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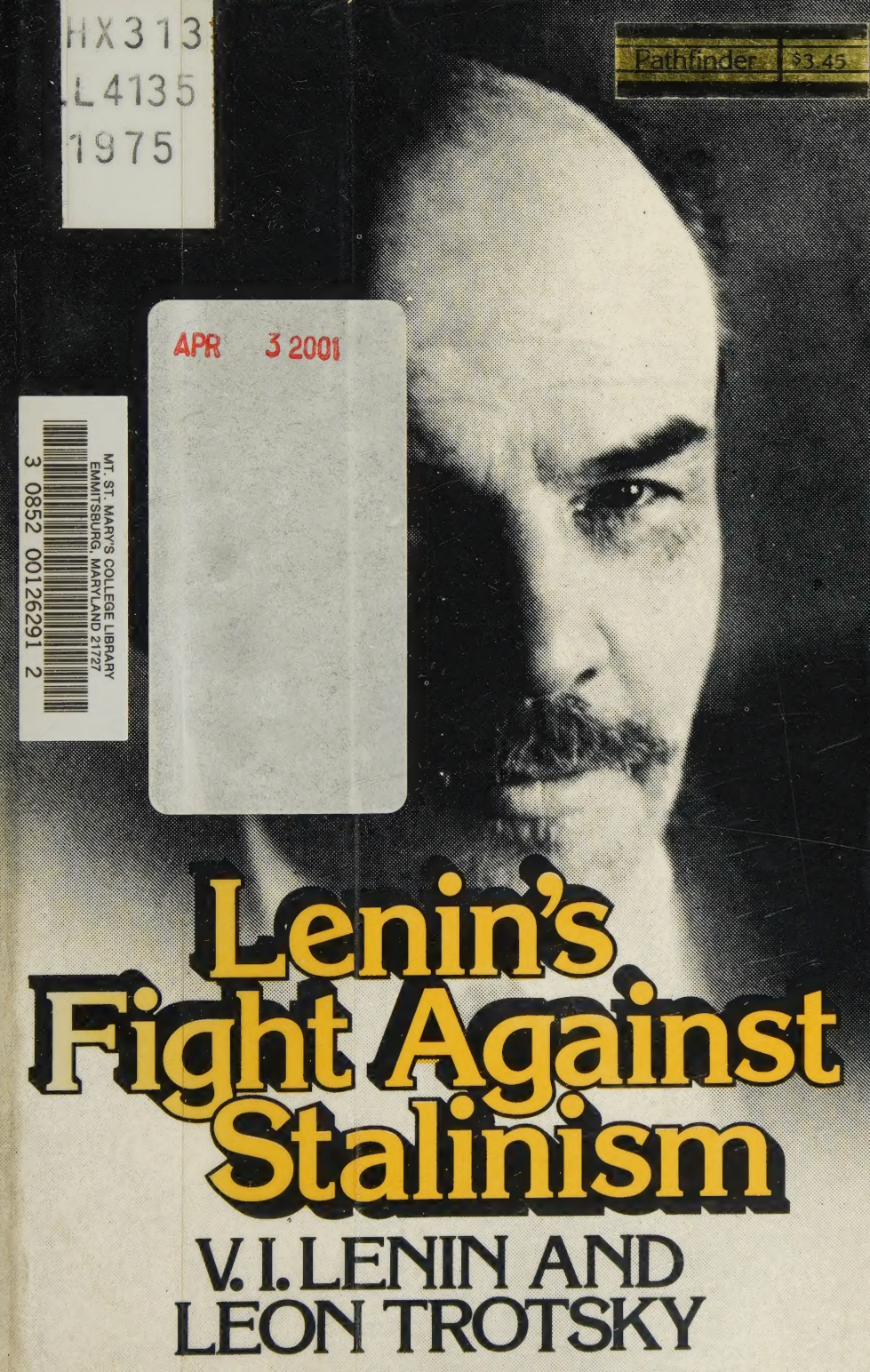
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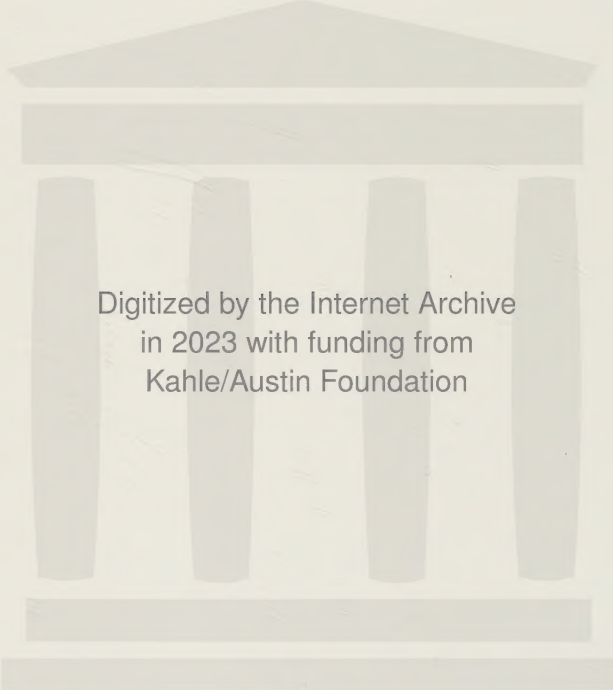


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A black and white, high-contrast portrait of Vladimir Lenin, showing his face from the nose up, with a prominent mustache and a serious expression. The background is dark and textured.

# Lenin's Fight Against Stalinism

V. I. LENIN AND  
LEON TROTSKY



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# Lenin's Fight Against Stalinism

V.I. LENIN AND  
LEON TROTSKY

EDITED WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY  
RUSSELL BLOCK



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## Contents

PART I: Introduction	5
PART II: On Lenin's Testament	
Introduction	29
On Lenin's Testament <i>by Leon Trotsky</i>	30
Notes to Part II	59
PART III: Lenin's Testament	
Introduction	61
Letter to the Congress <i>by V.I. Lenin</i>	63
To Comrade Stalin <i>by V.I. Lenin</i>	68
Notes to Part III	69
PART IV: The Bureaucracy	
Introduction	70
Political Report to the Eleventh Party Congress <i>by V.I. Lenin</i>	74
Comments on Lenin's Proposal Concerning the Work of Deputies <i>by Leon Trotsky</i>	79
Granting Legislative Functions to the State Planning Commission <i>by V.I. Lenin</i>	82
Letter to the Politburo (excerpt) <i>by Leon Trotsky</i>	86
How We Should Reorganize the Workers' and Peasants' Inspection <i>by V.I. Lenin</i>	87
Better Fewer, But Better <i>by V.I. Lenin</i>	92
The Tasks of the Twelfth Congress <i>by Leon Trotsky</i>	106
Notes to Part IV	111

**PART V: The Monopoly of Foreign Trade**

Introduction 113

Letter to J.V. Stalin re the Foreign Trade Monopoly  
by *V.I. Lenin* 116

To L.D. Trotsky by *V.I. Lenin* 119

To Comrade Lenin by *Leon Trotsky* 119

To Comrades Frumkin and Stomonyakov by *V.I. Lenin* 121

To L.D. Trotsky by *V.I. Lenin* 122

Letter to J.V. Stalin by *V.I. Lenin* 123

To L.D. Trotsky by *V.I. Lenin* 124

To L.D. Trotsky by *V.I. Lenin* 125

To L.D. Trotsky by *V.I. Lenin* 125

Notes to Part V 126

**PART VI: The Nationalities Question**

Introduction 127

Letter to L.B. Kamenev by *V.I. Lenin* 130

Memo to L.B. Kamenev on Combating Great Russian  
Chauvinism by *V.I. Lenin* 132

The Question of Nationalities or "Autonomization"  
by *V.I. Lenin* 133

To L.D. Trotsky by *V.I. Lenin* 139

To P.G. Mdivani, F.Y. Makharadze and Others  
by *V.I. Lenin* 139

Thoughts on the Party: The National Question and the Education  
of the Party Youth by *L.D. Trotsky* 140

Notes to Part VI 148

Biographical Notes 150

Index 156

## Part I

### INTRODUCTION

Few myths have been more generally accepted than the view that Stalin and the Soviet bureaucracy were the legitimate heirs to Lenin and the Bolshevik Party of the Russian Revolution. The reason for this is not hard to find—it is the official ideological position both in the “socialist countries” and in the capitalist “democracies.” Each, of course, expounds this view for its own reasons. The Soviet bureaucrats and their counterparts in Eastern Europe and Asia seek to identify themselves with Lenin and his party in order to appropriate the prestige of the first anticapitalist revolution and thereby justify their own rule. The capitalist ideologues, on the other hand, wish to identify the October Revolution and the overthrow of capitalism, with the economic mismanagement, national oppression, and crushing of personal liberties perpetrated by the bureaucracy. They wish to present the degeneration of the revolution as its inevitable and predetermined outcome, in order to discredit the revolutionary alternative to capitalist rule with its economic chaos, racism, and trampling on civil liberties.

The method used by the Stalinists to support the view that Stalinism is the natural heir to Bolshevism is one of outright distortion and falsification of history. One need only glance at the various presentations of the history of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union prepared in Moscow to note that they vary according to the year of their production. Just comparing the famous “Short Course” of 1939, prepared under Stalin’s direction, with the later version of 1960 we find that the “facts,” the accusations, are no longer the same. The “saboteurs” and “spies” of the 1939 edition have become “right and left deviationists” in the later edition. The “agents of capitalism” have become simply “adventurers” who hindered the construction of socialism.

During Stalin’s lifetime all the histories portrayed him as the



## 6 *Lenin's Fight Against Stalinism*

wise, all-knowing "father of the peoples," a veritable god, incapable of error. Today the bureaucracy's official evaluation of Stalin's role serves as a barometer for its domestic policy. When Stalin is criticized, it means the bureaucracy has decided to relax restrictions on dissent within the Soviet Union. Praise for Stalin indicates that a crackdown is on the way. All of this "history" is history with a purpose. Needless to say, the purpose is least of all to clarify the relationship between Lenin and the Bolshevik Party he built and led and the present-day ruling caste that holds political power in the Soviet Union.

It was to establish the fact that the Soviet bureaucracy is not the continuator of Lenin's tradition that Leon Trotsky wrote his article "On the Suppressed Testament of Lenin," completed on December 31, 1932, in Prinkipo, Turkey, Trotsky's first place of exile after his expulsion from the Soviet Union by Stalin in 1929.

The immediate occasion for Trotsky's article was the appearance of a biography of Stalin by the German author Emil Ludwig, a leader of the school of modern "humanized biography," who also produced studies on Bismarck, Freud, and Roosevelt. Ludwig's biography, based on conversations with Stalin, tacitly assumes that Stalin was Lenin's rightful heir and repeats a number of slanders directed against Trotsky. But it was with far more than personal vindication in mind that Trotsky wrote his reply. By establishing his own role in the fight within the Soviet party and his personal, political relationship to Lenin in the last months of Lenin's political activity, Trotsky wished to show that the Left Opposition within the Soviet Communist Party was the real continuator of the Leninist tradition.

At the time Trotsky wrote "On the Suppressed Testament of Lenin," the Left Opposition within the Soviet Union was in the process of being crushed by the Stalinist bureaucracy. All of its supporters had been expelled from the party, thousands were in prison or in exile in remote corners of the Soviet Union, many had been forced to undergo "self-criticism" and recant their views. Trotsky continued the fight from exile outside the Soviet Union. Stalin had deported him in order to behead the Opposition (at the time he did not feel confident enough in his power to take more direct and permanent measures against his opponent), but he did not foresee Trotsky's ability to organize the Opposition on an international scale, establishing Opposition groups in France, Germany, England, the United States, and other countries. This

oppositional core later developed into the Fourth International, founded in 1938 and today established in some forty different countries.

Trotsky substantiates his article with the documentary evidence contained in Lenin's last articles and letters as well as a few earlier documents. The major document, which came to be known as Lenin's testament, is part of a letter to the Twelfth Congress of the Bolshevik Party in which Lenin gives his evaluation of the major party leaders and particularly of Trotsky and Stalin. The letter was not presented to this congress. Rather, N. Krupskaya, Lenin's wife, kept it secret in the hope that Lenin would recover his health and be able to personally lead the fight it was sure to provoke. After Lenin's death on January 21, 1924, she turned the letter over to the Central Committee of the party and demanded that it be read at the Thirteenth Congress scheduled for May 1924. After much resistance, Stalin and his collaborators agreed to have the letter read to individual delegations at the congress, but refused to publish it.

In fact, the letter was not published in the Soviet Union until 1956, when the exigencies of the intrabureaucratic struggle in the Soviet party led Khrushchev and his group to make the document public along with some of Lenin's other articles and correspondence. The publication of this material caused a sensation in Stalinist circles, where Lenin's "absolute support" of Stalin had been an article of faith for more than three decades. Most of the "new" material had been published almost thirty years earlier by Trotsky in his "Letter to the Bureau of Party History," which appeared in *The Real Situation in Russia*, brought out by Max Eastman in the United States in 1928 and translated into ten languages within the next two years. The Soviet publication confirmed the authenticity of this material, which Trotsky refers to in his essay.

The core of the present book consists of Trotsky's essay outlining Lenin's fight against Stalinism and the growing bureaucratism in the Bolshevik Party and the Soviet state apparatus. It is presented along with the supporting documentary evidence, reprinted from the official Moscow texts where they are available. In addition we are publishing a number of other documents by Lenin and Trotsky, either in full or in part, in order to round out the picture of the developing battle in the last year of Lenin's political life.



## 8 *Lenin's Fight Against Stalinism*

If the Stalinists have resorted to crude falsification of history to establish their claim to the Leninist heritage, other historians have used more subtle means to verify the equation Stalinism equals Leninism. Most of these historians subscribe in one form or another to the theory of Bolshevik "original sin." This theory tries to place the roots of the degeneration of the October Revolution and the rise of the bureaucracy in the organizational forms of the Bolshevik Party that were initiated by Lenin. For these scholars it was the centralized, disciplined organization Lenin insisted on that laid the groundwork for the "natural" development of the dictatorial bureaucracy with Stalin at its head in the years after the revolution. Such a view has one very basic fault: it raises the question of organization to the level of a metaphysical absolute standing above the real world in which the Bolshevik Party functioned. That is, it leaves aside the question of the material difficulties the Bolsheviks faced in trying to reorganize a backward and war-shattered society and what effect these difficulties had on the evolution of the party.

### **Problems of the Russian revolution**

The period between the triumph of the October Revolution in 1917 and the rise of Stalinism in 1922-23 can be divided into three parts: 1) the period of the coalition government of Bolsheviks and Left Social Revolutionaries (November 1917-March 1918) during which the initial tasks were carried out (land reform decree, conclusion of a peace with Germany, etc.); 2) the civil war and war communism with nationalization of industry and forced requisitioning of grain from the peasantry in 1918-20; 3) the consolidation of Soviet power and the introduction of the New Economic Policy (NEP) in 1921-22.

A detailed discussion of this period lies beyond the scope of this introduction, but the main tendencies that led to bureaucratism and the rise of Stalin can be outlined.

The first and most important factor was the international isolation of the revolution. None of the Bolshevik leaders (including Stalin) had counted on the Russian revolution as an isolated phenomenon. Rather they saw it as the initiation of a revolutionary wave that would sweep over all of Europe. Once successful in the advanced industrial countries of the West, the revolution could pour technical and economic aid into Russia. This would



help the Russian revolutionaries overcome the problems presented by Russia's insufficient economic and cultural base, which posed an obstacle for the development of socialism. In fact, such a wave did develop, encompassing risings in North Germany, Bavaria, Hungary, and Italy. The revolutionary upsurge in Western Europe contributed to the victory of the Soviet regime in the civil war by impeding the abilities of the capitalist powers to intervene in Russia. But in the end, the failure of any of these revolutions to bring the workers to power left the Russian revolution isolated and contributed to the demoralization of the population that had suffered unheard-of privations.

To be sure, although the Bolsheviks based their hopes on the development of the international revolution, they did not fail to plan for internal development under the contingency of a long delay in the Western revolution. This consideration was one of the main points in Lenin's article "Better Fewer, but Better" (reprinted here) and Trotsky's "Tasks of the Twelfth Party Congress" (excerpted here). As Trotsky put it in this speech:

Yes, this is the essence of the matter. It became clear to us during 1920 and 1921, with absolute clarity, that the Union of Soviet Republics would have to go on existing, perhaps for a rather long time, in the midst of capitalist encirclement. We shall still not receive tomorrow any direct and immediate aid from a proletariat organized in a state, a state of a much higher type and with greater economic might than ours. That is what we told ourselves in 1920. We did not know whether it would be a matter of one, two, three, or ten years, but we knew that we were at the beginning of an epoch of serious and prolonged preparation.

The basic conclusion from this was that, while awaiting a change in the relation of forces in the West, we must look very much more attentively and sharply at the relation of forces in our own country, in the Soviet Union. [*Leon Trotsky Speaks*, (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1972), p. 137.]

The key to the ability of the revolution to hold out until help arrived from abroad was in the development of stable relations with the peasantry, which made up the majority of the population. World War I and the ensuing civil war brought about the near collapse of industry. This meant that trade relations between city and countryside broke down as well. Normally, the peasants produced a surplus of grain and other food stuffs, which they sold on the market, using the money realized in the transaction to buy manufactured goods produced in the cities. But with

industry at a near standstill, there were no manufactured goods for the peasants to buy and they withheld their surpluses, hoarding them for better times.

During the civil war period the Bolsheviks resorted to forced requisitioning of grain through Red Army detachments and poor peasant committees to ward off starvation in the cities and keep the war industries going. The peasants retaliated by refusing to plant more than they needed for themselves. Finally in 1921, after the conclusion of the civil war, the policy of forced requisitioning was reversed and the market economy reintroduced under the New Economic Policy.

The basis of the NEP was the introduction of a tax in kind. The peasants were required to hand over a certain amount of produce to the state in taxes. The rest of their surplus they were allowed to dispose of themselves. In this way, it was hoped that the peasants would have a material incentive to increase production and be won over to supporting the government's policies. This measure required the reestablishment of the market economy so that the peasants could sell their produce. The restoration of private trade would lead to an accumulation of capital, which could be pumped into industry. This was to be accomplished by granting private concessions (including foreign concessions) in nationalized industry. The state retained control over what Lenin called "the commanding heights" of the economy through its monopoly of heavy industry, foreign trade, and banking.

The state of Soviet industry at the end of the civil war was abysmal. The output of production was less than one-fifth of what it had been in 1913. The coal mines produced one-tenth and the iron foundries only one-fourteenth of their normal output. Railways were destroyed, all stocks and reserves utterly exhausted. In addition the proletariat—upon whom the workers' state was based—had been decimated. Many of the most politically conscious workers had fought at the front lines in the civil war and had perished. Millions of others had deserted the idle factories and returned to the countryside to live off the land in order to avoid starvation. In 1921 the major industrial cities, Moscow and Petrograd, had only one-half and one-third their former number of inhabitants respectively.

These conditions produced economic problems which are readily apparent. But in addition they produced a fundamental political problem. As the working class became exhausted and atom-

ized, the soviets ceased to function as governmental organs. More and more power was concentrated in the hands of the Bolshevik Party, and the party apparatus became more and more enmeshed with the state apparatus, which was based largely on the old tsarist bureaucracy. This development was not planned or desired by the Bolsheviks. It was forced on them by the necessity to fill the vacuum and prevent capitalist restoration. The problem was one not of form but of substance. It was not that the workers did not control the factories but rather that the factories did not function. It was not that the proletariat lacked political power; the proletariat did not exist in a form that could exercise political power, and no democratic declaration or decree from the government could change this. What was needed instead were measures to reconstruct a proletariat that could exercise political power and thus make it possible to restore workers' democracy on a real and not a fictitious basis. This is the thread that runs through all of the contributions from Lenin and Trotsky in this collection: How to create the economic and social prerequisites for socialist democracy in a backward, isolated, and devastated country during a period when immediate help from a revolution in the advanced countries of Western Europe was at best uncertain. It is in this light that the ban on factions within the Bolshevik Party, the repression of opposition parties, and other Bolshevik "organizational measures" must be evaluated.

### **The dangers of bureaucracy**

At the outset, we should make clear what is meant by "bureaucracy." A bureaucracy is not simply an inefficient or high-handed administration. An administration simply carries out decisions. A bureaucracy involves privilege and power for the administrators.

Bureaucrats are fundamentally administrators who have lost their long-range perspective. For them the administrative machinery is no longer a means to an end, but an end in itself. Preservation of the apparatus and their own privileged positions within it is the *raison d'être* of the bureaucrat. Such bureaucracy has its roots in scarcity and feeds on demoralization, both of which were plentiful because of the extreme privations the young Soviet state was forced to face in the years following the revolution.



## 12 *Lenin's Fight Against Stalinism*

In the period after 1917 one of the most extreme shortages was that of administrative personnel. In a country with a literacy rate of 30 percent in 1920, people who could read and write were a scarce resource. Yet it was precisely such a state of affairs the Bolsheviks had inherited. In order to administer the state and the economy, the Bolsheviks had to turn to the only people who had any skills or experience in this area—the officials and technicians of the old tsarist regime, for whom the use of administrative position for personal gain had been a way of life for centuries. This measure was even applied to the organization of the Red Army, where former tsarist officers were enlisted to fight against the White armies. In order to induce these individuals to serve the Soviet state rather than flee abroad or enlist with the White forces, they had to be granted considerable material privileges. Thus the Soviet state was afflicted with a bureaucratic deformation almost from its birth.

Lenin was aware of this and took note of it in his article "The Immediate Tasks of the Soviet Government" (April 28, 1918). There he characterized the introduction of material incentives of this sort as "*a step backward* on the part of our socialist, Soviet state power, which from the very outset proclaimed and pursued the policy of reducing high salaries to the level of the wages of the average worker" (*Collected Works*, vol. 27, p. 249).

At this time he put forward the soviets as the organs to control the influence of self-seekers and careerists in the government administration. In 1919 the Bolsheviks also organized the People's Commissariat of Workers' and Peasants' Inspection (known as "Rabkrin" from the acronym of its Russian name), with Stalin at its head—a post he held until the spring of 1922. Rabkrin had broad powers and responsibilities. It could inspect the work of any other commissariat without warning and was expected to root out inefficiency and bureaucracy. Lenin placed high hopes in Rabkrin and defended it for a long time against its critics. Trotsky, on the other hand, sharply criticized Rabkrin as early as December 1920. He thought that the conception of "a special department endowed with all the wisdom of government" was unrealistic and the specific performance worse. "Rabkrin itself provides a striking illustration of the lack of correspondence between governmental decree and governmental machinery, and is itself becoming a powerful factor of muddle and wantonness." He further criticized Rabkrin as a haven for misfits (Isaac

Deutscher, *The Prophet Unarmed* [New York: Vintage, 1959], pp. 47-48).

At the Eleventh Party Congress in March-April 1922—the last congress he was able to participate in—Lenin devoted a good part of his speeches to discussing the dangers of bureaucratism. Because of the low cultural level of the country, which was reflected within the party and the state apparatus, bureaucratism had been spreading. The country was going in a different direction than the one desired. Lenin chose an expressive analogy to illustrate his idea: “Well, we have lived through a year, the state is in our hands; but has it operated the New Economic Policy in the way we wanted in this past year? No. But we refuse to admit that it did not operate in the way we wanted. How did it operate? The machine refused to obey the hand that guided it. It was like a car that was going not in the direction the driver desired, but in the direction someone else desired; as if it were being driven by some mysterious, lawless hand, God knows whose, perhaps of a profiteer, or of a private capitalist, or of both” (“Political Report of the Central Committee,” excerpted in Part IV).

