

**Eliminate the
vermin!**



**trotsky(ism):
tool of imperialism**

Trotsky(ism): Tool of Imperialism

Communist Party of Great Britain (Marxist-Leninist)
PO Box 78900, London, SW16 9PQ
thecommunists.org

Trotsky(ism): Tool of Imperialism

Harpal Brar with Ranjeet Brar, Alexander McKay and Joti Brar 2024

ISBN: 978-1-913286-13-2

First published in Britain by CPGB-ML, 2024
PO Box 78900, London, SW16 9PQ

Contents

1. What exactly is the 'Revolutionary Communist Party' (RCP) and why is it being so heavily promoted?	9
1. Rebranded 'revolutionary communists' heavily promoted by the state	10
2. 'Left' liberal misdirection: 'Double Down News'	14
3. Marxist analysis and organisation more needed than ever	15
4. What is Trotskyism and why must it be understood?	16
5. Where did the RCP spring from?	19
6. What are the RCP's main positions on the important questions of the day?	21
7. We cannot give workers' enemies free rein	23
2. What is Trotskyism?	25
1. Three specific features of Trotskyism	27
2. How could Trotsky end up in the Bolshevik ranks?	45
3. Brest-Litovsk	47
4. Trade union debate	49
5. Return to fully-fledged factionalism	50
6. Lenin's death and attempt to substitute Trotskyism for Leninism	53

7. A rallying point for counter-revolution	55
8. Emergence of the new opposition	57
9. Formation of an illegal party	59
10. Struggle against 'Stalinism' – a continuation of the struggle against Leninism	60
11. Why did the opposition fail?	62
12. From factionalism within the party to counter-revolutionary struggle against the Soviet regime	63
13. Not personal factors but departure from Leninism is the cause of Trotskyism's failure	65
3. Trotsky's regular predictions of doom	69
1. 'New course' predicts the degeneration of the party	70
2. Failure of Trotsky's predictions	72
3. Contemptible and cowardly capitulator	72
4. Anti-Soviet diatribes are grist to the imperialist mill	75
5. Acknowledging Soviet achievements as a means of gaining credibility	78
6. More scurrilous attacks on socialism	81
7. Re-assertion of discredited 'permanent revolution' theory	82
8. Equating socialism and fascism; spreading defeatist demoralisation	84
9. Predicting and calling for defeat of the USSR in war	84
10. Predictions refuted by USSR's epic victory in WW2	87
11. Stalin and the Great Patriotic War	89
12. The cold war – imperialist response to the prestige of victorious socialism	95
4. Triumph of Khrushchevite revisionism and the resuscitation of Trotskyism	99
1. Trotskyism sides with every single counter-revolutionary movement	100
2. The Czechoslovak counter-revolution	101

3. Belgian Trotskyist Mandel and French Trotskyist Broué's crude defence of counter-revolution	106
4. American ICL's sophisticated defence of counter-revolution	109
5. British SWP welcomes 'demise' of communism	112
6. Healyites detect Trotsky's line and welcome Gorbachev's Perestroika	120
7. Some other Trots	123
8. The bankruptcy of Trotskyism and the triumph of socialism	126
9. Trotskyism or Leninism?	128

5. Stalin: Trotskyism or Leninism? 130

1. The facts about the October uprising	130
2. The party and the preparation for October	137
3. Trotskyism or Leninism?	152

6. 'Land and Freedom' – Trotskyism squared 162

1. The situation in Spain	163
2. Rise of the popular front and international fascist intervention	164
3. Struggle for a united army	165
4. Economic questions	165
5. Attacks on the Church	166
6. Trotskyite opposition to the Comintern	167
7. The Communist International and the Popular Front	168
8. Eulogising POUM, disorganisation and defeat	169
9. A professional army	171
10. Collectivisation debate	173
11. Disarming the POUM	174
12. Trotsky's 'permanent revolution' and the role of revolutionary theory	176

Appendices	179
1. Who's who in British Trotskyism	179
2. Two letters	183
3. Trotsky on Trotsky	188
4. Further reading	191
Notes	194

Dedicated to Vladimir Ilyich Lenin

*The leader of the Bolshevik party, the inspirer
of the Great October Socialist Revolution and
a resolute and uncompromising fighter against
all distortion and falsification of Marxism.*

1. What exactly is the 'Revolutionary Communist Party' (RCP) and why is it being so heavily promoted?¹

People interested in left-wing politics are suddenly being bombarded with links to RCP content on social media. Why?

Back in May, former home secretary Suella Braverman took part in an eighteen-minute chatshow segment* on GB News with an articulate young woman who came across to the uninitiated as very brave and appealing. This free advertisement was clearly designed to signpost her rebranded organisation to the revolutionary-minded youth of Britain.

Within days, Michael Gove (a high-level Tory party apparatchik, former leadership contender and just then secretary of state – don't laugh! – for 'levelling up, housing and communities'!) had reinforced this promotional message by standing up in Parliament, apparently to denounce as 'antisemitic' the Palestine encampments that had been invigorating the Palestine solidarity movement. In the process, he specifically stated his

* 'Revolutionary Communist vs Tory MP Suella Braverman on GB News', Revolutionary Communist Party channel, *YouTube*, 17 May 2024.

opposition (without suggesting any repressive measures) to the Socialist Workers Party (SWP), the Socialist Party (SP) and the Revolutionary Communist Party (RCP) as the organisations with which he most disagreed on Israel, labelling them all as 'anti-semitic'.

Gove's melodramatic and widely reported denunciations were aimed entirely at Trotskyist organisations. Why?

It is ridiculous to believe that Gove would even know about the existence of the RCP were it not a state asset. Why single out a small and relatively unknown group that has existed for less than six months in its current form?

A form, moreover, that has been *specifically designed* to be confused with Britain's really revolutionary communist party – the CPGB-ML.

1. Rebranded 'revolutionary communists' heavily promoted by the state

The RCP's new website and content is being algorithmically promoted. Elon Musk himself recently retweeted a video of some US actors in New York, dressed up like communists and waving hammer and sickle flags. There was no hint of a broader message or campaign context. Just a huge signpost to the 'Revolutionary Communist Party of America'. Musk's comment was simply '!'.

Given that he has forty million worldwide followers, and is not known for promoting communism, it is legitimate to ask why he might signpost an allegedly anti-establishment party, while our own party's social media and mainstream media presence is consistently censored and suppressed. Indeed, the 'RCP' website and newspaper rebrand carries a banner that could easily be mistaken for our own: *The Communist*.

Our comrades have been arrested and had trumped-up

WHAT IS THE RCP?

charges related to the public order and terrorism acts thrown at them.* Our homes have been raided in the middle of the night, and we have been ordered to keep off the streets and prevented from distributing literature. Our leaflets – ultimately found to have been entirely lawful – were nonetheless confiscated by S015 ‘anti-terror’ police and burned, rather than returned.

Our comrades have been harassed at work by the state, their families have been harassed by social services, we have been prevented from ‘entering Westminster’ or ‘leaving the country’ under the threat of being arrested again if we breach any of these conditions.

Our Comrade Ranjeet Brar has been publicly doxed (in the globally circulating *Daily Telegraph*[†] and by the *Jewish Chronicle*,[‡] well-known Zionist and imperialist organs) as an ‘antisemite’, and his professional body has been pushed into investigating his fitness to continue practising medicine.

All of this has been carefully orchestrated between high-level Zionist operatives, high-level policing bodies and officers, and cabinet-level politicians.

Yet Mr Gove chose to focus his denunciations on ‘revolutionary communist’ and ‘socialist’ groups that spend almost as much time denouncing the Palestinian resistance (‘Hamas’) as they do the Israeli regime.[§] One would think that a Tory government minister would be more friendly towards these groups given

* See ‘Anti-Zionism is not racism!’, 26 November 2023 and ‘British terrorist state persecutes communists on “anti-terror” pretext’, 19 January 2024, thecommunists.org.

† ‘Nazis were “good for Zionists” because they promoted separatism, pro-Palestine speaker tells students’ by J Freedland, *The Telegraph*, 5 February 2024.

‡ ‘NHS consultant arrested after selling Jewish conspiracy theory pamphlet’ by F Pope, *The Jewish Chronicle*, 1 February 2024.

§ See, for example, ‘Why Marxists cannot support Islamic fundamentalism – the case of Hamas’, *communist.red*, 2 October 2007. This article is attributed to the Communist League of Action of Morocco (the tiny Moroccan ‘branch’ of the Trotskyite IMT) and endorsed by the British editorial board.

how much common ground they share.

Clearly, something else is going on here.

When we look more closely, what we see is a classic attempt to divert working-class young people by presenting them with a well-packaged but controlled (and ultimately harmless) opposition. One young activist was promoted nationally and her organisation's name was immediately on the lips of cabinet ministers as 'the alternative' with whom the hated Tories 'disagree'.

Let us not forget that this was the same Michael Gove who proposed referring young people expressing communist sympathies to the Prevent 'anti-radicalisation' programme and who wants to redefine Britain's 'anti-terrorism' legislation to cover communists and socialists. And even as Gove attempted to mobilise this supposedly 'anti-terror programme' against our party and against those in the wider working class who are turning to communism, *no mention is to be made of our party itself*, lest the flames of our popularity be fanned among the mass of British workers.

It seems the British state has been thinking since the rise of the Palestine solidarity movement, which is beginning to move on from opposing the genocide in Gaza to opposing *the entire world order* that backs and is ultimately responsible for that genocide. One can almost hear the 'brainstorming' session convened by Braverman, Sunak and Gove, in cooperation with various MI5 officers, Met police commanders and media moguls.

A couple of months after the first arrest of our party comrades went viral, helped along by mobile phone footage from several protestors, which showed our comrade Ranjeet explaining to the arresting officers that they were complicit in war crimes and were enforcing a regime of political policing, the RCP produced slick footage of another arrest. This one had some remarkable parallels – and more remarkable differences.

A young 'activist' steps forward to complain that the police are arresting their member. Pan left, and witness . . . the care-

WHAT IS THE RCP?

fully choreographed 'arrest' of a 'young Indian doctor' (Raj, not Ranjeet) being led to a police van (quite calmly, by City police, on cue and without the handcuffs our own comrades had to endure) and politely driven away (to be released a few hours later). The whole performance was fortuitously live-streamed by an RCP paid full-timer, Jack Tye Wilson.* All that was missing was a final step back to witness the director, clapperboard in hand!

It seems clear that this was a copycat algorithm promotion device. The newly rebranded 'revolutionary communists' aimed to get themselves a boost from the legitimate wave of sympathy our party received following police repression. They want to create confusion between their pseudo-revolutionary organisation and our genuinely revolutionary one in the eyes of casual internet surfers and newcomers to left-wing politics.

And it is clear they have the full backing of the ruling class in this effort. Domination of internet search engines is a *major* part of the ruling class's armoury in preventing workers from finding our party. We know we have been targeted by spies. We know we have been subject to systematic shadow banning and algorithm suppression on major social media platforms. What other electronic methods are used against us we cannot at this stage find out, but we have no doubt there are more.

Ruling-class media – including supposedly 'left-wing' and 'independent' media – have an unwritten rule that is very rarely broken *never to mention our party or any of its leaders by name and never to invite us onto their platforms*. Thus the path for many who do eventually stumble across Britain's only real communist party is long and tortuous, often taking many years and much persistence. Many give up, assuming the organisation they were looking for simply does not exist.

* See 'British state arrests pro-Palestine communist – We won't back down!', *communist.red*, 5 February 2024.

If the RCP really *were* a threat to the system, it would suffer the same treatment we do. Instead, it is being promoted everywhere and its content is pushed by, rather than being suppressed by, the social media giants, all of whom are known to be hand in glove with US and British secret services.

2. 'Left' liberal misdirection: 'Double Down News'

It is notable that Roger Waters, the lead singer of Pink Floyd – a band particularly known for its celebration of the fall of the USSR and the eastern European socialist states – was drawn into appearing in a promotional video for the RCP's Fiona Lali, pushing her as an individual, her ideas and her candidature in the 4 July general election,* when she stood against Halima Khan in Stratford and Bow, thus helping her to split the vote of the established pro-Palestine and antiwar (Workers party) candidate.

In that interview, Lali asserted that communists were leading force in the 'black' (civil rights) struggle in the USA 'until Stalinism put them all off'. What is needed, said Lali, is a 'total revolution' (whatever that might be). She then announced that we need a 'planned economy (quite right) . . . which has absolutely nothing to do with the Stalinism of the USSR' (although the USSR's economy during the Stalin era is by far the strongest example of a planned economy that the world has so far seen).

A clearer example of an anticommunist posing as a communist in order to discredit communism would be hard to find.

Mr Waters took the opportunity to denounce the Soviet intervention that suppressed a fascist counter-revolution in Hungary

* 'Capitalism in crisis: Roger Waters and Fiona Lali on Farage, Starmer, identity politics and communism', Double Down News channel, *YouTube*, 30 June 2024.

in 1956 – an event that had apparently led his own mother to leave the Communist party and become a Labour party activist.

Whether Waters is aware of the nuances of Trotskyism and who he was promoting was not absolutely clear from this. He seems to all intents and purposes to be a well-intentioned liberal. But the effect of this promotion of a state agent was deeply harmful and, at very least, stupidly played into the hands of the very imperialist forces that are really responsible for the genocide in Palestine.

3. Marxist analysis and organisation more needed than ever

The economic and political crisis of imperialism is intensifying, and its consequent war drive is accelerating. On every side, the working class of Britain is beset by problems as the ruling class pushes the burden of the present crisis onto workers' backs.

As anger grows, the British bourgeoisie is doubling down on its centuries-old strategy of running interference in the working-class movement in the hope of diverting and disorganising its potential power. It makes use of anti-immigrant rhetoric, race-baiting and the open persecution of progressives and anti-imperialists. In a multipronged attack, the British state also invests heavily in the creation of *fake opposition parties and media*, whose job is to mislead and confuse those who are starting to look for answers.

Trotskyism in Britain has been playing this state-sponsored provocative role since its earliest days. It works by spreading incorrect analyses amongst workers and students, particularly amongst those who are new to politics and attracted by the 'ultra-revolutionary' clothing in which Trotskyism's *pro-imperialist* politics are routinely dressed.

It is therefore important that all class-conscious workers understand the history, current practice and dubious nature of the organisation now calling itself the 'Revolutionary Communist party' and why it should be outed as the reactionary state-sponsored agent it really is.

4. What is Trotskyism and why must it be understood?

Trotskyism is a varied and eclectic movement, just as the collected writings of its founder are incoherent and self-contradictory. But there are common points amongst the groups who follow (intentionally or not) Leon Trotsky's anti-worker, anti-Marxist tradition.

A common approach such groups share with their guru is the penchant for ultra-revolutionary phrasemongering. Trotskyite groups are well known for making themselves (and more importantly the communist movement) ridiculous by their bombastic but essentially empty declarations with no practical, definitive programme of action that will bring the working class to the stated goal of 'general strike now' or 'revolution everywhere'.

It is notable that, rather than skilfully and steadily building up the forces needed for working-class victory, these groups often push for reckless advances when the tide is against the workers' movement but argue for caution and compromise when the revolutionary masses are surging forward. Unsurprisingly, no Trotskyite group has ever built, led or won a revolution, despite more than a century of their proclaiming themselves the 'vanguard' and 'true proponents' of Leninism.

Despite their claims to be the upholders and inheritors of the October Revolution, the truth is quite the opposite. The main essence of Trotskyism has always been *opposition* to VI Lenin and Leninism. Trotsky himself worked consistently against Lenin and the Bolsheviks from the moment of their split from

WHAT IS THE RCP?

the Menshevik faction in 1903 until the last months before the socialist revolution of October 1917.

The origin of that split was on the question of organisation, and Trotsky was firmly of the Menshevik view that a broad mass organisation of self-enrolling members was all that was required to make revolution, while Lenin and the Bolsheviks argued that a disciplined, centralised organisation would be needed to harness the power of the working class and enable it to strike successfully against its powerful enemies.

Without organisation, said Lenin, the working class has nothing. But the intellectual individualists recoiled from the idea that anyone should 'dictate' to them as if they had been the common herd. They refused point blank to be held accountable for their work or to follow a line they might not have been instrumental in creating.

When socialist revolution was in the offing, and the Bolsheviks had defied all Trotsky's theories and predictions by building a party of the masses along Leninist lines, Trotsky jumped ship at the last minute and joined them just in time to proclaim himself a key leader of the party whose development he had done everything to oppose for a decade and a half. He later wrote a self-aggrandising history of the revolution* that was excellently refuted in Josef Stalin's 1924 article 'Trotskyism or Leninism?'

Among Trotsky's more notorious errors were his refusal to recognise the revolutionary potential of the poor peasants (condemned out of hand as 'petty-bourgeois') in Russia and his corresponding refusal to recognise the revolutionary potential of the oppressed nations (condemned out of hand as 'bourgeois') in the Russian empire. In Trotsky's world, only a pure proletarian could be revolutionary.

In opposition to this line, the Bolsheviks successfully carried out Lenin's programme of building an alliance between the

* L Trotsky, *The Lessons of October*, 1924.

workers, the poor peasants and the oppressed nationalities of the Russian empire, all of whom had a strong interest in bringing down the Russian tsarist autocracy. This alliance was further developed to become the foundation for the socialist revolution and the building of the Soviet Union.

Trotsky's mistake regarding the poor peasantry led him to the view that the revolution in Russia, since it would necessarily be carried out by a tiny proportion of the population (the urban working class at a time when Russia's population was overwhelmingly peasant), would have to be supported by workers from western capitalist countries, who would be needed to back up the Russian workers in putting down the peasants' opposition.

This is what is meant by the theory of the 'permanent revolution', also known as the theory of 'permanent hopelessness' since it dictates that all enemies must be fought simultaneously and therefore dooms the working class to defeat.

In fact, it now appears that the originator of this self-defeating theory may not have been Trotsky himself but his émigré close friend and mentor Alexander Parvus, a shady character in Russian socialist circles abroad who made money as a gun runner during the first world war, and who is known to have worked with both British and German intelligence.

After Lenin's death, Trotsky dressed up his *continued* opposition to the politics of Lenin in revolutionary Russia as a 'defence of Leninism' against Lenin's successor Stalin. In fact, it was Stalin who upheld Lenin's ideas and successfully led their implementation by the party and the people, who were thus the first and most spectacularly successful builders of a socialist state.

Trotsky, like his modern political spawn, never understood the necessity of *persuasion* if the party wanted to bring the masses over to the side of the socialist revolution. As the arguments in the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) of the 1920s repeatedly show, a majority of party members (led by Stalin)

WHAT IS THE RCP?

repeatedly made the point that the party must carry the people with them through argument and experience, not via coercive measures.

Trotsky, on the other hand, seemed to believe that shouting his demands loudly enough was all that was required. If that didn't work, he was ready to turn to military and bureaucratic methods of coercion – as was revealed by his attitude towards trade unions in the USSR.*

Pervading all this was personal arrogance, a contempt for discipline and organisation, a contempt for the poor and uneducated – all the hallmarks, in fact, of a petty-bourgeois intellectual.

And these errors continue to be replicated in the actions of those who follow Trotskyite organisations like the RCP in the present day. They advance ultra-revolutionary-sounding slogans such as 'Regional workers' revolution' in the middle east while ignoring or denigrating those who are *already waging the anti-imperialist struggle* in that region, none of whom meet their criteria for support.

Such an attitude can only lead those who follow them down a path of disorientation and disillusion. Who but the imperialist ruling class stands to gain from the promotion of such a method?

5. Where did the RCP spring from?

The organisation now calling itself the RCP is a rebrand of a group called Socialist Appeal (SA), which is connected to an international organisation known as 'International Marxist Tendency' (IMT). Along with many other Trotskyite sects, the SA was organised inside the imperialist Labour party for many

* See 'The trade unions, the present situation and Trotsky's mistakes', speech by VI Lenin, 30 December 1920.

decades, firstly as 'Militant' and then as 'Socialist Appeal'.

The group's rebrand occurred towards the end of 2023, when its members suddenly started calling themselves 'communists' – a word they'd barely ever used before – and started adopting a Soviet aesthetic in their material.

Some may argue that organisations change over time, but there is reason to be very suspicious of this rebrand given that it happened very suddenly and saw the organisation relaunch not just of its British section but of its entire international network. It is currently running an extensive (and expensive) advertising campaign across Britain, Europe and the USA – with generous funding from an unknown source, state promotion by government ministers, and corporate media sponsorship spanning the gamut of imperial organs from the *Daily Telegraph* and the *Daily Mail* to the information empires of Elon Musk and Rupert Murdoch.

All of this takes considerable resource, as does employing numerous full-time organisers, which the RCP is doing in many countries. Yet none of the IMT's local sections ever had a large membership, so where has the funding come from for this slick operation?

One is forced to conclude that the RCP relaunch is being funded either indirectly, via a substantial grant from some member of the Anglo-American capitalist class, or directly by the British and/or the US state and security services – perfectly timed to coincide with the rapid growth of interest in real revolutionary change and in communism – and that this is essentially a spoiler operation.

That is the role that Trotskyite operations have played for ninety years, and this one is no different.

Why would they have chosen the IMT? Likely because the relationship is longstanding. Veteran IMT/RCP leader Alan Woods has a long history of attempting to infiltrate and influence the Venezuelan leadership of Hugo Chávez, via his lesser-known

brother Adan Chávez, with the ideas of Trotskyism. This seems to have been largely unsuccessful, but can hardly be described as accidental.

The relaunch of the IMT/Socialist Appeal as the 'RCP' comes at a time when the Trotskyite parties that used to dominated left-wing politics in Britain and the USA have lost almost all their credibility and traction. Clearly a new vehicle was needed to keep the influence of this pernicious ideology alive amongst the workers.

6. What are the RCP's main positions on the important questions of the day?

When it comes to the two biggest crises facing US and British imperialism today, the RCP's analysis is so wrong that it ends up essentially supporting the propaganda of British imperialism.

If we examine its position on the Ukraine war, for example, which is the defining issue of the present era, we discover that the RCP's ultimate conclusion is that it is an "interimperialist" war, in which aggressive imperialist Russia is waging an unjust war of conquest against Ukraine.*

Our party has been debunking every aspect of this specious argument for a decade,[†] so there is no need to go into it further here, except to note that it is an 'analysis' that denies all history, all context and all economic fact and only serves to bolster the narrative created by the imperialists to hide their aggression, their use of fascist proxies, their destruction of Ukraine's sovereignty, their theft of Ukraine's wealth and their sacrifice of

* See, for example, 'The war in Ukraine: For an internationalist class position', IMT statement, 1 March 2022 and 'Ukraine war leads to splits in the Communist movement – back to Lenin!' by J Martin, *communist.red*, 6 October 2023.

† See G Shorter, *Neo-nazi Nato's Proxy War Against Russia*, 2023.

Ukraine's people on the altar of imperialist profit.

The RCP's analysis of the Gaza war is also incorrect when it comes to the resistance movements. It denounces the *actually existing* Palestinian resistance, in which Hamas and its military are the leading force, and brands the entire liberation struggle as futile. The RCP's 'analysts' refute the real anti-imperialist struggle that is now being waged and assert that the only thing that can defeat imperialism in the middle east is a *region-wide workers' revolution*.

Well if wishes were fishes, we'd all have tea!

Of course, no one is going to object to a region-wide socialist revolution, but the RCP seems to have no idea how the conditions to bring about such an event might develop. It is clear to anyone with eyes to see that the resistance against the imperialist domination of Palestine is today being conducted by Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ), the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) and others. And that on the regional level, these are being supported by the Iraqi, Lebanese and Yemeni resistance movements. All of which are doing real damage to imperialist interests and are well on course to achieving the final defeat and destruction of Anglo-American imperialism's settler colony of Israel in the coming period.

Some of these resistance groups are nationalist groups inspired by Islam, while others are secular socialist groups (PFLP and DFLP, for example). Palestinian Marxist groups are part of a broad alliance with Hamas and others, and they operate on the basis of a common programme, forming a united front against US-led Zionist occupation. They correctly identify their primary enemies as US imperialism, British imperialism and their Zionist colony.

The RCP position ignores what is actually going on inside Palestine and opposes to it an imaginary 'region-wide workers' revolution' that has no connection to reality – to how the struggle against imperialism is actually developing on the ground.

WHAT IS THE RCP?

This is a mistake which has its roots in Trotsky's own works. Throughout his career, Trotsky would routinely advance ultra-left slogans that were completely out of line with social forces, both before and after the revolution.

In the 1920s, he did this over the trade union question, over collectivisation of the land (which he wanted to forge ahead with when the conditions were not yet ready and which he denounced when they were), and over the programme for Soviet industrialisation.

7. We cannot give workers' enemies free rein

We are often asked why the party criticises the RCP on our social media platforms. Is this not 'divisive' and 'sectarian'?

For all the reasons outlined above, one cannot but regard the RCP as an asset of the British state. Its leaders are directly or indirectly serving imperialism, and its members – many of whom are no doubt sincere individuals who genuinely want to contribute to building a revolutionary movement in Britain – need to be made aware of that fact.

By denigrating the forces who are fighting imperialism, and who are dying in large numbers in Ukraine and Palestine, the RCP is misleading potential revolutionaries and leading them down a dead end. Its analyses serve imperialism. Its slogans create confusion and bring the true revolutionary movement into disrepute.

As communists, it is our duty to be honest with the working class about the true nature of such groups as the RCP: who they are and what they represent. We remain ready to engage honestly with all those who have been misled and to offer them a better path.

As Stalin himself observed in 1937, Trotskyism long ago moved from being a mistaken trend in the workers' movement

to being an asset of the intelligence services of the imperialist powers.* The RCP is but one plank in a raft of measures adopted by the capitalist class to sabotage the historic mission of the working class to rise to the position of ruling class, and to build a bright socialist future.

These Trotskyite tailers remain, of course, a subordinate plank to the mainstream Labour social democrats, but as the Labour party loses all credibility along with the rest of the British political 'mainstream', in the gathering storm of political and economic crisis, the capitalist class and its state are using the RCP to target the rise of Marxist understanding and sympathy – and to keep workers away from our party in particular, as the vehicle of that much-needed scientific ideology, understanding and organisation.

We must be absolutely clear as to the dangers that can come from such organisations and do our best to help workers steer clear of their poisonous misdirection.

Alexander McKay, Joti Brar and Ranjeet Brar

Manchester, Bristol and London, August 2024

* 'Defects in party work and measures for liquidating Trotskyite and other double dealers', speech by JV Stalin to the RCP(B) central committee, 3 March 1937.

2. What is Trotskyism?²

One of the myths perpetrated by Trotskyites, with not inconsiderable help from the imperialist bourgeoisie, is that Leninism and Trotskyism are synonymous; that Trotsky was, after Lenin, the most brilliant and greatest Bolshevik (some even implying that Lenin was a great Trotskyist); that Trotsky was the true inheritor of Leninism, and a worthy successor to Lenin, but was, alas, deprived of his rightful place by the cunning manoeuvres of a third-class mediocrity and oriental despot to boot – ie, Josef Stalin.

Repeated *ad nauseam* decade after decade in truly Goebbelsian fashion, not only in Trotskyite publications but also in classrooms by petty-bourgeois professors and teachers of history and sociology, not to mention the imperialist press and electronic media, this anticommunist myth has acquired the force of a public prejudice.

This prejudice is the product of deliberate distortion and falsification by Trotskyism and its bourgeois allies of Marxism-Leninism; of their deliberate inventions, deceptions, innuendoes, omissions and tendentious interpretations of the history of the Great October Revolution and the revolutionary practice

and role of the USSR on the one hand, and the ignorance of those on whom these deceptions, distortions and downright falsifications are practised on the other.

Anyone who has made some study, let alone a deep study, of the subject cannot but be aware of the total falsity of this myth. It is the aim of this book to expose this myth and lay bare the truly reactionary, counter-revolutionary, essence of the petty-bourgeois ideology of Trotskyism, which is as irreconcilably hostile to Marxism-Leninism as is the bourgeoisie to the proletariat – notwithstanding its pseudo-Marxist, ultra-‘left’ and ultra-‘revolutionary’ terminology.

We aim to demonstrate here that Leninism and Trotskyism are mutually exclusive; that Trotskyism is irreconcilably opposed to Leninism; that those claiming to be Marxist-Leninists are duty bound, in the interests of the proletariat, to wage a ruthless and uncompromising struggle against Trotskyism; that they have to bury Trotskyism, as an ideological trend in the working-class movement.

Further, that after the death of Lenin in January 1924, as Leninism was upheld by the Bolshevik party, now under the leadership of Stalin, Trotskyism continued its ceaseless onslaught on Leninism, with some tactical adjustments to the form of its attack. It now attacked Leninism and the party’s Leninist policy under the guise of attacking ‘Stalinism’ in the name of Leninism. For all that, Trotskyism continued its counter-revolutionary struggle against revolutionary Leninism, albeit without overtly and specifically naming Lenin as its target.

Be it said to the honour of the Bolshevik party and to its leader, Stalin, Trotskyism was dealt blows equally as shattering as those delivered against it during Lenin’s lifetime, causing it to suffer ignominious defeat.

In particular, we seek to emphasise three specific features of Trotskyism – features which bring it into irreconcilable contradiction with Leninism.

1. Three specific features of Trotskyism

1. *'Permanent revolution'*

Trotskyism stands for the theory of 'permanent' revolution, failing to take into account the vast mass of the poor peasantry as a revolutionary force and reliable ally of the proletariat.

As Lenin rightly pointed out, Trotsky's 'permanent' revolution is tantamount to 'skipping' the peasant movement and 'playing at the seizure of power'. Any attempt at such a revolution as was advocated by Trotsky would have ended in certain failure, for it would have denied the Russian proletariat the support of its most dependable ally, the poor peasantry.

Only this explains Leninism's unrelenting struggle against Trotskyism from 1905 onwards.

For its part, Trotskyism regarded Leninism as a theory possessing 'anti-revolutionary features' for no better reason than that at the proper time Leninism correctly advocated and upheld the idea of the dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry. Going far beyond this indignant opinion, Trotsky asserted:

The entire edifice of Leninism at the present time is built on lies and falsification and bears within itself the poisonous elements of its own decay.*

Leninism, on the other hand, asserts:

Trotsky has never yet held a firm opinion on any important question of Marxism. He always contrives to worm his way into the cracks of any given difference of opinion, and desert one

* Letter to NS Chkheidze by L Trotsky, 1 April 1913. Reprinted in Appendix 2.

side for the other. At the present moment he is in the company of the Bundists and the liquidators. And these gentlemen do not stand on ceremony where the party is concerned.*

2. Distrust of Leninism in matters of organisation

Trotskyism stands for the distrust of Leninism, of Bolshevism, in matters of organisation. Whereas Bolshevism stands for the principle of a revolutionary proletarian party of a new type, a disciplined and monolithic party, hostile to opportunist elements, Trotskyism stands for the coexistence of revolutionaries and opportunists and for the formation of groups, factions and coteries within a single party. Anyone who is at all aware of the history of Trotsky's notorious August bloc, in which the Martovites and otzovists,³ the liquidators⁴ and Trotskyites happily cooperated in their struggle against Bolshevism, cannot have failed to notice this liquidationist feature of Trotskyism.

Thus, during this crucial historical period, whereas Leninism regarded the destruction of the August bloc as a precondition for the development of the proletarian party, Trotskyism regarded the liquidationist August bloc as the basis for building a 'real' party.

Throughout this entire period – from 1903 to 1917 – Lenin again and again denounced Trotsky for his 'careerism', 'men-shevism', 'conciliationism' and 'liquidationism'. Here are a few samples chosen at random from scores of Lenin's writings in the same vein:

In a 1909 letter to Grigory Zinoviev, Lenin wrote:

Trotsky behaves like a despicable careerist and factionalist of the Ryazanov-and-co type. Either equality on the editorial

* VI Lenin, *The Right of Nations to Self-Determination*, April 1914. Collected Works (CW) Vol 20, pp447-8.

WHAT IS TROTSKYISM?

board, *subordination* to the central committee and no one's transfer to Paris except Trotsky's (the scoundrel, he wants to 'fix up' the *whole* rascally crew of *Pravda* at our expense!) – or a break with this swindler and an exposure of him in the CO. He pays lip-service to the party and behaves worse than any other of the factionalists.*

When Lenin was waging a life and death struggle to purge the party of liquidators and otzovists, Trotsky, assuming the role of a conciliator, tried his worst to reconcile the party with these two bourgeois trends. This caused Lenin to denounce Trotsky in the following terms:

In the very first words of his resolution Trotsky expressed the full spirit of the worst kind of conciliation, 'conciliation' in inverted commas, of a sectarian and philistine conciliation, which deals with 'given persons' and not the given line of policy, the given spirit the given ideological and political content of party work.

It is in this that the enormous difference lies between real partyism; which consists in purging the party of liquidationism and otzovism, and the 'conciliation' of Trotsky and co, which actually *renders the most faithful service to the liquidators and otzovists, and is therefore an evil that is all the more dangerous to the party the more cunningly, artfully and rhetorically it cloaks itself with professedly pro-party, professedly anti-factional declamations.*[†]

In November 1910, accusing Trotsky of following 'in the wake of the Mensheviks, taking cover behind particularly sonorous phrases', of 'putting before the German comrades liberal views

* 24 August 1909. CW Vol 34, p400.

† 'Notes of a publicist', March-June 1910. CW Vol 16, p211. Our emphasis.

with a Marxist coating', of being a master of 'resonant but empty phrases', of failing to understand and ignoring the '*economic content* of the Russian revolution', and thereby depriving himself 'of the possibility of understanding the historical meaning of the inner-party struggle in Russia', Lenin went on to state:

The struggle between Bolshevism and Menshevism is . . . a struggle over the question whether to support the liberals or to overthrow the hegemony of the liberals over the peasantry. Therefore to attribute [as did Trotsky] our splits to the influence of the intelligentsia, to the immaturity of the proletariat, etc, is a childishy naive repetition of liberal fairy-tales . . .

