

THOSE WHO OPPOSED STALIN:

THE BIRTH OF
THE INTERNATIONAL
LEFT OPPOSITION
1929-30

By Damien Durand

Part One: Chapters 1 - 7

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Editorial Note

On November 27, 1984, Damien Durand submitted his thesis in Political Science, "The Birth of the International Left Opposition, from the exile of Trotsky to the first conference (February 1929 - April 1930).

The Institut Leon Trotsky group, which is justifiably proud of this work which has been carried out by its young comrade, has tried to find a publisher, recognising that it had to suggest that it be shortened; the version submitted ran to 564 pages. We confess that we have failed. So we had to decide to take the bull by the horns. "Cahiers Leon Trotsky" will publish this study.

The documentation which Damien Durand has used for his research is, of course, that collected by the Institut Leon Trotsky, with the translations made by its collaborators, Isabelle Lombard, Katia Peresse and Maurice Stobnicer, with the biographical records of the Institut, the file of pseudonyms and the documents in archives and libraries in several parts of the world likewise at his disposal, as well as the help and moral support of these comrades.

Damian Durand, who carried through this enormous task, then had the least personally satisfying part of it to do: the reduction of his two large volumes in typescript to a text which could be fitted into two issues of the "Cahiers Leon Trotsky". We now publish it in Nos. 32 and 33.

We wish only to add that, on the occasion of the publication in "Cahiers Leon Trotsky" of this piece of work in which the journal was very interested, we want once more to commemorate Jan van Heijenoort, who helped us all in our researches, which Damien Durand has summarised here. Damien Durand has told us that he wants this commemoration to appear in our editorial note, a commemoration of "Van, who is a loss to us all".

Cahiers Leon Trotsky

INITIALS AND ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|--------------|--|
| A. H. | Archives of Harvard (Trotsky Archives) |
| B. P. | Political Bureau (Politburo) |
| C. C. | Central Committee |
| C. E. | Executive Committee |
| C. G. T. | General Confederation of Labour |
| C. G. T. U. | Unitary General Confederation of Labour |
| C. L. A. | Communist League of America |
| G. C. I. | Independent Communist Group of Oissel (France) |
| G. P. U. | Political Administration of the State (U.S.S.R.) |
| C. I. | Communist International (Comintern) |
| J. C. | Communist Youth |
| K. I. M. | Communist Youth International |
| K. P. D. | Communist Party of Germany |
| K. P. O. | Communist Party of Austria |
| K. P. O. - O | Communist Party of Austria (Opposition) |
| N. A. S. | National Secretariat of Labour (Netherlands) |
| N. E. P. | New Economic Policy |
| N. O. I. | New Italian Opposition |
| P. A. I. | Annamite Independence Party (Viet Nam Doc Lap Dang) |
| P. C. | Communist Party |
| P. C. E. | Communist Party of Spain |
| P. C. F. | Communist Party of France, later French Communist Party |
| P. C. I. | Italian Communist Party |
| P. C. M. | Mexican Communist Party |
| P. C. R. A. | Communist Party of the Argentine Region |
| P. C. T. | Czechoslovak Communist Party |
| P. C. U. S. | Communist Party of the Soviet Union |
| P. O. P. | Workers' and Peasants' Party |
| P. S. | Socialist Party |
| S. F. I. O. | French Section of the Workers' International (Socialist Party) |
| S. P. D. | Social-Democratic Party of Germany |
| S. R. | Social-Revolutionaries (in Russia) |
| T. U. C. | Trades Union Congress (British trade unions) |
| V. L. O. | United Left Opposition of the K.P.D. (Bolshevik-Leninists) |

I N T R O D U C T I O N

The scientific study of the birth of the International Left Opposition has been made possible by the opening of the Archives of Leon Trotsky at the Houghton Library in the University of Harvard on January 2, 1980. This has enabled a subject to be investigated which a number of authors have treated, though with restricted means and documentation. Before the archives were opened to the public, only Isaac Deutscher, the biographer of Trotsky, had been authorised by his widow, Natalia Sedova, to carry out research in the closed part of the archives, which were not yet catalogued, and in which he worked for only ten days.

The Trotsky Archives amount to nearly twenty thousand documents, and are divided into two parts: the first, the "open" part, includes only documents published during the period of exile or prior to it (particularly the 1917 - 1928 archives which Trotsky brought out of the U.S.S.R.). Despite its richness, it has often been neglected, for the benefit of the second part, the so-called "Closed Archives", which includes the documents about the exile period of 1929 - 1940, the "Exile Papers". When Trotsky sold these archives in 1940 to the University of Harvard, he imposed the condition that these documents should not be accessible to the public until forty years after his death, a condition dictated by his concern to protect militants and persons involved in the documents.

This "closed" part, which is now accessible, is divided into several categories of documents: letters of militants and letters by Trotsky to his correspondents, letters of militants to Sedov, Trotsky's son, and some letters from Sedov to his correspondents (the files of Sedov's correspondence being regarded as lost after his death in 1938 until they were recently recovered by Pierre Broue and Jan van Heijenoort, Trotsky's former secretary from 1932 to 1939, at the Hoover Institute in California) and the correspondence between Trotsky's secretaries and the militants.

The archives also include two last sections: the "other letters", which are copies of letters which passed between militants and other persons, which were sent to Trotsky for his information. Here we find a rich, varied but incomplete documentation. The "other texts and documents" are political texts, resolutions of Opposition groups and pamphlets, press cuttings and collections of reviews and journals, internal bulletins, articles and theses drafted by militants. These documents constitute an irreplaceable collection of archives about the life of the Opposition groups, their political struggle, the personality of leaders and militants of the Opposition. The opening of the Harvard archives enables us to make use of all these documents - which we are publishing with the permission of the Houghton Library.

Since only a few rare witnesses of this period have published works of a political character on memoirs, it was necessary to study the political history of this movement in the light of those documents which in many cases shed fresh light on little-known episodes and in any case on elements of analysis and deep understanding, enabling summary judgements, over-hasty assertions and that lack of subtlety due to the relative distance in time of the period studied to be avoided.

We include the conception of Isaac Deutscher, in his biography of Trotsky (1), among the over-hasty assertions, though many people have been impressed by them. In Deutscher's view, Trotsky was "the prophet outlawed" in this period, "disarmed" after having been defeated in the struggle against Stalin in the Bolshevik Party. According to Deutscher, the former chief of the Red Army and of the workers' state at the side of Lenin did not draw the conclusions from his defeat, which, still according to Deutscher, was inevitable. In exile in Turkey, Trotsky, at the head of scanty and divided forces, without means and with generous but un-realistic political positions, was waging a struggle for which there was no future, and succeeded in devaluing himself, "playing" at being the opposition to a dictatorship which he had created and which was to destroy him.

But, do the role of Trotsky and his activity at the beginning of his exile in Frinkipo represent by themselves the whole of the international Opposition, to the point of concealing it? Was it not because Isaac De. tscher gave little credit to all the groups of the international Opposition that he was interested only in Trotsky? Did he not proceed incorrectly, leaving his role as a biographer, to set himself up on occasions as a histor-

ian or an expert in politics, without really having the stature to do so?

There does exist a political phenomenon to be studied in its own right and of major importance: this is the phenomenon that, during the period February 1929 to April 1930, the balance swung from the Russian Opposition to the international Opposition. Before the Russian Opposition was excluded from the party, it had provided information about events in the Bolshevik party and had convinced Communists in other Communist Parties of the correctness of its struggle. In this way it had played the role of a lighthouse for the oppositionists within the other Communist Parties; it had been the front line of the struggle against the degeneration of the Russian revolution, which had begun to infect the whole of the international Communist movement through the Communist International. Was this not the beginning of the internationalisation of the struggle of the Russian Oppositionists, who, as Trotsky writes, believed that from that time onwards, everything would be settled on the international scale:

"... after the terrible exhaustion due to the revolution and to their material conditions today in the period of reconstruction, the essential mass of the proletariat... has developed a great political passivity. The series of defeats of the international revolution during the last few years have had no small influence in the same direction... Only the Opposition, by systematic, constant, obstinate, un-interrupted work, can help the Communist Parties in the West and in the East to come to the road of Bolshevism and to rise to the level of the revolutionary situations, which are not going to be lacking in the next few years. The Opposition in the U.S.S.R. can fulfill its tasks only as an international factor".(2)

In the opinion of the Russian Oppositionists and of Trotsky, only successes by the proletariat outside the Soviet Union could put an end to the apathy of the Russian proletariat, while the Opposition had already to stand up to repression and to act in secrecy. In connection with the exile of Trotsky and in the light of the experience of the first years of the struggle of the Russian Oppositionists and of the first nuclei and groups of oppositionists abroad, the international Opposition began to emerge as a real organisation, which was neither the "appendage" of the Russian Opposition, nor the simple placing of the opposition groups in various countries together or adding them to each other. It appears that the Russian Opposition was re-planted on the international level, at the very moment when Stalin was getting rid of it out of the party in the Soviet Union, which led Deutscher, among others, to regard it as having been historically defeated. To study this problem of the shift in this political struggle and the conditions in which the international Left Opposition was born involves analysing, besides the role of Trotsky, the activity and the political weight of the Left Oppositionists who took part in this movement. It is a struggle which they at any rate did not regard as being lost in advance, and they waged it with all their resources. It is this history, these ideas and these people, whom we wish to investigate.

Who were these people who called themselves "Bolshevik-Leninists", what influence did they have on their respective Communist parties, what was their personal stature and what breadth of vision did they bring to the tasks which they set themselves? What kind of relations did they keep up with their fore-runners, the Russian Oppositionists? Did the character of the Oppositionists in different countries and their political education enable them to place the Russian Oppositionists and their comrades in other groups on the international stage on the same level? This raises the question of inter-action between the Russian and the international oppositions: was there a real inter-action or was there simply a one-way influence, from the former to the latter? We shall also look into the political, ideological and personal influence of Trotsky on the two oppositions. How did he regard his relations with the opposition groups, what conception had he of his personal role, what were his personal and political links with the oppositionists of the different groups with which he corresponded?

What were the political and organisational answers which Trotsky and the oppositionists gave to the problems with which they were confronted, such as the turn in Stalinist policy, towards planning, industrialisation and 100% collectivisation? What was the degree of the crisis of the Communist movement? How deep was the degeneration of the Russian revolution and of its party, which was victorious in 1917 and was then conquered and defeated by the bureaucracy?

What is the class-nature of the Soviet Union under the domination of the Stalinist bureaucracy? What vision did these militants have of its future? What are the perspectives of their struggle, how did they carry it on, and how did they wish to carry it on?

These are the questions which we are going to investigate. First we shall go over the principal events of the period from the beginning of Lenin's struggle against the emergent bureaucracy in 1922 to the exile of Trotsky to Turkey in February 1929.

FOOTNOTES

- (1) Isaac Deutscher, "The Prophet Outcast: Trotsky, 1929 - 1940", Oxford U.P., 1963
- (2) Trotsky, "The New Stage", written at the end of 1927, published in French, in Redressement Communiste, No. 1/2, October 1928, and re-produced in "The Challenge of the Left Opposition: 1926 - 27", Pathfinder, 1980, pp. 491 and 502.

approximately the same as they had been after the Tenth Congress and Trotsky's defeat in the trade union discussion: the only members of the Central Committee who could be thought to be relatively close to him were Khristian G. Rakovsky, Karl Radek and Yury G. Piatakov.

Trotsky for his part had his eyes fixed on the horizon of the world revolution and, more precisely, on that German revolution which, according to him, was knocking at the door. In the decisive months of the autumn, there seems to have been a sacred union prevailing in Moscow. The leaders believed in general in the German revolution, which could decisively break capitalist encirclement. Zinoviev even let himself go so far as to describe in the press what this second victorious revolution would be. Trotsky had no needs of his personal fraction to convince the Politburo that the revolution was imminent and that it was urgent to organise the revolution. He devoted himself to the technical details of the preparations for insurrection, with his collaborators and the leaders of the Communist International and of the K.P.D.

The preparation of the German October was like a rallying cry. A young generation, which had been won to the Revolution after October 1917 and which felt itself to be called to serve the world revolution, thought that its hour had come, thought that here was a return to heroism and the end of the bureaucratic pettiness which was taking over. The let-down was to be all the harder. The collapse of the revolutionary hopes in Germany co-incided with increasing economic difficulties at home, the rise of workers' discontent and the desire of bureaucrats on the ground to repress when they felt problems closing in on them. It was Dzerzhinsk, the founder and head of the G.P.U. - whom Trotsky believed to be a revolutionary and not a bureaucrat - who set light to the gunpowder when he proposed to demand that party members must denounce any oppositional activity, including the organisation of strikes, to the G.P.U. The danger-point was reached. At the moment when a young generation, mobilised and ready to fight, saw its international perspectives disappear but refused to lower its arms, Trotsky was to come out openly in opposition to one fraction in the leadership and to propose a new orientation, which would turn away from the risk, as he saw it, of a bureaucratic degeneration.

The 1923 Opposition and its Consequences outside the U.S.S.R.

On October 8, 1923, Trotsky addressed to the Central Committee a letter in which he drew attention to "an extraordinary deterioration in the situation within the party since the Twelfth Congress" (2). He declared that "the bureaucratisation of the party apparatus has developed to un-heard-of proportions, by the use of the method of nominating secretaries, and denounced the increased role of the secretary who decides everything with an authoritarianism "ten times worse than that of the worst days of the civil war" (3). He stressed the danger that party members, deprived of their rights in the party, might come to regard the "Old Bolsheviks" as no different from the secretariat, and, therefore, that there would be a danger of a conflict of generations, and threatened to address the whole party, and not merely the leading milieu, if the Central Committee refused to improve this situation. The danger was serious, and, on October 15, a new element was to add more weight: forty-six party members wrote to the Central Committee in the same sense. Among the signatories there were Old Bolsheviks and heroes of the Civil War: Piatakov, Preobrazhensky, Boris M. Eltsine, Leonid P. Serebriakov, Ivan N. Smirnov, Nikolai I. Muralov, Lev S. Sosnovsky, all friends of Trotsky. There were also men who belonged to the so-called "Democratic Centralist" Opposition: Vladimir Smirnov, Timofei V. Sapromov, Andrei S. Bubnov, Valerian Ossinsky and Vladimir Kossior. Their declaration was a platform of struggle for internal democracy and against the empiricism in economic policy of the party leadership. The "forty-six" demanded that a special conference be called to take urgent measures, without waiting for the next Congress, and proposed the realisation of internal democracy and economic planning as immediate measures.

The apparatus, which was being criticised with blow after blow, replied on its own ground, that of discipline: Trotsky was accused of having committed a fractional act and the declaration of the forty-six was condemned as an act of division, tending to weaken the party through internal struggle: it was not published. None the less, the troika was obliged to open a discussion in the party and in the press.

This discussion opened on November 7, 1923, with an article by Zinoviev, and the d

CHAPTER ONE

The Birth of the Russian Left Opposition

A period in the history of the U.S.S.R. closed when Trotsky, expelled from the Soviet Union by a decision of the Politburo, crossed its frontier for the last time to disembark at Istanbul. His activity outside the Soviet Union, his efforts to organise a "left" fraction within the Communist International opposed to Stalin and his "centrist" fraction as well as to the "right-ist" fraction of Bukharin, were the result of a long political development at the top of the leading apparatus of the party and of the state in the U.S.S.R.

From the Encircled Revolution to Bureaucratisation

The revolution of October 1917 was in general confronted with difficult problems: the consolidation of the power of the Soviets, peace with Germany, the civil war waged by the White armies, the grave economic problems which were to lead to "War Communism" and then to the adoption of the new economic policy (N.E.P.) Above all, the encirclement of the revolution weighed terribly on this economically and culturally backward country.

Even more than the Bolshevik party, which succeeded for the moment, through crises and furious debates, in overcoming these obstacles, it was the victorious proletariat of October 1917, which Preobrazhensky called "the marvel of history", which emerged blood white from these ordeals. The militants in the workers' vanguard, enrolled in the Red Army or called to political responsibilities (in Soviets, government offices, regional committees of the party and in the state apparatus) left in production or in unemployment only the passive mass. The Bolshevik party, which was essentially made up of workers in 1917, was widely opened to peasants (30% of its 700,000 members in 1921). The demobilisation of hundreds of thousands of men at the end of the civil war encouraged the development of a state apparatus with its tentacles everywhere.

When Lenin returned to work after several months of enforced absence, at the end of 1922, he became anxious about the bureaucratic deformations in the state apparatus, and denounced a "hotch-potch of bourgeois and Tsarist survivals" (1). His analysis deepened in the light of the information he received: the foreign trade monopoly was being called into question by some of the Bolshevik leaders, the Workers' and Peasants' Inspection, for which Stalin was responsible, was ineffective. Stalin had been secretary-general since April 1922. There was also a grave conflict between the Communists of Georgia and the Politburo of the Bolshevik party over the draft Trans-Caucasian Federation. Lenin made up his mind to join battle: he demanded a census of the functionaries in the big cities and worked out a plan to re-organise the leading committees of the party. At every step he ran into the tracks of the power of Stalin - which Stalin had gathered step by step while Lenin was away - and the disastrous way in which it was being used - Lenin proposed to Trotsky a bloc against bureaucratism in the party, particularly in the Orgburo, the Organisation Bureau, that is, against Stalin. This bloc was hardly organised when it was destroyed by the fresh crisis which interrupted Lenin's activity in March 1923.

Trotsky was left alone from that time, but he had several weapons: Lenin's proposal to keep Stalin out of the post of General Secretary, Lenin's break of personal and political relations with him as well as his recommendations in the document known as "Lenin's Testament". However, in April 1923, at the Twelfth Congress of the Bolshevik party, Trotsky confined himself to an economic report, remained silent on the Georgian question and on Stalin, was sharply criticised by Bukharin and did not mount the struggle which had been planned with Lenin, whose absence no doubt seemed to him to make the perspectives too uncertain.

Stalin was threatened for a moment, but finally got out of this difficult situation with his position in the leading committees all the less weakened in that he concluded, with Zinoviev and Kamenev, the fractional alliance against Trotsky which has become known to history as the troika. The fractions in the Central Committee remained

The leading committee reversed its decision and condemned the Russian Opposition. Treint attacked L'Humanite, which, according to him, had lost its "clear Communist face". Pierre Monatte and Alfred Kosmer, who came from revolutionary syndicalism and opposed the methods of functionaries, waged the struggle on the question of Lenin's Testament, and had a certain response. Treint demanded that they "fall in line or leave". They were excluded by a special conference of the Communist Party of France on December 5, 1924, just one year after the resolution of the Politburo of the Russian party on the "new course".

Even more radical measures were taken in Poland, where the Communist leaders, Adolf Warski, Henryk Walecki and Wera Kostrzewa were excluded for having protested against the attacks directed against Trotsky.

The German Communist Party present very different characteristics, and the influence of the 1923 Opposition was reduced to a negligible quantity. However, there did exist a left-wing "current" which was the leadership of the K.P.D., but this "left", which was animated by three top-level people, Ruth Fiascher, Arkadi Maslov and Hugo Urbahms, was far from being favourable to Trotsky... who was labelled a "right-winger" like Heinrich Brandler, and whom they held responsible for the defeat of the German October and to be behind the right wing in the K.P.D. Nor did they favour the ideas of the Opposition of the forty-six. On the contrary, it confused "in the same left-ist criticism Brandler and Trotsky, who were both to blame, according to it, for defending an 'opportunist' and 'capitulatory' conception of the United Front, which the left could not conceive except 'from below'" (10). Therefore no favourable territory existed in Germany for the development of an opposition like that of the forty-six.

The development of "Bolshevisation", through the emissaries of the Comintern who were despatched to the Communist Parties, provoked "anti-Bolshevisation" groupings with vague political contours, as in France, where there was the small group around the party lawyer, Maurice Paz, Fernand Loriot, who was accused of being a "right-ist" and the metal worker, Albert Lemire. This group depended for its unity on opposition to Treint and his methods, while it tried to follow up with its support the opposition of Rosmer and Monatte, which had been excluded, but had had sharper political outlines.

Among the subsequent echoes of the struggle of the Opposition in 1923, we come across some isolated personalities, such as Max Eastman, the incarnation of the "left" in U.S.A. and one of the standard bearers of the party without actually having been a member. He said of himself that he was a "fellow traveller"; he followed the unfolding of the struggle closely and published the documents of the Russian Opposition. Trotsky was obliged to disavow him when he published Lenin's Testament in U.S.A.

We must stress one essential aspect of these events; the Opposition of the forty-six did not re-join the leading fraction after fighting it to get internal democracy and to avoid the phenomenon of bureaucratic degeneration. This break-up in the leading spheres of the party was a new fact of capital importance in the history of the young Communist movement. But in any case, the sharp break in the U.S.S.R. still had little extension abroad.

The Leningrad Opposition and the Unified Opposition

The victory of the troika over the 1923 Opposition meant that its economic and political proposals favourable to the proletariat were rejected, and a course was followed which favoured the peasantry, permitted the rise of the kulaks and the re-inforcement of their economic and political position to the detriment of the workers. The first divergences between Stalin and Zinoviev-Kamenev appeared in April 1925, and were the prelude to an important enlargement of the Opposition in the Bolshevik party, first with the appearance of the new Opposition in Leningrad and then its link-up with its predecessor of 1923.

The Leningrad Opposition was the rebellion of the last party apparatus to submit to the pressure of the working-class against the consequences of the "peasant course". This pressure turned people like Zinoviev and split the troika. Zinoviev criticised Bukharin, emphasised the kulak danger and adopted the stance of spokesman of the workers against the protectors of the kulaks. Before there was any political debate, it was as the result of a struggle between apparatuses that the troika broke up and the Stalin

opened up against the background of the defeat of the German October, for which Stalin and Zinoviev were principally responsible, since the leaders of the K.P.D., who were brought to Moscow in July 1933, had scrupulously observed their instructions. Preobrazhensky wrote on November 28:

"At the moment when... the objective conditions for the revival of the internal life of the party showed themselves, we have, on the contrary, strengthened bureaucracy, petrification and the number of questions that are settled from above in advance." (5)

Stalin replied on December 2:

"It is necessary to set limits to this discussion, to prevent the party, which is a fighting unit of the proletariat, from degenerating into a discussion club" (6).

On December 5, the Politburo unanimously adopted the resolution on the "New Course", which in particular stated:

"The party must proceed to modify its policy seriously, in the direction of a strict, methodical application of democratic centralism" (7).

This unanimous vote was a point of support for Trotsky. But the interpretation which Stalin put upon it - he spoke, in connection with the bad atmosphere in the party, about "survivals of war communism" taking the form of "survivals of militarism in the heads of the workers" (8), constrained Trotsky to counter-attack. On December 10, he published in Pravda a letter which accused defenders of the "Old Course" of wanting "to bury" the "new course", and declaring the necessity of struggling to ensure that the resolution of December 5 did not remain a dead letter. This was a call to battle, to the youth, and in particular the first public declaration of this struggle which until then had been underground. The text of Trotsky's "The New Course" was in Pravda on the 28th and 29th of December 1923. (9)

Immediately the troika opened up a campaign to discredit Trotsky, to keep a tighter grip on Pravda and to prepare the Thirteenth Conference with the greatest care. This conference was held on January 16 - 18, 1924, while Lenin was on his death-bed and in the absence of Trotsky, who was unwell. It marked the defeat of the Opposition of the forty-six and of those who, among the youth and in the Red Army, had confidence in them. Preobrazhensky and Piatakov intervened to defend the idea of planning and to protest, in the debates about the problems of the party, against the way in which the bureaucrats were resurrecting old quarrels and were utilising "Leninism" against the Opposition. But that is how the cards were dealt: the Opposition had only three delegates. The weakness and hesitations of the Opposition and its poor organisation, even its spontaneity, weakened its chances. The apparatus, on the contrary, functioned as a fraction; it had no ideas, but it was effective. The closing resolution condemned the fractional activity of the Opposition. The troika emerged from the struggle completely victorious, while the Opposition sustained the blows both of the discouragement of its supporters and of the punishments which the apparatus could inflict.

There was very little ^{echo} of the struggle of the Opposition in 1923 in Pravda, which was directed by Bukharin, or in the Communist International, over which Zinoviev presided. None the less, the articles of Preobrazhensky and of Trotsky contributed to "exporting" the internal struggle in the Bolshevik party. It was in the Communist parties of France and of Poland that the most important extensions of the battle in the U.S.S.R. in 1923 are to be found.

The first element of an opposition in the French party was an initiative by Boris Souvarin, the editor of Bulletin Communiste and a delegate from the Communist Party of France to the Executive Committee of the Communist International. He succeeded in getting the leading committee, shortly after the defeat of the Russian Opposition, to adopt a resolution - unanimously but for three votes - recommended that they should not follow the Moscow decisions without possessing sufficient information. Souvarin published the theses that were available, and especially "The New Course", in Bulletin Communiste. He was quickly isolated in the Communist Party, removed from Bulletin Communiste and excluded at the Fifth Congress of the Comintern in July 1924.

Zinoviev stirred up two members of the Central Committee of the French party, Albert Treint and Suzanne Girault, to open a struggle against oppositionists whom they labelled as "right-ists" and accused of resisting the "Bolshevisation" of the French party.

won the day at the Fourteenth Congress, where, apart from the delegates from Leningrad, who were 100% for Zinoviev, the same methods of selection applied on a larger scale produced nothing but delegates 100% for Stalin. Zinoviev and Kamenev were defeated and sought the help of Trotsky, for which they paid the price: Zinoviev confirmed the existence of the Testament of Lenin, denounced the alliance of "Kulak-Nepman-Bureaucrat" and revealed his own role in the troika against Trotsky. Quoting Lenin, he criticised "Socialism in a Single Country", after having denounced Bukharin's formulation about "Socialism at the speed of a Tortoise". It was a turn, not in the Congress which eliminated the Zinovievists from the apparatus, particularly from the Central Committee, but for the 1923 Opposition, even though Trotsky maintained a prudent reserve during the debates. The Leningrad apparatus was quickly taken in hand by Sergei M. Kirov for the benefit of Stalin.

The rapprochement between the 1923 Opposition and the Leningrad Opposition was a logical one, because their political characters were similar (defence of the interests of the workers, internationalism, denunciation of the kulak, the nepman and the bureaucrat) and their differences were quickly smoothed out. Zinoviev declared:

"There can be no doubt: the fundamental nucleus of the 1923 Opposition... was correct to warn us against the dangers of deviating from the proletarian line and against the threatening development of the party apparatus... Yes! On the question of the bureaucratic oppression by the apparatus, Trotsky was correct against us".(11)

This Unified Opposition, which did not defend the "permanent revolution" but which placed itself on the line of the 1923 Opposition by politically justifying it, had one considerable asset: its leaders, the Trotskyists with their past responsibilities and the Zinovievists with their present responsibilities, were front-rank figures, commanding a network of between four and eight thousand, many of whom were "Old Bolsheviks".

The Unified Opposition was formed in April 1926 and joined battle at the plenum of the Central Committee with the "Declaration of the Thirteen", which was read by Trotsky: it declared itself to be a proletarian current, with a programme of defence of the proletariat, for "a real five-year plan" (12), against the policy of the Anglo-Russian Trade Union Committee, and, finally, against the "theory" of "Socialism in a Single Country".

The proposals of the Thirteen were rejected and the leaders of the Opposition were accused of breaking party discipline, all the more when a provocateur denounced the secret network of several thousand members which the Opposition had brought together throughout the country and which functioned as in the times of Tsarism. The Unified Opposition was defeated and punished - Zinoviev was excluded from the Politburo - and it tried to make a break-through, on which it staked everything: its leaders visited meetings of the workers' party cells in order to speak directly to the workers, and they won real successes until the apparatus sent strong-arm groups to put this attempt to an end. There was no other way out, no means to get a hearing.

While Zinoviev's "turn" signified, in the Bolshevik party, the widening, unification and re-inforcement of the struggle of the Oppositionists, paradoxically and with a certain time-lag, it had very different significance abroad. In fact, when Zinoviev had been at the head of the Communist International, he had been the hated "Bolsheviser", who had excluded all the oppositionists, with the aid of his henchmen. Now, in the Communist parties throughout the world, the excluded and the "Bolshevisers" found themselves side by side in the Opposition, and tried to follow the example from the U.S.S.R. and to unify.

In France, there was no unified Opposition; there were divided, hostile oppositions, which the Russian Oppositionist, Piatakov, as a member of the Trade Delegation in Paris, tried in vain to bring together. In Germany, the Zinovievist Left (Fischer - Maslov) was in the Opposition, since the Stalinist fraction, led by Ernst Thälmann, who had been selected and supported by Stalin, took control of the K.P.D. This Zinovievist Left, in June 1926, logically allied itself with the Wedding Opposition (named after the workers' district in Berlin where it had its roots) round Hans Weber, member of the Central Committee and regional secretary of the party in the Palatinate, after having rejected "ultra-lefts" like Karl Korsch (who defined the U.S.S.R. as a capitalist, peasant state

and believed that it was impossible to regenerate the Communist parties and the Communist International). The Stalinist leaders of the K.P.D. excluded Ruth Fischer and Arkadi Maslov in August 1926. In September, after a remarkable organising campaign led by the Reichstag deputy Werner Scholem, one of the principal leaders of the K.P.D. between 1922 and 1925, at the side of Ruth Fischer, there appeared the "Letter of the Seven Hundred", signed by militant workers representative of the German working class who supported the Russian Opposition and particularly Zinoviev, demanded that the disciplinary measures against them be reversed, a fundamental change in the policy of the party, genuine democracy in the Communist International and in the K.P.D. and called for "a return to Lenin, to genuine, un-falsified Leninism" (13). These seven hundred signatures came from leading members of the party and of the mass organisations which it controlled. It reveals the "mass" character of Zinovievism in Germany, which explains the absence of a properly "Trotskyist" current, the only members of which were those of the Russian Opposition in diplomatic exile. However, a new element coming out of the U.S.S.R. overturned the basic ideas of the Opposition and led to more confusion.

In Russia, the Unified Opposition, which had tried to make a "break-out" and had failed, was caught in a trap. It could not express itself, it was tottering and in danger of falling apart. Trotsky tactically negotiated in order to avoid the threat of exclusion. On October 16, 1926, the leaders of the Opposition signed a declaration which, to be sure, repeated the principled positions of the "Declaration of the Thirteen", but at the same time admitted that their own activity had been fractional and that they had broken discipline. They undertook thereafter to respect party discipline, called for the dissolution of fractional groups and gave assurances that they would not defend their positions in future except within the framework laid down by the constitution and the Central Committee. Their declaration went on to condemn the people who had been excluded in Germany, in accordance with the express demand of the leading fraction:

"While recognising the right of every member of the Communist International to defend his ideas within the framework of the constitution and of the decisions of the Communist International... we consider to be absolutely inadmissible direct or indirect support to any of the fractional groups in the different sections of the International which oppose its policy, whether they be the Souvarin group in France, the Maslov - Ruth Fischer - Weber - Urbahns group in Germany... or any other group, whatever be their attitude to our ideas".(14)

The "declaration" appealed to those who had been excluded to recognise their mistakes, to return to the party and to "help in that way to liquidate the fractional struggle and the struggle against any breach of discipline".(15)

This declaration was a somewhat desperate manoeuvre, intended to avoid the exclusion which threatened the Opposition and which its leaders had not foreseen. It was successful in halting the repression in the Soviet party itself, but it had serious consequences for the morale of the Oppositional forces which were in the process of forming abroad, especially in Germany and which found themselves sharply dis-owned by it. There was a grave crisis, accompanied by losses and recantations. The leadership of the K.P.D. pressed home its advantage and decapitated the Opposition by excluding Urbahns and Scholem on November 5.

The declaration of October 16 was also a compromise between the Russian Zinovievists, who wanted to bring fractional activity to an end and to condemn any tendency to a split, and Trotsky, who believed that the seeds of factionalism and of tendencies to a split were to be found in the policy of the "fraction in power". But the matter did not appear in the same light to the German Zinovievists. They denounced what they called the "capitulation" of October 16, and saw themselves as scape-goats. The young "Red professor", Eleazar B. Solntsev, who was abroad on a mission, wrote to Trotsky that, from the standpoint of its international fall-out, the declaration was a grave mistake: to be aware of the responsibility of the German Zinovievists, who were sure that Thermidor was near in the U.S.S.R. and who had a little over-played with the policy of a "new party" did not change anything. While the Russian Opposition was effecting a retreat under the "conciliatory" pressure of Zinoviev and his people, the German Opposition was falling into disarray under the pressure of the "left-ist" wing of the Zinovievists, and

this fully justifies Pierre Broue's question:

"When the German Opposition accused the Russian Opposition of having a perspective narrowly confined to the Russian party, did not the German Opposition reveal the the same 'national-oppositionist' tendency as it claimed to denounce?"

In any case, it appears that the respite which the Russian Opposition gained thanks to this declaration was useful and was turned to advantage. Trotsky was to write:

"The winter of 1926 - 27 gave us a chance to breathe and to manage to deepen our ideas on a number of questions".(17)

The Chinese Question and the End of the Unified Opposition

The Chinese Revolution announced itself. The policies of Stalin and of the Communist International were entirely concerned with subordinating the Communists to the Kuomintang and to the authority of General Chiang Kai-Chek, and then to his opponents, Wang Chin-Wei, the leader of the "left" wing of the Kuomintang, and Feng Yu-Hsiang, the "Christian General". They were made up of tailing behind bourgeois nationalism and of manoeuvres, and prepared the defeat for the revolution which could fundamentally change the balance of forces in the world and in the U.S.S.R.

On March 31, 1937, Trotsky complained, in a letter to the Central Committee, that there was a shortage of information; he stressed the danger of a military coup d'etat and asked why the Chinese party was not advancing the slogan of Soviets and was not acting decisively for the agrarian revolution. At the beginning of April 1937 he warned again of the danger and re-stated the solutions of the Opposition to avoid the worst. On April 12, Chiang Kai-Chek launched his successful coup d'etat and beheaded the Communist Party and the Chinese workers' movement. The Opposition, which had foreseen this happening, was, for all that, not strengthened, because only a handful of cadres knew its position and because every defeat of the revolution served to the advantage of Stalinist conservatism. But the "Chinese question" became a weapon which the Opposition used against Stalin, and the eighty-three "Old Bolsheviks" in a declaration to the Central Committee emphasised that the latter was trying to conceal its mistakes, while continuing to harass the Opposition, that its ... 'mistaken line in China... was not accidental'... and that 'it was continuing and completing its mistaken line in its internal policy' (18) The signatories declared that "the defeat of the Chinese revolution may bring much nearer war against the Soviet Union". They referred to the dangers of the internal situation (the alliance of Kulak - Nepman - Bureaucrat), and proposed measures for preparing the Fifteenth Party Congress in order to strengthen the party by united decisions which democracy alone can enable to be reached. This declaration was counter-signed by three thousand party members, and led the apparatus to resolve to undertake severe repression: arrests, transfers abroad or to Siberia.

The Unified Opposition was to mount its last struggle around the programme which it proposed to the party, its "Platform". The document was drafted with the Fifteenth Congress in view, not only by the "Old Guard" (Trotsky, Zinoviev, Kamenev and Preobrazhensky) but by the militants of the younger generation (G. I. Jacovin and F. N. Dingelstedt, both graduates of the Institute of Red Professors, and I. M. Poznansky, a Bolshevik since 1917, in the Red Army and then in Trotsky's secretariat, where he was put in charge of organising the Red cavalry). But the Central Committee prohibited the publication of this document, which it believed to have been worked out in a fractional way. The Opposition staked everything on expressing its ideas before the Congress and decided to publish the Platform illegally, in a roneotyped form and then in printed form. Then Stalin employed against them the "Wrangel officer" operation. He sent into the ranks of the Opposition a member of the G.P.U., who offered them his services, and was then "un-masked" as a former White Guard officer who had come over after serving in the army of Wrangel - the last head of the White armies in the Civil War. The militia seized the printed copies ^{and} arrested the Old Bolsheviks, most of whom were Red Army officers who had taken the responsibility for this operation.

The Opposition did not succeed in its second attempt in two years to break through, even though it attracted several thousand signatures - Zinoviev and Kamenev hoped for twenty or thirty thousand to make Stalin retreat - and these signatures were soon to be a pass-

port to Siberia. Meetings and speeches ran into obstruction and repression in the absence of independent means of expression. It is evident that the arguments of the Opposition were not without impact, but also that they did not arouse crowds. Their setback was evident at the time of the street demonstration which they planned for the tenth anniversary of the October Revolution, shortly after the exclusion of Trotsky and Zinoviev from the Central Committee. The procession of demonstrators was broken up before it reached the Red Square. The same evening, Zinoviev said that one must have the courage to capitulate. Decomposition began in the ranks of the Opposition, the initial components of which had, moreover, never succeeded really in fusing. The suicide of A. A. Joffe - a friend of Trotsky, ambassador to Berlin, China, Vienna and Tokyo, who was struck down with multiple neuritis and refused the right to go abroad for medical treatment - on November 16, in protest against Stalinist policy, made possible only one last public demonstration, in the cemetery where he was buried and where Trotsky and Rakovsky, who had been excluded from the party on the previous day, spoke at his tomb.

The Fifteenth Congress was to be the scene of the break-up of the Opposition, which was deeply divided from that time onwards. The Zinovievists tried in vain to get out of the grip of the unconditional capitulation which the leaders were demanding as the price of "staying in", if necessary, to use Zinoviev's expressive phrase, "flat on their bellies". The "Trotskyists", led by Rakovsky, refused to go down this road; they maintained their opinions and undertook to respect discipline. They were excluded. The Zinovievists did not see extended to them "the rescuing hand" for which Kamenev had begged, and, little by little, they paid the price demanded of them by agreeing to condemn the ideas of the Opposition and contained in the Platform - their own - as "erroneous and anti-Leninist". Rakovsky, in the name of the last unit of resistance, declared:

"You are excluding us for our ideas. We regard ourselves as Bolsheviks and Leninists. We cannot renounce our ideas".(19)

The exclusion of at least 1,500 "Trotskyists" throughout the country was quickly completed by the administrative measures which enabled them to be dispersed. "Deportation" at this time took the form of sending these militants to live, under threat of imprisonment, days' journeys and weeks of correspondence away from Moscow. Trotsky was sent to Alma Ata, Rakovsky to Astrakan, Radek to Tomsk, Varsenika D. Kasparova, a close collaborator of Trotsky, to the Crimea, etc. Several Zinovievists, and not the least important, such as George V. Safarov, who returned from exile with Lenin in the "sealed train", a member of the Leningrad Opposition and then of the Unified Opposition, which he secretly represented on the international level thanks to his work in the diplomatic services, did not follow the capitulators, and found themselves in deportation, like the Trotskyists, and, also, like Smilga, who had no connection with either of its principal components, and chose to follow those who did not yield, as did the "decists" Sapronov and Vladimir M. Smirnov. From that time onwards the struggle of the Bolshevik-Leninist Opposition, whether it was in the factories or the workers' districts or in the places of deportation, was carried on under the banner of the ideas and the historic figures of Trotsky, Rakovsky and their comrades.

"The New Stage": A Balance-Sheet and Perspectives.

One period of the struggle of the Opposition here came to an end. In a document entitled "The New Stage" (20), Trotsky made the point, in December 1927, locating the Opposition, its struggle and the nature of its difficulties:

"The crisis in the party reflects the crisis of the revolution itself. The crisis of the revolution has been provoked by a change in the relations between the classes. The fact that the Opposition is in a minority in the party and finds itself constantly under attack reflects the pressure of the domestic and world bourgeoisie on the government apparatus, the pressure of the government apparatus on the party apparatus and the pressure of the party apparatus on the left, proletarian wing of the party. Today the Opposition is the focus upon which the most powerful worldwide pressures against the revolution are concentrated."

What is the meaning of the struggle against Thermidor? How is it to be carried on?

"The struggle against the danger of Thermidor is a class-struggle. The struggle aimed at tearing the power from the hands of another class is revolutionary. The struggle for changes (sometimes of a decisive character but still under the rule of the same class) is a reformist struggle. Power has not yet been torn from the hands of the proletariat. It is still possible to rectify our political course, remove the elements of dual power, and re-inforce the dictatorship by measures of a reformist kind."

The blows aimed against the left open the road to Thermidor, the most important condition of which ".,., would be to crush the Opposition so thoroughly that there would be no more reason to 'fear' it". One of the essential causes of this danger of Thermidor is the terrible political passivity of the proletariat and the effects of the internal regime of the party:

"The whole acuteness of the situation consists in the fact that the party regime acts as a brake on and paralyses the activity of the proletariat, while official party theory at the same time lulls the proletariat and puts it to sleep."

Thermidor realised in the U.S.S.R. would be only a regime of transition - "a sort of Kerenskyism in reverse" according to Trotsky - with, as in February 1917, a situation of dual power, but this time to the advantage of the bourgeoisie. But, for Trotsky, the exclusion of the Opposition from the party does not signify that Thermidor has taken place. He explains:

"... such an evaluation could prove to be correct, if the further course of events showed that no more working-class elements within the party would move towards the Opposition, that the working class had no more strength to resist the bourgeois offensive, and that accordingly the appearance of the numerically small Opposition was the last historical ripple of the October wave. But there is no basis for such an evaluation. There is no ground for supposing that the proletariat, despite the phenomena of passivity and apathy observed in the last few years, is incapable of defending the conquests of October against its own bourgeoisie, as well as against the external bourgeoisie; that would mean capitulating before the battle and without a battle... Even if the whole course of the struggle in the immediate future turned out to be fundamentally unfavourable for the dictatorship of the proletariat in the U.S.S.R. and resulted in its downfall, even in that case the work of the Opposition would retain all its significance. The completion of Thermidor would inevitably mean the splitting of the party... Our left wing would then constitute, not a 'second' party, but the continuation of the historical party of the Bolsheviks. The real 'second' party would arise out of the interpenetration of bureaucratic and pro-party-owning elements, which even today have points of support in the right wing".

In that case, it would be necessary to prepare for a second proletarian revolution. The political perspectives, and especially the economic perspectives, are characterised by the pressure, which could have been foreseen, exerted by the non-proletarian classes which favour Thermidor, while the apparatus is in un-stable equilibrium, threatened not only by the growing pressure from the right, but also by the resistance of the left.

Trotsky believed that the application of the economic programme of the right was probable with or without them. This would signify that both the foreign trade monopoly and the electoral arrangements would come into question:

"The role of the left-wing under these circumstances will be decisive for the fate of the party and the dictatorship. The critique of opportunism, correct class orientation, and correct slogans for the revolutionary education of the best elements of the party - this work is under all circumstances the most necessary and greatest of our obligations. The main task of the Opposition is to ensure the continuance of a genuinely Bolshevik party. For the present period, that means - to swim against the stream."

Discussing the policy of the Comintern, Trotsky recalls that the Fifteenth Congress of the Bolshevik party recognised the reflux of the workers' movement in Europe, after having denied it. He stressed that "the so-called 'Bolshevisation' of the parties of the Comintern... combined the tendency to exclude elements of no value, rotten elements, with the struggle against Marxist analysis... therefore against the left. He had this striking formula:

"The system of leaders who serve as orderlies in the Comintern has become even more firmly entrenched during the last two years".

The Opposition, for its part, must struggle to win the Communist parties back to the correct line:

"The Opposition in the U.S.S.R. can fulfill its tasks only as an international factor".

This statement, which was of great importance for the Oppositionists abroad, was a heavy responsibility for the Russian Opposition, which had not done much in this direction, having been so much absorbed in the struggle within the party. Trotsky added:

"All the more scandalous, therefore, is Zinoviev and Kamenev's abandonment of the Comintern left".

But he refuted the accusation, directed against the Opposition, that it was for a "second party". He quoted from a document by Zinoviev which was circulating in 1927:

"It is highly possible that substantial numbers of Oppositionists (including all the leading elements of the Opposition) will find themselves for a certain time outside the party. Their task will be, in the most difficult times, to maintain a course, not towards the formation of a second party, but towards return to the All-Union Communist Party and the rectification of its line... The Opposition is unanimous in believing that the struggle for the unity of the party on a Leninist basis can in no case turn into grovelling before the apparatus, playing down differences, reducing the sharpness of political expression. When fellow-travellers of the Opposition diverge from it to go to the right, they usually do not attribute their departure to their own capitulation to Stalin's standpoint ... rather they accuse the Opposition of steering towards a second party; in other words, they only repeat the Stalinist charges to cover up their own retreat".

In the case that the right succeeded in bringing an important part of the proletarian nucleus of the party under its control, two parties would be historically inevitable. That would mean the fall of the dictatorship:

"An opposite road can be envisaged only through the isolation of the right wing by the struggle of the Opposition against apparatus centrism for influence over the proletarian core of the party. The dictatorship of the proletariat cannot long endure with ever new defeats being dealt to the left proletarian wing. On the contrary, the dictatorship is not only compatible with the isolation and political liquidation of the right wing, but energetically demands such liquidation. Capitulation to apparatus centrism in the name of party unity would therefore be also direct work for two parties, i.e. for the downfall of the proletarian dictatorship."

Trotsky regarded the capitulation of Zinoviev and Kamenev as "unprecedented in the history of the revolutionary movement" and resisted the idea that the Unified Opposition had been a mistake. He recalled that this bloc was the meeting of two proletarian centres (Moscow and Leningrad) against the right (based in the Caucasus). He stressed that this unity still persisted, even at the international level, and that these capitulations would not stop this process.

Finally he attempted to evaluate the tactic of the Opposition. He referred to the cyclical character of its activity (the rise of its activity, the critical point and the confusion accompanied by a declaration of renunciation of fractional activity and its continuation) linked to the repression and apparatus methods, the only weapon of the Opposition being propaganda. He replied to critics as follows:

"The critics of the Opposition's tactics from outside, who point to its 'zig-zag' character, criticise it as though the Opposition could determine its tactics freely, as if there were no furious pressure from the hostile classes, as if there were no apparatus power, no political backsliding by the leadership, no relative passivity of the working class, etc. The Opposition's tactics, with their inevitable internal contradictions, can only be understood if one does not forget for a moment that the Opposition is swimming against the stream, fighting against difficulties and obstacles unprecedented in history... There are no text-books telling us how to set things right in a proletarian dictatorship that is being buffeted by the forces of

CHAPTER TWO

Towards an International OppositionFrom the German Left to the Leninbund

The German left, which was roughly treated in October 1926, provided itself with a national leadership consisting in particular of Ruth Fischer, Urbahns, Scholem, Josef Kon (known as Joko) and Anton Grylewicz, who was one of the leading personalities in this left, and published a bi-monthly information bulletin Mitteilungsblatt at the beginning of 1927. The Eleventh Congress of the K.P.D. in March 1927 at Essen witnessed its organisational defeat. To oppose a hundred and eighty-four delegates in support of the Central Committee, the left could muster only ten, and these, moreover, were not the expression of a homogeneous fraction because they were divided three ways. There was the "Urbahns - Fischer" group, the Berlin Tendency of the Wedding Opposition which had signed the "Letter of the Seven Hundred" and the Leipzig branch of the Wedding Opposition which had not done so. It was the Wedding Opposition, strongly implanted in the urban proletariat (in Berlin, in Saxony and in the Palatinate), which stood out longest against the alternative of capitulation or exclusion. It maintained itself for several more months in the K.P.D., while it defended the Russian Unified Opposition and accused Thalmann's Central Committee of continuing "normalisation" and the exclusions which Fischer and Maslov had begun.

The representatives of the "Urbahns - Fischer" group at the Eleventh Congress were Schlecht, Grylewicz and Bartels; they were excluded at the beginning of April. The Oppositionists, who right up to the Essen Congress had confined their struggle inside the K.P.D., were obliged, following the mass exclusions, to address themselves publicly, with appeals and public meetings, to the workers, while they continued to work in the party. Trotsky commented very favourably on the political evolution of the "German Left" in a letter of April 2, 1927. He judged it on the basis of its information bulletin. Trotsky emphasised that the exclusion of the ultra-lefts (Korsch) by the "lefts" and concluded that the latter had adopted a clear position in relation to the dangers which threatened the U.S.S.R., and that they had drawn the lessons of the 1923 defeat:

"Brandler has learned nothing from the several years which have passed; the lefts have learned much. This is why I think that they will recover their place in the International." (1)

The bi-monthly information bulletin was changed in March 1927 into a weekly: Die Fahne des Kommunismus (The Banner of Communism). This journal was directed by Urbahns. It defended the analyses and published the documents of the Unified Opposition in Russia. This was an important gain, just as important as the declaration of those who were excluded that they regarded their group as a fraction of the K.P.D. and not as a rival organisation. They appealed to workers to join the K.P.D., demanded the "re-unification of all genuine Communists on the basis of the old principles of Marx and Lenin" (2) and demanded that they be re-admitted to the K.P.D. and the Communist International.

The first national conference of the Opposition took place in Berlin on October 23, 1927; a hundred and twenty delegates adopted the Platform of the Opposition and decided to hold regional conferences, following which a second national conference would be called. The proclamation of an independent organisation was being prepared. Meanwhile the K.P.D. was getting rid of the last bastions of the Opposition, particularly of the entire section at Suhl, which was led by Guido Heym and published Volkswille; this journal became the organ of the Opposition throughout the whole of Germany. The mass expulsions meant that there were no organised left oppositionists within the K.P.D. and the existence of elements of organisation outside the party in the hands of the Opposition led inevitably to the formation of an organisation outside the party: the Leninbund (Lenin League) was proclaimed in April 1928 as "a public fraction of the

Thermidor. These ways and means must be sought by starting with the real situation. These ways will be found, if the fundamental orientation is correct."

Trotsky concluded "The New Stage" with three perspectives for the Russian Opposition, after its exclusion from the Bolshevik party, but also at the international level: theoretical self-education, "the most important task of every Oppositionist", the necessity of constructive work by Oppositionists in the proletarian and Soviet organisations, in order that their principal criticism may reach the consciousness of broad masses and the necessity of an appeal to the Communist International, in order that the question of the Opposition may be presented to the Sixth Congress in its full dimensions.

F O O T N O T E S

- (1) Lenin: "The Question of Nationalities or 'Autonomisation'", in Collected Works, Vol. 36, p. 606.
- (2) Quoted by Pierre Broue in "Le Parti Bolchevique", Paris Editions de Minuit, 1971, p. 182.
- (3) Ibid.
- (4) The full text in English is in Carr, "The Interregnum", 1954, pp. 367 - 376.
- (5) Quoted by Pierre Broue, op. cit., p. 185.
- (6) Ibid.
- (7) Ibid.
- (8) Ibid.
- (9) Trotsky, "The New Course", in "The Challenge of the Left Opposition (1923 - 25)", Pathfinder, 1975.
- (10) P. Broue: "The thesis of Maurice Stobnicer", in Cahiers du C.E.R.M.T.R.I., No. 29, June 1983, pp. 1 - 2.
- (11) Quoted by Pierre Broue, op. cit., p. 231.
- (12) The text of the declaration of the Thirteen (in English) is in "The Challenge of the Left Opposition (1926 - 27)", Pathfinder, 1980, p. 291.
- (13) The letter of the seven hundred is published in French in Bulletin Communiste, No. 16 - 17, January - March 1927.
- (14) see note (12)
- (15) Ibid.
- (16) Broue, "La these de Maurice Stobnicer", see note (10).
- (17) Trotsky, "My Life", Penguin Books, 1975, p. 552.
- (18) "Declaration of the Eighty-Three" in English in "The Challenge of the Left Opposition: 1926 - 26", Pathfinder, 1980, p. 224.
- (19) Rakovsky, "Declaration to the 15th Congress", in "Cahiers Leon Trotsky", No. 6.
- (20) All quotations, to the end of the chapter, are from Trotsky, "The New Stage", in English in "The Challenge of the Left Opposition: 1926 - 27", p. 488.

K.P.D." and rejected the characterisation of the leaders of the K.P.D. who labelled it as "a second party".

None the less, the capitulation of Zinoviev and Kamenev was to modify deeply the situation of the German Opposition. The Zinovievist left in fact split into two, between those who followed their historic leaders and those who meant to carry on the struggle through the Leninbund. The latter were particularly hostile to those whose thinking they had earlier followed, and wrote about Zinoviev and Kamenev, who had just denounced as "erroneous and anti-Leninist" the ideas of the Opposition:

"Their latest discoveries today are more due to the hardships of spending the winter in Siberia than to the heat of battle".(3)

But Ruth Fischer and Maslov, who resumed contact with Zinoviev and Kamenev and were to keep this up for years - especially through the agency of G. C. Chklovsky - accepted their position and demanded that they be taken back. This made them disliked by all whom their behaviour when in power in the party had not disgusted. This split in the German Left, which was traditionally marked with the imprint of Zinovievism, was in principle favourable to the development of a genuinely "Trotskyist" current in Germany, but the results could not be immediate.

On April 8 and 9, 1928, at the foundation congress of the Leninbund, one hundred and fifty three delegates unanimously adopted two reports: the first, presented by Scholem, attacked the leadership of the K.P.D. for having disrupted the unity of the party. This report saw in "the total and complete submission to the erroneous course of Stalin in the Comintern... a down-sliding from the line of the proletariat (Russian question, Chinese and English policies)...an opportunist policy which confuses Communist principles". It denounced "the total passivity in daily activity" (4) of the K.P.D., which was incapable of developing a concrete programme of activity. The Leninbund repeated that it did not want to be a second party, aiming to "draw together all those genuine Communists who want to struggle against revisionism and opportunism, including in their own ranks, and who accepted the fundamental resolutions of the five world congresses of the Communist International and the Twenty-One conditions for admission to it".(5) Finally, it repudiated the ultra-lefts "who have left the ground of Leninism", and the report expressed satisfaction at the rapprochement with the Wedding Opposition.

The second report dealt with the tasks of the Left Communists; Urbahns, speaking of the world situation, pointed out "... our epoch remains... the epoch of wars and revolutions" (6) and condemned the theory of socialism in a single country as carrying in itself the seeds of the ultimate doom of the Communist International.

At its formation the Leninbund was an organisation of significance. Scholem at the congress claimed six thousand members and eighty to a hundred thousand sympathisers for the Leninbund inside and outside the K.P.D. The Leninbund had over a hundred local groups. Its staff were nearly all former leaders of the K.P.D. (members of the Central Committee or deputies). The organisation controlled Volkswille, a daily paper, a weekly, Die Fahne des Kommunismus, and even a regional weekly in the Ruhr. At the international level the Leninbund was in contact with the Russian Opposition, the Czech Opposition (the Rudy Prapor group), the French Opposition (the Treint-Girault group) and the Austrian groups.

However, less than a month after its foundation, the Executive Committee of the Communist International dangled before the militants of the Leninbund the possibility of being taken back into the K.P.D. While it did not want this at any price, some of the former Zinovievist leaders capitulated for what appear to be different reasons. On May 18, Werner Scholem and Max Hesse - he had been a member of the Executive Committee of the Communist International from 1924 to 1926 and had signed the "Letter of the Seven Hundred" - on May 20, Ruth Fischer and Maslov. The crisis was severe: the organ of the Leninbund in the Ruhr ceased to appear and militants such as the Suhl group even went over to the S.P.D. At the same time, leaders who stood firm, such as Urbahns and Grylewicz had the re-inforcement of the militants of the Wedding Opposition in Berlin-Weissensee.

On May 20, 1928, the day of the capitulation of the historic leaders of the "German Left" was also the day of the Reichstag elections. The Leninbund, on the initiative, among others, of those who later capitulated, put up its own candidates. It suffered a terrible

electoral defeat and received only 48, 000 votes (with none of its candidates elected) against over three millions to the K.P.D. and nine million to the S.P.D. It was also a great source of disappointment (7), though this did not call into question the underlying and un-expressed orientation towards a second party, and laid the responsibility for the set-back on the workers:

"The German working class does not wish today to fight for these Communist aims, it only wishes at best to carry on a struggle for reforms and demand of a bourgeois democratic kind. Communists must start from there." (8)

The question which the Leninbund had to answer was that of its position in relation to the K.P.D. Its campaign about the Wittorf affair - the treasurer of the K.P.D. in Hamburg had misappropriated funds - showed that it was able to influence the internal life of the K.P.D., because it compelled the party to take action. But the problem remained and was not settled; whether to struggle to reform the K.P.D. or to struggle against it?

Trotsky inclined to the second interpretation, which was heavy with misunderstandings and political dangers; he wrote about its foundation and presentation of candidates in the elections:

"... the recent experiences in Germany (Altona) speak against the presentation of separate candidates. We have not the right to break our line for the chance of getting seats. The formation of the League of Left Communists is a mistake. The name of the Opposition is well enough known and it has an international character. The name 'League' adds nothing, but it can become the pseudonym of a second party." (9)

Despite these divergences, after the capitulation of the Zinovievists, Trotsky occupied an important place in the life of the German Opposition, in the press of the Leninbund and in that part of the Wedding Opposition which did not join the Leninbund.

The heterogenous Oppositions in France and in Czechoslovakia

In France, there was no Unified Opposition, but a constellation of groups, oppositions and currents. The leadership of the French Communist Party took advantage of this confusion and aggravated it by a variety of punishments and particularly by applying measures of "Bolshevisation" rigorously. The situation changed. At the beginning of 1926 Souvarin ceased publication of his Bulletin Communiste and demanded to be accepted back into the Communist International. He founded the "Marx-Lenin Communist Circle", through which passed many Oppositionists whom the Paz group was not in a position to organise. None the less, Souvarin was marginalised; he was no more than a scarecrow, a role which the leadership imposed upon him and helped them to keep the militants in line. The Rosmer - Monatte group, for its part, was publishing La Revolution Proletarienne from 1925 onwards, the "nucleus" of which consisted of trade union militants who kept up good relations with Souvarin. This review had nine hundred subscribers in 1927 and appeared regularly; this stabilised the group as an organisation. But it remained very fragile politically. Monatte was going further and further down the road of regarding Stalinism and Bolshevism as the same, and in valuing less than the others what he saw as "the capitulations" of the Russian Opposition. (10)

These groups had many features in common. They came from the 1923 Opposition and were formed of people who had been excluded from the party and had little contact with it, though they had some influence - Rosmer and Souvarin were very well-known figures.

They all had an organ of the press and they all had the same hostility to Treint, who had been the agent of "Bolshevisation" and boasted of what he did to the "Trotskyists". It was he who had denounced them as "right-ists" and excluded and marginalised them. But here was Treint himself driven out, into the Opposition, by the struggle of Zinoviev in the ranks of the Unified Opposition. He was turned out of the leadership of the Communist Party and his group, including Suzanne Girault, was punished. In fact, though he could be seen to have been "the" French Zinovievists, he was by no means a French Zinoviev; he never contemplated capitulation. Even though he defended better than anyone the whole of the positions of the Unified Opposition - and in particular those of Trotsky on the Chinese question - he was always regarded by the other Oppositionists as the "Bolsheviser" with the detestable methods, the first agent of the degeneration, the man who had killed democracy and opened the sluice gates for bureaucratic

authoritarianism to pour through. The concrete history of the French Communist Party between 1923 and 1925 weighed down to the full on the birth of a Unified Opposition in France; Treint exerted an undeniable influence in the party itself, but did this not risk being rapidly stifled?

At the National Conference of the French Communist Party in June 1927 all the Oppositions together did not get 5% of the delegates. The war machine against the Opposition was ready, awaiting the signal from Moscow. In November 1927 there began the mass campaign in the P.C.F.: there were resolutions from federations, sections and cells calling for exclusions, as it were, a re-run, on a smaller scale, of the activities of the apparatus in the Russian party. The P.C.F. even trained "theoreticians" for the struggle against the Opposition, such as Maurice Thorez and Pierre Semard. The purge began: first it was against the Paz group, which on November 20 launched the Oppositional journal, Contre le Courant. The leadership used this publication as the official reason for excluding the group. The cells to which Maurice and Magdeleine Paz belonged, who had been the leaders of the "Opposition of 1924", were dissolved. Soon afterwards, it was the turn of the Treint-Girault group. The party leadership attacked it for politically supporting the international Opposition and for its fractional methods. As in the Russian party the battle raged round the publication of the documents of the Opposition. On November 20, 1927, the print worker, Gaston Faussecave, who was a member of the Treint group, was excluded for having published the Platform of the Russian Opposition. At the district committee, he declared that he was ready to cease this publishing work if the party took it over. Impossible, replied "the party workers who do not want to discuss" (11)! None the less, numerous cells pronounced for the Opposition, and the Central Committee started the exclusions.

There was activity in the Opposition, though in divergent directions. Souvarin published in Bulletin Communiste his article "Black October" (12), a balance-sheet of ten years of the Russian Revolution. In his opinion, Russia was experiencing an important capitalist development and the restoration of the old classes. The Opposition had not understood this process, and had been converted to this "new religion", "Leninism". Its only merit was to have fought in 1923 against the degeneration which had influenced it too since then.

The first issue of Contre le Courant was entitled "The Revolution in Danger". It told about the situation of the Opposition in the U.S.S.R., the interventions of Trotsky and Zinoviev at the Central Committee of October 1927, and called for struggle. The Treint-Girault group launched Leninist Unity in December 1927, and this appeared more frequently than Contre le Courant: it appealed to the "old left". The Opposition changed its appearance again, with a new group which seemed at the time to be linked with Souvarin; this was the nucleus of the journal Clarte, which became La Lutte des Classes, in which were active Pierre Naville, the former secretary of the Communist students, and the young lawyer Francis Gerard (Gerard Rosenthal), back from Moscow where, at the end of 1927, he had met Trotsky and his circle.

The developments in the Russian party, the exclusions and the capitulations at the end of 1927 and the beginning of 1928, were to lead Trotsky to spell out what he expected from the militants abroad. In his "Instructions to Pierre" (13), he put down his judgement on the different French groups. He condemned the tendency in Germany to a development towards a second party, and stressed that, in France? "one cannot doubt that the Contre le Courant group is with us". He added:

"In the case that the Treint-Girault group takes up a correct position, the union of these two groups as quickly as possible is to be desired... It is very much to be desired that Rosmer be drawn into work on the journal Contre le Courant." (14)

He closed by pointing out to his young comrade that, in his opinion, Souvarin had taken up "a fundamentally incorrect position" on a series of questions.

The Treint-Girault group was excluded from the P.C.F. at its national conference in February 1928, while already some militants - following Suzann Girault - were far behind the positions of the group and were following in the footsteps of the Russian "capitulators". In March, Treint and Henri Barre (a member of the Central Committee of the P.C.F. in 1926) left the editorial committee of Leninist Unity because of differences about "the appreciation of the present situation in the U.S.S.R., of the de-

cisions of the 15th Congress... and our national conference..."(15). The majority of the Leninist Unity group capitulated and were taken back into the Communist Party. The journal ceased to appear in the month of May, after having made its self-criticism. While Suzanne Girault was taken back into favour, what remained of the Treint group, some ten militants, formed itself into the Group for Communist Regeneration (Groupe de Redressement communiste). It broke with Zinovievism and denounced those who had been its tutors, but it remained faithful to its own past, condemned the "right-ists" of 1923, kept up its attacks on "Trotskyism" and defended the correctness and methods of "Bolshevisation". Redressement Communiste was a small monthly of a few pages, and was often supplemented by leaflets. Contre le Courant, for its part, had difficulties, and published hardly any interesting documents apart from those of the Russian Opposition and of Trotsky. Are the difficulties of these Opposition groups to be explained by the fact that they were cut off from the base of the party, the result of the exclusion of their leading members? This is probable. But they had also to adapt themselves to a new context, characterised by a wave of capitulations.

On June 2, 1928, Paz wrote an "Open Letter to the Communists of the Opposition". This stated that it was addressed to groups "which all carry on a left-wing struggle against the opportunist deviation of the Communist International..." and, "who are absolutely opposed to the Stalinist course".(16) The Paz group mentioned the damaging state of division of the Opposition, and proposed to go forward towards re-groupment by way of several concrete perspectives: the creation of a single organ of the Opposition, the elaboration in common of a platform, the preparation and holding of a national conference of the Opposition at which all these points would be discussed. As to the dissensions between the groups, the authors (who did not mention bolshevisation) stated that "the effectiveness of oppositional activity means that reservations and grievances, however justified they may have been in the past, have to be laid aside."(17)

The replies from the groups to whom these proposals were addressed well express the state of the Opposition: out of eight, two were favourable, but still with reservations. The Treint group, which excluded a priori Souvarin and the Lutte des Classes group (whom it accused of consisting of nothing but petty bourgeois intellectuals), and the Opposition group in Lyons (led by Jean-Jacques Soudeille, known as Soudy), which announced, with scepticism about the prospects, that it would participate in the conference in order to obtain information. Two others did not reply: Reveil Communiste and Revolution Proletarienne. And finally, four replied negatively: the Limoges group (Marcel Body), the Fraction of the Italian Left Communists in France (18), the Lutte des Classes group and the Souvarin group. The Bordiguist fraction favoured the elaboration of a specific programme for each group, Naville declared:

"'Opposing the Stalinist course' means nothing".(19)

He likewise rejected the "unprincipled bloc" which Contre le Courant proposed, and emphasised that the approach of Lutte des Classes was the opposite of this: it was a search for political clarification, a preliminary to any regroupment of the Opposition. Finally, the Marx-Lenin Circle considered that the conference would be "harmful and, at best, useless". It was of the opinion that Contre le Courant, which wanted to pose as a unifier, had merely to publish what it stood for or to seek information at the meetings of the Circle, and that any other way of working was useless. It replied brutally:

"You claim to be Leninists: we have condemned both the word and the thing. You oppose 'Stalinism': we do not know what that is... You think you are carrying on a 'struggle of the left'; that is the least of our concerns. You regard the Bolshevists of 1924 as communists: we hold them to be criminals. You know only to approve whatever is said or done by the Russian Opposition: we do not respect the mistakes of anyone. You proceed by assertions and worship dogmas; we intend to reason and reject dogmatism" (21).

The check to the initiative by Contre le Courant revealed the impossibility of regrouping the whole Opposition, and had consequences of two kinds. In the short period, the relations between the groups became more embittered. In the longer term, Lutte des Classes and Bulletin Communiste came much closer together, while Contre le Courant

and Redressement Communiste came into conflict to such an extent that the latter group fell to pieces in December 1928. The majority of the Paris group condemned the legend of "Trotskyism" - which Treint refused to do - and denounced the methods of Treint, the denunciations which he issued against other groups of the Opposition, the absence of internal democracy, etc. Redressement Communiste ceased to appear and a good part of its members turned towards the ultra-left which, in Reveil Communiste, denounced the policy of reform of the Communist International.

Contre le Courant did not win many members, but none the less took comfort from its position as the quasi-official Opposition group. Its review was alone in publishing Trotsky's articles and being recognised by the Russian Opposition and in its will to emerge from the helpless state of the groups. Consequently Contre le Courant overcame the difficulties best during the year 1928.

In Czechoslovakia, the birth of the Left Opposition is as difficult to date as its limits are to trace. The Czechoslovak Communist Party was a mass party. It had many historic links with the K.P.D. but also with the Russian party. At the time of the Unified Opposition, several Czechoslovak militants joined it in the U.S.S.R. itself, where they were either refugees or working in the Comintern apparatus. This was the case of the leader of the Young Communist International, Karel Fischer, known as Michalec, who joined the Zinovievist fraction. This was also the case of the journalist Skandera, and of his colleague Vlastimil Burian, who took refuge in the U.S.S.R. to avoid a long prison sentence following the General Strike of 1920. In summer 1927 a young leader of the Communist Youth in Prague, Wolfgang Salus, who was invited to represent his organisation at a conference in Moscow, there met young militants who introduced him to Trotsky. He returned a convinced Oppositionist. But two important personalities of the Communist movement in the non-Czech territories likewise gravitated in the direction of the Opposition in which from the beginning they were to play an important role; these were the Slovak Hynek Lenorovic and the German Alois Neurath. The former was one of the founders of the Communist Party in Slovakia; he was a man of warm personality, very popular; he was beginning to distance himself from the policies in Czechoslovakia and was only just beginning to be informed about "Trotskyism" after he was excluded, following the Fifth Congress of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia in March 1928. Neurath was a leader of even greater stature. He had been a leader on the Social-Democratic Party in the Sudeten region, and had not succumbed to social-patriotism, but had been the initiator of groups of German-speaking Communists before he was one of the founders of the Czechoslovak Communist Party itself. In 1926 he declared his solidarity with the Opposition, in which he tended rather towards the Zinovievist current.

Already in 1927 a number of Czech militants were expressing themselves in the columns of Die Fahne des Kommunismus: Lenorovic, but also another old cadre trained in Russia, Leonard Safrys, who signed himself Zvon. After the Opposition was excluded in December 1927, they regrouped in Czechoslovakia round a journal, Rudy Prapor (Red Flag), in which not only Lenorovic and Neurath, but Michalec participated, as well as the younger comrades Jiri Kopp and Jan Frankel, who were friendly with Leonorovic, who had won them to Communism while they were all in the sanatorium at Merano, where they had met the writer Franz Kafka, Dr. Otto Friedmann (member of the Czech Communist Party), the Prague worker Kohout and the high-school teacher Artur Pollak... The group, which was formed during a meeting in Prague called by a Zinovievist, Simon I. Kanachikov, the head of the Soviet Press Agency in Czechoslovakia, rapidly established links with Oppositionists who inclined politically to the Brandler-ite Right.

The struggle of the Russian Bolshevik-Leninists

The beginnings of the Opposition outside Russia were assisted by a double phenomenon: by the role of the Russian Oppositionists who were on diplomatic missions abroad and by the visits to the Opposition in Moscow of militants from outside Russia.

In France, for example, the presence of Khristian Rakovsky as ambassador from November 1925 to October 1927 (when the French Government declared him to be persona non grata) had a very important echo for the French Opposition. Piatakov, who was posted to Paris for several months, financed the Treint group and the birth of the journal Contre le Courant and urged the Oppositionists to come together. The Russian Oppositionist, Salomon Kharin, the correspondent in Paris of the Left Opposition under the name of Joseph - he worked at the commercial delegation - likewise was trying to bring Paz and

Treint close together, with a tendency to favour the former. In Germany, besides Safarov who was advising the leaders of the Opposition from Ankara, there was also Alexander Herzberg, who worked at the commercial legation in Berlin and was in touch with Ruth Fischer. Safarov, Herzberg and N. N. Perevertsev, a member of the international commission on railways at Geneva, travelled all over Europe on behalf of the Opposition. When Solntsev returned from USA in the middle of 1928, he was in Berlin. In Czechoslovakia Kanachikov made the connections which we have mentioned.

The list of the militants which the Left Opposition won in Moscow is a long one. To start with, there are the militants who were won as individuals and who were to play an important role when they returned to their own countries. Among them were Andres Nin, the secretary in Moscow of the Red International of Labour Unions, the Cuban Sandalio Junco, who was won in turn by Nin, the Brazilian Rodolfo Countinho, the Czechs Burian, Fischer and Salus, the Serbian Vuyovich (a member of the Central Committee of the Young Communist International) and the frenchmen Naville and Gerard Rosenthal. The Croat Anton Ciliga tells in his book "In the Country of the Great Lie" (22) about the birth within the groups of Yugoslav Communists in Moscow of a small "Trotskyist" group and the formation of a "centre" which was in contact with the Russian Oppositionists. Repression was not slow to hit this small group of Oppositionists which was denounced by a provocateur. None the less, the biggest success was among the Chinese militants, a large number of whom had been sent to Moscow to become the future cadres of the Communist Party and who went over in their great majority to the Opposition, to found in China one of the strogest and most important sections of the international Opposition (23).

The massive arrests at the beginning of 1928 marked the opening of a new period in the Soviet Union. From that time onwards the bureaucracy tolerated the Opposition only when it was in the prisons or in the colonies of the deported. The problem was to uproot "Trotskyism" from all the organisations of the party. This was not an easy task: the fraction had "gone underground" and could not be readily seized, and the "Trotskyists" had the advantage of protection from party members themselves, as Pravda vainly denounced.

Of course, we know little about the "undeground" Opposition. There was a centre in Moscow, with Boris M. Eltsine and then with Grigori Jakovin, who had come from Leningrad and had escaped arrest, as well as nuclei in several large cities, Leningrad in particular (24). Contact was made with Trotsky through Sedov, who chose to accompany his father and undertook the difficult responsibility for linkages and secret communications. The "underground" workers in the cities organised distributions of leaflets and even of pamphlets, and intervned in meetings of the party and in workers' meetings, sometimes openly presenting their candidature to factory committees or soviets (25).

The remainder of the militants champed at the bit in semi- or complete idleness in remote corners of Siberia or Central Asia. The number of deportees continued to grow as the repression did not cease to add to it. The example of Zinoviev and of Kamenev was followed a few months later, at first by the Zinovievists, Safarov and Vardin in particular, but also by old Trotskyists, Piatakov, Serebriakov, Vladimir A. Antonov-Ovseenko (who had signed the letter of the 46 and had been a leader of the Opposition in 1923) and Krestinsky (ex-secretary of the Central Committee and member of the Opposition in 1923). Letters seem to have passed to and fro, with the usual delays; with the tolerance of the G.P.U. the deportees could carry on discussions and work out political documents (26). These conditions generally persisted up to the Sixth Congress of the Communist International. Then everything changed and the G.P.U. began to use the mails as a means of intervening in the exchanges between the deportees. The letters were all read, and the letters of people who were standing firm were held up, while the circulation was favoured of those which spread alarmist rumours, sowed discouragement or proposed capitulation. From September 1928 onwards the mails were no more than one means of police repression.

The crisis which tore apart the party leaders in and after summer 1928 and which put Stalin and Bukharin in opposition to each other, evidently contributed to intensifying the repression. There was a return to concessions after the "urgency measures" were taken to break the strike on the grain deliveries, but, contrary to what many people

surditities typical of little groups and study circles: there are not really so many people there who can swim against the stream without being deflected from the fundamental course" (31). His "Instructions to Pierre", which fell into the hands of the G.P.U. and were published in Pravda on January 15, 1928, were an effort to correct the ultra-left influence exerted by Safarov.

In fact the Opposition groups which appeared precisely during the year 1928 tended more or less to take on the same form as the Leninbund in Germany, that of a public fraction of the Communist Party founded by the excluded members.

In Belgium the Opposition formed an organisation after its exclusion in March 1928. It drew in about one-third of the members of the Belgian Communist Party, twelve members of the Central Committee out of twenty-six and its founder, a former General Secretary and the party's only deputy, War van Overstraeten. It published a weekly journal, Le Communiste and enjoyed an influence quite comparable to that of the Communist Party, which was considerably weakened by the exclusions policy and was led thereafter by Joseph Jacquemotte, one of the very few pioneers of the Belgian Communist Party who did not take the side of the Opposition. Likewise, in Spring 1928, the Revolutionary Socialist League was formed by former cadres of the Communist Party of the Netherlands and of the Communist International. Its leader was Henk Sneevliet, a delegate from the Communist Party of the Netherlands to the Second Congress of the Communist International, who had left the party in 1927. Sneevliet controlled the "red" trade union, Nacional Arbeids-Secretariat, (National Secretariat of Labour, N.A.S.); he was in disagreement with the International, but seems not to have decided to break, at least if we believe Trotsky on the matter, except to protect his trade union fiefdom. In Luxemburg the former general secretary Edy Reiland established links with groups of Spanish-speaking Communists led by a worker from Moscow, where he had worked for several years; this was Garcia Lavid, who worked politically under the name of Henri Lacroix - and they were in contact with Contre le Courant.

