corrupted methods.
I heartily welcome the idea of the New Italian Opposition publishing the present work in Italian. In my correspondence with the comrades of the New Opposition last year, I advanced the hypothesis that in the course of liquidating the fascist regime democratic slogans could assume a certain importance in Italy. Today, in the light of the Spanish events, I would formulate this same thought much more categorically. The Spanish experiences leave no doubt that the Italian revolution will have a longer or shorter democratic “preface” before entering the decisive phase of the immediate struggle of the proletariat for power. During that preliminary period, the proletarian vanguard will certainly not be able to ignore the problems of democracy. In the light of the Spanish events, the position of the Prometeo group, which rejects democratic slogans in principle, appears theoretically inconsistent and politically disastrous. Woe to those who will not learn from great historic facts!

The central theme of this work, at the same time that it is an attempt to clarify by means of recent experiences the Marxist attitude toward democratic slogans, consists in a criticism of the
myth of a neutral, “popular” revolution, above the classes, and of the classless and powerless “democratic dictatorship.” Today the Comintern leadership is attempting to erect a temple to this idol in Spain, for which many proletarian victims were sacrificed in China. We must confront this attempt of the centrist bureaucracy well armed; the problem is posed anew in the fate of the Spanish revolution.

It seems to me that the Italian comrades ought to follow attentively above all else the development of the great events on the Iberian peninsula. The same problems, in another form and with a different relationship of forces, will be posed sooner or later—we hope sooner—before the proletariat in Italy.
The complicated and imperfect architecture of this book reflects the ups and downs of its fate: it originated in the struggle for a clear and definite conception of the inner dialectic of the revolutionary process and was added to during the course of that struggle. The reader who is interested only in the external drama of revolution would do better to set this book aside. But those for whom revolution is not just a colossal spectacle but an objectively determined condition of social crisis, subject to its own internal laws, may perhaps benefit from a reading of the pages herewith presented.

In publishing this work in French, I am resigned in advance to being accused of dogmatism, casuistry, a fondness for exegesis of ancient texts, and lack of “clarity.” Alas, the only thing expressed by the aversion to materialist dialectics, so commonly found in “left” circles in France, not excluding the ranks of socialists as well, one may be sure, is the conservatism of official French thought, which has its own deep roots in the history of French bourgeois society. But we have no doubt that the dialectics of the historical process will deal with French bourgeois habits of thought no less thor-
oughly than with the bourgeoisie itself. Even the French language, with all its splendid refinement and polish, in whose processing not the least important part was played by that severe machine, the guillotine, is bound to be swept up by the force of history’s dialectic and hurled anew into a giant crucible to be remolded at the highest temperatures. Losing none of its qualities of logical precision, it will in the process acquire dialectical flexibility. Revolution in language will be but an expression of the new revolution in the realm of ideas, which in turn will be inseparable from the revolution in the realm of things.

A substantial part of this book is connected with Russia, with the present and past struggle over ideas within its revolutionary ranks. The course of events has raised these disputes to international prominence. This, and only this, serves as justification for the appearance in French of this theoretical-polemical work.

In the appendix we have included three essays, one that deals with a French novel about the Chinese revolution, the other two taking up the analysis of the Spanish revolution unfolding before our eyes. Regardless of differences in the country or epoch dealt with, one constant theme—“permanent revolution”—unites the parts of this book into a single whole, despite its crying defects, of which the author is more sharply aware than anyone.

The reader who pauses in indecision over one polemical chapter or another, or some quotation-loaded digression into the historical past of Russian Marxist thought, to ask, what use is all this to me? would be right to break off reading and turn to the concluding pages devoted to China and Spain. Perhaps after that, the chapters that at first seemed “doctrinaire” or “casuistical” would present themselves in a less repellent light.

At least the author would like to hope so.
To the Charleroi Federation, Belgian Left Opposition

Dear Comrades:

I am anxious to reply to the questions you asked me in your letter of June 19.

1. The International Secretariat replied to you that it did not know the reasons that Comrade Rosmer has interrupted his activities in the revolutionary movement. You found this hardly possible. I understand your astonishment very well. Nevertheless, the reasons for Comrade Rosmer’s departure from the League have remained just as unclear to me. The last letter he sent you supplies very little substance for drawing more or less political conclusions.

2. I must note with regret that the part of Comrade Rosmer’s letter that speaks of my attitude in the internal conflicts of the League gives a false idea of what really happened. According to Comrade Rosmer’s account, my intervention supposedly prevented Comrade Rosmer from removing from the League or from neutralizing within the League the negative elements headed by Comrade Molinier. Since, according to Comrade Rosmer, no political
difference had appeared, it becomes completely incomprehensible why I got involved in the matter and why I supported Comrade Molinier against Comrade Rosmer. That is altogether wrong, from beginning to end.

Comrade Rosmer forgot to tell you that he stayed for some time with me, along with Molinier. Comrade Molinier created on us both, as well as on Comrade Marguerite Rosmer, an excellent impression by his devotion to the cause, his energy, his enterprising character, his selflessness. We already knew at that time that all kinds of malicious gossip were being spread concerning Comrade Molinier, one reason for which is Comrade Molinier's tempestuous character and his capacity for violating all the rules and superstitions of the philistines. Together with Comrade Rosmer and Comrade Marguerite we decided to oppose categorically all the gossip and insinuations. It is in that sense that I wrote a letter to the comrades in Paris, on the initiative of Comrade Gourget, which continued to give a positive estimation of Comrade Molinier by describing him as a genuine revolutionary and an excellent comrade.

After Comrade Rosmer's departure to Paris, he wrote me more than once not only with praise but with admiration for Molinier's work. In his letters, as in the letters of Comrade Marguerite, were to be found sentences like: "If we had two like Raymond we would move ahead much more quickly. . . ."

After a few months' time, Comrade Rosmer's letters began to make allusions to friction and conflicts that had arisen between Molinier and Naville. But Comrade Rosmer never said who, in his opinion, was responsible for these conflicts.

Next, I received two letters: one from Comrade Rosmer, and the other from Comrades Naville, Gerard, and Gourget—both directed against Molinier. From these letters I learned for the first time that Comrades Rosmer and Naville had attempted to deprive Comrade Molinier of the right to hold any post whatsoever in the League and had attempted to carry out the extreme measure of expelling him from the League. They made this proposal to the Paris region, and the Paris region decided against the initiators of the proposal to remove Comrade Molinier from his post as secretary of the Paris region, i.e., they decided against Rosmer
and Naville. It was only after this that they turned to me to ask for my concurrence in opposing Molinier.

From this you can see that the Paris organization rejected the demands of Comrades Rosmer, Naville, and others and came to the defense of Comrade Molinier without my being involved in the least, and even without my knowledge.

It is also necessary to add that during the whole preceding period I was in constant correspondence with Rosmer and Naville but had no correspondence at all with Molinier. All the letters and documents that relate to this period are in my archives, and I will gladly put them at the disposal of any group of trustworthy comrades.

How did Comrades Rosmer, Naville, and the others motivate their demands for sanctions against Molinier? They said that Molinier "involved" himself in questions that he "knew nothing about," that he made nonsensical proposals, etc. To this I replied that if it were a question of political differences, I could intervene; that is why I asked them to tell me precisely what sort of proposals Molinier raised. At the same time I pointed out to Naville that it was totally inadmissible to divide the comrades into two categories: one category including comrades who could involve themselves in all questions, the other including comrades who were good only for technical work. Here, as in many other cases, Naville displayed a total lack of understanding of the spirit of a revolutionary proletarian organization, all of whose members have not only the right but the obligation to involve themselves in all questions from the smallest details and technical questions to the most complex questions of revolutionary politics.

It was only after this that I understood the character of the differences that constantly set Comrade Molinier against Comrade Naville. Comrade Rosmer in practice supported Comrade Naville without speaking his mind on the basis of the differences. These differences extended to our attitude toward the party, toward the trade unions, toward the International Left Opposition, and even toward the methods and character of the League's work. From letters, documents, and private conversations with the comrades of the two groups, I got the impression, and I was even convinced, that on all fundamental questions Comrade Molinier was much closer
to revolutionary politics than Comrade Naville. These differences did not have a personal character, but a principled character, and coincided on many points with the differences between Charleroi and Van Overstraeten, except that Comrade Naville never formulated his opinions with as much frankness as Van Overstraeten.

To this I should add that in order to justify his demand for extraordinary measures against Molinier, Comrade Rosmer thought it possible to rely on malicious gossip, which we have all known about for some time and which we did not consider worthy of attention. This argument raised by Comrade Rosmer made a very painful impression on me. I told him that insofar as he placed any importance whatsoever on the old or the new insinuations, he should demand the establishment of a control commission composed of reliable and impartial comrades to rule on the question as a whole. What other means could one propose in a revolutionary organization?

You know very well from your own experience what difficulty I had in deciding on a break with Van Overstraeten, despite the fact that you insisted on it (and quite correctly). I considered it my duty to exhaust all possible means to find a basis for collaboration. I acted in the same way with respect to the differences in the French section. After Comrades Naville and Rosmer proposed that I intervene in the dispute, I decided in agreement with both parties to attempt to separate the personal questions from the principled ones, lessen the friction, and create normal conditions for discussion of the disputed questions. Since it was impossible for me to come to France, I invited Comrades Molinier and Naville to visit me. I spent several days discussing all the disputed questions with them, and (with the participation of Comrades Mill, Frankel, and Markin)211 we arrived at agreement on certain measures which we jokingly called “the peace of Prinkipo.” These measures included the creation of a control commission to rule on all the accusations of a personal nature. You should be familiar with the Prinkipo agreement (at any rate I asked that it be sent to you). At a plenary session of the League these measures were adopted unanimously, but Comrade Rosmer did not even come to the session and continued to boycott the League without explaining—
even to me—the real reasons for his attitude.

The conditions of the “peace of Prinkipo” were violated in a disloyal fashion by Comrade Naville. Comrade Rosmer thought it possible to continue casting unwarranted aspersions on the character of Comrade Molinier without addressing himself to the control commission. These were the kinds of aspersions that talk about a great deal but say nothing, that make allusions, that equivocate, that compromise without saying things directly. The accusation was expressed in that unfortunate letter you sent me a copy of. In my opinion, this manner of functioning goes against the norms of a proletarian organization. Those are the facts.

3. A few words on the principled side of the thing. Rosmer and Naville directed the League’s work throughout the whole first year. In La Verite they developed the ideas of the Left Opposition on the most general questions, or allowed others to develop them. But Van Overstraeten, Urbahns, and Landau did the same thing. The real test began with the purely French questions, where it was necessary to take a combative position. Here Comrade Rosmer never took a clear position, especially on the trade-union question, and at the same time he supported the incorrect orientation of Gourget-Naville in the area of trade-union work. My letters to Comrade Rosmer in which I pointed out the extreme danger of this orientation date from the first days of the publication of La Verite. Comrade Rosmer never gave me a clear answer. I did not pose these questions openly in the press or to the organization because I hoped I would be able to obtain favorable results through correspondence and other private initiatives. If Comrade Rosmer denies the principled differences, and even maintains that they were invented after the fact (by whom?), that can only demonstrate how light-mindedly Comrade Rosmer approaches the fundamental problems of the proletarian revolution. One can only maintain that indispensable feeling for revolutionary questions by maintaining uninterrupted contact with the revolutionary movement. Comrade Rosmer believes it possible to absent himself from the movement for months or years because of conflicts, even those of a personal nature. Is it surprising then that with such an attitude toward the movement as a whole our principled
differences seem to him of secondary importance or even nonexis-
tent?

One more question—the last one. Comrade Rosmer talks about
“Zinovievist methods.” What does he mean by this? It is neces-
sary to stop playing with words and spreading confusion. What is
the origin of “Zinovievist methods”? They came from a sharp
political turn. When the epigones began to break the tradition of
the party under the pressure of new elements and circumstances,
they could not rely on the general agreement of the proletarian
vanguard. On the contrary, they took action against this vanguard.
Essentially, “Zinovievist methods” were based on the attempt of
the bureaucratic apparatus to use lies and violence against the pro-
etarian vanguard in order to impose on the broad working masses
a political orientation that ran contrary to the traditions of the
party and the interests of the proletariat. Thus these methods
flowed entirely from the politics behind them. What is the mean-
ing of “Zinovievist methods” in the present instance? What pro-
etarian vanguard are we doing battle against? What revolution-
ary wing are we crushing or forcing out and in the interests of
what opportunist political orientation? These words should be care-
fully weighed. Today Zinovievist methods are often understood
to mean anything that causes personal vexation or fails to satisfy
the inclinations of each individual.

In reality just the opposite is true. Since 1923 the most dispar-
ate elements, including those whose ideas have nothing in com-
mon with ours, have rallied to the Opposition in Western Europe.
Individuals like Paz graciously accepted the status or the self-im-
age of left communists, extreme revolutionaries, but with the pro-
viso that no one demand anything of them and that the proletar-
ian revolution not upset their digestion. All over France there are
these groups that get together once a week, discuss all sorts of
things, and adjourn without deciding anything. Once a month they
publish a small magazine in which each individual writes what-
ever comes into his head. The best of these prewar groups was the
one headed by Monatte. But its spirit, habits, methods of work,
and modes of thinking were infinitely removed from those of a
proletarian organization, even a small and weak one that had never-
Trotsky and Alfred Rosmer, 1920 (left); Pierre Naville, 1929 (right).
theless decided to place itself at the head of the masses. Souvarine’s circle\textsuperscript{212} on the one hand and Naville’s on the other are new examples of this same species. A few personal friends discuss the issues of revolutionary politics and publish their articles. That is all. Undoubtedly these habits have been introduced into the League. And when the most active, most revolutionary elements begin to pose questions in an entirely different manner, they are treated like troublemakers, enemies of the peace, disrupters, etc.

Is Comrade Rosmer wrong from a principled point of view, wrong from a political point of view, or even wrong from an organizational point of view? I had no reason to speak out against Comrade Rosmer to the extent that he had simply taken himself out of all activity. But at the present time Comrade Rosmer has become the flag of all those elements that are conducting a battle against our fundamental ideas, and who have up to now greatly compromised the ideas of the Left Opposition, compromised them to a far greater extent than they have propagated them. Before our eyes an attempt to form a bloc is taking place, a bloc of the Bordigists, of Landau, Naville, Van Overstraeten, and even Sneevliet and Urbahns—all those elements that are attempting in one way or another to cover themselves with the name Rosmer. One can hardly imagine a bloc that is more ridiculous, more of a caricature, more worthless. To give one’s name to such a bloc is to discredit oneself forever. Even though several dozens of my letters have not produced results, I hope nonetheless that Comrade Rosmer will not give his name to this unworthy bloc, which is condemned in advance to a pitiful defeat. In any case I will do my best to reestablish the possibility for collaborative work; I will do everything except renounce the principles that are the foundation of the Bolshevik-Leninists’ work.

With communist greetings,

L. Trotsky

P.S. In order to avoid all misunderstanding let me point out something that is self-evident. I did not take and do not take any responsibility for the political acts of Comrade Molinier, with whom I have more than once had differences in the evaluation of serious
practical questions. When it appeared to me that Comrade Molinier was making serious errors, I said so, both to him and to other comrades. Some differences are inevitable in the course of collaborative work. No solidarity on questions of principle can guarantee agreement on all tactical and organizational questions. The differences with the Naville group have basically always been differences of principle. As for Comrade Rosmer, as I said, he has always been very evasive on questions of principle, but he supported and continues to support Naville, Landau, and the others.
Yaroslavsky's article, “A New Assistant of Pilsudski,” in Pravda, July 2, 1931, as reproduced in Biulet en Oppozitsii, number 23, August 1931.
Scoundrels and their assistants

In *Pravda*, dated July 2, Yaroslavsky unmasks Trotsky, who, he says, in the bourgeois press called the five-year plan a “deception” and predicted the imminent fall of Bolshevism. With Yaroslavsky’s article is published a reproduction of the front page of the Polish paper to which, it is claimed, Trotsky sent his article. In connection with this, they speak once more of renegade, etc.

As a matter of fact, I never gave any article on the five-year plan to any bourgeois paper, with the exception of an interview I gave at the beginning of this year to the *Manchester Guardian*. The content and the sense of this interview, emphasizing the enormous successes of the socialist methods of the economy and defending the necessity of economic collaboration between England and the USSR, is in direct and irreconcilable contradiction to the articles in the world bourgeois press, which are based on fraudulent falsification and distortion. Riga and Warsaw have long been laboratories of false information directed against the USSR and communism. My alleged article in the Polish *Kurier Codzienny* [Daily Courier] was probably supplied by the same scoundrels who at one time manufactured the dispatches on how Lenin and
Trotsky were arresting each other, who subsequently manufactured the “Zinoviev letter,” and dozens of other forged documents. To fight against these falsifications in the columns of the bourgeois papers is exceedingly difficult, because most of them cover up for each other and are certainly not inclined to contradict each other in order to lend assistance to a proletarian revolutionist.

The Messrs. Yaroslavskys know this very well, but they hold the interests of their clique higher than the interests of the Soviet Union. The counterrevolutionary scoundrels fabricate false documents and forged articles, and the Yaroslavskys photograph these documents as authentic. What then is the political role of the Yaroslavskys? Assistants to bourgeois scoundrels—one cannot define their role in any other way.
To the Editor of the Manchester Guardian

Sir:

In a series of reactionary publications of various countries, in particular of Poland, Rumania, and Greece, there has been printed an article, ostensibly by me, directed against the five-year plan and the Soviet Union. One of the Polish newspapers has even furnished the article with an introduction purporting to show that the article has been specially sent to it. The Manchester Guardian is the sole newspaper in whose pages there has appeared an authentic interview with me about the five-year plan and the importance of collaboration between England and Russia. The character of this interview stands in irreconcilable contradiction to the views and tendencies which that section of the reactionary press that has recourse to forged documents seeks to ascribe to me. The observant and conscientious reader, of whatever standpoint, will, I hope, appreciate this.

Yours,

L. Trotsky
You have asked me a number of very complicated questions concerning the internal development of the Soviet Union. To answer these questions seriously and conscientiously it would be necessary to write several articles.

Within the space of an interview it is impossible to give an analysis of the complicated processes which form the contents of the present transitional economic system of the Soviet Union, a system which constitutes a bridge between capitalism and socialism.

You know that ordinarily I avoid interviews, especially because they too easily give rise to misunderstandings even if they are absolutely faithfully transmitted. In fact, this abstention from interviews as shown by my recent experience does not insure one against the most unbelievable misunderstandings and distortions.

In recent weeks a Reuters dispatch from Warsaw went the rounds of the world press, ascribing to me views that are the exact opposite of those I have presented and defended.

After my expulsion from the Soviet Union, the enemies of the Soviet regime, at least the most obdurate and least perspicacious,
counted on hostile actions on my part against the regime they hate so much. They miscalculated, and all that remains for them is to take refuge in falsifications which rely on credulity or ill will. I shall use the opportunity of the questions asked by you to declare again that my attitude toward the Soviet regime has not wavered even one iota since the days when I participated in its creation.

The fight which I carry on, together with my friends and my closest cothinkers within the communist ranks, has to do, not with general questions of socialism, but with the methods to be used in carrying out the tasks posed by the October Revolution. If the people in Warsaw or Bucharest hope that the internal difficulties in the USSR will drive the tendency represented by me into the camp of the “defeatists” of the Soviet Union, they are in for a bitter disappointment, as are their more powerful inspirers.

At the moment of danger the so-called “Trotskyists” (Left Opposition) will fill the most combative positions, as they did during the October upheaval and during the years of the civil war.

You ask whether the new course proclaimed in the recent speech of Stalin signifies a turning toward the road of capitalism. No. I find no basis for such a conclusion.

We have before us a zigzag along the road from capitalism to socialism. Viewed separately and apart, it is a zigzag of retreat. But the retreat is nevertheless of a tactical nature. The strategic line can remain the same as before. The necessity for the turn, and its sharpness, were brought about by the mistakes of the Stalinist leadership in the previous period.

These mistakes, as well as the inevitability of the turn itself, were pointed out by me dozens of times during the last two years in the Biulleten Oppozitsii, published abroad (Paris-Berlin). Hence this turn was least of all a surprise to the Left Opposition. To speak of a renunciation of socialist aims in referring to this turn is to speak nonsense.

The new course of Stalin may, nevertheless, not only encourage some light-minded enemies but also discourage some friends of the Soviet Union who do not think very deeply. The former feared and the latter hoped that over a few years the kulak would
THE NEW YORK TIMES, JULY 19, 1931.

TROTSKY REAFFIRMS LOYALTY TO SOVIET

In First Interview in Nearly Two Years He Denies He Was Ever Hostile to Regime.

ANALYZES NEW POLICIES

Exile at His Home in Turkey Says Stalin Is Retreating, but Not Turning to Capitalism.

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MODA, Turkey, July 18 (AP).—For the first time in nearly two years Leon Trotsky has unlocked the iron gates of his retreat to admit an interviewer. He received an Associated Press correspondent in his small wooden villa at Moda, an Asiatic suburb of Istanbul and a favorite Summer resort of the Anglo-American colony.

The house, which the exile rented here after fire destroyed his residence on Prinkipo Island, is a modest, unpainted eight-room structure standing in a neglected garden. High walls and locked barred wire gates surround it on three sides.

M. Trotsky would scarcely be recognized as the man who slipped out of the Soviet embassy's semi-prison three years ago. He is ruddier and more agile and his face reflects humor rather than bitterness. The heaviness and sallowness are gone.

Still Shows Power.
The sporting costume he wears, a white shirt open at the neck, white trousers and blue jacket, adds to the atmosphere of vitality about him. His thin, pointed face is sunburned from hours spent fishing on the Sea of Marmora—his one recreation. His bristling hair and pointed beard are almost white. Despite recurrent attacks of malaria, he is a man of such power that the air about him tingles.

M. Trotsky shot out cordial greetings in French with some English "How are you's" and "All right's" thrown in. He reads English easily, but prefers not to speak it.

First stipulating that his declarations were to be published word for word or not at all, he attacked the questions which at his request had been sent in advance.

M. Trotsky closed the Interview with a sudden smile and an emphatic final nod. As he rose he picked up a book, lying on the table and asked, "Have you read this? No? Take it along. It's an extra copy."

The interviewer went off with a recent book of Stalin, published in America.

Downstairs, in the cool, quietly furnished rooms of the old Turkish villa, a tanned girl with large spectacles brushed by. It was M. Trotsky's daughter. She suffers from serious throat trouble and will probably have to be sent to Europe for an operation this Winter. That will leave M. Trotsky and his wife, herself in ill health, alone. The son Ivan, who came with them from Russia, is now in Germany and takes care of his father's publications there.

Through the garden in which strolled a Turkish secret service man, a revolver on his hip, M. Trotsky's Austrian secretary conducted the correspondent down steep steps to a little wharf and into the same rowboat in which the exile takes his long fishing hours of rest from writing.

Looking back as the boat pulled away, it was hard to realize that such a quiet crumbling house in such a peaceful garden overlooking a sea of such tranquility held the man who has played so fiery a part in world history.
disappear, the peasantry would be collectivized completely, and socialism would reign.

The question of the five-year plan took on the inadmissible character of a sweepstakes competition. The Left Opposition emphatically warned against this policy, especially against the premature and precipitate transformation of the five-year plan into a four-year plan.

It goes without saying that it is necessary to do everything for the acceleration of industrialization. But if when put to proof it should be shown that the plan is realizable not in four but in five or even in six or seven years, that too would be a magnificent success. Capitalistic society developed immeasurably more slowly and with a much greater number of zigzags, turnings, and clashes.

It is undeniable that the present zigzag to the right, caused by the previous mistakes of the leadership, signifies an inevitable, temporary strengthening of bourgeois tendencies and forces. However, as long as state ownership of the land and of all the basic means of production is preserved, it does not by any means signify the revival of capitalism, as yet. Such a revival is in general inconceivable without the restoration, by force, of private property in the means of production, which would require the victory of a counterrevolution.

By this I do not mean at all to deny that there are certain political dangers connected with the new turn. The fight against these dangers requires the regeneration of the independent political activity of the masses, suppressed by the bureaucratic regime of Stalin.

It is precisely along these lines that the principal efforts of the Left Opposition are now directed. With the regeneration of the soviets, trade unions, and party, the Left Opposition will naturally and inevitably take its place in the common ranks.

You ask me about my own plans and prospects. I am working now on the second volume of The History of the Russian Revolution. If my political recess continues I want to write a book on the year 1918, which in the Russian Revolution occupied the same place as 1793 in the French Revolution. It was a year of enormous difficulties, dangers, and deprivations, of colossal exertions by the
revolutionary masses, the year of the German offensive, the beginning of intervention by the Entente Powers, of domestic plots, uprisings, and terrorist attacks—the year of the creation of the Red Army and of the commencement of the civil war, whose fronts soon encircled the Moscow center in a vise.

In this book I wish, by way of comparison, to make an analysis of the Civil War between the Northern and Southern states in America. I suppose that American readers will be as surprised by the many analogies as I was myself in studying the U.S. Civil War.

It is unnecessary to say that I am following the development of events in Spain with great interest. Minister of Foreign Affairs Lerroux expressed himself to the effect that he saw no reason for refusing me a visa. However, the Provisional Government, headed by Alcala Zamora, found it more prudent to postpone a decision on the question until the convocation of the Cortes and the formation of the new government.

I shall not fail, naturally, to renew my demand as soon as the government is formed.
July 15, 1931

A letter to ‘Pravda’

Pravda, issue number 180 of July 2, published an article by Yaroslavsky under the title: “A New Assistant of Pilsudski.” According to Pravda I am supposed to have written an article for the Warsaw Kurier Codzienny against the five-year plan, against the Soviet power, etc., and this article or some other—Yaroslavsky is not very exact—is supposed to have made the rounds “of a considerable part of the bourgeois press of America, England, Poland, Rumania.” Leaving aside the political and other commentaries of Yaroslavsky, I confine myself strictly to the factual side of the affair.

I have never given an article to the Kurier Codzienny, I have no connection of any sort with this paper, and I only learned of its existence from Yaroslavsky’s article. The article published under my name in the Kurier is a forgery which in no way differs from the famous “Zinoviev letter” and other similar documents. From the information of friends I learn that the Kurier continues to publish counterrevolutionary articles attributed to me.

I know absolutely nothing of what a “part of the bourgeois press of America, England, Poland, Rumania” publishes under my
name. I have given no article to any journal of these countries about the five-year plan. Thus in this case too it is a question of a forgery or, what is most probable, of a reprint of the article in the Kurier.

The Manchester Guardian is the only bourgeois journal with which I have had an interview on the five-year plan. This interview is devoted to showing the enormous historical importance of the five-year plan and of the necessity of collaboration between England and the USSR. It therefore pursues an aim directly contrary to that which is attributed to me by the forgers, who have long ago established themselves in Warsaw, Riga, and elsewhere.

By printing Yaroslavsky's article, Pravda is misleading millions of readers. I believe, therefore, that Pravda is obligated to publish my denial—out of respect for the millions of workers, Red soldiers and sailors, peasants, students, and other citizens of the USSR deceived by it.

L. Trotsky
Stalin’s speech at the conference of the economists on June 23 is of exceptional interest. Not because it contained any deep generalizations, broad perspectives, precise summaries, or clear practical proposals. There is nothing of this sort. Clipped thoughts, as always, deliberately ambiguous formulations which may be twisted one way or another, the casting of blame upon the executors, complete disharmony between conclusions and premises—all these qualities and features of bureaucratic inconsistency permeate Stalin’s speech. But out of the confusion of his speech, facts break through which can no longer be ignored. These facts give the speech genuine political significance. If it were shed of its trappings, the following would be the result: “The Left Opposition, this time too, proved to be right. All its warnings have been justified. And we, the bureaucrats, with our rude slander and oppression of the Opposition, proved to be fools.” Stalin, naturally, expressed these thoughts in different words. He continued, of course, to thunder at “Trotskyism” with cast-iron banalities. It is not the bureaucratic logic of Stalin which interests us, however, but rather the dialectics of the economic process, which is mightier than the mightiest bureaucratic incompleteness of thought.
The five-year plan in four years

We learn from the speech that the performance of the industrial plan presents a "rather motley picture." There are sectors which have for five months produced an increase of 40 percent over the corresponding period last year, there are sectors which have grown 20 to 30 percent, and finally there are sectors which have shown only 6 to 10 percent growth, and even less than that. As if in passing, Stalin remarks that in the last category belong the coal, iron, and steel industry, that is, the real base of industrialization.

What is the interrelation between the different parts of the economy? On this score there is no reply. Yet upon the reply to this question depends the fate of the five-year plan. With a wrong computation of its parts, a house in the process of construction may collapse at the third or fourth story. Under incorrect planning or; what is more important, under incorrect regulation of the plan in the process of its fulfillment, a crisis may develop toward the very end of the five-year plan and may create insurmountable difficulties for the utilization and development of its indubitable successes. Nevertheless, the fact that heavy industry has shown, instead of a 30 to 40 percent growth, only a growth of 6 percent "and even less than that" is covered up by Stalin with the meaningless trivial phrase: "the picture is a rather motley one."

From the same speech we learn that "a number of enterprises and economic organizations have long ceased to count [], to keep proper accounts, to draw up sound balance sheets of income and expenditure." Reading this, one cannot believe one's eyes. How is this possible? What kind of leadership of industry is it whose effectiveness is not measured and not checked on in an ever more precise manner? We learn further that such concepts as "regime of the economy . . . rationalization of production have long [] gone out of fashion." Does the speaker weigh his own words? Don't they sound like a monstrous slander of the Soviet economy, and primarily a merciless indictment of the top leadership? "It is a fact," Stalin continues, "that production costs in a number of enterprises have recently begun to increase." We know what such words as "here and there," "in a number of enterprises" mean.
when spoken by Stalin. They mean that the speaker is afraid of the facts, obscures them, and minimizes them. Under the words “in a number of enterprises” is concealed heavy industry; yielding a 6 percent increase instead of 40 percent, this at the same time drives up the costs of production, undermining in this manner the possibility of its future growth. In addition to this, it turns out that the keeping of accounts is thrown overboard and rationalization is out of fashion. Does not the alarming conclusion come to the fore that the actual situation is even worse than that presented by the speaker?

How could this happen? Why and how have accounting and calculation been thrown overboard? Stalin keeps silent. Since when are the walls of an economic plant built not according to plumb line but according to eye? With his characteristic precision, Stalin replies: long ago. How come the leaders did not notice it? Stalin is silent. We will reply in his stead. Calculation, which was never ideal, because the Soviet state has only begun to learn to make calculations on a national scale, was thrown completely overboard from the time that the bureaucratic leadership substituted the naked administrative whip for a Marxian analysis and flexible regulation of the economy. The coefficients of growth have become questions of bureaucratic prestige. Where is there a place for calculation? The director or chairman of a trust who “completed and exceeded” the plan, having robbed the budget and laid a mine in the form of bad quality of production under adjacent sectors of the economy, proved to be the hero. On the other hand the economist who tried to estimate correctly all the elements of production and did not push for the sacred bureaucratic targets constantly fell into the ranks of the penalized. Now we hear from Stalin that in industry there is an “uninterrupted workweek on paper,” “successes on paper,” a “paper,” that is, a false accounting. Did not the Opposition warn in every issue of its Biulleten that naked administrative pressure is much more capable of accelerating accounting, but not industry itself; that state figures are far more flexible than steel and coal? Didn’t we write dozens of times that the longer Stalin directs the five-year plan, the more the lamps are extinguished? This was, of course, proclaimed a counterrevo-
olutionary slander. All the blockheads, all the rogues, yelled about the “defeatism” of the Left Opposition. But what does the phrase “have long ceased to count, to keep proper accounts” mean if not that the apparatus has extinguished the lamps? If long ago, then why did the chief mechanic keep silent so long? We wrote about the extinguished lamps two years ago. The question arises: Can anyone more clearly, more categorically, attest to his inconsistency? Isn’t it clear that the transformation of the five-year plan into a four-year plan was an act of the most light-minded adventurism?

The basic conclusion is pointed out quite precisely in the draft platform of the International Opposition. “The administrative chase after ‘maximum’ tempos must give way to the elaboration of optimum (the most advantageous) tempos which do not guarantee the fulfillment of the command of the day for display purposes, but the constant growth of the economy on the basis of its dynamic equilibrium, with a correct distribution of domestic means and a broad, planned utilization of the world market” [Problems of the Development of the USSR].

The problem of the work force

Stalin informs us, for the first time with such clarity, that the fulfillment of the plan is hindered by the lack not only of skilled workers, but of workers in general. This fact may appear improbable at first sight. The Russian village has included within itself, from time immemorial, overt and hidden reserves of surplus population which, moreover, increased annually by hundreds of thousands. The growth of the Soviet farms and the collectivization and mechanization of agriculture should naturally have increased the number of those migrating from the village. The danger, it would appear, stemmed from the possible formation of tremendous reserves of the army of labor. But no, it appears that the attraction of the city for the peasant has ceased completely. Is it because the contradictions between the city and the village have disappeared? After all, in the third year of the five-year plan we “entered into socialism.” But no, in Stalin’s last speech we do not find anything about the realization of socialism. The speaker became much more
modest and confined himself to a simple reference to the improve­
ment of the position of the peasant poor. We have no intention to
contest the fact itself. However, as an explanation of the end of
migration from the village it is completely insufficient. Have the
conditions of life of over one hundred million peasants improved
so radically that the cities have lost the power of attraction for
them? This might be the case only if we assumed that the position
of city workers did not rise simultaneously during this time but
was stationary or even lowered. Stalin brings us right up to this
harsh conclusion, without, however, calling it by its name.

The chief emphasis of his speech is devoted to the fact that
industry is being undermined by the turnover of the work force,
by the “general” movement from factory to factory. While the
movement from the village to the city has stopped completely, the
turnover within industry and partly away from industry alto­
gether has grown immensely. Stalin informs us that in the major­
ity of factories the composition of the workers changes “at least
to the extent of 30 to 40 percent of the total in the course of a half
year, or even in one quarter.” This figure, which would appear
improbable had it not come from Stalin, becomes especially threat­
ening if we take into consideration the administrative struggle
which the trade-union bureaucracy, together with that of the party
and the soviets, led against the labor turnover for the past years.
The proverb says, “Let well enough alone.” The growth in labor
turnover signifies that under the conditions existing in the third
year of the five-year plan, the working masses are restless. The
bureaucracy sees the chief reason for the turnover in the incor­
rect system of wages, in its too-great equalization. No matter how
this question should be solved—we shall return to this later—it
does not in itself exhaust the problem of the turnover. If during
half a year or even a quarter the workers of an enterprise are
replaced “at least to the extent of 30 to 40 percent,” this means
that not only the skilled upper strata but the working mass as a
whole are in a state of perpetual migration. According to the words
of Stalin, the worker makes it his aim to “work only temporarily
so as to earn a little money and then go off to ‘try his luck’ in
some other place.” In this benign but essentially tragic phrase,
Stalin, without noticing it, approaches the basic defect of the five-year plan: the rude disruption of the economic balance to the detriment of the workers. Enormous electric stations and factories are being constructed, great quantities of machinery and tractors are being turned out, the village is being collectivized; but the proletarians, who should be the basic core of this whole gigantic process, migrate from place to place in search of “luck.” No, the movement of labor forces from the village to the city ceased not because the peasantry achieved some sort of an ideal well-being, but because the position of the workers—this must be said honestly, clearly, openly—extraordinarily worsened in the last period.

The draft platform of the International Left Opposition says: “The living standards of the workers and their role in the state are the highest criteria of socialist successes.” If the Stalinist bureaucracy would approach the tasks of planning and of a living regulation of the economy from this standpoint, it would not misfire so wildly every time, it would not be compelled to conduct a policy of wasteful zigzags, and it would not be confronted by political dangers.

The platform of the Russian Opposition warned five years ago: “The Mensheviks, agents of the bourgeoisie among the workers, point triumphantly to the material wretchedness of our workers. They are trying to rouse the proletariat against the Soviet state, to induce our workers to accept the bourgeois-Menshevik slogan, ‘Back to capitalism.’ The complacent official who sees ‘Menshevism’ in the Opposition’s insistence upon improving the material condition of the workers is performing the best possible service to Menshevism. He is pushing the workers under its yellow banner.”

One must not deceive oneself. The physical migration of the workers may be the precursor to their political migration.

**Socialist enthusiasm and piecework**

Nine-tenths of the new program of Stalin amounts to the re-establishment of piecework. All the rest has an extremely confused character and, in part, only serves to mask the turn to the right.

Stalin says his new turn depends upon the “new epoch” and
the “new tasks” which require “new methods.” But that is too crude a deception. We have seen in a whole number of questions of the world labor movement that the turns of the Stalinist bureaucracy flowed in no way from the changes in the world situation but, on the contrary, they were very often accomplished in opposition to these changes and flowed from the preceding errors of the bureaucracy itself.