Despite the fact that the Communists officially held power, the apparatus was steering according to the dictates of another will, which was dragging the party along with it: “If we take Moscow with its 4,700 Communists in responsible positions, and if we take that huge bureaucratic machine, that gigantic heap, we must ask: who is directing whom? I doubt very much whether it can be truthfully said the Communists are directing that heap. To tell the truth, they are not directing, they are being directed” (ibid.).

But what was to be done? Here Lenin rejected schemes to form new government departments as “pernicious twaddle.” “The key feature,” he said, “is that we have not got the right men in the right places; that responsible Communists who acquitted themselves magnificently during the revolution have been given commercial and industrial functions about which they know nothing; and they prevent us from seeing the truth, for rogues and rascals hide magnificently behind their backs. . . . Choose the proper men and introduce practical control. That is what the people will appreciate” (ibid.).

Lenin repeated the same sentiments in speeches to the Fourth Comintern Congress in November 1922. Basically, Lenin’s thoughts on the problem were that the bureaucracy existed out-

## 14 *Lenin's Fight Against Stalinism*

side the party in the state apparatus, and that the bureaucracy threatened to encircle the party and make the party its captive. At this point, Lenin was unable to clearly see the bureaucratism within the party and the role of state planning in overcoming bureaucratism. These two insights were to come from Trotsky.

We have already mentioned Trotsky's sharp criticisms of Rabkrin made at a time when Lenin was still staunchly defending the inspectorate and its head—Stalin. Even more basic were Trotsky's criticisms of the lack of centralized economic planning. In a statement to the Eighth Congress of Soviets in November 1920, Trotsky commented: "The reproach we hear so often that the Soviet institutions have become 'infected' by the vices of the old bureaucrats (formalism, delay, etc.), does not touch the root of the matter. . . . Procrastination, captious formalism, and organizational helplessness are not the outcome of the bad habits acquired by the Soviet institutions, but have their root much deeper, in the temporary structure, in the transition stage of our industries and their administration" (*Soviet Russia*, New York, March 5, 1921, pp. 226-27).

Rather than seeing the problem as one of "the right people," Trotsky saw it as a problem connected with the objective state of the economy and its lack of organization. In the same statement he gives the counterexample, what had been attained in the centralized organization of railway transport, which had been initiated under his direction in the spring of that year. Trotsky's basic approach consisted of two main ideas, one of which he shared with Lenin: that the grave crisis facing Soviet society could not be solved by resort to formal democracy, but only through economic reconstruction of the country. He agreed that in the meantime "the party is obliged to maintain its dictatorship, regardless of temporary wavering in the spontaneous moods of the masses, regardless of temporary vacillations even in the working class" (Trotsky, in a speech to the Tenth Party Congress, quoted in Isaac Deutscher, *The Prophet Armed* [New York: Vintage, 1965], p. 509).

Where Trotsky differed from Lenin was in his insistence on a central economic plan to be worked out by Gosplan (the State Planning Commission) with an emphasis on large-scale nationalized industry. Lenin rejected reorganization around a central plan, pressing instead for stricter regulation of existing bodies. In two letters to the Politburo on August 7, 1921, and April 19, 1922



(the latter excerpted in this volume), Trotsky put forward his proposals, arguing that without centralized planning the various economic agencies and individual enterprises would be working at cross purposes with one another and that this in itself would breed confusion and slow the economic development of the country. The direct effect of such confusion on the growth of bureaucracy is easy to see. First of all, the general planlessness created a thousand blinds for the "rogues and rascals" to hide behind. More importantly it tended to produce demoralization among the administrators. Even the most devoted Bolsheviks in administrative posts, seeing all of their constructive efforts thwarted by factors beyond their control (uncertainty in receiving raw materials, lack of replacement parts for machinery, breakdowns in transport), could develop a hopeless, cynical attitude. In addition, when the industries suffered, the workers suffered. The disruptions caused layoffs, shutdowns, nonpayment of wages. The workers tended to blame the administrators directly responsible for management for these privations even though they were often caused by factors beyond the administrators' control. As a result, the close ties and cooperative relations between the workers and the Bolshevik plant managers began to break down. Under these conditions it is not hard to see how honest administrators could be turned into bureaucrats interested only in advancing their own interests.

Trotsky's proposals were rejected at the time they were submitted, but Lenin later came around to this point of view, as may be seen from the article "Granting Legislative Functions to the State Planning Commission." Trotsky's proposals were also embodied in the "Theses on Industry" he presented to the Twelfth Party Congress in April of 1923. Although the "theses" were unanimously accepted, they were not put into effect. Industry would wait for the forced industrialization of the first Five Year Plan in 1928.

As we have seen, up till November 1922 Lenin saw the problem of bureaucracy as coming from outside the party, rejected centralized planning through Gosplan, and maintained full confidence in the party apparatus and its general secretary—Stalin. But then in the middle of December there is a sudden change. On December 12, Lenin offers Trotsky a bloc to defend the state monopoly of foreign trade. Between December 23 and January 4, he dictates scathing attacks on Stalin's handling of the national-

ties question and suggests removing him from his post as general secretary; in addition he calls for a general reorganization, enlarging the Central Committee to fifty or a hundred members and granting legislative functions to the State Planning Commission. This work is carried out despite the effects of two crippling strokes on December 12 and December 22. On January 23 and March 2, two articles follow: "How We Should Reorganize the Workers' and Peasants' Inspection" and "Better Fewer, but Better." These call for reorganization of Rabkrin since "everybody knows that no other institutions are worse organized than those of our Workers' and Peasants' Inspection, and that under present conditions nothing can be expected from this commissariat." Although Stalin's name is not mentioned, this is a direct attack on his authority since he headed Rabkrin until the middle of 1922 and was still closely if informally associated with it.

The attack continues with Lenin's offers of warm support to Stalin's opponents on the Georgian question and his enlistment of Trotsky's aid in fighting to defend the Georgian Communists (see below). These documents are powerful weapons to be used against Stalin and the bureaucracy at the coming party congress, which had been postponed until April in the hope that Lenin will be well enough to appear. Lenin is only silenced by a third stroke on March 10, which ends his political life. He will remain a mute observer of unfolding events until his death on January 21, 1924.

What caused this sudden turn about in Lenin's attitude? In December 1922 two major issues came to a head—the Georgian affair, alluded to above, and the decision on the monopoly of foreign trade. Lenin's articles and correspondence on both these topics are included in this volume.

## **The monopoly of foreign trade**

The monopoly of foreign trade was one of the key parts of the NEP. It was designed as a sort of "socialist protectionism" in order to defend the weak Soviet economy against pressures from the world market. It also prevented private business from going into foreign trade and determining the export and import of commodities on the basis of their own short-term profits without regard to the long-term effect on the economy.

At the beginning of October 1922, the Central Committee, in Lenin and Trotsky's absence, passed certain measures aimed at

weakening the monopoly. These did not go so far as to allow private concerns direct access to the world market, but they did open what Lenin considered to be a dangerous breach in the shield of "socialist protectionism." In a letter to Stalin on October 13, 1922, Lenin declared that the decision "wrecks the foreign trade monopoly" and that moreover it had been taken in haste and without due consideration or consultation. He demanded that the decision be held in abeyance until the next plenary meeting of the Central Committee in two months. In the meantime Lenin found out that Trotsky held like views on the question, and on December 13 he wrote to Trotsky asking him to defend their common position before the Central Committee. Lenin was prepared for a battle, but in fact the victory was won "without a single shot," as he put it in a letter to Trotsky on December 21.

The dispute was highly symptomatic of lines that would develop later. Here Stalin, with Bukharin as his theoretician, was backing a measure that would strengthen the private sector of the economy against the state sector. It foreshadowed the disputes over "socialism at a snail's pace" versus state planning and industrialization, and support to the rich peasants versus support to the poor peasants and gradual collectivization. The conservative politics of the bureaucracy were already becoming evident. It was only a week after Lenin's victory letter to Trotsky on the monopoly of foreign trade that Lenin dictated the notes "On Granting Legislative Functions to the State Planning Commission," in which he came around to Trotsky's views on economic policy.

It was at this same time, in the first weeks of December, that Lenin and Trotsky held their last private meeting, in which Lenin offered Trotsky "a bloc against bureaucracy in general and against the Organizational Bureau [headed by Stalin] in particular" (Trotsky, *My Life* [New York: Pathfinder Press, 1970], p. 479). Although we only have Trotsky's testimony for this meeting, Lenin's subsequent actions are further confirmation of the existence of such a "bloc against bureaucracy."

## The nationalities question

The second important dispute arose over the question of "the nationalities or autonomization." The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics was not formed until December 30, 1922. Before that

time what had existed was a loose union based on bilateral treaties between the Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic (RSFSR) and five other national republics—Ukraine, Byelorussia, Georgia, Azerbaidzhan, and Armenia. In 1922 Stalin, as commissar of nationalities, was charged with the responsibility of drawing up a plan for normalizing relations between the republics. This plan, known as the “autonomization plan,” provided for the entry of the non-Russian republics into the RSFSR as autonomous areas with central authority based in Moscow. It was categorically rejected by the Georgian Bolsheviks, who saw it as an attempt to reimpose the old Russia, “one and indivisible,” on the nationalities that had been oppressed under the tsarist empire. Stalin’s plan not only abused the sensibilities of the Georgian Bolsheviks themselves, it was also sure to be resented by the fiercely independent-minded Georgian people. The Georgian Bolsheviks were anxious to establish the legitimacy of their rule and opposed this interference from Moscow.

The situation was exacerbated by the high-handed manner in which Stalin and his lieutenant Ordzhonikidze (both of them incidentally native Georgians) handled the opposition. They immediately charged the majority of the Central Committee of the Georgian CP, led by such figures as Mdivani, Makharadze, and Tsintsadze with “nationalist deviation.” The dispute raged on through the summer and fall of 1922. At one point Ordzhonikidze “exiled” Mdivani and Makharadze to Moscow, but they only continued the struggle there, trying to get Lenin’s ear or to reach anyone on the Central Committee who would listen to their case.

In the summer, a commission was established to study plans for regularizing relations between the republics. When the commission met again in late September, Stalin presented a draft of his autonomization plan, the last paragraph of which revealed much about Stalin’s method of operating: “If this decision is confirmed by the Central Committee of the RCP [Russian Communist Party], it will not be made public, but communicated to the Central Committees of the Republics for circulation among the Soviet organs, the Central Executive Committees or the Congresses of the Soviets of said Republics before the convocation of the All-Russian Congress of the Soviets, where it will be declared to be the wish of these Republics” (Moshe Lewin, *Lenin's Last Struggle* [New York: Random House, 1968], pp. 146-47).

Thus this highly controversial proposal, which went against all



that the Bolsheviks had said about the right of self-determination of oppressed nationalities, was not even to be publicly discussed by the people it would affect. Rather it would be "communicated" to the leading administrative bodies of the republics and then "declared to be the wish of these Republics" at the All-Russian Congress of Soviets. In other words, the Russian Central Committee would present the proposal to organs of the republics as a fait accompli, and they would join in announcing it to the people of the republics as a fait accompli at the Soviet congress.

At this point, Lenin's disagreement with Stalin's proposal seems to have been on a purely principled basis—that is, he did not yet see what Stalin was up to organizationally. He met with Stalin to discuss the proposal and arranged a meeting with Mdivani. On September 26, he wrote to the Politburo through Kamenev, chiding Stalin for being "in rather too much of a hurry." The tone of the letter, included in this collection, is highly diplomatic. He reports that Stalin has "already agreed to make one concession" in replacing the term "entry into the RSFSR" with "formal union with the RSFSR in a Union of Soviet Republics of Europe and Asia." He makes it clear that all the republics will be "equals in law" and asks Kamenev and Zinoviev to think the matter over seriously. At least for the purposes of discussion, Lenin was willing to regard Stalin's proposed violation of Bolshevik principles on self-determination as an oversight caused by too much haste.

Stalin circulated Lenin's letter to the other members of the Politburo, appending a memorandum of his own in which he departed from his usual caution in opposing Lenin, accusing Lenin of "national liberalism" and encouraging separatists (Lewin, *Lenin's Last Struggle*, pp. 51-53). Nevertheless, when Stalin submitted his final draft to the Central Committee on October 6, he included Lenin's amendments, insisting only that Georgia be admitted as a member of the "Transcaucasian Federation" along with Azerbaidzhan and Armenia. This was a hold-over from an earlier and much disputed plan to combine the governmental and economic administration of the three neighboring republics. Stalin's purpose in introducing it into the plan for the new Soviet Union was to subordinate the rebellious Georgian leadership to the then more pliant party leaders in Azerbaidzhan and Armenia.

The plan was accepted by the Central Committee, but the

Georgians remained adamant, insisting that Georgia be admitted to the Union as an independent member and not as part of a Transcaucasian Federation. Kavtaradze and Tsintsadze wrote to Kamenev and Bukharin complaining bitterly about the plan and Ordzhonikidze's behavior. Bukharin passed their letter along to Lenin who wrote a curt, annoyed reply condemning "the invectives addressed to Ordzhonikidze" and informing them that the matter would be submitted for settlement to the Secretariat of the Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party (*Collected Works*, vol. 33, p. 582). It will be remembered that Stalin was the head of this secretariat. At this point Lenin apparently still trusted the information he was receiving from Stalin and Ordzhonikidze.

But the matter was far from over. Two weeks later, nine of the eleven members of the Georgian Central Committee resigned in protest. Stalin simply appointed new members who were more agreeable to his point of view. The old leadership did not, however, give up the fight. Their defiance continued. The debate became so heated that, in the course of a meeting in November, Ordzhonikidze went so far as to physically attack Kabanidze, one of the Georgian opposition leaders. This incident made a deep impression on Lenin when it was reported to him by Dzerzhinsky, the head of an official commission of inquiry into the Georgian affair organized in late November. "If matters had come to such a pass," Lenin wrote in his notes on the nationalities question, "that Ordzhonikidze could go to the extreme of applying physical violence . . . we can imagine what a mess we have got ourselves into."

Dzerzhinsky's report officially whitewashed Stalin and Ordzhonikidze, but Lenin was no longer deceived. Writing on December 30, 1922, the same day the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics was proclaimed, Lenin said: "Obviously the whole business of 'autonomization' was radically wrong and badly timed. It is said that a united apparatus was needed. Where did that assurance come from? Did it not come from that same Russian apparatus which . . . we took over from tsarism and slightly annointed with Soviet oil?" ("The Question of Nationalities or 'Autonomization'," reprinted in Part VI). In a more immediate sense, of course, the assurance that a united apparatus was needed came from Stalin, who drafted the autonomization plan. In the continuation of these notes on the nationalities question the next day,

Lenin makes it clear where the blame lies. "The political responsibility for all this truly Great Russian nationalist campaign must, of course, be laid on Stalin and Dzerzhinsky." Here Lenin also calls for "exemplary punishment" for Ordzhonikidze.

Lenin did not let the matter rest here. In mid-February 1923 he initiated a secret commission of his own secretaries to investigate the Georgian affair. We know from the chronology appended to volume 54 of the Russian edition of Lenin's works that the commission presented its report on March 3, 1923, but the report itself has never come to light. Apparently it confirmed Lenin's fears for he wrote to Trotsky: "It is my earnest request the you should undertake the defense of the Georgian case in the party CC." (This and the following letter are reprinted in Part VI.) This was on March 5. The next day Lenin dictated a brief note to Mdivani, Makharadze, and the other Georgian oppositionists: "I am following your case with all my heart. I am indignant over Ordzhonikidze's rudeness and the connivance of Stalin and Dzerzhinsky. I am preparing for you notes and a speech." This was Lenin's last political act.

The Georgian affair made such an impact on Lenin because in it he could see in embryo the bureaucratization process which was taking place within the party. All the essential features were there: the correspondence in attitude between the Great Russian chauvinists of the old tsarist bureaucracy and top leaders of the party; the use of slander, false charges of "nationalist deviation," to justify forcing ill-considered decisions from above; punitive transfers of dissidents; appointment from above of new "leaders" whose greatest claim to leadership was their willingness to follow orders from the general secretary; the use of physical violence against comrades; investigative whitewashes; and most importantly—the divorce of the apparatus from principled political considerations.

Although in the past the Bolsheviks, with Lenin's approval, had used ruthless means to enforce unpopular measures, this was always done with consideration of what was best for the interests of the revolution. The forced requisitioning of grain, for instance, was undertaken to prevent starvation in the cities. Whether one agrees or disagrees with this measure or how it was carried out, there can still be no doubt that it was not instituted to promote the personal interest of the party leadership. The situation with the "autonomization" plan was quite the opposite. There was no

pressing reason, such as imminent starvation, counterrevolution, or economic collapse, to justify forcing the measure through. The only thing at stake in pressing the matter was the political prestige and power of the commissar of nationalities and his lieutenant, the military commander of Georgia. Similarly, when the Bolsheviks had been forced to make organizational concessions that went against stated policy, they always took care to discuss these measures openly, answer the arguments of opponents both within and outside the party, and most importantly—they openly declared that such measures were retreats. This was the case when the Bolsheviks decided to provide material incentives to specialists, or to reinstitute the market economy under the NEP. If it had been felt necessary to violate the principle of self-determination, then in accordance with previous practice it should have been explained why this was necessary. Instead Stalin claimed that no principles had been violated, that the Georgian Central Committee members who disagreed with his plans were “national deviationists” or “separatists,” in other words, that they were the ones who were departing from principle rather than himself.

Lenin must have been similarly disturbed by Stalin's deviousness in handling the differences over the plan for creation of the Soviet Union. In the past there had been many hot disputes over policy in the Bolshevik ranks. After each vote it was assumed that the faction that was outvoted or forced to compromise would carry out the policy that had been decided upon and not try to carry out its own policy under a false guise of agreement. But it was precisely under such a guise of pretended agreement that Stalin proceeded. In the memo he attached to Lenin's September 26 letter, which counterposed the union of equals to Stalin's autonomization plan, Stalin took sharp disagreement with Lenin on almost every point. Yet a little more than a week later he “accepted” Lenin's amendments without argument, introducing only one wrinkle of his own, the Transcaucasian Federation, which allowed him to violate the principle of self-determination he had nominally accepted and to pursue his vendetta against the Georgian oppositionists.

The signs were now unmistakable. A group in the leadership had joined hands with the state bureaucracy and had separated itself from the masses and from the ranks of the party. Its motivations were personal rather than political, and it was willing to



resort to any means to strengthen its own power and position. Lenin determined to stop this bureaucratic faction at all costs.

## The Twelfth Party Congress

Lenin was preparing to fight at the Twelfth Party Congress, scheduled for March and then postponed till April. But he knew that another stroke could come at any time, bringing with it paralysis or death. He looked to Trotsky for support.

There had been a general convergence of the two men's views in the last months. Their agreement on the state monopoly of foreign trade, bureaucratism within the party, and economic planning has already been noted. It was only necessary to find out where Trotsky stood on the Georgian question. Lenin had every reason to believe that Trotsky would be in agreement on this question too, since Trotsky had voiced disagreements on Stalin's Georgian policy before. Before enlisting Trotsky's aid in defending the Georgian oppositonists, Lenin sent one of his secretaries to a Central Committee meeting to hear what Trotsky had to say on the question. To his satisfaction, he found that they thought alike on this matter too.

In addition, Trotsky was the only member of the leadership capable of carrying on the fight at the party congress in Lenin's absence. Their names had been continually linked during the course of the revolution and the civil war, and Trotsky enjoyed tremendous authority in the party ranks. Lenin provided Trotsky with his notes and correspondence to arm him for an implacable fight. What was hinted at in the December 21 letter on the monopoly of foreign trade, "I suggest that we should not stop and should continue the offensive," was made explicit in a message delivered by Lenin's secretary Fotieva. Trotsky had sent Fotieva to ask if Kamenev could be shown the materials on the Georgian question. Fotieva returned with the answer: "Under no circumstances. . . . Vladimir Illyich says: 'Kamenev will immediately show everything to Stalin, and Stalin will make a rotten compromise and then deceive us'. . . . He does not trust Stalin, and wants to come out against him openly, before the entire party. He is preparing a bomb" (Trotsky, *My Life*, p. 484).

But Trotsky did not detonate the "bomb" Lenin had placed in his hands. Shortly after the conversation between Fotieva and Trotsky, Lenin changed his mind about informing Kamenev. He

## 24 *Lenin's Fight Against Stalinism*

was growing weaker and was forced to come out into the open before it was time. His purpose in revealing his hand to Kamenev was quite possibly not to enlist his aid but rather to start a panic among Stalin's supporters.

Trotsky immediately summoned Kamenev and dictated his terms. He would not demand that Stalin, Ordzhonikidze, and Dzerzhinsky be removed from their posts, but he wanted "a radical change in the policy on the national question, a discontinuance of persecutions of the Georgian opponents of Stalin, a discontinuance of the administrative oppression of the party, a firmer policy in matters of industrialization, and an honest cooperation in the higher centres" (*My Life*, p. 486).

Stalin agreed to the compromise. He rewrote his theses on the nationalities question incorporating Trotsky's amendments, supported Trotsky's resolution on industry; and temporarily halted the campaign of innuendo against Trotsky that he had initiated in the Central Committee. And, as Lenin had warned, Stalin also deceived. While Trotsky honored the agreements that had been made, did not insist on the publication of the scathing notes on the nationalities question, and refrained from attacking Stalin and his associates at the Twelfth Party Congress, they instituted a whispering campaign against him among the delegates, hinting that Trotsky aspired to be the Bonaparte of the Russian revolution.

Having narrowly escaped at the party congress, and with Lenin silenced indefinitely by a new stroke, Stalin and his associates, emerging as the triumvirate of Stalin, Zinoviev, and Kamenev, tightened their hold on the state and party apparatus and moved to further isolate Trotsky. None of the promised reforms was put into effect, and when the fight broke out in the party ranks in October 1923, the relationship of forces had significantly changed. Not only were the internal problems exacerbated by the triumvirate's inactivity in making the economic and organizational reforms called for by the Twelfth Congress, but a new wave of demoralization was sweeping the country as a result of the defeat of the German Revolution of 1923, which smashed hopes of relief from the West.

### **Trotsky's reluctance to act**

Historians have puzzled over why Trotsky chose to compromise rather than launch the attack Lenin had called for. This question

is all the more interesting since, endowed with hindsight, we can say that if the bureaucracy was to be stopped, then it would have had to be stopped at this time. Trotsky himself subscribed to this view. As he put it in *My Life*: "I have no doubt that if I had come forward on the eve of the twelfth congress in the spirit of a 'bloc of Lenin and Trotsky' against the Stalin bureaucracy, I should have been victorious even if Lenin had taken no direct part in the struggle" (p. 481). However, the durability of such a victory is, as Trotsky points out, another question. The same factors that had led to the rise of the bureaucracy would continue to act in favor of its consolidation. But "in 1922-3 . . . it was still possible to capture the commanding position by an open attack . . ." (ibid.).

Why then did Trotsky not act? He himself gives two reasons. First was the question of Lenin's health. Lenin might still be able to rise from his sick bed, as he had done before, to lead the fight at the congress or after. Second was Trotsky's fear that in Lenin's absence an open attack might be interpreted as Trotsky's "personal fight for Lenin's place in the party and the state" (ibid., p. 482). As long as there was hope for Lenin's recovery, these considerations bore considerable weight.

This was particularly true because the Stalin faction systematically exploited the question of succession to Lenin's place as head of the party. They presented themselves as the triumvirate of Zinoviev, Kamenev, and Stalin—a team of Old Bolsheviks active in the party and loyal collaborators of Lenin for twenty years. They pictured Trotsky as an upstart, an old opponent of Lenin who had only joined the Bolsheviks in August of 1917. They continually compared the leader of the Red Army in the civil war to Napoleon Bonaparte, the brilliant military leader of the French Revolution who turned his military successes into a personal dictatorship and derailed the revolution.