The Austrian Opposition was one of the oldest. It was soon to show that it was one of the most fertile in fractional struggles and personal quarrels - a caricature of a sect. The Left Opposition in the Communist Party was led by Josef Frey, a veteran of the revolution of 1918 and of the soldiers' councils, who was at first a member of the political bureau. He took the side of the Opposition and made contact with Trotsky. Frey and his supporters were excluded from the Austrian Communist Party at the beginning of 1927 and went on to form a "public fraction", the Communist Party of Austria: Opposition (K.P.O.-O), which published the journal Arbeiterstimme (Workers' Voice). From May 1927 onwards the Austrian Opposition was the scene of conflict between Frey, who held to the position of the "public fraction" and Kurt Landau in his youth who proposed that the organisation should undertake the construction of a "second party". The political question was settled by the victory of Frey, but the quarrel broke out again in the following year with the exclusion in April 1928 of the supporters of Landau, who were charged with supporting "Korsch-ist theses" on the Soviet Union. The group - some thirty workers at Graz and a few intellectuals in Vienna - founded the periodical Klassenkampf (Class Struggle) and then Der Neue Mahnruf (The New Alarm-Call) and continued an independent existence justified in part by polemics against Frey's group.

The appearance of the first elements of the Left Opposition in the American continent is evidently an event of the first importance, the most reliable indication of progress towards an international organisation. We know more about its origin today - thanks to the opening of the archives which have provided much information about the "pre-history" of the movement about which the militants who have been regarded as the "founding fathers" had observed a certain discretion.

As in Germany, the threads went back to Solntsev, who, after his service in Berlin, was posted to work for Amtorg in the United States at the end of 1927. He left the U.S.A. less than a year later, but had not wasted his time during this stay. He made contact with Maz Eastman, who still had some hard feelings since Trotsky had disowned his publication of the "Testament of Lenin". But Solntsev succeeded, (with, it appears, the support of Mrs. Eastman, Ellena Krylenko) in convincing Eastman that Trotsky's declaration disowning him had been extracted under threat. Eastman agreed to prepare the translation and the presentation, with notes, of a number of Trotsky's writings which were unknown in U.S.A., for example, the Platform of the Left Opposition, the Letter to the Institute of Party History and several speeches. This work was to be published

(especially those around Trotsky) believed, this was not a victory of the right. Stalin began to talk about a "kulak deviation" and in October dismissed several supporters of the right wing led by Bukharin, Tomsky and Rykov. Kamenev had a meeting with Bukharin, who imprudently confided in him what kind of men Stalin and his secretary were. Filip Schwalbe, a member of the Left Opposition, transmitted a copy of the account of this interview (prepared for Zinoviev) to the Moscow centre. What could the Trotskyists in Moscow hope to gain by divulging an interview which could only facilitate the struggle of Stalin against the Zinovievists and Bukharin? (27) Did they let themselves be manoeuvred by some provocateur to undertake to publish a document which helped Stalin to get rid of the right?

The Sixth Congress of the Communist International, from July 17 to September 1, 1928, without doubt marked the success of the activity which the Left Opposition organised. The Opposition succeeded in distributing to every delegate, in the official folder itself, copies of "The Draft Programme of the Communist International - A Criticism of Fundamentals", which Trotsky had written at Alma Ata. This convinced Cannon and Specter, delegates from North America. Trotskyists in Moscow had talks with delegates from foreign Communist Parties such as the Italian Palmiro Togliatti and the Frenchman Maurice Thorez, who did not conceal their disillusion with the line that was being developed and with the "theory of socialism in a single country" and its consequences. The Congress even saw an Indonesian delegate take the floor to develop the policies of the Opposition in relation to China against Bukharin.

Probably this success was big enough to lead Stalin to decide that the relative tolerance of the Opposition by the G.P.U. had to be ended. We have already seen how the normal distribution of the mail was interrupted. The difficulties of the deportees increased. On December 16 a representative of the council of the G.P.U. demanded from Trotsky that he categorically undertake to end his activity, failing which "the question of changing the place of his residence" would arise.²⁸⁾ This representative drew down on himself a stinging reply:

"Only completely corrupted bureaucrats could demand such a renunciation from revolutionaries. Only contemptible renegades could give such a promise." (29)

Therefore the test of strength followed. Part of it was the decision to expel Trotsky from the U.S.S.R. since he could not be isolated from his organisation and since to imprison or to assassinate him would no doubt raise more problems than it would solve in the immediate future. The Russian Opposition was on the point of losing its principal leader. But it was also on the eve of a grave crisis, of a wave of capitulation foreshadowed by Radek.

First signs of organisation on the international level

The very beginning and source of the international organisation of the Opposition is no doubt to be sought in a meeting (about which we do not know much) held in Berlin in December 1927 at the same time as the Fifteenth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, where the Oppositionists were excluded and where Zinoviev and Kamenev capitulated. The meeting - with Safarov in the chair - brought together essentially representatives of the German Left, delegates from other countries in Europe and some twenty members of the Russian Opposition, who were working abroad for the Russian government, some in diplomatic posts. Solntsev took part in this conference and wrote an account of it to Trotsky, who told his comrade Yudin in a letter in 1928:

"Safarov arrived in Berlin from Constantinople during the period when our group was being crushed in Moscow. In his Berlin meetings Safarov proclaimed the coming of Thermidor. His formula was: 'It is five minutes to twelve', that is, there were five minutes left before a full-scale coup d'etat, and those five minutes had to be used to wage a frenzied campaign. A comrade arriving from Berlin told me how our closest friends there were astonished by the ultra-left, super-Detsist way in which Safarov presented matters. But because he was the most authoritative of the Russians there, the foreigners took the ultra-left charges from him." (30)

Trotsky had no illusions about the left opposition groups abroad in the months following this conference, and criticised them sharply. He wrote that we find in their ranks "a great deal of confusion, exaggeration and deviation and, in general, all sorts of ab-

under the title The Real Situation in Russia and was to provide in this way the first published details of the struggle of the Left Opposition. Solntsev also had valuable contacts with Ludwig Lore, an old companion of Trotsky during his exile in New York in 1917: Lore had been excluded for "Trotskyism" - which was by no means the case - but he was disposed entirely to helping Trotsky. At the time he was in charge of the German-language daily Volkszeitung (People's Journal), in which Solntsev was able to present the viewpoint of the Russian Opposition. Solntsev moreover got into contact with a Communist doctor in Boston, Dr. Antionette Konikov, an emigre from Russia, a pioneer of the Communist Party in Boston, who had gathered round herself the first nucleus of the Opposition in America. Finally, he formed working relations with Louis Basky, the leader of the Hungarian-language section of the American Communist Party and with its hundred Hungarian Oppositionists who published Proletar (The Proletariat). We cannot doubt that the meeting which was held during the winter of 1927 - 28 at Eastman's house, attended by him, his wife, Ludwig Lore, Solntsev and Antoinette Konikov, was the first historic element in "Trotskyism" on American soil.

As we know, this pre-history of the movement through the foreign groups has been eclipsed by the spectacular adhesion to the International Left Opposition and to Trotsky's theses of a group of leaders of the Communist Party itself, the militants whom James P. Cannon brought together immediately after the Sixth Congress of the Communist International, with his team-mate, Maurice Spector, the Canadian leader and member of the Executive Committee of the Communist International. Cannon was a veteran of the Socialist Party in Kansas; with William Z. Foster, he had been the leader of one of the three tendencies in the American Communist Party (32). He was one of those rare leaders who came from Anglo-Saxon, from truly "American" stock; he was a classical workers' leader, an organizer of people, a tribune, but he knew when he thought it necessary to handle himself in the apparatus. He had kept away from the discussion on the "Russian question", probably, as he was to write later, because he felt that he was ill-informed and perhaps because he did not think that the support of the leadership of the Communist International would be worth a lot if he bought it at the cost of agreeing with them. Spector was a very young intellectual who was hardly twenty years old when he came to the top of the Canadian Communist Party, was originally from the Ukraine. He spent some time in Germany and observed the revolutionary preparations in 1923; after that date he became convinced of the superiority of Trotsky's analyses; he succeeded up to that time in preventing his own party from taking the road of condemning "Trotskyism".

For these men the turning-point was in 1928, in the summer, when, at the time of the Sixth Congress of the Communist International, where Cannon went (on his own admission) (33) to seek support for his fractional struggle within the American Party and without the slightest underlying design of establishing connections with "Trotskyism". We know that the members of the Russian Left Opposition had carefully prepared their intervention at this Congress, both on the political and on the technical plane, as Trotsky had wished in December 1927. There can be no doubt that the intervention of the Indonesian delegate Alfonso - whose real name was Mohamed Tohir or Dakhjoedin (34) - criticising the line of Bukharin in China, had been prepared in agreement with the Russian militants. We know that there exist in the exile papers an abundant correspondence from "Trotskyists" in Moscow, who sent almost daily to Trotsky the reflections and the sentiments expressed by the foreign delegates. It can hardly be by chance that the document which Trotsky drafted at Alma Ata, the "Critique of the Draft Programme of the Communist International" and addressed to the Congress had been translated there into several languages and distributed by the Congress secretariat to the leaders of the foreign delegations and to the members of the programme commission, among whom were Cannon and Spector (35). These two men were immediately convinced by what they read that "Marxist truth was on the side of Trotsky" (36), as Cannon wrote. They then decided not to reveal themselves in the course of the Congress, which could have resulted in their being detained indefinitely in Russia, and to get out of the Soviet Union with the document. On their road home they stopped in Berlin and had a long discussion with Urbahns. When they got back to U.S.A., Solntsev was gone; he finally handed himself over to the G.P.U. when he accepted the order recalling him, but his work had provided a base. Cannon and Spector were quickly in touch with Eastman and the Hungarians. Eastman even provided the money which enabled the "Militant" to start publication.

Finding roots in America was not easy. Despite every precaution, the affair quickly be-

came public property. Cannon was charged by his tendency comrades, the Foster part of their joint fraction and excluded from the party after having read a declaration in support of the Russian Opposition to a meeting of the Central Committee on October 26, 1928; He succeeded in convincing his closest collaborators in the International Labour Defence, the former leaders of the Communist Youth, Max Shachtman and Martin Abern, who were excluded at the same time as he was. He then succeeded in winning the Chicago workers' leader, Arne Swabeck, and the leader of the Communist Youth in Chicago, Albert Glotzer, followed by that of the Dunne brothers (excluding William) who were part of the legend of American Communism. More than sixty militants were excluded in a few weeks, and some of them were very well known. Their journal, "Militant" appeared on November 18, 1928; it published extracts from "The Critique of the Draft Programme of the Communist International" and the slogans of the Opposition, beginning its long career.

The new "American Trotskyists" were to express themselves one last time in the Party Congress in December 1928; they there denounced the methods of the bureaucracy, the "deproletarianisation" of the party, and called for unity (37). The apparatus stepped up the exclusions and Cannon and his comrades succeeded only with some difficulty in preserving a small secret nucleus in the party which was not un-masked. A tough fight started, with attacks on paper sellers and on the platforms at public meetings and a desperate campaign of slander by the party against the Oppositionists, who were preparing to hold public meetings in all the great cities in U.S.A. In Canada, on the initiative of Spector, a group of Oppositionists was formed after the party apparatus, which had been re-organised and recovered control, excluded the Oppositionists. It developed in liaison with the American Opposition.

An international conference, called by the Leninbund and prepared in December 1928, met at Aachen on February 17, 1929. The Leninbund saw it as "A Conference to defend the deported Bolsheviks". From Germany, the conference was attended by the Leninbund, the Deutsche Industrieverband (Association of German Industry), and the Korchist group from the Ruhr, Kommunistische Politik. Also represented were the Belgian Opposition, the French group Contre le Courant, the trade union organisation N.A.S. and the editors of the journal De Nieuwe Weg - a monthly with which Sneevliet collaborated - for the Netherlands. Other Opposition groups (Austria, Italy, U.S.A. and Czechoslovakia) sent their support to the conference (38) and the Redressement Communiste group wrote excusing themselves, for lack of money.

We know little about this conference. It decided to set up a "Trotsky Aid Fund", "intended to come to the help of the revolutionary defenders of the dictatorship of the proletariat" (39). A provisional committee of the "Trotsky Aid" was set up. However, the creation of the "Trotsky Aid" was in reality nothing but the extension on the international scale of the "Trotsky-Hilfe" which the Leninbund had started at the beginning of February 1929. Therefore it was on the initiative of Urbahns that this fund for international help was started: he was the chairman of the international committee which the conference appointed and demanded that the sums collected be sent to Berlin. This committee also included Paz, van Overstraeten, Sneevliet, the syndicalist Paul Weyer and a second member of the Leninbund, Jakob Ritter.

The conference adopted a resolution which emphasised the danger which Trotsky was running in exile: it appealed to the workers of the whole world:

"Revolutionary workers, join with us in organising the TROTSKY AID; form 'Trotsky Aid' Committees everywhere, gather supporters in every land, join us in collecting the material means to save and protect Trotsky and the other revolutionary fighters whose lives are in danger".(40)

At the same time, they formed a "Committee against the Deportations" (41), and decided to send a militant from Germany to visit Trotsky. Paz wrote to Trotsky on February 21, 1929:

"The impression of the conference was in the main good... Besides the activities which were envisaged, this conference will have the usefulness of creating real links between Urbahns and us. Up to the present, these links were confined to an exchange of journals; this was due largely to the existing relations between Urbahns and 'Freint'.(42)

Urbahns wrote to Trotsky about the conference on February 25:

pressing itself through the organisation of an illegal anti-Soviet party, activity which during the last period was directed towards the provocation of anti-Soviet demonstrations and towards the preparation of armed struggle against Soviet power.

DECISION: To exile citizen Trotsky, Lev Davidovich, beyond the borders of the USSR.

CERTIFIED: Director of the Alma-Ata Division of the GPU, Alma-Ata, January 20, 1929. (48).

This expulsion was decided in haste but could only be carried out slowly. The journey towards exile lasted twenty-eight days (six thousand kilometres), interrupted by long stops waiting for an exact destination. In the end it was Turkey. In the same period the G.P.U. tried to put a definite end to the Opposition by a wave of arrests - several hundreds, of whom a hundred and fifty involved the "Trotskyist centre".

The expulsion of Trotsky followed closely on an unpleasant event for the Opposition. This was the return to the U.S.S.R. at the end of 1928 of Eleazar B. Solntsev, when he was immediately imprisoned. He had been the organiser of the international Opposition up to that time. He was a young man, of the generation in high school in 1917, and had followed higher studies as a Communist at the Institute of Red Professors, from which he had degrees in the double speciality of history and economics. He was part of the nucleus of young Oppositionist militants from 1923 onwards and had worked closely with Trotsky, who mentions him as having been among those who collaborated in the drafting of the Platform of the Left Opposition. This is perhaps the reason why this young specialist, whose occupation was in external trade, was posted abroad, to Germany and then to U.S.A. As we have seen, he doubtless contributed much to the organisation of the Left Opposition abroad. We hear of him in Berlin at the time of the December 1927 conference. We then come across him in U.S.A. where he effects important contacts. He was excluded from the party in April or May 1928, and consulted Trotsky about what he ought to do, asking whether "he had to sacrifice himself". In October and November he was in Vienna and then in Berlin, from where he sent the second report which we have mentioned. He resumed contact with the Germans, and tried to correct the "aim" of the comrades who, after his departure, had replaced him and concentrated on Weber and the remains of the Wedding Opposition and practically neglected Urbahns, who was somewhat bitter about it.

Then Solntsev went back to Russia. From that time onward, he travelled the same road as hundreds of "un-breakables": Chelyabinsk, then Verkhne-Uralsk and exile after a long term in jail. The circumstances of his return to Russia have long been a mystery to historians. Did he go back and "sacrifice himself" on the basis of advice from Trotsky? We now know that there was nothing like that, and that he returned in obedience to a personal impulse and, according to what Trotsky wrote, despite the advice of the latter, who called this return a "thoughtless act", and made clear, soon after his own departure from the U.S.S.R.:

"Still today I cannot think about it without a sharp feeling of distress. How we would need him now and how useful he would be!". (49)

The man to whom Trotsky sadly gave this confidence was Solomon Kharin, an old militant of the Opposition, who likewise deplored Solntsev's return to the U.S.S.R. in the first report which he sent in March 1929. (50)

The international Opposition was in a certain sense beheaded when Solntsev went back to the U.S.S.R., and had to make good the deficiency. The Aachen conference gave no more than an insufficient answer to the double problem of organisation but particularly of politics. The shifting of responsibility for the political struggle to reform the Communist International and the Communist Parties, which was taking place at the beginning of 1929, was also the result of the course of events in 1928. The absence of a formed international Opposition and the dispersion of the elements who could organise it - could these be compensated by the arrival of Trotsky and of Leon Sedov, who had been the mainspring of the organising work during the deportation in Alma-Ata? Had the centre of gravity of the Opposition left the U.S.S.R. with Trotsky?

"It was a first attempt to reach an international agreement on ideas. Its success and its political results were not very important, but it forms a starting-point. It decided to organise international aid for the Russian Opposition, under the name of 'Trotsky Aid'. 'Trotsky Aid' must be set up 'for all the Russian revolutionaries who carry on the class struggle and who want to re-establish the dictatorship of the proletariat'. Moreover they decided that all the political groups prepared to do so will mobilise to obtain a residence permit for you".(43)

What was the aim of this conference? To discuss and to take action on the Russian question alongside the organisations ready to denounce the blows against the Opposition? Was the Leninbund trying to advance towards re-grouping the Oppositionists of different tendencies on the international scale? Or was it really trying to give itself credibility to win the "right-wingers", especially in Germany where they were especially numerous and had just been excluded? There are two elements which suggest the beginning of an answer: in the first place, there is the opinion of Solntsev before the conference in connection with the situation of the Opposition at the end of 1928. He expressed this view in his report to Trotsky:

"We are without doubt witnessing the beginning, the very beginning, of the formation of a left wing in the Communist International. Considering the events which have happened up to today, we can assert without fear of contradiction that this process will be long, difficult and very painful. It will be accompanied by hard battles, disputes and even splits... Right at the beginning, before any unification, we should mark ourselves off and trace our frontiers. This stage has not yet been realised. The numerous groups to whom we have given our label have entered the opposition by such varied routes and for such diverse reasons that we must expect the most surprising combinations and regroupments. A few words more about the international conference: I think that it is premature, for the considerations which I have just mentioned and that at this stage it would end in a scandal. However, knowing the general situation, I have not spoken out against it."(44)

The second element of reply is to be found in the results of the activities which the conference envisaged: Paz went to Prinkipo in the place of the German militant who had been intended, the Committee against Deportations had no real existence and the Provisional Committee of "Trotsky Aid" came down to the single personality of Urbahns, with the money that was collected remaining in the hands of the Leninbund. When Trotsky heard about the creation of the "Trotsky Aid", he demanded that the name must be changed to "Fund to help the deported Bolshevik-Leninists", declaring that he was not in any personal need. Moreover he observed a strict silence about this conference because the organisations which attended were so obviously heterogeneous that they could not be, in the words of Solntsev, "the beginning of the formation of a left wing in the Communist International", but rather indicated "the most surprising combinations and regroupments".

Let us agree with him that this conference was probably premature - even though the exile of Trotsky created a dramatic framework which justified an international Oppositional response. But at the same time the conference did not end in a "scandal", as he feared, but in almost total silence (45). None the less, it was the first international meeting of the left oppositions, and, as such, was an important landmark.

Trotsky in exile

One month after the ultimatum of the G.P.U. and Trotsky's categorical refusal to give up all political activity, when the G.P.U. succeeded in stopping all the mail addressed to or leaving Alma Ata, and thereby cutting Trotsky off from the Oppositionists, the Left Opposition continued to develop. It enjoyed real support and was able to strike blows in its struggle to reform and party and the Communist International. As Trotsky wrote, "the Sixth Congress did not close the history of the Left Opposition, but on the contrary opened up a new and more significant chapter of it" (46). To put a stop to this, it had to be beheaded as quickly as possible, and in the course of January 1929 Stalin induced the Politburo to exile Trotsky (47). On January 20, the G.P.U. arrested Trotsky at Alma-Ata and handed to him the following memorandum:

"HEARING: The case of citizen Trotsky, Lev Davidovich, covered by Article 58/10 of the Criminal Code regarding the accusation of counter-revolutionary activity ex-

FOOTNOTES

- (1) Trotsky's letter "On the German Left", April 2, 1927, Harvard T3037
- (2) Quoted by Maurice Stobincer, "Le mouvement trotskyste allemand sous la republique de Weimar", Universite de Paris VIII, 1980, p. 69
- (3) Die Fahne des Kommunismus, No. 5, February 3, 1928
- (4) Die Fahne des Kommunismus, No. 15, April 13, 1928
- (5) Ibid.
- (6) Die Fahne des Kommunismus, No. 10, March 9, 1928
- (7) The experience in Altona in September 1927 had not sufficed; the candidates of the Left Opposition had received only 365 votes, against 19,000 to the K.P.D.
- (8) Die Fahne des Kommunismus, No. 23, June 8, 1928
- (9) A letter by Trotsky (1928) to an un-identified addressee, Harvard T3176
- (10) At the end of 1926 "La Revolution Proletarienne" fostered the creation of the "Ligue Syndicaliste". From that time, Rosmer cut down his participation in the journal.
- (11) See "L'Humanite", November 20, 1927, No. 10570
- (12) Boris Souvarine, "Octobre noir", in "Bulletin Communiste", No. 22 - 23, October - November 1927
- (13) P. Broue has identified "Pierre" as N. N. Perevertsev. See "Cahiers Leon Trotsky", No. 6, pp. 8 - 9 and P. Broue, "The thesis of Maurice Stobincer, p. 2-3.
- (14) Trotsky, "Instructions a Pierre", in Contre le Courant, No. 7, January 22, 1928, p. 4.
- (15) "L'Unite Leniniste", No. 12, March 1928.
- (16) Contre le Courant, No. 12, June 28, 1928, pp. 1 - 3.
- (17) Ibid.
- (18) This fraction regrouped militants who had been close to Bordiga. It tended to ultra-leftism and was led by Ottorino Perrone, alias Vercesi. From 1928 onwards this fraction produced the review Prometeo. In its reply to Contre le Courant it wrote, in particular: "If there exist several oppositions, this is because there are several ideologies which must reveal themselves in their real substance, and not encounter each other in a simple discussion, in a common organ." See Contre le Courant, No. 13, August 5, 1928, pp. 7 - 8
- (19) "Reponse de La Lutte des Classes" in Contre le Courant, No. 12, June 28, 1928, pp. 4 - 5
- (20) "Reponse du Cercle Marx-Lenin", *ibid.*, pp. 8 - 9
- (21) Anton Ciliga
- (22) See Damien Durand, "The birth of the Chinese Left Opposition", in "Cahiers Leon

- Trotsky", No. 15, September 1983, pp. 5 - 26
- (24) Victor Serge
- (25) According to Broue, "The Trotskyists in the Soviet Union", in "Cahiers Leon Trotsky", No. 6
- (26) Anton Ciliga
- (27) The text of the secret interview of Kamenev and Bukharin was published in Contre le Courant, No. 27 - 28, April 12, 1929 and No. 29 - 30, May 6, 1929
- (28) Trotsky, "My Life", Penguin ed. 1975, p.581
- (29) See "Leon Trotsky: the Challenge of the Left Opposition (1928 - 29)", Pathfinder 1981, p. 366
- (30) Letter from Trotsky to Yudin, May 26, 1928, in "The Challenge of the Left Opposition", p. 366.
- (31) Ibid.
- (32) The American Communist Party was wracked by ferocious fractional struggles. The "Zinovievist" fraction of Ruthenberg confronted the "Centrist" fraction of Foster and Cannon, and the "right", led by Lovestone, which the International placed in control in 1928.
- (33) James P. Cannon, "The History of American Trotskyism" (from its origin to the foundation of the Socialist Workers' Party, 1938). Pathfinder 1972.
- (34) Alfonso was an incidental pseudonym. V. Kahan says that he was Mohamed Tohir and Sneevliet, in a letter to Trotsky, says that he was Dakhjoedin.
- (35) According to Spector, this document was pruned of several essential parts, including that about the history of the Communist International since 1923 and that about the question of the regime in the Bolshevik party. See letter from Spector to Trotsky, April 24, 1929, Harvard 5343
- (36) Cannon, op. cit., p. 50
- (37) According to "Our Appeal to the party members", in "Militant" No. 1, Vol. 2, January 1, 1929, pp. 1 - 2
- (38) Apart from the N.A.S. and the Leninbund, there was only one delegate from each of the organisations. Paz was not a delegate, even though his name appears in the provisional committee of the "Trotsky Aid". We do not know who was the delegate from Contre le Courant
- (39) Contre le Courant No. 23, February 25, 1929, "An international Conference"
- (40) Ibid.
- (41) It was Paz who informed Trotsky of this decision (letter of February 21, 1929, Harvard 3752). The decision is not mentioned anywhere in the Opposition press. Moreover, when Paz told Urbahns that he expected to visit Trotsky at Prinkipo, Urbahns did not send anyone.
- (42) Letter from M. Paz to Trotsky, February 21, 1929, (Harvard 3759)
- (43) Letter from Urbahns to Trotsky, February 25, 1929, (Harvard 5612)

- (44) Letter-report of Solntsev to Trotsky, November 8, 1928, in "Cahiers Leon Trotsky" No. 7 - 8, 1981, pp. 45 and 54
- (45) There are no traces, apart from the correspondence of the militants with Trotsky, such as Paz, Urbahns and Sneevliet, of this conference, except in Centre le Courant (No. 23, February 25, 1929) and Volkswille (No. 29, February 20, 1929 and No. 31, February 25, 1929)
- (46) Trotsky, "The Sixth Congress and the Opposition's Tasks", in "The Challenge of the Left Opposition", pp. 250 - 264 (1928 - 29)
- (47) Broue, "Le Parti Bolchevique", Editions de Minuit, 1977, p. 291
- (48) Trotsky, "My Life", Penguin ed. 1975, pp. 584 - 5, and "The Challenge of the Left Opposition (1928 - 29)", p. 410
- (49) Letter from Trotsky to Kharin, March 31. 1929 (Harvard 8630)
- (50) Letter from Kharin to Trotsky, March 1929 (Harvard 2421)

CHAPTER THREERegroupment and the Delimitation ofFrontiers

Leon Trotsky, his wife Natalia and his son Leon Sedov were disembarked by their G.P.U. escort at Constantinople on February 12, 1929. They were lodged in the Soviet Consulate and then in a hotel, before finding a villa on the Isle of Princes, Prinkipo.

A difficult exile began for Trotsky and his companions. The rest of his family and all his associates were cut off from them. For the international Opposition, it meant a turn as well as a test, with the seductive prospect that Trotsky could come to the West.

The first contacts were very quickly made. The members and sympathisers of the Opposition were surprised at the suddenness of the event, and they were anxious when they heard that Trotsky and his companions were left to themselves without protection and precariously installed, far away, in a city where more than thirty thousand former fighters of the White armies were living. The world press which carried this news had added that Trotsky was seriously ill.

Trotsky at Prinkipo

The first letters reached Trotsky a few days after his arrival. The Paz couple and Rosmer had been informed by telegraph and wrote at once for news and to satisfy themselves that contact by letter was working and to offer help. Then, letters came from Raissa Adler, and old friend of Trotsky, who had been a student in Moscow and then in Vienna, where she had married Alfred Adler the psychoanalyst. Letters came from Urbahns in Berlin, from Souvarin, from Magdeleine Paz-Marx and from Naville, in Paris. Souvarin was pre-occupied with material aid, while Urbahns was trying to get a German visa for Trotsky.

Once Trotsky had cleared away the emotion and the anxiety, by declaring that he recognised no personal tragedy and rejecting any material aid, the first political pre-occupations surfaced: to be sure, the problem of visas, but also the behaviour of the Communist press on the subject of the expulsion and especially the publication in several large-circulation newspaper of articles by Trotsky about his expulsion (What happened and why?), after Trotsky had questioned the Oppositionists about their publication. At the same time, the people who were writing to Trotsky informed him about the situation in the parties and the state of the Opposition groups, sent him newspapers and leaflets and replied to his repeated requests for documentation and information.

It is perhaps a paradox - though is it really? - that Trotsky did not know well the people who were writing to him, even when he knew them at all. Of course, there were Raissa Adler and Alfred Rosmer, his friend since Paris, but these are the only ones who can be regarded as personal friends. The others were people whom he had met by chance at meetings of during trips which they had made to the U.S.S.R. In this way he had met Maurice Paz in 1923, Pierre Naville in 1927, had rubbed shoulders with Maurice Spector at the Executive Committee of the Communist International and, no doubt, Urbahns. But he had never met Cannon and many others.

Very quickly the political aspect came to be dominant in his relations. Trotsky employed his old friend Raissa in translations and formed exclusively political relations with Cannon. And it was as a militant, and not as Trotsky's son, that Sedov received from Trotsky the important task of keeping contact with the militants in the U.S.S.R.

In fact this complex web of relations only expresses the long separation between Trotsky in the U.S.S.R. and the outside world, as well as the un-formed character of the Left Opposition. Trotsky knew no more about the groups in question than what Solntsev and then Kharin had written to him; Kharin was in a sense the Western correspondent of the Russian Opposition.

Moreover, all that was to be clarified, each item given its due importance, illuminated and transformed in a few months, with the arrival in Prinkipo of visitors and collaborators, militants and secretaries, and with the development of a correspondence which covered the whole world and brought together the experiences of those who had come to Trotsky by very different routes and through very different means of contact.

In the course of spring and summer 1929 the visitors were mostly French. The first was Maurice Paz, who stayed from March 12 to 16. Even though he wrote an enthusiastic account of his visit in Contre le Courant (1), the results of his stay were not extraordinary. The perspective of a weekly journal of the French Opposition was advanced, and, in the meantime, Contre le Courant was to publish many more of Trotsky's articles, but the personal relations of the two men were not good.

From that time the people who came one after another to Prinkipo wanted to discuss political questions and, often, concrete projects such as the French weekly, and those who came to act as secretaries or guards - often combining the two roles. These were, first of all, the former deputy secretary of the Communist Youth in the XXth arrondissement in Paris in 1923, who had been excluded for three years in 1924 and gone over to the Opposition in 1926. This was Raymond Molinier. He was accompanied by his friends, his brother Henri and the Russian (resident in Paris) David Barozin (known as Pierre Gourget), a former friend of Souvarin who had later gone over to Contre le Courant, as well as Jeanne Martin des Pallieres, the wife of Raymond Molinier. Then there was Lucien Marzet, who stayed as a secretary from April to October, and the Rosmers, who arrived at the beginning of May and went away separately, Marguerite in mid-May and Alfred at the end of July. Pierre and Denise Naville also came, with Gerard Rosenthal, in the month of August. The doctor Louis Bercher, a former member of the Communist Party in Algeria, from the Revolution Proletarienne group (where he was known as Pera) took advantage of one of his voyages for Messageries Maritimes, his employers. There came from Czechoslovakia a young man who had met the Russian Left Opposition in 1927 at an organising conference of the Communist Youth. This was Wolfgang Salus, who came on his own initiative and was only vaguely connected with the groups which claimed to support the Left Opposition. There was a Lithuanian, Jacob Frank, who had worked in the Soviet Trade Delegation in Vienna, who came also to help Trotsky as a secretary, between June and October, on the recommendation of Raissa Adler. A Russian shorthand-typist, Maria Ilychna Pevzner, was recruited locally, Jeanne Martin also collaborated and, in October, Robert Ranc, a friend of the Rosmers, from the union of the correctors of the press, came to take the place of Marzet.

Certain absences have to be mentioned. Despite the repeated assurances of the Italian Left Fraction, none of its representatives made the journey. Nor did anyone from Germany, despite the insistence of Trotsky on the importance of that country and on the role of the Leninbund. Neither Frey nor Sneevliet decided to come, though they were invited. The Chinese, Liu Renjing, one of the founders of the Communist Party in his country, who had been a delegate at the Third and the Fourth Congresses of the Communist International, came from Moscow, where he had spent several years and had joined the Left Opposition, and made the diversion to Prinkipo on his road back to China.

The financial problem intruded on these journeys and foreshadowed political difficulties to come. The Rosmers were somewhat annoyed at the news that Molinier and his relations were leaving before them and that they were going to "represent" the French Oppositionists, but Molinier replied that he was free to do so because he was travelling at his own expense. As for the Rosmers, they had no such resources, and Trotsky financed their trip out of his royalties in France. But he was very shocked when Maurice Paz, whom he believed to be a prosperous business lawyer, demanded to have the cost of his trip re-imbursed.

During these first months of exile, Trotsky's activity was organised round three axes: his literary work, his contacts with the groups of the International Opposition and his efforts to obtain a visa.

Trotsky attached a decisive importance to his literary work and devoted a great deal of his time to it. He became what he called "the hard-labour convict of the publishers"; in particular he wrote "My Life" in a few months, but his task was complicated by the dictatorial delays of publishers, the lack of qualified collaborators, incomplete archives and problems of translation. But he also wrote at this time a number of pamphlets and articles, and we cannot overlook his conflicts which led to a lawsuit with his publishers (Rieder in France and especially Harry Schumann in Leipzig, who, he believed, had been contacted by the

C. P. U.]

Magdeleine Paz, Marguerite Rosmer, Raissa Adler and the Pfemfert couple - convinced left-is who edited the journal Die Aktion - saw to contracts and manuscripts as well as to finding reliable translators - Trotsky was inflexible on this point. The books and articles were published in many countries, either by the groups and journals of the Opposition or by bourgeois publishers and journals (in these cases Trotsky turned over his royalties to the groups).

This literary activity won important results. The quality and the interest of these writings had an influence on a very wide public. It made Trotsky a "best-seller" and thus earned substantial financial returns, part of which went to the groups of the Opposition and another part served to set up an international fund intended to publish the documents of the Opposition as well as the works of Lenin which Stalin banned.

Contacts with the Opposition groups developed through the correspondence by means of which Trotsky sought information before beginning to intervene.

Finally, in the matter of visas, Trotsky made numerous approaches, in parallel with those of many militants, to political contacts of the past or to notabilities whom he hosted in the USSR, and tested the ground in many countries ... but in vain! He went even so far as to consider entering France clandestinely and compelling the government, by a political campaign, to lift the prohibition to live there which had hung over him since 1916.

During this period, events speeded up within the Communist world. The crisis of the Stalin-Bukharin bloc, associated with the crisis in the grain collections which the kulaks organised, entered a decisive phase. After the Sixth Congress of the Communist International, the Stalin fraction little by little eliminated the "right-ists" from key positions in the Communist International, and planned disciplinary measures against the right. The publication of the conversation between Kamenev and Bukharin in a secret interview provided Stalin with a pretext to drive the right out of the Politburo and with the same stroke to launch a zig-zag to the left in the economy. The Communist International limped behind with some delay. There was no more talk, as there had been while Bukharin ruled the roost, of the "stabilisation" of capitalism, but of the "decomposition of the capitalist stabilisation". The conception of the "united front" advocated by the "right-ists" was denounced as "opportunism" and replaced by that of the "united front from below". The Social-Democrats were denounced as "social-fascists" who had to be liquidated as the first step towards opening the road of revolution. The leaders of the right at the head of the Bolshevik Party, Bukharin, Rykov and Tomsky, were eliminated in a few months, even though Bukharin remained formally the President of the Communist International up to July 1929 - when he was replaced by Viatcheslav Molotov, a faithful follower of Stalin - and was given the job of introducing the new line with which he disagreed, an un-welcome one.

The right was liquidated throughout the whole International in a few months. In Germany, all the other leaders of the right were excluded after Brandler; they were victims of the backlash of the Wittorf affair. In Sweden Karl Kilbom, the leader of the party, the editor of its journal, a member of the Presidium of the Communist International at the Sixth Congress, was excluded. In Czechoslovakia it was the whole of the old team going back to the beginning who were excluded. In USA, the General Secretary, Jay Lovestone, the representative of the American Communist Party on the Executive Committee of the Communist International in 1929, Bertram D. Wolfe and others, who were put out. Whole organisations were excluded in Switzerland and Alsace, as well as Italian militants like Angelo Tasca, who also was a member of the Executive and of the Presidium at the Sixth Congress of the Communist International.

The right were to be replaced by far-sighted careerists. This new category of "leaders" had nothing whatever in common with the former leaders of the Communist International. These were people in the Stalinist fraction who were ready for anything. They expressed the interests of the bureaucratic layer which had appropriated the power in the USSR and subordinated to itself the organs of the Soviet state as well as those of the party and the International.

The crisis followed by the end of the centre-right bloc were not merely a clarification but an additional source of confusion to many. There is no doubt that in the USSR things were clear with the turn to forced collectivisation and the perspective of liquidating the kulaks and industrialisation. As the left hoped, the centrists came into collision with the right. Outside the Soviet Union it was not the same; there right-wingers, ex-Zinovievists and Trotskyists joined in fighting the ultra-left policy expressed in the formula of "social-fascism",

criticising the subordination of the proletariat to the directives of the Stalinised Communist International, and in fighting the policy of deviation which expressed itself in the formula the "united front from below". Already in 1928, writing in Germany, Solntsev was stressing the danger of an alliance for the occasion with the right - which had long been the main en in the eyes of the Russian Oppositionists, and Stalin no more than their ally. From that time the danger grew, and in Czechoslovakia took the absurd form of a fusion of the Bukhari ist right-ists and the Zinovievist left in a "unified" opposition, the basic principles of which diverged totally from one group to another.

Such a situation could not be allowed to go on without danger - especially in the relations between the Russian Opposition and the other groups of the left - and evidently demanded not merely political clarification on the part of the Left Opposition but also checking the political orientation of those who claimed to be its supporters.

The Three Criteria of the Clarification

On March 31, 1929, in his letter entitled "Groupings in the Communist Opposition", Trotsky proposed a method by which to evaluate the groups or tendencies within the International Communist Opposition, and established a principled method of distinguishing between them. The method was linked, not to mass activity, because of the character of the period. He wrote:

"A clear, precise ideological differentiation is unconditionally necessary. It prepares future successes. We have more than once appraised the general line of the Comintern leadership as centrism. Clearly centrism, all the more so centrism armed with the entire arsenal of repressions, must repel into opposition not only consistent Marxist elements but also the more consistent opportunists".(2)

This demarcation in relation to the opportunists demonstrates his rejection of an "all-inclusive" Opposition or of a political bloc, which might tempt some Oppositionists who were dubious about the perspectives of their own struggle and were seeking support among opponents of the line of regeneration of the Communist International and the Communist Parties. This principled demarcation was in the spirit of a "new Zimmerwald", it being the duty of the "consistent proletarian elements" to unite as a fraction of the International, as a tendency in world Communism, on clear bases of principle at the risk of being small in numbers once again.

The three criteria by which to evaluate the different tendencies, proposed by Trotsky, were the policy of the Anglo-Russian Trade Union Committee, the course followed in the Chinese Revolution and the economic policy in the USSR connected with the theory of Socialism in a Single Country. The question of the internal regime in the party, on the contrary, was not included as an effective criterion:

"Some comrades may be astonished that I omit reference here to the question of the party regime. I do so not out of oversight, but deliberately. A party regime has no independent, self-sufficient meaning. In relation to party policy it is a derivative magnitude. The most heterogeneous elements sympathise with the struggle against Stalinist bureaucracy. The Mensheviks, too, are not averse to applauding this or that attack by us against the bureaucracy".(3)

Here too, the essential concern is to avoid confusion and especially to avoid offering an opening for any and every amalgam, that is, for simple confusion.

In Trotsky's opinion, the positions of the groups or militants on the policy of the Anglo-Russian Trade Union Committee constituted the ideal test for political opportunism. On May 14, 1924 a delegation from the Soviet Trade Unions and the Trades Union Congress formed, on a basis of parity, the Anglo-Russian Trade Union Committee, which set itself the task of struggling for international trade union unity, against the danger of war and of reaction. The serious demoralisation of the British working class and left the Communist Party exhausted. The Left Opposition campaigned for the committee to be wound up: Trotsky wrote that it "had become a reactionary obstacle, a chain on the feet of the working class" (4): the leaders of the T.U.C. had to be deprived of any possibility of using their connections with the Russian trade union and in this way with the Russian working class, in order to carry on their treacherous policy with the implicit support and the moral authority of the Soviet Union. However, the Russian union leaders did not take the initiative in breaking the committee up; it was the British trade union leaders who put an end to the committee in 1927, in the wake of the termination of diplomatic relations with the U.S.S.R. on which the Conservative government in Britain decided.

Trotsky believed that here we had to deal with a fundamental problem of Stalin's policy: "a classic example of the policy of centrism sliding to the right, holding the stirrups for outright betrayers and receiving only kicks and blows in return" (5). Since the balance-sheet of the Committee revealed the deep retreat of the British workers' movement, Trotsky warned:

"Whoever has still failed to understand this is not a Marxist, not a revolutionary politician of the proletariat. The protests of such an individual against Stalinist bureaucratism are of no value in my eyes. The opportunist course of the Anglo-Russian Committee could be carried out only in struggle against the genuine revolutionary elements of the working class." (6)

This political problem, which became one of the criteria for differentiation, was not urgent in 1929. But the attitudes which were adopted at the time were still valid and some of them carried the germs of future splits: thus, while the Left Opposition condemned the opportunistic policy of Stalin in this affair, Souvarin regarded the affair in 1927 as "purely a matter of tactics" (7). This was the beginning of a slow but inexorable political separation between him and Trotsky. Finally, "La Revolution Proletarienne" was alone in coming out against the split and the dissolution of the Anglo-Russian Trade Union Committee.

The Chinese question was still more delicate, because it called for a good knowledge of the events of the Revolution of 1925 - 27, which was not always to be found in the ranks of the Opposition.

The Chinese question was not a burning one in 1929, any more than the Anglo-Russian Trade Union Committee. Above all it had been a test, and important indicator, because the Communist International and its advisers in China had played an important role in it as direct supporters of the Kremlin, from where Stalin tried to pull the strings of a revolution which in this way he had led to tragedy. The arguments of the Left Opposition about the Chinese Revolution were hardly known outside a small group of initiates, because its conclusions had not been able to be published immediately, and nothing illustrates better than this question the link between the development of the revolutionary movement in the world and the firmness of the positions of the Opposition and the fact that Stalin, on the contrary, was strengthened by disasters.

In fact between 1925 and 1927 the Stalinists and Stalin's emissaries had dug the grave of the revolution. At the time when the workers' movement developed its gigantic class actions like the Canton - Hong Kong General Strike and fed the peasant agitation, the Chinese Communist Party demanded the right to leave the Kuo Min Tang, the nationalist organisation which had entered in 1922, and to recover its independence, in order to lead the struggle of the masses of workers and peasants against the head of the Kuo Min Tang Government, Ch'iang Kai-Shek, henceforth an ally of imperialism. But Stalin and Bukharin conferred on the Kuo Min Tang the title of a "sympathising organisation" and on Ch'iang himself that of honorary member of the Executive of the International. They opposed the exit of the Communists and recommended that they should not engage in class combats against the Kuo Min Tang and should remain in the peasant movements. When Ch'iang Kai-Shek massacred the Communists and beheaded the proletariat of Shanghai, Stalin, who the day before had described him as a "reliable ally" transferred his allegiance, on the same political basis, to the government of Wuhan, led by Wang Chin-Wei, Ch'iang's rival. The two principals made up their differences and outlawed the Communist Party and the trade unions. At the end of 1927, with the revolution in full retreat, the Communist Party launched its suicidal "Canton Commune", resurrecting in a heroic press statement the word Soviets, which it had hitherto banned. There were five thousand seven hundred dead and thousands of Communists hunted down, killed in battle or executed. (8) Stalin declared that "the events have fully and entirely proved the correctness of the line"

Trotsky intervened several times in the different responsible bodies, before his exclusion, to defend the viewpoint of the Left Opposition, on the basis of the compromise agreed between Zinoviev and himself. We have seen that on March 31, 1927, he demanded, in a letter to the Central Committee, why the Communist International and the Chinese Communist Party was not issuing the slogans of Soviets and of agrarian revolution. He warned against the possibility of a coup d'etat by Ch'iang Kai-Shek which this passivity was making possible. The tragic events in Shanghai unhappily proved him right, but, trapped in the framework of the fraction which it formed in the party, the Russian Opposition could not express its positions in public. When Trotsky was being expelled from the USSR, China was undergoing the white or blue terr

of Ch'iang Kai-Shek and organised hunting-down and betrayal. The Communist Party was bled to death in the cities and discredited in some provinces, and re-formed itself only little by little. Stalin's men made its General Secretary, Chen Duxium, the scapegoat for the defeat, severely purged the Chinese party and prepared to lead it briskly to slaughter in the name of the new policy.

For the International Opposition, the time was one for drawing a balance-sheet and lessons, before making new solid connections, as Trotsky wrote:

"The study of the problems of the Chinese Revolution is a necessary condition for the education of the Opposition and the ideological demarcation within its ranks. Those elements who have failed to take a clear and precise position on this question reveal thereby a national narrowness which is in itself an un-mistakeable symptom of opportunism." (9)

There too the question was to drive out opportunism. The International Opposition had to be tested by the standard of its... internationalism and its capacity to intervene in the ever increasing percussion of which on international politics were of very great importance. It is sufficient, for example, to recall how attentively Lenin followed the evolution of the world of the East and particularly of China, as well as the interests of the Western imperialists in this part of the world.

The third criterion was that of economic policy in the USSR in relation to the theory of Socialism in a Single Country. Trotsky began by defining the forces involved:

"Because of the conditions created by the October Revolution, the three classic tendencies in Socialism - 1) the Marxist tendency; 2) the centrist tendency and 3) the opportunist tendency - are the most clearly and precisely expressed under the Soviet conditions, i.e. filled with the most incontestable social content. In the USSR we see a right wing which is tied up with the skilled intelligentsia and the petty proprietors; the centre which balances itself between the classes on the tightrope of the apparatus, and the left wing, which represents the vanguard of the proletarian vanguard in the epoch of reaction." (10)

Criticism must have a clear class basis and must rest on one of these three historic tendencies. That of Brandler identifies itself in reality with the right wing and approves their policy through the years 1924 - 1927, right up to the brutal turn to the left. It expresses the pressure of the petty bourgeoisie of the countryside and, ultimately, those forces which hope for the restoration of capitalism. Trotsky shows how a purely economist line of criticism leaves the field clear for Stalin and re-inforces the idea of "Socialism in a Single Country":

"The truth is that in executing a leap to the left, Stalin made use of slivers of the Opposition's programme. The platform of the Opposition excludes first of all the course towards a shut-in, isolated economy. It is absurd to try to separate the Soviet economy from the world market by a brick wall... All the economic plans of the Stalinist leadership have been up to now built on the reduction of foreign trade in the course of the next five to ten years... The Opposition has nothing in common with such an approach. But this approach does flow from the theory of socialism in one country." (11)

In the criteria which Trotsky proposed to differentiate the "Bolshevik-Leninist" tendency, then, he took the question up on the level which was already his own in the Soviet Union, that of locating all the tactical problems in a national framework within a world strategy. Insufficient differentiation from the Brandler-ites could lead to disaster in Germany or in Czechoslovakia, just as much as confusion in the USSR with the policy imposed by the apparatus "centrists". He sums up the problems:

"Such are the three basic criteria for the internal demarcation of the Opposition. These three criteria are taken from the living experience of three countries. Naturally, each of the backward countries has its own peculiar problems and the attitude towards them will determine the position of every single group and every individual Communist. Some of the new questions can tomorrow come to the forefront and push all others aside. But today the three cited questions seem to me to be decisive." (12)

Towards the International Opposition: Clarification and the Means to reach it.

It was in another article, published in Contre le Courant and entitled "The Tasks of the Oppo

ition", that Trotsky tackles the means necessary for delimitation. He condemns any bloc with the Right Opposition, stressing that "under the name of Opposition, people habitually bring together two currents which are essentially irreconcilable; the revolutionary current and the opportunist current (13), the only common feature of which is hostility to "centrism" and to the party regime. But the fact that a bloc with the Right is impossible should not lead to regarding the tendencies in Communism as "finished and petrified". Trotsky takes up the idea and the formulation of Solntsev:

"Political groupings do not arise at a single stroke. In the early stages there are always many misunderstandings. Workers who are dissatisfied with the policy of the party quite often find doors very different from those they looked for. This must be especially borne in mind with regard to Czechoslovakia, where the Communist Party is passing through a very acute crisis." (14)

The Opposition was not free from mis-understandings in its own ranks, and the existence in countries of two or three groups in solidarity with the Russian Opposition is one of the signs of this. To get away from this fragmentation, Trotsky proposed to proceed as followed:

"The unity of the Opposition cannot be obtained by abstract sermons on unity or by mere organisational combinations. Unity must be prepared theoretically and politically. This preparation must make clear which groups and elements really stand on common ground and those which list themselves among the Opposition only out of mis-understanding." (15)

The instrument by which to measure them must be the national platform of the groups. This platform must reflect the struggle of the groups:

"In fact, unless the Opposition constantly intervenes in the life of the proletariat and the life of the country, it was inescapably remain a barren sect." (16)

It is necessary to work out an international platform for the Opposition, at the same time the national platforms. This "... will serve as a bridge to the future programme of the Communist International".

The instrument for working out this international platform for the Opposition must be an international publication, monthly and later twice monthly:

"Such a periodical, under a firm and unswervingly principled editorial board should be in the beginning open to all groups which consider themselves in the Left Opposition or which are trying to draw close to it. The task of this periodical is not to strengthen old barriers but to expedite a regroupment of forces on a much broader basis. If the fragmentation within the Left Opposition cannot as yet be overcome within the national framework, then we can already today prepare to overcome it on an international plane."

This organ of the international Opposition will also be the political instrument for clarifying the ideas and the problems of the different groups of the Opposition:

"Given a clear and precise line by the editorial board, such a periodical should also have a department devoted to free discussion. In particular the organ must exercise international control over differences of opinion among the various national groups of the Left Opposition. Such careful and conscientious control will enable us to separate actual disagreements from fictitious ones, and to unite the revolutionary Marxists, sifting the alien elements." (18)

The idea of locating it in the national framework is the same - approximately - as we find from the pen of the former anarchist, Victor Serge, in a letter which came out of the USSR:

"I have read a few issues of the Brussels 'Communiste'. I found it very local, provincial... I have also read several issues of "C(ontre) le C(ourant)", which are full of interesting things but have no present-day relevance or relation to French working-class life too much the other way... I think that it is absolutely necessary in France that the Oppositional movement comes **out of the period of** little gatherings and begins to talk to the worker in the street. I see no other possibility than by the creation of a wide-circulation weekly (non-party workers) with the object of gathering, for the present, without distinction all the Communist tendencies driven out of the party. A wide Communist free tribune. In the first phase of Communist regroupment, we should not, in my opinion, feed a certain Communist confusionism (no other). The platforms will define themselves later in action. We should establish ourselves first." (19)

Trotsky dealt with the final organisational aspect of the clarification in the ranks of the

International Opposition, namely, the organisation of a leadership:

"Some comrades say and write that the Russian Opposition is doing too little in the way of the organisational leadership of the international Left Opposition. I believe that behind this reproach there lurks a dangerous tendency. We are not preparing to reproduce in our international faction the morals and methods of the Zinovievist and Stalinist Communist Internationals. Revolutionary cadres in each country must take shape on the basis of their own experiences and they must stand on their own feet. The Russian Opposition has at its disposal - today one might say almost that this is fortunate - neither instruments of state repression nor governmental financial resources. It is solely and exclusively a question of ideological influence, interchange of experiences. Given a correct international leadership of the faction, this can naturally lead to a rapid growth of the Opposition in each country." (20)

These experiences of the different national sections can come only from tireless work directed towards members of the party, of the workers' movement and of the youth. In this work the Russian Opposition can give no help except through its role as an example. In any case the road towards the International Opposition from that point onwards is marked out on the line of the policy of being a fraction, that is, of wanting to win the proletarian nucleus of the Communist Parties, but likewise, in certain cases, of the Socialist parties.

The Left Opposition in fact regarded itself as a fraction of the Communist International and each national group as a fraction of the Communist Party. But the problem arises of the countries where the Communist Party has an existence reduced to its simplest expression, not having succeeded in winning the proletarian nucleus which gathers round the Social-Democratic "Bolshevised" and purged of oppositionists, these Stalinised Communist Parties were nothing but skeletons, carried at arms length by Moscow. Can the Left Opposition set itself the aim of reviving these empty shells? The concrete case of Belgium, but also that of USA, called for an answer to this question, which conditioned the entire strategy of the Opposition groups in the country and, notably, the problem of standing candidates against those of the Communist Party (the official one) in elections.

On April 30, Trotsky wrote to van Overstraeten, the leader of the Belgian Opposition:

"... You are going to participate in elections, independently, counter-posing your line to that of the Communist Party. Some of our friends are very anxious about this. For my part, I do not see it as a point of principle. If we are completely feeble, that is to say, if we are only a propaganda grouping, working on an individual basis, and if we want to make an impression on the masses during the elections, we can easily produce the opposite result, that is to say, antagonise the masses and even provoke disgust for this pretentious but powerless group. In such cases, it is always preferable and even necessary to support the official candidates of the party, formulating exactly our criticisms and our reservations about parliamentary and municipal activity, to remind the electors of our reservations at the right moment.

But if we are strong enough, we should present ourselves independently and with success. It would be abstentionist doctrinaire-ism not to do so. During the struggle, we must throw the responsibility for the split on the official leaders.

We must and we can, even from the tribune of Parliament, propose Communist unity on the basis of Marx and Lenin. The fact that you are going to participate in elections, independently, is for me a sign that you feel yourselves strong enough to do so in comparison with the official Communists". (21)

In this way, his argument replies in part to the criticism of Solntsev, who criticised Trotsky for "bending the stick" in the other direction, after the electoral defeats of the German League and of the Leninbund in 1928.

Trotsky made this analysis even more precise some months later, in a letter to the Leninbund in which he condemned a tendency towards the "second party":

"In Belgium and in USA, where the official Communist Party is very weak and the Opposition is relatively strong, the organisations of the Opposition can have a policy totally independent of the official party, that is, can appeal to the masses over the heads of the official party each time that is practicable. In Germany it is quite a different matter as also largely in France. In these countries there is a very different relation of forces. The Opposition is numbered in hundreds or in thousands, and the official parti-

Opposition.

The "Redressement Communiste" group shared Souvarin's hostility to Paz. Treint accused Paz of trying to isolate him from Trotsky; he declared that the unification of what he regarded as the only two groups of the Opposition (the Paz group and his own) "... can take place only in clarity" (26), and denounces in long letters the "slanders and lies" of Paz against his group and himself. Treint and Souvarin had another point in common: their hostility to Solomon Kharin, who, they thought, was too close to "Contre le Courant". Souvarin refused to have anything to do with Joseph, because, he said, "this en-Kharined bloc said nothing worth while to us" (27). No doubt we must see in that the hostility of Souvarin to Russian militants abroad... In return, it was Joseph who refused the collaboration which Treint demanded in a menacing tone, provoking strong anger in the latter, who regarded this refusal as implicit support for "Contre le Courant". Trotsky sharply disapproved of the attitude of Treint

"I greatly regret the tone of your letter to comrade Joseph. Threats are normal enough in the USSR, where one can use state repression, and, consequently, in the Communist International: but we in the Opposition must refrain from threats, especially in order to obtain collaboration, because our collective work cannot be organized without the goodwill of everyone." (28)

This skirmish has a strong, musty smell of a group fight, which, according to the letters which passed between Treint and Trotsky, was started by the former. But in any case the silent and indeed, contemptuous attitude of the Paz group did not deceive Trotsky: hostility to Treint was very wide-spread and notorious in the French Opposition - especially on the part of Alfred and Marguerite Rosmer - who still resented the "Bolshevisation" for which Treint had been responsible. Trotsky himself appreciated Treint's un-deniable dynamism and his political link with the life and struggle of the working class - and this could form a reply to what Souvarin said about "people without future". He knew the role which Treint had played, but he analyzed his real evolution better than the French Oppositionists did.

The tone was to change and quickly became sharper. After the publication of the "Groupings in the Communist Opposition", Treint believed that he had been justified in his struggle against the Paz group. He quoted the three criteria, and added three more to them - "no bloc or compromise with the politics of the right", "the internal regime in the party resulting from the pressure of the class enemy on the party" and "expressing the policy of the Opposition in a national platform which guides the immediate struggle in the French section", and declared

"We have fully satisfied all these criteria since we began the oppositional struggle. 'Contre le Courant' has had towards these criteria an attitude which is inadequate, confused and false. Yet in your writings about the various oppositional groupings you write as if 'Contre le Courant' were the group which we should all join and as if 'Redressement Communiste' were the group which should join it. This reversal of roles creates an equivocal situation which is prejudicial to the development of the Opposition." (29)

Treint declares that he completely agrees with these criteria, and writes that his group has already posed them several times. Moreover he has already announced that the platform of his group is to be published, and sends to Trotsky a document which is "... a historical account of the attitudes of the two groups compared" (30) of Paz and Treint. This text is entitled "The Opposition in France: Its History and Perspectives. Criteria for evaluating the group." It was written by Jean Chernobelsky, who was known in the Jewish Group as Jean-Jacques, and who successively joined "Unite Leniniste" and "Redressement Communiste" after being excluded from the Communist Party. He re-traced in his own way the oppositional struggle of the Paz and Treint-Girault groups and then of the Treint group, and then launched into a vigorous attack on the errors of the Paz group, stressing that the positions which it had taken on burning political problems, (such as strikes, the arrest of a party congress at Clichy) had been weak or non-existent. He accused "Contre le Courant" of opportunism and failing to distinguish between the left (the Treint group) and the right (the Souvarin group) on the question of the attempt to unify the French Opposition which was launched by the Paz group in 1928 and opened to all the groups which claimed to stand for the Left Opposition.

The object of this text by Jean-Jacques was to clear up "the confusion which comrade Trotsky un-intentionally created". Comrade Trotsky should cease to support the "Contre le Courant" group and should pronounce in favour of the "Redressement Communiste" group. Jean-Jacques concluded as follows:

"... now that comrade Trotsky has posed the question of an international oppositional

in hundreds of thousands. This must be kept in mind, when we work out our policy." (22)

The task of the Oppositions in Belgium and in USA, therefore, is the struggle to win the proletarian vanguard, which is re-grouped, not in the Communist Parties, but in the Social-Democracy. This implies more important responsibilities for the groups of the Opposition, in particular in relation to their organisation and their press, but also from the viewpoint of the links to be woven with the working class. These Communist parties, from their side even though numerically feeble, disposed of all the power, especially the financial power, the Communist International and continued to be a serious obstacle for the Opposition.

The two articles by Trotsky, devoted to the three criteria for delimiting and constructing the Opposition had little echo among the groups of the Opposition. In a letter to Trotsky Rosmer advanced a convincing explanation for this surprising silence:

"Your exile brought all the groups of the Opposition out of their lethargy, which was more or less pronounced, and all, or nearly all, present themselves as the real defenders of your ideas as against the others. Even Souvarin, who came to see me... before the publication of the last number of his Bulletin. When I strongly criticised him for his attitude - which is inconsistent at the very least - he told me that he was absolutely convinced that he was in full agreement with you, with you personally, but not with the other comrades of the Opposition." (23)

Rosmer's phrase, "even Souvarine", tells us a lot about the "legitimet" reflex of all the groups at the moment when Trotsky's articles were published. They all had the feeling, which sometimes was justified, that they un-reservedly matched up to Trotsky's definition, fulfilled the three "conditions" and met the three criteria. For example, this was the case with the Leninbund, the Zinovievist past of the leaders of which did not prevent it from being a full member of the international Opposition and in political agreement with Trotsky on the fundamental questions. But silence on the tasks of the Opposition, on the necessity for national and international platforms, of an international periodical, said enough about the conservatism of the groups and their pre-occupation with being recognised by Trotsky as representatives of the Opposition. None the less, some oppositionists were to break silence.

Souvarin, who was made anxious by the announcement of an article by Trotsky on the groups of the Opposition in France, was to react slowly:

"We all here have fully appreciated the high level of your opinions, the tact and the reserve of your letter of March 31. (On our side) we expected nothing less from you. I did not refer to the letter when I wrote to you, because I was ignorant of the text. I have in no way 'criticised' you for pronouncing on the three problems which you have at heart... In general, I have not 'criticised' you for anything... What has surprised me is that you could place the slightest reliance on people who are completely devoid of ideas and good only for repeating your formulae and appreciations without understanding them, and contenting themselves moreover with trying to impose themselves by wretched means. This was the method of Zinoviev, it is the method of Stalin. I repeat, coming from you, it surprises me." (24)

For Souvarin, the problem was one rather of men, of character and of breadth of mind than of criteria:

"So, you may well lend a little artificial life to people who do not exist without you: you will not give them a reason for existing. As to the men and the groups which have a reason for existing, they will live, grow and ripen even if they are wrong about the Anglo-Russian Trade Union Committee, the Kuo Min Tang and the Kulak - which I do not believe is established, but makes no difference in these discussions. Your conception of the utilisation of people is abstract. It is to that that I draw your attention." (25)

Hostility to Paz and to the "Contre le Courant" Group thus becomes a re-condition, a new criterion of delimitation of the Opposition in France. But a new argument appears: it is Trotsky who "pulls the strings" and supports groups which have no future. But that was not Trotsky's position, when he saw in "Contre le Courant" the possible base for the French weekly, because the re-groupment had to take place, not around the Paz group, but on the basis of the platform. Souvarin, for his part, never mentions this. He seems in fact to be pre-occupied with problems of historic analysis of the struggle of the Opposition and its mistakes, in other words with a political-historical reflection which diverts his attention from the struggle of the

journal, we believe that, for France, a good, truly Bolshevik-Leninist, leadership can be ensured by the 'Redressement Communiste' Group and the 'Contre le Courant' Group, of course after the latter has cleared away the equivocation from its policies and has finally laid down what its policy on French and international questions is." (31)

Trotsky's reply to what was a real indictment is filled with his concern to continue collaboration with Treint, even if the other oppositionists do not agree with him. In return, Trotsky stresses Treint's past^{or} errors and notes that the list is longer than his work in the Opposition and that his way of approaching the other groups is not such as to win their confidence. The same applies to his ~~his~~ behaviour towards Kharin. Trotsky desires "... a collaboration between all the living elements in the Communist Opposition, including most of the elements in 'Revolution Proletarienne'" and declares that he is ready to help Treint and his group if they undertake collaboration, without exclusions or pre-conditions aimed at anyone. In fact, this reaction on the part of Treint to the three criteria marginalised him in the opposition and definitely weakened his role.

FOOTNOTES

- (1) M. Paz: "Four Days with Trotsky", in Contre le Courant, No. 25 - 26, March 2 1929, pp 1 - 2.
- (2) Trotsky: "Groupings in the Communist Opposition", in "Writings: 1929", dated March 22, 1929.
- (3) Ibid.
- (4) Trotsky: "The Third International After Lenin", Pioneer Publ. 1936, p. 130
- (5) Trotsky: "Groupings in the Communist Opposition", op. cit.
- (6) Ibid.
- (7) See the article by Souvarin, entitled, "The Black October", in Bulletin Communiste, No. 22 - 23.
- (8) Quoted in H. R. Isaacs, "The Tragedy of the Chinese Revolution", Second Revised Edition, Stanford University Press 1961, p. 292.
- (9) Trotsky: "Groupings in the Communist Opposition", op. cit.
- (10) Ibid.
- (11) Ibid.
- (12) Ibid.
- (13) G. Gourov (Trotsky): "The Tasks of the Opposition", first published in Contre le Courant, No. 29, May 6, 1929. English-language text in "Writings 1929", p. 86ff.
- (14) Ibid.
- (15) Ibid.
- (16) Ibid.
- (17) Ibid.
- (18) Ibid.
- (19) Letter of Victor Serge, April 1929, A.H. 3776.

- (20) Gourov: "Tasks of the Opposition", op. cit.
- (21) Letter of Trotsky to van Overstraeten, April 30, 1929, A.H. 10708.
- (22) Letter of Trotsky to Leninbund, September 19, 1929, A.H. 7911.
- (23) Letter of Rosmer to Trotsky, in Broue, "Correspondence Trotsky - Alfred & Marguerite Rosmer", Paris, Gallimard, 1982, pp. 17 - 20.
- (24) Letter of Souvarin to Trotsky, May 3, 1929, A.H. 5331.
- (25) Ibid.
- (26) Letter of Treint to Trotsky, Mar 25, 1929, A.H. 5522.
- (27) According to Broue, "A Capitulator in Paris: The Kharin Affair", in "Cahiers Leon Trotsky", No. 7 - 8, op. cit., p. 29, note 1.
- (28) Letter of Trotsky to Treint, April 20, 1929, A.H. 9159.
- (29) Letter of Treint to Trotsky, April 30, 1929, A.H. 5527.
- (30) Ibid.
- (31) J. Chernobelsky, "The Opposition in France: History and Perspectives: Criteria for the Appreciation of the Groups", May 15, 1929, A.H. 2072.
- (32) Letter of Trotsky to Treint, May 23, 1929, A.H. 10582.

C H A P T E R F O U R

Trotsky Against the Ultra-Lefts

In the month of June 1929, Trotsky decided to take the opportunities which the presence at Prinkipo of militants from different countries provided and to act in direct continuation of his article "Towards the International Opposition". For two months he waited for reaction to the clarification of the militants and groups of the Opposition and for construction at the international level to begin. Nothing, or practically nothing, happened. Then, at the beginning of June, the presence at Prinkipo all at the same time of Alfred Rosmer, who had come to discuss launching the French weekly, of the secretaries, Jakob Frank, a member of one of the Austrian groups and Wolfgang Salus, who had come on his own account, and, finally, of the Chinese Liu Renjing who spent a few days while passing through, enabled several important projects to get under way.

This "little private gathering", as Trotsky called it, took several initiatives: the discussion of theses on the Chinese question and the tasks of the Chinese Bolshevik-Leninists, a document drafted by Trotsky for Liu, who was to take it back to China (1). This draft was later sent to all the opposition groups and published in the Bulletin of the Opposition. This was a significant step forward of the International Opposition, one more element justifying its rapid construction.

On June 6, Alfred Rosmer drafted a document addressed to the whole International Opposition in which he announced that an international "Opposition" group had been formed, commanding at that time money from the authors' rights in a series of articles which had appeared in the bourgeois press:

"This fund will essentially provide for publications of an international character, reviews, etc. It can be used, in exceptional circumstances: 1) for publications which are both of a national and an international character: 2) as temporary assistance for national publications.

These various publications will have to be carried through as quickly as possible, and it is desirable that from today we should aim at setting up a publishing establishment." (2)

As to the French weekly in preparation, the necessity for proper financing was laid down: help might be given, but on the condition that it would later be repaid, so that other groups and publications could resolve their temporary difficulties.

On June 10, four days after Rosmer's initiative, Liu Renjing and Wolfgang Salus announced that a provisional international Committee of the Communist Left Opposition had been created. Their short statement showed that this was to be only a first stage, a first declaration, intended to be taken over by other militants and groups of the Opposition:

"The 10th anniversary of the Communist International has revealed an International in complete decline: its leadership is incapable of fulfilling its task, its sections ceaselessly grow weaker and weaker... In the face of this danger, which will grow... Communist groups in various countries, meeting on June 10, 1929, decided to form a provisional international Committee of the Communist Left Opposition.

This Committee takes upon itself as its principal aim that of gathering together the oppositional Communist forces in every country, on the basis of the programme drafted by the Communist Opposition in the Russian Communist Party. It accepts as its own the methods and conceptions worked out by the first four Congresses of the Communist International. It will defend them at the same time as it denounces the disastrous mistakes and the new practices which characterise the Fifth and Sixth Congresses. It proposes to publish an international review in several languages, to hasten the re-groupment of the Communist workers by the study and discussion of the problems which are posed to the working class in each country".(3)

The document announcing the formation of this provisional Committee was signed only by Liu Renjing and Wolfgang Salus, because Alfred Rosmer and Jakob Frank could not commit their groups without giving rise to very useless rivalries in their countries. However, the signature of Liu had great political significance; a militant of the Chinese Opposition appealed to the International Opposition to organise itself. The almost paradoxical aspect of this appeal, launched by the distant

Chinese Opposition, could only stir up the Oppositionists in other countries and lead to a certain rivalry, a dynamic to centralise the groups on the international plane. Salus represented an opposition which had many contacts in Germany and which was destined to play no negligible role in the international Opposition.

Trotsky signed none of these documents. However, he was the driving force behind all these initiatives. The centralisation of the Opposition called for cadres, and Trotsky's task was to form them, to help them but in no case to substitute for them. The battle was joined at the initiatives taken. What remained was realising these projects. Trotsky was not unaware that the difficulties were serious and that the provisional committee had to be widened to include the absent groups. Launching the international review implied heavy tasks and wide collaboration. He harnessed himself to these tasks and Rosmer was to be of decisive help to him.

On June 15 Trotsky occupied himself with disposing of two burdens: the question of the collaboration of the Leninbund in the "Opposition" review, and that of the various Austrian groups.

"The question of the publication of an international review of the Opposition is already settled with certain national sections of the Opposition. It is absolutely clear that the Leninbund cannot remain outside this affair. It is totally impossible to reject or again the appearance of the international review. That is why the arrival of a representative of the Leninbund, armed with sufficient powers to participate in decision-making in this field, is greatly to be desired." (4)

The new criteria

At the moment when Trotsky, Rosmer, Salus and Liu Renjing were launching their initiatives to take decisive steps on the way to the construction of the international Opposition and of the clarification of its ranks, two political questions took the front of the stage: the August 1st activities organised by the Communist International and the conflict between the Soviets and China on the subject of the railway in Manchuria.

The "Red Day of the Communist International", August 1st 1929, was proclaimed by the Western European Bureau of the Communist International in Berlin on May 8, 1929, as an international day for the conquest of the streets by the workers. This demonstration was to be a reply to the bloody events of May 1, 1929 in Berlin (27 dead, hundreds wounded and the prohibition of Rote Fahne (Red Flag), the organ of the KPD, as well as the Red Front, its armed defence force).

This grave set-back on May 1st in Germany was due to the ultra-left policy of the Communist Party. The Leninbund had criticised the sectarian way in which this demonstration was prepared, but had called on the workers to demonstrate; then it had accused the Social-Democrats of being responsible for what happened, covering up in this way the adventuristic policy of the KPD. In the face of the danger that such events would happen again, Trotsky had written on June 26 an article entitled, "What will the First of August Bring?". This article was sent to all the groups under the signature of the editorial committee of the forthcoming review, "Opposition". It was one element more in the arrangements for launching this review. Trotsky analysed the situation country by country in relation to the results of May 1st, and emphasised how deeply the Communist Parties in Britain (Anglo-Russian Committee), in China (policy of the Communist International) and in Czechoslovakia had lost ground, and wrote about France:

"When the Central Committee of the French Communist Party promises that on the first of August proletarian battalions will march in Shanghai as in Paris, their prediction can only be classed as cheap rhetoric. Alas, everything points to the fact that the battalions will not march either in Shanghai or in Paris. The French Communist Party, like in the pale shadow the Unitary General Confederation of Labour, has by no means increased its influence in recent years. There is not the slightest hope that the first of August will prove any more revolutionary in France than the first of May." (5)

In this context, the slogans advanced by the Communist International have no relation to the current situation: "Into the streets, Proletarians!", "Down with Imperialist War!", but especially "Learn from the military and technical experience of the struggle of the Berlin proletariat!" and "Learn the methods of fighting of the police!" Trotsky judges the call of the Communist International to be "pitiful" and writes indignantly:

"... this brainless leadership, armed with the about-cited ideas and slogans, warns the bourgeoisie of all Europe that it intends, on the first of August, to lead the workers into the streets 'fully armed with military-technical methods'. Could it be possible to play more shamelessly with the lives of the proletarian vanguard and the honour of the Comintern than these contemptible epigones headed by Stalin are playing?" (6)

In Trotsky's opinion at that moment the demonstration had to be called off. That would do the prestige of the Communist International no good, but it would avoid fresh murderous confrontations, without effect on the broad working class, from which, Trotsky points out, the Opposition will not let itself be isolated, by participating in its activities. The Opposition should throw all its forces into this battle.

However, this did not happen. In France, Treint and "Redressement Communiste", Paz and "Contre le Courant", Naville and, finally, "La Revolution Proletarienne", all of which had been sounded out to sign the appeal of the Opposition, refused for various reasons. The appeal was published under the signature of the editorial committee of "Opposition" alone. This was a serious set-back and a threat to the initiatives which were being taken at Prinsip. Naville disagreed with the analysis of the situation in Germany. Traënt and Paz disagreed on the attitude to adopt. They agreed with Urbahns that the Opposition must not content itself with criticising. Treint added that it should "... make use of August 1st to make the problem of war completely clear" and that "the Committee of 'Redressement Communiste' calls on revolutionary workers to limit the damage as much as possible by participating in the Day of Activity on August 1st to the limit of their resources..." (7) "Contre le Courant" criticised the bad preparation for the Day of Activity and denounces the demagoguery of the Communist Party, while it welcomed the fact that the rank and file of the party was preparing the day of struggle against war and was in this way rejecting the adventurist policy of the leadership.

The Molinier brothers, they too, were reserved about the conclusion of the document in "Opposition". Henri wrote as follows:

"Some people are going to make use of this statement to represent the Oppositionists as disrupters of the revolutionary movement, in the eyes of the sympathisers and revolutionary youth who look towards us inside or outside the party". (8)

He said that he was opposed to the statement being distributed, unless it was completed with a passage about what the Opposition thought should be done. As for Raymond, he wrote to Trotsky on July 9:

"If we are all agreed in approving the slogan 'No August 1st' as necessary as a party slogan and a trade union slogan, to which we could have added a less general complement 'no strikes called from above', 'consult the rank and file of the party and the unions we would have liked someone to say what we want to be actively done, 'partial strikes' 'street demonstrations from time to time'. On this point we are absolutely opposed to a slogan of abstention. When I say 'we', I express the opinion of some ten comrades, five of whom are still in the Party and are fighting alongside the Opposition." (9)

We find the same position in a letter which a group of party militants wrote to the Politburo of the French Communist Party:

"Conscious of the new dangers which the tactic of the Communist International makes the international revolutionary movement run, we shall fight with all our strength in our organisations against your slogans. If, despite our efforts and thanks to your 'method' you place us once again in front of an accomplished fact in the form of slogans which risk exposing to the repression by the employers and the government of the most combative part of the proletariat of this country, we shall carry out our duty of proletarian solidarity and shall be there, where you, functionaries and bureaucrats, will not be, that is, by the side of the revolutionary workers who follow your slogans." (10)

Trotsky replied on July 14 to Raymond Molinier, in order to put a stop to a significant mis-

understanding about the strategy of the Opposition:

"I am greatly distressed by your last letter, in which you attribute to us the desire to call upon people to stay at home on August 1st. We have spoken about this question at length and we have agreed that every Oppositional Communist must take part in the activity of the masses and even of a party of the masses. The call about August 1st. does not contradict this advice in any way. The last sentence is the algebraic form of this advice." (11)

Trotsky explains the closing sentence of the appeal about August 1st, on behalf of the whole Opposition:

"It is necessary to begin by cancelling the demonstration of August 1st. in the form in which it was announced... Obviously this could not mean that we are against mass demonstrations against war in the day of action on August 1st, organised in forms which are consistent with the situation. But we have to call things by their names. We have to give the proletariat a correct orientation and not play with it." (12)

In order to be certain of being understood, Trotsky wrote a new article, dated July 27, entitled "Necessary Clarifications concerning the First of August":

"The last lines of the letter state - as something taken for granted - that the Opposition will never let itself be separated from the working class as a whole, or from its vanguard in particular. For any thoughtful political person, this means that if the first of August demonstration is not called off, if it takes place in the form projected by the Comintern - which we consider incorrect - in that case we would participate and share responsibility with the proletarian vanguard.... Why, then, do we not say so openly? Because, when you are calling for the cancellation of demonstrations of a particular kind, there is no point in explaining at length that you are willing to take part if they should be held at all." (13)

In these conditions, the fears which the oppositionists expressed appear as a kind of self-criticism of their own activity, too cut off from the masses. We note an important difference between the attention which Trotsky paid to this problem and that paid by the oppositionists. In USA, "Militant" published the article from "Opposition" without comment and then drew a quick balance of August 1st. In Germany, the Leninbund appealed to the workers to demonstrate and to organise the anti-war front. "Volkswille" carried on July 31 the headline "Proletarian Revolution against Imperialist war" and, on August 2, "The Masses Against War", as the balance-sheet of the demonstrations. In Austria the Frey group took part in the demonstrations, after having published the appeal under the signature of Trotsky and not that of the editorial committee of "Opposition". Elsewhere, few militants were favourable to the appeal at first. Marguerite Rosmer, Pierre Gourget and his companion, Sarah Menant, formerly a collaborator in "Bulletin Communiste" and in Souvarin's Marx-Lenin Circle, were very isolated on this position in France, while Rosmer was away in Prinkipo. In France the situation changed sharply; the cleavages between the groups deepened as well as within the group which was preparing to launch "La Verite", when three currents opposed each other on the problem of August 1st.