We believe the same is true today. We were told that in the third year of the five-year plan the Soviet Union had entered into socialism. If this were so, we should have witnessed a tendency toward the gradual equalization of wages. This tendency should have justified itself and been supported more and more by socialist emulation and by shock brigades. Absurd as it may seem, it was nevertheless we, the Left Opposition, who were accused by the Stalinist bureaucracy of lack of confidence in the socialist enthusiasm of the Russian workers. Because of inertia and in order to preserve an apparent continuity Stalin today repeats the empty formulations of bureaucratic idealism. “Do not forget,” he says, “that the vast majority of the workers have accepted these demands of the Soviet government [discipline, overexertion of effort, emulation, shock brigades] with great enthusiasm, and they are fulfilling them heroically.” Now, if this is true, if we have entered into socialism, if the “vast majority” (mark it well: the vast majority!) of the workers fulfill their tasks “with great enthusiasm” and even “heroically,” one must ask why this same “vast majority” wander from one factory to another to try their luck? And why are they obliged, precisely now, after all the successes have been achieved, to pass over to the system of piecework which is, after all, the most refined capitalist method of exploitation of the working class?

“The principle of the Left Opposition is to say what is,” declares our draft platform. The proletarian revolution has no need of the bureaucratic hodgepodge of idealism. We want the truth.

To be sure, the enemy will rejoice over the negative sides of this truth. It is obvious that it will seize upon certain elements of our criticism, as it seizes upon certain sections of Stalin’s disclosures today. When the enemy uses fragments of the truth in or-
order to weave a system of falsehood it is not serious. But when the workers themselves do not know the truth and do not know where to seek it, that may have tragic consequences.

Heroic enthusiasm can lift the masses for relatively short historical periods. A small minority is capable of manifesting enthusiasm for a whole historical epoch: upon this is based the idea of a revolutionary party as the selection of the best elements from the class.

Socialist construction is a task for decades. One cannot guarantee the solution of this task except by a systematic advance in the material and cultural living standards of the masses. That is the principal condition, more important than the gain in time in the construction of a Dnieprostroy, a Turksib, or a Kuzbas, because with the fall in the physical and moral energy of the proletariat, all the gigantic enterprises may lack a tomorrow.

Stalin pleases his audience with quotations from Marx and Lenin, according to which the differentiation of wages is inevitable for the period of the transition to socialism.

Tomorrow Stalin will quote Marx and Lenin to show that during the transition to socialism the small producer of commodities, the peasant, inevitably gives birth to the kulak. These general truths are indisputable; it is precisely we who recalled them during the "dizziness" which, unfortunately, is not yet at an end today. But it is precisely the Stalinist bureaucracy which, contrary to us, posed as a practical task the liquidation of the kulak, that is, of the stratification of the peasantry, within the limits of the five-year plan accelerated to four years. Contrary to us, the Stalinist bureaucracy affirmed that the essential difficulties on the road to socialism were overcome, that we had already entered into socialism, that the accomplishment of the five-year plan automatically improved the conditions of the workers, and that one could "outstrip" the five-year plan in four years. Then how could the question of piecework be posed so sharply at the end of the third year? This is a question which every conscious worker will ask himself.

On July 7, Pravda quoted the following from the organ of the People’s Commissariat of Labor: “The development of technique and the growth of the role of transport, of electrification, etc., nar-
row the field of piecework.” Is this not a Marxian truth? But Pravda calls this truth a “Trotskyist assertion.” This strange conflict between the official organ of the People’s Commissariat of Labor and the official organ of the Central Committee of the party is explained by the fact that the second issue of Voprossov Truda [Problems of Labor] appeared before Stalin’s speech, while issue number 185 of Pravda appeared two days after the speech. Why was Pravda obliged to transform this simple truth of Marxism into a “Trotskyist” heresy? Because the new turn of Stalin does not at all stem from the development of socialist construction, but from the acute contradiction between the erroneous course of the bureaucracy and the vital needs of the economy.

Piecework wages are not in principled contradiction with the conditions of the transitional Soviet economy; it would be stupid doctrinairism to oppose them. But the abrupt turn toward piecework and the extreme accentuation of the capitalist features of this system present today, in the summer of 1931, at the end of the third year of the five-year plan, after the uninterrupted successes, after we have “entered into socialism,” one of the harshest blows against the workers, from the material as well as from the moral point of view. It is not surprising that the weathercocks and the chameleons of the press are obliged to denounce the elementary positions of Marxism in the field of wages in order to cover up, even if only for a day, the blow dealt to illusions.

That the old method of wages was bad from every point of view has been obvious to us for a long time. One cannot work out a rational, viable, and progressive system of wages without the collaboration of the masses themselves. The trade-union bureaucracy is no better than the rest. Collective contracts and wage scales are elaborated in the offices and imposed upon the workers, like all the other decisions of the infallible center. Without the rebirth of workers’ democracy, a correct policy of wages is absolutely unattainable. “Collective contracts,” says the platform of the Russian Opposition, “should be made after real and not fictitious discussion at workers’ meetings. The work of the trade unions should be judged primarily by the degree to which they defend the economic and the cultural interests of the workers under the existing
industrial limitations. The trade unions must fulfill their func­tions on the basis of genuine elections, publicity, accountability to the membership, bearing the responsibility at every degree of the hierarchical scale. An article should be introduced into the Crimi­nal Code punishing as a serious crime against the state every di­rect or indirect, overt or concealed persecution of a worker for criticizing, for making independent proposals, and for voting.” How accusing these words are today!

But the sharpness of the present turn toward piecework is not the result of a change in the system of wages. It has a more pro­found reason: the lack of material wealth to satisfy the needs of the workers. The wrong method of the plan, the incorrect adjust­ment in the course of its realization, the absence of genuine con­trol by the masses, the absence of the party, the struggle for arti­ficial targets in the name of prestige, the administrative command by the whip, boasting, bluster, stifling of criticism—all these com­bined have led to a false distribution of forces and means and have created, in view of the extremely rapid growth of the number of workers, an intolerable contraction of the real-wage fund. That is why the workers feel restless. That is why they wander from one factory to the other. The excessive pressure on the one hand and the degeneration of the trade unions on the other have provoked the anarchic reaction which is called the fluctuation of the labor force. Stalin has shown us the enormous extent of this reaction. “You will find few factories,” he says, “where the personnel does not change at least to the extent of 30 to 40 percent of the total in the course of a half year, or even in one quarter.” This is the threat­ening extent of the disease which the bureaucracy has sought to bring to an end. The moving from one factory to another, from one town to another, means moreover an enormous waste of pro­ductive forces, a needless loss of time for the move itself as well as for adaptation to new working conditions. That is the principal reason for the decline in returns and the increase in the net costs. But the greatest danger of the fluctuation—in the hunt for luck!—consists in the decline in the morale of the proletariat.

The mere accentuation of piecework settles nothing. It can only create a stratum of more prosperous workers. The tendency to-
ward creation of a labor bureaucracy in the factories corresponds perfectly to the procedures of the Stalinist bureaucracy. From this angle, piecework is a purely political method. As a panacea, it completes the evolution of Stalinism. The tradition of Bolshevism is a tradition of struggle against aristocratic castes within the working class. On this basis is erected the structure of the dictatorship of the proletariat. The program of the Stalinist bureaucracy leads it inexorably to the necessity of supporting itself upon the ever more privileged labor aristocracy. Here lies hidden the immediate political danger for the dictatorship of the proletariat!

A personal revelation

The new policy is enacted in the same way as the old policy: as a personal revelation. Stalin informs us that the uninterrupted workweek was introduced “too hastily, without preparing suitable conditions for it.” What were the results? Stalin is compelled to point them out: “no sense of responsibility for the job, machinery is handled carelessly, large numbers of machine tools break down, and there is no incentive for increasing the productivity of labor.” Stalin generalizes it all in a single phrase: “Nobody is responsible for anything.” A terrific avowal, or rather a disavowal of his own policy. “Nobody is responsible for anything”—that always happens when a single individual wants to be responsible for everything.

The uninterrupted workweek was introduced too hastily. But who introduced it? The general secretary. Was it discussed among the working masses before its introduction? Not at all. Everything was prepared secretly. The masses accepted the uninterrupted workweek “with enthusiasm,” according to the official communications. And are things happening differently now? Only yesterday, all these calamities of which Stalin speaks today were not dealt with at all in the press. We have already said and written more than once that among the Stalinist bureaucrats everything proceeds marvelously five minutes before everything goes wrong. In enumerating the disastrous results of the bureaucratic uninterrupted workweek, Stalin deals in passing with the most ticklish and the most dangerous question. “There can be no doubt,” he
says, “that our business executives understand all this very well. But they keep silent. Why? Evidently because they fear the truth. But since when have Bolsheviks begun to fear the truth?” Since the Stalinist apparatus, by its cretinism, by its lack of ideas and principles, stifled the Bolshevik-Leninist faction! Precisely since that moment! The executives, according to Stalin, “fear the truth.” What a perfidious formula! It is not the truth they fear; they are afraid of falling victim to the truth because Rakovsky, Sosnovsky, Muralov, Eltsin, Gruenstein, Kasparova, Kosior, and together with them hundreds and thousands of the best Bolsheviks—the very ones who do not fear the truth and know how to defend it—fill the prisons of Stalin and the places of deportation and exile. There lies the knot of the problem of the party.

After having crushed the Left Opposition, the Stalinist bureaucracy stifled the party. It no longer exists, this living, sensitive, supple, and flexible organization which experienced the life of the masses, which saw all, which criticized, which generalized, which signaled the dangers in time, and collectively elaborated the new roads. “Now that the centrist bureaucracy has strangled the party,” says the draft platform of the International Left Opposition, “that is, has remained without eyes and ears, it moves along gropingly and determines its path under the direct impact of the classes, oscillating between opportunism and adventurism.” Even more, within the apparatus itself, the fear of the lower functionary for the higher functionary has reached such a point that nobody dares any longer to look facts in the face and to point them out to his superior. At the lower rungs, the functionaries acquiesce in everything asked of them at the higher rungs, and the latter regard it as the voice of the ranks themselves. In order to work out the measures for applying the new policy, the plenum of the Central Control Commission has been convoked. They seek to give this event an exceptional significance, for this time not only the members of the CCC are called, but also the representatives of the regional bodies and of a number of rank-and-file organizations. In other words, the higher functionaries are calling the lower functionaries to their aid. All are designated from above. All are united by subordination and mutual responsibility. And this council of func-
tionaries is represented as the supreme expression of democracy!

Does not the new abrupt turn justify the convocation of an extraordinary congress of the party? But the regime of personal revelations (each time after a delay of a few years) does not tolerate the regime of party democracy, nor the existence of the party itself. Then do the Bolsheviks really fear the truth? The name of the Bolshevik who today most fears the truth is Stalin. Otherwise he would not fear to consult the congress, that is, the party, in this new abrupt turn in policy.

In recent months, we have received a number of letters reporting conversations which our correspondents have had with party bureaucrats at different stages of ossification. They are for the most part terribly frightened people. They observe and understand a great deal, but their will is broken. Their philosophy is the philosophy of adaptation. Here is what they say most frequently: "You speak of the party regime. To be sure, it is very onerous. Everybody feels it. But you must know that it cannot be otherwise. Without an iron hand we would not overcome the difficulties. Your criticism of Stalin’s mistakes is right on the whole, and the events have confirmed it. We have no illusions about Stalin. Of course, he will never set the Thames on fire: from the intellectual point of view, he is a mediocre man, with inadequate theoretical preparation, without broad perspectives. We frequently feel these defects on our own backs. But he has indispensable positive qualities: firmness, tenacity, perseverance. Besides, he is entirely bound up with the apparatus. And whatever you may say, the apparatus now is everything." Thus speak many bureaucrats. It seems to them that the stifling of the party, painful though it is, is justified by the circumstances and later—oh well!—later socialism will come and will change everything.

Here lies the fundamental mistake. Socialism is not a ready-made system which can spring full-blown from someone’s head, even the most gifted one. The task of the correct division of the forces and means of production can only be solved by means of constant criticism, by verification, by the ideological struggle of the various groupings within the proletariat. We reject formal democracy because in the framework of capitalism it means hand-
ing over the keys to the enemy armed to the teeth. But at the same time we insist that without working-class democracy we will not be able to maintain the dictatorship of the proletariat, let alone succeed in building socialism. Stalin’s zigzags are more costly each time. Only fools and the blind can believe that socialism can be handed down from above, that it can be introduced bureaucratically. Louder than ever before, we warn the advanced workers of the USSR and of the whole world: the new zigzag of Stalin, regardless of the manner in which it will develop in the next period, will lead inevitably to new and still sharper contradictions at the next stage. We must begin with the restoration of proletarian democracy. This is now the decisive link in the whole chain. The problems of the economy must be discussed in their full scope throughout the party and the trade unions. For this it is necessary that the Bolsheviks cease to fear to speak the truth. This can be attained only by removing the chains from those who fought and still fight for the right to speak the truth. The Left Opposition (Bolshevik-Leninists) must be readmitted into the party. A discussion must be opened on the fundamental questions of economics and politics. A new party congress must be prepared upon the basis of party democracy!
July 19, 1931

Greetings to the weekly 'Militant'

National Committee of the Communist League of America

Dear Comrades:

Our little group in Kadikoy was very happy to receive our old friend *The Militant* in a new form. Let us hope that the paper, with its regular weekly appearance, will now exercise not only a doubled but a tenfold influence.

I am sending you an article on the latest turn in Stalinist policy. The world capitalist press violently exaggerated the significance of this turn from its standpoint, but from our standpoint its significance cannot be overestimated. We are approaching a critical stage in the USSR which will have its effects also inside the party and the International. The world crisis, the Spanish revolution, the great events in Germany—all these place vast tasks before *The Militant*. We are fighting for genuine scientific ideas and principles, with inadequate technical, material, and personal means. But correct ideas will always find the necessary corresponding means and forces. With best communist greetings.

Yours,

L. Trotsky
Some ideas on the period and the tasks of the Left Opposition

1. The revolutionary tide is now indisputable. The Communist parties are growing stronger in certain countries. The elementary flow of forces turns aside the questions of strategy and puts them in second or third place. The workers move toward the Communists as the most intransigent party. In the same direction act the economic successes in the USSR, acknowledged by an important part of the bourgeois press, and by that fact becoming even more convincing to the workers.

2. This general political situation, even though paradoxical at first sight, strikes not only at the Right Opposition but also at the Left. That is what explains, in the last analysis, the Austrian capitulations, the lack of growth in certain countries, the weakening of activity, etc. Over and above any local, specific, and personal reason, there is a general reason: the spontaneous upsurge which has not yet posed the questions of revolutionary strategy, which has not yet solved completely the contradictions in the position of the Comintern and of its sections at this new historical stage. It is evident that under these conditions a faction which does not simply swim with the stream but which studies the situation critically and consciously poses all the questions of strategy must inevitably be
set back, for a certain time; inside this faction there will be manifested feelings of impatience which, in isolated cases, take a capitulatory form.

3. In some situations victory is possible even with a very bad policy. With the deepening of the crisis and its prolongation, with the subsequent disintegration of the social democracy and the demoralization of the governments, the victory of the German Communist Party is not excluded, even with the policy of the Thaelmann leadership. But, unfortunately, it is merely not excluded. The actual chances for such a victory are not great. Of course if the battles develop, the Left Opposition will take part in them as a not very large but as the most resolute detachment. I believe that the Left Opposition should now make a declaration, not public but official, on this subject: for instance, address a letter to the Central Committee of the German Communist Party stating that without renouncing a particle of its views the Left Opposition as a whole, and each of its members in particular, is ready to put its forces at the disposal of the party for any mission or task whatever. A declaration made in this manner, regardless of its immediate consequences, would have an educational import and would bring returns in the future.

4. A victory in Germany would have decisive international importance. We have said that it is not excluded, even with the present leadership. But there is still a long way to go to victory. The fundamental feature of the situation in Germany, this time too, is the extreme disproportion between the acuteness of the revolutionary situation and the strength of the party. On this point Trotsky has spoken in his pamphlet about the last Reichstag elections [The Turn in the Communist International and the Situation in Germany]. The contradictions in the political situation analyzed in this pamphlet have become more acute. The party, having weakened itself for a few years by an untimely offensive, conducts an essentially defensive and waiting policy. An entirely real perspective arises: the objective situation may change in favor of the bourgeoisie before the semispontaneous flow of forces permits the Communist Party to advance to a decisive offensive.

5. In Spain, the same disproportion. During the development
of the revolution, on the ascendancy and favorable to the proletariat, the Comintern lets month after month escape, discloses its weakness and its bankruptcy, nurtures anarcho-syndicalism, gives the bourgeoisie the possibility of consolidating itself, and thus prepares an outcome for the revolution not in the Russian style but in the German (1918-19).

6. I follow developments in China very little now, but there too the crying mistake of recent years—the ignoring of the real situation of the country, the negation of democratic-revolutionary tasks, the ignoring of the proletariat, the transfer of the center of gravity to the peasant war—has prepared a tragic denouement. Chiang Kai-shek begins with destroying peasant homes while the cities remain tranquil. His victory in this case threatens the Communists with a frightful extermination and a new weakening of the revolution for a prolonged period.

7. The economic development of the USSR is now visibly entering into a critical phase. The “motley picture” of the execution of the five-year plan (according to Stalin’s expression) signifies the disruption of the proportions even within the formal framework of the plan. However, the crux of the matter lies in whether success is obtained, and in what measure, in establishing the necessary proportions between the elements of the plan and the spontaneous and semispontaneous processes in the economy. From the very beginning we anticipated that the accumulating contradictions and disproportions—in the absence of constant and open regulation—would break out in the third, the fourth, or the fifth year. Now this stage has drawn quite near.

8. According to the objective conditions, we have entered into the period of revolutions and of revolutionary wars. In these conditions the Red Army is a historical factor of enormous importance. On the balance scale of history, the Red Army could prevail considerably not only over German fascism, but even more over Polish. The general situation in Europe entirely justifies a revolutionary offensive. But this poses with exceptional acuteness the question of bread, of meat, of horses, of oats and—after that—of the mood of the peasantry and also the mood of the working class. The discordant and bureaucratic planning and regulation lead, at
a critical moment, to a state of affairs where the economy, powerful in its inherent possibilities, is extremely weak in actual performance.

9. In a long-range policy one must also foresee the worst variant, especially if the likelihood of it is as great as it is under the present conditions. What is this worst variant? The German proletariat does not take power in the next period. The Spanish Communist Party does not succeed in time in measuring up to the role of leader of the working class. Capitalism benefits by a respite. Under the fascist or the “democratic” or a combined form, it pulls out of the crisis. To be sure, the declining character of capitalism cannot be overcome. But even now the temporary pacification of China can open up a parade ground for operations in grand style. A new industrial upswing can in no way be considered as theoretically excluded in advance.

10. The period we are experiencing is characterized by the fact that capitalism has slipped down ever more deeply into the quagmire of crisis, while the Soviet Union has yielded ever-greater percentages of growth. The danger consists in the fact that the world can present, in the coming period, a picture of a contrary character up to a certain point. More particularly: capitalism will extricate itself from the crisis and in the Soviet Union all the disproportions and contradictions that were driven in by bureaucratic pressure as revealed in Stalin’s last speech will erupt.

All that is said above naturally has a hypothetical character. Just as in economic planning one must have maximum and minimum variants, so in political prognoses one must take the best and worst variants. Analyzed above is the worst possible variant. The reality will develop somewhere between the best and the worst variant, even though, it may be feared, closer to the worst than to the best. What does this mean for the development of communism itself? A period of deep internal crisis, of criticism, of the verification of past experiences, of discussion of the past. What has the Left Opposition done effectively up to now? Very little. There is a certain amount of critical works and platforms which the Western proletariat, even its vanguard, even the vanguard of this vanguard, has not assimilated and has not tested by its own
experience. In various countries there existed for years opposition groups which sometimes never had anything in common with Bolshevism and which only compromised the Left Opposition by their sympathy for it. Our work in this last period reduced itself in large measure to the purging of the ranks of the Opposition of accidental, alien, and really pernicious elements. With this, we ourselves committed not a few mistakes, which are quite inevitable and the price of learning. There is nothing astonishing in the fact that the workers did not rush headlong to the call of the Left Opposition groups in the various countries. The current revolutionary tide is in itself rewarding to the advanced workers and pushes strategical problems into the background. All this, as is said above, entirely explains why the Left Opposition, in a number of cases, finds itself outside of the mainstream of the movement. But this is to be explained as a temporary situation. The questions of revolutionary strategy will be posed in a short time in a number of countries, first in Germany or in Spain, with exceptional sharpness. A large part of what was said by the Opposition in the past, and which now appears to be forgotten—in part by the Opposition itself—will surface tomorrow, will come to life again, and will once more acquire an extraordinarily timely character.

We defend absolutely correct ideas and methods with the aid of inadequate, primitive means. The Comintern defends wrong ideas with the aid of “American” technique. But in the long run it is the correct idea that triumphs.

From this follows still another conclusion. Our strength at the given stage lies in a correct appreciation, in a Marxian conception, in a correct revolutionary prognosis. These qualities we must present first of all to the proletarian vanguard. We act in the first place as propagandists. We are too weak to attempt to give answers to all questions, to intervene in all the specific conflicts, to formulate everywhere and in all places the slogans and the replies of the Left Opposition. The chase after such a universality, with our weakness and the inexperience of many comrades, will often lead to too-hasty conclusions, to imprudent slogans, to wrong solutions. By false steps in particulars we will be the ones to com-
promise ourselves by preventing the workers from appreciating the fundamental qualities of the Left Opposition. I do not want in any way to say by this that we must stand aside from the real struggle of the working class. Nothing of the sort. The advanced workers can test the revolutionary advantages of the Left Opposition only by living experiences, but one must learn to select the most vital, the most burning, and the most principled questions and on these questions engage in combat without dispersing oneself in trifles and details. It is in this, it appears to me, that the fundamental role of the Left Opposition now lies.
August 20, 1931

A motion and its interpretation

Dear Comrade Collinet:

Thank you for the interesting news. The teachers congress motion on the USSR, etc., is undoubtedly quite sympathetic, but I must admit that I really cannot see how you can compare this motion to the proposal of La Verite. It is certain that the majority of the federation has not expressed its opinion on the Chinese question, the problems of the Spanish Communist Party, or the question of the five-year plan. The motion of the Federation of Teachers has a purely demonstrative character and, for a good part of the congress, a purely platonic one. Insofar as I understand it, the Monattists and even the pure anarcho-syndicalists voted affirmatively. Do you really think these irreconcilable adversaries have decided to support the Left Opposition? No, they are using a “sympathetic” gesture to continue their anticommunist struggle. This isn’t an argument against the motion itself. But it is an argument against the false interpretation of this motion and, permit me to say it, also an argument against the political attitude of comrades who are inclined toward false interpretations of the activities of communists and anticommunists: too hostile toward the former, too soft on the latter.

L. Trotsky
Even bureaucratic shifts can be of great significance. When Ordzhonikidze was transferred to the Supreme Council of National Economy, Yaroslavsky undoubtedly expected to be appointed chairman of the Central Control Commission. But the appointee was Andreyev, who was much younger and who, it would seem, “earned” it incomparably less. There were even whispers in Moscow, half in earnest, half serious, that Yaroslavsky was going over to the Opposition.

As a matter of fact, direction of the GPU has been concentrated in the hands of Yagoda in recent years. He seemed to be the natural successor to Menzhinsky. Suddenly Yagoda is demoted to second assistant, and the little-known Akulov is advanced to first place.

What does this mean? Yaroslavsky and Yagoda are two figures on the same order, of the same type, as if made for the same jobs. Closely tied to each other, they performed through the two bodies of apparatus repression—the Central Control Commission and the GPU—Stalin’s most delicate assignments in the struggle against his opponents and even in matters of personal revenge.
against all who at any time, in any way, brushed up against him.

These two, Yaroslavsky and Yagoda, could be given any kind of assignment, without risk of their refusal. Who but Yaroslavsky could be commissioned to bring about the suicide of the faultless Glazman? Who but Yagoda would have been capable of starving out the innocent Butov? What other pair could better carry out “the Soviet and party order”—the shooting of Blumkin? It can be considered quite probable that the alleged article by Trotsky on the five-year plan was suggested thirdhand to the reactionary press by Yagoda, and that Yaroslavsky, involved in this with him, then exposed Trotsky’s counterrevolutionary crusade against the Soviets in Pravda. We do not claim that this is exactly the way it happened, but every informed member of the apparatus admits that it might be. In the past there were hundreds of such exploits carried out under Stalin’s direct instructions or in hope of his approval.

Who, then, should be put at the head of the Central Control Commission, if not the incomparable Yaroslavsky? And who is more qualified to head the GPU and carry out Stalin’s most “intimate” assignments than Yagoda?

Why, therefore, was the very picturesque Yaroslavsky pushed aside by the colorless, though zealous, Andreyev? And why did Yagoda, who is ready for anything, have to yield his place to Akulov? These are interesting questions.

The fact that it is impossible for Stalin to appoint his emissaries to the most important posts is an expression of the unarticulated, almost anonymous, yet insurmountable resistance of the apparatus against the recent consequences of the Stalinist system. On the whole the Stalinists will accept Stalin and all that he implies. But now we see that Yaroslavsky and Yagoda stick in their craw. Stalin has to make extraordinary efforts to retain even in secondary and tertiary positions the people he needs the most.

This is a symptom, one of many, that Stalin, who was raised up by the apparatus, is in continual silent struggle with the apparatus, which somehow feels the pressure of the party on it. The rejection of Yaroslavsky and the demotion of Yagoda is a singular warning to Stalin on the part of the apparatus, one could almost
say a secret vote of lack of confidence.

Such symptoms, and even more expressive ones, may be expected in the future in greater number. A growing alarm of the apparatus precedes the inevitable awakening of the party. In the future we should expect more and more “very significant facts.”
To friendly, sympathetic, vacillating, skeptical, and antagonistic readers

The life of our Biulleten is linked inseparably with the processes unfolding in the USSR. The Biulleten gets into the land of the Soviets in modest numbers. But the entire history of revolutionary struggle is proof that ideas, if they correspond to the objective trend of development, find their way through the narrowest openings. In the Soviet press, published in millions of copies, we come across at every step—distorted and refracted—reflections of the criticisms, advice, and warnings which have appeared in the columns of our Biulleten. The truly incredible fact that Pravda basely reprinted from a lying, indecent, reactionary Polish newspaper a forgery alleged to be an article by Trotsky becomes the most convincing illustration that the ideas of the Opposition, corroborated at every step by the objective trend of development, increasingly alarm the ruling Stalinist group and oblige it to use any means in order to compromise the Biulleten and the editorial board. In vain!

In the past year we have learned from different sources that a great impression was created by the fact that the much-talked-about Stalin letter on “Dizzy with Success” turned out to be only
a belated bureaucratic rehash of the timely warnings of the *Biulleten Oppozitsii*.

It is true that after that in the troubled circles of the party and especially of the apparatus a temporary period of noticeable calm set in. Moderation of administration excesses in the sphere of collectivization promised to improve the mutual relations with the peasantry. At the same time, industry continued to show record figures—at least to the extent that the facts of the arrears, gaps, and holdups had for a certain time been ignored or played down and concealed. These conditions aroused a flow of sympathy toward the *Biulleten*.

Yes, you were right, said to us the half-friends, the semi-vacillators, the very ones who were neither cold nor hot, like the angel of the Laodicean Church—but the necessary corrections are already included in the official policy, the five-year plan is going ahead at full speed, and consequently there is no place for an opposition.

Certainly, added others, the question of the party regime still remains. Here the *Biulleten* is absolutely correct: the regime is unbearable. But let us get firmly established on a sounder economic basis, then a sounder superstructure will develop!

It has long been known that philistine subservience is much inclined to don the colors of Marxist objectivity.

But the vacillations of half-friends did not inspire us. The direction of our policy is determined neither by isolated episodes in the economic process nor by the particular ebb and flow of successes and failures, nor by the bureaucratic zigzags of the present leadership, but only by Marxist analyses of all the circumstances and resources of a transitional society in capitalist encirclement, and by consistent Bolshevik evaluation of the theory and practice of bureaucratic centrism. *Our policy is a long-term policy.* We serve the cause of the October Revolution and the international proletariat under special conditions—not only banishment of individuals and imprisonment of friends and cothinkers (we experienced these in the past more than once) but even internationally organized persecution into which the gigantic forces and resources of the Stalinist apparatus have been poured. We serve the cause of
the October Revolution under unprecedented, difficult historical conditions; but we are as confident today in the correctness of our ideas and in their power to conquer as we were on October 25, 1917.

Our policy is a long-term policy. This gives us the possibility to reveal, behind the conjunctural changes, behind particular shifts and regroupments, behind bureaucratic turmoil, the fundamental motive forces, to foresee the approaching dangers in time and to raise a warning voice.

Stalin’s June speech produced, from all accounts, an enormous impression in the party and especially in the apparatus. Ninetenths, if not more, turn out to be not only the agents of Stalinist policy but also its victims. With the stifling of the party, the apparatchiks are themselves deprived of the possibility of knowing the truth. They interpret as completed what are disconnected fragments and nothing remains for them but to accept on trust the brief formulas and generalizations emanating from above. Stalin’s speech burst on them not like thunder from a clear sky but like the boom of an unexpected earthquake. At first, they thought in all lucidity that the bureaucratic acts of violence to the economy and the additional bureaucratic acts of violence to the party not only did not guarantee future automatic successes but threatened to blow up also what had been achieved.

From the bits of facts and thoughts which Stalin could not help but give in his June speech even the most conservative and least sensitive of the apparatchiks felt how great the dangers approaching were and—they greedily looked again in the pages of the Bulletin for answers to the disquieting questions.

The working masses in the USSR, including the party workers, experience for themselves in daily life the contradictions, miscalculations, and flounderings of the leadership. The masses are capable of enormous sacrifices if they assimilate the objective conditions and if they understand the place hardship takes in the general struggle for lofty goals. But woe to the leadership which flatters the masses with false perspectives, which sows illusions in order to strike more harshly afterwards at the consciousness of the masses with compulsory, self-revealing, and weak admissions.
Stalinism has become a double danger: devoid of a Marxist understanding of the economic processes, it continually leads the economy now into a “right” now into a “left” impasse, and at the same time, by not allowing the party to educate its members and raise their consciousness, makes it susceptible to suggestions of panic and prepares the way for a grave crisis of confidence.

Under these conditions, the voice of the Left Opposition must ring out louder than ever before. Our programmatic and strategic positions have been tested in the course of the last eight years by events of gigantic historical significance. Today in Spain, the Stalinist bureaucracy is forced at every step to have recourse to parasitical borrowings from the Left Opposition in order to find a way out from centrism, which has no way out. In Germany, where one of the most important knots in the struggle of world historical forces is being tied, the Stalinist presidium of the Comintern, that organizer of great defeats, at every step pushes the proletarian vanguard off course, helping the German social democracy, the most crime-stained section of the Second International.

The great world events of today are inseparably linked with those taking place in the USSR—not only on account of the general indissoluble interdependence of world economy and world politics but also on account of the fact that the errors in Spain, Germany, and the USSR come from the one organizational center and feed on one and the same ideological, unprincipled, shortsighted “coarse and disloyal” Stalinism.

Our Biulleten is needed today for the cause of the October Revolution and world communism more than ever before. We think we have the right to expect not only from our friends but also from readers in all the categories listed above, even from antagonistic readers (certainly not from class enemies), closer attention and more positive ideological help.

In recent times, people have written to us from different places, both from the USSR and from abroad, that for many sympathizers fear of exposure holds up active forms of help. Agents specializing in the struggle against the Biulleten spread rumors that we print “all” the news that comes to us, regardless of the danger in which we involve the comrades by this presentation. There is no
need to say how false and ludicrous are these allegations. Nobody has yet suffered on account of carelessness or rashness on the part of the editorial board of the Biulleten or its business office. Our friends and correspondents can rely completely on our experience and on our prudence. It is necessary only to tell oneself that the Biulleten must not only exist but it must appear more often than before, in a greater number of copies, and reach more readers in the Soviet Union. Whoever wishes to be taken for a genuine, that is, to be relied on as a confirmed revolutionist will take the road to us. We, on our side, are doing everything to organize connections correctly and reliably.

We need information. From the letters sent to us we use only what can be published without danger to our correspondents and, it goes without saying, without harm to the cause we serve. We need correspondents. We need the criticisms of friendly antagonists and semiantagonists.

We need personal organizational connections. We need subscribers. We need addresses in the USSR. Finally, we need money—for money is still the “sinews” not only of war but also of political struggle.

We call for help; we await the response!
Is it correct to speak of dual power in the USSR? We never speak of dual power but only of elements of dual power. . . .

Absolutely correct. That is exactly what I had in mind. But even such a formulation raises doubts. Elements of dual power have always existed in the Soviet republic, from the first day of its existence. Why, then, do we speak of them only now? After all, the NEP was an official recognition of elements of dual power in the economy. Now, the relationship between capitalist and socialist economic tendencies has changed in favor of socialism. But this is just when we begin to speak of elements of dual power. Isn’t this wrong? Couldn’t it give rise to the idea that we consider the development of dual power and consequently the destruction of the dictatorship of the proletariat inevitable?

There is no question that in every class society it is possible to discover elements of the preceding regime as well as of that regime which is about to replace the existing one. The whole question, however, is: which class is supreme and to what extent it is supreme. The bourgeoisie acts when it is forced to. Significant
economic and political concessions to the proletariat create important preconditions for the future in the womb of capitalist society. But to the extent that the bourgeoisie itself decides what to concede and what not to concede, to the extent that the power remains in its hands, to the extent that it relies with confidence on the bureaucratic apparatus and on the armed forces, to that extent there are no grounds for speaking of elements of dual power. The NEP was a conscious and strictly calculated concession by the proletarian power to the petty-bourgeois masses of the population. What to concede and how much to concede were decided by the proletarian dictatorship, primarily by the Communist Party, as the living leadership of the Soviets. In this basic point the position now is immeasurably less favorable, despite the great economic successes. Now there is no party leading the Soviet apparatus; in its turn, the Soviet apparatus is being pushed back by the bureaucratic apparatus, and the latter is riddled with elements of another class: the trials of the saboteurs were to open the eyes of the blind on this score.

But weren't there in fact similar trials in the past? Weren't there in fact various conspiracies? We recall the affair of the National Center, the trial of the SRs, etc. However, we didn't speak then of elements of dual power.

That's absolutely true. But between the old trials and the new there is the deepest qualitative difference. Then, the question was about conspirators acting illegally and gathering forces for an armed overthrow, or of those who resorted to terrorist acts. In this, too, there were a few elements of dual power as in the past activities of the revolutionists in czarist Russia. The saboteurs of the last few years have acted quite differently. They occupied responsible posts of leadership in the economic apparatus. Their sabotage consisted in openly and publicly—with the approval of the Politburo—putting through programs which in essence were directed against socialist construction and the proletarian dictatorship. The Left Opposition exposed them. But the party apparatus, directed by the ruling Stalinist faction, smashed the Left Opposition in the course of a few years, trying to prove to the workers that the economic plans of the saboteurs were the purest embodiment of Leninism. If the saboteurs were the agents of the bour-
geoisie, 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. The significance of these elements is increased a hundredfold by the party apparatus smashing those proletarian revolutionists who exposed the saboteurs. At the time when the Ramzins not only legally but with authority put through their programs under the supervision of the Krzhyzhanovskys, Ustrialov demanded that the Politburo arrest and exile those who acted against the Ramzins; and Stalin carried out Ustrialov’s social law. Is it really not clear that we have before us elements of dual power in the very summits of the state apparatus?

Just the same, weren’t the saboteurs punished and the policy changed?

Of course. If this hadn’t happened then we would have to speak not of elements of dual power but of the centrist bureaucracy going over to the service of the bourgeoisie and of the destruction of the proletarian dictatorship as accomplished fact. That is the view of Korsch, Urbahns, and Pfemfert; but it is not ours. However, it would be basically incorrect to think that a shift of the centrist policy to the left signifies the liquidation of the political elements of dual power. The artificial speedup of the rates of industrialization and collectivization can be just as much an act of sabotage as their artificial slowing-down. Symptoms of this are plain to be seen. Meanwhile, the party is being crushed still more, the apparatus still further demoralized. 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? Who can answer this question? No one! 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.

Does this not mean then that we are heading in the direction of increasing dual power?
It is impossible to answer that by guessing. This is a problem of the correlation of forces. It will be put to the test and decided in the process of the struggle itself. The Left Opposition will not occupy the last place in that struggle. Its numbers are few but after all it consists of cadres who are highly qualified and keenly tempered. Crystallization around these cadres could take place very rapidly in a critical moment.

What does the slogan of a Coalition Central Committee mean? Could this not be understood in the sense of an unprincipled bloc of three factions? In what measure is this slogan applicable to the European parties?

Let's begin with the last question: to put forward the slogan of a Coalition CC in Germany or France would be simply ludicrous. The Left Opposition is demanding a place for itself not in the CC but in the party. The composition of the CC will be determined by the party on the basis of democratic centralism. In the USSR, the position is essentially different. There is no party there: it is dissolved into millions entered on party and youth lists and artificially kept in a state of atomization and ideological weakness. In the moment of political crisis the party apparatus could be poised on the brink of chaos and itself begin to disintegrate rapidly. How can we find a way out in such a situation? How do we reach the party? Meanwhile, party elements, great in numbers and very valuable, although dissolved into the nonparty millions, still exist and in the hour of danger will be prepared to respond. Under such conditions a Coalition CC would be in essence an organizational commission for the reconstruction of the party. The question is not about some principled slogan or other but about one of the possible organizational ways out from a completely artificial and unique situation. But, of course, this is only a purely hypothetical formula.