There is an additional explanation that has some merit. That is, Trotsky simply underestimated his opponents. He thought that the fright put into them by Lenin's denunciations and the knowledge that the material could be made public at any time would be sufficient to call them to order. Later when Trotsky did try to use the "bomb" Lenin had left him, he found himself on the defensive and hemmed in by walls of censorship. His access to the press was limited and then cut off altogether. He could make neither Lenin's views nor his own known to the party ranks or the general public.

In the final analysis, there is more to the history of the year 1922-23, documented in this book, than the record of a succession of errors committed by individuals—by Lenin, who did not see the growth of bureaucracy in the party in time; by Trotsky, who did not act decisively at the Twelfth Party Congress; by Zinoviev and Kamenev, who sided with Stalin and only saw their error two years later when they joined Trotsky in opposition; or even by Stalin himself, who had embarked on a course that would lead to the destruction of the Bolshevik Party and the Communist International—certainly not what he had in mind at the time.

In the past the Bolsheviks had made many serious mistakes—the delay in signing the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, leading to renewed German military intervention at a time when the Russian armies had almost completely disintegrated is just one example. But the revolution was on the offensive; it buoyed the Bolsheviks up and gave them a chance to recover.

In 1923, however, the revolution was definitely on the defensive. It was this that gave the mistakes their decisive character. When one is swimming with the stream, one is carried along by the current and a few missed strokes are unimportant. When one is swimming against the stream, as Lenin and Trotsky were in 1923, a missed stroke could prove disastrous.

Lenin's fight against Stalinism was over. But the battle to defend the Bolshevik tradition against the encroachments of the bureaucracy continued.

After several months of vain attempts to implement the resolutions of the Twelfth Congress from within the Central Committee, Trotsky decided to open the fight in the ranks of the party. On October 8, 1923, he wrote to the Central Committee:

The members of the Central Committee and the Central Control Commission know that while fighting resolutely and unequivocally within the Central Committee against the false policy, I have deliberately avoided submitting the struggle within the Central Committee to the judgment of even a very narrow circle of comrades: specifically, to those who given any party course that was at all reasonable would surely occupy a prominent place in the Central Committee and the Central Control Commission. I am compelled to state that my efforts over the past year and a half have yielded no results. This raises the danger that the party may be caught unawares by a crisis of exceptional severity; and in that case any comrade who saw the danger but failed to openly call it by name could be rightly accused by the party of placing form above content.



In view of the situation that has developed, I think it is not only my right but my duty to make the true state of affairs known to every party member whom I consider to be sufficiently prepared, mature, self-restrained, and consequently, capable of helping the party find a way out of this impasse without factional convulsions and upheavals. [Trotsky, *Challenge of the Left Opposition*, vol. 1 (New York: Pathfinder Press, forthcoming).]

One week later, forty-six prominent party leaders submitted a manifesto to the Central Committee which came to be known as "The Platform of the Forty-Six." The manifesto decried the "division of the party between a secretarial hierarchy and 'quiet folk,' between professional party officials recruited from above and the general mass of the party which does not participate in the common life" (E.H. Carr, *The Interregnum* [Baltimore: Pelican, 1969], pp. 375-76).

These two documents marked the origins of the Left Opposition, which fought to keep the Leninist tradition alive. This stage of the struggle will be documented in a multivolume series of Trotsky's writings from the years 1923-29: *The Challenge of the Left Opposition*.

The fight would be long and bloody. Thousands would be imprisoned, exiled, and murdered. In order to establish his "natural" succession to the mantle of Lenin, Stalin would physically liquidate the entire Bolshevik Old Guard. Trotsky himself was expelled from the Communist Party in 1927, banished to Alma Ata in Central Asia in 1928, and deported to Turkey in 1929. This measure failed to achieve the desired result. He continued to lead the Left Opposition from exile.

## The subsequent evolution of the Left Opposition

Trotsky's expulsion from the Soviet Union in 1929 made contact with the Soviet Opposition more difficult, but at the same time it facilitated the building of the Opposition on a world scale by making possible contact with Communists abroad. From his exile in Turkey he founded the International Left Opposition (ILO), which attempted to function as a faction of the Communist International (Comintern). In practice the Left Opposition was forced to form separate organizations since Communist party members even suspected of "Trotskyist sympathies" were immediately expelled from the official organizations.

This situation changed in 1933, when the German Communist Party (KPD) capitulated to Hitler without a fight. The Comintern refused to learn the lessons of the debacle. It declared that the policy of the KPD had been totally correct, that Hitler's coming to power did not mean a defeat for the German workers! As a result, in 1933 the ILO issued a call for a new International, the Fourth International, which was formally established in September 1938, and for a political revolution in the USSR to overthrow the bureaucracy and reestablish workers' democracy.

The fate of the Left Opposition in the Soviet Union was grim. Its members were deported to labor camps, forced to capitulate, or executed. Only a few isolated individuals miraculously survived in the "Gulag Archipelago" into the 1950's (see "Memoirs of a Bolshevik-Leninist" in *Samizdat—Voices of the Soviet Opposition*, ed. by George Saunders [New York: Monad Press, 1974]). But the fight against Stalinism in the Soviet Union is not over.

The Soviet working class, once a tiny minority in a sea of peasants, is now a large majority of the population, and its cultural level is incomparably higher than it was fifty years ago. The overturn of capitalist property relations in twelve countries since World War II has enabled the Soviet Union to break out of the cruel isolation of capitalist encirclement. And as the material conditions of the Soviet masses have risen to a higher level—so have their expectations. They are no longer the starved and battered generation of 1923. Their aspirations in the cultural, economic, and political spheres increasingly collide with the narrow interests of the privileged, self-serving bureaucracy.

In recent years this has given rise to a new Soviet opposition movement. This movement, organized primarily around demands for freedom of expression and an end to the oppression of the non-Russian nationalities, although young and unformed and in general isolated from the traditions of the past, is a forerunner of the mass movement for political revolution that is bound to develop in the USSR.

A not insignificant force within this dissident movement is the current that seeks to revive the Bolshevik tradition, to cut through decades of falsification and slander, and to join in Lenin's fight against Stalinism.

## Part II ON LENIN'S TESTAMENT

### Introduction

Trotsky's article "On the Suppressed Testament of Lenin" was completed on December 31, 1932. It was first published in an English translation in the July and August 1934 issues of *New International* (now *International Socialist Review*). In 1935 Pioneer Publishers printed Trotsky's article along with Lenin's testament in pamphlet form. A second edition, with the translation of Trotsky's article slightly revised, was published by Pioneer in 1946. Pathfinder Press reissued the 1946 pamphlet with a new foreword as a third edition in 1970.

The version printed here is based on the 1946 text. Spelling, capitalization, and punctuation have been modernized and a few obvious errors corrected, but otherwise the text has not been changed. This will give the reader the opportunity to compare the texts of the Lenin documents published by Trotsky with those finally published in the Soviet Union almost thirty years later. The Lenin texts included in the remainder of this book are based on the fourth English-language edition of Lenin's *Collected Works* published by Progress Publishers in Moscow, with the exception of two items which are omitted from the English-language *Collected Works*. Significant discrepancies between the Pioneer translations and the Moscow translations have been checked against the fifth Russian edition of Lenin's *Collected Works* and are noted along with the Lenin texts where they are printed later in the book.

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Notes will be found at the end of each part.



## **On Lenin's Testament**

### **By Leon Trotsky**

The postwar epoch has brought into wide currency the psychological biography, the masters of which art often pull their subject up out of society by the roots. The fundamental driving force of history is presented as the abstraction, personality. The behavior of the "political animal," as Aristotle brilliantly defined mankind, is resolved into personal passions and instincts.

The statement that personality is abstract may seem absurd. Are not the superpersonal forces of history really the abstract things? And what can be more concrete than a living man? However, we insist upon our statement. If you remove from a personality, even the most richly endowed, the content which is introduced into it by the milieu, the nation, the epoch, the class, the group, the family, there remains an empty automaton, a psycho-physical robot, an object of natural, but not of social or "humane," science.

The causes of this abandonment of history and society must, as always, be sought in history and society. Two decades of wars, revolutions, and crises have given a bad shake-up to that sovereign, human personality. To have weight in the scales of contemporary history, a thing must be measured in millions. For this, the offended personality seeks revenge. Unable to cope with society on the rampage, it turns its back upon society. Unable to explain itself by means of historic processes, it tries to explain history from within itself. Thus the Indian philosophers built universal systems by contemplating their own navels.

### **The school of pure psychology**

The influence of Freud upon the new biographical school is undeniable, but superficial. In essence these parlor psychologists are inclining to a belletristic irresponsibility. They employ not so much the method as the terminology of Freud, and not so much for analysis as for literary adornment.

In his recent work Emil Ludwig, the most popular representa-

tive of this genre, has taken a new step along the chosen path: he has replaced the study of the hero's life and activity with dialogue. Behind the answers of the statesman to questions put to him, behind his intonations and grimaces, the writer discovers his real motives. Conversation becomes almost a confession. In its technique Ludwig's new approach to the hero suggests Freud's approach to his patient: it is a matter of bringing the personality to the surface with its own cooperation. But with all this external similarity, how different it is in essence! The fruitfulness of Freud's work is attained at the price of a heroic break with all kinds of conventions. The great psychoanalyst is ruthless. At work he is like a surgeon, almost like a butcher with rolled-up sleeves. Anything you want, but there is not one hundredth of one percent of diplomacy in his technique. Freud bothers least of all about the prestige of his patient, or about considerations of good form, or any other kind of false note or frill. And it is for this reason that he can carry on his dialogue only face-to-face, without secretary or stenographer, behind padded doors.

Not so Ludwig. He enters into a conversation with Mussolini, or with Stalin, in order to present the world with an authentic portrait of their souls. Yet the whole conversation follows a program previously agreed upon. Every word is taken down by a stenographer. The eminent patient knows quite well what can be useful to him in this process and what harmful. The writer is sufficiently experienced to distinguish rhetorical tricks and sufficiently polite not to notice them. The dialogue developing under these circumstances, if it does indeed resemble a confession, resembles one put on for the talking pictures.

Emil Ludwig has every reason to declare: "I understand nothing of politics." This is supposed to mean: "I stand above politics." In reality it is a mere formula of personal neutrality—or to borrow from Freud, it is that "mental censor" which makes easier for the psychologist his political function. In the same way diplomats do not interfere with the inner life of the country to whose government they are accredited, but this does not prevent them on occasion from supporting plots and financing acts of terrorism.

One and the same person in different conditions develops different sides of his personality. How many Aristotles are herding swine, and how many swineherds wear a crown on their heads! But Ludwig can lightly resolve even the contradiction between

Bolshevism and fascism into a mere matter of individual psychology. Even the most penetrating psychologist could not with impunity adopt such a tendentious "neutrality." Casting loose from the social conditioning of human consciousness, Ludwig enters into a realm of mere subjective caprice. The "soul" has not three dimensions, and it therefore lacks the refractory quality common to all other substances. The writer loses his taste for the study of facts and documents. What is the use of this colorless evidence when it can be replaced with bright guesses?

In his work on Stalin, as in his book about Mussolini, Ludwig remains "outside politics." This does not in the least prevent his works from becoming a political weapon. Whose weapon? In the one case Mussolini's, in the other that of Stalin and his group. Nature abhors a vacuum. If Ludwig does not occupy himself with politics, this is not saying that politics does not occupy itself with Ludwig.

Upon the publication of my autobiography some three years ago, the official Soviet historian Pokrovsky, now dead, wrote: "We must answer this book immediately, put our young scholars to work refuting all that can be refuted, etc." But it is a striking fact that no one, absolutely no one, responded. Nothing was analyzed, nothing was refuted. There was nothing to refute, and nobody could be found capable of writing a book which would find readers.

A frontal attack proving impossible, it became necessary to resort to a flanking movement. Ludwig, of course, is not a historian of the Stalin school. He is an independent psychological portraitist. But a writer foreign to all politics may prove the most convenient means for putting into circulation ideas which can find no other support but a popular name. Let us see how this works out in actual fact.

### **"Six words"**

Citing the testimony of Karl Radek, Emil Ludwig borrows from him the following episode:

After the death of Lenin we sat together, nineteen members of the Central Committee, tensely waiting to learn what our lost leader would say to us from his grave. Lenin's widow gave us his letter. Stalin read it. No one stirred during the reading. When it came to Trotsky the words occurred: "His non-Bolshevik past is not accidental." At that point Trotsky interrupted the reading and asked:



"What does it say there?" The sentence was repeated. Those were the only words spoken in that solemn moment.

And then in the character of analyst, and not narrator, Ludwig makes the following remark on his own account: "A terrible moment, when Trotsky's heart must have stopped beating; this phrase of six words essentially determined the course of his life." How simple it seems to find a key to the riddles of history! These unctuous lines of Ludwig would doubtless have uncovered to me myself the very secret of my destiny if . . . if this Radek-Ludwig story did not happen to be false from beginning to end, false in small things and great, in what matters and in what matters not.

To begin with, the testament was written by Lenin not two years before his death as our author affirms, but one year. It was dated January 4, 1923; Lenin died on January 21, 1924. His political life had broken off completely in March 1923. Ludwig speaks as though the testament had never been published in full. As a matter of fact it has been reproduced dozens of times in all languages of the world press. The first official reading of the testament in the Kremlin occurred, not at a session of the Central Committee, as Ludwig writes, but in the Council of Elders at the Thirteenth Congress of the party on May 22, 1924. It was not Stalin who read the testament, but Kamenev in his then position as permanent president of the central party bodies. And finally—most important—I did not interrupt the reading with an emotional exclamation because of the absence of any motive whatever for such an act. Those words which Ludwig wrote down at the dictation of Radek are not in the text of the testament. They are an outright invention. Difficult as it may be to believe, this is the fact.

If Ludwig were not so careless about the factual basis of his psychological patterns, he might without difficulty have got possession of an exact text of the testament, established the necessary facts and dates, and thus avoided those wretched mistakes with which his work about the Kremlin and the Bolsheviks is unfortunately brimful.

The so-called testament was written at two periods, separated by an interval of ten days: December 25, 1922, and January 4, 1923. At first only two persons knew of the document: the stenographer, M. Volodicheva, who wrote it from dictation, and Lenin's wife, N. Krupskaya.<sup>1</sup> As long as there remained a glimmer of hope for Lenin's recovery, Krupskaya left the document under

lock and key. After Lenin's death, not long before the Thirteenth Congress, she handed the testament to the Secretariat of the Central Committee in order that through the party congress it should be brought to the attention of the party for whom it was destined.

At that time the party apparatus was semiofficially in the hands of the troika (Zinoviev, Kamenev, Stalin)—as a matter of fact, already in the hands of Stalin. The troika decisively expressed themselves against reading the testament at the congress—the motive not at all difficult to understand. Krupskaya insisted upon her wish. At this stage the dispute was going on behind the scenes. The question was transferred to a meeting of the Elders at the Congress—that is, the leaders of the provincial delegations. It was here that the oppositional members of the Central Committee first learned about the testament, I among them. After a decision had been adopted that nobody should make notes, Kamenev began to read the text aloud. The mood of the listeners was indeed tense in the highest degree. But so far as I can restore the picture from memory, I should say that those who already knew the contents of the document were incomparably the most anxious. The troika introduced, through one of its henchmen, a resolution previously agreed upon with the provincial leaders: the document should be read to each delegation separately in executive session; no one should dare to make notes; at the plenary session the testament must not be referred to. With the gentle insistence characteristic of her, Krupskaya argued that this was a direct violation of the will of Lenin, to whom you could not deny the right to bring his last advice to the attention of the party. But the members of the Council of Elders, bound by factional discipline, remained obdurate; the resolution of the troika was adopted by an overwhelming majority.

In order to grasp the significance of those mystical and mythical "six words" which are supposed to have decided my fate, it is necessary to recall certain preceding and accompanying circumstances. Already in the period of sharp disputes on the subject of the October Revolution, certain "Old Bolsheviks" from the right wing had more than once pointed out with vexation that Trotsky after all had not formerly been a Bolshevik. Lenin always stood up against these voices. Trotsky long ago understood that a union with the Mensheviks was impossible, he said, for example, on November 14, 1917—"and since then there has been no better Bolshevik."<sup>2</sup> On Lenin's lips those words meant something.

Two years later, while explaining in a letter to the foreign Communists the conditions under which Bolshevism had developed, how there had been disagreements and splits, Lenin pointed out that "at the decisive moment, at the moment when it seized the power and created the Soviet Republic, Bolshevism was united and drew to itself all the best elements in the currents of socialist thought that were nearest to it."<sup>3</sup> No current closer to Bolshevism than that which I represented up to 1917 existed either in Russia or in the West. My union with Lenin had been predetermined by the logic of ideas and the logic of events. At the decisive moment Bolshevism drew into its ranks "all the best elements" in the tendencies "that were nearest to it." Such was Lenin's appraisal of the situation. I have no reason to dispute him.

At the time of our two months' argument on the trade union question (winter of 1920-21), Stalin and Zinoviev had again attempted to put into circulation references to the non-Bolshevik past of Trotsky. In answer to this, the less restrained leaders of the opposite camp had reminded Zinoviev of his conduct during the period of the October insurrection. Thinking over from all sides on his deathbed how relations would crystallize in the party without him, Lenin could not but foresee that Stalin and Zinoviev would try to use my non-Bolshevik past in order to mobilize the Old Bolsheviks against me. The testament tries, incidentally, to forestall this danger, too. Here is what it says immediately after its characterization of Stalin and Trotsky: "I will not further characterize the other members of the Central Committee as to their personal qualities. I will only remind you that the October episode of Zinoviev and Kamenev was not, of course, accidental, but that it ought as little to be used against them personally as the non-Bolshevism of Trotsky."

This remark that the October episode "was not accidental" pursues a perfectly definite goal: to warn the party that in critical circumstances Zinoviev and Kamenev may again reveal their lack of firmness. This warning stands, however, in no relation with the remark about Trotsky. In regard to him it is merely recommended not to use his non-Bolshevik past as an argument *ad hominem*. I therefore had no motive for putting the question which Radek attributes to me. Ludwig's guess that my heart "stopped beating" also falls to the ground. Least of all did the testament set out to make a guiding role in the party work

difficult for me. As we shall see below, it pursued an exactly opposite aim.

### **“The mutual relations of Stalin and Trotsky”**

The central position in the testament, which fills two typewritten pages, is devoted to a characterization of the mutual relations of Stalin and Trotsky, “the two most able leaders of the present Central Committee.” Having remarked upon the “exceptional abilities” of Trotsky (“the most able man in the present Central Committee”), Lenin immediately points out his adverse traits: “far-reaching self-confidence” and “a disposition to be too much attracted by the purely administrative side of affairs.” However serious the faults indicated may be in themselves, they do not—I remark in passing—bear any relation to “underestimating the peasants” or “lacking faith in the inner forces of the revolution” or any other of the inventions of the epigones in recent years.

On the other side Lenin writes: “Stalin, having become general secretary, has concentrated an enormous power in his hands; and I am not sure that he always knows how to use this power with sufficient caution.”

It is not a question here of the political influence of Stalin, which at that period was insignificant, but of the administrative power which he had concentrated in his hands, “having become general secretary.” This is a very exact and carefully weighed formula; we shall return to it later.

The testament insists upon an increase of the number of members of the Central Committee to fifty, even to one hundred, in order that with this compact pressure it may restrain the centrifugal tendencies in the Political Bureau. This organizational proposal has still the appearance of a neutral guarantee against personal conflicts. But only ten days later it seemed to Lenin inadequate, and he added a supplementary proposal which also gave to the whole document its final physiognomy: “. . . I propose to the comrades to find a way to remove Stalin from that position and appoint to it another man who in all other respects<sup>4</sup> differs from Stalin only in superiority—namely, more patient, more loyal, more polite and more attentive to comrades, less capricious, etc.”

During the days when the testament was dictated, Lenin was still trying to give to his critical appraisal of Stalin as restrained an expression as possible. In the coming weeks his tone would



become sharper and sharper right up to the last hour when his voice ceased forever. But even in the testament, enough is said to motivate the demand for a change of general secretary: along with rudeness and capriciousness, Stalin is accused of *lack of loyalty*. At this point the characterization becomes a heavy indictment.

As will appear later, the testament could not have been a surprise to Stalin. But this did not soften the blow. Upon his first acquaintance with the document, in the Secretariat, in the circle of his closest associates, Stalin let fly a phrase which gave quite unconcealed expression to his real feelings toward the author of the testament. The conditions under which this phrase spread to wide circles, and above all the inimitable quality of the reaction itself, is in my eyes an unqualified guarantee of the authenticity of the episode. Unfortunately this winged phrase cannot be quoted in print.

The concluding sentence of the testament shows unequivocally on which side, in Lenin's opinion, the danger lay. To remove Stalin—just him and him only—meant to cut him off from the apparatus, to withdraw from him the possibility of pressing on the long arm of the lever, to deprive him of all that power which he had concentrated in his hands in this office. Who, then, should be named general secretary? Someone who, having the positive qualities of Stalin, should be more patient, more loyal, less capricious. This was the phrase which struck home most sharply to Stalin. Lenin obviously did not consider him irreplaceable since he proposed that we seek a more suitable person for his post. In tendering his resignation, as a matter of form, the general secretary capriciously kept repeating: "Well, I really am rude. . . . Ilyich suggested that you find another who would differ from me *only* in greater politeness. Well, try to find him." "Never mind," answered the voice of one of Stalin's then friends. "We are not afraid of rudeness. Our whole party is rude, proletarian." A drawing-room conception of politeness is here indirectly attributed to Lenin. As to the accusation of inadequate loyalty, neither Stalin nor his friends had a word to say. It is perhaps not without interest that the supporting voice came from A.P. Smirnov, then people's commissar of agriculture, but now under the ban as a Right Oppositionist. Politics knows no gratitude.

Radek, who was then still a member of the Central Committee, sat beside me during the reading of the testament. Yielding with abandon to the influence of the moment and lacking inner disci-

pline, Radek took instant fire from the testament and leaned to me with the words, "Now they won't dare go against you." I answered him, "On the contrary, they will have to go the limit, and moreover as quickly as possible." The very next days of that Thirteenth Congress demonstrated that my judgment was the more sober. The troika were compelled to forestall the possible effect of the testament by placing the party as soon as possible before a fait accompli. The very reading of the document to the local delegations with "outsiders" not admitted, was converted into a downright struggle against me. The leaders of the delegations in their reading would swallow some words, emphasize others, and offer commentaries to the effect that the letter had been written by a man seriously ill and under the influence of trickery and intrigue. The machine was already in complete control. The mere fact that the troika was able to transgress the will of Lenin, refusing to read his letter at the congress, sufficiently characterizes the composition of the congress and its atmosphere. The testament did not weaken or put a stop to the inner struggle, but on the contrary lent it a disastrous tempo.

### **Lenin's attitude toward Stalin**

Politics is persistent. It can press into its service even those who demonstratively turn their backs to it. Ludwig writes: "Stalin followed Lenin fervently up to his death." If this phrase expressed merely the mighty influence of Lenin upon his pupils, including Stalin, there could be no argument. But Ludwig means something more. He wants to suggest an exceptional closeness to the teacher of this particular pupil. As an especially precious testimony Ludwig cites upon this point the words of Stalin himself: "I am only a pupil of Lenin, and my aim is to be his worthy pupil." It is too bad when a professional psychologist operates uncritically with a trite phrase, the conventional modesty of which contains not one atom of intimate content. Ludwig becomes here a mere transmitter of the official legend manufactured during these recent years. I doubt if he has the remotest idea of the contradictions into which his indifference to facts has brought him. If Stalin actually was following Lenin up to his death, how then explain the fact that the last document dictated by Lenin, on the eve of his second stroke, was a curt letter to Stalin, a few lines in all, *breaking off all personal and comradely relations*? This single event of its kind in the life of Lenin, a

sharp break with one of his close associates, must have had very serious psychological causes, and would be, to say the least, incomprehensible in relation to a pupil who "fervently" followed his teacher up to the end. Yet we hear not a word about this from Ludwig.