The "Red Day" was a failure. Thirty thousand demonstrators in Berlin, five or six thousand in New York; in France, where the CGTU had between three and four hundred thousand members and "L'Humanite" had two hundred thousand readers, there were less than fifty thousand demonstrators, and the majority of the Central Committee were arrested. The exclusion of many municipal councillors of the Communist Party in Paris, as "right-wingers", wiped out the Party's representation in the government of the city until 1936. For all that, on August 7 and 13, "L'Humanite" did not cease to shout "Victory!".

The Opposition had been cut up into different divergent currents on the attitude to be adopted, but it found itself in agreement about the outcome, that it was a defeat for the Communist International and for the Communist Parties. But no criticism was made of the Opposition. It is one sign, among others, of the trouble which this problem caused, and of which the Opposition would have been glad to be spared. But already another event was concealing the fall-out from August 1st.

The stake in the Sino-Soviet conflict was a railway, which had been built at the end of the 19th century by Tsarist Russia in the Chinese state, leading through Manchuria to Vladivostok to meet the needs of Russian industry. An unequal treaty had enabled Russia to secure its

sovereignty over a strip of territory the whole length of the line. After the October Revolution, the Soviet Government denounced the unequal treaty and declared that it was ready to hand over the railway and these territories to a government which really represented the Chinese people, and not the feudalists who were dividing China between them. A new administrative agreement, in which imperialist rights were given up, while the commercial utilization of the railway remained with the USSR, was signed in 1924 with the head of the Beijing government, Zhang Zuolin.

In July 1929 Ch'iang Kai-Shek seized the railway, after some fighting, and arrested the Soviet functionaries and employees whose job it was to manage the railway. When Trotsky commented on these events, on July 27, he stressed that the Chinese government's aggression due to the strength which it derived from crushing the masses during the revolution, was an adventurist attempt to raise its prestige in the eyes of the British and Japanese imperialists, whom the defeated revolution had fought:

"Must this provocation, which developed out of the defeat of the Chinese revolution, lead to war? I don't think so. Why? Because the Soviet Government does not want war, the Chinese Government is not capable of waging it". (14)

But, if other powers were to come in on the side of Ch'iang, which Trotsky thought unlikely the Opposition would intervene:

"It goes without saying that, in the event that war is imposed on the Soviet people, the Opposition will devote itself fully to the cause of defending the October Revolution." (15)

Trotsky believed that this declaration would be agreed by the whole International Opposition because it was no more than a reminder of elementary principles, but it was contradicted by different groups and journals of the Opposition in several countries. The tone was set by the organ of the Leninbund, "Die Fahne des Kommunismus", number 26 of which carried an article entitled "Hands off Russia! Hands off China!", signed by a militant who had been excluded from the Communist Youth and who was in contact with the leader of the German ultra lefts. This was Heinz Pächter - who signs H.P. He traced the origin of the conflict to the violation by the USSR of the right of China to self-determination. For good measure, the editors of the journal, who did not identify themselves with the views of this article and who published it in order to open a discussion, also published a reply by the Austrian Kurt Landau. Trotsky commented drily:

"The article by H.P. expresses vulgar democratic prejudices, joined to anarchist prejudices. The article by Landau outlines the position of Marxism. But what is the position of the editors themselves?" (16)

This question was to be a decisive issue in the coming period. After Germany, a section of the French Opposition declared that it disagreed with Trotsky. On July 28 the editorial of "Contre le Courant" denounced "the bastardised state apparatus of the USSR, of which Stalin and the embourgeoisified bureaucrats have become the masters...", and declared:

"... the Communist Opposition cannot support, either, Stalin's war, which is not a war to defend the proletariat, but a semi-colonial war, in which the Russian workers have nothing to gain, and in which they have everything to fear. Faced by such a conflict, the Opposition must, none the less, have the courage to say to the working class that it does not have to take the side of the Stalinist bureaucracy and its military adventure." (17)

The editorial concludes:

"AGAINST ALL WARS WHICH DO NOT SERVE THE INTERESTS OF THE PROLETARIAN REVOLUTION, that is the slogan of the Communist Opposition." (18)

Robert Louzon, one of the founders of "Revolution Proletarienne", went still further:

"The Chinese Eastern Railway does little for a Chinese country, inhabited by Chinese: it must be given back to the Chinese." (19)

Sneevliet spoke of "colonial policy" and the Brussels group of the Belgian Opposition of "social-imperialism":

"... what Stalin calls the march of socialism in a single country... is in reality a fall back towards international capitalism." (20)

All these positions have only one point in common. They all attribute to the policy of Stalin the responsibility for what happened, that is to say, they all opposed the policy of Trotsky, which few groups or publications supported. These were Landau, the little group "La Verite" round Rosmer, and, with hesitations and reservations, the "Militant" and the Federation of Charleroi in the Belgian Opposition. Trotsky was led by these declarations to clarify the question, criticising and denouncing the position of Urbahns, Paz and Louzo. He drew a parallel between Louzon and Austrian Social-Democracy, Otto Bauer and the Second International, whose position was "geographical" and of a "social-democratic" nature. As for the editorial in "Contre le Courant", "it is a sorry mess of errors from beginning to end, partly of a social-democratic and partly of an ultra-left character. The editorial begins with the statement that the adventurist policy of the Soviet bureaucracy is responsible for the conflict; in other words, the paper assumes the role of Ch'iang Kai-Shek's attorney." (21) In Trotsky's opinion, the erroneous conceptions which this article defended brought its author into opposition to the entire Left Opposition, in an irreconcilable way.

But Trotsky's concern, in his article "The Sino-Soviet Conflict and the Opposition" of August 4, 1929, was to clarify the discussion, and not, or at any rate not yet, to draw lines of differentiation, of cleavage in the ranks of the Opposition based on the political positions of the groups. For that reason, he wrote about the provocation by Ch'iang and how it worked, and posed the question which seemed to him to be essential to those who were straying:

"Had the revolution of the Chinese workers and peasants been victorious, there would not be any difficulty whatsoever about the Chinese Eastern railroad. The lines would have been turned over to the victorious Chinese people. But the fact of the matter is that the Chinese people were defeated by the ruling Chinese bourgeoisie, with the aid of foreign imperialism. To turn over the railroad to Ch'iang Kai-Shek under such conditions would mean to give aid and comfort to the Chinese Bonapartist counter-revolution against the Chinese people. This itself is decisive." (22)

In reply to Sneevliet, Trotsky wrote:

"To qualify as 'colonial policy' the defence of the Russo-Chinese Treaty of 1924 is, in my opinion a gross mistake, even though we would have to admit that a large part of the journalists of the Opposition have fallen into this mistake. Can we speak of a colonial policy which ignores the reciprocal relations between the classes? How have you failed to notice that, when you characterise it in this way, you fall into complete solidarity with international social-democracy?" (23)

Differentiation

The insistence of the opponents who talked about imperialism and colonial policy was serious. Trotsky went into the question, because he foresaw that the conflict would change its nature.

"Hands Off China!" shout the involuntary defenders of Ch'iang Kai-Shek, repeating not only the slogans but also the basic arguments of the social democrats. Up until now we believed that only the capitalist bourgeoisie as a class could be the representatives of imperialist policy. Is there anything to indicate the contrary? Or has such a class taken power in the USSR? Since when? We are fighting against the centrism of the Stalinist bureaucracy (remember: centrism is a tendency within the working-class itself because centrist policies may help the bourgeoisie to gain power, first the petty and middle bourgeoisie and, eventually, finance-capital. That is the historical danger; but this is a process that is by no means at the point of completion." (24)

This question of Thermidor (Had it or had it not taken place in the USSR?) became progressively the stake in the debate about the Sino-Russian conflict.

On June 13, Trotsky put the question to the national leadership of the Leninbund about the consequences of their position, according to which Thermidor was an accomplished fact:

"If the USSR is a bourgeois state, what is your position then on international questions? How should we act towards the Soviet Union in the event of a conflict between it and a bourgeois state?" (25)

The only response from the Leninbund was to publish the article by Heinz Pachter. From that point, two men were to play a preponderant role: Alfred Rosmer, who went to Austria and Germany on his way back from Prinkipo, and Kurt Landau.

There was a mis-understanding with Josef Frey. He took an unfavourable view of the decisions of the "conference" at Prinkipo in the presence of Jakob Frank, whom he considered incorrectly to have represented the Austrian Opposition, which he refused to do. Frey did not go to see Trotsky (despite the insistence of the latter). He believed himself to be under attack and criticised the "internal regime" of the international Opposition, refusing to take part in the international discussion. The "Mahnruf" group (so-called from the name of their journal "The Alarm Signal"), after having enthroned itself as the only group to represent truly the Russian Opposition, was hostile to any adherence to an international formation, because it had not obtained the label which it wanted, any more than Frey had. Rosmer went to Austria to try to settle these problems and to get out of Frey and the other groups a collaboration between them and the international Opposition. Rosmer wrote to Trotsky about the Frey, Landau and Strasser groups:

"Given the similarity of the situations generally, I think that what we are going to do in France will have great repercussions here, and our example will be very useful. There is no lack of goodwill; what is lacking is the powerful impulse which will shake up the little groups and put an end to a state of affairs which will crystallise more solidly the longer it lasts". (26)

Even though Frey hailed the creation of "Opposition" and declared that he was ready for common work with the other groups, Rosmer showed himself to be sceptical, and, recalling Landau's appreciation of Frey ("the problem with Frey is not so much political as pathological"), concluded:

"I believe that there is a great deal of truth in this appreciation. Frey is a leader but he is a used-up, weary, embittered leader". (27)

Fractional quarrels dominated, and all Trotsky's patience towards Frey was of no avail. Austrian Opposition could not be a centre for the international Opposition. Therefore he had to turn towards Germany, where the perspectives seemed hardly more favourable. Rosmer wrote from Vienna:

"... in the editorship of 'Volkswille' there is a certain number of young Korchists, whom Urbahns is happy to utilise, because they write about questions which he cannot handle himself. This is how the variations of 'Volkswille' are to be explained, and the difficulty which Urbahns has in answering the questions which you put to him." (28)

Rosmer met Urbahns and several leaders of the Leninbund in Berlin. The meeting was difficult and unpleasant for him, and this is explained in the account which he sent to Trotsky:

"Urbahns is not only superficial, a blunderer and a shouter; he completely lacks sincerity while he is amply provided with cunning. I am not surprised that you have not managed to drag precise answers out of him. His principal pre-occupation is always to screen himself... It was completely clear that one thing only pre-occupied him: the review. Would he edit it in Germany?". (29)

Before replying on this point, Rosmer questioned Urbahns about the absence of German visits from Prinkipo, the absence of clear answers to Trotsky's question and the fluctuations in "Volkswille", etc. Faithful to his habits, Urbahns promised answers. But he was awaiting above all Rosmer's answer on the question of the German edition of "Opposition":

"When he learned that the German edition of the review would not be entrusted to him, as a matter of course, he was annoyed, and shouted: 'So they don't trust me! They think I am not a 100% Trotskyist!'. I replied very calmly to him that the hundred percent and all that nonsense came from Zinoviev, that it would indeed have been completely normal to entrust the German edition to him, but on the condition that he was exactly fixed in his position. By concealments, by dodges, he had given the impression that he intended to pursue a personal line and to keep it outside any discussion. On that note our discussion ended". (30)

Rosmer drew up the following list:

"There is Urbahns, who is very dangerous to us and cannot be improved. There is Pfemf who is solidly KPDist. Then there is the little group in Pfalz and some isolated comrades. The editorship of the review in German cannot be entrusted to any of them". (31)

Unable to entrust the German edition either to Austrians or to Germans, Rosmer put the following proposal to Trotsky:

"We would have to do it, provisionally from Paris, in the following way: I am at present fully decided to bring Landau to Paris. In any case, he would be very useful to me for this difficult German question, in which my ignorance of the language leaves me in a very inadequate position. With Overstraeten, who could regularly travel to Paris, we will form a small editorial committee, which will be able to handle the two editions, German and French, in close contact with the isolated comrades in Germany..." (32)

In the end, Rosmer went to Belgium at the end of August, and felt sure "of success in dissipating the doubts which will still remain in the minds of our comrades and bringing them back to the right road" (33), after their mistake in the analysis of the Sino-Russian dispute.

From his side, Kurt Landau intervened in the developing polemic by publishing in "Die Fahne des Kommunismus" an article entitled "Hand Off Russia! Hands Off Bolshevism!", and a reply to the editorial in "Contre le Courant" in which he attacked the French group on the interpretation of Thermidor:

"You do not recognise that there is no more than a tendency towards Thermidor, but already believe that the process is completed..." (34)

This second article was written at Trotsky's insistence; he was very satisfied with Landau's answer to Pachter. Trotsky was busy trying to get answers out of the Leninbund about its position on the Sino-Soviet conflict and the question of Thermidor, and Rosmer's reports on Landau's articles were precious assets. Trotsky replied to Rosmer on August 21 that his proposal did not meet the problem of the edition in Paris.

It was necessary to look more closely into the German situation. This is why Trotsky asked the Austrian, Kurt Landau, to go to Berlin. In fact he valued the political stance of the militant, whom he did not know personally, but with whom he was now in regular correspondence. Of Austrian origin, Landau was now 26 years old and had been active since the age of eight in the Austrian Communist Party (K.P.O.), of which he had quickly become a leader, a member of the Central Committee and in charge of agitation and propaganda. He criticised the decisions, in 1923, of the Fourth Congress of the Communist International, and opposed any united front with Social-Democracy. He then turned towards the Opposition in the K.P.O., from which he was excluded in 1926, becoming, with Josef Frey, one of the founders of the K.P.O. - Opposition. He was excluded in April 1928 by Frey and founded his own Opposition group. His departure for Berlin raised hopes that the fractional struggles in Austria would end (which unfortunately was not the case, because Landau retained the political leadership of "Mahnruf") and that his undeniable political capacities could be used, not to serve the fractional struggle with Frey but to inform Trotsky about the situation of the German position.

At that point Rosmer's proposal was subordinated to the clarification of the German question and the whole project linked to "Opposition" was held up. Trotsky wrote to the Leninbund on August 24, to question it on its positions in relation to the Sino-Russian conflict and Thermidor. At the same time, he condemned the publication in "Die Fahne des Kommunismus" of the "Contre le Courant" article, because this article was presented there as the official position of the French Opposition.

The leadership of the Leninbund replied on September 5, and brought up again the support which the Russian Opposition had given to the Wedding group, the group of Weber. This was an old business. It denied having refused a fundamental explanation and recalled in particular having written to Trotsky on March 25, 1929:

"The great majority of the comrades of the Leninbund consider as excluded the conquest of the party and of the Comintern. They are also of the opinion that the perspectives of ~~the~~ the conquest of the Russian party through the medium of the Opposition are completely negative. Consequently they are unanimous in thinking that the Opposition must prepare to issue such slogans as the right to strike and the right to association for the working class, etc." (35).

It then accused Trotsky's secretary, Jacob Frank, of having given Trotsky incorrect accounts of the position of "Volkswille" in the affair of May 1st 1929 and the shooting directed by the Berlin police prefect, the Social-Democrat, Karl Zörgiebel. It declares that the organisation does not, either, share the viewpoint of Heinz Pachter, from whom, it states, "we have formally separated". It goes on, about the USSR:

"We in no way support the point of view that in Soviet Russia the counter-revolution has

has been 'accomplished' and that Russia is a bourgeois state... Today, she is neither a bourgeois state, nor a proletarian dictatorship. It is on the strength of the international proletariat, on the policy of the Comintern, that is, today, on the Leninist position that it will depend whether the Stalinist regime is changed one way or another (36)

The reply only delayed the final settlement. On September 10, a Chinese Oppositional Communist - probably Liu Renjing - wrote to Trotsky:

"What is your position in the question of the Chinese Eastern Railway? Here (in China) three slogans have been launched, one for each Communist tendency:

1. Ours (i.e. that of the Left Opposition): 'Against the occupation of the Chinese Eastern Railway by the Kuomintang! Defence of the USSR in the interests of the world revolution!
2. That of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party: 'Against intervention! For the defence of the USSR!'
3. That of the Chen Duxiu tendency: 'Against the treacherous policy of the Kuomintang'

A letter from one of our comrades in Moscow tells us that 'people say' that you are in favour of returning the railway to China. This seems to me to be absolutely incredible. Could you not write to me about this question?".(37)

The extreme isolation on China could not let him know that this had already been done. In addition to the successive articles on the conflict itself, which were published in many countries, a brochure by Trotsky entitled "The Defence of the USSR and the Opposition" appeared on September 7. This brochure, of some sixty pages, is a minute, polemical analysis of the policy of the ultra-lefts, in the first place among whom was Louzon and especially Urbahns who took up several weeks after the conflict began a definite position, which Trotsky particularly criticised. This article (by Urbahns) in fact takes up a position of "conditional defence" of the USSR (38), as being neither the land of the dictatorship of the proletariat nor a bourgeois state, but a state of "a third kind", in which the capitalist class dominated economically, i.e. the outcome of the period of "Kerensky-ism in reverse", which Urbahns defended from that point, but with a content and an objective different from that of Trotsky "The New Stage".

As far as Trotsky was concerned, he started from the following observation:

"We have established that three tendencies exist in the inter-national communist movement namely; the Right, the centrist and the Left (Marxist) tendencies. But this classification does not exhaust the question, because it omits the ultra-lefts. Meanwhile the latter continue to exist, engage in activities, commit blunders, and threaten to discredit the work of the Opposition".(39)

This was the case with Louzon and Urbahns in the question of the Sino-Soviet conflict, in which they substituted democratic abstractions for Marxism and a class analysis. Neither Louzon, on the question of helping Ch'iang Kai-Shek, or Urbahns, on the subject of the completion of Thermidor, dares to go to the end of their logic, which they were not unaware was taking them far from Communism... Trotsky reviewed the conditions in which the discussion unfolded, and wrote:

"The Sino-Soviet conflict has shown once again that an irreconcilable ideological conflict is required within the Marxist Opposition, not only from the right but also from the left. The philistines will sneer over the fact that we, a tiny minority, are constantly occupied with internal demarcations. But that will not disturb us. Precisely because we are a tiny minority, whose entire strength lies in ideological clarity, we must be especially implacable towards dubious friends, on the right and on the left." (40)

Finally, Trotsky warns the Leninbund and, by implication, the whole Opposition, against the danger "of sectarianism and a narrow national spirit", which would be fatal to it. To avoid that, it was necessary to pronounce where one stood clearly on the question of Thermidor, that of the class nature of the Soviet Union and for its defence, against the policy of a "second party", for the policy of a fraction, and, finally, for the creation of a real weekly organ - the Left Opposition in Germany.

The problem was now one not of clarification but of differentiation. The discussion was taking on the aspect of a battle and was proceeding with three principal participants: Urbahns

of course, the Brussels Belgians and Maurice Paz. The difference with Urbahns could not be resolved: the Leninbund believed the Communist International and the KPD to be dead organisations, unable to be regenerated. The entire policy of the organisation was affected by this, and in this way are to be explained the sliding-over towards a second party, the rejection of the defence of the Soviet Union, everything which, according to Trotsky, cut the Opposition in the capitalist world off from the Russian Opposition and made the Opposition as such break up into a thousand facets and national perspectives. From this time, Trotsky could not avoid anxiety about the future of the Leninbund, which was compromised by the analysis of its leaders.

He then turned towards the militants of this organisation who wrote to him that they agreed with his criticisms. He made contacts, not only with Grylewicz, but with the Austrians, Joko (Josef Kohn) and Richard Neumann - a former Brandler-ite who had been active in Czechoslovakia before settling in Germany - as well as with members of the former Bolschewistische Einheit ("Bolshevik Unity") of Leipzig, which had become the local group of the Leninbund in June 1929. This was led by the Lithuanian Ruvins Sobolevicius - a student in Leipzig, whose father, a big industrialist in skins and hides, had a factory. Sobolevicius joined the KPD after a stay in the USSR, from where he returned an agent of the GPU, and later founded Bolshevik Unity before joining the Leninbund under the pseudonym of Roman Well. He visited Trotsky at Prinkipo on the recommendation of Jakob Frank.

This "minority in the Leninbund" was defending at the time in the organisation a return to democratic methods and to political discussion, which alone could avoid the worst, a split. The turn can almost be felt in the correspondence. Links with Urbahns and the Leninbund were strained and exchanges became rare, while the bundle of letters grows with the leader of the "Leninbund minority" and Kurt Landau.

Did this mean break-up or split? Trotsky seems to have very seriously hoped to avoid the eventualities by facing up to them and by calling for democratic guarantees within the Leninbund, in two letters addressed to the leadership of this organisation. But he could not make too great concessions, because of the situation in USSR and of the Russian Opposition as he wrote to Lenorovic:

"The Stalinists in Russia are very deftly exploiting the enormous political errors of Urbahns in their struggle against the Opposition. We unceasingly receive complaints about this from the comrades in Russia." (41)

The discussion with the Paz group broke down in the same way. Contre le Courant complained that Trotsky distorted its ideas, did not reply to its essential arguments and did not really discuss what it wrote. The editorial committee no doubt revealed the key to the attitude of a group which was fighting to survive in its existing state, when it wrote:

"What above all appears in Trotsky's article is as it were a scheme to discredit Contre le Courant for the benefit of a new grouping which offers the advantage over us that it blindly accepts his directives". (42)

It is true that Trotsky seems to have been losing interest in a group which justifies itself by such arguments its own pre-occupations. From then onwards it was with the La Verite group that he discussed.

The discussion with the Brussels group of the Belgian Opposition was less dramatic, because the work of Rosmer, his letter and then a short stay, had brought the viewpoints nearer. On September 30 Trotsky replied to van Overstraeten with a document entitled "The Sino-Soviet Conflict and the Position of the Belgian Oppositionists". As Rosmer pointed out to Trotsky it was Louzon, not Paz or Urbahns, who influenced van Overstraeten. The latter moreover sharply drew the line between himself and the Leninbund on the question of Thermidor:

"To affirm that Thermidor has been accomplished would be, in our opinion, a monstrous absurdity. It would not only lead to the worst possible follies, but would break total contact with every possibility of revolutionary activity." (43)

Trotsky welcomed this distancing from the ultra-lefts. He believed that the support which "the Marxist Overstraeten" gave to the positions of "the formalist Louzon" was "a certain mis-understanding" (44). Following Louzon, van Overstraeten advanced several erroneous ideas, including this:

"An offer purely and simply to restore the Eastern railway would have revealed to the

entire falsehood of the accusation of 'red imperialism' which Ch'iang Kai-Shek made against the USSR...". (45)

Trotsky ironically replied to this:

"The best way to demonstrate that one is not intending to attack anyone is to cut one's own throat". (46)

Paradoxically, despite these mistakes, van Overstraeten ended his article with the slogans "For the Defence of the USSR" and "Against Stalinism", about which Trotsky emphasised that they are "fundamentally correct". (47)

In a letter to the Charleroi Federation, Trotsky criticised the resolution of the Executive Bureau of the Belgian Opposition, under the leadership of van Overstraeten and the Brussel group, which revived the mistakes on the subject of the Sino-Russian conflict. Trotsky defended himself against the accusation of "treating softly those responsible for this mistake" and explained:

"I do so all the less because it is precisely such mistakes, disproportionate exaggerations lacking perspective - formal anti-Stalinism instead of Marxist dialectic - which have caused the Left Opposition the greatest damage and, for example, have undermined the position of the Leninbund in Germany... In Urbahns' defence and deepening of his fallacious point of view, he has arrived at a new theory of the state, which is completely idealistic and democratic. I do not conceal that this danger can threaten also our friends in the leadership of the Belgian Opposition." (48)

But, unlike Urbahns, van Overstraeten was not constantly manoeuvring. The Belgian crisis was overcome, even though some traces of the struggle between the groups in Brussels and in Charleroi remained.

In seven months, then, from April to October 1929, Trotsky succeeded in his undertaking of regrouping and unifying the opposition. It could indeed appear paradoxical to speak of regrouping when we take into account the splits and conflicts which marked this period. Nonetheless, these were only incidentals: the ideological delimitation of the Left Opposition which Trotsky laid down was not aimed so much at the groups as at their will to clarify the policy. Trotsky repeated many times during this period: the numbers were of little importance; only the quality and the clarity of the policy of the Left Opposition were guaranteed for the future. To regard these splits as set-backs would be contradictory to Trotsky's procedure, the logic of which was quite different: splits were one of the possible consequences of the clarification of the ranks of the Opposition. The loss of dangerous allies such as Urbahns and Paz would show itself beneficial to the cohesion of the international Opposition, even though at the beginning the damage which they caused in their countries was real.

But was this differentiation not premature? Were its criteria correct?

It is true that one may think, as Souvarin thought at the time, that the process was introduced much too soon, because it did not permit the groups to evolve under Trotsky's influence, when he was finally much nearer and was intervening in this evolution, unlike the period 1927 - 28 when he was in the USSR, though he was **no better** able really to judge on the spot the groups and militants as a whole. But this argument hardly stands up to analysis. The three criteria which Trotsky chose to judge the groups of the Left Opposition historically pre-dated by a long time the period of delimitation of the Opposition; the problem of the Anglo-Russian Trade Union Committee went back to 1926, the Chinese question to 1925 - 27 and the Russian question went back to 1923... The groups had therefore had ample time to declare where they stood and even to correct their positions.

In this sense, the choice of such criteria is one element in the reply to the claim that the differentiation was "premature". Provided that no one had some mistake to cover up and, accordingly, some interest in not going back over the past and its effects on the present! Indeed, these three criteria are the "classical" questions of revolutionary policy, according to Trotsky's formula. Therefore, the groups were judged by what they did much more than by their declarations of principle. This is even more true of the two new criteria, which were directly connected with events (the "Red Day" of August 1st and the Sino-Russian conflict). These two criteria completed the ideological differentiation, the final stage of transforming an ideological current into a real international fraction of the Communist International,

founded on its principles, judged by the test of facts, notably in relation to the ultra-provoking genuine differentiation, and functioning, or at any rate trying to function, in homogeneous way.

From this point of view, differentiation was a political necessity: it was necessary to group various groups, with divergent policies and in permanent conflict, many of which contributed to presenting a very unfavourable impression of the Opposition to the proletarian nucleus of the Communist Parties which the Left Opposition precisely sets itself the task of winning, in order to regenerate the Communist International and its Parties, out of their bad state. This delay in differentiation - on the same criteria, it could have taken place much sooner - can be attributed to a specific historical contingency: the absence of real organisers outside the Soviet Union of the international Opposition. This delay became a problem only after other currents than the left had been excluded, in successive waves; the Zinovievist and the Bukharinists, etc. For that time, the seven months which Trotsky devoted to this task seem to be quite long enough to judge thoroughly the politics of his ideological friends. From this standpoint, we should not neglect the important documentation (journals of the Opposition and other publications, leaflets, brochures and books, letters etc.) at Trotsky's disposal and which enabled him to judge in complete tranquillity.

On the other hand, we may consider a paradoxical phenomenon: Trotsky in March 1929, when he was preparing this double period of clarification of differentiation, set up the milestones for this task as follows: national platform; international platform and international journal, to be the instrument for elaborating this platform and for verifying divergences between the groups. The elaboration of the national platforms did not take place in most groups, except in France, where the Contre le Courant group at least in practice transformed this elaboration into a pre-condition for launching the weekly, that is, into an obstacle to the development of the work of the Opposition. But the international organ could not be launched at the moment of differentiation within the Opposition in relation to the new criteria, which prevented the promised verification and still more the elaboration of an international platform by groups which had not yet drafted their national platform. Therefore it was Trotsky, from Prinkipo, who played this role, discussing, arguing, polemicising with the different groups and militants who corresponded with him. In this way he fulfilled a function which, we should remember, he did not want and which the Oppositionists, for want of organisation and political drive, obliged him to play.

Having been involved in this battle against his inclination, he decided to fight it through to the end, and intervened in the process of differentiation in France, the unfolding of which provides an example.

FOOTNOTES

- (1) These Theses are entitled: "The Political Situation in China and the Tasks of the Bolshevik-Leninist Opposition". They are dated June 1929, and can be read in English in "Writings: 1929", p. 143ff.
- (2) Rosmer to the international Opposition, June 6, 1929, A.H. 17153.
- (3) Appeal of Liu Renjing and Salus to the international Opposition, June 10, 1929, A.H. 16537.
- (4) Letter of Trotsky to the Leninbund, June 15, 1929, A.H. 7910.
- (5) Trotsky: "What Will the First of August Bring?", June 26, 1929, in "Writings: 1929", p. 165ff. A.H. 3209.
- (6) Ibid.
- (7) Redressement Communiste, No. 6, June 14, 1929, pp. 1 and 3.
- (8) Letter of Henri Molinier to Jeanne Martin, June 18, 1929. A.H. 6882.
- (9) Letter of R. Molinier to Trotsky, July 9, 1929. A.H. 3203.

- (10) Text entitled: "To the Political Bureau of the French Communist Party", July 1929. A.H. 14074.
- (11) Letter of Trotsky to R. Molinier, July 14, 1929. A.H. 9164.
- (12) Circular letter of Trotsky to Landau, Adler, Frey, Salus, Urbahns, Pfemfert, Muller, van Overstraeten, Eastman, Henri Molinier, July 12, 1929. A.H. T3209
- (13) Trotsky: "Necessary Clarifications Concerning The First of August", July 27, 1929, "Writings: 1929", p. 178f. A.H. T3211 - 2.
- (14) Trotsky: "The Sino-Soviet Conflict: A Press Statement" in "Writings: 1929", p. 213ff.
- (15) Ibid.
- (16) Trotsky: "The Sino-Soviet Conflict and the Opposition", August 4, 1929, in "Writings: 1929", p. 213ff. Published in "La Verite", August 15, in Le Communiste, September 1, in Contre le Courant, September 21 and in "Militant", September 15.
- (17) Contre le Courant, No. 35, July 28, 1929, pp. 1 - 4.
- (18) Ibid.
- (19) Louzon, "L'heritage du Czar ou de Lenine?", in La Revolution Proletarienne; Aug 1, 1929, in Courant le Courant, No. 36 - 37, September 21, 1929, pp. 11 - 14.
- (20) Van Overstraeten, "Towards Social-Imperialism", August 4, 1929, in Contre le Courant, No. 36 - 37, September 21, 1929, pp. 14 - 15.
- (21) Trotsky: "The Sino-Soviet Conflict and the Opposition", August 4, 1929, in "Writings: 1929", p. 217ff. A.H. T3234.
- (22) Ibid.
- (23) Letter of Trotsky to Sneevliet, August 22, 1929. A.H. 10378.
- (24) Trotsky: "The Sino-Soviet Conflict and the Opposition", op. cit.
- (25) Letter of Trotsky to the national leadership of the Leninbund, June 13, 1929. A.H. 7909.
- (26) Letter of A. Rosmer to Trotsky, August 4, 1929, in Broue, "Correspondance", op. cit., pp. 34 - 38.
- (27) Ibid.
- (28) Ibid.
- (29) Letter of A. Rosmer to Trotsky, August 26, 1929, in Broue, "Correspondance", op. cit., pp. 40 - 44.
- (30) Ibid.
- (31) Ibid.
- (32) Ibid.
- (33) Letter of A. Rosmer to Trotsky, August 26, 1929 in Broue, "Correspondance", op. cit., pp. 53 - 56.

- (34) K. Landau, "To the Editors of Contre le Courant", August 5, 1929, in Contre le Courant, No. 36 - 37, September 21, 1929.
- (35) Letter of the leadership of the Leninbund to Trotsky, March 25, 1929, A.H. 561.
- (36) Letter of the leadership of the Leninbund to Trotsky, September 5, 1929, in Contre le Courant, No. 38, October 22, 1929, pp. 20 - 22.
- (37) A.H. 16538. In a letter by Rosmer of October 24 (in Broue, "Correspondance" op. cit., pp. 78 - 81) Trotsky says that he had received a letter from Liu Re-
jing about the Sino-Russian conflict which "seemed to him to be the crushing
argument of the discussion with Louzon, Paz., Urbahns etc." and that he thought
that "this echo from Shanghai weighs more than pamphlets or even books on
on the subject". This document, moreover, comments which appear to have been
written by Trotsky with a view to the letter being published, in "Militant",
No. 18, November 30, 1929, p. 3, and in "La Verite".
- (38) "Uber der Konflikt Russland-China", un-signed, in Die Fahne des Kommunismus,
No. 31, August 23, 1929, and another article in Die Fahne des Kommunismus, No.
32, August 30, 1929.
- (39) Trotsky: "The Defence of the Soviet Republic and the Opposition", dated Sep-
ber 7, 1929, in "Writings: 1929", p. 262ff.
- (40) Ibid.
- (41) Letter by Trotsky to Lenorovic, October 30, 1929. A.H. 8810.
- (42) "Our Point of View", in Contre le Courant, No. 36 - 37, September 21, 1929, p.
26 - 27.
- (43) Article by van Overstraeten in Le Communiste, No. 25
- (44) Trotsky: "The Sino-Soviet Conflict and the Position of the Belgian Opposit-
ists", dated September 30, 1929, in "Writings: 1929", p.332ff. A.H. T3232.
- (45) Article by van Overstraeten, op. cit.
- (46) Trotsky: "The Sino-Soviet Conflict and the Position of the Belgian Opposit-
ists", op. cit.
- (47) Ibid.
- (48) Letter of Trotsky to the Charleroi Federation of the Belgian Communist Opposi-
tion, December 25, 1929. A.H. 7812.

CHAPTER FIVE

The Foundation of La Verite

The plumb-line of Trotsky's intervention in the French Opposition was the creation of a weekly journal. This position was in contrast to the multiplicity and rivalry of the groups. This was all played out at Prinkipo, in direct relation to the process of differentiation: the journey of Paz had its main purpose as the early transformation of Contre le Courant into a weekly. At any rate, this is what Trotsky thought, for Paz did not mention it in his report when he returned. He mentioned this problem only in a short article, without even mentioning that it was a matter of undertakings entered into with Trotsky. In any way Paz located himself in a wholly equivocal situation.

This situation could not go on for ever. When Trotsky proposed that Contre le Courant be transformed into a weekly of the French Opposition, he neither handed over a blank cheque nor enthroned the Paz group as the sole representative of the Opposition in France; he entrusted to Paz a precise political task, while retaining all the initiatives linked to its execution, especially the attempt to re-group the other oppositional currents round the weekly. Trotsky's position, in April 1929, was as follows:

"The principal group in France is Contre le Courant. We must establish close links as a division of labour between this group and 'La Revolution Proletarienne'. Without excluding the criticism of comrades.... But no collaboration with the Souvarin group in its present form. There must be clear demarcation and a polemic... As regards Treint there is no reason in principle why we should not work with him... There is nothing worse than the stagnation of small groups close to one another. They can remain sitting and rotting away for years. The conservatism of a small group is solid. It is particularly powerful in France." (1)

However, there existed at that moment a double axis, for getting out of this apathy. This consisted of Paz and Rosmer. The latter seemed disposed to facilitate the alliance by contributing his personal collaboration to Contre le Courant. But this alliance is the condition of rapprochement with the Treint group; against which Paz and his friends have such hatred, with, it appears, the support of Solomon Kharin since his arrival.

It appears that early on Paz retained nothing but the administrative aspect of Trotsky's political perspective: as weeks and months went by, there was nothing in Contre le Courant about the weekly, except subscription lists on its behalf. None the less, the situation developed quickly and, through the attacks of Paz against those whom he wanted to denounce as to blame for the delays, a new alignment made itself known. The editorial of the editorial committee entitled "Fire on the Left" attacked holus-bolus "Bulletin Communiste", "Reveil Communiste", "La Lutte des Classes", "Redressement Communiste". Contre le Courant announced its agreement with Trotsky and accused the other groups of trying to weaken it at the moment when it should be the axis of the regroupment. The fact that this article was published in the same issue of Contre le Courant as reproduced Trotsky's letter about the different groupings was more than a co-incidence: it was the declaration by Contre le Courant that it considered itself to be the sole legitimate representative of Trotsky and of the Opposition:

"The question of union with Treint or with Souvarin could be posed a year ago - when the strengthening of the Opposition appeared to have to be the result of the groups coming together; today it can only weaken or delay the movement which is revealing its around us." (2)

However, the torch was to change hands, and there were to be different actors. Alfred Rosmer arrived in Prinkipo, a little after Raymond Molinier. If any point of agreement existed between the two men, it was certainly the recognition that the Paz experiment was closing in on a set-back, and that it was necessary to start again on new bases. Rosmer had distanced himself from "La Revolution Proletarienne" and had not accepted the "Fire on the Left" in Contre le Courant. Raymond Molinier was still in the Communist Party, where he was known as an oppositionist, and his dynamism had impressed Trotsky. From this point these were the two assets which Trotsky had during the necessary re-dealing of the cards for the weekly. For Trotsky had reached a completely new conclusion: the weekly could not emerge from one

of the existing groups, as sectarianism, inactivity and scruples of categories showed. It was thought that it was necessary only to create an editorial committee, small and even tentative in the beginning, which would be enlarged in due course by all those who wanted to join in the publication of the Opposition.

The driving force, apart from the editorial committee, would therefore remain informal at first, and the movement would prove itself by what it achieved; from this joint work would arise first the programme, the famous platform, and then the group would organize itself and the weekly would then become its organ. Paz would be stripped of his mission and would, the contrary fall back upon the elaboration of a platform as a preliminary to the foundation of the journal. The hour of splits had sounded.

It began with the Kharin affair, which Pierre Broue elucidated in 1961 (3) and which is illuminated by the discovery at the Hoover Institution at Stanford (USA) of the file of letters from the subject to Trotsky in the archives of Leon Sedov. The man was young - thirty-six in 1929 - and he was a former member of the Institute of Red Professors with a degree in economics, a friend of Vinokosted, who was a member of the Russian Opposition for a long time. In 1928 he was sent to Paris as head of the information bureau of the commercial delegation to Paris. At that time he had established relations with Paz, Treint and Molinier, but not with Souvarin, who refused to meet him. His letters reveal a person not without self-assurance, not to say arrogance, but also tactful, perhaps a little of a dilettante, through whose hands passed many important documents, especially all the articles for the first number of the "Bulletin of the Opposition" of the Russian Opposition.

The defection of Kharin must be related to the first elements of crisis in the Russian Opposition, around Radek, who moved towards the positions of Stalin and sharply distanced himself from Trotsky.

Kharin had a similar itinerary. At the beginning of March 1929, in a letter to Trotsky, he disapproved of the style and especially the tone of the series of articles which appeared under the title "What Happened and How?" in the bourgeois press, and in this way was followed by Radek. The problem of this series of articles became an object of contention between Joseph and Trotsky. These articles were not written for the bourgeois press but in order to explain the conditions of Trotsky's deportation. He intended them to be published as a brochure. He wanted five thousand copies printing and entrusted to Kharin the Russian-language edition. Then, at the end of March, Kharin said that he had sent the brochure to the USSR but made clear that he did not know anything about the production, the number of copies, etc. Trotsky was furious that the brochure had not been published and repeated that five thousand copies were required.

Despite these problems, Trotsky wrote to Kharin not to go back to the USSR if he were recalled:

"You must stay where you are at all costs. Do not do what Solntsev did..." (4)

Kharin was useful in Paris, not only because he could translate Russian articles, but in his role as a representative of the Russian Opposition and his collaboration with the French Opposition. In this way he was a valuable source of information for Trotsky. Joseph's view of the French Opposition differed from that of Trotsky on several points. In Joseph's opinion Contre le Courant, despite its "academic character" was a solid group which desired unity. Treint and Barre on the contrary demanded that the others admit their errors and maintained that there was one "Trotskyism". Their group dissolved; part went to Paz and another part to Souvarin. Joseph thought that Rosmer, Naville and Body were "right-ists" who were evolving towards Souvarin. On April 29, Kharin wrote that he had been to Berlin, where he met Weber and heard it said that "some comrades were speaking in favour of a rapprochement with Stalin" (5). He did not mention the names of any who were favouring such a rapprochement. But the man from whom Trotsky had demanded that he "inject some movement" into the situation of the groups of the French Opposition, break the groups up and re-group them, had not the energy or the enthusiasm which were indispensable. To be sure, it was not the difficult situation of the French Opposition which could give them to him. The perspectives in the USSR and Radek sliding down into capitulation no doubt also weighed upon this oppositionist who was a prey to doubt. It is now established that the man wanted to negotiate his return to the USSR and to ask for pardon at a moment when this still seemed possible. Then the GPU made him tell everything. He involved himself in negotiation, without, however, going to the limit, because he ended his activity as a spy at his own decision. It was on June 9 that he owned up to Paz about his

his "doubts". On the 11th Raymond Molinier telegraphed that he "was changing his firm - going over to the competitors"... (6) The man disappeared. The memory remained a bitter one for people like Paz, who had worked with him and perhaps followed his advice. In reality it was a consolation for Treint, who regarded Joseph as being close to the right-ists, while according to Treint, he had refused to condemn because his "policy was false".

Souvarin too could share his satisfaction, which was nothing but a stage in the war between the groups of the Opposition. In any case, the disappearance, in such unhealthy conditions of the man who had represented the Russian Left Opposition, was not a positive factor.

On the French side, a rupture was developing by itself, that of "Le Revolution Proletarienne" of Pierre Monatte - who was not one of those who wanted to see Trotsky again - and of Robert Louzon. The "communist syndicalist" review was adopting positions more and more alien to communism in order to get nearer to syndicalism; even Rosmer noticed this movement and separated himself from it, even though the people associated with "Le Revolution Proletarienne" - who went along with Lucien Marget and Robert Ranc to supply him with two secretaries - retained their loyalty to Trotsky. The latter thought that "Le Revolution Proletarienne" and Monatte were turning back to "dilatatory, passive and negative syndicalism, which falls more and more frequently into pure trade unionism". (7)

The two problems which remained were those of Souvarin and his relation to the Opposition first, and that of Paz and his place in the Opposition thereafter. The problem of Souvarin was not new. It had faced the Opposition for some years. The positions of Souvarin were always marginal and the man, the militant, was a special case. After a long period of political ambiguity, he began to make his position precise: in March 1929 he declared in a public meeting:

"I consider that comrade Trotsky is a very great revolutionary, but that does not stop him from thinking that he can make mistakes sometimes. At this moment, I think that he is wrong on two large questions: the question of industrialisation and the peasant question. I think, in fact, that it is the so-called "right" tendency which is correct. More recently Stalin has undertaken to prove Trotsky wrong by applying his methods." (8)

This position was unanimously denounced by the Opposition. Oppositional letters and publications were filled with criticisms of Souvarin. Trotsky, who identified him with the right, did not for all that reject him so severely and corresponded with him, in the hope of winning him to the Left Opposition. Souvarin was doubly shocked by the differentiation which Trotsky undertook to establish: by what he regarded as its premature, summary aspect and by being assimilated to Brandler, which he rejected. It was impossible for him to meet Trotsky, none the less he would have wished, and he prepared a long letter in reply. This thirty-page reply was the signal for the rupture. Trotsky had earlier warned him against the course of his evolution to the right and recommended to him to take time to think before committing the irreparable; he could only recognise how great the damage would be.

"I find in your letter hardly a single idea that is correct and based on Marxist doctrine and the great events of history... Your idea that you can serve the cause of the proletariat outside of the party is not mature enough even to be called syndicalist. At this stage, it only signifies desertion from the Marxist organisation... We record your man overboard and pass on to the next point on the agenda." (9)

The group was "overboard" also. Naville, in a letter to the Marx-Lenin Circle, calls for a discussion to be opened on Souvarin's letter and the reply of Trotsky, in order to win the militants of the group to the new weekly of the Opposition. Trotsky had already acted in this sense on August 22, demanding explicitly from the members of the circle whether they solidarised themselves with their leader.

The opening of the battle for the weekly, through the signature of the appeal, as well as the formation of groups of friends of the journal, on the initiative of Courget and Molinier, disquieted Paz, who wrote to Trotsky to complain:

"I do not know what is your precise conception of the starting of the journal. Courget seems to be better informed... The question of the weekly poses the question of the platform, and the platform, in its turn, is the charter of the regroupment of the Opposition... The question of the regroupment of the Opposition poses in turn another problem: round what axis will this regroupment take place?... Two solutions can be envisaged: either our group will really be this axis, or it will be necessary to create afterwards a new centre for crystallisation". (10)

The second hypothesis would be a disavowal of the politics of the group since 1923, and,

would have the consequence for Paz "of sacrificing our little piece of revolutionary tradition". But Trotsky had already replied to these questions: when Paz refused to sign the appeal for the weekly, he renounced "an absolutely necessary and urgent initiative", which he had himself agreed at the start. Trotsky applied the hot iron to the two sores and declared on the subject of the experience of Paz in connection with the weekly:

"My opinion is, rather, that people have retreated, and have created, in order to cover this retreat, a whole philosophy about the platform. A false philosophy for a dangerous retreat. And now that a team of energetic comrades have taken up this idea, you oppose them, even though they are doing no more than take up our joint initiative from the time of your stay in Constantinople. This is absolutely incomprehensible, and you must take into account that it is a declaration of war... I insist with all my energy that you change your decision." (11)

The conflict broke out openly with a long letter from the editorial board of Contre le Courant, the line of which is summed up in a few words:

"... We say that, after having read and re-read your letter, an impression is given by it; it is that it advances no political argument and is merely a violent attempt to intimidate us". (12)

One "political" element deserves to be drawn out of this letter:

"You seem to criticise us because we have not effected the transformation which we planned of 'Contre le Courant' into a twice-monthly organ. But do not forget that, if we have not been able to make this change immediately, that is the fault of Rosmer: the basis of the plan to effect the transformation was that he would participate; this was the minimum condition." (13)

Another scapegoat! What mis-understandings! Trotsky confined himself to noting that with the group "on many questions we are speaking two languages which are rather different"; his reply was prudent though firm:

"We are patiently waiting for you, and, if you come at the second stage, you will always be welcome". (14)

However, Trotsky replied "in complete frankness, complete freedom and even complete brutality" (in his own words) to a letter from Paz which accompanied that of the group. He took note that the sole subject of Paz's pre-occupation was knowing "Who would be the axis?". Trotsky showed that responsibility for the weekly would necessarily have led him to choose "between the revolution and the law courts":

"You can have revolutionaries both wise and ignorant, intelligent or mediocre. But you cannot have revolutionaries who lack the willingness to smash obstacles, who lack devotion and the spirit of sacrifice." (15)

Consequently, Paz can hope only, at best, to play the same role as Eastman in USA, that of a fellow-traveller. Trotsky concludes with a firm recommendation:

"Even if you do not have confidence in the weekly paper, you ought to wait quietly and sabotage it!... keep a friendly neutrality and do not present the sad spectacle of an principled opposition, dictated by exclusively personal reasons." (16)

When Trotsky learned that the Paz group refused to sign the appeal of August 1st, he stressed that "the logic of the struggle is irrevocable" and informed Paz that he broke off his collaboration with Contre le Courant. Paz's last letter is very polemical: he reproaches Trotsky for not introducing any other element in a letter which contains "only sentiments of personal animosity". He does not accept the place which Trotsky allots to him in - or rather more exactly on the side of - the Left Opposition. Trotsky recounted the death-knell of their friendship to the Rosmers:

"I have received another letter from Paz, which I have not read right through. It was enough to be aware of a few lines, in which he denies my opinion about his lack of the spirit of sacrifice, pointing to the fact that he travelled to Constantinople. One is old, but the world is so complicated that one can still be surprised by something or other. That happened to me." (17)

The very unusual fact that Trotsky did not read the whole of Paz's letter reflects the hope which had been placed in him and the disappointment which he caused.

The Foundation of La Verite and the Reactions of the Groups

The break with Paz confirmed Trotsky's opinion. Molinier, who was still an oppositionist to the Communist Party, and Rosmer, a prestigious old militant, were alone in having the means to launch and to guide the weekly of the Opposition. The decision which had been taken at Prinkipo was put into operation when Rosmer returned to Paris on August 7, 1929. Despite the fact that Molinier was not available - he was suffering from a moral crisis following the simulation of insanity in order to escape military service - Rosmer flung himself into launching the paper. The bases for it had, of course, already been laid - appeals for subscribers had been drafted and an office found. There was no lack of reasons for this: the differences about the First of August of the Communist International and the Sino-Russian conflict, the breaks with Souvarin, Paz and Kharin, and the active mistrust of Treint.

On August 13, 1929, the inaugural issue of "La Verite" appeared in the form of a single flysheet, while the normal issues carried eight pages. Trotsky judged the presentation to be very successful. The real first issue of "La Verite" appeared on September 13, 1929, and that fact did consist of eight pages.

While the month between the two issues passed, the future of the review was being decided. The small group of militants who supported the launch of the weekly turned itself into an editorial committee (18) and ensured the material preparations. When the weakness of the group is considered, it was a result to inspire hope. When the circumstances and the difficulties are considered, it was a frail skiff. Trotsky therefore followed events closely and intervened stage by stage with all his weight. His first public intervention in support of "La Verite" is dated August 6, 1929, in the form of an "Open Letter to the Editors of 'La Verite'". It stressed the weakness of the French Opposition, a heritage from ossified grand and episodic publications; Trotsky believed that, to end this situation which did harm to the cause of the Opposition, a daily paper was necessary; this was what "La Verite" was called upon to become, regarding its weekly appearance as temporary. It should have two essential qualities: it must appear regularly (a source of the earlier conflict with Paz) and there should be a real political continuity (a close connection with the workers' movement, with real happenings in the class struggle). The journal would then become "the useful and irreplaceable instrument for elaborating the platform of the French Opposition - a platform that is correct in principle and viable". Trotsky assigned two tasks to the weekly. On the one hand, "La Verite" must become the organ of "the concentration of all the forces of the Left Opposition for action..." On the other hand, the journal must deserve its title:

"The workers need the truth as an instrument of revolutionary action... To tell the truth about the reformist bureaucracy is to condemn it in the consciousness of the masses. To tell the truth about the centrists is to help the workers assure a correct leadership of the Communist International". (19)

This "Open Letter", deliberately turned towards action, received the support of the groups and militants who decided to put an end to the sterile conservatism of the groups and to launch the weekly of the Opposition. Trotsky could accordingly write to Rosmer about his satisfaction with the visit of Naville and Gerard Rosenthal and his hope for common work. Little by little, other groups were to take up positions in favour of the new weekly. In response to these favourable perspectives, Paz announced that Contre le Courant would be transformed into a weekly in autumn 1929. This announcement sounded like a provocation, since no issue of Contre le Courant had been published in August 1929 for lack of resources... Rosmer was in no way worried, regarding that this was "playing the fool".

Trotsky was determined to speed up the process of differentiation which "La Verite" was starting. He intervened twice to assist the weekly. First, his letter to the editors of La Lutte des Classes entitled "A Step Forward" is the outcome of his discussion with Naville. Trotsky touches upon the problems linked with the launching of "La Verite" and returns to the differences which separated Naville and his group from "La Verite". Naville criticised the representatives of the Russian Opposition for having supported in France "the obedient ones" - an allusion to the Paz group, which had been financed, according to a rumour which Paz always denied, by Piatakov. Trotsky admitted that "there had been not a few mistakes made". But he stressed that this excessive influence was no more than the reflection of the weakness of the French Opposition. "There is only one way out; strengthen the Opposition on French soil." Trotsky did not flinch from going over past events and examining them:

"You may say that I, too, bear responsibility for delaying matters, to the extent that I

supported publications which reflected the past and which did not prepare for the future. It is possible that during recent months I kept waiting too patiently for initiative from people who are incapable of initiative, that I restricted myself far too long to trying to convince people by letters, etc." (21)

Trotsky justified his choice of Rosmer to direct the weekly by speaking of the "major signposts" in Rosmer's biography, which he contrasts with that of Treint. In the subject of the latter, Trotsky stresses that the door must remain open even if Treint's declaration of distrust of "La Verite" contributes to distance him considerably. Finally, Trotsky sketched out a platform of struggle for the weekly:

"To understand well and to explain to others that the most important and unpostponable task today is the creation of a weekly of the Communist Left Opposition.

... To understand and explain to others that the 'Verite' group, given our common support ... will be free from personal prejudices and intrigues and will be a genuine organ of Communist Left as a whole.

To support openly... the initiative of 'La Verite' by collaborating with the editors.

To condemn openly... attempts to establish a competing journal, as an act dictated by circle machinations..." (22)

This letter carries the seeds of the coming collaboration between La Lutte des Classes and "La Verite". But it also enabled Trotsky to give elbow room to the team running the weekly and particularly to Rosmer. In any case, he did not confine himself to that. He was set upon seeing the weekly succeed, and himself wrote the "Declaration of 'La Verite'", which was published in the real number one, dated September 13, 1929. This declaration opened up all the question and perspectives of the political struggle of the Opposition, located the place which "La Verite" claimed to occupy in the political struggle in France and on the international level. The fact that it was drafted by Trotsky - in the paper the document is signed by the editorial committee - was anyway to raise a problem: one paragraph about the relations between the party and the trade unions led to a disagreement with some of the members of the editorship, a first hitch expressing the lack of homogeneity in the group and, therefore in the review.

On September 18, 1929, some days after the first issue of "La Verite" came out, Rosmer wrote to Trotsky that the journal had had a great success:

"3200 copies sold in Paris, when the most optimistic comrades hoped only for 1500 to 2000. The Belgian militants, from their side, sold 75 and then another 25." (23)

Anyway, curiosity had something to do with it, as Rosmer supposed, because the sale of the next issue dropped to 1500. These results were encouraging, and Marguerite Rosmer wrote to Trotsky:

"People are beginning to come to the shop and discuss: subscriptions are coming in slowly two or three a day; plenty of six-month subscriptions..." (24)

Rosmer tried to enlarge the format of the journal in response to Trotsky's criticisms, but refused to include more documents because "too long articles... frighten readers" and because "the editors are, for the moment, extremely poor". (25)

The group began to structure the weekly; the distribution was organized, there was a network of correspondents, there were subscriptions from readers and sympathisers as well as the dues paid by militants. Beyond the journal, these were the bases of an organisation being outlined in this way.

At first Contre le Courant seems to have hesitated to join the clan of those early opponents of the appearance of "La Verite" - among whom we find Souvarin's Bulletin Communiste, which hardly still existed (26) as well as the majority of La Revolution Proletarienne grouped around Monatte (27), which had been silent for months. The editorial of Contre le Courant of September 21, 1929, entitled "A Step Forward? An Open Letter to 'La Verite'" seemed to open up a policy of questions and discussion tending to clarify the situation of the Opposition. In fact, thanks to the treachery of certain allusions or insinuations, there was here a declaration of war: the following issue, on October 22, 1929, carried no less than four articles devoted to "La Verite" attacking the weekly, speaking of steps backward for the Opposition in criticising Trotsky and the weekly over the discussion with the Leninbund and the situation of the French Opposition.

The hostilities which opened in this way ended, none the less, for lack of combatant Contre le Courant disappeared because of financial difficulties. Paz, all the same, tried a final stroke; he announced a fortnightly, Le Libérateur, which appeared only eight times.

As to the Treint group and Redressement Communiste, they evolved evolved in a certain equivocation. Rosmer hoped to win Jean Chernobelsky, one of the close collaborator Treint, and thought that, for others, conversations and discussions were still needed. Treint, for his part, wrote in Le Libérateur against "La Verite". This attitude demanded an explanatory insertion; Treint himself provided an element of explanation nearly two years later:

"'La Verite' was formed under the aegis of cde. Trotsky, outside of the only group ('Le Redressement') which for three years had carried on the oppositional battle in France. 'La Verite' was formed with comrades who were isolated, who either had not participated in the oppositional struggle or had adopted wrong positions during three years' bitter struggle.

During this period, Comrade Rosmer, in La Revolution Proletarienne, had turned back towards pure syndicalism and taken a wrong position on the Anglo-Russian Committee...

Comrade Naville occupied during this period a wavering position. He let himself be excluded from the party, without firmly or precisely posing the essential political problems on which the Opposition was fighting.

It (the Treint-Barre group) has protested against the fact that three years of bitter oppositional struggle on the part of Redressement has counted for less than the hasty and superficial conversion of Rosmer in a few conversations in Constantinople.

'La Verite' said that it wanted to group all the oppositionists, placing itself on the basis of the first four congresses and of the Russian platform of 1927, and set itself up while keeping at a distance the only group which had struggled on this basis". (28)

In a letter to Trotsky, he spoke of "adhesion, calculated on the part of Paz and mystified on that of Rosmer..." and ended:

"Understand that, in the obscurity of 1923, there were serious mistakes on the part of one and another and you, you sent lepers to preach good health to us. In this obscurity, the soldiers of the same revolutionary army could fire on each other." (29)

The ex-Bolsheviker was crushed, in fact, under the weight of his own history. How could he face up to the terrible difficulties of the Communist movement in the year 1929 without having first settled those of the period 1923 - 25? If we can understand Rosmer's strong hostility to Treint, the "open" attitude of Trotsky was the only one which could lead to a favourable evolution on the part of a militant who - after resolving his problems, could be very useful to the cause of the Opposition. Unfortunately this result was not gained at the time of the launch of "La Verite".

Among the small groups or isolated militants, we may mention the favourable reaction of the group in the 15th district, an internal opposition in the Communist Party led by the engineer, Gaston Davoust, who was in touch with Molinier. Marcel Body, who was publishing "La Verite" in Limoges, likewise came near to the weekly, and sometimes translated brochures by Trotsky. The independent Communist group (G.C.I.) of Cissel, linked with Paz and which had come out in favour of a weekly of the Opposition in June 1929, at first distanced itself from "La Verite" and then joined the "Parti Ouvrier Paysan" (P.C.P.) led by the former General Secretary of the Communist Party in 1923, Louis Seignier.

The hostility of Contre le Courant and the absence of Treint and his group, were political elements not to be overlooked; they had real repercussions on "La Verite"; a debate - sharp one, which was soon to go outside the framework of the weekly - opened in the group on the attitude to adopt towards Contre le Courant, on problems of internal work

ing, as well as personal questions (tension between the "Rosmer group" and the "Molinier group", aggravated by the arrival of the "Baville group") - we may see here no more than the inevitable negative effects of a positive initiative. None the less, it is a paradoxical balance-sheet, full of nuances, which has to be drawn on the French weekly; the clarification and delimitation of the French Opposition, which the appearance of "La Verite" made possible, and the "clearing" of the ground of the Opposition, are offset by the internal difficulties which they produced in the group, the weakness of the editorial committee - even when the group was progressing, when the twelve members of the group on August became thirty-five in October 1929 - and of the modest figure of sales.

On October 11, 1929, after Trotsky received no. 4 of "La Verite", he wrote to Rosmer:

"It already appears clearly that the weekly is miles ahead of all the other periodicals of the Opposition. I am fully confident about its future." (30)

As a publication, the weekly deserves this judgement. Two of Trotsky's aims had been reached; the delimitation of the French Opposition and real steps towards unifying the various components of the Opposition - La Lutte des Classes, produced by the Baville-Rosenthal group collaborating with "La Verite" in the framework of a division of labor (31)

In this way, "La Verite" became a means, an instrument in the service of the struggle to structure the French and the international Opposition, of which it had become an advanced battalion, and was to play an extremely important role as "centre" of the international Opposition. In the same time, it had to settle internal problems and to continue the differentiation, which, in the case of the French Opposition, passed through the clarification of the trade union question.

The Trade Union Discussion

On October 14, Trotsky sent to Rosmer theses on the trade union question, intending to establish the differences with other groups of the Opposition sharply and without fear that these groups would attack "La Verite". He wrote:

"The real danger has a completely opposite character: it lies in Communist workers, trade union workers, sympathisers with Communism, workers who subscribe to 'L'Humanite', etc., confusing us - and the party bureaucracy having the chance to identify us - with the anti-Communist and anti-Marxist elements... We have to get out of this situation at all costs. We have to seek the result that the wide layers of revolutionary workers no longer permit the party bureaucracy to throw us into the same sack as the Syndicalist League, with Urbahns and Paz..." (32)

This differentiation on the trade unions was aimed, in the first place, against the "pure syndicalists", the minority syndicalists grouped in the C.G.T.U. in the Syndicalist League of Pierre Monatte, Loriot and Chambelland. An open forum for discussion on the trade union question was opened in "La Verite" from October 25, 1929. Trotsky's theses were published on November 1st, under the title "Communism and syndicalism: an Introduction to a Discussion". These theses had originally been written only to serve as the basis for an internal discussion in the "La Verite" group, in order to correct the weakness of the editors on this point.

When Trotsky drafted the short passage devoted to relations between trade union and party in the "Declaration of 'La Verite'", he had shown himself to be deliberately present:

"It is stupid and criminal to transform the unions into a slightly larger second edition of the party, or to make them an appendage of the party. It is completely legitimate for a revolutionary workers' party to try to win influence in the unions... But it must do this by methods that flow from the very nature of the unions and that re-inforce them..." (33)

This declaration no doubt was intended to re-assure the militants in the trade union movement who were anxious at the moment when the weekly was launched. This conciliatory policy presented the fault that it enabled the party leadership to fight the Left Opposition as a new variety of anti-Communists, of "syndicalist" minority, as Molinier complained to Leon Sedov:

"You will have received No. 2 of 'La Verite'. It seems to me to be inadequate from the trade union point of view. The declaration... 'Party and Unions' is too long (page 63 follows)

I fear that, under the pretext of not offending good sympathetic comrades of the 'La Verite' group, who likewise are linked with La Revolution Proletarienne, comrades whose usefulness is over-estimated and who number two or three and whose influence has fallen, we are not sufficiently defining our trade union line... we are not a rallying point for some hundreds of communists dis-contented with trade union policy of the party and who are going in today's confusion to lose selves in the 'syndicalist League'". (34)

Trotsky underlined this danger equally in mid-October; it led him to cross swords with the trade union minorities, but also with Charbis and Marzet, members of the editorial team of "La Verite".

Trotsky started in "Communism and Syndicalism" by declaring:

"The Communist Party is the fundamental weapon of revolutionary action of the proletariat, the combat organisation of its vanguard that must raise itself to the role of leader of the working class in all the spheres of its struggle without exception, and, consequently, in the trade union field. Those who, in principle, oppose trade union independence to the leadership of the Communist Party, oppose thereby - whether they want it or not - the most backward proletarian section to the vanguard of the working class, the struggle for immediate demands to the struggle for the complete liberation of the workers, reformism to Communism, opportunism to revolutionary Marxism." (35)

In his opinion, the revolutionary syndicalism of pre-1914 was 'an embryo of the revolutionary party', and therefore played an important historic role. But he added:

"After the war, French syndicalism found not only its refutation but also its development and its completion in Communism. Attempts to revive revolutionary syndicalism now would be to try to turn back history; for the Labour movement, they can have only a reactionary significance."

Trotsky denounced the "epigones of syndicalism", who tried to make people believe that trade unions are sufficient to themselves. He considered that "the party does not attack the real autonomy of the unions", but that, "the political independence of the trade unions is a myth". And Trotsky attacked those who, under a cover of independence, tried to take political control of the unions:

"By all its traits, it comes forward as a political organisation which seeks to subordinate the trade union movement to its influence. In fact the League recruits its members not in accordance with the trade union principle, but in accordance with the principle of political groupings; it has its platform, if not its programme, and it defends it in its publications; it has its own internal discipline within the trade union movement... It presents itself masked by what it calls 'trade union independence'. From this point of view, the League approaches the Socialist Party which also realises its leadership, under cover of the phrase: 'independence of the trade union movement'. The Communist Party, on the contrary, says openly to the working class: Here is my programme, my tactics and my policy, which I propose to the trade unions."

Trotsky likewise denounced the fetish of trade union unity, which is worth no more than that of independence, and called for strengthening the revolutionary C.G.T.U. against the reformist C.G.T., which Jouhaux had led since 1921. This was a contribution to clarification of the ranks of the Opposition, but also to their differentiation:

"It is entirely wrong to affirm that in these recent years - contrary to what has happened in Germany, Czechoslovakia and other countries - there has not been constituted in France a Right Wing grouping in the revolutionary camp. The main point is that, forsaking the revolutionary policy of Communism, the Right Opposition in France, in conformity with the traditions of the French Labour movement, had assumed a trade union character, concealing in this way its political physiognomy. At the same time, the majority of the trade union opposition represents the Right Wing, just as the Brandler group in Germany, the Czech trade unionists who, after the split, had taken a clearly reformist position, etc."

Trotsky defined in terms of principle the attitude of the Communist Left Opposition:

"The Left Opposition considers that to influence the trade union movement, to help it to find its correct orientation, to permeate it with correct slogans, is impossible except through the Communist Party (or a faction for the moment) which, besides its other attributes, is the central ideological laboratory of the working class."

He ends on the problem of delimitation:

"The more firm and implacable is its action against the supposedly revolutionary rantings of the Centrist bureaucracy, against political hysteria which does not take conditions into account, which confuses today with yesterday or with tomorrow the more firmly and resolutely must it set itself against the elements of the Right that take up its criticisms and conceal themselves under it in order to introduce their tendencies into revolutionary Marxism."

He closed by stressing that his favourable appreciation of the Monatte group was due to lack of information when he was deported from the Soviet Union, and was founded on "old memories". On November 17, Rosmer wrote to Trotsky:

"Your theses on the trade union question have had here the effect of a bomb". (36)

According to Rosmer, the syndicalist sympathisers of "La Verite" judged Trotsky's attacks to be "brutal and unjust" (37). He cited, among the most astounded, Ferdinand Charbit, from whom Rosmer insisted that he draft a reply. He did this in an article in "La Verite" for November 15, entitled "Trade Union Independence, the Safeguard of the Class". Surprised to see "La Verite" taking a position against trade union independence, he recalled the collaboration of the revolutionary syndicalists with the leadership of the Communist International, and declared himself to be "a firm supporter of trade union independence". He "considered that the fundamental arm of the revolutionary action of the proletariat is the trade union, because it represents the working class in the most complete and perfect form: it alone is open to all workers; it alone includes nothing but workers. It therefore has a class-composition infinitely more pure than no matter what party." (38)

Charbit's position was based on an anti-Stalinism which was rapidly developing toward pure anti-Communism, in its rejection of the guiding role of the revolutionary party. Rosmer replied to him in an article entitled "Trade Union Autonomy or Anti-Communist Bloc?", which appeared on November 22. He indicated the slope down which Charbit was going:

"It seems that, since the Congress of the C.G.T.U., since he observed the possibility of defeating the leadership of the C.G.T.U. by blocking with minorities of every colour, from the anarchists to the reformists, he has gone a long way, and not in good direction." (39)

Without doubt the differentiation was going on, though without producing a satisfactory result, at any rate in the short term. The discussion on the unions went on without enthusiasm. Few articles appeared: on November 29, there was one from the teacher of philosophy, Aime Patri, a former member of the Marx-Lenin Circle of Souvarin and a collaborator with La Lutte des Classes. Trotsky thought this article "frankly bad". There was an editorial from Rosmer on December 13, 1929, entitled "Facing the Danger of a Split in the C.G.T.U.", and an article which seems to have passed un-noticed at the time, drafted by the young chemical engineer, Pierre Frank - a member of the Communist Party in 1925, an oppositionist in 1927 and excluded in 1929 - an article inspired by Raymond Molinier, which appeared in "La Verite" for December 6: "For a trade union fraction of Oppositional Communists". The discussion closed with an article from the editor entitled "For a Strong C.G.T.U.", where the line for action was given as "For the C.G.T.U. Against A Bad Leadership" (40) Rosmer told Trotsky on December 19 about the end of the discussion:

"We have closed the trade union discussion. Nothing interesting came out of it, and in general it was thin. Apart from your piece and the poor reply from Charbit it gave us nothing." (41)

In this field, the differentiation which Trotsky desired and for which his theses were the bait, had not yet found its full dimension; the split with the "pure syndicalists" supporters of autonomy, was accomplished ideologically and the organisational consequ

ences of it were drawn, but "La Verite", which did not yet have an "alternative" trade union policy, was in this way exposed to the pressure of the trade union minorities sailing without a compass.

"La Verite", the International Organ of the Opposition

After the proposal by Rosmer to make the French and German editions of the review "Opposition" in Paris, and the absence of a reply by Trotsky, who was waiting to know more about the situation in Germany thanks to the presence of Kurt Landau in Berlin, the launch of the review was held up. Trotsky did not mention Rosmer's proposal again, the question of the review does not appear in their correspondence. The launch of "La Verite", the attention which they gave to the weekly, the internal difficulties of the "La Verite" group, the problem of the Sino-Soviet conflict, the opening of the crisis in the Belgian Opposition and the accumulation of disagreements with Urbahns, which prevented the stay of Landau in Berlin, seem to have relegated the project of "Opposition" to a second level.

While waiting for the international review to appear, it was Rosmer, the only comrade appointed to the task, who took on the essential task of centralising information and informing himself about the different groups, setting up an editorial committee and dealing with technical questions. He became a sort of "international centre", a market for the other groups of the Opposition, and "La Verite" filled provisionally the place of the review "Opposition", the appearance of which everyone seemed to want without, all that, seriously occupying themselves with it.

"La Verite" was the publication which incarnated the regroupment and the clarification of the French Opposition. In this way it became a sort of international organ of the Opposition, and acquired a certain authority. The provisional international committee could not be extended because both the Germans and the Austrians refused to join it. But the work of making contacts and Rosmer's travels enabled relations to be maintained with most of the groups in other countries, and in this way tended to establish relations between the other groups and to present the impression of the International Opposition in the process of constructing itself.

Contre le Courant published a multitude of articles by Trotsky and the Russian Opposition but could not possibly claim to play a role comparable to that of "La Verite", which served as an example, having emerged from the process of differentiation, being placed under the authority of Trotsky and under the leadership of the old militant, Rosmer. When Rosmer became Trotsky's emissary in Germany, in Austria and in Belgium, "La Verite" became a real axis, a pole of re-groupment. Rosmer contributed considerably to this result.

His prestige cannot be denied, and Gerard Rosenthal justifies it in this way:

"Alfred Rosmer, a veteran of revolutionary syndicalism, a 'minority' internationalist in the Great War, one of the first militants to go over to the Communist International, a former leader of the French Communist Party, a long-time friend of Trotsky, a fine face showing innate dignity, enjoyed undisputed moral authority." (42)

Rosmer did not lack the qualities needed to face his responsibilities: a capacity for analysis, flexibility in discussion while knowing how to insist frankly on the essential and perseverance... These qualities were decisive in the conflicts in which he intervened from outside, to settle problems positively and permanently without ever using "apparatus" arguments. At this time he was un-replaceable for the task of structuring the international Opposition, in which he had to act with finesse but with firmness and obstinacy. Here his sole limitation can be seen; his ability to structure his activity with lasting results, to surround himself with the indispensable militants, groups and structures. But could he fill effectively and enduringly, by himself, the place of the international committee which Trotsky and he had not managed to develop, after forming it in June, because of the German and Austrian problems?

In the end the international review, Opposition, never appeared. At the beginning of 1930 new projects were elaborated, and bore fruit in the publication of an International Bulletin of the Left Opposition. Its appearance was to begin in August 1930. What

are the reasons for this political set-back, which prevented the construction of an international centre of the Opposition? Were the problems political, or financial due to lack of cadres? Finally, why do we find no trace of this set-back and no explanation of it in the publications of the Opposition, in Trotsky's voluminous correspondence with the militants of the Opposition and, especially, with Rosmer?

One of the major reasons is, no doubt, that the absence of centralisation in the Opposition contributed considerably to prevent... centralisation. This tautology cannot give a sufficient answer, but it is necessary to stress how much the crisis in the Lenin and the "national-oppositionism" of Urbahns, as well as the fractional struggles in Austria, held up the development of international structures of the Opposition. Trotsky and Rosmer struggled on the basis of definite objectives in June at Prinkip but they ran into the conservatism of groups more concerned with their future and their position than with those of the international Opposition. Without the extension of a provisional international committee, without the financial participation of the groups to launch "Opposition", without cadres to see to the technical questions of publication, distribution, etc., such an organ could not be viable. Without will to create this publication on the part of those for whom it was a necessity - especially in the countries where there were many rival groups - the review could be no more than the subject of further differences.

The set-back to the launching of Opposition was therefore one of the last ill-effects of the delay in differentiation in the ranks of the international Left Opposition. The launching of "La Verite" had a more than symbolic value in this connection; "La Verite" replaced Opposition on the basis of a differentiation which was won in France. Trotsky and Rosmer were isolated in their own current - apart from rare favourable clarifications like that of the Americans in "Militant" - and they devoted their whole attention to the French weekly, which from that time onwards was to be a substitute for the international review and the provisional committee, for a time. By the same time it was a period of very specific contacts, which was prolonged, with all the political risks that that entails. But, as Trotsky wrote to Frey, it is necessary to "create public opinion of the international Opposition, as a preliminary to its organisational unification." (43)

F O O T N O T E S

- (1) Letter from Trotsky to a comrade in Paris - apparently Kharin - April 1929. A.H. 7286.
- (2) Letter from M. Paz to Trotsky, April 22, 1929. A.H. 5772.
- (3) P. Broue: "A Capitulator in Paris: The Kharin Affair", in Cahiers Leon Trotsky No. 7 - 8, op. cit., pp. 29 - 35.
- (4) Letter from Trotsky to Kharin, March 31, 1929. A.H. 8630.
- (5) Letter from Kharin to Trotsky, April 29, 1929. A.H. 2427.
- (6) See the article by P. Broue in Cahiers Leon Trotsky, No. 7 - 8, op. cit. p. 2.
- (7) Trotsky: "A Letter to the Italian Left Communists, Followers of Comrade Amadeo Bordiga", dated September 25, 1929, in "Writings: 1929", p. 318ff. A.H. T326.
- (8) "The Marx-Lenin Circle Makes Clear its Position", in Contre le Courant, No. 26, March 22, 1929, p. 30.
- (9) Letter from Trotsky to Souvarin, July 3, 1929, in "Writings: 1929", p. 188. A.H. 10493.
- (10) Letter from Paz to Trotsky, June 25, 1929. A.H. 3781.
- (11) Letter from Trotsky to Paz, June 19, 1929. A.H. 9491.
- (12) Letter signed "Rene Dionnet", on behalf of the editorial committee of Contre.