Trotsky distorts Bolshevism, because he has never been able to form any definite views on the role of the proletariat in the Russian bourgeois revolution.

Countering Trotsky's lies and falsifications in the German social-democratic press, and accusing Trotsky of following a policy of 'advertisement' of 'shamelessness in belittling the party and exalting himself before the Germans', Lenin concluded:

Therefore, when Trotsky tells the German comrades that he represents the 'general party tendency' I am obliged to declare that Trotsky represents only his own faction and enjoys a certain amount of confidence *exclusively* among the otzovists and the liquidators.*

When Trotsky's Vienna Club, stepping up its activities, passed a resolution in November 1910 to organise a 'general party fund for the purpose of preparing and convening a conference of the RSDLP', Lenin characterised this as a 'direct step towards

* 'The historical meaning of the inner-party struggle in Russia', *Diskussionny Listok*, May 1911. CW Vol 16, pp374-92.

a split . . . a clear violation of party legality and the start of an adventure in which Trotsky will come to grief’.

He continued:

It is an adventure in the ideological sense. Trotsky groups all the enemies of Marxism, he unites Potresov and Maximov, who detest the ‘Lenin-Plekhanov’ bloc, as they like to call it.⁵ *Trotsky unites all those to whom ideological decay is dear; all who are not concerned with the defence of Marxism*, all philistines who do not understand the reasons for the struggle and who do not wish to learn, think and discover the ideological roots of the divergence of views. At this time of confusion, disintegration and wavering, it is easy for Trotsky to become the ‘hero of the hour’ and gather all the shabby elements around himself. The more openly this attempt is made, the more spectacular will be the defeat.*

Lenin ended his letter by calling, among other things, for ‘struggle against the splitting tactics and the unprincipled adventurism of Trotsky’.

In December 1911, being sick and tired of Trotsky’s dirty work as an attorney and diplomat for the liquidators and otzovists, Lenin, exposing Trotsky’s factionalism, wrote:

It is impossible to argue with Trotsky on the merits of the issue, because Trotsky holds no views whatever. We can and should argue with confirmed liquidators and otzovists, but it is no use arguing with a man whose game is to hide the errors of both these trends; in his case the thing to do is to expose him as a diplomat of the smallest calibre.[†]

* Letter to the Russian collegium of the central committee of the RSDLP, December 1910. CW Vol 17, pp17-22. Our emphasis.

† ‘Trotsky’s diplomacy and a certain party platform’, *Sotsial-Demokrat*, 21 December 1911. CW Vol 17, pp360-2.

In July 1912, in a letter to the editor of *Pravda*, the daily legal Bolshevik paper printed in Petersburg from 5 May 1912, Lenin advised the editor not to reply to Trotsky's 'disruptive and slanderous letters', adding:

Trotsky's dirty campaign against *Pravda* is one mass of lies and slander . . . This intriguer and liquidator goes on lying right and left.*

In a March 1914 article, Lenin wrote:

Trotsky, however, has never had any 'physiognomy' at all; the only thing he does have is a habit of changing sides, of skipping from the liberals to the Marxists and back again, of mouthing scraps of catchwords and bombastic parrot phrases . . .

Actually under the cover of high-sounding, empty and obscure phrases that confuse the non-class-conscious workers, Trotsky is defending the liquidators by passing over in silence the question of the 'underground', by asserting that there is no liberal-labour policy in Russia, and the like.

. . . Unity means rallying the majority of the workers in Russia about decisions which have long been known, and which condemn liquidationism . . .

But the liquidators and Trotsky . . . who tore up their own August bloc, who flouted all the decisions of the party and dissociated themselves from the 'underground' as well as from the organised workers, are the worst splitters. Fortunately, the workers have already realised this, and all class-conscious workers are creating their own *real* unity *against* the liquidator disrupters of unity.†

* 19 July 1912. CW Vol 35, pp40-1.

† 'The break-up of the "August" bloc', *Put Pravdy*, 15 March 1914. CW Vol 20, pp158-61.

WHAT IS TROTSKYISM?

In a June 1914 article, Lenin denounced Trotsky for his factionalism and liquidationism and exposed the utter falsity of the charge of splittism hurled by Trotsky and the liquidators at the Bolsheviks. Writing in his allegedly non-factional journal, *Borba*, Trotsky, having accused the Bolsheviks of splittism for the sole reason that they exposed and opposed liquidationism, went on to admit that the Bolshevik 'splittist tactics are winning one suicidal victory after another'. He added:

Numerous advanced workers, in a state of utter political bewilderment, themselves often become active agents of a split.*

Here is Lenin's retort to this accusation and 'explanation':

Needless to say, this explanation is highly flattering, to Trotsky . . . and to the liquidators. Trotsky is very fond of using, with the learned air of the expert, pompous and high-sounding phrases to explain historical phenomena in a way that is flattering to Trotsky. Since 'numerous advanced workers' become 'active agents' of a political and party line [Bolshevik party line] which does not conform to Trotsky's line, Trotsky settles the question unhesitatingly, out of hand. These advanced workers are 'in a state of utter political bewilderment', whereas he, Trotsky, is evidently 'in a state' of political firmness and clarity, and keeps to the right line! . . . And this very same Trotsky, beating his breast, fulminates against factionalism parochialism, and the efforts of the intellectuals to impose their will on the workers!

Reading things like these, one cannot help asking oneself – is it from a lunatic asylum that such voices come?†

Later in the same article, Lenin pointed out:

* *Borba*, March 1914.

† 'Disruption of unity under cover of outcries for unity', *Prosveshcheniye*, May 1914. CW Vol 20, pp325-47.

TROTSKY(ISM): TOOL OF IMPERIALISM

The reason why Trotsky avoids facts and concrete references is because they relentlessly refute all his angry outcries and pompous phrases. It is very easy, of course, to strike an attitude and say: 'a crude and sectarian travesty'. Or to add a still more stinging and pompous catchphrase, such as 'emancipation from conservative factionalism'.

But is this not very cheap? Is not this weapon borrowed from the arsenal of the period when Trotsky posed in all his splendour before audiences of high-school boys?

Lenin concluded his article with a brilliant description of Trotsky's wavering and vacillation between the party and the liquidators, calling him a 'Tushino turncoat'⁶ appearing before the party with

. . . incredibly pretentious claims, unwilling absolutely to reckon with *either* the party decisions, which since 1908 have defined and established our attitude towards liquidationism, *or* with the experience of the present-day movement in Russia, which has actually brought about the *unity* of the majority on the basis of full recognition of the aforesaid decisions.

About the same time – early 1914 – Trotsky, writing in the second issue of *Borba*, falsely attributed to the 'Polish Marxists' – not just Rosa Luxemburg – the position according to which the right to national self-determination 'is entirely devoid of political content and should be deleted from the programme'. This falsehood drew from Lenin the following observation:

The obliging Trotsky is more dangerous than an enemy! Trotsky could produce *no proof* except 'private conversations' (ie, simply gossip, on which Trotsky always subsists), for classifying 'Polish Marxists' in general as supporters of every article by Rosa Luxemburg . . .

WHAT IS TROTSKYISM?

Trotsky has never yet held a firm opinion on any important question of Marxism. He always contrives to worm his way into the cracks of any given difference of opinion, and desert one side for the other. At the present moment he is in the company of the Bundists and the liquidators. And these gentlemen do not stand on ceremony where the party is concerned.*

In a 1916 letter to Dutch Marxist Henriette Roland-Hoist, Lenin asked: 'What are our differences with Trotsky?', before giving the following answer:

In brief – he is a Kautskyite, that is, he stands for unity with the Kautskyites in the International and with Chkheidze's parliamentary group in Russia. We are absolutely against such unity.†

Writing to Alexandra Kollontai in 1917, Lenin said:

What a swine this Trotsky is – left phrases, and a bloc with the right against the Zimmerwald left!!⁷ He ought to be exposed (by you) if only in a brief letter to *Sotsial-Demokrat*!‡

Finally, in a 1917 letter to Inessa Armand, Lenin wrote:

There is also a letter from Kollontai who . . . has returned to Norway from America. N Iv and Pavlov . . . had *won Novy Mir*, she says, . . . but . . . Trotsky arrived, and this scoundrel at once ganged up with the *right* wing of *Novy Mir* against the left Zimmerwaldists!! That's it!! That's Trotsky for you!! Always true to himself = twists, swindles, poses as a left, *helps* the

* 'The right of nations to self-determination', *Prosveshcheniye*, February-May 1914. CW Vol 20, pp447-8.

† 8 March 1916. CW Vol 43, pp515-6.

‡ 17 February 1917. CW Vol 35, p285.

right, so long as he can . . . *

In the light of the foregoing historic evidence, of the most impeccable and irrefutable kind, it can safely be asserted that Trotsky was during this long period – between 1903 and 1917 – a Menshevik and a liquidator who waged a most dirty and factional campaign against the Bolsheviks' attempts to build a revolutionary party of the proletariat.

Although people with knowledge about the history of the Bolshevik party know only too well that from 1903 to August 1917 Trotsky was a Menshevik and a liquidator, Trotskyites generally maintain a studied silence over this question or, worse still, they try and excuse him on this account. It is, therefore, very refreshing to discover some ardent Trotskyites who condemn Trotsky's menshevism, centrism, conciliationism and factionalism. In this category fall the Trotskyites of the International Communist League (ICL) of the so-called Fourth International (the official Fourth International, of course, since each of the milliard Trotskyist organisations claims to be the official Fourth International and describes every other Trotskyist organisation as a fake – a hilarious phenomenon reminiscent of the *Life of Brian*).

The ICL publishes the theoretical journal *Spartacist*, and the occasion for its frank admission and condemnation of Trotsky's menshevism was the review by ICL member Daniel Dauget of a biography of Leon Trotsky published in 1988 by Pierre Broué. Broué was a professor at the Institute of Political Studies of Grenoble university who had for forty years been a member of 'the ostensibly Trotskyist Lambertist tendency in France' (ICL's description in the said review) – ie, of the Parti Communiste Internationale (PCI).[†]

* 19 February 1917. CW Vol 35, p288.

† *Spartacist* 45 and 46, Winter 1990-91, English edition.

Broué praised Trotsky for being a 'freelancer' – praise which roused the ICL to indignation and downright outrage. So as not to lose the full force of ICL's fluent prose, the full burning anger and shame, and the thrust of its argument, and so as not to be accused of quoting Mr Dauget out of context, we reproduce here almost the entire section of his review that was concerned with Trotsky's factionalism and menshevism between 1903 and 1917.

Trotsky as 'freelancer'

Broué's treatment of Trotsky's political activity between the decisive 1903 Bolshevik-Menshevik split and the October Revolution is at the core of his interpretation; because it is here that he deals with the debates within Russian social democracy over the nature, form and structure a revolutionary party must have if it is to take state power, as well as with the role of political and programmatic debate in forging such a party. After the 1903 split between the Bolsheviks and Mensheviks, Trotsky became a sort of freelancer in the party.

Broué *praises* Trotsky for this, seeing in it the cause for Trotsky's leading role in the 1905 revolution as chairman of the St Petersburg Soviet and his brilliant propagandist use of his trial following the 1905 defeat:

'In fact, effectively freed from any factional obligations, at a good distance from the up and downs of the conflicts between the two main factions, satisfied in this respect with his 'unitary' position whose victory seemed to him assured in the future, Trotsky had his hands completely free to devote his attention and activity to the events that were unfolding in Russia . . .' – Broué, p97.

To read this, one would conclude that Lenin's factional struggle against Menshevism was irrelevant – if not outright counter-

posed – to intervening in and leading the revolutionary struggle. Indeed, Broué views Trotsky's role as the leading 'conciliator' between the Bolsheviks and Mensheviks as exemplary.

Earlier, as Broué notes: 'Trotsky, partisan of centralisation and of the authority of the central committee ever since he had been deported to Siberia, was seen in the émigré circles as Lenin's 'hatchet man'. At the 1903 congress Trotsky began a programmatic struggle against Lenin on the question of the party. For example, Trotsky opposed the sovereignty of the party congress: 'The congress is a register, a controller, but not a creator.' (Report of the Siberian delegation, 1903)

Although the programmatic implications were far from clear at the time, the 1903 split was a fundamental split on the party question. Trotsky's federalist position on this question was also reflected in 'Report of the Siberian delegation', with his rejection of the Bolshevik definition of a party member that required 'personal participation in one of the party bodies'. In practical terms, Trotsky was in favour of the Menshevik definition of a party member as one who gave 'personal assistance' to the party – he wished to allow all the broad 'workers organisations', which existed alongside the party committees in many major Russian cities, to act in the name of the party *regardless* of their adherence to the statutes or decisions of party congresses.

At the same time that Broué enthuses over Trotsky's independence, he mentions in passing that Trotsky was wrong on the party question during this entire period. But what he says pales in comparison with Trotsky's own judgement:

'The deep differences that divided me from Bolshevism for a whole number of years and in many cases placed me in sharp and hostile opposition to Bolshevism, were expressed most graphically in relation to the Menshevik faction. I began with

WHAT IS TROTSKYISM?

the radically wrong perspective that the course of the revolution and the pressure of the proletarian masses would ultimately force both factions to follow the same road. Therefore I considered a split to be an unnecessary disruption of the revolutionary forces. But because the active role in the split lay with the Bolsheviks – since it was only by ruthless demarcation, not only ideological but organisational as well, that it was possible, in Lenin's opinion, to assure the revolutionary character of the proletarian party (and the entire subsequent history has fully confirmed the correctness of those policies) – my 'conciliationism' led me at many sharp turns in the road into hostile clashes with Bolshevism.' – Trotsky, 'Our differences', November 1924.

The traditional 'centre' and right wing of the social democracy were only too happy to use Trotsky's name and journalistic brilliance as a left cover for their own positions and *as a weapon against Lenin*. Thus Broué reports that 'Trotsky was on good terms with Kautsky and the "centre" of the German social democracy until at least 1912 . . . It was Kautsky during this period who, to Lenin's great anger, opened the pages of *Die Neue Zeit* and *Vorwärts* to Trotsky.'

Broué also details Trotsky's warm relations with the Austro-Marxists of Vienna, noting that he rapidly became 'the uncontested head of the social-democratic colony in Vienna' from 1909 to 1912. He passes rapidly over the fact that during the same period Rosa Luxemburg viewed Trotsky with 'systematic suspicion' and as a 'dubious individual', no doubt due to his ties to her right-wing opponents in the German social democracy.

Broué's attitude toward Trotsky during these years is exemplified by his treatment of the infamous August bloc. The Vienna *Pravda* edited by Trotsky attempted to 'conciliate' the Bolshevik and Menshevik factions – Broué approvingly quotes the professional anticommunist Leonard Schapiro's praise of the Vienna

Pravda for not being as polemical as the Bolshevik press. A 1910 agreement between the factions provided for Bolshevik financial support to the Vienna *Pravda*, with Kamenev (who was close to Lenin and was Trotsky's brother-in-law) responsible for administering the Bolshevik funds. The agreement stipulated that the Mensheviks would get rid of their right wing, and the Bolsheviks of their left wing.

While the Bolsheviks respected the agreement, the Mensheviks did not, and in the subsequent polemics, Trotsky sided with the Mensheviks and got rid of Kamenev. Trotsky's articles, aimed at militants inside Russia who were unfamiliar with the details of the dispute, denounced the Bolsheviks as a 'conspiracy of the émigré clique'. Kautsky solicited and published several articles by Trotsky attacking the Bolsheviks, which provoked angry rejoinders not just from Lenin, but also from Plekhanov and Rosa Luxemburg.⁸ When the Bolshevik Prague congress in 1912 proclaimed that it represented the party as a whole, Trotsky organised a 'unity' counter-conference in Vienna in August.

'In Trotsky's mind, [the conference] was to have been the general unification, the reunification of the party. In fact, the Bolsheviks' rejection of it reduced the participants to a bloc against them, which they baptised the "August bloc". The Polish social democrats and Plekhanov also chose not to appear . . . In fact, Trotsky's return to the factional arena proved particularly unfortunate. Independent of his intentions, and even of his precautions, the positions he took after the Prague conference and his role in forming the August bloc made him appear, despite himself, as the soul of a general coalition against the Bolsheviks and an indirect supporter of the 'liquidators'.' – Broué, pp139-40.

Every qualifier in Broué's description of Trotsky's role in the August bloc is wrong or misleading. As is clear from Trotsky's

WHAT IS TROTSKYISM?

denunciation of the Bolsheviks as an 'émigré clique', he was well aware that what Broué so delicately terms 'general unification' was a polemical cudgel with which to attack Lenin. Trotsky did not just 'appear' to be the soul of the anti-Bolshevik coalition, he was in fact that soul in that he was the most left-wing, most respected force outside the Bolsheviks. Trotsky's actions were not misconstrued 'despite himself', but were an accurate reflection of the role he played vis-à-vis the Bolsheviks in the entire period from 1903 to at least 1915.

The outbreak of WW1 and the betrayal by the parties of the Second International, most of whose leaders supported their 'own' governments in the bloody interimperialist war, shifted the grounds of dispute within the world socialist movement, forcing realignments and regroupments. Lenin and Trotsky both fought against the imperialist war, and both attended the gathering of antiwar socialists held in Zimmerwald, Switzerland in September 1915. (pp33-34)

Be it noted in passing that the last sentence is either born out of dishonesty or simple ignorance – most likely the former – for everyone with the least knowledge about this matter knows that the Bolshevik slogan of working for the defeat of one's own government in the imperialist war then raging was countered by Trotsky with his chauvinist slogan demanding 'Neither victory nor defeat'.

Further, we have provided, quotations above from Lenin to the effect that during this period Trotsky was a Kautskyite and fought against the Zimmerwald left headed by Lenin's Bolsheviks.⁷ But that does not concern us here.

ICL continues:

Broué argues that after Zimmerwald despite 'real disagreements' between Lenin and Trotsky, there was 'a reasonable prospect for a gradual rapprochement between the two men,

who in reality were divided only [sic] by the 1903 split, which had long since been outdated'. What Broué slides over is the fact that Lenin never repudiated the 1903 split – instead he generalised from it to a fully-formed *theoretical* position on the necessity for revolutionary cadres to organise a vanguard party, separate from reformist and centrist tendencies. Trotsky was ultimately won to Lenin's side on this question in 1917.

There is something anachronistic and evocative of the worst aspects of French political traditions in Broué's repeated presentation of Trotsky as a simple star, freelancer, too busy being 'a leader of men' and giving brilliant speeches before and after the revolution to have been a 'party man' or to have had the time to 'familiarise himself with [the] faction fights in the corridors'. Trotsky *was* a factionalist before 1917 – on the wrong side.

But his programme of conciliationism could never have built the sort of hard faction that could win leadership in the party, nor the kind of party that could take state power. (p34)

Well said, Messrs the Trotskyites of the ICL! We think any comment on this would be superfluous!

All this does not, however, prevent the Trotskyites of the ICL from asserting, without so much as a blush, that Trotsky, after the death of Lenin, was best placed 'to carry forward the authentic Bolshevik programme against Stalin's usurpers'. Very strange logic indeed, according to which Trotsky, the Menshevik liquidator, who spent two decades in a mortal struggle against every aspect of Leninism, was better suited to carrying out the 'authentic' Bolshevik programme than someone like Stalin, who had spent two and a half decades faithfully supporting and actually carrying out the Bolshevik programme.

Here is how the ICL puts it:

WHAT IS TROTSKYISM?

In his admiration for Trotsky the left-Menshevik, Broué also never considers the potential authority that Trotsky would have gained and retained among stalwart Bolsheviks had he come over to Lenin's side as a hard party man in 1903 – an authority that would have served him well in the subsequent period when he fought to carry forward the authentic Bolshevik programme against Stalin's usurpers. (p35)

Pigs might fly! The above statement of ICL amounts, if it amounts to anything at all, to a meaningless tautology: namely, had Trotsky been a staunch supporter of Leninism in the period 1903-17, he would have been well placed to carry out the authentic Bolshevik programme after Lenin's death.

The problem, however, is that neither during this long period, nor in the subsequent period, was Trotsky a staunch supporter of Leninism. The one who was a staunch Leninist, namely Josef Stalin, was quite correctly chosen by the Bolshevik party to lead it in carrying forward the authentic Bolshevik programme against the would-be usurper – to wit, Trotsky.

There is method in the ICL's madness. It admits Trotsky's pre-1917 menshevism in order to present gullible readers with a sanitised version of Trotsky, who, it is claimed, suddenly saw the light and after 1917 became a better Bolshevik than anyone else.

The fact is [writes the ICL], that Broué . . . agrees with Trotsky's conciliationism before 1917, and much prefers Trotsky the anti-Leninist to Trotsky the Bolshevik.

Unlike Broué, in a vain attempt to gain credibility for Trotskyism, the ICL would rather make a clean admission of Trotsky's pre-1917 menshevism and anti-Leninism in order to be able all the more zealously to fasten the label of staunch Leninist onto his lapel.

This trick will not work, however, for apart from the short period during October 1917 when he hid his anti-Leninist stock-in-trade in the cupboard, Trotsky continued to practise his anti-Leninism, his anti-Bolshevism, with a zeal worthy of a better cause.

It is not only the case that Broué, as is justly claimed by the ICL, 'subtly puts Lenin under the gun' in order to gain the appreciation of the 'anti-Leninist Soviet intelligentsia' (these words were written in the winter of 1990-91), but also the fact that the Trotskyites of the ICL, in common with all other Trotskyites, are attempting to substitute Trotskyism for Leninism – albeit by denouncing pre-1917 Trotskyism.

No subterfuges, no tricks, no artful dodging, no deception can detract from this fact – not even the pretence of praising Leninism.

3. Distrust of Bolshevik leadership

Trotsky stands for the distrust of the leaders of Bolshevism, for discrediting and defaming them.

As Stalin correctly observed:

I do not know of a single trend in the party that could compare with Trotskyism in the matter of discrediting the leaders of Leninism or the central institutions of the party.*

In Trotsky's letter to Chkheidze, already cited, Trotsky described Lenin as

. . . a professional exploiter of every kind of backwardness in the Russian working-class movement.

* 'Trotskyism or Leninism?', speech to communist trade unionists by JV Stalin, 19 November 1924. Collected Works (CW), Vol 6, p366. Reprinted here in chapter 5.

If Trotsky could express such ill-mannered views about Lenin, is there anything surprising in the fact that he showered, after Lenin's death, even more vile abuse on Lenin's most faithful pupil, Stalin?

2. How could Trotsky end up in the Bolshevik ranks?

How was it that Trotsky, having such an impeccably anti-Bolshevik and anti-Leninist record, found himself in the Bolshevik ranks in the period of the October Revolution? Stalin, in a speech on 19 November 1924, asked and answered this question:

How could it happen that Trotsky, who carried such a nasty stock-in-trade on his back; found himself, after all, in the rank of the Bolsheviks during the October movement? It happened because at that time Trotsky abandoned (actually did abandon) that stock-in-trade; he hid it in the cupboard.

Had he not performed that 'operation', real cooperation with him would have been impossible. The theory of the August bloc, ie, the theory of unity with the Mensheviks, had already been shattered and thrown overboard by the revolution, for how could there be any talk about unity when an armed struggle was raging between the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks? Trotsky had no alternative but to admit that this theory was useless.

The same misadventure 'happened' to the theory of permanent revolution, for not a single Bolshevik contemplated the immediate seizure of power on the morrow of the February Revolution, and Trotsky could not help knowing that the Bolsheviks would not allow him, in the words of Lenin, 'to play at the seizure of power'.

Trotsky had no alternative but recognise the Bolsheviks' pol-

icy of fighting for influence in the Soviets, of fighting to win over the peasantry. As regards the third specific feature of Trotskyism (distrust of (he Bolshevik leaders), it had naturally to retire into the background owing to the obvious failure of the first two features.

Under the circumstances, could Trotsky do anything else but hide his stock-in-trade in the cupboard and follow the Bolsheviks, considering that he had no group of his own of any significance, and that he came to the Bolsheviks as a political individual without an army? Of course, he could not!

What is the lesson to be learnt from this? Only one: that prolonged collaboration between the Leninists and Trotsky is possible only if the latter completely abandons his old stock-in-trade, only if he completely accepts Leninism.

Trotsky writes about the lessons of October, but he forgets . . . the one I have just mentioned, which is of prime importance for Trotskyism. Trotskyism ought to learn that lesson of October too.*

Trotskyism, however, failed to learn this lesson, and its old stock-in-trade, hidden in the cupboard in the period of the October movement, was dragged into daylight once more, especially after the death of Lenin, through Trotskyist literary pronouncements aimed at undermining the Bolshevik party principle, belittling and discrediting Lenin (albeit under the guise of praising and exalting Lenin), and asserting the correctness of the much-discredited theory of permanent revolution, which had been shattered by the experience of the three Russian revolutions – ie, that of 1905 and those of February and October 1917.

* *Ibid.*

On arriving in Petrograd in 1917, Trotsky affiliated to the Mezhrayontsi (inter-regional), a group that vacillated between the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks. In August 1917, declaring that they had no differences with the Bolsheviks, the Mezhrayontsi joined the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party (Bolsheviks). Trotsky joined the Bolsheviks with them.

On joining the Bolshevik party, quite a number of Mezhrayontsi broke with opportunism; but, as subsequent events were to reveal, for Trotsky and some of his followers joining the Bolsheviks was only a ruse. They continued to propound their harmful and reactionary views, flout discipline and undermine the party's organisational and ideological unity.

Since Trotskyism, far from abandoning its old nasty stock-in-trade, on the contrary dragged it out into the light of day, it was bound, owing to its entire inner content, to become the centre and rallying point not only of the non-proletarian elements in the USSR who were then (in the 1920s and 1930s) striving to disintegrate the proletarian dictatorship, but also of the imperialist bourgeoisie seeking by a thousand means to overthrow the proletarian regime that had been ushered in by the mighty October Revolution.

At every crucial stage in the development of the Russian revolution and the existence of the dictatorship of the proletariat in the USSR, Trotskyism continued to maintain its reactionary anti-Bolshevik, anti-Leninist stance in matters of theory as well as organisation, cloaking this under thick layers of 'revolutionary' rhetoric.

3. Brest-Litovsk

In 1918, the young Soviet republic, bereft of any army with the will and ability to fight, was fighting for its very survival through signing the Brest-Litovsk peace treaty with German imperial-

ism, thus gaining a much-needed respite for the exhausted population.

At a crucial moment in these negotiations, Trotsky, as the head of the Soviet delegation to the peace talks, in violation of the instructions of the party central committee and the Soviet government, declared the unilateral withdrawal of the Soviet republic from the war and the demobilisation of the Russian army. He then left Brest-Litovsk on the spurious ground that

We can only be saved in the true meaning of the word by a European revolution.*

This gave the German high command the pretext it needed for ending the armistice, mounting an offensive and obliging the Soviet government to sign

. . . a much more humiliating peace, and the blame for this rests on those who refused to accept the former peace.†

Apropos the failure of the European revolution to come to maturity thus leaving the Bolshevik revolution to solve its problems on its own, and forcing the Bolsheviks to face reality as it was rather than as they would wish it to be, Lenin admonished Trotsky and his ilk in the party in the following terms:

If you are unable to adapt yourself, if you are not inclined to crawl on your belly in the mud you are not a revolutionary but a chatterbox; and I propose this, not because I like it, but because we have no other road, because history has not been kind enough to bring the revolution to maturity everywhere

* Extraordinary seventh congress of the RCP(B), March 1918, verbatim report, p65.

† 'Political report of the CC to the extraordinary seventh congress of the RCP(B)' by VI Lenin, 7 March 1918. CW Vol 27, p102.

simultaneously.*

Thus the young Soviet republic paid a very heavy price for Trotsky's adventurism and phrasemongering defeatism, which is the chief characteristic of his rotten theory of permanent revolution, according to which nothing good can ever come of any revolution unless it is accompanied by a world revolution.

4. Trade union debate

With the victorious conclusion of the civil war of 1918-20, as the Soviet republic under Lenin's guidance, switched from war communism to the New Economic Policy (NEP) and embarked on a programme of economic revival and rejuvenation – of restoration of industry through an upsurge in agriculture and by drawing the workers and trade unions into active socialist construction through planned organisation and persuasion (and not coercion), Trotsky and his supporters forced on the party a discussion on the question of trade unions (a luxury and a diversion from the work of economic construction, and from the fight against famine and economic dislocation, that the party could ill afford at the time).

Trotsky, the patriarch of bureaucrats, as Stalin rightly called him insisted on 'tightening up the screws' and 'shaking up' the trade unions, and turning the latter into state agencies – on replacing *persuasion* by *coercion*.

The party discussion on the trade unions resulted in the total rout of Trotsky and his supporters. When the central committee of the party rejected Trotsky's Prussian sergeant-style proposal, Trotsky went outside and gathered a group of his supporters with the aim of fighting against the central committee.

* *Ibid*, p101.

So alarmed was Lenin by Trotsky's factionalism and flouting of party discipline that he caused the tenth party congress (March 1921) to pass a resolution forbidding the formation of factions and disbanding existing factions forthwith. It was further stated that the

Non-observance of this decision of the congress shall entail unconditional and instant expulsion from the party.*

5. Trotsky's return to fully-fledged factionalism

This resolution was to arouse Trotsky's bitter hatred and opposition, for whenever he could not get his own way on any question, he rushed to form a Trotskyist faction within the party, even if that meant threatening a split.

During 1921, Lenin's health began to decline. Cerebral arteriosclerosis was already blocking his blood circulation and taking its toll, with the result that this man of inexhaustible energy and drive was tiring easily, and spent most of the summer resting in the village of Gorki, not far from Moscow. The eleventh party congress, meeting at the end of March 1922, created the new office of general secretary, to which, one day after the conclusion of that congress (ie, on 3 April 1922), on Lenin's initiation and sponsorship, Stalin was appointed.

On 26 May 1922, while resting in Gorki, Lenin suffered a severe stroke, which caused a partial paralysis of the right side of his body and loss of speech. He recovered from this stroke remarkably quickly and was back at his desk in early October. After two further minor strokes on 13 and 16 December 1922, he suffered on 10 March 1923 a massive stroke, from which

* 'Preliminary draft resolution of the tenth RCP congress on party unity' by VI Lenin, March 1921. CW Vol 32, p244.

he never recovered and after which he took no further part in politics.

Following the latest stroke suffered by Lenin, Trotsky, with an eye on the leadership, stepped up his factional activity and intensified his vile and slanderous attacks on the party leadership, its central institutions and its policy. On 8 October 1923, he sent a letter to the central committee in which he asserted that the country was being inexorably led by the party leadership to a catastrophe, to prevent which he demanded greater inner-party democracy. Stripped of its Trotskyite verbiage, this meant the right to form factional groupings.

A group of forty-six of his followers issued a manifesto – known as the ‘Statement of Forty-Six’ – to the same effect. Trotsky’s letter and the Statement of Forty-Six were discussed and condemned at a joint plenary meeting of the central committee and the central control commission with representatives of ten of the largest party organisations in October 1923.

Trotsky followed his letter with a pamphlet entitled *New Course*, in which in addition to the demand for ‘greater party democracy’, he accused the ‘old Bolsheviks’ – the party leadership – of degeneration. He counterposed young people, especially students, to veteran Bolsheviks, declaring the former to be the ‘barometer’ of the party.

In talking about the degeneration of the ‘old guard’, Trotsky had used the expression ‘we, the old Bolsheviks’, which provoked Stalin to make this observation, full of biting sarcasm:

First, I must dispel a possible misunderstanding. As is evident . . . , Trotsky includes himself among the Bolshevik old guard, thereby showing readiness to take upon himself the charges that may be hurled at the old guard if it does indeed take the path of degeneration.

It must be admitted that his readiness for self-sacrifice is undoubtedly a noble trait. But I must protect Trotsky from

TROTSKY(ISM): TOOL OF IMPERIALISM

Trotsky, because, for obvious reasons, he cannot and should not bear responsibility for the possible degeneration of the principal cadres of the Bolshevik old guard . . .

With more than a covert reference to Trotsky's long Menshevik past, Stalin, while admitting the possibility of degeneration of the Bolshevik old guard, went on to add:

Nevertheless, there are a number of elements within our party who are capable of giving rise to a real danger of degeneration of certain ranks of our party. I have in mind that section of the Mensheviks who joined our party *unwillingly* and who have not yet got rid of their old opportunist habits.*

The thirteenth conference of the RCP(B), held on 16-18 January 1924, strongly condemned the factionalism of Trotsky and his followers, stating that

. . . the present opposition is not only an attempt to revise Bolshevism not only a flagrant departure from Leninism but patently a petty-bourgeois deviation. There is no doubt whatever that this opposition mirrors the pressure of the petty-bourgeoisie on the position of the proletarian party and its policy.†

* 'The discussion, Rafail, the articles by Preobrazhensky and Sapronov, and Trotsky's letter' by JV Stalin, *Pravda*, 15 December 1923. Collected Works Vol 5, p395.

† 'Resolution on the results of the discussion and on the petty-bourgeois deviation in the party', January 1924. Published in *Against Trotskyism*, Soviet Institute of Marxism-Leninism, 1972, p157.

6. Lenin's death and Trotsky's attempt to substitute Trotskyism for Leninism

After a further stroke on the morning of 21 January 1924, Lenin died that same evening. Trotsky, although a newcomer to the party, had convinced himself that he had a better claim to succeed Lenin than old, trusted and tried Bolsheviks such as Stalin.