When Lenin's letter breaking with Stalin became widely known among the leaders of the party, the troika having by that time fallen to pieces, Stalin and his close friends found no other way out but to revive that same old story about the incompetent condition of Lenin. As a matter of fact the testament, as also the letter breaking off relations, was written in those months (December 1922 to the beginning of March 1923) during which Lenin in a series of programmatic articles gave the party the most mature fruits of his thinking. That break with Stalin did not drop out of a clear sky. It flowed from a long series of preceding conflicts upon matters of principle and upon practical matters alike, and it sets forth the whole bitterness of these conflicts in a tragic light.

Lenin undoubtedly valued highly certain of Stalin's traits: his firmness of character, tenacity, stubbornness, even ruthlessness, and craftiness—qualities necessary in a war and consequently in its general staff. But Lenin was far from thinking that these gifts, even on an extraordinary scale, were sufficient for the leadership of the party and the state. Lenin saw in Stalin a revolutionist, but not a statesman in the grand style. Theory had too high an importance for Lenin in a political struggle. Nobody considered Stalin a theoretician, and he himself up to 1924 never made any pretense to this vocation. On the contrary, his weak theoretical grounding was too well known in a small circle. Stalin is not acquainted with the West; he does not know any foreign language. He was never brought into the discussion of problems of the international workers' movement. And finally Stalin was not—this is less important, but not without significance—either a writer or an orator in the strict sense of the word. His articles, in spite of all the author's caution, are loaded not only with theoretical blunders and naivetes, but also with crude sins against the Russian language. In the eyes of Lenin, Stalin's value was wholly in the sphere of party administration and machine maneuvering. But even here Lenin made substantial reservations, and these increased during the last period.

Lenin despised idealistic moralizings. But this did not prevent him from being a rigorist of revolutionary morals—of those rules of conduct, that is, which he considered necessary for the success

of the revolution and the creation of the new society. In Lenin's rigorism, which flowed freely and naturally from his character, there was not a drop of pedantry or bigotry or stiffness. He knew people too well and took them as they were. He would combine the faults of some with the virtues of others, and sometimes also with their faults, and never cease to watch keenly what came of it. He knew also that times change, and we with them. The party had risen with one jump from the underground to the height of power. This created for each of the old revolutionists a startlingly sharp change in personal situation and in relations with others. What Lenin discovered in Stalin under these new conditions he cautiously but clearly remarked in his testament: a lack of loyalty and an inclination to the abuse of power. Ludwig missed these hints. It is in them, however, that one can find the key to the relations between Lenin and Stalin in the last period.

Lenin was not only a theoretician and technician of the revolutionary dictatorship, but also a vigilant guardian of its moral foundations. Every hint at the use of power for personal interests kindled threatening fires in his eyes. "How is that any better than bourgeois parliamentarism?" he would ask to express more effectively his choking indignation. And he would not infrequently add on the subject of parliamentarism one of his rich definitions. Stalin meanwhile was more and more broadly and indiscriminately using the possibilities of the revolutionary dictatorship for the recruiting of people personally obligated and devoted to him. In his position as general secretary he became the dispenser of favor and fortune. Here the foundation was laid for an inevitable conflict. *Lenin gradually lost his moral trust in Stalin.* If you understand that basic fact, then all the particular episodes of the last period take their places accordingly, and give a real and not a false picture of the attitude of Lenin to Stalin.

### **Sverdlov and Stalin as types of organizers**

In order to accord the testament its proper place in the development of the party, it is here necessary to make a digression. Up to the spring of 1919 the chief organizer of the party had been Sverdlov. He did not have the name of general secretary, a name which was then not yet invented, but he was that in reality. Sverdlov died at the age of 34 in March 1919 from the so-called Spanish fever. In the spread of the civil war and the epidemic,



mowing people down right and left, the party hardly realized the weight of this loss. In two funeral speeches Lenin gave an appraisal of Sverdlov which throws a reflected but very clear light also upon his later relations with Stalin. "In the course of our revolution, in its victories," Lenin said, "it fell to Sverdlov to express more fully and more wholly than anybody else the very essence of the proletarian revolution." Sverdlov was "before all and above all an organizer." From a modest underground worker, neither theoretician nor writer, there grew up in a short time "an organizer who acquired irreproachable authority, an organizer of the whole Soviet power in Russia, and an organizer of the work of the party unique in his understanding." Lenin had no taste for the exaggerations of anniversary or funeral panegyrics. His appraisal of Sverdlov was at the same time a characterization of the task of the organizer: "Only thanks to the fact that we had such an organizer as Sverdlov were we able in war times to work as though we had *not one single conflict worth speaking of.*"

So it was in fact. In conversations with Lenin in those days we remarked more than once, and with ever renewed satisfaction, one of the chief conditions of our success: the unity and solidarity of the governing group. In spite of the dreadful pressure of events and difficulties, the novelty of the problems, and sharp practical disagreements occasionally bursting out, the work proceeded with extraordinary smoothness and friendliness, and without interruptions. With a brief word we would recall episodes of the old revolutions. "No, it is better with us." "This alone guarantees our victory." The solidarity of the center had been prepared by the whole history of Bolshevism and was kept up by the unquestioned authority of the leaders—and above all of Lenin. But in the inner mechanics of this unexampled unanimity the chief technician had been Sverdlov. The secret of his art was simple: to be guided by the interests of the cause and that only. No one of the party workers had any fear of intrigues creeping down from the party staff. The basis of this authority of Sverdlov was *loyalty*.

Having tested out mentally all the party leaders, Lenin in his funeral speech drew the practical conclusion: "Such a man we can never replace, if by replacement we mean the possibility of finding one comrade combining such qualities. . . . The work which he did alone can now be accomplished only by a whole group of men who, following in his footsteps, will carry on his service."<sup>5</sup> These words were not rhetorical, but a strictly practical proposal. And the proposal was carried out. Instead of a single

secretary, there was appointed a collegium of three persons.

From these words of Lenin it is evident, even to those unacquainted with the history of the party, that during the life of Sverdlov, Stalin played no leading role in the party machinery—either at the time of the October Revolution or in the period of laying the foundations and walls of the Soviet state. Stalin was also not included in the first secretariat which replaced Sverdlov.

When at the Tenth Congress, two years after the death of Sverdlov, Zinoviev and others, not without a hidden thought of the struggle against me, supported the candidacy of Stalin for general secretary—that is, placed him *de jure* in the position which Sverdlov had occupied *de facto*—Lenin spoke in a small circle against this plan, expressing his fear that “this cook will prepare only peppery dishes.” That phrase alone, taken in connection with the character of Sverdlov, shows us the differences between the two types of organizers: the one tireless in smoothing over conflicts, easing the work of the collegium, and the other a specialist in peppery dishes—not even afraid to spice them with actual poison. If Lenin did not in March 1921 carry his opposition to the limit—that is, did not appeal openly to the congress against the candidacy of Stalin—it was because the post of secretary, even though “general,” had in the conditions then prevailing, with the power and influence concentrated in the Political Bureau, a strictly subordinate significance. Perhaps also Lenin, like many others, did not adequately realize the danger in time.

Toward the end of 1921, Lenin's health broke sharply. On December 7, in taking his departure upon the insistence of his physician, Lenin, little given to complaining, wrote to the members of the Political Bureau: “I am leaving today. In spite of my reduced quota of work and increased quota of rest, these last days the insomnia has increased devilishly. I am afraid I cannot speak either at the party congress or the Soviet congress.”<sup>6</sup>

For five months he languishes, half removed by doctors and friends from his work, in continual alarm over the course of governmental and party affairs, in continual struggle with his lingering disease. In May he has the first stroke. For two months Lenin is unable to speak or write or move. In July he begins slowly to recover. Remaining in the country, he enters by degrees into active correspondence. In October he returns to the Kremlin and officially takes up his work.

“There is no evil without good,” he writes privately in the draft of a future speech. “I have been sitting quiet for a half year and

looking on 'from the sidelines.' ”<sup>7</sup> Lenin means to say: I formerly sat too steadily at my post and failed to observe many things; the long interruption has now permitted me to see much with fresh eyes. What disturbed him most, unquestionably, was the monstrous growth of bureaucratic power, the focal point of which had become the Organization Bureau of the Central Committee.

The necessity of removing the boss who was specializing in peppery dishes became clear to Lenin immediately after his return to work. But this personnel question had become notably complicated. Lenin could not fail to see how extensively his absence had been made use of by Stalin for a one-sided selection of men—often in direct conflict with the interests of the cause. The general secretary was now relying upon a numerous faction, bound together by ties which, if not always intellectual, were at least firm. A change of the heads of the party machine had already become impossible without the preparation of a serious political attack. At this time occurred the “conspiratorial” conversation between Lenin and me in regard to a combined struggle against Soviet and party bureaucratism, and his proposal of a “bloc” against the Organization Bureau—the fundamental stronghold of Stalin at that time. The fact of this conversation as well as its content soon found their reflection in documents, and they constitute an episode of the party history undeniable and not denied by anyone.

However, in only a few weeks there came a new decline in Lenin's health. Not only continual work, but also executive conversations with the comrades were again forbidden by his physicians. He had to think out further measures of struggle alone within four walls. To control the backstage activities of the secretariat, Lenin worked out some general measures of an organizational character. Thus arose the plan of creating a highly authoritative party center in the form of a Control Commission composed of reliable and experienced members of the party, completely independent from the hierarchical viewpoint—that is, neither officials nor administrators—and at the same time endowed with the right to call to account for violations of legality, of party and Soviet democracy, and for lack of revolutionary morality, all officials without exception, not only of the party, including members of the Central Committee, but also, through mediation of the Workers' and Peasants' Inspection, the high officials of the state.

On January 23, through Krupskaya, Lenin sent for publication in *Pravda* an article<sup>8</sup> on the subject of his proposed reorganization of the central institutions. Fearing at once a traitorous blow from his disease and a no less traitorous response from the Secretariat, Lenin demanded that his article be printed in *Pravda* immediately; this implied a direct appeal to the party. Stalin refused Krupskaya this request on the ground of the necessity of discussing the question in the Political Bureau. Formally this meant merely a day's postponement. But the very procedure of referring it to the Political Bureau boded no good. At Lenin's direction Krupskaya turned to me for cooperation. I demanded an immediate meeting of the Political Bureau. Lenin's fears were completely confirmed: all the members and alternates present at the meeting, Stalin, Molotov, Kuibyshev, Rykov, Kalinin, and Bukharin, were not only against the reform proposed by Lenin, but also against printing his article. To console the sick man, whom any sharp emotional excitement threatened with disaster, Kuibyshev, the future head of the Central Control Commission, proposed that they print a special issue of *Pravda* containing Lenin's article, but consisting of only one copy. It was thus "fervently" that these people followed their teacher. I rejected with indignation the proposal to hoodwink Lenin, spoke essentially in favor of the reform proposed by him, and demanded the immediate publication of his article. I was supported by Kamenev who had come in an hour late. The attitude of the majority was at last broken down by the argument that Lenin in any case would put his article in circulation; it would be copied on typewriters and read with redoubled attention, and it would be thus all the more pointedly directed against the Political Bureau. The article appeared in *Pravda* the next morning, January 25. This episode also found its reflection in due season in official documents, upon the basis of which it is here described.

I consider it necessary in general to emphasize the fact that since I do not belong to the school of pure psychology, and since I am accustomed to trust firmly established facts rather than their emotional reflection in memory, the whole present exposition, with the exception of specially indicated episodes, is set forth by me on the basis of documents in my archives and with a careful verification of dates, testimony, and factual circumstances in general.



## The disagreements between Lenin and Stalin

Organizational policy was not the only arena of Lenin's struggle against Stalin. The November plenum of the Central Committee (1922),<sup>9</sup> sitting without Lenin and without me, introduced unexpectedly a radical change in the system of foreign trade, undermining the very foundation of the state monopoly. In a conversation with Krassin, then people's commissar of foreign trade, I spoke of this resolution of the Central Committee approximately as follows: "They have not yet knocked the bottom out of the barrel, but they have bored several holes in it." Lenin heard of this. On December 13 he wrote me: "I earnestly urge you to take upon yourself at the coming plenum the defense of our common view as to the unconditional necessity of preserving and enforcing the monopoly. . . . The previous plenum took a decision in this matter wholly in conflict with monopoly of foreign trade."

Refusing any concessions upon this question, Lenin insisted that I appeal to the Central Committee and the congress. The blow was directed primarily against Stalin, responsible as general secretary for the presentation of questions at the plenums of the Central Committee. That time, however, the thing did not go to the point of open struggle. Sensing the danger, Stalin yielded without a struggle, and his friends with him. At the December plenum the November decision was revoked. "It seems we captured the position without firing a shot, by mere movements of maneuver," Lenin wrote me jokingly on December 21.

The disagreement in the sphere of national policy was still sharper. In the autumn of 1922 we were preparing the transformation of the Soviet state into a federated union of national republics. Lenin considered it necessary to go as far as possible to meet the demands and claims of those nationalists who had long lived under oppression and were still far from recovering from its consequences. Stalin, on the other hand, who in his position as people's commissar for nationalities directed the preparatory work, was conducting in this sphere a policy of bureaucratic centralism. Lenin, convalescing in a village near Moscow, carried on a polemic with Stalin in letters addressed to the Political Bureau. In his first remarks on Stalin's project for the federated union, Lenin was extremely gentle and restrained. He was still hoping in those days—toward the end of September 1922—to adjust the question through the Political Bureau and without open conflict. Stalin's answers, on the other hand, contained a

noticeable irritation. He thrust back at Lenin the reproach of "hurriedness," and with it an accusation of "national liberalism"—that is, indulgence to the nationalism of the outlanders. This correspondence, although extremely interesting politically, is still concealed from the party.

The bureaucratic national policy had already at that time provoked a keen opposition in Georgia, uniting the flower of Georgian Bolshevism against Stalin and his right-hand man, Ordzhonikidze. Through Krupskaya, Lenin got into private contact with the leaders of the Georgian opposition (Mdivani, Makharadze, etc.) against the faction of Stalin, Ordzhonikidze, and Dzerzhinsky. The struggle in the borderlands was too keen, and Stalin had bound himself too closely with definite groupings, to yield in silence as he had on the question of the monopoly of foreign trade. In the next few weeks Lenin became convinced that it would be necessary to appeal to the party. At the end of December, he dictated a voluminous letter on the national question, which was to take the place of his speech at the party congress if illness prevented him from appearing.

Lenin employed against Stalin an accusation of administrative impulsiveness and spitefulness against an alleged nationalism. "Spitefulness in general," he wrote weightily, "plays the worst possible role in politics." The struggle against the just, even though at first exaggerated, demands of the nations formerly oppressed, Lenin qualified as a manifestation of Great Russian bureaucratism. He for the first time named his opponents by name: "It is, of course, necessary to hold Stalin and Dzerzhinsky responsible for all this out-and-out Great Russian nationalistic campaign." That the Great Russian, Lenin, accuses the Georgian, Dzhughashvili,<sup>10</sup> and the Pole, Dzerzhinsky, of Great Russian nationalism, may seem paradoxical; but the question here is not one of national feelings and partialities, but of two systems of politics whose differences reveal themselves in all spheres, the national question among them. In mercilessly condemning the methods of the Stalin faction, Rakovsky wrote some years later: "To the national question, as to all other questions, the bureaucracy makes its approach from the point of view of convenience of administration and regulation."<sup>11</sup> Nothing better could be said.

Stalin's verbal concessions did not quiet Lenin in the least, but on the contrary sharpened his suspicions. "Stalin will make a rotten compromise," Lenin warned me through his secretary, "in

order then to deceive." And that was just Stalin's course. He was ready to accept at the coming congress any theoretical formulation of the national policy provided it did not weaken his factional support in the center and in the borderlands. To be sure, Stalin had plenty of ground for fearing that Lenin saw through his plans completely. But on the other hand, the condition of the sick man was continually growing worse. Stalin coolly included this not unimportant factor in his calculations. The practical policy of the General Secretariat became the more decisive, the worse became Lenin's health. Stalin tried to isolate the dangerous supervisor from all information which might give him a weapon against the Secretariat and its allies. This policy of blockade naturally was directed against the people closest to Lenin. Krupskaya did what she could to protect the sick man from contact with the hostile machinations of the Secretariat. But Lenin knew how to guess a whole situation from accidental symptoms. He was clearly aware of the activities of Stalin, his motives and calculations. It is not difficult to imagine what reactions they provoked in his mind. We should remember that at that moment there already lay on Lenin's writing table, besides the testament insisting upon the removal of Stalin, also the documents on the national question which Lenin's secretaries Fotieva and Glyasser, sensitively reflecting the mood of their chief, were describing as "a bombshell against Stalin."

### A half year of sharpening struggle

Lenin developed his idea of the role of the Central Control Commission as a protector of party law and unity in connection with the question of reorganizing the Workers' and Peasants' Inspection (Rabkrin), whose head for several preceding years had been Stalin. On March 4, 1923, *Pravda* published an article famous in the history of the party, "Better Fewer, but Better."<sup>12</sup> This work was written at several different times. Lenin did not like to, and could not, dictate. He had a hard time writing the article. On March 2 he finally listened to it with satisfaction: "At last it seems all right." This article included the reform of the guiding party institutions on a broad political perspective, both national and international. Upon this side of the question, however, we cannot pause here. Highly important for our theme, however, is the estimate which Lenin gave of the Workers' and Peasants' Inspection. Here are Lenin's words: "Let us speak

frankly. The People's Commissariat of Rabkrin does not enjoy at the present moment a shadow of authority. Everybody knows that a worse organized institution than our Commissariat of Rabkrin does not exist, and that in the present circumstances you cannot expect a thing of that commissariat."

This extraordinarily biting allusion in print by the head of the government to one of the most important state institutions was a direct and unmitigated blow against Stalin as the organizer and head of this inspectorate. The reason for this should now be clear. The inspectorate was to serve chiefly as an antidote to bureaucratic distortions of the revolutionary dictatorship. This responsible function could be fulfilled successfully upon condition of complete loyalty in its leadership, but it was just this loyalty which Stalin lacked. He had converted the inspectorate like the party Secretariat into an implement of machine intrigues, of protection for "his men" and persecution of his opponents. In the article "Better Fewer, but Better" Lenin openly pointed out that his proposed reform of the inspectorate, at whose head Tsyurupa had not long ago been placed, must inevitably meet the resistance of "all our bureaucracy, both the Soviet and the party bureaucracy." In parenthesis Lenin adds significantly, "We have bureaucratism not only in the Soviet institutions but also in the party." This was a perfectly deliberate blow at Stalin as general secretary.

Thus it would be no exaggeration to say that the last half year of Lenin's political life, between his convalescence and his second illness, was filled with a sharpening struggle against Stalin. Let us recall once more the principal dates. In September 1922, Lenin opened fire against the national policy of Stalin. In the first part of December, he attacked Stalin on the question of the monopoly of foreign trade. On December 25, he wrote the first part of his testament. On December 30, he wrote his letter on the national question (the "bombshell"). On January 4, 1923, he added a postscript to his testament on the necessity of removing Stalin from his position as general secretary. On January 23, he drew up against Stalin a heavy battery: the project of a Control Commission. In an article on March 2, he dealt Stalin a double blow, both as organizer of the inspectorate and as general secretary. On March 5, he wrote me on the subject of his memorandum on the national question: "If you would agree to undertake its defense, I could be at rest." On that same day<sup>13</sup> he for the first time openly



joined forces with the irreconcilable Georgian enemies of Stalin, informing them in a special note that he was backing their cause "with all my heart" and was preparing for them documents against Stalin, Ordzhonikidze, and Dzerzhinsky. "With all my heart"—this expression was not a frequent one with Lenin.

"This question [the national question] has worried him extremely," testifies his secretary, Fotieva, "and he was preparing to speak on it at the party congress."<sup>14</sup> But a month before the congress Lenin finally broke down, and without even having given instructions in regard to the article. A weight rolled from Stalin's shoulders. At the caucus of the Council of Elders at the Twelfth Congress he already made bold to speak, in the style characteristic of him, of Lenin's letter as the document of a sick man under the influence of "womenfolk." (That is, Krupskaya and the two secretaries.) Under pretext of the necessity of finding out the actual will of Lenin, it was decided to put the letter under lock and key. There it remains to this day.

The dramatic episodes enumerated above, vivid enough in themselves, do not in the remotest degree convey the fervor with which Lenin was living through the party events of the last months of his active life. In letters and articles he laid upon himself the usual very severe censorship. Lenin understood well enough from his first stroke the nature of his illness. After he returned to work in October 1922, the capillary vessels of his brain did not cease to remind him of themselves by a hardly noticeable, but ominous and more and more frequent nudge, obviously threatening a relapse. Lenin soberly estimated his own situation in spite of the quieting assurances of his physicians. At the beginning of March, when he was compelled again to withdraw from work, at least from meetings, interviews, and telephone conversations, he carried away into his sick room a number of troubling observations and dreads. The bureaucratic apparatus had become an independent factor in big politics with Stalin's secret factional staff in the Secretariat of the Central Committee. In the national sphere, where Lenin demanded special sensitiveness, the fangs of imperial centralism were revealing themselves more and more openly. The ideas and principles of the revolution were bending to the interests of combinations behind the scenes. The authority of the dictatorship was more and more often serving as a cover for the dictates of functionaries.

Lenin keenly sensed the approach of a political crisis and feared that the apparatus would strangle the party. The policies of Stalin became for Lenin in the last period of his life the incarnation of a rising monster of bureaucratism. The sick man must more than once have shuddered at the thought that he had not succeeded in carrying out that reform of the apparatus about which he had talked with me before his second illness. A terrible danger, it seemed to him, threatened the work of his whole life.

And Stalin? Having gone too far to retreat, spurred on by his own faction, fearing that concentrated attack whose threads all issued from the sickbed of his dread enemy, Stalin was already going headlong, was openly recruiting partisans by the distribution of party and Soviet positions, was terrorizing those who appealed to Lenin through Krupskaya, and was more and more persistently issuing rumors that Lenin was already not responsible for his actions. Such was the atmosphere from which rose Lenin's letter breaking with Stalin absolutely. No, it did not drop from a clear sky. It meant merely that the cup of endurance had run over. Not only chronologically, but politically and morally, it drew a last line under the attitude of Lenin to Stalin.

Is it not surprising that Ludwig, gratefully repeating the official story about the pupil faithful to his teacher "up to his very death," says not a word of this final letter or indeed of all the other circumstances which do not accord with the present Kremlin legends? Ludwig ought at least to know the fact of the letter, if only from my autobiography, with which he was once acquainted, for he gave it a favorable review. Maybe Ludwig had doubts of the authenticity of my testimony. But neither the existence of the letter nor its contents were ever disputed by anybody. Moreover, they are confirmed in stenographic minutes of the Central Committee. At the July plenum in 1926, Zinoviev said: "At the beginning of the year 1923, Vladimir Ilyich, in a personal letter to Comrade Stalin, broke off all comradely relations with him" (Stenographic Minutes of the Plenum, No. 4, page 32). And other speakers, among them M.I. Ulyanova, Lenin's sister, spoke of the letter as of a fact generally known in the circles of the Central Committee. In those days it could not even enter Stalin's head to oppose this testimony. Indeed, he has not ventured to do that so far as I know, in a direct form, even subsequently.<sup>15</sup>

It is true that the official historians have in recent years made literally gigantic efforts to wipe out of the memory of man this

whole chapter of history. And so far as the Communist youth are concerned, these efforts have achieved certain results. But investigators exist, it would seem, exactly for the purpose of destroying legends and confirming the real facts in their rights. Or is this not true of psychologists?