How do you regard the slogan “Workers’ and Peasants’ Government”?

In general, it is a negative one, and especially for Germany. Even in Russia where the agrarian question played a decisive role and where we had a revolutionary peasant movement, we did not put forward the slogan even in 1917. We spoke of a government
of the proletariat and the village poor, that is, semiproletarians led by the proletariat. Through this the class character of the government was fully defined. True, subsequently we called the Soviet government worker and peasant. But by this time the dictatorship of the proletariat was already a fact, the Communist Party was in power, and consequently the name Workers’ and Peasants’ Government could not give rise to any ambiguity or grounds for alarm. But let’s turn to Germany: to put forward here the slogan of a workers’ and peasants’ government, as it were putting the proletariat and the peasantry on the same footing, is completely incongruous. Where, in Germany, is there a revolutionary peasant movement? In politics it is impossible to operate with imaginary or hypothetical quantities. When we speak of a workers’ government then we can explain to a farm laborer that we are referring to that kind of government which will protect him against exploiters even if they are peasants. When we speak of a workers’ and peasants’ government then we confuse the farm laborer, the agricultural worker, who in Germany is a thousand times more important to us than the abstract “peasant” or the “middle peasant” who is hostile to us. We can only reach the peasant poor in Germany through the agricultural workers. We can only neutralize the intermediary layers of peasants by rallying the proletariat under the slogan of a workers’ government.

Are the references to Lenin in support of the slogan a “Workers’ and Peasants’ Government” correct?

Totally incorrect. The slogan itself was put forward, as far as I remember, between the Fourth and Fifth Congresses of the Comintern as a weapon in the struggle against “Trotskyism.” The formation of the famous Krestintern took place under this slogan. The secretary of the Krestintern, Teodorovich, formulated a new Marxist slogan, “The liberation of the peasants must be the work of the peasants themselves.” To this epigonic ideology the slogan of a workers’ and peasants’ government fully corresponds; it has nothing in common with Leninism.
A letter to Albert Treint

Dear Comrade Treint:

As I was able to convince myself from our correspondence and now from our conversations, your mind turns constantly not to questions of program and policy but rather to isolated incidents in the past. Tirelessly and—if you will allow me—with the bias of a prosecutor, you ferret out the mistakes of others, thinking in this way to minimize your own. Previously in correspondence and now in personal talks, I made several attempts to shunt you from this, in my opinion, barren path to the path of the vital and actual problems of the revolution, but you stubbornly persist on your own. Pursuing the tradition of the period when you stood at the head of the French party, you continue to demand of everybody the admission of their mistakes. I am forced to take my stand on the level to which you reduce our political discussion in order once and for all to draw a line under certain questions. Inasmuch as in your researches you operate with isolated petty episodes, data, chance conversations, and so on, elements, that is, which do not at all allow of verification, I prefer to answer you in writing. First, I shall begin with an “admission of my mistakes.”
Yes, in the early part of 1924 I did allow my name to be signed, in my absence, to Radek’s theses on the German revolution. These theses were erroneous—to tell the truth, not so grossly in error as were the theses of the Comintern—and were in conflict with everything that I wrote and said prior, during, and after their compilation by Radek. Doubtless it was a blunder on my part. But there was nothing “principled” in this mistake. The plenum of the Executive Committee of the Communist International found me ill in a village, 40 kilometers away from Moscow. Radek communicated with me by phone, which functioned very poorly in winter. Radek was being hounded at the plenum. He was seeking support. He declared categorically that the views presented by the theses were identical with those I had developed in my speeches and articles, and that Pyatakov had already signed them. He asked me to add my signature without insisting upon reading the theses since he had only half an hour before the decisive session. I agreed—not without inner wavering—to give my signature. Yes, I committed an error in placing too much confidence in the judgment of two comrades, Radek and Pyatakov. For, as a matter of fact, the two of them, perhaps even in agreement with Brandler, introduced into the theses a number of formulations which were intended to mitigate Brandler’s guilt, and to justify the conduct of Pyatakov and Radek themselves, who supported Brandler in many things.

After acquainting myself with Radek’s theses, I did not hide either from their author or from any other comrade my disapproval of the theses. In speeches and articles that were issued as pamphlets, and later in entire volumes, I formulated time and again my appraisal of the German situation, which had nothing in common with Radek’s theses. This appraisal, which I arrived at approximately in July 1923, I have upheld unaltered in its essentials to this very day. Herein I naturally include the appraisal of Brandler’s politics, that of the Zinoviev faction of the Comintern, and so on.

It is a noteworthy fact that not a single member of the Zinoviev clique utilized in Russia my signature to Radek’s theses, for my attitude towards the Brandlerites was far too well known. From September 1923 to January 1924, Zinoviev and Stalin even defended Brandler against my allegedly unjustified attacks. But far
more important is another aspect of the matter which has apparently completely slipped your memory. With all its errors as regards the past, Radek’s resolution contained a most important warning as regards the future: it stated that the directly revolutionary situation had passed, and that a period of defensive struggles and preparation for a new revolutionary situation was in store. In my eyes this was the central point. On the other hand, the resolution of the Comintern continued to steer a course toward armed insurrection. Hence flowed the ill-fated policy of ultra-leftism of 1924–25. Had I been present at the plenum, and had the adoption of one of these two resolutions hinged upon my vote, I would have voted for Radek’s resolution, notwithstanding all of its mistakes in regard to the past. But you, Comrade Treint, voted for the resolution of the Comintern which resulted in the greatest calamities and devastations. That is why you are hardly the proper prosecutor even as regards Radek’s poor resolution.

In 1924 you couldn’t of course be acquainted with the behind-the-scenes history of Radek’s resolution. At that time, you had the right to invest my signature to Radek’s theses with an exaggerated importance, without juxtaposing them with what I had personally said and written on this very question. But since that time almost eight years have elapsed. All the most important documents have long been published in all languages. My book on the Comintern [The Third International After Lenin] states everything essential insofar as the policy of the Brandlerites in 1923 is concerned.

I ask you: What do you expect to glean now, in the autumn of 1931, from the chance episode of my signature to Radek’s theses? Why not give yourself an answer to this question? Why not formulate your reply in writing?

Furthermore, you persistently cite my declaration that in all fundamental questions on which I disagreed with Lenin, Lenin was right as against me. This declaration is contained in the platform of the Opposition bloc of 1926. You, like Zinoviev, seek to draw directly or indirectly from this declaration the conclusion that you were correct in the criticism which you and your faction directed against me from 1924 to 1927—if not entirely then at least partially so.
And here, too, I begin with an "admission of my mistake." And this time likewise the error was not of a principled character: it rests completely and exclusively on the plane of inner factional tactics.

In its general form, my declaration that Lenin was right as against me is unquestionably correct. I made it without doing the least violence to my political conscience. Lenin did not come over to me, I went over to Lenin. I joined him later than many others. But I make bold to think I understood him in a way not inferior to others. If the matter involved the historical past alone, I would make no exceptions to my declaration. It would be unworthy of Lenin's memory, and at the same time beneath my dignity, for me to attempt, now that Lenin is no longer alive, to demonstrate out of mere ambition that on such and such questions I was right as against Lenin.

Nevertheless I violently opposed the declaration which you now so avidly seize upon. Why? Precisely because I foresaw that a declaration on my part would be seized upon by all those who were and who remain equally wrong both as against Lenin and me. On the question of my disagreements with Lenin, the Zinoviev faction and its French section have written a great many pages, theoretically absurd, politically reactionary, and in considerable measure, slanderous. With my acknowledgement of Lenin's correctness, Zinoviev sought, if only partially, to throw a veil over the previous criminal "ideological" work of his own faction against me.

Zinoviev's position at that time was truly tragic. Only yesterday a recognized leader of anti-Trotskyism, he on the next day bowed to the banner of the 1923 Opposition. At the sessions of the Central Committee all the speakers took every occasion to fling in his face his own declarations of yesterday, to which he could say nothing in reply. The same thing was done day in and day out by Pravda. On the other hand, the advanced Petrograd workers, followers of Zinoviev, who had engaged honestly and seriously in the struggle against "Trotskyism," could by no means reconcile themselves to the sudden 180-degree turn. Zinoviev was confronted with the danger of losing the best elements of his own faction. In these conditions, a number of comrades from the 1923
Opposition insistently argued with me: “Let us give Zinoviev some
general formula that would enable him, if only partially, to de­
fend himself against the blows of the Stalinists on the one hand,
and against the pressure from his own Petrograd cothinkers on
the other.” I had no objections in principle to a defensive formula
of this type, but on one condition, namely, that it contained no
principled concessions on my part. The struggle around this ques­
tion lasted for weeks. At the last moment, at a time when it was
already necessary to hand in a finished platform to the Central
Committee, a clear-cut diplomatic break occurred between us and
the Zinovievists precisely over the question of this formula which
interests you so much. We were ready to introduce a platform
independently in the name of the 1923 faction. As is always the
case, intermediaries were found. Changes and corrections were
introduced. In our own group, it was decided to make a concession
to the Zinovievists. In our group I voted against the concession,
finding it excessive and equivocal. But I did not break on this ques­
tion either with the leading center of my own group or with the
Zinovievists. However, I did warn my friends that I would not
raise the question so long as only the historical past was concerned.
But as soon as it would be posed as a programmatic or political
question, I would of course defend the theory of the permanent
revolution. This is precisely what I did later.

That is what really took place. Now you know. You naturally
could not have known in your time. But a great deal of water has
gone under the bridge since 1926. We passed through the experi­
ence of the Chinese revolution. It has been revealed with absolute
clarity that the sole antithesis to the theory of nationalistic social­
ism is the theory of the permanent revolution. The same question
was posed with regard to India, and gave us, in particular, a test of
the theory of “bi-composite (two-class) parties.” Now the prob­
lem of the permanent revolution unfolds before us on the arena
of the Iberian peninsula. In Germany the theory of the perma­
nent revolution, and that theory alone, stands counterposed to
the theory of a “people’s revolution.” On all these questions the
Left Opposition has expressed itself quite categorically. And I
myself, in particular, have long since explained in the press the
mistakes of the Russian platform of 1926, insofar as it contained concessions to the Zinovievists.

I ask you: What do you desire to glean today, in the autumn of 1931, from the circumstance that in the autumn of 1926 I deemed it necessary—rightly or wrongly—not to protest publicly against the purely formal concessions which my then political friends thought it necessary to make to the Zinovievists? Why not reply to this question in writing!

Now I could with complete justification raise some questions concerning your own past. Have you understood that whatever might have been this or that partial mistake or sin, the basic nucleus of the 1923 Opposition was and remains the vanguard of the vanguard, that it conducted and still conducts a struggle for the theory of Marxism, for the strategy of Lenin, for the October Revolution; whereas the opponent grouping to which you belonged carried through the fatal revision of Leninism, shook the dictatorship of the proletariat, and weakened the Comintern? Have you understood that in the struggle against “Trotskyism” you were the unconscious tool of the forces of Thermidor? Yes or no?

However, I shall not insist on your answering this question, although it is of far greater importance than all those petty incidents on which you vainly waste your time and mine.

But while I am ready to put aside questions relating to the past, I can’t permit any ambiguity or half-statements in principled questions that concern the present and the future.

What is your attitude to the theory of the permanent revolution, Comrade Treint? Do you still uphold that arch-reactionary criticism, Thermidorean in its social roots, which you developed in the past jointly with all the epigones and in complete solidarity with them? On this cardinal question there are and cannot be any concessions. There is no room here for any reservations and equivocations. The question has been dealt with in theses, articles, and books with utmost clarity. It has been tested in the experience of colossal events. All the sections of the Left Opposition—above all the Russian section—stand exclusively and completely on the basis of the theory of the permanent revolution. Your clear and unambiguous answer to this question is a necessary preliminary condi-
tion for solving the question of whether we can work together within the framework of one and the same faction.

This cardinal programmatic question, which counterposes the Bolshevik-Leninists to the centrists and the right-wingers, contains a whole series of questions that flow from it:

What is your attitude in general to the slogan of the democratic dictatorship of workers and peasants for colonial countries in particular, and especially for India?

What is your attitude to the idea of workers’ and peasants’ parties?

Do you consider correct the formation of the Krestintern and the policy of the Anti-Imperialist League?

What is your attitude to the slogan of the Soviet United States of Europe?

All these questions which met with anti-Marxian decisions at the Fifth World Congress of the Comintern retain a great importance even today.

A correct answer to these questions is, as was already stated, from my point of view absolutely indispensable for establishing a programmatic precondition for joint work. But programmatic premises are not enough. There remain questions of tactics and of organization.

In this sphere our correspondence has already revealed very serious and sharp differences which my initial talks with you have unfortunately not at all mitigated. So as not to repeat myself, I refer you here only to two documents: my letter to you of May 23, 1929, and my criticism of your draft declaration upon your entry into the French League May 23, 1931. I enclose copies of both documents.235

In conclusion I should like to express a general consideration which might perhaps prove of assistance in better understanding my evaluation of your position. In the ranks of the Left Opposition, especially its French section, a spiritual disease is rather widespread, which I would, without going into an analysis of its social roots, call by the name of its most finished representative: Souvarinism. It is—approaching the question on the plane of political psychology—a disease combining the paralysis of political will with hy-
pertrophy of rationalizing. Cabinet wit, without roots, without an axis, without clear aims, criticism for criticism’s sake, clutching at trifles, straining at gnats while swallowing camels—such are the traits of this type, concerned above all with the preservation of its narrow circle or personal “independence.” A circle of this kind, too irresolute to join the social democrats, but likewise incapable of the politics of Bolshevism, incapable of active politics in general, is primarily inclined to jot notations on the margins of actions and books of others. This spirit, I repeat, is most graphically expressed by Souvarine who has finally found an adequate medium for his tendency in the shape of a bibliographical journal, in which Souvarine subjects to criticism everything and everybody in the universe as if in the name of his own “doctrine.” But the whole secret lies in the fact that Souvarine has no doctrine and, by virtue of his mental makeup, cannot have. In consequence, Souvarine’s spiritual creative work, which lacks neither wit nor resourcefulness, is by its very nature parasitic. In him are combined the calcined residues of communism with the as yet unfolded buds of Menshevism. This precisely constitutes the essence of Souvarinism, insofar as it is at all possible to speak of any essence here.

I have often told Comrade Naville that he has been poisoned by Souvarinism and that I fear it is incurable; over the past year, at any rate, I have noticed no signs of improvement. You, Comrade Treint, consider yourself an opponent of both Souvarine and Naville, and not without some reason. However, despite undeniable individual differences, you do have one feature in common with them. You, too, Comrade Treint are lacking in any doctrine; you have lost it. All your efforts add up to nothing more than statements of clarification or qualification, to footnotes on petty quibbles.

You wage a stubborn struggle not for a given system of ideas and methods but for your own “independence,” and it is altogether impossible to obtain any conception of just what is the content of this independence. Comrade Treint, this is nothing else but the disease of Souvarinism. With all my heart I hope you will be cured of it.

This question, which is to a considerable degree personal, would
have far less significance if both of us were members of a large healthy proletarian party. But with us, it is as yet a question of a small faction which defends under exceptionally difficult conditions the banner of Marx and Lenin. For a fighting faction of this kind, the bacillus of Souvarinism is far more dangerous than for a big party. It would of course be criminal to split frivolously with isolated groups and even isolated individuals. But it is even more criminal to permit such an initial composition of a factional organization as would paralyze or weaken its aggressive propagandist spirit, its political fighting capacity. That is why there are certain conditions when it is necessary to say: we defend a certain sum of ideas, but you defend a given sum of commentaries to our views; let us try not to interfere with each other, and function separately. Perhaps experience in its purer form will teach us both something. When we meet again on a new stage, we shall draw the balance, and will perhaps be better able to arrive at an understanding than we can today. I do not say that this is the sole conceivable solution, or that it is the best one. But I do not at all consider it as excluded.

L. Trotsky
Another letter to Albert Treint

Dear Comrade Treint:

I want here to briefly summarize our exchange of letters and our conversations.

1. As you know, I consider that you have a false estimate of the past. Politically, this is important insofar as the differences over the past can recur in the future. But the question of the past, taken in isolation, has not been raised by me and I do not raise it now. To my knowledge, the leading comrades of the League are not raising this question either. So you have even less reason to raise it yourself. If the League does not demand that you formally recognize your real errors, you have even less reason or right to denounce, in joining the League, the imaginary “errors” of others.

You cannot fail to understand that any declaration by you of that kind will encounter immediate and decisive resistance in the course of which the whole past, from 1923 on, will be taken up. You cannot fail to see that the Zinovievist faction of the left centrists to which you belonged no longer exists and that its disappearance is not accidental.

Next, you cannot fail to understand that the whole French and
International Left Opposition will be entirely against you on the disputed questions of the past.

To make a declaration about the mistakes of our people and not about your own mistakes would be possible only if your political aim was to demonstrate the impossibility of working with us; but you categorically declare that this is not so. In that case, it is essential that you make your actions correspond with your intentions.

2. The question of the permanent revolution: I consider it decisive in the strategic programmatic sense. In my latest pamphlet I tried to show that this question has completely and definitively left the domain of the old Russian quarrels and that it has become the central question of the international proletariat’s revolutionary strategy.

I am far from thinking that the theory of the permanent revolution has a “finished” character or that it is a master key that unlocks all strategic problems. No, this theory does not free us in any way from the necessity of a concrete analysis of each new historic situation in each separate country; quite the contrary, it forces us to make such analyses. To consider the theory of the permanent revolution as a suprahistorical dogma would contradict its very essence.

But this theory gives us a unique and correct starting point in the internal dynamic of each contemporary national revolution and in its uninterrupted connection with the international revolution. In this theory the Bolshevik-Leninists have a fighting formula imbued with the content of the gigantic events of the last thirty years.

On the basis of this formula, the Opposition is combating and will combat the reformists, the centrists, and the national communists in a decisive manner. One of the most precious advantages of this formula is that it slices like a razor through the ideological ties with all kinds of revisionism of the epigones.

It would be ideological suicide for the Opposition to weaken itself by any concession to the viewpoints of the Zinovievists or semi-Zinovievists on this issue. That is out of the question.

Until now you have not studied the essential works of the Left
Opposition devoted to the question of the permanent revolution; to a considerable extent your present objections, which I consider entirely false and approaching the boundaries of vulgar republicanism, can be explained by your inadequate knowledge. Therefore I cannot at this time speak categorically about the depth of the differences between us. I will await with great interest your conclusions formulated, if you can, on the basis of two books: The Third International after Lenin and The Permanent Revolution. If on this question of principles there is not a community of ideas, it would be better for you not to hasten joining the Opposition, because it would prove to be purely formal, and would inevitably lead to a rupture at the first serious test.

3. If, however, it becomes clear to you and to the others that there is no immediate obstacle to working together, I would personally be pleased—it is obvious that after your formally joining the ranks of the Left Opposition nothing would stop you, in the course of the discussion, from raising these or other questions that are contentious or have not been clarified, or that concern the past, the present, or the future. The Left Opposition cannot live without internal discussion, but the recruitment of an isolated comrade cannot cause it to put in doubt its ideological foundations elaborated in the struggle of these eight years.

Those are my conclusions dictated on the one hand by my sincere desire to see you fully within our communist ranks and on the other hand by the wish to safeguard the International Opposition’s homogeneity on the fundamental questions of program and strategy, for only on that condition will it be able to fulfill its historic mission.

L. Trotsky
September 25, 1931

Internal difficulties of the French Communist League

1. In my last circular letter I already wrote that the League’s stagnation, its new conflicts and splits, have a general cause: the French labor movement has not yet emerged from its stage of ebb, and the general weakening of the revolutionary wing of the proletariat also affects the Left Opposition. Events will bring with them the necessary change, as they have in Spain and in Germany. But it is precisely the example of these two countries which shows how important it is, even before the revolutionary turn in development, to prepare as homogeneous and as solid an organization as possible, one that has passed through the serious experience of an internal struggle. The creation of such an organization is now the main task in France.

2. The League originated as a conglomeration of various groups and splinters. This was a result of the situation in France, of the existence and the ingrown life of numerous groups, of the fact that there was a certain confusion in all the groups, of the absence of a group which would be able to play an authoritative role with regard to the other groups and on which it would be possible to rely with complete assurance.
The heterogeneity of the League’s composition predetermined the ultimate inevitability of the selection and the cleansing of its ranks. But this process has been prolonged for reasons which I will not discuss here. I will merely say that with regard to certain “doubtful” groups or groups of an alien origin, no sufficiently consistent policy has been adopted, which would begin by attempts at loyal collaboration to put the doubtful elements to the test and, under the scrutiny of everybody, give them the possibility of correcting themselves or of discrediting themselves, and in the latter case conclude by eliminating them from the organization. In any case the time has come to draw the necessary organizational conclusions from a much too-protracted political experiment.

3. All the discussions in the League now revolve around the definition of the “faction.” I have not seen the texts of the various definitions, but I greatly fear that this struggle introduces a great deal of scholasticism. Are we a faction of the party or a faction of communism? Formally we are not a faction of the party because we are outside its ranks and suppressed by it. On the other hand, the conception of communism is inseparable from the conception of the party. In our situation it is a contradiction created not by fault of formal logic, but by objective historical conditions. This contradiction cannot last forever. It must be resolved in one way or another. It is not at all probable that formal exercises on the word “faction” will enable us to arrive at a solution. All that is fundamental in determining our relations with the official party and the Comintern has been said with sufficient decisiveness in the fundamental documents of the Opposition. There is no ground to change what has been said, because the objective situation in its fundamental outlines has not yet changed, neither in one sense nor another. We are continuing our struggle as before for the regeneration of the Third International, not for its replacement by a Fourth.

4. The attempt to draw the line of demarcation inside the League by proceeding exclusively, or for the most part, with new discussions on “faction” does not appear to me to be correct. Especially because it seems to ignore the entire past of the League and to try to begin its whole history once more. However, correct organiza-
tional policy demands that the selection within the League take place on the basis of its entire experience, which is very precious in spite of its very restricted scope, and not merely on the basis of an isolated discussion, one which is mainly scholastic at that.

5. Comrade Treint presents the thing in this fashion: on the one hand there are the "liquidators," the Jewish group, and on the other the conciliators (Naville and Gerard), and that is why it is necessary to direct our policy toward the amputation of the liquidators now in order to take on the conciliators later. A situation of this sort, it is true, is not rare in organizations, especially in mass organizations, when the presence of a right or an ultraleft wing clearly manifests itself and leads to the formation of an intermediate layer, a conciliating faction. But this general schema does not at all cover what we have in the League. The traditions and the line of development of the Naville group have nothing in common with the traditions and the line of development of the Jewish group. In the first case we have a group of petty-bourgeois intellectuals, of ideological sideline spectators. In the second we have a group of nomad proletarians who have all the strengths and weaknesses of revolutionary emigrants. Any relations between these two groups can only be the result of personal combinations; they have no common roots. That is why it is altogether incorrect to take the question of Naville as one of a function, that is to say, of a derivative, as a quantity dependent on the question of the Jewish group.

6. Naville’s point of view was originally that of two parties, and he imagined "his" party in the manner of Paz and Souvarine as a sort of Sunday discussion circle in which he would appear in the role of soloist. Later Naville took the position of the "independent faction," introducing into this notion the old content. He has assimilated the point of view of the Left Opposition, but only in words. He remains petty-bourgeois, anarchic, and nonparty to the same degree against the official party as against the League. In the course of one and a half years Naville has not advanced an inch. Even while he remains within the ranks of the League, he remains our irreconcilable adversary.

Take La Lutte de classes [Class Struggle]. Even after we had
driven out Landau from our ranks, Naville published an article by him in that magazine, which he considers his private property. (The anarchistic petty bourgeois always gives an enormous importance to the question of property.) The last issue of *La Lutte de classes* bore the following subtitle: Theoretical review of the Communist Opposition in France. A fierce struggle has been carried on for several months on the question of the transformation of *La Lutte de classes* into an official organ of the Left Opposition (the League). And what follows: Naville once more demonstratively shows that he does not want to identify “his” publication with this organization to which, it appears, he belongs. Doesn’t this suffice to eliminate such a clearly alien and hostile person from our ranks? The fact that the League and its leadership have not yet reacted to his revolting provocations is in itself a disquieting symptom. For the first characteristic of a revolutionary is his firm attachment to his organization, his patriotism toward the organization, his sensibility toward all attacks against the banner of his organization.

How does Naville today define the conception of a faction? I do not know that and I admit it does not interest me very much. It is possible to give a theoretically false definition of the Left Opposition and, at the same time, to prove by all of one’s work one’s ardent attachment to it. In this case one can calmly and in a comradely manner correct the false definition. It is possible to give a correct definition of the Left Opposition and, at the same time, to trample its banner underfoot.

7. I have insisted for a long time now that we ought to link adherents to the League in general with the achievement of a definite and systematic task. This is, apart from the rest, a rule to exclude all the amateurs, the loafers, the windbags, the political parasites. Certain ones among them are sufficiently adroit not to allow themselves to be caught in an anticommmunist formulation. But that does not prevent them from carrying on daily sabotage, under cover of the very best formulations, and at a favorable moment betraying the organization.

8. The situation of the Jewish group, as has already been said, has nothing in common with the situation of the Naville group.
No matter what the combinations at the top are, the members of the Jewish group are linked together by uniformity of language and by insufficient knowledge of France. This permits some of the leaders of the group to play an exaggerated role and to cultivate a stifling atmosphere, one of isolation. Only a few months ago Mill was fulminating against the Jewish group as the principal source of all the misfortune. Now he is siding with Felix in cultivating its negative characteristics, the emigrant features of the group, and in stifling its positive proletarian traits.

It is quite evident that the group has been too isolated in the past. The leaders of the League thought that the support of this group was assured for them; they took very little trouble to keep each member of the Jewish group in touch with what was happening in the League. The group has become the victim of the maneuvers of its present leaders. It is difficult for me to judge from here to what degree it is possible to correct the mischief caused by the leaders. In any case we must do everything to aid the group to liberate itself from its present leadership and to preserve within the League all the healthy proletarian elements of the group. The difference between the Jewish group and the Naville group is expressed in a somewhat trenchant manner on the plane of our practical relations toward these two groups. While the partisans of Naville who took his declarations more or less seriously have long ago quit the League and await their chief outside its ranks, we are inclined to think that the revolutionary elements of the Jewish group will renounce its temporary and accidental leaders and remain within the League. All our efforts must be turned in that direction.

9. To pose the question of faction in a purely formal manner, disregarding the whole past of the League and independently of the social and personal content of each group, not only makes the demarcation from the alien elements more difficult, but also creates the danger of a new splintering of the fundamental nucleus of the League. I do not at all want to entirely deny in advance the theoretical and political importance of the differences which are associated with the question of the faction. But it would be criminal to emphasize these differences by separating them from the
political activity of the League. If under the shadings of definitions of the word “faction” there are really concealed two different tendencies, then they ought to manifest themselves more clearly on the fundamental questions of the International, and above all of the French labor movement. The faction is formed not by defining itself at each step, but in action. The need to rehash again and again the question of the faction is undoubtedly called forth by the stagnation of the League. To obstinately and endlessly continue in this direction signifies the disruption of the fundamental nucleus and, at that, along an accidental and largely scholastic line.
Dear Comrades:

Your national conference, delayed so long because of the League’s internal crisis, finds the League still not extricated from the crisis situation. The conference cannot accomplish miracles. It would be naive to expect it to overcome the crisis and eliminate the internal struggles at one stroke. But the conference can take an enormous step in this direction. What is required to do this?

Above all, the principled political questions must be separated in a decisive fashion once and for all from personal collisions and frictions. A revolutionary organization that wants to live must not let itself be poisoned by quarrels. There is a normal organizational way to solve personal questions, through a Control Commission. Whoever avoids that way, whoever replaces the solving of personal accusations through organizational channels with the launching of poisonous rumors, condemns himself. A progressive current does not need such methods. The entire history of the revolutionary movement in all countries shows that groups that resort to bitter personal quarrels in ideological struggles are groups that have become an obstacle in the organization and hold
it back instead of advancing it.

It is difficult to give advice from afar on the organizational question. But perhaps you will find it useful to elect alongside the Executive Committee a Control Commission composed of a few levelheaded and objective comrades, and give it the responsibility from now on of pursuing with the severest methods, including expulsion from the League, anyone who tries to replace political struggle with personal quarrels.

Only the blind can deny the principled character of the struggle that is developing in the League. It is obvious that all members of the League recognize certain programmatic and tactical principles common to all. But experience shows that it is one thing to recognize them formally and it is another thing to understand them and above all to apply them correctly. There is a big step between the two, sometimes two and even three steps.

The circumstance that the Opposition finds itself outside the party is very detrimental to the party, as it is to the Opposition itself. This state of split is artificially maintained by order of the Stalin center in Moscow. The French CP would never have expelled the Left Opposition if the party conducted itself according to the interests of the French and international labor movement. But the Stalinist faction in the USSR can maintain itself in power only by stifling the party. The Stalinist bureaucracy is all the more haunted by fear of the Left Opposition because events confirm the correctness of our program. In the USSR Stalin represses the Bolshevik-Leninists with the GPU. To prevent the Opposition from becoming dangerous in the Comintern, the Stalinist apparatus commands the central committee of every party to expel the Left Opposition, to hunt it down, and slander it. In Spain, the Stalinists are now preparing a communist congress of unification to which all groups will be admitted on one condition: that they repudiate the Russian Left Opposition. Maurin, in whom the social democrat is united with the trade unionist and the anarchist, can attend this unification congress. Nin, Lacroix, and the other Bolshevik-Leninists cannot. This fact alone characterizes better than any other the unprincipled struggle of the Comintern apparatus against us. Nevertheless, we have to recognize that in the past the policies
of the different opposition groupings in France have greatly helped the Stalinist bureaucracy to present the Left Oppositionists as opportunists, semisyndicalists, and enemies of the party.

On this essential question of relations with the party, *La Verite*, despite its great merits in other domains, was not able for a long time to find the correct line. Sectarian contempt for the party, an excessively haughty spirit of a circle accustomed to living on abstract criticism and not caring what is happening around it, a tendency towards “independence,” that is, isolation—these are the traits that from the beginning slipped into the articles of *La Verite*, permitting disparate elements to gather around it: those who were tired of revolutionary politics, and the elements who in reality are foreign to us, the semisyndicalists, the semireformists, the political dilettantes, etc.

The struggle to transform *La Verite* from the paper of an isolated circle into an instrument destined to have an impact on the CP was an inevitable and indispensable struggle. It led to a differentiation among those who had been the earliest supporters of *La Verite*. The base of the Left Opposition was thus narrowed, giving certain people a pretext to cry out that the Left Opposition was falling apart in France. As far as I can tell, the people most inclined to utter these cries are those who from the beginning tended to give *La Verite* a false face and who are responsible for the weakening of the organization and its crisis.

If *La Verite* had not flirted from the beginning with the syndicalists and with the idea of a second party (openly or under the pseudonym of an “independent faction”), it would not have created unnecessary fears about itself or unnecessary obstacles on its path, it would not have relied on presumed friends, and it would not be forced to lose them.

Every ideological current, every factional grouping, must be verified not only nationally but internationally: it is only then that its character is precisely defined. The picture of international relations is extremely complex from this point of view: it is a fact that the elements of the French Opposition who were blocking the progressive development of the League were at the same time supporting in Germany, Austria, and other countries, organiza-
tions and groups that are in reality foreign to the Left Opposition and that are not in its ranks. This must not be forgotten for one instant. It would be a real crime after the experience we have just had to allow ourselves to be pulled back toward old mistakes.

Obviously it is extremely desirable to safeguard the unity of the organization. But there are situations, especially in young and weak organizations, in which two groups pull in opposite directions in so obvious a fashion that it paralyzes the life of the organization. What remains to be done? Above all, every possibility of an honest accord must be thoroughly pursued. But if these attempts have no result, there remains only to say to each other: let us try to work separately and in six months or more, we will see which of us is right, and then perhaps we will meet each other seriously on the common path. Such an action is called a split. But at times a split is a lesser evil. An organization that is smaller but more unanimous can have enormous success with a correct policy, while an organization which is torn by internal strife is condemned to rot.

Do I mean by this that the only way out for the League under present conditions is a split? No. I would not choose to speak so categorically. But one cannot shut one’s eyes to the fact that a split could become the only way out of the situation. It seems to me that much will depend on the way your conference unfolds. As I have already said, it cannot accomplish miracles. But the conference is nonetheless a very important event in the life of the League. After it, a return to the past will no longer be possible.

Either the conference will take account of the experience, work, and mistakes; will sketch out the plan of work, distribute forces, elect a center that is able to function; and win take measures to again transform *La Verite* into a weekly—in that case the conference will be an enormous step forward and the danger of a split will automatically be dissipated. Or else the conference will take place under the sign of the demoralizing and sterile internal struggle—in which case it is better not to delay the split.

I am giving you my opinion with total frankness and sharpness because I think that revolutionaries have no need for internal diplomacy and because experience shows that chronic crises
are not solved by sugary speeches.

Need I add that if the two basic groups of the League, the one that I have supported on the essential questions and the one that I have fought, come to a loyal agreement for effective common work, I would be happy to cry out: “The peace of Prinkipo is dead, long live the peace of Paris!” All of us, including myself, would very gladly consider the past errors, equivocations, and conflicts as over and done with, because it is necessary to live not with the past but with the future.

I hope with all my heart that your conference will take place under the sign of the future and not of the past.

Communist greetings,

L. Trotsky
October 9, 1931

Summary on the French question

I am taking the liberty of summarizing not our discussions but the practical results that flow from them and can clarify and normalize the life of the League.

1. It is self-evident that none of us intends to resolve this or that question by private arrangements made behind the back of the League, without the knowledge of the Executive Committee or the national conference. Our intention is solely to elaborate a number of proposals and suggestions, as the comrades in the leadership of the League have often done with other national sections, in order to help them settle their internal difficulties through the normal channels of communist democracy.

2. The personal questions (about "business matters," etc.) should be settled once and for all. Toward this end we must establish a commission whose composition will guarantee a rapid and complete settlement. I believe this is in the interests not only of Comrade R.M. but of all the comrades in question. Are there or are there not formal charges? Are they of recent origin? Let them be presented. If they only concern things that have been known for a long time, it will only remain to establish that they did not
prevent collaboration up to the time when the differences emerged. But since the personal questions do not have and cannot have anything to do with the political differences, the commission will only have to determine, barring the appearance of new facts and definite new charges, that there is nothing in Comrade R.M.'s past or in the circumstances of the present situation that can prevent him from working in the League and for the League and occupying posts assigned by the organization.

3. As far as the financial aid provided by Comrade H.M. is concerned, it should be completely detached from political and organizational questions and considered as a question of the goodwill of a particular comrade. It does not, of course, imply that he has any additional rights—which, moreover, he has never claimed—but it can even less be held against him.

4. I can state with satisfaction that just as Comrade Molinier has declared that he does not envisage in any way expelling anyone from the other group, Comrade Naville as well recognizes the usefulness of creating an organizational committee with the participation of Comrade Molinier in this committee, which means in the Executive Committee as well.

N.B. It is not necessary to repeat that the composition of the EC can only be determined by the national conference, but what is at issue is whether there will be a fight between groupings over the aforesaid question during the preparations for the conference and the conference itself. Now the declarations of Comrades Molinier and Naville attest that not only will they not take part in such a fight, but if necessary they will do everything in their power to prevent other comrades from becoming involved in such a fight.

5. Given the international role of the League, its conference will not only have decisive importance for the French Opposition but will also have a great influence on all the national sections. This is why the preparations for this conference must be carried out with both of these considerations in mind. Not only should the groups in the provinces be formally organized in advance, but the draft resolutions should be published early enough for the national sections, at least those in Europe, to give their opin-
ion on them. Moreover, this procedure should be introduced as a rule for all the national sections.

6. In order to safeguard the normal functioning of the organization, the report on the internal situation should be given by the secretary of the EC, that is, by Comrade Naville. Formally, the right of a minority of the EC to present a second report cannot be contested. But we all agree that this method would be prejudicial to the future work of the League, that is, for its unity in action. In order to prevent a certain mistrust based on past events from manifesting itself in this question, particularly since the report will be concerned with these past events, the most careful precautionary measures are called for. We all agree, including Comrade Naville, that the best way to resolve any difficulties is to work out the report in written form, discuss it in advance with comrades of the other grouping in a preparatory commission, and eliminate, with the goodwill of both sides, everything that could poison the atmosphere of the conference and revive the personal questions, etc.

N.B. Moreover, a written report can be communicated to the other national sections to greatest advantage either in toto or in excerpts.