So, in October 1924, Trotsky published an introduction to his collected works entitled *The Lessons of October*, which purported to deal with the reasons for the Bolshevik victory in the October Revolution. Having made general ritual references in it to the necessity of a revolutionary party for the success of a revolution, Trotsky went on to belittle the role of the Bolshevik party and to extol his own part in the revolution, hinting that Lenin had suddenly changed his previous position for that of Trotsky, to which fact alone was to be attributed the success of the October Revolution.

He also dragged out of the cupboard his old and much-discredited theory of 'permanent revolution', arguing that hostile collisions between the proletarian vanguard and the broad masses of the peasantry were inevitable. One gets the impression from reading his *Lessons of October* that it was Trotsky who had organised the October victory.

In other words, the man who had fought against Bolshevism and Leninism for fourteen long years, who had sided with the Mensheviks and liquidators to oppose the building by Lenin's Bolsheviks of the proletarian revolutionary party capable of leading the proletariat and the broad masses in seizing political power, who had spent his life opposing Lenin's theory of proletarian revolution with his absurd theory of 'permanent revolution', who had opposed the Bolshevik slogan of defeat of one's own government in the imperialist war (the first world war) with his

chauvinistic slogan demanding 'Neither victory nor defeat', suddenly and providentially descended on the scene in Petersburg to rescue the revolution from the frightened and useless lot that constituted the central committee of the Bolshevik party, the majority of whom, according to this fairy tale worthy of the *Arabian Nights*, were opposed to the October uprising!!

Nothing could be further from the truth. The story of Trotsky's 'special role' in October originated with John Reed, the author of *Ten Days That Shook the World*, who, being remote from the Bolshevik party, had no knowledge of the secret meeting of its central committee on 23 October 1917 and was therefore taken in by the gossip spread by people such as Nikolai Sukhanov. These fairy tales about Trotsky's special role in October were later passed round and repeated in several pamphlets written by Trotskyites, including Syrkin's pamphlet on October. After Lenin's death, Trotsky strongly supported these rumours in his literary pronouncements.

Since a systematic attempt was being made by Trotskyites to rewrite the history of October and bring up Soviet youth on such legends, Stalin, in a speech delivered at the plenum of the communist group of the AUCCTU,⁹ refuted – by reference to hard facts – these *Arabian Nights* fairy tales in his characteristically devastating manner.

Citing the minutes of the Bolshevik party's central committee meeting of 23 October 1917, Stalin proved that the resolution on the uprising had been adopted by a majority of ten against two; that the same meeting had elected a political centre, called the political bureau, to direct the uprising, its members being Lenin, Zinoviev, Stalin, Kamenev, Trotsky, Sokolnikov and Bubnov. Thus the centre included even Zinoviev and Kamenev who had been the only two to vote against the resolution on the uprising.

This was possible in spite of the political disagreements between them because there was at that time a unity of views

WHAT IS TROTSKYISM?

between these two (Zinoviev and Kamenev) and the rest of the central committee on such fundamental questions

. . . as the character of the Russian revolution, the driving forces of the revolution, the role of the peasantry, the principles of Party leadership, and so forth.*

Thus the decision on the uprising had been taken by the central committee and the central committee alone. The political direction of the uprising was firmly in the hands of the central committee.

As to the painfully persistent legend that Trotsky played a 'special' role, that he 'inspired' and was the 'sole leader' of the October uprising, Stalin dealt with it in his brilliant 1924 article 'Trotskyism or Leninism', which is reprinted in full in chapter five of this pamphlet.

7. Trotskyism – a rallying point for counter-revolution

Stalin concluded that seminal article by pointing out that the danger was

. . . that Trotskyism, owing to its entire inner content, stands every chance of becoming the centre and rallying point of the non-proletarian elements who are striving to weaken, to disintegrate the proletarian dictatorship.

In view of which, it was 'the duty of the party *to bury Trotskyism as an ideological trend*'.

In later years, Trotsky himself was obliged to admit that 'in the wake of this vanguard [ie, the Trotskyist opposition], there dragged the tail end of all sorts of dissatisfied, ill-equipped and

* 'Trotskyism or Leninism?', *op cit*, p341.

even chagrined careerists', adding, however, that the opposition had managed to free itself from 'its accidental and uninvited fellow wayfarers'.*

On the contrary, as the contents of the pages that follow reveal, it is precisely the non-proletarian elements, with their irreconcilable hostility to the proletarian dictatorship and their striving for its disintegration, who supported the Trotskyist opposition in the USSR and who continued to support him abroad after his expulsion from the Soviet Union. And it is precisely the same type of person who has rallied around Trotskyism ever since, driven by an innate hatred of Marxism-Leninism and of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Even the Trotskyite biographer Isaac Deutscher was compelled to say:

Outside the party, formless revolutionary frustration mingled with distinctly counter-revolutionary trends. Since the ruling group had singled out Trotsky as a target for attack, he automatically attracted the spurious sympathy of many who had hitherto hated him.

As he made his appearance in the streets of Moscow [in the spring of 1924], he was spontaneously applauded by crowds in which idealist communists rubbed shoulders with Mensheviks, Social Revolutionaries, and the new bourgeoisie of the NEP, by all those indeed who, for diverse reasons hoped for a change [ie, for the disintegration of the proletarian dictatorship through the weakening and disintegration of the Bolshevik party].†

At its plenary meeting of 17-20 January 1925, the central committee of the RCP(B) characterised Trotskyism as a 'variety of Menshevism' and Trotsky's ceaseless attacks on Bolshevism

* 'The expulsion of Zinoviev' by L Trotsky, *The Militant*, 12 November 1932.

† I Deutscher, *Stalin*, 1966, p279.

as an attempt *to substitute Trotskyism for Leninism*. This meeting resolved to remove Trotsky from the office of chairman of the Revolutionary Military Council of the USSR, and resolved

Most categorically to warn Comrade Trotsky that membership of a Bolshevik party demands real and not mere verbal subordination to party discipline and complete and unreserved abandonment of opposition to Leninism in any form.*

8. Emergence of the new opposition

After the above meeting pronounced against Trotsky and warned that his splittist activity and anti-Leninist propaganda was incompatible with party membership, Trotsky retreated for a while, awaiting his chance. This chance came when the two old Bolsheviks Zinoviev and Kamenev, frightened by difficulties and overcome by defeatism, went into opposition after the fourteenth party conference of April 1925 affirmed the possibility of building socialism in the USSR.

Being incorrigible defeatists and sceptics, Zinoviev and Kamenev denied the possibility of building socialism in the Soviet Union, and in this way found common ground with pessimism, scepticism and defeatism personified – namely, Trotsky, the author of the theory of ‘permanent revolution’, the epitome of hopelessness.

The ‘New Opposition’ (as it was called) led by Zinoviev and Kamenev launched vicious attacks on the party’s Leninist line (on the possibility of building socialism) at the fourteenth party congress, which opened in December 1925. After suffering a crushing defeat at that congress, the new opposition, headed

* ‘Resolution on Comrade Trotsky’s actions’.

by Zinoviev and Kamenev (who had until only recently been seeking to remove Trotsky from the leadership and whom Trotsky, in turn, had been seeking to eliminate from the leadership of the party) openly embraced Trotskyism.

Thus emerged an anti-party opposition bloc, to which flocked the remnants of the various opposition groups previously squashed by the party – all motivated by their hatred of, and opposition to, the party's policy of strengthening the proletarian dictatorship and building socialism in the USSR.

The leaders of this opposition, Trotsky, Zinoviev and Kamenev, 'granting each other mutual amnesty', as Stalin put it, and using as an occasion and a pretext the collapse of the British general strike (which they blamed on the leadership of the Bolshevik party for having allegedly failed to give leadership and guidance to the British workers), produced their platform, written by Trotsky, which was presented in part to the plenum of the central committee that met on 6-9 April 1926, and in full to the meeting of 14-23 July 1926.

In flagrant breach of party discipline, the opposition organised demonstrations in factories, demanding full discussion of their platform. Communist workers vehemently denounced the opposition leaders and made them leave these meetings. Faced with this humiliating defeat, the opposition leaders beat a retreat and on 16 October 1926 sent a statement in which they confessed their errors and promised to desist in future from their factional activity against the party.

In the words of Ian Grey:

Appalled by their own temerity and recklessness, the six leaders – Trotsky, Zinoviev, Kamenev, Pyatakov, Sokolnikov and Evdakimov – confessed their guilt in a public declaration and swore not to pursue factional activity in future. They also denounced their own left-wing supporters in the Comintern and

the Workers' Opposition group.*

9. Formation of an illegal party

The opposition's penitent statement turned out to be totally insincere and thoroughly hypocritical. As a matter of fact, the opposition had formed an illegal party of its own, with a separate system of membership, district committees and a centre. The illegal party, with a secret illegal printing press, held secret meetings at which the opposition's factional platform, and the tactics to be adopted against the Bolshevik party, were discussed – all in violation of the decisions of the tenth party congress banning the formation and continuation of separate factions within the party.

In October 1926, the central committee plenum, sitting jointly with the central control commission, issued a severe warning to the leaders of the opposition, removing Trotsky from the Politburo and Kamenev from his candidate membership of this body. Zinoviev was removed from the Comintern.

The fifteenth all-Union party conference of October/November 1926 characterised the Trotsky-Zinoviev opposition as a Menshevik deviation in the party and issued a warning that further development in the direction of Menshevism would lead to the opposition's expulsion from the party.

At the beginning of 1927, the opposition renewed its attack on the policy of the Comintern, blaming both it and the CPSU for reverses suffered by the Chinese Revolution.

Taking advantage of internal difficulties, as well as of the deterioration in the international position of the USSR, the opposition yet again came out with the so-called 'Platform of Eighty-

* I Grey, *Stalin – Man of History*, 1982, pp213-4.

Three'. Renewing their slander against the party, the opposition claimed in this platform that the Soviet government was intending to abolish the monopoly of foreign trade and grant political rights to the kulaks. Such slanders could not but encourage the kulaks and imperialism alike to put pressure on the USSR in an attempt to wrest precisely such concessions from the Soviet government.

In addition, the opposition demagogically demanded greater freedom in the party, which it understood to mean the freedom to form factions and to

. . . indulge in unparalleled abuse and impermissible vilification of the Central Committee, CPSU(B) and the ECCI. They complain of the 'regime' within the Comintern and the CPSU(B). Essentially, what they want is freedom to disorganise the Comintern and the CPSU(B).*

10. Trotskyism's struggle against 'Stalinism' – a continuation of the struggle against Leninism

What the Trotskyite opposition was fighting against was the regime established by the tenth congress under the guidance of Lenin – a regime designed to strengthen the dictatorship of the proletariat through unity and iron discipline within the Bolshevik party by outlawing factionalism.

The underlying principles of the regime established by the tenth congress were that

. . . while inner-party democracy is operated and business-

* 'The revolution in China and the tasks of the Comintern', speech by JV Stalin to the executive committee of the Communist International (ECCI), 24 May 1927. CW Vol 9, p317.

WHAT IS TROTSKYISM?

like criticism of the party's defects and mistakes is permitted, no factionalism whatsoever is permitted, and all factionalism must be abandoned on pain of expulsion from the party.

I assert (said Stalin) that the Trotskyites had already started their fight against the Leninist regime in the party in Lenin's time, and that the fight the Trotskyites are now [in September 1927] waging is a continuation of the fight against the regime in the party which they were already waging in Lenin's time.*

As the opposition's platform drew no support from the workers, it retreated again and handed another declaration to the central committee on 8 August 1927, in which its leaders promised *yet again* to cease their factional activity – only to violate this pledge a month later.

As the preparations got under way in September 1927 for the fifteenth party congress, the opposition drew up a third statement of its aims and policies. An end had to be put to the opposition's factionalism, its disorganising activity and the charade of repeated violations of its hypocritical admissions of guilt and promises to cease its factionalism. So, at the end of October 1927, the central committee, in a joint meeting with the central control commission, expelled Trotsky and Zinoviev from the central committee, deciding further to submit all the documents relating to the Trotskyite opposition's factional activity to the fifteenth congress for consideration by the latter.

It is worth recalling that during the party discussion preceding that congress, seven hundred and twenty-four thousand members voted for the central committee's Leninist policy, while a derisory four thousand votes were cast for the Trotskyite-

* 'The political complexion of the Russian opposition', speech by JV Stalin to the presidium of the ECCI and the international control commission, 27 September 1927. CW Vol 10, p166.

Zinovievite opposition bloc's platform. That is, half of one per cent of the membership that took part in this debate voted with Trotsky and co.

11. Why did the opposition fail?

The opposition failed to get any support in the party organisations, for its line was that of utter bankruptcy – the line of wanting to supplant Leninism by Trotskyism, while the party wished faithfully to pursue the line of Leninism; that of revolutionary Bolshevism.

How, then, asked Stalin, are we to explain the fact that, notwithstanding his oratorical skill, notwithstanding his will to lead, notwithstanding his abilities, Trotsky was thrown out of the leadership of the great party which is called the CPSU(B)?

. . .

The reason is that the opposition intended to *replace* Leninism with Trotskyism, to *supplement* Leninism with Trotskyism, to '*improve*' Leninism by means of Trotskyism. But the party wants to remain faithful to Leninism in spite of all the various artifices of the down-at-heel aristocrats in the party. That is the root cause why the party, which has made three revolutions, found it necessary to turn its back on Trotsky and on the opposition as a whole.*

Speaking at the fifteenth congress, Stalin returned to this question again.

How could it happen that the party as a whole, and after it the working class as well, so thoroughly isolated the opposi-

* *Ibid*, pp164-5.

tion? After all, the opposition is headed by well-known people with well-known names, people who know how to advertise themselves (*voices*: 'Quite right!'), people who are not afflicted with modesty (*applause*) and who are able to blow their own trumpets, to make the most of their wares.

It happened because the leading group of the opposition proved to be a group of petty-bourgeois intellectuals divorced from life, divorced from the revolution, divorced from the party, from the working class. (*Voices*: 'Quite right!' *Applause*) *

12. From factionalism within the party to counter-revolutionary struggle against the Soviet regime

Faced with utter defeat within the party, bankrupt politically and isolated from the party membership, the Trotskyite-Zinovievite bloc switched over from factional activity within the party to anti-Soviet and counter-revolutionary struggle against the Bolshevik regime, attracting in the process all the anti-Soviet elements to their camp.

On 7 November 1927, the tenth anniversary of the October Revolution, Trotsky and Zinoviev organised *anti-party demonstrations* in Moscow and Leningrad. Poorly attended, these counter-revolutionary demonstrations were easily dispersed by the demonstrators of the working class under the leadership of the CPSU.

By these actions, the opposition had given full proof of its conversion into a counter-revolutionary force openly hostile to the proletarian dictatorship in the USSR. Having infringed all the norms and rules of party life, the Trotskyites now embarked upon a career of violating state laws, which in due course led

* 'Political report of the central committee' delivered by JV Stalin to the CPSU(B)'s fifteenth congress, 3 December 1927. CW Vol 10, p345.

them to murder, sabotage, wrecking and, finally, to an alliance with fascism. On 14 November 1927, the central committee expelled Trotsky and Zinoviev from the party, while other members of their group were removed from the central committee and the central control commission.

In December, the fifteenth congress, noting that the opposition had ideologically broken with Leninism and degenerated into Menshevism, adopting the path of capitulation to international imperialism and the internal bourgeoisie and becoming an instrument of struggle against the dictatorship of the proletariat, enthusiastically endorsed these expulsions. It expelled in addition a further seventy-five members of the Trotsky-Zinoviev bloc, along with fifteen democratic centralists. The congress then instructed party organisations to purge their ranks of incorrigible Trotskyites and to take steps to re-educate rank-and-file members of the opposition in the spirit of Leninism.

After the congress, many ordinary members of the opposition recognised their errors, broke with Trotskyism and were restored to party membership. In January 1928, Trotsky was exiled to Alma-Ata in central Asia (Kazakhstan). Even there, he continued clandestinely to indulge in his anti-party, anti-Soviet activity. Consequently, in January 1929, he was expelled from the Soviet Union.

Since the opposition intended little by little to switch the Bolshevik party from the Leninist path to that of Trotskyism, and since the party wanted to remain a Leninist party, it was only natural that the party should turn its back on the opposition and raise ever higher the banner of Leninism.

This alone explains why, as Stalin put it:

Yesterday's leaders of the party have now become renegades.*

* 'The Trotskyist opposition before and now', speech by JV Stalin to a joint plenum of the party CC and CCC, 23 October 1927. CW Vol 10, p199.

13. Not personal factors but departure from Leninism is the cause of Trotskyism's failure

Instead of grasping this truth, the Trotskyite opposition in its day, and the Trotskyites ever since then, have sought to 'explain' the opposition's defeat by reference to 'personal' factors.

This is how Stalin described the far-reaching historical roots of Trotsky's fight against Bolshevism and the reasons for the failure and bankruptcy of the opposition's line:

The opposition thinks that its defeat can be 'explained' by the personal factor, by Stalin's rudeness . . . That is too cheap an explanation! It is an incantation, not an explanation. Trotsky has been fighting Leninism since 1904. From 1904 until the February revolution in 1917 he hung around the Mensheviks, desperately fighting Lenin's party all the time.

During that period, Trotsky suffered a number of defeats at the hand of Lenin's party. Why? Perhaps Stalin's rudeness was to blame? But Stalin was not yet the secretary of the central committee at that time; he was not abroad, but in Russia, fighting tsarism underground, whereas the struggle between Trotsky and Lenin raged abroad. So what has Stalin's rudeness got to do with it?

During the period from the October Revolution to 1922, Trotsky, already a member of the Bolshevik party, managed to make two 'grand' sorties against Lenin and his party: in 1918 – on the question of the Brest peace; and in 1921 – on the trade-union question.

Both those sorties ended in Trotsky being defeated. Why? Perhaps Stalin's rudeness was to blame here? But at that time Stalin was not yet the secretary of the central committee. The

TROTSKY(ISM): TOOL OF IMPERIALISM

secretarial posts were then occupied by notorious Trotskyists. So what has Stalin's rudeness got to do with it?

Later, Trotsky made a number of fresh sorties against the party (1923, 1924, 1926, 1927) and each sortie ended in Trotsky suffering a fresh defeat.

Is it not obvious from all this that Trotsky's fight against the Leninist party has deep, far-reaching historical roots? Is it not obvious from this that the struggle the party is now waging against Trotskyism is a continuation of the struggle that the party, headed by Lenin, waged from 1904 onwards?

Is it not obvious from all this that the attempts of the Trotskyists to replace Leninism by Trotskyism are the chief cause of the failure and bankruptcy of the entire line of the opposition?

Our party was born and grew up in the storm of revolutionary battles. It is not a party that grew up in a period of peaceful development. For that very reason it is rich in revolutionary traditions and does not make a fetish of its leaders.

At one time, Plekhanov was the most popular man in the party. More than that, he was the founder of the party, and his popularity was incomparably greater than that of Trotsky or Zinoviev. Nevertheless, in spite of that the party turned away from Plekhanov as soon as he began to depart from Marxism and go over to opportunism.

Is it surprising, then, that people who are not so 'great', people like Trotsky and Zinoviev, found themselves at the tail of the Party after they began to depart from Leninism?*

Just as the struggle waged against Trotskyism by the Bolshevik party headed by Stalin from 1924 onwards was a continuation of the struggle that the party headed by Lenin had waged from

* *Ibid*, pp199-201.

WHAT IS TROTSKYISM?

1903 onwards, so Trotsky's fight against the Bolshevik party headed by Stalin was a continuation of the struggle that he had waged against the Bolshevik party when it was headed by Lenin. Lenin had been the chief target of Trotsky's vilifications from 1903 to 1917. After his death, Stalin came to occupy this honourable position, became the chief target of the opposition's attack.

This was because Stalin, by faithfully defending and carrying forward the Leninist line, became the most representative spokesman of the Bolshevik party, and in that capacity drew the wrath of the opposition in its repeated, if unsuccessful, attempts to substitute Trotskyism for Leninism.

It was not a case of the allegedly Leninist Trotsky fighting against an allegedly outside usurper, Stalin, as is put out in Trotskyite fairy tales; on the contrary, it was the staunch and indefatigable Leninist (Stalin) who brilliantly continued the successful Leninist assault on the anti-Bolshevik and petty-bourgeois ideology of Trotskyism.

This alone explains Trotskyism's hatred for Josef Stalin, the very mention of whose name causes Trotskyite gentry to foam at the mouth.

This is how Stalin described the opposition's hatred for him:

First of all, about the personal factor. You have heard here how assiduously the oppositionists hurl abuse at Stalin, abuse him with all their might. The reason why the main attacks were directed against Stalin is because Stalin knows all the opposition's tricks better, perhaps, than some of our comrades do, and it is not easy, I dare say, to fool him. So they strike their blows primarily at Stalin. Well, let them hurt abuse to their hearts' content.

And what is Stalin? Stalin is only a minor figure. Take Lenin. Who does not know that at the time of the August bloc the opposition, headed by Trotsky, waged an even more scurril-

ous campaign of slander against Lenin? Listen to Trotsky, for example.

'The wretched squabbling systematically provoked by Lenin, that old hand at the game, that professional exploiter of all that is backward in the Russian labour movement, seems like a senseless obsession.' (*See Trotsky's 'Letter to Chkheidze', April 1913*)

Note the language, comrades! Note the language! It is Trotsky writing. And writing about Lenin.

Is it surprising, then, that Trotsky, who wrote in such an ill-mannered way about the great Lenin, whose shoelaces he was not worthy of tying, should now hurl abuse at one of Lenin's numerous pupils – Comrade Stalin?

More than that. I think the opposition does me honour by venting all its hatred against Stalin. That is as it should be. I think it would be strange and offensive if the opposition, which is trying to wreck the party, were to praise Stalin, who is defending the fundamentals of the Leninist party principle.*

* *Ibid*, pp177-8.

3. Trotsky's regular predictions of doom

Proceeding from the unscientific and pessimistic, not to say anti-Leninist, theory of 'permanent revolution', which was refuted by the experience of the three Russian revolutions and by all further social development in the USSR and elsewhere, Trotsky could, and did, predict nothing but doom.

The underlying theme and purpose of all his statements between 1923 and 1940 was to deny any possibility of building socialism in the USSR, and thus to undermine the confidence of the Soviet proletariat in building a new society by its own efforts if the world revolution failed to come to its rescue.

This was accompanied by vicious attacks on the only guarantee for the successes of the USSR during this epoch-making period of particular difficulty and particular achievement: namely, the Leninist leadership of the party and state of the proletarian dictatorship.

Of course, these attacks were always hidden under a guise of attacking the 'bureaucratic state apparatus', or 'Stalinist bureaucracy', with the alleged desire of aiming to improve matters. And when the oft-predicted disaster did not happen, this only provided Trotsky with an occasion to report on *invented*

widespread disaster, disillusionment and demoralisation in the hope of thereby bringing about the fulfilment of his jeremiads.

1. Trotsky's 'new course' predicts degeneration of the party

In 1923, at the time of the New Economic Policy (NEP), Trotsky predicted immediate doom for the proletarian dictatorship through the 'degeneration of the state apparatus in a bourgeois direction'. In his *New Course*, written in 1923, he claimed that

Bureaucratism has reached an excessive and truly alarming development.

This is how he predicted the restoration of capitalism through the NEP, claiming that quantity would at a certain stage be transformed into quality:

The rapid development of private capital . . . would show that private capital is interposing itself more and more between the workers' state and the peasantry, is acquiring an economic and therefore a political influence . . . Such a rupture between Soviet industry and agriculture, between the proletariat and the peasantry, would constitute a grave danger for the proletarian revolution, a symptom of the possibility of the triumph of the counter-revolution.

What are the political paths by which the victory of the counter-revolution might come if the economic hypothesis just set forth were to be realised? . . . The political process would assume in the main the character of the degeneration of the state apparatus in a bourgeois direction . . .

If private capital increased rapidly and succeeded in fusing with the peasantry, the active counter-revolutionary tenden-

PREDICTIONS OF DOOM

cies directed against the Communist party would then probably prevail . . .

The counter-revolutionary tendencies can find a support among the kulaks, the middlemen, the retailers, the concessionaires, in a word, among elements much more capable of surrounding the state apparatus than the party itself . . .

The negative social phenomena we have just enumerated and which now nurture bureaucratisation could place the revolution in peril should they continue to develop . . . bureaucratism in the state and party apparatus is the expression of the most vexatious tendencies inherent in our situation, of the defects and deviations in our work which . . . might sap the basis of the revolution . . . Quantity will at a certain stage be transformed into quality.*

In all this, Trotsky forgot completely the role of the dictatorship of the proletariat. Of course, the introduction of the NEP did unleash capitalist elements, in the countryside in particular; of course, it was a partial return to capitalism. All that was known to the author of the NEP, Vladimir Ilyich Lenin. But there was no other way of transition from war communism to socialism except through the NEP, even though the latter, by unleashing capitalist elements in the countryside, carried the danger of capitalist restoration.

This danger, however, this possibility of capitalist restoration, would never be realised as long as the proletarian dictatorship exercised its iron rule over hostile capitalist classes – kulaks and traders. That is why Lenin called for the maximum strengthening of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

This, in turn, could only be done through unity of will and iron discipline in the ruling Bolshevik party. That is why he caused

* L Trotsky, *New Course*, 1923, Chapter 4.

the tenth party congress to pass the resolution, written by himself, calling for existing factions within the party to be disbanded forthwith, and for the formation of new factions in the future to be banned, and why that resolution declared that non-compliance would result in immediate expulsion from the party.

Trotsky, for his part, consistently *undermined* the proletarian dictatorship by his vicious attacks on the party's leadership, his denigration of the party and state apparatus in the USSR, and by flouting all norms and discipline of the Bolshevik party.

2. Failure of Trotsky's predictions

Notwithstanding Trotskyist sabotage, Trotsky's predictions did not come true, thanks to the Leninist leadership of the party and state during this very difficult period.

Instead, NEP Russia was actually transformed into a mighty socialist USSR, which then went on to achieve the crowning glory of defeating the mighty Nazi war machine almost single-handedly. As the 'degeneration', 'initiative-killing bureaucracy', 'ossification', 'estrangement' and 'morbid uneasiness' predicted by Trotsky failed to materialise and the USSR began to be transformed through the collectivisation and industrialisation drive of the five-year plans,¹⁰ Trotsky intensified his attacks on the USSR and the leadership of the Bolshevik party – revealing in the process his true hideous features as a market socialist – ie, as a bourgeois socialist of the social-democratic variety.

3. Contemptible and cowardly capitulator

In 1933, Trotsky published his pamphlet *Soviet Economy in Danger*, in which he came out in opposition to this second assault on capitalism – ie, the assault mounted through socialist

PREDICTIONS OF DOOM

industrialisation and collectivisation, both of which were measures of world revolutionary historic significance. He declared that the

. . . correct and economically sound collectivisation, at a given stage, should not lead to the elimination of the NEP but to the gradual reorganisation of its methods.*

In other words, no attempt should be made to eliminate capitalism in general, and capitalism in the countryside in particular.

Gorbachev-style, pretending to stand for some sort of control of the market, Trotsky's proposed method of controlling the market was to leave it to the market to control itself!

The regulation of the market (he wrote) itself must depend upon the tendencies that are brought about through its medium.†

Every revolutionary giant stride forward of the Soviet economy at that time, because outside the market, was portrayed by this high priest of market socialism as disorder and 'economic chaos':

By eliminating the market and installing instead Asiatic bazaars, the bureaucracy has created . . . the conditions for the most barbaric gyrations of prices and consequently has placed a mine under commercial calculations. As a result, economic chaos has been redoubled.‡

Trotsky, who in December 1925, at the fourteenth congress of the CPSU, had tried to force on the party a policy of immedi-

* L Trotsky, *Soviet Economy in Danger*, 1933, p32.

† *Ibid*, p30.

‡ *Ibid*, p34.

ate collectivisation of the peasantry, when the conditions necessary for such collectivisation were totally lacking, this same Trotsky in 1933, when collectivisation was well on the way to completion, came out in *opposition* to the policy of liquidating the kulaks as a class, demanding instead the establishment of

. . . a policy of severely restricting the exploiting tendencies of the kulaks.*

In other words, capitalism must not be eliminated in the countryside.

Praying for miracles Trotsky declared that 'Commodities must be adapted to human needs'. His position amounted to this: 'Economic accounting is unthinkable without market relations.' In view of this, it is hardly surprising that Trotsky came to the conclusion that

It is necessary to put off the second five-year plan. Away with shrieking enthusiasm!†

No wonder that Stalin made the following observation on the Trotskyist programme:

We have always said that the 'lefts' are in fact rights who mask their rightness by left phrases. Now the 'lefts' themselves confirm the correctness of our statement.

Take last year's issues of the Trotskyist *Bulletin*. What do Messieurs the Trotskyists demand, what do they write about, in what does their 'left' programme find expression? They demand: the dissolution of the state farms, on the grounds that they do not pay, the dissolution of the majority of the collective farms, on the grounds that they are fictitious, the abandon-

* *Ibid*, p47.

† *Ibid*, p41.

PREDICTIONS OF DOOM

ment of the policy of eliminating the kulaks, reversion to the policy of concessions, and the leasing to concessionaires of a number of our industrial enterprises, on the grounds that they do not pay.

There you have the programme of these contemptible cowards and capitulators – their counter-revolutionary programme for restoring capitalism in the USSR!

What difference is there between this programme and that of the extreme rights? Clearly, there is none. It follows that the 'lefts' have openly associated themselves with the counter-revolutionary programme of the rights in order to enter into a bloc with them and to wage a joint struggle against the party.*

4. Trotsky's anti-Soviet diatribes are grist to the imperialist mill

Although bourgeois economics learnt nothing from Trotsky's *Soviet Economy in Danger*, since he had but repeated, in a clumsy way, what had been said a decade earlier by bourgeois economists such as Ludwig Von Mises and Boris Brutzkus, it was nevertheless extensively quoted in the imperialist press by the bourgeois critics of socialist construction, for it enabled them to stress that their 'objective' and 'impartial' critiques of socialism, and their dogma that it was impossible for society to free itself of the market, were fully accepted by this 'old Bolshevik'.¹¹

Trotsky's diatribes against the Soviet regime were grasped with alacrity by the German and Italian fascists:

* 'Report to the seventeenth congress of the CPSU(B), 26 January 1934. CW Vol 13, pp370-1.

See, my friends (said Goebbels to the German socialists and communists), what Trotsky is saying about the Soviet state. It is no longer a socialist state but a state dominated by a parasitic bureaucracy, living on the Russian people.*

These and similar arguments, broadcast by the fascists as well as by other imperialist states, were designed to weaken both the faith the masses might have in the USSR and their faith in themselves; in their capacity to build a new life for themselves. These Trotskyist arguments were, and continue to be, seized upon by the opponents of communism in the Labour movement, as well as by the radical petty-bourgeois intelligentsia.

Trotskyism thus performed, and continues to perform, the function of confusing and disarming the working-class movement politically and ideologically.

Flying in the face of all reality, ignoring the developments in socialist construction in the USSR, Trotsky continued to predict disaster and to advocate the overthrow of the 'Stalinist bureaucracy' – a euphemism for the Leninist leadership of the Bolshevik party and the Soviet state – in other words, the overthrow of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

In an article written in October 1933, Trotsky predicted the restoration of capitalism if 'Stalinist bureaucracy' continued to hold sway:

The further unhindered development of bureaucratism must lead inevitably to the cessation of economic and cultural growth, to a terrible social crisis and to the downward plunge of the entire society. But this would imply not only the collapse of the proletarian dictatorship but also the end of bureaucratic domination. In place of the workers' state would come not 'so-

* See H Brar, *Trotskyism or Leninism?*, 1993, Appendix 2: Trotsky and the imperialist press.

PREDICTIONS OF DOOM

cial bureaucratic' but capitalist relations.*

In February 1935, Trotsky predicted the 'inevitable collapse of the Stalinist political regime' and its replacement by 'fascist-capitalist counter-revolution', unless the removal of the Soviet regime came 'as a conscious act of the proletarian vanguard', to wit, the same Trotskyist counter-revolutionaries who denied the very possibility of building socialism in the first place, and who tried to put every obstacle (albeit unsuccessfully) in the way of socialist construction. Who, hand in hand with the imperialist bourgeoisie, slandered the Soviet state and Bolshevik party leadership, belittled and denigrated every single achievement of socialist industry, agriculture, science, technology and the arts, and ended up by being allies and tools of German and Japanese fascism!!

These very contemptible cowards and counter-revolutionaries, these ardent advocates of the programme of capitalist restoration, in the topsy-turvy world of Trotskyist make-believe and intrigue, convinced themselves that they were the 'proletarian vanguard'!

At the same time, we were told by Trotsky that the Bolshevik party which, following the Leninist line, not only believed in the possibility of building socialism in the USSR but was actually accomplishing that building successfully in the face of internal and external difficulties and foes, was a regime of 'Bonapartism' that was bound to make way for 'counter-revolution' unless its removal came about at the hands of the counter-revolutionary Trotskyists who had awarded themselves the title of 'proletarian vanguard'!

The inevitable collapse of the Stalinist political regime will lead to the establishment of Soviet democracy only in the event that

* 'The class nature of the Soviet state' by L Trotsky, 1 October 1933.

the removal of Bonapartism comes as the conscious act of the proletarian vanguard In all other cases, in place of Stalinism there could only come the fascist-capitalist counterrevolution.*

5. Acknowledging socialist achievements as a means of gaining credibility

By the end of the second five-year plan, however, even the blind could not fail to see the gigantic, truly heroic and world-historic achievements of socialist construction. Even intelligent representatives of imperialism began to make admissions about the achievements of socialism in all walks of life of the USSR – the only country to have achieved full employment while the capitalist world was reeling under the hammer blows of recession.