- Courant, June 29, 1929, A.H. 5774.
- (13) Ibid.
- (14) Letter from Trotsky to Maurice Paz and to the Contre le Courant group, July 8 1929. A.H. 9496.
- (15) Letter from Trotsky to Paz, July 11, 1929, "Writings: 1929", p. 190. A.H. 94
- (16) Ibid.
- (17) Letter of Trotsky to Rosmer in Broue "Correspondance", op. cit. p. 38 - 39.
- (18) About a dozen people took part in launching "La Verite": the two Molinier brothers, the Rosmers, F. Charbit, Marthe Bigot, Lucien Marzet, Auguste Mougeot, Sarah Menant, Pierre Gourget, Jeanne Martin des Pallieres, Pierre Frank.
- (19) Trotsky: "An Open Letter to the Editorial Board of 'La Verite'", dated August 6, 1929, in "Writings: 1929", p. 222ff.
- (20) Trotsky: "A Letter to the Editorial Board of 'La Lutte des Classes'", dated August 11, 1929, in "Writings: 1929", p. 236ff.
- (21) Ibid.
- (22) Ibid.
- (23) Letter from Rosmer to Trotsky, September 18, 1929, in Broue "Correspondance" op. cit., pp. 62 - 64.
- (24) Letter from Marguerite Rosmer to Trotsky, October 3, 1929, in Broue "Correspondance", op. cit., pp. 65 - 67.
- (25) Letter from Rosmer to Trotsky, October 6, 1929, in Broue "Correspondance", op. cit. p. 67 - 70.
- (26) Le Bulletin Communiste re-appeared in February 1930 (no. 31) after fourteen months' interval. We read in that issue: "Communism is fast asleep: one issue every four years is enough to note the degeneration of the party and of the International".
- (27) Monatte had strongly desired that a weekly organ of the Opposition should appear and had hesitated to write to Trotsky on this subject. However he was fast changing politically and, some months later, was to repudiate the designation "syndicalist-communist".
- (28) Letter of Treint to Trotsky, September 13, 1931, A.H. 5532.
- (29) Ibid.
- (30) Letter from Trotsky to Rosmer, in Broue "Correspondance", op. cit., pp. 70 -
- (31) An exchange of letters between Trotsky and Gerard Rosenthal led to a division of labour between "La Verite" and La Lutte des Classes: the latter became a theoretical monthly, with the tasks of filling in the gaps in the weekly. (Letters from Trotsky to Rosenthal, October 22 and 31, 1929, in Rosenthal, "Avocat de Trotsky", Paris, Robert Laffont, 1975, pp. 78 - 79, 83 - 84.)
- (32) Letter from Trotsky to Rosmer, October 14, 1929, in Broue "Correspondance", op. cit., pp. 74 - 75.

- (33) Trotsky: "A Declaration of 'La Verite'", in "La Verite" No. 1, September 1, 1929, and in "Writings: 1929", p. 226ff.
- (34) Letter of R. Molinier to Sedov, August 17, 1929, A.H. 12791.
- (35) Trotsky: "Communism and Syndicalism: an Introduction to a Discussion" appeared in "La Verite" for November 1, 1929. Durand gives it the date October 14, 1929. It was published in English by the Communist League of America (Opposition), the fore-runner of the Socialist Workers' Party, in 1931 in a pamphlet containing a collection of Trotsky's writings on the subject, dated March 1931, entitled "Communism and Syndicalism", with an introduction by James P. Cannon.
- (36) Letter from Alfred Rosmer to Trotsky, November 17, 1929, in Broue, "Correspondance", op. cit., pp. 81 - 84.
- (37) Ibid.
- (38) Charbit: "Trade Union Autonomy, the Safeguard of the Class", in "La Verite", November 15, 1929.
- (39) Rosmer: "Trade Union Autonomy or Anti-Communist Bloc?", in "La Verite", November 22, 1929.
- (40) Editorial Board of "La Verite", "For A Powerful C.G.T.U.", in "La Verite", December 20, 1929. Pierre Frank, in his article "For a trade union fraction of Oppositional Communists", comes out against the construction of a revolutionary tendency in the trade union and for a fraction controlled by the Left Opposition. This was at that time the only position which Trotsky decided to support.
- (41) Letter from A. Rosmer to Trotsky, December 19, 1929, in Broue "Correspondance" op. cit., pp. 99 - 101.
- (42) G. Rosenthal, "Avocat de Trotsky", op. cit., p. 77.
- (43) Letter of Trotsky to Frey, October 19, 1929, A.H. 8200.

C H A P T E R S I X

The Crisis of the Russian Opposition

While the Left Opposition was trying to provide itself with a structure on the international level, great events were in preparation in the USSR. These were to overture the political, economic and social context. The crisis of the right-centre bloc, the crisis of the food supply to the cities and the kulak danger precipitated the "great turn" towards forced collectivisation and towards industrialisation, in the framework of the five-year plans. This formidable change in Soviet society was the product of another zigzag by the Stalinist fraction, which, this time, was an enduring one. It was also, in the eyes of many of the deportees in the camps and the isolators, the defeat of the right; the prospect of Thermidor seemed to be lessening and there was hope of better tomorrows. For these reasons, it was the dawn of a grave crisis in the ranks of the Bolshevik-Leninists.

It was vital for Trotsky to keep up all the solid contacts with the USSR that he could. Even when it was established that, henceforth, the Russian Opposition would not play a predominant role which it had had in the 1923 - 1928 period, the international Opposition and Trotsky needs to retain a network of information about what was going on in Soviet society. Moreover, it is difficult to imagine any sort of international opposition, which did not have connections, however loose they might be, with its historic section which was still, despite the repression, in the front rank of the struggle for the regeneration of the Communist parties and of the Communist International.

Trotsky organised the work and took measures to protect this contact; it was Leon Sedov who was exclusively concerned with the contacts with the USSR (1). In addition, there were always one or more secretaries who knew Russian; all Trotsky's articles, as well as the circular letters, were regularly sent into the Soviet Union, particularly to known comrades in the colonies of deportees. Only in course of time Trotsky discovered that these mailings were intercepted, after which he completely abandoned the use of letters. They sent documents on open postcards; a trick which the police-brain would find hard to imagine... The Bulletin of the Opposition, produced in Europe, was sent secretly, wrapped inside Communist journals that had been lightened and were sent to institutions very rarely like bottles in the sea. Most of the time there was in fact someone who knew that the Bulletin would arrive and how.

The Trotsky Aid was intended, at Trotsky's express wish, to become a fund to help deported Bolshevik-Leninists. From June 1929 the international Opposition undertook the publication of the Bulletin of the Opposition. Finally, and these were not the least important element, Russian Oppositionists abroad served as relays; this was the case of Kharin in France and of the young oppositionist Nina Vorovskaya, who was authorised to leave the USSR for the treatment of her tuberculosis in Germany. One of their tasks consisted in recruiting and involving militants in the Russian work, in contact with the national positions and of contacting travellers.

These arrangements as a whole were to play a very important role in the course of the year 1929, especially during the crisis of the Russian Opposition, from April to September.

The Stalinist Turn; Was it to the Left?

In November 1928 the plenum of the Central Committee of the Bolshevik Party attacked the "Right deviation", with the approval of the leaders of the right. Stalin announced the policy of industrialisation. This was one of the first indications of the conflict between the Stalinist fraction and that of Bukharin, which Trotsky called the "crisis of the centre-right bloc". This opened on February 15, 1929, at the moment when the existence of a crisis in the food supply, due to the kulaks, who refused to deliver grain and held it back in store, was recognised in Moscow. Stalin had wanted to free himself from the right (Bukharin, Tomsky and Rykov) in the Politburo but retreated on February 9 and 10 in the face of their threat all to resign. After the plenum of the Central Committee (April 16 - 17) had definitively condemned the right, the XVIth Party Congress (held from April 23 - 28) adopted the first five-year plan, with retrospective effect to October 1, 1928.

Forced collectivisation and headlong industrialisation were two facets of the turn. In the countryside, collectivisation took the form of a "peasant October" for the poor peasants against the kulaks. But, faced by the lack of confidence which the middle peasants showed in collectivisation and collective farms, they had recourse to compulsion. In October 1929 there were only 4% of peasant households in the kolkhoses; in March 1930, there were 58% of them! In the same period, the countryside was in prey to peasant war, massacres of herds and to resistance to collectivisation by every means. The state "abolished the kulaks", arrested and deported to Siberia and the forced labour camps ten million peasants. This civil war in the countryside equally affected the cities; stocks of food ran short, creating a state of scarcity.

Within a context of world crisis, following the stock exchange crash on Wall Street in October 1929, the USSR entered its own industrialisation at a dizzy pace; while industrial production in USA fell by 25%, that in the USSR rose by 250%!

The first political consequence of this turn by the Stalinist fraction was the end of the threat of Thermidor and the definitive defeat of the political right, Bukharin-Tomsky-Rykov, who advocated a policy of concessions towards the kulaks. This sharp turn put an end to a period of concessions and hesitations on the part of Stalin towards the right and what it represented socially. It was due to the necessity to preserve the apparatus from the consequences, and from the price to be paid for, this policy of concessions to the right. The time of reckoning was drawing near. On this point, the crisis in the food supply no doubt was revealing.

So this sharp turn took on another aspect, that of a new political zigzag by the Stalinist leadership in the face of the internal situation in the USSR. At the same time, another aspect of the turn shows it to have been a zigzag; in condemning the right, the Stalinist fraction took up the arguments which the Left Opposition has used two years previously, and "stole" the economic theories of Preobrazhensky. But, while the apparatus short on economic theory, picked up and used the proposals for planning, industrialisation and collectivisation of the Left Opposition, it was to realise them with its own bureaucratic methods. Preobrazhensky had foreseen that, to counter-act the difficulties of the period of primitive socialist accumulation, it would be necessary to make the trade unions play their full role - including necessarily the right to strike - as well as democracy in the party, to enable the contradictions of this phase of economic development to be positively resolved.

However, the apparatus, from its side, could not accept such proposals; industrialisation was to be carried through at a frantic speed with brutality, radically and bureaucratically. In the countryside the apparatus brutally changed course and passed from concessions to the kulaks to "de-kulakisation" and forced collectivisation.

Soviet society was deeply shaken by this economic turn with its considerable social importance. On the political level, the Stalinist leadership was master of the game in the party, where it had finally eliminated all the oppositions, and its applied by its own methods the political economy of a Left Opposition which it had combatted, condemned and defeated, against the policy of a right opposition which it had defeated, attacked and finally liquidated, at the same time pitching out its policy of concessions to the kulaks to attack them frontally thereafter.

Many party militants, especially in the Communist youth, saw in this tremendous upheaval their first chance to serve the revolution, after the years of bitter fractional struggles within the party. The radical, bureaucratic aspect of the turn was taken to be Stalin's will to construct socialist society rapidly, hard methods being understood to be correct, given the size of the task and of the adversary. "The Peasant October and the Five-Year Plan, heavy industry won the support of these young militants.

The Left Opposition could see two sources of satisfaction which made this turn be taken to be a "pleasant surprise"; the defeat and the liquidation of the right, which the Left Opposition and the Left Opposition had fought so hard and which, at that time, the apparatus was protecting: the "new" turn against the right and, for that turn, the acceptance of the three economic points of the Left Opposition; planning, industrialisation and collectivisation.

None the less, the Left Opposition was still subjected to the same ferocious repression. Nothing seemed to make for improving the conditions of the deportees in exile, in the camps and in the isolators. In the ranks of this opposition, always ready for struggle

militants were getting impatient and were being un-nerved at being still in exile while so many great events were unfolding in Moscow and throughout the country.

Victor Serge describes this phenomenon in a letter from Moscow in April 1929:

"Serious uneasiness is ripening among the oppositionists amid the repression. Preobrazhensky, Radek and Smilga believe in the necessity to support Stalin and to make repeated efforts to get re-integration. They are proceeding from a pure theoretical conception of the party, which goes back to the first years of the Revolution, a mechanical conception of the relations of right, centre, left, etc, and are losing sight of the fact that, without internal reform of the party, there is no longer a party in the former sense of the word... I am told that they have decided to agree to differ, feeling themselves alone and not wishing to have a demoralising role. The mass of the oppositionists, hunted and persecuted, are developing a great deal of activity and have no fancies of this kind. On the contrary, there is spreading among them a state of mind diametrically the opposite, which leads to a fear among them - (doubt about the possibility of a radical reform of the party, ideas that it is too late, that an incurable slide down to the right has already taken place... This is a dangerous state of mind, because it leads to letting slip the last and still great chance of reform in the revolution and of salvation in the reform." (2)

The "capitulators"

Radek believed that it was necessary to support the centre against the right, in order to render the turn to the left irreversible. He circulated documents in this sense and the GPU made it their business to ensure that they arrived everywhere, while it systematically blocked the circulation of all the critical and virulent contributions against Radek. The capitulation of the ex-Zinovievist Safarov and the dangerous evolution of Radek did not shake the political cohesion of the Opposition. However, the circulation on March 29, 1929, of the Tomsk Theses, signed by Radek, Smilga and Beloborodov, were a new event. Radek vigorously criticised the appearance of a series of articles in the Western bourgeois press by Trotsky. Preobrazhensky no doubt fearing the inevitable slope down to capitulation on which Radek was moving, put forward precise demands as a pre-condition for any joint activity with Radek and Smilga; in particular, he demanded total freedom of meeting for the deportees and the restoration of freedom of the press. His object was to re-group the "conciliators" and negotiate with the party leadership. He hoped to obtain a lifting of the repression (especially the use of article 58 of the criminal code against the Opposition, which was used for the expulsion of Trotsky) and the return of Trotsky to the USSR. These demands are an antidote to capitulation. But, precisely, Preobrazhensky knew that the apparatus could never accept these demands. He lucidly "... foresaw that the militants who wanted to be re-integrated at any price into the party will have to submit to 'methods which they cannot approve' and that they will have to bear their new party card 'like a heavy cross'".

The party apparatus was determined to yield nothing. It tried to extract the utmost advantage from these hesitations and from the confusion in the ranks of the Opposition. At the end of April, a few days after the "great turn" was decided, was brought back to Moscow, where, like Radek and Smilga, he enjoyed a regime of semi-liberty during the negotiations with the party leadership, represented by the two Old Bolsheviks, Yaroslavsky and Ordjonikidze, both members of the Central Control Committee. But, contrary to the wishes of Preobrazhensky, the GPU, which organised the large-scale diffusion of their documents, continued to intercept all the correspondence of the exiles. Panic began to spread in the colonies of deportees, and contradictory rumours were circulating. In a climate of great political upheaval, the distress and panic among the exiled militants, deprived of information, was a normal phenomenon, on which the party leadership was counting, to speed up the crisis that was hatching in the Left Opposition.

Little information filtered out during the three long months of the negotiations between Radek, Preobrazhensky and Smilga and the party leadership. To be sure, it was the best link in the Opposition, the most advanced on the road to capitulation, which was advanced by the party leadership. It was, therefore, against Radek - and not against Preobrazhensky, whose evolution was less certain - that all eyes, and especially the eyes of critics, turned.

Trotsky's first articles devoted to militants on the road to capitulation were leaving nothing to chance and were essentially directed against Radek, no doubt because of the publicity which he was getting from the party and the press.

Among the criticisms which Trotsky levelled at Radek, there is one to which restrained approval will be given: Trotsky gives as the source of the hesitations of Radek his "aggravatedly impulsive" character, and recalls his propensity to zigzags over many years despite his talent as a Marxist journalist and the twenty-five years of revolutionary militancy which he had behind him. Trotsky sought to demonstrate that Radek was not and could not be, the leader of any group in the Left Opposition, and that a new zigzag on his part could concern only him alone, within the framework of a political evolution which had begun some years earlier. This political appreciation, based on traits of character, even if they were justified, were not to the taste of all the oppositionists particularly Kharin, who, moreover, was on the same political slope as Radek and who no more than the "Parisian" variety of the capitulators in formation in the USSR: here a method of struggle which he called "biographical", in the manner of the Stalinist (cf. the non-Bolshevism of Trotsky before 1917 and the spread of literature on this subject in 1923).

Trotsky had a premonition about the coming capitulation of Radek; he raised the fundamental questions:

"Radek and a few others with him think that the most favourable moment for their capitulation has now arrived. Why, actually? Because, you see, Stalin has dealt with Rykov, Tomsky and Bukharin. But was our task really to get one part of the group to deal with the other? Has the principled position on basic political questions really changed? Has the party regime changed? Hasn't the anti-Marxist programme of the Comintern remained in force? Is there really ^{any} thing at all sure about tomorrow?" (4)

To these questions, Trotsky gave the replies which wholly relate to the nature of the turn by the party leadership:

"The present crushing of the right, sharp in form but superficial in content, in its turn is only a by-product of the policy of the Opposition. Bukharin is completely right when he accuses Stalin of not having thought up a single word, but just used bits of the Opposition platform. What has produced the left twitch of the apparatus? Our attack, our irreconcilability, the growth of our influence, the courage of our cadres." (5)

Then the political sentence is handed down:

"By capitulating, Radek has simply struck himself from the ranks of the living. He will fall into the category headed by Zinoviev, of half-suspended, half-pardoned people." (6)

Trotsky addressed the Opposition, after mentioning how "the revolutionary epoch quickly exhausts people":

"Tenacity, tenacity, tenacity! - that is the slogan for the current period. And let the dead bury their dead." (7)

On July 13, "Pravda" published a declaration by Preobrazhensky, Radek and Smilga; this marks the final capitulation of the three leaders of the Opposition. It has two essential different aspects, which give some summary indications of the course of the "negotiations" which lasted three months. In fact, the first part is devoted to a sort of list of the points of agreement between the three militants and the line of the Central Committee. Thus, we read in the document:

"We, the under-signed, declare our agreement with the general political line of the party and our break with the Opposition (that is, with the current which, on the basis of the political line of Trotsky, has re-grouped round a so-called "Centre of the B(olshevik) L(eninists) of the Soviet Union"). We consider the policy of industrialisation...to be the programme for building socialism... We support the struggle against the kulaks... we support the struggle against bureaucratism in the apparatuses of the state and of the party.... We support the struggle against the

right, which objectively reflects the discontent of capitalist and petty bourgeois elements against the policy of socialist offensive which the party is waging. support the policy of the Communist International, which is leading relentlessly struggle against social-democracy". (8)

All this part of the final document, apart from the role of the Communist International did not necessarily raise major problems, to the extent that the struggle against the right, the kulak and bureaucratism were fundamentals for the Opposition.

However, the second part of the declaration was devoted to a list of political disagreements with Trotsky:

"We believe that Leninism is the ideological basis of Communism. We have nothing common with Trotsky's theory of the permanent revolution. The development of the Russian and the Chinese revolutions has shown its inaptitude and its incorrectness... We categorically reject the appreciation held by Trotsky and his friends of the class-nature of the Soviet power and the party leadership... Despite all the bureaucratic deformations of the Soviet apparatus and some elements of degeneration we believe Soviet power to be the dictatorship of the proletariat... The slogan of secret voting leads to weakening the dictatorship of the proletariat and opening the road to the Thermidorean forces. The demand for the legalisation of fractions within the party and for freedom of criticism... advanced by Trotsky, is not a Bolshevik one... Now that our divergences from the party have diminished and that our return to the party has becoming an absolute necessity, Trotsky and his friends are more and more distanced from the party, as a result of... their abandonment of a series of fundamental theses of Leninism. It is only in this way that one can explain the appearance of Trotsky in the bourgeois press, an appearance which we fully condemn, as well as the creation of the Centre of the Bolshevik-Leninists of the Soviet Union, which is a step towards the foundation of a new party." (9)

The two latter parts of the document were devoted respectively to demonstrating that the party line was correct and to a final renunciation of all their political ideas. They were after having judged as "erroneous... the creation of a fractional organisation and its activity with violence unheard-of in the history of the party (secret print-shops, the demonstration of November 7, etc.)", the three ex-militants of the Opposition declared:

"... The XVth Congress has seen correctly when it condemned our platform. Starting from the considerations set out above, we withdraw our signatures from fractional documents, we declare ourselves in perfect solidarity with the general line of the party and we demand to be re-admitted to its ranks. We call upon our friends in the Opposition to follow our example." (10)

Three months' discussion were certainly not ^{too} long a delay to get such a renunciation by three former leaders of the Opposition, of their ideas, which they believed, and particularly Preobrazhensky, to have been confirmed, both by the "great turn" of the Stalinists and by its first economic and social results. From then on, there could be no question for these ex-leaders of the Opposition not understanding the meaning of what they declared in their document:

"It is precisely to realise this task... the continuation of the proletarian revolution in Russia, that we want to be re-integrated into the party, to struggle and to be victorious with it." (11)

In fact they had renounced all their political ideas and, tragic irony, even what the party, after having captured them, had applied since the turn. This was definitively their certificate of political death that they had signed.

The declaration of Radek, Preobrazhensky and Smilga was a great victory for Stalin, for more than one reason. First, there was the stature of the men who capitulated. Radek was a brilliant journalist and a member of the Opposition since 1923. Smilga, who was still young, had been Lenin's man of confidence during the preparation of the October insurrection in 1917. He was an economist who joined the Unified Opposition and later went over from the positions of Zinoviev to those of Trotsky. Finally, Preobrazhensky was also an economist, had defended the viewpoints of the Opposition in 1923 and in particular had fought against Bukharin and advised a policy of industrialisation.

Besides the question of the stature of these militants, it is essential to mention that in the camps and the isolators many of the deportees had believed that these three leaders were going to negotiate in Moscow in their name and on their positions, that is, the positions which had earned them exile. Reading Pravda was a brutal disillusionment, a veritable catastrophe, which the GPU had cleverly prepared. The declaration published in Pravda was counter-signed by four hundred deportees. This supplementary motive of satisfaction to Stalin was a real bombshell in the camps; not only had three of the heroic leaders of the Opposition capitulated, but four hundred of their comrades in the camps and isolators had followed them. It was a terrible blow to the morale of these people, who as a whole formed an opposition which had consciously decided to pursue its struggle, knowing the difficulties and the sharpness of the struggle. Many exiles capitulated following the "Declaration", but they did it individually, as broken men. We can measure the magnitude of the crisis which was running through the Opposition in what Solntsev wrote to Rakovsky in July:

"The catastrophe has exploded. Panic and confusion reign. People are seeking individual solutions to the situation. Already before this, internal relations were far from good and have now become really insupportable everywhere. The unheard-of treachery of the three has turned all moral reserves upside-down, all the principles which forbade certain things. Complete ideological and moral degeneration, no one trusts anyone else, no one believes anyone else. An atmosphere of mutual distrust has been created, a situation of discussion in groups, a distancing and isolation from one another. Everyone is afraid of being betrayed or that someone else will get their place. Therefore everyone is trying to slide into the party over the back of everyone else. The dam has broken... The few who have not lost their heads, who have not changed their opinion, cannot undertake anything and cannot even dampen the panic." (12)

However, the hyperbolic character of the capitulation of Preobrazhensky, Radek and Smilga began to secrete anti-bodies to the paroxysm of crisis in the Opposition, when all the exiles seemed to be engaging sooner or later on the same course. It began to provoke rejection reactions, not only in those who refused any kind of capitulation, but also on the part of militants who were politically more hesitant and who were on the fatal down-slope, who wanted to demand to be re-integrated and to stop their fractional activity but refused to be made into capitulators, to renounce their political ideas, to denounce the Opposition and to condemn Trotsky as an agent of big capital and of the world press.

In order that the Opposition should not founder definitively by losing those militants who still held out, it was necessary to fight against the "complete ideological and moral degeneration" and to hasten to reconstruct "the dam which had broken", according to what Solntsev said. (13)

Trotsky denounced the declaration of the three on July 27, in an article entitled "A Wretched Document". He called it "a unique document of political and moral degeneration" (14) In "The psychology of capitulation", he wrote:

"The capitulation of Radek, Smilga and Preobrazhensky is in its own way a major political fact. It shows above all how completely a great and heroic generation of revolutionaries whose destiny it was to pass through the war and the October Revolution has spent itself. Despite the ludicrous form of the capitulation there are undoubtedly elements of tragedy in it; three old and meritorious revolutionaries have removed their names from the roll of the living. For very many centrists the road to revival is opened. For capitulators it is closed. They have deprived themselves of the most important thing; the right to command confidence. This they can never regain." (15)

For Trotsky their capitulation was full of lessons, of which he drew two, essential ones. The first was that these militants condemned themselves, in advance, in their 1928 writings, and gave the example of Radek:

"On May 10, Radek wrote indignantly to Preobrazhensky of Zinoviev and Pyatakov: "Do not do violence to their convictions, they recant. It is impossible to help the working class by falsehood." Thus Radek did not think it conceivable that capitulators

could, sincerely and honestly, renounce their views... The views of the Opposition were formed at the beginning of 1923. In the middle of 1928, i.e. in the sixth year of the political test, Radek fully asserted their correctness. But a year later, having spent it in exile, Radek together with the other pair of deserters put out a statement summarised in the words: 'The party was right to condemn our platform'. (16)

The second lesson is that these revolutionaries did not stand up to the test, and that their capitulation was due to a moral collapse, which Trotsky had already described in the article entitled "Tenacity" in June 1929:

"A revolutionary epoch quickly exhausts people. It is not so easy to withstand the pressure of the imperialist war, the October Revolution, the series of international defeats and the reaction growing from them. People spend themselves, their nerves fail, consciousness gets worn out and falls apart. We have seen the tragic examples of how the generation of Bebel, Guesde, Victor Adler and Plekhanov was used up. But there the process took decades. Development has gone on at a completely different rate from the time of the imperialist war and the October Revolution. Some perished in the civil war, others could not hold out physically. Hundreds of Old Bolsheviks are now living as obedient officials, criticising their boss over a cup of tea and toiling away. But these at least have not shared in complicated conjuring tricks, have not pretended to be eagles, have not taken up positional struggles, have not written platforms, but have quietly and slowly degenerated from revolutionaries into bureaucrats. We have seen a whole series of examples of how Old Bolsheviks, who had fought to maintain the tradition of the party and themselves, put out their last effort for the Opposition; some by 1925, some by 1927, some by 1929. But finally, they have written themselves off; their nerves could not take it." (17)

All the same, Trotsky could not restrict himself to denouncing the psychological aspects of the capitulations. His essential aim was to show that those who had capitulated simply abandoned, had betrayed what the Opposition had fought for since 1923, while the zigzag of Stalin in no way justified a revision of the strategy of the Opposition. At the beginning of July, Trotsky showed why centrism remained the principal enemy, in opposition to all the capitulators, who wanted to support the centre in its struggle against the right:

"It is precisely the centrists who, in order to draw the attention of the party away from the basic questions, i.e. from their basic errors and omissions, are now in words reducing the whole life of the party to the struggle against the 'right' enemy, i.e. the Right groups within the party. And the left centrists within the Opposition or close to the Opposition want to swim with the current and hasten to assume protective coloration. In fact, what could be simpler than, instead of pointing to oneself the problems of changing the programme, the strategy, the tactics of the Comintern, to occupy oneself with cheap, formal, incited and even paid "struggle against the Right", with the leading role in the struggle being led by inveterate opportunists..." (18)

Trotsky strikes a hammer-blow at the heads of the capitulators with an argument in the form of a simple observation:

"Of what use to the Stalinists are Pyatakov, Radek and the others in the struggle against the Bukharinists? None. However, they can be of considerable use in the struggle against the Left Opposition. By contrast, an ideologically irreconcilable Opposition remains the best aid to the centrists in their struggle against the Right." (19)

From this point, the task is to struggle pitilessly against the capitulators, while trying to solidify the hesitant militants whom the organisational rout of the Opposition abandons to themselves and the pressure of the GPU.

The Declaration of Rakovsky

Some weeks after the declaration of the three, Khristian Rakovsky, in exile at Saratov, began to discuss with his comrades in deportation about elaborating a political document intended to halt the wave of capitulations in the Opposition.

The first feature of this initiative was, in fact, its principal weakness and a considerable handicap: it appeared late. Thus, in the letter from Solntsev to Rakovsky in July, extracts from which were published by Yaroslavsky - the GPU having intercepted the letter - we find traces of a recognition of this error:

"... we have delayed in an in-admissible way..." (20)

But this error is probably only the simple consequence of another, graver error; that of having regarded the trio of Preobrazhensky, Radek and Smilga as representing the whole of the Opposition in relation to the authorities. Solntsev's letter implicitly recognises this mistake when it speaks of the "unheard-of treachery" of the capitulators of the three.

The second feature of this initiative is that, if it was carried out by Rakovsky, it is also the fruit of elaboration by Solntsev and in particular of the opinion, which he expressed, about what should be done, in his letter to Rakovsky:

"The task in my opinion, is to try to make of this situation, which we cannot prevent a manoeuvre on our part of the same kind as was undertaken on October 16, 1926. I am aware of all the negative, dangerous aspects of a step of this kind. But we have only two possible roads; either we let events take their course and do nothing to prevent the complete disintegration of our movement, or we use the small opportunities which this step offers. If we succeed in doing it, what positive result can it bring to us? Above all, we shall succeed... in taking the initiative on our side, even though it is in a way that smells very bad". (21)

In fact, the problem is that "many will sign the renunciation of the fractional struggle without worrying about knowing who drafted the declaration" (22). However, it was not a matter of indifference if it emanated from I. N. Smirnov, from an individual initiative or from Rakovsky and his comrades. Solntsev stated clearly:

"In the first case, it would certainly be a step towards the liquidation of the Opposition. In the second case, this declaration would be the starting point for a manoeuvre in order to preserve the Opposition". (23)

It is not surprising that Rakovsky should be mentioned first by Solntsev. He could, in fact, personify a rallying point for those who refused to capitulate, but also for those who were turning more or less clearly towards capitulation. This has to do with the strong personality of the former ambassador in France of the Soviet Union, a convinced revolutionary and internationalist, an oppositionist in 1923, a leader of the Unified Opposition at Trotsky's side, exiled to Astrakhan in 1928 and then to Saratov. Pierre Broue describes him as "one of the people most hated by the bureaucracy in power" (24). His moral and political authority in the ranks of the Opposition could not be disputed. Since the exile of Trotsky and Leon Sedov, he was the real leader. When Rakovsky answered Solntsev's request, he was to put this authority to use.

Solntsev likewise stressed the "Smirnov danger", which was a by-product of the delay in the struggle to preserve the Opposition against the capitulators; Ivan N. Smirnov, who condemned the capitulation of the three, took up again their original demands and, like them, demanded discussions with the party leadership. The oppositionists who had learned from the experience, (like Solntsev) believed that he wanted to develop like his three forerunners, and that there was a danger that he might draw with him a fresh wave of disoriented deportees.

Finally, Solntsev stressed the essential danger in the declaration:

"The principal danger is that the Opposition will not understand it. It is going to re-unite all those who are hesitating and to alienate all those who have remained devoted to the platform. The only guarantee depends on this step being taken by leaders in whom they have confidence." (25)

There is, overall, the political import and significance which Rakovsky attached to the two documents which he elaborated in August: the "Declaration to the Central Committee and the Central Control Committee", jointly signed by Vladimir V. Kossior and Mikhail Okoudjava, the former secretary of the Communist Party in Georgia, who was deported to Samarkand, and then counter-signed by hundreds of deportees, and, "Theses", signed likewise by Kossior and Okoudjava, intended to support the declaration in the eyes of the militants. It cannot be denied that Rakovsky took on a great responsibility when he drafted the "Declaration" and had it circulated, with the "Theses", in the colonies of

deportees, to win their signatures, before sending the text to the Central Committee: but the situation imposed running such a risk upon him.

With the exception of a short paragraph on the Communist International, this declaration is concerned only with the internal problems of the USSR. After a short summary of events since the XVth Congress, it approaches the internal difficulties consequent on "... the new socialist construction..." in the following way. (26)

Stressing the external dangers (Sino-Russian conflict, "re-awakened policy of intervention by international imperialism"), the signatories express the view that the realisation of the five-year plan will "lead to an extreme strain on the productive forces and the taxable capacities of the worker and peasant masses..." and that "the acquisition of equipment from abroad..." will have the result of "raising the cost of living as well as reducing real wages" (27). The place of the Bolshevik Leninists, which is the decisive issue in this declaration, is defined as follows:

"We believe that the struggle to realise the Five-Year Plan is, after the Civil War, the most serious battle which has taken place between the Communist Party and the proletariat behind it, as well as the poor peasants, on one side, and capitalism which is raising its head, on the other... the defeat of these plans would open the road to a right-wing current, the policy of which... would lead to the restoration of capitalism and the fall of the dictatorship of the proletariat... With the majority of the party, we recognise that the right danger, within the Party, is a direct, immediate threat to socialist construction". (28)

After recommending a real purge of the right in the party, Rakovsky and his comrades devote a long paragraph to the problem of the kulak. They believed that, in the matter of collectivisation, "... the principal, fundamental task is to lead the peasant, progressively but with perseverance, to collective exploitation, the only form which is a solid base for the construction of the socialist economy." (29) As for the kulak, it must at one and the same time cease to integrate him and fight against him, by finding support on the organisations of poor peasants, which will form the linkage with the middle peasants and draw them away from the political control of the kulaks.

The following part of the declaration is devoted to the problem of bureaucracy in the State apparatus. It calls for struggle against this bureaucracy. It stresses the considerable financial burden which keeping up this immense governmental and trade union apparatus involves, as well as that of the party. The signatories treat bureaucracy as "a real national disaster", which is responsible for scandals and abuses of all kinds. They declare:

"... Only an apparatus which rests on the trust of the masses, an apparatus based on suitability, on removability and on respect for revolutionary legality, can correspond to the interests of the toiling masses and to the requirements of the proletarian dictatorship". (30)

Similarly, democracy within the party, anticipated in the programme and the constituent decisions of congresses and plenums and especially the resolution of December 1927 "... must be thoroughly accepted." (31)

Finally, while "adopting the new line of the Communist International in the struggle against the right danger (and) recognising that its essential task is to struggle against social-democracy...", the signatories believe "... at the same time that the leadership of the Communist International has not emerged from its period of ideological fluctuations". (32) The last paragraphs are devoted to defining the attitude of the Left Opposition towards the party:

"In the present declaration, we have set out the whole of the important questions which the appreciation of the Left Opposition co-incides with that of the party, without concealing from the party or its leadership the disagreements which exist" (33)

The signatories believed that their duty was "... to support, entirely and unconditionally, the party and the Central Committee in the application of the plans of socialist construction..." They stated that "the new circumstances" (the "turn" and the struggle against the right...) have "... in part removed the barriers separating the Opposition of the Bolshevik-Leninists from the party." (34)

Believing that these new circumstances "... should lead to an improvement of the relations which have come about between the Leninist Opposition and the party leadership,

difficult relations which have resulted from our activity... and also from the repression which the leadership has imposed on the Opposition", the signatories, in the name of the Opposition, demand to be re-integrated into the party, that the Bolsheviki-Leninists be released and that Trotsky be brought back from exile. They make the point that to expel him was "... the greatest political mistake of the party leadership" (35). Finally, in the belief that the existence of factions is harmful, the signatories declared themselves ready to renounce fractional methods of struggle.

This declaration was sent in its final form to the Central Committee and the Central Control Committee on August 22, 1929. Besides the signatures of Rakovsky, Kossior and Okoudjava, it carried those of five hundred deportees, including many Old Bolsheviki, long-standing oppositionists. In his "Letter accompanying the declaration of August 22, 1929" (36), Rakovsky pointed out that, up to September 8, ninety-five colonies of deportees had supported the declaration.

A Necessary Stage... Was it a Sufficient Stage?

Pacific and moderate, these are the principal characteristics of the declaration. It sought out and exhaustively established the points of agreement between the Opposition and the party, but it did not touch - or only a little - on the disagreements. In restating the position of the Opposition, the declaration also recognised the positive aspects of the turn by the leadership. The general framework and many particular aspects recall the terms of Solntsev's letter, and his name was on the list of signatories.

The declaration demanded that the Opposition be re-integrated into the party and declared that it was ready to cease fractional activity, in return for a restoration of the democracy of the party, for the lifting of the repression against the Left Opposition and for the return of Trotsky.

Can this be considered to be a capitulation? No! It differs on one essential point from the declaration of Radek, Preobrazhensky and Smilga; far from repudiating their earlier political positions, the signatories re-affirm that the political line of the Opposition was correct. Can it, in that case, be regarded as a preliminary to capitulation?

This was the opinion of a number of deportees who criticised it "from the left". It was what Solntsev foresaw and feared:

"Those who will not understand immediately the aim and importance of the manoeuvre will make noise as they did on October 16 (1926)... This will happen with our left, which still lives in the masses, and with our youth..." (37)

It is true that the declaration includes numerous concessions which can only shock the most radical elements of the Opposition - but was the declaration really addressed to them? For example, the declaration powerfully attacks the right, but does not breathe a word about the centre, which so long protected the right - at the period of the centre-right bloc - against the blows of the left, while Trotsky presented the centre "the principal enemy". All the same, when the declaration speaks about the bureaucracy, it declares that it "... is with the party... for a decisive and implacable struggle against the bureaucracy". It is equally difficult for a Bolshevik Leninist in deportation to accept the silence of the document on the questions of socialism in a single country and the world revolution - which is hardly mentioned - while the term "socialist construction"... in a single country appears fourteen times... Is it not a contradiction of the formulae of zigzag or bureaucratic adventurism, which Trotsky employed, to speak of "socialist construction"?

However, in counter-point to these indisputable concessions to the party direction, we should mention other points: in the centre there is the policy aimed at reliance in the countryside on the poor peasants, in order to win the middle peasants in course of time and to lead them progressively into the framework of collectivisation. This is a penetrating answer to the bureaucratic and savage policy of Stalin, which applied pressure on the poor and middle peasants and "de-kulakised" because it had for too long favoured their interests and did not know how to combat the kulak politically. We should equally take into consideration the denunciation of the bureaucratic methods of the Communist International, the denunciation of the interventionist policy of imperialism (the Sino-Russian conflict) in opposition on this point to the erroneous positions of Paz and Urbahns.

The paragraph which calls for the realisation of complete democracy in the party, for suitability and removability in the apparatus, for support for the resolution of December 1923, contains essential demands, which counter-balance the delicate passage of a document where the leadership (repressive) and the Opposition (at fault) are declared to be jointly responsible for their bad relations.

In this way, each concession to the party leadership can be seen to be, at least in part, corrected by the re-affirmation of the fundamental viewpoints of the Opposition. At the same time, it is clear that the signatories had, of their own free will, placed greater emphasis on what brought them nearer to the party, including by using concessions, than on what separated them. This clever proportioning, between "concessions and political "re-affirmations", gives its true character to the declaration: it is a manoeuvre. It was aimed, not at the radical elements, but at the hesitant, who were drawing nearer to the party without, for all that, re-affirming their politics, and ran the risk of taking the decisive step, renouncing their politics and capitulating. If the radical elements criticised the declaration, in return five hundred deportees, a majority of whom were probably disoriented and discouraged militants, who in that case held the ranks together behind the banner of Rakovsky.

The set aim of the declaration, to stop the wave of capitulations, was undeniably achieved in this way, and this tactical step saved what could be saved and preserved in the Opposition.

Several exiled militants expressed their understanding of Rakovsky's declaration, in letters to Leon Sedov. For example, N. I. Mekler wrote from Biysk, where he was deported, that he thought that "some tired comrades and sceptics will still leave us", but that there "are plenty of new ones and also many firm and faithful comrades." (38) Another deportee, Lasha A. Kievlenko, writes:

"The Saratov declaration was clearly necessary. Events are clearly proving it. Apart from the numerous signatories, opinions are very divided about it. Some have given it a favourable welcome and are satisfied with its conciliatory tendency, and try to make use of it to move further to the right; others have welcomed it with a shadow of enthusiasm ("morale is going down"), believing it to be a lesser evil and have signed, (after making reservations), believing that it is not possible to act any differently, in view of the situation in the country, the party and the Opposition. We recognise that we must express the urgent need which numerous comrades are showing to knock at the door of the party. We recognise the change of tactics which the declaration defines..." (39)

The full dimension of the declaration would be given by the party, in its reaction:

"... The brutality of the close of the rejection with which the apparatus has opposed the August declaration, the violent attacks over Yaroslavsky's signature in Pravda and the ferocious reprisals against Rakovsky, who was taken away from Saratov and deported in inhuman conditions to Barnaul, against Sosnovsky, who was sent to the initiators in Cheliabinsk and finally at Tomsk - a real tomb - succeeded in convincing those who were really hesitating, the sincere conciliators and the really naive.. (40)

In fact, apart from the increasing harshness of the repression against the initiators of the declaration, the only reply by the apparatus came from Yaroslavsky, who was in charge of "negotiations" with the candidates for capitulation. In an article published in Pravda, he accused the Opposition of wanting to deceive the party, of trying to dupe it.

Trotsky replied in the Bulletin:

"But the candour with which the Opposition demands its re-admission into the party does not at all appear accidental to the guardian of the apparatus, who sees in this itself an attempt at deception. Don't the Oppositionists know - this is Yaroslavsky's private but quite obvious idea - that he can only let in people who have broken spines and who declare that white is black? By what right do people who have kept their political spine intact dare to knock on the door and disturb the peace of the door-keeper? Obviously to deceive the party!" (41)

The reaction of the party, at least that of its leadership, could only strengthen those who signed the declaration and deportees who were hesitating. Rokovsky wrote in the "Theses" which accompanied the declaration:

"... A correct, democratic regime in the party is the touch-stone of a genuine course to the left". (42)

Rakovsky's declaration, then, blocked the crisis of the Opposition on a position which can be characterised as "minimal" in relation to the party. But his style of tactical response and manoeuvre could not permanently resist the development of the situation, to the pressure of militants who wanted to return to the party and to the candidates of capitulation who grouped round Ivan Smirnov.

Many deported oppositionists called for a new initiative of a theoretical character to define the fundamental political positions of the Bolsheviki-Leninists. Kievlenko expressed this view:

"Everyone is waiting for L. D. (Trotsky) to say something, but nothing comes to us. In conclusion, it is necessary to re-form our front on the line which Kh. G. (Rakovsky) has correctly defined as a whole. Otherwise catastrophe is inevitable. We have to elaborate a unifying document, talk about the five-year plan, etc. We cannot hold people with good sentiments. Few people stand firm. The great mass demands fundamental answers on the divergences. We have to formulate our position clearly". (43)

Another deportee, Boris N. Viaznikov, wrote to Sedov, a former fellow-student, about the Rakovsky declaration:

"Personally, I have not supported it, even though I think that it had to be written. But it was a declaration for fugitives, not for those who have remained on their former positions... It is impossible to build a solid group on the basis of this declaration. It could have helped us to gain time to re-form our ranks. But now the left is going to become disorganised. I repeat that we cannot stay where we are: we must go back to the positions of October 21, 1928, and of the document, 'The Crisis of the Right-Centre Bloc'. This is the orientation which attracts the best people." (44)

On the other hand, the declaration could not prevent a fresh wave of capitulation, which had been ripening for long weeks, on the initiative of Smirnov, who elaborated and got circulated numerous drafts which were judged to be too weak - Smirnov was trying to avoid a capitulation as shameful as that of Radek, Smilga and Preobrazhensky.

The evolution of Smirnov towards capitulation did not have the effect which the party leaders expected. On the contrary! The successive drafts and counter-drafts into which Smirnov was forced, in a context in which the Opposition was recovering, were the object of mockery on the part of the deportees. The old Bolshevik, Kote M. Tsintsadze, a deportee, wrote to Trotsky:

"All these 'honest people' - I. N. Smirnov - these people 'born in prison' - Mrachkovsky, Beloborodov and others - have revealed themselves as revolutionaries of no thing. These people have swallowed every shame in order to get back their party card. But they have wasted their efforts; they will be used to fill up little holes in the Soviet apparatus. Smirnov distributes his draft declaration among the deportees. In which of them - he has already written six - is he presenting his real ideas? We cannot tell." (45)

It appears that the generally accepted position in the Opposition was that expressed by Kievlenko:

"We should not worry about those who tomorrow are going to join Belob(orodov), or Mrachkovsky and Smirnov, but about those who remain and those who are coming up behind." (46)

None the less, at the time when Smirnov capitulated, and Mikhail S. Boguslavsky - and the Bolshevik, a dec-ist, an oppositionist in 1923, excluded in 1927 and then deported - he capitulated on October 27, 1929 - a good number of old Bolsheviks, but especially of the militants of the 1923 Opposition, followed them: thus, we find, besides Sergei V. Mrachkovsky,

kovsky, effectively born in prison, a Bolshevik in 1907, an oppositionist in 1923 and excluded in 1927 for the business of the clandestine print-shop, and Beloborodov, the Armenian old Bolshevik, Vagarshak A. Ter-Vaganian and Nikolai I. Ufimtsev, a party member since 1906 and a former political commissar in the Red Army. This is a symptom of a deep change in the composition of the Opposition.

Trotsky received Rakovsky's declaration on September 22, and drafted an "Open Letter to the Bolshevik-Leninists who signed the August 22 Declaration". He declared, in the first place:

"Although I took no part in drawing up your declaration and consequently can have no responsibility for all its formulations, I append my signature to it, since it is fundamentally along the political line of the Bolshevik - Leninists (Opposition)

He twice emphasised that the moderate terms of the declaration are "in no way equivocal" and declared:

"A Marxist would have to refuse to sign your declaration only were he to come to the conclusion that Thermidor is an accomplished fact, the party is a corpse, and the road to the dictatorship of the proletariat lies through a new revolution. Although this opinion has been attributed to us dozens of times, we have nothing in common with it. That is why the declaration of August 22 shows itself to be a natural stage on the political road of the Opposition." (48)

In reply to criticisms about the declaration, he indicates the method which led him to sign the document:

"Certainly a number of critical observations could be made concerning the text of the declaration. I have presented some of these, in positive and constructive form in my open letter." (49)

In fact we find several examples in the "Open Letter", as, for example, on the possible renunciation of fractional methods:

"You think that it is possible to submit to the party's discipline, since there is no doubt that our theoretic criticism will will objectively help to liquidate incorrect strategic principles, just as it has already helped to liquidate a good number of incorrect tactical conclusions." (50)

To this objectivist position, which is dangerously close to that of Preobrazhensky - saw, in the taking-up of the economic theories of the left, the instrument which objectively, would moderate the party regime (therefore without the pressure of the Opposition) - Trotsky counter-posed a simple fact, as every deportee could equally do:

"But that is precisely why the leadership is opposed, with re-doubled efforts, to the re-integration of the Opposition into the ranks of the party". (51)

Trotsky dealt with the paragraph about the Communist International by relying on the rejection - implicit in the declaration - of socialism in a single country. He stressed that "... the fundamental problem of the October Revolution - the transformation of bourgeois society into a socialist society - cannot in any case be fully resolved without a parallel development of the international revolution..." He thought that the declaration was correct to say that "the leadership of the Comintern has not emerged from the period of ideological fluctuations", and stressed that it should add that "**there** is really being produced in fact a further weakening of the Communist International in its organisation and in its policy". (52)

In conclusion, Trotsky opened up a last problem:

"For the October Revolution, under the banner of Lenin, the Opposition will fight in every case and in all circumstances. That is a duty higher than organisational norms and formal party membership. In your declaration you said only that the interests of the revolution demand that the Opposition have the possibility of carrying out its duty by normal means within the ranks of the party. I associate myself entirely with this aim." (53)

These remarks by Trotsky had the aim of bringing out the full political import of the declaration of Rakovsky, beyond all the criticisms which many people had not formulated with the same method and the same approach as Trotsky. The support which he gave to the declaration of August 22 was very important to the Russian Opposition, even if it

reached them slowly. It was also thinking about the international Opposition that Trotsky supported the declaration:

"what is the task of the international Opposition in relation to this important step taken by the Russian Opposition? To take advantage of it to expose the lies about the 'defeatist, counter-revolutionary' etc. character of the Opposition, before the eyes of worker-Communists who have been deceived. The declaration must be used to shake, to loosen and knock over the artificial barriers which the Comintern leadership has erected between the members of the official Communist parties and the Left Opposition.... What is involved here is the use of a united front policy toward the official Communist parties... Some ultra-lefts will perhaps see the declaration as a capitulation. But if we gave in to such ultra-lefts, we would inevitably fall into a sect. That is why the question of the declaration, of how to interpret it and of the agitational campaign we should develop around it in order to break through to the party rank and file - these questions, it seems to me, can have no less importance than the Sino-Soviet conflict for the further evolution of the groupings within the international Opposition." (54)

The "Past Stage": The Tactic in the USSR

In the period which followed the signature by Trotsky of the declaration of August 22 in connection with restoring strength to the Russian Opposition, new problems of political orientation and tactics were posed in the USSR.

Very quickly, Trotsky formed the opinion that the declaration of August 22 was a "past stage", in relation to the capitulators and to the party. As to the former, he wrote

"For some of the signatories, it was merely a bridge towards a new document which would be half-capitulation or all capitulation. For us, it was the maximum concession to the pacifists... All those who take one step to the right of this declaration should be helped on their way by a good kick." (55)

In a document entitled "The tactic in the USSR", Trotsky expressed the view that "the declaration of Rakovsky and the others is an episode which will show itself to be useful more than once in the future", and stressed that "Stalin's zigzag necessitated some modifications to the tactic of the Left Opposition a year and a half ago... the demand for the secret ballot remains, of course, valid." (56), as well as calling strikes. In October, Trotsky came out in favour of a new appeal to the party which would weld the Opposition together again. He reminded the reader that the Opposition had nothing in common with the capitulators and that the crisis was overcome, and declared:

"Whether there remain in exile, not three hundred and fifty-five, faithful to our banner, but thirty-five, or even three: the banner ^{will} remain, the strategic line will remain and the future will remain". (57)

On October 4, Rakovsky published a new declaration, in which he declared himself particularly opposed to radical collectivisation. In a letter to Leon Sedov, he indicated that the paragraph about the Communist International had been "reviewed, completed as well as some other points too" (58)

The correspondence of the deportees with Sedov reveals divergent reactions to the position of Trotsky. Thus, N. I. Mekler:

"I am very pleased that the Old Man supported the declaration of Kh(ristian)... I yesterday received a letter from Kh. He is terribly happy about your support" (59)

On the contrary, Iasha A. Kievlenko reported to Sedov the position of the colony at Kamen:

"In his last letters, L.D. does not give a precise reply on the characterisation of the policy of the leadership... The declaration of Kh(ristian) G. (Rakovsky) neither poses nor solves the essential questions. It is indeed a "past stage", which was hardly necessary." (60)

From that time the crisis in the Opposition was overcome and the first sign of this is the Open Letter from Dingelstedt to Kharin; the latter, after his capitulation and his return to the USSR, had circulated a statement calling on the Opposition to follow his example. The ferocious reply from Dingelstedt put a stop to this effort.

The successive waves of capitulations and the loss of several historic leaders of the

Opposition were terrible blows.

Their effective membership fell very sharply during this period; Isaac Deutscher thinks that, between the beginning of 1929 and the end, the number of deportees on the line of the Opposition changed from eight thousand to a little over a thousand (61). This estimate, and the indication that before the crisis the Opposition had twice as many militants as during the time that it was relatively legal in the party in 1927 (before the XVth Congress) are corroborated, as far as the effectives after the crisis are concerned, by Rakovsky, who in a letter to Sedov permits himself, on the basis of the signatures on his declaration, to an estimate of the number of exiles faithful to the Left Opposition - excluding the "dec-ists", whom Deutscher perhaps counted:

"How many of them are left? It is very difficult to say. Perhaps eight hundred all. They are all of our way of thinking, but we have insurmountable difficulties in communicating between ourselves." (62)

The composition of the Opposition was profoundly changed by this crisis. It lost nearly the whole of the Old Guard of 1923. There only remained three well-known former militants; Rakovsky, Sosnovsky and Muralov. Around them one found essentially young comrades more enthusiastic but less educated and without prestige - for the party.

Outside the Soviet Union, the groups and the journals of the Opposition confined themselves, in the course of summer 1929 - which above all was the period of differentiation in their ranks - to publishing the articles by Trotsky about the capitulators and about the evolution of the situation of the Russian Opposition. None the less, evidently in connection with the political problems which existed between certain groups and the Opposition, in the course of the period of differentiation, fresh disagreements came up. Trotsky frequently spoke of the inadmissible character of the practices of Urbahns, at the head of the Leninbund: the German organ published, without the slightest comment, documents of Radek, Preobrazhensky and Smilga.

As Trotsky wrote in a letter to a militant of the Leninbund, "the position which the official leadership of the Leninbund will adopt towards the latest events within the Russian Opposition (the declaration of Rakovsky and his comrades) will seriously influence the development of the Leninbund." (63) Indeed, at the same moment, we can read in "Die Fäden des Kommunismus":

"We firmly declare that we do not approve of this enterprise by the Russian Opposition that we cannot conceal that we fear that this enterprise may rather be a great source of harm both for the Russian Opposition and for the international Opposition." (64)

While Grylewicz and Juko denounced the "grave political vagaries of the Leninbund major on the fundamental political and theoretical questions of our struggle" (65), Trotsky declared that Urbahns got from Yaroslavsky the idea of destroying the Russian Opposition

"It is difficult to imagine anything more stupid". (66)

As for Contre le Courant and the Paz group, they condemned the declaration in the following terms:

"People may say that we are 'pedants' or 'limited people', but we do not hesitate to say that we do not see the necessity for the Rakovsky Declaration. On the contrary we think that it is an unfortunate stage, a serious fault on the road of the Russian Opposition." (67)

After Trotsky said what he thought about the position of Urbahns, he dealt with the case of Paz, with whom he had broken:

"So that nothing be missing from the picture, here comes an old warrior covered with wounds - Maurice Paz, in the role of a Cato of the revolution with his 'lofty platform' (where is this platform?). There exists a species of communist dilettante prowls around the bonfire of revolution, but who is primarily concerned with not getting his fingers burned.... And such armchair 'revolutionaries' would give lessons in firmness to Rakovsky, Sosnovsky, Muralov... and many others who have behind them decades of revolutionary struggle, prison, clandestine work, deportation, and who show their fidelity to the proletariat today, too, in the Altai Mountains, in the prisons of Chelyabinsk and Tobolsk, and not in the rooms of the Palais de Justice in Paris." (68)

In counter-point to the condemnation of the Declaration by Faz and Urbahns, we should record two positions taken favourable to Rakovsky. One came from Frey's group in Austria, and the other from the group of Spanish emigres in Belgium who were in touch with "La Verite". The leadership of the K.P.O. (Opposition) wrote an open letter on October 16 to the members of the Communist Party of Austria; in this the oppositionists declared:

"The Russian Opposition has not capitulated! It demands its place in the party, not at the cost of sacrificing its revolutionary conceptions, but according to its conceptions of the defence of the revolution!... Should we, members of the Austrian Communist Party (Opposition), have addressed such an open letter to the Central Committee of the Austrian Communist party? Why do we not do so? Because we know that the Austrian Communist Party... is completely dependent on the leadership of the Stalinist fraction in Moscow. But it is extremely important to know what you, the members of the Austrian Communist Party, think about the unity of the Communists.. As little as the Russian Left Opposition are we thinking of abandoning our ideas. But we are thinking about the Soviet Union, about the world proletariat, about the world revolution, we think that it is high time to confront the rising dangers with a strengthened front. We believe that we are in agreement with you if we think that there is only one way to achieve this: the unity of all the Communists on the basis of the ideas of Lenin." (69)

Trotsky congratulated Frey on this "magnificent letter" and wrote to Rosmer:

"Frey's letter is an excellent answer not only to Urbahns, but to many others, in the ranks, who do not understand the necessity of finding the link with the mass of the party. There is a lot of talk about a united front with the socialists and the Amsterdam unions, etc. But, for the Opposition, the most imperious and urgent united front is that with the party... Frey demonstrates that, despite his particular characteristics, he has serious political value." (70)

On November 29, 1929, "La Verite" published an article by Henri Lacroix, the leader of the group of Spanish Oppositionists in Belgium, who wrote:

"There is certainly in the declaration something different from the language of the Leninist opposition. But this difference can well be understood, if we are willing to take into account the conditions in which the comrades in the Soviet Union are obliged to work. It disappears in the face of the extreme importance which we, on our part, attach to this document... The declaration by Rakovsky is the formal expression of our desire for unity in the struggle for the defence of the Soviet Union and of the Communist International.... It will demonstrate to the working class that it is we, the oppositionists, who want unity, and that it is Stalin who provokes and carries out division within the Communist International. The failings which it has are insignificant compared to the results which it can give and to the use which we should make of it, and we are convinced that the Spanish Oppositionists will give their support to it." (71)

One final aspect of this crisis, the problem of connections with the USSR - and delay began to be solved with the publication in Paris of the Bulletin of the Opposition. Preparation was done at Prinkipo, and the proofs were sent to Paris for printing and distribution, except to the USSR. In Paris Henri Molinier, a member of the "La Verite" group, saw to administrative questions (and no longer Kharin, who had initially been responsible for them), under the more or less direct control of Trotsky and Sedov. Raymond Molinier, in association with Sedov, undertook the distribution among the groups and financial centralisation. Jean Meichler, a former member of the Communist Party who had come over to the Opposition and was close to Molinier, served as the "letter box" in Paris for the mail coming from the USSR and for articles addressed to the Bulletin. The copies which were sent into the USSR at the moment of the crisis of the Opposition played an undisputable role, even if they reached their destinations sometimes after delay. The existence of this bulletin of the Russian Opposition was therefore a precious asset from the point of view of the links with the international Opposition.

FOOTNOTES

- (1) Contact and the arrival of letters were functioning but were rather slow. See Cahiers Leon Trotsky, No. 7 - 8, op. cit., p. 120, note 7.
- (2) Letter from Victor Serge, April 1929, in Contre le Courant, May 6, 1929.
- (3) P. Broue: "The Trotskyists in the Soviet Union", Cahiers Leon Trotsky, No. 6, op. cit., p. 18.
- (4) Trotsky: "Tenacity, Tenacity, Tenacity", in "Writings: 1929", p. 161ff.
- (5) Ibid.
- (6) Ibid.
- (7) Ibid.
- (8) Preobrazhensky, Radek and Smilga, "Declaration", July 10, 1929, in Cahiers Leon Trotsky, No. 6, op. cit. pp. 74 - 77.
- (9) Ibid.
- (10) Ibid.
- (11) Ibid.
- (12) Letter from Solntsev to Rakovsky, July 1929, in Cahiers Leon Trotsky, No. 7 - 8, op. cit., pp. 64 - 67.
- (13) Ibid.
- (14) Trotsky: "A Wretched Document", July 27, 1929 in "Writings: 1929", pp. 198ff.
- (15) Trotsky: "On the Psychology of Capitulation", dated September 1929, in "Writings: 1929", p. 254ff.
- (16) Ibid.
- (17) Trotsky: "Tenacity, Tenacity, Tenacity", in "Writings: 1929", op. cit.
- (18) Trotsky: "Diplomacy of Revolutionary Politics", in "Writings: 1929", p. 180.
- (19) Trotsky: "How to Help the Centrists", in "Writings: 1929", p. 397.
- (20) Letter from Solntsev to Rakovsky, July 1929, in Cahiers Leon Trotsky No. 7 - 8, op. cit., pp. 64 - 67.
- (21) Ibid. Solntsev disavows by this that he had written to Trotsky when he believed that the declaration of October 16, 1926 was "a grave mistake".
- (22) Ibid.
- (23) Ibid.
- (24) P. Broue: "Rako" in Cahiers Leon Trotsky, No. 18, June 1984, p. 13.
- (25) Letter from Solntsev to Rakovsky, July 1929, in Cahiers Leon Trotsky, No. 7 - 8, op. cit., pp. 64 - 67.
- (26) Rakovsky, Kossior, Okoudjava, "Declaration to the Central Committee and the Control Commission", August 22, 1929, in Cahiers Leon Trotsky, No. 6, op. cit., pp. 78 - 86.

- (27) Ibid.
- (28) Ibid.
- (29) Ibid.
- (30) Ibid.
- (31) Ibid.
- (32) Ibid.
- (33) Ibid.
- (34) Ibid.
- (35) Ibid.
- (36) Rakovsky: "Letter Accompanying the Declaration of August 22, 1929", in Cahiers Leon Trotsky, No. 7 - 8, op. cit., pp. 92 - 93.
- (37) Letter from Solntsev to Rakovsky, July 1929, in Cahiers Leon Trotsky, No. 7 op. cit., pp. 64 - 67.
- (38) Letter from N. I. Mekler to Sedov, August 23, 1929, in Cahiers Leon Trotsky, 7 - 8, op. cit., pp. 90 - 91.
- (39) Letter from Kievlenko to Sedov, October 16, 1919, in Cahiers Leon Trotsky, No 7 - 8, op. cit., pp. 108 - 109.
- (40) P. Broue, "The Trotskyists in the Soviet Union", in Cahiers Leon Trotsky, No. op. cit., p. 22.
- (41) Trotsky: "What Next? The Bolshevik Opposition in the CPSU", dated October 1929, in "Writings: 1929", pp. 340ff.
- (42) Kossior, Okoudjava and Rakovsky, "Theses", August 3, 1929, in Cahiers Leon Trotsky No. 7 - 8, op. cit., pp. 68 - 82.
- (43) Letter from Kievlenko to Sedov, October 16, 1929, in Cahiers Leon Trotsky, No 7 - 8, October 16, 1929, op. cit., pp. 108 - 109.
- (44) Letter from Viazikovtsev to Sedov, October 19, 1929, in Cahiers Leon Trotsky, No. 7 - 8, op. cit., pp. 116 - 117.
- (45) Letter from K. Tsintsadze to Trotsky, September 21, 1929, in Cahiers Leon Trotsky No. 7 - 8, op. cit., p. 94.
- (46) Letter from Kievlenko to Sedov, October 16, 1929, in Cahiers Leon Trotsky, No. 7 - 8, pp. 108 - 109.
- (47) Trotsky: "An Open Letter to the Bolshevik-Leninists who Signed the August 22 Declaration", in "Writings: 1929", p. 325ff, dated September 25, 1929.
- (48) Ibid.
- (49) Trotsky: "Letter to the USSR Accompanying the August 22 Declaration", dated September, 1929, in "Writings: 1929", p. 329f. dated September 25, 1929.
- (50) Trotsky: "An Open Letter to the Bolshevik-Leninists who Signed the August 22 Declaration", in "Writings: 1929", p. 325, op. cit.

- (51) Ibid.
- (52) Ibid.
- (53) Ibid.
- (54) Trotsky: "Letter to the USSR Accompanying the August 22 Declaration", Septer 25, 1929, in "Writings: 1929", p. 329f.
- (55) Trotsky: "A Return to the Party", dated Autumn 1929, in "Writings: 1929", p. 399f.
- (56) Trotsky: "The Tactic in the USSR", October 1929, A.H. T3219.
- (57) Trotsky: "How to Help the Centrists", dated November 26, 1929, in "Writings: 1929", p. 397f.
- (58) Letter of Rakovsky to Sedov, November 1929, in Cahiers Leon Trotsky, No. 7 - 8 op. cit., p. 121.
- (59) Letter of N. I. Mekler to Sedov, October 27, 1929, in Cahiers Leon Trotsky, No. 7 - 8, op. cit., p. 119.
- (60) Letter of I. A. Kievlenko to Sedov, January 1930, in Cahiers Leon Trotsky, No. 7 - 8, op. cit., p. 139 - 141.
- (61) Isaac Deutscher, "The Prophet Outcast", Oxford University Press 1970, p. 81.
- (62) Letter of Rakovsky to Sedov, November 1929, in Cahiers Leon Trotsky, No. 7 - 8 op. cit., p. 121.
- (63) Letter from Trotsky to Grylewicz, October 12, 1929, A.H. 8386
- (64) Die Fahne des Kommunismus, No. 37, October 11, 1929.
- (65) Die Fahne des Kommunismus, No. 38, October 18, 1929.
- (66) Letter from Trotsky to Frey, October 19, 1929. A.H. 8200.
- (67) "Un pas en Arriere", in Contre le Courant, No. 38, October 22, 1929, pp. 1 - 7
- (68) Trotsky: "The Murder of Jacob Blumkin", December 1919, in "Writings: 1929", p. 412.
- (69) Leadership of the K.P.O. (Opposition): "Open Letter to the Members of the Austrian Communist Party", October 16. 1929, in "La Verite", No. 12, November 1929.
- (70) Letter of Trotsky to A. Rosmer, October 24, 1929, in Broue, "Correspondence", op. cit., pp. 78 - 81.
- (71) Henri Lacroix, "On the Rakovsky Declaration", in "La Verite", No. 12, Novembre 29, p. 6.

CHAPTER SEVEN

The Communist International and
the "Third Period"

"The Comintern seemed to me to be an institution of no great importance... There was an abyss between reality and the grand words spoken about 'the general staff of the world revolution'. The weight of the Comintern counted far less in Moscow than that of any People's Commissariat. It was hardly more than a foreign section attached to the propaganda arm of the Central Committee... I expected giants and I found dwarves". (1)

These disillusioned reflections of the Yugoslav Communist, Anton Ciliga, on his arrival in the Soviet Union in 1926, underline the delapidated state of the International, parallel to the process of degeneration of the Bolshevik party during the period 1923 - 29. The International, and more particularly its Executive Committee, had suffered, stage after stage, repercussions from the battles in the heart of the party, the sudden turns and the changes of personnel.

A new political period opened in February 1928, when Bukharin, then President of the Communist International, set out to justify the new ultra-left turn and spoke for the first time of the "third period" concerning the relationship of strength between the classes on a world scale. Trotsky immediately diverted the expression from its original purpose, and gave it a polemical content: the "third period" of mistakes of the Communist International, the title of his pamphlet bringing together a series of articles.

The "Third Period"

Trotsky summarised thus the history of the successive zig-zags of the Communist International:

"The history of the centrist leadership is the history of fatal mistakes in orientation. After the epigones missed the 1923 revolutionary situation in Germany, which profoundly changed the whole situation in Europe, the Comintern went through three stages of fatal errors.

The years 1924 - 25 were the period of ultra-left mistakes: the leadership saw an immediate revolutionary situation ahead of them when it was already past. In that period they called the Marxist-Leninists 'right-wingers' and 'liquidators'.

The years 1925 - 27 were the period of open opportunism, which co-incided with the stormy rise of the labour movement in Britain and the revolution in China. In this period they called us nothing else than 'ultra-lefts'.

Finally, in 1928, the 'third period' is announced, which repeats the Zinovievist errors of 1924 - 25 on a higher historical plane. The 'third period' has not yet come to a close; on the contrary, it continues to rage, devastating organisations and people.

All three periods are characterised, not accidentally, by a steady decline at the leadership level. In the first period: Zinoviev, Bukharin, Stalin. In the second period: Stalin, Bukharin. In the third period: Stalin and - Molotov. There is a pattern in this." (2)

This "pattern", of organisational impoverishment and of political and theoretical weakening of the cadres of the Communist International, was the direct result of the progressive concentration in the hands of Stalin alone, of power in the party and the state in the USSR. The exclusion of Oppositional currents, during the successive zig-zags, reduced and then eliminated the cadres formed during the construction of the Communist International during the time of Lenin. The arrival of Molotov at the head of the Communist International, where he replaced Bukharin, eliminated along with the whole of the right during the great "turn", was the clearest symptom of this elimination of the cadre which carried with it the ideological crumbling of the Communist International, which, nevertheless was charged with the leadership of the Communist Parties of the entire

world in the struggle for the conquest of power.

These periods of confusion and error, the zig-zags and the changes suffered in personnel and policy, profoundly affected the Communist Parties, the central committees of which served as scapegoats at each turn. In these conditions, international Communism in the course of the years 1924 - 29 retreated and lost positions already conquered, as well as much goodwill among the working masses. Thus, in France the fall in the forces of the Communist Party was spectacular, even though we have to rely on official figures which by all accounts would be exaggerated: from 83,000 in 1925 the French Communist Party fell to 35,000 in 1929. Membership fell steadily, for example in USA from 16,300 in 1925 to 7,300 in 1928.

All the organisations linked to the Communist Party experienced a loss of influence: this was notably the case of the CGTU in France, which, as Trotsky noted, followed the decline of the party with a year's delay. The fall was more limited, though still serious, when a strike movement broke out: membership went from 475,000 to 375,000 between 1926 and 1928.

The four years which separated the Fifth and the Sixth Congresses of the Communist International reveal the state of dependence of the Comintern on the Bolshevik party, but also the deep disinterest of the centrist bureaucrats towards the institution which they use only to condemn the Opposition in every country and to control in their own interest the activities of the Communist Parties. The Fifth Congress, which was held in June and July 1924 and passed almost un-noticed, is of real interest in the analysis of the different periods of the Comintern. The policy of "Bolshevisation" of the Communist Parties, following the Russian model of 1924 and not that of 1917 - which was a piece of deception - dealt with two problems: to reduce the Communist Parties to subjection, but also, in the interests of the leaders in Moscow, to change their regime and their structures (the turn towards factory cells) with the aim of giving a really working-class character to the leaderships of these parties, trying in this way to deal with the question of the possible bureaucratisation of the Communist Parties following that which was in progress in the Bolshevik Party. The methods and the people who were used in this enterprise discredited it: "Bolshevisation" was a disaster. Membership fell. The factory cells, imposed from above, were an obstacle. The French Communist Party was obliged in many cases to re-establish the old branches (inherited from the SFIO) alongside the few workplace cells which actually existed.

In February 1928 Bukharin, after replacing Zinoviev at the head of the Comintern, was given the task of introducing the notion of the "Third Period". It was against the grain that he spoke about the radicalisation of the masses, of the battles in preparation throughout the world and the capitalist de-stabilisation, which, for his part, he did not see. He was still the leader at the Sixth Congress, and conducted the work of the Congress with great pomp, while Stalin and the rest of the apparatus held, according to Trotsky's phrase, a... "congress of corridors", in which they finalised the preparation for Bukharin's fall and that of the right wing in general" (3). The turn to the left of the Bolshevik party, which was set in motion in 1928, at the moment of the crisis in the food supply to the cities and, thus, of the centre-right bloc, brought with the removal of Bukharin from the Communist International, and his replacement by Molotov. This was in fact, the real beginning of the "Third Period", which received its consecration at the Tenth Plenum of the Executive Committee of the Comintern in July 1929 and in the preparation of the "Red Day", August 1, 1929, which was centred on building barricades in the streets of large cities throughout the entire world.

The theory of the "Third Period" was contained in a few phrases, but those phrases had serious implications: the basic postulate was that the capitalist world as a whole had entered an era of complete de-stabilisation, due to the increase in production and the shrinkage of the world market, which led to unemployment and intensified exploitation. The period of capitalist stabilisation was in itself relative and was resisted by the radicalisation of the masses, Molotov having declared at the Tenth Plenum that they were entering an era of great revolutionary events.

The Communist Parties throughout the world had to undertake initiatives of enormous scope. It was in this spirit that the dates for the mobilisation of the masses were decided: the traditional May 1, transformed into a day of revolutionary mobilisation, was followed

according to the same recipe, by August 1, the "Red Day" of the conquest of the streets supported by barricades. But the radical aspect of these initiatives was duly completed by denunciation of social-democracy, which the Communist International saw as its worst enemy to be fought first. In this way the social-democracy became the twin sister of fascism, and any alliance with it, even a tactical one, was to be condemned. The United Front had been a strategy worked out by the Communist International (at the time of its first congresses in Lenin's lifetime) to win over the workers still under the political influence of social-democracy, and to struggle during periods of danger for the working class (war, fascism, etc...). But henceforth it was condemned in favour of permanent denunciation of social-democracy. This practice, far from profiting the Communist parties, provoked confusion and violence within the working-class movement: that movement revealed itself to be disunited and weakened, while the danger of fascism, over and above Italy, was real in Austria and Germany. This passage from the policy of the united front to that of social-fascism was the essential pivot of the "Third Period". It ended in the total isolation of the Communist parties, rendering them impotent and entirely subject to Moscow.

The question of the "Third Period" appears in Trotsky's correspondence in August 1929 - though he had already devoted a number of articles and pamphlets to the new course of the Communist International under Bukharin. His pamphlet, "The 'Third Period' of the Error of the Comintern", was written between October and December 1929, and finished on January 8, 1930. It appeared first as a series of articles in "La Verite", then in pamphlet form. It was well documented, based on electoral statistics, strikes and the numbers of strikers, while it did not have the same character as the "Critique of the Draft Programme of the Communist International", either in size or depth. For Molotov, unlike his predecessor Bukharin, did not take the trouble to write the smallest draft, and confined himself to one speech at the Tenth Plenum. Trotsky could not repeat his broad criticism of Bukharin's writing and point out the essential parts of the method of elaborating the programme of the Comintern which needed correction on the basis of Molotov's speech. Trotsky's education purpose was entirely directed towards the Opposition which on several occasions had displayed weaknesses on questions of the international revolutionary movement. His concern, therefore, was to follow up his policy of differentiating within the ranks of the Opposition vis-a-vis an erroneous and dangerous policy.

Marxism versus Empiricism

Trotsky's pamphlet opens with this statement:

"The radicalisation of the masses has today become simply a credo."

This credo is inadequate. He emphasised that radicalisation "is not a principle, but only a characteristic of the state of the masses", and then asked:

"Is it true or false in the present period?... How does it express itself?... What is its character? The lamentable leadership of the French Communist Party does not even ask these questions."

Why? Because, having broken with dialectical thinking, the schematism of the leaders of the Communist International leads them into mechanistic reasoning:

"The social-democratic parties, especially before the war, had imagined the future as a continual increase in the social-democratic vote, which would grow systematically until the very moment of the taking of power. For a vulgar or pseudo-revolutionary this perspective still retains its force, only instead of a continual increase in the number of votes, he talks of the continual radicalisation of the masses. This mechanical conception is sanctioned also by the Bukharin-Stalin programme of the Comintern."

To which Trotsky replies:

"The reformists see only the ups of the capitalist road. The formal 'revolutionaries' see only its downs. But a Marxist sees the road as a whole, all of its conjunctural ups and downs, without for a moment losing sight of its main direction - the catastrophe of wars, the explosion of revolutions".

From a detailed analysis of the curve of strikes in France, he drew the following conclusion:

"We can surely say that the period 1919 - 27 forms a certain independent cycle in the life of the French proletariat, including the abrupt rise of the strike movement immediately after the war as well as its defeats and its decline, especially acute after the German catastrophe in 1923. In its most general form this cycle is characteristic not only of France but of Europe as a whole and, to a considerable degree, the whole world. What characterises France itself is the comparatively moderate fluctuation between the highest and lowest points of the cycle; victorious France did not experience a genuine revolutionary crisis. In the tempo of the French strike movement the gigantic events developing in Russia, Germany, Britain and other countries found only a weak reflection."

The analysis of the strike statistics also revealed the following facts:

"The number of strikers and the number of days of each strike fell sharply in the beginning of 1922. In 1921 each strike averaged 800 strikers and altogether totalled more than 14,000 days. By 1925 each strike averaged only 300 strikers and altogether totalled little more than 2,000 days. We can assume that in 1926 - 27 these averages did not grow larger. In 1929, there were 400 workers per strike."

Trotsky underlined the fact that in 1929 the strikes took place essentially in light industry. He noted that the development of the strike movement was still very modest and did not in the least give a picture of a tempestuous outburst which would allow us to conclude that this is a revolutionary or a pre-revolutionary period at least. Thus there was no evident difference between the years 1928 and 1929. The social and political composition of the proletariat has a real influence on a possible "radicalisation": the heterogeneity of the social strata, the conservative role played by the organised workers, who felt themselves to be in a minority and protected, the role of the foreign workers who play in France the same role as the blacks in USA (little integrated, they wage at the best only economic struggles). Finally, discussing the characteristic features of the radicalisation of the masses, Trotsky challenged Monmouveau's use of the term "offensive" to describe the current strike movement: on the contrary, they were dealing with strikes of a defensive character (defence of purchasing power). Trotsky polemical against the two syndicalists of the CGTU, the one in a majority and the other in a minority, in respect of both the analysis and the forecasts which they advance: on Chambelland, a member of the Syndicalist League, Trotsky wrote:

"At the Congress, Chambelland expressed the superficial thought - based exclusively on his own reformist inclinations, that capitalist stabilisation will last for about another thirty or forty years. He has no serious arguments to substantiate his fantastic time-period. The historical experience of the past two decades and the theoretical analysis of the present situation completely refute Chambelland's perspectives".