7. We agree that it would be very advantageous to assure the strictly regular appearance of *La Lutte de classes*, a powerful instrument of the League and the international organization. We are just as much in agreement that it is necessary to form a rather large editorial board for the magazine (seven to ten comrades) including not just theorists, but comrades representing different areas of the workers’ struggle, including workers. Given that such an editorial board, which is in itself a school for theoretical training, can meet at most twice a month, the secretary of the editorial board or a bureau of three members should have broad authority for the contents of the magazine.

General control over the magazine, as over the weekly, naturally rests with the Executive Committee.

8. As for political differences or nuances concerning “the turn,” the Unitary Opposition, etc., the discussion can and must be developed to its fullest extent before and during the conference
on the basis of theses and countertheses, and amendments if necessary for one question or another. The elimination of all personal considerations from the discussion will be an important factor in revolutionary education.
To Albert Weisbord, New York, N.Y.  
(Copy to National Executive Committee, Communist League of America)

Dear Comrade:

I have received a number of documents and letters from you. I apologize for answering so late and in German at that; to write in English would be too long and too ungrateful a task. Now to the point.

I cannot adopt your standpoint. Your criticism of the American League seems to me one-sided, artificial, and terribly exaggerated. You throw the League and the right wing together, which shows that you utterly disregard the fitness of things. You make fun of the publishing activity of the League and counterpose your “mass action” to it. Have you any mass activity behind you? Before one turns to the masses, one must construct a principled basis. One begins as a propaganda group and develops in the direction of mass action.

In addition, your international connections, sympathies, and
partial sympathies speak against you. For even if I cannot claim to be an expert in current American affairs, still I know well enough what the Landau group and other similar groups in Europe represent. “Tell me with whom you associate, and I will tell you who you are.”

The International Opposition has no use for two organizations in America. Your group is new, has only recently split off from the Right, differs from the Left Opposition on a number of questions, and flirts with those elements which split themselves off from the International Left Opposition. Can you ask us to favor you over the Communist League of America?

You declare yourself loyal to the International Left Opposition. Organizationally this is not the case. This can therefore be understood only in the sense of a general solidarity of ideas. But now you must ask yourself the question of how this will be expressed organizationally. In your letter to the League conference, you proposed a united front—but without the leading comrades. This is the famous united front from below which the Stalinists practice (in words) toward the social democrats and the trade unions. On top of this you attack the League for not applying the policy of the united front. This does not give the impression of being serious. If the solidarity of ideas with the Left Opposition really means anything to you, you must build a bridge back to the League. This by no means excludes internal criticism on the basis of healthy revolutionary democracy.

L. Trotsky
October 17, 1931

Tasks of the
Left Opposition in Bulgaria

To the Editors, Osvobozhdienie

Dear Comrades:

I have received your letter of October 9, and I am very pleased that the oppositional press, that is to say, real Marxist thought, has not died in Bulgaria. We could not and cannot expect very rapid development, for although our tendency is the direct continuation of Bolshevism, the thread of continuity has been broken for a number of years, ravages have taken place in the consciousness of the world proletarian vanguard, and terrible prejudices have been sown, while all this work is formally connected with the bureaucratic apparatus of the Soviet Union, with the authority of the October Revolution, the Bolshevik Party, etc. What we have to do is open a way through a heap of ruins and rubbish. For that we need firmness and tenacity, and consequently and above all—unshakable faith in the correctness of the ideas for which we are fighting.

The present epoch of unprecedented world crisis and deep convulsions will not unfold without leaving its mark on the bureau-
cratic and centrist Comintern. Whether the proletariat will emerge victorious or whether it will suffer a series of heavy defeats in the immediate future, the centrist leadership of the bureaucracy will disclose its full bankruptcy. That is why it is important for the Marxist wing of the Comintern, the Bolshevik-Leninist faction, to stand vigilantly at its post and critically analyze the course of events and the policy of the official party.

It is essential for the Left Opposition in Bulgaria to approach the official party as closely as possible, and to penetrate it as deeply as possible. The growth of the official party presents the Opposition with great tasks. But only on the basis of great tasks will the Bolshevik-Leninists be able, step by step, to prove the correctness of their principled position to the best elements of the party. And with this aim all forces must strive to approach the party masses, without of course sacrificing their principled position.

Osvobozhdenie produces a very lively impression. Unfortunately, lately I have been overloaded with work and cannot give any more detailed comments.

I have not given anyone permission for the Bulgarian edition of my History of the Russian Revolution. Evidently this is open pirate publishing, if in this case we have to do with a bourgeois publishing house. I do not know whether Bulgaria is covered by the international literary convention. If it is, I have the full right to demand from the publisher not only the cessation of the sale of the unauthorized translation, but also compensation for damages and losses. I would of course gladly assign both the sum for the latter and the translation rights to your group. It goes without saying that I shall not hand over any of my books or articles to anyone in Bulgaria without previously securing your agreement.

Comradely greetings,

L. Trotsky
Two comrades, Ridley and Chandu Ram, have elaborated theses on the situation in England, the Left Opposition, and its relations to the Comintern. The authors consider themselves supporters of the Left Opposition despite serious differences with it. In their document they defend several times the necessity of open and free internal criticism. That is absolutely correct. This free and open criticism we will employ, therefore, in relation to their own theses.

1. “Great Britain is at the present time in a transitional phase between democracy and fascism.” Democracy and fascism are here considered as two abstractions without any social determinants. Evidently the authors wish to say: British imperialism is preparing to free its dictatorship from the decaying parliamentary covering, and to enter upon the path of open and naked violence. In general this is true, but only in general. The present government is not an “antiparliamentary” government; on the contrary, it has received unprecedented parliamentary support from the “nation.” Only an upsurge of the revolutionary movement in England can force the government to tread the path of naked, ultraparliamentary violence. This will without doubt take place. But at the present
time this is not so. Advancing the question of fascism to first place today is not adequately motivated. Even from the standpoint of a distant perspective one can doubt in what measure it is correct to speak of “fascism” for England. Marxists must, in our opinion, proceed from the idea that fascism represents a different and specific form of the dictatorship of finance capital, but it is absolutely not identical with the imperialist dictatorship as such. If the “party” of Mosley and the “Guild of St. Michael”\(^{249}\) represent the beginnings of fascism, as the theses declare, then it is precisely the total futility of these two groups that shows how unwise it is to put the imminent coming of fascism on the order of the day.

In this judgment there is nothing new. It repeats propositions long ago clarified and rejected. The trade unions are not considered by the authors as the *historic organization* of the British proletariat, which reflects its fate, but as a creation which from its inception is penetrated with the sin of imperialism. But the trade unions have had their rich and instructive history. They had previously carried on a heroic struggle for the right to organize. They gloriously participated in the Chartist movement.\(^{250}\) They led the struggle for the shorter workday, and these struggles were recognized by Marx and Engels as having great historical importance. A number of trade unions joined the First International. Alas, history does not exist for our authors. In all their opinions there is not a hint of dialectics. They limit themselves to metaphysical principles: “fascism,” “democracy,” “imperialistic organizations.” To the living and real processes they counterpose their discoveries.

We hear from them that the leaders of the trade unions did not betray the general strike of 1926: to acknowledge them as “betrayers” would mean to acknowledge that they were previously “revolutionary.” See what kind of a derby metaphysics runs. The reformists have not always betrayed the workers. In certain periods and under certain conditions, the reformists accomplished some progressive work, insufficient though it was. The epoch of imperialist decline snatches the bottom from under the reformists. That is why the reformists, insofar as they are forced to attach themselves to the movement of the masses, betray it at a certain stage. Even so, the masses accept the conduct of the reformists. To this
living conception of the masses, the authors oppose the theory of
the original sin of the trade unions. This theory is remarkable in
that it does not allow a betrayer to be called a betrayer.

In the analysis of the present situation in England, we should
not preclude the variants through which the rule of conservatism
may pass: not directly to the dictatorship of open violence, but as
a result of a swift parliamentary dislocation to the left, to some
kind of bloc of Henderson and Lloyd George, a transitory govern­
ment of British Kerenskyism. Lloyd George counts, manifestly,
on an inevitable left turn, of "open opinion," and precisely, there­
fore, does not fear to remain today in a futile minority.* To what
degree British Kerenskyism is probable, how durable it will be,
etc., depends on the further development of the economic crisis,
on the tempo of the bankruptcy of the "national" government,
and, mainly, on the speed of the radicalization of the masses.

Obviously, Kerenskyism, when it appears, must for its part
expose its own inadequacy and consequently push the bourgeoi­
sie along the road of open and naked violence. In this case the
English workers must convince themselves that their monarchy
is not merely an innocent and decorative institution: the king's
power will inevitably become the center of the united imperialist
counterrevolution.

2. A profound error is to be found in the second paragraph,
directed against activity in the trade unions designed to win con­
trol of them, which for a Marxist and Bolshe­vik is obligatory. Ac­
cording to the thought of the theses, the trade unions from their
origin represent "imperialist organizations." They can live only
so long as they benefit from the superprofits of British capitalism;
now, when its privileged position is forever lost, the trade unions
must disappear. To struggle to win the present trade unions is
nonsense. The revolutionary dictatorship will, in the proper time,
built new "economic organizations."

Since 1920 the trade unions have lost more than 40 percent of
their membership. The authors, therefore, say that in the course

* I have just received the "demission letter" of Lloyd George to his parliamen­
tary party, which totally confirms this supposition.
of the next two years they will lose another 40 percent. When these 80 percent of workers come to communism, Comrades Ridley and Ram can say: the prophet need not go to the mountain because the mountain has come to the prophet. But insofar as we know, this is not so. Ridley and Ram have not a dozen workers behind them. The trade unions still embrace millions of workers who in 1926 demonstrated that they are capable of carrying on a revolutionary struggle. We must look for the workers where they are to be found today, and not where they may be tomorrow—the organized as well as the unorganized. The question does not extend to the economic organizations which the future revolutionary dictatorship will create, but rather to the present English worker, without whom to speak of the dictatorship of the proletariat signifies playing with words.

Can the workers really enter the path of insurrection in one leap, without in the preceding period deepening their struggle against capitalism, without radicalizing themselves, their methods of struggle, and their organizations? How can the radicalization of the working class take place outside of the trade unions, without reflecting itself inside the trade unions, without changing their character, without calling forth a selection of new leaders? If it is true that the trade unions originated on the foundations of the capitalist superprofits of Great Britain—and this is true to a limited degree—so must the destruction of the superprofits radicalize the trade unions, understood, of course, from below and not from above, understood in the struggle against the leaders and tradition. This struggle will be all the more successful if the communists participate in it.

The authors of the theses go so far as to identify the struggle to win over the trade unions with the Anglo-Russian Committee. An overwhelming argument! The Left Opposition accused Stalin, Tomsky, and Co. that because of their political friendship with Citrine,252 Purcell, Cook, et al., the communists in the trade unions were hindered from unmasking these traitors. Comrades Ridley and Ram bring forth a new discovery: to unite with the betrayers and to unmask them before the masses—are one and the same thing. Can we take such arguments seriously?

The American comrade Glotzer,253 in speaking of the necessity
of working in the trade-union organizations for their conquest, appeals in absolute correctness to Lenin’s pamphlet *Left-Wing Communism: An Infantile Disorder*. To this Comrades Ridley and Ram answer with four objections:

(a) They ask for arguments and not appeals to authorities. This is true. But Lenin’s pamphlet contains many arguments which their theses entirely fail to answer.

(b) The authors deny Roman Catholic dogmas of infallibility. We agree with that. But we counsel them to begin with a criticism of the infallibility of their own gospel.

(c) “Lenin was neither God nor an infallible pope!” This is a repetition of the preceding argument. Without being a pope, Lenin successfully struggled against metaphysics and sectarianism.

(d) Lenin wrote in the year 1920; the situation since then has changed considerably. But the authors abstain from explaining in what these changes really consist, apart from their reference to the diminishing membership of the trade unions, which does not have a decisive significance.

We see that the arguments of the authors have an extremely abstract and even a purely formal character. The reference to the year 1920 is in direct opposition to the fundamental thoughts of the theses. If the trade unions from their origin were and remain to this day pure imperialist organizations incapable of revolutionary deeds, reference to the year 1920 loses all significance. We would have to say simply that the attitude of Marx, Engels, and Lenin was wrong to begin with.

3. The third paragraph is devoted to the Comintern. The authors stand for the creation of a Fourth International, and, here, too, manifest the fundamental quality of their thought: absolute metaphysics. We reply that Engels, after Hegel, understood metaphysics as the consideration of phenomena, facts, power, tendencies, etc., as unchangeable substances, and not as developing processes and, therefore, developing in constant contradictions. If the trade union is a vicious imperialist substance from top to bottom, in all epochs and periods, so likewise the Comintern is for our innovators a vicious bureaucratic substance. The inner processes of the Comintern, the inevitable contradiction between the masses
of members and the bureaucratic apparatus, are entirely left out
of consideration in their analysis. The authors ask us: do we be­
lieve that the bureaucracy under the influence of our criticism
will surrender their interests? And is such a supposition to be
described as idealism or materialism? inquire further Ridley and
Ram with inimitable irony, not observing that the very way they
pose the question must be characterized as lifeless metaphysics.

The bureaucracy is very strong, but it is certainly not as om­
nipotent as Ridley and Ram believe. In the USSR the sharpening
contradictions of the economic development urgently place be­
fore the millions of members of the party and youth the funda­
mental questions of program and tactics. Insofar as the bureau­
crats will not be able to solve these contradictions, the millions of
communists and young communists will be forced independently
to work out their solution. To these masses we say today and we
will say tomorrow: “The centrist bureaucracy conquered the ap­
paratus of the party, thanks to certain historic 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. Revo­
lutionary workers do not leap blithely from organization to orga­
nization like individual students. We Bolshevik-Leninists are fully
ready to help you worker-communists regenerate the party.”

Supporting the German Communist Party are millions of work­
ers. The catastrophic crisis in Germany places before it revolu­
tionary problems as problems of life or death. On this ground
without doubt will develop a deeper and deeper ideological struggle
in the party. If the few hundred Left Oppositionists remain on the
sidelines, they will become transformed into a powerless, lamen­
table sect. If, however, they participate in the internal ideological
struggles of the party, of which they remain an integral part de­
spite all expulsions, they will win an enormous influence in the
proletarian kernel of the party.

No, the Left Opposition has no reason to tread the path which
Ridley and Ram call for. Within the Comintern—even when one
does not consider the USSR—are to be found tens of thousands of
workers who have lived through profound experiences, through a
series of disillusionments, and are forced to search for correct answers to all fundamental political questions. We must approach these workers and not turn our backs on them. It would be very sad if the critical members of the official British Communist Party would imagine that the opinions of Ridley and Ram represent the opinions of the Left Opposition.

4. The authors of the theses accuse the Left Opposition, especially the American League, of “absurdly overrating” the importance of the British Communist Party. In no way do we overrate its importance. The last elections sufficiently, clearly, and openly exhibited the weakness of the British Communist Party.* But the Left Opposition in Great Britain is today many hundred times weaker than this weak party. Ram and Ridley have as yet nothing. Supporting them are only individuals who are not bound up with the struggle of the proletariat. Have they really attempted to draw an honest criticism of the party? What is their activity? Where are their programmatic theses? Have they held discussions with the rank and file of the party? Have they tried to convert them and win them to their support? Have Ram and Ridley, out of the seventy thousand voters for the official party, seven hundred or even seventy supporters? But in spite of this they are ready to organize the Fourth International. The proletariat must believe implicitly—on credit—that they are really capable of building an International and leading it.

The entire method of posing the question is absolutely wrong. To this we must add that if the Left Opposition entertained this pernicious notion and decided to create a Fourth International today, Comrades Ridley and Ram, who differ with us on all fundamental questions, would have to openly and immediately build a Fifth International.

5. The paragraph which concerns itself with India also indulges in extraordinary abstraction. It is absolutely indisputable that In-

* It is not necessary to repeat that elections are not the only or precise measure of influence. A real revolutionary party always demonstrates far more strength in struggles than in parliamentary elections. Nevertheless, the statistics of votes are a very worthwhile indication of the strength or weakness of political parties. Only anarchists can ignore these indications.
India can achieve its full national independence only through a really
great revolution which will put in power the Indian proletariat.
Another path of development is imaginable only if the proletar-
ian revolution in England comes to victory prior to the revolution
in India. In such an event, the national liberation of India would
precede—one must suppose for a short time only—the dictator-
ship of the proletariat, uniting around it the poor peasantry. But
from these perspectives, which are absolutely correct, it is still a
long way to affirm that India is already ripe for the dictatorship
of the proletariat, that the Indian workers have outlived their concil-
liatory illusions, etc. No, before Indian communism stands a task
hardly begun. The Bolshevik-Leninists in India must accomplish
an immense, tenacious, daily, and difficult work. One must pen-
etrate into all the organizations of the working class. One must
educate the initial cadres of worker-communists. One must par-
ticipate in the daily “prosaic” life of the workers and their organi-
izations. One must study the relations existing between the cities
and the rural districts.

To fulfill such a task, naturally, programmatic and tactical the-
ses are necessary. But it would be incorrect to begin to work with
the convocation of an international conference over the question
of India, as our authors propose. A conference without sufficient
preparation will produce nothing. If the Indian Left Opposition-
ists will occupy themselves with the selection of recent material
and working it up, or at least translating it into one of the Euro-
pean languages (strikes, demonstrations, centers of the peasant
movement, the parties and the political groups of the different
classes, the activity of the Comintern, its appeals and slogans),
they will, with this important work, greatly facilitate the possibil-
ity of a collective elaboration of the program and tactics of the
proletarian vanguard in India.

One must begin with the building of a serious nucleus of the
Left Opposition of Indian comrades, who really stand upon the
point of view of the Bolshevik-Leninists.
November 10, 1931

Dear Comrade Groves,

I have your letter of four weeks ago. Excuse me for not answering sooner. I am at present busy with extremely important work. Aside from this, it is very difficult for me to write in English and it would take me a great deal of time to do so. In addition I did not know whether you could read German or French. At the present time there is an American comrade here who will translate this letter into English. Because of all these reasons you can understand the exceptional delay in answering you.

The same necessary work, which will take at least one and a half months, prevents me from paying close attention to the English question, which is of immeasurable importance to us. Even with regard to reading the English papers, I find little time for it. I trust that the second volume of my History of the Russian Revolution which I am now completing will serve in good stead the communists over the entire world, and especially England, in the current era which will bring great tremors in Europe and the rest of the world.

The above will explain why it is difficult for me to give a pre-
cise opinion at the present time on the question of the next practical steps for the British Communists and the Left Opposition. In one or two months I shall turn my attention to this. For the present I am forced to confine myself to considerations of a most general character.

One of my English friends wrote to me on October 9, prior to the parliamentary elections, about the rapid growth of the Communist Party and of a certain approach of the rank-and-file members in the ILP toward communism. My correspondent also spoke of a rebirth of the Minority Movement in the trade unions and the growing leadership of this organization in the sporadic strike struggles. Against the background of the world crisis and the British national crisis, these isolated incidents would lead one to believe that in the last two years there has been a strengthening of the Communist Party. But the elections brought an absolute disillusionment in this respect. Of the many hundreds of thousands of votes which the Labourites lost, the party at best swung twenty thousand to its support, which, considering the increase in the total number of voters, is merely a transitory conjunctural fluctuation, not at all a serious political victory. Where is the influence of the party among the unemployed? Among the coal miners? Among the young generation of workers who voted for the first time? Actually the election results are a terrible condemnation of the policies of the party and the Comintern.

I have not followed the tactics of the British party closely during the last year and I do not want to make a judgment about what it has learned, or whether in fact it has learned anything. It is clear to me, however, that apart from its recent new errors, the Communist Party is paying with its impotence of the past year for the shameful and criminal policies of the Comintern, first of the Anglo-Russian Committee and later of the “third period.” These errors were especially damaging for England.

The enormous weight of humility, conservatism, bigotry, conciliationism, respect for those on high—for titles, riches, the Crown—that continues to burden the consciousness of the British working class, which is capable also of grand revolutionary insurrections—Chartism, the prewar movements of 1911 and the postwar move-
ments, the strike struggles of 1926—never ceases to be amazing.

The British proletariat, with its oldest and longest tradition and its empirical method of thinking, bears two souls, as it were, and turns two faces to historical events.

The contemptible, mercenary, and servile bureaucrats of the trade unions and the Labour Party express all that is humiliating, serflike, and feudal in the British working class. In counterposition to this, the tasks of the Communist Party consist in giving expression to its potential revolutionary qualities, which are very great and are capable of developing immense explosive powers. But precisely at a critical juncture in British history, 1925–27, all the policies of the British Communist Party and the Comintern consisted in slavish adaptation to the trade-union leadership, idealizing it, erasing its treachery, and tying the working class to it. Because of this the young British Communist Party was deeply demoralized. All the authority of the October Revolution, the USSR, Bolshevism, was used to support and solidify the conservative and servile tendencies of the British working class.

After the Labourites had utilized the Stalinists to the end and kicked them aside, the chapter of trade unionism was mechanically replaced through an ultraleft turn by the new panacea of the “third period.” The slogan of “class against class” was issued, interpreted as a slogan for the struggle of a handful of communists against the “social-fascist” proletariat. Whereas yesterday Purcell and Cook were the friends and trustworthy allies of the Soviet Union, today the workers who vote for Purcell and Cook become class enemies. This is the political orbit of the British Communist Party, or, rather, of the Comintern. Is there a surer way to trample on the prestige of communism and to undermine confidence in the party of the awakening workers?

The Moscow bureaucracy of the Comintern stumbles on obstacles at every step, then orders a turn either to the left or the right. This is not difficult. All these Kuusinens, Manuilskys, Lozovskys, etc., are apparatus people, not only without serious Marxist training and revolutionary perspective, but also, and this is decisive, free from any control by the masses. Their politics consists in issuing decrees. For them, a tactical turn is only an about-face.
The Central Committee of the British Communist Party carries out its directives as best it can. But all these turnabouts, with their corresponding policies, are registered in the consciousness of the workers. These bankrupt bureaucrats believe that it is possible to mechanically establish leadership of the working class by means of cash and repression on the one hand and by abrupt leaps on the other, obscuring the past with lies and slander. But this is entirely false.

The British workers think slowly, since their minds are filled with the rubbish of centuries. But they do think. Isolated articles, appeals, slogans, generally go unnoticed. But a sustained policy (the Anglo-Russian Committee, the “third period”) does have an effect, at least on the most progressive, militant, critical, and revolutionary section of the working class. If one can compare the development of revolutionary consciousness to the cutting of threads on a screw, then one must say that the Comintern leadership at each turn does not use the right tool, nor caliper, nor right direction, breaking and demolishing the grooves. Without any exaggeration it can be said that since 1923—for England, particularly since 1925—had the Comintern not existed, there would be in England today an incomparably more influential revolutionary party. The recent elections fully lead to this frightful conclusion.

This is where the task of the Left Opposition begins. The British Communists, among whom there are certainly many devoted, honest, self-sacrificing revolutionists, cannot but be discouraged by the results of their decade of activity, especially since it was a decade of unique opportunities. Pessimism and indifference can also take hold of very good revolutionists if they do not understand the cause of their weakness or find a way out. Criticism, that is, the light of Marxism that broadly illuminates the path of the party, its zigzags, its errors, and the theoretical roots of these errors is the foremost necessary condition for the regeneration of the party. It is especially necessary, where this has not already been done, to begin publication of the most important documents of the International Left Opposition concerning the Anglo-Russian Committee. This is the point of departure for a British left wing.
The Left Opposition in England, like communism generally, has the right to look forward to a promising future: British capitalism is in the process of decline from great historical heights to the abyss; this is clear to all. One can confidently say that the recent elections represent the last spark of national "grandeur" of the British bourgeoisie; it is the spark of a dying lamp. Official British politics will pay heavily for these elections in the coming period.

The bankruptcy of the great national heroes of the three parties, like the bankruptcy of British capitalism, is absolutely inevitable. Despite all the obstacles presented by the Comintern, the mole of the British revolution is burrowing a sure path. One has every right to hope that the elections will represent the last of the reliance of the millions of workers on the capitalists, the lords, the intellectuals, the educated and rich, and those associated with MacDonald and the Sunday dinner. These gentlemen will not discover a secret solution. The real secret is: the proletariat revolution. Just as the present elections prepare the end to the conservatism and servility of the proletariat, so will that be followed by its full revolutionary awakening.

But in the immediate period the victory of the Conservatives brings heavy trials for the British proletariat and the intensification of international dangers. It especially endangers the USSR. Now we see how little the USSR has been helped by the policies that were always motivated with the cry for its "defense." For a few years its defense was expected from Purcell, Hicks, Citrine; then its defense against the "social-fascist" proletariat was assigned to the Communist Party. Now, in defense of the USSR, all it has is seventy thousand votes. The criticism of the Left Opposition, its demand for an end to the shameful bloc with Purcell, was attacked by Stalin as a refusal to defend the USSR against British imperialism. Now we can draw the balance sheet: nothing has served British imperialism as well as the Stalin school. The chief of this school surely has earned two Orders of the Garter.

The British Left Opposition must begin systematic work. You must establish a central staff, even if a small one. You must establish your own publication, even if on a modest scale. It is neces-
sary to carry out sustained activity, analysis, criticism, and propaganda. It is necessary to educate our cadres, even if in the initial stages they are few. The fundamental historical factors are in our favor. If in England, more than anywhere else, communism can permeate the consciousness of broad masses in a short time, the ideas of the Left Opposition, that is, the ideas of Marx and Lenin, can win supremacy within the communist movement in the same short time. I sincerely wish our British friends success on this path. With best communist greetings.

Yours,

L. Trotsky
The document entitled “Is a Soviet Germany Possible?” only proves how important it was for the Soviet government to elaborate a model plan of cooperation between the Soviet Union and Germany right at the beginning of the crisis. That would have an incomparable agitational value at the present time. The least that can be done now is to make up for what has been missed.

I have only cursorily glanced through the anti-Soviet manifesto of the Leipziger Volkszeitung [Leipzig People’s News] for lack of time, but its stupid superficiality leaps to the eye. In 1917 the Russian social democrats maintained that the dictatorship of the proletariat was all right for a highly industrialized country, but in no case for backward Russia, where it could only spell disaster. Besides, the dictatorship could not last more than three days—then, one to three weeks. This was the social democratic evaluation of the October Revolution. Now, fourteen years later, the German social democrats say that a soviet regime, that is, the dictatorship of the proletariat, is fine for a backward country, with its wide dimensions and overwhelming preponderance of the peasantry, etc. But for highly industrialized Germany, the dictatorship
of the proletariat would be disastrous.

On the question of economic collaboration between a soviet Germany and Soviet Russia, the German social democrats manipulate current export-import figures to demonstrate that the trade relations between the two countries are insignificant. All that proves is that if a soviet Germany were to proceed according to the rules of capitalist Germany, it would collapse.

Industrial imports into Russia are limited by credit conditions. In the course of several years the collectivized agrarian economy, now for the most part merely a form of bureaucratic coercion, could become extremely productive and the entire economic relations between both countries completely revolutionized by German industrial and organizational capacity. But what about the transitional period? Obviously, Germany would have to go through a few hard years. The workers, however, would at least understand why they were making sacrifices. But even during the critical transitional years, assuming that the rest of Europe remained capitalist, Germany would not be isolated from the world market. Once the workers have expropriated the landowners, the bankers, and the industrialists, they would immediately be able to produce for the world market at cheaper prices than before. Under such circumstances, an economic blockade is absolutely out of the question.

Direct contact with Soviet Russia would be reestablished immediately, for between a soviet Germany and Soviet Russia capitalist Poland would soon give way. Moreover, after a revolution in Germany, it is quite improbable that European capitalism could remain firm for any extended period of time.

It really is necessary to write more at length on this subject. Perhaps the German comrades could divide up the subject among themselves in its different aspects, and begin to collect material toward this end. Later, I could also join in the collective work.
What is fascism? The name originated in Italy. Were all the forms of counterrevolutionary dictatorship fascist or not (that is to say, prior to the advent of fascism in Italy)?

The former dictatorship in Spain of Primo de Rivera, 1923–30, is called a fascist dictatorship by the Comintern. Is this correct or not? We believe that it is incorrect.

The fascist movement in Italy was a spontaneous movement of large masses, with new leaders from the rank and file. It is a plebeian movement in origin, directed and financed by big capitalist powers. It issued forth from the petty bourgeoisie, the slum proletariat, and even to a certain extent from the proletarian masses; Mussolini, a former socialist is a “self-made” man arising from this movement.

Primo de Rivera was an aristocrat. He occupied a high military and bureaucratic post and was chief governor of Catalonia. He accomplished his overthrow with the aid of state and military forces. The dictatorships of Spain and Italy are two totally different forms of dictatorship. It is necessary to distinguish between them. Mussolini had difficulty in reconciling many old military
institutions with the fascist militia. This problem did not exist for Primo de Rivera.

The movement in Germany is analogous mostly to the Italian. It is a mass movement, with its leaders employing a great deal of socialist demagogy. This is necessary for the creation of the mass movement.

The genuine basis (for fascism) is the petty bourgeoisie. In Italy it has a very large base—the petty bourgeoisie of the towns and cities, and the peasantry. In Germany, likewise, there is a large base for fascism. . . .

It may be said, and this is true to a certain extent, that the new middle class, the functionaries of the state, the private administrators, etc., can constitute such a base. But this is a new question that must be analyzed. . . .

In order to be capable of foreseeing anything with regard to fascism, it is necessary to have a definition of that idea. What is fascism? What are its base, its form, and its characteristics? How will its development take place? It is necessary to proceed in a scientific and Marxian manner.
1. For an analysis of a situation from a revolutionary point of view, it is necessary to distinguish between the economic and social prerequisites for a revolutionary situation and the revolutionary situation itself.

2. The economic and social prerequisites for a revolutionary situation take hold, generally speaking, when the productive powers of the country are declining; when the specific weight of a capitalist country on the world market is systematically lessened and the incomes of the classes are likewise systematically reduced; when unemployment is not merely the result of a conjunctural fluctuation but a permanent social evil with a tendency to increase. This characterizes the situation in England completely, and we can say that the economic and social prerequisites for a revolutionary situation exist and are daily becoming more and more acute. But we must not forget that we define a revolutionary situation politically, not only sociologically, and this includes the subjective factor. And the subjective factor is not only the question of the party of the proletariat. It is a question of the consciousness of all the classes, mainly of course of the proletariat and its party.
3. A revolutionary situation, however, begins only when the economic and social prerequisites for a revolution produce abrupt changes in the consciousness of society and its different classes. What changes?

(a) For our analysis we must distinguish the three social classes: the capitalist, the middle class or petty bourgeoisie, the proletariat. The required changes in mentality of these classes are very different for each of them.

(b) The British proletariat, far better than all the theoreticians, knows very well that the economic situation is very acute. But the revolutionary situation unfolds only when the proletariat begins to search for a way out, not on the basis of the old society, but along the path of a revolutionary insurrection against the existing order. This is the most important subjective condition for a revolutionary situation. The intensity of the revolutionary feelings of the masses is one of the most important indications of the maturity of the revolutionary situation.

(c) But a revolutionary situation is one which must in the next period permit the proletariat to become the ruling power of society, and that depends to some extent, although less in England than in other countries, on the political thinking and mood of the middle class: its loss of confidence in all the traditional parties (including the Labour Party, a reformist, that is, a conservative party), and its hope in a radical, revolutionary change in society (and not a countervoluntary change, namely, a fascist).

(d) The changes in the mood both of the proletariat and the middle class correspond and develop parallel to the changes in mood of the ruling class when it sees that it is unable to save its system, loses confidence in itself, begins to disintegrate, splits into factions and cliques.

4. At what point in these processes the revolutionary situation is totally ripe cannot be known in advance or indicated mathematically. The revolutionary party can establish that fact only through struggle; through the growth of its forces and influence on the masses, on the peasants and the petty bourgeoisie of the cities, etc.; and by the weakening of the resistance of the ruling classes.

5. If we apply these criteria to the situation in Britain we see:
WHAT IS A REVOLUTIONARY SITUATION?

(a) That the economic and social prerequisites exist and are becoming more compelling and acute.

(b) That the bridge, however, from these economic prerequisites to a psychological response has not yet been crossed. It is not a change in the economic conditions, already unbearable, that is required but changes in the attitude of the different classes to this unbearable catastrophic situation in England.

6. Economic development of society is a very gradual process, measured by centuries and decades. But when economic conditions are radically altered, the delayed psychological response can quickly appear. Whether quickly or slowly, such changes must inevitably affect the mood of the classes. Only then do we have a revolutionary situation.

7. In political terms this means:

(a) That the proletariat must lose confidence not only in the Conservatives and Liberals, but also in the Labour Party. It must concentrate its will and its courage on revolutionary aims and methods.

(b) That the middle class must lose confidence in the big bourgeoisie, the lords, and turn its eyes to the revolutionary proletariat.

(c) That the propertied classes, the ruling cliques, rejected by the masses, lose confidence in themselves.

8. These attitudes will inevitably develop; but they do not exist today. They may develop in a short period of time, because of the acute crisis. They may develop in two or three years, even in a year. But today this remains a perspective, not a fact. We must base our policy on the facts of today, not those of tomorrow.

9. The political prerequisites for a revolutionary situation are developing simultaneously and more or less parallel, but this does not mean that they will all mature at the same moment—this is the danger that lies ahead. In the ripening political conditions, the most immature is the revolutionary party of the proletariat. It is not excluded that the general revolutionary transformation of the proletariat and the middle class and the political disintegration of the ruling class will develop more quickly than the maturing of the Communist Party. This means that a genuine revolutionary situation could develop without an adequate revolutionary party.
It would be a repetition to some degree of the situation in Germany in 1923. But to say that this is the situation in England today is absolutely wrong.

10. We say that it is not excluded that the development of the party can lag behind the other elements of the revolutionary situation—but this is not inevitable. We cannot make an exact prediction, but it is not merely a question of a prediction. It is a question of our own activity.

11. How much time will the British proletariat need at this conjuncture of capitalist society to break its connections with the three bourgeois parties? It is entirely possible that the Communist Party with a correct policy will grow in proportion to the bankruptcy and disintegration of the other parties. It is our aim and duty to realize this possibility.

Conclusions: This explains sufficiently why it is totally wrong to say that the political conflict in England is between democracy and fascism. The era of fascism begins seriously after an important and, for a period of time, decisive victory of the bourgeoisie over the working class. The great struggles in England, however, lie ahead. As we have discussed in another connection, the next political chapter in England, after the fall of the national government and the Conservative government which will probably succeed it, will very likely be a Liberal-Labour one, which can become in the near future more dangerous than the specter of fascism. We called that, conditionally, the period of British Kerenskyism.

But it must be added that Kerenskyism will not in every situation and in every country necessarily be as weak as Russian Kerenskyism, which was weak because the Bolshevik Party was strong. For example, in Spain Kerenskyism—the coalition of the liberals and the “socialists”—is by no means as weak as it was in Russia and this is due to the weakness of the Communist Party. Kerenskyism is a great danger to the Spanish revolution. Kerenskyism combines a policy of reformist, “revolutionary,” “democratic,” “socialist” phrases and secondary democratic social reforms with a policy of repression against the left wing of the working class.

This is contrary to the method of fascism, but it serves the same end. The defeat of the future Lloyd Georgeism is possible
only if we foresee its approach, only if we are not hypnotized by the specter of fascism, which today is a danger further removed than Lloyd George and his tool of tomorrow—the Labour Party. The danger tomorrow may be the reformist party, the bloc of liberals and socialists; the fascist danger is still three or four stages away. Our struggle to eliminate the fascist stage and to eliminate or reduce the reformist stage is a struggle to win over the working class to the Communist Party.
The helplessness of the League of Nations in the Sino-Japanese dispute exceeds all the predictions of its most implacable enemies and critics. The self-contradictory character of the League of Nations—I should prefer, with your permission, to say its treacherous character—is most clearly represented by France. Its official delegate, Minister of Foreign Affairs Briand, is conducting the whole of the League’s campaign for peace, and at the same time the entire French governmental press—with *Le Temps* in the lead—is supporting Japanese intervention with all its might, thus in effect disavowing its own official diplomacy. If you follow the editorials in *Le Temps* day after day, you might think you were reading an organ of the general staff in Tokyo, not of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Paris. It is clear that the difference between the real policy of Briand and the military operations of General Honjo cannot be very great if the semiofficial French press can successfully accommodate both points of view.

Here we see once more that France, in order to support its Versailles hegemony—a hegemony which is unstable because it does not correspond to the actual relative economic weight of the coun-
try—is compelled to seek props among all the reactionary elements of Europe and the world, and to support military violence, colonial expansion, etc., wherever it turns.

But it goes without saying that the Sino-Japanese conflict, or more precisely, the military attack on China by Japan, before it could find support in Paris, had to find it in Tokyo—and in a certain sense in Nanking as well. The present dramatic developments in Manchuria have arisen directly out of the suppression of the Chinese revolution and the imminence of revolution in Japan.

The Chinese revolution of 1925–27 was a movemental liberation and brought immense masses into action. The Kuomintang Party, having seized the leadership of the movement, succeeded in putting down the revolution ultimately by military means. This prevented the formation of a democratic nation, weakened China, revived the struggle between cliques of generals, and therewith kindled predatory appetites, especially in Japan.