Trotsky was in danger of being discredited as a result of the crying discrepancy between Soviet reality and his own description of it. So Trotsky, that most anti-Soviet of all anti-Soviets, in order to gain some credibility, was compelled to write almost effusively of the gains of socialism in the USSR – again, of course, merely as a prelude to a further scurrilous campaign of lies and slander against the Soviet regime.

In his *Revolution Betrayed*, he wrote:

Gigantic achievements in industry, enormously promising beginnings in agriculture, an extraordinary growth of the old industrial cities and a building of new ones, a rapid increase of the number of workers, a rise in cultural level and cultural demands – such are the indubitable results of the October Revolution . . .

* 'The Workers' state, Thermidor and Bonapartism' by L Trotsky, published as 'The Soviet Union today' in *New International* (New York), July 1935.

PREDICTIONS OF DOOM

Socialism has demonstrated its fight to victory, not in the pages of *Das Kapital* but in an industrial arena comprising a sixth part of the earth's surface – not in the language of dialectics, but in the language of steel cement; and electricity . . . a backward country has achieved in less than ten years successes unexampled in history.

This also ends the quarrel with the reformists in the workers' movement. Can we compare for one moment their mouse-like fussing with the titanic work accomplished by this people aroused to a new life by revolution?*

Thus, quite mysteriously and without any explanation let alone a correction or an apology from Trotsky, we find that the 'smug, negative, disdainful cliquish, bureaucratic apparatus', characterised on the one hand by 'inertia' and on the other by 'antagonistic violence towards criticism', staffed with only 'careerists and political hangers-on' who are so divorced from reality as to be in danger of losing the support of the masses and forfeiting state dominance to the 'counter-revolutionary tendencies' among 'retailers, middlemen . . . and kulaks – this bureaucratic apparatus' (ie, the leadership of the Bolshevik party and the Soviet state) has somehow risen to the occasion and organised 'ten years of successes unexampled in history'!

Normally, Trotskyism paints a picture of the Soviet people being ordered about and herded around by the 'Stalinist bureaucracy', meekly and sullenly accepting their fate. Yet in some pages, which are characteristically contradicted by other pages in the same book, Trotsky describes the enthusiasm with which the Soviet youth plunged into economic, cultural and artistic activity, in the following glowing terms:

To be sure, the youth are very active in the sphere of econom-

* L Trotsky, *The Revolution Betrayed*, 1936, chapter 1.

ics. In the Soviet Union . . . there are now 1.2 million communist youth in the collective farms. Hundreds of thousands of members of the communist youth have been mobilised during recent years for construction work, timber work, coal mining, gold production, for work in the Arctic, Sakhalin, or in Amur where the new town of Komsomolsk is in process of construction.

The new generation is putting out shock brigades, champion workers, Stakhanovites, foremen, under-administrators. The youth are studying and a considerable part of them are studying assiduously. They are as active, if not more so, in the sphere of athletics in its most daring or warlike forms such as parachute jumping and marksmanship. The enterprising and audacious are going on all kinds of dangerous expeditions.

'The better part of our youth,' said recently the well-known polar explorer, Schmidt, 'are eager to work where difficulties await them.' This is undoubtedly true . . .

. . . it would be a crude slander against the youth to portray them as controlled exclusively, or even predominantly, by personal interests. No, in the general mass they are magnanimous, responsive, enterprising . . . In their depths are various unformulated tendencies grounded in heroism and still only awaiting application. It is upon these moods in particular that the newest kind of Soviet patriotism is nurturing itself. It is undoubtedly very deep, sincere and dynamic.*

* *Ibid*, chapter 7.

6. More scurrilous attacks on socialism

All this, however, was only the prelude to a vicious denunciation of the Soviet regime, a negation of Soviet achievements and everything socialist, and a distortion – nay a downright falsification – of Soviet history.

Having been forced to pay lip service to socialism having 'demonstrated its right to victory', to the Soviet state having achieved 'ten years successes unexampled in history', Trotsky devoted the rest of his book to a vitriolic attack on the USSR and its leadership.

His readers were told, despite all the admissions about 'successes unexampled in history', that

The Soviet state in all its relations is far closer to a backward capitalism than to communism.*

That, far from achieving the lower stage of communism, what the Soviet Union had achieved was a

. . . preparatory regime transitional from capitalism to socialism.†

That this regime was engendering increasing inequalities:

Wage differences in the Soviet Union (he asserted) are not less but greater than in the capitalist countries.‡

And that industry was dominated by a 'corps of slave drivers'.‡

* *Ibid*, chapter 10.

† *Ibid*, chapter 3.

‡ *Ibid*, chapter 9.

Before this transitional regime could develop in the direction of socialism, it was absolutely necessary for there to be

. . . a second supplementary revolution – against bureaucratic absolutism,*

because

. . . the bureaucracy can be removed only by a revolutionary force. And, as always there will be fewer victims the more bold and decisive is the attack.*

Since the Soviet leadership had the overwhelming support of the working class and the collectivised peasantry, Trotsky's references to 'revolutionary force' could either mean acts of terrorism against the leadership of the Bolshevik party, or a military conspiracy, or foreign intervention for the overthrow of the Bolshevik regime – or a combination of all these means.

That this is precisely what Trotsky had in mind was made clear by his activities in the following years.†

7. Re-assertion of the discredited theory of 'permanent revolution'

There is also the inevitable statement that the advance towards socialism depends to some extent on the prior victory of the revolution in the rest of Europe – a rehash and latest version of Trotsky's permanent hopelessness that masquerades as the theory of 'permanent revolution'.‡

That being the case, one may be forgiven for asking: what will

* *Ibid*, chapter 11.

† See H Brar, *Trotskyism or Leninism?*, op cit.

‡ *The Revolution Betrayed*, op cit, appendix.

PREDICTIONS OF DOOM

the 'supplementary revolution against bureaucratic absolutism' achieve if the revolution is destined to vegetate and degenerate into hopelessness in the absence of 'victory of the revolution in the rest of Europe'?

In addition, the book contains virulent denunciations of all attempts at raising the productivity of labour, unattainable under the conditions of capitalism. Trotsky attacks all wage differentials, piece-work payments, socialist emulation drives – all of which are simply denounced as

. . . a source of injustice, oppression; and compulsions for the majority, privileges and a 'happy life' for the few.*

Apart from the demagoguery of it all, what comes through is the sheer ignorance, not to mention dishonesty: it would appear that its author has failed totally to grasp the essence of *The Critique of the Gotha Programme*, in which Marx dealt, among other things, with the norms of distribution under the lower and higher stages of communism.

In the lower stage, distribution can only be according to the formula 'From each according to his ability, to each according to his work', a formula which, as Lenin pointed out,

. . . *does not remove* the defects of distribution and the inequality of 'bourgeois law', which *continues to prevail* so long as products are divided 'according to the amount of labour performed'.†

* *Ibid*, chapter 10.

† VI Lenin, *The State and Revolution*, 1917, chapter 5. CW Vol 25, p471.

8. Equating socialism and fascism and spreading defeatist demoralisation

Driven by his intense and insensate hatred of the Soviet state, mindless subjectivism and limitless vindictiveness against the Bolshevik regime for the reason that the latter had decided to expel him for his incorrigible factionalism, Trotsky went to the despicable length of saying that

Stalinism and fascism . . . are symmetrical phenomena. In many of their features they show a deadly similarity.*

In case there were any room left for doubt, he added:

. . . with the working class and its sincere champions among the intelligentsia . . . our work will cause doubts and evoke distrust – not of the revolution but of its usurpers. But that is the very goal we have set ourselves.†

9. Predicting and calling for the defeat of the USSR in war

Since Trotsky, driven by a combination of egotistical factionalism and bourgeois subjectivism, always referred to the Leninist leadership of the Bolshevik party and the Soviet state as a 'Stalinist bureaucracy', a 'caste of usurpers', a 'totalitarian regime' etc, it can hardly be denied that the purpose and intention behind Trotsky's demented vituperations was to malign

* *Ibid*, chapter 11.

† *Ibid*, appendix.

PREDICTIONS OF DOOM

the Soviet government by attempting to convince workers all over the world that this regime, indistinguishable according to Trotsky from fascism, was not deserving of their support.

Such an attitude was only the prelude to wishing, and then calling, for the defeat of this regime in any war against fascism by spreading demoralisation.

That Trotskyism took this step, not only secretly but also openly, is clear from the following disgusting pronouncements he made, predicting with malicious glee the military defeat of the USSR in the impending second world war. Indeed, he went even further, asserting that a protracted war without a military defeat 'would have to lead to a bourgeois-Bonapartist revolution'. Here are Trotsky's very words:

Can we, however, expect that the Soviet Union will come out of the coming great war without defeat? To this frankly posed question, we will answer as frankly: if the war should only remain a war, the defeat of the Soviet Union would be inevitable. In a technical, economic and military sense, imperialism is incomparably more strong. If it is not paralysed by revolution in the west, imperialism will sweep away the regime which issued from the October Revolution.*

What would be the case if the Soviet Union managed to survive the fate assigned to it by Trotsky? Well, the destruction of the Soviet state would ensue just the same. Turn or twist as we may – military defeat or not – the Soviet Union could not possibly survive the war:

The protracted nature of the war (wrote Trotsky) will inevitably reveal the contradictions of the transition economy of the USSR with its bureaucratic planning . . . In the case of a

* *Ibid*, chapter 8.

TROTSKY(ISM): TOOL OF IMPERIALISM

protracted war accompanied by the *passivity of the world proletariat*, the internal social contradictions of the USSR not only might lead but would have to lead to a *bourgeois-Bonapartist counter-revolution*.*

In 1939 and 1940, nearing the end of a life full of irreconcilable hostility towards Leninism, and with a zeal worthy of a better cause, Trotsky again repeatedly predicted the defeat of the USSR and the triumph of Hitlerite Germany:

. . . we always started from the fact that the international policy of the Kremlin was determined by the new aristocracy's . . . incapacity to conduct a war.

. . . the ruling caste is no longer capable of thinking about tomorrow. Its formula is that of all doomed regimes: 'after us the deluge' . . .

The war will topple many things and many individuals. Artifice, trickery, frame-ups and treasons will prove of no avail in escaping its severe judgment.†

Stalin cannot make a war with discontented workers and peasants and with a decapitated Red Army.‡

The level of the USSR's productive forces forbids a major war... The involvement of the USSR in a major war before the end of this period would signify in any case a struggle with unequal weapons.

* L Trotsky, *War and the Fourth International*, July 1934.

† 'On the war and the Soviet-Nazi pact' by L Trotsky, *Socialist Appeal*, 11 September 1939.

‡ Statement to the press on the 'Soviet-German alliance' by L Trotsky, *Socialist Appeal*, 9 September 1939.

PREDICTIONS OF DOOM

The subjective factor, not less important than the material has changed in the last years sharply for the worse . . .

Stalin cannot wage an offensive war with any hope of victory. In case the USSR enters the war, with its innumerable victims and privations, the whole fraud of the official regime, its outrages and violence, will inevitably provoke a profound reaction on the part of the people, who have already carried out three revolutions in this century.

. . . the present war can crush the Kremlin bureaucracy long before revolution breaks out in some capitalist country.*

10. Predictions refuted by the epic victory of the USSR in World War Two

As usual, and happily for humanity, all Trotsky's predictions were totally belied.

After initial reverses in the first few weeks of the war, attributable in the main to the Nazi surprise attack, the Soviet defences stiffened. Before long they struck back. The rest of the world, like Trotsky, had expected that the USSR would hold out only a few weeks before collapsing in the face of the onslaught of the allegedly invincible Nazi war machine.

But the Red Army and Soviet people, united as one under the leadership of the CPSU and their supreme commander Josef Stalin, exploded this myth of Nazi invincibility. Soviet victories in the titanic battles of Moscow, Stalingrad, Kursk and Leningrad will forever be cherished not only by the peoples of the former, great and glorious Soviet Union, but also by all progressive humanity.

* 'Hitler and Stalin: What is really going on in Russia' by L Trotsky, Liberty magazine, 27 January 1940.

The Battle of Moscow had been an epic event . . . It had involved more than two million men; two thousand five hundred tanks, one thousand eight hundred aircraft, and twenty-five thousand guns. Casualties had been horrifying in scale.

For the Russians, it had ended in victory. They had suffered the full impact of the German *Blitzkrieg* offensive and, notwithstanding their losses . . . they had been able to mount an effective counterattack. They had begun to destroy the myth of German invincibility.*

The surrender by the fascist field marshal Friedrich von Paulus along with twenty-three other generals on 1 February 1943 at Stalingrad mesmerised the world. The victory of the Red Army at Stalingrad had been as incredible as it was heroic. Nazi losses in the Volga-Don-Stalingrad area were one and a half million men, three thousand five hundred tanks, twelve thousand guns and three thousand aircraft.

Never before had the Nazi war machine, which was accustomed to running over countries in days and weeks, suffered such a humiliating defeat, one

. . . in which the flower of the German army perished. It was against the background of this battle . . . that Stalin now rose to almost titanic stature in the eyes of the world.†

From then on, defeat stared the Germans in the face, leading inexorably to the Red Army's entry into Berlin and its storming of the Reichstag on 30 April 1945 – the same day on which the Führer committed suicide. Six days later, Field Marshall Wilhelm Keitel, acting on behalf of the German high command, surrendered to Soviet Marshall Georgy Zhukov.

* I Grey, *Stalin – Man of History*, 1982, p344.

† I Deutscher, *Stalin*, 1966, p472.

11. Stalin and the Great Patriotic War

Although the credit for the victory must correctly be given to the Soviet armed forces and the heroic efforts of the Soviet people, no narrative of these fateful years is complete without a reference, indeed a fulsome tribute, to the undisputed leader of the CPSU(B) and the Soviet people, the Supreme commander of the Soviet forces Josef Stalin.

Even a renegade like Mikhail Gorbachev was obliged, apropos the Soviet victory in the second world war, to admit that:

A factor in the achievement of victory was the tremendous political will, purposefulness and persistence, ability to organise and discipline people, displayed in the war years by Josef Stalin.*

Ian Grey, a bourgeois but honest writer, has this to say on this score:

The massive setbacks and the immediate threat to Moscow would have unnerved most men, but the impact on Stalin was to strengthen his grim determination to fight. No single factor was more important in holding the nation from disintegration at this time.†

Further:

It was in a real sense his [Stalin's] victory. It could not have been won without his industrialisation campaign, and espe-

* 'Report at the festive meeting on the seventieth anniversary of the Great October Revolution' in Moscow, 2 November 1987, p25.

† I Grey, *op cit*, p335.

cially the intensive development of industry beyond the Volga. Collectivisation had contributed to the victory by enabling the government to stockpile food and raw materials to prevent paralysis in industry and famine in the towns. But also collectivisation, with its machine-tractor stations, had given the peasants their first training in the use of tractors and other machines.*

Approvingly quoting Isaac Deutscher, who was far from friendly toward Stalin, Grey continued:

‘Collectivised farming had been ‘the peasants’ preparatory school for mechanised warfare’ . . .

It was his victory, too, because he had directed and controlled every branch of Russian operations throughout the war. The range and burden of his responsibilities were extraordinary, but day by day without a break for the four years of the war he exercised direct command of the Russian forces and control over supplies, war industries and government policy, including foreign policy.*

And in conclusion:

It was his victory, above all, because it had been won by his genius and labours, heroic in scale. The Russian people had looked to him for leadership, and he had not faded them. His speeches of 3 July and 6 November 1941, which had steeled them for the trials of war, and his presence in Moscow during the great battle of the city, had demonstrated his will to victory. He . . . inspired them and gave them positive direction. He had the capacity of attending to detail and keeping in mind the broad picture, and, while remembering the past and immersed

* *Ibid*, p419-20.

PREDICTIONS OF DOOM

in the present, he was constantly looking ahead to the future.*

Innately hostile as he was to Stalin, Deutscher was nevertheless obliged to paint this picture of Stalin's role during the war:

Many allied visitors who called at the Kremlin during the war were astonished to see on how many issues, great and small, military, political or diplomatic, Stalin personally took the final decision. He was in effect his own commander-in-chief, his own minister of defence, his own quartermaster, his own minister of supply, his own foreign minister, and even his own *chef de protocole*.

The stavka, the Red Army's GHQ, was in his offices in the Kremlin. From his office desk, in constant and direct touch with the commands of the various fronts, he watched and directed the campaigns in the field. From his office desk, too, he managed another stupendous operation, the evacuation of one thousand three hundred and sixty plants and factories from western Russia and the Ukraine to the Volga, the Urals and Siberia, an evacuation that involved not only machines and installations but millions of workmen and their families.

Between one function and the other he bargained with, say, [British minister of war production Lord] Beaverbrook and [US ambassador to the USSR W Averell] Harriman over the quantities of aluminium or the calibre of rifles and anti-aircraft guns to be delivered to Russia by the western allies; or he received leaders of the guerrillas . . . from German occupied territory and discussed with them raids to be carried out hundreds of miles behind the enemy's lines.

At the height of the battle of Moscow, in December 1941, when the thunder of Hitler's guns hovered ominously over the streets

* *Ibid*, p424.

of Moscow, he found time enough to start a subtle diplomatic game with the Polish General Sikorski, who had come to conclude a Russo-Polish treaty . . . He entertained them [foreign envoys and visitors] usually late at night and in the small hours of the morning.

After a day filled with military reports, operational decisions, economic instructions and diplomatic haggling, he would at dawn pore over the latest dispatches from the commissariat of home affairs, the NKVD . . . Thus he went on, day after day, throughout four years of hostilities – a prodigy of patience tenacity, and vigilance, almost omnipresent almost omniscient.*

And further:

There is no doubt that he was their [the Soviet troops] real commander-in-chief. His leadership was by no means confined to the taking of abstract strategic decisions, at which civilian politicians may excel. The avid interest with which he studied the technical aspects of modern warfare, down to the minute details, shows him to have been anything but a dilettante.

He viewed the war primarily from the angle of logistics . . . To secure reserves of manpower and supplies of weapons, in the right quantities and proportions, to allocate them and transport them to the right points at the right time, to amass a decisive strategic reserve and to have it ready for intervention at decisive moments – these operations made up nine-tenths of his task.†

Deutscher also dispelled any notion of popular hostility toward the Soviet regime:

* I Deutscher, *op cit*, pp456-7.

† *Ibid*, p459.

PREDICTIONS OF DOOM

It should not be imagined that a majority of the nation was hostile to the government. If that had been the case, no patriotic appeals, no prodding or coercion would have prevented Russia's political collapse, for which Hitler was confidently hoping.

The great transformation that the country had gone through before the war had . . . strengthened the moral fibre of the nation. The majority was imbued with a strong sense of its economic and social advance, which it was grimly determined to defend against danger from without.*

So much, then, for the Trotskyist drivel about the 'new aristocracy's incapacity to conduct a war', the 'discontented workers and peasants and a decapitated army' making it impossible to fight in any war, the alleged inferiority of the weapons of the Red Army, Stalin's personal inability to 'wage an offensive war with any hope of victory', and the inevitability of the war's crushing 'the Kremlin bureaucracy'.

Far from being crushed, the Soviet regime emerged from the war much strengthened. Far from crushing the Soviet regime through its war against the USSR, the Nazi regime itself was crushed, as was Germany. What's more, the Soviet victory demonstrated beyond measure the correctness of the policies of industrialisation and collectivisation, pursued in the teeth of Trotskyist and imperialist opposition by the Soviet state before the war.

The new appreciation of Stalin's role did not spring only from afterthoughts born in the flush of victory. The truth was that the war could not have been won without the intensive industrialisation of Russia; and of her eastern provinces in particular.

* *Ibid*, p473.

Nor could it have been won without the collectivisation of large numbers of farms. The muzhik [peasant] of 1930, who had never handled a tractor or any other machine, would have been of little use in modern war. Collectivised farming with its machine-tractor stations, had been the peasants' preparatory school for mechanised warfare.

The rapid raising of the average standard of education had also enabled the Red Army to draw on a considerable reserve of intelligent officers and men.

'We are fifty or a hundred years behind the advanced countries. We must make good this lag in ten years. Either we do it, or they crush us' – so Stalin had spoken exactly ten years before Hitler set out to conquer Russia. His words, when they were recalled now, could not but impress people as a prophecy brilliantly fulfilled as a most timely call to action.

And, indeed a few years' delay in the modernisation of Russia might have made all the difference between victory and defeat.*

This is how Deutscher captured the victory parade in Red Square at the end of the war.

On 24 June 1945, Stalin stood at the top of the Lenin mausoleum and reviewed a great victory parade of the Red Army which marked the fourth anniversary of Hitler's attack. By Stalin's side stood Marshall Zhukov, his deputy, the victor of Moscow, Stalingrad and Berlin.

The troops that marched past him were led by Marshall Rokossovsky. As they marched rode, and galloped across the Red Square, regiments of infantry, cavalry and tanks swept the mud of its pavement – it was a day of torrential rain – with

* *Ibid*, p535.

PREDICTIONS OF DOOM

innumerable banners and standards of Hitler's army. At the mausoleum, they threw the banners at Stalin's feet. The allegorical scene was strangely imaginative . . .

The next day Stalin received the tribute of Moscow for the defence of the city in 1941. The day after he was acclaimed as 'Hero of the Soviet Union' and given the title of Generalissimo . . .

In these days of undreamt-of triumph and glory, Stalin stood at the full blaze of popular recognition and gratitude. These feelings were spontaneous, genuine, not engineered by official propagandists. Overworked slogans about the 'achievements of the Stalinist era' now conveyed fresh meaning not only to young people, but to sceptics and malcontents of the older generation.*

Thus, at the end of the war, Trotskyism stood thoroughly discredited – thoroughly bankrupt – and regarded as no more than an information bureau and anticommunist ally of imperialism, in particular during the US-led war of aggression against the Korean people, during which most Trotskyists, consumed by their fanatical hatred of the Soviet Union, effectively sided with US imperialism and against the forces of national liberation and socialism.

12. The cold war – Imperialism's response to the prestige of victorious socialism

The USSR's successes in the collectivisation of agriculture, in its massive programme of socialist industrialisation, its gigantic achievements in education, science, technology and culture,

* *Ibid*, p534.

which had produced a continuously rising standard of living for the working class and the collective peasantry, and her crowning victory in the antifascist Great Patriotic War, with the resultant victory of people's democratic governments in Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Romania, Bulgaria and Albania, brought Soviet prestige to soaring point. It was this spectacle of triumphant, confident and advancing socialism that put the fear of God into the hearts of the imperialist bourgeoisie, and caused the latter, under the leadership of US imperialism, which had emerged from the war as the strongest imperialist power, to initiate the cold war, to establish the Nato aggressive warmongering military alliance and to re-arm West Germany as a member of this alliance.

The Nato warmongers threatened the USSR with an economic blockade and nuclear blackmail. But the USSR defied the blockade and military threats alike. It redoubled its efforts to build its economy and destroy the USA's monopoly of the atom bomb. At the end of September 1949, in the same week as Comrade Mao Zedong proclaimed the People's Republic of China and the success of the Chinese revolution, the world heard the detonation of the USSR's first atom bomb.

Even such a Trotskyite writer as Isaac Deutscher, whose hatred for Stalin was total and who never missed a chance of describing Stalin as 'dull and dreary', was obliged to admit:

"He [Stalin] achieved some of his vital objectives. He resisted western pressures firmly enough to deter any American design for spreading the war, and Soviet nuclear industry progressed by leaps and bounds and produced its first hydrogen bomb in 1953, shortly after the Americans had achieved the feat.

The basic sectors of the Soviet economy, having reached their prewar level of output in 1948-9, rose fifty percent above in Stalin's last years. The modernisation and urbanisation of the Soviet Union was accelerated. In the early fifties alone its ur-

PREDICTIONS OF DOOM

ban population grew by about twenty-five millions.

Secondary schools and universities were giving instruction to twice as many pupils as before 1940. Out of the wreckage of the world war, the foundations had been relaid for Russia's renewed industrial and military ascendancy, which was presently to startle the world.*

A few pages later, Deutscher observed:

It is a fact that 'Stalin found Russia with a wooden plough and left her equipped with atomic piles' . . . This summary of Stalin's rule is, of course, a tribute to his achievement.†

The words quoted by Deutscher are quoted from his own obituary of Stalin, published in the *Manchester Guardian* of 6 March 1953.

Of course, only the demented Trotskyites can argue that the above achievements took place automatically on the foundation of socialist property relations inherited from the October Revolution – not because of but in spite of, the leadership, as it were. No, such achievements do not come without correct leadership.

One has only to compare the leadership, the policies pursued by the leadership, and the consequences and achievements of those policies in the USSR up to the mid-fifties with those of the leadership from the twentieth party congress (1956) onwards until the August 1991 coup that resulted in the disintegration of the USSR to realise what a chasm divides the two periods.

Even Roy Medvedev, no friend of Stalin's and the author of the thoroughly anti-Stalin *Let History Judge*, has been obliged to say:

* *Ibid*, pp585-6.

† *Ibid*, p609.

Stalin found the Soviet Union in ruin and left it a superpower.
Gorbachev inherited a superpower and left it in ruin.

4. Triumph of Khrushchevite revisionism and the resuscitation of Trotskyism

Thus, in view of her gigantic achievements, which were the fruit of dogged persistence in following the Leninist path of socialist construction, working people treated with utter contempt the Trotskyist ravings against the USSR and its leadership.

All this changed, however, with the triumph of Khrushchevite revisionism in the CPSU after the death of Stalin.¹² Khrushchevite revisionism could get nowhere in its desire to undermine socialism, reach an accommodation with imperialism, and start the long process on the road back to capitalism, unless it attacked the person who had, after the death of Lenin and in a bitter struggle for the victory of the Leninist line on the question of socialist industrialisation and collectivisation, become the most representative spokesman of, and whose name was indelibly and inextricably linked with, the building of socialism in the USSR – namely, Josef Stalin.

Hence Khrushchev's attack on Stalin in his so-called 'secret report' to the twentieth party congress of the CPSU in 1956. With this attack on Stalin's supposed 'personality cult' – all, incidentally, in the name of Leninism and with the alleged pur-

pose of returning to true Leninist norms – began the long political and economic process that brought forth ripe capitalist fruit under the loving and tender care of Khrushchev's last successor, Gorbachev.

Khrushchev's attack on Stalin brought some retrospective credence to Trotskyist counter-revolutionary fulminations against the USSR from the mid-twenties onwards. As, under the tutelage of Khrushchev and his successors, the CPSU itself, as well as the revisionist parties in Europe and elsewhere, really did begin to degenerate, the long-repeated Trotskyist jeremiads about the alleged 'Thermidor' and 'degeneration' gripping the CPSU from 1923 onwards came to acquire the semblance of plausibility.

1. Trotskyism sides with every single counter-revolutionary movement

In the aftermath of the triumph of revisionism at the CPSU's twentieth party congress, and under its direct stimulus, bourgeois-nationalist tendencies within the working-class parties, acting in close coordination with imperialist agencies and broadcasting media and the church, came to the fore in some of the people's democracies.

In a number of places – most notably Hungary – this led to counter-revolutionary uprisings. Everywhere in these upheavals directed against socialism and the rule of the working class, the Trotskyites were, as was to be expected, on the side of imperialism reaction, counter-revolution and clerico-fascism. The eleventh world congress of Trotskyites paid homage to the CIA/Vatican-inspired and led Hungarian counter-revolution in the following glowing terms:

The Hungarian revolution of October-November 1956 went the

farthest on the path of a fully-fledged anti-bureaucratic political revolution.*

James Burnham, American Trotskyist and trusted henchman of Trotsky's until 1940, openly advocated from 1950 onwards the US policy of 'liberation of captive nations' in relation to the socialist bloc – a policy of destabilising the people's democracies in eastern Europe.

2. Trotskyism and the Czechoslovak counter-revolution

When the extreme revisionists in Czechoslovakia, under the leadership of Alexander Dubček became impatient with the slow speed of 'reform' aimed at restoring a capitalist economy and a multiparty bourgeois democracy and started the so-called 'Prague Spring', they euphemistically declared that their aim was

. . . to free Marxism from Stalinist and bureaucratic distortions
. . . (and to) formulate the humanist vocation of the communist movement.

The meaning of these apparently attractive slogans became all too clear during 1989, by which time the liquidation of the Communist parties and the dismantling of what remained of socialist economic planning in Poland and Hungary, and the plunge into capitalism and bourgeois democracy under the tender mercies of imperialism and its spiritual arm, the Vatican, had become obvious.

Dubček, in a letter to the Czech party leadership, pleaded with them not to condemn reforms in Poland and Hungary. So

* *Inprecor*, November 1979.

did his colleague Jiri Pelikan, who called upon the

. . . democratic movement in western Europe [to] develop a dialogue with Solidarnosc . . . in Poland, with the Democratic Forum . . . in Hungary, with Charter 77 . . . in Czechoslovakia . . .

That is, with the forces of capitalist restoration. Then, in 1968, as well as subsequently in the late eighties and the beginning of the nineties, the Trotskyites, true to form, were to be found on the side of counter-revolution.

Trotskyist Petr Uhl was one of the most active members of the anticommunist Charter 77. On 15 October 1988, the luminaries of Charter 77 and other opposition groups signed a *Manifesto of the Movement for Civil Liberty*, which, among other things, demanded 'economic and political pluralism', the freeing of business from 'the yoke of centralised bureaucracy', the 'complete reestablishment of private enterprise in . . . commerce, craft industry, small and medium business', and 'the integration of the Czech economy . . . in a natural way with the world economy, based upon the international division of labour' – that is, a manifesto for the restoration of capitalism and bourgeois democracy.

While declaring himself to be in sympathy with this manifesto of the velvet counter-revolution, Uhl did not judge it opportune to append his signature to it, even criticising it as 'liberal-democratic' and 'totalitarian'. The conclusion? Instead of denouncing it and disassociating himself from it, he welcomed the manifesto because of its inclusion of 'the demand for worker's control in the big firms' of the kind that abounds in the imperialist countries with its humbug of a 'share-owning democracy'.

After the success of the counter-revolution and the implementation of the above manifesto, Uhl stated:

RESUSCITATION OF TROTSKYISM

One might discuss the extent to which Trotsky's theory of the political revolution has been justified. I think that it is in Czechoslovakia that the reality is nearest to this theory.

He went on to add by way of an explanation of this 'political revolution' and the composition of this anticommunist coalition:

So long as people can say they are against communism, Stalinism and bureaucracy, then everybody is in agreement.*

And further:

There were those who saw in Charter 77 a step in the direction of political revolution – of whom I was one; others saw in it a means of propagating the word of Christ. It was a veritable laboratory of tolerance.†

Comrade Ludo Martens, Chairman of the Belgian Party of Labour (PTB), in his 1991 book *The Velvet Counter Revolution*, which we recommend to any reader desiring a detailed account of these events, justly remarked in this regard:

To overthrow and destroy socialism (whether it be a strong and vigorous socialism or an eroded and sickly socialism), the clerico-fascists, reactionary nationalists, agents of the CIA and social democrats all stick together and, needless to say, they show great 'tolerance' towards those pseudo-socialists who back up their political agitation with repeated quotations from Trotsky . . .

about the so-called anti-bureaucratic, political revolution, which turns out to be no more than another expression,

* *Inprecor* no 304, 1990, p26.

† *Inprecor* no 300, 1990, p8.

wrapped up in 'left' verbiage, for the simple restoration of capitalism. Thus has Trotskyism arrived at its 'political revolution' against 'Stalinist bureaucracy'!!

Belgian Trotskyist Ernest Mandel greeted the events of 12 January 1990 in Romania as:

. . . the sudden access of hundreds of millions of men and women from the eastern countries to political life.*¹³

The meaning of this meaningless hyperbole was made clear by the selfsame puffed-up and pompous Trotskyist gentry a mere ten months later, on 23 November 1990:

According to Petr Uhl there are probably only a few thousand, even a few hundred militants from Civic Forum at the regional and local level [in bourgeois Czechoslovakia] . . .

The student movement, which largely inspired the events of November 1989, no longer exists.†

In Czechoslovakia, the 'access to political life', over which Mandel waxed so lyrical, happened at a time when the masses were following the counter-revolutionary Civic Forum, under the leadership of Václav Havel, a notorious CIA agent. This is what Pavel Pechacek, head of the Czech section of the CIA-financed Radio Free Europe, had to say in this instance:

We have always played an important role. According to the leader the student revolt in Bratislava, it was Radio Free Europe which lit the fuse. We always had close contacts with Havel, [Jan] Camogursky and [Jiří] Dienstbeir, who today are members of the new government but who for years worked for us as independent correspondents.

* *Inprecor* no 300, 1990, p8.

† *Inprecor* no 319, 1990, p4.

These were the people – the Havels and Pechaceks – who ‘awakened the masses to political life’ in Czechoslovakia. Knowing full well that the Civic Forum stood for the restoration of capitalism, that Václav Klaus, head of the Civic Forum since October 1990 and one of the principal advisors to Havel, is not only on record expressing his admiration for Milton Friedman and Friedrich Hayek, the two bourgeois economists most admired by former US president Ronald Reagan and former British prime minister Margaret Thatcher, but also his commitment to ‘a market economy, without qualification’ – knowing all this, Mandel told a Belgian financial paper in March 1990:

The transition to a completely western model is possible, but this is not the case in countries like the Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia.*

Knowing all this, why did the Trotskyists go along with the Civic Forum? Their innate hatred of socialism and communism is the answer. This truth was blurted out by the dim-witted Uhl, who explained that his support for the Civic Forum and Havel was motivated by a desire to get rid of the remnants of the socialist system!