### **The hypothesis of the "duumvirate"**

We have indicated above the signposts of the final struggle between Lenin and Stalin. At all these stages Lenin sought my support and found it. From the speeches, articles, and letters of Lenin you could without difficulty adduce dozens of testimonies to the fact that, after our temporary disagreement on the question of the trade unions,<sup>16</sup> throughout 1921 and 1922 and the beginning of 1923, Lenin did not lose one chance to emphasize in open forum his solidarity with me, to quote this or that statement from me, to support this or that step which I had taken. We must understand that his motives were not personal, but political. What may have alarmed him and grieved him in the last months, indeed, was my not-active-enough support of his fighting measures against Stalin. Yes, such is the paradox of the situation! Lenin, fearing in the future a split on the line of Stalin and Trotsky, demanded of me a more energetic struggle against Stalin. The contradiction here, however, is only superficial. It was in the interests of the stability of the party leadership in the future, that Lenin now wished to condemn Stalin sharply and disarm him. What restrained me was the fear that any sharp conflict in the ruling group at that time, when Lenin was struggling with death, might be understood by the party as a casting of lots for Lenin's mantle. I will not raise the question here as to whether my restraint in that case was right or not, nor the broader question as to whether it would have been possible at that time to ward off the advancing danger with organizational reforms and personal shiftings. But how far were all the actual positions of the actors from the picture which is given us by this popular German writer who so lightly picks the keys to all enigmas!

We heard from him that the testament "decided the fate of Trotsky"—that is, evidently served as a cause of Trotsky's losing power. According to another version of Ludwig, expounded alongside of this with not even an attempt to reconcile them, Lenin desired "a duumvirate of Trotsky and Stalin." This latter

thought, also, doubtless suggested by Radek, gives excellent proof that even now, even in the close circle around Stalin, even in the tendentious manipulation of a foreign writer invited in for a conversation, nobody dared assert that Lenin saw his successor in Stalin. In order not to come into too crude conflict with the text of the testimony and a whole series of other documents, it is necessary to put forward *ex post facto* this idea of a duumvirate.

But how reconcile this story with Lenin's advice: remove the general secretary? That would have meant to deprive Stalin of all the weapons of his influence. You do not treat in this way the candidate for duumvir. No, and moreover this second hypothesis of Radek-Ludwig, although more cautious, finds no support in the text of the testament. The aim of the document was defined by its author—to guarantee the stability of the Central Committee. Lenin sought the road to this goal not in the artificial combination of a duumvirate, but in strengthening the collective control over the activity of the leaders. How in doing this he conceived the relative influence of individual members of the collective leadership—as to this the reader is free to draw his own conclusions on the basis of the above quotations from the testament. But he should not lose sight of the fact that the testament was not the last word of Lenin and that his attitude to Stalin became more severe the more closely he felt the denouement approaching.

Ludwig would not have made so capital a mistake in his appraisal of the meaning and spirit of the testament if he had interested himself a little bit in its further fate. Concealed by Stalin and his group from the party, the testament was reprinted and republished only by Oppositionists—of course, secretly. Hundreds of my friends and partisans were arrested and exiled for copying and distributing those two little pages. On November 7, 1927—the tenth anniversary of the October Revolution—the Moscow Oppositionists took part in the anniversary demonstration with a placard: "Fulfill the Testament of Lenin." Specially chosen troops of Stalinists broke into the line of march and snatched away the criminal placard. Two years later, at the moment of my banishment abroad, a story was even created of an insurrection in preparation by the "Trotskyists" on November 7, 1927. The summons to "fulfill the testament of Lenin" was interpreted by the Stalinist faction as a summons to insurrection! And even now the testament is forbidden publication by any section of the Communist International. The Left Opposition, on



the contrary, is republishing the testament upon every appropriate occasion in all countries. Politically these facts exhaust the question.

### **Radek as a source of information**

Still, where did that fantastic tale come from about how I leapt from my seat during the reading of the testament, or rather of the "six words" which are not in the testament, with the question: "What does it say there?" Of this I can only offer a hypothetical explanation. How correct it may be, let the reader judge.

Radek belongs to the tribe of professional wits and storytellers. By this I do not mean that he does not possess other qualities. Suffice it to say that at the Seventh Congress of the party on March 8, 1918, Lenin, who was in general very restrained in personal comments, considered it possible to say: "I return to Comrade Radek, and here I want to remark that he has accidentally succeeded in uttering a serious remark. . . ." And once again later on: "This time it did happen that we got a perfectly serious remark from Radek. . . ." <sup>17</sup>

People who speak seriously only by way of exception have an organic tendency to improve reality, for in its raw form reality is not always appropriate to their stories. My personal experience has taught me to adopt a very cautious attitude to Radek's testimonies. His custom is not to recount events, but to take them as the occasion for a witty discourse. Since every art, including the anecdotal, aspires toward a synthesis, Radek is inclined to unite together various facts or the brighter features of various episodes, even though they took place at different times and places. There is no malice in this. It is the manner of his calling.

And so it happened, apparently, this time. Radek, according to all the evidence, has combined a session of the Council of Elders at the Thirteenth Congress with a session of the plenum of the Central Committee of 1926, in spite of the fact that an interval of more than two years lay between the two. At that plenum also, secret manuscripts were read, among them the testament. This time Stalin did actually read them, and not Kamenev, who was then already sitting beside me in the Opposition benches. The reading was provoked by the fact that during those days copies of the testament, Lenin's letter on the national question, and other documents kept under lock and key were already circulating

rather broadly in the party. The party apparatus was getting nervous and wanted to find out what it was that Lenin actually said. "The Opposition knows and we don't know," they were saying. After prolonged resistance Stalin found himself compelled to read the forbidden documents at a session of the Central Committee—thus automatically bringing them into the stenographic record, printed in secret notebooks for the heads of the party apparatus.

This time also, there were no exclamations during the reading of the testament, for the document was long ago too well known to the members of the Central Committee. But I did actually interrupt Stalin during the the reading of the correspondence on the national question. The episode in itself is not so important, but maybe it will be of use to the psychologists for certain inferences.

Lenin was extremely economical in his literary means and methods. He carried on his business correspondence with close colleagues in telegraphic language. The form of address was always the last name of the addressee with the letter "T" (*Tovarishch*: comrade), and the signature was "Lenin." Complicated explanations were replaced by a double or triple underlining of separate words, extra exclamation points, etc. We all well knew the peculiarities of Lenin's manner, and therefore even a slight departure from his laconic custom attracted attention.

In sending his letter on the national question Lenin wrote me on March 5:

Esteemed Comrade Trotsky:

I earnestly ask you to undertake the defense of the Georgian affair at the Central Committee of the party. That affair is now under "prosecution" at the hands of Stalin and Dzerzhinsky and I cannot rely on their impartiality. Indeed, quite the contrary! If you would agree to undertake its defense, I could be at rest. If for some reason you do not agree, send me back all the papers. I will consider that a sign of your disagreement.

With the very best comradely greetings,

Lenin

March 5, 1923

Both the content and the tone of this slight note, dictated by Lenin during the last day of his political life, were no less painful to Stalin than the testament. A lack of "impartiality"—does not this imply, indeed, that same lack of loyalty? The last thing to be felt in this note is any confidence in Stalin—"indeed, quite the

contrary"—the thing emphasized is confidence in me. A confirmation of the tacit union between Lenin and me against Stalin and his faction was at hand. Stalin controlled himself badly during the reading. When he arrived at the signature he hesitated: "With the very best comradely greetings"—that was too demonstrative from Lenin's pen. Stalin read: "With communist greetings." That sounded more dry and official. At that moment I did rise in my seat and ask: "What is written there?" Stalin was obliged, not without embarrassment, to read the authentic text of Lenin. Someone of his close friends shouted at me that I was quibbling over details although I had only sought to verify a text. That slight incident made an impression. There was talk about it among the heads of the party. Radek, who at that time was no longer a member of the Central Committee, learned of it at the plenum from others and perhaps from me. Five years later when he was already with Stalin and no longer with me, his flexible memory evidently helped him to compose this synthetic episode which stimulated Ludwig to so effective and so mistaken an inference.

Although Lenin, as we have seen, found no reason to declare in his testament that my non-Bolshevik past was "not accidental," still I am ready to adopt that formula on my own authority. In the spiritual world the law of causation is as inflexible as in the physical world. In that general sense my political orbit was, of course, "not accidental," but the fact that I became a Bolshevik was also not accidental. The question how seriously and permanently I came over to Bolshevism is not to be decided either by a bare chronological record or by the guesses of literary psychology. A theoretical and political analysis is necessary. This, of course, is too big a theme and lies wholly outside the frame of the present article. For our purpose it suffices that Lenin, in describing the conduct of Zinoviev and Kamenev in 1917 as "not accidental," was not making a philosophical reference to the laws of determinism, but a political warning for the future. It is exactly for this reason that Radek found it necessary, through Ludwig, to transfer this warning from Zinoviev and Kamenev to me.

### **The legend of "Trotskyism"**

Let us recall the chief signposts of this question. From 1917 to 1924, not a word was spoken of the contrast between Trotskyism and Leninism. In this period occurred the October Revolution, the

civil war, the construction of the Soviet state, the creation of the Red Army, the working out of the party program, the establishment of the Communist International, the formation of its cadres, and the drawing up of its fundamental documents. After the withdrawal of Lenin from his work in the nucleus of the Central Committee, serious disagreements developed. In 1924 the specter of "Trotskyism"—after careful preparation behind the scenes—was brought forth on the stage. The entire inner struggle of the party was henceforth carried on within the frame of a contrast between Trotskyism and Leninism. In other words, the disagreements created by new circumstances and new tasks between me and the epigones were presented as a continuation of my old disagreements with Lenin. A vast literature was created upon this theme. The sharpshooters were always Zinoviev and Kamenev. In their character of old and very close colleagues of Lenin they stood at the head of "the Bolshevik Old Guard" against Trotskyism. But under the pressure of deep social processes this group itself fell apart. Zinoviev and Kamenev found themselves obliged to acknowledge that the so-called "Trotskyists" had been right upon fundamental questions. New thousands of Old Bolsheviks adhered to "Trotskyism."

At the July 1926 plenum, Zinoviev announced that his struggle against me had been the greatest mistake of his life—"more dangerous than the mistake of 1917." Ordzhonikidze was not entirely wrong in calling to him from his seat: "Then why did you dupe the entire party?" (See the already quoted stenographic minutes.) To this weighty rejoinder Zinoviev officially found no answer. But he gave an unofficial explanation at a conference of the Opposition in October 1926. "You must understand," he said in my presence, to his closest friends, some Leningrad workers who honestly believed in the legend of Trotskyism, "you must understand that it was a struggle for power. The trick was to string together the old disagreements with new issues. For this purpose 'Trotskyism' was invented. . . ."

During their two-year stay in the Opposition, Zinoviev and Kamenev managed to expose completely the backstage mechanics of the preceding period when they with Stalin had created the legend of "Trotskyism" by conspiratorial methods. A year later, when it became finally clear that the Opposition would be compelled to swim long and stubbornly against the current, Zinoviev and Kamenev threw themselves on the mercy of the victor. As a first condition of their party rehabilitation it was demanded that



they rehabilitate the legend of Trotskyism. They agreed. At that time I decided to reinforce their own previous declarations on this matter through a series of authoritative testimonials.<sup>18</sup> It was Radek, no other than Karl Radek, who gave the following written testimony:

I was present at the conversation with Kamenev when L.B. [Kamenev] said he would openly declare at the Plenum of the Central Committee how they, that is, Kamenev and Zinoviev, together with Stalin, decided to utilize the old disagreements between L.D. [Trotsky] and Lenin so as to keep Comrade Trotsky from the leadership of the party after Lenin's death. Moreover, I have heard repeated from the lips of Zinoviev and Kamenev the tale of how they had "invented" Trotskyism as a topical slogan.

K. Radek

December 25, 1927

Similar written testimonies were given by Preobrazhensky, Pyatakov, Rakovsky, and Eltsin. Pyatakov, the present director of the State Bank, summed up Zinoviev's testimony in the following words: "'Trotskyism' had been invented in order to replace the real differences of opinion with fictitious differences, that is, to utilize past differences which had no bearing upon the present but which were resurrected artificially for the definite purpose mentioned above."

This is clear enough, is it not? And V. Eltsin, a representative of the younger generation, wrote: "None of the supporters of the 1925 group (the Zinovievists) who were present raised any objections to this. Everyone received this information of Zinoviev as a generally known fact."

The above-cited testimony of Radek was submitted by him on December 25, 1927. A few weeks later he was already in exile, and a few months later, on the meridian of Tomsk, he became convinced of the correctness of Stalin's position, a thing which had not been revealed to him earlier in Moscow. But from Radek also the powers demanded, as a condition sine qua non, an acknowledgment of the reality of this same legend of "Trotskyism." After Radek agreed to this, he had nothing left to do but repeat the old formulas of Zinoviev which the latter had himself exposed in 1926, only to return to them again in 1928. Radek has gone further. In a conversation with a credulous foreigner he has amended the testament of Lenin in order to find in it support for this epigonist legend of "Trotskyism."

From this short historic review, resting exclusively upon docu-

mentary data, many conclusions may be drawn. One is that a revolution is an austere process and does not spare its human vertebrae.

The course of subsequent events in the Kremlin and in the Soviet Union was determined not by a single document, even though it were the testament of Lenin, but by historical causes of a far deeper order. A political reaction after the enormous effort of the years of the insurrection and the civil war was inevitable. The concept of reaction must here be strictly distinguished from the concept of counterrevolution. Reaction does not necessarily imply a social overturn—that is, a transfer of power from one class to another. Even tsarism had its periods of progressive reform and its periods of reaction. The mood and orientation of the ruling class changes according to circumstances. This is true also of the working class. The pressure of the petty bourgeoisie upon the proletariat, tired from the tumult, entailed a revival of petty-bourgeois tendencies in the proletariat itself and a first deep reaction on the crest of which the present bureaucratic apparatus headed by Stalin rose to power.

Those qualities which Lenin valued in Stalin—stubbornness of character and craftiness—remained, of course, even then. But they found a new field of action and a new point of application. Those features which in the past had represented a minus in Stalin's personality—narrowness of outlook, lack of creative imagination, empiricism—now gained an effective significance important in the highest degree. They permitted Stalin to become the semiconscious instrument of the Soviet bureaucracy, and they impelled the bureaucracy to see in Stalin its inspired leader. This ten-year struggle among the heads of the Bolshevik Party has indubitably proved that under the conditions of this new stage of the revolution, Stalin has been developing to the limit those very traits of his political character against which Lenin in the last period of his life waged irreconcilable war. But this question, standing even now at the focus of Soviet politics, would carry us far beyond the limits of our historic theme.

Many years have passed since the events we have related. If even ten years ago there were factors in action far more powerful than the counsel of Lenin, it would now be utterly naive to appeal to the testament as an effective political document. The international struggle between the two groups which have grown out of Bolshevism long ago outgrew the question of the fate of individu-

als. Lenin's letter, known under the name of his testament, has henceforward chiefly a historic interest. But history, we may venture to think, has also its rights, which moreover do not always conflict with the interests of politics. The most elementary of scientific demands—correctly to establish facts and to verify rumors by document—may at least be recommended alike to politician and historian. And this demand might well be extended even to the psychologist.

December 31, 1932

## NOTES TO PART II

1. According to the version published in Lenin's **Collected Works**, vol. 36, pp. 593 ff., the first part of the testament was dictated on December 24-25, 1922, and taken down by M. Volodicheva. The addition to the testament on January 4, 1923, was taken down by another of Lenin's secretaries, L. Fotieva.

2. Lenin made this remark at a session of the Petersburg Committee of the Bolshevik Party on November 1 (14), 1917. (At this time Russian was still on the old-style Julian calendar, which was thirteen days behind the Gregorian calendar used in the West, hence the double date.) The minutes of this meeting were originally included in a collection of minutes of the Petrograd (Petersburg) Committee published in 1927, but they were expunged from the book at the last moment. The corrected galley proofs fell into the hands of the Opposition and Trotsky published them together with photostats of the originals in **Biulleten Oppozitsii** (Bulletin of the Opposition), the Russian-language organ he edited in exile (no. 7, November-December 1929, pp. 31-37). An English translation and commentary is found in **The Stalin School of Falsification** (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1972), pp. 101-23. This speech of Lenin's does not appear in the **Collected Works**.

3. See "Greetings to Italian, French and German Communists," **Collected Works**, vol. 30, pp. 55-56. Trotsky's emphasis.

4. We must not forget that the testament was dictated and not corrected; hence stylistic difficulties in places; but the thought is completely clear.—L.T.

5. See "Speech in Memory of Y.M. Sverdlov," **Collected Works**, vol. 29, pp. 89-94, for this and preceding citations. Trotsky's emphasis.

6. This, like many other letters quoted in the present article, is reproduced from documents in my archives.—L.T. This letter is printed in **The Trotsky Papers**, ed. by Jan M. Meijer (The Hague: Mouton, 1971), vol. 2, p. 647.—Ed.

7. This document has not been located.

8. The reference is to "How We Should Reorganize the Workers' and Peasants' Inspection," contained in Part IV of this book.

## 60 *Lenin's Fight Against Stalinism*

9. The plenum was actually held on October 6, 1922.

10. Dzhugashvili, Stalin's real name.

11. The source has not been located.

12. Reprinted in Part IV of this book.

13. Actually, on the next day, March 6.

14. For the full text of Fotieva's statement in a letter dated March 16, 1923, see Trotsky, **The Stalin School of Falsification**, p. 70. According to Lewin, **Lenin's Last Struggle**, pp. 155-56, the Institute of Marxism-Leninism confirms the existence of this letter and states that Fotieva sent it to the Political Bureau on April 16, 1923.

15. This letter, dated March 5, 1923, was first published in the USSR after Stalin's death. It is reprinted in Part III of this book.

16. During the period of war communism the Bolsheviks introduced militarization of labor. This policy, which involved mobilizing the workers under military discipline in order to restore the functioning of vital sectors of the economy, achieved some notable successes, such as in the reorganization of rail transport carried out under Trotsky's direction in 1920. This policy was, however, bitterly resented by many trade unionists since it involved the suspension of trade-union rights. After the conclusion of the Russo-Polish war in the fall of 1920, Lenin and Trotsky disagreed about the extent to which this policy should be pursued. Trotsky saw no independent role for the trade unions in a system of war communism in which all resources were nationalized and distributed by government order. Although Trotsky was opposed to the system of war communism as a whole and had proposed replacing it with a system very much akin to the NEP in February of that year, he argued that as long as war communism was maintained, it should be administered consistently. Lenin sensed the unpopularity of the trade-union measures and felt that it was politically necessary to relax the restrictions. The dispute was settled in March 1921 when war communism was replaced by the NEP.

17. See **Collected Works**, vol. 27, p. 110, where Lenin's remarks are directed against Ryazanov rather than Radek. The following note about this quotation appears in the findings of the Dewey Commission, which investigated the charges against Trotsky in the Moscow trials, published in 1938 in **Not Guilty** (2nd ed., New York: Monad Press, 1972), p. 199: "In checking this quotation we find that it appears as Trotsky gave it in Lenin's **Collected Works**, State Publishers, 1925 (Vol. XV, pp. 131-2). In the Third Russian edition of Lenin's **Collected Works**, published in 1935, the name of Riazanov has been substituted for that of Radek (Vol. XXII, p. 331). The editors neither explain the change nor even state that in earlier editions Radek's name figured in place of Riazanov's."

18. The full text of these testimonials, together with photostats of the Russian originals, is in **The Stalin School of Falsification**, pp. 92-96.



## Part III LENIN'S TESTAMENT

### Introduction

Lenin's "Letter to the Congress" was intended for the Twelfth Congress of the Bolshevik Party scheduled for April 1923. Its existence was known only to Krupskaya and the two secretaries who took it down in shorthand, M.A. Volodicheva and L.A. Fotieva. After Lenin's stroke on March 10, 1923, Krupskaya placed the document under lock and key, only revealing it on the eve of the Thirteenth Party Congress a year later, after Lenin's death. It was in this way that the letter came to be known as Lenin's "testament."

The testament was read to the delegates at the Thirteenth Congress (May 1924) with the proviso that no one would take notes. The existence of the testament was first made known to the outside world by the American radical Max Eastman, who published key phrases from it in his book *Since Lenin Died* (London: Labor Publishing Co., 1925). Eastman cited as his authority "three responsible Communists in Russia . . . who had all recently read the letter and committed its vital phrases to memory" (pp. 30-31n).

On October 18, 1926, Eastman published the "complete text" in the *New York Times*, actually the second part and the postscript, both dealing with the personalities of the central leadership.

The entire letter, including the comments on enlarging the Central Committee to fifty or a hundred members, came to light only when it was published for the first time in the Soviet Union in 1956.

A detailed analysis of the testament is given in Trotsky's 1932 article immediately preceding. The notes on enlarging the Central Committee complete the picture. Lenin intended to offset the bureaucratic tendencies within the Central Committee with an infusion of new people "closer to being rank-and-file workers and peasants" than those who had taken part in administration in the previous period and had already acquired bureaucratic hab-

its. This would give the antibureaucratic grouping headed by Trotsky more room to maneuver and avoid a hardening of positions leading to a split.

In the portion of the letter dictated on December 25, Lenin apparently felt that Stalin and his supporters could be curbed in this manner and confined himself to a serious but cautious criticism of the general secretary. The January 4 postscript reflects a change in attitude. By this point Lenin was aware of Stalin's conduct in the Georgian affair (see the introduction and Part VI, "On the Nationalities Question"). His comments on Stalin's rudeness, capriciousness, and lack of loyalty seem to be a direct comment on Stalin's handling of this matter. Now Lenin was ready to call for Stalin's removal from the post of general secretary.

The last selection in Part III is Lenin's letter to Stalin threatening to break off relations with him. On December 21, Lenin dictated a letter to Trotsky declaring victory on the question of the monopoly of foreign trade. The letter was taken down in dictation by Krupskaya at Lenin's request and with doctor's permission. Stalin found out about the letter and telephoned Krupskaya in a rage. By intimidating Krupskaya, Stalin hoped to prevent Lenin from engaging in further political activity, using Lenin's illness as an excuse.

Krupskaya appealed for help to Kamenev in a letter on December 23: "What one can and what one cannot discuss with Ilich, I know better than any doctor, because I know what makes him nervous and what does not; in any case, I know better than Stalin" (Robert V. Daniels, *Conscience of the Revolution* [New York: Simon and Schuster, 1960], p. 179). Lenin apparently did not find out about the incident until early March, when he wrote the letter threatening to break off relations with Stalin.

## Letter to the congress

### I.

I would urge strongly that at this congress a number of changes be made in our political structure.

I want to tell you of the considerations to which I attach most importance.

At the head of the list I set an increase in the number of Central Committee members to a few dozen or even a hundred. It is my opinion that without this reform our Central Committee would be in great danger if the course of events were not quite favorable for us (and that is something we cannot count on).

Then, I intend to propose that the congress should on certain conditions invest the decisions of the State Planning Commission with legislative force, meeting in this respect the wishes of Comrade Trotsky—to a certain extent and on certain conditions.

As for the first point, i.e., increasing the number of CC members, I think it must be done in order to raise the prestige of the Central Committee, to do a thorough job of improving our administrative machinery, and to prevent conflicts between small sections of the CC from acquiring excessive importance for the future of the party.

It seems to me that our party has every right to demand from the working class fifty to one hundred CC members, and that it could get them from it without unduly taxing the resources of that class.