Albert Vassar, a member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party and of the majority current in the CGTU, declares in his refutation of the position of Chambelland:

"From 1850 to 1910, an economic crisis took place approximately every fourteen years (?), bred by the capitalist system..."

Trotsky notes:

"... with this sort of argument Vassar, who confuses conjunctural crises with the revolutionary crisis of capitalism as a whole, only strengthens the false position of Chambelland."

Trotsky judged that both the two positions were equally erroneous. He pointed out that over a period of a century and a half, the interval between one crisis and the next has never been more than eleven years and was eight and a half years on the average. At the same time, Chambelland cannot "deny a beginning of radicalisation because strikes have not yet embraced the main sections of the workers... Chambelland, like Vassar substitutes dead forms for the living history of the labour movement".

Trotsky notes that, "for the new generation of leaders, the history of Marxist thought

begins with the Fifth Congress, particularly with the unfortunate Tenth Plenum of the ECCI" and that "the principal crime of the dense and blind bureaucratic apparatus consists in the mechanical interpretation of our theoretical tradition". Trotsky refuted the fashion in which Vassart defended the "third period" and radicalisation:

"(Vassart) simply establishes an automatic parallel between exploitation and radicalisation. How can the radicalisation of the masses be denied, Vassart asks irritably, if exploitation grows from day to day? This is childish metaphysics, quite in the spirit of Bukharin.... Vassart's conclusion can quite easily be turned into its opposite. The question can be put this way: how could the capitalists increase exploitation from day to day if they were confronted by the radicalisation of the masses?"

Trotsky then stresses:

"But the ultra-left opportunists leading the Comintern fear an industrial upturn as an economic 'counter-revolution'. Their radicalism leans on a weak reed. For a further rise in the industrial-business conjuncture would first of all deliver a mortal blow to their stupid theories of the 'third and last period'".

In Trotsky's opinion, "a serious industrial revival would be, not a minus, but a tremendous plus for French Communism, creating a mighty strike movement as a forerunner to a political offensive. There will be no lack of revolutionary situations. It is quite likely, however, that there will be a lack of ability to use them". He concluded as follows:

"For the Communist International, as for the Red International of Labour Unions, tactics consist of periodic zig-zags and strategy is the arithmetical sum of these zigzags. That is why the proletarian vanguard suffers defeat after defeat."

In the third part of his pamphlet, entitled "What Are the Signs of Political Radicalisation?", Trotsky - after having described the position in the Communist Party, the CGTU and the working class - deals with the perspectives and the problem of political forecasting and of the orientation to be given to the Communist movement; he devotes a long passage to criticism of the slogans advanced by the Comintern and Molotov.

He drew attention to the fact that the radicalisation, about which the leaders of the Communist Party and the CGTU had so much to say, was in continual decline. Moreover, while social-democracy continued to make progress, the distance between the "organisational position of the Communist Party and the range of its influence did not cease to grow", the weight of the party in elections having risen only by 1.33% between 1924 and 1928. He concluded that "... the French Communist Party is being transformed from a revolutionary into a parliamentary and municipalist party". He emphasised the "monstrous 'disproportion' between the victorious shouts of the leaders and the real response of the masses", as well as the decline of the Communist Youth, always ready, like all youth, to be radicalised. Finally, he points out that "the present strike wave is extremely modest".

After pointing out the difficulties of forecasting the alternation of the phases of an economic cycle, Trotsky advanced four variants for the period ahead:

1. The New York stock market crisis proves to be the forerunner of a commercial-industrial crisis in the United States. Europe enters a crisis later, under the effect of the competition of American products dumped on the European markets. The European crisis, slower to appear, is all the more severe.
2. The stock market crash does not immediately call forth a commercial-industrial crisis and is followed by an upward turn in the conjuncture. Trotsky sketched the possibilities before American capitalism.
3. An up-turn in Europe might be maintained for a certain time, because capitalism in USA could not be able to re-assert itself in a few short months for a decisive attack on the world market.
4. The possibility that the real course of development may be somewhere between the

variants outlined above in a wavering curve, with slight fluctuations up or down.

Trotsky points out then that the development of the working class, especially as expressed in strike movements, has from the very beginning of capitalism been closely bound up with the development of the conjunctural cycle. He stressed that "this must not be considered mechanically". Even though the crisis is inevitable, "the task of the Communists is not to predict crises, revolutions and wars every single day, but to prepare for wars and revolutions by soberly evaluating the circumstances and conditions which arise between wars and revolutions". Forecasting in connection with the economic conjuncture should enable the policy of the Communist parties to be oriented:

"The art of revolutionary leadership is primarily the art of correct political orientation... One of the most important elements in orientation is the determination of the temper of the masses, their activity and readiness for struggle".

Trotsky affirmed that the Communist parties of the entire world need to have a sound policy of forecasting:

"Centrism, which now rules the Comintern, as an intermediate tendency living on the ideas of others, is by its very nature incapable of historical prognosis... And since it had already been announced that the course of development led automatically towards socialism in one country, that was enough to free centrism from the need of a world orientation."

He then stressed the real dangers in this situation:

bureaucratic centrism, which is able to live for a time off the capital of already captured proletarian power, is completely incapable of preparing the young parties for the conquest of power. In this lies the principal and most formidable contradiction of the Comintern today."

Trotsky begins his criticism of Molotov's speech at the Tenth Plenum by pointing to the chain of errors and the weakness of the argument, unworthy of a leader of the International. Thus, when Molotov announces that Germany, France and Poland are experiencing "beginning of revolutionary recrudescence", Trotsky replies:

"Without giving himself the trouble of any analytical work in politics or economics, for reasons which we must admit are very valid, Molotov limited himself to a short catalogue of the strikes in different countries (Ruhr, Lodz, northern France, Bombay) as the sole proof of the fact that 'we have entered into the realm of the most tremendous revolutionary events'. This is how historic periods are created!"

At the same time, he exposes Molotov's blindness and ignorance:

"Of all the European countries, Austria alone... has gone through a crisis which, in the presence of an influential Communist party, might have assumed a real revolutionary development, - But it is Austria which is not even mentioned".

To Molotov, who declared that the industrial development of the USSR was one of the causes of the revolutionary recrudescence which he saw everywhere, Trotsky replies that "the cruel conditions of the food supply in Moscow and in Leningrad are not exactly calculated to inoculate the millions of workers in the capitalist world with revolutionary fervour

After having brought together on the same level several strikes which were taking place in different countries, Molotov, having observed that these strikes "have a certain appearance of fragmentary dispersion", proposed to unify them, by means of a general strike, which he describes as "this new element, fundamental and characteristic, placed at the very centre of the tactical problems of the party at the present time". Trotsky saw in the general strike "... the last act but one of the struggle for the conquest of the conquest of power". Molotov's words about the general strike - world-wide - can mean only one thing:

"... simultaneously and throughout the entire world the revolutionary situation has reached maturity and faces the Communist parties of the West, East, North and South with the general strike as the immediate prologue to armed uprising".

From which Trotsky drew the conclusion:

"It is sufficient to review Molotov's strategy of the 'third period' to reveal its absurdity."

On the subject of August 1, the "Red Day" of the Communist International, he wrote:

"It is not for us to deny the right of the proletariat to 'the conquest of the street' by way of the barricades. But it is necessary to understand clearly what this means... Immediate political ends are required... The struggle for the streets cannot be an independent task separated from mass political struggle and subordinated to Molotov's office schedule... You cannot fool history... When there is no 'third period', it is possible to invent it. But to make the third period on the streets, according to the calendar, is impossible. On this road the Communist parties will find only defeats, in some cases tragic ones, (such as the Berlin uprising) but more often stupid and humiliating ones (preventive arrest of three-quarters of the Central Committee of the French Communist Party before August 1)".

Finally, Trotsky took up one of the most important results of the "third period", which was quickly to develop into its fine flower, namely "Social-fascism". Molotov had declared "More than ever the tactic of coalition between the revolutionary organisations and the reformist organisations today is un-acceptable and harmful". Trotsky replies:

"'More than ever'. Does this mean that they were un-acceptable before too? How shall we explain the policy of the years 1926 - 28? And why have alliances with the reformists, inadmissible in general, become particularly inadmissible now?"

Trotsky emphasised the necessity for the tactic of the united front with the social-democracy, and counterposed the directives of the Communist International to it:

"The present leadership knows only two methods: either, in the spirit of the Brandleyites, to tail-end the social-democracy (1926 - 28), or, by identifying social-democracy with fascism, to substitute ineffective abuse for revolutionary policy. As a result of the last six years of zigzags, the social-democracy is stronger and Communism weaker".

Moreover Trotsky points out that this "third period" was not going to push the social-democracy towards fascism, but on the contrary it was going for a time to slide to the left, to oppose fascism and to take the head of the workers' movement in order then to try to deflect it. This was the case in Austria. In an article entitled, "The Austrian Crisis and Communism", Trotsky stressed the inanity of the formula and the conception of "social-fascism":

"... of all the countries in Europe, it is Austria where we find the most revolutionary situation, and there - the most significant fact of all - the starting-point for possible revolutionary developments is not the struggle between Communism and "social-fascism", but the clash between social-democracy and fascism. Confronted by this fact, the luckless Austrian Communist Party finds itself at a total impasse."(4)

For all that it is necessary to come to practical agreements with the reformist leaders, or at any rate with a part of them, and with the social-democracy, when they lead strikes which they do not fail to do at the beginning of a wave of struggles. The same thing applies to the struggle against the fascist threat, on the subject of which Trotsky wrote:

"This perspective may soon be at hand, not only in Austria, but also in Germany".

Trotsky then addressed the other "credo" of the "third period", "the danger of war", in the belief that Molotov advanced it, ^{only} "to confuse things still more". He recalled that just as in the case of radicalisation, we are here dealing with a dialectical phenomenon which will by no means increase from one day to the next as the leaders of the Communist International claim. He denounced the real danger:

"The Sino-Soviet conflict created an urgent necessity for the mobilisation of the masses against the war danger and for the defence of the Soviet Union... But as luck would have it, the Far Eastern conflict broke out in the middle of the preparations for August 1. The official agitators and journalists carried on about war in general and danger in general so furiously and continuously that the real international conflict was lost sight of, hardly reaching the consciousness of the masses. Just so

in the current policy of the Comintern, the lean kine of the bureaucratic schemas eat up the fat kine of living reality".

Trotsky concludes his pamphlet on the "third period" by defining the current period:

"History knows not only wars and revolutions, but also periods between wars and revolutions, that is, periods when the bourgeoisie makes preparations for war and the proletariat for revolution".

The proletariat had to be prepared to accomplish its historic tasks. This was the role of the Communist International, though Trotsky feared that it was presenting "... all the problems so as to confuse the vanguard workers as much as possible". This "fear" indicates the magnitude of the task of the International Left Opposition in the face of the "third period".

The Opposition Confronted by the "Third Period"

Trotsky regarded the "third period" as just one stage in the deviations of the Communist International, which "regularly managed to break its head at each turn of a new stage, then to do penance before the masses by beheading one after another the Central Committees of the national sections". Trotsky forecast another turn, in which the leaders of that day of the Communist parties would become "scapegoats for the theories and the practice of the 'third period'". In Trotsky's opinion, the next turn following this ultra-left period would be opportunist and rightist:

"These bureaucrats will proclaim a 'fourth period' or a 'second phase of the third' and all the Molotovs will declare themselves ready ... to enter the period of opportunist experienced of the type of the 'Anglo-Russian Committee' or the 'Worker and Peasant Guomindang'"

The final section of the pamphlet, which deals with the groupings within Communism, indicates Trotsky's intention of carrying on his policy of differentiation within the ranks of the International Left Opposition:

"... in 1924 in France there were many who were potential opportunists but adopted the political colouration of the Russian Opposition. Some of them until very recently even made a show of agreeing with us without any reservations. But when the struggle for the views of the Opposition became the issue, an abyss opened between us and these armchair Oppositionists, who deny the existence of a revolution any situation only because they have no desire for one".

This political conclusion had a double significance for the Opposition: It had to separate itself from all those who refused to take clear positions of the fundamental questions of the Communist movement, and it was indispensable to undertake a deep analysis of the policies of the Communist International and of the Communist Parties, in order to draw their full consequences out. From this point of view, it was essential to go back to the fact that the period of regroupment and construction of the international Opposition was a period in which the Communist International was operating an ultra-left, sectarian policy. The Opposition needed to understand and to assimilate this factor, which temporarily disturbed the Communist movement, and all the more because, as Trotsky pointed out, a new, opportunist turn was inevitable. The Opposition needed to be armed then and there to confront this new situation and to act appropriately. Therefore, the policy of differentiation within the Opposition was not a simple question of clarification of ideas and of people; it was important for the Communist movement; it was a question of the existence and the survival of an Opposition which fought to preserve the Communist, revolutionary character of the Communist International and ideological and organisational firmness, in order to check the grave dangers which the policies of the Communist International presented to the workers' movement as a whole.

The concentrated character of this pamphlet and the pedagogic intention of educating Marxist cadres at the very moment when the Communist International was trying to pervert the cadres of the official Communist parties are in contrast with the virtual silence of the Opposition on the theoretical problem of the "third period". A general condemnation of this "third period" seemed to suffice to the international Opposition, which contented itself with a few articles, most often short. In parallel with this

lack of analysis, the Opposition was not free from waverings on such tactical questions as August 1, a consequence of which was a tendency to adaptation to the slogans of the Communist Parties, especially that against war: the Leninbund, Treint and Paz sang the same in chorus. From this point of view, the Opposition was not immunised against the theory of "social-fascism": a latent but real hostility towards social-democracy could lead it into ultra-left mistakes and sectarian behaviour, like the Communist Parties. A tendency to a kind of "national-opportunism" in certain countries, such as Germany, was no doubt a by-product of lack of knowledge of the problems of world Communism and of the responsibilities of the international Left Opposition, but also of a refusal to shoulder them, that is to say, a form of political defeatism, which led in the long run to giving up the struggle. Trotsky criticised the leadership of the Leninbund on this score:

"You publish... my criticism of the programme of the Communist International. But, you have chosen as you own objectives things which were neutral, dodging the most crucial problems".(5)

Finally, and this is not the least of the paradoxes, one part of the international Opposition was to denounce the declaration of Rakovsky, on the basis of the one and only real mistake made in that document, in connection with the Communist International, when the signatories wrote:

"We agree with the new line of the Comintern on the struggle with the danger from the right, recognising that its most important task is the struggle with social-democracy... At the same time we consider that the leadership of the Comintern has not emerged from the period of ideological vacillation".(6)

Though the second part of the statement ^{carries} a serious reservation regarding the first it is undeniable that we have there a policy of adaptation and submission to the erroneous policy of the "third period". But among those who sharply criticised this paragraph were to be found groups which placed themselves on the fringe of the Opposition during the process of clarification and differentiation, groups which we have seen themselves adapting to the ultra-left errors of the Communist International, such as Paz and his group, as Urbahns and the Leninbund. In opposition to all "national oppositionism", there was essential for the Opposition, if it were to develop and to preserve an international character, to resolve the problems with which it was confronted, particularly the absence of information on the situation abroad, from which the Russian Opposition and its deported or imprisoned militants suffered.

For these reasons, the establishment of the Bulletin of the Opposition and the analysis of the "third period" were two elements in the same political enterprise, on Trotsky's initiative, of which the Opposition had at one and the same time to grasp the method and to pursue the realisation, leading to the construction of a coherent international Opposition capable of influencing the development of the Communist movement.

FOOTNOTES

- (1) A. Ciliga: "In the Country of the Great Lie", op. cit., pp. 25 - 26.
- (2) Trotsky: "The 'Third Period' of the Comintern's Errors", in "Writings: 1930"; unless indicated otherwise, all the quotations reproduced in this chapter are from this article.
- (3) Trotsky: "The Faces Change, the System Remains", in "Writings: 1929", p. 379.
- (4) Trotsky: "The Austrian Crisis and Communism", in "Writings: 1929", p. 383ff.
- (5) Trotsky: "Where is the Leninbund Going?", in "Writings: 1929", p. 304.
- (6) Rakovsky, Kossior and Okoudjava: "Declaration to the Central Committee and to the Central Control Commission", August 22, 1929, in Cahiers Leon Trotsky, No. 6 op. cit., pp. 78 - 86.

See also, G. Fagan, "Christian Rakovsky: Selected Writings on Opposition in the USSR, 1923 - 30", Allison & Busby, London, 1980, p. 143.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Towards a New German Opposition

The Sino-Russian conflict had aggravated the disagreements between Leon Trotsky and the leadership of the Leninbund. The points of friction were already numerous: the absence of any German visitor to Prinkipo, the lack of account of the money collected for the German Trotsky Aid, the problem of responsibility for the German edition of Opposition, etc. The resounding silence of the Urbahns leadership in the face of Trotsky's letters was broken only by the taking of positions on the Sino-Soviet conflict and notably by the publication, without comment, of an article by the Korchist, Pachter. This disquieting development was to provoke a change in the nature and the issues of the debate, and an extension of the conflict.

Urbahns' article of August 30 on the Sino-Soviet conflict was, in many respects, a turning-point in the argument with Trotsky. Over and above taking a position of conditional defence of the USSR, he put forward a new definition of the class nature of the Soviet Union, speaking of a dominant capitalist class, of a "third type" of state and considering, implicitly, that Thermidor was already realised, in spite of his denials in his correspondence with Trotsky. On September 19, the latter, in a long letter to the Leninbund leadership, embarked on a point-by-point study of the disagreements, and expressed anxiety about arriving at an open and sincere discussion of these problems - a difficulty which the Leninbund leadership aggravated by denying their existence, against all the evidence. To this end, leaving aside no problem, he questioned, criticised and argued against the Leninbund leadership on the question of the relationship between the German Opposition and the Russian and International Oppositions. He denounced the methods employed by the leadership to conceal the disagreements, raising the cutting of his article and the continuing failure to publish, in Volkswille or in Die Fahne des Kommunismus, other articles doubtless judged embarrassing, because they argued against or questioned the leadership of the Leninbund about its policies. In the long list of the problems which were posed, Trotsky stressed one which had "a decisive significance":

"You write in your publications about the USSR, the Communist International and the German Communist Party as if they were completely foreign to your concerns. You begin from the fact that the Soviet Republic has ^{been} irremediably destroyed, that the Communist International and the German Communist Party have been ruined, that all branches of the Opposition fail to go far enough and that you alone must build every thing anew. You do not always express this; sometimes, particularly under pressure from critics, you even put forward the opposite. But that is precisely the basis of your attitude. It is a sectarian basis. It can destroy the Leninbund".(1)

As an outstanding example of this sectarianism, Trotsky quoted the mistake of Volkswille which carried the headline, when Die Rote Fahne was banned:

"During the banning of Die Rote Fahne, Volkswille is the only Communist daily appearing in Berlin".

He commented:

"When the police crushed Die Rote Fahne, it was necessary without concealing disagreements to speak out in its defence with unbounded energy, not stopping for fear of the closing of Volkswille, but consciously confronting this danger. Instead, the editors of Volkswille printed a statement in the spirit that, because Die Rote Fahne was closed by the police, Volkswille, thank god, was now the only Communist newspaper. I cannot call this conduct anything but scandalous. It is evidence of the wrong attitude toward the party and complete absence of revolutionary feeling".(2)

Trotsky ended his letter by pointing out that it was necessary to avoid the danger of a split by holding a wide discussion, for which "... minimal guarantees of party democracy were necessary, and that the Leninbund must loyally echo the voice of the international Opposition within its ranks and in its press.

Urbahns' initial distrust, his desire to keep his distance from Trotsky, which created serious misunderstanding, became a grave political disagreement on the "Russian question" which from that time onwards affected the relations between the Leninbund and the international Opposition, as well as the future of the Leninbund itself. Trotsky wrote:

"You would make it seem as though the Russian state under Kerensky was not a bourgeois state, but bourgeois-imperialist, and that the Soviet republic under Stalin is not a proletarian and not a bourgeois state. All of this is appalling from beginning to end, and I ask myself in alarm: Where is this line going to take you if you persist in it in the future".(3)

In the face of the heavy drafts on the future with which the Urbahns leadership was loading his organisation, Lenin undertook to group together his supporters to try to correct the line and to save what could still be saved, the conflict shifting to the very heart of the Leninbund. In fact, the argument, which had begun apparently as a disagreement between two "personalities" of the Opposition, took on its true aspect in being taken up by new protagonists. Trotsky was not well enough informed about the internal life of the Leninbund to be in a position to influence it effectively, and neither could - nor wished - to substitute himself for any length of time for the Russian and international Opposition in the argument with the German Opposition. Also, he had asked Kurt Landau, the Austrian, to go to Berlin to "feel out the ground", in his words. On their part, Urbahns and the leadership could not be equated with their organisation as a whole. Urbahns himself was not the Leninbund, but its "autocrat", according to Rosmer's judgement. In this way the polemic developed inside the Leninbund, between the leadership linked with Urbahns and the minority, who were close to the theses of the international Opposition and to Trotsky.

A Minority in the Leninbund

Kurt Landau had been in Berlin since mid-August 1929. His first task was to enlighten Trotsky. In fact, the latter knew very little about the internal life of the Leninbund and complained to the leadership that Volkswille did not sufficiently reflect the life of the organisation. Landau made contact with the Wedding Opposition and with the small group round Anton Grylewicz, an old left-wing German militant and founding member of the Leninbund, as well as with the Austrian, Josef Kohn (known as Joko) who was considered to be the only "Trotskyist" on the Central Committee of the Leninbund, where he fought against the policies of Urbahns. Landau busied himself with establishing relations between the Wedding Opposition and the militants in the Leninbund who were close to the ideas of Trotsky. The perspectives appeared to be sufficiently favourable in the immediate future for Urbahns' brief sojourn, in fact, to be extended.

On September 6 Landau indicated to Trotsky two possibilities: to create a fraction in the Leninbund or to split what he mockingly called the "Urbahns League" (4). Trotsky's reply was clear:

"In no circumstances work towards a split, and still less impose one. Our task is - propagandist activity for as long as it is possible. So far we have said nothing in our press against these tub-thumpers. What are needed now are articles, resolutions, pamphlets. In no case must we hasten to bring about the organisational consequences".(5)

On September 19, Trotsky insisted and explained:

"Do not in any circumstances plan for a split. If Urbahns desires a split he will have to face the consequences openly. But I do not think that Urbahns will decide in favour of a split".(6)

He also suggested a method of working:

"It is very desirable that the comrades who accept our position should meet regularly that they should draw up documents, formulate precise resolutions and decisions and keep us informed about their work. It is necessary to give the discussion a systematic character, given that time and the situation are on our side".(7)

In fact, from his arrival in Germany up to the end of September 1929 Landau served as the almost exclusive intermediary between Trotsky and the opponents of Urbahns. It was only after the end of September that the situation developed, with correspondence with

Grylewicz, Joko and Richard Neumann, who were included in the correspondence which had already been going on with Sasha Muller, who along with Hans Weber, was the leader of the Wedding Opposition.

The "minority" of the Leninbund were not inactive during September: on the 13th, Joko published in Die Fahne des Kommunismus an article entitled "The Russian Question: Some fundamental problems of the Leninbund", in which he attacked Urbahns' articles about the Sino-Soviet conflict and its erroneous conclusions about the nature of the USSR. This was the beginning of the internal discussion in the Leninbund and of the formation of an organised minority, which appealed in an "Open Letter" to the whole organisation. Joko and Grylewicz informed the militants about the letters which had passed between Trotsky and the leadership of the Leninbund from the month of June onwards; they denounced the methods and the duplicity of Urbahns, recalling that they had published the article from Contre le Courant (which they presented as the official position of the French Opposition), while the positions of Rosmer, of the Americans of the Militant and of the Austrians had not been published. (9)

It is significant of the role of Landau, lastly, that Trotsky concluded his letter of September 19 thus:

"I beg you to send this letter to the comrades who share our opinions and I ask them to write and tell me how they view the situation".(8)

Grylewicz sent to Trotsky, in the name of the minority, on September 29, a detailed report on the situation of the German Opposition and the Leninbund, and of what had already been accomplished during the discussion on the Sino-Soviet conflict. It was severely critical of the policy of Urbahns:

"The situation is such that the militants are voting with their feet against Urbahns' policy. The Leninbund has, at most, about 2,000 members, who are completely passive".(10)

Grylewicz also pointed out that Volkswille was heavily in debt to its printers. The beginning of the fight of the minority (interventions in the leadership, publication of an open letter to the activists) permitted firm contacts to be established with the local groups in Leipzig and in Königsberg, as well as with isolated militants in Frankfurt and Luckenwald; it allowed Grylewicz's and Joko's resolution on the Sino-Soviet conflict, counter-posed to Urbahns' articles, to obtain twelve votes against sixty for the majority. This resolution not only condemned the two articles by Urbahns and the conception of the Leninbund as a "second party", but also demanded that a discussion between the majority and the minority be opened under the supervision of Landau as the representative of the international Opposition, as well as the distribution to the members of the Leninbund of Trotsky's letter of September 19. Grylewicz also told Trotsky that a minority leadership had been formed, including Joko, Grylewicz, Albert (whom we have not identified) and two militants from Berlin. Landau was included in a consultative capacity. Trotsky wrote to his supporters on September 30 to underline his agreement with the minority of the Leninbund on the important questions; he re-affirmed that "the Leninbund must see itself and operate as a fraction within German Communism and not as an independent party; he tackled the Russian question at length and noted that the "theoreticians" of the Leninbund considered Thermidor to be the only issue. This profound disagreement on the nature of the USSR was uppermost in the strategy to be adopted towards the USSR and the Communist movement, as Trotsky wrote in reply to these "theoreticians":

"... the theoreticians preach the necessity for the German Opposition to separate itself from the Russian Opposition and not to 'dance to its tune', etc... That shows that certain petty-bourgeois theoreticians are transforming their fight against bureaucratism, total power and the administrative-financial control of the Communist International into a struggle to transform the German Opposition into an exclusive national fraction... One must dance, not to a Russian tune but to a Marxist one" (11)

The discussion took a more acute turn at the beginning of October, with the crisis in the Russian Opposition and Rakovsky's declaration.

Urbahns versus the Russian Opposition

Far from "dancing to the tune" of the Russian Opposition, the Leninbund continued to distance itself. In addition to publishing articles by Trotsky (prefaced by brief introductions designed to change or limit the meaning of the text, when it was not simpler just to cut it), the leadership of the Leninbund seemed to have decided to re-issue on a grand scale contradictory articles, without actually taking a stand. This tactic was used as much as possible at the time of the Sino-Soviet dispute.

This practice could not long mask the policy which underlay it. The long list of articles, theses and letters published in Die Fahne des Kommunismus at the very moment when the Russian Opposition suffered - and then overcame - the grave crisis of summer and autumn 1929, showed that the Leninbund was rejoicing at what it considered to be the swan-song of the Opposition the political line of which it shared less and less - even though it claimed that it had published Radek's documents "for information". The leadership of the Leninbund indeed published a polemical letter by Radek:

"On the subject of Trotsky's letter 'to the Workers of the USSR' and to the concurrence of the leadership of the Opposition with his reply, each Oppositionist must give a clear and ambiguous answer: is he or is he not in agreement with Trotsky? Is he or is he not of the opinion that in the fight against Stalin everything is permissible? If he replies 'Yes', this Oppositionist is a doomed man politically. If he replies 'No', he must dare to break with those who preach that the Central Committee of the Soviet Union is more dangerous for the proletariat than... the press of world imperialism".(12)

Trotsky wrote, in a letter to the Leninbund leadership of October 13, in which he stressed the gravity of the situation:

"You write...that you have published my pamphlet for the same reasons as you publish 'the viewpoints of Radek, Smilga and Freobrazhensky'. Is that not outrageous? In my pamphlet it is the position of the Opposition that I defend. Radek, Smilga and Freobrazhensky are renegades, bitter adversaries of the Russian Opposition, Kadek, for his part, not recoiling from any calumny. And you declare that you are ready to publish the policies of the Russian Opposition for the same reasons as those of these miserable traitors. Do you understand what this means? Down what road are you leading the Leninbund? Down the road of a break with the Russian Opposition. Even if on the international level a few groups, all of them small with the exception of our Belgian friends, have to some extent supported Urbahns in his false appreciation of the Sino-Soviet conflict, there is, on the contrary, no group in the international Opposition which supports this ambiguous course between the Russian Opposition and the capitulators. Following this road, the Leninbund leadership will isolate itself and lead its organisation to destruction".(13)

From the point of view of the members of the German Opposition, there was an old bone of contention between the Russian and the German Oppositions: this was the declaration of October 16, 1926. Urbahns particularly regarded this as a mistake, which "offered up" the heads of other national oppositions as expiatory victims. Three years had since passed, but, for Urbahns and the Leninbund leadership, the evil genius of the Russian Opposition was striking again. The declaration of Rakovsky and his comrades was, in their eyes, a capitulation, an abandonment of previous political stances. Errare humanum est sed perseverare diabolicum: to err is human, but to persist in error is diabolical. The Leninbund leadership condemned the Rakovsky declaration, which they regarded as the passing-over of the Russian Opposition to centrism and to reformism. This denunciation went hand in hand with advancing political demands for the Soviet Union: "for the secret independent conduct of strikes, etc." The basic problem was the attitude to adopt towards the Bolshevik Party. Urbahns considered that to demand his re-integration would be a capitulation, and all the more so as he was embarking more and more openly on the idea of a second party:

"But if the Opposition wishes to accomplish its historic task, the re-establishment of a Communist party and a Communist International, then it must take on the functions of a party alongside its work as a fraction of the Russian Communist Party".(14)

A propos Solntsev's letter, the Leninbund leadership wrote:

"This letter is evidently an explanation of Rakovsky's declaration. It is stated in this letter that I. N. Smirnov is trying to draw up an acceptable declaration, but that this must take on the same capitulatory character. Rakovsky, Muralov, etc. have got together to produce a completely basic declaration, with the obvious aim of arresting the atomisation of the Russian Opposition, including tactical steps designed to lead the dispersed cadres back into battle. Can this succeed? We believe that such an outcome is impossible".(15)

Finally, the Leninbund leadership was determined at the same time to re-affirm the political maturity of the German Opposition and its independence vis-a-vis the Russian Opposition:

"(The Russian Opposition) must not forget that the militants of the international Opposition also has acquired, in the struggles of recent years, some experience which they must not throw overboard without further examination, just because the Russian Opposition considers it desirable".(16)

Trotsky replied, in a letter of October 19 to Josef Frey:

".... You must have read Urbahns' article in Die Fahne des Kommunismus No. 37. According to Yaroslavsky, it is Urbahns who now takes up the idea that the Russian Opposition has been destroyed, and sees a 'capitulation' in this declaration. It is difficult to imagine anything more stupid. When one capitulates, one declares: 'Given that we admit to having been wrong about everything, we ask to be taken back into the party'. The Opposition, on the contrary, declares: 'Given that it has been confirmed that we have been right in everything, we demand to have all our rights as members of the party restored'.(17)

The reaction of the Urbahns leadership hastened the development of events within the Leninbund.

The Turn in the Leninbund

No. 38 of Die Fahne des Kommunismus for October 18 carried an article by Grylewicz and Joko entitled "Fight directed towards the proletarian kernel of the party - or self-isolation?". These two members of the minority argued against Urbahns' interpretation of Rakovsky's declaration. In particular, they detected a false translation of the text of the declaration. In fact, we read, in the German version:

"These differences (between the Opposition and Stalinism centrism) cannot justify our absence from the ranks of the party".

However, the correct translation is the following:

"These divergences of opinion cannot justify the fact that we are left outside the ranks of the party".

Grylewicz and Joko conclude:

"We leave there the question of knowing whether this distortion, the consequences of which are serious, arises solely from hasty translation".

The argument of the Leninbund leadership was that it was impossible to bring together the scattered cadres in order to bring them back into the struggle, an idea which it falsely attributes to Solntsev and Rakovsky. From this point of view, the "hasty translation" presents Rakovsky's declaration as an obvious capitulation; the Opposition is ready to overlook these "differences" with the apparatus in order to mitigate its "absence" from the party. However, for Rakovsky and his comrades, it was a question of showing that it was the apparatus which was weakening the party by keeping the Opposition outside, by preventing it from occupying its proper place and there developing its own policy, particularly towards the right wing against which it had always fought. Again, the parallel which Urbahns drew between the declaration of October 16, 1926 and that of August 22, 1929 is dubious, to say the least: Urbahns wrote:

"On October 16, the Russian Opposition was already compelled, very quickly, under pressure from its own ranks, to propose the tactic of October 16".(18)

It would follow that the Russian Opposition and, in particular, its leadership, Rakovsky,

Soltsev, etc., had been forced to capitulate by pressure from the capitulators. In fact this parallel made sense only to Urbahns, who considered both declarations to be capitulations.

Urbahns' second manoeuvre was still more serious. In no. 38 of Die Fahne des Kommunismus a letter appeared, signed "N", and entitled "On the Declaration of the Opposition". (19) Leon Sedov wrote to the editor of Die Fahne as follows on October 31:

"In No. 38 of Die Fahne des Kommunismus, a letter from comrade N. is published under the title of "A voice from the USSR". This subjects to criticism some of the passages in the declaration of Rakovsky and others. The editor of Die Fahne presents this letter as if it came from their own correspondent, that is, as if this comrade were complaining about Rakovsky to Urbahns, and as if his signature, "with my best greeting, your N" were really addressed to the editor of Die Fahne. All that, from beginning to end, is calculated to deceive the reader. In fact, the letter is addressed to the Bulletin of the bolshevik-Leninist Opposition (Russian).

While the author of the letter points out the imperfections of the declaration, due almost exclusively to the difficulty of elaborating a collective text by dozens of scattered colonies of deportees, he had not only signed the letter himself but even criticised the small group of deportees... who had not signed it. Comrade N's criticisms co-incide with those contained in comrade Trotsky's open letter... Comrade N's open letter was sent... by the editor of the Bulletin... to all the Oppositional journals, in order to give the international Opposition a clearer idea of the diverse shades of opinion in the Russian Opposition. But comrade Urbahns carefully concealed where this letter came from and the conditions in which he received it. He let it be understood that, if comrade N. criticised the declaration of the Russian Opposition, it was in accord with his own (Urbahns') position. On the contrary, we have received already a dozen letters from comrade N. and others... in which they express their anger at the policy of comrade Urbahns, who takes up on the most important questions a policy which the Stalinists in their press can with bad faith attribute to the Russian Opposition.

It must be said openly: nothing has caused so much difficulty, and still does so, than these quotations from Urbahns' irresponsible articles". (20)

The manoeuvre is thus revealed very simply. It clearly shows that the majority of the Leninbund and Urbahns regarded any stick good enough to beat the Russian Opposition and Trotsky.

During October 1929 Joko and Grylewicz introduced some information about and explanation of what they called the "outcry" of Urbahns about the Rakovsky declaration: these lay in the closer and closer ties which Urbahns was forming with Brandler and his group. The turn of the Leninbund to the right seems to have been prepared by the campaign against Rakovsky and his comrades. But there was more: according to Landau, Urbahns was in favour of a speedy rapprochement with the "Decist" group of Saprionov in the USSR. It thus appeared that the Russian question, in all its aspects (Sino-Soviet conflict, crisis of the Opposition, Rakovsky's declaration) served to reveal the problems of the German Opposition, in relation both to the international Opposition and to its own internal life.

The meeting of the national committee of the Leninbund on October 20 marked a change in the discussions within it. The majority approved Urbahns' theses and thereby endorsed the two articles about the Sino-Russian conflict in August 1929. However, these theses on the Soviet Union signified that, for the Leninbund, the Communist International and the German Communist Party were dead, and that the Leninbund had set its course for a new party, a "second" Communist party:

"In these conditions, the Leninbund has a duty, over and above its role as a fraction in influencing the working class, to put forward independent political proposals and to take the organisational measures necessary to realise them. The national leadership is perfectly aware that in so doing the Leninbund would, to some extent, exercise the functions of a party. It considers that, in the present conditions, this is correct, and therefore also approves of independent participation in local elections. The national leadership declares that, in taking this position, the Leninbund is set to fulfill its historic mission, the building of a real Communist Party.

"The decisions of the national leadership aggravate the situation considerably and necessitate united, systematic and resolute work on the part of the minority.

The resolutions of the national leadership, which constitute a repetition of Urbahn's articles, are an accumulation of theoretical and political errors, which bears witness to the extremely low theoretical level of the Leninbund. This is quite understandable, if one considers that a serious Marxist journal does not exist. We are all the more compelled to fill this gap. It is necessary to intensify every effort to create in Berlin a truly Leninist weekly".(26)

Starting from these political considerations, Trotsky suggested two channels of work for the Leninbund minority: a deadline for the appearance of the journal and a proper organisation of the work of the minority:

"It is very probable that, after the local elections (mid-November 1929), a new period of crisis will open up in the organisation of the Leninbund. This must be used to prepare the organisational basis of the journal. It is desirable that the journal should commence publication no later than January 1, 1930. The minority is now charged with a responsible task. That makes more than ever necessary the correct organisation of work on a strictly collective basis, with a precise division of functions and responsibilities".(27)

In the opinion of Landau, it would be possible to rely on the Wedding Opposition to launch the weekly. The Palatinate group, which, according to him, consisted of two to three hundred members, would have to be brought into this work. This position was logical, because Landau had set himself to bring together the Leninbund minority and the small groups of the Wedding Opposition ever since his arrival in Berlin. From the beginning he was in contact with the young leader of the group, Hans Schwalbach. After he had worked for a long time within the Leninbund in liaison with the minority, Landau left at the end of October and joined the Wedding Opposition, thus counteracting to some extent the effect of the absences - for professional reasons - of the national leader of this Opposition, Hans Weber. There was another force, connected with the Leninbund minority, which was very active; this was the Leipzig group, a local group of the Leninbund, which had been founded in June 1929 (28) and was led by Roman Well. Landau described this as the most developed among the assemblage of groups supporting the policies of Trotsky. The best example of their activity was the distribution of Trotsky's pamphlets, of which they sold more than all the rest of the groups put together. The third militant force for the German weekly was, of course, the Leninbund minority, which was trying to extend its influence among the local groups.

The summation of all these forces should have enabled the German Opposition, much weakened by the policies of Urbahn's, to be consolidated. However, by a singular challenge of the Marxist dialectic, which all these militants claimed to accept, and which regarded the whole as greater than the sum of the parts, the "whole" of the potential forces of a German Opposition favourable to Trotsky turned out to be inferior to the sum of the three groupings. In fact bitter factional disputes and personal antagonisms conflicted with the perspective of a rapid and effective regroupment of these currents. These manifestations of the political struggle were changed from being possibilities to being realities, and seriously compromised the future of the German Opposition.

The "Landau Affair"

It would be easy to write the history of the German Opposition around the sordid "Little histories" of fractional struggles and personal animosities. The correspondence between the German militants and Trotsky and between the militants themselves gives much space to these quarrels. It appears that these fractional difficulties poisoned the atmosphere, to the point where, in good faith and a fortiori in bad faith, one could confuse methods with politics. However, it is necessary to try to understand why these quarrels, carried on by dubious methods, took precedence over political questions, and without lingering over the factual aspect of the quarrels, go on to uncover the political weaknesses of the Oppositionists, which permitted the development of problems which were basically political but which were dominated by their form, that is, by the method used.

The first signs of the existence of personal antagonisms appeared at the end of September 1929, that is, four weeks after the arrival of Landau in Berlin. It was, turn and turn about, Richard Neumann and Josef Kohn, who wrote to Trotsky to complain about Landau. Neumann thought that it was a matter calling for the skills of a psychiatrist. Joko approached the problems from a more political angle:

"In practical and political matters, Landau is as naive as a new-born baby. As for theoretical matters, I leave the judgement to you. These weaknesses can be explained by the fact that Landau has, alas, acquired his experience amid the miserable battles of the Austrian cliques and factions. His tactics in the Leninbund change, not just from one day to another, but from one hour to another. They oscillate between a policy of provocation and complete legalistic cretinism. Result - nothing decisive has been undertaken up to now, either along the road of a policy of provocation or along any other road". (29)

These accusations did not lack seriousness, but they did not constitute personal attacks. Joko called on Trotsky to intervene:

"I am writing these lines in the hope that you will intervene energetically in the matter of Landau, to prevent his presence becoming a serious handicap for our cause" (30)

The situation deteriorated rapidly during October. Neumann and Joko wanted to withdraw from the work of the minority for as long as Landau was taking part in it. Joko justified this decision by declaring that he "did not want any longer to carry the burden which Landau represents", and that, to him, it "... is politically almost impossible to be co-responsible for a group in which Landau, thanks to the authority which you have conferred on him, does nothing but pile up catastrophes". (31)

One of Joko's arguments merits particular attention; the question of the "authority" which Trotsky is supposed to have conferred on Landau. This problem provoked a controversy between the Leninbund minority and Landau, the latter representing himself as the delegate of Trotsky and the international Opposition. From then onwards the relations between the minority and Landau continued to deteriorate, to the point at which the latter went and joined the Wedding Opposition. The personal conflict between Joko, Neumann and Landau had thus become an argument - in private - between the leaders of the minority and the militant whom Trotsky had sent to organise the reform of the Leninbund. The controversy about the role of Landau and the authority which Trotsky had conferred was a precise reflection of the weaknesses of the German Opposition. It was also a controversy for the historians of the Trotskyist movement. A letter from Jakob Frank to Landau, dated August 13, 1929, proves that it was at Trotsky's request that Landau went to Berlin, and that Trotsky provided the material means:

"The situation in the Leninbund is very bad, because of the policy of Urbahns... We do not know anyone in the Leninbund (really because we have waited too long). That is why a difficult mission falls to you: to go to Berlin as soon as possible and sound out, on the spot, the possibility of reforming the Leninbund. As for the expenses occasioned by the journey and the period there: borrow the money for the journey from R(aissa) A(dler). In Berlin, go to Mme. Alexandra Pfemfert... where you will find the money for the visit, the return journey and the repayment of the loan from R.A.". (32)

One problem remains to be resolved: had Trotsky given to Landau some sort of power or authority to settle the problems of the German Opposition?

When Trotsky requested Landau to go to Berlin for a time to bring together the elements capable of combatting the incorrect line of Urbahns, he was entrusting a political mission to a militant whose clear position on the Sino-Soviet had convinced him of that comrade's ability. Trotsky had entrusted to Landau a mission which he knew that he himself could not accomplish within the framework of his correspondence with Urbahns. This mission could have only one meaning, political. Trotsky mandated Landau to pursue this task on the spot and to keep him informed about the situation in the Leninbund, on which he considered himself to be ill-informed. It is no less necessary to emphasise one constant in Trotsky's attitude; to carry the discussion as far as was necessary and never to use the "argument of the apparatus", which in the case of the Opposition, would be rather

the argument of authority. From this point of view, the best answer is still Trotsky's attitude to the accusations against Landau, as in this letter to Neumann:

"I must say that your last letter greatly surprised me. I cannot manage to understand how a revolutionary can abandon an important and urgent task for the sole reason... that he considers that certain comrades are in a pathological state. I do not know comrade Landau or you personally. For my part, I wish to work with both of you. In my opinion, it is a duty for you to accept this collaboration if you remain in Berlin".(33)

Trotsky explained to Joko that he had not suspected the existence of a Marxist minority within the Leninbund leadership, and justified his appeal to Landau:

"As you did not express yourselves independently in the press, and as it was comrade Landau who published in the FdK (Die Fahne des Kommunismus) the article of the Soviet-Chinese conflict, it was natural that I should turn to him to ask him to find out, on the spot, what was going on, and to make contact with the Marxist elements of the Leninbund".(34)

He also dealt with the work of the minority and, hence, with the role of Landau:

"It is obvious that the work of the minority can only be carried on collectively... I think that you have no right, under any circumstances, to withdraw from participation in the work of the leadership on equal terms with other members of the group. I have also written to Neumann in these terms. Only a correct organisation of work that is to say, a collective one, will permit the settlement of individual psychological conflicts, errors, etc."(35)

On October 29, Trotsky wrote to the Leninbund minority, in order to clarify the relationship between the group, the militants and himself:-

"Only a collective, firm and conscious of its responsibilities, is in a position to prevent personal friction from disorganising the work.

In conformity with the past, I shall carry on my correspondence with the group as a whole and will recognise officially only those letters coming from the group. Obviously this will not prevent comrades from exchanging personal letters. As far as I am concerned, every letter coming from any member of your group will be for me a joy".(36)

The insistence with which Trotsky faced the group with its responsibilities is in itself an indication of his opinion of the Landau "affair", which he considered to be a by-product of the weakness of the group. Furthermore, the insistence with which Landau repeated his claim to enjoy a "power" recalled the Zinovievist habits of the Communist International. It is somewhat paradoxical that the militants who, in theory at least, were fighting against the degeneration of the Communist International and of the Communist Parties, were incapable of fighting, in their own ranks, against those "poisons inherited from the Comintern", as Trotsky put it. From this point of view, it was an unequivocal sign of weakness that Joko and Neumann brandished threats of resignation. Only the group could prevent such phenomena from developing and could thereby build up experienced cadres. Unfortunately, it was Landau's "methods" - attributable to his lack of development and to an apprenticeship in the fractional struggles in Austria, which had affected him - which prevailed over the political will of the group. But these "methods" also prevailed over his own policy.

Seeking at all costs - and by all means, that is to say, including the use of the argument of the authority of Trotsky and of the international Opposition in default of managing to convince - the rapprochement of the Leninbund minority and the Wedding militants. Landau arrived at the opposite. The minority members, who were so violently opposed to him, involuntarily assisted him in achieving this result, which heavily penalised the German Opposition and narrowed its perspectives. Similarly, it was a severe blow at the international Opposition. Were the protagonists conscious of this dramatic result? We can reply in the affirmative in the case of Landau, who was as much an internationalist as an untiring factionalist. As for his adversaries, their attention seemed to have been concentrated on their internal quarrels, while a tendency to "national-oppositionism" was, no doubt, related to their prejudices against Landau, whom they saw

as a militant parachuted in, a kind of delegate of the Communist International in the time of Zinoviev, on a foreign mission. There also the weakness of the German Oppositionists could only have facilitated the development of an abnormal situation.

The quarrels were to burst out again in full bloom while Jakob Frank was staying in Berlin from the middle of December 1929 to the beginning of January 1930. Here Frank's "personality" played a decisive role. He was by origin Lithuanian and had been from June to November 1929 Trotsky's Russian-language secretary in Prinkipo. Following this, he spent from November to mid-December in Vienna, in order to contribute to the launch of a weekly and in an attempt to unify the Austrian groups. But it was impossible "completely to leave aside the question of his membership of the GPU" (37), as Jan van Heijne wrote regarding Deutscher's description of Frank as a "Trotskyist economist". Pierre Broue also has written that Jakob Frank was "... strongly suspect... of having been an 'agent'". (38) It goes without saying that this aspect assumed major importance in the crisis of the German Opposition in which Frank was an actor all through his stay in Berlin.

In the heat of battle Trotsky stuck to politics and refused to suspect anyone - a principle from which he was not to depart - and, from the evidence, had complete confidence in Frank. Moreover, the long letters which he received from Berlin compelled him to reconsider the political line of the German Oppositionists, so that he wrote to Marguerite Rosmer on December 24:

"I do not believe that it can be possible, for the present, to launch a weekly; the most elementary conditions are absent. Comrade Landau would now be more useful in Austria. It would be more sensible from all points of view. I am writing to Berlin to this effect..." (39)

But everything was moving very quickly in Berlin. The rupture between Jakob Frank and Landau was finalised, following the decision of the minority leadership, on the initiative of Frank, to demand that Trotsky recall Landau and put a stop to his work in the German Opposition. Landau wrote to Frank that this was a provocation; he spoke in a letter to Trotsky of a campaign against himself, and asked Trotsky's permission to abandon his work in Berlin. In this context, an agent of the GPU - who was not then in a position to be un-masked - took upon himself the role of arbiter. Roman well, writing to Trotsky on January 7, 1930, distributed good and bad marks and spoke of the methods of a comrade at "a la Zinoviev-Stalin" employed by Landau - in whom he recognised good qualities - and of the intolerance of Joko and Neumann towards Landau.

He suggested that the fraction be re-organised with "fresh blood", that is to say, representatives of the local groups recently won to the cause of the Leninbund minority. In this way, at the same time, he located himself in a strong position for his own interests which were not those of the German Opposition, but those of Stalin. This was one of the results of the crisis at the centre of the German partisans of Trotsky.

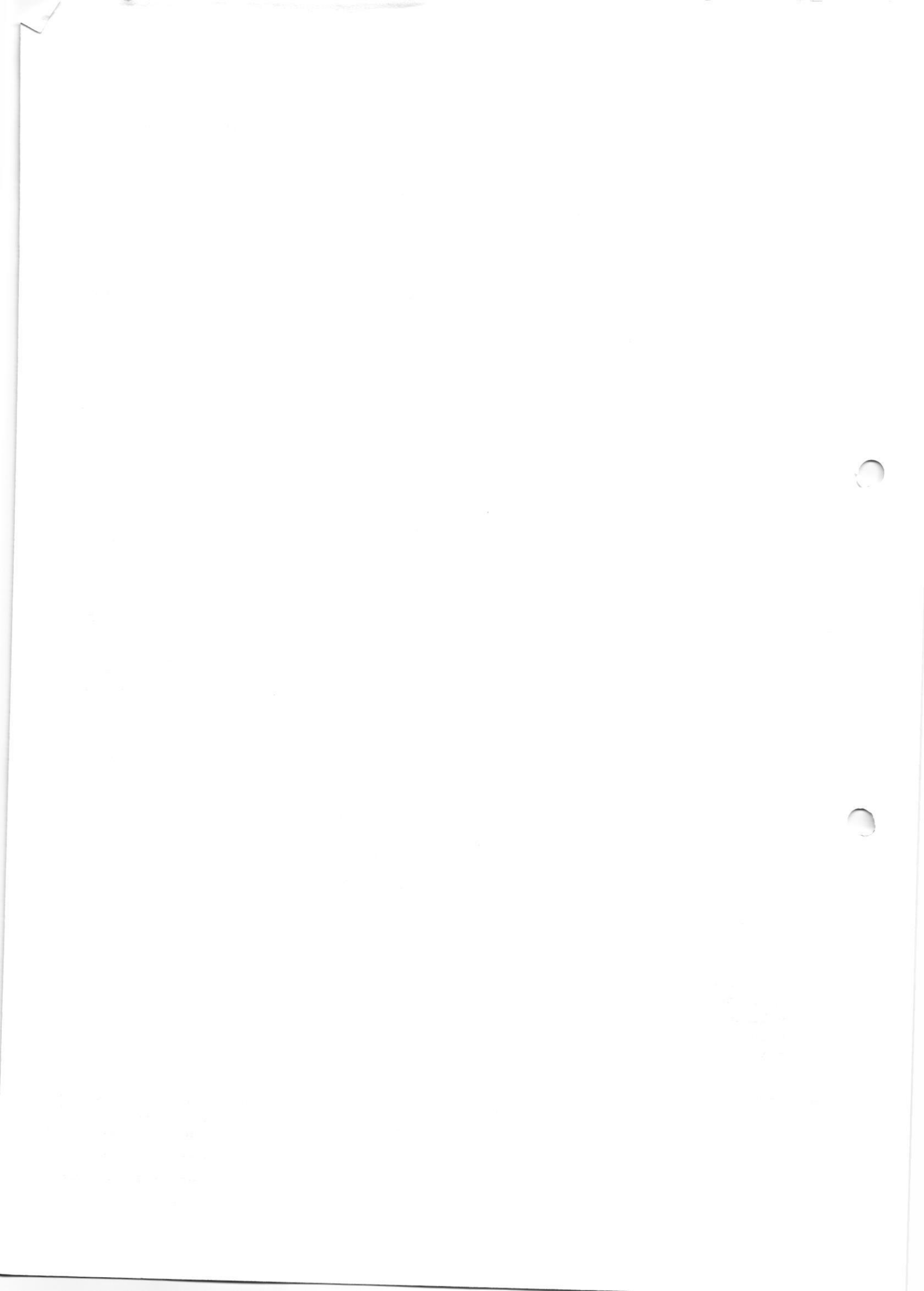
It was Trotsky who was to close this painful affair very quickly. On January 7, 1930, he wrote to Landau:

"The way things are going concerning you is worrying me to the highest degree... I well understand comrade Grylewicz when he opposes 'accredited agents'. Of that there cannot and never could be any question between us... Your work in Berlin could not be conceived on the basis of formal directives, but only on the basis of voluntary agreement between the comrades. That agreement no longer exists. I understand your decision to withdraw from the leadership. I do not doubt that you have done all that you thought desirable and possible in the interests of the cause (40)

He explained to Grylewicz on January 11:

"I have never considered Landau as my 'accredited agent'. Anyway, what meaning could this expression have? I did not imagine his work in Berlin except in willing collaboration with you. Since this is not or no longer the case, I do not need to 'discharge' comrade Landau. The facts speak for themselves in this matter". (41)

The affair being closed, there remained only the consequences, which were serious; delay in launching the weekly, postponed sine die, no real elaboration of the platform, clima



... based on the relations between the members, which was to the advantage of Roman Well, which is to say the A.P., which introduced its spies, while biding its time to use them better. Finally, one of the most serious consequences was the weakness of the opposition confronting Landau, who remained idle and was actively preparing a split in the Leninbund.

THE SPLIT IN THE LENINBUND

Two circulars from the national leadership announced that a conference of the Leninbund would be held on February 23, 1930. Its political orientation, the accusations levelled against the minority, everything showed that Urbahns wanted to put an end to the work of his opponents and to separate himself from the international Opposition. As early as February 6, Trotsky wrote an "Open Letter to all Members of the Leninbund", in which he emphasised the international isolation of Urbahns, pointed out that the bloc with Treint was built on the basis of their common condemnation of Rakovsky's declaration and criticised the exclusively "national" pre-occupations, which were duly combined with a policy of alliance, at international level, with no matter what "left" group. Trotsky faced every member of the Leninbund with his responsibilities:

"We represent a definite ideological tendency, and we build on the basis of clear principles and of traditions. If, under these conditions, the members of the international Opposition cannot find a place in the Leninbund, if the Leninbund declares that it does not want to offer a place in its ranks to the international Opposition... you see, comrades, that these questions are far more important than the petty bickerings on which prosecutor Urbahns bases his accusations. The fate of your organisation is in the balance. Each member of the Leninbund must understand that, following a split, the organisation will be completely transformed into the Urbahns League, that is to say, a tiny national sect without any importance, without the slightest future, without perspectives".(42)

There was then no question of attempting the slightest conciliation with the Urbahns leadership. The fate of the Leninbund was entirely in the hands of its members. They alone could prevent a split, synonymous with the final destruction of the organisation. If they failed to prevent the split, the members should join the ranks of the international Opposition, that is to say, the Leninbund minority and the Wedding Opposition.

As for the Opposition, in spite of the grave crisis around the role of Landau, the month of January and February were profitably spent extending the organisation and the groups. The wedding Opposition had finally managed to unify its different groups and thereafter called itself the "United Opposition of Wedding and the Palatinate". As for the Leninbund minority, it extended its influence to numerous local groups, whose representatives thereafter participated in the work of the leadership: Gustav Plep for Konigsberg, Ludwig Dorr for Bruchsal, Emil Heckel for Frankfurt-on-Main, Paul Zenker for Frankfurt-on-Oder, Wilhelm Kuhnast for Luckenwald and Adam Ebner for Neu-Isenberg. The work of the leadership of the minority was regularly reported to Trotsky. One finds in these texts, in addition to the sustained combat against Urbahns, a concern for a realistic political orientation, notably towards the K.F.D., from which Urbahns had cut the Opposition off. As early as mid-February, a joint meeting of the two groups took the first steps towards unification, which proved difficult. The United Opposition of Wedding and the Palatinate, which included Landau in its delegation, was very favourable to this unification, but the leaders of the Leninbund minority were more reticent. Very quickly the problem of the representation of the groups arose, and, although a unification commission was set up, political difficulties and "technical" questions contributed to drag out the discussion in a tense atmosphere. Time worked for Urbahns and against the Opposition.

On February 23, 1930, the conference of the Leninbund excluded the minority. In an "Open Letter to comrade Trotsky", the national leadership justified this measure as a response to the splitting tactic of what they called the "Grylewicz group", which they accused of trying to set up, along with the Opposition of Wedding and the Palatinate, the "Bolshevik-Leninist Group, Left Communists". In addition the leadership protested against Trotsky's accusations and the "suppressed nationalism of the Leninbund".

Roman Well wrote in an article entitled "The Split in the Leninbund", published in "La Verite" of March 21, 1930:

"The 'left' call a year now for the leadership to avoid all open discussion and has been trying to work out a 'programme of action' without succeeding in doing so. At the last plenum of February 25, Urbahn himself had to admit that the leadership was unable to work out a political programme. There is only one thing that Urbahn could do: to avoid difficulty by founding, that is, by imposing, the tactics of Zinoviev. The third point of view, the public seem to have even surpassed their master at that time, hit all political ideas within the Leninbund, evading discussion and systematically diamanting the attention of the members of the organisation towards insignificant questions and details, the Urbahn group has finally arrived at excluding the 'left' Opposition."

At the split the minority took with it half of the active membership in Berlin and whole sections of the Leninbund, with the addition of numerous local groups, like the Bruchsal group, led by Borr, or partially, like that of Leipzig, led by Well and his younger brother, Abraham Sobolevicius - an agent like his elder brother, but of second rank - who were supported by an old member of the Communist Youth, Erwin Ackerknecht, expelled from the KPD for "brandler-ite sympathies", although he was actually one of the founders of Bolschevistische Einheit in autumn 1923, and Otto Schussler. Other provincial groups gradually joined the Grylewicz group, a product of the split, which helped to give it a national base, despite the weakness of the local groups. On the other hand, its strong roots in the working-class district of Berlin were the strong point, the real bastion, of this group. As to the Opposition of Wedding and the Palatinate, it possessed several groups at Ludwigshafen, Kaiserlautern, Mannheim, Neustadt, etc.

From this time it was necessary for the Opposition to lay the foundations for a new organisation, by unifying all Trotsky's supporters in Germany.

FOOTNOTES

- (1) Letter of Trotsky to the Leninbund, September 13, 1929, in "Writings: 1929", p. 304 where it is entitled, "where is the Leninbund Going?".
- (2) Ibid.
- (3) Ibid.
- (4) Letter from Landau to Trotsky, September 6, 1929, A.H. 2539.
- (5) Letter from Trotsky to Landau, September 8, 1929, A.H. 8779.
- (6) Letter from Trotsky to Landau, September 19, 1929, A.H. 8780.
- (7) Ibid.
- (8) Ibid.
- (9) Grylewicz and Joko: "To the Members of the Leninbund", no date, A.H. 15718.
- (10) Letters of Grylewicz to Trotsky, September 29, 1929 and October 4, 1929, A.H. 1091 and A.H. 1717.
- (11) Letter of Trotsky to Grylewicz, September 30, 1929, A.H. 8385.
- (12) Die Fahne des Kommunismus, No. 31, August 23, 1929.
- (13) Letter of Trotsky to the Leninbund, October 13, 1929, A.H. 7912.
- (14) Urbahns: "A Natural Step", in Die Fahne des Kommunismus, No. 17, October 11, 1929.
- (15) Ibid.
- (16) Ibid.
- (17) Letter of Trotsky to Frey, October 19, 1929, A.H. 8200.
- (18) Urbahns: "A Natural Step", in Die Fahne des Kommunismus, op. cit.
- (19) "N", see on this point the explanations and hypotheses of Pierre Broue in Cahiers Leon Trotsky, No. 7 - 8, op. cit., p. 129
- (20) N. Markin: "A Manoeuvre of Urbahns in connection with the Rakovsky Declaration in "La Verite", No. 9, November 8, 1929, P.2.
- (21) Resolution of the National Committee, in Die Fahne des Kommunismus, No. 39, October 25, 1929.
- (22) Letter of Trotsky to Neumann, October 3, 1929, A.H. 9363.
- (23) Letter from Trotsky to Grylewicz, October 12, 1929, A.H. 8386.
- (24) Letter of Trotsky to Frey, October 24, 1929, A.H. 8201.
- (25) Letter of Frey to Trotsky, October 31, 1929, A.H. 1304.
- (26) Letter of Trotsky to the minority of the Leninbund, October 29, 1929, A.H. 8387.
- (27) Ibid.

- (29) Cf. Wolfgang Alles, Zur Politik und Geschichte der deutschen Trotsisten ab 1930 1978, University of Mannheim, p. 19.
- Moreover, the letters of Roman well, headed "Bolschewistische Einheit", carry the sub-heading: "Since June 1929, the local group of the group of the Leninbund".
- (30) Letter from Joko to Trotsky, September 1929, A.H. 2092.
- (31) Letter from Joko to Trotsky, October 18, 1929, A.H. 2093.
- (32) Letter from Jacob Frank to Landau, August 13, 1929, A.H. 11959.
- (33) Letter from Trotsky to Neumann, October 22, 1929, A.H. 9364.
- (34) Letter from Trotsky to Joko, October 29, 1929, A.H. 8582.
- (35) Ibid.
- (36) Letter of Trotsky to the minority of the Leninbund, October 29, 1929, A.H. 8387
- (37) Jean van Heijenoort. "Sept Ans Aupres de Leon Trotsky", Paris, Les Lettres Nouvelles - Maurice Nadeau, 1978, p. 221.
- (38) P. Broue: "La These de Maurice Stobnicer", in Cahiers du CERMTRI, op. cit.
- (39) Letter from Trotsky to Marguerite Rosmer, December 24, 1929, in Broue, "Correspondance", op. cit., pp. 103 - 105.
- (40) Letter from Trotsky to Landau, January 7, 1930, A.H. 8789.
- (41) Letter from Trotsky to Grylewicz, January 11, 1930, A.H. 8388.
- (42) Trotsky: "An Open Letter to All Members of the Leninbund", in "Writings: 1930 p. 87ff.

CHAPTER NINE

The Blumkin Affair

At the end of the year 1929 the USSR was in a state of turmoil. The Plenum of the Central Committee saw the capitulation and self-criticism of the leaders of the Right (November 10 - 17), Bukharin having been excluded from the Central Committee. As for the Left Opposition, Smirnov, Bogulavsky and some hundreds of deportees ended up by capitulating at the end of October. But the party was no longer the channel for political battles, and it was not inside the party that the gamble was taken. It was in the field on the "liquidation of the kulaks", and in the factories, on the realisation, cost what it might, of the Five-Year Plan, that the economic and, above all, the political future of the USSR was being wagered.

Stalin appeared to be the master of the Bolshevik Party since he had forced the "rightist" leaders to recant and certain capitulators of the left to grovel. But he had not broken the social forces which his adversaries represented within the party, whether of the "right" or of the "left". The overwhelming majority of his opponents might be in exile or in the camps, but he had not put a stop to the underground work of his opponents of the Russian Left still at liberty, and he had not succeeded in isolating them and depriving them of all contact with the party. The destruction of all oppositional work required police repression more than ever. Moreover the economic policy could not be put into application otherwise than under the same regime of coercion as that which had marked collectivisation in the countryside and the fulfillment of the first five-year plan. This grandiose policy demanded an immediate development of repression, that is, development of the means of repression. The GPU, not the Party, was the real force behind collectivisation, and it was called upon to undertake even wider responsibilities.

This was the difficult political, economic and social context in which the party of Stalin became, in truth, the party of the bureaucracy and of the GPU, its armed branch. This was the context in which the Blumkin affair erupted. It concerned the execution in Moscow December 1929 of Jakob Blumkin. The news, which appeared on December 29 in a white emigre journal in Paris, laconically announced:

"Recently the legendary Blumkin, the murderer of Mirbach, was arrested. Blumkin was accused of maintaining secret contacts with Trotsky. In accordance with the sentence of the GPU, Blumkin was shot".(1)

The Execution of a Hero

The man thus executed in Moscow had had an unusual destiny in relation to that of the Russian Revolution. He was born in 1899 of a bourgeois family. After having pursued advanced studies, he was, at the age of eighteen, simultaneously a member of the Left Social-Revolutionary Party and a member of the Cheka in Moscow. He had already been called upon to shoulder heavy responsibilities, which he had completely fulfilled. The Left Social-Revolutionaries, who wanted hostilities with Germany to be renewed, decided to provoke them, by assassinating the German Ambassador in Moscow, von Mirbach; they entrusted this task to Blumkin and one of his comrades. The attempt succeeded, but Blumkin was arrested and sentenced to death. Trotsky visited him in prison and set out to win him over. Blumkin was secretly released and admitted into the ranks of the Bolshevik Party, which he served in "impossible" missions for the GPU and the intelligence service of the Red Army. In the Civil War he covered himself with glory, carrying out missions behalf of the Bolshevik Party behind the lines of the Whites, and then in journeys for the military in the Middle East and in Mongolia. At the end of the war he was a legendary figure, a counter-espionage star and a collaborator with Trotsky, serving him in his personal secretariat and assisting with the Publication of his Military Writings.

Blumkin was linked to Trotsky and Radek and supported the Opposition from 1923 onwards. However, his professional activities distanced him from the struggle, and placed him in a difficult position after the exclusion of the Unified Opposition from the Party. He reported to his superiors, Menzhinsky (successor to Dzerzhinsky at the head of the GPU) and Trilisser (vice-president of the GPU) his sympathy with Trotsky and the Opposition, this having become difficult to reconcile with his duties in the GPU, which had already been

charged with the application of article 58 against the Opposition. For these two leaders of the GPU there was no question of losing Blumkin, whom they authorised to retain his post so long as, in view of his work and responsibilities, he did not carry on any activity in conjunction with the Opposition. His past activities in the service of the Tcheka had quite obviously earned him the confidence of his superiors; his convictions could not alter that. Blumkin, though an Oppositionist, was indispensable in the service of the Soviet Union. That remained true until 1929.

When Trotsky was sent into exile, contact was made with Blumkin. On April 2 he was in Prinkipo, drafting, at Trotsky's request, an obituary of his comrade Efime Dreister - a young intellectual, Oppositionist since 1923, who had been a military adviser in China and arrested on his return, and was believed to be dead. Blumkin signed this with the pseudonym "Svoj" (2). He was again with Trotsky in summer 1929, the only visit which Trotsky remembered. Had he been charged with a special mission about which we know nothing? Did he just have to carry the harmless letter of directions, of which a copy is to be found in the Trotsky archives at Harvard? (3) According to Trotsky's later declarations, Blumkin questioned him about the compatibility of his duties in the GPU with his oppositional ideas, as he had done some years earlier with his superiors. As the GPU was defebding the USSR, and as the Opposition had declared itself - particularly after the Sino-Soviet conflict - in favour of the defence of the USSR against imperialist aggression, there was no contradiction of incompatibility, in Trotsky's opinion, and Oppositionists had the duty of staying at their posts.

The circumstances of Blumkin's return to Moscow are obscure, and a controversy has developed about the conditions of his arrest by the GPU. There are five different accounts of the events which preceded it. Their common denominator is Karl Radek. He was, in fact, formally accused by an underground Oppositionist in Moscow ("N") of having betrayed Blumkin in order to prove to Yaroslavsky and Stalin the sincerity of his repentance. (4) Victor Serge himself says that Radek advised Blumkin to get in touch with Ordjonikidze, President of the Central Control Commission, in order to clarify his position. Only Deutscher white-washes Radek, by taking up the hypothesis, advanced by others, about the role which a mistress of Blumkin's, herself a GPU agent, in denouncing him. This version is incontestably less detailed, but more favourable to Radek, than that of the ex-GPU agent, Orlov, in his book, The Secret History of Stalin's Crimes. According to Orlov, Elena Zubilina - whom he mentions as "Lisa G." - a GPU agent, was placed in Blumkin's entourage, in order to extract information from him after Radek had denounced him. It is difficult, in any case, to discover Radek's exact role. Despite the strong presumptions pointing to him, his guilt is not proven. It is difficult, at the same time to discover the exact circumstances in which he was arrested. Let us point out that, in Trotsky's opinion, Radek had shed the blood of his friend.

Victor Serge states, in Destin d'une Revolution, that after Blumkin was sentenced he requested and obtained a stay of execution for the purpose of writing his memoirs. This work finished, he was executed on December 25, 1929.

On January 5, 1930, Trotsky wrote a long letter to the Rosmers, informing them of Blumkin's execution and setting out the version of events which he intended to maintain: one meeting, following a "chance" encounter between Blumkin and Lev Sedov in Constantinople. He recalled that the authors of attempts on the lives of Lenin and other Bolshevik leaders had not been executed, and wrote:

"While he was not shot in 1919 for his leading participation in the armed insurrection against the Soviet power, he was shot in 1929 for the reason that, courageously serving the October Revolution, he did not share, on important questions, the opinions of the Stalin fraction, and considered it his duty to spread the ideas of the Bolshevik Leninists (Opposition)". (5)

Trotsky drew the following political conclusions:

"Blumkin was shot... by the decree of the GPU... Such a deed could take place only because the GPU has become Stalin's personal weapon. The principal role in the GPU is played by Yagoda, a detestable careerist who has linked his destiny to that of Stalin and is ready to carry out deliberately and without question no matter what

order from the latter... The Political Bureau no longer exists. Bukharin has revealed that Stalin holds the members of the so-called political bureau in his hands by virtue of dossiers accumulated against them by the GPU. In these circumstances, the execution of Blumkin is Stalin's personal act."(6)

Emphasising that the murder of Blumkin revealed Stalin's fear when confronted by the Left Opposition Trotsky wrote:

"Through the execution of Blumkin, Stalin intends to tell the International Opposition of Bolshevik-Leninists that he holds inside the country hundreds and thousands of hostages, who will pay with their heads for the success of true Bolshevism on the world arena... After exclusions from the party, after condemning families to hunger, after imprisonments, deportations, etc., Stalin tries to frighten the Opposition with the last weapon available to him - murder."(7)

This line of blood between the Stalinist fraction and the Opposition was drawn deliberately by Stalin, and marks a turning-point in the struggle between them: certainly there had already been deaths among the Oppositionists, following hunger-strikes or man-handling or again from illness during deportation. One could consider these as "mishaps" for which the GPU obviously had a responsibility, but not as a deliberate policy of assassination. But in the case of Blumkin it was a matter of execution in cold blood. This decision, therefore, was all the more serious. This line of blood heralded a new era: for Stalin, it was no longer a question of tolerating the active sympathy which the Opposition enjoyed. Such a radical change could be justified only against an enemy of considerable stature. It was the best proof that the crisis of the Russian Opposition had been overcome and that Stalin feared the development of the international Opposition and the political and literary works of Trotsky.

Trotsky approached the affair from two new angles, in his article, "The Murder of Jakob Blumkin"(8): first of all, from that of the personal fate of Radek:

"In Radek's personal fate is un-covered with maximum clarity the wretched fate of the capitulators. The first stage of capitulation: 'After all, centrism is not as bad as we had thought'. The second stage: 'We must draw closer to the centrists to help them in their struggle against the right'. The third stage: 'We must pay for the right to struggle against the Right by recognising the correctness of centrism'. Then the last stage: the capitulator delivers a Bolshevik Oppositionist into the hands of the GPU, dooming him to extermination."

The other aspect of the Blumkin affair was tied up with Rakovsky's declaration. Trotsky noted that 'the shooting of Blumkin took place a significant interval of time after the declaration of Rakovsky, Okudzhava and Kosior was sent out'. Trotsky stigmatised the shameful role of the Oppositionists who condemned this declaration as a capitulation, and concluded:

"Blumkin was shot because he was attached to the cause of the Russian Opposition, the same who signed the declaration of Rakovsky and the others. And these harsh denouncers - this must be said out loud! - did not even lift a finger to help the Russian Oppositionists who are imprisoned and in exile. On the contrary, in the person of Urbahns, they did everything to make this help impossible."(9)

Soliloquising on the role of Smirnov and Preobrazhensky, Trotsky considered that "they had accepted, before the party and the international proletariat, responsibility for all the rottenness of the Stalinist bureaucracy", and that they... "could not be acquitted of all responsibility in this affair".

This extremely severe condemnation of the capitulators and the "ultra-lefts" (Urbahns, Paz etc.) reveals in effect Trotsky's real intention: in order to avenge its dead and to protect its Russian militants, the Opposition had to undertake a formidable struggle and in order to do this, must rid itself of "armchair Oppositionists".

The Sacco and Vanzetti Affair of the Left Opposition

On January 5, 1930, Trotsky laid out before the Rosmers the type of campaign which he envisaged for the International Opposition:

"An international campaign must be started immediately. In it each Oppositionist must do the work which, in normal circumstances, would be spread over the shoulders of three, five or ten comrades." (10)

The aim of the campaign was clear:

"Above all, it is necessary to bring (the murder of Blumkin) to the knowledge of all Communists, and to demand from the official leadership of the Party the confirmation or denial of the fact... Such an atmosphere must be created that, from Paris, Berlin, Vienna, Prague, New York, an explanation is demanded." (11)

He called for a campaign of short pamphlets, distributed without let-up, questioning the Communist Parties, harassing them. In order to be certain of being understood, he wrote:

"The Blumkin affair must become the Sacco and Vanzetti affair of the Communist Left Opposition. The struggle for the safety of our friends in the USSR must at the same time become the test of the ranks of the Opposition in the countries of the west. Having carried out a campaign in a revolutionary manner, that is to say, with the utmost concentration of forces and the greatest devotion, the Opposition will immediately emerge united. That will give us the right to claim that Blumkin has not given his life in vain." (12)

On January 28, Trotsky denied the statement in a Menshevik journal that Blumkin had long been his emissary, writing that:

"During this period Blumkin was working in Mongolia and in Europe, where I have no need of a secret emissary." (13)

The campaign of the International Opposition was carried on essentially through its press. "La Verite" for January 13, 1930, published "N.'s" letter from Moscow on the front page, accompanied by a "Note from the editors of the Bulletin of the Russian Opposition" - identical with the text entitled "Jakob Blumkin shot by the Stalinists" - in this "note", we may read:

"The Stalinist press is silent. It does not know how to 'explain' the assassination of comrade Blumkin. Faced with this abominable crime, which it knows full well it can not cover up, it hesitates and still searches about. Every serious measure against the Opposition has always been preceded by a clever, methodical 'preparation intended to deceive the workers. In order to forestall the outburst of revolt which the deportation of thousands of workers in the October Revolution would provoke, Stalin and the GPU concocted the 'plot' of the Opposition and the former officer of Wrangel's army - who was a GPU agent. Today, confronted with the corpse of comrade Blumkin, Stalin and his executioners remain deprived of imagination".

The journal of the Opposition in USA, The Militant, published on February 8, 1930, an article entitled: "What has Happened to Blumkin? Stalin and the leaders of the American party must answer". Here the editor quoted passages from Trotsky's letter to the Rosmers about the Blumkin affair, and addressed the leaders of the American Communist Party:

"If the news of the execution of Blumkin is false, then make a statement to that effect in the Party press. If this abominable crime has really been committed, do you, in common with Stalin, shoulder the responsibility for it before the revolutionary working class? If you accept co-responsibility for this assassination, make a statement to that effect in the Party press. We await a reply from the leaders of the Party, for there is still much to be said about this dreadful act."