After several political somersaults and mental contortions, the Trotskyist Uhl finally, and not unexpectedly, carved for himself a nice little niche in the new bourgeois Czech state, as the head of the Czech press agency – a position to which he was appointed in February 1990, from which to propagate the wonders of capitalist restoration and the ‘access to political life’ set in train by this restoration – ‘anti-bureaucratic revolution’, if you like.

From jabbering away about ‘workers’ control’ only the previous day, Uhl had little difficulty in getting on with the job of

* *De Financieel Economische Tijd*, 21 March 1990.

informing the masses that the Czech state represented society:

It is generally understood that, if we depend on the state, we support the government, which is not exactly the case. Of course we must 'respect' the government, but if there is a conflict it would be up to a parliamentary committee to make a decision, because parliament represents the state more than the government does. Our task is to propagate news abroad about Czech society. This is the concern of the Czech state because it represents Czech society for the moment.*

If this drivel amounted to anything at all it is merely the worst form of parliamentary cretinism, according to which the Czech parliament and bourgeois Czech state are synonymous, and since, according to this Trotskyist imbecile, the state represents society, it is therefore 'our task to propagate news abroad about Czech society'!!

This is the beginning and end, the sole meaning of the much-trumpeted Trotskyist 'anti-bureaucratic, political revolution'. Nothing could be clearer than this.

3. Belgian Trotskyist Mandel and French Trotskyist Broué's crude defence of counter-revolution

Ernest Mandel, notorious for his anti-Marxism and vulgar economism, had for more than two decades held the view that, in the absence of a violent counter-revolution, capitalism could not be restored in the socialist countries. Proceeding from this erroneous premise, he had all along advocated multiparty democracy (democracy for all).

Since, according to his reasoning, there was no danger to so-

* *Inprecor* no 304, 1990, p27.

cialism and the real enemy lay in 'bureaucracy', socialism would acquire through multiparty democracy a democratic character. Towards the end of 1989, in regard to the counter-revolutionary movement in Timisoara, which resulted in the overthrow and foul murder of Ceaușescu and his wife Helena, Mandel surpassed even the lying imperialist media in denouncing the 'hideous Stalinist crimes in Timisoara' – crimes which turned out not to have been committed after all.

The bourgeois media's inflammatory figures of between seventy and one hundred thousand dead in Timisoara, and the horror stories about mass graves, turned out to be totally fabricated. The revised figure, of only seven hundred deaths, most at the hands of the army rather than of the Securitate (department of state security), was published in half-inch columns relegated to inside pages.

In regard to the counter-revolutionary movement in the German Democratic Republic (GDR), Mandel declared:

I am delighted over what's happening in Berlin. The antisocialist movement is really weak.

Welcoming this 'revolution', he went on to exclaim:

Everything Trotsky ever hoped for could now become reality.*

In Trotskyist, as indeed in imperialist circles, whereas Mikhail Gorbachev, Boris Yeltsin and Leon Trotsky are 'revolutionaries', Josef Stalin and the Bolshevik party that he led are counter-revolutionaries!!

It is worthwhile reproducing the views of Mandel, considered to be the theoretician of the Trotskyist Fourth International, on the counter-revolutionary programme of capitalist restoration embodied in Gorbachev's *Perestroika*. During an interview he

* *Dans Humo*, 21 December 1989.

gave to a journalist of *New Times*, he was asked: 'Is it not true that Mikhail Gorbachev stated that *Perestroika* is a true new revolution?'

To which Mandel replied:

Yes, he does indeed and again this is very positive. Our movement has defended this thesis for fifty-five years and was therefore labelled as counter-revolutionary. Today people, both in the Soviet Union and in a large part of the international communist movement, understand better where the real counter-revolutionaries were.*

In the same Belgian financial paper, Mandel again expressed himself on this question in these terms:

The reformer Yeltsin represents the tendency which wants to reduce the gigantic state apparatus. Consequently he follows in Trotsky's footsteps.†

These wonderful admissions from the Trotskyist Mandel, for which we thank him heartily, only make our job of exposing Trotsky's anticommunism and anti-Bolshevism, easier. For once, Mandel was absolutely correct. Gorbachev, Yeltsin and Trotsky do have the same ideological and political physiognomy – they all stand for capitalist restoration.

This same despicable Mandel had earlier described the arch-reactionary monarchist Andrei Sakharov as one of the 'radical and progressive left' and the bourgeois-nationalist Sajudis party of Lithuania as belonging to 'the radical democratic and nationalist popular movement'!!‡

Without exception, all the Trotskyists everywhere support-

* *Temps Nouveaux* no 38, September 1990.

† *Temps Nouveaux* , 21 March 1990.

‡ *Inprecor*, 3 April 1989.

ed that counter-revolutionary brainchild of the CIA and the Vatican, Solidarnosc, in Poland, cheering its rise and accession to power – again in the name of Trotsky's 'anti-bureaucratic political revolution'.

The French Trotskyist Broué, already referred to, for his part applauded the counter-revolutionary movements of eastern Europe which, two years after the publication of his *Trotsky*, came to head the capitalist-restorationist regimes, and correctly attributed to Trotsky the following version of 'political revolution'.

The demands appearing in these movements of workers and youth reconstitute those that defined the programme of 'political revolution' as Trotsky sketched it: democracy, freedom for parties, destruction of the bureaucratic apparatus, 'free' trade unions, electoral freedom and the right of criticism, ending infringements on human rights, punishing those responsible for crimes, winning the democratic rights of speech, assembly, demonstration, as well as the appearance of a free – and hence stimulating – press.*

4. American ICL's sophisticated defence of counter-revolution

Of course, the correct and candid representation by Messrs Mandel and Broué of Trotsky's 'political revolution' against 'Stalinist bureaucracy' is highly embarrassing to the Spartacists of the ICL, who are forever presenting a sanitised version of Trotskyism in an effort to gain for the latter some credibility in the eyes of progressive workers in order to be able to carry

* P Broué, *Trotsky*, 1988, p943.

out all the more successfully the propagation of counter-revolutionary Trotskyism and the theory of permanent hopelessness. That is why they flew into a rage against Mandel and Broué's straightforward admissions of the simple truth.

What was the ICL's own position? While it may appear to an unwary or superficial observer that they defended the gains of socialism and socialist construction, and workers' states, this is not the case. They were second to none in maligning the former socialist regimes, especially the Soviet regime from 1923 to 1953, which they always denounced as 'bureaucratic', needing to be overthrown by a 'political revolution'.

In unguarded moments, however, dropping their usual mask, they revealed the reactionary essence of their Trotskyist political line. In an article written in November 1992 for the sole purpose of presenting a sanitised version of Trotskyism, the truth literally oozed out, despite themselves, in the following lines:

The idea that 'socialism' could be built in a single country (and a backward one at that), surrounded by imperialist enemies, is a nationalist perversion of Marxism.

Stalin's dogma of 'socialism in one country' was the ideological afterbirth of a political counter-revolution which defeated Leninist internationalism and brought to power a nationalist bureaucratic caste.

Was the idea of socialism in a single country really a 'nationalist perversion of Marxism'; was it really 'Stalin's dogma' and 'the ideological afterbirth of a political counter-revolution which defeated Leninist internationalism and brought to power a nationalist bureaucratic caste'? If what Spartacist said was true, would it have been worthwhile for them, or for anyone else, to defend the gains of this 'nationalist perversion'?

The Spartacists of the ICL only had to ask this question to realise that they were giving away their whole game: of appear-

ing to defend socialism in words while undermining it in deeds. Were the Spartacists really so ignorant of Lenin's writings as not to realise that this 'nationalist perversion' of socialism in one country was not 'Stalin's dogma', but Lenin's? He and he alone must get the credit (or discredit) for the authorship of this 'dogma'.

The Spartacists ought not to be so ignorant, for they claim that they are Leninists and make the same claim for their guru, Trotsky. Let them then read Lenin's 1916 article 'The military programme of the proletarian revolution', and his article 'On cooperation' from the beginning of 1923, written just as Trotsky was writing his anti-Leninist, counter-revolutionary pamphlet *New Course*.

And let them read the following lines taken from Lenin's November 1922 speech to the Moscow Soviet:

We have approached the very core of the everyday problems, and that is a tremendous achievement. Socialism is no longer a matter of the distant future, or an abstract picture, or an icon. Our opinion of icons is the same – a very bad one. *We have brought socialism into everyday life* and must here see how matters stand. That is the task of our day, the task of our epoch.

Permit me to conclude by expressing confidence that, difficult as this task may be, new as it may be compared with our previous task and numerous as the difficulties may be that it entails, we shall all – not in a day, *but in a few years* – all of us together fulfil it whatever the cost *so that NEP Russia will become socialist Russia*.*

After this, if the Spartacists have the courage of their convic-

* Speech at plenary session of the Moscow Soviet by VI Lenin, 20 November 1922. CW Vol 33, p443, our emphasis.

tions, they ought to accuse Lenin of the 'dogma' they attempt to pin on Stalin's shirt sleeve; they ought to lay the blame for this 'nationalist perversion' at the doorstep of Lenin rather than depositing it at Stalin's.

5. British SWP welcomes 'demise' of communism

The largest British Trotskyist organisation, the Socialist Workers Party (SWP), having cheered every counter-revolutionary movement in eastern Europe from the CIA-Vatican inspired Hungarian uprising to the capitalist-restorationist Solidarnosc in Poland and the Civic Forum in Czechoslovakia, greeted with frenzied glee the demise of socialism in the USSR.

Its organ, *Socialist Worker*, declared joyfully:

Communism has collapsed. Now fight for real socialism.*

It went on to cheer the toppling of the statues of Yakov Sverdlov, Felix Dzerzhinsky and other 'former Communist party icons'; it even considered it opportune to carry a picture of the statue of the great Lenin brought down and to declare:

Communism has collapsed . . . It is a fact that should have every socialist rejoicing.

The SWP went as far as to argue that Yeltsin's victory had brought 'the workers of the USSR closer to the spirit of the socialist revolution of 1917, not further from it'.

Well, since the Berlin wall came down on 9 November 1989, what has this 'death of communism' and the fight for 'real socialism' brought in its trail? Exactly what imperialism had been desiring and working for over decades. Exactly what every

* *Socialist Worker* headline 31 August 1991.

intelligent observer not consumed by anticommunist hate expected it to be.

Market forces have been let loose over the unhappy peoples of eastern Europe and the former USSR. Everywhere there is rising unemployment, contraction of production, catastrophic rates of inflation, national strife, rising racism, antisemitism and fascism, increased crime, drug trafficking, prostitution, black market and hunger. There has been an astronomic rise in the prices of basic necessities such as food, accommodation, electricity and clothing.

In other words, all the freedoms have been unleashed that are associated with a free market economy and the Trotskyite 'political revolution' against 'Stalinist bureaucracy'.

In the former German Democratic Republic, for instance, between the beginning of 1990 and the end of 1991, the economy contracted by twenty percent as entire industries were shut down. In the first half of 1990, industrial output fell by a huge forty percent; in the second half of the same year by another forty percent! By the spring of 1991, a third of east Germans had either lost their jobs or had been put on short time. From two hundred and seventy thousand in July 1990, unemployment jumped to one million by the end of 1991 and one and a half million in 1992.

In Poland, two million workers, representing fifteen percent of the workforce, were unemployed at the time of writing (July 1993, and, while real wages had fallen by thirty percent, the cost of living had risen by forty percent.

The picture was the same in Hungary and Czechoslovakia, where industrial production had fallen by a fifth.

In the USSR, which had a giant economy before 1985, industrial production was down by forty percent in eight years; the rate of inflation stood at a staggering *two thousand five hundred percent*; the currency was in ruin, with the rouble, which used to have a value higher than the US dollar, having in March

1993 a rate of exchange of eight hundred roubles to the dollar.

The same goons of the SWP who with such lurid delight greeted the 'death' of 'communism' as the beginning of the fight for 'real socialism' two years later on they were bemoaning, in the manner of innocent virgins, the fact that the changes were hurting the workers:

Wealth, freedom democracy – this, the media claimed, was the future for east Germany as the Berlin Wall came down on 9 November 1989.

In the weeks which followed, Czechoslovaks, Bulgarians and Romanians threw off their Stalinist rulers too. Poles and Hungarians increased the pressure for reform

Two years on and those same politicians, commentators and pundits are silent. Not one of their predictions has come true, none shows any prospect of coming true.

. . . the market economy has not led to prosperity, simply deepened the misery.*

On the contrary. Every prediction of bourgeois politicians and media did indeed come true. Capitalism was being restored, and this process, as was known to everyone (including the dim-witted Trotskyists whose 'anti-bureaucratic political revolution' against 'Stalinism' and 'the command economy', shorn of all its 'left' verbiage, amounted to this capitalist restoration), could only take place amid misery and ruin for the masses of workers and an extraordinary enrichment of the few.

The movement involving the demolition of all central planning and the introduction of private property could not but express itself in the shocks, jolts and dislocation that were then hurting the working class of the former socialist states.

* Socialist Worker, 9 November 1991.

It was, in fact, the SWP gurus who, if they had any sense of shame and a gramme of socialism in them, ought to be quiet at the very least, since it was their darlings, Lech Walesa and his Solidarnosc in Poland, Václav Havel and his Civic Forum in the Czech Republic, Boris Yeltsin in Russia, etc, all leaders of the Trotskyist 'anti-bureaucratic revolution', who were introducing the wonders of 'democracy' and the 'free market'.

Instead of wisely keeping quiet, *Socialist Worker*, having summarised the results of introduction of the market economy in eastern European countries, went on mildly to complain:

Yet this, and the misery being suffered in east Germany and Poland, has not stopped Russia's president Boris Yeltsin proposing a programme of rapid and widespread privatisation and the quick removal of food and rent subsidies.

But it would appear that the SWP's gurus were not yet happy with the results of all this, for they believed that the newly established bourgeois regimes had not been thorough enough in destroying all the traces, instruments and institutions connected with the previous regimes in the former socialist states:

And not a week goes by without revelations proving the hated Stasi, the Securitate, the Hungarian AVO and all the other riff raff which once enforced the Stalinist regimes, are still around.

[!]

The above sentence, apart from revealing that their hatred is especially reserved for the socialist regimes, is also a clever attempt to fool the Simple Simons, who swell the rank and file of Trotskyist organisations everywhere and who have a weakness for catchphrases, into believing that the former regimes in eastern Europe were Stalinist – ie, Leninist.

In the preface of my book *Perestroika, The Complete Collapse of Revisionism*, referring in this context to the Trotskyites, revi-

sionists and social democrats, I said:

This revolting gentry – in particular the counter-revolutionary Trotskyites – have been gloating with delirium over the alleged collapse, in eastern Europe and the USSR, of Stalinism. Just the contrary. What has collapsed is revisionism, and its inevitable degeneration into ordinary capitalism. What is called 'Stalinism' by these despicable creatures is only Leninism in practice.

When Leninism was practised in the USSR, as it undoubtedly was during the three decades of Stalin's leadership of the CPSU, it achieved world-historic feats on all fronts – economic, social, cultural, diplomatic and military – which is precisely the reason why the very name of Stalin has become the target of so much abuse on the part of the bourgeoisie and its 'hired prizefighters'.

So what has collapsed is revisionism, even though in order to confuse the proletariat, the sly and yet unthinking and uncouth Trotskyites, using the word 'Stalinism' as a swear word rather than as a political characterisation, have been applying it to the very revisionists who entertain mortal hatred of Stalin.*

In the end, when all is said and done, *Socialist Worker* was well satisfied with the achievements of the counter-revolution in eastern Europe, and ended with the following smug, not to say smutty, conclusion:

What *Socialist Worker* said in November 1989 remains true today: 'what is really wonderful about the new movements in eastern Europe is they raise the possibility of a society which is better, freer and more democratic than that which exists east or west at the moment'.

* H Brar, *Perestroika, The Complete Collapse of Revisionism*, 1992, ppviii-ix.

In other words, what a wonderful thing it was to have replaced the former socialist regimes with bourgeois regimes and free-market economies, the consequences of which Mr Alan Gibson, the writer of this article in *Socialist Worker*, so dementedly and in such self-annihilatory a manner, bemoans!!

The same SWP, which in August 1991 had with great counter-revolutionary zeal declared that Yeltsin's victory had brought 'the workers of the USSR closer to the spirit of the socialist revolution of 1917', declared in 1993, through the column of the despicable John Molyneux, that

It is precisely the viciously anti-working class nature of Yeltsin's free-market reform that makes him aspire to dictatorial powers in order to impose his programme. Consequently, no socialist should now support Yeltsin.*

Such was the logic of the counter-revolutionary gentry of the SWP: support for Yeltsin's counter-revolution in August 1991 on the pretext that his victory brought the Soviet proletariat 'closer to the spirit of the socialist revolution of 1917', and opposition to Yeltsin in April 1993 for his attempt to put into effect the declared programme of the very counter-revolution over which the SWP had waxed so eloquent!!

Nothing could better reveal the hideous social-democratic face of the SWP than the fact that the same *Socialist Worker*, which felt elated at the death of communism, suffered a deep 'depression' and 'post-election demoralisation' in the wake of the fourth consecutive electoral rout of the Labour party in 1993. Bleated the *Socialist Worker*:

The election result was a disaster for everyone who wants a better society.

* 'Russia: should we take sides?' by J Molyneux, *Socialist Worker*, 10 April 1993.

The crudity of SWP's defence of capitalism and its representatives compelled even the Spartacists of the ICL, another counter-revolutionary Trotskyite organisation, to make the following correct observation:

An organisation [ie, the SWP] which found a cause 'that should have every socialist rejoicing' in the victory of Yeltsin's counter-revolutionary forces that have brought poverty, mass unemployment and misery to the masses of the former Soviet Union, while finding a cause to make 'socialists' sob in the defeat of Neil Kinnock's scab-herding Labour traitors, obviously has a pretty twisted weathervane . . . *

Further on, the same article continued:

Capitalist counter-revolution in eastern Europe and the Soviet Union has meant untold misery for the working masses of those countries – poverty, homelessness and starvation – and made an onslaught of bloody nationalist fratricide. Europe – east and west – faces massive unemployment, the ominous rise of antisemitism, racist and fascist terror, attacks on women's rights . . .

Now that the unifying thread of anti-Sovietism no longer mutes their rivalries, the imperialist ruling classes are trying to tighten the screws of exploitation on the proletariat at 'home'. At the same time, they try to sell the lie to the working class and oppressed that 'communism is dead', that any attempt to overthrow this system of exploitation and oppression is condemned in advance, useless, even criminal.

The SWP presents itself as a fighting alternative. If there were any justice in this world, these Third Camp renegades should feel ashamed to even try to show their face in public! From

* *Workers Hammer*, July 1993.

RESUSCITATION OF TROTSKYISM

Poland to east Germany to Moscow, they were among the foremost cheerleaders for the forces of counter-revolution that are now devastating eastern Europe and the ex-Soviet Union.

While most of the rest of the left followed suit, howling along with the imperialist wolves in championing any and every anti-Soviet 'movement', the SWP not only supported some of the darkest forces of reaction, but offered them as a model for the struggle against Stalinist 'totalitarianism'.

So, for example, following the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan, the Cliffites heralded the CIA-funded islamic reactionaries who are now drowning any shred of social progress in that country in blood. *Socialist Worker* (4 February 1989) enthused that a 'mujahideen victory will encourage the opponents of Russian rule everywhere in the USSR and eastern Europe!' By rights, the SWP should now be pleased that just such 'opponents of Russian rule', ie, vicious nationalist reactionaries, fascist terrorists, women-hating clericalists, have been unleashed by capitalist counter-revolution.

The SWP may be organised independently, but in terms of its programme and political and ideological physiognomy it is indistinguishable from the social-democratic Labour party – as indeed are all Trotskyite organisations, which everywhere act as an anticommunist militant wing of social democracy.

The hypocrisy of SWP's fake anti-Labour stance was exposed by another Trotskyite, Sean Matgamna. Writing in the *Socialist Organiser* of 19 November 1992, from a perspective which would have the SWP within the Labour party to help build the 'left' within it, this was how he tore the mask of false anti-Labourism from the hideous face of the SWP:

In the 1979 general election, the SWP, while proclaiming itself 'the socialist alternative' to the Labour party, declined to put up

candidates, backed the Labour Party! . . . It fell to [Paul] Foot in a much-quoted interview in the *London Evening Standard*, to express the SWP's dualism, the approach which left the political labour movement to the right wing in all its crassness.

He said: 'For the next three weeks I am a strong Labour supporter. I am very anxious that a Tory government shouldn't be returned, and I shall be going around to meetings we are having telling everyone to vote Labour.' (9 April 1979)*

And he concluded:

In his role of SWP ambassador to the bourgeoisie and the media, Foot often blurts out the truth about the SWP's politics without the usual 'socialist' obfuscation and phrasemongering. Michael Foot's nephew Paul is thus a useful man to have around.

6. Healyites detect Trotsky's line and welcome Gorbachev's Perestroika

The late and unlamented child molester and recipient of funds from a wide variety of sources ranging from Arab governments to the CIA for his lifelong devotion to the cause of anticommunism and anti-Sovietism, namely the Trotskyite Gerry Healy of the old and notorious Socialist Labour League (SLL), welcomed Gorbachev's *Perestroika* and *Glasnost* as

. . . the political revolution for restoring Bolshevik world revolutionary perspectives.

* *Socialist Organiser*, 19 November 1992.

Following the collapse of the Soviet Union and its disintegration, Healy's followers, the Redgrave Trots of the so-called Marxist party, went on to blacken all Soviet development and history by asserting that Lenin had been wrong throughout and that Rosa Luxemburg's denunciation of Lenin as a 'sterile overseer' aiming at 'blind subordination' to 'an intellectual elite hungry for power' through 'pitiless centralism' had been correct.*¹⁴

With the disappearance of the former socialist states and the coming to power of bourgeois regimes, the Trotskyites are at sixes and sevens as to how to explain away their wretched theory of 'anti-bureaucratic political revolution'. As a result, they are at each other's throats. The other offshoots of Healy's lunatic fringe, the Northites and Torrancites, are in convulsions over this.^{15,16}

The Northites simply passed the buck on to Trotsky who, they said, got it wrong, for there was nothing left with which to have a revolution:

I don't think it detracts anything from Trotsky's work to say that he simply could not have known, even when he was writing his denunciations of the Moscow trials, the scale of the bloodbath that was taking place in the USSR.

. . . what was destroyed between 1936 and 1940 was not only the flower of Marxism but its roots.[†]

This can mean one of two things: either that socialism had ceased to exist and capitalism had been restored by the end of the thirties, in which case, the Northites appear to be arguing Trotsky ought to have then denounced the Soviet regime far

* 'Organisational questions of the Russian social democracy' by R Luxemburg, (new) *Iskra*, 1904.

† 'After the demise of the USSR: The struggle for Marxism and the tasks of the Fourth International', report delivered by D North to the International Committee of the Fourth International, *wsws.org*, 11 March 1992.

more vehemently than he actually did.

Alternatively, it could mean that the workers' state, albeit a 'distorted' one, continued to exist in the USSR but that after the Moscow treason trials there was no 'revolutionary vanguard' left capable of effecting the Trotskyist 'political revolution', and that therefore the 'overthrow of the bureaucracy' could only lead to the establishment of capitalism, to which end the Trotskyists, with their theory of 'political revolution' have worked all these years. In this case, Trotsky was also wrong in advocating his 'political revolution', thereby leading his followers up the blind alley which leads to capitalist restoration.

Whichever way one looks at the above Northite quotation, one comes to the conclusion that these gentry are as much at sea in explaining the momentous developments in the USSR as they are at home with Trotskyist gobbledygook.

From anti-Soviet defeatism, hidden by veritable phrasemongering and a pretended belief in the chimerical 'anti-bureaucratic political revolution', the Northite Trots passed over without any difficulty to the following unreserved and absolute defeatism, characterising the whole period from October 1917 onwards as one of unmitigated disaster:

We should avoid using phrases that become hackneyed from over-use; but in this case it can truly be said that we have come to the end of an entire historical period that was opened in 1917.*

Their rivals, from the Torrance faction of Trots, the *News Line Workers' Revolutionary Party* (WRP) rump, did not like this Northite 'explanation' whose utter defeatism greatly embarrassed them. In an attempt to gain some credibility for Trotskyism and to overcome doubts even among the Trotskyist

* *Ibid.*

rank and file as to whether their guru Trotsky's theory of 'political revolution' and his lifetime spent in anti-Soviet activity ever contained an iota of progressive, let alone revolutionary, content, the Torrancites came down, Mandel fashion, in favour of characterising the counter-revolutionary developments in the former USSR and eastern Europe as 'revolutionary' in nature.

Deriding the Northites, the Torrancites wrote:

The comic side of all this is that since the bureaucracy is the 'determining force', if the so-called 'military industrial complex' were to overthrow Yeltsin, reinstating the USSR, then no doubt North would have to declare that the USSR was once again a workers' state. He would have to say 'Thank god for the Stalinist bureaucracy.'

Thus we find one section of Trots (the Northites) blaming Trotsky for not being firm enough in his fulminations against the Soviet Union, thereby misleading his followers into the blind alley of supporting an allegedly workers' state in need of political revolution, when, say the Northites, socialism had already been destroyed and therefore there was nothing left against which to have a revolution. The other section (Torrancites) exonerate themselves from all responsibility for lifelong anti-Soviet and anticommunist activity by pretending that the counter-revolution has not taken place at all, and that Boris Yeltsin represents the 'political revolution' that, in the course of time, will 'restore Bolshevism'.

7. Some other Trots

For its part, the Trotskyist rag *Socialist Organiser*, referred to immediately above, exulted over the victory of the Yeltsin forces thus:

TROTSKY(ISM): TOOL OF IMPERIALISM

His brave defiance of the Stalinist establishment will help workers to see what the issues are – an opening society, with the beginnings of the rule of law and some degree of democratic self-control on one side, and stifling ice-age Stalinist dictatorship on the other.*

The 'Militant' Trotskyites were no less despicably shameless in welcoming the Yeltsin counter-revolution:

All over the world, workers will see this as people's power reducing the threat of dictatorship to a poorly scripted farce. Every dictator will tremble at the prospect of his own subjects taking such action.

'Workers Power', yet another Trotskyist outfit, being fully cognisant of the 'socially counter-revolutionary nature of Yeltsin's programme' and the 'spivs and racketeers' who supported him, nevertheless felt obliged to back Yeltsin:

No matter what the socially counter-revolutionary nature of Yeltsin's programme, no matter how many spivs and racketeers joined the barricades to defend the Russian parliament, it would be revolutionary suicide to back the coup-mongers and support the crushing of democratic rights . . .

It is far better that the fledgling workers' organisations of the USSR learn to swim against the stream of bureaucratic restorationism than be huddled in the 'breathing space' of the prison cell.

Looking forward with great enthusiasm 'to the next stage – the task of rapidly dismantling the instruments of central planning', 'Workers' Power', reducing its counter-revolutionary logic

* *Socialist Organiser* special supplement, 20 August 1992.

to an absurdity, called for 'workers' control' of the counter-revolution! – for a 'workers' Yeltsin' who would not stop half way:

Revolutionaries share the workers' hatred for all the real and symbolic representatives of their oppression. We support the closing down of the palatial CPSU offices, private shops and sanatoria, the rooting out of the KGB officers. But we put no trust in Yeltsin or the leadership of the main soviets in the chief towns and cities to carry out the destruction of the Stalinist dictatorship.

We seek at every point to involve the masses independently in the process of the destruction of the CPSU dictatorship . . .

The workers must control the process of destruction of the Stalinists through to the end and not let Yeltsin preserve what is useful to him.*

Like the *Socialist Organiser*, Workers Power was fully aware of the forces supporting Yeltsin. Its on-the-spot report stated that those manning the Yeltsin barricades 'were not for the most part, the most audacious workers and students of Moscow', adding:

Rather, they were in the majority small businessmen, speculators and owners of ['free enterprise'] cooperatives, the traditional base of the [Russian nationalist] 'Democratic Russia' demonstrations, plus a few hundred young enthusiasts. While there have been reports of strike action and mass mobilisations in other parts of the USSR, in Moscow at least the working class played little part in the resistance to the coup.†

* 'The CPSU and the working class', *Workers Power* no 146, September 1991.

† 'Soviet left is isolated', *ibid.*

There are, of course innumerable other Trotskyist groups of which nothing at all has here been said. It is not, however, either possible or necessary or even desirable to make reference to all of them, for they represent no more than variations on themes already encountered in the brief sketch given above of the major Trotskyist tendencies.

What unites them all, however, is that they are all Trotskyists. They are, therefore, all counter-revolutionary to their fingertips – not necessarily out of a desire to be so, but because they cannot help being counter-revolutionaries for as long as they follow Trotsky's petty-bourgeois, pessimistic and counter-revolutionary theory of 'permanent revolution.'

8. The bankruptcy of Trotskyism and the triumph of socialism

The events of the last few years, which have overwhelmed eastern Europe and the USSR, have not only proved the utter bankruptcy of Khrushchevite revisionism but also exposed, if such exposure was ever required, the thoroughly counter-revolutionary nature of Trotskyism. These events have proved beyond doubt the inner affinity, notwithstanding the differences in form, of revisionism and Trotskyism.

Khrushchevite revisionism, 'right' both in form and in essence, was aiming, through the Communist party, for the same aim of restoring capitalism in the USSR and other east European countries that Trotskyism, 'left' in form but right in essence, had been attempting ever since the twenties through the so-called 'anti-bureaucratic revolution'.

This affinity, and the proof in practice in a most vivid form of the counter-revolutionary essence of revisionism and Trotskyism, ought to facilitate the task of exposing and fighting both these counter-revolutionary trends.

We are, however, passing through a time of ideological decay, confusion, disintegration and wavering – a time when renegacy and apostasy are the order of the day. With the complete collapse of Khrushchevite revisionism, the disintegration of the USSR and the east European socialist regimes, as well as the liquidation of the revisionist parties elsewhere, the Trotskyists can yet again be expected to come forward and say: 'We told you so. Trotsky was correct in asserting that socialism could not be built in a single country, etc.'

Our task is to refute this nonsensical and counter-revolutionary chatter. The collapse of the USSR, far from proving the correctness of Trotskyism, actually smashes it to smithereens. What it proves is that had Trotskyism (or Bukharinism for that matter)¹⁷ been put into effect in the USSR in the mid-twenties, the latter would have collapsed much earlier, more than six decades ago.

The Communist Party of the Soviet Union, however, rejecting both Trotskyism and Bukharinism, went on to construct socialism and a mighty Soviet state – a bastion and a beacon of socialism whose epic achievements in war and peace; whose heroic feats in all spheres of social development, economic, educational, artistic, military and scientific; whose superhuman endeavours to build a new society based not on the exploitation of one human being by another but on the basis of the law of balanced development of the national economy for the satisfaction of the constantly-rising needs of the population; a society based on fraternal cooperation and not on national strife and racism, a society based on sex equality not on sex discrimination; whose titanic struggle against and crowning victories over Hitlerite Germany – victories which freed humanity from the scourge of fascism – brought socialism to eastern Europe and imparted a tremendous impulse to the national-liberation movements, thereby weakening imperialism; and whose unstinting support to the revolutionary proletarian and national-

liberation wars elsewhere, whose proletarian internationalism, will continue to inspire humanity in its endeavour to get rid of all exploitation and achieve a classless communist society through the dictatorship of the proletariat.

9. Trotskyism or Leninism?

In this period of ideological confusion, the Trotskyites are bound to come forward with scraps of pompous, high-sounding, empty, obscure and bombastic catchphrases, which confuse the intelligentsia and non-class-conscious workers, in an attempt to fill the ideological vacuum and to pass off Trotskyism as Leninism. They are bound to make yet another attempt to substitute Trotskyism for Leninism.

They must not be allowed to do this. Every Marxist-Leninist, every class-conscious worker, must play his or her part in frustrating this attempt and in ensuring that it fails as miserably as did all similar attempts in the past.

It is by way of a contribution to frustrating this attempt to substitute Trotskyism for Leninism that this book is presented. The author seeks no other reward than the fulfilment of this aim. The choice is straightforward: either counter-revolutionary Trotskyism or revolutionary Leninism. One or the other. Trotskyism or Leninism?

What I have said in these pages may be common knowledge to the older generation of Marxist-Leninists. But, to our shame, such knowledge is becoming less and less amongst the younger generation. We meet young comrades who want to join the movement and help with our work. What are we going to do with these comrades?

I answer this question in the following words of Stalin's:

I think that systematic reiteration and patient explanation of

the so-called 'generally known' truths is one of the best methods of educating these comrades in Marxism.*

If I have succeeded in correctly and systematically reiterating at least some of these 'generally-known' truths, I shall consider myself entirely satisfied.

H Brar

London, July 1993

* JV Stalin, *Economic Problems of Socialism in the USSR*, 1952, p9.

5. Trotskyism or Leninism?*

Comrades, after [then head of state Lev] Kamenev's comprehensive report there is little left for me to say. I shall therefore confine myself to exposing certain legends that are being spread by Trotsky and his supporters about the October uprising, about Trotsky's role in the uprising, about the party and the preparation for October, and so forth.

I shall also touch upon Trotskyism as a peculiar ideology that is incompatible with Leninism, and upon the party's tasks in connection with Trotsky's latest literary pronouncements.