Japan’s military intervention in Manchuria is, however, by no means an expression of the strength of the present Japanese state. On the contrary, this step was dictated by its growing weakness. It is highly instructive to consider the analogy between the Manchurian adventure of czarism, which led to the war of 1904–05, and this adventure of the mikado’s government,266 which will inevitably develop into war, or more precisely, a series of wars.

The czarist government in its day plunged into the situation in the East in search of a way out of the intolerable inner contradictions between a developing capitalism and the archaic, semifeudal, agrarian-caste structure of the country. The medicine, however, only made the disease worse and led to the first Russian revolution of 1905.

The agrarian and caste stratification of Japan still remains semifeudal. At the beginning of the present century the contradiction between youthful Japanese capitalism and the old state regime had not yet fully developed. On the contrary, capitalism was successfully using the firm old feudal classes, institutions, and traditions for its own military aims. It was just this combination which gave Japan her colossal victory over czarist Russia in 1904–05.

Since that time the situation has radically changed. During the
last quarter of a century the capitalist development of Japan has deeply undermined the old Japanese relations and institutions crowned by the figure of the mikado. The ruling classes are pointing out to the Japanese peasants the copious reserves of land in Manchuria. But the peasants want first to settle the agrarian problem at home. It is only on a new, democratic basis that Japan can finally take shape as a modern nation. The masters of Japan’s destiny feel now approximately as the czarist monarchy felt at the beginning of the century. And by the ill-omened irony of fate, the rulers of Japan are seeking a way out on those same plains of Manchuria where the czarist monarchy received such a serious prerevolutionary wound.

Which way events will turn in the Far East in the coming days or weeks is not easy to predict. Too many contradictory factors, crisscrossing in different directions, are at work. It is especially difficult to cast a balance at this juncture because the Japanese government itself, being the government of a prerevolutionary epoch, is marked by an unusual instability and tendency toward unpredictable actions.

But no matter how events stack up in the coming weeks, their general course can be predicted almost without the danger of mistake. Even if it should prove possible at this time to halt the spread of Japanese military operations and thus prevent them from developing directly into major warfare along an extensive front, that would still signify nothing more than a breathing spell. The ruling circles of Japan have got a foothold in Manchuria. The League of Nations is trying to resolve the conflict (insofar as it is really trying to do this) by making new concessions to Japan at China’s expense. This means that, even with the most favorable possible outcome of the current military operations, Japan will further strengthen its foothold in Manchuria.

For China, the Japanese “rights” in Manchuria will rankle like a painful sliver in a bare foot. True, China is weakened by the unchallenged sway of the various Kuomintang military cliques. But China’s national awakening remains a factor of immense historical importance, and it will become even greater. In order to maintain its position, Japan will inevitably be compelled to resort
to ever new military expeditions. The necessity of sending new troops will in its turn create a desire to justify the expense by an enlargement of Japanese "rights"—that is, by new seizures and violations.

This process has its own automatic logic. Japan's international position will become subject to more and more strain. Military expenses will steadily increase. The original considerations of economic advantage will, as things develop, give place to considerations of military prestige. Discontent will increase throughout the country. In these circumstances Manchuria may well become for the Japanese monarchy what Morocco was for the Spanish monarchy—and that, too, in a briefer time. 267

Might not the present developments in Manchuria lead to a war between Japan and the Soviet Union? On this question, as on the foregoing in general, I can comment, of course, only as an observer not initiated into the plans and intentions of the respective governments and judging exclusively on the basis of objective indications and the logic of things.

Any desire on the part of the Soviet government for a conflict with Japan may in any case be absolutely excluded. Upon this question it is most instructive to observe the new tack taken quite recently by the semiofficial French press. During the first weeks of the Japanese intervention, Le Temps never tired of repeating: "It is not Japan that is to be feared, but the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, which is obviously getting ready for aggressive action." News stories about Soviet troop concentrations poured out as from the horn of plenty. In this way public attention was sufficiently distracted, and the necessary time gained for the Japanese military authorities. When the weakness of the League of Nations had made itself apparent in a sufficiently convincing way, the semiofficial French press set itself the task—or rather, had the task set for it—of reconciling the governments of the great powers to the accomplished fact and getting them to go as far as possible to meet Japan. From that moment Le Temps began to assert that there could be no talk of interference by the USSR, that it was just a question of a local conflict, a provincial episode, that everything would be settled properly, just as fine as could be, that
there was no need to get upset and interfere: Japan itself knew what was best for it in Manchuria.

The French press has sought an argument for these recent reassuring affirmations in the "weakness" of the USSR and the Red Army. In so doing it has made frequent use of the analogy mentioned above with the Russo-Japanese War of 1904–05. The analogy is very instructive, but only upon one condition: that you place a plus sign where there was a minus before, and vice versa. For if present-day Japan is not at all similar to the Japan of the beginning of the century, the Soviet Union is still less similar to czarist Russia. Of course, the Soviet revolution is far from having been completed. There are many contradictions in Soviet economic development, and these at times develop into political difficulties. To deny this would be to engage in the head-in-the-sand politics of the ostrich. But in making assessments on a broad historical scale one must keep a sense of proportion and not be distracted from fundamental factors by secondary ones. The Red Army is the historical product of three revolutions, which have awakened and educated the Russian nation and, along with it, the several nations of the Soviet Union and a number of other nations friendly with it. In the event of war—whose inevitability and necessity will be understood by the masses of the population in the USSR—the energy awakened by those three revolutions will become a mighty force. Only the blind can fail to see that!

To be sure, a Far Eastern theater of military activities would be remote. Railroad connections with it present a serious difficulty. Japan's advantage in this respect is indubitable—but *only* in this respect. In everything else the decisive advantage would be on the side of the USSR. The Red Army alone would demonstrate its enormous superiority over the present prerevolutionary Japanese army, and that in itself could have decisive significance. But over and above that, the operations would be carried on in a country deeply hostile to Japan and friendly to the Soviet Union. For if the latter found itself forced into a war, it could, and would, wage the war only as an ally of the Chinese people in their fight for national liberation.

No matter how weakened China may be by the regime of her
militarists, the colossal upheavals of two revolutions have politically prepared innumerable elements for the making of a new China. Hundreds of thousands, millions, of Chinese know how to handle weapons. Hunger and an awakened national sense drive them to take up arms. Even now, as guerrilla detachments constantly harassing the Japanese lines of communication and threatening individual Japanese units, the improvised Chinese troops constitute a serious danger to the Japanese, no less a danger than that which the Spanish guerrillas proved to be for Napoleon’s occupying forces. As for a military alliance between the Soviet republic and China, that would be a veritable catastrophe for Japan.

Why then, you may ask, does the Soviet Union seek to avoid war? Are not the peaceable declarations of Moscow mere diplomatic screening for intentions that are anything but peaceful? No, I do not think so. More than that, I consider such a thing impossible. No matter what its military results might be, a war would bring the Soviet republic enormous economic hardships which would be added to the already existing economic complications. Economic construction would be halted and political difficulties would very likely result.

One could go to war, in such circumstances, only if it became absolutely inevitable. But it is not inevitable. On the contrary, even from a purely military point of view the Soviet government has not the slightest reason for haste or for running ahead to meet events. Japan will only weaken itself by its Manchurian undertaking. Conditions in the Far East—the immense distances, the general economic backwardness, and, in particular, the poorly developed rail connections—are such that there is absolutely no reason to fear an immediate, or even a relatively remote danger to the vital centers of the Soviet Union, including of course its centers in Asia.

The question of the Chinese Eastern Railroad, important as it is in itself, when viewed in this connection cannot have a decisive significance in determining the policy of the two sides. The Soviet government has announced more than once its perfect readiness to hand over the railroad to a really strong Chinese government—that is, a government that would base itself upon the awakened Chinese people. To have handed it over in earlier years, to Chang
Tso-lin or Chang Hsueh-liang would have meant, either directly or indirectly, to have handed it over to Japan, which would have employed it against China and against the Soviet Union.

To interpret the Soviet policy in relation to the Chinese Eastern Railroad as “imperialism” is to stand things on their head in the interests of aggressive Japanese militarism. But in any case, the question of the railroad is not an isolated question. It is a subordinate element in the great overall problem of the Far East. China will speak the last word on that problem. And the most ardent sympathies of the people of the Soviet Union will be on the side of the Chinese people, it goes without saying.

It would not be out of the way to add that, if nothing else, the present situation in Europe ought to make it clear to all thinking political people, including opponents of the USSR, that the Soviet Union does not, and could not, wish to tie its hands in the Far East. You may ask what am I getting at? The possibility of the National Socialists, i.e., the fascists, coming to power in Germany. If this were to happen, it would mean, according to my deepest conviction, an inevitable war between fascist Germany and the Soviet republic. Then we would truly be dealing with a question of life or death. But that is a separate subject, to which we can perhaps return another time.
Dear Comrades:

I thank you for the confidence you show in me by your letter of November 12. I see no reason to accuse you of “dishonesty” and “betrayal” of the proletarian united front, as you put it, because of your membership in the SAP. I do not doubt in the least that you are quite serious about the proletarian revolution. Your critique of the Communist Party is correct. However, what you are now counterposing to the Communist Party is not another, consistently revolutionary party but your own idea of such a party. The idea might be excellent, and it really isn’t bad. Nevertheless the party of which you speak is yet to be created. The SAP, however, stands before the public as a rather confused organization with a leadership that is completely foreign to revolutionary Marxism and politically inadequate.

You call yourselves communists and declare your solidarity with the ideas that I represent. You set yourselves the goal of winning the SAP to true Marxist communism. Naturally, I can only welcome this goal and seek to support you in this course to the best of my ability. I would not, however, represent the SAP in its
present condition to anyone as being a party but rather as a transitional formation on whose territory various tendencies are trying to recruit to themselves. Within the framework of this transitional "party," then, you, the Marxist communist elements, constitute a fraction which presents a sharply delineated platform and openly and energetically leads the fight for this platform.

I cannot approve the corollary idea you propose: that all of the oppositional communist groups join the SAP. In the first place, these various organizations have quite different tendencies and are—as you yourselves correctly say—not mass organizations, but cadres, and cadres only have value when they are quite clear and conscious about their goals. To unite with Brandlerites, ultralefts, antiparliamentarists, etc., would be absurd.

Secondly, the German Communist Party has behind it millions of workers. Quite obviously you underestimate this fact. One can influence these workers, especially now, when the questions are being posed in their sharpest form by the events themselves. The Communist Left Opposition (Bolshevik-Leninists), though excluded from the party, regards itself as a component of the Communist Party and tries in every way possible to influence its proletarian membership. Clearly it would render this task immeasurably more difficult for itself by suddenly going over to the SAP. No, there can be no talk of this. It's also excluded that the Communist Left Opposition enter into any connections with the SAP without the Communist Party also participating. However, the Left Opposition can establish quite close and friendly relations with the communist fraction of the SAP on the basis of common ideas, provided that it turns out that such really exist, without setting up any organizational structures too hastily.

Do you have any kind of relationship with the Left Opposition? Do you receive their literature?

I shall follow the further developments with great interest and will be very grateful if you keep me up to date.

With revolutionary greetings.

Yours,

L. Trotsky
December 17, 1931

One always begins weak

To the Left Opposition of the Communist Party of Switzerland

Dear Comrades:

I’ve owed you a reply to your friendly letter of August 29 for a long time now. I have taken note of the materials you sent me. The fact that you are weak corresponds to the nature of things. One always begins weak, and becomes strong only later on. I hope you are attentively following the development of events in Germany. That is where the great strategic school is now. I believe that you would do well to energetically pose to the Swiss Communist Party the same questions that we are raising before the German party. The more energetically you proceed now, the more the course of events will strengthen the authority of the Left Opposition.

With best communist greetings.

Yours,

L. Trotsky
1. I have received issue number 5 of the organ of our Bulgarian friends, Osvobozhdienie. This issue contains truly astounding material about the mistreatment of our comrades in the prisons by the Stalinists who also are imprisoned there. It appears that a group of supporters of the Left Opposition has been formed among the prisoners in some of the Bulgarian penitentiaries. A rabid and thoroughly poisoned, that is, a purely Stalinist baiting campaign is being carried on against them, fostered by the bureaucrats outside the prisons. Undoubtedly, among the incarcerated Stalinists there are not a few honest and upright revolutionists. But when in the name of the Comintern they are told all kinds of atrocities about the Left Opposition, atrocities which they cannot verify in prison, they vent their hatred of prison on the Left Oppositionists, that is, they take the road of least resistance. The demand of the Oppositionists that these accusations be stated openly and verified leads to new slanders and physical confrontations.

In Plovdiv a few comrades were severely wounded. The Stalinists then appealed to the state prosecutor with a complaint against our comrades, who were then put into isolation cells. A letter by
Comrade D. Gatschev concerning this incident, addressed to the state prosecutor on October 16, 1931, is published in Osvobozhdenie. This is an excellent document that—as the editorial board correctly states—testifies to the high proletarian morale of our imprisoned friends. In my opinion this letter must be published in the entire international press of the Left Opposition; it deserves it in every respect.

The declaration begins by pointing out that its author belongs to the International Left Opposition. Then it states: “Mr. State Prosecutor, I have never requested and would never permit your interference in our factional struggles. You are the representative of bourgeois class rule against which we are fighting in order to replace it by the rule of the working class. We are a faction in the class struggle movement of the proletariat, which is a foe of the class you serve.” Since his factional opponents nevertheless turned to the state prosecutor, Gatschev considered it necessary to state the facts. Further on, the tragic episode of the conflict is presented in detail. After Gatschev quotes Trotsky’s article on the impermissibility of terrorist methods in the internal faction fights of the working class, he continues: “We cannot resort to provocation, terror, swindle, slander, murder, etc., in the struggle against comrades. But when we are assaulted—shall we not defend ourselves? Yes, we defend ourselves, we are not Christians.” The letter ends with the following words: “The real judgment will be made by the working class. It is to it I appeal.”

Similar incidents took place in other prisons. The working class must be informed as widely as possible about these facts. Our Bulgarian comrades must know that they are not alone, that there are hundreds and thousands of comrades with them in every country, and that the number of their friends is growing rapidly. It should be added that Comrade Gatschev was at one time sentenced to death.

2. I have received a group picture of twenty-three Greek comrades, Bolshevik-Leninists, “Archio-Marxists,” who are incarcerated in Singros prison in Athens. This picture gave me a clear and living idea of the composition of our Greek section. Shameless bureaucrats on the payroll had the nerve to call these proletar-
ians—whose revolutionary spirit is written on their faces—fascists! Wherever the faction of Greek Bolshevik-Leninists has sunk firm roots in the working class the future belongs to genuine Bolshevism, to genuine Marxism. I salute our imprisoned comrades most warmly.

3. Just two months ago we received documents and material from the USSR which are characteristic of the theoretical and political work of the leading cadres of the Left Opposition. This material consists of a few hundred small sheets written with such microscopic letters (for reasons of conspirative dispatch) that it took about six weeks to decipher them with magnifying lens. This in itself speaks of their arduous revolutionary efforts. We have begun to publish this material, received after a long delay, in Biulleten Oppozitsii. A long article by Comrade Rakovsky and programmatic theses of three exiles are published in number 25–26. Every reader will be readily convinced of how far the Russian Opposition stands from any idea of capitulation. The material, which contains the internal discussions of the Left Opposition, displays the high plane on which the theoretical political level of the Russian Bolshevik-Leninists is developing. Within it a new generation of Marxists is taking shape, which will not permit extinction of the theoretical spirit of scientific communism. The less opportunity the Russian comrades have to make themselves heard, the more resolutely and intransigently all the other comrades must reply to intrigues and insinuations of all types, regardless of their source.

4. The preparations for the January [Seventeenth] Conference of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union are taking place entirely under the sign of the struggle against “Trotskyism.” How long ago is it that the Stalinist bureaucracy declared “Trotskyism” liquidated? (Molotov had exclaimed, “Coffin! Finished!” and so on.) Is it so long since it was established that “the Right Opposition is the main danger from now on!”? Now we have a new turn: “‘Trotskyism’ is the principal foe!” It is discovered that “Trotskyism” has penetrated into all institutions of learning, into the most important textbooks, and even into commentaries on Lenin’s works. The Central Committee informs the organizations by telegraph that, while the Right Opposition finds support in the countryside,
in the kolkhozes, etc., the “Trotskyists” raise their heads in the industrial districts. Kaganovich, the Amsterdamer, delivered a speech before the Institute of Red Professors, which fills a whole page of Pravda, on the necessity of opening up a struggle against “Trotskyism” all along the line. We will have to write a separate article on the political significance of this campaign in the near future. For the time being it is sufficient to mention a few outstanding facts. The Stalinist top is compelled to draw a tighter and tighter circle around itself. Less and less can it base itself on those who repeat the general obligatory loyalty oaths. That is why it invents supplementary formulas, ever more outrageous, which finally culminate in the dogma of Stalin’s infallibility.

Attempts at Marxist research in any direction whatsoever lead inevitably to a conflict with the ideology of Stalinism. A growing number of people who are not connected with “Trotskyism” in any way at all, who are, on the contrary, even hostile to it, are being accused of “Trotskyism.” On the other hand it appears that the most important Marxian seats of learning in all the higher educational institutions are occupied by oppositionists who have capitulated. This fact demonstrates indirectly, but very convincingly, that a serious theoretical life exists only within the Left Opposition, so that the Stalinist bureaucracy is compelled to use renegades for the most important positions.

The fact that such a tremendous state and party apparatus is compelled, after eight years of continuous and bitter struggle against the Left Opposition, to concentrate all its forces once again for a struggle against “Trotskyism” shows the enduring vitality of our ideas. The Russian Left Opposition still has a great word to say in history.

5. I have been written that a foreign comrade, who is apparently a poor observer, has expressed himself quite contemptuously about the German Opposition. Yet it is precisely in recent times that it has experienced a serious growth and is becoming an extraordinarily important factor in the policy of the German working class. The main reasons, naturally, lie in the objective conditions. A genuine Marxian faction is able to manifest all its superiority most effectively precisely in a period when the right, centrist, and
eclectic factions lose their heads completely—precisely in a pe-
period of great revolutionary tasks, of abrupt turns in the political 
situation, and of approaching grandiose conflicts. Only cadres 
which go through such a period and absorb the lessons into their 
flesh and blood will become genuine Bolshevik cadres. The present 
situation in Germany also demonstrates very graphically how im-
portant it was for the International Left Opposition to free itself 
at the right time from alien elements and ambiguous traveling 
companions. Had we not broken at the right time with Urbahns, 
we would not now have the possibility of finding a way to the 
ranks of the Communist Party. Had we not later broken with 
Landau, the internal life of the Left Opposition would now be 
paralyzed by unprincipled intrigues, quarrels, and chicanery. Cer-
tain critics of the present German Opposition should ask them-
selves: Did they not too long support the international faction of 
Landau-Naville and did they not thereby weaken the German Oppo-
position?

6. In France, the Left Opposition is undoubtedly stagnating, 
and therefore centrifugal forces are developing within it. For this 
too there exist objective reasons. In France the communist ebb is 
not yet at an end. The party and the independent trade unions 
continue to fall apart. The party is even losing votes in the elec-
tions. Because no immediate revolutionary tasks stand before the 
French working class today, the Left Opposition has no possibility 
of manifesting its principal qualities politically: capacity for ori-
entation and boldness in decisions. Under these conditions, the 
general communist ebb also seizes the Left Opposition, for the 
French workers in their majority still for the moment see much 
more what the Opposition has in common with the party than 
what distinguishes them.

But besides the great historical reasons indicated for the weak-
ness of the French Opposition, there exist still other reasons of a 
secondary order. From the very beginning the League was com-
posed of highly diverse elements. Many of them had repeated 
monotonously for years the formulas of the Russian Opposition 
in order to attach some importance to themselves and to cover up 
their own impotence. It is enough to recall that so conservative,
cowardly, and empty a bourgeois as Paz imagined himself in all seriousness to be the representative of the Left Opposition. Now this creature has tumbled into the Socialist Party. And that’s where he belongs. Yet we did have comrades in our ranks who thought that we broke with Paz too early and too sharply. The *Lutte de classes* group, which for a few years moved from one ideological haven to another, joined the Left Opposition. It is highly probable that with a rapid development of the League and its recruitment of workers, many an intellectual of *La Lutte de classes* would have been educated, tempered, and become not a bad revolutionist. However, under the conditions of a standstill, the *Lutte de classes* group finally showed only its negative qualities. The largest part of its membership left the League in order to learn independently and to lead the French proletariat. They surely have all the qualifications for this. Unfortunately the members of the *Lutte de classes* group who still remained in the League apparently have not grasped to this day the lessons of these two years: they vacillate, maneuver, sit around, and sniff the air, instead of rolling up their sleeves and occupying themselves with the daily small tasks at hand. The situation is still further complicated by the terrible vacillations and mistakes of the Jewish group. With the weakness of the League, this in itself small group plays no subordinate role. Under the conditions of the development and growth of the League, the Jewish group ought to become the League’s voice for propaganda among the Jewish workers. But this one of its functions is scarcely fulfilled by the group, in which there undoubtedly are workers devoted to the cause. On the contrary, it became a support for two or three comrades who seek to give some kind of direction to the League, the International Secretariat, and the whole International Opposition. Up to now, nobody knows anything about this “direction,” for, apart from confusion, the authors of this “direction” have till now brought nothing into the life of the Opposition. They were with Paz against us, they made their orientation in the League dependent upon conditions of a subjective character, they supported Molinier-Frank against Rosmer-Naville, they made a bloc with Naville and afterwards with Rosmer, they created confusion and confused themselves, they derailed the
Jewish group, and brought in nothing but decomposition.

A few times I proposed, because of the specific conditions in France, to introduce into the League's statutes the following propositions as for example: every member of the League who has not, within the period of a month, fulfilled the current work from day to day, such as the conducting of classes for young workers, street sales of papers, collecting of money, attendance at meetings, establishment of contact, etc., be expelled from the League. The League needs no ballast! It has been proven by the whole experience of the labor movement, and by the experience of the League in particular, that precisely those intellectuals and semi-intellectuals who are unproductive and reluctant to roll up their sleeves like to engage in maneuvers and intrigues, poisoning the life of the organization and preventing the entry of workers into it.

7. The Spanish section has made certain advances and established contacts which permit it to hope for new successes. But it is clear that measured by the scale of the grandiose revolutionary movement of the Spanish masses the successes of the Spanish Opposition are quite small. This is explained, however, primarily by the fact that before the revolution the Spanish Opposition did not actually exist. It was formed in the fire of events, and time was lost and wasted with experiments whose hopelessness was clear in advance (Catalonia). The extreme weakness of the Spanish Opposition at the beginning of the revolution expressed itself in the fact that, regardless of the exceptionally favorable situation in the country, our Spanish comrades up to recently were unable to issue a weekly paper. Help from abroad did not suffice or did not arrive in time. El Soviet of Barcelona was suspended. It must be said that the reasons which the Spanish Opposition gives to explain the suspension of El Soviet are to be considered completely unacceptable. Instead of saying clearly and openly: "We have no means, we are weak, send help!" the Spanish comrades declare that they do not want to submit to censorship. If revolutionists are not in a position to shake off the censor, then they must on the one hand adapt themselves to it legally, and on the other hand say to the very end all that is necessary in the illegal press. But to disappear from the scene by pointing to the censorship and to one's own
revolutionary pride means to conduct a decorative but not a Bolshevik policy. The Spanish revolution has now entered into a period of lull preceding the showdown between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. How long this period will last cannot be foretold. At all events the Spanish Opposition now has the possibility for more systematic and planned preparatory work. No time should be lost and cadres must be developed. The theoretical monthly organ *Comunismo* is one of the most important weapons in this connection. A serious bulletin for internal discussion must be created. The education of cadres is unthinkable on the basis of national questions alone. If the Spanish comrades have devoted very little time to international questions in the course of the past year, this could be explained by the youthfulness of the Opposition and the turmoil of the revolutionary events. These undoubtedly were the reasons why the intervention of the Spanish Opposition in international questions was extremely infrequent and bore an episodic character that was not always a fortunate one.

8. The American League has been developing slowly up to now, with periods of retreat, but in general organically. The great advantage of the American League over the French was the fact that the former in contrast to the latter was from the very beginning a homogeneous group which was not expelled from the party in 1923–24 but in 1928. The slowness of the growth of the League is to be accounted for primarily by the lack of great shifts in the American working class in recent years. As I have already written elsewhere, it may be presumed that the crisis in America creates premises for revolutionary work on a broad scale for the first time. It is to be hoped that, thanks to the preceding systematic education of cadres, the American League will enter the new period well enough prepared, although it should not be concealed that the real test for the cadre is still ahead.

The American League took less part in the life of the ILO than was desirable. The explanation for this is surely the distance. At any rate, it is desirable that the Central Committee of the League as a whole attentively follow the internal questions of the ILO, since the excessive concentration of these questions in the hands of one comrade have up to now not yielded the desired results.
9. This letter is in no respect either a systematic survey of individual sections or a systematic presentation of the individual questions. It is the task of this letter to exchange opinions with the comrades, even if only in a very cursory form, about a few questions and phenomena which appear to me to be important and interesting in the light of the ILO. Thus, for example, I now leave aside the Chinese, Czechoslovakian, Belgian, and other sections, partly because of the lack of necessary information, partly because many questions which affect these sections are not yet sufficiently clear to me. In conclusion I want to say that the need to have recourse to this letter lies in the fact that we have not yet succeeded in creating an International Secretariat. This fact is explained partly by a general cause, the relatively slow growth of the national sections, and partly by special circumstances, the personal composition of the Secretariat and the atmosphere in which it in part found itself and which in part it itself created in Paris. It is needless to repeat here what I have already written countless times to the Secretariat and primarily to the full-time secretary. I will, therefore, try to send my letter of October 6 of this year to all the sections. From that time on, matters did not improve but became worse. It is quite clear to me that without a reorganization of the Secretariat matters will not improve.

In what direction should the reorganization proceed? This question is easiest to answer if one reveals the shortcomings of the old organization. Its principle was: creation of a Secretariat on the basis of personal selection and not along the path of delegations from the national sections. It seemed to some comrades and also to me that such a core of comrades, who were chosen as candidates because of their personal qualifications, would display a certain independence toward the national sections and possibly have a fruitful effect upon them; unfortunately, such a result was not obtained. Perhaps because among us there are cadres not yet sufficiently prepared for such a responsible task. At any rate, the result was that the functioning of the Secretariat became dependent on the moods of a single comrade who was not connected with any organization or under any discipline. The Secretariat became a source of constant surprise and in recent months even an in-
instrument of a subfaction, whose platform and aims are not known to anybody. Such a situation is obviously intolerable. It is clear that the Secretariat must relate more to the national sections. The Secretariat must be a constantly functioning institution; consequently its members must be in one or at the most two cities which are connected with adequate means of communication. In the latter case, it is necessary to establish a constantly functioning bureau located in one city. But all the members of the Secretariat must be official delegates of their corresponding national sections which in turn bear the responsibility for their delegates. Because of the practical impossibility of drawing in delegates from all sections, it is therefore desirable to draw in delegates from the most important sections for collaboration in the Secretariat. Such an organization does not of course in any way protect the Secretariat against mistakes, but it assures it against some of the most dangerous trends: personal moods and vacillations. In setting up the Secretariat it is important to take into account the specific weight of the country in question and of the official party, as well as the size of the corresponding Opposition section. Thus, for example, despite the small size of the country, the Greek section is numerically the largest, after the Russian, and the most proletarian in composition. The participation of its official representatives on the Secretariat would therefore be most desirable.

P.S. If it is true that Germany is at the present time the key to the international situation, the conclusion follows that the main link of the ILO now is the German section. It lacks financial and technical means. If a weekly paper is especially needed anywhere, then it is in Germany. The demand for the Opposition press in the circle of the German workers increases rapidly. There is no doubt that a weekly paper would have wide circulation. All the sections must set themselves the task: to help the German section issue a weekly organ.

P.P.S. When I had concluded this letter, I noticed that on the one hand it contains information which is meant for publication and on the other hand whole paragraphs or parts of them which are intended exclusively for the information of the members of the
organization. I do not doubt that the leading bodies of the national sections themselves will distinguish without difficulty the parts of this letter that are to be utilized for the press. As for me, I took complete liberty to touch upon very delicate questions because the letter as a whole is intended solely for a comradely internal examination.

L. Trotsky
National Committee of the Communist League of America

Dear Comrades:

In a few days you will receive a circular letter from me to the national sections which speaks of our successes and our failures. In this letter we also deal with an American comrade who delivered a scandalous report on Russia. This American is Miller. It was related to me as though he had had a recommendation from an American Opposition comrade. I consider this out of the question and shall be very glad if you clear up this misunderstanding.

In my letter I also had to take a position against our friend Shachtman. The reason for this will be clear to you from the enclosed copy of my letter to Comrade Shachtman himself. My efforts to find a common language with him in the most disputed European questions were never crowned with success. It appeared to me that Comrade Shachtman always was—and still is—guided in these questions, which are somewhat remote from America, more by personal and journalistic sympathies than by fundamental political considerations.
I know very well that from America it is not easy for you to understand the internal European struggles in the Opposition immediately and to take a precise position on them. Nor can anybody demand this of you. You must understand, however, that it is not received very well here when Comrade Shachtman at the sharpest moments adopts a position, presumably with the authority of the American section, which completely counteracts the struggle that the progressive elements of the Opposition have been conducting for a long time and upon the basis of which a certain selection has taken place. Naturally it does not occur to me to deprive Comrade Shachtman of the right to intervene in European affairs according to his standpoint or his inclination as much as he wants. But then it must be clear in this connection that it is only a question of one of the leading American comrades, not of the American League as an organization.

Do not take these remarks badly; they are dictated by the interests of the cause.

With best communist greetings.

Yours,

L. Trotsky
December 25, 1931

Personal sympathies and political responsibilities

(Excerpts from a letter)

Dear Comrade Shachtman:

It’s a good thing that at least a small beginning has been made in England. Let us hope that you will have more luck than Naville, who messed with the English question for more than a year without making the slightest headway, as in every other field.

Unfortunately, you have not replied to my objections to your conduct in Europe. In the meantime, I had to take a position against you openly, at any rate, without calling you by name, in a circular to the sections. I must establish regretfully that you have drawn absolutely no conclusions from the bad experience, beginning with the international conference of April 1930. The difficult situation in the French League is, to a certain degree, thanks also to you, for directly or indirectly you always supported those elements that acted like a brake or destructively, like the Naville group. You now transfer your support to Mill-Felix, who have absolutely not stood the test in any respect. At one time you published in The Militant (so did La Verite!) two scandalous reports by Mill from Spain which
misled the whole International Opposition. These reports demonstrated that Mill was incapable of finding his way correctly in the fundamental political questions. After a year of struggle against Rosmer and Naville he suddenly began to fasten himself on to them. In your letter you half-coyly call this stupid. For a fifteen-year-old boy that might still hold. But for the full-time secretary of the International Secretariat one must seek sharper and more political designations.

Your conduct in Spain also, as is evident from your letter, was wrong. The Spanish comrades, especially Nin, committed all imaginable mistakes, wasted a lot of time, and now would like to find a scapegoat for their own weaknesses and mistakes. Lacroix, who, it is maintained, has very good qualities, is absolutely undisciplined in his thoughts and actions and to support him in his outbursts is a crime.

What you say about the German Opposition sounds like an echo of your old sympathies for Landau, which the German comrades do not want to forget and rightly so. In the struggle that we led here against the accidental, burned-out, or downright demoralized elements, you, dear Shachtman, were never on our side, and those concerned—Rosmer, Naville, Landau, and now Mill—always felt themselves covered to a great extent by the American League. I by no means believe that the American League bears any of the responsibility, but I do find it necessary to send the copy of this letter to the American National Committee so that at least in the future our European struggle may be less influenced by your personal connections, sympathies, etc.
December 28, 1931

Some historical facts

I have received the December 19 Berlin Arbeiterpolitik (Workers Politics). Their article “Seydewitz and Trotsky” is very characteristic of Messrs. Brandler and Thalheimer. The whole Stalin school is contained in it. Since Seydewitz quoted from my pamphlet, that is enough reason for Brandler and Thalheimer to link my ideas with those of Seydewitz. The Stalinist policy of capitulation in China, the alliance with Chiang Kai-shek, the treacherous complicity with the British General Council, the Stalin-Bukharin prokulak policy—all of this our two heroes approved of and took part in. This is really the basis for all sorts of Seydewitzism: a little way to the left, a little way to the right, but always a good stone’s throw from the Left Opposition, that is, from Marxism.

These two gentlemen assert that Trotsky, “for as long as he played a leading role in the Comintern, contributed his important part to the course whose consequences we are still faced with today.” But these heroes will not find the courage to provide the particulars of their assertion because my activity in the Comintern coincided with its first four congresses. At some of these congresses I found myself in bitter conflict with Zinoviev, Bukharin,
and Radek, not to mention Thalheimer, Bela Kun,\textsuperscript{278} etc. But at all of these congresses I marched shoulder to shoulder with Lenin. All of Brandler’s wisdom is nothing more than an impression of the lessons of the Third World Congress. These gentlemen will be unable to find a single important proposal or resolution from the time of the first four congresses which I did not carry out or for which I was not directly coresponsible. The enduring historical significance of the Comintern is based on the foundations laid by the first four congresses, for which of course Lenin was primarily responsible, but where I was always ready to bear equal responsibility before the world proletariat.

But that is not all. In the fall of 1923 the German Central Committee unanimously decided to ask the Bolshevik Politburo to send a comrade from the Politburo with whom they were well acquainted—let’s just call him Comrade T.—to take charge of the crucial developments that were about to occur. On grounds that are in themselves incomprehensible, the Central Committee request was denied.\textsuperscript{279} That was, I repeat, in the fall of 1923, when my collaboration in the leadership of the Comintern was completely a thing of the past. But Messrs. Brandler and Thalheimer must have known something of my harmful influence. How, then, do they explain their attitude at that time? Was it quite simply a matter of the pressure of great events? And what about their attitude at present? It is even more simply motivated by Stalin’s desire to be able to crawl around on all fours and still call himself a revolutionary.
Leon Trotsky in his garden.
December 1931

The White Guard preparation of a terrorist act against Comrade Trotsky

A statement of the Bolshevik-Leninists (Left Opposition)

On October 31, 1931, the German Communist newspaper Die Rote Fahne [The Red Flag] published disclosures about the terrorist plans of the Russian White Guards abroad. At the center of the organization stands the czarist general Turkul, who has his groups and connections in various countries, particularly Bulgaria and Yugoslavia. Turkul set himself the task of carrying out a terrorist act against L.D. Trotsky, basing his calculations on the assumption that Trotsky, in the words of Rote Fahne, “is poorly guarded by the Turkish authorities.” By assassinating Trotsky Turkul reckons to solve a dual problem: not only the annihilation of a hated enemy, but also the “laying of the responsibility for the murder on the Soviet government”; that is how the central organ of the German Communist Party formulates Turkul’s goal!

Although the newspaper itself does not indicate any source for its information, it is clear all the same: only a state apparatus could get such strictly confidential information, including names, towns, plans, etc. The information comes, of course, from the GPU. Its exceptional importance is self-evident: a Stalinist newspaper finds itself forced to print the fact that White Guards are intending to
kill Trotsky, taking advantage of the fact that he is poorly guarded—and cannot be well guarded—in Turkey, the country to which Stalin exiled Trotsky.

Any communist, any thinking worker, must say to himself: In sending Trotsky to Constantinople, Stalin therefore placed him in conditions in which he is completely at the mercy of the White Guards; the admission of this fact lies behind the whole Rote Fahne report. Furthermore, in preparing to commit his terrorist act, the czarist general starts from the conviction that Trotsky’s murder lies completely in Stalin’s interests, and that it will therefore not be hard to attribute to Stalin the actual organization of the terrorist act. The fact of this amazing “collaboration” is precisely expressed in the Rote Fahne report, which comes from none other than Stalin, and has without doubt been carefully edited by him.

What goal, then, was Stalin pursuing with his report? The disclosure of White Guard plans? Such an explanation will not do at all, since Stalin would thereby be unmasking himself: the whole plan of the White Guards, on Stalin’s own admission, depends on the exceptionally favorable circumstances Stalin has created for czarist terrorists.

If it was a case of a simple political disclosure, Stalin would of course have begun with the Soviet press. But no! We will not find a single word of this affair in the Russian newspapers. Stalin will not dare to tell Russian communists, workers, Red soldiers and peasants that he has made it easier for the White Guards to get rid of Comrade Trotsky and that he himself knows in advance through the GPU of these consequences and of how it can and is to take place. Stalin is carefully concealing his actual collaboration with the White Guards, his common front with them against Trotsky, from the population of the USSR.