This was a signal for a long and obstinate campaign by the American Opposition.

In Germany the situation in the Opposition made this campaign difficult. On January 28 Grylewicz sent to Trotsky various statements from his German supporters on the subject of Blumkin's assassination, and pointed out that the official leadership had published nothing, although it had been informed. The minority of the Leninbund, for their part, at the Wedding Opposition, had created a joint leadership of three people to carry on the Blumkin campaign. Five thousand copies of the leaflet which this leadership drafted were distributed to members of the KPD at meetings, etc. On January 29, Volkswille at last published news of the assassination of Blumkin:

"We call on all workers to protest against Stalin's regime of terror directed against the Russian Opposition; why was comrade Blumkin shot?... We know that thousands of members of the KPD are not in agreement with the political and organisational measures taken by their bureaucracy against their opponents. We call on these members of the KPD to help us in the fight against the Stalinist policy which is destroying the October Revolution."

On February 12, Volkswille published "N.'s' letter from Moscow, but not the "Note by the editor of the Bulletin of the Opposition". On the contrary, Volkswille quoted short passages from it, and launched into a long criticism; it spoke of groundless intervention by the editors of the Bulletin, and made the accusation:

"The editors of the Bulletin openly perpetuate Stalinist methods; they demand, with absolute and complete authority, that everyone agree with them or be designated as 'false friends' and 'traitors'". (14)

Urbahns replied to the accusation by the Bulletin of not having lifted "a little finger to defend the Russian Opposition, that, in spite of political differences, the Leninbund had always been its defender - like Paz:

"We regard as irresponsible the attack by the Bulletin. For it can only spread confusion in the ranks of the Opposition and, in particular, serve the Stalinist regime at the moment when the workers are rejecting Stalin's terror methods against the Russian Opposition". (15)

This argument obviously could not advance the campaign which Volkswille appeared, in its issue of the end of January, appeared to be preparing. This division opened up an irreversible process, with Urbahns provoking the split in the Leninbund on February 23.

La Verite, for its part, pursued its campaign. Trotsky wrote to Marguerite Rosmer on February 17:

"L'Humanite still does not wish to answer the Blumkin question. It is now a point of honour for La Verite to force its hand." (16)

But L'Humanite would not answer. In USA, The Militant of February 15 demanded of the principal leaders of the American Communist Party, William Z. Foster, who had just returned from Moscow:

"Has Blumkin been assassinated? Why? William Z. Foster must know. Does he, along with Stalin, assume responsibility for this abominable crime?... And the other leaders of the Party? Let them openly declare themselves! Or do they wish the Blumkin affair to become the Sacco and Vanzetti affair of the Communist movement? YES OR NO? HAS BLUMKIN BEEN ASSASSINATED? ANSWER US, FOSTER! AND TELL US WHY!"

The Militant of February 22 announced a reply from the American Communist Party, and published the letter from Moscow along with the Note by the editor of the Bulletin of the Opposition. The reply by the journal of the American Communist Party, the Daily Worker was a "torrent of vituperation and slanders", as the editor of The Militant wrote:

"(The Daily Worker) has declared that we are in the camp of the counter-revolution, along with the Pope... with the French reaction... and the rest. It says that we have revived the old war-cry of the reaction against the Soviets. 'The only change it has undergone since the days of 1917', writes the Daily Worker, 'is that 'Lenin the assassin' has become 'Stalin the assassin'. Not at all, gentlemen!... Lenin was the instrument of the revolution against the class enemy. Stalin is the instrument of the Thermidorean elements against the proletarian vanguard. This is the difference".

In this way the insistence of the Militant forced the Daily Worker to take up this taboo subject, and obliged the Communist Party again to use slander and the grossest lies to avoid replying about the roots of the Blumkin affair:

"They cannot deny it, because they know that Blumkin has been killed. They do not dare to defend this act publicly and frankly, because every honest worker would recoil from them in horror."

from week to week the Militant pursued its campaign on the Blumkin affair, employing various appropriate methods: prominent inserts on the front page, publication of all the documents coming from Trotsky, regular articles, etc.

After the Daily Worker, it was the Rote Fahne of Vienna which, in its turn, was forced to declare itself in the Blumkin affair, following a polemic with the Social-Democratic press, which "did not let such a good opportunity to enhance its public image go by" - responsible though it was for the assassination in January 1919 of the Spartacist leader Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht and of thousands of revolutionaries. Trotsky argued against the statements in the Rote Fahne of Vienna, in his article entitled "Yes or No? A First Answer on the Blumkin Affair":

"What in essence does the Vienna Rote Fahne say? It calls the report of Blumkin's shooting 'a clumsy lie any ass can see through at first glance'. This looks like a very decisive refutation... Unfortunately, however, the refutation later becomes considerably less categorical".(18)

He stressed that Rote Fahne had waited six weeks before it expressed itself on this affair, and exposed the cynical double game which it was playing:

"But after such a categorical beginning, Rote Fahne in subsequent lines imperceptibly shifts its denial. The slander now is that Blumkin was shot 'merely because he was a Trotskyist, that legendary Blumkin'... The Stalinists' Vienna journal is clearly ^{leaving} the door open for two versions: the categorical denial of the fact itself, i.e. of the murder of Blumkin by Stalin, and the admission of the fact, but in a different, as yet unprepared, 'light'".

It was clear to Trotsky that Rote Fahne was waiting to learn the version chosen by the person responsible for the assassination. The "reply" in the Daily Worker and the difficult manoeuvre of Rote Fahne revealed the embarrassing position in which Stalin had placed his own troops abroad. The GPU was a "crime syndicate" in the USSR, but it was still no more than a simple intelligence-gathering organisation abroad. Only Jacques Motte, the leader of the Belgian Communist Party, was to dare in a meeting to reply to a Oppositionist that Blumkin was a counter-revolutionary, who fought to overthrow the Soviet regime.(20)

The International Opposition did not, however, manage to give this campaign the intensity and breadth which it needed. We find an element of explanation in what Rosmer wrote to Trotsky on March 7, 1930:

"Our activity in response to the assassination of Blumkin is inadequate. It must be said that there has been resistance in our own ranks on the part of comrades who are usually the most active and enterprising, but who object that the moment is unfavourable, with the entire press unleashed against the Soviet Union, and the 'Young Patriots' in the streets and descending in gangs on the embassy. We have had to overcome this attitude, and our activity has felt the effects seriously."(21)

This explanation does not adequately explain the relative weakness of the results of the campaign carried on by the International Opposition. However, this "weakness of result" does not in turn justify the opinion of Isaac Deutscher:

"Blumkin's fate did not arouse even a fraction of the indignation that the execution of Sacco and Vanzetti had provoked. It was far easier to arouse the conscience of the left against a miscarriage of justice by the judiciary of a bourgeois state than to move it against a Justizmord committed in a workers' state." (22)

That is obviously an erroneous interpretation of the political aims of Trotsky and the International Opposition. As an international fraction of the Communist International and of the Communist Parties, it was the "public opinion" of the Communist Parties that the Opposition addressed. In this affair it could appeal to no other force than the Communist movement itself and, within it, the proletarian core, the militants capable of fighting the degeneration embodied in the bureaucracy. The Blumkin affair could not avoid the objective reality of the world Communist movement, reform or degeneration of the Communist Parties, nor the subjective needs of the Opposition, clarification and differentiation in its ranks. It appears that the Opposition did not make significant gains from this campaign, because it did not appreciably influence the militants of the

Communist Parties, but it acted as a force in the process of emerging on to the international scene, with a genuine cohesion. This was a fact of great importance from the point of view of its perspectives. Nevertheless, it remained true that it had "failed to dent the stony indifference," & Deutscher's words, of those militants of the Communist Parties which it attempted to win to its cause. But this problem spread far outside the framework of the Blumkin affair: it had, in fact, represented a constant since 1923.

Economic Zigzags and Repression in the USSR

Trotsky emphasised the significance of the execution of Blumkin in his "Open Letter to the Communist Party of the Soviet Union:

"The declaration of Comrade Rakovsky, ... was an application of the policy of the united front towards the party. The centrist leadership replied to it by intensifying repressions. To the Opposition's expression of its sincere readiness to tone down the organisational rigidity of our struggle for a Marxist line, the apparatus responded by having Blumkin shot." (24)

This heightened repression against the Opposition appeared at the moment when Stalin, taking an openly ultra-left line, came out in favour of "complete collectivisation" and for extreme speeding-up of the completion of the Five-Year Plan. Stalin's line from then on was "To the Devil with the NEP", the title of his speech on December 27, 1929. After having under-estimated the speed of industrialisation (denouncing as super-industrialist the Opposition which put forward a figure of 15% to 20% annual growth), Stalin decided on the liquidation of the kulaks as a class, on complete collectivisation (the suppression of 25 million small private holdings) and the realisation of the plan designed for five years in four years, then in three years and finally in two-and-a-half! Trotsky called this "economic adventurism". It provoked a gigantic economic and social upheaval in the USSR. Numerous letters coming out of the Soviet Union expressed the disquiet of the Oppositionists regarding this policy of Stalin, which, they believed, brought with it grave danger for the Soviet regime. During the winter of 1929 - 30, Trotsky devoted numerous articles to the economic problems of the USSR. A propos the speed of industrialisation, he underlined the fantastic progress of the Russian economy, which he decided to attribute, not to Stalin, but to the energy released by the October Revolution and to socialist industrialisation, of which he wrote that it possessed "infinite possibilities" (25).

On the contrary, he criticised Stalin's new course:

"The gamble on industrialisation and complete collectivisation flows entirely from the theory of socialism in one country... Complete collectivisation means introducing into the collective farms all the contradictions of the countryside. Industrialisation on the basis of subjective factors... means preparing a very severe crisis" (26)

This crisis was not slow to arrive, so greatly did the speed of collectivisation outstrip the physical possibilities, particularly as regards agricultural machinery. The kolkhozes were, for the most part, artificial: as Trotsky wrote, "the destruction of the class of kulaks outside the kolkhoses is not only powerless to alter the economic fabric of the peasantry, but cannot prevent the development of kulakism inside the collective farms" (27). On March 2, 1930, Stalin publicly denounced the "dizziness with success" and the excesses of collectivisation. This was the signal for a retreat which in many cases, turned into a rout, into massive de-collectivisation. The U-turn, this climb-down by Stalin, illustrated the adventurist character of his policy: the possibility of a new "NEP" was envisaged by the Oppositionists. Therefore, a sharp turn to the right, the normal consequence of a long ultra-left course, was again possible. The Left Opposition felt that it had the duty to intervene in this situation, to express its political position in defence of the workers' state in deep crisis. Therefore its principal leaders prepared a new declaration in view of the XVIth Congress of the Bolshevik Party. This declaration raised and re-affirmed a number of the positions advanced in the preceding declaration, that of October 4, 1929. Rakovsky and Kosior, joined by Muralov and Kasparova, grappled particularly with the consequences of the headlong pace of collectivisation and of realising the five-year plan:

"The question is posed to the party - what to do to prevent the retreat from becoming

a disorderly flight, a catastrophe. The gravity of the situation has reached a level not experienced since the end of the civil war."(28)

The political diagnosis of the nature of the Soviet state was fraught with dire predictions.

"From a proletarian state with bureaucratic deformations - as Lenin described the political form of our state - we are in the process of becoming a bureaucratic state with proletarian Communist survivals."(29)

The signatories of the declaration proposed a number of measures to put an end to this difficult and dangerous situation, in particular:

"Formal abolition of compulsory collectivisation, cessation of mass de-kulakisation and of expulsion of kulaks from the countryside..."

This Opposition, which fought against the Stalinist line in the worst conditions of repression, presented a very different face from that of 1929 before the wave of capitulations. It still contained three leaders of first rank, Rakovsky, Muralov and Sosnovsky, signatories of the declaration to the XVth Congress. They were surrounded by militants less well-known outside the Soviet Union and the "youth" from the generation of 1917. These were the militants who ensured the continuity of the Left Opposition. The conditions of its struggle continued to deteriorate during the winter of 1929 - 1930, in line with Stalin's economic zigzags. The transfer of Rakovsky to Barnaul and the assassination of Blumkin were designed to intimidate the Opposition. A few months later this affair was indubitably kept alive by the execution of a GPU officer, Rabinovich and a non-party journalist, Silov. Both were accused of alleged "sabotage of the railways" but their real crime was to have informed the Opposition of the execution of Blumkin. The executions of Rabinovich and Silov gave additional evidence of Stalin's determination to subjugate the GPU and to cut any link, however tenuous, between it and the Opposition. Under such conditions of repressive violence, isolation and deportation to the camps, the Russian Opposition could no longer play a leading role in the construction of the International Opposition, about which they had little information. On the other hand, the maintenance of a Russian section and the persistence of its ideological and political struggle was of supreme importance to the International Opposition, which was its historical continuation, and for which the Russian question remained one of its decisive problems.

FOOTNOTES

- (1) Quoted by Trotsky in a letter to the Rosmers, January 5, 1930, in Broue "Correspondence", pp. 111 - 117.
- (2) See the article by Broue: "Complements a un article sur les Trotskystes en URSS" (Supplementary to an article on the Trotskyists in the USSR), in "Cahiers Leon Trotsky" No. 24, December 1985, pp. 63 - 72.
- (3) Trotsky: "Message Confie a Blumkine" (The Message Entrusted to Blumkin", in "Cahiers Leon Trotsky", No. 7 - 8, 1978, pp. 83 - 85.
- (4) "N.": "Letter from Moscow", December 25, 1929, in "Cahiers Leon Trotsky", 1, pp. 129 - 132.
- (5) Letter from Trotsky to the Rosmers, January 5, 1930, in Broue "Correspondence" pp. 111 - 117.
- (6) Ibid.
- (7) Ibid.
- (8) Trotsky: "The Murder of Jakob Blumkin", "Writings (1929)", p 412.
- (9) Ibid.
- (10) Letter from Trotsky to the Rosmers, January 5, 1930, in Broue "Correspondence" pp. 111 - 117.
- (11) Ibid.
- (12) Ibid.
- (13) Letter from Trotsky to the Rosmers, January 28, 1930, A.H. 9855.
- (14) "Stalin lasst Revolutionare ershieszen" (Stalin has revolutionaries shot), in Volkswille, No. 16, February 12, 1930, p. 1.
- (15) Ibid.
- (17) Trotsky: "Yes or No? A First Answer on the Blumkin Murder", in "Writings: 1930", pp. 120 - 122.
- (16) Letter from Trotsky to Margueite Rosmer, February 17, 1930, A.H. 9855.
- (18) Ibid.
- (19) Ibid.
- (20) According to the Militant, No. 16, April 19, p. 2.
- (21) Letter from A. Rosmer to Trotsky, March 7, 1930, in Broue "Correspondence", pp. 128 - 130.
- (22) Deutscher: "The Prophet Outcast", p. 90.
- (23) Ibid.
- (24) Trotsky: "Open Letter to the Communist Party of the Soviet Union: The State the Party and the Tasks of the Left Opposition", in "Writings (1930)", p. 135.
- (25) Trotsky: "The New Course in the Soviet Economy: An Adventure in Economics ar its Dangers", in "Writings (1930)", p. 105ff.

- (26) Trotsky: "Writings (1930)", p. 96, where this letter is headed, "Reply to a Friend's letter", and dated February 7, 1930.
- (27) Trotsky: "Writings (1930)", p. 96, where the article is headed "Open Letter to the Communist Party of the Soviet Union..."
- (28) Rakovsky, Kossior, Muralov and Kasparov : "Declaration of April 1930", in "Christian Rakovsky: Selected Writings on Opposition in the USSR: 1923 - 1930". See Document 13, p. 166 and "Introduction", p. 57
- (29) Ibid. As Broue points out, (in "Cahiers Leon Trotsky", No. 6, p. 97, note 6), this passage was later to give rise to a lively polemic in the ranks of the Russian Opposition.

CHAPTER TEN

New International Developments

In the slack of the periods of political clarification and differentiation, the international left Opposition tended to present a sharper profile, a greater cohesion, the results of past struggles (the Sino-Russian conflict, the Rakovsky declaration, the "third period", the Blumkin affair, etc.). It formed itself round two poles, which were political before being geographical: "La Verite" in France and "The Militant" in USA, with the French weekly playing the role of an international organ. But this should not lead us to forget the role of Trotsky and of Leon Sedov on Prinkipo.

The New Contacts of "La Verite"

According to Rosmer, there formed in France "... a vast united front, stretching from the Communist party to the anarchists, passing by way of the diverse varieties of syndicalists..." (1) against "La Verite". None the less the Opposition made progress. La Lutte des Classes changed its format and the frequency of its appearance, while "La Verite" was the subject of glowing comment from Trotsky:

"... No. 16 of 'La Verite' pleases me greatly. 'La Verite' is on the march and nothing will stop it." (2)

This appreciation was completed as follows:

"I already told you yesterday of the impression which No. 16 made on me. I have read it attentively and my impression is strengthened. Truly French Communism has never yet had a publication which is made so solidly and honestly... With such an instrument, we cannot fail to be successful".(3)

The old contacts of "La Verite" and Rosmer with Belgium, Germany and Austria were strengthened despite the difficulties encountered in these countries. The situation of the Belgian Opposition, after having been one of the most encouraging, was a grave source of concern: a serious crisis (due to divergences of interpretation of the Sino-Russian conflict and to grievances between militants) literally broke the Opposition in two, between one part, the Brussels group led by van Overstraeten and Adhemar Hennaut, the secretary of the organisation, and the other, the group of workers at Charleroi, led by one of the founders of the Belgian Communist Party and of its left Opposition, Leon Le-soil, the leader of the work in the mines. The militants of the Charleroi Federation refused to sell the organ of the Belgian Opposition, Le Communiste, the line of which they believed to be false. Rosmer went to Belgium during December 1929 in order to reconcile the viewpoints and to persuade the Charleroi group to sell Le Communiste again. The breach in the Belgian Opposition was a deep one and Rosmer's task was delicate.

The immediate consequence of this was the paralysis of the Belgian Opposition. Its most active group, that of the miners and metal-workers of Charleroi, refused to work with the Central Committee in Brussels, and indirectly deprived the Opposition of funds by no longer selling the nine hundred copies - out of sixteen hundred sold by the whole Belgian Opposition - which they formerly had sold as a rule. This grave crisis was calmed down when the Charleroi militants returned to common work with the Brussels militants, after Trotsky had written to the former to assure them that he supported them politically (in analysis of the Sino-Russian conflict and concerning the errors of the leadership of the Belgian Opposition on this point), but no less to urge them not to break with Brussels:

"Charleroi comrades, you are not alone; you should align yourselves with the international Opposition. Continue to defend your point of view, which is correct. Do all you can to avoid a split".(4)

But Trotsky took into consideration this last eventuality, and pointed out to Marguerite Rosmer on January 8, 1930:

"If they do not succeed in avoiding a split, there will have to be a split, not only between Brussels and Charleroi, but also between two groups in Brussels".(5)

The split did not intervene, but the latent tension led to the expectation that new problems would arise. On March 24, van Overstraeten announced that he was resigning and retiring from the Opposition. The most disturbing aspect was that he had also ceased to correspond with Rosmer, depriving the latter of every possibility of intervening. This grave crisis put an end to the excellent prospects of the Opposition in Belgium and prevented it from playing the role of a beacon which should have been its role on the international level.

The months of November and December 1929 were, none the less, a period of success for the international work of the French Oppositionists, who helped to form a Jewish Group and to launch its publication Klorkheit (Clarity), as well as a Hungarian group. The "Jewish Group" had some twenty members; it came out of the Jewish-language group in the Communist Party. The Hungarian perspectives were no inferior: besides the Hungarian group in USA around Louis Basky and the journal Proletar, it was during December 1929 that the militant of "La Verite" succeeded in recruiting a nucleus of Hungarian members of the French Communist Party, at the head of which was an emigre militant named Karoly Szilvassy. By way of Hynak Lenorovic, who, with his collaborator Karoly Terebessy, had a base among the Hungarians at Bratislava, they managed to make contact with different Opposition groups within the Communist Party and the Communist Youth in Hungary. A trip by Szilvassy to Vienna enabled the point to be made and the link tied: the "Hungarian" group entitled Jovo was formed with a little over a hundred militants from the Young Communists, a very worker-ist group, but perfectly held together and very combative, under the leadership of a young comrade named Hartstein. Plans were made to issue an illegal publication of the Opposition inside Hungary, which would double the effect of the exile press which already existed.

In Spain the prospects of the Left Opposition seemed very favourable; the official party was completely un-hinged by the policy dictated from Moscow. Andres Nin, who was a member of the Unified Opposition, was still in the USSR, where he was vegetating, after having been excluded from the Bolshevik Party and from his responsibilities in the Red Trade Union International. But his presence in Moscow had been very useful. On the one hand, it seems very likely that it was he who won to the ideas of the Opposition the Cuban black trade unionist, the worker Sandalio Junco. On the other hand, it was through him that the pioneers of Communism in Spain were informed about what was really going on in the USSR and about the ideas of the Opposition. Luis Garcia Palacios, the former general secretary of the Communist Youth, declared his support for the latter, and showed it when he applauded - alone in the meeting - an intervention by Trotsky at the Plenum of the Executive Committee of the Communist International which resolved to exclude him. He then returned to Spain.

For several years, Francisco Garcia Lavid, known as Henri Lacroix, a building trade worker and a cadre of the Communist Party of Spain, also had been living in the USSR and had collaborated on Imprecor (International Press Correspondence). He worked with the Russian Opposition and, moreover, declared that he had differences from Nin, whom he regarded as an "opportunist", and hailed the courage of Garcia Palacios. On leaving the USSR in 1928, he went to work in Luxemburg, from where he was expelled on August 1, 1929. He then went to Belgium, where he was placed in charge of the Spanish-language Communist groups in Belgium and Luxemburg, which he was to draw behind him in support of the Opposition and of the Central Committee of the Belgian Communist Party, which was led, at that time, by van Overstraeten. In 1928 he came into contact with Contre le Courant; in 1929 he devoted himself to the task of constructing a Spanish section of the Opposition and made contact by letter with the pioneers of the Party in Spain, Esteban Bilbao and Juan Andrade.

In parallel, a functionary of the Communist Party of Spain, who had recently spent several years in Moscow, named Julian Gomez Garcia (known as Gorkin), made contact with the French Oppositionists and began to collaborate in La Verite. When the first conference of the left Opposition was held in Liege on February 28, 1930, organised by the Garcia Lavid group, the prospects were good for quickly constructing an "opposition" "inside", with militants of standing in every region and real influence on the party leadership in the Asturias. It was for this purpose that Lacroix went back to Spain, from where he began to write for "La Verite" in March 1930. Trotsky had great hopes of the return to Spain of these militants, and Rosmer announced on March 7 that they "were already in place for the past week" (6) and that the political work had begun.

The attitude of the Italian Bordiguist Oppositionists was more than reserved and prudent towards the international Opposition; they were writing for their leader and theoretician Amadeo Bordiga, to be released from jail. He had been a founder and principal leader of the Italian Communist Party, and had been criticised by Lenin for his ultra-left concepts (see "Left-Wing Communism: an Infantile Sickness"). He had been eliminated from the leadership of the Italian Communist Party in 1926 and had been arrested at the end of 1926 and deported first to Sicily and then to the Lipari islands. The Italian Oppositionists in emigration still were without news of him several weeks after the date when they expected him to be freed. The Bordiguist groups, which drew in the Italian emigrants, published a journal entitled Prometeo and were in contact with Rosmer. On September 25, 1929, Trotsky had stressed the similarity of views between these Oppositionists and the international Opposition and had expressed the hope that they would draw nearer, in his "Letter to the Italian Left Communists" (7). But although Rosmer had told Trotsky about good relations with the Paris Bordinguists during January 1930, political divergences separated the Italian Oppositionists from the French Oppositionists with whom they were in contact. The real difficulty lay not so much in these divergences as in the refusal of the Italian Oppositionists to take up clear positions in the absence of Bordiga. Trotsky, who was anxious about the absence of definite news of the personal fate of Bordiga, became irritated by this attitude on the part of the Bordinguist groups, and wrote to this effect to Rosmer:

"The Italian (Bordiguist) question remains a complete enigma to me, and, for that reason, even a source of anxiety... I do not think that we can go on treating them as we have done until now. These comrades remain on the narrowly national plane. They are afraid of approaching anyone else. They think up bizarre ideas on many questions. They do not take part in international life. If we go on tolerating them passively, they will play a nasty trick on us and on themselves too, of the kind of Urbahns... Cost what it may, we must force their hand... We cannot wait with them for the moment when Bordiga will be able to pronounce what he thinks. If there is confusion and indecision on their ranks, we should provoke differentiation. The fact is that we need to have decisive friends in the Italian working class".(8)

However, Trotsky's very open approach to them, his willingness to open the discussion on the basis of the divergences in order to draw these Oppositionists nearer to the general body of the international Opposition, as well as the contacts with Rosmer, did not permit favourable prospects to be entertained about a group which was more concerned about its internal democracy pushed to an extreme than with real activity, and without any real perspective even in Italy. Even as far as Italy was concerned, the international left Opposition was to find fresh contacts.

In fact, in April 1930, it was through Rosmer - with whom the contact was made and which he loyally passed on to the group - that the Oppositionists in Paris made a contact which seemed at the time to be both precious and significant. Three of the historic leaders of the Italian Communist Party in exile, first the former Bordiguist Pietro Tresso, who was part of the trio which led the underground party and was a former collaborator with Antonio Gramsci - one of the principal leaders of the Italian Communist Party who had been in prison since 1926 - and director of the journal Ordine Nuovo (The New Order), Alfonso Leonetti, and the trade union leader, Paolo Ravazzoli - in underground terms Blasco, Feroci and Santini - three of the best-known leaders of the underground party made contact with the left Opposition and agreed to give "La Verite" information about the conflict in the Italian Communist Party: the battle was raging around the "turn", which had been decided in Moscow, and which was engaging in the policies of the "third period" a party already worn out and exhausted. The "three" battled for several months, but the struggle at the meeting of the Central Committee in March 1930 was particularly violent and suggested that exclusion was near. Leonetti and Ravazzoli went to see Rosmer at the beginning of April 1930, and on the spot brought into the left Opposition this weighty contribution - at any rate in a moral sense - because the "three" represented a historic period of the Communist Party of Italy through which they had lived in Italy and not in Moscow, and, finally, at least for two of them, represented the current of Gramsci, which since his arrest, had been systematically put into the shade by a team which had no need for a master-thinker since they were reduced to the role of carrying out orders. Moreover, with the "three", there was a different kind of Communist,

people who brought a new element into ranks of the international Opposition, in which the "New Italian Opposition" was to form the most "opportunist" wing - without the word being used in any derogatory sense. Moreover, they did not come alone; they brought other militants with them as representative as themselves, such as the militant woman worker Teresa Recchia of "Giacomi", Mario Ravassano, who had been trained in Moscow as a specialist in military questions.

It was from Paris, during what is called the "Indo-China" period, that came perhaps the most encouraging of a kind of spontaneous development of Communist militants towards the left Opposition, when the mathematics student Ta Thu Thau and his comrades made contact with Rosmer in December 1929. As Daniel Hemery stresses in his thesis, Vietnamese Trotskyism did not result from "comonial" work by European militants, but from the development in the opposite direction of Vietnamese revolutionaries towards Trotskyism.(9) Nationalist students, who had come over to Marxism in 1927, had founded at that time in Paris the Viet Nam Doc Lap Dang (Party for the Independence of Vietnam, familiarly called the PAI), which inspired Ta Thu Thau and the law student Huynkh Van Phuong. It was this organisation which succeeded in controlling the principal student organisations, notably the General Association of Indo-Chinese students in Paris, led by Tran Van Tach and Pham Can Chanh. Huynkh Van Phuong and Pham Van Chanh made contact with the militants of "La Verite" because they felt the need for revolutionary theory, an idea which Ta Thu Thau began to develop in the series of articles for "La Verite" in April 1930.

Finally, in England, hopes were still pretty weak. The Marxian League, led by Francis A. Rodley and the Indian, Chandu Ram - his real name was Hans Aggarwala - which was formed at the end of 1929 and the beginning of 1930, included in its ranks militants who had been known in the movement of the Left Opposition or of the Fourth International, such as Hugo Dewar of the students from Ceylon, Leslie Simon Goonewerdene and Colvin de Silva. This league had episodic contacts with Alfred Rosmer and with the Americans of "Militant". But it had a number of clear positions which opposed those of the left Opposition and was never to be recognised as a member of it.

The Problems of the American Opposition

The foundation congress of the American Section of the Left Opposition, the Communist League of America, was held in Chicago on May 17, 18 and 19, 1929: thirty-one delegates and seventeen substitute delegates, representing about a hundred members in twelve city organisations, designated there a leadership formed of men known and tested in the American Communist movement: James P. Cannon, Max Shachtman, Martin Abern, Arne Swabeck, the worker-militant of Swedish origin Carl Skoglund, the organiser of the Oppositional nucleus in Minneapolis and the Canadian Maurice Spector. These Oppositionists had been able to preserve within the Communist Party a group of militants working as an organised fraction under the leadership of "Young", the pseudonym of one of the toughest worker-organisers Edward Oler, known in the party under the name of Hugo Oehler and the leader of the Gastonia strike.

The Communist League of America progressed slowly; it did not succeed in doubling its numbers within a year, but continued to win fewer Communist cadres than active element among the Communist Youth. Unlike many of the European sections, it consisted in the majority of militant workers, educated in the Communist parties in the period of Lenin and Zinoviev, accustomed to organisational work and little devoted to theoretical debate. It reflected with great fidelity the orientation laid down by Trotsky on the crucial questions of August 1, the defence of the USSR and the Sino-Russian conflict. It broke alliances with the foreign section which opposed Trotsky and proclaimed its un-failing solidarity with the Russian Opposition, especially with Rakovsky. The clearest indication of its progress, quantitative but especially political, was the development of "Militant" from a twice-monthly to a weekly.

The progress of the organisation was hampered by difficulties connected with the partial inactivity of Cannon, the principal leader of the C.L.A. and editor of "Militant". According to a letter from Albert Glotzer to Trotsky - dated April 5, 1930 - Cannon was experiencing in 1929 - 1930 some personal problems which accentuated a certain lassitude and perhaps demoralisation. The functioning of the leadership, which rested to a great extent on his shoulders, was more and more inappropriate and ill-adapted to the tasks of the organisation and the size of the country.

Europe which contributed most of the links" (11). We can remark that at least two Brazilians who had responsibilities in the Communist Party, the art critic Mario Pedrosa and the teacher Rodolfo Coutinho, the founder of the Communist Party in Brazil and a delegate in Moscow in 1924, made contacts, the first with Pierre Naville and the second in the USSR. These contacts resulted in the publication of A Lucta de Classe (The Class Struggle) by the Opposition group formed by Pedrosa, the Lenin Communist group. It was also Naville, through a short correspondence with the Peruvian Jose Carlos Mariategui, who put this pioneer of Marxism in Peru and founder of the Peruvian Communist Party in touch with the ideas of Trotsky and of the international Opposition.

In Mexico the American Russell Blackwell, who was known as Rosalio Negrete and represented the Young Communist International, and the Ukrainian Abraham Golod sought contact with the international Opposition and found it by way of the American Opposition. On February 22, 1930, the "Militant" announced the formation of an opposition group in Mexico in these terms:

Comrade Negrete was in New York for a time for the Party, and came to discuss with the militants of the Communist League (Opposition). Plans were made to start work on the basis of the principles of the international Opposition in Mexico... It is of interest to note that comrade Diego Rivera, one of the best-known leaders of the Communist movement in Latin America for years, has published a declaration in favour of the international left Opposition led by comrade Trotsky..."

Negrete was excluded by the Mexican Communist Party and was expelled from Mexico in March 1930, and Golod likewise. It seems that the Cuban leader, Julio Antonio Mella had sympathies with them, a little before he was assassinated at the beginning of January 1929.

The only real, solid links were made with a group struggling in Argentina, organised around Roberto Guinney, who in 1925 had organised a split in the Argentine Communist Party (in which he was secretary of the Russian and Ukrainian branch), leading to the P.C.R.A., within which he formed in 1929 the Communist Opposition Committee, which in March 1930 became the Argentine Communist Left and published La Verdad (The Truth). Guinney sent several letters about the situation in Argentina to the "Militant" in the course of the end of 1929 and indicates that an "American Comrade" had been to Argentina to inform the group about the situation in USA. By the side of Guinney was a worker in Bahia Blanca, of Russian origin, who signed his letters Pedro Manulis and his articles "Dvorin", and a former member of the Communist Party of Spain, Camilo Lopez.

This beginning of an anchorage in Latin America was still fragile in most cases, and the contacts between the Communist League of America and these Latin-American groups were infrequent and insufficient to overcome the delay in the development of these groups, which was a ^{by-}product of the feeble development of the official Communist Parties.

The Role and the Contacts of Trotsky

Though Trotsky was ^{away} from the centre of things in Prinkipo, he was, as we have seen, in contact with many militants, to whom he periodically addressed political statements and articles, for the internal debates within a group or for the publications. Trotsky naturally had a privileged contact with the USSR. The whole of this "Russian work" was the field of Leon Sedov (12), who carried out a tough job; contact with Russian Oppositionists, search for new contacts, putting together the Bulletin of the Opposition, correspondence with the comrades who undertook the technical work of producing it (Henri Molinier particular) and of distributing it (Raymond Molinier was engaged in management and sending out the copies to be sold). Trotsky was in this way relieved of work which demanded a great deal of care and of time. This enabled him to follow more closely the correspondence with the militants in other countries and with the life of the different groups. We have seen, at the time of the German crisis, how much attention Trotsky paid to the political problems of the Oppositionists and the noticeable increase in the volume of his correspondence. In the absence of any regular structure in the Opposition, Trotsky played, whether he liked it or not, the role of a source of political enlightenment rather than as that of an arbiter. He intervened only with the purpose of indicating and trying to resolve the political questions which obstructed the progress of the group.

apart from the French and German groups, with whom the political battle for the weekly, against Paz and Urbahns, necessitated a sustained correspondence, Trotsky had real links with the militants in only one country: Czechoslovakia. Contact was very quickly established by Wolfgang Salus, who travelled on his own initiative to offer his services to the exile and who remained for several months with him. Jiri Kopp, his close friend, joined him, and these young people kept in contact with their friend Jan Frankel, but also made links with other Czechoslovak militants over a wider range, some of whom, like Michalec, already knew Trotsky. Leonorovic, who grouped behind him in Bratislava a solid group of Slovak and Hungarian militants, likewise kept up a regular correspondence with Trotsky. These links no doubt explain the quality of the information which Trotsky commanded.

It was in relation to Czechoslovakia that, in March 1929, Trotsky warned his comrades against the danger of confusing the leaders of the right with the Communist militants who might have joined them, because one does not strike the right door with the first knock. On July 1, 1929, in a letter to Lenorovic, as an act of "exploration", he tried to trace the broad outlines of what would be, in his opinion, a revolutionary policy in the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, with a resolution break from the "centrist" policy of Artur Pollak and the group of students under his influence and with Neurath, who was "in the process of sliding to the right". At the same time, Neurath had concluded an alliance with a group of deputies in opposition to the bureaucratic regime of the party and launched at Reichenberg (Liberec) the journal of the united Opposition Arbeiterpolitik (Workers' Politics), which for the next year was the unique case of a journal explaining the views of a bloc of Communists some of whom claimed to stand for the "right" and others for the "left" in a common opposition to Stalinist "centrism".

The old opposition round Rudy Prapor had broken up, but Trotsky supported the efforts at re-groupment of the small nucleus round the youngest elements, Salus, Frankel and Kohout who were soon to join Lenorovic round the publication of a bulletin with the symbolic name of Iskra. It also sought to win at a later stage the nucleus of militants in Prague which had remained distant from the new regroupments and inside the party under the leadership of Otto Friedmann, as well as the groups of militant workers formed at Brno round Vlastimil Burian, who had come back after being excluded from the Communist Party in Vienna, and at Plzen round the miner Juskievic, a former member of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia in 1927. It is curious that the Czechoslovak Opposition, deeply divided, was one of those which preserved and was to preserve over years the most solid links with the members of the Communist Party.

The correspondence of Trotsky with the Dutchman Henk Sneevliet marks a degeneration in the political relations between the two men. The latter had in fact followed Urbahns in his erroneous appreciation of the Sino-Soviet conflict and had supported Urbahns at the time of the creation of the Trotsky Fund, at the Aachen Conference. Their relations deteriorated further with the announcement that an article by Sneevliet was to be published in La Lutte des Classes, an announcement which was immediately denied by "La Verite", which argued that Sneevliet was a member of the Two-and-a-Half International. The article had been published in Holland in the review De Nieuwe Weg, which was published by one of the founders of the Dutch Communist Party, Henriette Roland-Holst, a poetess and writer who had broken with that party in 1927. Trotsky wrote to Sneevliet about the possibility that this article might be published, before the decision of La Lutte des Classes, and stressed that he was not in a position to analyse it, because he had not seen a translation, but expressed his reserves about Roland-Holst:

"I have retained for her my old personal sympathy, but she has deserted Marxism and politically she stands between the Second and the Third Internationals, which she ^{wants} to unite. Consequently we belong to two irreconcilable camps." (13)

Sneevliet replied by attacking La Lutte des Classes and Trotsky as sectarians. Trotsky replied coldly, defending the decision of "La Verite" to refuse to publish the article:

".. You regard as sectarians everyone who traces a line of intangible separation between democratic socialism and revolutionary Communism. In this case, I am one of the sectarians... We really have not broken from Stalin, Bukharin and Zinoviev to enter into collaboration with Roald-Holst. On this ground there can be no compromise." (14)

Sneevevliet's article was about the revolutionary movement in Indonesia (which was then a Dutch colony), which he knew because he had been one of its pioneers and perhaps had retained some contacts. In his letter to Trotsky, in which he enclosed a copy of the article, he spoke of Tan Malaka, one of the leaders of the Indonesian Communist Party, who had taken part in the Fourth Congress of the Communist International, had remained nearly a year in Moscow after it and then had been put in charge of questions relating to South-East Asia by the Communist International:

"... comrade Malaka is one of the most devoted and capable militants in the Indonesian movement".(15)

According to Sneevevliet, this militant would be opposed to the policy of the "Third Period", as also would "Alfonso", the Indonesian delegate at the Sixth Congress of the Communist International. However, at this time, there appear to have been no more concrete links with these Indonesian militants.

In Bulgaria, contact was made by letter on arriving in Turkey with a small nucleus which always regarded itself as "Trotskyist" since 1923, led by Stephan Manov and Sider Todorov, both excluded at the same time from the Communist Party for having denounced the putschist character of the insurrection of September 1923, and who were old contacts of Rakovsky. Their roots in the Bulgarian movement went deep: at the same time, it was known that the split between Stalinists and "Trotskyists" had taken place in prison. The latter were influenced by Dimitar Gatchev, a former leader of the military apparatus of the party, was sentenced to death and was imprisoned in 1926, and was not to renew his contacts until his liberation in 1932.

Finally, it does not seem that Trotsky or any of his comrades succeeded at this time in making contact, as would be achieved later, with another nucleus which dated back to 1923, that of the leader of the Yugoslav Communist Youth, Mikola Popovic, nor with one of the two principal Opposition groups in Greece, the Spartakos Group, which was born at the end of the 1920's, while the contact with the Archaeo-Marxists had not yet resulted in a rapprochement with the International Opposition. There was not yet any contact with the Opposition which had arisen in Warsaw in 1929, under the impulsion of the Jewish militant linked with the Russian Party. Nor were there any contacts with Rumania or Albania.

The Fractional Struggles in Austria

Many malicious, or simply ignorant, "commentators" have made jokes about the incessant internal fractional struggles of the groups of the left Opposition. However, this undeniable weakness cannot and should not be seen as something inherent, as a phenomenon internal to the Oppositional movement. In the case of the groups which we shall now study - those in Austria and in China - other phenomena and political conditions of the period partially explain at least these difficulties and internal struggles: secrecy, the lack of contact with the international Opposition, the undetected by often murderous role of agents provocateurs infiltrated by the GPU. Imposture then reaches its full dimension: it was only too easy for the GPU and its agents to lay stress on the incessant struggles which they had most often inflamed as much as they could... The fact remains that the weakness of the Opposition was to have involuntarily presented a favorable terrain. From the same point of view, it would be abnormal not to make the point that this weakness of the Opposition was also the reflex of its political strength, that is, of the extreme rigour of its militants in relation to the political principles of their movement and of their vigilance towards those whom they feared would call these principles in question.

At the beginning of 1930, the situation of the Opposition in Austria reveals a very severe crisis, which threatened in a certain way to splash with mud the entire international Opposition. We know how extremely tense were the relations between the two groups of the Opposition in Austria - to put it simply, the "Frey-Landau" antagonism, strongly coloured by personal opposition, due to their bellicose temperament, but not less by, to say the least, the spiteful, egocentric temperament of Frey, who moved through others as intermedialaries. At the end of 1929, neither of these two groups said that it wanted to join the international Opposition, and they exchanged hostile declarations and denunciations. At the approach of the international conference and perhaps other less well-known factors were to provoke an explosion of the crisis the agent of which - probably intentionally -

was to be the group known as "the internal group in the party", which was in reality formed by elements excluded from the two rival groups and particularly influenced by Trotsky's former secretary on Prinkipo, Jakob Frank, who worked here under the name of Max Graf, and exploited the prestige which his former function won for him to try to for decision with the argument of authority.

During February the "internal group" submitted to the other two organisations of the Opposition a platform for unification. It emphasised that they should not start "from Austrian traditions of fractional struggle", and proposed as a basis for unification:

1. Agreement with the programme of the Russian left opposition and rejection of any analysis of the USSR near that of Urbahns or Korsch;
2. Symmetrical rejection of the Stalinist theory of the "third period" and of the right-wing theme of 'stabilisation';
3. A characterisation of the Austrian situation in terms of a deep structural crisis, the fascist danger, the defeat of the proletariat, ideological and political disintegration of the Social-Democracy, but not its organisational dissolution, a total failure of the Communist Party and, as a result of this situation, a real passivity of the working class. (16)

The "internal group" rejected the "false problem of the second party" and proposed a solution for unification, to function on the basis of democratic centralism and to be the backbone of a revolutionary party. But it was these proposals - which after all could be discussed which set a match to the gunpowder. In a letter, which was also sent to the Brandler group headed by the former editor-in-chief of the Vienna Rote Fahne, expelled in 1929, Willi Schlamm, the Mahnruf group replied by formally denouncing any illusion about the possibility of regenerating the Austrian Communist Party and affirming that the slogan, "Save the Communist International" was erroneous in Austria. While it pronounced in favour of the defence of the dictatorship of the proletariat in USSR and in rejecting the perspective of the construction of "socialism in a single country", it none the less added that it was "a nonsense and a contradiction to want to force the Austrian Communists to accept the documents of the Russian Opposition", (17) which they could not verify in their own daily experience. Landau's former comrades ended by declaring that they were hostile to the Austrian Opposition, since it was not itself an organisation, joining what they called "a foreign organised group"...

One might think, then, that the situation was becoming simpler and that unification could be realised at least between two of the three components. But that would be to misunderstand the fractional ardour of the Austrian Oppositionists. The Frey group, for its part had no reservations about the principles which were advanced. But it thought it necessary to shed light on the past and, before going forward to unification, put conditions both to the Russian Opposition and to "the internal group of the party". It was ready to admit that it had been wrong in the past when it supported the leadership of the Communist International and condemned the Russian Opposition, it demanded in return that its future partners in the unification should recognise that their own "fractional struggle, waged subjectively in the interests of Leninism" was in reality "objectively and subjectively in the interests of the Party and of the Communist International" (18). It added that the Russian Opposition ought to begin by publicly denouncing the exclusion from the Austrian Communist Party of the Frey fraction, which it had, so they claimed, "approved" in its time.

The "internal group" replied by refusing to make any self-criticism on past events in which it had not been involved and expressed reservations about the demands of the Frey group. On April 9, 1930, in a letter of extreme verbal violence, Frey characterised the attitude of the "internal group" as being "stupid, ridiculous and arrogant", and declared that Graf was only the projection, in Austrian affairs, of Trotsky, who was in reality responsible for the letter of March 25, which was "politically as mendacious as it is provocative" (19). And, for good measure, it went over to a public attack in the columns of Arbeiterstimme, treating the leaders of the group as clowns and declaring at the same time that "it seems really that Trotsky is behind them and believes them to be, as it were, as 'his' group in Austria..." (20).

In this way, not only did they make no progress towards unification, but they had considerably restricted its perspective. Traditional Austrian fractionalism was probably not

one only reason: after having contributed to the aggravation of the fractional struggles - which was apparently not very difficult - the "internal" group was to make itself the champion of ... capitulation before Stalinism.

The Strength and the Weaknesses of the Chinese Opposition

The situation of the Chinese Opposition is in many respects at least as confusing as that of the Austrian Opposition. But there were still more historical and geographical influences. We have already mentioned the beginning of contacts in Moscow by Chinese students with the Left Opposition and how these contacts resulted in the formation of groups of the Opposition which returned in successive waves to China during 1929 - the last Oppositionists in Moscow being arrested and exiled to Siberia. In 1929 there were three different groups among students back from Moscow, which was to create a certain confusion and to fragment the Opposition.

The first group, "Our Word", was made up of about ten militants known for their "Trotskyist" opinions, who had been excluded from the Chinese party in 1928. When they got back to China, they formed small Oppositional groups in Shanghai, Hong Kong and Peking: at Hong Kong, Ou Fang and Chen Yimou were implanted among the dockers and at Peking their comrade was very active among the students. They published a journal on the national scale; it bore the name of the group. They were in touch with the Chinese Opposition in Moscow, led by the student Wang Wenyuan (21), and published documents of the Russian Opposition.

In September 1929 the group led by Wang Wenyuan returned to China and joined the "Our word" group at Shanghai. In conformity with the orientation laid down in Moscow, the militant of the group informed the Central Committee of the party of their return and to resume their militant activity. In this way Wang Wenyuan became the right-hand man of one of the principal leaders of the Communist Party of China, Zhou Enlai. These militants were to work illegally inside and outside the party for the Opposition; they were to work in secrecy and especially to infiltrate the whole department devoted to the propaganda of the Chinese Communist Party. Many of them occupied important posts in the apparatus, as cadres trained in Moscow. This group remained secret until 1930. At the same time, some students, like Liu Renjing, refused to rejoin the party, and formed a new group, October, which quickly numbered more than fifty members and published a short-lived journal, the Journal of the October Group.

The third group, formed at the end of 1929, was called Militant. Its members were all former Oppositionists who had worked in the party before being excluded. There were about thirty of them, which made this the smallest and least influential of the three groups formed by the "students" back from Moscow. These groups had only small contact with Trotsky and the international Opposition. Only Liu Renjing, in the course of his journey back from Moscow, had passed by way of Germany and Paris, where he had met Rosmer before going to Prinkipo, where he spent several days with Trotsky, who took advantage of his visit to draft a programme for the Chinese Bolshevik-Leninists, which Liu took back to China.

The multiplicity of the groups was an obstacle to the development of a strong Opposition in China. But it was also an indication of the combativity of the Chinese Communists despite the defeat of the revolution of 1925 - 27. The Russian Opposition had been preaching in the desert while this revolution was going on, but it had a just revenge when, at the end of 1929, two eminent former leaders of the Chinese Communist Party, Chen Duxiu and Peng Shutzzi, respectively the former general secretary and the former organisational secretary, made a spectacular turn towards the Left Opposition. It was the reading of the documents of the Russian Opposition, translated and provided to the two men by the Chinese Oppositionists back from Moscow which had convinced them. The Chinese Question After the Sixth Congress and Balance-Sheet and Perspectives of the Chinese Revolution were a veritable revelation to Chen Duxiu of his own role during the revolution and how he had been a puppet in the hands of Stalin.

The news that Chen had gone over to the Opposition created a sensation and provoked a crisis in the party, especially in the apparatus. Chen joined battle and attracted old cadres such as Peng Shutzzi, Zheng Chaolin, the former deputy chief editor of the party weekly, the former student leader Ho Tzushen, Yin Kuan, the leader of the Communist Party in Anhui

... the revolution of 1925 - 1927 and Li Yufu. This was the beginning of a new and authentic political current of Opposition in the ranks of the party. There are reports of entire branches of supporters of Chen in the party, such as the East Shanghai Committee, made up entirely of "Chen-ists".

Like Trotsky, Chen Duxiu was born in 1879. After studies of Chinese literature and of the English and French languages, he soon became a revolutionary intellectual of the very highest level. Harold Isaacs describes him as follows:

Out of the thinned ranks of the revolutionary intellectuals of 1911 emerged the figure of Chen Duxiu, scion of an Anhwei mandarin family, who began posing the tasks of revolution more boldly, more clearly, more courageously than anyone who had preceded him. The task of the new generation, proclaimed Chen Duxiu, was 'to fight Confucianism, the old tradition of virtue and rituals, the old ethics and the old politics, the old learning and the old literature'. In their place he would put the fresh materials of modern democratic political thought and natural science".(22)

Chen was a professor in the University at Peking and had great influence as an intellectual and a revolutionary, like that of the national journal of which he was the head, The New Youth. He was one of the principal leaders of the movement of May 4, 1919 against the pro-Japanese government of Peking, and, after being imprisoned, he turned towards the West, especially towards Britain and France, where he sought new ideas, studied the nature of the state and began to struggle for the unification of China. He was finally won to Marxism in 1920, and was elected general secretary of the Chinese Communist Party on its foundation in 1921. Chen pursued in parallel his activities in the academic and cultural fields, retained his contacts with several Chinese cultural movements and published a textbook on Chinese history and literature. Lee Feigon, his biographer, sums up his influence in this way:

"With the possible exception of Mao Zedong, it would be difficult to find anyone whose ideas and activity had a greater importance, for the history of modern China, than those of Chen Duxiu. His contributions included everything, from the introduction of punctuation in Chinese writing to the foundation of the Chinese Communist party".(23)

As general secretary of the Chinese Communist Party, he was the leader between 1925 and 1927 the Chinese Communists during the revolution, applying the policy and the orders of Moscow. The defeat and the campaign of slander accusing him of being personally responsible were to affect him severely. He was not to re-appear until he was in a position to combat his slanderers and his former comrades. His spectacular evolution toward the left Opposition and the formation of his own fraction in the Chinese Communist Party were a striking reply to his enemies.

The latter started then a great campaign to try to discredit him, ceaselessly attacking "the Trotsky-Chen liquidatory centre". They then tried to prevail on him to go to Moscow for discussion. In vain! The silence enforced on Chen after he was removed from his post as general secretary of the party and the campaign waged against him by those who had shared his responsibilities on the Central Committee had not seriously harmed his prestige in the eyes of the old cadres and of the masses of party members. In addition, his passing over to the Opposition and the campaign of denunciation had shaken the party at all levels. It was a deep crisis, which compelled the leaders to exclude hundreds of militants who favoured Chen or were thought to do so. It was a "great purge" on the Russian scale. The Oppositionists were excluded from the Central Committee, from the provincial committees and from the Communist Youth League... The party journal, the Red Flag, published each week the list of the expelled, including Chen himself, on November 15, 1929. He replied on December 10, by publishing an Open Letter to all the comrades of the party. Five days later, eighty-one old Communists, who had had or still retained responsibilities in the party, published a document entitled Our Political Position, in which they openly declared themselves in support of Trotsky:

"If we had had the political leadership of Trotsky in 1927, we would perhaps have been able to lead the Chinese Revolution on to the road to victory".(24)

Those who signed were the leading nucleus of Chen's fraction, the Proletarian Fraction, based essentially in Shanghai. Its cadres were all intellectuals of high level, and educated in many years for the political struggle with the party. The fraction had then several hundreds of militants, developed rapidly, and constructed branches in Peking, Tian

the work in Sichuan, Ningpo and in the Shandong and the Anhui, and cells in Hong Kong and Macao. Chen was general secretary, Peng Shuzi was in charge of propaganda and Ma Yufu and Liu Renjing were executive secretaries.

The passage to the left Opposition of a group of well-known cadres and, in particular, Chen Duxiu who had international standing and reputation, changed the circumstances of the development of the Opposition. However, in the immediate future, the appearance of this element was to provoke additional confusion, because there was super-imposed on the rivalries of the three groups of "returned" students the general hostility (which varied in degree) of the former students to the man whom, until then, they had regarded as "an old opportunist". While he was a threat to the "bosses" of little groups, he also carried the burden of the defeat in 1925 - 1927 when he was official leader of the party. Was it possible to bring together the Chinese Oppositionists from Moscow, who were already old hands, and those in China recently recruited? Was it possible to bring together youth won in the Russian universities and the old cadres who followed Chen?

The congress of "Our word" in September 1929 seemed to bode ill: quarrels, splits and exclusions. Even though they agreed on a formula, the Chinese "B.L.s" could not agree on its content, as their discussion on the Constituent Assembly and their letter consulting Trotsky on this point reveals. Were they heading towards breaking up? The conference of the groups claiming to stand for the Opposition, in November 1929, was hardly more reassuring. The tone of the discussion soon became very sharp and personal attacks made any confrontation of ideas impossible: on the very day that Chen was excluded from the party, the "Our Word" group wrote to Trotsky to denounce his "opportunism", and to accuse him of having applied in 1927 the policy of Martynov (a former Menshevik who joined Stalin and defended the Chinese policy of the Communist International), and to declare that the group made the struggle against him a priority. Liu Renjing, for his part, having broken with Chen, tried to gain support for the thesis that the latter had always supported Stalin's policy and represented "the rightist Opposition under the mask of the phraseology of the left".

The Chinese left Opposition seemed to be well and truly in a blind alley. None the less they continued to seek a solution, and, at the end of the conference, they set up a "consultative committee" including representatives of the different groups. Its duty was to discuss the divergences and even to publish documents on the major questions: the Constituent Assembly, the nature of the revolution, the lessons of the defeat of 1927. But few documents were published and incidents were frequent. Each group claimed to desire unification and used this argument in its efforts to get the personal support of Trotsky, who took good care not to do so and was satisfied with repeating that the important thing was to make progress towards unification.

In his "Reply to the Chinese Oppositionists", Trotsky showed hope and caution, the keys to his attitude to Chen:

"Concerning the Chen Duxiu group, I am pretty well acquainted with the policy it followed in the years of the revolution: it was the Stalin-Bukharin-Martynov policy that is, a policy in essence of right-wing Menshevism. Comrade N(iel Sih) wrote me however, that Chen Duxiu, basing himself on the experience of the revolution, has come considerably closer to our position. It goes without saying that this can only be welcomed. In your letter, however, you categorically dispute Comrade N(iel Sih) information. You even contend that Chen Duxiu has not broken from Stalin's policy which presents a mixture of opportunism and adventurism. But up to now I have read only one declaration of program by Chen Duxiu and therefore am in no position to express myself on this question." (26)

He did not change this position until he had had in his hands a document by Chen and was able to judge on the basis of the document: this happened only during the summer of 1930 a date after which he totally supported Chen, with the perspective of a unification which in fact did not happen until 1931. The perspectives of this Chinese Opposition were therefore favourable, despite the white terror reigning under the Kuomintang and the distance from China which was a heavy burden in its relations with the international Opposition.

The absence of a centralised organisation of the international Opposition prevented, at this period, a supplementary step in its development from being taken: this was in the matter of the network of contacts round Rosmer and Trotsky, who brought the principal links together.

These developments and international contacts of the left Opposition revealed a wide range of different situations, related to the characteristics of each national situation: the situation of the workers' movement in general, of the Communist party and of its opponents - but likewise to the nature and the quality of the contacts established with the International Opposition as a whole. It is significant that in the course of this period many contacts were made by chance, by meetings between militants in the course of travel and by reading the journals of the Opposition. At the same time, the absence of contacts with small groups or nuclei, such as the Spartakos Group in Greece or the Warsaw Opposition in Poland, are example of "chance" working the opposite way, of the organisational weakness of the Opposition at the international level.

The absence of an international organ was a considerable handicap, which "La Verite" and "Militant" tried to overcome. The geographical isolation of some sections, such as China, raised financial and material problems that were practically insoluble. However these difficulties had little or no influence on the political line and the firmness of the Oppositionists, who, even though in some cases they were isolated and cut off from Trotsky and his comrades, fought "at their side". But as this network of contacts grew larger and the international Opposition developed on the international scale, the homogenisation and the political centralisation, which only an international conference of all the national sections, groups and nuclei could enable to be obtained - let alone the isolated militants - became necessary.

FOOTNOTES

- (1) According to the letter of A. Rosmer to Trotsky (December 1929), in Broue Correspondence, pp. 94 - 95.
- (2) Letter from Trotsky to Marguerite Rosmer, December 31, 1929, in Broue Correspondence pp. 106 - 109.
- (3) Letter from Trotsky to Marguerite Rosmer, January 2, 1930, A.H. 9914.
- (4) Letter from Trotsky to the Charleroi Federation, December 25, 1929, A.H. 9914.
- (5) Letter from Trotsky to Marguerite Rosmer, January 8, 1930, in Broue, Correspondence January 8, 1930.
- (6) Letter from A. Rosmer to Trotsky, March 7, 1930, Broue Correspondence pp. 128 - 13
- (7) Trotsky: "Letter to the Italian Left Communists: Followers of Comrade Amadeo Borigha", "Writings (1929)", p. 318ff.
- (8) Letter from Trotsky to A. Rosmer, February 28, 1930, in Broue, Correspondence, pp. 125 - 127.
- (9) Daniel Hemery: "Revolutionnaires Vietnamiens et Pouvoir Colonial en Indochine: Communistes, Trotskystes, Nationalistes a Saigon de 1932 a 1937", Paris, Maspero, 1975, 524 pages.
- (10) Trotsky: "Greetings to the Weekly Militant", October 19, 1929, published in the Militant, No. 18, November 30, 1929, p. 1.
- (11) P. Broue: "Le Mouvement Trotskyste en Amerique Latine", in "Cahiers Leon Trotsky" No. 11, September 1982, pp. 13 - 30.
- (12) On the life and activity of Sedov, see "Cahiers Leon Trotsky", No. 13 and 14, March and June 1983.
- (13) Letter from Trotsky to Sneevliet, February 10, 1930, A.H. 10381
- (14) Letter from Trotsky to Sneevliet, July 18, 1930, A.H. 10382.
- (15) Letter from Sneevliet to Trotsky, February 21, 1930, A.H. 5167.
- (16) According to the report on the situation of the Austrian Opposition in the International Bulletin of the Left Communist Opposition, No. 1, end of August 1930, p.
- (17) Ibid., p. 15.
- (18) Ibid.
- (19) Letter from Frey to Trotsky, April 9, 1930, A.H. 1306.
- (20) According to International Bulletin, No. 1, p. 15.
- (21) Wang Wenyuan wrote, under the pseudonym of Wang Fanxi, his memoirs: "Chinese Revolutionary: Memoirs 1919 - 1949", O.U.P., 1980.
- (22) H. R. Isaacs: "The Tragedy of the Chinese Revolution", p.53, in Second Revised edition, Stanford University Press, 1961.
- (23) Lee Feigon: "Chen Duxiu: Founder of the Chinese Communist Party", Princeton Uni-

versity Press, 1983, p.3. On Chen Duxiu one may also read: Wang Hongmo, "Chen Duxiu: an evaluation of his life's work" in Social Sciences in China, winter 1985 (translated from the review Zhongguo Shehui Kexue, 1985, No. 5, by Feng Shize).

- (24) Quoted by R. C. Kagan, "The Chinese Trotskyist Movement and Chen Duxiu: Culture, revolution and polity", London, University of Pennsylvania, 1969, p. 65.
- (25) Letter from the "Our Word" group to Trotsky, November 15, 1929, in Bulletin of the Opposition, No. 9, February - March 1930, as well as Trotsky's reply, December 22, 1929, which is in "Writings (1929)", p. 407.
- (26) Trotsky: "Reply to the Chinese Oppositionists", December 22, 1929, in "Writings (1929)", p. 407. The letter to which this is the reply appears also, along with the reply, in Militant, January 25, 1930.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Elements of Crisis

The progress of the Opposition on the international level, but equally the internal problems of certain groups, made a real structure necessary as a forward step in the restructuring of the opposition round leading organisms and regular procedures. The period of informal contacts between groups and of the role as a centre which had had to be played by "La Verite" was now passed. Trotsky wrote to Rosmer on October 13, 1929:

"I have already written to you of my opinion about the need for the provisional committee⁽¹⁾ (or perhaps for the bureau of information - a more modest title and therefore a wiser one) to make itself known to the different groupings and to start work. 1 day I learn by letter from Landau that Urbahns, with the connivance of Paz, is preparing something like an international conference. Groups which yesterday detested each other today are coalescing, under the pressure of considerations which are all to a revolutionary policy. In that way they can create nothing but confusion. We should take the initiative, or, to put it better, should support and continue the initiative which we took some months ago. I am sending you herewith the draft of a circular-letter of the international information bureau. If, as I hope, the Belgians support the initiative, we can issue this letter over three signatures; yours for 'La Verite', G. Gourov for the Russian Opposition and van Overstraeten for the Belgians. This would be a good step forward. I shall await your reply with the greatest impatience." (2)

However, several months were to elapse before this initiative was followed up, through the appeal in "La Verite", alone, for the formation of an international bureau of the Opposition. During this period, while Rosmer remained silent, and during which Trotsky began by being anxious and later was exasperated by Rosmer's silence and inactivity, elements of crisis were accumulating in the ranks of the Opposition, which was deprived of any organ capable of "managing" these conflicts: the German crisis, the fractional problems in Austria and in China, the national separatism of the Italian Bordiguist militants and the grave crisis of the Belgian Opposition had repercussions on the life of the international Opposition. New elements of crisis appeared in the internal relations in the "La Verite" group and on the trade union question. The accumulation of these problems was to provoke a grave crisis between the two men who were involved in these conflicts: Rosmer, who was acting in the place of the international bureau which he had not brought into being, and Trotsky, who followed closely the evolution of these conflicts, and stressed at every stage that the difficulties which were encountered resulted from the absence of an organism capable of resolving them, the absence of an international bureau. As Rosmer saw it, these difficulties were what prevented the formation of such a bureau. Thus there followed a real dialogue of the deaf, with very serious consequences.

Trotsky's Plans

In Trotsky's letter of October 13, he located the work of forming the international bureau in the direct line from what he called "a little private conference" between five militants from different countries, held in summer 1929 in Prinkipo, which created the provisional international Committee of the Communist Left Opposition, on June 10, 1929. In the draft circular-letter which Trotsky sent to Rosmer, he proposed to "... take a forward step by bring into existence an international information bureau, which, without claiming to have any administrative powers, would take upon itself to act as a unifying link between the different groups of the Opposition, and to ensure the exchange of materials and documents and the appearance of an information bulletin" (3). He suggested that the bureau be formed of a member of the Russian Opposition (Trotsky), one from the "La Verite" group (Rosmer) and one from the Belgian group (Van Overstraeten). At the same time, it would invite the most important groups to delegate a representative. He then touched on the problems of the centralisation of the Opposition:

"The question of the international linkage of the Communist Left Opposition represents a life-and-death question for it. However, we do not hide for a single moment all the difficulties which lie on the road towards this re-groupment... In these con

of ideas, the closer unity cannot be achieved at one stroke. It must be prepared on the basis of ideas as well as that of organisation." (4)

The appeal which he proposed was ambitious; it was in no way limited to the formation of a bureau, which would be only a stage in the centralisation of the Opposition:

"The common basis of ideas, like the organisational forms of this re-groupment, can be realised only by democratic methods. It is the international conference which alone will be able to create the incontestable bases of the unity of the Opposition. We believe that, despite the obstacles which arise along the road, it is perfectly able to be realised, and that we must especially apply all our efforts to bringing it together as quickly as possible". (5)

The ideological preparation (elaboration of platforms, draft resolutions, their subject ion to wide discussion in the press of the international Opposition) and the practical preparation (list of organisations wishing and able to take part in the conference, elaboration of the constitutional principles, representation of groups, methods of voting, etc.) must be the immediate concern of the different groups of the Opposition. Therefore the groups, publishers and organisations which claimed to stand for the Communist Left to reply as quickly as possible to a number of questions, such as the following:

"What is the road, and what are the practical steps, which they believe to be the most useful for preparing the assembling of the forces of the Opposition? What documents, drafts, resolutions and theses are they going to put into discussion in front of the international Opposition? In what order and with what delay?" (6)

What was lacking on October 13 for battle to be joined? It was the signature of van Overstraeten in the name of the Belgian Opposition, which Trotsky wanted to give greater credit to this initiative. It was quite naturally Rosmer, who was in contact with the Belgians, who had the task of getting their agreement. On October 20, Trotsky wrote again to Rosmer:

"It is with the greatest impatience that I await your answer about the international bureau. The question seems to me to be a burning one. If we lose time our situation will be highly complicated in a few weeks, when the initiative will be taken by elements who are capable of nothing but sowing confusion." (7)

On October 24, Trotsky insisted on the urgency of the appeal and on the danger which the preparations of Paz and Urbahns presented at the international level:

"This political macedoine will be capable only of creating confusion, but at that it will be very capable. In order to keep down these incidental costs of the international Opposition, there is for the moment only one way: that is to anticipate their initiative of an international conference etc. I come back to the proposal in the circular-letter and the other steps which I discussed at length with you in an earlier letter. I can well imagine, my dear friend, that you are over-loaded with work by the day-to-day demands of 'La Verite', but it is precisely for that reason that I insist. You must harness the young people solidly to the work of the provisional bureau; it is absolutely necessary and urgent, and, in the long run, the fate of 'La Verite' itself depends upon it". (8)

Rosmer replied on October 29:

"Everything that you have been sent has been passed on, but the people to whom it was sent are slow in replying (the Belgians, for example)". (9)

A long silence followed, and letters became infrequent.

Rosmer's Silence

Marguerite Rosmer announced that she would arrive in Prinkipo at the end of November and lift a little of the curtain, when she wrote that "there is much to be said about the inner life of 'La Verite' and spoke of "little frictions" (10) On November 18,

Trotsky broke the silence on the subject of the international bureau, and became anxious about the "almost threatening speechlessness" on Rosmer's part: he wrote to him:

"The delay in creating the provisional bureau is creating serious difficulties. For example: Landau is asking for financial assistance. That is for the bureau to decide. But the bureau is not there... I am still awaiting a reply about the provisional bureau." (11)

From his side, Rosmer wrote the preceding day to Trotsky. His letter did not say a word about the provisional bureau, but we find an important passage in it:

"Something has been gained already; we really are a centre for the international Opposition. Not only do the Belgians regularly increase their sales of 'La Verite', but we are in contact with the Spanish Opposition groups in Belgium and in Luxembourg as well as with the 'Militant'". (12)

A fresh silence opened between the two men, while Trotsky waited for the reply which did not come. On December 13, two months precisely after his initiative and the drafting of the circular letter, he wrote again to Rosmer about the provisional bureau. His letter is a real plea intended to convince of the necessity of action. But above all he tries to understand where the resistance lay:

"The question which makes me most anxious is the stagnation about the international bureau. Is there some opposition, especially on the part of the comrades of La Lutte? That would be regrettable enough, given the situation. The reaction against bureaucratic centralisation leads many elements of the Opposition to the tendency of Menshevism in matters of organisation. I am thinking of Menshevism as it presented itself particularly before the first revolution (1905). In order to take a step forward in the field of organisation, they were always waiting for the situation to be ripe, for ideas to be clear; they endlessly put things off; they did not understand that the clarification and crystallisation of political ideas are not an independent process, and that lack of sharpness in organisational relations leads also to confusion in the realm of ideas or at any rate holds back their progress.

The creation of an international centre, no matter how modest it may be, is extremely urgent, for France, as for the other countries... It is especially necessary that 'La Verite' and the French Opposition which groups round it shall appear as a detachment of the international Opposition. It is a method of incommensurable importance to emerge from this pullulation of groups and individuals who do not know what to do and never will. For the combative workers, the effect of our international organisation will be a powerful attraction." (13)

Trotsky wrote to point out that an international centre would equally be very useful to attract the groups of the Right Opposition - now that the Russian Right had capitulated and the disorientated militants:

"... Our business is to re-awaken and the strengthen in our own ranks the sentiment and the idea of international responsibility, which is too often replaced with the idea of national autonomy, alleging weakness, the absence of a platform, etc. Paz also has demanded that the worked-out platform must precede the act of organisation but we see that, thanks to 'La Verite', we are already much nearer to a serious platform for France than we were on the eve of the launching of the weekly. As always there is in that a dialectical relation between political activity and organisation. The Zimmerwald Left was a great deal weaker than we are when it equipped itself with an international organisation. We are already late. I am nearly sure that the creation of the international bureau, even with a simple bulletin at the beginning, will change our position for this stage as much as did the creation of 'La Verite' for the first stage." (14)

In conclusion, Trotsky once more insisted:

"I await with impatience your information about what has been done in this field, the obstacles, etc." (15)

This time, Rosmer replied.

Delay in Belgium - or Internal Problems?

In fact Rosmer wrote to Trotsky on December 19, to explain the latest developments in the Belgian crisis. He went straight on to the consequences, including one which greatly interested Trotsky:

"An indirect result is that War van Overstraeten is falling back more than ever on Brussels... and no longer wants to hear about the provisional international bureau or to sign the appeal which you drafted. I have little hope of getting him to change his decision. At least for a time he is going to wall himself in in Brussels".(16)

He also replied on the subject of the militants of "La Lutte des Classes":

"Do not think that there has been the least resistance from the side of La Lutte. Quite the contrary. Naville at once approved of your proposal. What held us up was, first, the reply of the Belgians, for which we had to wait a long time and which was not yet final when the conflict broke out; it is also our situation, our which does not seem to us to be solid enough to permit us to take an initiative of this importance." (17)

Finally Rosmer made this proposal:

"In fact there exists already, since we came into existence and especially now, an embryo of international organisation of the Opposition, in the fact that the group or nearly all of them, write to us and, through us, communicate with each other, either through the journal or through the direct relations which we have helped them to establish. It would therefore be enough to accept, and to develop and extend, the situation which in fact exists, in order to set up the international bureau. For that, the appeal could be signed by 'La Verite' alone. We are sure that now all the groups will reply favourably." (18)

This letter calls for numerous comments and raises several questions. The first comment is about the "delay in Belgium": when Rosmer said that the Belgian reply had kept us waiting and had still not been final when the conflict broke out, he was only confirming what he had already written about the slowness of certain groups to reply. However, there is one element to cast doubt on this version. In fact, we read, in a letter from van Overstraeten to Trotsky, a passage which contradicts Rosmer:

"When we point out certain obstacles to strengthening international cohesion, we by no means suggest contenting ourselves with simply accepting the situation. On the contrary, we have fully agreed, when Rosmer sent us the circular the plan of which you conceived some time ago. It is true that, since then, its despatch seems to have been delayed".(19)

The apparent contradiction between these two versions is perhaps due to the formal agreement of the Belgians to sign the appeal, but especially to their weak enthusiasm for taking a real part in setting up the bureau, a task which they may have thought to be beyond their means, at the moment when a conflict between the Brussels and Charleroi group was coming on the scene. In that case, why did Rosmer not immediately tell Trotsky about this difficulty, which became practically unsurmountable after the crisis exploded in the Belgian Opposition? For Trotsky, in a letter to van Overstraeten, takes him up on this point:

"You recognise the need for an international linkage. But you do so in a way with which I cannot agree. You allege the shortage of material means. That can be interpreted in this sense: that one leaves for the international linkage only what is left of the means and resources used for internal questions... The Communist Opposition cannot be successful on the national terrain if it is not international not merely 'in essence' but in its activity itself. This is the greatest lesson which flows from the recent crisis of the Belgian Opposition".(20)

Rosmer's silence made easier the evasion of the Belgians and at the same time rendered Trotsky unable to intervene either in the internal crisis of the Belgian Opposition or in favour of creating the international bureau or launching the appeal. After Rosmer

used the delay by the Belgians to excuse himself, he wrote:

"Then this is our situation too, that does not seem solid enough to enable us to make an initiative of this importance. But at the same time, preparatory work was being done, with the results which you know. In the end there has been no time lost. In any case, there is no principled opposition among us to overcome on this point".(21)

There too we have the right to ask ourselves about Rosmer's silence: his support for the appeal - that is to say, the appreciation that the "La Verite" group, aided by others, had the means to create the provisional bureau - seemed at first to be won for Trotsky. On what basis did Rosmer express his doubts about the solidity of the French group and why did he not share his doubts with Trotsky except through this laconic formula, without indicating what were the problems involved? Why did he not become aware of them earlier? His appreciation that "no time had been lost" has only one meaning: the two months which has passed since Trotsky's initiative were put to advantage to extend the international influence of "La Verite" but doubtless likewise try to weld the group together and to settle its latent internal problems - which he did not disclose to Trotsky and seems to have regarded as settled.