1. The facts about the October uprising

First of all about the October uprising. Rumours are being vigorously spread among members of the party that the central committee as a whole was opposed to an uprising in October 1917. The usual story is that on 10 October, when the central committee adopted the decision to organise the uprising, the

* Speech by JV Stalin to plenum of the communist group in the AUCCTU (trade unionists), 19 November 1924. CW Vol 6, pp338-73.

majority of the central committee at first spoke against an uprising, but, so the story runs, at that moment a worker burst in on the meeting of the central committee and said:

You are deciding against an uprising, but I tell you that there will be an uprising all the same, in spite of everything.

And so, after that threat, the story runs, the central committee, which is alleged to have become frightened, raised the question of an uprising afresh and adopted a decision to organise it.

This is not merely a rumour, comrades. It is related by the well-known John Reed in his book *Ten Days*.^{*} Reed was remote from our party and, of course, could not know the history of our secret meeting on 10 October, and, consequently, he was taken in by the gossip spread by people like [the Menshevik Nikolai] Sukhanov.

This story was later passed round and repeated in a number of pamphlets written by Trotskyites, including one of the latest pamphlets on October written by [the Zionist Nachman] Syrkin. These rumours have been strongly supported in Trotsky's latest literary pronouncements.

It scarcely needs proof that all these and similar *Arabian Nights* fairy tales are not in accordance with the truth, that in fact nothing of the kind happened, nor could have happened, at the meeting of the central committee. Consequently, we could ignore these absurd rumours; after all, lots of rumours are fabricated in the office rooms of the oppositionists or those who are remote from the party. Indeed, we have ignored them till now; for example, we paid no attention to John Reed's mistakes and did not take the trouble to rectify them.

After Trotsky's latest pronouncements, however, it is no long-

^{*} J Reed, *Ten Days That Shook The World*, 1919.

er possible to ignore such legends, for attempts are being made now to bring up our young people on them and, unfortunately, some results have already been achieved in this respect. In view of this, I must counter these absurd rumours with the actual facts.

I take the minutes of the meeting of the central committee of our party on 10 (23) October 1917.¹⁸ Present: Lenin, Zinoviev, Kamenev, Stalin, Trotsky, Sverdlov, Uritsky, Dzerzhinsky, Kollontai, Bubnov, Sokolnikov, Lomov. The question of the current situation and the uprising was discussed. After the discussion, Comrade Lenin's resolution on the uprising was put to the vote. The resolution was adopted by a majority of ten against two.

Clear, one would think: by a majority of ten against two, the central committee decided to proceed with the immediate, practical work of organising the uprising. At this very same meeting the central committee elected a *political* centre to direct the uprising; this centre, called the political bureau, consisted of Lenin, Zinoviev, Stalin, Kamenev, Trotsky, Sokolnikov and Bubnov.

Such are the facts.

These minutes at one stroke destroy several legends. They destroy the legend that the majority on the central committee was opposed to an uprising. They also destroy the legend that on the question of the uprising the central committee was on the verge of a split.

It is clear from the minutes that the opponents of an immediate uprising – Kamenev and Zinoviev – were elected to the body that was to exercise political direction of the uprising on a par with those who were in favour of an uprising. There was no question of a split, nor could there be.

Trotsky asserts that in October our party had a right wing in the persons of Kamenev and Zinoviev, who, he says, were almost social democrats. What one cannot understand then

is how, under those circumstances, it could happen that the party avoided a split; how it could happen that the disagreements with Kamenev and Zinoviev lasted only a few days; how it could happen that, in spite of those disagreements, the party appointed these comrades to highly important posts, elected them to the political centre of the uprising, and so forth.

Lenin's implacable attitude towards social democrats is sufficiently well-known in the party; the party knows that Lenin would not for a single moment have agreed to have social-democratically-minded comrades in the party, let alone in highly important posts.

How, then, are we to explain the fact that the party avoided a split? The explanation is that in spite of the disagreements, these comrades were old Bolsheviks who stood on the common ground of Bolshevism. What was that common ground? Unity of views on the fundamental questions: the character of the Russian revolution, the driving forces of the revolution, the role of the peasantry, the principles of party leadership, and so forth.

Had there not been this common ground, a split would have been inevitable. There was no split, and the disagreements lasted only a few days, because, and only because, Kamenev and Zinoviev were Leninists, Bolsheviks.

Let us now pass to the legend about Trotsky's special role in the October uprising. The Trotskyites are vigorously spreading rumours that Trotsky inspired and was the sole leader of the October uprising. These rumours are being spread with exceptional zeal by the so-called editor of Trotsky's works, Lentsner.

Trotsky himself, by consistently avoiding mention of the party, the central committee and the Petrograd committee of the party, by saying nothing about the leading role of these organisations in the uprising and vigorously pushing himself forward as the central figure in the October uprising, voluntarily or involuntarily helps to spread the rumours about the special role

he is supposed to have played in the uprising.

I am far from denying Trotsky's undoubtedly important role in the uprising. I must say, however, that Trotsky did not play any special role in the October uprising, nor could he do so; being chairman of the Petrograd Soviet, he merely carried out the will of the appropriate party bodies, which directed every step that Trotsky took. To philistines like Sukhanov, all this may seem strange, but the facts, the true facts, wholly and fully confirm what I say.

Let us take the minutes of the next meeting of the central committee, the one held on 16 (29) October 1917. Present: the members of the central committee, plus representatives of the Petrograd committee, plus representatives of the military organisation, factory committees, trade unions and the railway-men. Among those present, besides the members of the central committee, were: Krylenko, Shotman, Kalinin, Volodarsky, Shlyapnikov, Lacs and others, twenty-five in all.

The question of the uprising was discussed from the purely practical-organisational aspect. Lenin's resolution on the uprising was adopted by a majority of twenty against two, three abstaining. A *practical* centre was elected for the organisational leadership of the uprising.

Who was elected to this centre? The following five: Sverdlov, Stalin, Dzerzhinsky, Bubnov, Uritsky. The functions of the practical centre: to direct all the practical organs of the uprising in conformity with the directives of the central committee. Thus, as you see, something 'terrible' happened at this meeting of the central committee, ie, 'strange to relate', the 'inspirer', the 'chief figure', the 'sole leader' of the uprising, Trotsky, was not elected to the practical centre, which was called upon to direct the uprising.

How is this to be reconciled with the current opinion about Trotsky's special role? Is not all this somewhat 'strange', as Sukhanov, or the Trotskyites, would say?

And yet, strictly speaking, there is nothing strange about it, for neither in the party, nor in the October uprising, did Trotsky play any *special* role, nor could he do so, for he was a relatively new man in our party in the period of October. He, like all the responsible workers, merely carried out the will of the central committee and of its organs.

Whoever is familiar with the mechanics of Bolshevik party leadership will have no difficulty in understanding that it could not be otherwise: it would have been enough for Trotsky to have gone against the will of the central committee to have been deprived of influence on the course of events. This talk about Trotsky's special role is a legend that is being spread by obliging 'party' gossips.

This, of course, does not mean that the October uprising did not have its inspirer. It did have its inspirer and leader, but this was Lenin, and none other than Lenin, that same Lenin whose resolutions the central committee adopted when deciding the question of the uprising, that same Lenin who, in spite of what Trotsky says, was not prevented by being in hiding from being the actual inspirer of the uprising.

It is foolish and ridiculous to attempt now, by gossip about Lenin having been in hiding, to obscure the indubitable fact that the inspirer of the uprising was the leader of the party, VI Lenin.

Such are the facts.

Granted, we are told, but it cannot be denied that Trotsky fought well in the period of October. Yes, that is true, Trotsky did, indeed, fight well in October; but Trotsky was not the only one who fought well in the period of October.

Even people like the left Socialist-Revolutionaries, who then stood side by side with the Bolsheviks, also fought well. In general, I must say that in the period of a victorious uprising, when the enemy is isolated and the uprising is growing, it is not difficult to fight well. At such moments even backward people become heroes.

The proletarian struggle is not, however, an uninterrupted advance, an unbroken chain of victories. The proletarian struggle also has its trials, its defeats. The genuine revolutionary is not one who displays courage in the period of a victorious uprising, but one who, while fighting well during the victorious advance of the revolution, also displays courage when the revolution is in retreat, when the proletariat suffers defeat; who does not lose his head and does not funk when the revolution suffers reverses, when the enemy achieves success; who does not become panic-stricken or give way to despair when the revolution is in a period of retreat.

The left Socialist-Revolutionaries did not fight badly in the period of October, and they supported the Bolsheviks.

But who does not know that those 'brave' fighters became panic-stricken in the period of Brest, when the advance of German imperialism drove them to despair and hysteria? It is a very sad but indubitable fact that Trotsky, who fought well in the period of October, did not, in the period of Brest, in the period when the revolution suffered temporary reverses, possess the courage to display sufficient staunchness at that difficult moment and to refrain from following in the footsteps of the left Socialist-Revolutionaries.

Beyond question, that moment was a difficult one; one had to display exceptional courage and imperturbable coolness not to be dismayed, to retreat in good time, to accept peace in good time, to withdraw the proletarian army out of range of the blows of German imperialism, to preserve the peasant reserves and, after obtaining a respite in this way, to strike at the enemy with renewed force.

Unfortunately, Trotsky was found to lack this courage and revolutionary staunchness at that difficult moment.

In Trotsky's opinion, the principal lesson of the proletarian revolution is 'not to funk' during October. That is wrong, for Trotsky's assertion contains only a *particle* of the truth about

the lessons of the revolution.

The *whole* truth about the lessons of the proletarian revolution is 'not to funk' not only when the revolution is advancing, but also when it is in retreat, when the enemy is gaining the upper hand and the revolution is suffering reverses.

The revolution did not end with October. October was only the beginning of the proletarian revolution. It is bad to funk when the tide of insurrection is rising; but it is worse to funk when the revolution is passing through severe trials after power has been captured.

To retain power on the morrow of the revolution is no less important than to capture power. If Trotsky funkcd during the period of Brest, when our revolution was passing through severe trials, when it was almost a matter of 'surrendering' power, he ought to know that the mistakes committed by Kamenev and Zinoviev in October are quite irrelevant here.

That is how matters stand with the legends about the October uprising.

2. The party and the preparation for October

Let us now pass to the question of the preparation for October.

Listening to Trotsky, one might think that during the whole of the period of preparation, from March to October, the Bolshevik party did nothing but mark time; that it was being corroded by internal contradictions and hindered Lenin in every way; that, had it not been for Trotsky, nobody knows how the October Revolution would have ended.

It is rather amusing to hear this strange talk about the party from Trotsky, who declares in this same preface to Volume III that 'the chief instrument of the proletarian revolution is the party, that

. . . without the party, apart from the party, bypassing the party, with a substitute for the party, the proletarian revolution cannot be victorious.

Allah himself would not understand how our revolution could have succeeded if 'its chief instrument' proved to be useless, while success was impossible, as it appears, 'bypassing the party'.

But this is not the first time that Trotsky treats us to oddities. It must be supposed that this amusing talk about our party is one of Trotsky's usual oddities.

Let us briefly review the history of the preparation for October according to periods.

1. The period of the party's new orientation (March-April)

The major facts of this period:

1. the overthrow of tsarism;
2. the formation of the provisional government (dictatorship of the bourgeoisie);
3. the appearance of soviets of workers' and soldiers' deputies (dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry);
4. dual power;
5. the April demonstration;
6. the first crisis of power.

The characteristic feature of this period is the fact that there existed together, side by side and simultaneously, both the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie and the dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry; the latter trusts the former, believes that it is striving for peace, voluntarily surrenders power to the bourgeoisie and thereby becomes an appendage of the bourgeoisie.

There are as yet no serious conflicts between the two dicta-

torships. On the other hand, there is the 'contact committee'.¹⁹

This was the greatest turning point in the history of Russia and an unprecedented turning point in the history of our party. The old, pre-revolutionary platform of direct overthrow of the government was clear and definite, but it was no longer suitable for the new conditions of the struggle.

It was now no longer possible to go straight out for the overthrow of the government, for the latter was connected with the soviets, then under the influence of the defencists, and the party would have had to wage war against both the government and the soviets, a war that would have been beyond its strength. Nor was it possible to pursue a policy of supporting the provisional government, for it was the government of imperialism.

Under the new conditions of the struggle, the party had to adopt a new orientation. The party (its majority) groped its way towards this new orientation. It adopted the policy of pressure on the provisional government through the soviets on the question of peace and did not venture to step forward at once from the old slogan of *the dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry* to the new slogan of *power to the soviets*.

The aim of this halfway policy was to enable the soviets to discern the actual imperialist nature of the provisional government on the basis of the concrete questions of peace, and in this way to wrest the soviets from the provisional government. But this was a profoundly mistaken position, for it gave rise to pacifist illusions, brought grist to the mill of defencism and hindered the revolutionary education of the masses.

At that time I shared this mistaken position with other party comrades and fully abandoned it only in the middle of April, when I associated myself with Lenin's theses. A new orientation was needed.

This new orientation was given to the party by Lenin, in his

celebrated *April Theses*.*

I shall not deal with these theses, for they are known to everybody. Were there any disagreements between the party and Lenin at that time? Yes, there were. How long did these disagreements last? Not more than two weeks.

The city conference of the Petrograd organisation (in the latter half of April), which adopted Lenin's theses, marked a turning point in our party's development.²⁰

The all-Russian April conference (at the end of April) merely completed on an all-Russian scale the work of the Petrograd conference, rallying nine-tenths of the party around this united party position.²¹

Now, seven years later, Trotsky gloats maliciously over the past disagreements among the Bolsheviks and depicts them as a struggle waged as if there were almost two parties within Bolshevism.

But, firstly, Trotsky disgracefully exaggerates and inflates the matter, for the Bolshevik party lived through these disagreements without the slightest shock.

Secondly, our party would be a caste and not a revolutionary party if it did not permit different shades of opinion in its ranks. Moreover, it is well known that there were disagreements among us even before that, for example, in the period of the third Duma, but they did not shake the unity of our party.

Thirdly, it will not be out of place to ask what was *then* the position of Trotsky himself, who is *now* gloating so eagerly over the past disagreements among the Bolsheviks.

Lentsner, the so-called editor of Trotsky's works, assures us that Trotsky's letters from America (March) 'wholly anticipated' Lenin's 'Letters from afar' (March), which served as the basis of Lenin's *April Theses*.†

* VI Lenin, *The April Theses: The Tasks of the Proletariat in the Present Revolution*, 7 April 1917. CW Vol 24, pp21-6.

† VI Lenin, CW Vol 23, pp297-342.

That is what he says: 'wholly anticipated'. Trotsky does not object to this analogy; apparently, he accepts it with thanks.

But, firstly, Trotsky's letters 'do not in the least resemble' Lenin's letters either in spirit or in conclusions, for they wholly and entirely reflect Trotsky's anti-Bolshevik slogan of 'no tsar, but a workers' government', a slogan which implies a revolution *without* the peasantry. It is enough to glance through these two series of letters to be convinced of this.

Secondly, if what Lentsner says is true, how are we to explain the fact that Lenin on the very next day after his arrival from abroad considered it necessary to dissociate himself from Trotsky?

Who does not know of Lenin's repeated statements that Trotsky's slogan: 'No tsar, but a *workers'* government' was an attempt 'to skip the still unexhausted peasant movement', that this slogan meant '*playing* at the seizure of power by a workers' government'?

What can there be in common between Lenin's Bolshevik theses and Trotsky's anti-Bolshevik scheme with its 'playing at the seizure of power'? And what prompts this passion that some people display for comparing a wretched hovel with Mont Blanc? For what purpose did Lentsner find it necessary to make this risky addition to the heap of old legends about our revolution of still another legend, about Trotsky's letters from America 'anticipating' Lenin's well-known 'Letters from afar'?²²

No wonder it is said that an obliging fool is more dangerous than an enemy.

2. The period of the revolutionary mobilisation of the masses (May-August)

The major facts of this period:

1. the April demonstration in Petrograd and the formation

* 'Letters on tactics by VI Lenin, April 1917. CW Vol 24, p48.

of the coalition government with the participation of 'socialists';

2. the May Day demonstrations in the principal centres of Russia with the slogan of 'A democratic peace';
3. the June demonstration in Petrograd with the principal slogan: 'Down with the capitalist ministers!';
4. the June offensive at the front and the reverses of the Russian army;
5. the July armed demonstration in Petrograd; the Cadet ministers resign from the government;
6. counter-revolutionary troops are called in from the front; the editorial offices of *Pravda* are wrecked; the counter-revolution launches a struggle against the soviets and a new coalition government is formed, headed by [Alexander] Kerensky;
7. the sixth congress of our party, which issues the slogan to prepare for an armed uprising;
8. the counter-revolutionary conference of state and the general strike in Moscow;
9. [General Lavr] Kornilov's unsuccessful march on Petrograd, the revitalising of the soviets; the Cadets resign and a 'directory' is formed.

The characteristic feature of this period is the intensification of the crisis and the upsetting of the unstable equilibrium between the soviets and the provisional government which, for good or evil, had existed in the preceding period. Dual power has become intolerable for both sides. The fragile edifice of the 'contact committee' is tottering. 'Crisis of power' and 'ministerial re-shuffle' are the most fashionable catchwords of the day.

The crisis at the front and the disruption in the rear are doing their work, strengthening the extreme flanks and squeezing the defencist compromisers from both sides. The revolution is

mobilising, causing the mobilisation of the counter-revolution. The counter-revolution, in its turn, is spurring on the revolution, stirring up new waves of the revolutionary tide.

The question of transferring power to the new class becomes the immediate question of the day.

Were there disagreements in our party then? Yes, there were. They were, however, of a purely practical character, despite the assertions of Trotsky, who is trying to discover a 'right' and a 'left' wing in the party. That is to say, they were such disagreements as are inevitable where there is vigorous party life and real party activity.

Trotsky is wrong in asserting that the April demonstration in Petrograd gave rise to disagreements in the central committee. The central committee was absolutely united on this question and condemned the attempt of a group of comrades to arrest the provisional government at a time when the Bolsheviks were in a minority both in the soviets and in the army. Had Trotsky written the 'history' of October not according to Sukhanov, but according to authentic documents, he would easily have convinced himself of the error of his assertion.

Trotsky is absolutely wrong in asserting that the attempt, 'on Lenin's initiative', to arrange a demonstration on 10 June was described as 'adventurism' by the 'right-wing' members of the central committee. Had Trotsky not written according to Sukhanov he would surely have known that the 10 June demonstration was postponed with the full agreement of Lenin, and that he urged the necessity of postponing it in a big speech he delivered at the well-known meeting of the Petrograd committee (see minutes of the Petrograd committee).*

Trotsky is absolutely wrong in speaking about 'tragic' disagreements in the central committee in connection with the July

* 'Speech on the cancellation of the demonstration', made by VI Lenin to a meeting of the Petrograd committee of the RSDLP(B), 11 (24) June 1917. CW Vol 25, pp79-81.

armed demonstration. Trotsky is simply inventing in asserting that some members of the leading group in the central committee 'could not but regard the July episode as a harmful adventure'.

Trotsky, who was then not yet a member of our central committee and was merely our soviet parliamentary, might, of course, not have known that the central committee regarded the July demonstration only as a means of sounding the enemy, that the central committee (and Lenin) did not want to convert, did not even think of converting, the demonstration into an uprising at a time when the soviets in the capitals still supported the defencists.

It is quite possible that some Bolsheviks did whimper over the July defeat. I know, for example, that some of the Bolsheviks who were arrested at the time were even prepared to desert our ranks. But to draw inferences from this against certain alleged 'rights', alleged to be members of the central committee, is a shameful distortion of history.

Trotsky is wrong in declaring that during the Kornilov days a section of the party leaders inclined towards the formation of a bloc with the defencists, towards supporting the provisional government. He, of course, is referring to those same alleged 'rights' who keep him awake at night.

Trotsky is wrong, for there exist documents, such as the central organ of the party of that time, which refute his statements. Trotsky refers to Lenin's letter to the central committee warning against supporting Kerensky; but Trotsky fails to understand Lenin's letters, their significance, their purpose.

In his letters, Lenin sometimes deliberately ran ahead, pushing into the forefront mistakes that might *possibly* be committed, and criticising them in advance with the object of warning the party and of safeguarding it against mistakes. Sometimes he would even magnify a 'trifle' and 'make a mountain out of a molehill' for the same pedagogical purpose.

The leader of the party, especially if he is in hiding, cannot act otherwise, for he must see further than his comrades-in-arms, he must sound the alarm over every possible mistake, even over 'trifles'.

But to infer from such letters of Lenin's (and he wrote quite a number of such letters) the existence of 'tragic' disagreements and to trumpet them forth means not to understand Lenin's letters, means not to know Lenin. This, probably, explains why Trotsky sometimes is wide of the mark.

In short: there were no disagreements in the central committee during the Kornilov revolt, absolutely none.

After the July defeat, disagreement did indeed arise between the central committee and Lenin on the question of the future of the soviets. It is known that Lenin, wishing to concentrate the party's attention on the task of preparing the uprising outside the soviets, warned against any infatuation with the latter, for he was of the opinion that, having been defiled by the defencists, they had become useless.

The central committee and the sixth party congress took a more cautious line and decided that there were no grounds for excluding the possibility that the soviets would revive. The Kornilov revolt showed that this decision was correct.

This disagreement, however, was of no great consequence for the party. Later, Lenin admitted that the line taken by the sixth congress had been correct. It is interesting that Trotsky has not clutched at this disagreement and has not magnified it to 'monstrous' proportions.

A united and solid party, the hub of the revolutionary mobilisation of the masses – such was the picture presented by our party in that period.

3. The period of organisation of the assault (September-October)

The major facts of this period:

1. the convocation of the democratic conference and the

collapse of the idea of a bloc with the Cadets;

2. the Moscow and Petrograd soviets go over to the side of the Bolsheviks;
3. the Congress of Soviets of the Northern Region; the Petrograd Soviet decides against the withdrawal of the troops;²³
4. the decision of the central committee on the uprising and the formation of the revolutionary military committee of the Petrograd Soviet;
5. the Petrograd garrison decides to render the Petrograd Soviet armed support; a network of commissars of the revolutionary military committee is organised;
6. the Bolshevik armed forces go into action; the members of the provisional government are arrested;
7. the revolutionary military committee of the Petrograd Soviet takes power; the Second Congress of Soviets sets up the Council of People's Commissars.

The characteristic feature of this period is the rapid growth of the crisis, the utter consternation reigning among the ruling circles, the isolation of the Socialist-Revolutionaries and Mensheviks, and the mass flight of the vacillating elements to the side of the Bolsheviks. A peculiar feature of the tactics of the revolution in this period must be noted, namely, that the revolution strove to take every, or nearly every, step in its attack in the guise of defence.

Undoubtedly, the refusal to allow the troops to be withdrawn from Petrograd was an important step in the revolution's attack; nevertheless, this attack was carried out under the slogan of protecting Petrograd from possible attack by the external enemy. Undoubtedly, the formation of the revolutionary military committee was a still more important step in the attack upon the provisional government; nevertheless, it was carried

out under the slogan of organising soviet control over the actions of the headquarters of the military area.

Undoubtedly, the open transition of the garrison to the side of the revolutionary military committee and the organisation of a network of soviet commissars marked the beginning of the uprising; nevertheless, the revolution took these steps under the slogan of protecting the Petrograd Soviet from possible action by the counter-revolution.

The revolution, as it were, masked its actions in attack under the cloak of defence in order the more easily to draw the irresolute, vacillating elements into its orbit. This, no doubt, explains the outwardly defensive character of the speeches, articles and slogans of that period, the inner content of which, nonetheless, was of a profoundly attacking nature.

Were there disagreements in the central committee in that period? Yes, there were, and fairly important ones at that. I have already spoken about the disagreements over the uprising. They are fully reflected in the minutes of the meetings of the central committee of 10 and 16 October. I shall, therefore, not repeat what I have already said.

Three questions must now be dealt with: participation in the pre-parliament, the role of the soviets in the uprising, and the date of the uprising. This is all the more necessary because Trotsky, in his zeal to push himself into a prominent place, has 'inadvertently' misrepresented the stand Lenin took on the last two questions.

Undoubtedly, the disagreements on the question of the pre-parliament were of a serious nature. What was, so to speak, the aim of the pre-parliament? It was: to help the bourgeoisie to push the soviets into the background and to lay the foundations of bourgeois parliamentarism.

Whether the pre-parliament could have accomplished this task in the revolutionary situation that had arisen is another matter. Events showed that this aim could not be realised, and

the pre-parliament itself was a Kornilovite abortion.

There can be no doubt, however, that it was precisely this aim that the Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries pursued in setting up the pre-parliament. What could the Bolsheviks' participation in the pre-parliament mean under those circumstances? Nothing but deceiving the proletarian masses about the true nature of the pre-parliament.

This is the chief explanation for the passion with which Lenin, in his letters, scourged those who were in favour of taking part in the pre-parliament. There can be no doubt that it was a grave mistake to have taken part in the pre-parliament.

It would be a mistake, however, to think, as Trotsky does, that those who were in favour of taking part in the pre-parliament went into it for the purpose of constructive work, for the purpose of 'directing the working-class movement' 'into the channel of social democracy'. That is not at all the case. It is not true.

Had that been the case, the party would not have been able to rectify this mistake 'in two ticks' by demonstratively walking out of the pre-parliament. Incidentally, the swift rectification of this mistake was an expression of our party's vitality and revolutionary might.

And now, permit me to correct a slight inaccuracy that has crept into the report of Lentsner, the 'editor' of Trotsky's works, about the meeting of the Bolshevik group at which a decision on the question of the pre-parliament was taken. Lentsner says that there were two reporters at this meeting, Kamenev and Trotsky. That is not true. Actually, there were four reporters: two in favour of boycotting the pre-parliament (Trotsky and Stalin), and two in favour of participation (Kamenev and Nogin).

Trotsky is in a still worse position when dealing with the stand Lenin took on the question of the form of the uprising. According to Trotsky, it appears that Lenin's view was that the party should take power in October 'independently of and be-

hind the back of the soviet'. Later on, criticising this nonsense, which he ascribes to Lenin, Trotsky 'cuts capers' and finally delivers the following condescending utterance:

'That would have been a mistake.' Trotsky is here uttering a falsehood about Lenin, he is misrepresenting Lenin's views on the role of the soviets in the uprising. A pile of documents can be cited, showing that Lenin proposed that power be taken *through* the soviets, either the Petrograd or the Moscow Soviet, and not *behind the back* of the soviets.

Why did Trotsky have to invent this more than strange legend about Lenin?

Nor is Trotsky in a better position when he 'analyses' the stand taken by the central committee and Lenin on the question of the date of the uprising. Reporting the famous meeting of the central committee of 10 October, Trotsky asserts that at that meeting 'a resolution was carried to the effect that the uprising should take place not later than 15 October'.

From this it appears that the central committee fixed 15 October as the date of the uprising and then itself violated that decision by postponing the date of the uprising to 25 October. Is that true? No, it is not. During that period the central committee passed only two resolutions on the uprising – one on 10 October and the other on 16 October. Let us read these resolutions.

The central committee's resolution of 10 October:

The central committee recognises that the international position of the Russian revolution (the mutiny in the German navy, which is an extreme manifestation of the growth throughout Europe of the world socialist revolution, and the threat of [a separate] peace between the imperialists with the object of strangling the revolution in Russia) as well as the military situation (the indubitable decision of the Russian bourgeoisie and Kerensky and co to surrender Petrograd to the Germans), and

the fact that the proletarian party has gained a majority in the soviets – all this, taken in conjunction with the peasant revolt and the swing of popular confidence towards our party (the elections in Moscow), and, finally, the obvious preparations being made for a second Kornilov affair (the withdrawal of troops from Petrograd, the dispatch of Cossacks to Petrograd, the surrounding of Minsk by Cossacks, etc) – all this places an armed uprising on the order of the day.

Considering, therefore, that an armed uprising is inevitable, and that the time for it is fully ripe, the central committee instructs all party organisations to be guided accordingly, and to discuss and decide all practical questions (the Congress of Soviets of the Northern Region, the withdrawal of troops from Petrograd, the actions of the people in Moscow and Minsk, etc) from this point of view.*

The resolution adopted by the conference of the central committee with responsible workers on 16 October:

This meeting fully welcomes and wholly supports the central committee's resolution, calls upon all organisations and all workers and soldiers to make thorough and most intense preparations for an armed uprising and for support of the centre set up by the central committee for this purpose, and expresses complete confidence that the central committee and the soviet will in good time indicate the favourable moment and the suitable means for launching the attack.†

You see that Trotsky's memory betrayed him about the date of the uprising and the central committee's resolution on the uprising.

* Meeting of the central committee of the RSDLP(B), 10 (23) October 1917.

† Meeting of the central committee of the RSDLP(B), 16 (29) October 1917.

Trotsky is absolutely wrong in asserting that Lenin underrated soviet legality, that Lenin failed to appreciate the great importance of the All-Russian Congress of Soviets taking power on 25 October, and that this was the reason why he insisted that power be taken before 25 October. That is not true. Lenin proposed that power be taken before 25 October for two reasons.

Firstly, because the counter-revolutionaries might have surrendered Petrograd at any moment, which would have drained the blood of the developing uprising, and so every day was precious. Secondly, because the mistake made by the Petrograd Soviet in *openly* fixing and announcing the day of the uprising (25 October) could not be rectified in any other way than by actually launching the uprising *before* the legal date set for it.

The fact of the matter is that Lenin regarded insurrection as an art, and he could not help knowing that the enemy, informed about the date of the uprising (owing to the carelessness of the Petrograd Soviet) would certainly try to prepare for that day. Consequently, it was necessary to forestall the enemy, ie, without fail to launch the uprising *before* the legal date.

This is the chief explanation for the passion with which Lenin in his letters scourged those who made a fetish of the date – 25 October. Events showed that Lenin was absolutely right.

It is well known that the uprising was launched prior to the All-Russian Congress of Soviets. It is well known that power was actually taken before the opening of the All-Russian Congress of Soviets, and it was taken not by the Congress of Soviets, but by the Petrograd Soviet, by the revolutionary military committee. The Congress of Soviets merely *took over* power from the Petrograd Soviet.

That is why Trotsky's lengthy arguments about the importance of soviet legality are quite beside the point.

A virile and mighty party standing at the head of the revolutionary masses who were storming and overthrowing bourgeois rule – such was the state of our party in that period.

That is how matters stand with the legends about the preparation for October.

3. Trotskyism or Leninism?

We have dealt above with the legends directed against the party and those about Lenin spread by Trotsky and his supporters in connection with October and the preparation for it. We have exposed and refuted these legends. But the question arises: for what purpose did Trotsky need all these legends about October and the preparation for October, about Lenin and the party of Lenin?

What is the purpose of Trotsky's new literary pronouncements against the party? What is the sense, the purpose, the aim of these pronouncements now, when the party does not want a discussion, when the party is busy with a host of urgent tasks, when the party needs united efforts to restore our economy and not a new struggle around old questions?

For what purpose does Trotsky need to drag the party back, to new discussions?

Trotsky asserts that all this is needed for the purpose of 'studying' October. But is it not possible to study October without giving another kick at the party and its leader Lenin? What sort of a 'history' of October is it that begins and ends with attempts to discredit the chief leader of the October uprising, to discredit the party, which organised and carried through the uprising?

No, it is not a matter here of studying October. *That* is not the way to study October. *That* is not the way to write the history of October.

Obviously, there is a different 'design' here, and everything goes to show that this 'design' is that Trotsky by his literary pronouncements is making another (yet another!) attempt to create the conditions for substituting Trotskyism for Leninism.

Trotsky needs 'desperately' to discredit the party, and its cadres who carried through the uprising, in order, after discrediting the party, to proceed to discredit Leninism. And it is necessary for him to discredit Leninism in order to drag in Trotskyism as the 'sole' 'proletarian' (don't laugh!) ideology.

All this, of course (oh, of course!) under the flag of Leninism, so that the dragging operation may be performed 'as painlessly as possible'.

That is the essence of Trotsky's latest literary pronouncements.

That is why those literary pronouncements of Trotsky's sharply raise the question of Trotskyism.

And so, what is Trotskyism?

Trotskyism possesses three specific features which bring it into irreconcilable contradiction with Leninism.

What are these features?

Firstly. Trotskyism is the theory of 'permanent' (uninterrupted) revolution. But what is permanent revolution in its Trotskyist interpretation? It is revolution that fails to take the poor peasantry into account as a revolutionary force. Trotsky's 'permanent' revolution is, as Lenin said, 'skipping' the peasant movement, 'playing at the seizure of power'.

Why is it dangerous? Because such a revolution, if an attempt had been made to bring it about, would inevitably have ended in failure, for it would have divorced from the Russian proletariat its ally, the poor peasantry. This explains the struggle that Leninism has been waging against Trotskyism ever since 1905.

How does Trotsky appraise Leninism from the standpoint of this struggle? He regards it as a theory that possesses 'anti-revolutionary features'. What is this indignant opinion about Leninism based on? On the fact that, at the proper time, Leninism advocated and upheld the idea of the dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry.

But Trotsky does not confine himself to this indignant opinion.

He goes further and asserts:

The entire edifice of Leninism at the present time is built on lies and falsification and bears within itself the poisonous elements of its own decay. (See Trotsky's 'Letter to Chkheidze', 1913)

As you see, we have before us two opposite lines.

Secondly. Trotskyism is distrust of the Bolshevik party principle, of the monolithic character of the party, of its hostility towards opportunist elements. In the sphere of organisation, Trotskyism is the theory that revolutionaries and opportunists can coexist and form groups and coteries within a single party.

You are, no doubt, familiar with the history of Trotsky's August bloc, in which the Martovites and Otszovists, the liquidators and Trotskyites, happily cooperated, pretending that they were a 'real' party.