Such a reform would considerably increase the stability of our party and ease its struggle in the encirclement of hostile states, which, in my opinion, is likely to and must become much more acute in the next few years. I think that the stability of our party would gain a thousandfold by such a measure.

Lenin

December 23, 1922

Taken down by M.V.

## II.

Continuation of the notes.

December 24, 1922

By stability of the Central Committee, of which I spoke above, I mean measures against a split, as far as such measures can at all be taken. For, of course, the white guard in *Russkaya Mysl* (it seems to have been S.S. Oldenburg) was right when, first, in the white guards' game against Soviet Russia he banked on a split in our party, and when secondly, he banked on grave differences in our party to cause that split.

Our party relies on two classes and therefore its instability would be possible and its downfall inevitable if there were no agreement between those two classes. In that event this or that measure, and generally all talk about the stability of our CC, would be futile. No measures of any kind could prevent a split in such a case. But I hope that this is too remote a future and too improbable an event to talk about.

I have in mind stability as a guarantee against a split in the immediate future, and I intend to deal here with a few ideas concerning personal qualities.

I think that from this standpoint the prime factors in the question of stability are such members of the CC as Stalin and Trotsky. I think relations between them make up the greater part of the danger of a split, which could be avoided, and this purpose, in my opinion, would be served, among other things, by increasing the number of CC members to fifty or one hundred.

Comrade Stalin, having become general secretary, has unlimited authority concentrated in his hands, and I am not sure whether he will always be capable of using that authority with sufficient caution. Comrade Trotsky, on the other hand, as his struggle against the CC on the question of the People's Commissariat for Communications has already proved,<sup>1</sup> is distinguished not only by outstanding ability. He is personally perhaps the most capable man in the present CC, but he has displayed excessive self-assurance and shown excessive preoccupation with the purely administrative side of the work.

These two qualities of the two outstanding leaders of the present CC can inadvertently lead to a split, and if our party does not take steps to avert this, the split may come unexpectedly.



I shall not give any further appraisals of the personal qualities of other members of the CC. I shall just recall that the October episode with Zinoviev and Kamenev<sup>2</sup> was, of course, no accident, but neither can the blame for it be laid upon them personally, any more than non-Bolshevism can upon Trotsky.

Speaking of the young CC members, I wish to say a few words about Bukharin and Pyatakov. They are, in my opinion, the most outstanding figures (among the youngest ones), and the following must be borne in mind about them: Bukharin is not only a most valuable and major theorist of the party; he is also rightly considered the favorite of the whole party, but his theoretical views can be classified as fully Marxist only with great reserve, for there is something scholastic about him (he has never made a study of dialectics and, I think, never fully understood it).

December 25. As for Pyatakov, he is unquestionably a man of outstanding will and outstanding ability, but shows too much zeal for administrating and the administrative side of the work to be relied upon in a serious political matter.

Both of these remarks, of course, are made only for the present, on the assumption that both these outstanding and devoted party workers fail to find an occasion to enhance their knowledge and amend their one-sidedness.

Lenin

December 25, 1922

Taken down by M.V.

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## **Addition to the letter of December 24, 1922**

Stalin is too rude and this defect, although quite tolerable in our midst and in dealings among us Communists, becomes intolerable in a general secretary. That is why I suggest that the comrades think about a way of removing Stalin from that post and appointing another man in his stead who in all other respects differs from Comrade Stalin in having only one advantage, namely, that of being more tolerant, more loyal, more polite, and more considerate to the comrades, less capricious, etc. This circumstance may appear to be a negligible detail. But I think that from the standpoint of safeguards against a split and from the standpoint of what I wrote above about the relationship be-

tween Stalin and Trotsky it is not a detail, or it is a detail which can assume decisive importance.

Lenin

Taken down by L.F.  
January 4, 1923

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### III.

Continuation of the notes.  
December 26, 1922

The increase in the number of CC members to fifty or even one hundred must, in my opinion, serve a double or even a treble purpose: the more members there are in the CC, the more men will be trained in CC work and the less danger there will be of a split due to some indiscretion. The enlistment of many workers to the CC will help the workers to improve our administrative machinery, which is pretty bad. We inherited it, in effect, from the old regime, for it was absolutely impossible to reorganize it in such a short time, especially in conditions of war, famine, etc. That is why those "critics" who point to the defects of our administrative machinery out of mockery or malice may be calmly answered that they do not in the least understand the conditions of the revolution today. It is altogether impossible in five years to reorganize the machinery adequately, especially under the conditions in which our revolution took place. It is enough that in five years we have created a new type of state in which the workers are leading the peasants against the bourgeoisie; and in a hostile international environment this in itself is a gigantic achievement. But knowledge of this must on no account blind us to the fact that, in effect, we took over the old machinery of state from the tsar and the bourgeoisie and that now, with the onset of peace and the satisfaction of the minimum requirements against famine, all our work must be directed towards improving the administrative machinery.

I think that a few dozen workers, being members of the CC, can deal better than anybody else with checking, improving, and

remodeling our state apparatus. The Workers' and Peasants' Inspection, on whom this function devolved at the beginning, proved unable to cope with it and can be used only as an "appendage" or, on certain conditions, as an assistant to these members of the CC. In my opinion, the workers admitted to the Central Committee should come preferably not from among those who have had long service in Soviet bodies (in this part of my letter the term workers everywhere includes peasants), because those workers have already acquired the very traditions and the very prejudices which it is desirable to combat.

The working-class members of the CC must be mainly workers of a lower stratum than those promoted in the last five years to work in Soviet bodies; they must be people closer to being rank-and-file workers and peasants, who, however, do not fall into the category of direct or indirect exploiters. I think that by attending all sittings of the CC and all sittings of the Political Bureau, and by reading all the documents of the CC, such workers can form a staff of devoted supporters of the Soviet system, able, first, to give stability to the CC itself, and second, to work effectively on the renewal and improvement of the state apparatus.

Lenin

Taken down by L. F.  
December 26, 1922

In increasing the number of its members, the CC, I think, must also and perhaps mainly devote attention to checking and improving our administrative machinery, which is no good at all. For this we must enlist the services of highly qualified specialists, and the task of supplying those specialists must devolve upon the Workers' and Peasants' Inspection.

How are we to combine these checking specialists, people with adequate knowledge, and the new members of the CC? This problem must be resolved in practice.

It seems to me that the Workers' and Peasants' Inspection (as a result of its development and of our perplexity about its development) has led all in all to what we now observe, namely, to an intermediate position between a special people's commissariat and a special function of the members of the CC; between an institution that inspects anything and everything and an aggregate of not very numerous but first-class inspectors, who must be

well paid (this is especially indispensable in our age when everything must be paid for and inspectors are directly employed by the institutions that pay them better).

If the number of CC members is increased in the appropriate way, and they go through a course of state management year after year with the help of highly qualified specialists and of members of the Workers' and Peasants' Inspection who are highly authoritative in every branch—then, I think, we shall successfully solve this problem which we have not managed to do for such a long time.

To sum up, one hundred members of the CC at the most and not more than four to five hundred assistants, members of the Workers' and Peasants' Inspection, engaged in inspecting under their direction.

Lenin

December 29, 1922

Taken down by M.V.

[Lenin, *Collected Works*, 4th ed. (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1960-70), vol. 33, pp. 593-97, 603-04. Unless otherwise indicated, all the Lenin selections are from this edition. Spelling, capitalization, and punctuation have been slightly revised.]

## To Comrade Stalin

Top secret  
Personal

Copy to Comrades Kamenev and Zinoviev

Dear Comrade Stalin:

You have been so rude as to summon my wife to the telephone and use bad language. Although she had told you that she was prepared to forget this, the fact nevertheless became known through her to Zinoviev and Kamenev. I have no intention of forgetting so easily what has been done against me, and it goes without saying that what has been done against my wife I consider having been done against me as well. I ask you, therefore, to



think it over whether you are prepared to withdraw what you have said and to make your apologies or whether you prefer that relations between us should be broken off.

Respectfully yours,  
Lenin

March 5, 1923

[Lenin, *Collected Works*, vol. 45, pp. 607-08.]

### NOTES TO PART III

1. This is a reference to the discussion on the trade unions. See Part II, note 16.

2. Zinoviev and Kamenev opposed the resolution to make immediate preparations for an armed uprising that was introduced by Lenin at the Bolshevik Central Committee meetings on October 10 and 16, 1917 (old calendar). When the resolution passed despite their opposition, they issued a statement in the Menshevik paper *Novaya Zhizn* (New Life) (October 18) in which they attacked the insurrection as an "act of despair." That same day, Lenin in his "Letter to Bolshevik Party Members" (*Collected Works*, vol. 26, pp. 216-19) condemned the two as "strike-breakers" and demanded their expulsion from the party.

## Part IV

# THE BUREAUCRACY

### Introduction

The evolution of Lenin's theory of bureaucracy and Trotsky's differences with Lenin on this question is treated in the introduction.

The documents included here cover a thirteen-month period between the Eleventh Party Congress in March 1922 and the Twelfth Party Congress in April 1923.

The first selection is composed of excerpts from Lenin's political report to the Eleventh Party Congress, the last one he was able to attend. Here Lenin outlines the economic and political situation at the end of the first year's experience with the NEP. The situation is unique: "Never before in history has there been a situation in which the proletariat, the revolutionary vanguard, possessed sufficient political power and had state capitalism existing alongside it." The customary operation of capitalist economy and capitalist exchange is essential. "Without it, existence is impossible." But state capitalism must be confined within certain bounds and ". . . we have not yet learned to confine it within those bounds."

Lenin also refers to the concentration of power in the hands of the party: "This state capitalism is connected with the state, and the state is the workers, the advanced section of the workers, the vanguard. We are the state."

At this point, Lenin viewed the bureaucracy as being centered outside the party in the state apparatus. The problem was that "the vanguard of the working class which has been brought to the forefront to directly supervise . . . lacks sufficient ability for it." Hence the economy and the state apparatus steer in a different direction than was intended. The Communists are not leading; they are being led. The solution to the problem "is not resolutions, not departments, and not reorganization. . . . Choose the proper men and introduce practical control."

It was in this spirit that on April 11, 1922, Lenin sent to the Politburo a "Regulatory Order on the Work of Deputies (Deputy

Chairmen of the Council of People's Commissars and Council of Labour and Defence)." This proposal was based on the establishment of a system of "deputies" to oversee the functioning of the apparatus. "The basic work of Deputies, for which they are specially responsible and to which everything else must be subordinated, consists in the verification of the actual execution of decrees, laws and regulatory orders; in the reduction of the establishments of Soviet institutions and in the supervision of the regulation and simplification of office procedure in them; and in combating bureaucracy and red tape in them" (*The Trotsky Papers*, ed. by Jan Meijer [The Hague: Mouton, 1971] vol. 2, pp. 712-13).

The second document included here is Trotsky's comments on Lenin's regulatory order. Trotsky objected to Lenin's proposal on three grounds. First, he did not think that the problem was one of "verification" or practical control to see that orders were carried out. Rather, it was a question of training officials in proper work methods and work habits from the ground up. Second, he argued that the Workers' and Peasants' Inspection (Rabkrin) was unsuited for the task of revitalizing the apparatus since it was composed mainly of officials who "have come to grief in various other fields" and was wracked by intrigue. Third, he emphasized once again the general problem of economic disorganization that caused the economy to be "yanked in all directions without system and without a plan." Without centralized economic planning under the control of the State Planning Commission (Gosplan) various economic planning boards would inevitably find themselves working at cross purposes and forced to improvise in the face of crises that might have been avoided by coordinated, timely planning.

These first two selections present the differences in approach to the problem of bureaucracy between Lenin and Trotsky in the spring of 1922. The last group of documents shows the convergence, with Lenin coming around to support Trotsky's views.

On December 27-29, 1922, Lenin dictated his notes on "Granting Legislative Functions to the State Planning Commission." "This idea," he wrote, "was suggested by Comrade Trotsky, it seems, quite a long time ago. I was against it at that time. . . . But after closer consideration of the matter, I find that in substance there is a sound idea in it. . . ."

In a letter to the Politburo on January 15, 1923, Trotsky restated his arguments for extending the functions of the State

Planning Commission. "Without a unifying plan and unified management, no economic work is possible." This had been Trotsky's central idea for more than two years. Bureaucracy could not be overcome without economic development, and economic development could not take place without centralized planning.

On January 23, 1922, Lenin dictated his article "How We Should Reorganize the Workers' and Peasants' Inspection," intending to publish it in *Pravda* as a contribution to the pre-congress discussion. Here he proposed combining a reorganized Rabkrin with the party Central Control Commission. The tone of the article is positive, but the reforms it suggests are a direct blow against the bureaucratic faction. Members of the Central Control Commission are to attend meetings of the Political Bureau and they are not to allow "anybody's authority without exception, neither that of the general secretary nor of any other member of the Central Committee, to prevent them from . . . keeping themselves fully informed of all things and from exercising the strictest control over the proper conduct of affairs." This was the equivalent of placing a watchdog over the highest party political decision-making body. In addition, Lenin proposed reducing the inflated staff of Rabkrin to three or four hundred members. In effect, this proposal called for a thorough housecleaning in one of the strongholds of the bureaucracy.

At first the Stalin faction refused to publish the article. It was only after a sharp dispute in a special meeting of the Political Bureau that the article was finally sent for publication to *Pravda*, where it appeared on January 25.

The tone of Lenin's second article on Rabkrin, "Better Fewer, but Better," was sharper. In this article, written over the course of a month (February 2 to March 2), Lenin echoes Trotsky's criticism of Rabkrin and declares publicly for the first time that the problem of bureaucracy is not limited to the state machine. "Let it be said in parentheses that we have bureaucrats in our party offices as well as in Soviet offices." Lenin came to see that the key to fighting the state bureaucracy was fighting and bringing under control the party bureaucracy. It was for this purpose that he proposed combining the reorganized Workers' and Peasants' Inspection (a state institution) with the party Central Control Commission.

The final selection in Part IV is from Trotsky's speech "The



Tasks of the Twelfth Congress of the Russian Communist Party.” The speech was delivered to a conference of the Communist Party of the Ukraine on April 5, 1923, and published in a pamphlet entitled *The Tasks of the Twelfth Congress of the Russian Communist Party*. In the excerpts from the speech printed here, Trotsky takes up the question of the “state machine.” The ideas presented are the same ones found in Lenin’s article “Better Fewer, but Better” to which Trotsky refers in passing. The state machinery “is neither more nor less than very similar to the tsarist state machine. . . .” It was created by the Bolsheviks “under the pressure of historical necessity out of the material which [they] had to hand.” What is needed is “*systematic, planned reconstruction of the state machine*” (emphasis in original).

The second excerpt, the concluding paragraphs of the speech, points up the necessity of taking practical measures at home while awaiting a change in the international situation. The essence of the Leninist position is summed up in the final paragraph: “We go forward in agreement with the peasantry and the petty bourgeoisie, we allow the Nepmen; but in the party we will allow no Nepmanism or petty bourgeois, no—we shall burn it out of the party with sulphuric acid and red-hot irons. . . . And if the signal sounds from the West—and it will sound—though we may be at that moment up to our necks in calculations, balance sheets, and NEP generally, we shall respond without wavering or delay. . . .”

The bureaucratic faction, under the leadership of Stalin, adopted a diametrically opposed program. Instead of seeing the economic concessions of the NEP and the bureaucratized character of the state machine as necessary evils to be overcome by systematic planned reconstruction, they made a virtue out of a necessity and declared that these were the basis for building socialism. Rather than looking toward the revolution in the West as the way out of the Soviet Union’s isolation and backwardness, they discounted its importance and ultimately reduced it to a diplomatic bargaining point in the vain search for alliances with capitalist governments.

These two counterposed approaches to the difficulties imposed on the Russian revolution by historical conditions formed the basis for the split in the Russian party and the world Communist movement that counterposed “Stalinism” to “Trotskyism.”

## Political Report to the Eleventh Party Congress

The state capitalism discussed in all books on economics is that which exists under the capitalist system where the state brings under its direct control certain capitalist enterprises. But ours is a proletarian state; it rests on the proletariat; it gives the proletariat all political privileges; and through the medium of the proletariat it attracts to itself the lower ranks of the peasantry (you remember that we began this work through the Poor Peasants' Committees).<sup>1</sup> That is why very many people are misled by the term state capitalism.<sup>2</sup> To avoid this we must remember the fundamental thing that state capitalism in the form we have here is not dealt with in any theory, or in any books, for the simple reason that all the usual concepts connected with this term are associated with bourgeois rule in capitalist society. Our society is one which has left the rails of capitalism but has not yet got on to new rails. The state in this society is not ruled by the bourgeoisie, but by the proletariat. We refuse to understand that when we say "state" we mean ourselves, the proletariat, the vanguard of the working class. State capitalism is capitalism which we shall be able to restrain, and the limits of which we shall be able to fix. This state capitalism is connected with the state, and the state is the workers, the advanced section of the workers, the vanguard. We are the state.

State capitalism is capitalism that we must confine within certain bounds; but we have not yet learned to confine it within those bounds. That is the whole point. And it rests with us to determine what this state capitalism is to be. We have sufficient, quite sufficient political power; we also have sufficient economic resources at our command, but the vanguard of the working class which has been brought to the forefront to directly supervise, to determine the boundaries, to demarcate, to subordinate and not be subordinated itself, lacks sufficient ability for it. All that is needed here is ability, and that is what we do not have.

Never before in history has there been a situation in which the proletariat, the revolutionary vanguard, possessed sufficient political power and had state capitalism existing alongside it. The whole question turns on our understanding that this is the capitalism that we can and must permit, that we can and must

confine within certain bounds; for this capitalism is essential for the broad masses of the peasantry and for private capital, which must trade in such a way as to satisfy the needs of the peasantry. We must organize things in such a way as to make possible the customary operation of capitalist economy and capitalist exchange, because this is essential for the people. Without it, existence is impossible. All the rest is not an absolutely vital matter to this camp. They can resign themselves to all that. You Communists, you workers, you, the politically enlightened section of the proletariat, which undertook to administer the state, must be able to arrange it so that the state, which you have taken into your hands, shall function the way you want it to. Well, we have lived through a year, the state is in our hands; but has it operated the New Economic Policy in the way we wanted in this past year? No. But we refuse to admit that it did not operate in the way we wanted. How did it operate? The machine refused to obey the hand that guided it. It was like a car that was going not in the direction the driver desired, but in the direction someone else desired; as if it were being driven by some mysterious, lawless hand, God knows whose, perhaps of a profiteer, or of a private capitalist, or of both. Be that as it may, the car is not going quite in the direction the man at the wheel imagines, and often it goes in an altogether different direction. This is the main thing that must be remembered in regard to state capitalism. In this main field we must start learning from the very beginning, and only when we have thoroughly understood and appreciated this can we be sure that we shall learn. . . .

. . . The main economic power is in our hands. All the vital large enterprises, the railways, etc., are in our hands. The number of leased enterprises, although considerable in places, is on the whole insignificant; altogether it is infinitesimal compared with the rest. The economic power in the hands of the proletarian state of Russia is quite adequate to ensure the transition to communism. What then is lacking? Obviously, what is lacking is culture among the stratum of the Communists who perform administrative functions. If we take Moscow with its 4,700 Communists in responsible positions, and if we take that huge bureaucratic machine, that gigantic heap, we must ask: who is directing whom? I doubt very much whether it can truthfully be said that the Communists are directing that heap. To tell the truth, they are not directing, they are being directed. Something analogous hap-

pened here to what we were told in our history lessons when we were children: sometimes one nation conquers another, the nation that conquers is the conqueror and the nation that is vanquished is the conquered nation. This is simple and intelligible to all. But what happens to the culture of these nations? Here things are not so simple. If the conquering nation is more cultured than the vanquished nation, the former imposes its culture upon the latter; but if the opposite is the case, the vanquished nation imposes its culture upon the conqueror. Has not something like this happened in the capital of the RSFSR? Have the 4,700 Communists (nearly a whole army division, and all of them the very best) come under the influence of an alien culture? True, there may be the impression that the vanquished have a high level of culture. But that is not the case at all. Their culture is miserable, insignificant, but it is still at a higher level than ours. Miserable and low as it is, it is higher than that of our responsible Communist administrators, for the latter lack administrative ability. Communists who are put at the head of departments—and sometimes artful saboteurs deliberately put them in these positions in order to use them as a shield—are often fooled. This is a very unpleasant admission to make, or, at any rate, not a very pleasant one; but I think we must admit it, for at present this is the salient problem. I think that this is the political lesson of the past year; and it is around this that the struggle will rage in 1922.

Will the responsible Communists of the RSFSR and of the Russian Communist Party realize that they cannot administer; that they only imagine they are directing, but are actually being directed? If they realize this they will learn, of course; for this business can be learned. But one must study hard to learn it, and our people are not doing this. They scatter orders and decrees right and left, but the result is quite different from what they want.

The competition and rivalry that we have placed on the order of the day by proclaiming NEP is a serious business. It appears to be going on in all government offices; but as a matter of fact it is one more form of the struggle between two irreconcilably hostile classes. It is another form of the struggle between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. It is a struggle that has not yet been brought to a head, and culturally it has not yet been resolved even in the central government departments in Moscow. Very often the bourgeois officials know the business better than our best Commu-



nists, who are invested with authority and have every opportunity, but who cannot make the slightest use of their rights and authority. . . .

. . . In connection with NEP some people are beginning to fuss around, proposing to reorganize our government departments and to form new ones. All this is pernicious twaddle. In the present situation the key feature is people, the proper choice of people. A revolutionary who is accustomed to struggle against petty reformists and uplift educators finds it hard to understand this. Soberly weighed up, the political conclusion to be drawn from the present situation is that we have advanced so far that we cannot hold all the positions; and we need not hold them all.

Internationally our position has improved vastly these last few years. The Soviet type of state is our achievement; it is a step forward in human progress; and the information the Communist International receives from every country every day corroborates this. Nobody has the slightest doubt about that. From the point of view of practical work, however, the position is that unless the Communists render the masses of the peasants practical assistance they will lose their support. Passing laws, passing better decrees, etc., is not now the main object of our attention. There was a time when the passing of decrees was a form of propaganda. People used to laugh at us and say that the Bolsheviki do not realize that their decrees are not being carried out; the entire white-guard press was full of jeers on that score. But at that period this passing of decrees was quite justified. We Bolsheviki had just taken power, and we said to the peasant, to the worker: "Here is a decree; this is how we would like to have the state administered. Try it!" From the very outset we gave the ordinary workers and peasants an idea of our policy in the form of decrees. The result was the enormous confidence we enjoyed and now enjoy among the masses of the people. This was an essential period at the beginning of the revolution; without it we should not have risen on the crest of the revolutionary wave; we should have wallowed in its trough. Without it we should not have won the confidence of all the workers and peasants who wanted to build their lives on new lines. But this period has passed, and we refuse to understand this. Now the peasants and workers will laugh at us if we order this or that government department to be formed or reorganized. The ordinary workers and peasants will display no interest in this now, and they will be right because this is not the

central task today. This is not the sort of thing with which we Communists should now go to the people. Although we who are engaged in government departments are always overwhelmed with so many petty affairs, this is not the link that we must grasp, this is not the key feature. The key feature is that we have not got the right men in the right places; that responsible Communists who acquitted themselves magnificently during the revolution have been given commercial and industrial functions about which they know nothing; and they prevent us from seeing the truth, for rogues and rascals hide magnificently behind their backs. The trouble is that we have no such thing as practical control of how things have been done. This is a prosaic job, a small job; these are petty affairs. But after the greatest political change in history, bearing in mind that for a time we shall have to live in the midst of the capitalist system, the key feature now is not politics in the narrow sense of the word (what we read in the newspapers is just political fireworks; there is nothing socialist in it at all), the key feature is not resolutions, not departments, and not reorganization. As long as these things are necessary we shall do them, but don't go to the people with them. Choose the proper men and introduce practical control. That is what the people will appreciate. . . .