Why did Stalin nevertheless publish, even though only in the German Communist press, a report which puts him in a difficult position? The answer is clear: so as not to fall into a still more difficult position. In expectation of a possible catastrophe Stalin wants—with the most noise, with the least difficulties—to set up for himself what in the courts is called an alibi, i.e., a proof of his actual, material, direct nonconnection with Trotsky’s murder. If
the plans of General Turkul, the White Guard captain Fors, and the other members of the organization had been crowned with success, and if at the scene of the crime had been placed documentary evidence of the guilt of the Soviet government, Stalin could have said that he had long ago "unmasked" the plans of Turkul, Fors and Co., and that the terrorist act was undoubtedly their doing. What is more, in that case Stalin would have had other papers to prove that he had "requested" the Turkish authorities to strengthen their present precautions, that the GPU for its part had taken measures, etc., etc. Such papers, it is not difficult to guess, are made up in advance and sent numbered and signed, reckoning that in case of need it would be possible to publish them, and that these "secret" documents, in combination with the public disclosures of Rote Fahne, could provide Stalin with an alibi, i.e., proof of his nonconnection with the terrorist act.

In other words, Stalin is not concerned about hindering the White Guards from carrying out their intentions, but only about preventing them from laying the blame for the terrorist act on Stalin and his agents.

To illuminate the matter fully, it is necessary to return to some facts associated with L.D. Trotsky's exile to Turkey. The question of security was at that time raised in the name of the Politburo by agents of the GPU—Bulanov, Volyinsky, Fokin, et al. They all started from the fact that real protection—insofar as real protection for a Russian revolutionary is possible in Turkey—could be achieved only on condition that in fact the people taking part were directly and closely interested in the protection and acquainted with the conditions of keeping it up. At the time when Trotsky was still on Soviet territory, the Politburo categorically undertook by direct line, through the GPU representative Bulanov, to send on into Turkey two old colleagues of Trotsky's, the Bolshevik-Leninists Sermuks and Poznansky.281 Till their arrival from banishment L.D. Trotsky could stay in the Soviet consulate in Constantinople. This undertaking, however, as it turned out, was categorically broken after the arrival of Trotsky in Turkey. In the name of the government (i.e., of Stalin), Fokin declared that Poznansky and Sermuks would not be made available. Trotsky and his family, hav-
ing by way of protest refused to leave the consulate building, were forcibly removed from it by dozens of armed consular officials. Trotsky was actually thrown out on the street in the very center of a Constantinople seething with White Guards, without a place to stay and without the slightest protection. As Mirsky, a very responsible person, officially declared, this step was taken on direct telegraphic orders from Moscow, i.e., from Stalin.

Such was the first open act of that project of Stalin's which we have called his united front with Turkul against Comrade Trotsky. In the course of the three years since then Stalin didn't move a finger to show the slightest cooperation in improving the security conditions, despite the fact that in that time there were ample reasons for worry: it is sufficient to mention the fire, after which Comrade Trotsky and his family lived for months literally in a wooden hut open to the four winds!

However, after the appearance in *Rote Fahne* of the report, originating with Stalin, of General Turkul's plans, Trotsky's closest cothinkers and friends made one more attempt to remind Stalin of his personal responsibility for the life of Comrade Trotsky. In the name of the leading comrades of the German Left Opposition, the Prussian Landtag deputy, Comrade Seipold, went to the Soviet embassy in Berlin and raised with the person responsible the question of fulfilling the undertaking about the former colleagues of Comrade Trotsky or of taking other more or less realistic security measures. Comrade Seipold was promised a reply after necessary consultations with Moscow. No reply was made.

An attempt of the same kind was made by Comrade Trotsky's French comrades. Representatives of the French Left Opposition approached the Soviet embassy in Paris with the same demand as Comrade Seipold. The result was the same.

Only after this refusal by Stalin to conclude with L.D. Trotsky's friends a practical agreement on the protection of Comrade Trotsky's life from danger at the hands of counterrevolutionary assassins did we consider it our right to formulate clearly and distinctly our accusation: *Stalin is in an actual united front with General Turkul, the organizer of a terrorist act against Trotsky.*

No "alibi" in the form of disclosures printed in a German news-
paper, but concealed from the people of the USSR, no secret docu-
ments from a Stalinist archive, prepared in advance for publica-
tion at the necessary moment, will refute or weaken our accusa-
tion; on the contrary, they will strengthen and redouble it.

We declare:

1. The very fact of Comrade Trotsky’s exile abroad has turned
him into a target for the class enemies.

2. The place chosen for exile was Turkey, where conditions ex-
clude the possibility of taking any measures whatsoever to pro-
tect Comrade Trotsky by the forces of the local communists.

3. Stalin has broken his undertaking on the protection of Com-
rade Trotsky, given at the time of his exile (the question of Com-
rades Poznansky and Sermuks).

4. Stalin’s agents, on Stalin’s direct orders, threw Comrade Trot-
sky out onto a Constantinople street without the least means of
protection.

5. Stalin has for several months now been aware of the White
Guard preparations for an attempt on Comrade Trotsky, and is so
sharply conscious of his own complicity in this affair that he is
taking steps in advance to establish his alibi.

6. Stalin is concealing from the people of the USSR the facts he
knows about the activity of Turkul and Co., for he understands
that even a terrorized, strangled, downtrodden party will raise the
question: What has he done, not just for setting up his alibi, but
for real, actual, practical action against the terrorist plot of the
band of czarist officers?

7. In refusing to participate jointly with us, the Bolshevik-Le-
inists, in taking the most necessary steps to protect the life of
Comrade Trotsky, Stalin has finally and completely assumed the
responsibility for his united front with General Turkul.

In this declaration of ours we raise no political questions. We
are putting forward no demands for L.D. Trotsky’s return to the
USSR. We understand that for Stalin this is impossible as long as
he continues a policy of merciless, often bloody, repression against
the Bolshevik-Leninists. The struggle between revolutionary
Marxism and bureaucratic centrism is a historical struggle, which
will be fought to the finish and of whose outcome we are in no doubt. We are raising here a narrow question on the basis of which practical agreement is possible, without any slackening of the overall theoretical and political struggle. In selecting this question, we are establishing all the more precisely and concretely Stalin’s responsibility in the matter of Trotsky’s life.

So as not to leave room for the slightest misunderstandings, we make a completely formal statement that we are ready and willing at any moment to work out together with the appropriate representatives of the Soviet government the necessary defense measures, and to offer our personal forces in realizing these measures. It is precisely for this reason that we are for the moment refraining from publishing this declaration.
Notes and acknowledgments

1. “Manifesto on China of the International Left Opposition.” The Militant (newspaper of the Communist League of America, section of the International Left Opposition), October 1, 1930. This manifesto was written in the aftermath of the second Chinese revolution (1925–27), whose defeat had been the subject of bitter disputes in the Communist International (see Trotsky’s books Problems of the Chinese Revolution and The Third International After Lenin), and around a year before the Japanese invasion of China. It was signed by the Provisional International Secretariat of the ILO: Rosmer, Landau, Markin [Leon Sedov], and the following: L. Trotsky for the Russian Opposition; A. Rosmer, Communist League of France; K. Landau, United Left Opposition of the German Communist Party; J. Andrade and J. Gorkin, Spanish Opposition; A. Hennaut, Belgian Opposition; M. Shachtman, Communist League of America; D. Karl and C. Mayer, Communist Left of Austria; J. Frey, Communist Party of Austria (Opposition); Frank, “Internal Group” of the Austrian CP; W. Krieger, Czechoslovak Opposition; Candiani, Italian Left Faction; Santini and Blasco [Pietro Tresso], New Italian Opposition; R. Negrete, Mexican Opposition.

2. The Left Opposition (Bolshevik-Leninists) was formed in October 1923 as a faction of the Russian Communist Party, and the International Left Opposition was formed in April 1930 as a faction of the Communist International (see Writings 30). The Stalinists, and others, called its members “Trotskyists” or “Trotskyites,” a term that Trotsky disliked and usually put in quotation marks when he had to use it. The ILO’s first international conference was not held until February 1933 (Writings 32–33). When it decided later that year to work for the creation of a new International, it also changed its name to the International Communist League. The founding conference of the Fourth International was held in September 1938. Resolutions, theses, and reports adopted by the early international conferences of the Fourth International and its predecessors have been collected in Documents of the Fourth International: The Formative Years (1933–40)(Pathfinder Press, 1973).
3. The Communist International (Comintern or Third International) was organized under Lenin’s leadership as the revolutionary successor to the Second International. In Lenin’s time its world congresses were held once a year—the first four from 1919 to 1922. Trotsky regarded the theses of these congresses as the programmatic cornerstone of the ILO and the Fourth International. The Fifth Congress, where the bloc of Stalin, Zinoviev, and Kamenev was in control, was held in 1924, the Sixth not until 1928, and the Seventh not until 1935. Trotsky called the Seventh the “liquidation congress” of the Comintern (see Writings 35–36), and it was in fact the last before Stalin announced its dissolution in 1943 as a gesture to his imperialist allies. Trotsky’s reference to the “dominant faction” of the Comintern in 1930 was to the Stalin faction, which had by that time defeated the Right Opposition headed by Bukharin, Rykov, and Tomsky.

4. The most important events relating to the Chinese 1925–27 revolution, according to Trotsky, were: “March 20, 1926—Chiang Kai-shek’s first overturn in Canton. Autumn of 1926—the Seventh Plenum of the ECCI [Executive Committee of the Communist International] with the participation of a Chiang Kai-shek delegate from the Kuomintang. April 13, 1927—coup d’etat by Chiang Kai-shek in Shanghai. The end of May 1927—the counterrevolutionary overturn of the ‘Left’ Kuomintang in Wuhan. The end of May 1927—the Eighth Plenum of the ECCI proclaims it the duty of the Communists to remain within the ‘Left’ Kuomintang. August 1927—the Chinese Communist Party proclaims a course toward an uprising. December 1927—the Canton insurrection. February 1928—the Ninth Plenum of the ECCI proclaims for China the course towards armed uprising and soviets. July 1928—the Sixth Congress of the Comintern renounces the slogan of armed insurrection as a practical slogan” (from “Stalin and the Chinese Revolution,” August 26, 1930, in Problems of the Chinese Revolution).

5. The Canton insurrection of December 1927 was a putsch instigated by Stalin through his agents Heinz Neumann and V.V. Lominadze so that he would be able at the Fifteenth Congress of the Russian Communist Party that month to “refute” the Left Opposition’s charges that his policy had produced terrible defeats in China. Since the Chinese CP in Canton was isolated and the uprising unprepared, it was crushed in less than three days at a cost of several thousand lives.

6. The Kuomintang of China was the bourgeois-nationalist party founded by Sun Yat-sen in 1911 and led after 1926 by Chiang Kai-shek. See Trotsky’s letter of December 10, 1930, later in this volume, for his
account of his personal position on the Chinese CP's entry into the Kuomintang in 1923 and how it differed from that of other Oppositionists.

7. Chiang Kai-shek (1887– ) was the military leader of the Kuomintang during the revolution of 1925–27, and a member of its right wing. The Stalinists hailed him as a great revolutionary until April 1927 when he conducted a bloody massacre of the Shanghai Communists and trade unionists. He ruled China until overthrown by the Chinese CP in 1949.

8. "Dictatorship of the proletariat" is the Marxist term for the form of rule by the working class that follows rule by the capitalist class ("dictatorship of the bourgeoisie"). More modern substitutes for this term are "workers' state" and "workers' democracy." The "democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry" was projected by Lenin before 1917 as the form of state which would follow the overthrow of Russian czarism. He envisaged the revolution as bourgeois in character, led by a coalition of the working class and the peasants which would take power and democratize the country without overstepping the limits of capitalist productive relations. He changed his position with the approach of the revolution, and on his return to Russia in April 1917 he reoriented the Bolshevik Party to the struggle for a proletarian dictatorship. Later the Stalinists revived the discarded formula (and others similar in content, such as the "bloc of four classes") in order to justify class collaboration with the bourgeoisie, especially in the colonial world.

9. The October Revolution was the second to occur in Russia during 1917. Led by the Bolsheviks, it overthrew the Provisional Government, a coalition of capitalist and reformist parties, and established the rule of the soviets (councils) of workers, peasants, and soldiers. The earlier (February) revolution overthrew czarism, brought the Provisional Government to power, and created the conditions for a showdown between that government and the soviets.

10. Karl Marx (1818–83) was, with Frederick Engels, the founder of scientific socialism and a leader of the First International (International Workingmen’s Association), 1864–76. His teachings on the state were reviewed and explained in the book, State and Revolution, by Vladimir Ilyich Lenin (1870–1924). Lenin restored Marxism as the theory and practice of revolution in the imperialist epoch after it had been debased by the opportunists, revisionists, and fatalists of the Second International. He initiated the political tendency that became known as Bolshevism, the first to build the kind of party needed to lead a working-class revolution. He was the first Marxist to fully understand and explain the central importance of colonial and national struggles. He led the first
victorious workers' revolution in 1917, and served as the first Soviet head of state. He founded the Communist International and helped to elaborate its principles, strategy, and tactics. He prepared a fight against the bureaucratization of the Russian CP and the Soviet state, but died before he could carry it out.

11. "To the Conference of the German Left Opposition." The Militant, February 1, 1931. This letter was written for the national conference of the German Opposition which was held October 11–12, 1930. The conference did not fulfill Trotsky's hope that its leaders would rise above petty sectarian conflicts and meet the new challenges posed by the tense situation that followed the Reichstag elections of September 14, 1930, when Hitler's Nazis scored a 700 percent gain in their vote and became the second biggest party in Germany.

12. Arkady Maslow (1891–1941), Ruth Fischer (1895–1961), and Hugo Urbahns (1890–1946) were central leaders of the German CP in the 1920s, expelled by the Stalinists in 1927 because as supporters of Zinoviev they had defended the Russian United Opposition. In 1928 they helped to found the Leninbund, which collaborated with the Left Opposition until 1930. In that year the leadership of the Leninbund was taken over exclusively by Urbahns, who expelled the Left Oppositionists (see Writings 30). The Left Oppositionists then formed their own organization, whose principal leader at the time of Trotsky's letter was Kurt Landau.

13. In the September 14 Reichstag elections the CP received 4.6 million votes, a substantial increase from its 3.3 million in May 1928. By comparison, the Social Democrats got 8.6 million and the Nazis 6.4 million. Trotsky's analysis of the vote will be found in his pamphlet, The Turn in the Communist International and the Situation in Germany, September 26, 1930, reprinted in The Struggle Against Fascism in Germany.

14. The March days in 1921 refer to the period when the German CP leadership issued a call for an armed insurrection to seize power, an action which was crushed in two weeks because of its lack of mass support. The Third Congress of the Comintern later that year repudiated the action and the ultraleft theories of "galvanizing the masses" advanced to justify it. October 1923 refers to the revolutionary situation that developed in Germany, following the French invasion of the Ruhr, when a majority of the workers rapidly shifted their support toward the CP. But the CP leadership vacillated, missed an exceptionally favorable
opportunity to conduct a struggle for power, and permitted the German capitalists to recover their balance before the end of the year. The Kremlin’s responsibility for this wasted opportunity was one of the factors that led to the formation of the Russian Left Opposition at the end of 1923.

15. **Social democracy** was the designation of various socialist parties. Before 1914, when most social democratic parties supported the war, it was synonymous with revolutionary socialism or Marxism. Thereafter it was used by revolutionaries to denote opportunist betrayers of Marxism.

16. **National Socialism** refers to Hitler’s National Socialist (Nazi) Party. It should not be confused with the term national socialism which was sometimes used to designate the Stalinist theory and practice of “socialism in one country.”

17. **Ernst Thaelmann** (1886–1945), **Hermann Remmele** (1880–1937), and **Heinz Neumann** (1902–1937?) were the Kremlin-approved leaders of the German CP from 1928 to 1933 and uncritical defenders of the Kremlin policies that led to Hitler’s victory. Thaelmann was arrested by the Nazis in 1933 and executed at Buchenwald in 1945. Remmele and Neumann fled to the USSR in 1933, where Remmele was executed by the GPU in 1937 and Neumann was arrested and disappeared the same year.

18. **Possibilism** is a term stemming from French political history. Possibilists were French opportunists of 1882–90 who tried to combine Proudhonism and Marxism, and who held that the tactics of the social democracy should be confined within the framework of what is “possible” in capitalist society.

19. **Centrism** was Trotsky’s term for tendencies in the radical movement that stand or oscillate between reformism, which is the position of the labor bureaucracy and the labor aristocracy, and Marxism, which represents the historic interests of the working class. Since a centrist tendency has no independent social base, it must be evaluated in terms of its origin, its internal dynamic, and the direction in which it is going or being pushed by events. Until around 1935 Trotsky saw Stalinism as a special variety of centrism: “bureaucratic centrism,” sometimes “centrism” for short. After 1935 he felt that this term was inadequate to describe the continuing degeneration of Stalinism.

20. **Heinrich Brandler** (1881–1967) was a founder of the German CP and its principal leader when it failed to take advantage of the revolutionary crisis of 1923. Made a scapegoat by the Kremlin, he was re-
moved from the party leadership in 1924. He and August Thalheimer (1884–1948) formed a faction, the Communist Party Opposition (KPO), which aligned itself with Bukharin’s Right Opposition in the USSR and was expelled from the German party and the Comintern in 1929. The Brandlerites continued as an independent organization until World War II.

21. Although a number of Left Opposition groups had got together in April 1930 to constitute themselves as the International Left Opposition, Trotsky’s statement that “the basis has been laid for an international organization of the Left Opposition” meant that he thought much more work remained to be done in this area before anyone could speak of more than a “basis.”

22. “On the Declaration by the Indochinese Oppositionists.” By permission of the Harvard College Library. Translated for this volume by George Saunders. This was in response to a document written by a group of Indochinese Oppositionists in Paris shortly before they were expelled from France for organizing demonstrations against French repression in Indochina at the end of 1930. On their return to Vietnam they founded the Ta Doi Lap, or Left Opposition. The Vietnamese Communist Party had been founded in February 1930.

23. Bonapartism is a Marxist term describing a dictatorship or a regime with certain features of a dictatorship during a period when class rule is not secure; it is based on the military, police, and state bureaucracy, rather than on parliamentary parties or a mass movement. Trotsky saw two types of Bonapartism in the 1930s—bourgeois and Soviet. His most extensive writings on bourgeois Bonapartism (which he distinguished from fascism, although both serve in the interests of maintaining the capitalist system) will be found in The Struggle Against Fascism in Germany. His views on Soviet Bonapartism reached their final form in his essay “The Workers’ State, Thermidor and Bonapartism,” reprinted in Writings 34–35.

24. “The Krestintern and the Anti-Imperialist League.” Biulleten Oppozitsii (Bulletin of the Opposition), number 15–16, September–October 1930. Unsigned. Translated for this volume by Jim Burnett; another translation appeared in The Militant, November 15, 1930. Biulleten Oppozitsii was the Russian-language journal started by Trotsky in July 1929, a few months after his deportation to Turkey. It was printed in Paris until 1931, and then was shifted to Berlin until 1933, when the Nazis banned it. Thereafter it was published in Paris until
1934, in Zurich until 1935, in Paris until 1939, and in New York until 1941, when it ceased publication. A complete set in four volumes, with all of Trotsky’s articles identified, including those that were unsigned or signed with pen names, has been published by Monad Press (distributed by Pathfinder Press).

25. The **Krestintern (Peasant International)**, formed by the Comintern in October 1923, was an experiment that did not meet with much success. It disappeared without publicity around the beginning of World War II.

26. **Epigones**, disciples who corrupt their teachers’ doctrines, was Trotsky’s derisive term for the Stalinists, who claimed to be Leninists.

27. **Nikolai Bukharin** (1888–1938) was an Old Bolshevik allied with Stalin against the Left Opposition until 1928. He succeeded Zinoviev as president of the Comintern, 1926–29, and was coauthor with Stalin of the program adopted by the Comintern at its Sixth World Congress in 1928. Together with Rykov and Tomsky he headed the Right Opposition in 1929; with them, he was purged from the party leadership, capitulated to Stalin, and was allowed back into the party. In 1938 he was executed after the third big Moscow trial.

28. **Vyacheslav M. Molotov** (1890– ), an Old Bolshevik elected to the Russian CP’s Central Committee in 1920, became an ardent supporter of Stalin. He was a leader of the Comintern after Bukharin’s downfall (as a member of the ECCI presidium, 1928–34), as well as president of the Council of People’s Commissars, 1930–41, and foreign minister; 1939–49, 1953–56. He was eliminated from the CP leadership in 1957 for opposing Khruščev’s “de-Stalinization” program.

29. The **Anti-Imperialist League**, a project of the Comintern, held its first world congress in Brussels in February 1927 and its second and last world congress in Frankfurt in July 1929. Like the Krestintern, it disappeared without notice.

30. **Willi Muenzenberg** (1889–1940), an organizer of the Communist Youth International and a loyal Stalinist, founded a whole string of propaganda enterprises with Comintern money, including newspapers, magazines, a film company, a publishing house, etc. He also was responsible for the Anti-Imperialist League. He broke with the Comintern over its People’s Front policy in 1937, and was found dead in France after the German invasion in 1940.

31. The **Second International** (or Labor and Socialist International) was organized in 1889 as the successor to the First International. It was a loose association of national social democratic and labor parties, unit-
ing both revolutionary and reformist elements. Its progressive role had ended by 1914, when its major sections violated the most elementary socialist principles and supported their own imperialist governments in World War I. It fell apart during the war but was revived as a completely reformist organization in 1923.

32. The General Council of the Trades Union Congress called off the British general strike of May 1926, causing the defeat of the miners' prolonged strike that year. The Stalinists, however, continued to curry favor with the General Council, in the Anti-Imperialist League and elsewhere, because the Council was willing, until September 1927, to continue belonging to the Anglo-Russian Trade Union Unity Committee, which had been organized by the General Council and the Soviet unions to fight, among other things, against war. In 1927 the danger of a British imperialist attack on the Soviet Union was considered very real. For Trotsky's views on the Anglo-Russian Committee and the Stalinist attitude to it, see the collection Leon Trotsky on Britain.

33. “A History of the Second Chinese Revolution Is Needed.” Bulletin Oppozitsii, number 15–16, September–October 1930. Unsigned. Translated for this volume by Jim Burnett. The kind of history Trotsky proposed was not published until 1938. It was entitled The Tragedy of the Chinese Revolution and was written by Harold R. Isaacs, an American journalist who had spent several years in China. Trotsky not only praised it but wrote its introduction. Later editions of this book, revised in accordance with Isaacs's break from Marxism, omitted Trotsky's introduction, which has been reprinted in The Chinese Revolution: Problems and Perspectives.

34. “Molotov's Prosperity in Knowledge.” The Militant, November 15, 1930. Signed “T.” Trotsky's citations of certain page numbers in the Russian edition of Europe and America and an early U.S. version of The Third International After Lenin have been replaced by the corresponding page numbers in current U.S. editions.

35. Leon Trotsky (1879–1940) became a revolutionary in 1896 and a collaborator with Lenin on Iskra (Spark) in 1902. He broke with Lenin the next year over the nature of the revolutionary party and aligned himself with the Mensheviks. He broke with the Mensheviks in 1904 and tried during the next decade to reunite the Russian social democracy. In the 1905 revolution, he was the leader of the St. Petersburg Soviet and developed the theory of permanent revolution. In 1915 he
wrote the Zimmerwald manifesto against the war. He joined the Bolshevik Party in 1917, was elected to its Central Committee, and organized the Bolshevik insurrection that made the new Soviet state possible. His first post was as commissar of foreign affairs. Then as commissar of war he organized the Red Army and led it to victory through three years of civil war and imperialist intervention. He formed the Left Opposition in 1923 and fought for the next decade to return the Communist International and the Soviet Union to Leninist internationalism and proletarian democracy. Defeated by the Stalin faction, he was expelled from the Communist Party and the Comintern, and exiled to Turkey in 1929. In 1933 he gave up his efforts to reform the Comintern and called for the creation of a new International. He viewed his work on behalf of the Fourth International as the most important of his career.

36. Pravda (Truth) was the official Bolshevik paper starting in 1912; it became a daily in 1917, and a mouthpiece of Stalinism after Lenin’s death.

37. The Ruhr occupation by French troops in January 1923, because Germany had failed to pay the reparations stipulated by the Versailles Treaty, produced “convulsions” that included the revolutionary opportunity bungled by the German CP later that year.

38. Joseph Stalin (1879–1953) became a social democrat in 1898, joined the Bolshevik faction in 1904, was coopted to its Central Committee in 1912, and elected to it for the first time in 1917. In 1917 he favored a conciliatory attitude to the Provisional Government before Lenin returned and reoriented the Bolsheviks toward winning power. He was elected commissar of nationalities in the first Soviet government, and general secretary of the Communist Party in 1922. Lenin called in 1923 for his removal from the post of general secretary because he was using it to bureaucratize the party and state apparatuses. After Lenin’s death in 1924, Stalin gradually eliminated his major opponents, starting with Trotsky, until he became virtual dictator of the party and the Soviet Union in the 1930s. The chief concepts associated with his name are “socialism in one country,” “social fascism,” and “peaceful coexistence.” His “exploits” in England and China refer to his position on the Anglo-Russian Committee following the British general strike of 1926 and his policy in the Chinese revolution of 1925–27.

39. The Young Plan, after Owen D. Young (1874–1962), an American big business lawyer, was the second of two arrangements for supervising Germany’s war reparations payments by a commission set up
under the Versailles Treaty. The first had been the Dawes Plan, after U.S. banker and politician Charles G. Dawes (1865–1951). Young administered both plans, which had, like the Versailles Treaty, the contradictory aims of subordinating the German economy and stifling the postwar revolutionary upsurge. The Young Plan was superseded in 1931, when a moratorium on payment of the German war debt proposed by President Herbert Hoover was adopted.

40. The **Kellogg Pact**, after Frank B. Kellogg, U.S. secretary of state (1925–29), was an agreement signed by fifteen nations in 1928 to renounce war as an instrument of national policy. It was later ratified by a total of sixty-three countries, including the Soviet Union.

41. **George Curzon** (1859–1925) was a leader of the British Conservative Party, a former governor-general of India, and a bitter anti-Soviet member of the British cabinet. **Ramsay J. MacDonald** (1866–1937) was prime minister in the first two British Labour governments (1924, 1929–31); then he bolted the Labour Party to form a “national unity” government with the Tories (1931–35). **Arthur Henderson** (1863–1935) served as secretary of the British Labour Party and as president of the Second International, 1923–24 and 1925–29. The **Fabian Society**, founded in 1883 in London by George Bernard Shaw, Sidney Webb, and others, propounded a gradual evolutionary socialism.

42. **Jay Lovestone** (1898– ) was a leader of the American CP who was expelled on Moscow’s orders in 1929 shortly after the downfall of his Soviet ally, Bukharin. The Lovestone group remained an independent organization until World War II. Lovestone himself later became cold-war adviser on foreign affairs for AFL-CIO president George Meany.

43. **Socialism in one country** was Stalin’s theory, introduced into the communist movement for the first time in 1924, that a socialist society could be achieved inside the borders of a single country. Later, when it was incorporated into the program and tactics of the Comintern, it became the ideological cover for the abandonment of revolutionary internationalism and was used to justify the conversion of the Communist parties throughout the world into pawns of the Kremlin’s foreign policy. Trotsky’s comprehensive critique will be found in *The Third International After Lenin*.

44. **Schweik** was the hero of *The Good Soldier Schweik*, the satirical antiwar novel by Jaroslav Hasek (1883–1923), a Czech sympathizer of Bolshevism. **Bohumir Smeral** (1880–1941) was a Czech social democrat and social-patriot in Austria in World War I, and later a right-wing leader of the CP and the ECCI.

46. “Regeneration of the proletarian dictatorship is still possible by peaceful means” was a formulation that described the Left Opposition’s basic attitude to the Soviet Union up to 1933. Thereafter the Left Opposition and the Fourth International held that Soviet democracy could be restored only through a political revolution against Stalinism.

47. Bessedovsky, Kajurov, and Agabekov were Soviet diplomats who were appointed by the Stalinist apparatus and defected to the capitalist world.

48. Thermidor (1794) was the month, according to the new calendar initiated by the French Revolution, in which the radical Jacobins headed by Robespierre were overthrown by a right wing within the revolutionary camp; although the Thermidoreans opened up a period of political reaction that culminated in the seizure of power by Napoleon Bonaparte, they did not go so far as to restore the feudal regime. Trotsky called the conservative Stalinist bureaucracy Thermidorean because he believed that its policies were preparing the way for a capitalist counter-revolution. Until 1935 Trotsky used the analogy of Thermidor to denote an actual shift of power from one class to another. Then he modified his theory, using the Thermidor analogy thereafter to designate a reactionary development which occurred on “the social foundation of the revolution” and which therefore did not alter the class character of the state (see “The Workers’ State, Thermidor and Bonapartism” in Writings 34–35).

49. The Bolshevik Party began, under Lenin’s leadership, as one of the two major factions in the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party, section of the Second International, following its Second Congress in 1903; its chief opponent inside the party was the Menshevik faction. Eventually Bolshevism and Menshevism became separate parties, ending up in 1917 on opposite sides of the barricades. In 1918 the Bolshevik Party’s name was changed to the Communist Party (Bolshevik).

50. “To the Executive Committee of the Belgian Opposition.” International Bulletin, Communist Left Opposition, number 2, March 1, 1931. Political and theoretical differences inside the Belgian Opposition became serious in 1929 when the Executive Committee, led by Edouard van Overstraeten and located in Brussels, insisted that the Soviet Union should turn over the Chinese Eastern Railroad to Chiang Kai-shek, a position strongly opposed by Trotsky (see Writings 29) and the Charleroi
Federation of the Belgian organization. Differences widened during the following year, extending into such areas as trade-union policy, attitude to the Soviet Union, and the question of “faction or party” in Belgium. By the fall of 1930 the differences between the two Belgian groups were being argued in the public paper of the Opposition, *Le Communiste.* The positions of the two factions were printed in *International Bulletin,* Communist Left Opposition, number 1, February 1, 1931. A formal split took place at a central committee meeting in December 1930, when the EC faction refused to grant the Charleroi faction’s request for a special congress to settle the differences. The EC faction withdrew from the Belgian organization, taking another name before it disintegrated a few years later.

51. *Maurice Paz* (1896– ) a French lawyer, was an early Oppositionist, associated with the magazine *Contre le Courant* (Against the Stream). He visited Trotsky in Turkey in 1929 and broke with the Opposition the same year over what he considered its unrealistic perspectives. He joined the French Socialist Party and became part of the Paul Faure tendency of its leadership. *Pierre Monatte* (1881–1960) was a syndicalist who briefly belonged to the French CP in the 1920s and left it to found *La Revolution proletarienne* in 1925 and the Syndicalist League in 1926. Trotsky’s polemics against him will be found in *Leon Trotsky on the Trade Unions.*

52. *La Verite* (The Truth) was the paper of the Communist League of France. *J. Obin* was the delegate of the Jewish Opposition group in France to the April 1930 gathering where the International Left Opposition was constituted.

53. “Introduction to the Rakovsky Declaration.” *The Militant,* January 15, 1931. Trotsky’s introduction was to a document dated April 1930 and referred to as the Declaration of the Four (Rakovsky, Muralov, Kosior, Kasparova), which was written shortly before the Sixteenth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (June–July 1930). A portion of this declaration was translated in the same *Militant,* but its full text was printed only in *Biulleten Oppozitsii,* number 17–18, November–December 1930. The earlier document that Trotsky refers to was the Declaration of the Seven (Rakovsky, Muralov, Kosior, Kasparova, Gruenstein, Tsintsadze, Aussem), which was written in August 1929 during a crisis that shook the Left Opposition after several of its leading adherents capitulated to Stalin on the ground that his recently proclaimed “left turn” meant the Opposition was no longer needed; this appeared
in *Biulleten Oppozitsii*, number 6, October 1929, along with an open letter by Trotsky, dated September 25, 1929, associating himself with it (see *Writings 29*).

54. Christian G. Rakovsky (1873–1941), a leading revolutionary in the Balkans before World War I, became chairman of the Ukrainian Soviet in 1918 and later served as ambassador to London and Paris. An early leader of the Left Opposition, he was deported to Central Asia in 1928, where he suffered illness, medical neglect, and isolation. In 1934 he gave up the fight against Stalinism, but his capitulation did not save him. In 1938 he was one of the major defendants in the third Moscow trial, where he was sentenced to twenty years’ imprisonment. Nikolai I. Muralov (1877–1937), an Old Bolshevik, was a leader of the 1917 insurrection in Moscow, a military commander in the civil war, and a member of the Central Control Commission. As a Left Oppositionist, he was expelled in 1927 and exiled to Western Siberia. He left the Opposition without formally capitulating, but was executed after the second Moscow trial in 1937. Vladimir Kosior, a former leader of the Democratic Centralism group, was expelled from the CP with other oppositionists in 1927. Kasparova, an Old Bolshevik, directed party and Comintern work among Asian women. Expelled as a Left Oppositionist in 1927, she was deported to Siberia and disappeared there.

55. Albert Treint (1889–1972) was a central leader of the French CP and a member of the ECCI in the mid-1920s; as a supporter of Zinoviev he defended the Russian United Opposition and was expelled in 1927. His oppositional group, Comite de redressement communiste, was short-lived. He collaborated with several organizations, including the Communist League, to which he belonged for a brief period before joining a syndicalist tendency.

56. A. Feroci was one of the leaders of the Italian CP who was won over to the Left Opposition and helped to organize the New Italian Opposition in 1930. He was a member of the Secretariat from then to 1936. After World War II he returned to the Italian CP. His article, “Trotsky and the Italian Workers,” was printed in *Biulleten Oppozitsii*, number 17–18.

57. Alexei Rykov (1881–1938), an Old Bolshevik, was elected commissar of the interior in 1917 and, after Lenin’s death, president of the Council of People’s Commissars, 1924–30. In the latter post he collaborated with Stalin in defeating and expelling the Left Opposition. He himself was purged from his posts for leading the Right Opposition with Bukharin and Tomsky, and was executed after the Moscow trial in
1938. **Leon Kamenev** (1883–1936), an Old Bolshevik, was, like Zinoviev, an ally of Stalin in initiating the crusade against “Trotskyism” (1923–25), and then an ally of Trotsky against Stalinism (1926–27) until the Opposition was defeated and its leaders expelled. With Zinoviev, he capitulated in December 1927 and was reinstated in 1928; was expelled again in 1932 and capitulated again in 1933. He and Zinoviev were sentenced to ten years’ imprisonment in 1935 and executed after the first Moscow trial in 1936.

58. “Tasks in the USSR.” By permission of the Harvard College Library. Translated for this volume by George Saunders.

59. **Karl Bauman** (1892–1937), a secondary figure in the Stalinist apparatus noted for pushing all-out collectivization in 1929–30, was made a scapegoat and demoted when Stalin found it necessary to retreat. Later he vanished in the purges.

60. **Mikhail Kalinin** (1875–1946) was elected president of the Soviet Central Executive Committee in 1919. **Kliment Voroshilov** (1881–1969) was commissar of war, 1925–40, and president of the USSR, 1953–60. Both were placed on the Politburo in 1926. They were believed to sympathize with some of the ideas of the Right Opposition but went along with Stalin, perhaps because he had access to information that would have embarrassed them if made public.

61. **Mikhail Tomsky** (1886–1936), an Old Bolshevik, was allied with Stalin against the Left Opposition until 1928. He helped to found the Right Opposition, and like its other leaders capitulated to Stalin after it was defeated. This did not save him from being removed from his post as president of the Soviet trade unions. He committed suicide during the first Moscow trial in 1936.

62. **GPU** was one of the abbreviated names for the Soviet political-police department; other names were Cheka, NKVD, MVD, KGB, etc., but GPU is often used in their place.

63. The **Mensheviks** and the **Social Revolutionaries (SRs)** were the dominant parties in the newly formed Soviets after the February revolution. The Mensheviks, led by Julius Martov, began as a faction of the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party and became an independent party which opposed the October 1917 revolution. It remained a legal party in the Soviet Union until 1921, and was recognized by the Second International as its Russian section. The SRs were the political expression of the Narodnik (Populist) currents. Prior to the October Revolution the SR party had the largest share of influence among the peasants.
Its right wing was led by Kerensky. The Left SRs served briefly in a coalition government with the Bolsheviks after the revolution, but soon moved into opposition “from the left” organizing counterrevolutionary actions.

64. Of the military and GPU figures named by Trotsky in 1930 as potential candidates for a Bonapartist role in the event of a coup against the Soviet regime, only Voroshilov managed to survive the thirties. **V.K. Bluecher**, head of Soviet partisan forces in Siberia during the civil war, the Red Army’s military adviser to Chiang Kai-shek in the mid-twenties, the commander of the Special Far Eastern Army, was shot on Stalin’s orders in 1938. **Mikhail Tukhachevsky** (1893–1937), an outstanding military commander in the civil war, was one of several generals charged with treason and executed in June 1937 in the first stage of Stalin’s purge of 25,000 Red Army officers. **Henry Yagoda** (1891–1938), Stalin’s chief lieutenant in the GPU, became its official chief in 1934; after supervising the organization of the 1936 Moscow trial, he was made a defendant himself in the 1938 trial, and was convicted and executed. **Terenty Deribas** (1883–1939), in charge of the GPU in the Far East, was arrested and shot.