It is well known that this patchwork 'party' pursued the aim of destroying the Bolshevik party. What was the nature of 'our disagreements' at that time? It was that Leninism regarded the destruction of the August bloc as a guarantee of the development of the proletarian party, whereas Trotskyism regarded that bloc as the basis for building a 'real' party.

Again, as you see, we have two opposite lines.

Thirdly. Trotskyism is distrust of the leaders of Bolshevism, an attempt to discredit, to defame them.

I do not know of a single trend in the party that could compare with Trotskyism in the matter of discrediting the leaders of Leninism or the central institutions of the party. For example, what should be said of Trotsky's 'polite' opinion of Lenin, whom he described as

. . . a professional exploiter of every kind of backwardness in the Russian working-class movement? (*Ibid*)

And this is far from being the most 'polite' of the 'polite' opin-

ions Trotsky has expressed.

How could it happen that Trotsky, who carried such a nasty stock-in-trade on his back, found himself, after all, in the ranks of the Bolsheviks during the October movement? It happened because at that time Trotsky abandoned (actually did abandon) that stock-in-trade; he hid it in the cupboard. Had he not performed that 'operation', real cooperation with him would have been impossible.

The theory of the August bloc, ie, the theory of unity with the Mensheviks, had already been shattered and thrown overboard by the revolution, for how could there be any talk about unity when an armed struggle was raging between the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks? Trotsky had no alternative but to admit that this theory was useless.

The same misadventure 'happened' to the theory of permanent revolution, for not a single Bolshevik contemplated the immediate seizure of power on the morrow of the February Revolution, and Trotsky could not help knowing that the Bolsheviks would not allow him, in the words of Lenin, 'to play at the seizure of power'.

Trotsky had no alternative but recognise the Bolsheviks' policy of fighting for influence in the soviets, of fighting to win over the peasantry. As regards the third specific feature of Trotskyism (distrust of the Bolshevik leaders), it naturally had to retire into the background owing to the obvious failure of the first two features.

Under those circumstances, could Trotsky do anything else but hide his stock-in-trade in the cupboard and follow the Bolsheviks, considering that he had no group of his own of any significance, and that he came to the Bolsheviks as a political individual, without an army? Of course, he could not!

What is the lesson to be learnt from this? Only one: that prolonged collaboration between the Leninists and Trotsky is possible only if the latter completely abandons his old stock-in-

trade, only if he completely accepts Leninism.

Trotsky writes about the lessons of October, but he forgets that, in addition to all the other lessons, there is one more lesson of October, the one I have just mentioned, which is of prime importance for Trotskyism. Trotskyism ought to learn that lesson of October too.

It is evident, however, that Trotskyism has not learnt that lesson. The fact of the matter is that the old stock-in-trade of Trotskyism that was hidden in the cupboard in the period of the October movement is now being dragged into the light again in the hope that a market will be found for it, seeing that the market in our country is expanding.

Undoubtedly, Trotsky's new literary pronouncements are an attempt to revert to Trotskyism, to 'overcome' Leninism, to drag in, implant, all the specific features of Trotskyism. The new Trotskyism is not a mere repetition of the old Trotskyism; its feathers have been plucked and it is rather bedraggled; it is incomparably milder in spirit and more moderate in form than the old Trotskyism; but, in essence, it undoubtedly retains all the specific features of the old Trotskyism.

The new Trotskyism does not dare to come out as a militant force against Leninism; it prefers to operate under the common flag of Leninism, under the slogan of interpreting, improving Leninism. That is because it is weak.

It cannot be regarded as an accident that the appearance of the new Trotskyism coincided with Lenin's departure. In Lenin's lifetime it would not have dared to take this risky step.

What are the characteristic features of the new Trotskyism?

1. *On the question of 'permanent' revolution.* The new Trotskyism does not deem it necessary openly to uphold the theory of 'permanent' revolution. It 'simply' asserts that the October Revolution fully confirmed the idea of 'permanent' revolution.

From this it draws the following conclusion: the important and

acceptable part of Leninism is the part that came after the war, in the period of the October Revolution; on the other hand, the part of Leninism that existed before the war, before the October Revolution, is wrong and unacceptable.

Hence, the Trotskyites' theory of the division of Leninism into two parts: prewar Leninism, the 'old', 'useless' Leninism with its idea of the dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry, and the new, postwar, October Leninism, which they count on adapting to the requirements of Trotskyism.

Trotskyism needs this theory of the division of Leninism as a first, more or less 'acceptable' step that is necessary to facilitate further steps in its struggle against Leninism.

But Leninism is not an eclectic theory stuck together out of diverse elements and capable of being cut into parts. Leninism is an integral theory, which arose in 1903, has passed the test of three revolutions, and is now being carried forward as the battle-flag of the world proletariat.

Bolshevism (Lenin said), as a trend of political thought and as a political party, has existed since 1903. Only the history of Bolshevism during the whole period of its existence can satisfactorily explain why it was able to build up and to maintain under most difficult conditions the iron discipline needed for the victory of the proletariat.*

Bolshevism and Leninism are one. They are two names for one and the same thing. Hence, the theory of the division of Leninism into two parts is a theory intended to destroy Leninism, to substitute Trotskyism for Leninism.

Needless to say, the party cannot reconcile itself to this grotesque theory.

* VI Lenin, *'Left-Wing' Communism: an Infantile Disorder*, 1920, Chapter 2. CW Vol 31, p24.

2. *On the question of the party principle.* The old Trotskyism tried to undermine the Bolshevik party principle by means of the theory (and practice) of unity with the Mensheviks. But that theory has suffered such disgrace that nobody now even wants to mention it.

To undermine the party principle, present-day Trotskyism has invented the new, less odious and almost 'democratic' theory of contrasting the old cadres to the younger party element. According to Trotskyism, our party has not a single and integral history. Trotskyism divides the history of our party into two parts of unequal importance: pre-October and post-October.

The pre-October part of the history of our party is, properly speaking, not history, but 'pre-history', the unimportant or, at all events, not very important preparatory period of our party. The post-October part of the history of our party, however, is real, genuine history. In the former, there are the 'old', 'pre-historic', unimportant cadres of our party. In the latter there is the new, real, 'historic' party.

It scarcely needs proof that this singular scheme of the history of the party is a scheme to disrupt the unity between the old and the new cadres of our party, a scheme to destroy the Bolshevik party principle.

Needless to say, the party cannot reconcile itself to this grotesque scheme.

3. *On the question of the leaders of Bolshevism.* The old Trotskyism tried to discredit Lenin more or less openly, without fearing the consequences. The new Trotskyism is more cautious. It tries to achieve the purpose of the old Trotskyism by pretending to praise, to exalt Lenin. I think it is worthwhile quoting a few examples.

The party knows that Lenin was a relentless revolutionary; but it knows also that he was cautious, that he disliked reckless people and often, with a firm hand, restrained those who were infatuated with terrorism, including Trotsky himself.

Trotsky touches on this subject in his book *On Lenin*, but from his portrayal of Lenin one might think that all Lenin did was

. . . at every opportunity to din into people's minds the idea that terrorism was inevitable.

The impression is created that Lenin was the most blood-thirsty of all the bloodthirsty Bolsheviks.

For what purpose did Trotsky need this uncalled for and totally unjustified exaggeration?

The party knows that Lenin was an exemplary party man, who did not like to settle questions alone, without the leading collective body, on the spur of the moment, without careful investigation and verification. Trotsky touches upon this aspect, too, in his book. But the portrait he paints is not that of Lenin, but of a sort of Chinese mandarin, who settles important questions in the quiet of his study, by intuition.

Do you want to know how our party settled the question of dispersing the Constituent Assembly? Listen to Trotsky:

'Of course, the Constituent Assembly will have to be dispersed,' said Lenin, 'but what about the left Socialist-Revolutionaries?'

But our apprehensions were greatly allayed by old Natanson. He came in to 'take counsel' with us, and after the first few words he said:

'We shall probably have to disperse the Constituent Assembly by force.'

'Bravo!' exclaimed Lenin. 'What is true is true! But will your people agree to it?'

'Some of our people are wavering, but I think that in the end they will agree,' answered Natanson.

That is how history is written.

Do you want to know how the party settled the question about the Supreme Military Council? Listen to Trotsky:

'Unless we have serious and experienced military experts we shall never extricate ourselves from this chaos,' I said to Vladimir Ilyich after every visit to the staff.

'That is evidently true, but they might betray us . . . '

'Let us attach a commissar to each of them.'

'Two would be better,' exclaimed Lenin, 'and strong-handed ones. There surely must be strong-handed communists in our ranks.'

That is how the structure of the Supreme Military Council arose.

That is how Trotsky writes history.

Why did Trotsky need these *Arabian Nights* stories derogatory to Lenin? Was it to exalt VI Lenin, the leader of the party? It doesn't look like it.

The party knows that Lenin was the greatest Marxist of our times, a profound theoretician and a most experienced revolutionary, to whom any trace of Blanquism was alien.

Trotsky touches upon this aspect, too, in his book. But the portrait he paints is not that of the giant Lenin, but of a dwarf-like Blanquist who, in the October days, advises the party

. . . to take power by its own hand, independently of and behind the back of the soviet.

I have already said, however, that there is not a scrap of truth in this description.

Why did Trotsky need this flagrant . . . inaccuracy? Is this not an attempt to discredit Lenin 'just a little'?

Such are the characteristic features of the new Trotskyism.

What is the danger of this new Trotskyism? It is that Trotskyism, owing to its entire inner content, stands every chance of becoming the centre and rallying point of the non-proletarian elements who are striving to weaken, to disintegrate the proletarian dictatorship.

You will ask: what is to be done now? What are the party's immediate tasks in connection with Trotsky's new literary pronouncements?

Trotskyism is taking action now in order to discredit Bolshevism and to undermine its foundations. It is the duty of the party *to bury Trotskyism as an ideological trend*.

There is talk about repressive measures against the opposition and about the possibility of a split. That is nonsense, comrades. Our party is strong and mighty. It will not allow any splits. As regards repressive measures, I am emphatically opposed to them.

What we need now is not repressive measures, but an extensive ideological struggle against renascent Trotskyism.

We did not want and did not strive for this literary discussion. Trotskyism is forcing it upon us by its anti-Leninist pronouncements. Well, we are ready, comrades.

6. 'Land and Freedom': Trotskyism squared²⁴

Ken Loach's film depicting the activities of the Trotskyist POUM during the Spanish civil war is at once a masterpiece of propagandist filmmaking, and a succession of anticommunist slanders and distortions.

One needs to be a professor of working-class history to untangle the threads woven into this tapestry of lies, for in this film we have Trotskyism squared, or perhaps raised to the third power: *Land and Freedom* is Loach's modern-day Trotskyist dramatisation of *Homage to Catalonia*, the anticommunist novel by George Orwell, itself a heavily-spun account of the POUM's actual Trotskyist activities in Spain.*

The film begins at the end. An elderly man suffers a fatal heart attack as he is rushed to hospital by ambulance from his run-down council flat in Liverpool. His granddaughter sorts through his possessions before his funeral and discovers letters, addressed to his wife, written from the front in Spain in 1936, revealing an entirely new dimension of his life and struggle.

These letters narrate the film's unfolding drama, and we

* G Orwell, *Homage to Catalonia*, 1938.

are transported in time to a nineteen thirties meeting of the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB), during which the main protagonist – a young British worker from Liverpool called David – is moved by the suffering of the Spanish republicans, workers and peasants at the hands of General Francisco Franco's fascist forces. There and then, he makes the momentous and heroic decision to join the International Brigades, and go to the defence of the Spanish republic. This is his struggle – our struggle.

So far, so good. The film is well crafted and sucks us in, giving us a tangible link to past events. Here in this dusty council flat is to be found the history of the tumultuous working-class struggle of the twentieth century. But events depicted beyond this point rapidly degenerate into such a travesty of historical fact that it is necessary to equip ourselves with some background knowledge before continuing.

1. The situation in Spain

Spain in the early thirties was characterised by antiquated, feudal relations of production. The capitalist class, wanting to develop modern industry and compete on the world market, was hampered by these relations and began a political struggle to cast them off. The 1934 election, however, brought a deeply reactionary right-wing minority government to power, whose attempts to roll back democratic concessions precipitated a general strike, which was particularly militant amongst the miners of Asturias.

On 5 October 1934, over seventy thousand highly unionised, communist-oriented miners in Asturias (north-western Spain) rose in revolt, occupying the city of Oviedo and taking control of much of the area within a few hours. (*OnWar.com*)

The Spanish army – with a significant corps of foreign legion colonial troops, once again furnishing vivid proof that *no nation which enslaves another can itself be free*²⁵ – was led to Asturias by General Franco, who put down the strike in the most brutal manner over the following bloody fortnight. Three thousand workers were killed and thirty-five thousand were imprisoned indefinitely, subjected to torture and judicial persecution.

2. Rise of the popular front and international fascist intervention

In the wake of these events, the communists, social democrats and left republicans of Spain formed a popular front to contest the February 1936 general elections in order to depose the reactionary elements. Radicalised by the general strike, the population handed the republican forces a resounding electoral victory, but, on 18 July 1936, the army generals under Franco rose from Morocco in a coup d'état.

As Franco's rebellion erupted, communists immediately called for the people to be armed. Although this call was opposed by the 'socialist' republicans, the communists were successful, and, where the people were armed, putsches were put down. The communist-led Fifth Regiment, with its solid military discipline and training, proved highly effective in defeating Franco's forces.

There Franco's story might have ended, but for the intervention of fascist Germany and Italy, both of which came to Franco's aid. They sent troops and munitions, and, famously, the Luftwaffe's first major campaign was to destroy the Basque republican stronghold of Guernica (prompting Picasso to paint one of his best-known works by way of protest).

3. Struggle for a united army

This unholy alliance of international fascism confronting the republic demanded maximum efficiency and discipline among republican forces if they were to survive. The Spanish communists campaigned for a regular people's army to be formed, under a unified command structure composed of proven officers who had distinguished themselves in the civil war. This was no time for playing – the military struggle must be won, or all hope of progress would be swept away by the ensuing fascist reaction.

Yet, nonsensically, these demands were opposed by the 'left' socialists and Trotskyites of the Partido Obrero de Unidad Marxista (POUM) – the entirely misnamed Workers' Party of Marxist Unity, which coined the demagogic slogan

We don't want our army handed over to professional militarists.

In other words, oppose the combined and extremely professional forces of Hitler's Germany, Mussolini's Italy and Franco's Spain with anarchistic disorganisation and amateurishness.

All of which begged the question: whose side were they on?

4. Economic questions

Of great importance to the war effort was providing adequate food and supplies to the people and armies of the republic. Therefore, the communists called for key industries to be placed under state control and geared towards war production, while opposing confiscation of small shops and workshops by

the working class. The Spanish masses were, after all, predominantly small peasants and artisans (petty-bourgeois businessmen). To attack them was to undermine mass support for the republic and push them into the arms (and armies) of Franco.

Meanwhile, many factories were being run by trade unions, producing for profit in sublime disregard for the exigencies of the war. In Barcelona, such factories were making baths and children's prams – harmless in themselves, but a deadly economic indulgence when the Aragon front was short of munitions.

The POUM advocated entrusting factories to individual workers' collectives, acting independently of one other and of the republican government, claiming that it only trusted their 'revolutionary initiative'. The anarchy that ensued scarcely requires further explanation, and entirely failed to organise production to support the antifascist war.

Meanwhile, in the countryside, despite serious food shortages, the POUM advocated and tried to organise collectivisation – with all the (temporary, but immediate and far reaching) dislocation in social relations and productive capacity that this entailed, particularly as the peasantry was in no way ready for such a measure.

5. Attacks on the Church

In the concrete situation they then faced, the Spanish communists were opposed both to collectivisation and to attacks on churches and priests. Spanish workers had anarchist and anti-Church traditions, and were apt to attack both churches and priests, but among large sections of the peasantry – who were highly religious – it was considered an affront, and one that was likely, again, to push the peasants into the arms of the fascists.

In the specific context of a civil war, the communists under-

stood that this was not the time to be making new enemies. That the fascists understood well the correctness of the communist policy is highlighted by their tactic of sending *agent provocateurs*, posing as communists, to orchestrate attacks on priests and to burn churches – all in order to tarnish the image of the republican forces.

6. Trotskyite opposition to the Comintern

How is the contradiction between the Trotskyite position in Spain and Russia to be explained?

In Spain, they advocated even *forced* collectivisation, *before* the democratic tasks of the revolution had been completed, and at a time of *national crisis* and war. Yet in Russia, *voluntary* collectivisation was vehemently opposed by Trotsky and his followers, even *after* the democratic tasks of the revolution had been completed and the Soviet government had forged a firm alliance with the poor and middle peasantry, held large accumulated reserves of grain, and had concentrated key elements of production into its hands.

The only consistent thing here is the counter-revolutionary nature of the Trotskyite policy.

In fact, the POUM *systematically opposed every single policy* of the republican government that was aimed at winning the war. That is why it was ultimately excluded, as a disruptive and disorganising element, from government. POUM's response was not to carry on fighting regardless against the common fascist enemy, but to withdraw its fighters from the Aragon front to Barcelona.

Finally, on 3 May 1937, POUM rose in armed rebellion, not against the fascists, but *against the republican government*. The attempted putsch was rightly crushed. It would be more appropriate to criticise the republic for tolerating the POUM's

activities for too long than its putting down of the POUM rebellion – but such was the nature of the popular front government.

The communist forces emerged much strengthened ideologically from these battles, but militarily such adventures were incredibly destructive, and they made a decisive contribution to ultimate fascist victory in the civil war.

7. The Communist International and the Popular Front

The Communist International (Comintern or CI) had always had a policy of exposing European social democracy, of showing it to be compromising and, in the last analysis, a force of the imperialist bourgeoisie. In the face of the rising fascist threat, however, it was considered possible – under certain conditions – to form a united proletarian front with social democracy, or even a popular inter-class alliance against fascism.

This was not a change in principle, but one of tactics, reflecting the changed world realities: the bourgeoisie had switched its backing from social democracy to fascism, and therefore it was *possible* to form such alliance. The communist objective – to win the class struggle – remained constant.

Thus, the resolution of the seventh congress of the Comintern in 1935 read:

If with such an upsurge of the mass movement it will prove possible, and necessary in the interests of the proletariat, to create a proletarian united front government, or an antifascist people's front government, which is not yet a government of the proletarian dictatorship, but one which undertakes to put into effect decisive measures against fascism and reaction, the communist party must see to it that such a government is

formed.*

Conditions necessary for formation of such a front were carefully formulated:

- (a) when the state apparatus of the bourgeoisie is seriously paralysed so that the bourgeoisie is not in a condition to prevent formation of such a government;
- (b) when vast masses of the toilers vehemently take action against fascism and reaction, but are not yet ready to rise and fight for Soviet power;
- (c) when already a considerable proportion of the organisations of the social-democratic and other parties participating in the united front demand ruthless measures against the fascists and other reactionaries, and are ready to fight together with the communists for the carrying out of these measures.*

Barely a year later, Spain fulfilled these criteria, and accordingly the Soviet Union and the communist parties of Europe sent men and weapons to assist the Spanish republic. This was an epic and pivotal struggle in its own right, and simultaneously one of the first skirmishes of the looming world war. Stakes were high.

8. Eulogising POUM, disorganisation and defeat

On the human level, Ken Loach is a good filmmaker, who knows how to personalise events and touch people's emotions. But from the moment we hit the ground in Spain, Loach skews the

* 'Resolution on fascism, working-class unity and the tasks of the Comintern', August 1935. *The Communist International 1919-1943 Documents*, Vol 3 p365.

entire context of the Spanish struggle and artificially contrives to place the POUM at the centre of events.

His principal protagonist, David, is a working-class communist and CPGB member from Liverpool, who makes the decision to go to Spain in the course of a rousing CPGB meeting; yet in the very next scene (as his narrated letter complains of their being 'no organisation to get into Spain'), he's sitting in a train rattling into Spain, apparently as a lone individual, unattached to any organising party. By sheer chance, he happens to bump into some POUM guys who share cigarettes with him – and that's it, he joins up with the POUM!

No doubt there were times when the organisation worked less than perfectly, but cursory acquaintance with the International Brigaders and their writings clearly reveals that the CPGB directed volunteers to contacts in Paris, from where they would rendezvous with couriers to get them across the Pyrenees, and so on. It was all done clandestinely, because under the treacherous policy of the 'non-interventionist' strangulation and blockade of the Spanish republic by French, British and US imperialism (which turned a blind eye to the international support given to Franco by Italian and German fascism), the really heroic act of going to defend the Spanish republic and fight in the International Brigades (IB) on the first international front against fascism was declared illegal and actively blocked by the British and French bourgeoisie, which viewed independent working-class mobilisation as a threat and Bolshevism as its principle enemy.

Without the communists' organisation, international volunteers simply wouldn't have got to Spain.*

At times, *Land and Freedom* is moving in its depiction of individual POUM cadres as good-hearted and honest, prepared to make great sacrifices for the defeat of fascism. But the film –

* See, for example, Harry Haywood's autobiography, *Black Bolshevik*, 1978.

and the POUM it depicts – goes well beyond that in its defence of POUM policy generally. In reality, Trotskyism diverted many good-hearted, genuinely motivated workers from serving the movement, rendering their actions not only useless but positively harmful. The POUM *objectively* ended up fighting to aid the cause of fascism.

This fact is entirely obscured (even glorified) by the film – and is just one more example of why the fight against opportunism is so absolutely essential. This is not an abstraction, or intellectualist hair splitting; the capitalists' greatest weapon is diverting the revolutionary fervour of the masses against the revolution itself.

The film is deeply idealist (as opposed to materialist), in that it depicts a little band of soldiers wandering around in isolation with no broader context. We hear little of the overall strategic necessities that decided the great debates and course of the struggle, and see little of the main parties constituting the republican government. To the extent they are referred to at all, they are depicted as dogmatic, brutish and dictatorial – and as agents of the capitalists. The communists never fight at the front, we are told – it is left to Trots and anarchists to do the real fighting!

9. A professional army

'In its struggle for power the proletariat has no other weapon but organisation,' said Lenin.* Can anyone really believe that a little band of fellow travellers could ever really be effective without linking up in some way with other units or a common command?

* VI Lenin, *One Step Forward Two Steps Back*, part R, 1904. CW Vol 7, pp203-425.

David describes the POUM militia as 'socialism in action':

No salutes, we elect the officers and everyone gets the same pay.

So, according to the Trotskyites, it's impossible to have socialism in a single country – the USSR – but perfectly possible to have it in a single military unit!

This whole idea of 'military democracy' taken to the point where people can say 'no fighting today – today we're going to have a good time' is a farcical way to conduct a struggle against a ruthless and determined fascist imperialist enemy. Trotskyism at a certain level merges into anarchism.

The POUM thesis that Loach pushes in his film, that 'if we have a well-organised and disciplined, hierarchical army structure – the revolutionary spirit will be crushed', is a fallacy. The history of the second world war shows that the spirit of revolution was much enhanced by a disciplined army that could fight as one under a single command structure according to a unified tactical and strategic plan.

That was the experience of the Red Army's fight against fascism, and that was the experience of the Chinese, Vietnamese and north Koreans. If everyone had said 'I'm sorry, I don't want to fight – who is Kim Il Sung to give the orders?' the Democratic People's Republic of Korea would certainly have failed to defeat US imperialism!

The complete indiscipline advocated by Trotskyites, and eulogised by both Loach and Orwell, is in stark contrast to the militarisation of the unions and the imposition of military discipline upon the whole Soviet working class that Trotsky had advocated (unsuccessfully) in the 1920s! And the same Trotsky, for the limited time he held positions of power in the Soviet military, was the staunchest advocate of bringing in tsarist officers to command the Red Army!

This totally incoherent and contradictory line of argument is a good example of how 'nailing down the political positions of Trotsky is like trying to nail jelly to the wall'. The only discernable consistency is anticommunism and incorrect policy!

10. Collectivisation debate

Half way through the film, the POUM militia travel to the rear, where we see them engaging in a debate with the peasants of an Aragon village, advancing arguments in favour of collectivisation. This is a pivotal point in the film, and here an interesting (and dishonest) device is employed by Loach: an International Brigade comrade with a heavy US accent, clearly designated 'the evil personification of Stalinism', is given the task of speaking for the republic.

Actually, with the exception of the rather absurd statement that he's tailoring his ideas to the interests of foreign capitalists, everything this 'evil communist' says is correct and logically explained from a common sense point of view. As, for instance, when he quite correctly questions the policy of confiscating the land and property of those who are supporting the government.

This policy of the communists to take on one enemy at a time when forming a popular front can be compared to the change in policy of the Communist Party of China (CPC) in the 1930s toward the Kuomintang.

In the early thirties, while fighting a revolutionary (civil) war against the nationalist forces of the Kuomintang, the Chinese communists confiscated the land of all the landlords and rich peasants and redivided it amongst the poor and middle peasantry. When imperialist Japan launched its massive military invasion to subject China to its colonial occupation, the CPC changed its position to confiscating *only* the land of the pro-Japanese elements. This had the effect of galvanising the na-

tional forces to struggle against Japanese fascism in China, and ultimately resulted in the alliance of the Kuomintang with the CPC in the popular front against Japan.

This same policy, pursued by the Spanish republic, was particularly correct and far sighted in the case of Spain. The country was not in the process of a socialist revolution; it was in the midst of a struggle to defend a national republic against fascist aggression. To try and carry out the socialist revolution in the midst of that life-and-death struggle, however favourably presented that programme is in the film, *was objectively counterrevolutionary*, since it led to a split in the antifascist forces and, ultimately, *defeat*.

'Collective decision-making' is seductively presented in the film as the masses 'needing no leaders'. However, especially in times of great struggle, the masses have great need of revolutionary leadership to find the correct path – for which a Leninist party is invaluable. Of course, you cannot simply issue the people with orders, but without a *trusted* structure and command, the reactionary elements will always be able to take advantage of spontaneity to divert struggle from the correct and successful path.

To recognise the principal enemy at each moment, at each stage in the revolution (the feudal-imperial forces of Franco in this instance), and to unite the maximum social forces against the principal enemy, is a cardinal Leninist principle; the Trotskyite fondness for 'jumping stages' results in what Lenin characterised as 'playing with revolution'.

11. Disarming the POUM

In Loach's film, unlike in life, arguments are not resolved by any comparison with reality. Rather, the debate is 'resolved' in the final scene: the disarming of the POUM.

Why was the POUM disarmed? No reference is made by Loach to its treacherous and murderous attempted putsch – in the strange ‘reality’ created by *Land and Freedom*, our little band of tragicomical POUM fighters are ‘treacherously’ disarmed even as they are ‘fighting the fascists at the front’ – an extraordinary historical falsification, since in reality they were fighting in an anti-government putsch and *disorganising the rear*!

All those previously arguing *against* collectivisation, and *for* a united command, now appear as the republican army, dressed in uniforms striking in their similarity to those worn by the fascists. This artifice goes to the length of using the same actor for the commanding republican officer (wearing the same steely heartless expression) that had played a captured fascist officer in an earlier scene. The subliminal message is clear: the Spanish revolution is being ‘betrayed’ by the Comintern and Stalin; ‘communism (Stalinism) = fascism!’

This message is roundly reinforced by the POUM ‘comrades’, who fall about dramatically declaiming: ‘The Stalinists are betraying the revolution’, ‘There is an explanation – it’s called Stalinism’, ‘The party stinks! Its evil! It’s corrupt!’, ‘It’s practising torture!’, ‘Stalin is just using the working class!’, etc. Stalin’s name is no longer employed in any kind of meaningful way, but simply as a word of abuse.

The POUM characters ironically conclude by shouting to the republican soldiers: ‘Don’t fight us, fight fascism!’ This is rich, considering that in reality it was the POUM who decided that the fascists and republicans were ‘as bad as each other’ and so set out on the path of military conflict with the republicans.

In fact, since the POUM had degenerated to the level of a ‘fifth column’ for the fascists, the republicans had no option but to fight them too, however difficult it was to spare the necessary forces at such a critical time in the defence of the republic.

13. Trotsky's 'permanent revolution' and the role of revolutionary theory

And so we come full circle. Having struggled and sacrificed, the inevitable conclusion of hopelessness and despair is reached: the climax of the entire film, its highest purpose, is for the chief protagonist to tear up his party card!

The lasting message of the film is not the steeling and liberating heroism of the workers who struggled against fascism, but the importance of the struggle against 'Stalinism', and the ultimate futility of workers' struggle, which will always be subverted by 'Stalinist' betrayers from its pure (Trotskyite) purpose. We could not hope for a more direct illustration of how Trotskyism – even today – is actually employing its arguments in the service of fascism, in the service of the bourgeoisie, in the service of imperialism. It is one of the chief anticommunist propaganda planks of the aggressive monopoly-capitalist class.

Loach idealises 'the cult of the heroic failure'. Success is not important, but idealism and self-indulgent ultra-sincerity (to one's own beliefs, rather than to the wider cause of the working class) is the overriding principle. Perennial failure is then crowned with the statement:

I don't regret any of it: if we'd have succeeded – we'd have changed the world!

This is what the Trotskyites always say: *IF!* Cruel fate! And therefore, in their own eyes, they are blameless. It never really matters that they don't achieve anything. They wash their hands of their own failures – usually blaming them on the betrayals of Stalinism (the communist movement) – and remain 'pure' and aloof from the real struggle to build the new society

in the real world.

It is the communist movement that *really* wants to change the world for the material benefit of working people and has a history of engaging seriously – and successfully – with that struggle.

The Spanish POUM cannot simply be explained as ‘good people going astray’, although a good number of its cadres were undoubtedly sincere; POUM’s overriding service to the fascists was the theoretical confusion they imparted.

The situation arrived at in Spain by the POUM was very much a continuation of the theory of ‘permanent revolution’ (PR). The question is, at heart, one of theory, and demonstrates clearly where putting an incorrect theory into practice will lead the masses.

The purpose of theory is either to inform people of the true situation and serve as a guide to action or, alternatively, to misinform and mislead them into living in a completely different world. The theory of permanent revolution ultimately results in a departure from reality: it says ‘socialism cannot be built’; therefore its followers must oppose the building of socialism.

And, transferred to the international arena, it means *permanent opposition* to all policies of the USSR and the Comintern, as by definition these must go against the theory of permanent revolution (this disproven theory being given higher importance than the reality that contradicts it).

Where collectivisation is not possible or expedient (as in Spain during the antifascist war), the slogan of the Trotskyites is ‘Collectivise!’ On the other hand, where collectivisation is the order of the day (as in the USSR in the early thirties), the Trotskyites are bound to oppose collectivisation!

Trotskyism takes young people full of fire and enthusiasm and spits them out bitter and disillusioned with what they assume is ‘socialism’ or ‘communism’. The only remaining option, which the film’s antihero himself adopts, is to give up the struggle,

accept that history is 'over', and crawl home quietly to grow old, suffer and die.

The only correct conclusion for communists from all this is that we must *reinvigorate our struggle for correct theory*. This is the role of party schools and Marxist-Leninist study sessions of all kinds; to ensure that our comrades are enlightened by correct theory in all their endeavours.

Theory alone does no good – theory must be combined with practice; but practice, as Stalin said, will always grope in the dark if its path is not illumined by revolutionary theory.*

* JV Stalin, *Foundations of Leninism*, 1924, chapter 3. CW Vol 6, p92.

Appendix 1: Who's who in British Trotskyism*

An instructive overview of the genesis of British Trotskyism from 1932 to 1986. The Trotskyites still active in Britain today can all be traced back to parties described here. Counterfire and the SWP are offshoots of the old IS group, while the Alliance for Workers' Liberty, the Socialist party and the new RCP (formerly Socialist Appeal) all trace their roots back to splits from the Militant Tendency.

With news of the expulsion from the Labour party of members of the so-called Militant Tendency on an almost regular basis, it is timely to look at just what the history of Trotskyism has been in Britain since 1932. It was then that Reg Groves was expelled from the Communist Party of Great Britain and went off to form the 'Balham Group', Britain's first Trotskyist organisation.

After about five years, this Trotskyist 'movement' had managed to muster up about a dozen members. By 1938, there were a few other small groups, and from the mid-1930s they fought against the formation of a People's Antifascist Front. It could already be seen that these Trotskyites, who professed

* 'Who's who in British Trotskyism', *Lalkar*, December 1986.

to support socialist revolution and the labour movement as a whole, were a severe hindrance to both. It is hardly surprising that the recipients of Trotskyite 'support' are often less than grateful.

It was in 1938 that Trotsky sent JP Cannon of the US Socialist Workers Party to Britain to set up a section of the 'Fourth International') Trotskyist. He found a number of small sectarian groups mainly occupied in fighting each other. Things had started as they were to go on. The groups included the Militant Group (not to be confused with the Militant Tendency), the Workers' International League (formed by G Healy and J Haston when they split from the Militant Group), the Marxist League led by CLR James (whose views on cricket were far better than his views on politics), and a group around H Sara and H Wicks who were in the Labour party. Cannon managed to unite most of the groups, briefly, and to form the Revolutionary Communist party (RCP).

During the second world war, these people, who had opposed the Popular Antifascist Front on the basis that it was alleged to be a sell-out to the bourgeoisie – a line that could help nobody other than the Nazis – had the gall to denounce the USSR as a 'collaborator with nazism' for having signed the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact. They deliberately failed to see that this pact represented a diplomatic coup for the forces of international socialism, having deflected the blows of fascist Germany away from the socialist USSR towards Germany's rival imperialists.

With the victory of the Labour party in the elections of 1945, and as no one would take any notice of them in their own right, most Trotskyists decided to jump on the Labour party bandwagon and became members of it.