[Lenin, *Collected Works*, vol. 33, pp. 278-80; 288-89; 303-04.]

## Comments on Lenin's Proposal Concerning the Work of Deputies

1) The problems posed are so general that this is the equivalent of posing no problems at all. The deputies are supposed to strive to make everything go well in all areas and in every respect—this is what the draft resolution comes down to. The various points, at least in outward *appearance*, give instructions on how to achieve a state of affairs where all goes well in every area, even down to the proper editing of *Ekonomicheskaya Zhizn* [Economic Life].

2) The apparatus designated for carrying out these general tasks is Rabkrin. However, by its essence Rabkrin is not suited for this and cannot become so. We must not shut our eyes to the fact that those who work in Rabkrin are mainly officials who have come to grief in various other fields. From this, among other things, results the extraordinary growth of intrigue in the organs of Rabkrin, which has long been proverbial throughout the entire country. There is no basis whatever for thinking that this apparatus (not the small group at its head, but the organization as a whole) can be strengthened and restored to health, for the good workers will in the future continue to be assigned to essential work and not to jobs as inspectors. Hence, the plan to raise up the Soviet state apparatus using Rabkrin as a lever is clearly a fantasy.

3) Similarly, I just do not believe in the possibility of cultivating administrators and economic officials from the ranks of nonparty workers and peasants through Rabkrin. For this, a system of schools and courses is necessary, in particular courses connected with specific branches of economic and state activity.

4) I am very much afraid that the relationship between the deputies can become a source of difficulties. Here the dictaphone will not help. Once there are two deputies, there must be perfect regularity in their relationship.

5) The main thing is that, as before, I cannot picture the kind of organ which can in practice manage economic work on a day-to-day basis. If it is a bad thing that the Central Statistical Administration is an academic institution, then it is a hundred times worse, and frankly disastrous, that Gosplan is an academic institution. As early as the beginning of last year it was clear that a unifying economic organ exercising practical control did not exist. The present reorganization of Gosplan in *outward*

appearance advances Gosplan to what I proposed last year, but only in outward appearance. Essentially, the fractionating of responsibility still exists, and it is completely uncertain who in practice controls the orders for fuel, transport, raw materials, money. In case of interdepartmental conflict, these questions are placed before STO [the Council of Labor and Defense] or the Politburo and resolved slapdash and at the very moment when the water is reaching our throats. There should be an institution with an economic calendar for the coming year hanging on its wall, an institution that makes projections, and in the light of these projections, coordinates. Gosplan should be such an institution. I think that the chairmanship of Gosplan would be a far more realistic task for one of the deputies than anything discussed in the resolution.

[April 19, 1922]

L. Trotsky

Additional on my note of yesterday on the work of deputies:

1) The creation of a good apparatus can only be achieved by means of consistent, uninterrupted, day-to-day efforts, pressure, instructions, correction, etc. In any case, this work cannot be done from the outside through a special department that looks in from time to time and notes everything that is necessary. This is a utopia. Such a department has never existed anywhere in the world and, given the logic of things, it cannot exist.

With our New Economic Policy it would be a good thing to have *state control* through which can be posed a limited, but well-defined task requiring knowledge of Soviet laws and accounting practice. The more Rabkrin concentrates on and specializes in this task, the more help it will prove to be in putting our entire Soviet apparatus in good order, and primarily in putting our budget in good order, and consequently our finances too.

2) "Verification of execution," which the draft resolution speaks of as the principal practical task, does not in actual fact appear to be the principal task, at least not in the sense that we spoke of it in 1918, 1919, and 1920. At that time instructions were simply not carried out (through carelessness, ineptness, forgetfulness, indiscipline). Now this is only the case in the most "humanitarian" departments. Formally speaking, instructions are carried out. But nothing comes of this, for in the process of being carried out, the orders in practice come to nothing, on the one hand from material shortages, on the other out of ignorance, ineptness,



etc.—goodwill granted. A swoop from without, even a well-considered one, will only show once again that things are going badly. We must teach the copy-typists to make better copies (without errors), the telephone operators not to garble numbers, the bookkeepers to enter expenses and income punctually and accurately, etc., etc. We must initiate evening review courses for office, departmental, production, and trade officials, etc. How else? There is nobody to replace them. Consequently, we must raise their standards without distracting them from their work. This is a difficult road, but there is no other.

3) There must be some system in the work. In the meantime, *the example of lack of system*—and this is the most important and the most dangerous thing—*comes from above*. All economic questions are decided in a haphazard fashion and always later than they should be. There is no controlling economic organ to work without interruption, look ahead, and be answerable for its work. Everyone sees this and senses this (to a considerable extent, the present crisis<sup>3</sup> was due to causes that could have been foreseen). Hence we have proposals, at times fantastic and inexpedient, but responding to a profound need. Preobrazhensky proposes a CC Econburo. Krasin—a comrade of a totally different stamp—already proposed the same thing: a CC Supreme Econ-commission. And it must be said that even a CC Econburo would be a step forward in comparison to the present state of affairs, where the CC establishes an Economics Commission, a Budget Commission, a Gold Commission, etc., etc. All of this is the result of the lack of a forward-looking, controlling, economic organ. As conceived, Gosplan should have been such an organ. In its composition, methods of work, and ideological direction, it has not, cannot, and will not be such.

It is necessary to make Gosplan a tool for putting the economy in order, and for this we must put a stop to the continual disorganization of the economy through improvisation and lack of foresight with regard to this central question. Nothing can be accomplished in the field of economy with propagandistic and retributive measures if the economy is yanked in all directions without system and without plan.

L. Trotsky

## Granting Legislative Functions to the State Planning Commission

This idea was suggested by Comrade Trotsky, it seems, quite a long time ago. I was against it at the time, because I thought that there would then be a fundamental lack of coordination in the system of our legislative institutions. But after closer consideration of the matter, I find that in substance there is a sound idea in it, namely: the State Planning Commission stands somewhat apart from our legislative institutions, although, as a body of experienced people, experts, representatives of science and technology, it is actually in a better position to form a correct judgment of affairs.

However, we have so far proceeded from the principle that the State Planning Commission must provide the state with critically analyzed material and the state institutions must decide state matters. I think that in the present situation, when affairs of state have become unusually complicated, when it is necessary time and again to settle questions of which some require the expert opinion of the members of the State Planning Commission on some points but not on others—I think that we must now take a step towards extending the competence of the State Planning Commission.

I imagine that step to be such that the decisions of the State Planning Commission could not be rejected by ordinary procedure in Soviet bodies, but would need a special procedure to be reconsidered. For example, the question should be submitted to a session of the All-Russia Central Executive Committee, prepared for reconsideration according to a special instruction, involving the drawing up, under special rules, of memoranda to examine whether the State Planning Commission decision is subject to reversal. Lastly, special time limits should be set for the reconsideration of State Planning Commission decisions, etc.

In this respect I think we can and must accede to the wishes of Comrade Trotsky, but not in the sense that specifically any one of our political leaders, or the chairman of the Supreme Economic Council, etc., should be chairman of the State Planning Commission. I think that personal matters are at present too closely interwoven with the question of principle. I think that the attacks which are now made against the chairman of the State Planning

Commission, Comrade Krzhizhanovsky and Comrade Pyatakov, his deputy, and which proceed along two lines, so that, on the one hand, we hear charges of extreme leniency, lack of independent judgment and lack of backbone, and, on the other, charges of excessive coarseness, drill-sergeant methods, lack of solid scientific background, etc.—I think these attacks express two sides of the question, exaggerating them to the extreme, and that in actual fact we need a skillful combination in the State Planning Commission of two types of character, of which one may be exemplified by Comrade Pyatakov and the other by Comrade Krzhizhanovsky.

I think that the State Planning Commission must be headed by a man who, on the one hand, has scientific education, namely, either technical or agronomic, with decades of experience in practical work in the field of technology or of agronomics. I think this man must possess not so much the qualities of an administrator as broad experience and the ability to enlist the services of other men.

Lenin

December 27, 1922

Taken down by M.V.

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Continuation of the letter  
on the legislative nature of  
State Planning Commission  
decisions.

December 28, 1922

I have noticed that some of our comrades who are able to exercise a decisive influence on the direction of state affairs exaggerate the administrative side, which, of course, is necessary in its time and place, but which should not be confused with the scientific side, with a grasp of the broad facts, the ability to recruit men, etc.

In every state institution, especially in the State Planning Commission, the combination of these two qualities is essential; and when Comrade Krzhizhanovsky told me that he had enlisted the services of Comrade Pyatakov for the Commission and had come to terms with him about the work, I, in consenting to this,

on the one hand, entertained certain doubts and, on the other, sometimes hoped that we would thus get the combination of the two types of statesmen. To see whether those hopes are justified, we must now wait and consider the matter on the strength of somewhat longer experience, but in principle, I think, there can be no doubt that such a combination of temperaments and types (of men and qualities) is absolutely necessary for the correct functioning of state institutions. I think that here it is just as harmful to exaggerate "administrating" as it is to exaggerate anything at all. The chief of a state institution must possess a high degree of personal appeal and sufficiently solid scientific and technical knowledge to be able to check people's work. That much is basic. Without it the work cannot be done properly. On the other hand, it is very important that he should be capable of administering and should have a worthy assistant, or assistants, in the matter. The combination of these two qualities in one person will hardly be found, and it is hardly necessary.

Lenin

Taken down by L.F.  
December 28, 1922

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Continuation of the  
notes on the State  
Planning Commission.  
December 29, 1922

The State Planning Commission is apparently developing in all respects into a commission of experts. Such an institution cannot be headed by anybody except a man with great experience and an all-round scientific education in technology. The administrative element must in essence be subsidiary. A certain independence and autonomy of the State Planning Commission is essential for the prestige of this scientific institution and depends on one thing, namely, the conscientiousness of its workers and their conscientious desire to turn our plan of economic and social development into reality.

This last quality may, of course, be found now only as an exception, for the overwhelming majority of scientists, who natu-



rally make up the commission, are inevitably infected with bourgeois ideas and bourgeois prejudices. The check on them from this standpoint must be the job of several persons who can form the presidium of the commission. These must be Communists to keep a day-to-day check on the extent of the bourgeois scientists' devotion to our cause displayed in the whole course of the work and see that they abandon bourgeois prejudices and gradually adopt the socialist standpoint. This work along the twin lines of scientific checking and pure administration should be the ideal of those who run the State Planning Commission in our republic.

Lenin

Taken down by M.V.  
December 29, 1922

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Is it rational to divide the work of the State Planning Commission into separate jobs? Should we not, on the contrary, try to build up a group of permanent specialists who would be systematically checked by the presidium of the commission and could solve the whole range of problems within its ambit? I think that the latter would be the more reasonable and that we must try to cut down the number of temporary and urgent tasks.

Lenin

December 29, 1922  
Taken down by M.V.

[Lenin, *Collected Works*, vol. 36, pp. 598-602.]

## Trotsky: January 15, 1923

### Letter to the Politburo (excerpt)

Comrade Stalin, advancing the proposal to appoint me deputy chairman (a proposal that was never placed before the Politburo or the plenum and never discussed in them) proposes “placing” Vesenkha [the Supreme Council of the National Economy] “under my special care.” Putting the question in this way . . . is fundamentally incorrect. The special care of the Vesenkha should reside with the chairman of Vesenkha. The role of special “administrator” will only divide responsibility and introduce uncertainty and confusion in this area where clarity and certainty are valuable and important above all. We need correct, practical coordination of the work of the economic departments, and not in the least—two-stage management of each of them individually. . . .

Without a unifying plan and unified management, no economic work is possible. This plan should not be academic, but practical. Separating the plan from the supervision of its execution is impossible. Our planning body is Gosplan, the other bodies (STO [Council of Labor and Defense], Sovnarkom [Council of People’s Commissars], Finkomitet [Financial Committee], the collegium of deputies, CC) are obliged either to rely on Gosplan or else to improvise and set up innumerable commissions. The only way out of this situation is to take Gosplan in hand, i.e., to place responsible officials on its staff for regular day-to-day work, combining them with specialists in the proper proportions. It is necessary for higher institutions to receive from Gosplan high quality material, well worked out, verified, and moreover, it goes without saying, in keeping with the Soviet, Communist point of view.

With such a properly functioning Gosplan, only large-scale questions of a principled nature will go back to the higher bodies, ones which require legislative decisions or new direction in principle.

To use an analogy, I would say that Gosplan will play the role of general staff, and STO the role of Military Revolutionary Council.

[*Trotsky Papers*, vol. 2, pp. 820-22. Translated by the editor.]

## How We Should Reorganize the Workers' and Peasants' Inspection

### (Recommendation to the Twelfth Party Congress)

It is beyond question that the Workers' and Peasants' Inspection is an enormous difficulty for us and that so far this difficulty has not been overcome. I think that the comrades who try to overcome the difficulty by denying that the Workers' and Peasants' Inspection is useful and necessary are wrong. But I do not deny that the problem presented by our state apparatus and the task of improving it is very difficult, that it is far from being solved, and is an extremely urgent one.

With the exception of the People's Commissariat of Foreign Affairs, our state apparatus is to a considerable extent a survival of the past and has undergone hardly any serious change. It has only been slightly touched up on the surface, but in all other respects it is a most typical relic of our old state machine. And so, to find a method of really renovating it, I think we ought to turn for experience to our civil war.

How did we act in the more critical moments of the civil war? We concentrated our best party forces in the Red Army; we mobilized the best of our workers; we looked for new forces at the deepest roots of our dictatorship.

I am convinced that we must go to the same source to find the means of reorganizing the Workers' and Peasants' Inspection. I recommend that our Twelfth Party Congress adopt the following plan of reorganization, based on some enlargement of our Central Control Commission.

The plenary meetings of the Central Committee of our party are already revealing a tendency to develop into a kind of supreme party conference. They take place, on the average, not more than once in two months, while the routine work is conducted, as we know, on behalf of the Central Committee by our Political Bureau, our Organization Bureau, our Secretariat, and so forth. I think we ought to follow the road we have thus taken to the end and definitely transform the plenary meetings of the Central Committee into supreme party conferences convened once in two

months jointly with the Central Control Commission. The Central Control Commission should be amalgamated with the main body of the reorganized Workers' and Peasants' Inspection on the following lines.

I propose that the congress should elect seventy-five to one hundred new members to the Central Control Commission. They should be workers and peasants and should go through the same party screening as ordinary members of the Central Committee because they are to enjoy the same rights as the members of the Central Committee.

On the other hand, the staff of the Workers' and Peasants' Inspection should be reduced to three or four hundred persons, specially screened for conscientiousness and knowledge of our state apparatus. They must also undergo a special test as regards their knowledge of the principles of scientific organization of labor in general, and of administrative work, office work and so forth, in particular.

In my opinion, such an amalgamation of the Workers' and Peasants' Inspection with the Central Control Commission will be beneficial to both these institutions. On the one hand, the Workers' and Peasants' Inspection will thus obtain such high authority that it will certainly not be inferior to the People's Commissariat of Foreign Affairs. On the other hand, our Central Committee, together with the Central Control Commission, will definitely take the road of becoming a supreme party conference, which in fact it has already taken, and along which it should proceed to the end so as to be able to fulfill its functions properly in two respects: in respect to *its own* methodical, expedient, and systematic organization and work and in respect to maintaining contacts with the broad masses through the medium of the best of our workers and peasants.

I foresee an objection that, directly or indirectly, may come from those spheres which make our state apparatus antiquated, i.e., from those who urge that its present utterly impossible, indecently prerevolutionary form be preserved (incidentally, we now have an opportunity which rarely occurs in history of ascertaining the period necessary for bringing about radical social changes; we now see clearly *what* can be done in five years and what requires much more time).

The objection I foresee is that the change I propose will lead to nothing but chaos. The members of the Central Control Commis-



sion will wander around all the institutions, not knowing where, why, or to whom to apply, causing disorganization everywhere and distracting employees from their routine work, etc., etc.

I think that the malicious source of this objection is so obvious that it does not warrant a reply. It goes without saying that the presidium of the Central Control Commission, the people's commissar of the Workers' and Peasants' Inspection and his collegium (and also, in the proper cases, the Secretariat of our Central Committee) will have to put in years of persistent effort to get the commissariat properly organized, and to get it to function smoothly in conjunction with the Central Control Commission. In my opinion, the people's commissar of the Workers' and Peasants' Inspection, as well as the whole collegium, can (and should) remain and guide the work of the entire Workers' and Peasants' Inspection, including the work of all the members of the Central Control Commission who will be "placed under his command." The three or four hundred employees of the Workers' and Peasants' Inspection that are to remain, according to my plan, should, on the one hand, perform purely secretarial functions for the other members of the Workers' and Peasants' Inspection and for the supplementary members of the Central Control Commission; and, on the other hand, they should be highly skilled, specially screened, particularly reliable, and highly paid, so that they may be relieved of their present truly unhappy (to say the least) position of Workers' and Peasants' Inspection officials.

I am sure that the reduction of the staff to the number I have indicated will greatly enhance the efficiency of the Workers' and Peasants' Inspection personnel and the quality of all its work, enabling the people's commissar and the members of the collegium to concentrate their efforts entirely on organizing work and on systematically and steadily improving its efficiency, which is so absolutely essential for our workers' and peasants' government and for our Soviet system.

On the other hand, I also think that the people's commissar of the Workers' and Peasants' Inspection should work on partly amalgamating and partly coordinating those higher institutions for the organization of labor (the Central Institute of Labor, the Institute for the Scientific Organization of Labor, etc.), of which there are now no fewer than twelve in our republic. Excessive uniformity and a consequent desire to amalgamate will be harmful. On the contrary, what is needed here is a reasonable and

expedient mean between amalgamating all these institutions and properly delimiting them, allowing for a certain independence for each of them.

Our own Central Committee will undoubtedly gain no less from this reorganization than the Workers' and Peasants' Inspection. It will gain because its contacts with the masses will be greater and because the regularity and effectiveness of its work will improve. It will then be possible (and necessary) to institute a stricter and more responsible procedure of preparing for the meetings of the Political Bureau, which should be attended by a definite number of members of the Central Control Commission determined either for a definite period or by some organizational plan.

In distributing work to the members of the Central Control Commission, the people's commissar of the Workers' and Peasants' Inspection, in conjunction with the Presidium of the Central Control Commission, should impose on them the duty either of attending the meetings of the Political Bureau for the purpose of examining all the documents appertaining to matters that come before it in one way or another; or of devoting their working time to theoretical study, to the study of scientific methods of organizing labor; or of taking a practical part in the work of supervising and improving our machinery of state, from the higher state institutions to the lower local bodies, etc.

I also think that in addition to the political advantages accruing from the fact that the members of the Central Committee and the Central Control Commission will, as a consequence of this reform, be much better informed and better prepared for the meetings of the Political Bureau (all the documents relevant to the business to be discussed at these meetings should be sent to all the members of the Central Committee and the Central Control Commission not later than the day before the meeting of the Political Bureau, except in absolutely urgent cases, for which special methods of informing the members of the Central Committee and the Central Control Commission and of settling these matters must be devised), there will also be the advantage that the influence of purely personal and incidental factors in our Central Committee will diminish, and this will reduce the danger of a split.

Our Central Committee has grown into a strictly centralized and highly authoritative group, but the conditions under which

this group is working are not commensurate with its authority. The reform I recommend should help to remove this defect, and the members of the Central Control Commission, whose duty it will be to attend all meetings of the Political Bureau in a definite number, will have to form a compact group which should not allow anybody's authority without exception, neither that of the general secretary nor of any other member of the Central Committee, to prevent them from putting questions, verifying documents, and, in general, from keeping themselves fully informed of all things and from exercising the strictest control over the proper conduct of affairs.

Of course, in our Soviet republic, the social order is based on the collaboration of two classes: the workers and peasants, in which the "Nepmen," i.e., the bourgeoisie, are now permitted to participate on certain terms. If serious class disagreements arise between these classes, a split will be inevitable. But the grounds for such a split are not inevitable in our social system, and it is the principal task of our Central Committee and Central Control Commission, as well as of our party as a whole, to watch very closely over such circumstances as may cause a split and to forestall them, for in the final analysis the fate of our republic will depend on whether the peasant masses will stand by the working class, loyal to their alliance, or whether they will permit the "Nepmen," i.e., the new bourgeoisie, to drive a wedge between them and the working class, to split them off from the working class. The more clearly we see this alternative, the more clearly all our workers and peasants understand it, the greater are the chances that we shall avoid a split, which would be fatal for the Soviet republic.

January 23, 1923

[Lenin, *Collected Works*, vol. 33, pp. 481-86.]

## Better Fewer, But Better

In the matter of improving our state apparatus, the Workers' and Peasants' Inspection should not, in my opinion, strive either after quantity or hurry. We have so far been able to devote so little thought and attention to the efficiency of our state apparatus that it would now be quite legitimate if we took special care to secure its thorough organization, and concentrated in the Workers' and Peasants' Inspection a staff of workers really abreast of the times, i.e., not inferior to the best West European standards. For a socialist republic this condition is, of course, too modest. But our experience of the first five years has fairly crammed our heads with mistrust and skepticism. These qualities assert themselves involuntarily when, for example, we hear people dilating at too great length and too flippantly on "proletarian" culture. For a start, we should be satisfied with real bourgeois culture; for a start, we should be glad to dispense with the cruder types of prebourgeois culture, i.e., bureaucratic culture or serf culture, etc. In matters of culture, haste and sweeping measures are most harmful. Many of our young writers and Communists should get this well into their heads.

Thus, in the matter of our state apparatus we should now draw the conclusion from our past experience that it would be better to proceed more slowly.

Our state apparatus is so deplorable, not to say wretched, that we must first think very carefully how to combat its defects, bearing in mind that these defects are rooted in the past, which, although it has been overthrown, has not yet been overcome, has not yet reached the stage of a culture that has receded into the distant past. I say culture deliberately, because in these matters we can only regard as achieved what has become part and parcel of our culture, of our social life, our habits. We might say that the good in our social system has not been properly studied, understood, and taken to heart; it has been hastily grasped at; it has not been verified or tested, corroborated by experience, and not made durable, etc. Of course, it could not be otherwise in a revolutionary epoch, when development proceeded at such break-neck speed that in a matter of five years we passed from tsarism to the Soviet system.



It is time we did something about it. We must show sound skepticism for too rapid progress, for boastfulness, etc. We must give thought to testing the steps forward we proclaim every hour, take every minute and then prove every second that they are flimsy, superficial and misunderstood. The most harmful thing here would be haste. The most harmful thing would be to rely on the assumption that we know at least something, or that we have any considerable number of elements necessary for the building of a really new state apparatus, one really worthy to be called socialist, Soviet, etc.

No, we are ridiculously deficient of such an apparatus, and even of the elements of it, and we must remember that we should not stint time on building it and that it will take many, many years.

What elements have we for building this apparatus? Only two. First, the workers who are absorbed in the struggle for socialism. These elements are not sufficiently educated. They would like to build a better apparatus for us, but they do not know how. They cannot build one. They have not yet developed the culture required for this; and it is culture that is required. Nothing will be achieved in this by doing things in a rush, by assault, by vim or vigor, or in general, by any of the best human qualities. Secondly, we have elements of knowledge, education, and training, but they are ridiculously inadequate compared with all other countries.

Here we must not forget that we are too prone to compensate (or imagine that we can compensate) our lack of knowledge by zeal, haste, etc.

In order to renovate our state apparatus we must at all costs set out, first, to learn, secondly, to learn, and thirdly, to learn, and then see to it that learning shall not remain a dead letter, or a fashionable catchphrase (and we should admit in all frankness that this happens very often with us), that learning shall really become part of our very being, that it shall actually and fully become a constituent element of our social life. In short, we must not make the demands that are made by bourgeois Western Europe, but demands that are fit and proper for a country which has set out to develop into a socialist country.