65. **Yuri Pyatakov** (1890–1937), an Old Bolshevik, played a leading role in the Russian Revolution and civil war and held many key party and state posts. In his testament Lenin called him and Bukharin the “two ablest young men in the party.” He became a Left Oppositionist in 1923, was expelled in 1927, and capitulated and was reinstated in 1928. As vice chairman in the Commissariat of Heavy Industry, he helped to industrialize the country in the 1930s. He was convicted and executed in the second Moscow trial. **Karl Radek** (1885–1939) was an outstanding revolutionary in Poland and Germany before World War I and a leader of the Comintern in Lenin’s time. He was both an early Left Oppositionist and one of the earliest to capitulate to Stalin after his expulsion and exile. He was readmitted to the party in 1930 and served as a propagandist for Stalin until he was framed up in the second Moscow trial and sentenced to ten years’ imprisonment.

66. “The Bloc of the Right and the Left.” **The Militant**, January 1, 1931; unsigned in **Biulleten Oppozitsii**. Stalin’s forced collectivization of Soviet agriculture, initiated in 1929, produced a great deal of discontent, reaching even into the top levels of the Communist Party. The Right Opposition, led by Bukharin, Rykov, and Tomsky, was decisively defeated before 1930 and no longer played any political role, although
Rykov was not to be removed as president of the Council of People’s Commissars until December 1930. Dissidence emerged, however, from a section of the Stalinist apparatus itself. The Kremlin responded by a public attack on two Central Committee members, Syrtsov and Lominadze, followed by their expulsion in December 1930. Instead of identifying them as what they were—disillusioned Stalinists—Stalin castigated them as representatives of an unprincipled bloc between the Right and Left Oppositions. Nobody in the Soviet Union had the means of answering this lie in the press, including Syrtsov and Lominadze. This was an added reason why Trotsky answered it, although the main reason was the Left Opposition’s irreconcilable hostility to the Right Opposition, with whose leaders Stalin had had an anti-“Trotskyist” bloc for seven years.

67. **Sergei I. Syrtsov** (1893–1938) was picked by Stalin in 1927 to become a member of the CP Central Committee, in 1929 to replace Rykov as premier of the Russian republic, and in July 1930 to become a candidate for Politburo membership. He would never have got his 1929 and 1930 promotions if there had been any evidence of sympathy by him for the Right Opposition. **V.V. Lominadze** served Stalin unquestioningly throughout the 1920s, especially in 1927 when he helped instigate the ill-fated Canton insurrection. In July 1930 he was elected to the CP Central Committee, something that would have been impossible if anyone had suspected him of sympathy for the Left Opposition. He committed suicide in 1934 according to some sources, in 1936 according to others.

68. The **August bloc of 1912** (not 1913, as Trotsky says throughout this article) was an attempt to reunite the Bolshevik and Menshevik factions into a single party. Trotsky, who belonged to neither of these factions, was one of the chief inspirers of the bloc, which he later came to recognize as a serious mistake. After this reunification attempt failed, the Bolsheviks and Mensheviks went their own way as separate parties, although, as Trotsky notes, local groups inside Russia did function as unified organizations, especially between February and July 1917.

69. **Iraklii G. Tseretelli** (1882–1959) was a Georgian leader of the Mensheviks, who held a ministerial post in the Provisional Government.

70. “**Dizzy with Success: Concerning Questions of the Collective Farm Movement**” was the title of an article by Stalin published in Pravda, March 2, 1930, and reprinted in Stalin’s *Works*, volume 12. It gave the signal for a slowing down of the headlong rush toward agricultural

71. The Duma (which, like soviet, means council) was the Russian parliament with extremely limited powers, established by Nicholas II in 1905. At first both the Bolsheviks and Mensheviks advocated boycott of the Duma elections; Lenin and the Mensheviks had changed their minds on this tactic by 1906, but many Bolsheviks continued to support it on ultraleft grounds. At the Third Party Conference of the Russian social democracy in July 1907, when the Bolsheviks and Mensheviks still functioned as members of the same party, eight of the nine Bolshevik delegates present voted to revert to the boycott policy in the Third Duma election, while Lenin voted along with the Mensheviks, Bundists, and Polish social democrats to defeat the boycott motion.

72. The Workers and Peasants Party (POP) was a centrist group founded in France at the end of 1929 by Louis Sellier, former secretary of the CP who was expelled because of his resistance to ultraleftist excesses. It later was succeeded by the Party of Proletarian Unity (PUP).

73. “What Next in the Campaign Against the Russian Right Wing?” *The Militant*, January 1, 1931. Unsigned. The Stalinist drive against the Right Opposition in the Russian CP began shortly after the Fifteenth Congress had expelled the Left Opposition at the end of 1927. Bukharin was removed as president of the Comintern in July 1929 and from the Politburo in November 1929; Tomsky was removed as president of the trade unions in June 1929, and from the Politburo in July 1930. All of the Right Opposition leaders had capitulated to Stalinism by November 1929. Rykov was to be removed from the Politburo and from the post of president of the Council of People’s Commissars in December 1930. Despite Trotsky’s strong political opposition to the right wing, he regarded its leaders as communists and did not advocate their expulsion from the leadership or membership of the party and the Comintern.

74. Valerian V. Kuibyshev (1888–1935) held a variety of posts before becoming chairman of the Supreme Council of National Economy in 1926, from which post he served as a leading spokesman for the Stalinist economic policies. Jan E. Rudzutak (1887–1938), elected to the Central Committee of the CPSU in 1920, was active in trade-union work. Anastas I. Mikoyan (1895– ) replaced Kamenev as commissar of trade in 1926. Kuibyshev and Rudzutak became members of the Politburo in
1926; Mikoyan a candidate member in 1927 and member in 1939. Kuibyshev died in mysterious circumstances; Rudzutak was shot in the purges; Mikoyan survived and associated himself with Khrushchev’s “de-Stalinization” program.

75. **War Communism**, or Military Communism, was the name given to the system of production that prevailed in the Soviet Union when it was fighting for its life during the civil war of 1918–20. The Bolsheviks had not planned to nationalize and centralize the economy so much and so soon after they came to power; their original economic plans were more gradual. But everything was subordinated to the military struggle for survival. One result was growing conflict between the peasants, whose produce was requisitioned or confiscated, and the Soviet state; another was a continuing decline in production, both agricultural and industrial. The Kronstadt uprising of 1921 was a signal to the Bolsheviks that peasant discontent was reaching the point of explosion, and the event that led to the replacement of War Communism by the New Economic Policy (see note 106).

76. **Albert A. Purcell** (1872–1935) was a “leftist” leader of the General Council of the British Trades Union Congress and of the Anglo-Russian Committee, with whom the Stalinists were allied during and after the betrayal of the British general strike of 1926. **Stefan Radich** (1871–1928), leader of the Croatian Peasants Party, suddenly was hailed by Moscow as “a real leader of the people” because he attended a congress of the Krestintern in 1924.

77. **Permanent revolution** was the theory most closely associated with Trotsky, beginning with the 1905 revolution when he first developed his ideas about the leading role of the working class in industrially backward and underdeveloped countries. Although Lenin and the Bolsheviks accepted the conclusions of this theory in leading the 1917 revolution, the Stalinists centered their fire on it in the 1920s, especially after adopting the theory of socialism in one country. Trotsky’s defense, *The Permanent Revolution*, was written in 1928.

78. “**A Squeak in the Apparatus**” was the title of an article dated April 13, 1930, in which Trotsky had called attention to evidence of dissension in the CP’s ranks (see *Writings 30*).

79. **Lavr G. Kornilov** (1870–1918) was a czarist general who was put in command of the Russian army by the Provisional Government which ruled the country between the February and October revolutions in 1917. Deciding to take power into his own hands, he set out on a march to depose the Provisional Government, but his attempted coup
was thwarted by the initiative of the Bolsheviks in disintegrating his army. Alexander Kerensky (1882–1970), associated with a wing of the SRs, was prime minister of the Provisional Government when it was overthrown by the Bolsheviks.

80. Old Bolsheviks were those who joined the Bolshevik Party before 1917, that is, members of the party’s “old guard.” Although it was an honorific designation, Lenin sometimes used it disparagingly for party veterans who hadn’t learned or relearned anything for a long time.

81. “What Is to Be Learned from the Saboteurs’ Trial?” The Militant, January 1, 1931. Signed “L.T.”; unsigned in Biulleten Oppozitsii. Most students of Soviet history now agree that the trials of the “Industrial Party” in November–December 1930 and of the “Menshevik Center” in March 1931 were frame-ups and precursors of the better-known and more sensational Moscow trials of 1936–38. But at the time Trotsky and most Left Oppositionists outside of the Soviet Union accepted the “confessions” at these trials as valid. Later, shortly before the Zinoviev-Kamenev Moscow trial in 1936, he appended to an article about these earlier trials by Victor Serge, who had recently been allowed to leave the Soviet Union, a note which said: “The editors of the Biulleten must admit that in the period of the Menshevik trial they greatly underestimated the degree of shamelessness of Stalinist ‘justice’ and therefore took too seriously the confessions of the former Mensheviks” (Biulleten Oppozitsii, number 51, July–August 1936). That this reconsideration was supposed to apply to the Industrial Party trial too was made evident in April 1937 when Trotsky was questioned about both these trials in the Mexico hearings held by the Dewey Commission (see The Case of Leon Trotsky). Also relevant is the article “No, It Isn’t the Same,” June 18, 1938, Writings 37–38 (second edition).

82. There were eight defendants in the Industrial Party trial, all of whom had held responsible posts in Soviet economic and planning institutions during the 1920s. They were accused of having organized a “Council of the Allied Engineers’ Organization,” which had, according to the indictment, “united in a single organization all the different wrecking organizations in the various branches of industry and acted not only in accordance with the orders of the international organizations of former Russian and foreign capitalists, but also in contact with and upon direct instructions of the ruling circles and the general staff of France in preparing armed intervention and armed overthrow of the Soviet power.” They were also accused of having ties with the British general staff. The
defendants confessed to everything in the indictment, including sabotage in the principal industries, treasonable activities in the Red Army, espionage, etc. No evidence was introduced except the confessions. Five defendants were sentenced to death, the other three to ten years' imprisonment. The death penalties were commuted to imprisonment. A useful summary of the Industrial Party and Menshevik trials will be found in Not Guilty, the report of the Commission of Inquiry into the charges made against Trotsky in the Moscow trials, 1938 (Monad Press, 1972).

83. Leonid K. Ramzin (1887–1948), the chief defendant in the Industrial Party trial, was quickly released from prison and restored to an important job, one of the circumstances that aroused mass skepticism about the trial.

84. Nikolai V. Krylenko (1885–1940?), an Old Bolshevik, was co-commissar of military affairs until 1918 and commissar of justice from 1931 until the year of his own arrest in 1937. He was posthumously "rehabilitated."

85. Gleb M. Krzhyzhanovsky (1872–1959), an Old Bolshevik, head of the State Planning Commission, was purged in the thirties but lived long enough to be rehabilitated before his death in 1959.


87. “On the Question of Thermidor and Bonapartism.” International Bulletin, Communist Left Opposition, number 2, March 1, 1931. An editorial statement said that this was written in response to questions presented by Roman Well for the German Left Opposition.

88. Jacobinism was the philosophy of the tendency that provided the left-wing leadership of the French Revolution, the Society of the Friends of the Constitution, which held its meetings in the Jacobin Monastery.

89. The Korschists were a small ultraleft sect led by Karl Korsch (1889–1961), who was expelled from the German CP in 1929 for alleged “Trotskyism.”

90. Kurt Landau, of Austrian origin, was at this time a central leader of the German Left Opposition and a member of the International Secretariat. Within a few months he was to break with the Opposition. He was murdered by the Stalinists in Spain during the civil war. Trotsky’s analysis of “Landauism” as a type will be found in Writings 32–33.

92. The Convention was the revolutionary parliament of the French Revolution.

93. Napoleon Bonaparte I (1769–1821) became emperor of France through a series of political shifts that consolidated the reaction following the downfall of the revolutionary Jacobins in 1794. The Convention was replaced by the Directory in 1795. Bonaparte’s coup d’état of 18 Brumaire 1799 overthrew the Directory and established the Consulate, with himself as first consul. The Empire was born when Bonaparte proclaimed himself emperor in 1804.

94. Maximilien Robespierre (1758–94) was the leader of the Left Jacobins and head of the French government, 1793–94. The day on which he fell from power was the Ninth of Thermidor (July 27, 1794) in the new revolutionary calendar.

95. “Doubts and Objections About the Bulgarian Manifesto.” International Bulletin, Communist Left Opposition, number 3, 1931. The manifesto was intended for publication in the Bulgarian Left Opposition’s periodical Ozvobozhdenie (Liberation).

96. Frederick Engels (1820–95) was the lifelong collaborator of Karl Marx and coauthor with him of many of the basic works of Marxism. In his last years he was the outstanding figure of the young Second International. Eduard Bernstein (1850–1932), Engels’s literary executor, was the first theoretician of revisionism in the German social democracy. Socialism, he said, would come about through the gradual democratization of capitalism; therefore Marxism had to be “revised” and the workers’ movement had to abandon the policy of class struggle for one of class collaboration with the “progressive” capitalists. Bernstein’s book, Evolutionary Socialism, was attacked by the noted Marxists of the period, but revisionist theory and practice became increasingly dominant in the most important social democratic party and led to the collapse of the Second International in 1914. Otto von Bismarck (1815–98) was head of the Prussian government from 1862, and the first chancellor of the German empire, 1871–90. He unified Germany under Prussia and the Hohenzollerns, and was an aggressive enemy of the labor and socialist movements. Napoleon III (1808–73), emperor of the “Second Empire” of France, 1852–70, was deposed after France’s defeat in the Franco-Prussian War, which also led to the establishment of the Paris Commune in 1871.

97. Kristo Pastoukhov (1874–1949) was a reformist socialist politi-
arian active in the Bulgarian labor movement and minister of the interior in 1919. **Georgi Dimitrov** (1882–1949) was a leader of the Bulgarian CP who emigrated to Germany, where he became one of the defendants in the “Reichstag fire” frame-up trial staged by the Nazis in 1933. He was acquitted and moved to the USSR, where he became a Soviet citizen and an executive secretary of the Comintern, 1934–43. After World War II he became premier of Bulgaria, 1946–49.

98. “Remarks on Frank’s Work on Collectivization.” By permission of the Harvard College Library. Translated for this volume by George Saunders. The author “Frank” probably was a pseudonym for Ya. Graef, who was a member of the Austrian Left Opposition for a brief period. Earlier in 1930 Trotsky had written a criticism of an article by Graef on Soviet collectivization that was printed in the *Biulleten Oppozitsii* (see Writings 30).

99. “The Opposition’s Record on the Kuomintang.” From the 1931 introduction by Max Shachtman to *Problems of the Chinese Revolution*. This was part of a letter answering questions posed by Shachtman while he was editing Trotsky’s book on China, and was translated by Shachtman. Trotsky’s answer may be easier to follow if it is borne in mind that the Left Opposition, organized in 1923, was also known as the 1923 Opposition and the Moscow Opposition; the Opposition organized by Zinoviev and Kamenev was also called the Leningrad Opposition and the 1925 Opposition; and the bloc of these two groups, called the United (or Joint) Opposition, was started in 1926 and came to an end in December 1927 when the Zinoviev-Kamenev group capitulated to Stalin.

100. **Gregory Zinoviev** (1883–1936) was an Old Bolshevik and a leading figure in the Comintern in Lenin’s time, serving as its first president. He, along with Kamenev, helped Stalin launch the campaign against “Trotskyism” but later formed a bloc with the Left Opposition. After his first capitulation in 1927, he was expelled again in late 1932, and repented again in 1933. He was sentenced to ten years’ imprisonment in 1935, then was framed up in the first Moscow trial and executed.

101. The **Chinese Eastern Railroad** was the portion of the original route of the Trans-Siberian Railroad which went through Manchuria to Vladivostok. The theses on the CER to which Trotsky refers are dated March 25, 1926 (not 1925) and were adopted by a special committee of which he was chairman and which included Voroshilov, Dzerzhinsky,
and Chicherin. He quoted from it copiously in an article, "The Sino-Soviet Conflict and the Tasks of the Opposition," August 4, 1929, at a time when the government of Chiang Kai-shek was attempting to oust the Soviet government from its share of the jointly controlled CER (see *Writings* 29). On this occasion Trotsky was very critical of Left Oppositionists who argued that since the CER was a czarist, imperialist enterprise, the Soviet workers' state should turn it over to the Chinese capitalist government. In 1932 the CER became an object of conflict between the Soviet government and the Japanese who had seized the rest of Manchuria. Stalin held on to it until 1935, when he sold it to the Japanese puppet regime in Manchuria in an effort to ward off attack on the USSR. The railroad came under Soviet control again after World War II. Although the Chinese CP took over the Chinese mainland in 1949, Stalin did not cede it to the Mao Tse-tung government until 1952.


103. Whites. White Guards, and White Russians were names used for the Russian counterrevolutionary forces following the October Revolution.

104. In March 1920 Poland invaded the Ukraine. The Red Army counteroffensive reached the outskirts of Warsaw, but at that point it was decisively driven back. A dispute then ensued in the Politburo on whether to continue the war—to launch the second Polish campaign—or accept onerous peace terms. The Riga treaty, which gave Poland large part of Byelorussia and the Ukraine, was signed in 1921.

105. The Workers’ Opposition was a semisyndicalist, ultraleft group inside the Russian CP in the early 1920s while Lenin was still active. Its leaders included A.G. Shlyapnikov, the first Soviet commissar of labor, and Alexandra Kollontai, the first woman ambassador. Some of its leaders joined the United Opposition in 1926 and were expelled and exiled in 1927.

106. The New Economic Policy (NEP) was initiated in 1921 to replace the policy of War Communism, which had prevailed during the Russian civil war and led to drastic declines in agricultural and industrial production (see note 75). To revive the economy after the war, the NEP was adopted as a temporary measure allowing a limited revival of free trade inside the Soviet Union and foreign concessions alongside the nationalized and state-controlled sectors of the economy. The Nepmen, who benefited from this policy, were viewed as a potential base for the
restoration of capitalism. The NEP was succeeded by the first five-year plan and forced collectivization of the land at the end of the twenties. The famous discussion of 1920–21, usually referred to as the trade-union discussion, revolved around the function of the unions. Trotsky maintained that, under the conditions of War Communism, the unions should be tied to the state and party administrations in order to mobilize the labor force and revive the productive process. Lenin countered that the unions must remain independent organizations in order to defend the interests of the workers, even though the employer was now the state. The Workers’ Opposition wanted the unions to have sole charge of production. The issue was settled at the Tenth Congress of the party in March 1921, where Lenin introduced the NEP. Both the NEP and a resolution along the lines of Lenin’s position on the unions, introduced by Zinoviev, were adopted overwhelmingly. The dispute on the unions between Lenin and Trotsky was subsequently used as ammunition in the anti-Trotskyist campaign.

107. The members of the Politburo elected after the Sixteenth Congress in July 1930 were Stalin, Kaganovich, Kalinin, Kirov, Kosior, Kuibyshev, Molotov, Rudzutak, Rykov, and Voroshilov. In December Rykov was removed and replaced by Ordzhonikidze.

108. Karl Kautsky (1854–1938) was regarded as the outstanding Marxist theoretician until World War I, when he abandoned internationalism and opposed the Russian Revolution. Eugene Varga (1879–1964), a Hungarian social democrat and economist, served as chairman of the Supreme Economic Council of the short-lived Hungarian Soviet regime. In 1920 he went to Russia, joined the Russian CP, and worked in the Comintern as an economics expert, supporting the Stalinists.

109. V.V. Osinsky (1887–1938) was a leader of the Democratic Centralism opposition until 1923, then a member of the Left Opposition for a few years, and finally a supporter of the Right Opposition.

110. The campaign proposed by the Opposition was explained in detail in Trotsky’s “World Unemployment and the Five-Year Plan,” March 14, 1930 (Writings 30).


112. M.N. Riutin, one of the leaders of the anti-Trotskyist crusade in Moscow, was removed from some of his posts in 1930 for alleged sympathy to the Right Opposition. At the end of 1932 he was arrested and expelled from the party for circulating a platform critical of Stalin
that advocated reform, through party and constitutional channels, of the party and the economy. He was specifically charged with holding discussions with Bukharinists and Zinovievists.

113. **N.A. Uglanov** was another Stalinist who rose to high rank through his anti-Trotskyist zeal and then became a Right Oppositionist. He was dropped from the Central Committee in 1930, and capitulated. He was implicated in the Riutin case in 1932, and capitulated again. In the end he disappeared in the purges.

114. **Fritz Heckert** (1884–1936) was a former leader of the Spartacus League who became a leading Stalinist functionary in the German CP. He kept extolling its policies even after they had helped put Hitler in power. The *Spartacus League* (Spartakusbund) was formed at the start of 1916 as an antiwar left wing in the German Social Democratic Party. When the latter split and the Independent Social Democratic Party (USPD) was formed in April 1917, the Spartacus group became the left wing of the USPD until the end of World War I when it took the initiative in forming the German Communist Party. Its leaders included **Karl Liebknecht** (1871–1919), **Rosa Luxemburg** (1871–1919), and **Leo Jogisches** (1867–1919). Liebknecht was the first member of the Reichstag to come out against the war, and was imprisoned for his antiwar activity. Luxemburg was a founder of the Polish Social Democratic Party and a leader of the German left wing, noted for her opposition to revisionism and opportunism; she was assassinated with Liebknecht. Jogisches, a founder of the Polish Social Democratic Party, was arrested and assassinated by the police a month after Liebknecht and Luxemburg were murdered.

115. **Sun Yat-sen** (1866–1925), founder of the Chinese nationalist movement and the Kuomintang, became the provisional president of the Chinese republic in 1911 and head of the Canton Nationalist government until his death.

116. **Lenin’s testament** and evaluation of the Soviet leaders, written shortly before the last stroke leading to his death in 1924, was not printed by the Soviet government until after Stalin’s death. It can be found in Trotsky’s essay “The Suppressed Testament of Lenin,” December 31, 1932.

117. **Alexander P. Smirnov** (1877–1938) was commissar of agriculture until removed from that post in the struggle against the right wing in 1928. In 1933 he was accused of participating in a plot against the government and dropped from the Central Committee. He disappeared in the purges. **Ivan A. Teodorovich** (1875–1940), an early right-winger,
began his connection with the Commissariat of Agriculture in 1920. He also disappeared in the purges. **Nikolai D. Kondratiev** (1892–1937) was a professor at the Agricultural Academy and the head of the Business Research Institute of Moscow after the revolution. His theory of fifty-year, self-adjusting economic cycles provoked wide controversy during the twenties. In 1930 he was arrested as the alleged head of an illegal Peasants Labor Party and exiled to Siberia. He reappeared briefly as a witness in the Menshevik trial in 1931.

118. **Nikolai Ivanovich** is Bukharin. **Alexander Bezymensky** (1898–), a leading figure with Averbach in the Russian Association of Proletarian Writers (RAPP), reached the height of his popularity in 1929–31.

119. “National Conferences and Internationalism.” From the archives of the Socialist Workers Party. The French Communist League was engaged in a number of bitter internal disputes throughout 1930; one of the issues concerned work in the trade unions, about which Trotsky wrote several articles, reprinted in **Leon Trotsky on the Trade Unions**. The present letter was his response to information that a decision had been made to hold a national conference of the League without sufficient time to allow discussion from other sections of the Left Opposition. The projected conference was postponed after Trotsky’s protest, and was not held until October 1931. At this time the ILO was considering holding both a European conference and an international conference. For various reasons the European conference was never held and the international conference was not held until 1933.

120. **Pierre Naville** (1904– ) was a founder of the French Left Opposition and a member of the International Secretariat for many years. He left the Fourth International during World War II. He has written many sociological works and a memoir, **Trotsky vivant**, published in 1958, and has helped to publish several Trotsky books in French.

121. **Pierre Gourget**, an early French Oppositionist, was a leader of the rightist tendency in the Communist League in 1930–31. He capitulated to Stalinism and returned to the CP in 1932.

122. **Gerard Rosenthal**, who also went by the name of Francis Gerard, was a leader of Naville’s group and later Trotsky’s attorney in France.

123. The “third period,” according to the Stalinists, was the last period of capitalism, when it was on the verge of death and replacement by soviets. Following from this, Comintern tactics from 1928 to 1934 were marked by ultraleftism, adventurism, sectarian “red” unions, and opposition to the united front. In 1934 the theory and practice of the
“third period” were discarded and replaced by those of the People’s Front (1935–39), but the latter period was not given a number. The “first period” was 1917–24 (capitalist crisis and revolutionary upsurge); the “second period” was 1925–28 (capitalist stabilization). In 1930 Trotsky and other Oppositionists believed that “the days of the ‘third period’” were coming to an end and that a new “turn” away from its ultraleft excesses was taking place in the Comintern and its parties. Despite some oscillations, however, third-period policies were continued until 1934.

124. L’Humanite (Humanity) was the daily paper of the French CP and under attack from the government in 1930.

125. “Another Victim of Stalin.” Biulleten Oppozitsii, number 17–18, November–December 1930. Unsigned. Translated for this volume by Iain Fraser. An editorial note following this article said that just as number 17–18 was being completed, word of Kote Tsintsadze’s death had been received.

126. Gregory K. Ordzhonikidze (1886–1937), one of the organizers of the Stalin faction, was in charge of heavy industry. The circumstances of his death are still not publicly known.


128. The conflict between the Georgian Bolshevik leadership and Stalin at the head of the Moscow central party apparatus developed during 1922 over the issue of the Georgia republic’s relation to the proposed federation of the Soviet republics into the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. Ordzhonikidze, secretary of the Transcaucasian Regional Bureau, tightened the reins over the Transcaucasian federation, which consisted of Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan and had been organized over Georgia’s objections, as preparation for its affiliation as a unit to the USSR. In the course of the struggle, Stalin and Ordzhonikidze carried through a purge of the Georgian leadership and brought in a group subservient to the party apparatus. When Lenin learned what was going on and that Ordzhonikidze had physically assaulted one of the Georgians, he was alarmed about the violation of the rights of the non-Russian national minorities and the procedures used. He wrote some notes on the question, on December 30 and 31, 1922, which appear as “The Question of Nationalities or ‘Autonomisation’” in his Collected Works, volume 36. He was prevented from launching a counterattack at the Twelfth Congress by the last of a series of strokes that totally incapaci-
tated him until his death. **Felix Dzerzhinsky** (1877–1926), a founder of the Polish Social Democratic Party, headed the Cheka from its formation in 1917 and the Supreme Council of National Economy from 1924 until his death. He figured in the Georgian conflict as a member of a Moscow investigating commission that entirely whitewashed Stalin and Ordzhonikidze.


130. **Eugene A. Preobrazhensky** (1886–1937), a secretary of the Bolshevik Central Committee, 1920–21, wrote *The New Economics* in 1926, a creative analysis of the problems facing the Soviet economy. A Left Oppositionist, he was expelled from the party in 1927, readmitted in 1929, expelled again in 1931, and again readmitted. He refused to make a “confession” during the Moscow trial purges and was shot without a trial.

131. **Chen Tu-hsiu** (1879–1942), a founder and leader of the Chinese CP, became an adherent of the Left Opposition in 1929. He was imprisoned by Chiang Kai-shek from 1932 to 1937; while in prison he left the Trotskyist movement. Not active in politics after his release, he devoted his last years to literary work, including an autobiography that deals only with the years before the founding of the CP. A long letter by Chen Tu-hsiu, “To All Members of the Chinese Communist Party,” dated December 10, 1929, was reprinted in *The Militant* in its issues of November 15, 1930–February 1, 1931.

132. **Dmitri Manuilsky** (1883–1952) was secretary of the Comintern from 1931 to its dissolution in 1943. Like Trotsky, he had belonged to the independent Marxist organization, the Mezhrayontsi (Inter-District Group), which fused with the Bolshevik Party in 1917. He joined the Stalinist faction in the early 1920s. The analysis of the Stalinist theory was printed with the title “A Retreat in Full Disorder,” November 1930, in *Problems of the Chinese Revolution*.

133. Spanish perspectives in 1931 and after are discussed in detail in Trotsky’s *The Spanish Revolution* (1931–39).

134. “Twenty-one conditions” were adopted by the Second World Congress of the Comintern (July–August 1920) as a way of making it more difficult for centrist parties and others that had not broken fully with reformism to become affiliates of the Comintern; they were written by Lenin (*Collected Works*, volume 31). The ILO’s first conference was held in February 1933 in Paris, where the delegates adopted a docu-
ment containing “eleven points” that were to govern future admissions to the ILO (see Writings 32–33).

135. On May Day, 1931, a national conference of the four Chinese oppositional groups met in Shanghai and voted to unify as the “Left Opposition of the Chinese Communist Party.” They adopted a platform and a program of action, elected a national executive committee, and chose the name Huo hsing (Spark) for their paper. Soon after, however, the united organization was severely hit by repression and arrests by the Chiang Kai-shek government.


137. The Bordigists (after their leader, Amadeo Bordiga, 1889–1970, who was expelled from the Comintern on charges of “Trotskyism” in 1929) were also known as the Italian Left Faction and as the Prometeo group (after their journal Prometeo [Prometheus]). They were the first Italian group to adhere to the ILO, but their inveterate sectarianism led to a separation from the ILO at the end of 1932. Their resolution on democratic demands was printed in International Bulletin, Communist Left Opposition, number 4–5, August 1931.


139. Monatte’s fraternization with the reformists and social-patriots was the subject of Trotsky’s article “Monatte Crosses the Rubicon,” December 15, 1930, reprinted in Leon Trotsky on the Trade Unions.

140. Marcel Cachin (1869–1958) was an ardent social democratic supporter of World War I, who turned to communism in 1920, and then became an uncritical Stalinist, in which role he supported the French capitalist government again in World War II.

141. Georges Dumoulin (1877–1963), who tried to straddle the war issue in 1914, later joined the right wing of the French labor bureaucracy; he collaborated with the Vichy government in World War II. Jean Zyromsky (1890– ) was a French Socialist Party functionary who founded a left wing in the SP; during the 1930s he favored merger of the SP and CP; he joined the CP after World War II.

143. Roman Well and Senin were pseudonyms of the Sobolevicius brothers, originally from Latvia, who played a leading role in the German Opposition until the end of 1932, when they led a split toward the Stalinists (see *Writings 32–33*). As Dr. Robert Soblen, Well committed suicide in 1962 when he was under prosecution as a Soviet espionage agent in the USA. Senin, under the name of Jack Soblen, told a U.S. Senate committee in 1957 that he had been a GPU agent while functioning inside the Left Opposition.

144. Der Neuer Mahnruf (The New Call) was the periodical of the “Communist Opposition of Austria.”

145. M. Mill, who also wrote under the name J. Obin, was chosen by the Russian Opposition as its member of the Administrative Secretariat, largely because of his knowledge of the Russian language; after he was removed from this post in 1932 because of his personal intrigues, he became an agent of Stalinism (see *Writings 32*). Raymond Molinier (1904— ) was a cofounder of La Verite and the Communist League of France, with whom Trotsky often found himself in agreement in the League’s many internal disputes until 1935. Molinier was for several years the target of rumors and innuendoes by League opponents about allegedly improper fund-raising methods. In order to concentrate the discussion on the political differences, Trotsky sought to settle these rumors by having them formally investigated by a control commission. Their collaboration ended in 1935 when the Molinier group violated discipline by publishing a periodical, La Commune (see *Writings 35–36*). Shortly before his death in 1940, however, Trotsky expressed a willingness to explore the possibility of a reconciliation, and the Molinier group became part of the reunified French section of the Fourth International during World War II (*Writings 39–40*, second edition).

146. Ya. Graef was briefly an Austrian Oppositionist—in the “Internal Group of the Party”—before deciding in favor of Stalinism.

147. Jan Frankel, a Czech Oppositionist starting in 1927, became a member of Trotsky’s secretariat and guard in 1930. He was the only other witness besides Trotsky at the April 1937 hearings on the Moscow trials conducted by the Dewey Commission (see *The Case of Leon Trotsky*).

148. Josef Frey (1882–1957), a founder of the Austrian Communist Party, from which he was expelled in 1927, was also briefly the leader of an “Austrian Communist Party (Opposition),” which published Arbeiter Stimme.
149. The International Secretariat took the position that none of the three Austrian groups could be considered representatives of the ILO, and that therefore none of them should be granted the right to participate at a European conference which the IS at this time hoped to be able to convene in the near future. The IS position on this question was supported by most sections of the ILO, but the European conference was not held.

150. The French crisis at the end of 1930 revolved around differences in the Communist League leadership over trade-union policy and different evaluations of the Communist Party’s temporary abandonment of certain features of its “third period” ultraleftism. Trotsky supported the position of the group led by Molinier and opposed that of the group led by Naville. The crisis was contained through a unanimous agreement to change the composition of the League’s executive committee and to continue discussion in preparation for its national conference.

151. “A Letter to the Politburo.” By permission of the Harvard College Library. Translated for this volume by George Saunders. In March 1929 a Dresden publisher named Harry Schumann persuaded Trotsky to sign a contract to publish several of his books in Germany. When Trotsky learned that Schumann had withheld information about himself—that he had published Kerensky’s memoirs “exposing” the Bolsheviks as agents of imperialist Germany in 1917, etc.—he declared that he would not have signed a contract with the publisher of such a book if Schumann had not deceived him, and demanded the cancellation of the contract. Schumann took the case to court in Germany. While it was there, he suddenly got a lucrative contract to publish five volumes of Soviet documents from the Soviet government, whom he called “the spiritual and political successors of Lenin”; this, he told the court, proved that Trotsky’s objections to him were invalid, and therefore the court should uphold the contract giving him control over Trotsky’s books in Germany. Trotsky’s two public articles on why the Stalin regime had come to the aid of a publisher of an anti-Lenin book (he called it an alliance of Stalin and Company with Schumann and Kerensky against Lenin and Trotsky) will be found in Writings 30. Schumann lost his case at the first two trial levels and early in 1931 took his appeal to the highest court in Leipzig. That court held that political facts as well as juridical issues were involved and appointed an “expert” to get opinions from scholars at Leipzig University and others about Kerensky’s charges
against the Bolsheviks, Kerensky’s arrest of Trotsky in 1917, etc. Trotsky submitted arguments on these questions to the expert and his letter to the Politburo was an effort to get it to do the same. The editors were unable to learn how the case finally ended in the courts, but there is no evidence that Schumann published anything by Trotsky in the two years before the Nazis took power.

152. The Soviet ambassador in Berlin was Nikolai N. Krestinsky, appointed ambassador to Germany in 1921. He had been a member of the first Politburo, in 1919. A defendant in the 1938 Moscow trial, he was convicted and executed.

153. Lenin and the Epigones was the name of the first book Trotsky was supposed to give Schumann under the disputed contract. Perhaps because of the dispute Trotsky never published any book under that title in any country. Instead it appeared first, in France, as La Revolution defigurée, which was expanded in Russian and U.S. editions under the title The Stalin School of Falsification.

154. “The Crisis in the German Left Opposition.” International Bulletin, Communist Left Opposition, number 6, 1931. This English version was a retranslation from the German.

155. The Austrian Crisis and Communism, November 13, 1929, will be found in Writings 29.

156. Henri Barbusse (1873–1935) was a pacifist novelist who joined the French CP, wrote biographies of Stalin and Christ, and sponsored amorphous antiwar and antifascist congresses used by the Stalinists as substitutes for genuine struggle.

157. Jakob Blumkin (1899–1929), a Left Social Revolutionary terrorist who became a Communist and GPU official, was the first Russian supporter of the Left Opposition to visit Trotsky in Turkey. Bringing back a letter from Trotsky to the Opposition, he was betrayed to the GPU and shot in December 1929.

158. “Interview by the Manchester Guardian.” The Manchester Guardian, March 27 and 28, 1931. “We agree,” the reporter recalled, “that the best way to avoid distortion is to decide beforehand what questions will be of chief interest to our readers, and then to write down Trotsky’s answers as a continuous narrative. Soon he sets to work, dictating in a musical mixture of French and German.” The interview was run in two parts, “The Five-Year Plan and the World” and “America Discovers the World.”
159. **Oliver** and **Godfrey Locker-Lampson**, brothers, were British Conservative politicians. **Hamilton Fish** (1888–), a New York Republican in the U.S. House of Representatives, was noted for his hostility to the USSR and his authorship of red baiting legislation.

160. **Le Temps** (The Times) was the unofficial voice of the French government in the 1930s.

161. **David Lloyd George** (1863–1945) was the British Liberal prime minister from 1916 to 1922.

162. **Theodore Roosevelt** (1858–1919) was the Republican president of the United States, 1901–09.

163. **Herbert Hoover** (1874–1964) was the Republican president of the U.S., 1929–33. In 1932 he was to propose disarmament.

164. **Leonid Krasin** (1870–1926) was an Old Bolshevik who served in many important posts, including commissar of foreign trade, 1922–24.

165. **The Hohenzollerns** became the ruling family in Germany in 1871; the dynasty ended during the November 1918 revolution when Kaiser Wilhelm II abdicated.