However, in 1953, Ted Grant went off to form a group called the 'International Socialist' (not to be confused with the International Socialists, who later became the Socialist Workers party). He then went on to form the Revolutionary Socialist

APPENDICES

League – generally known as the Militant Group (yes, this is the Militant Tendency). Another group at that time well hidden inside the Labour party formed the International Marxist Group as it was to be known when it surfaced fifteen years later.

If this short history begins to get a little confused then that is because those involved were more than a little confused. Meanwhile, in 1951, the International Socialists (the ones who became the Socialist Workers party) were born of M Kieron and T Cliff, who, like all 'good' Trotskyites of the day, were hiding inside the Labour party.

In 1972, the SWP was ripe for a split – and off went a group to form the Revolutionary Communist Group. The RCP itself soon split, and some of them became the Revolutionary Communist Tendency, which, having recruited about a dozen members, decided it was large enough to call itself the Revolutionary Communist PARTY.

The SWP had also expelled a group called Workers' Fight, which became the International Communist League; and in 1975 they expelled Workers' Power, who fused with the ICL, but left again within a year.

Meanwhile, back on the Labour party funny farm, we had the Revolutionary Socialist League (alias the Militant group – now the Militant Tendency) and the International Marxist Group. Just to confuse things, IMG left the Labour party only to re-enter it in 1982 renaming itself the Socialist Labour Group, by which name it is still known.

Now, the original Revolutionary Communist party (the one led by Gerry Healy, which was originally the Workers' International League, not the one that used to be Revolutionary Communist Tendency) changed its name, first to the Socialist Labour League and then to the Workers' Revolutionary party (WRP). A small splinter group left the WRP in 1971 to form the Socialist Labour Group. The WRP expelled A Thornett in 1974: he formed the Workers' Socialist League, which later joined forces with the

International Communist League to form the Socialist Organiser Alliance in 1982.

About two years ago, the SOA expelled some of its members, who in turn formed Socialist Viewpoint.

Last year, the WRP split and both factions still insist that they are the true WRP.

For completeness, one more group should be mentioned, the Spartacists. They did not emerge from a split with anyone because they are an American import whose main activity is going on demonstrations with banners bearing catchy slogans like 'Drive Out SDP Fifth Column Labour Party Can Betray Without CIA Connections! Smash NATO. Defend USSR'. In case you are wondering why Trotskyites call for the defence of the USSR, this 'defence' is of the usual Trotskyite kind in that the Spartacists also call for 'political revolution to overthrow the Kremlin bureaucracy'.

All in all, it is ironic that these groups, who have a long history of expelling everyone, regularly find themselves being expelled from the Labour party, in which they should not have been in the first place if, as their names suggest, they are 'revolutionary', 'Marxist', 'internationalists', etc. Are they in a strong position to accuse others of conducting a witch hunt against them? Let he who is without sin cast the first stone!

Appendix 2: Two letters*

Trotsky's letter to Nikolay Chkheidze, 1 April 1913

To Nicholas Semionovich Chkheidze
Member of the Empire Duma
Tauride Palace
St Petersburg

Dear Nicholas Semionovich

First of all, let me express my gratitude for the pleasure, both political and aesthetic, that your speeches, particularly your last one on robbery, give me. Yes, one feels joy when reading our representatives' speeches and the workers' letters to the *Luch* editorial board, or when learning about the symptomatic facts concerning the labour movement. After that, the despicable division, consistently fostered by Lenin, who is a master in this art, a professional exploiter of Russian labour movement routine, seem like an absurd nightmare. No sensible European

* 'Two letters of Leon Trotsky', published in the archive section of *RevolutionaryDemocracy.org*.

socialist could possibly believe that the differences of opinion created by Lenin in Cracow are likely to cause a split.

Lenin's 'successes', although they are an obstacle for us, do not inspire me with any concern. At this stage, we are no longer in 1903 or in 1908. With 'money of suspicious origin', intercepted at Kautsky's and Zetkin's place, Lenin set up an organ, took the logo of a popular newspaper, wrote the word 'unity' on its banner and thus attracted worker readers, who, of course, considered the publication of a workers' daily to be a great victory. Then, when the newspaper had gained influence, Lenin used it as an instrument for his circle intrigues and for his splittist trends. But the aspirations of the workers for unity are so strong that Lenin was forced to play hide and seek with his readers, to talk about unity from below while organising the split at the top, to equate class struggle to the bickering of groups and fractions. In a word, at this moment, all that Leninism consists of is based on lies and falsifications, and bears in itself the seeds of its own decay. There is no doubt that, if the opposing party knows how to manage, gangrene will soon develop among Leninists, precisely because of the question of unity or division.

But I repeat: if the opposing party knows how to manage. And if Leninism, by itself, does not inspire me with any fear, I must admit that I am not sure that our friends, the liquidators, will not help Lenin to get back on saddle.

Two policies may now be applied: to destroy ideologically and organically the fractional walls which still exist, and thus destroy the very foundations of Leninism, which is incompatible with the organisation of workers into a political party, but which can perfectly grow on the manure of splits; or, on the contrary, to conduct a fractional selection of anti-Leninists (Mensheviks or liquidators) by a complete liquidation of the divergences on tactics.

Trotsky's letter to Mikhail Olminsky, 6 December 1921

This second letter, written to a Bolshevik historian, while asking that his earlier attack on Lenin should be suppressed as 'irrelevant', in fact confirms Trotsky's insistence on the theory of 'permanent revolution' even after he claimed to have become a Leninist. The letter of 1913 had come to light in a police archive following the revolution.

Dear Mikhail Stepanovitch

I apologise for my delay in replying, but I was extremely busy during the week. You ask me whether to publish my letters to Chkheidze. I think that it would not be appropriate. It is still too early to work as historians. These letters were written under the spur of the moment and, obviously, the tone suffers from this. Today's readers would not understand, would be unable to make the necessary historical corrections and would simply be disoriented. We must receive, from abroad, party archives and foreign Marxist editions. They contain many letters from all those who participated in the 'quarrel'. Do you really intend to publish them immediately? This would create unnecessary political difficulties, because it would be difficult to find two former party members in exile, who, in their correspondence of that time, have not exchanged sharp words, motivated by the anger due to the struggle.

What if explanations accompanied my letters? They would tell the divergences I had at that time with the Bolsheviks. I briefly mentioned them in the preface to my brochure *Results and*

Prospects.^{*} I do not see the need to return to this subject in connection with the discovery of letters in the archives of the police. Moreover, this retrospective review of factional struggle could, still now, give rise to controversy, because, I confess frankly, I do not think at all that, in my disagreements with the Bolsheviks, I was wrong on all points. I was completely wrong in my assessment of the Menshevik fraction: I overestimated its revolutionary capabilities, and I thought possible to isolate and neutralise its right wing. However, this fundamental error is due to the fact that I was analysing the two fractions, Bolsheviks and Mensheviks, by placing myself from the perspective of the permanent revolution and of the dictatorship of the proletariat, while, at that time, the Bolsheviks and Mensheviks were adopting the point of view of the bourgeois revolution and of the democratic republic. I had not realised that the two fractions were separated by such deep divergences, and I was hoping (as I have repeatedly expressed in letters and reports) that the course of the revolution, itself, would lead them to the programme of the permanent revolution and of the seizure of power by the working class – which was partially achieved in 1905. (Lenin's preface to Kautsky's article on the driving forces of the Russian Revolution and position of the *Nachalo* newspaper.)

I estimate that my appreciation of the driving forces of the revolution was undoubtedly correct, but that the consequences that I pulled from the two fractions were unquestionably false. Only Bolshevism, thanks to the rigidity of its principles, could rally all the truly revolutionary elements among the intellectuals and the advanced fraction of the working class of that time.

And it is only because it managed to create this compact revolutionary organisation that it could switch quickly from the democratic revolutionary position to the socialist revolutionary position.

^{*} L Trotsky, *Results and Prospects*, 1906, reissued with new preface in 1919.

APPENDICES

Today, I would still be able to easily separate my polemical articles against the Mensheviks and the Bolsheviks into two categories: those focused on the analysis of the internal forces of the revolution, of their perspectives (*Neue Zeit*, the theoretical organ, Polish Rosa Luxemburg); and those in which I evaluated the fractions of the Russian social democracy, their struggle, etc ... Now I could still publish articles of the first category without making any correction, because they are entirely consistent with the position adopted by our party since 1917. But articles of the second category are clearly erroneous and are not worth being reprinted. The two letters sent fall into this second category, and it is useless to publish them. Let someone else do that ten years from now, if people are still interested in them.

Communist greetings

L Trotsky

Appendix 3: Trotsky on Trotsky

We present here two of the many quotations that can be found which illustrate Trotsky's tremendous egotism and shameless self-promotion.

1. On his role in the 1905 revolution^{*26}

Among the Russian comrades, there was not one from whom I could learn anything. On the contrary, I had to assume the position of teacher myself. The events of the stormy years were coming swiftly, one upon the heels of another . . .

I was confident in the face of events. I understood their inner mechanism, or at least so I believed. I visualised their effect on the minds of the workers, and envisaged, in its main features, the next day to come. From February to October, my participation in the events was chiefly of a literary nature. In October, I plunged headlong into the gigantic whirlpool, which, in a personal sense, was the greatest test for my powers. Decisions had to be made under fire. I can't help noting here that those decisions came to me quite obviously. I did not turn back to see

* L Trotsky, *My Life*, 1930, chapter 14.

what others might say, and I very seldom had opportunity to consult anybody; everything had to be done in such a hurry.

Later, I observed with astonishment and a sense of estrangement how every event caught the cleverest of the Mensheviks, Martov, unawares and threw him into confusion. Without thinking about it, there was too little time left for self-examination, I organically felt that my years of apprenticeship were over, although not in the sense that I stopped learning.

No, the urge and willingness to learn I have carried through my whole life in all their first intensity. But in the years that followed I have been learning as a master learns, and not as a pupil . . .

No great work is possible without intuition, that is, without that subconscious sense which, although it may be developed and enriched by theoretical and practical work, must be ingrained in the very nature of the individual. Neither theoretical education nor practical routine can replace the political insight which enables one to apprehend a situation, weigh it as a whole, and foresee the future. This gift takes on decisive importance at a time of abrupt changes and breaks the conditions of revolution.

The events of 1905 revealed in me, I believe, this revolutionary intuition, and enabled me to rely on its assured support during my later life. I must add here that the errors which I have committed, however important they may have been and some of them were of extreme importance always referred to questions that were not fundamental or strategic, but dealt rather with such derivative matters as organisation and policy.

In all conscientiousness, I cannot, in the appreciation of the political situation as a whole and of its revolutionary perspectives, accuse myself of any serious errors of judgment.

2. On Lenin's alleged appreciation of his genius^{*27}

Looking back, two years after the revolution, Lenin wrote: 'At the moment when it seized the power and created the Soviet republic, Bolshevism drew to itself all the best elements in the currents of socialist thought that were nearest to it.' Can there be even a shadow of a doubt that when he spoke so deliberately of the best representatives of the currents closest to Bolshevism, Lenin had foremost in mind what is now called the 'historical Trotskyism'?

For what was nearer to it than the current that I represented? And whom else could Lenin have had in mind? Perhaps Marcel Cachin? Or Thälmann? To Lenin, when he surveyed the past development of the party as a whole, Trotskyism was no hostile and alien current of socialist thought, but on the contrary the one that was closest to Bolshevism.

(See chapter two for a selection of the many trenchant criticisms made by Lenin of Trotsky's political line, dishonesty and self-aggrandisement.)

* *Ibid*, chapter 28.

Appendix 4: Further reading

A few useful sources for those who wish to further their understanding of Trotsky and Trotskyism.

Harpal Brar: *Trotskyism or Leninism?*, Harpal Brar Books, 1993.

This book covers all the major Trotskyite controversies, including: Lenin's plan for a party of a new type v Trotsky's liquidationism; Lenin's theory of revolution v Trotsky's theory of 'permanent revolution', Lenin v Trotsky on national liberation; Trotsky's opposition in the Comintern; Trotsky's opposition to building socialism in the USSR and to collectivisation; the evidence of the Moscow trials which revealed the active participation of Trotsky and his followers in plots to destroy the Soviet Union, through wrecking, sabotage assassinations and preparations for a coup, and that they received funding for this work by making deals with the fascist powers (Trotsky was revealed to have been cooperating with German imperialism since 1921 when he was still a CPSU(B) member; he concluded agreements with both fascist Germany and fascist Japan when in exile, maintaining his connection with his adherents and passing orders to them from abroad).

Ludo Martens: *Another View of Stalin*, English edition, EPO Belgium, 1996.

Grover Furr: *Trotsky's 'Amalgams'*, Erythros Press, 2015.

Espresso Stalinist: 'Revisionism in Russia: Trotsky against the Bolsheviks', *EspressoStalinist.com*, 1 August 2015.

TROTSKY(ISM): TOOL OF IMPERIALISM

Richard B Spence: 'Interrupted journey: British intelligence and the arrest of Leon Trotskii', April 1917, *Revolutionary Russia*, 13:1, pp1-28, 2000.

Richard B Spence: 'Hidden agendas: spies, lies and intrigue surrounding Trotsky's American visit of January-April 1917', *Revolutionary Russia*, 21:1, pp33-55, 2008.

We know from the Moscow trials that Trotsky was acting as an agent for German imperialism from 1921, receiving pay from abroad for his anti-party activities. This later moved from publication and propaganda work to outright sabotage and murder, which he directed from his exile after he was deported from the USSR in 1929. The two articles listed above contain new evidence that Trotsky was targeted by British intelligence operatives even before the October Revolution and may well have been in imperialist pay from that time or earlier.

NOTES

- 1 This article was originally printed in the *Lalkar*, September 2024. p9
- 2 Chapters two, three and four of this volume originally appeared as the Preface to H Brar's seminal work *Trotskyism or Leninism?* (1993), which is available to buy from our online bookstore: shop.thecommunists.org.

Other chapters in the book refute Trotskyite (imperialist) mythology on topics such as the true content and essence of Leninism, the theory of permanent revolution, the Moscow trials, the Chinese revolution, the Spanish civil war, collectivisation in the USSR, and the class struggle under socialism. p25

- 3 Otzovists: an opportunist group formed in the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party (RSDLP) in 1908, led by Alexander Bogdanov. From behind a screen of revolutionary verbiage, the Otzovists demanded the recall of the social-democratic deputies from the third duma (tsarist parliament) and the cessation of party activity in legal and semi-legal organisations, maintaining that because reaction was on the rampage the party had to confine itself to illegal work.

This programme would have isolated the party from the masses and turned it into a sectarian organisation incapable of mustering the forces for another revolutionary upsurge.

Lenin showed that the views of the Otzovists were inconsistent, unprincipled and hostile to Marxism. At a conference of an extended editorial board of Bolshevik newspaper *Proletary* in June 1909, a resolution was passed to the effect that 'as a clear-cut trend in the RSDLP, Bolshevism has nothing in common with Otzovism or ultimatumism' (a variety of Otzovism). Bogdanov was expelled from the Bolshevik party for his factional activities. p28

- 4 Liquidators: representatives of an opportunist trend in the RSDLP during the period of reaction (1907-12) that followed the first (defeated) Russian revolution (1905-7). The Mensheviks were utterly demoralised by the defeat of this uprising and decided in a panic that the only course open was to disband all illegal party organisations and cease all underground revolutionary activity.

Headed by Julius Martov, Pavel Axelrod, Fyodor Dan, Alexandr Martynov and other Menshevik (anti-Bolshevik) leaders, their aim was to liquidate the revolutionary party of the working class and set up an openly reformist party. The liquidators urged the working class to come to terms with the bourgeoisie; to reconcile itself to the reactionary regime in Russia. Trotsky sided with the liquidators.

At the sixth (Prague) all-Russia conference of the RSDLP (January 1912), the liquidators were expelled from the party. p28

- 5 Georgi Plekhanov (1856-1918): Considered by Lenin to be the founder of Russian Marxism, Georgi Plekhanov was both a deep-thinking Marxist theoretician and one of the founders of Russia's first Marxist organisation, the Emancipation of Labour Group (founded from exile). He translated the *Communist Manifesto* into Russian and much of his work on Marxist philosophy continued to be translated and published throughout the Soviet period.

Plekhanov worked with Lenin on the production of the *Iskra* newspaper from 1900 to 1903, but his attempts to gloss over the differences that arose sharply at the second congress of the RSDLP (August 1903) led him step by step into the Menshevik camp.

He and Lenin were never allied again. He consistently underestimated the revolutionary potential of the peasantry and took a social-chauvinist stand during the world war, calling for the defeat of Germany and the victory of the entente (Britain, France and Russia) as the 'better' outcome for the proletariat. Plekhanov had degenerated so far as to denounce the October Revolution and Soviet power of 1917, believing it to be 'premature', since Russia would not be 'ready' for socialism until it had passed through a prolonged period of capitalist development.

Despite their deep differences, Lenin and the Bolsheviks continued to honour his contribution to the development of Marxism in Russia and a Soviet institute of economics was named in his honour. The university still bears his name today: the Plekhanov Russian University of Economics. p31

- 6 Note by VI Lenin: Tushino turncoat: the name given in the Troublous Times in Rus to fighting men who went over from one camp to another.

Elucidation by Soviet editors: 'Troublous Times' was a term used in pre-

revolutionary Russian historiography to denote the period of the peasant war and the struggle of the Russian people against the Polish and Swedish intervention in the early seventeenth century.

In 1608, the Polish troops under Pseudo-Dmitry II, a henchman of the Polish landed gentry who posed as the younger son of the Russian tsar Ivan the Terrible, invaded Russia, and reached the outskirts of Moscow, where they encamped in Tushino. A government headed by Pseudo-Dmitry was formed in Tushino in opposition to the government of Moscow. Some of the Russian nobles and boyar aristocracy deserted one camp for another in an effort to keep in with the winning side. These deserters were called 'Tushino turncoats'. p34

- 7 The Zimmerwald conference of 1915 brought together all those who were dismayed by the militarist, pro-imperialist turn taken by the leaders and significant sections of every one of the European socialist parties in 1914 – in total contradiction to the resolutions they had all signed up to at a congress in Basle, Switzerland just two years earlier.

The course of the war saw the firm incorporation of the right wing of the socialist movement into the bourgeois state apparatuses all over Europe. Social democracy emerged as the fully-fledged instrument of bourgeois influence in the working-class movement. Social-democratic leaders became government ministers, their parliamentarians voted for war credits and they in every way supported and recruited for the war effort.

Those who attended the Zimmerwald conference revealed themselves to have three tendencies. The first of these was a consistently revolutionary left wing, headed by Lenin, which stuck firmly to the line that had been previously agreed on. In 1912, in Basle, all socialist parties in Europe had made a commitment that they would work to mobilise the workers to actively oppose the war, and would endeavour to transform an interimperialist war, in which workers slaughtered their fellow workers in the interests of the financiers, into a civil war, in which the revolutionary workers would turn their guns against their own imperialist rulers.

On the other side was the Zimmerwald right, those who officially supported the old antiwar line, but who were afraid to be seen as 'splitting the movement' and wanted to conciliate with the open social-chauvinists, hoping to reunite the movement as soon as the nasty interruption caused by the war was over. Objectively, this line was a line of capitulation to the bourgeoisie and to the bourgeois-aligned opportunists, who had revealed their loyalties only too clearly. Lenin wrote extensively about the need to expose rather than cover over these important differences – about the need to break cleanly rather than try to mend what could no longer be considered as a whole.

Between these two was a centrist position that tried to reconcile the two,

led by the German Karl Kautsky. Objectively, this section also acted like the petty-bourgeois vacillators in the class struggle – unwilling or unable to take a firm position; afraid to speak out against former friends and comrades; hoping against hope that a way could be found to square the circle with the minimum of unpleasantness. p35

- 8 Rosa Luxemburg (1871-1919): Born into a Jewish family in Poland (part of the Russian empire), Rosa was forced into exile at the age of eighteen following her early beginnings in political agitation. She lived and studied for some years in Zurich, Switzerland, where she met many other exiled Russian social-democrats. She then moved to Berlin where she joined the German Social-Democratic Party and began to write and to organise there.

She supported Karl Kautsky against the revisionist Eduard Bernstein in Germany and the Bolsheviks against the Mensheviks in Russia, but she took several positions that brought her into conflict with Lenin, in particular on the national question, where she believed that self-determination for the oppressed nations would lead to the weakening of the socialist struggle. Lenin repeatedly criticised her formulations on this question.

During the first world war, Luxemburg was vigorous in her opposition to the renegades of her party and came out firmly in defence of the revolutionary line. With Karl Liebknecht she founded the Spartacus League, which agitated (as the Bolsheviks did) that German soldiers should turn their weapons against their own government and overthrow it. For this activity both were jailed.

Despite this activity being the fulfilment of their apparently shared line, Luxemburg denounced the Bolsheviks' leading role in the October Revolution as 'dictatorial'. Whether she would have become entrenched in this position or revised it in the light of experience is impossible to know since she and Karl Liebknecht were both murdered on 15 January 1919 by German government forces for their part in leading the failed German revolutionary uprising that began in November 1918. p40

- 9 AUCCTU: The All-Union Central Council of Trade Unions. p54

- 10 Five-year plans: From 1928 onwards, the Soviet economy was put on a firm socialist footing with the inception of the five-year plans. Each one was worked out with the input of huge numbers of workers via their workplace and neighbourhood organisations, which sent reports to the centre at the state planning committee (Gosplan) about what they needed, what they thought they could make and what they needed to succeed.

Through a process of iteration and consultation, targets for production in all areas of the economy and all parts of the country were set, the specific sections adopted in each locale and a great competition ensued as sectors

of the economy and areas of the country sought to fulfil their quotas as early as possible. The first five year plan was thus declared complete after four years and three months and the basis of Soviet industry had been firmly laid.

For an eye-witness account of the first five-year plan see AL Strong, *The Stalin Era*, chapter 2. For a succinct evaluation of planned economy v capitalist anarchy see H Johnson, *The Socialist Sixth of the World*, 1939, book IV chapter 1. p72

- 11 For a fuller treatment of this subject, see H Brar, *Perestroika – the Complete Collapse of Revisionism*, 1992, chapter 11. Available to buy via our bookstore at shop.thecommunists.org. p75
- 12 Khrushchevite revisionism: Following the death of Josef Stalin and the election of Nikita Khrushchev as general secretary of the CPSU(B) in 1953, the Soviet Union's planned economy and proletarian dictatorship were steadily undermined by a series of economic and political measures. These measures were accompanied by a systematic purge of opposition (ie, loyal to Leninism) members of the party, which became steadily more divorced from the masses as a result.

The revisionist campaign to undermine socialism from within is examined in detail in H Brar, *Perestroika, the Complete Collapse of Revisionism* and in H Brar, *Revisionism and the Demise of the USSR*, CPGB-ML pamphlet, 2011. p99

- 13 On 12 January 1990, Romania outlawed the Communist party following the overthrow of communist leader Nicolae Ceauşescu, who had been the Romanian head of state since 1967. Like Stalin's, Ceauşescu's reputation has recovered substantially in the decades since, as Romanian workers have come to appreciate the depth of the lies that were told to them during the counter-revolution and to mourn the life of dignity and security that they lost with the abolition of socialist Romania. p104
- 14 'Organisational questions of the Russian social democracy': This anti-Leninist text, written in opposition to Lenin's *One Step Forward, Two Steps Back*, is much beloved of Trotskyites and has been frequently reprinted and distributed by them over the last century. p121
- 15 Northites: Followers of the David North, a US-based Trotskyite and leading light in the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI), to which the Workers Revolutionary party of Gerry Healy (WRP) had been affiliated. North had made criticisms of the WRP's political and organisational approach in the early eighties, and these were widely circulated in 1985 when the party suffered terminal meltdown following revelations of its leader Gerry Healy's sexual abuse of female party members. p121

- 16 Torrancites: Adherents of WRP assistant general secretary Sheila Torrance, who led the minority section after the split and coalesced around the newspaper *News Line*, pursuing the same politics as before (endlessly calling for general strikes while trying to gain positions within the trade union bureaucracies) and with the disgraced Gerry Healy in the background as a 'political advisor'. p121

- 17 Nikolai Bukharin (1888-1938): A Bolshevik who had been known for decades for political vacillation and opposition to Lenin. Nevertheless he was a member of the central committee before, during and after the revolution and held many important positions in the Communist party and the Comintern.

Having opposed both the rapid pace of industrialisation and the policy of collectivisation which followed it, Bukharin degenerated into pessimism from the late 1920s onwards and was found during the third Moscow trial to have been a part of the bloc of Rights and Trotskyites actively trying to bring down the Soviet regime. For this treason he was executed on 15 March 1938. p127

- 18 Before the 1917 October Revolution, the old Julian calendar was in use. After the revolution, socialist Russia switched to the Gregorian calendar in use in western Europe and aligned its dates by skipping 1-13 February 1918. This is why all dates from Russian history before 14 February 1918 are given with the new style equivalent in brackets. p132

- 19 Note by JV Stalin: The 'contact committee', consisting of NS Chkheidze, YM Steklov, NN Sukhanov, VN Filippovsky and MI Skobelev (and later VM Chernov and IG Tsereteli), was set up by the Menshevik and Socialist-Revolutionary executive committee of the Petrograd Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies on 7 March 1917, for the purpose of establishing contact with the provisional government, of 'influencing' it and 'controlling' its activities.

Actually, the 'contact committee' helped to carry out the bourgeois policy of the provisional government and restrained the masses of the workers from waging an active revolutionary struggle to transfer all power to the soviets. The 'contact committee' existed until May 1917, when representatives of the Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries entered the provisional government.

For more on the contact committee, see the article 'Lessons of the Revolution' by VI Lenin, *Rabochy*, 12 September 1917. CW Vol 25, pp227-43. p139

- 20 The Petrograd city conference of the RSDLP(B) took place from 27 April to 5 May (14-22 April) 1917, with fifty-seven delegates present. VI Lenin and JV Stalin took part in the proceedings. VI Lenin delivered a report on the

current situation based on his *April Theses*. JV Stalin was elected to the commission for drafting the resolution on VI Lenin's report. p140

- 21 Concerning the seventh all-Russian April conference of the Bolshevik party see the *History of the CPSU(B), Short Course*, 1952, pp291-6. p140
- 22 Note by JV Stalin: Among these legends must be included also the very widespread story that Trotsky was the 'sole' or 'chief organiser' of the victories on the fronts of the civil war. I must declare, comrades, in the interest of truth, that this version is quite out of accord with the facts.

I am far from denying that Trotsky played an important role in the civil war. But I must emphatically declare that the high honour of being the organiser of our victories belongs not to individuals, but to the great collective body of advanced workers in our country, the Russian Communist party.

Perhaps it will not be out of place to quote a few examples. You know that Kolchak and [General Anton] Denikin were regarded as the principal enemies of the Soviet Republic. You know that our country breathed freely only after those enemies were defeated. Well, history shows that both those enemies, ie, Kolchak and Denikin, were routed by our troops in spite of Trotsky's plans.

Judge for yourselves.

Kolchak. This is in the summer of 1919. Our troops are advancing against Kolchak and are operating near Ufa. A meeting of the central committee is held. Trotsky proposes that the advance be halted along the line of the river Belaya (near Ufa), leaving the Urals in the hands of Kolchak, and that part of the troops be withdrawn from the eastern front and transferred to the southern front.

A heated debate takes place. The central committee disagrees with Trotsky, being of the opinion that the Urals, with its factories and railway network, must not be left in the hands of Kolchak, for the latter could easily recuperate there, organise a strong force and reach the Volga again; Kolchak must first be driven beyond the Ural range into the Siberian steppes, and only after that has been done should forces be transferred to the south.

The central committee rejects Trotsky's plan. Trotsky hands in his resignation. The central committee refuses to accept it. Commander-in-Chief Vatsetis, who supported Trotsky's plan, resigns. His place is taken by a new commander-in-chief, Kamenev. From that moment, Trotsky ceases to take a direct part in the affairs of the eastern front.

Denikin. This is in the autumn of 1919. The offensive against Denikin is not proceeding successfully. The 'steel ring' around Mamontov (Mamontov's

raid) is obviously collapsing. Denikin captures Kursk. Denikin is approaching Orel. Trotsky is summoned from the southern front to attend a meeting of the central committee.

The central committee regards the situation as alarming and decides to send new military leaders to the southern front and to withdraw Trotsky. The new military leaders demand 'no intervention' by Trotsky in the affairs of the southern front. Trotsky ceases to take a direct part in the affairs of the southern front. Operations on the southern front, right up to the capture of Rostov-on-Don and Odessa by our troops, proceed without Trotsky.

Let anybody try to refute these facts. p141

- 23 The Congress of Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies of the Northern Region took place in Petrograd on 24-26 (11-13) October 1917, under the direction of the Bolsheviks. Representatives were present from Petrograd, Moscow, Kronstadt, Novgorod, Reval, Helsingfors, Vyborg and other cities. In all there were ninety-four delegates, of whom fifty-one were Bolsheviks.

The congress adopted a resolution on the need for immediate transference of *All power to the soviets*, central and local. It called upon the peasants to support the struggle for the transference of power to the soviets and urged the soviets themselves to commence active operations and to set up revolutionary military committees for organising the military defence of the revolution.

The congress set up a northern regional committee and instructed it to prepare for the convocation of the second All-Russian Congress of Soviets and to coordinate the activities of all the regional soviets. p146

- 24 This review of Ken Loach's *Land and Freedom* was first published in *Lalkar*, July 2008. p162
- 25 This sentiment was expressed several times in various ways by both Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. For example, by Marx in 'Confidential communication on Bakunin', where he wrote: 'Any people that oppresses another people forges its own chains.' 28 March 1870. CW Vol 21, p120. p163
- 26 We note in passing that no genuine revolutionary leader of the time had time for or interest in biographies or autobiographies. p188
- 27 A clear attempt to rewrite history and remove from people's minds twenty years of political opposition to Lenin, which suffered only the very shortest of interruptions during the period of the October Revolution. p190

Books by Harpal Brar

Perestroika: The Complete Collapse of Revisionism (1992)

Trotskyism or Leninism? (1993)

Social Democracy: The Enemy Within (1995)

Imperialism: Decadent, Parasitic, Moribund Capitalism (1997)

Bourgeois Nationalism or Proletarian Internationalism? (1998)

Chimurenga! The Liberation Struggle in Zimbabwe (Ed, 2004)

Imperialism: The Eve of the Social Revolution
of the Proletariat (2007)

Imperialism and War (2008)

Inquilab Zindabad: India's Liberation Struggle (2014)

Socialism with Chinese Characteristics: Marketisation of
China's Economy (2020)

Books by Harpal Brar and Ella Rule

Imperialism in the middle east (2002)

Imperialism and the Worst-Ever Crisis of
Overproduction (2013)

Books by Ella Rule

Marxism and the Emancipation of Women (Ed, 2000)

Books by Giles Shorter

Neo-nazi Nato's Proxy War Against Russia (2023)

CPGB-ML pamphlets

H Brar, Nato's Predatory War Against Yugoslavia (2009)

H Brar, The 1926 British General Strike (2009)

H Brar, Revisionism and the Demise of the USSR (2011)

Various, World War One: An Interimperialist War
to Redivide the World (2015)

H Brar, The Soviet Victory Over Fascism (second edition, 2016)

E Rule, Claudia Jones, Communist (2017)

J Brar, The Drive to War Against Russia and China (2017)

E Rule, A Class Analysis of British Society at the Start
of the 21st Century (2017)

CPGB-ML Party Programme and Rules (revised 2018)

Various, Identity Politics and the Transgender Trend (2019)

Various, The Rise and Fall of Project Corbyn (2020)

Eighth Congress of the CPGB-ML, 2018 (2021)

H Brar, Capitalism and Immigration (second edition, 2022)

R Brar, Britain's Road to Socialism? (2022)

Various, Manifesto for the Crisis (2023)

H Brar, Britain's Perfidious Labour Party (2023)

H Brar, Zionism: A Racist, Antisemitic and Reactionary
Tool of Imperialism (second edition, 2024)

J Brar and E Rule, Identity Politics or Class Politics? (2024)

H Brar et al, Trotsky(ism): Tool of Imperialism (2024)

Contact the CPGB-ML for further copies and a list of publications.
PO Box 78900, London, SW16 9PQ



Today's Trotskyites claim to be the 'true inheritors' of VI Lenin, faithful upholders of revolutionary Leninist ideology and of the Bolshevik organising tradition which brought us the world's first socialist state in 1917. But in reality their organisations and leaders play the role of *agent provocateur* in the working-class movement, just as Trotsky did throughout his lifetime.

By consistently denigrating and opposing the forces that actually fight imperialism, whether at home or abroad, Trotskyism works to mislead potential revolutionaries and prevent them from making any meaningful contribution to the struggle for socialism. Despite their constant calls for strikes and uprisings 'now', no Trotskyist group has ever led a successful movement against capitalism in over a century of revolutionary posturing.

More than that: Trotskyism has actively impeded all such struggles. By re-packaging imperialist lies in 'Leninist' phrases, Trotskyists promote 'analyses' and slogans that mislead and confuse rather than educating, and they engage in activities that are designed to prevent any advance of the working class.

In Britain today, their practical programme amounts to support for the imperialist Labour party, support for imperialist wars, and implacable hostility toward genuine revolutionaries. A plethora of Trotskyist organisations are funded by the British state and promoted by British corporate media: one of many strategies used by the capitalists to sabotage the efforts of the workers to rise to the position of ruling class and build a bright, socialist future.

ISBN: 978-1-913286-13-2

thecommunists.org

Communist Party of Great Britain (Marxist-Leninist)