At this stage, the essential point, in Trotsky's eyes, was Rosmer's proposal, and, on December 25, he wrote to Rosmer:

"It is very interesting to note that the Opposition makes progress only in France and America, where it placed itself from the beginning on international ground".(22)

And he replied to Rosmer's proposal in the following way:

"Your proposal to launch the appeal about the international bureau in the name of "La Verite" alone appears to me to be excellent from all points of view. Do it as quickly as you can. In this case, your appeal will naturally be directed to the Russian Opposition also at the address of the Russian Bulletin. The most important thing is not to forget any group, even the smallest, to demonstrate complete impartiality and loyalty. The small insignificant groups will reciprocally neutralise each other..." (23)

Marguerite Rosmer wrote to Trotsky on December 29; she had received a letter from van Overstraeten that the break had taken place in the Belgian Opposition, and concluded:

"This delays the establishment of the international bureau".(24)

Was she not aware of Alfred's proposal, in his letter of December 19? Was she seeking an alibi, already useless, to justify the delay which had taken place? We do not know. But this "little phrase" irritated Trotsky and the tone changed in his letter in reply

"About the international bureau, I am completely perplexed. No news. The last proposal (to leave the initiative to 'La Verite' alone) was accepted. But it is an action which is lacking. People write to tell me that there is no internal obstacle. At the same time, they do not take the step which is absolutely necessary. I can understand it. On many questions, I am obliged to undertake activities in my personal name, to the detriment of the thing itself, as, for example, in the case of Blumkin. Tell me, please, where is the obstacle".(25)

The cup was still far from being full. It certainly was, when Trotsky received a letter from Marguerite Rosmer - with Alfred still silent - dated January 14, in which Trotsky found the following post-script:

"Alfred and I will write to you in a few days about the 'International Bureau'".(26)

Trotsky's "Suppressed Rage"

Trotsky replied to Marguerite Rosmer on January 21, 1930 with a genuine indictment:

"Your letter of 14/1 increases my anxieties. You promise me - no for the first time - alas! - that someone is going to write to me in 'a few days' about the International Bureau. The matter has been dragging on since the summer, in spite of the decision which was reached and even signed in Prinkipo. For months it was Van Overstraeten who sabotaged the affair. And since? I sent a draft circular at

less than two months ago. It has been proposed to turn the whole initiative over to 'La Verite'. I agreed at once. Everyone is awaiting the promised initiative. And now, it is suggested to me that I must wait some days for a letter 'about' the I(nternational) B(ureau). I have already written fifteen letters to every country with the same refrain: 'La Verite' has taken the initiative: wait a little'. I mailed four or five letters yesterday with the same phrase: 'I don't have anything to do with it: I don't even know the reasons for the inadmissible delay'. We have lost time and, in politics, that means losing the battle. And the worst thing is that nothing precise is ever said. I shall naturally await the promised letter. But I very much hope to find the definitive answer in it".(27)

But he did not stop there, and went on to complain about the decision of Marguerite Rosmer to publish his series of articles on "the Third Period" as a pamphlet:

"(The series) was written for 'La Verite' and not for a pamphlet (the pamphlet may or may not be published after the publication of the series). Will someone explain to me the reasons why 'La Verite' does not want it? (Besides, they still owe me an explanation for sending back my article against Monatte for 'La Lutte (de Classes) ...' I always have time to spare for 'La Verite'. In this case, we are dealing with a decisive question. The question is burning. The figures are already out of date. We created the weekly precisely to avoid being out of date, at any rate on the most important questions. To tell you frankly; I think there are other reasons (as there are on the question of the B(ureau) I(nternational). Let someone tell me what they are. I am completely prepared to discuss them in a friendly spirit".(28)

Trotsky then advanced his own interpretations of the problems:

"Perhaps they want to liberate 'La Verite' from 'doctrinal' articles. There is a tendency like that around 'La (Verite)'. But that would mean killing 'La Verite'. La Lutte (de Classes) can and should complement 'La V(erite)', but not replacing it in its task of doctrinal education... There is also another explanation: it is the pre-occupation with 'independence' on the part of Naville".(29)

He sharply criticised the "negative and rather 'national'" conception of "independence" which he ascribed to Naville, and ended as follows:

"There is a great danger above all if, instead of educating Naville himself, we let him 'educate' others. He is too intellectual and too freshly come from the school of surrealism and later of Souvarin".(30)

Trotsky's complaints did not stop there. He had another grievance in connection with the trade union problem:

"The greatest danger in this period is from Monatt-ism. It is he who helps Monmousseau to hold the waverers with him, and it is he also who pushes those in despair towards Jouhaux. It is in this question that 'La V(erite)' should operate razor in hand. Unhappily this is not the case..." (31)

In concluding his letter, he laid down that he wrote it "... to eliminate misunderstandings which are beginning to accumulate". But in the end he did not send it, and on the following day he drafted another, in which he said only that he had written to the other groups that they should address themselves to "La Verite" as far as the international bureau was concerned, and in which he speaks of the "intellectualism" of Naville "which he could not fail to mention because it is a great danger". (32)

The silence continued on Rosmer's side. On January 28, 1930, Trotsky again refers to the international bureau in connection with the information, supplied by Landau and Well, about the preparations by Urbahns to split the Leninbund. He thought that the question of the bureau had greatly contributed to this result, and expressed the hope that "La Verite" will say a sharp word against Urbahns in the name of the editors (33) Rosmer broke silence on February 13:

"I will write you at greater length tomorrow, especially on the subject of your letter about the I(nternational) B(ureau) of the Opposition..."(34)

There was no letter the next day, but a week later Rosmer wrote:

This week I have been over-loaded with work and have not been able to tell you about the discussion which followed your letter about our I(nternational) B(ureau). There have been resistances, but as you have been able to see from 'La V(erite)' this week the affair is under way". (35)

Naturally, the "affair" was the launch of the appeal in the columns of "La Verite" for February 28, 1930, under the title: "For a Link-up of the international Opposition". Once again, two months had passed since Rosmer proposed to get the appeal launched by "La Verite" alone and the effective launch - and therefore four months since Trotsky's proposal in his circular letter of October 13, 1929. But in reality much more time had gone by. The establishment of the international bureau, or more prosaically the appeal for it to be established - was one of the initiatives discussed in Prinkipo in summer 1929, and these themselves were no more than the timid applications of the orientations which Trotsky outlined in his article, "The Tasks of the Opposition" in... March 1929, only a month after arriving in Turkey. The delay, therefore, was considerable.

Rosmer was content to hint at "resistances" and seemed to think that launching the appeal settled the problems and finally overcame all obstacles. Trotsky had kept his complaints to himself and Rosmer had always kept silent - raising a corner of the curtain only on rare occasions and in a laconic fashion - and the crisis that was growing between Trotsky and Rosmer could pass un-noticed at this stage, like an epiphenomenon in a political struggle of this scope. However, the crisis was to break in June 1930 (37). It is necessary in every way to try to elucidate the problems at issue and to try to explain what Rosmer's silence concealed.

Several elements of crisis existed between Trotsky and Rosmer; they had in common the point that they were connected to the internal life of the "La Verite" group. The lack of homogeneity in the group, the differences between militants from different horizons and the "incompatibilities of temperament" were to result, at the instigation of Raymond Molinier, in a clique against Naville, to oust him from his responsibilities at the side of Rosmer. The trade union question was the object of latent discord on the part of Rosmer in the face of the positions of Trotsky, and provoked eddies in the group. Finally the rejection of Trotsky's articles by "La Verite" and La Lutte de Classes completed the list of the elements of crisis. Personal and political elements came together in the affair of the international bureau, which doubtless explains Rosmer's difficulty in opening up these problems with Trotsky and the difficulty of the latter in really understanding what was going on.

The "fraction" against Rosmer and Naville

The internal difficulties of the "La Verite" group went back to the period when it was prepared and launched, which was carried through without Raymond Molinier, who was at the time in the midst of a moral crisis after he was forcibly inducted into the army following his insubordination. We find in the correspondence between Trotsky and Rosmer small indications of a sort of "war" between small groups and individualities when Molinier returned to political work. Thus, Rosmer wrote to Trotsky on September 10, 1929:

"The people on the side of Naville-Gerard (Rosenthal) are very good, very active, take on all the tasks... But between them and the Molinier group, things do not go well. They look at each other suspiciously. You will recall perhaps that soon after Naville arrived, you received a copy of Revue Surrealiste. This was a dishonest way of presenting it to you. I am now quite sure that the sender was Raymond or one of his people".(38)

Rosmer added:

"The people on the side of Molinier are very polite, but are not very capable politically. What R(aymond) has done is very significant".(39)

He was alluding here to Molinier's simulating madness in order to escape military service, which Trotsky vigorously condemned. This was, moreover, the only point about Molinier on which Trotsky and Molinier agreed. As far as political questions were concerned, Trotsky had been very favourably impressed by his qualities - the dynamism and organisational capacities of Molinier, when he was staying in Prinkipo in April and May

They completely disagreed on this point.

The first serious skirmish occurred in October 1929. The Rumanian French-language writer Panait Istrati, a friend of Rakovsky, after a stay in the USSR from October 1927 to February 1929, which had deeply distressed him, wrote an article in the Nouvelle Revue Francaise for October 1929, in which he reported the persecution to which the family of the Left Oppositionist, Victor Serge, had been subjected. Trotsky then demanded that the editors of "La Verite", who were in touch with the writer, break from what he called "the completely extravagant course" of Istrati, that is, the formulation which Marguerite Rosmer judged to be anti-communist, and the publication of this article in the bourgeois press instead of addressing himself to the Communist workers in the journals of the Opposition. Naville wrote the article in reply, "Panait Istrati and the Roussakov Affair", published in "La Verite" for October 11. Molinier wrote to Ljova the next day:

"I do not much care for Naville's article about the liberal Panait Istrati, and I have had his N.R.F. article sent to you."(41)

Molinier wrote this to Ljova because he was sure that he shared his opinion, and a certain complicity arose between them on this point. On the other hand, Trotsky had no forewarning about Naville, even though there had already been political disagreements between them. It was, naturally, politics which served him as his instrument of judgement, as in this letter to Rosmer:

"We were a little surprised here with the fact that the leader in No. 5 of 'La Verite' was devoted to Istrati. This too much reflects the journalistic, intellectual milieu. A fifty-line note on page 5 would have been much better instead. The article is well written from the journalistic point of view, but the appreciation of the attitude of Istrati, like that of L'Humanite on the other side, is not clear, precise or vigorous as it should be... Istrati goes to the bourgeois press to inform it about the crimes of this bad government in Moscow, and draws conclusions which are entirely contrary to ours. This should have been said, in a brutal, hostile way... This is why I think that you should not confine yourselves to a purely literary reply. I think you should return to this question, but on the condition that you put Istrati truly in his place when you do so".(42)

Trotsky's introductory remark - "We were a little surprised here..." naturally applied to his entourage. So it is not excluded that Ljova, under the influence of Molinier, may have tried to influence his father. But we should take up the point that the attack on the "journalistic, intellectual milieu" is aimed at Rosmer, who put the article on the front page, and not at the writer of the article, whose style Trotsky admired.

At the same time, the fundamental criticisms were addressed just as much to Naville as to Rosmer. This was only a first incident and at that moment it had no real consequence.

At the beginning of December Trotsky was thinking that he detected a resistance on the part of Naville and Rosenthal to the plan for an international bureau, and he told Rosmer that he had written a letter to Naville, in which he "insisted firmly on a few points, in order to avoid the dangers of mis-understandings which can intrude invisibly" (43) Rosmer defended them, pointing out that, on the contrary, Naville had at once approved of the proposal and reported his reaction as follows:

"Naville was greatly upset by your last letter. 'Why remind me that I am an intellectual? That makes discussion difficult, because I cannot accept this as a valid argument, and all discussion becomes impossible', he said." (44)

Rosmer once more defended Naville and Rosenthal:

"I must say that Gerard and he do not limit themselves to giving us articles. They take a very active share in the practical work. Especially Naville, who has the advantage of spare time. They give out leaflets, sell the paper and even from time to time get taken to the police station, as happened to Gerard the other day. They are completely devoted to the journal".(45)

Trotsky came back to these divergences with Naville in another letter to Rosmer, in which he explained:

For some weeks I have been feeling serious anxiety about the somewhat too intellectual and literary character of 'La Verite' (the article against Istrati, etc.) On the other hand, I was very surprised at the opinion of Naville that an open, formal declaration of solidarity with the party before the law courts of the bourgeoisie would be no more than bluff. Bluff?? Why, in what sense? This formula seemed to me to be derived from insufficient attention to or penetration of the mentality of the mass of workers. I characterise it as a typically 'intellectual' sin; it is a social characteristic or an abbreviation of more extended arguments".(46)

but he hastened to add:

"Truly, there was not and will not be in this any personal note, especially for Naville..." (47)

It may be difficult to cast doubt on Trotsky's word, but on the other hand it is possible that Ljova contributed to accentuating the political impression of Naville in his father's eyes in order to exacerbate his hostility to his "intellectualism". Molinier was manoeuvring behind Trotsky's back, as his letter of January 9, 1930 to Ljova shows.

"This evening our fraction met and decided to get rid of Naville and to settle the second stage which we planned. We can no longer mark time.

According to Gourget (who remains the same, about whom I have only the illusion of using him for the League for the necessary time), Rosmer is very annoyed with Gourget for his letting down N(aville), and is in the same darkness. In the present situation we must not get tied up but must firmly accept all our responsibilities. That is what I am trying to co-ordinate and to do; we will send you the minutes of Sunday".(48)

There can be no doubt about the fractional work of the clique around Molinier, and the affair turned on a kind of "conspiracy" against Naville, the object of which was to get a statement of his position by Trotsky. In fact, Trotsky was about to take a position politically against Naville (particularly in the "prosecution" letter, which he did not finally send, to Marguerite Rosmer),

Molinier gained assurance from Trotsky's taking this position, and the rising tension in the "La Verite" group crystallised between two "groups", two poles; that of Molinier and that of Rosmer.

The Trade Union Question

To open a formal discussion on the trade union question seems to be a normal and necessary stage in the development of "La Verite". None the less, these problems are serious and presented themselves at the time when the weekly was launched. It was Trotsky who launched this discussion of his own free will, because he felt sharply the weakness of the "La Verite" group, and the dangers to which it was exposing itself. The real turning-point came and a latent divergence appeared at the end of October 1929, when Rosmer received Trotsky's article "The Errors in Principle of Syndicalism: To Serve in the Discussion with Monatte and his Friends..." and decided not to publish in "La Verite" but to let it appear in La Lutte de Classes. In this article Trotsky polemicised hard against Monatte: he denounced the two sacred, meaningless principles of "trade union autonomy" and "trade union unity", of which Monatte and others made fetiches; he condemned the effort to resurrect the revolutionary syndicalism of pre-1914 but also of pre-Communism. He laid emphasis on the character and the "purely reactionary role" of the syndicalists who "stuff into the workers whom bourgeois power oppresses their warnings against the dangers of a proletarian state".(49) In Trotsky's eyes, this article "is a necessary complement to my theses", as he wrote to Rosmer.

The line of cleavage between Trotsky and Rosmer lay on the question of the attitude to be adopted towards the trade union minorities and those who had been excluded from the party. He declared:

"The accusations that 'La Verite' polemicises too much or that its polemics are too sharp on those excluded from the party reflect very well the spirit of stagnation in the Opposition, and can serve only to strengthen this spirit. A small minority such as we are can gain influence only if it demonstrates mercilessly that it has very clear and well-defined ideas and that it is ready to defend them against all

some's without sparing any" (50)

The position of Rosmer even though he appeared to be in basic agreement, is noticeably different:

"Your chases on the trade union question have had the effect of a bomb here. People are no longer accustomed to such language, and some of the sympathetic syndicalists have thought them brutal and unjust. Our friend Charbit is not one of the least affected... Everything is much clearer now, but, as far as we are concerned, we are suffering the consequences of a false start. We had thought that we could set off with Marzet and Charbit, which had its significance, because they represented the left wing of R(évolution) Proletarienne); for me personally it allowed me to keep contact with comrades with whom I have been accustomed to work. Of course, we shall have compensations; comrades who hesitated to join us because of our 'syndicalism' will come; only we do not know them and have not much in the way of means to find them; most often we have to wait while they set themselves in motion".(51)

On the other hand, it was easier to contact the syndicalist elements which formed a minority in the C.G.T.U. This was the reason why Rosmer was anxious about the consequences of a possible complete break with this minority:

"... the minority is still something fairly formless, but when it takes form it will be opposed to Communism... Only, it will not be able to draw everyone behind it, and I think that our best tactic would be to try to save all the malcontents who can be saved".(52)

Trotsky was aware of Rosmer's apprehensions, but insisted on the danger which Monatte represented:

"I learn that my article against Monatte is to appear in La Lutte (de Classes). To tell you the truth, I would have preferred 'La Verite'. For the moment the enemy is syndicalist reaction. If Monatte did not exist, Monmousseau would have to invent him. We shall have to pay for all that to the extent that we let this retrograde opposition get near to us. Involvement with this group would in fact turn against us".(53)

The big question was that of the relations with the rank and file militants of the Communist Party: Trotsky saw the great danger being that "La Verite", edited by Rosmer who had for a long time collaborated in La Revolution Proletarienne, unlike Molinier who had recently been excluded from the Communist Party, where he still had contacts and was organising internal work (54), could be regarded as identified with the varieties of "pure syndicalism", which one after another were moving towards anti-Communism and were denounced as such by the Communist Party leadership. Was not "diplomacy" towards Monatte and the "pure syndicalists" a by-product of the difficulty of "biting" into the ranks of the party? In any case, Trotsky saw in it an effort on the part of weary Left Oppositionists to fall back coolly on to the "minority" which regarded the regeneration of the Communist International and the Communist Parties to be impossible and wanted to find a place for themselves by way of the erroneous idea of "the autonomy of the trade unions".

The evolution of Monatte completely confirmed Trotsky's analysis: No. 95 of La Revolution Proletarienne, in January 1930, marked a decisive turn. The journal no longer carried a mention of "Communist Syndicalist Review", but of "Revolutionary Syndicalism". Fernan Lorient, in an article entitled "The bankruptcy of the Communist International and the independence of the Trade Union Movement", wrote that trade union independence is "the best guarantee of a proletarian solution of the problems of the Revolution", since the Communist International no longer had any "revolutionary consciousness". Monatte discussed the foundation of "La Verite", to which he showed himself to be definitively hostile:

"We will confine ourselves to taking note that the Opposition in the Party is dominated by a leadership in Constantinople, just as Moscow dominates the Communist Parties. The method is the same. The results also".(55)

Rosmer and "La Verite" followed closely during the months December 1929 to February 1930 the evolution of the Federation de l'Enseignement (Teachers' Federation), the leaders of which rejected the line of the leaders of the C.G.T.U. but also those of the two minorities. Without Rosmer's informing Trotsky, "La Verite", which devoted numerous factual articles to the developments in the struggle between this federation and the confederal

bureau of the C.G.T.U., tried to draw this new minority nearer to its positions. With success. In March the leaders of the federation were excluded from the party, even though they refused to yield to the anti-Communist positions of the other minorities. The leadership of the Communist Party really objected to their association with the Left Opposition. In fact, on March 9, Rosmer met the teacher Maurice Dommanget, who had been secretary of the Federation since 1925. They decided together to create a new opposition in the C.G.T.U., the United Opposition, of which the Federation de l'Enseignement would form the first mile-stone. This new opposition was formed at a conference held in April 1930.

The creation of this trade union opposition and, especially, the secrecy in relation to Trotsky reveal beyond doubt the depth of the divergences on the trade union question.

Did Rosmer wait to inform Trotsky that an agreement with Dommanget had effectively been reached because he was not yet sure of it? Or, rather, did he prefer to confront Trotsky with the accomplished fact, knowing in advance that Trotsky disagreed with the political considerations which inspired the formation of this unitary opposition? The result was the same: the trade union question was to be one of the factors in the break of Trotsky and Rosmer and a factor in the crisis in the young Communist League (Opposition) formed in April 1930.

In a letter to Sedov, Molinier drew a balance of the trade union question in the form of a series of charges against Rosmer - even though he said that he was not attacking anyone "personally" and spoke of a "criticism of the form of the activity of our group"

"In trade union questions, we bear heavy responsibilities in the present situation. When one thinks that all the trade union work is done by little conversations in corridors and there is not a trade union commission at all in the group... Eight months' existence without any co-ordination of our efforts in the unions and just one document: the thesis of L.T.!" (57)

Thus the trade union question was one element in the crisis within the "La Verite" group, at the same time as an element of conflict, at first concealed and then open, between Trotsky and Rosmer. (58)

It was a latent element in the crisis between the groups of Molinier and of Naville-Rosenthal. The foundation of the Communist League (Opposition) in April 1930 was to confirm the provisional relations of forces between these poles: Rosmer, in the election to the executive commission, got Molinier eliminated, while Naville and Rosenthal were members. This was the outcome of these months of silent struggle. But the provisional outcome only, because Trotsky had not supported Rosmer in this affair, and the break between the two was not slow to intervene.

Rosmer could not reconcile his work for "La Verite" with the new international tasks which Trotsky entrusted to him. He was caught in the cross-fire of the personal and political problems within the French group, in disagreement with Trotsky on the trade union question and hesitant on the problems of centralising the international Opposition; he paid in his personal physique - he was in bad health - and also paid politically for the combined results of all these elements of crisis: the call issued by "La Verite" on February 21, 1930, was already late, having regard to the development of the international Opposition. The real turn of the Left Opposition towards an international organisation was to be effected outside the network of Rosmer's contacts: in Germany with the forward steps towards unifying the opposition and thanks to the visit to Europe and then to Trotsky at Prinkipo of Max Shachtman, one of the principal leaders of the American Opposition.

FOOTNOTES

- (1) Cf. Chapter 4, pp. 42 - 43.
- (2) Letter from Trotsky to Rosmer, October 13, 1929, in Broue, op. cit., pp. 73 - 7
- (3) Trotsky: "Draft of Circular Letter", Letter to Rosmer, October 13, 1929. A.H. 9840.

- (4) Ibid.
- (5) Ibid.
- (6) Ibid.
- (7) Letter from Trotsky to Rosmer, October 20, 1929, in Broue, op. cit., pp. 75 - 78.
- (8) Letter from Trotsky to Rosmer, October 24, 1929, in Broue, op. cit., pp. 78 - 81.
- (9) Letter from Rosmer to Trotsky, October 29, 1929, A.H. 4386.
- (10) Letter from Marguerite Rosmer to Trotsky, November 12, 1929, A.H. 4466.
- (11) Letter from Trotsky to A. Rosmer, November 18, 1929, A.H. 9845.
- (12) Letter from Rosmer to Trotsky, November 17, 1929, in Broue, op. cit., pp. 81 - 84.
- (13) Letter from Trotsky to Rosmer, December 13, 1929, in Broue, op. cit., pp. 96 - 99.
- (14) Ibid.
- (15) Ibid.
- (16) Letter from A. Rosmer to Trotsky, December 19, 1929, Broue, pp. 99 - 101.
- (17) Ibid.
- (18) Ibid.
- (19) Letter from van Overstraeten to Trotsky, January 15, 1930. A.H. 5669.
- (20) Letter from Trotsky to van Overstraeten, January 26, 1930, A.H. 10709.
- (21) Letter from A. Rosmer to Trotsky, December 19, 1929, in Broue, op. cit., p. 100.
- (22) Letter from Trotsky to Rosmer, December 25, 1929, in Broue, op. cit., p. 105 - 106.
- (23) Ibid.
- (24) Letter from Marguerite Rosmer to Trotsky, January 14, 1930, A.H. 4467.
- (25) Letter from Trotsky to Marguerite Rosmer, January 8, 1930, A.H. 9916.
- (26) Letter from Marguerite Rosmer to Trotsky, January 14, 1930, in Broue, op. cit., p. 118 - 119.
- (27) Letter from Trotsky to Marguerite Rosmer, January 21, 1930, in Broue, op. cit., pp. 120 - 122.
- (28) Ibid.
- (29) Ibid.
- (30) Ibid.
- (31) Ibid.
- (32) Letter from Trotsky to Marguerite Rosmer, January 22, 1930, A.H. 9919.
- (33) Letter from Trotsky to the Rosmers, January 28, 1930, A.H. 9855.
- (34) Letter from A. Rosmer to Trotsky, February 13, 1930, A.H. 4399.

- (35) Letter from A. Rosmer to Trotsky, February 21, 1930, A.H. 4400.
- (36) "La Verite" was forestalled, as far as the call for an international linkage of the Opposition was concerned, by the Militant, which published on February 15 an article by Martin Abern entitled: "For an international Conference of the Left: the necessity to organise the international Opposition".
- (37) On the break between Trotsky and Rosmer, see the article by Gerard Roche: "The Split in 1930 between Trotsky and Rosmer: 'Molinier Affair' or political divergences?", in Cahiers Leon Trotsky, No. 9, January 1982, pp. 9 - 20.
- (38) Letter from A. Rosmer to Trotsky, September 10, 1929, in Broue, op. cit., p. 59 - 62. As Broue writes (p. 62, n. 1) "we find in the Leon Sedov-Molinier correspondence at Harvard confirmation of the hypothesis formulated here by Rosmer: the review came out of Raymond Molinier". Moreover, the "Molinier group" probably included: Raymond and Henri Molinier, Jeanne Martin and Pierre Frank.
- (39) Ibid.
- (40) Letter from Trotsky to Rosmer, October 11, 1929, in Broue, op. cit., pp. 70 - 73
- (41) Letter from R. Molinier to Leon Sedov, October 12, 1929, A.H. 12793.
- (42) Letter from Trotsky to Rosmer, October 20, 1929, in Broue, op. cit., pp. 75 - 78
- (43) Letter from Trotsky to Rosmer, December 8, 1929, in Broue, op. cit., pp. 91 - 94
- (44) Letter from Rosmer to Trotsky, December 19, 1929, in Broue, op. cit., pp. 99 - 100
- (45) Ibid.
- (46) Letter from Trotsky to Rosmer, December 25, 1929, in Broue, op. cit., p. 105 - 106.
- (47) Ibid.
- (48) Letter from R. Molinier to L. Sedov, January 9, 1930, A.H. 12802.
- (49) Trotsky: "The Errors in Principle of Syndicalism - to Serve in the Discussion with Monatte and his friends", published in English by the Communist League of America, in their pamphlet "Communism and Syndicalism" in March 1931.
- (50) Letter from Trotsky to Rosmer, December 8, 1929, in Broue, op. cit., pp. 91 - 94
- (51) Letter from Rosmer to Trotsky, November 17, 1929, in Broue, op. cit., pp. 81 - 84
- (52) Letter from Rosmer to Trotsky, December 21, 1929, in Broue, op. cit., pp. 101 - 103.
- (53) Letter from Trotsky to Rosmer, December 24, 1929, in Broue, op. cit. pp. 103 - 105.
- (54) The letters of Raymond Molinier to Trotsky give indications about the work of a commission composed of members of the party and militants recently excluded. This was essentially Molinier, very recently excluded - December 1929 - who followed this work and informed Trotsky.
- (55) Monatte: "Our Plan of Work for 1930", with the sub-title, "The Foundation of 'La Verite'", in La Revolution Proletarienne, No. 95, January 1, 1930.
- (56) In Trotsky's opinion, this syndicalist tendency could only become a formation of

politically of a "centrist" type, creating confusion, instead of permitting the Opposition to differentiate itself sharply from "syndicalists of all kinds".

107) Letter from R. Molinier to Sedov, April 7, 1930, A.H. 12810

108) Sedov, in a letter to his comrade Bauer, September 29, 1931 A.H. 12098) sums up as follows the internal problems of the "La Verite" group in 1929 - 1930:

"... you know the history of the (Communist) League and the disputed questions of these two years. The semi-syndicalist tendency of 'La Verite' and Rosmer at the beginning of 'La Verite' (bloc with Charbut and the other Monatt-ists); the question of the relations of the League with the party: (Rosmer and Naville had the clear tendency to form themselves into an impotent literary circle, at the same time opposing the official party as a... 'second party'); the whole Rosmer-Navillist mentality, sectarian, passive, non-revolutionary; the question of the international organisation; the tendency to 'national independence' like Urbahns... the question of the unitary Opposition, where Gourget and others wanted to subject the party to the unitary Opposition while refusing all independent work in this public fraction, which was not a trade union organisation

CHAPTER TWELVEElements of Progress

On February 21, 1930, "La Verite" launched an appeal entitled 'For an international linkage of the Opposition':

'Many times... the same thought has been found to be expressed: 'an international linkage for the groups of the Opposition is necessary' has been said by our comrades in Belgium, America, Spain and China... And in private letters people have added: 'You are the best placed to do this! Up till now, despite repeated requests, we have hesitated to undertake this task... It is easy to talk about an 'international conference', but another thing to do it. One thing happened which decided us to accede to the appeals which have been addressed to us. We have learned that the leadership of the Leninbund is preparing to exclude the members of the organisation who criticise the policy of Urbahns...'

"La Verite" opened up the perspective of issuing an information bulletin and preparing an international conference of the groups which claimed to be part of the Left Opposition, and called for a bureau or an international secretariat to be formed, with the task of preparing the bulletin or the conference.

Towards an international linkage

In USA, the Oppositionist Martin Abern, in Militant of February 15, wrote:

"The Left Opposition has reached the moment and the possibility when it is necessary to elaborate an international platform, in order to serve as a guide to the Opposition in every country".

He declared that a conference and an organ of the Opposition were necessary, proposed that an executive committee be elected at the conference, and concluded:

"The European comrades, particularly in France, Germany, Italy, Belgium, Holland and in Austria, should take the initiative to form a committee of action to lay the bases for such an international conference".

The position which the Militant took constituted an important point of support. The arrival in Paris, on February 29, of the American leader of the Opposition, Max Shachtman, gave to it its full significance. He remained for a few days in Paris, where he met the Rosmers and Naville, and then went on to meet Trotsky, where he "was awaited in a friendly way by the whole Prinkipo cell".(1) On March 7, Rosmer wrote to Trotsky:

"His unforeseen (2) visit must give you great pleasure. We too were very glad to see him; he is indeed one of our American comrades, as we can imagine them from reading the Militant".(3)

The issue of "La Verite" for March 7 announced, following its appeal of February 21, that it had received favourable replies from the Communist League of America, the Russian Left Opposition, the Opposition of Wedding and the Palatinate (Germany) and one of the groups of the Czechoslovak Opposition (the Lenorovic group). The secretariat, provisional up to the conference, which would be based in the office of "La Verite" in Paris, would be responsible only for purely technical tasks. "La Verite" questioned the groups of the Opposition about the best methods to unify the international Opposition and to achieve a single platform. It invited contributions, draft resolutions, for publication in the Information Bulletin, and declared:

"We believe that on this road we shall be able to arrive at the creation of a truly homogeneous international organisation which represents exactly the collective thinking of the international Opposition... After a wide discussion and progressive sharpening of our ideas and of the form of the organisation, we shall succeed in creating a conference which will be able to lay indisputable bases for the unity of the Opposition... We must not mechanically be abrupt, but must go forward decisively, prudently, with really democratic methods. We believe that the Bulletin as well as the conference must unite every one of the groups which claim to stand for the Left Opposition. We appeal to all without exception".(4)

His appeal, then, placed in the centre the question of the publication of the Information Bulletin, as the means by which to centralise the Opposition and to regroup it before the international conference. The perspective of such a conference was thus opened, but for a fairly distant future and after the Opposition had gone through several stages, notably the launch of this bulletin, the successor to "Opposition", and the establishment of a secretariat and the realisation of the single international platform... The appeal of "La Verite" was accordingly confined to limited proposals, the check to "Opposition" and to the creation of a provisional bureau on the international level being still recent.

On March 7, Trotsky wrote to Rosmer that he was anxious about the state of the German Opposition:

"The Grylewicz group... which claims to have close links with us seems to me to be rather hostile, or at any rate rather cold about fusion with Wedding, which claims to have up to eighty comrades in Berlin and over 200 in the Palatinate. This is already something. Grylewicz wants to launch the journal before the fusion - which would perpetuate the split for ever".(5)

Stressing the formal aspect of the problems, Trotsky came back to the lack of an international organism able to intervene in such a situation; he stressed the necessity to act quickly:

"Here is a moment when one feels really helpless in the face of a question of pure form, which none the less could lead to new disasters... We shall not be an international factor until we have got the German Opposition out of the inactivity into which Urbahns plunged it. I think that you now have the support of the majority of the national groups. The visit of Shachtman greatly facilitates the adherence of the Americans. Then what do we lack to make a solid beginning?" (6)

Trotsky's essential pre-occupation was that the international conference should be held early and that the German question be settled. Rosmer in "La Verite" - notably on March 7 - had insisted on the publication of the Information Bulletin and the creation of the provisional secretariat as instruments for the preparation of the conference, which would be the outcome of a "wide discussion and progressive sharpening of our ideas and of the form of organisation..." The evidence shows that the two men envisaged the perspectives differently. Trotsky felt this, and wrote to Rosmer:

"We are uneasy about the necessity to make a third periodical, the Bulletin. But, I think, for the bulletin we could begin with the greatest possible modesty, with an edition of a few hundred copies roneotyped and made up exclusively of official communiques and with comments strictly reduced to what is necessary. The polemical articles which appear in the Bulletin should come in the first instance from other groups - while the editors of "La Verite" as the initiators will at first maintain their reserve. But from now on we need to aim at creating the bureau so as to be able to settle questions like that of Berlin, which will accelerate the development very effectively".(7)

The provisional secretariat created by Rosmer - which was still no more than a simple letter-box for the groups of the Opposition - had not the content which Trotsky hoped to give to it. The divergences about perspective thus led to a new difficulty: the differences about interpretation about the initiative which had been taken and the tasks to be accomplished. Rosmer seemed too pre-occupied with the material difficulties of creating the international organ and the secretariat than with the political necessities, which he did not deny but judged no doubt less pressing than Trotsky did. But Shachtman's visit to Prinkipo and the position taken by Militant for the international conference were decisive assets for Trotsky. He was to make the fullest use of them.

The Creation of the International Secretariat

The provisional international secretariat was set up on March 10, 1930, at Prinkipo, by Max Shachtman and Leon Sedov. It issued a circular, signed by Shachtman, Sedov and Rosmer, addressed to all the groups; this repeated the terms of the article in "La Verite" for March 7, but added some significant lines about the problem of delays:

You will understand that the realisation of these projects has become absolutely urgent. We demand of you that you reply to us as quickly as possible..."(8)

Among the political considerations which have made the international conference necessary the members of the international secretariat mention the situation of the Russian Opposition:

"In the USSR the Opposition lives in illegality, which leads to considerable practical obstacles, which transform themselves into political difficulties".(9)

This capital political observation - which is an explanation after the event of one of the causes of the crisis in the Russian Opposition in summer 1929 - goes further than what "La Verite" said on March 7, 1930:

"We must gring about the unity in the struggle between the different international organisations and groups, and in the first place with our Russian Bolshevik comrades."

But another difference appeared between the circular of the provisional secretariat and "La Verite", when the latter wrote:

"On the road of organisation, the first stage is to bring into existence the international information bulletin. From today we are working to form the international secretariat which will ensure control over the publication of the Bulletin

The circular, on the other hand, after underlining the difficulties of the Russian Opposition and the diversity of the groups of the international Opposition, points out:

"All these difficulties will not be able to be overcome except by a truly democratic preparation of the conference. It is for this reason that we have taken the initiative of publishing, under the control of an international Secretariat, an INFORMATION BULLETIN, in which will be posed and discussed all the problems which interest the Left Opposition".(10)

There is a clear discrepancy between the two views, even though the same expressions reappear in both texts: "The Bulletin as the first stage before the conference", or "the conference with the Bulletin as an instrument". But the appreciation of timing - a fundamental dimension of political struggle - made them diverge radically. Rosmer's vision was a relatively slow structuring of the Opposition on the international level, in relation to its political weaknesses, but especially to its material weaknesses. Shachtman, and particularly Trotsky and Sedov, believed on their side that time was pressing, and that they had already lost too much of it. The difficulties of the German Opposition, the indecision of the Italian Bordingists, the threat of an international conference on the initiative of Paz and Rosmer, the disarray of the Right Opposition on the international level, all meant resolute involvement in preparing the conference. Rosmer's perspective was, from this point of view, too uncertain: the Bulletin as the first stage could develop, in case of delay or setback, into a new obstacle to structuring the international Opposition. Nor did this settle the problem of an organism able to intervene in the internal conflicts in the groups, as in Germany. This disagreement at the level of theory, while latent, was a threat to the international Opposition, with events capable at any moment of providing surprises and making things worse.

On March 15, "La Verite" announced the creation of the provisional secretariat (without mentioning its membership) and the forthcoming publication of the International Information Bulletin (even though the secretariat had not yet received the answers of all the groups, particularly the most distant ones) and announced the adherence of a second group in Czechoslovakia (the Bureau of the Prague Fraction). In an article entitled "The organization of the bulletin of the international Opposition", it published large extracts from the letter of adherence of the Russian Opposition (11) on its own initiative:

"The editors of the bulletin of the Russian Opposition, who are in permanent contact with their companions in struggle in the USSR, do not doubt for a moment that, the more energetic and decisive is the initiative taken by the French comrades in this matter, the warmer will be the support of the Russian Opposition. The preparation of the conference is not merely an organisational task: it is in the first place a

theoretical and political task, for which several months may be needed... The Bulletin is an instrument (one of the instruments) in the preparation of the conference. Marxist politics in a single country are as impossible as the construction of the socialist society in a single country. Every national group which would try to carry out an isolated policy within national frameworks would inevitably be doomed to sectarian degeneration. This is why we do not doubt that none of the really revolutionary groups of the Communist Opposition would wish to remain apart, but will all take up a clear position on all the disputed questions and will support the initiative of 'La Verite' to prepare the international conference".(12)

The support which was given to the initiative of "La Verite" was un-reserved and entirely located round the international conference. This was a further symptom of the disagreement between Trotsky and Rosmer. But Rosmer and "La Verite" did not make up the provisional secretariat by themselves. Things were dragging on, when nothing seemed lacking really for the work to begin, and Trotsky, after having got the international secretariat created by Shachtman and Sedov, decided to take in hand the preparation and holding of the conference, which involved the unification of the groups in Germany. This also Shachtman was an asset to Trotsky.

Towards Unification in Germany?

During January the Wedding Opposition and that of the Palatinate unified their groups. The organ of the Palatinate, Der Pioneer, became the organ of the unified Opposition of the Leninbund. This organisation favoured a re-groupment with the minority of the Leninbund. Discussions were opened and a meeting held on February 16, 1933. Eight militants represented Wedding-Palatinate and five the Leninbund minority.(13) There were two points on the agenda: the discussion of a draft joint declaration and organisational measures to unify the two groups.

The first incident took place on the question of chairing the meeting. It was a bad omen. The discussion went no better: Neumann, in the name of the Grylewicz group, believed that without settling the trade union question and elaborating a platform it was not possible to speak of unification. Muller replied that the trade union question would be thoroughly discussed after the unification, which should be carried through as quickly as possible. Landau declared that his group had taken the initiative for unification because, in the two groups, there were divergent opinions on this trade union question and that agreement would result from common work. Well answered this with a declaration the tone of which was sharply provocative:

"I declare here that, as far as I am concerned, I refuse to take part in a discussion of trivialities. We have no need in Germany to repeat what was necessary in France. We have no need of any discussion in our journal: it would be made up of literary and journalistic ambition, which we spew up".(14)

Grylewicz replied to Landau stressing that it was Trotsky who had taken the initiative in the unification and that the trade union questions ought to be clarified at the beginning. Trotsky was invoked on both sides; there were calls for unification but no progress was made. A unification commission was set up, both sides seeing no other course for the meeting. Grylewicz and Neumann from one side, Muller and Hans Schwalbach from the other, met on February 19.

On February 20, Schwalbach gave to Trotsky an optimistic account of the work of this commission:

"On all the fundamental questions, unanimity exists".(15)

None the less, he reported that the Grylewicz group maintained its insistence that the trade union question must be clarified before the unification. The proposals of Grylewicz seemed to him to be fundamentally sound, but he feared that the discussion would go on for ever and would hold up the unification. He asked Trotsky to telegraph what he thought, in favour of one or other of the groups so that the problem could be resolved. Grylewicz made the same request on the same day.

On February 24, Trotsky tried to settle this problem by proposing in a letter to Grylewicz the following formulation of the passage in the declaration devoted to the trade union question:

"The two organisations which are uniting take their stand, in trade union questions, on the basis of the principles and tactics which were elaborated by the Communist International in the time of Lenin. As concerns the way to apply this method to the situation today in Germany and other countries, a deep, friendly discussion must take place in the framework of the unified organisation". (16)

In this way the proposal judged Wedding to be right not to regard the settlement of the trade union question as a preliminary to the unification. But when Trotsky, in proposing a minimal formulation on this question, he was replying to part of the demand of the Grylewicz group, which wanted a principled declaration in its favour, and not to the public announcement of a discussion on this disputed question. Therefore he refused to take a clear position, as he was requested, between the "Grylewicz proposal" and the "Schwalbach proposal".

Trotsky also wrote to Roman Well, of whose role in the course of the first meeting of the two groups on February 16 he had not a high opinion. Well replied on March 1 that he should correct the information which the other group had given to Trotsky (17); he denied that the Grylewicz group had stipulated that a platform must be written before the unification, whereas it would come out of the unification, and he rejected as pure invention - in an attack on Landau, though he was not mentioned - the statement that his group was not united on the trade union question. On the other hand, he attacked Landau and Wedding for not being able to give any answer other than "We do not know what point of view comrade Trotsky supports on this point". Well also raised the question of the methods of representation of the groups (he contested the figures of 50 to 80 members for the Wedding group and 200 to 250 for the Palatinate) and declared that in meetings he had met only eight or nine different militants. He took up the problems of persons and characters, and replied to the accusation by Trotsky that he had been the disturbing element to hold up the unification by threatening to withdraw from the work of the leadership, while declaring that he wanted a rapid unification. In fact he was fighting against it. He was a subtle manoeuvrer and announced to Trotsky that the production of the new journal had been deferred in order, he said, to avoid a fresh sharpening of relations with Wedding; it had earlier been planned for March 1. This news could only re-assure Trotsky in fact, and it served as a guarantee of the good will of the Grylewicz group and of Well.

On March 5 Grylewicz acknowledged the receipt of Trotsky's proposal; he said that he had communicated the contents of the telegram to Wedding and reported on the meeting of the unification commission on March 2. His group had proposed to complete the formulation of Trotsky by quoting from the texts of the Third Congress of the Communist International, but Wedding opposed that, preferring to confine themselves to the principled position defined by Trotsky. The leadership of the Grylewicz group met on March 3 and, though it strongly regretted this attitude, it declared for a rapid unification and proved it, by accepting the proposals of Wedding on the trade union question. This was obviously a great step forward towards effective unification: the text of the declaration adopted, which thus reproduced only the formulation of Trotsky, was sent to all the local groups.

None the less, at the moment when unification seemed to be about to be realised, new difficulties arose. The two groups exchanged letters full of accusations and reproaches. ... The Grylewicz group complained to Trotsky that Wedding was manoeuvring on the trade union question, and accused it of having sent out in the Palatinate the declaration with the old formulation and not that adopted by the two groups. Grylewicz disagreed with the method of representation of the groups proposed by Wedding, and denied that the liaison-sheet replaced the journal, while it filled a vacant space before the unification. According to him, there was no danger that this sheet could be used against Wedding, while, on the contrary, (he wrote to Trotsky), Landau was acting in this way in Pioneer. (19) The Wedding Opposition, in turn, accused the minority of the Leninbund of being afraid to present itself as a group independent of that organisation, and of preferring to follow its former policy of fraction work. It quoted, as a proof, certain local groups, near to the minority, which refused to leave the Leninbund. Finally it accused the Grylewicz group of mis-informing its local groups about the unification and of wanting unification only in Berlin. Grylewicz denied this charge and accused the representative of Wedding of being disloyal and responsible for the difficulties... (20)

On March 14, the Wedding leadership wrote to the Grylewicz group to inform them of the decisions of their March 12 conference, which they held to be binding: relying on the text of the joint declaration, they proposed a proportional representation, with one delegate for every twenty signatures. As for the journal which was to appear, they thought that it should be "an organ of struggle" and quoted Der Pioneer as an example. They suggested the title "International Opposition" and a print-run of 500 copies for the Palatinate, where it would have the support of Pioneer. (21) In response to what sounded like instructions, the Grylewicz advanced its proposals: the journal should be twice-monthly, with the type-face of "La Verite" and the format of Die Fahne des Kommunismus. It would be entitled Banner of Communism or Banner of Marxism and would be open to all the local groups. The unification conference would be held on March 30, with each local group sending one delegate. The unification commission would preside over the conference and the commissions and provisional leadership would be elected on a basis of parity. Finally - and this was not the least of the proposals - the Grylewicz group suggested that each group should have the right of rejecting the presence of a member of the other group, without discussion, in order to avoid difficulties linked with personal questions.

A joint meeting of the two groups was planned for March 30 at the latest. But the basis on which this meeting was called were openly explosive. The proposal aimed at the possibility to reject the presence of a delegate from the other group was clearly aimed at Landau, and threatened to provoke a row. All the "technical" questions, from the method of representation to the choice of title for the journal, likewise became man-traps on the road to unification.

The Interventions of Trotsky and Shachtman

In mid-March the sometimes good and sometimes bad news which arrived from the groups of the German Opposition led to two initiatives by Trotsky. He believed that the holding of the international conference must not be put off, while they awaited the hypothetical International Information Bulletin. These problems of the German unification, the full support of the Americans of the C.L.A. and the re-iterated demands of other groups of the international Opposition were all elements which demanded that it be held soon: the discussion with Shachtman led to the date of the conference being fixed at April 6, 1935. The two men wrote to Rosmer to inform him of this decision. He was in the mountains to cure his lung troubles; it was Marguerite Rosmer who replied to Trotsky on March 24:

"Alfred has received your letter telling him of the date of the international conference which you have fixed with Shachtman. It is very well so".(22)

Trotsky convinced Shachtman how urgent this conference was, and in this way won the support of the Rosmers, who saw holding the conference as a perspective rather than as a burning task. The fact that Shachtman had given his agreement to Trotsky and that he had fixed with him the date for the conference was naturally an element of weight in the balance. The Rosmers and Naville, who had met Shachtman during his short stay in Paris accordingly rallied to an initiative which they themselves had started, under the insistent pressure of Trotsky and of numerous groups. More than a paradox, this was a victory for Trotsky for the benefit of the international Opposition and its centralisation. But the "cold shower" which came from Germany was full of threats to the holding of the conference. Trotsky once again utilised the presence of Shachtman. He acquainted him with the content of the German file, through the voluminous correspondence and the numerous documents which had been received on Prinkipo. On May 21, when the latest information spoke of difficulties, Shachtman wrote to the two groups to give them his opinion, by reason of "disturbing developments" of the situation during the negotiations. He said that these delays in the German unification would have inevitable effects on the international movement:

"Our cause has already been greatly compromised in the course of the last two years by the disrupting effects of the policy of Urbahns - or, more exactly, the absence of a policy, particularly from the viewpoint that Germany, after the Soviet Union, is probably the most important country in the International".(23)

He noted that there were no divergences of principle and that a common declaration had been adopted, and severely questioned his German comrades:

"It now appears that the laborious efforts of the past period are threatened by futilities or, at least, dangerously delayed - as long as these decisive stages are not completed. The French comrades have already had to write to propose to you the holding of a preliminary conference of the international Opposition in Paris shortly. Will two groups from Germany appear there, each of them stating that it represents the forces of the Opposition in this country? That would not only have a bad effect on the conference, but would make its work and the work in Germany more difficult, one after the other. The Austrian situation, where three groups exist, is bad enough for us not to repeat these difficulties in Germany".(24)

He saw no difference of principle between the two groups and, therefore, no reason to put off the unification; he mentioned the obstacles which had been encountered and gave his opinion clearly:

"It seems to me that there is a clear tendency on the part of each of the two groups to 'safeguard' its initial organisational coherence, unhappily to the detriment of the realisation of the unification. This is why the introduction of small questions into these activities are harmful and can only add to the mass of little stones (personal questions, former differences now liquidated, etc., etc.) which block the road. I can mention only what I have gathered from the various letters from Berlin

- 1) The proposal from cde. Grylewicz to widen and concretise the formula on the trade union question which cde. Trotsky proposed: this is the negation of the fact that the discussion on this question should be organised after the unification.
- 2) The different proposals for the composition of the conference and of the national committee look like manoeuvres to take position and proportional forces.
- 3) The useless re-activation of the personal problems concerning cde. Landau, about which I have no opinion (not knowing the details) and which is relatively without importance at this stage and can only render the unification more difficult".(25)

Shachtman considered that the formation of the future leadership did not present serious problems, and announced that he and Naville were coming to Berlin at the beginning of April, and hoped that the German comrades would have succeeded in unifying. Finally, he repudiated the statement by Urbahns that a large majority of the American Opposition shared his political viewpoints and called upon the German comrades to denounce this falsification as quickly as possible.

This letter from Shachtman to the German Oppositionists is a political plea to them to unify and a statement of the positive fall-out which they might legitimately expect, in particular through the disintegration of the Leninbund, which had become openly an Urbahns League. But this plea for the "German" aspect of this unification changed into string pressure in respect of its international fall-out. The role and the experience of the American Opposition in this way weighed in favour of the unification and made the obstacles in this way appear, at one and the same time, derisory for the German Opposition which had to overcome them, and as serious for the international Opposition, by reason of the delays and retreat in Germany. In this way Shachtman utilised the call for the conference, the date of which was already fixed, to summon the opposing forces to unify. In the face of such an appeal, true internationalists could only come together. It was this shock which was to rouse the German Opposition from its inaction and its atmosphere of incessant quarrels which Trotsky hoped to get thanks to the intervention of Shachtman.

The Convocation of the German Conference

Shachtman's letter, which was drafted on March 21 in Prinkipo, did not have time to make its effect, because on the following day Muller and Schwalbach sent a message to the Grylewicz group in which they repeated the charge that it was issuing a journal of the group in opposition to that of the future unified organisation. Wedding delegated four members to attend the meeting of the leadership of the Grylewicz group on March 23, which turned itself into a joint meeting of the two groups. Discussion was joined on a preliminary which set fire to the gunpowder: a written declaration by Wedding on the conditions for unification. At once the members of the Grylewicz group, and in particular Karl Albert, the chairman of the session, denounced this declaration as a

provocation. Landau replied by claiming that the letters from Grylewicz to Frenzel be read. Here he pointed out that obstruction of the unification was not down to the Leninbund minority. These letters and the sending of an emissary were, in Landau's eyes, sabotage. He demanded that the Grylewicz group condemn them in writing. There followed a new polemic about the role of Pioneer and of Mitteilungsblatt, with each side holding firm to its positions and accusing the other.

Then the Grylewicz group formally accused Wedding of not wanting the unification. Schwalbach replied that the appearance of Mitteilungsblatt meant that the unification was broken off: he said that this was the opinion of the whole Wedding Opposition and ended his intervention by "returning the compliment" of the minority:

"Grylewicz has no interest in unification".(26)

The representatives of the Grylewicz group repeated that the appearance of this sheet was necessary while waiting for the unification and in order to serve the struggle against Irbahns, to win the militants of the Leninbund after the recent split. Grylewicz who had not yet intervened in this argument, solemnly put the question to Schwalbach:

"Will you break off the negotiations if we continue to produce this sheet?" (27)

Schwalbach was determined to prevent the sheet from appearing, and replied in the affirmative. Landau proposed that the two journals cease to appear before the fusion. Osl Seipold, a Landtag deputy in Prussia, excluded from the KPD on February 22, 1930, and won to the Grylewicz group, declared on the contrary that he favoured the appearance of both organs up to the unification; he pointed out that it was a matter of the last issue and that the issue which followed that would be that of the unified organisation. Neumann declared that the non-appearance of the sheet would be as harmful as breaking off the negotiations; he forced Wedding to withdraw and the meeting at last devoted itself to negotiating the unification.

The tone became markedly more conciliatory. Schwalbach, who led the negotiations on behalf of Wedding, declared at the start that he was abandoning the former proposals of his group and was in agreement with a paritary leadership, but that he maintained its proposals for the method of representation (one for twenty). Grylewicz said that he opposed the proportional vote, in favour of delegates, with the right to vote, representing the local groups throughout the country; he declared that he did not want a "Berlin conference", which would be the case if such delegates were not there. Albert then intervened to contest the method of representation:

"The conference must be a political and moral demonstration. It is only after the conference, on the basis of a clear political declaration, that such a collection of signatures can take place. It is true that the local groups of the country should be represented at the conference. The proposals for the method of representation advanced by the Wedding militants would mean that two thirds of our group would not be at the conference".(28)

None the less, Schwalbach maintained his position. Seipold declared that the conference should not be prepared on the basis of democratic centralism in order to get a majority in it but to strengthen the political positions of the unified organisation. The local groups which could send a delegation should, according to him, be admitted. Landau intervened in a decisive fashion to propose that all the local groups be represented and that those with financial difficulties should be assisted. He thus went still further than Seipold, and took everyone by surprise, including his own comrades. He likewise suggested that the Berlin group, which was very active in the two organisations, should be authorised to take part in the conference. Taking this position enabled the last obstacles to be definitively settled.

The unification conference was fixed for Berlin on March 30. Grylewicz and Schwalbach were to take the chair, and the unification commission would constitute the bureau. The agenda was drawn up and those who were to open the debates were nominated: Neumann was to deal with the tasks of the fraction of the Left Communists in Germany and Schwalbach with the crisis in the Comintern and the struggle of the Bolshevik-Leninists. Then there would be the election of the common leadership and the preparation of the journal.

The content of the opening contributions was to be known and available two days before the conference. Finally, Schwalbach demanded a declaration from the members of the Grylewicz group that they had nothing against Landau. Oskar Hippe (a metal-worker, founder-member of the KPD and of the Leninbund, who led the group in the Charlottenburg quarter of Berlin, where he was employed by the municipality), Neumann and other militants refused, believing that it was impossible to give a blank cheque to Landau. Grylewicz, on behalf of his group, replied by repeating his proposal to prevent personal quarrels by means of exclusion, to be voted by the conference, of one or more of those responsible for difficulties. This proposition was finally adopted. After the meeting, a telegram was sent to Trotsky:

"Agreement reached STCP Conference March 30 Grylewicz - Muller".(29)

This good news, even if the conference had not yet confirmed the unification, was doubled by another satisfactory piece of news: a letter from Kurt Landau, who had written on a few occasions since the "affair" in December and January. He announced the agreement about unification, while briefly recalling the difficulties which had been encountered, described Seipold as an objective, neutral comrade and referred to the character-revolutionary tradition of the Wedding quarter of Berlin, which he compared to Paris in 1871. Finally, he touched on a subject which evidently was delicate and difficult for him: the past problems, the "Landau affair". He declared that he had been "very touched" by what Trotsky had written (30) to him "at the height of the crisis", and ended:

"It is hard for me to tell you how much these words supported me at this critical moment".(31)

On March 27, Roman Well wrote to Trotsky that his group had proved its will to unite, not issuing its sheet, which was ready, but he added that the absence of their organ was a great handicap in Leipzig, where none the less the Opposition was making progress. He also announced that Wedding had given way on proportional representation and that the method of representation had been fixed.(32) Concessions seemed to be on the order of the day on the way to the unification, after the internal struggles, and Well was pleased to emphasise this, no doubt in order to improve his image in the eyes of Trotsky. Another G.P.U. member was in the process of taking his position in the ranks of the German Oppositionists: the Lettish Valentin Olberg, in contact with Landau, whom he had impressed favourably.

Schwalbach and Muller also wrote to Trotsky on March 27, to the effect that they thought that new problems would arise in the future, but that the unification was a political necessity.(33) Grylewicz, in a letter in which he described the situation to Trotsky a few days after the conference, confirmed that Mitteilungsblatt, which had been prepared, would not be distributed; he stressed that, unlike Pioneer, there was no trace of polemics in it. Letters had been sent to the Mahnruf group, to Frey, to Pollak, to Leonorovic, to the Militant, to the Belgians and to the editors of the "Bulletin of the Opposition", to announce the unification conference (34), and the presence of a representative of "La Verite" (it was to be Pierre Naville) was requested.(35) Shachtman, from his side, had expected to be in Berlin at the beginning of April and left Crankip on March 26, in order to be able to attend the unification conference. He and Trotsky had not been greatly excited when they read the telegram from Grylewicz and Muller, which they judged to be "suspect" (36), believing rather that there were nine chances that unity would not be realised against only one that it would result. By all the evidence, Trotsky literally dispatched Shachtman to Berlin (where he arrived the day before the conference) after having "duly lectured" him, according to Pierre Broue's expression (37), to obtain the result of this German conference on which the international conference depended in the first instance. In this close game, where nothing was finally won, Trotsky had all the same marked out some important points: the two conferences, the German and the international, were convened. In both cases he could rely on Shachtman. But it remained to concretise these first elements, on which the fate of the international Opposition depended, as Trotsky wrote to the Canadian, Maurice Speer:

"The Opposition in Europe has gone through an important stage in the past year of internal purification, and here we have the greatest hopes that the coming year will enable us to harvest what has been sown. In France the harvest is beginning to

bear fruit in a certain point of view". (38)

The success of the two conferences would thus be the harvest of the periods of clarification and differentiation, at the same time as the opening of a new period of development of the International Left Opposition.

FOOTNOTES

- (1) According to the telegram from Trotsky to Marguerite Rosmer, March 6, 1930. A.H. 9924.
- (2) Shachtman's visit to Europe in February 1930 seems to be connected to the financial difficulties of the Militant. We have seen that a letter from Glotzer in 1932 mentions a resolution of the American Opposition during 1929 deciding to ask for financial aid from the international Opposition. Shachtman's arrival would then be the consequence of this resolution.
- (3) Letter from Rosmer to Trotsky, March 7, 1930, in Broue, op. cit., pp. 128 - 130.
- (4) "The organisation of the Information Bulletin of the international Opposition", in "La Verite", No. 26, March 7, 1930, p. 8. This text repeats as a whole the terms of the draft circular letter of Trotsky, of October 13, 1929. A.H. 9840.
- (5) Letter from Trotsky to Rosmer, March 7, 1930, in Broue, op. cit., pp. 127 - 128.
- (6) Ibid.
- (7) Ibid.
- (8) Circular of the provisional international Secretariat to the groups of the Opposition, March 10, 1930, in Militant, No. 14, Vol. 3, April 5, 1930, p. 8.
- (9) Ibid.
- (10) Ibid.
- (11) In a letter to the editors of Militant (February 28, 1930, A.H. 9069a), Trotsky wrote: "I am sending you herewith the reply which we are giving to this initiative in the name of the editors of the Russian Bulletin and, we are certain that to our correspondence, in the name of our comrades in the USSR".
- (12) Trotsky: "Uniting the Left Opposition", February 1930, in "Writings: 1930", pp. 98 - 99.
- (13) For the Opposition of Wedding and the Palatinate were present: Sacha Muller, Hans Schwalbach and his father George, Landau, Erwin Schober, Kirstein (excluded from the KPD on April 13, 1930), Persicke and Lehmann. For the Leninbund minority, Grylewicz, Joko, Neumann, Scholer and Well.
- (14) Record of the joint meeting of the Opposition of Wedding and the Palatinate and the Grylewicz group, February 16, 1930, A.H. 3439.
- (15) Letter from Schwalbach to Trotsky, February 20, 1930, A.H. 4761.
- (16) Letter from Trotsky to Grylewicz, February 24, 1930, A.H. 8398.
- (17) Letter from Well to Trotsky, March 1, 1930, A.H. 5241.
- (18) Letter from Grylewicz to Trotsky, March 5, 1930, A.H. 1731.
- (19) Letter from Grylewicz to Trotsky, March 14, 1930, A.H. 1732.

- (20) Letter from Grylewicz to Schwalbach, March 10, 1930, A.H. 1732, annex No.4.
- (21) Letter from Schwalbach and Muller to Grylewicz, March 14, 1930, A.H. 1732, annex No. 5.
- (22) Letter from Marguerite Rosmer to Trotsky, March 24, 1930, A.H. 4477.
- (23) Letter of Shachtman to the Opposition of Wedding and the Palatinate and to the Grylewicz group, March 21, 1930, A.H. 15421. The Wedding Opposition replied to Shachtman's letter on March 26, 1930, expressing pleasure at his coming to Berlin and announcing the unification for March 30. The Oppositionists likewise replied to his question: "At the international conference, the united German Opposition will be represented". (Letter of Muller and Schwalbach to Shachtman, March 26, 1930, A.H. 15395.
- (24) Ibid.
- (25) Ibid.
- (26) "Minutes of the Joint Meeting of the Opposition of Wedding and of the Leninbund" March 23, 1930, A.H. 16206.
- (27) Ibid.
- (28) Ibid.
- (29) Telegram from Grylewicz and Muller to Trotsky, March 23, 1930, A.H. 1733.
- (30) cf. the letter of Trotsky to Landau, January 7, 1930, A.H. 8789.
- (31) Letter from Landau to Trotsky, March 23, 1930, A.H. 2564.
- (32) Letter from Well to Trotsky, March 27, 1930, A.H. 4762.
- (33) Letter from Muller and Schwalbach to Trotsky, March 27, 1930, A.H. 4762.
- (34) Letter from Grylewicz to the groups of the Left Opposition, March 27, 1930, A.H. 1734 (annex).
- (35) Letter from Grylewicz to Rosmer, March 23, 1930, A.H. 1734 (annex).
- (36) According to the letter from Shachtman to Trotsky, April 3, 1930, A.H. 5034.
- (37) Broue, op. cit., p. 134, n. 1.
- (38) Letter from Trotsky to Spector, March 26, 1930, A.H. 10497.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

The German Unification

Shachtman and Naville arrived in Berlin at the same time on March 22, and met the Oppositionists of Wedding and those who had been excluded from the Leninbund. According to Shachtman's letter to Trotsky, the atmosphere was strained:

"The Leninbunders declared that unity with Landau was impossible; the Weddingists replied that unity with Joko and Neumann, even with Grylewicz, would not be profitable or desirable. In brief, the very promising telegram which had been sent by Grylewicz) and Muller did not at all reflect the situation".(1)

Shachtman and Naville spent long hours in negotiation. They tried to get the minimal agreement which would permit the conference to begin. At the last moment and in the face of the agreement which had been reached unanimously on March 23, Wedding demanded that it should be Landau and not Schwalbach who presented the report. The Grylewicz group refused, but Naville finally obtained victory for Wedding, by stressing that each group could choose its representative. The Grylewicz group, which accepted reluctantly, declared that here was one of Landau's habitual provocations to prevent unification. Wedding then proposed a leading committee of sixteen members, on a basis of parity, with two commissions: one commission of eight delegates charged with the political work and the press, led by Landau, and the other, charged with organisational and trade union work, led by Grylewicz. This proposal was rejected by the Grylewicz group, and Shachtman and Naville had once more to intervene to find a formula acceptable by all: a committee of twelve members in Berlin, plus four members from the provinces, based on parity. This committee would have the task of naming those to be responsible for the different tasks (journal, organisation).

A Stormy Conference

So the unification conference opened, as planned by after some complications, on March 30 in Berlin. Shachtman and Naville presided. A presidium was made up of Schwalbach, Grylewicz, Muller and Neumann. Delegates represented the groups of Bruchsal, Bautzen, Hamburg, Konigsberg, Leipzig, Ludwigshafen and Berlin. The conference opened with greetings from the militants of the Communist League of America, brought by Shachtman and that of the French Oppositionists by Naville, who stressed that the situation of the French Opposition, where deep political differences were increasing between the group and the Left, was different from the German situation, where the groups did not present fundamental differences. The preamble was evidently intended to relax the atmosphere at the conference. They went on then to the reading of the reports on the crisis in the Comintern and the struggle of the Bolshevik-Leninists (by Landau) and that on the situation in Germany, by Neumann. On the initiative of Well, it was decided to take the debate on both reports together.

Landau's report re-affirmed the positions of the Left Opposition and the main lines of the crisis of the Communist International. Neumann's report, on the other hand, was not without surprises. Neumann declared that the Opposition must condemn the legend "Trotskyism", and read a declaration from Wedding, dating from 1926, in which it was written that Trotsky had gone over to Zinoviev and that "the theory of the permanent revolution" was erroneous. He then discussed the trade union question, emphasising its importance in Germany; declaring that the Leninbund minority had a clear principal point of view, he advocated that this should be clarified by the conference. Neumann then took up the question of a platform of the Opposition, which he regarded as the "burning question of this unification".(2) Finally, as regarded the Leninbund, he believed that a good number of vanguard workers were still in it and that it was possible and necessary to win them. He declared that a clear position had to be taken on the electoral question, a settled problem as far as his group was concerned, but not for the unified organisation.

Shachtman reported to Trotsky what the minutes enable to be guessed but do not mention to conceal it from Trotsky?

The reports of Landau and Neumann developed with great difficulty. In his report, Neumann tried to raise the vexed trade union question. Immediately the Weddingers brandished an official declaration according to which they considered this to be a breach of the agreement and refused to discuss the trade union question before the end of the conference and before the 'unification' was effective. Our own opinion that Neumann and his comrades raised the question in order to "show the false position" of the others, while the others refused to discuss it, not out of consideration about unity but because of the fact that their position is neither clear nor correct".(3)

The discussion opened unpromisingly, with contradictory interventions by Well and Olber. The former demanded an explanation of the differences between the positions of the two groups on the trade union question, while the latter objected that this would be useless because everyone knew what these positions were. Landau intervened to state that the Wedding group was conducting a discussion on this point and that it would be finished in two weeks. Well replied that he did not want a discussion but a presentation of the differences. Shachtman spoke to point out that Naville and he thought that a provisional discussion should take place, as well as in the joint journal. Well stressed that he had made any proposal, but that it was simply desirable that the provincial members should hear the position of the Wedding Opposition. Landau replied that it had signed the declaration and that it was bound by it. However, he proposed a discussion on tactical questions. At this stage in the discussion, Well intervened at length to demand clarity on the fundamental questions, such as the Anglo-Russian Committee, the Sino-Russian conflict and the condemnation of the legend of "Trotskyism", and called on the members not to go into the trade union question. He then spoke about the policy in the USSR, the right-ward course of Stalin, who had replaced his ultra-left course with another, ultra-right one. These considerations favourably impressed Shachtman, who described Well as a "very energetic" and "not factional", "developing interesting theories on the Stalinist bureaucracy" (4), which the American judged to be "right enough". Well ended his intervention by stressing that the Leipzig group, which before the split had forty-five members, had twenty-two of them after it and had won a cell of eighteen. Seipold had been silent since the debate opened, emphasised the importance of the unification and stressed that the militants in the provinces really did not know the Wedding position on the trade union question. He declared that he attached great importance to it because he would be travelling all over the country in the future - as a member of the Prussian Landtag, he travelled free on the railways. He also pointed out that the official party had conducted no discussion on this question. In addition, he replied to the accusations of the KPD that he had no right to his seat in the Landtag - after joining the Opposition, he had refused to hand over his seat to the party - and had had a meeting with three party full-timers in East Prussia and won them to the Opposition. He ended by declaring that he was doing all in his power to arrive at the unification of the two groups.

Seipold's positive intervention was followed by another no less favourable intervention. Frenzel expressed the opinion that there was no fundamental difference between the two groups and that none of those who opened the discussion had created artificial divergences. He emphasised that the influence of the Opposition on the KPD was very weak, and believed that if unification had been achieved earlier the Opposition would be in a different position. According to him, it was necessary to elaborate a programme and to concretise the tasks of the Opposition. The tone of the discussion then improved. Well tried to poison it by asking treacherously where Weber was. Frenzel replied that the Palatinate had been fighting the false policy of the party since 1921. Weber, who had led this struggle, had not capitulated, but was inactive. Frenzel stressed that his activity had strengthened the whole Opposition. Alfred Scholer (who was chairman of works council at Lindstrom in Berlin and a member of the Grylewicz group) demanded, as had been foreseen, that a letter to the militants of the KPD be drafted.

Joko spoke in his turn, and considered that both the two groups had made mistakes and the past should be set aside. He quoted Trotsky, who always believed that a fusion without political clarity was undesirable, and referred to the errors of the left - in fact of the ultra-left - against the decisions of the Third Congress of the Communist International. The leader of the Wedding Opposition in Leipzig intervened to say that an organisational unification would not suffice, and that it was necessary to go over to

attack especially in Saxony, where the situation was favourable. Well said that the text of the letter to the members of the K.P.D. would be available very quickly and repeated that the provisional leadership should elaborate a platform. Four issues of the journal would appear in this period. Shachtman imparted his impressions to Trotsky:

"The theoretical level of the conference was surprisingly low and unfruitful from the point of view. The general opinion seemed to be: 'Well! we are obliged to unite with these people under the pressure of the international Opposition and there is nothing to be done about it: so the sooner the better'".(5)

After an interval, Shachtman re-opened the conference by announcing the composition of the national committee which had been fixed by the presidium: six militants from the two groups in Berlin and two others from the provinces, as foreseen. This committee had the task of settling the questions about the composition of the editorial board, the appearance of the journal, the platform, the preparation of a conference in eight weeks' time on the basis of the votes of the members of the unified organisation, participation in the international conference, etc. It was composed of: Schwalbach, Muller, Landau, the leader of the Wedding Opposition in Berlin, Erwin Schober, a former militant in the KPD and a trade union leader in Halle, Albert Kitner and Otto Kirstein for Wedding, Frenzel and Braun for the Palatinate and of Grylewicz, Neumann, Joko, Hippe, Scholer and Seipol for the minority of the Leninbund. Finally, Well would represent the Leipzig group and Dorr that of Bruchsal.

The unification achieved in the end

Shachtman then proposed the unification resolution, which announced the creation of the unified Left Opposition in Germany. He called for a vote in favour of the leadership as a whole. Joko then intervened to say that he had the strongest reservations about Landau as a person, but that he supported the idea of a vote as a whole. He stressed that Trotsky's secretary, Jakob Frank, after having been favourable to Landau, spoke openly against his methods and likewise had broken off personal relations with him. He was interrupted by Naville, who declared that Frank had been not a secretary but a simple visitor, and then by Landau, who shouted:

"The opposite is true! It was I who broke off personal relations!".(6)

Neumann shouted in his turn:

"It is the same thing!".(7)

Schwalbach took the floor and declared that Joko's remarks created an entirely new situation, and that this attack constituted a violation of the joint decisions of March 23. Landau at once called for a commission of enquiry to be formed to settle this problem under the chairmanship of Naville and Shachtman. He called upon the Wedding militant not to let themselves be provoked and to join the elected leadership. He decided to refuse to work in the joint leadership. Hippe supported him. Shachtman then declared that a set-back to the conference on personal questions would be an "international scandal" for the Opposition. He told Trotsky about this episode:

"I read the proposals and the resolution declaring that the two groups were unified as a single fraction. On this point, Joko raised the 'Landau question' and as foreseen the conference seemed on the point of frustration. A terrible tumult, nearly a scandal, ensued, with accusations and counter-attacks flying across the room, insults and slanders and everything else... In the face of the direct danger of an immediate break-up, Naville and I took the initiative of announcing that if personal quarrels and purely personal meanness did not stop immediately, the international Opposition would not recognise any of the groups as representing Germany, and the task of constructing a section would have to be resumed from the bottom, taking none but the best parts of the existing two groups".(8)

This threat by Shachtman and Naville seems to have made the German opponents recoil, and they adopted the unification declaration as a whole. Only Plep, the delegate from Königsberg abstained from voting because he believed that this unification was soon going to result in a break-up. The composition of the leadership was adopted, despite three abstentions and two votes against: those of Hippe and of Margarete Neumann, the wife of Richard. Shachtman proposed a resolution on the Blumkin question. Grylewicz

It was proposed that a telegram be sent to Trotsky announcing that the unification had been achieved, and this was adopted unanimously... (9) Shachtman closed the conference in the hope that in eight weeks the national conference of the German Opposition would be held and would ensure the definitive unification. Naville emphasised that the unification was a great step forward for the international Opposition. The two men summed up for Trotsky how they saw the conference:

"The conference made a very bad impression on both of us. Unity was achieved only in the formal sense of the word and with the greatest difficulty. The two parties agreed solely under pressure and without any real desire or concern for the future of the German movement". (10)

The national committee met on the day after the unification conference. Shachtman was again nominated as chairperson, against his will, because he feared to create a dangerous precedent and because that "...encourages the atmosphere of two factions which cannot unite without the presence of a 'commissar' by their side". (11) To the despair of Shachtman, things were dragging on and the session was to last more than six hours, whereas according to him thirty minutes would have been enough. The commission to settle the incident of Joko and Landau was set up only with difficulty. After "hours of petty, insignificant discussion" (12), in the course of which the voting on the small and the big questions always produced the same result, six against six, Shachtman and Naville proposed to organise the work in the following way: the twelve militants form the leadership (Reichsleitung) of the organisation. An editorial committee of six members should be created. Seipold, who as a Landtag deputy enjoyed parliamentary immunity, was nominated as director of the publication of the journal, Muller and Grylewicz were the proprietors, but no chief editor was appointed, despite Shachtman's opinion favourable to the appointment of Landau to this post.

Finally, Seipold was unanimously delegated to the international conference. This unanimity was deeply suspected by the American, doubtless on sound grounds; he thought that it was a sign, not of unity, but of "an absence of interest in the international work, that is, that we had here, not 'united internationalism' but 'a provincial shrugging of shoulders'". (13) But we must not neglect, for all that, the personality of Seipold, who had recently joined the Grylewicz group and played no part in the fractional struggles; it was a "neutral" delegate who was sent to the conference.

The choice of title for the journal and the name of the organisation were to be sharply debated. Wedding proposed Bolshevik, which Shachtman thought "very imposing", and the Grylewicz group proposed The Spark. Shachtman then whispered to Landau The Communist, which was finally adopted. For the organisation, Wedding proposed "Unified Opposition of the Communists of the Left (Bolshevik-Leninists)" and the Grylewicz group, "Unified Left Opposition of the KPD (Bolshevik-Leninists)". The second proposition was accepted. Naville and Shachtman suggested that the mention of "Bolshevik-Leninists" be withdrawn to avoid the jokes and criticisms attached to the excessive length of this title in relation to the weakness of the organisation. They were to be defeated and Shachtman, who was clearly undeceived, concluded "There was nothing to be done". (14)

The leadership was finally constituted, the appearance of the journal programmed and Seipold delegated to the international conference. Landau was even proposed as a member of the international secretariat. This last proposal had only one object: to get rid of him out of German affairs. But the man was energetic and capable enough to tackle all these tasks head-on. Finally, the leadership had to prepare the platform of the fraction and the holding, in eight weeks' time, of the national conference.

This difficult conference, where the tone was often higher than its theoretical aspect, none the less took many decisions and initiatives. But definitively the most important element was the success of the unification, though nothing guaranteed how long it would last. There the questions of personalities, of characters, of political formation, were decisive. The portraits which Shachtman drew for Trotsky of the leaders of the two former groups are instructive:

"With a few exceptions (like Seipold, Well and others to a lesser degree) the leaders of the Leninbunders are soaked in the Zinoviev-Maslow spirit of low politics, of demagoguery and intrigue, especially comrade Joko. They are more active than the other group, but rarely in the right direction. The Weddingers (outside Landau and one

and others) form a good group of workers, but having struggled for a long time they do not seem very energetic and speak very little if at all in the meetings. There is not one young comrade in their group (Schwalbach, aged twenty-five, is the youngest member) and they are soaked with the most surprising variety of what Naville correctly calls 'particularism, localism and provincialism'... they have a deep distrust and disdain for these old Zinovievist - Urbahns-ist politicians of the Grylewicz group; the latter despises the Weddingers who, according to him, exist largely on paper and not in reality".(15)

Shachtman's descriptions are corroborated by Naville, who - in a manuscript annex to the letter of the American - writes:

"Dear Comrade, I am completely in agreement with the opinion of Shachtman. I fear that the German Opposition will be unable to develop without breaking a good half of its present leadership".(16)

Moreover, pursuing their descriptions, the two men, who had met Olberg at the house of the Pfemferts, stressed that they had been very unfavourably impressed by this militant Oppositionist of recent date, who inspired little confidence, despite his knowledge of Russian, German and typewriting and should not be allowed to visit Prinkipo. Finally, a propos of Landau, Shachtman thinks that, despite his weaknesses, he is useful:

"He is the only one, or one of only two, who have a consistency in matters of theory. His political line, in my opinion, is distinctly more correct than that of no matter any other comrade".(17)

Landau, according to Shachtman, wanted to go back to Prinkipo, but at the request of the American he was to await the holding of the international conference. No other German militant could be sent in the immediate future from among those whom Shachtman and Naville met.

The Beginnings of the V.L.O.

The V.L.O., Unified Left Opposition of the KPD, was, therefore, the outcome of a difficult process. Despite the meanders it confirmed that "German Trotskyism" was really born, of which the Leninbund and Urbahns had been no more than a pale imitation. On the other hand, the absence of leaders of high capacity, such as Ruth Fischer and Maslow such as Brandler, historic leaders of the KPD, was a considerable handicap to the struggle of this fraction in the service of regenerating the German party. Only Grylewicz represented in his person part of the tradition of the German revolutionary movement, in which he had been organised since 1912 and had never ceased to struggle. Yet he never really occupied the front rank in German Communism.

What was the numerical significance of the new unified fraction? It is difficult to give a precise answer, in the absence of reliable figures. If we add together the figures which the two groups supplied, we get about five or six hundred members. Shachtman questioned this estimate when he revealed to Trotsky that the Oppositionists confessed that they could not get together the fifty to a hundred marks indispensable to launching the Communist. Despite unemployment and low wages, an organisation of five to six hundred (or even of four hundred, according to Seipold at the international conference) should be able to reach that. The figure of two hundred militants, which Wolfgang Alles puts forward in his thesis, seems in fact to be more probable. The new organisation had a national geographical implantation, with some exceptions and with regional disparities. Its "bastions" were situated in Berlin, where it had a strong group (over sixty members), Leipzig (about sixty) and in Hamburg. It also had an important group in Bruchsal led by Frenzel. Besides the groups, there were numerous cells (up to fifteen members) in a number of cities - Cologne, Frankfurt on Main, Mannheim, Dresden, Ludwigshafen, Essen, Königsberg, Karlsruhe and Magdeburg.