166. **Woodrow Wilson** (1865–1924) was the Democratic president of the U.S., 1913–21. The **Fourteen Points** he issued in January 1918 as a basis for ending World War I were intended to counteract the antiwar propaganda of the Bolsheviks, who were then conducting peace negotiations with the Germans at Brest-Litovsk.


169. **Emelyan Yaroslavsky** (1878–1943) was a top Stalinist specialist in the extirpation of “Trotskyism,” which, however, did not prevent him from falling from favor in 1931–32 when he failed to keep up with the tempo demanded by Stalin in the rewriting of Soviet history (see **Writings 32**).


171. **Arthur J. Cook** (1885–1931) was a “left” leader of the British union movement at the time of the general strike in 1926.
172. **August Bebel** (1840–1913) was a cofounder with Wilhelm Liebknecht of the Social Democratic Party of Germany. It became powerful under his leadership, which formally rejected revisionism but bore responsibility for the growth of the opportunist tendencies that took over the party shortly after his death.

173. **Otto Kuusinen** (1891–1964) was a Finnish social democrat who fled to the Soviet Union after the collapse of the Finnish revolution in April 1918. He became a Stalinist and served as a Comintern secretary from 1922 to 1931. **Solomon A. Lozovsky** (1878–1952) was responsible for Stalinist trade-union policy as head of the Red International of Labor Unions (Profintern). He was arrested and shot on Stalin’s orders during an anti-Semitic campaign.

174. **B. Borilin, L. Ya. Larin, L. Kritsman,** and **Vladimir P. Milyutin** were members of the Supreme Council of National Economy; Larin and Milyutin since 1918. Larin had been an ultra-leftist in his early days but became an ardent Stalinist; Milyutin was always a right-winger.

175. **Vladimir G. Groman** (1873–193?) was a Menshevik statistician who had been on the State Planning Commission since 1922. He was the main figure in the 1931 Menshevik trial and was last heard of in prison.


177. **David B. Ryazanov** (1870–193?), historian and philosopher, became a social democrat in the 1890s, a Menshevik-Internationalist during World War I, and a Bolshevik in 1917. He organized the Marx-Engels Institute and, after the rise of Stalinism, withdrew from political activity. But his scholarly and scrupulous attitude toward party history made him offensive to Stalin, who ordered him to be implicated with the defendants of the 1931 Menshevik trial. He was arrested, expelled from the party, dismissed as director of the Marx-Engels Institute, and exiled to Saratov. Trotsky gave 1933 as the year of his death; others subsequently have set it as 1935 or 1938.

178. In 1927 the GPU identified somebody seeking contact with members of the Left Opposition as an officer of Wrangel, the White Guard general who had fought against the Soviet government in the civil war. This attempt to smear the Oppositionists as collaborators of counter-revolutionaries backfired when the GPU was forced to admit that the alleged Wrangel officer was actually an agent of the GPU. **Vyacheslav Menzhinsky** (1874–1934) succeeded Felix Dzerzhinsky as head of the GPU in 1926, but **Yagoda,** as Stalin’s lieutenant in the GPU, played a dominant role.
179. “The Real Disposition of the Pieces on the Political Chessboard.” The Militant, April 15, 1931. The Menshevik trial indictment was made public on February 23, 1931; the trial itself was held March 1–8. There were fourteen defendants, charged with establishing a “Menshevik counter-revolutionary organization” that plotted “to restore the capitalist system through the armed assault of foreign imperialist gangs upon the USSR.” Their ties were said to include the Industrial Party as well as the Second International, the French general staff, etc. All fourteen defendants “confessed” their guilt and were convicted, but their sentences were light—a total of 53 years’ imprisonment.

180. Abram Ginzburg (1878– ), a Menshevik economist, started work in the Supreme Council of National Economy in 1922. Aron Sokolovsky (1883– ), a member of the Jewish Bund, was connected with the council since 1921.

181. “I Await Criticism from the Sections.” By permission of the Harvard College Library. Translated for this volume by Carol Lisker. This letter to the International Secretariat and the sections of the ILO accompanied the next selection in this volume, “Problems of the Development of the USSR.”


183. Robert La Follette (1855–1925), U.S. senator from Wisconsin, was the Progressive Party presidential candidate in 1924. Two-class parties, or workers’ and peasants’ parties, was a term used by the Stalinists in the 1920s to justify support for the Kuomintang and other bourgeois parties in the Orient. Trotsky’s attack on the concept as non-Marxist will be found in The Third International After Lenin and Problems of the Chinese Revolution.

184. Gregory Potemkin (1739–91), field marshal and adviser to Catherine the Great, was assigned the task of organizing “New Russia.” He rebuilt old ports and set up new villages, but his critics charged that his villages were cardboard fronts built to deceive the empress when she visited an area; hence the expression Potemkin villages.

185. The united front was a tactic used by the Bolsheviks in Russia before the October Revolution and elaborated by the Second Congress of the Comintern in 1920. It is designed to give the workers the opportunity to struggle jointly against the common class enemy, even when
they are divided into reformist and revolutionary organizations; it also
enables the revolutionary party to make contact through joint struggle
with the ranks of other working-class organizations and, when success­
ful, win their sympathy. The major condition for the employment of
this tactic, according to the Bolsheviks, is that the revolutionary party
must at all times preserve its independence and right to criticize other
participants in any united front. Between 1928 and 1934 the Stalinists
perverted this tactic into what they called the "united front from be­
low," which was based on the idea that joint action arrangements must
be negotiated and consummated with the ranks, and not the leaders, of
non-Stalinist organizations; the effect was to torpedo the possibility of
any actual united fronts. Trotsky's fullest discussion of the united front
will be found in The Struggle Against Fascism in Germany.

186. Semyon Budenny (1883–1973), who joined the Russian CP in
1919, was one of the few leading military figures to escape execution or
imprisonment in the purges.

187. Nikolai N. Sukhanov (1882–193?) was a Menshevik-Internation­
alist during World War I and a member of the Petrograd Soviet
executive committee in 1917. His book about the October Revolution
was translated into English under the title The Russian Revolution
1917. He was one of the defendants in the 1931 Menshevik trial, last
heard of in prison, where he complained that he had been doublecrossed
by the Stalinists, who had promised him that he would be released
from prison after a short while in return for his "confession" at the
trial.

188. “Two Letters to the Prometeo Group.” Prometeo, September
27, 1931. Translated for this volume by Iain Fraser.

189. “A New Slander Against D.B. Ryazanov.” The Militant, July 4,

190. Lydia Zederbaum-Dan (1878– ) participated in the Russian so­
cial democratic movement. Her brother, Julius Martov, and her hus­
band, Feodor Dan, were leading Mensheviks.

191. Alexander Potresov (1869–1934) was an associate of Lenin on
the editorial board of Iskra until 1903, when he became a Menshevik. In
the 1930s he edited an anti-Soviet paper in Paris.

192. “Part of the Responsibility.” Internal Bulletin, Communist
League of America, number 2, July 1932. By this time the crisis in the
German section had reached the point of a split. Landau refused to submit to the intervention of the ILO, in which action he received the support of only a minority of the German Executive. He retained control of Der Kommunist, while the German majority began to publish Die Permanente Revolution. By July 1931 Landau withdrew from the ILO too.

193. Max Shachtman (1903–1972) was a founder of the American Left Opposition, the Socialist Workers Party, and the Fourth International. He edited several books and pamphlets by Trotsky. In 1939 he led an opposition in the SWP to revise its position of defense of the USSR, which resulted in a split in 1940. Shachtman then organized the Workers Party, later renamed the Independent Socialist League, whose remnants he led into the right wing of the Socialist Party in 1958.

194. Edouard van Overstraeten was a leader of the Belgian CP who became a leader of the Belgian Left Opposition. He broke from the Opposition in December 1930; his group existed for a short while under the name of League of Communist Internationalists, but he withdrew from politics before it expired. Albert Weisbord (1900– ), who was expelled from the American CP in 1929, organized a small group, the Communist League of Struggle, which proclaimed its adherence to the ILO in the early 1930s although its politics vacillated between those of the Right and Left Oppositions. He later broke with Marxism and became an American Federation of Labor organizer.


197. Gregory A. Alexinsky (1879– ) was a Bolshevik deputy in the Second Duma and later an opponent of Lenin on philosophical and organizational problems. When World War I began, he broke with the Bolsheviks to defend the war, and he was active in the 1917 effort to smear them as German agents. He supported the White Guards in the civil war, embraced monarchism and anti-Semitism, and became an émigré in Paris. Manuilsky’s relations with him were in the prewar period.

198. Leopold Averbach (1903–193?), a literary critic, was the dominant figure in the Russian Association of Proletarian Writers (RAPP) until 1932, when Averbachism was denounced and the RAPP was replaced by the Union of Soviet Writers. Ironically, he was victimized in the purges as a “Trotskyist.”
199. **Ivan N. Smirnov** (1881–1936), an Old Bolshevik, played a leading role in the civil war, especially in Siberia. A Left Oppositionist, he was expelled from the party in 1927 and capitulated in 1929. Reinstated and appointed director of auto plants at Nizhni-Novgorod, he was arrested in 1933 and kept in prison until he was tried in the first Moscow trial and executed.

200. **Vladimir Mayakovsky** (1893–1930) was the Futurist poet who supported the October Revolution and became highly popular. He committed suicide in April 1930. Trotsky’s article “The Suicide of Vladimir Mayakovsky,” published in May 1930, is translated in *Leon Trotsky on Literature and Art*.

201. In July 1920, when the transportation system was almost at a standstill, Trotsky was put in charge of the Commissariat of Transport. One of his first acts was to issue “Order No. 1042,” which projected a five-year program of reconstruction and was the first serious attempt to introduce long-term planning into the Soviet economy.

202. “Principled and Practical Questions Facing the Left Opposition.” From the files of the International Communist League. Translated from the French for this volume by Russell Block. The date of the postscript, given as May 8, 1931, is an obvious error by the author or a translator or an editor; it perhaps should be June 8.

203. **Henricus Sneevliet** (1883–1942), a founder of the Marxist movement in Indonesia and the CP in Holland, organized the Revolutionary Socialist Party in 1929 after his expulsion from the Comintern. In 1933 Sneevliet’s group joined the ILO, but withdrew in 1938 before the formation of the Fourth International. He was executed by the Nazis during World War II.

204. **G.I. Myasnikov** (1889–1946) was expelled from the Russian CP in 1923 for violating party discipline by his leadership of the Workers’ Group, a splinter of the Workers’ Opposition. He made some approaches to Trotsky in 1929, but the differences were too great to permit political collaboration (see *Writings 30*). **T.V. Sapronov** (1887–1939) was a leader of the Democratic Centralists, who developed ultraleft concepts on the character of the Soviet Union.

205. **Henrietta Roland Holst** (1869–1952), a Dutch poet and essayist, became a socialist and an enthusiastic supporter of the October Revolution in its early years, which she wrote about in *Heroic Saga*. She protested Trotsky’s expulsion in 1927, and subsequently resigned from the CP. Later she moved to the right.
206. “The Italian Opposition and the Spanish Revolution.” *International Bulletin*, Communist Left Opposition, number 8, 1932. This preface to Trotsky’s pamphlet *The Spanish Revolution in Danger* was intended for an Italian-language edition to be published by the New Italian Opposition, which had been organized in 1930. The pamphlet was a compilation of articles which now can be found in *The Spanish Revolution* (1931–39).

207. “French and the Revolution.” By permission of the Harvard College Library. Translated for this volume by George Saunders. This was written as a preface to a French edition of *The Permanent Revolution*, which was published in 1932. Unlike other editions, the French contained as appendices the following 1931 essays by Trotsky: “The Strangled Revolution” (on André Malraux’s *The Conquerors*), “The Revolution in Spain,” and “The Spanish Revolution and the Dangers Threatening It.” The one on Malraux’s book will be found in *Leon Trotsky on Literature and Art*, the other two in *The Spanish Revolution* (1931–39).

208. “French Leadership Problems.” From *Protocole et documents, Comité Nationale de la Ligue Communiste*, 1931. Translated for this volume by Russell Block and Michael Baumann. In November 1930 Alfred Rosmer suddenly withdrew from the International Secretariat and the French Communist League because of disagreements never clearly expressed. In a letter to Belgian Left Oppositionists he voiced dissatisfaction with Trotsky’s partiality toward the Molinier group in the French League. The Belgians sent a copy of his letter to Trotsky asking for his side of the story, which Trotsky supplied in the present letter. The potential bloc of Rosmer with various opponents of Trotsky and the International Secretariat did not materialize.

209. Alfred Rosmer (1877–1964) was a revolutionary syndicalist and collaborator of Trotsky in France during World War I. He was elected to the ECCI in 1920 and was a leader of the French CP until his expulsion in 1924. He was a leader of the Left Opposition and its International Secretariat until November 1930, when he withdrew over differences with Trotsky. Their personal friendship was renewed in 1936. He wrote several books on labor history. His memoir of Trotsky in Paris, 1915–16, appears in the collection *Leon Trotsky, The Man and His Work* (Pathfinder Press, 1969). A recent book, *Alfred Rosmer et le mouvement révolutionnaire international* by Christian Gras (Maspero,
1971), quotes the following extract from a letter by Trotsky to a French Oppositionist, Auguste Meugeot, on July 7, 1931: “You understand that of course I cannot orient my politics according to the personal qualities of this or that comrade. I cannot support comrades, not even those most worthy of personal confidence, if they take the wrong course, and that is the case with Comrade Rosmer.”

210. Marguerite Thevenet Rosmer (1879–1962) was a revolutionary activist and a friend of the Trotskys from the time she met them in Paris during World War I.

211. N. Markin was a pen name of Leon Sedov (1906–38), Trotsky’s elder son, who joined the Left Opposition and accompanied his parents in their last exile as Trotsky’s closest collaborator and as coeditor of the Biulleten Oppozitsii. He lived in Germany from 1931 to 1933, and then in Paris until his death at the hands of the GPU.

212. Boris Souvarine (1893–) was a founder of the French CP and one of the first biographers of Stalin. He was repelled by Stalinism in the 1920s and turned against Leninism in the 1930s.


214. The “Zinoviev letter” purportedly giving the British CP “instructions” to take over the Labour Party, supposedly signed by Zinoviev in his capacity as president of the Comintern, was forged by British Conservatives with the aim of defeating MacDonald’s Labour government in the 1924 general elections.


216. “Replies to an Associated Press Correspondent.” New York Times, July 19, 1931; checked and corrected against the Russian text in Biuletten Oppozitsii, number 23, August 1931, by George Saunders. Trotsky probably decided to grant this interview as a way of counteracting the Kremlin charge that he had written an anti-Soviet article for various reactionary papers in Europe.

217. The development of events in Spain referred to the establishment of a republican government following the abdication of Alfonso XIII. Alejandro Lerroux (1864–1949), leader of the Spanish Radical Party, was prime minister from 1933 to 1936. Alcala Zamora (1877–1949), head of the Progressive Party, was prime minister of the first republican
government in 1931 and president from 1931 to 1936. The Cortes was the Spanish parliament. Trotsky had no more luck getting a visa from this new government, which called itself a “workers’ republic,” than he had had from the other European governments.


219. Josef Pilsudski (1867–1935) was a founder of the Polish Socialist Party (PPS) who became the first chief of the new Polish republic at the end of World War I. He led Polish troops against the Soviet Union during the imperialist intervention and civil war. He retired in 1923, but led a coup in May 1926 that returned him to power, and was dictator of Poland from various posts until his death.


221. Lev S. Sosnovsky (1886–1937), an outstanding Soviet journalist, was one of the first Left Oppositionists and one of the last to capitulate (in 1934). Victor B. Eltsin, an active fighter in the 1917 revolution and the civil war, became an economist and one of the first members of the Left Opposition; he edited Trotsky’s Collected Works before being expelled and exiled in 1929. K.I. Gruenstein served on the Military Revolutionary Council.


223. “Some Ideas on the Period and the Tasks of the Left Opposition.” From an unnumbered and undated internal bulletin of the Communist League of America, 1931. Signed “G. Gourov.” Trotsky’s discussion here of the possibility that under certain circumstances a workers’ revolution could win power in the absence of a revolutionary Marxist party was continued by him a little over a year later in “On the State of the Left Opposition,” December 16, 1932, reprinted in Writings 32–33.

224. “A Motion and Its Interpretation.” Bulletin interieur, Groupe Bolchevik-Leniniste, number 4, August 1931. Translated for this volume by Michael Baumann. A national convention of the Unitary Fed-
eration of Teachers, an affiliate of the leftist Unitary General Federation of Labor (CGTU), meeting in Limoges on August 6, 1931, adopted a resolution which proclaimed solidarity with the USSR, affirmed the need of the workers in other countries to fight against their own capitalists in defense of the USSR, demanded that the Soviet government end its exile and imprisonment of revolutionaries like Trotsky and Rakovsky, and urged a halt to the administrative persecution of revolutionary dissenters. The first two parts were adopted unanimously, the other two by a vote of 270 in favor, 132 opposed, and 26 abstaining. Michel Collinet, a leader with Pierre Gourget of the rightist tendency in the French League, brought this resolution to Trotsky’s attention in an effort to convince him that he had erred in opposing the League’s collaboration with a syndicalist group in the CGTU. Collinet, who also wrote under the name Paul Sizoff, soon left the League and joined the Socialist Party.


226. Georgy Butov, in charge of Trotsky’s secretariat of the Revolutionary Military Council during the civil war, was arrested for refusing to sign false charges against Trotsky, went on a hunger strike and died in prison in September 1928. Mikhailo Glazman, a member of Trotsky’s secretariat, was hounded by the Stalinists because of his adherence to the Left Opposition and committed suicide in 1924.


229. The trial of the SRs, in the summer of 1922, secured international publicity. Of the forty-seven leading SRs arrested on charges of conspiracy and terrorist acts against the government, thirty-four were actually tried. There were fourteen death sentences, which were all suspended.

230. N.V. Ustrialov was a Russian professor and economist who opposed the Russian Revolution but later went to work for the Soviet government (for the Chinese Eastern Railroad in Manchuria) because
he believed that capitalism was gradually being restored. He supported
Stalin’s measures against Trotsky as moves in this direction.

231. Franz Pfemfert (1879–1954), editor of the German Expressionist
publication Die Aktion (Action) 1911–32, was active in Spartakusbund.
In 1926 he initiated a Spartakusbund II, which was dissolved in 1927.

232. Trotsky later revised this view and decided that the “workers’
and peasants’ government” slogan was correct and acceptable provided
it was filled with the proper revolutionary content, and not presented
in counterposition to the dictatorship of the proletariat. For his later
views see the chapter “Workers’ and Farmers’ Government” in “The
Death Agony of Capitalism and the Tasks of the Fourth International”
and other articles in The Transitional Program for Socialist Revolu-

tion.

1938, where it appeared with another item under the title “Two Letters
on the Question of the German October.” An omission from the third-
from-last paragraph in that translation has been restored after exami-
nation of Trotsky’s manuscript at Harvard.

234. The slogan of a “people’s revolution” and the goal of “national
liberation” for Germany were raised by the German Stalinists as ways
of competing with the Nazis for popular support in the early 1930s.
Such competition benefited only the Nazis. For Trotsky’s criticism, see
“Thaelmann and the ‘People’s Revolution,’” April 14, 1931, in The
Struggle Against Fascism in Germany.

235. The first will be found in Writings 29 under the title “Capitu-
lators of the Third Wave.” The second is in the present volume under
the title “On Comrade Treint’s Declaration.”

236. “Another Letter to Albert Treint.” Bulletin interieur, Ligue
communiste opposition, October 1931. Translated for this volume by
Art Young.

237. “Internal Difficulties of the French Communist League.” From
an undated, unnumbered internal bulletin of the Communist League of
America, 1931.

238. The Jewish group, led by Felix, was a unit of the Communist
League of France for promoting Left Oppositionist propaganda among
Jewish workers. For a while it published a Yiddish paper Klorkeit (Clari-
ity). When the Jewish group became a faction in the League, Trotsky
accused it of trying to turn the League into a federation of national groups (see *Writings 32*).


240. **Joaquin Maurin** (1897– ) was expelled in 1929 from the leadership of the Spanish CP as a Right Oppositionist. He organized the Catalan Federation, which later merged with a split-off from the Left Opposition to form the Workers Party of Marxist Unification (POUM). When the civil war broke out in 1936, Maurin, a POUM deputy in parliament, was arrested and imprisoned by Franco’s troops. Upon his release, he went into exile and ceased all political activity. **Andres Nin** (1892–1937), a founder of the Spanish CP and secretary of the Red International of Labor Unions, was expelled in 1927 as a Left Oppositionist. He participated in the formation of the ILO and was a leader of its Spanish section, which split from the ILO in 1935 to merge with Maurin’s group. For a brief period in 1936 he was minister of justice in the Catalan government, but then was arrested by the Stalinists and murdered. **Henri Lacroix**, one of the first leaders of the Spanish Left Opposition, was expelled for “misappropriation of funds” in 1933 and joined the Socialist Party; in 1939, identified as a one-time Left Oppositionist, he was murdered by the Stalinists.

241. “Summary on the French Question.” From the files of the International Communist League. Translated from the French for this volume by Russell Block. On several occasions during Trotsky’s exile in Turkey he was visited by delegations from France for intensive discussions of problems facing the French section. One such visit occurred in the summer of 1929, where agreement was reached on the publication of *La Verite* (see *Writings 29*). Another took place in the summer of 1930, when Naville, Molinier, Trotsky, and others worked out the so-called “peace of Prinkipo,” which failed to bring about a genuine principled and workable collaboration between the various tendencies in France. In September 1931, when the League was still gripped by factional paralysis despite the approach of an already postponed national conference, another delegation went to Prinkipo for talks with Trotsky. Included this time were Treint, Naville, and Molinier. The present document is Trotsky’s version of the proposals the participants in the discussions agreed to make to the national conference.
242. H.M. was Henri Molinier (1898–1944), a brother of Raymond and himself a member of the French section. Later he was very helpful to Trotsky in getting visas both to France (1933) and Norway (1935). As head of the French section’s military department, he was killed during the battle for the liberation of Paris from the Germans in August 1944.

243. The Unitary Opposition was the left-wing grouping in the CGTU in which the members of the French section played an important role. Differences over the policy of the Unitary Opposition had for almost a year been a subject of heated controversy in the League.

244. The French League’s national conference, held in October 1931, did not lead to an immediate split but it also did not resolve the basic causes of the League’s sickness. By December a new factional struggle flared up, leading soon after to the split of the Jewish group (see Writings 32). Trotsky did not even have the satisfaction of getting action by a control commission to clear up slanders against Raymond Molinier; two years later, when he moved to France, he was still making the same proposal (see Writings 33–34). After the national conference, he said in a letter to Molinier on November 18, 1931: “From what I have heard, you intend to devote yourself more to business than to politics for some time. If it is for personal reasons, naturally I say nothing about it. If it is to support La Verite financially, while leaving its leadership—no, that is not reasonable. In such a case, truly, it would be better for you to come here for a while, leaving the others to get out of the mess themselves. If they are really able to do something, we will support them. In the contrary case, we shall have to rid ourselves of the sterile elements and begin again at a less ‘elevated’ level. When one is unceasingly persecuted by the enemy, the military rule says one must, by a supreme effort, whatever the cost, disengage in order to get one’s breath back. Your case is a little like that. You definitely need two or three months’ rest, from the standpoint of politics as well as nerves. At the same time it will give you the possibility of judging the League more objectively...” (from La Crise de la section francaise de la Ligue communiste internationaliste, part 2, a pamphlet published by the Molinier group in 1939).


246. “Tasks of the Left Opposition in Bulgaria.” Osvobozhdenie, December 12, 1931. Translated for this volume by Iain Fraser.
247. "Tasks of the Left Opposition in Britain and India." The Militant, December 12, 1931. The second British Labour government, headed by Ramsay MacDonald, fell from power in August 1931 in a crisis triggered by the government’s attempts to “balance the budget” at the expense of the workers and the unemployed. MacDonald broke with the Labour Party and, together with the Tories and a wing of the Liberals, set up a “National” coalition cabinet. Between then and the new parliamentary elections that were held in October, numerous theories were developed about the future of Britain.

248. F.A. Ridley (1897–) and Chandu Ram (d. 1932) were trying to form a Left Oppositionist group with British and Indian adherents. Ridley at this time was an independent socialist, having left the Independent Labour Party in 1930 because of its support for MacDonald; later he rejoined the ILP and was on its executive committee for a decade. Chandu Ram was the pen name of an Indian law student and member of the London branch of the Indian National Congress. A copy of their draft theses could not be located, but Ridley’s views were also expressed in The Militant, October 31, 1931, where he wrote that “the ‘National’ government represents the first stage of British fascism, which only requires time to become fully articulate.”

249. Oswald Mosley (1896–) entered British politics as a Tory, switched to Labour in 1924, and served as a minister in MacDonald’s government in 1929. He resigned in 1930 and formed the “New Party” in the spring of 1931. He transformed this into the British Union of Fascists in 1932. The Guild of St. Michael was a short-lived right wing movement in London which disbanded soon after Mosley created his openly fascist group.

250. The Chartist movement, which developed in 1838 and continued into the early 1850s, was a struggle for political democracy and social equality that attained near-revolutionary proportions. It centered around the “People’s Charter,” a program drawn up by the London Workingmen’s Association.

251. Lloyd George strongly disagreed with the tendencies in the Liberal Party that supported the National coalition government, a policy that he considered “calamitous folly.” After the October 27 parliamentary election he was invited to attend a meeting of Liberal MPs; in response he sent his “demission letter” on November 3, in which he declined, on political grounds, to attend or accept any post in the Liberal group.

252. Walter Citrine (1887–) was general secretary of the British
Trades Union Congress, 1926–46. For his services to British capitalism he was knighted in 1935 and made a baronet in 1946.

253. Albert Glotzer (1905– ), a leader of the Left Opposition in the U.S., was closely associated with Shachtman and split with him from the SWP in 1940. “Five Weeks in Kadikoy,” published in The Militant January 2, 1932, is a report of his visit to Trotsky at the end of 1931.

254. “The British Elections and the Communists.” The Militant, December 5, 1931, where it appeared without the salutation and the first three paragraphs, which are printed here by courtesy of Reg Groves. The supporters of the National cabinet—the Conservatives, National-Labourites, and National-Liberals—scored an overwhelming victory in the October 27, 1931, parliamentary elections; the Conservatives alone took 471 seats. The Labour Party was reduced to 46 seats, a loss of 243 seats and two million votes from their total in 1929. The Communist Party, running in 26 districts, received about 75,000 votes (and no seats), an increase of only 20,000 since 1929.

255. The Independent Labour Party (ILP), founded in 1893, played an influential role in the creation of the Labour Party, to which it was affiliated and in which it usually occupied a position on the left. In the 1920s it provided most of the central leaders of the Labour Party and, therefore, of the first two Labour governments, 1924 and 1929–31. Expelled from the Labour Party in 1931, it was for some years attracted toward Stalinism. It became part of the centrist International Labor Community (IAG) in the mid-1930s, and returned to the Labour Party in 1939.

256. The National Minority Movement was a left-wing caucus in the British Trades Union Congress, organized in 1924. Although initiated by the Communist Party, it did not offer a real alternative to the “left” union bureaucrats being courted in the mid-1920s by Moscow through the Anglo-Russian Committee.

257. Social fascism, a theory made famous by Stalin from 1928 to 1934, held that the social democracy and fascism were not antipodes but twins. Since the social democrats were only a variety of fascism, and since just about everyone but the Stalinists was some kind of fascist (a liberal-fascist or a labor-fascist or a Trotskyist-fascist), then it was impermissible for the Stalinists to engage in united fronts with any other tendency against the plain ordinary fascists. No theory was or could have been more helpful to Hitler in the years before he won power in Germany. The Stalinists dropped the theory at some unpublicized date in 1934 without bothering to explain why, and soon were wooing not
only the social democrats but also capitalist politicians like Roosevelt and Daladier, whom they had still dubbed fascists early in 1934.

258. George Hicks, secretary of the National Federation of Building Operatives, was on the British General Council of the Trades Union Congress when it sold out the 1926 general strike.

259. “Russian-German Trade Relations.” The Militant, November 21, 1931. Trotsky’s article was provoked by a German social democratic propaganda campaign intended to show that even collaboration with the Soviet Union would not be able to save a soviet Germany from inevitable economic collapse.

260. “What Is Fascism?” The Militant, January 16, 1932. This was an extract from a letter to a British comrade.

261. “What Is a Revolutionary Situation?” The Militant, December 19, 1931. These summary notes were prepared by Trotsky after a discussion with Albert Glotzer about the draft theses by F.A. Ridley and Chandu Ram that he had criticized in “Tasks of the Left Opposition in Britain and India.”

262. “The Japanese Invasion of Manchuria.” By permission of the Harvard College Library. A translation was published under the title “Why Russia Dare Not Fight Japan” in Liberty, February 27, 1932, but comparison with Trotsky’s text at Harvard disclosed that its parts had been rearranged and that it lacked several sentences and phrases. That translation has been revised and corrected for this volume by George Saunders. Japan began its invasion of Manchuria on September 18–19, 1931. In February 1932, the invaders declared the vast Chinese province to be an “independent” nation named “Manchukuo” and established a puppet regime to rule it in the interests of Japanese imperialism.

263. The League of Nations was set up at the Versailles peace conference in 1919; its statutes were part of the Versailles peace treaty. The treaty was drawn up by the victors of World War I and imposed heavy reparations payments and conditions on the defeated countries, especially Germany. The League’s response to the Japanese attack on Manchuria was a commission of inquiry whose recommendation that Japan evacuate Manchuria with “safeguards” for its rights there was accepted more than a year later. Whereupon Japan left, not Manchuria, but the League.

264. Aristide Briand (1862–1932), expelled from the French SP in
1906 for accepting office in a capitalist cabinet, was premier several times and France’s representative to the League of Nations.

265. Eijiro Honjo was the commander-in-chief of the Japanese army in Kwantung, at the southern tip of Manchuria, which launched the attack.

266. Hirohito (1901–) the mikado, began his reign in 1926.

267. Spain had gotten a foothold in Morocco in the nineteenth century, but was never completely successful in overcoming the resistance movement. Its colonial policy, pushed by the militarists, was expensive, unpopular, and often the cause of political crisis in Spain.

268. Chang Tso-lin was the Chinese warlord who controlled Manchuria with Japanese backing in the 1920s. In 1928 he was assassinated by the Japanese military when they decided to dump their protege in order to prepare for direct military intervention in Manchuria. Chang Hsueh-liang (1898–), the son of Chang Tso-lin, assumed control of Manchuria in 1928 on his father’s death and joined the Kuomintang, becoming a general under Chiang Kai-shek.

269. “The Founding of the German SAP.” Oktober Briefe, February 1933. Translated for this volume by Robert Cantrick. This was a letter to Frankfurt members of the new Socialist Workers Party (SAP) of Germany, which had been organized in October 1931 after the social democrats expelled a number of left-wing Reichstag deputies headed by Max Seydewitz and Kurt Rosenfeld. In the spring of 1932 a split occurred in the German Communist Right Opposition (Brandlerites) and a wing headed by Jakob Walcher joined the SAP. When Seydewitz and Rosenfeld withdrew from the SAP, the ex-Brandlerites became its leaders. In 1933 the SAP agreed to work together with the Left Opposition in forming a new International, but it soon changed its mind and became an opponent of the Fourth International.

270. “One Always Begins Weak.” Der Bolschewik (Zurich), December 1931–January 1932. Translated for this volume by Robert Cantrick. The Swiss Left Opposition had originated in the spring of 1931 out of the Communist fraction in the Marxist Students’ Group of Zurich.

271. “A Letter to the National Sections.” The Militant, February 13, 1932 (sections 1–4), and an unnumbered, undated internal bulletin of the Communist League of America, 1932 (sections 5–9 and postscripts). Trotsky’s October 6, 1931, letter to the International Secretariat, which he said here he would try to send to the sections, was evidently not sent,
and it could not be located in the “open section” of the Trotsky Archives at Harvard University.

272. **Lazar Kaganovich** (1893–) was a crony of Stalin and an undeviating Stalinist in various Soviet governmental and party positions. He was removed from all his posts as an “antiparty” element when Khrushchev took over the Soviet leadership in the mid-1950s. The *Amsterdamer* refers to the time in 1926 when the Stalinists were considering a merger of the Red International of Labor Unions with the Amsterdam International. A speech by Kaganovich advocating merger was printed after a decision had been made not to go through with this policy. Kaganovich’s alibi was that the stenographer had misquoted him and that he was too busy to edit the speech. Thereafter he was given the nickname the Amsterdamer.

273. **Pierre Frank** (1905–), a leader of the French Communist League and a collaborator of Raymond Molinier in the 1930s, later became a member of the International Secretariat and the United Secretariat of the Fourth International.


275. “Personal Sympathies and Political Responsibilities.” *Internal Bulletin, Communist League of America*, number 2, July 1932. The same bulletin which contained this excerpt from a letter by Trotsky printed Shachtman’s extended replies to Trotsky’s criticisms. The “small beginning” in England mentioned in the first paragraph referred to Shachtman’s report that in December 1931 a group of British CP members met in London to set up a section of the ILO.

276. “Some Historical Facts.” *Bulletin Internationale de l’Opposition Communiste de Gauche*, number 14, March 1932. Translated for this volume by Russell Block. This selection was described as the postscript of a letter by Trotsky, but did not tell what the letter was about or to whom it was addressed.

277. **Max Seydewitz** (1892–), a left social democrat and member of the Reichstag, was one of the founders of the German Socialist Workers Party (SAP), which was organized in October 1931. He soon left the new organization. After World War II he became a Stalinist functionary in East Germany.

278. **Bela Kun** (1886–1939) was a leader of the Hungarian revolu-
tion of 1919 and head of the short-lived Hungarian Soviet republic. Moving to Moscow, he became a Comintern functionary, noted for a bent toward ultraleftism. He was reportedly shot by the Stalin regime during its purge of communist exiles in the late 1930s.

279. The Central Committee of the German Communist Party asked the Russian Politburo to send Trotsky to Germany in a capacity which would have meant, in effect, that he direct the impending insurrection in 1923. Zinoviev, together with Stalin and Kamenev, offered various pretenses for not concurring in the German request, and nominated Pyatakov for the mission.

280. “The White Guard Preparation of a Terrorist Act Against Comrade Trotsky.” Biulleten Oppozitsii, number 27, March 1932. Translated for this volume by Iain Fraser. Written by Trotsky in December 1931, this declaration, which was sent to the Soviet government in the name of all the sections of the ILO in January 1932, was not originally intended for publication. But it was published in March 1932, shortly after Stalin had given his “reply” to it—the Soviet decree of February 20, 1932, revoking Trotsky’s citizenship (see Writings 32). Die Rote Fahne’s dispatch of October 31, 1931, attributed the plot to kill Trotsky to an organization called the Russian All-Military Association, headed by czarist General Anton W. Turkul. “An extraordinary piece of provocation, as planned by Turkul,” the Rote Fahne article said, “is to be the assassination of Trotsky. . . . In executing his plans the honorable general will utilize the fact, which has already been reported by his agents, that Trotsky is poorly protected by the Turkish authorities.”

281. Sermuks and Poznansky were arrested and exiled for trying to accompany Trotsky in exile to Alma-Ata in January 1928. For details about this and Trotsky’s later efforts to get them released so they could go to Turkey with him, see My Life.

282. Oskar Seipold was elected a deputy to the Prussian Landtag as a member of the Communist Party, but remained a deputy after joining and becoming a spokesman for the Left Opposition.
In addition to the material in the present volume, the following writings of Trotsky during the period covered here have been published by Pathfinder:

**The History of the Russian Revolution**, volume 1. Volumes 2 and 3 were completed in 1932.

**The Struggle against Fascism in Germany.** Includes “The Turn in the Communist International and the Situation in Germany” (September 26, 1930); “Thaelmann and the ‘People’s Revolution’” (April 14, 1931); “Workers’ Control of Production” (August 20, 1931); “Against National Communism! (Lessons of the ‘Red Referendum’)” (August 25, 1931); “Factory Councils and Workers’ Control of Production” (September 12, 1931); “Germany, the Key to the International Situation” (November 26, 1931); and “For a Workers’ United Front against Fascism” (December 8, 1931).

**The Spanish Revolution (1931–39).** Includes thirty-three articles from November 21, 1930, to December 22, 1931, among which are the two 1931 pamphlets published under the titles *The Revolution in Spain* and *The Spanish Revolution in Danger*. The appendix includes extracts from fifteen other letters to Andrés Nin in 1930–31.

**Leon Trotsky on China.** Includes nine articles from September 1930 to November 26, 1931, including “A Retreat in Full Disorder” (November 1930); “The Strangled Revolution” (February 9, 1931); and “A Strangled Revolution and Its Stranglers” (June 13, 1931).

**Trade Unions in the Epoch of Imperialist Decay.** Includes “Monatte Crosses the Rubicon” (December 15, 1930); “The Mistakes of Rightist Elements of the Communist League on the Trade Union Question” (January 4, 1931); and “The Question of Trade Union Unity” (March 25, 1931).

**Writings of Leon Trotsky Supplement (1929–33).** Includes twenty-five articles and letters from October 1930 to December 29, 1931.
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