This good geographical implantation was complemented by a real implantation into the world of the working class, as in the Charlottenberg quarter of Berlin, where Oscar Hippe led a solid group of workers, Schussler and the builder and mason, Helmut Schneeweiss, the organiser of the unemployed, both at Oranienburg, Georg Jungclas - who fought in the Hamburg uprising and who was later a member of the Leninbund and of its minority in this city - and Alfred Scholer, chairperson of the works committee in a Berlin fact-

ory, were also the physical expression of this anchorage in the German proletariat of the big cities. On the other hand, the V.L.O. had been cut off from the KPD for a long time thanks to the policies of Urbahns and as a fraction of that party tried to implant itself again by establishing cells of Oppositionists. This policy was difficult to apply successfully and came up against the physical violence which forced the militants of the Opposition to retreat.

The first number of Der Kommunist appeared in mid-April 1930. It carried on the front page the letter to the militants of the KPD and the articles of Trotsky on the "third period". It was to appear regularly every fortnight. The publication in Der Kommunist of Trotsky's letter to the members of the Leninbund was a last appeal to the militants remaining in the organisation which the V.L.O. judged to be without a future. On March 1 Volkswille carried an article by Urbahns entitled "Who Splits the Leninist Opposition?" which formally accused the members of the minority of having provoked the split.

The Leninbund organ likewise published a letter from Leon Sedov of February 24. This stressed that at one and the same time Urbahns had severely criticised Rakovsky and those who signed his declaration and treated them as capitulators, while he published full-length the texts of the real capitulators, Smilga and Preobrajensky, like Radek. Sedov took up the question of the "Trotsky Aid" and declared that the sums of money which had been raised in various countries and sent to Urbahns had not reached the editors of the Bulletin of the Opposition and that he had never replied to repeated demands for an account of these sums. Urbahns' reply defines what sort of man he was:

"The sums collected for the 'Trotsky Help' and which were not sent to the Russian Opposition have been used for the political defence of the Russian Opposition and in particular of Cde. Trotsky at the time of his deportation by the Stalinist regime from the Soviet Union. It is with this money that the political campaign against the Stalinist terror and deportations against the Russian Opposition, and for the right of asylum for Trotsky in Germany, was carried on. Another part of the money has financed Volkswille and Die Fahne des Kommunismus, the only organs to have carried on the fight for the Russian Opposition in Germany".(18)

The admission is big enough. Urbahns therefore did not confine himself to publishing the statements of the capitulators and to denouncing Rakovsky: he now recognised that he had spent to meet the needs of his organisation the money which had been collected from workers in several countries for Rakovsky and his comrades. Not content with this inelegant procedure, he went on to try to compromise those who since had become his adversaries, by asserting that the use of this money by the Leninbund had been approved by Grylewicz and Joko when they were members of the national leadership of that organisation, an accusation which Landau and his people brought up again against these militants in the unification negotiations.

The break of Trotsky and his supporters from Urbahns and the Leninbund was irreversible and the decline of the organisation was no less so. The Leninbund quickly transformed itself into an "Urbahns sect", because numerous militants left it during and after the split. Its press was on its last legs and the frequency with which Volkswille and Die Fahne des Kommunismus appeared was falling. It was the hardly glorious end of the old German Left, which hardly existed any more outside the V.L.O.

When Shachtman was expressing his doubts about the solidity of the recent unification of the German Opposition, he wrote to Trotsky that they must not forget that Urbahns, in spite of all his efforts, never managed to get a unification between the Leninbund and the Wedding Opposition. He stressed that to have accomplished this unification, however unsteady and feeble it might be "... constitutes an enormous step forward".(20) It opened the door to the international conference and assumed a capital importance, because from that time onwards one could hope for further gains. Shachtman also suggested to Trotsky that he should draft a letter warning the German Oppositionists of the dangers of their fractional struggles. The latter, after thanking the American for his report on the various events in Berlin, replied:

"The picture which you have traced was not in any case very rosy... I have explained very frankly to our friends in Berlin my suspicion that there may be among them a number of agents of the official bureaucracy, developing their miserable work as

splitters. Moreover I believe that this type of procedure is completely in the spirit of the Stalinist bureaucracy and that we must be on our guard against it everywhere, including in America".(21)

From this point of view, we must mention that except for the sharply unfavourable appreciation which Shachtman and Naville made of Valentine Olberg, the two militants seem never to have thought of the possibility which Trotsky envisaged very seriously, of the presence of infiltrated elements. The most effective of them was evidently Well, who located himself in a strong position and impressed Shachtman, at a moment when Trotsky was considering him to be deliberately obstructing the unification and was preparing to struggle against him politically.

The unification which was effected in Germany was a point of support for the struggle of the international Opposition, and the German militants on April 6 informed all the groups of the formation of the V.L.O. and the decisions of their conference.(22) After Germany it was the Belgian Left Opposition which was in difficulty, and Pierre Naville went to Brussels at the end of the German conference, in order to try to settle the problems before before the international conference. For his part, Shachtman left Berlin to go to Paris, where he awaited Rosmer for the conference on April 6.

F O O T N O T E S

- (1) Letter from Shachtman to Trotsky, April 3, 1930. A.H. 5034.
- (2) Minutes of the unification conference, March 30, 1930. A.H. 16207.
- (3) Ibid.
- (4) Ibid.
- (5) Letter from Shachtman to Trotsky, April 3, 1930. A.H. 5034.
- (6) Minutes of the unification conference, March 30, 1930. A.H. 16207.
- (7) Ibid.
- (8) Letter from Shachtman to Trotsky, April 3, 1930. A.H. 5034.
- (9) The telegram to Trotsky read as follows: "The **completed** unification conference salutes through you the Russian Oppositionists in prison and exile". March 31, 1930. A.H. 1735)
- (10) Letter from Shachtman to Trotsky, April 3, 1930. A.H. 5034.
- (11) Ibid.
- (12) Ibid.
- (13) Ibid.
- (14) Ibid.
- (15) Ibid.
- (16) Ibid.
- (17) Ibid.
- (18) Volkswille, No. 21, March 1, 1930, p. 14.
- (19) Scholem, after having met Sedov, came near to the Left Oppositionists, until his arrest.

- (20) Letter from Shachtman to Trotsky, April 3, 1930, A.H. 5034.
- (21) Letter from Trotsky to Shachtman, April 16, 1930, A.H. 10279.
- (22) Letter from Grylewicz (in the name of the provisional leadership of the V.L.O.)
Trotsky and to the groups of the Opposition, April 6, 1930. A.H. 1738.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

The International Conference of April 6 1930

On April 5, 1930, Shachtman arrived in Paris. He met Rosmer and presented to him Trotsky's plans concerning the conference, notably the documents prepared at Prinkipo. Naville for his part returned from Belgium, where he had tried in vain to resolve the conflict which took on a new dimension when van Overstraeten resigned. The Belgian Opposition was therefore going to present itself at the conference divided, that is, exactly as Shachtman feared that the German Opposition would present itself if the unification were held up. The conditions of preparation of this conference, convened in great haste, and more prepared in Prinkipo than in Paris, the Belgian difficulties and the anxieties about the solidity of the German unification, were hardly a reassuring context before it opened.

Conference or Pre-Conference?

On April 6, Rosmer opened the conference, over which he presided as one who, with Naville, had initiated the call for it. Rosenthal and Jean Chernobelsky were in charge of the secretariat. The Belgian Opposition was represented by Hennaut, from the Brussels Federation (in the absence of van Overstraeten) and Lesoil, from Charleroi. Seipold represented the V.L.O. of Germany, Julian Gorkin the Spanish group, Jan Frankel the Lenorovic group of the Czech Opposition, Karoly Szilvassy, the Hungarian group in Paris, Shachtman the C.L.A. of the United States, the Ukrainian Jew Pavel Okhun (known as Obin) and M.M. Pikas, the Jewish group linked to "La Verite". The Italian Bordiguists were represented by Giovanni Bottaioli, known as Peri, a member of the fraction of the Italian Left since 1928, and another militant known as "Severino".

Numerous groups were not represented. Some had not been able to be warned in time, such as the Chinese groups, the indo-chinese groups and those of Latin America. On the other hand, several sent a letter of support to the conference, in the course of which their messages were read. This was the case with the Russian Opposition - Sedov having been unable to come, of the Austrian groups of Josef Frey and Mahnruf, of one of the Czechoslovak groups, the Bureau of the Fraction of Prague (the Freund group after the name of its leader, Dr. Hermann Freund, known as Harry, a former member of the Michalec group, after having been among the founders of the Czechoslovak Communist Party) and of the Greek organisation known as the "Archaeo-Marxists". Finally, other groups which were notified could not get themselves represented, in particular the small Austrian group of Josef Strasser. We may mention the absence of anyone from Holland as well as of Italians linked to the "three", these last having demanded of Rosmer that at this stage he should guard the secret that they had been in contact.

The absence of many groups constituted a first handicap for this international conference while the presence of two Belgian delegates concretises the crisis which was shaking the Opposition. The fact that the Bordiguists of the Left Fraction stressed that they were not mandated was a new obstacle. But the true difficulty presented a much more serious character: the agenda foresaw three essential questions, the establishment of the international secretariat, the questions relating to launching the Bulletin and, finally, the study of the situation country by country. The conference of April 6 therefore opened with a session lasting a morning devoted to the international secretariat and the Bulletin. The minutes bear witness to this surprising agenda for what was in principle an international conference. The preamble in fact mentions this:

"Session of the international ^{secretariat} on April 6, 1930". (1)

In this way, the delegates present formed this secretariat and not the assembly of the conference. There was more than a mistake here. It was the nature of the conference which was at stake. The absence of many groups, the absence of mandates and this agenda do not seem to be able to justify calling it an international conference, but rather a pre-conference, even a simple international meeting, or, still more logically, as the

minutes said, as a session of the international secretariat. So it seems that this was the "Rosmer line" - to confine themselves to creating the secretariat and publishing the Bulletin - and that it prevailed over that of Trotsky, which favoured holding a real conference, with the responsibilities and the tasks which that implied. This mistake is in fact a clear disagreement and was to reveal itself in its full importance. On March 21 1930, Trotsky wrote, in "Answers to Questions from the USSR":

"We cannot forget even for a minute that the Opposition represents an international current. Over the course of the last year, Europe, America and China had the chance for virtually the first time to become acquainted with the living ideas and slogans of the Bolshevik-Leninists in the persons of certain advanced elements of Communist circles. Thanks to this, a very serious regroupment has taken place on the basis of ideological differentiation. The Opposition has gotten on its feet ideologically on an international scale. The political fruits produced by this year's labour will show themselves more and more plainly in the near future." (2)

This qualitative gain could be solidified only by holding the conference which Trotsky, thanks to Shachtman, had imposed on Rosmer. In fact, Rosmer opened the conference in these terms;

"The object of this meeting is to take a first step to re-assemble the forces of Opposition, by the creation of an international secretariat and the publication of a bulletin which would serve for reciprocal information and the preparation of the international conference, by publishing studies of the problems posed to the conference. I regret that the difficulties of contact prevent our Italian comrades from stating their positions about these limited objectives. How is the Bulletin to be done?... In what language will it be published?... How will its cost be covered? These above all are the questions which we must discuss?" (3)

He likewise said that they would proceed to a discussion, country by country, preceding "the examination of the essential questions" on the basis of a document drafted by Shachtman and himself.

In this way, according to the very words which Rosmer used, the aims of the conference were limited, even timid, having regard to the ambitions of Trotsky and to the development of the international Opposition, and it is the content of a pre-conference which emerges from his intervention. This has an immediate result: this pre-conference, which had the task in principle of preparing the future international conference of the Opposition, could in fact settle only technical questions, such as those of the secretariat and of the Bulletin. Failing reliance on the political progress of the international Opposition, it was to find itself faced with difficulties and with calling into question the earlier political gains.

The Debates

The first difficulties appeared as soon as the conference opened. The Bordinguist Severino provoked a discussion on the problem of the invitations, asking Rosmer:

"The other groups, Leninbund, Groupe Ouvrier Communiste (4); have they replied to your invitation?"(5)

Naville replied that these groups had not replied. Urbahns had been content merely to publish the invitation, and the Russian and Chinese groups had not been able to be represented. Severino was astonished when Rosmer said that only the groups of the Left, excluding the groups of the right and of the ultra-left, had been invited. Rosmer reminded the Bordinguist that differentiation was necessary and pointed out to him:

"You would not want to work with Brandler!" (6)

Hennaut came to the support of Severino and proposed to invite Paz and Urbahns to the coming international conference, as well as the Sneevliet group, despite its attitude which he judged to be "confused". When Rosmer and Naville stressed that the Paz group was out of action - particularly in the suspension of Liberateur, which had succeeded to Contre le Courant - Lesoil, from the Federation of Charleroi, stated:

"We want above all the group the comrades who have decided to march forward, but not those who come to discuss. Our agreement signifies that we must make a very clear demarcation between the groups which are in agreement with the position and the work

of the Russian Opposition and the others. No amalgams. We agree to meet the other groups, but not to amalgamate with them".(7)

This intervention, based on the gains of the clarification of the ranks of the Left Opposition, was received with opposition by Hennaut, who saw in it only "... the opinion of the Charleroi Federation".(8) Rosmer closed this painful discussion as follows:

"Some comrades fear that we are setting off from too narrow a base. Until the conference decides, we must start off from a wide enough base. Just as the Third International sent out invitations to its Second Congress very widely. Then separation was effected on principles. Up to that point it was necessary to preserve a certain liberalism in the discussion".(9)

This discussion on the problem of the "invitations" went through a prolongation in the debate on the Bulletin. Once again, two poles with divergent conceptions came into position: on one side, there was Peri - for whom the Bulletin had "no political significance" - and Hennaut, who wanted the columns of the Bulletin to be open to every group which claimed to support the "left", and on the other side Rosmer, Naville but no less Jan Frankel and Seipold, for whom the Bulletin was the element of preparation of the future conference and elaboration of its platform. In this way, Rosmer replied to Severino, who considered that they should not "... determine that this or that group should not take part in the Bulletin":

"It is impossible. In Germany there exists a multiplicity of groups, the trend of which is clear and who could demand that we publish their documents. What 'La Verite' has done is to clarify principles and subject them to the experience of facts. But we cannot take in groups whose real direction we clearly know. It is because we know that there are ideas to examine and to clarify that we are creating the Bulletin".(10)

What Rosmer called the "extreme, formal democratism of the Bordiguists was a serious obstacle, even a threat, because it was only after a big debate that the delegates present finally tackled the technical questions of producing the Bulletin.

The proposal by Rosmer of a monthly bulletin of eight pages published in French and German did not satisfy the delegates. Gorkin, the Spaniard, thought this "... complete insufficient for the information of each national group" and called for a twice-monthly or more pages, but at the same time made clear that his group was compelled to concentrate its efforts on the "difficult work in Spain".(11) Jan Frankel and Szilvassy wanted a tri-lingual publication: French, German and English. Shachtman for his part raised the questions of publication in several languages, the periodicity and the number of pages being purely a financial problem. He suggested using a small type-face and asked each group to say how many copies it would be responsible for and pay for. When Obin expressed a fear that there would not be enough documents to fill a twice-monthly, Naville said he thought there would be enough documents but feared they would be too long. He envisaged irregular intervals between the numbers, the average being fifteen days, and an income of 700 francs per number to cover the whole of the international print-run. In the end, he stressed that the printer was in a position to bring out the editions in different languages. After Gorkin, Frankel said that his group was concentrating on creating a journal, while Szilvassy said that he could not reply without having consulted the body of his comrades. Hennaut announced a distribution of a hundred copies in Belgium, Seipold four to five hundred for Germany. Shachtman guaranteed that the American group would subscribe ten dollars per issue and announced a sale of two hundred and fifty copies. Obin, for the "Jewish Group", put forward the figure of fifty copies, and Naville, for the French Opposition, two hundred to two hundred and fifty. These estimates brought to an end this discussion, from which emerged two essential decisions: appearance in French and German and a minimum of eight pages.

Rosmer then proposed to make up the international secretariat with a representative from the Russia, the German, the French and the Belgian Oppositions, the technical work being handled by the French group. Hennaut hastened to reply that he agreed with the proposal but that the Belgian group could not take on the task:

"The international linkage rests above all on a certain activity in one's own country. But if this work prejudices the national work, it is impossible".(12)

A long discussion followed between Rosmer and Naville on one side and Hennaut - sometimes supported by Lesoil - on the other. There was a clear disagreement: the more the form insisted on getting a Belgian representative on the secretariat, the more Hennaut raised reservations, referred to the internal difficulties and finally proposed that the secretariat should be formed without the Belgian Opposition - which could be consulted when necessary. Rosmer none the less insisted, stressing that this abstention would be "... interpreted in a very different way" (13), and emphasised that the Belgian Opposition ought to take responsibility for the Bulletin, having regard to its connections and its "central position", but also to the fact that these Oppositionists were the leading elements of the (Communist) party and had roots throughout Belgium. He had no success, as the conference agreed the following composition of the secretariat: one representative of the Russian, French and German Oppositions and a Belgian representative when that Opposition wanted it. (14) The Russian militant was Leon Sedov (15), the French Rosmer and the German would be Landau, his appointment applying after the conference.

The Belgian affair illuminates the difficulties of the international Opposition which had only two sections which were at one and the same time sufficiently solid politically and numerically and were really capable of putting resources into the international work: the French Opposition which was to take on the technical work of the Bulletin and of the secretariat, and the American Opposition which was going to assist financially. The geographical distance which separated these two sections was a considerable handicap and there is nothing surprising about the absence of an American member in the secretariat. The German unification was to enable this section to recover its real place, but the fact that it had been carried out at the last minute and that it looked fragile did not permit solid reliance to be placed on it.

As Rosmer stressed, it was in fact the Belgian Opposition which ought to represent the centre of the international Opposition. But the crisis which was shaking it and the opinions and reservations of Hennaut, as he expressed them in the conference, showed that on many points he shared the provincial and narrowly nationalistic conceptions of the German Oppositionists, pre-occupied as they were with settling their internal struggles to their own advantage. He seemed hardly receptive to the solemn appeal of Rosmer who called upon him, as well as his comrades, to take their proper place fully on the international level. More than a symptom of "provincialism", here was a real threat to the whole Opposition. But the way in which the conference was prepared and unfolded did not really enable it to "drag them forward" and, on the contrary, made the retreat in the face of the tasks to be accomplished.

The silence of the small groups, apart from stating that they could not materially do much, was no more positive. It was Rosmer and Naville who handled the discussion with Hennaut. Frankel alone intervened once to support the two Frenchmen. These small groups (Spanish, Czech, Jewish, Hungarian and even German) - did they think that they had no power or right, that they did not have the duty to try to convince the Belgians that participation in the international secretariat was necessary, since it was supposed to represent them little or much. By abstaining they were only supporting or even participating in the extreme abstentionism of the Bordiguist representatives, whose over-sharpe democratism expressed their concern not to tie themselves down, particularly without the agreement of Bordiga. On behalf of these groups, we must reflect that situation and the attitude of the Belgian Opposition was not such as to encourage them and exerted a negative weight on the small groups, which were overwhelmed by the tasks to be carried out in their own countries and were no doubt disillusioned by the internal crises which divided the Belgian Opposition after having hit the German Opposition hard.

The conference devoted the afternoon of April 6 to examining the situation of each national group. The Belgian crisis was tackled first and at the greatest length, with an opening by Hennaut which set the tone:

"I believe that some have illusions about the strength of the Belgian group. Its solidity, its homogeneity, belong to the past". (16)

He recalled the disagreement with Charleroi about the analysis of the Sino-Russian conflict, about the possibility of regenerating the Communist International and its participation and of avoiding Thermidor in the USSR, and stressed that the Opposition was cut off from the mass movement. He used a significant formulation:

"Brussels is the head without a body of the Opposition". (17)

Hennaut spoke in favour of better cohesion in the group, and of a platform of action, ending with an observation reeking with pessimism:

"The difficulties of recruiting healthy elements are very great. Inactivity is the rule". (18)

Lesoil, for his part, considered that the sickness was due to the inactivity of the Centre Committee and of van Overstraeten in particular, and that the mistake of these militants in the Sino-Russian conflict was not a "momentary" one, but the beginning of the demarcation between those who agreed with the Russian Opposition and the others. Rosmer called on all the members of the Belgian group to counter-pose their viewpoints in order to see whether common work could be resumed. Hennaut replied that the sickness went deep, as the resignation of van Overstraeten showed. Then, suddenly, while the Belgian discussion and, a fortiori, the international conference were un-finished, Hennaut announced that he had to leave for reasons connected with his occupation. This was a serious blow for the perspectives of the Belgian group, but also for the whole conference. However, the session recommenced with Naville reading a document from the Charleroi Federation, which could serve as a basis for discussion in the Belgian Opposition. Lesoil then stated:

"It is necessary to establish clearly what is the policy of the Russian Opposition on the various fundamental points... Then, on the basis of this demarcation, we can organise the comrades. We have to show truthfully what the Communist Left Opposition wished". (19)

Rosmer asked about a possible split with Brussels, and Lesoil replied:

"They could do nothing useful except perhaps in the Flemish region. As for us, we are incorporated in the regional movement. The journal? Do not ask us to tackle theoretical questions. But van Overstraeten was able very well to produce a good journal, with 'La Verite' and La Lutte (des Classes). It was the task that made them give ground. We now sell 600 Communiste (we used to sell 900 or 1,000)". (20)

So the Belgian discussion ended. We can understand what Shachtman said about its "depressing effect on the delegates" (21), which "fouled" the atmosphere of the conference.

The discussion on the situation of the other national groups dealt in turn with all the countries represented, with the exception of Spain, because Gorkin, like Hennaut and with the same excuse, left the conference before it ended. Out of these reports and discussions, the improvement of the situation in Germany emerged; according to Seipold, in Germany "there are not clearly defined policies, but on the contrary personal quarrels". (22) The German delegate added:

"However, the last meeting was satisfactory and an atmosphere of friendship and comradeship was established. They reached decisions in a friendly way". (23)

Severino did his best to convince the other delegates that the Italian situation was "revolutionary", and that nothing was lacking but the framework of the organisation. He said, even, that "in a sharp crisis, a number of 'compulsory fascists' would rally to the revolution". (24) The Hungarian Opposition was in difficulties, in Hungary itself where it was illegal and in USA where the Basky group had had to cease producing Proletar, but Szilvassy announced that the Paris group was about to launch a new organ for the groups of Hungarians in different countries. The Lenorovic group in Czechoslovakia also was pre-occupied with launching a journal Jiskra (The Spark). Finally, the "Jewish Group", through Pikas, referred to its adherence to the "La Verite" group and to the favourable perspectives for work in the workers' organisations influenced by the Communist Party, and, in particular, in the Kulturliga, which had six hundred members and in which the brother of Roman Well, Abraham Sobolevicius, played a role.

The Decisions

Among the proposals put to the conference, we may note those of Rosmer: on the one hand, that "... each group nominate a comrade to deal with international correspondence, not only with the secretariat, but with all the organisms" (25), and, on the other hand, for technical collaboration with Trotsky, sending young militants to work under his direction at Priripo and to educate themselves, each group having the duty to make a judicious choice. The conference had already decided to produce the Bulletin - in principle twice monthly in

German and French with at least eight pages - and had formed the international secretariat with Rosmer, Sedov and Landau, to whom a Belgian would be added. Rosmer also secured the adoption of two resolutions, one on the murder of Blumkin and the other on the case of Radvovskiy, who was ill and in exile. A telegram was then agreed and sent to Trotsky:

"The first international meeting of the Communist Left Opposition, held on April 6, in Paris, bringing together German, American, Belgian, Spanish, French, Hungarian, Italian and Czechoslovak delegates, ends its warm greetings and the proof of its close solidarity with the imprisoned and deported Bolshevik comrades, and to their exiled leader, L. D. Trotsky".(26)

Shachtman expressed the hope that sending comrades to work with Trotsky would be organized "very precisely", in order to avoid such regrettable errors as sending Olberg, which was only just avoided.

The minutes record the words with which Rosmer closed the session:

"Rosmer closed the conference by expressing his satisfaction with its being held, with the information which had been assembled and the decisions reached, which would be productive, as well as with the atmosphere of cheerful co-operation in which it proceeded - if we except the black spot of the situation in Belgium, where the Opposition was one of the first and the strongest, but was not now in a favourable situation. But difficulties could arise; there had been difficulties and there would be difficulties to overcome. The essential thing was that clarity could be achieved, so that differences could be sharply and fruitfully resolved. Our conceptions had to be subjected to the test of facts. Despite this shadow, the general perspectives appeared to be very favourable, and it remained only to set resolutely to work".(27)

The first number of the International Bulletin of the Communist Left Opposition was to appear only in August 1930. Difficulties of a technical order were then given to explain this belated appearance. This issue was to publish the list of the organisations which supported the international conference, as well as articles about the situation of the principal national groups of the Opposition, in the direct line of the conference discussion. It also published, on the front page, an appeal "To the Proletarians of the World!" This issue had sixteen pages and carried as a declaration the appeal in the Communist Manifesto of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels: "Proletarians of All Lands, Unite!"

While awaiting the appearance of the Bulletin, the various organs of the Opposition reported on the holding of the conference, as, for example, "La Verite" for April 11:

"On April 6 was formed in Paris the provisional international secretariat of the Communist Opposition... This is a step which must be appreciated at its full value. A period of bringing together, of selecting and of crystallising the International Left Opposition is not finished today, but already, under the pressure of circumstances, its outline is clear... It is already clear that the future international conference of the Left Opposition will truly represent the totality of the Marxist forces of the International."

No. 2 of Der Kommunist, in May 1930, carried a brief report by Seipold. "Militant" of April 26 reported that Shachtman was back from Europe and that he would report on his visit to Trotsky and on the international conference. "Militant" of May 3 in fact carried an article by Shachtman entitled "A Great Step Forward: The International Conference of the Left Opposition". The American delegate wrote enthusiastically about this conference being held, saying even that the spirit of Zimmerwald inspired the militants there, who decided to redress the international Communist movement. He then outlined the progress on the international level which the Opposition had made, mentioning, in connection with the difficulties in Germany, only "some inevitable problems" in the course of the unification, the importance of which he stressed. He also mentioned the difficulties in Belgium and in Austria without giving their substance, indicating that it would be necessary to come back later to them. He ended by announcing that the next international conference, which was being prepared, would be preceded by a wide preliminary discussion.

"A Big Step Forward: Unification of the Left Opposition" (29) is the title of an article by Trotsky, published in the May 1930 issue of the Bulletin of the Opposition. Here, unlike Shachtman, he speaks of the pre-conference of the Opposition, whereas the latter spoke of the international conference, while "La Verite" and Rosmer, for their part, spoke of "meeting"

as did the telegram to Trotsky. Trotsky stressed the representative character of this pre-conference, the importance of having set up the secretariat and that of having founded the Bulletin: he wrote:

"At the conference an atmosphere of complete unanimity, faith in the banner and readiness for struggle prevailed. We do not doubt that the very near future will show clear and incontestable results of the great work of preparation that has been carried out over the last year." (30)

While Trotsky high-lighted the progress of the international Opposition and the results of the meeting of April 6, he hid from the eyes of all who could try to draw advantage from how profoundly dissatisfied he was with what he publicly called the "pre-conference" - when he had wanted a real conference to be held - and, in a ^{private} letter to Shachtman, the "mute conference". His irritation was no less sharp in relation to the attitude of the Italian Bordiguists. He was to make this clearly known.

The "Mute Conference"

Marguerite Rosmer wrote to Trotsky on April 7:

"The international meeting yesterday was very important: all our comrades said that no thing had encouraged them so much in the last six years". (31)

She also announced the arrival in Prinkipo, as a secretary, of Jan Frankel, who would be able to give a complete account of the session. Molinier wrote to Sedov, in his turn, in laconic, prudent fashion:

"Yesterday there was held in Paris a sort of international conference". (32)

On April 10 it was Rosmer who wrote how satisfied he was with the meeting of April 6, which he described as a "great event" and commented thus:

"... Our first international conference - a real success with only one black spot - (the Belgian problem) -...". (33)

Trotsky's reply will have reached Rosmer on April 25. We do not possess the text of this letter, but it was probably like that which he sent to Shachtman on April 16. In that letter Trotsky showed himself particularly critical and severe in his judgement on the conference:

"It has been a great disappointment for me in every respect. It was really not wise to call a mute international conference. If our opponents have only half their wits about them - and in this area they have quite creative minds - they will immediately and publicly draw the conclusion: the assembled representatives of the Opposition were so dis-united or unclear or both that they did not dare give voice to a single political idea. After all, no one, no politically thinking person will believe that people come from New York, Berlin, Prague, Spain, etc., to Paris in order to say nothing. Travel undertaken for the sake of silence is really a superfluous political expense." (34)

He pointed out that the secretariat could have been formed by a simple exchange of post-cards... The fact that the majority of the delegates were already present in Paris does not change anything in relation to the silence of the conference and to the interpretation which may be placed upon it. Trotsky questioned Shachtman as to the real reasons for the silence:

"Why wasn't a short ^{declaration} of principle or manifesto issued? Why? Such a document would have been of the greatest political importance. It could be shown to every thinking worker in every country and serve as a basis for the propaganda work of the International Opposition.... And we have robbed ourselves of this weapon for an indeterminate period of time. For what reasons?" (35)

He rejected the reasons which Naville advanced, to wit, the Belgian and Italian problems:

"I have received from comrade Naville the communication that 'following the semi-defection of the Italians and the Belgians', they neither adopted a manifesto nor created a bureau. So, if I understand it aright - 'following the semi-defection of the others ... they solidly completed it". (36)

Trotsky explained, in his letter to Shachtman:

"We held a conference to give expression to the views of those groups which had achieved clarity, not those that remained mired in confusion. Besides this, the Italians were not represented officially, and the Belgians were divided. The manifesto could have been passed unanimously or with a negative vote from one of the Belgians. One might object that we did not want to antagonise the people from Brussels. This I find even more difficult to understand, since they are doing battle against the comrades from Charleroi, to whom we are committed to give our complete support. Also insofar as the Italians are concerned, I consider the policy of patient 'indulgence' to be completely wrong. If we had pressed the Italians for a decision through articles, by openly posing the question, we would now be a lot further with them than we unfortunately are now". (37)

Moreover, Trotsky decided to settle this Italian question by putting questions to the Bordinguist group in an open letter, of April 22, 1930. He mentioned the inconsistency between the importance of the pre-conference and the abstention of the Bordinguist delegates, and asked the members:

"1. Do you conceive that Communism can be nationalist in character?... And so: Do you regard yourselves as a national tendency or as part of an international tendency?... In the second case, a second question arises: to what particular international tendency do you belong?... What are your disagreements with the Left Opposition? Are they of a principled or episodic character? A clear and precise answer to this question is indispensable." (38)

Trotsky wrote in a letter to Seipold; in this connection:

"I consider it to be a mistake that we have not taken up a position in a resolution about the Bordinguists, that is to say, we have not put them up against a clear alternative. In their ranks there are, to be sure, divergent nuances. We must aid those who hold international positions against those who hold nationalist positions. Bordinguism in its Parisian form runs the very great danger of degenerating into pure national sectarianism, an Italian manifestation of Urbahnsism. And the longer things drag on, the greater this danger grows". (40)

He concluded his letter to the Bordinguists:

"Your non-participation in the international preliminary conference can be interpreted politically to signify that you are separated from the Left Opposition by differences of a principled character. If that is so, then a third question arises: Why don't you proceed with the organisation of an international faction of your own tendency? ... Needless to say, the Russian Opposition would be happy to learn of your decision to join the International Left". (39)

In his letter (of April 16, 1930) to Shachtman, he develops his criticisms by referring to the delay before the conference:

"It must be admitted that we wasted too much time even before the conference. The Secretariat should have been formed at least six months ago. Urbahns would never have been able to make such relatively deep inroads into his organisation if he had been under some kind of control from the International Opposition and if the members of the Leninbund had understood that it was a question of breaking with the entire International Opposition. By this inexplicable delay we have helped Urbahns against us, just as we are now helping the muddleheads among the Belgians and Italians and elsewhere with our mute conference (that's how it will go down in history). I am insistent on this point, because I sense that there are tendencies on this important question that are not in agreement with the active revolutionary internationalism of the Opposition, and, if they are not brought to light and eliminated in time, they may become dangerous". (41)

In conclusion, he attacks Shachtman directly, and his grounds for complaint are serious:

"Through your good offices I made proposals to the conference. But the conference never got to hear a word about them. Who decided, behind the backs of the conference that an important proposal directed to the conference should not even be placed before it? That seems to me not to be quite 'democratic' as regards the conference itself.

What is really un-democratic (without quotation marks) is that 99% if not more of the membership of the International Opposition would undoubtedly be for issuing such a manifesto, were they asked.... So the whole procedure seems politically to be completely wrong and organisationally a bit arbitrary". (42)

On April 25, Rosmer gave his account of what he calls "the disagreeable things":

"Our meeting was prepared in conditions which gave hardly any ground for optimism. the preceding week, Shachtman and Naville had been in Berlin, and the information we got from them gave us little encouragement. They returned... in this state of mind which we could only share, and it was only then that I learned from them that you thought it possible at that time to hold a conference which would not restrict itself to setting up an international secretariat, a relatively easy thing to do, but which would have already to be the first international conference of the Opposition, with consequences that implied. Shachtman showed us the texts which you had prepared together, on the following day: no doubt on account of his hasty departure he had not had time to make them presentable, and naturally he had not been able either to do so during his travels. We read them together - Sh(a)chtman), Nav(ille), Ger(ard) and I and could see that serious editorial work was necessary, work which it was too late to undertake, because we were on the eve of the conference. We agreed in thinking that we could indicate to the comrades the central ideas of the manifesto and entrust the definitive editorial work to some comrades". (43)

Rosmer stressed the pleasant surprise from Germany, the situation reported by Seipold being better than expected, but he insisted on the defects of Hennaut and Gorkin. In reply to Trotsky's criticisms, he added:

"None the less, when we had a consultation towards the end of the afternoon - Sh(a)chtman), Nav(ille) and I - we found ourselves spontaneously in agreement believing that was not possible to go any further, on this occasion, than the formation of the secretariat. The criticism that one could advance that the conference remained 'mute' did not occur to us, because we were thinking already of the reports which we would give in our journals and later in the Bulletin. The manifesto will be looked at again and edited, communicated to the various groups and published in No. 1 of the Bulletin". (44)

Rosmer no doubt had a feeling that these explanations were weak and he tried to justify his comrades and himself:

"I can easily understand that you found us too slow and too timid. But we were heavily impressed by the environment and the conditions in which we were working. Among us there are few comrades who can undertake serious work, with the result that those who have to take on the numerous tasks which impose themselves are worn out and often can do only the most pressing, the indispensable, thus neglecting all the rest which, for all that, are not negligible". (45)

Shachtman's explanations, in his letter to Trotsky of May 2, 1930, are equally very interesting:

"The criticisms which you make of the faults in the international conference, and especially my own, do not come as a shock - because I had not only foreseen them but equally found them to be justified - even though I think that you are mistaken when you characterise the conference so severely as to call it 'our mute conference' and you give the impression that what was accomplished could have been realised by way of post-cards". (46)

He did not try to slide out of his responsibility for the weaknesses of the conference, and, like Rosmer, he advanced in his defence the conditions in which it was prepared and carried through. He mentioned his interview with Naville when he arrived in Paris at the end of February, and suggested that there had then been a "misunderstanding", due to his "atrocious" American accent, with the French Oppositionists, according to him, not contemplating a real conference. Shachtman's letter (sent also by Trotsky) to Rosmer fixing the date of the conference had not cleared up this "misunderstanding": according to him Trotsky was preparing a conference of a technical nature, with un-mandated delegates and without voting instructions. He explained:

"I arrived in Paris one day before the conference. The idea that we should publish a manifesto and invest a secretariat with real authority and powers was regarded by the comrades as an entirely new idea - I do not say this to criticise them, but rather as an example of the fact that the general concept of the conference had not been clearly understood and agreed in advance. This took everyone by surprise". (47)

He returned then to the Belgian and Italian problems, as Naville and Rosmer had done before him, and wrote:

"If you add to that the factors mentioned above - the fact that no one saw in the conference anything but a meeting to reach decisions about the bulletin - you will understand why there was extreme hesitation, not only about presenting (and still more about adopting) the manifesto, but even about raising two or three other subjects which we had already discussed... I have thought this over and I see more clearly that I should have in any case insisted on a manifesto or a declaration being presented". (48)

But he then stressed that the conference had not been prepared, and advanced an important argument:

"The articles in 'La Verite' for weeks had talked about everything and revealed everything, except an international conference which was going to adopt a central document. At the opening of the conference, in his introductory remarks about the aims and intentions, comrade Rosmer, the chairman, declared that the conference had been called as a first step towards launching the publication of a discussion bulletin of the international Left Opposition, in which we would have to clarify our position and in that way prepare an international conference several months later which would be really representative and authoritative". (49)

Shachtman stressed that he did not write this to evade his responsibilities; he explained

"I suppose that, if I had been more conscious of the importance of what the conference neglected, I would have been more active in preventing it from so doing. But the preparations, the setting and the spirit of the conference were not favourable to this step being taken". (50)

He believed that Trotsky's opinion was one-sided, and that the weaknesses of the decision could be compensated by widening the powers of the secretariat, and he said that he was sure that the groups would all be totally in favour of that. The same applied to the Bulletin which ought to be, not an organ for abstract debates, but the means of centralising the struggle of the Opposition on the international scale. Shachtman ended with his confusion in the face of Trotsky's criticisms, while hoping that his account of the circumstances of the conference would be sufficient.

However, a last echo was to temper the storm of criticisms and self-criticisms. On June 11, 1930, one of the most representative of the "Bolshevik-Leninists" in the USSR of the 1917 generation, Viktor B. Eltsine wrote from deportation to Sedov:

"... Thanks to the row in the press and in the latest journals (Bolshevik in April), we guessed that some great events had taken place abroad, events which infuriated Stalin and his apparatchiks. Your card was to show us the real source of their anxiety. Your success in uniting the international Left - this is a great source of rejoicing for us. This news gives us strength and assurance". (51)

The Balance-Sheet of the Conference

Trotsky's reply to Shachtman on June 20, 1930 says that the writer regarded as "intolerable" what he called the "bureaucratic procedure" of Rosmer, Naville and the American at the conference and their decision not to present resolutions, without informing the other participants (52). The explanations and self-justifications of the three militants who led the work of the conference had, therefore, not succeeded in calming the dissatisfaction of Trotsky about what happened there.

In fact, its weak points - which Trotsky made it his duty to stress - were numerous and alarming. The determination of the Bordiguists to isolate themselves and the silence of the conference were elements of crisis for the international Opposition. The debate themselves revealed the theoretical and political weakness of those present, and Trotsky

could correctly stress that they ought to have supported Charleroi against Brussels and to have politically armed the most advanced of the delegates by proposing that they vote on the manifesto. When the conference let itself get bogged down in a long discussion about the invitations, it had not only wasted precious time for discussion of the tasks to be carried out and the resolutions to be adopted, but it had even gone back from what had been gained, before it involved itself in the question of a Belgian representative on the international secretariat. The departure of Hennaut and Gorkin naturally contributed to make the conference even weaker. Would these militants have left a session of the Communist International like that? Would the other militants have accepted their leaving?

The absence of real discussion about the different national groups, following the reports was a source of anxiety for an international organisation. To be sure, the conditions in which the conference was prepared damaged the possibility of a preparatory discussion and of an exchange of viewpoints and information. But they do not explain the weakness of the discussion and the lack of decisions.

To hold an international conference, to set up an international secretariat and an Information Bulletin - were these aims too ambitious? Or, were the oppositionists too weak, too stamped by their environment and by the political conditions of the moment, as Rosmer wrote to Trotsky? Were the difficulties with which the oppositionists found themselves confronted political or material? The aim of the international Opposition, to win the proletarian core of the Communist parties - and in some cases that of the Social-Democratic parties - was it incapable of being realised, was it un-realistic?

The Left Opposition was confronted by a mass of workers who were often distrustful of the official Communist parties and of the proletarian core of these parties - sometimes hostile and sometimes indifferent. It was numerically and, therefore, materially weak, having at its command only one effective weapon; the clarity and the correctness of its political struggle. Having been born in the Soviet Union out of the struggle of the 1923 Opposition, then that of the Unified Opposition and finally that of the Left Opposition, the international Opposition needed to organise to carry through to the end its struggle on the world scale. There was no lack of obstacles on this road, but the difficulty which its principal leaders experienced - apart from Trotsky himself - in expressing this objective of centralising the opposition as an international fraction of the Communist International was beyond any doubt a serious source of anxiety for Trotsky.

The weaknesses of the conference were numerous. However, they cannot totally eclipse the positive and decisively important aspects. The first of these was the demonstration that the Left Opposition could claim two genuinely internationalist sections, the French Opposition and the American Opposition, and that they had to serve, in the role as light-houses and as poles of regroupment, to draw forward the other sections of the Opposition that were too firmly anchored in their national work. The internationalist role of these two sections came out sharply during the debates at the conference and in its decisions. A significant example of this state of mind can be found in the proposal of the French section to handle the technical tasks connected with publishing the Bulletin, and that of the American League to finance substantially each number. Still more significant of this internationalist spirit was the remark by Rosmer to the Belgian militants that it would be their task to form the real centre of the international Opposition.

The second positive aspect of the conference was naturally the creation of an international secretariat, even though it was conceived as a technical secretariat. The different national groups had available in this way an international point of centralisation, a genuine standard-bearer of the international Opposition. This was a new element in the history of this young opposition. It was also, and even above all, the signal for a transfer of responsibilities, one of the highest importance. After having since 1923 been in the front line with numerous cadres of the Bolsheviki party, after then being supported by Zinoviev and Kamenev when the Unified Opposition was formed, Trotsky undertook practically alone - with his son since 1928 - the ideological leadership of the Left Opposition. Since arriving at Prinkipo he exerted himself in vain to lead the opposition to organise itself on the international plane and to provide itself with a leadership which would be independent of himself. The April conference was not yet the end of this process, but formed the means of touching it off. It seemed to proclaim an independent leadership of the Left Opposition, which would permit Trotsky to devote himself more to literary work and to

political studies, to which he gave enormous importance. Here was one of the most important gains of the conference of April 6, 1930.

FOOTNOTES

- (1) Minutes of the international conference of April 6, 1930, A.H. 16421.
- (2) Trotsky: "Answers to Questions from the USSR", March 21, 1930, in "Writings: 1930" pp. 130 - 134.
- (3) Minutes of the conference, op. cit.
- (4) The Communist Workers' Group had published since August 1929 L'Ouvrier Communiste. Former militants of the Left Fraction (Bordiguists), who had broken with Prometeo, and young French ultra-left intellectuals formed this ultra-left group. Trotsky judged them to be "...convinced, doctrinaire and aggressive", but did not share their political conceptions. See letter from Trotsky to Rosmer, February 28, 1930 in Broue, "Correspondance", op. cit., pp. 125 - 127.
- (5) Minutes of the conference, op. cit.
- (6) Ibid.
- (7) Ibid.
- (8) Ibid.
- (9) Ibid.
- (10) Ibid.
- (11) Ibid.
- (12) Ibid.
- (13) Ibid.
- (14) According to the minutes of the conference, op. cit.
- (15) In March 1930 Leon Sedov had made approaches with a view to getting a visa to enter France. The affair seemed to be progressing well after the intervention by Marguerite Rosmer and her contacts. The set-back, which prevented Sedov from coming, had the result that he was replaced in the secretariat in summer 1930 by Obin.
- (16) Minutes of the conference, op. cit.
- (17) Ibid.
- (18) Ibid.
- (19) Ibid.
- (20) Ibid.
- (21) Letter from Shachtman to Trotsky, May 2, 1930, A.H. 5035.
- (22) Minutes of the conference, op. cit.
- (23) Ibid.
- (24) Ibid.

- (25) Ibid.
- (26) "Militant", No. 18, Vol. III, May 3, p. 4.
- (27) Minutes of the conference, op. cit.
- (28) The journal of ~~one~~ of the Chinese groups, October, No. 2, was to publish in July 1930 an account of the international conference.
- (29) Trotsky: "A Big Step Forward. Unification of the Left Opposition", in "Writings: 1930", pp. 187 - 190.
- (30) Ibid.
- (31) Letter from Marguerite Rosmer to Trotsky, April 7, 1930, in Broue "Correspondance" op. cit., pp. 133 - 134.
- (32) Letter from Molinier to Sedov, April 7, 1930, A. H. 12810.
- (33) Letter from A. Rosmer to Trotsky, April 10, 1930, in Broue, "Correspondance", op. cit, pp. 134 - 137.
- (34) Letter from Trotsky to Shachtman, April 16, 1930, in "Writings (Supplement): 1929 - 1933", pp. 33 - 35, under the title: "The Mute Conference"
- (35) Ibid.
- (36) Letter from Trotsky to an un-identified recipient, April 13, 1930, quoted by Naville in "Trotsky Vivant", Paris, Les Lettres Nounvelles, 1979, p. 78.
- (37) Letter from Trotsky to Shachtman, April 16, 1930, A. H. 10279.
- (38) Open letter from Trotsky to the Prometeo Group, April 22, 1930, in "Writings: 1930" pp. 191 - 192.
- (39) Ibid.
- (40) Letter from Trotsky to Seipold, April 19, 1930, A. H. 10249.
- (41) Letter from Trotsky to Shachtman, April 16, 1930, A. H. 10279.
- (42) Ibid.
- (43) Letter from A. Rosmer to Trotsky, April 25, 1930, in Broue, "Correspondance", pp. 137 - 141.
- (44) Ibid.
- (45) Ibid.
- (46) Letter from Shachtman to Trotsky, May 2, 1930, A. H. 5035.
- (47) Ibid.
- (48) Ibid.
- (49) Ibid.
- (50) Ibid.
- (51) Letter from V. B. Eltsin to Sedov, June 11, 1930, in "Cahiers Leon Trotsky", No, 7.
- (52) See "Writings (Supplement 1929 - 1933)", pp. 42 - 44.

C O N C L U S I O N

The birth of the International Left Opposition in 1929 - 1930 was the outcome of a long process, covering several years; it began with the struggle of the Russian Oppositionist in the Bolshevik Party in 1923 and was developed and then extended to the world Communist movement through the struggle of the Unified Opposition. It was the capitulation of Zinoviev and Kamenev which marked the end of the internal struggle in the Bolshevik Party and the birth of the Left Opposition under the banner of Trotsky.

The political conditions in which this Left Opposition came into existence were closely linked with the situation in the USSR, with the transformation of the Bolshevik Party in a Stalinist party, with the passing from a "bureaucratic state of mind" to a bureaucracy which defends its interests tooth and nail, resulting in the policy of deportation and exile of those who opposed its power. Very quickly, the stakes became clear to the oppositionists: the danger of Thermidor, the ultra-left, adventurist policy of the "Third Period" of the Communist International, the economic dangers linked to Stalin's great turn to industrialisation and general collectivisation, the rise of fascism (in Italy particularly, but threatening in Austria and in Germany), the context of world economic crisis, following the Wall Street crash, which provoked large-scale unemployment in USA and in Europe.

The Russian Left Opposition was born in reaction to the degeneration of the Bolshevik Party and was in fact fighting against the current of the reflux of the wave of October 1917. Trotsky, in "The New Stage" did not hesitate to emphasise the apathy of the workers, to which repression and bureaucratism strongly contributed. The opposition had to resist the political conditions of the period, and suffered the counter-stroke of this degeneration; it ran up against the indifference of the party workers while the axis of its policy was to win them to struggle to regenerate it. Is there really no foundation for the theory that the opposition was no more than the "... last historic ripple of the wave of October" (1)? In Trotsky's opinion, the proletariat is able to defend the conquests of October, despite its passivity and apathy. In fact, from 1923 up to the exile of its principal leader in February 1929, the opposition went from defeat to defeat, from retreat to retreat. But that is just one aspect of the problem: the end of the wave of October would mean the realisation of Thermidor, the crushing of the Opposition and of the social regime which emerged from the revolutionary overturn. However, the Opposition still existed, despite the desperate struggle against it, and it not only maintained its political orientation, in the isolators and in deportation, but succeeded in carrying on a little clandestine activity.

The Opposition regarded the organisational and political destruction of the Right following the crisis of the Right-Centre Bloc, as a sign that the danger from Thermidor was receding. In this way, the struggle of the Opposition could not be written off as a vain struggle, lost in advance, waged by idealists against "practical people" with more "down to earth" methods, and whom one could condemn several decades later only by pretending to discover them. In this struggle of living forces, nothing is settled. The strong threat of Thermidor in 1928 and at the beginning of 1929 gave way to the economic adventurism of the "great turn", to the construction of "Socialism in a Single Country" by the furious realisation of five-year plans. For the Opposition, despite defeats and retreats, despite the very difficult conditions of the struggle and the momentary apathy of the Russian proletariat, the social regime in the USSR was the key to all these questions. To preserve it against the Thermidorean elements in the apparatus and in the country was the dominant element in their political struggle, and even if the proletariat was not able to defend it, there could be no question of giving up the struggle.

It was the logic of the struggle between the defenders of a power without ideas and the Left Opposition which led the latter to organisational defeats under the blows of the repression, despite the correctness of their political orientation. The refusal of Trotsky to capitulate led to his being deported for a year to Alma-Ata, in order to isolate him from his comrades, and then to his exile in Prinkipo. This decision by a regime, which hoped to put an end to the activities of the Opposition by trying to distance and to break its historic leader is in fact the true starting-point for the extension of the Opposition on to the international plane, after having long been essentially Russian.

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The arrival of Trotsky in Turkey was a turning-point of extreme importance in the Communist movement. It was the end of an internal struggle within the leading fraction in the Soviet Union, and it offered the possibility to numerous groups and nuclei of oppositionists to the policies of the Communist International under Zinoviev and Stalin to enter in contact with the former comrade-in-arms of Lenin. Trotsky's role from that time on was decisive in orienting the struggle of the Opposition on the international plane, in giving a cohesion and a dimension which the heterogeneity of national situations, as well as lack of information and of understanding of events in the USSR, had prevented it from getting during the years which had passed. This was the task to which he harnessed himself when he arrived, knowing that the struggle would be a long one and that he was putting down the markers for work which would endure.

As soon as he had made contacts, Trotsky occupied himself in getting information about what the different groups of the Opposition were doing, before he suggested the three criteria for appreciating their politics and whether they formed part of the Left Opposition. Clarification followed very quickly and demonstrated that he did not intend to lose time or to let confusion establish itself. Should he attempt to influence the groups with which there was little agreement before putting them on one side? Should he refuse to take sides in the guerrilla warfare of the Oppositions with divergent aims and let events and leave it to events to dispose of the situation? Should he, on the contrary, intervene with all his authority to take the head of the movement and to give to it a precise orientation?

His choice was clear and his method was precise: Trotsky wished to devote himself to his literary work and to thinking about the course of events in the Soviet Union - as, for example, in "The Permanent Revolution" - and in this way to assist the movement of Left Opposition, from which he hoped to be independent and for which he did not want to accept any responsibility as a member. In his opinion, clarification meant a principled delimitation of the Opposition, from the standpoint of its ideas and objects. Demarcation, differentiation, which would be the organisational consequence of the process of ideological delimitation of the opposition, would result only after a period of clarification and discussions. The rapidity with which Trotsky suggested the three criteria expresses his concern to demonstrate clearly the need to break from the current confusion of the various opposition groups, and to start coherent work. Without orders from above and without initiative, but an invitation intended to attract the serious elements towards a movement to be quickly structured, after Trotsky laid the foundations and the perspectives for such task: a national and international platform, an international organ...

It is significant of the political situation of the opposition on the international plane that the only response to these proposals was absolute silence, while on the contrary, the oppositionists were unanimously "legitimist" on the validity of the three criteria and on the fact that they matched up to all of them! In fact, the national oppositions had little or no contact with each other and did not have the maturity or the political experience of the Russian Opposition, which served as a point of reference or even as an example to copy. But this opposition, which had bravely raised the torch, had to pass over to give way to an international opposition which had no existence of its own, no cadres and still a loose content.

This was the monstrous contradiction which Trotsky had to resolve in order to carry on the struggle. This meant regrouping a vanguard on the international level after the great majority of the cadres of the Bolshevik Party educated in the time of Lenin before and in the course of the revolution of October 1917 had degenerated. It meant educating a new generation of leaders who had assimilated the new elements in the situation created by the emergence of the Stalinist bureaucracy and the retreating wave of the revolution of 1917. This education could not be done on the basis of confusion and of a heterogeneous opposition, a disparate opposition. But to clarify the ranks of the Opposition meant also speaking out clearly about the nature of the disagreements. Over and above problems of analysis and theory - which were to appear all the same - it was events themselves in the class struggle which were to provoke differentiation and almost inevitable ruptures.

* * * * *

The "Red Day" of the Communist International and the Sino-Soviet conflict were the occasion for concretely testing how deep was the degree of agreement or disagreement between the Oppositionists and Trotsky. The careerists and the opportunists were to retreat quickly in the face of the sacrifices which the tasks of the Opposition implied and which Trotsky did not fail to remind them. His intransigence on this point was the reflection of the unbreakable will of the Russian Oppositionists, who refused to capitulate in their isolators, to fight their war to the end. The other groups of the Opposition had not yet assimilated, "in their blood and flesh", this steadfast devotion to the cause of their idea. But such devotion and such sacrifices require an understanding of their purpose and a real assimilation into the course of the events. This was, no doubt, the element which was lacking in the ranks of the Opposition groups, and it was there that Trotsky played an indispensable role, as the leader of the October Revolution at the side of Lenin and as theoretician of the Opposition of the 46, as author of "The New Course" and as the leader of the invincibles of the Unified Opposition which became the Left Opposition.

When Trotsky put forward the criteria for clarification and showed himself to be intransigent on the fundamental divergences with the ultra-left, right-ist or "centrist" groups, he played no role other than that of a guide and never that of an executor of "lowly tasks", who interfered in discussions and polemics which did not concern him. We must emphasise, also, that the ruptures were never carried out by Trotsky but by those who contradicted him. He drew the attention of Boris Souvarin to the political slope which was dragging him away from Communism under the pressure of Stalinism and finally drew the line between their political conceptions. The case of Maurice Paz had bearing more on the problems of the nature of the commitment in the Opposition and of the scale of its tasks. It was the refusal of Paz to occupy his real place which ended in a rupture which was inevitable when Paz did not launch the weekly journal but prevented anyone else from launching it in his place.

The most serious rupture, without doubt, was that with the leadership of the Leninbund Germany. Trotsky never desired this rupture, as his voluminous correspondence with the German Oppositionists shows. The rupture with the German oppositionists grouped round Urbahns, which began with various points of friction (the Trotsky Aid and the absence of any German visitor), was fed by the polemic about the Sino-Soviet conflict and was a possibility which very quickly grew into a probability. At first Trotsky tried to correct the course of the Leninbund leadership, before he became aware of the duplicity of Urbahns, his refusal of discussion and his disloyal methods, his autocratic behaviour and his concern not to tie himself too closely to the international Opposition. Urbahns' drift on the nature of the USSR completed the process of the break, accompanied by his refusal to allow genuinely democratic expression to the minority which shared the views of Trotsky. What led to the break was Urbahns' really disruptive tactic, though Trotsky had not failed to warn the leaders and the militants of the Leninbund against the danger of their attitude. The split in February 1930, that is, the exclusion of the members of the minority, marked the beginning of the liquidation of the Leninbund, after the erosion of many of its members and the beginning of a German Opposition which was clearly more closely linked with the international Left Opposition.

None the less, a problem of ^{scale} remained: it was Trotsky who conducted the ideological battle against the Leaders of the Leninbund, in order to try to save what could be saved. The absence of organisation of the Left Opposition on the international level, the absence of a real leadership apart from the person of Trotsky, reflected the same kind of situation as that of the different groups towards the Russian Opposition; he was "irreplacable", and the paralysis which followed resulted in his becoming the point of concentration for all the political problems of the Opposition. Rosmer alone emerges from this situation to try to remedy the shortage of materials from which to construct a centre for the Opposition and able to encourage the fight on the international level. But Rosmer himself was no more than a kind of linkage - though a linkage of quality - between Trotsky and the Oppositionists.

Against his own inclination and against the needs of the movement itself it was Trotsky who filled the role of a real political leadership for the international opposition. This is more than a paradox: it is the sign of the weakness and the youth of the movement. It was vital for Trotsky and for the opposition itself to get out of this situation as

quickly as possible. In these conditions, we can understand why he hastened to lay the foundations for the work of centralising the Opposition on the international level and we can also understand why his opponents were silent. But for all that we must not explain the weakness of the international Opposition as being a sort of combined result of the weakness of the national oppositions and of their cadres. The process which led to this lack of enthusiasm for international tasks had more complex political roots. These lay especially in the real difficulties of centralising a movement which had been born at different times out of different problems in different countries. Trotsky and the Russian Opposition were their only common reference point; it was from them that the groups sought everything. In fact, the opposite would have been more logical and more in conformity with the situation.

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The cadres of the different Opposition groups were not rank and file militants, anonymous Communists affronted by the Stalinist policy and seduced by the ideas of the Left Opposition. Their role in the Communist movement, before they went over to the ranks of the Opposition, their standing and their personal positions were in many cases considerable gains for the Opposition. There were great differences here too. In France, the passage of Souvarin to the Opposition had less echo than the departure of the nucleus of La Revolution Proletarienne from the Communist Party. The arrival of Albert Treint in the Opposition was received with embarrassment by all the Oppositionists, who recognised in him the "Bolsheviseur". None the less, he was a genuine cadre of the Communist movement and this was the basis upon which Trotsky was to try to win him to the Left Opposition. Maurice Paz and others earned sharp criticism from Trotsky, as Gerard Rosenthal had recalled in his memoirs:

"With people for whom their professional life comes first, then their family life and finally the revolution, if there is any time left, it is useless to think of leading a revolution. And in questions of money, what are the sacrifices of which they are capable? When I was in Vienna, a militant, a complete rank and file, came and knocked on my door. He had come from the Crimea. He had come into a little legacy, a had travelled across Europe to give it to the Party. He blushed at having to withhold the cost of his journey". (2)

These moral qualities and this total devotion were a decisive criterion for Trotsky. From this point of view, the moral integrity, the dignity and the qualities of Alfred Rosmer explain Trotsky's confidence in him and the weight of the tasks which he entrusted to him. Rosmer also was a pioneer of Communism in France, a member with Lenin and Trotsky of the "small bureau" of the Communist International, even before the Communist Party of France was formed. When he was excluded from the Party he separated himself from it and collaborated with the Communist syndicalist review, La Revolution Proletarienne. The exile of Trotsky to Prinkipo enabled the threads of a solid friendship to be renewed and Rosmer could be launched again in the vanguard of the struggle of the Opposition after several years of relative silence on his part. It was the successive breaks with Souvarin and Paz, and the departure of Treint, the gap which was developing between Rosmer and Monatte and his friends who were turning back to revolutionary syndicalism, which led to the fact that Rosmer was the only real cadre of the little group which launched "La Verite" in August 1929. One of the handicaps of this French Opposition was that Rosmer and his comrades had been scarred and personally wounded by the "Bolshevisation" which meant that traces of that period remained, personal hatreds and hostilities, grievances and enduring dislikes. These after-effects of "Bolshevisation" partially broke down the traces of goodwill towards the construction of an Oppositional movement after the majority of the Oppositionists had in most cases contributed to the construction of the Communist Party in their country.

There did exist, on the international level, a nucleus of old cadres which had come out of their respective Communist parties. Among these Communist leaders were the German Anton Grylewicz, who was a front-rank cadre, though he had remained a little overshadowed by Ruth Fischer, Maslow and the leaders of the period of the mass Zinovievism of the German Left. There was Urbahns, who had played a political role in the Hamburg events and had been the element of resistance to the capitulation of Fischer and Maslow, which permitted the Leninbund to be preserved as an Oppositional organisation and the bases to be laid for the "old left" in Germany and the ideas of Trotsky and the international Left Opposition to draw nearer to each other, though unhappily not permanently. Likewise

there was the Czech Alois Neurath, but especially the secretary-general of the Chinese Communist Party, Chen Duxiu, who came over spectacularly to the Opposition and who was much more than a cadre of the Communist Party. He was an intellectual of very high attainments, with competence in the fields of philology, literature and the arts, and a personality who enjoyed formidable cultural and political influence in China and was, according to Lee Feigon, a tower dominating the history of modern China.

Trotsky attached great importance to the presence of these cadres in the ranks of the Opposition who had been leading figures in the Communist Parties. They physically expressed the continuity of Bolshevism and were the best spokesmen for the "Bolshevik-Leninists". From this point of view, they had an indispensable role to play in the transmission of the heritage and in the political formation of the Bolshevik party and of the present Stalinist Communist movement before the degeneration, a role fundamentally the same as that which Trotsky played, no doubt with greater ascendancy but based on the same political considerations.

The problem remained of the capitulation of part of the cadres of the Russian Opposition with Radek, Smilga and Preobrazhensky at their head. Perhaps it should be recalled that they were, not the first wave of "capitulators", but the third, following that of Zinoviev-Kamenev and of some of their comrades when the United Opposition was excluded and that of Piatakov and others. This list of capitulations, however impressive it might be, was not a logical series or a chain linking the first capitulators, their successors and those to come. The motivations were different, the logic was contradictory and the numbers and quality of those who capitulated was by no means a symptom of a defeat of the Opposition. In many cases, it was the retreat of demoralised Oppositionists, but not of the whole of the Opposition, which, as in the course of the crisis of summer 1929, mocked these capitulators. It was the political disarray of the future capitulators which formed the first link in the chain of political and repressive events leading them to renounce the ideas of the Opposition. This political disarray was an expression of the aggressive counter-revolution, in the bureaucratisation of the party apparatus against the leaders of October 1917.

The trajectory of Radek is full of lessons in this regard. Under his influence, in the course of summer 1929, some of the leaders and old cadres of the Bolshevik party, who had supported the Opposition in 1923, capitulated. This marked a decisive stage in transforming the composition of the ranks and of the leadership of the Opposition, which from that time was taken on by young people of the generation educated since 1917. There existed several types of "capitulators": there were those who wanted to re-integrate the party, "to combat the right", those who abandoned the Opposition after having believed that it would have a quick victory and those who capitulated because they were demoralised. The common point of all these capitulators was that they renounced the ideas of the Left Opposition and unanimously condemned the struggle of that Opposition, which made Yaroslavsky their leader and their attacks on the Opposition virulent in varying degrees. It is no doubt this last aspect which gives a certain unity to the list of capitulators. Trotsky said that Stalin, like Chichikov, the hero of Gogol, was collecting "dead souls" (3). Nor can we exclude the existence of "pseudo-capitulators", who "capitulated" only for the purpose of supporting clandestine work in the party, especially obtaining information.

It was the loss of these cadres, of the major part of the well-known leaders of the Bolshevik Party who had gone over to the Opposition, which helps to explain the paradox to which Pierre Broue has drawn attention, "... the extraordinary difference between the personal influence of Trotsky and the impact of his articles... and the weakness of the opposition, not merely in terms of its organisation but even of its cadres" (4). According to Isaac Deutscher, the capitulations should make us question whether the policy, from these perspectives, the nature and the aims of the Opposition were valid:

"Was it possible to put Trotsky's proposals into practice in the period when he formulated them? Was not the profound divorce between Marxist theory and the practice of the Russian Revolution a trait inherent in this period? Had not the circumstances rendered this divorce inevitable? There are few questions, among those which the historian puts to himself, which put his judgement to the test so severely as these

The "practice of the Russian Revolution" means the definitive Stalinisation of the Bolshevnik party, the subjection and the "Bolshevisation" of the other Communist parties by the influence of the Communist International, then in the full flood of the "Third Period". From this point of view, the "divorce" from Marxist theory was indeed profound. But it was more than that. It was above all the crisis of the Communist movement, and it was to resolving this crisis that Trotsky devoted himself. From then on, can anyone believe that this enterprise was vain, useless, doomed to defeat at the time and, no doubt, for ever? Besides the assimilation of Bolshevism with Stalinism, which from that time has been classical, it would be to personalise the discussion to the extreme, by paying attention only to Trotsky's "proposals"... Are we to see in the Opposition of the 83 and then that of the Thirteen and that of the Forty-Six, nothing but a handful of fanatics who accepted "The New Course"? Is it legitimate to regard the Unified Opposition as the "toy" of Trotsky, Zinoviev and Kamenev, that is, of a handful of cadres marginalised in the Bolshevnik party, "intriguing" to recover power? This would be to erase, with one stroke of the pen, the thousands of Oppositionists who, at their side, undertook the struggle against the degeneration of the party and of the October Revolution - all those deported and exiled and put in isolators who, though cut off from Trotsky and the Opposition in general, continued to display their attachment to their ideas, to those of the Russian Opposition.

Is not the most important phenomenon - which some will regard as the most paradoxical - that the Russian Opposition succeeded in replanting itself outside the Soviet Union, in giving an international dimension to its ideas and its struggle, at the very moment when Trotsky was in "internal exile" in Alma Ata? This movement to transfer its responsibilities, which the Russian Opposition wished for and encouraged, began in 1928 and only found its prolongation in Trotsky's arrival in Turkey - in self-defence - before the concretisation represented by the international conference of April 6, 1930. Do we have to see the "hand" of Trotsky everywhere to be able all the better to mock the former leader of the Soviet Union who returned to the tasks of propagandism, without force and with hope?

We have seen how Trotsky did not lay down his arms in the face of the amplitude of the tasks, and that he shouldered the most important of them; ideological elaboration, the analysis of the evolution of the USSR and of the perspectives of revolutionary struggle on the world scale. This was his object when he wrote his articles, his pamphlets and his books, as, for example, the series of articles devoted to the "Third Period" - a real manual of analysis of the revolutionary perspectives, of methods of political foresight, of elaboration of slogans, intended to educate the Marxist cadre and to struggle against the bureaucratic cretinism which was beginning to fuddle the heads of the Communist militants in every party of the Communist International and even to influence the Oppositionists.

Trotsky even tried - was it to confound his future critics or because it was the logic of his politics - to preserve to the utmost his independence in relation to the international Opposition, in order to permit this organisation to equip itself with a real political leadership, forged in this struggle against the current - which he knew would at least be durable and would be able, as in the Soviet Union, to carry on its ideological and political struggle in the absence of the "master-mind". It is true that at the beginning of his exile in Prinkipo Trotsky had to intervene to help to clarify and differentiate the ranks of the Left Opposition. After these two periods were over, it was at the demand of the Oppositionists and most often against his own will that he intervened to give his opinion - and never the slightest instruction or the slightest order - on the political problems. He was obliged to intervene in personal questions such as the Landau "affair", but Trotsky did so with great prudence and reserve, never using his moral authority and always strictly concentrating on the politics and the politics alone.

The insistence of the Oppositionists in involving Trotsky in their debates and divergences was without doubt the expression of the weakness of the Opposition and of a real difficulty in assuming its responsibilities and rising to the level of its tasks. But it would be completely erroneous to hold Trotsky responsible for this situation at the very moment when he was trying to disengage himself from this kind of relationship, so that he could create the conditions for the education of a genuine leadership, with which he would collaborate in the field of political and ideological elaboration.

To personalise the debate is to mask - deliberately or not - the fact that this political and ideological struggle between the social forces which emerged from the same mould, which began in the form of a divergence between two fractions of the leading team in the Soviet Union and in the space of several years became a struggle the stakes in which were the future of the USSR and of the Communist movement itself. Transposed to the international plane, this conflict retained the marks of its origins - the Russian question retained all its importance and even a certain pre-eminence in relation to the question of the revolution in the capitalist countries - but also acquired a new dimension, transforming the divergence about the course of the revolution in the USSR into a crisis of the Communist movement as a whole.

At this period it was not written that this struggle would go through another transformation, from political and ideological struggle to a war to the death marked by assassinations, kidnappings and executions of Trotskyists throughout the entire world by the Stalinists. From this point of view, it is impossible to draw some kind of analogy with the years 1936 - 1940. All the historical elements show that such an attempt would be absurd: the approach of world war was not on the order of the day - except in the propaganda of the Communist parties - in 1929 - 30 and the context of the world economic crisis protected the USSR for several years. Stalin, for his part, had still to secure his definitive control over the Bolshevik party - in order to deprive it of any role - and to free himself from the Oppositions, especially of the Left Opposition, which, even though severely repressed, still managed to survive and was always regarded by the leaders in the Kremlin as dangerous. They arrested people, imprisoned them, sent them into exile and added to their sentences, but the GPU was not yet in the business of systematic assassination, of Moscow Trials, of incessant hunting-down and provocation. Outside the Soviet Union, its role was still limited; it placed a few agents in the ranks of the international Left Opposition, but their job at this period was confined to the fields of information and of "sabotage" of the groups which they infiltrated.

There was Abraham Sobolevicius, very active in Paris in the "Jewish Group"; there was the Latvian Valentin P. Olberg, who aroused the suspicions of Shachtman and Naville; there was the Lithuanian, Jakob Frank, probably an agent, whose negative role in the "Landau affair" and in the fractional problems in Austria is beyond dispute.

The most effective of these agents, without doubt, was Roman Well; he managed to place himself in a favourable position at the time of the "Landau affair", playing the role of an arbitrator between Landau and the minority of the Leninbund - whom Jakob Frank supported - and opposed, by manoeuvring as deftly as he could, the unification which was to give rise to the birth of the V.L.O., embittering the personal questions and the political divergences, while trying to pass for a warm supporter of this unification. In this way he played an indubitable role of sabotage without for all that being un-masked.

The GPU had at least two effective weapons in this work of sabotage, at least, with Jakob Frank located in Trotsky's entourage (he was one of Trotsky's secretaries for several months) and Roman Well, who was in the leadership of the unified German Opposition. Nonetheless, their destructive activity was limited to politics, precisely because it tried to be politically destructive. When Well fought against the unification of the Opposition in Germany, he was obliged to manoeuvre, to give guarantees for himself as a "unified" and even to withdraw when he discovered that Trotsky had political doubts about his willingness to reach unification. It was the fear of exposure which obliged Well to step back and prevented him from attaining the aim of the GPU. Trotsky was ready to fight against him politically in order to get unification. It was the political will of Trotsky and the politics of the international Opposition which checked "the foul disruptive work of the agents of the official bureaucracy", according to the formula of Trotsky about the persistent difficulties all along the long march to the unification of the German Opposition.

Things were not the same later on, but that cannot justify regarding these provocateurs, whose mission was completely political, as being the same as policemen. The episode of the capitulation of Kharin equally reveals that the GPU wanted to get hold of information of addresses in the USSR, i.e. to serve the needs of repression in the Soviet Union, as well as the contents of the first number of the Bulletin of the Opposition. This did

not amount to much, and one might be led to think both that Stalin was little worried about the international Opposition and that it was easy for the agents of the GPU to infiltrate its ranks. Jean van Heijenoort explains about how the GPU acted and the possibility of a "lack of vigilance" on the part of the Opposition:

"In the first place, we must consider that a historic evolution took place. When Trotsky arrived in Turkey in 1929, he was housed in the Soviet consulate, where there was a representative of the GPU, named Minsky, who collaborated with Trotsky in a certain way and up to a certain point, giving him information about the agents of the Great Powers, turning over money to him, etc. During the first days we did not regard the GPU as the principal enemy. In Prinkipo we were much more concerned about White Russians, for example. All that changed fairly quickly and we have to keep our eye on the historical context. The situation in 1929 was not the same as that in 1932, and that of the Moscow Trials in 1936 was not that of 1934. There was a progression in the Stalinist repression".(6)

Within the space of sixteen months, from the exile of Trotsky to the first international conference of the Communist Left Opposition, the landmarks of a durable organisation were laid down, with sections and cadres which were to ensure the continuity of the movement. As Trotsky wrote, this was one of the things at stake in the struggle:

"The fact is that all the defeats of the proletariat in all the countries of the world have in recent years been completed by new blows at the Left Opposition. The bourgeois and the social-democratic reaction is pressing on the Soviet republic, weakening the Communist Party in the whole world, and through the Stalinist apparatus striking at the so-called 'Trotskyists'. The Opposition is one of the principal nodes of the whole political situation. In the struggle with 'Trotskyism' Stalin has a common front with the bourgeoisie and the social-democracy of all countries. The wretched slanders of Yaroslavsky are now in contradiction to the living and incontrovertible fact of world politics. There is no escaping from this. The Opposition is a small minority, but it is an accumulation of the revolutionary experience of the proletariat, the leaven for a revolutionary future".(7)

In this document in which Trotsky combats the idea (which was later to become an accepted formula) that the Opposition was reduced to a sect, divided and without future, we find at one and the same time a review of the struggle of the international Left Opposition and a profession of faith, which bears witness to the magnitude of the task to be accomplished:

"The main enemy in the country is the imperialist bourgeoisie. The main enemy in the working class is the social democracy. And the main enemy in the party is centrism (8)"

We shall add only a few words about the methods and means of this political struggle. To reject that Bolshevism is the same as Stalinism is to deny categorically that the ideas of the Opposition could have been those of the Stalinist bureaucracy. But that means, in addition and perhaps above all, to stress that the principal danger for the Opposition is sectarianism, the spirit of the coterie, drawing-room opposition, the lack of vigilance against the "poisons inherited from the Comintern", according to Trotsky, the utilisation of apparatus methods to re-inforce political conviction. In fighting against the ideas - or, more precisely, the absence of ideas - of the bureaucracy of the Bolshevik party and its apparatus methods of repression, the international Left Opposition was not, for all that, immunised against the evil influence of these methods. Let us leave to Trotsky the task of concluding, on this point:

"Some comrades say and write that the Russian Opposition is doing too little in the way of the organisational leadership of the international Left Opposition. I believe that behind this reproach there lurks a dangerous tendency. We are not preparing to reproduce in our international faction the morals and methods of the Zinoviev and Stalinist Comintern. Revolutionary cadres in each country must take shape on the basis of their own experiences and they must stand on their own feet. The Russian Opposition has at its disposal - today one might almost say that this is fortunate - neither instruments of state repression nor governmental financial resources. It is solely and exclusively a question of ideological influence, interchange of experiences. Given a correct international leadership of the faction, this can naturally lead to a rapid growth of the Opposition in each country. But each

each national section must seek for the sources of its influence and strength not above but below, among its own workers, by rallying the youth to its side, by tireless, energetic and truly self-sacrificing work".(9)

F O O T N O T E S

- (1) Trotsky: "At a New Stage", in "Challenge of the Left Opposition: 1926 - 27", Pathfinder 1980, p. 495, dated "Late December 1927".
- (2) G. Rosenthal: "Avocat de Trotsky", op. cit., p. 73.
- (3) Trotsky: "Zinoviev and Kamenev Capitulate Again", in "Writings: 1932 - 33", Pathfinder 1972, p. 243, dated May 23, 1933.
- (4) Broue: "The Thesis of Maurice Stobnicer", op. cit., p. 12.
- (5) Isaac Deutscher: "The Prophet Outcast", O.U.P. 1963, pp. 103 - 4.
- (6) Conversation between Jan van Heijenhoort and Rudolf Prager, in "Cahiers Lenin Trotsky", No. 1, January 1979, p. 91.
- (7) Trotsky: "Diplomacy or Revolutionary Politics", in "Writings: 1929", Pathfinder 1975, dated July 1, 1929, p. 183ff.
- (8) Ibid.
- (9) Trotsky: "Tasks of the Opposition", in "Writings: 1929", Pathfinder 1975, p. 89, dated March 1929.