The conclusions to be drawn from the above are the following: we must make the Workers' and Peasants' Inspection a really exemplary institution, an instrument to improve our state apparatus.

In order that it may attain the desired high level, we must follow the rule: "Measure your cloth seven times before you cut."

For this purpose, we must utilize the very best of what there is in our social system and utilize it with the greatest caution, thoughtfulness, and knowledge to build up the new people's commissariat.

For this purpose, the best elements that we have in our social system—such as, first, the advanced workers, and second, the really enlightened elements for whom we can vouch that they will not take the word for the deed and will not utter a single word that goes against their conscience—should not shrink from admitting any difficulty and should not shrink from any struggle in order to achieve the object they have seriously set themselves.

We have been bustling for five years trying to improve our state apparatus, but it has been mere bustle, which has proved useless in these five years, or even futile, or even harmful. This bustle created the impression that we were doing something, but in effect it was only clogging up our institutions and our brains.

It is high time things were changed.

We must follow the rule: Better fewer, but better. We must follow the rule: Better get good human material in two or even three years than work in haste without hope of getting any at all.

I know that it will be hard to keep to this rule and apply it under our conditions. I know that the opposite rule will force its way through a thousand loopholes. I know that enormous resistance will have to be put up, that devilish persistence will be required, that in the first few years at least, work in this field will be hellishly hard. Nevertheless, I am convinced that only by such effort shall we be able to achieve our aim; and that only by achieving this aim shall we create a republic that is really worthy of the name of Soviet, socialist, and so on and so forth.

Many readers probably thought that the figures I quoted by way of illustration in my first article<sup>4</sup> were too small. I am sure that many calculations may be made to prove that they are. But I think that we must put one thing above all such and other calculations, i.e., our desire to obtain really exemplary quality.

I think that the time has at last come when we must work in real earnest to improve our state apparatus and in this there can scarcely be anything more harmful than haste. That is why I would sound a strong warning against inflating the figures. In my opinion, we should, on the contrary, be especially sparing

with figures in this matter. Let us say frankly that the People's Commissariat of the Workers' and Peasants' Inspection does not at present enjoy the slightest authority. Everybody knows that no other institutions are worse organized than those of our Workers' and Peasants' Inspection, and that under present conditions nothing can be expected from this people's commissariat. We must have this firmly fixed in our minds if we really want to create within a few years an institution that will, first, be an exemplary institution, secondly, win everybody's absolute confidence, and, thirdly, prove to all and sundry that we have really justified the work of such a highly placed institution as the Central Control Commission. In my opinion, we must immediately and irrevocably reject all general figures for the size of office staffs. We must select employees for the Workers' and Peasants' Inspection with particular care and only on the basis of the strictest test. Indeed, what is the use of establishing a people's commissariat which carries on anyhow, which does not enjoy the slightest confidence, and whose word carries scarcely any weight? I think that our main object in launching the work of reconstruction that we now have in mind is to avoid all this.

The workers whom we are enlisting as members of the Central Control Commission must be irreproachable Communists, and I think that a great deal has yet to be done to teach them the methods and objects of their work. Furthermore, there must be a definite number of secretaries to assist in this work, who must be put to a triple test before they are appointed to their posts. Lastly, the officials whom in exceptional cases we shall accept directly as employees of the Workers' and Peasants' Inspection must conform to the following requirements:

First, they must be recommended by several Communists.

Second, they must pass a test for knowledge of our state apparatus.

Third, they must pass a test in the fundamentals of the theory of our state apparatus, in the fundamentals of management, office routine, etc.

Fourth, they must work in such close harmony with the members of the Central Control Commission and with their own secretariat that we could vouch for the work of the whole apparatus.

I know that these requirements are extraordinarily strict, and I am very much afraid that the majority of the "practical" workers

in the Workers' and Peasants' Inspection will say that these requirements are impracticable, or will scoff at them. But I ask any of the present chiefs of the Workers' and Peasants' Inspection, or anyone associated with that body, whether they can honestly tell me the practical purpose of a people's commissariat like the Workers' and Peasants' Inspection. I think this question will help them recover their sense of proportion. Either it is not worthwhile having another of the numerous reorganizations that we have had of this hopeless affair, the Workers' and Peasants' Inspection, or we must really set to work, by slow, difficult, and unusual methods, and by testing these methods over and over again, to create something really exemplary, something that will win the respect of all and sundry for its merits, and not only because of its rank and title.

If we do not arm ourselves with patience, if we do not devote several years to this task, we had better not tackle it at all.

In my opinion we ought to select a minimum number of the higher labor research institutes, etc., which we have baked so hastily, see whether they are organized properly, and allow them to continue working, but only in a way that conforms to the high standards of modern science and gives us all its benefits. If we do that it will not be utopian to hope that within a few years we shall have an institution that will be able to perform its functions, to work systematically and steadily on improving our state apparatus, an institution backed by the trust of the working class, of the Russian Communist Party and the whole population of our republic.

The spadework for this could be begun at once. If the People's Commissariat of the Workers' and Peasants' Inspection accepted the present plan of reorganization, it could now take preparatory steps and work methodically until the task is completed, without haste, and not hesitating to alter what has already been done.

Any halfhearted solution would be extremely harmful in this matter. A measure for the size of the staff of the Workers' and Peasants' Inspection based on any other consideration would in fact be based on the old bureaucratic considerations, on old prejudices, on what has already been condemned, universally ridiculed, etc.

In substance, the matter is as follows:

Either we prove now that we have really learned something about state organization (we ought to have learned something in



five years), or we prove that we are not sufficiently mature for it. If the latter is the case, we had better not tackle the task.

I think that with the available human material it will not be immodest to assume that we have learned enough to be able systematically to rebuild at least one people's commissariat. True, this one people's commissariat will have to be the model for our entire state apparatus.

We ought at once to announce a contest in the compilation of two or more textbooks on the organization of labor in general, and on management in particular. We can take as a basis the book already published by Yermansky, although it should be said in parentheses that he obviously sympathizes with Menshevism and is unfit to compile textbooks for the Soviet system. We can also take as a basis the recent book by Kerzhentsev, and some of the other partial textbooks available may be useful too.

We ought to send several qualified and conscientious people to Germany, or to Britain, to collect literature and to study this question. I mention Britain in case it is found impossible to send people to the USA or Canada.

We ought to appoint a commission to draw up the preliminary program of examinations for prospective employees of the Workers' and Peasants' Inspection; ditto for candidates to the Central Control Commission.

These and similar measures will not, of course, cause any difficulties for the people's commissar or the collegium of the Workers' and Peasants' Inspection, or for the Presidium of the Central Control Commission.

Simultaneously, a preparatory commission should be appointed to select candidates for membership of the Central Control Commission. I hope that we shall now be able to find more than enough candidates for this post among the experienced workers in all departments, as well as among the students of our Soviet higher schools. It would hardly be right to exclude one or another category beforehand. Probably preference will have to be given to a mixed composition for this institution, which should combine many qualities and dissimilar merits. Consequently, the task of drawing up the list of candidates will entail a considerable amount of work. For example, it would be least desirable for the staff of the new people's commissariat to consist of people of one type, only of officials, say, or for it to exclude people of the propagandist type, or people whose principal quality is sociability

or the ability to penetrate into circles that are not altogether customary for officials in this field, etc.

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I think I shall be able to express my idea best if I compare my plan with that of academic institutions. Under the guidance of their Presidium, the members of the Central Control Commission should systematically examine all the papers and documents of the Political Bureau. Moreover, they should divide their time correctly between various jobs in investigating the routine in our institutions, from the very small and privately owned offices to the highest state institutions. And lastly, their functions should include the study of theory, i.e., the theory of organization of the work they intend to devote themselves to, and practical work under the guidance either of older comrades or of teachers in the higher institutes for the organization of labor.

I do not think, however, that they will be able to confine themselves to this sort of academic work. In addition, they will have to prepare themselves for work which I would not hesitate to call training to catch, I will not say rogues, but something like that, and working out special ruses to screen their movements, their approach, etc.

If such proposals were made in West European government institutions they would rouse frightful resentment, a feeling of moral indignation, etc.; but I trust that we have not become so bureaucratic as to be capable of that. NEP has not yet succeeded in gaining such respect as to cause any of us to be shocked at the idea that somebody may be caught. Our Soviet republic is of such recent construction, and there are such heaps of the old lumber still lying around, that it would hardly occur to anyone to be shocked at the idea that we should delve into them by means of ruses, by means of investigations sometimes directed to rather remote sources or in a roundabout way. And even if it did occur to anyone to be shocked by this, we may be sure that such a person would make himself a laughingstock.

Let us hope that our new Workers' and Peasants' Inspection will abandon what the French call *pruderie*, which we may call ridiculous primness, or ridiculous swank, and which plays entirely into the hands of our Soviet and party bureaucracy. Let it

be said in parentheses that we have bureaucrats in our party offices as well as in Soviet offices.

When I said above that we must study and study hard in institutes for the higher organization of labor, etc., I did not by any means imply "studying" in the schoolroom way, nor did I confine myself to the idea of studying only in the schoolroom way. I hope that not a single genuine revolutionary will suspect me of refusing in this case to understand "studies" to include resorting to some semihumorous trick, cunning device, piece of trickery, or something of that sort. I know that in the staid and earnest states of Western Europe such an idea would horrify people and that not a single decent official would even entertain it. I hope, however, that we have not yet become as bureaucratic as all that and that in our midst the discussion of this idea will give rise to nothing more than amusement.

Indeed, why not combine pleasure with utility? Why not resort to some humorous or semihumorous trick to expose something ridiculous, something harmful, something semiridiculous, semi-harmful, etc.?

It seems to me that our Workers' and Peasants' Inspection will gain a great deal if it undertakes to examine these ideas, and that the list of cases in which our Central Control Commission and its colleagues in the Workers' and Peasants' Inspection achieved a few of their most brilliant victories will be enriched by not a few exploits of our future Workers' and Peasants' Inspection and Central Control Commission members in places not quite mentionable in prim and staid textbooks.

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How can a party institution be amalgamated with a Soviet institution? Is there not something improper in this suggestion?

I do not ask these questions on my own behalf, but on behalf of those I hinted at above when I said that we have bureaucrats in our party institutions as well as in the Soviet institutions.

But why, indeed, should we not amalgamate the two if this is in the interests of our work? Do we not all see that such an amalgamation has been very beneficial in the case of the People's Commissariat of Foreign Affairs, where it was brought about at the very beginning? Does not the Political Bureau discuss from the party point of view many questions, both minor and important,

concerning the "moves" we should make in reply to the "moves" of foreign powers in order to forestall their, say, cunning, if we are not to use a less respectable term? Is not this flexible amalgamation of a Soviet institution with a party institution a source of great strength in our politics? I think that what has proved its usefulness, what has been definitely adopted in our foreign politics and has become so customary that it no longer calls forth any doubt in this field, will be at least as appropriate (in fact, I think it will be much more appropriate) for our state apparatus as a whole. The functions of the Workers' and Peasants' Inspection cover our state apparatus as a whole, and its activities should affect all and every state institution without exception: local, central, commercial, purely administrative, educational, archival, theatrical, etc.—in short, all without any exception.

Why then should not an institution, whose activities have such wide scope, and which moreover requires such extraordinary flexibility of forms, be permitted to adopt this peculiar amalgamation of a party control institution with a Soviet control institution?

I see no obstacles to this. What is more, I think that such an amalgamation is the only guarantee of success in our work. I think that all doubts on this score arise in the dustiest corners of our government offices, and that they deserve to be treated with nothing but ridicule.

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Another doubt: is it expedient to combine educational activities with official activities? I think that it is not only expedient, but necessary. Generally speaking, in spite of our revolutionary attitude towards the West European form of state, we have allowed ourselves to become infected with a number of its most harmful and ridiculous prejudices; to some extent we have been deliberately infected with them by our dear bureaucrats, who counted on being able again and again to fish in the muddy waters of these prejudices. And they did fish in these muddy waters to so great an extent that only the blind among us failed to see how extensively this fishing was practiced.

In all spheres of social, economic, and political relationships we are "frightfully" revolutionary. But as regards precedence, the observance of the forms and rites of office management, our



“revolutionariness” often gives way to the mustiest routine. On more than one occasion, we have witnessed the very interesting phenomenon of a great leap forward in social life being accompanied by amazing timidity whenever the slightest changes are proposed.

This is natural, for the boldest steps forward were taken in a field which was long reserved for theoretical study, which was promoted mainly, and even almost exclusively, in theory. The Russian, when away from work, found solace from bleak bureaucratic realities in unusually bold theoretical constructions, and that is why in our country these unusually bold theoretical constructions assumed an unusually lopsided character. Theoretical audacity in general constructions went hand in hand with amazing timidity as regards certain very minor reforms in office routine. Some great universal agrarian revolution was worked out with an audacity unexampled in any other country, and at the same time the imagination failed when it came to working out a tenth-rate reform in office routine; the imagination, or patience, was lacking to apply to this reform the general propositions that produced such brilliant results when applied to general problems.

That is why in our present life reckless audacity goes hand in hand, to an astonishing degree, with timidity of thought even when it comes to very minor changes.

I think that this has happened in all really great revolutions, for really great revolutions grow out of the contradictions between the old, between what is directed towards developing the old, and the very abstract striving for the new, which must be so new as not to contain the tiniest particle of the old.

And the more abrupt the revolution, the longer will many of these contradictions last.

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The general feature of our present life is the following: we have destroyed capitalist industry and have done our best to raze to the ground the medieval institutions and landed proprietorship, and thus created a small and very small peasantry, which is following the lead of the proletariat because it believes in the results of its revolutionary work. It is not easy for us, however, to keep going until the socialist revolution is victorious in more developed countries merely with the aid of this confidence be-

cause economic necessity, especially under NEP, keeps the productivity of labor of the small and very small peasants at an extremely low level. Moreover, the international situation, too, threw Russia back and, by and large, reduced the labor productivity of the people to a level considerably below prewar. The West European capitalist powers, partly deliberately and partly unconsciously, did everything they could to throw us back, to utilize the elements of the civil war in Russia in order to spread as much ruin in the country as possible. It was precisely this way out of the imperialist war that seemed to have many advantages. They argued somewhat as follows: "If we fail to overthrow the revolutionary system in Russia, we shall, at all events, hinder its progress towards socialism." And from their point of view they could argue in no other way. In the end, their problem was half solved. They failed to overthrow the new system created by the revolution, but they did prevent it from at once taking the step forward that would have justified the forecasts of the socialists, that would have enabled the latter to develop the productive forces with enormous speed, to develop all the potentialities which, taken together, would have produced socialism; socialists would thus have proved to all and sundry that socialism contains within itself gigantic forces and that mankind had now entered into a new stage of development of extraordinarily brilliant prospects.

The system of international relationships which has now taken shape is one in which a European state, Germany, is enslaved by the victor countries. Furthermore, owing to their victory, a number of states, the oldest states in the West, are in a position to make some insignificant concessions to their oppressed classes—concessions which, insignificant though they are, nevertheless retard the revolutionary movement in those countries and create some semblance of "class truce."

At the same time, as a result of the last imperialist war, a number of countries of the East, India, China, etc., have been completely jolted out of the rut. Their development has definitely shifted to general European capitalist lines. The general European ferment has begun to affect them, and it is now clear to the whole world that they have been drawn into a process of development that must lead to a crisis in the whole of world capitalism.

Thus, at the present time we are confronted with the question—shall we be able to hold on with our small and very small peasant

production, and in our present state of ruin, until the West European capitalist countries consummate their development towards socialism? But they are consummating it not as we formerly expected. They are not consummating it through the gradual "maturing" of socialism, but through the exploitation of some countries by others, through the exploitation of the first of the countries vanquished in the imperialist war combined with the exploitation of the whole of the East. On the other hand, precisely as a result of the first imperialist war, the East has been definitely drawn into the general maelstrom of the world revolutionary movement.

What tactics does this situation prescribe for our country? Obviously the following. We must display extreme caution so as to preserve our workers' government and to retain our small and very small peasantry under its leadership and authority. We have the advantage that the whole world is now passing to a movement that must give rise to a world socialist revolution. But we are laboring under the disadvantage that the imperialists have succeeded in splitting the world into two camps; and this split is made more complicated by the fact that it is extremely difficult for Germany, which is really a land of advanced, cultured, capitalist development, to rise to her feet. All the capitalist powers of what is called the West are pecking at her and preventing her from rising. On the other hand, the entire East, with its hundreds of millions of exploited working people, reduced to the last degree of human suffering, has been forced into a position where its physical and material strength cannot possibly be compared with the physical, material, and military strength of any of the much smaller West European states.

Can we save ourselves from the impending conflict with these imperialist countries? May we hope that the internal antagonisms and conflicts between the thriving imperialist countries of the West and the thriving imperialist countries of the East will give us a second respite as they did the first time, when the campaign of the West European counterrevolution in support of the Russian counterrevolution broke down owing to the antagonisms in the camp of the counterrevolutionaries of the West and the East, in the camp of the Eastern and Western exploiters, in the camp of Japan and the USA?

I think the reply to this question should be that the issue depends upon too many factors, and that the outcome of the

struggle as a whole can be forecast only because in the long run capitalism itself is educating and training the vast majority of the population of the globe for the struggle.

In the last analysis, the outcome of the struggle will be determined by the fact that Russia, India, China, etc., account for the overwhelming majority of the population of the globe. And during the past few years it is this majority that has been drawn into the struggle for emancipation with extraordinary rapidity, so that in this respect there cannot be the slightest doubt what the final outcome of the world struggle will be. In this sense, the complete victory of socialism is fully and absolutely assured.

But what interests us is not the inevitability of this complete victory of socialism, but the tactics which we, the Russian Communist Party, we, the Russian Soviet government, should pursue to prevent the West European counterrevolutionary states from crushing us. To ensure our existence until the next military conflict between the counterrevolutionary imperialist West and the revolutionary and nationalist East, between the most civilized countries of the world and the orientally backward countries which, however, comprise the majority, this majority must become civilized. We, too, lack enough civilization to enable us to pass straight on to socialism, although we do have the political requisites for it. We should adopt the following tactics, or pursue the following policy, to save ourselves.

We must strive to build up a state in which the workers retain the leadership of the peasants, in which they retain the confidence of the peasants, and by exercising the greatest economy remove every trace of extravagance from our social relations.

We must reduce our state apparatus to the utmost degree of economy. We must banish from it all traces of extravagance, of which so much has been left over from tsarist Russia, from its bureaucratic capitalist state machine.

Will not this be a reign of peasant limitations?

No. If we see to it that the working class retains its leadership over the peasantry, we shall be able, by exercising the greatest possible thrift in the economic life of our state, to use every saving we make to develop our large-scale machine industry, to develop electrification, the hydraulic extraction of peat, to complete the Volkhov Power Project, etc.<sup>5</sup>

In this, and in this alone, lies our hope. Only when we have done this shall we, speaking figuratively, be able to change



horses, to change from the peasant, muzhik horse of poverty, from the horse of an economy designed for a ruined peasant country, to the horse which the proletariat is seeking and must seek—the horse of large-scale machine industry, of electrification, of the Volkhov Power Station, etc.

That is how I link up in my mind the general plan of our work, of our policy, of our tactics, of our strategy, with the functions of the reorganized Workers' and Peasants' Inspection. This is what, in my opinion, justifies the exceptional care, the exceptional attention that we must devote to the Workers' and Peasants' Inspection in raising it to an exceptionally high level, in giving it a leadership with Central Committee rights, etc., etc.,

And this justification is that only by thoroughly purging our government machine, by reducing to the utmost everything that is not absolutely essential in it, shall we be certain of being able to keep going. Moreover, we shall be able to keep going not on the level of a small-peasant country, not on the level of universal limitation, but on a level steadily advancing to large-scale machine industry.

These are the lofty tasks that I dream of for our Workers' and Peasants' Inspection. That is why I am planning for it the amalgamation of the most authoritative party body with an "ordinary" people's commissariat.

March 2, 1923

[*Lenin, Collected Works*, vol. 33, pp. 487-502.]

## The Tasks of the Twelfth Congress

Let us now proceed to a question of first-class importance, that of the relation between the party and the state machine. In that latest article of Comrade Lenin's<sup>6</sup> which I have mentioned more than once, Comrade Lenin writes about the state machine—and I must say straight out that nobody else would have ventured to utter such words—such words as one doesn't repeat so easily [*laughter*]. Vladimir Ilyich writes about our state machine that it is neither more nor less than very similar to the tsarist state machine, anointed, as they say, colored in the Soviet style, but if you examine it, it is the same old bureaucratic machine.

Isn't that nice to hear? It's a real Easter egg for international Menshevism [*laughter*]. It's very much "better" than industry working at a loss. But how are we to understand it? Here, of course, we have one of Lenin's especially emphatic formulations; in order the more firmly to get this into the party's head, to hammer it in as deeply as possible, he doesn't refrain from using drastic words which would earn anybody else a hole in the head. But this is not the sole explanation. We must go more thoroughly into the question. What is our state machine? Did it fall among us from out of the heavens? No, of course it didn't.

Who built it? It grew up on the basis of the soviets of workers', peasants', Red Army men's, and Cossacks' deputies. Who led these soviets? The Communist Party. What the party is we know well. What the soviets are we know well also, of course. We said and we say: The soviets are the best form of government in the interests of the working masses. Our party is the best of parties. It is the teacher of the other parties in the Communist International. That is generally recognized. And here we see coming into being out of the soviets, that is, the best representation of the working masses, under the leadership of the party which is the best party in the Communist International, a state machine of which it has been said that it is . . . little different from the old tsarist machine.

From this, perhaps, some simple-minded fellow, from the so-called Workers' Truth group,<sup>7</sup> let's say, will draw the conclusion:

Should we not take a hammer—just the hammer, without the sickle [*laughter*—and carry out some mechanical operations on this machine? Such a conclusion would, however, be groundless, since we should then have to pick up the fragments and begin again. Why? Because this machine, which really is wretchedly bad, nevertheless did not drop onto our shoulders, but was created by us under the pressure of historical necessity out of the material which we had to hand. Who is responsible? We all are, and we shall answer for it.

Where has this “quality” of the state machine come from? From this circumstance, that we did not and do not know how to do very much, but we have been forced to do a lot, and often have enlisted people who know, or only half know, but don’t want to do it even a quarter properly, and sometimes don’t want to do it at all and do it minus a hundred percent. In the operations which we carry out you often cannot distinguish between calculation and magic, but in the state machine there are not a few people who consciously pass off magic as calculation. So here we have been constructing a state machine which begins with a young, selflessly devoted but quite inexperienced Communist, goes on through an indifferent office clerk, and ends with a gray-haired expert who sometimes, under irreproachable forms, engages in sabotage.

Well now, can we abolish this all at once? Can we do without this machine? Of course we can’t. What must we do? Our task is to take this bad machine as it exists and set about transforming it systematically. Not anyhow or slapdash, but in a planned way, calculated to cover a long period. Up to now the state machine has been constructed on the principle of going from one case to the next. First we assembled material, then we reduced it. When an institution had become extremely overgrown, we cut it down. If we have learned anything in the last five years, Comrade Lenin notes in his article, then it is to estimate time, that is, to appreciate how comparatively little can be done in five years in the sense of replacing the old by the new. And how systematically we must therefore approach our great tasks.

Comrades, this is a very important idea. To take power is one thing, but to reeducate people, to train them in new methods of work, to teach even such a thing (a small thing, but presupposing a displacement of the entire psychology!), such a small thing, I say, as that a Soviet official ought to behave attentively and

respectfully to an old, illiterate peasant woman who has come into a big, high-ceilinged hall and gazes around her and doesn't know before which inkstand to beat her forehead on the ground—and there sits our red-tapist, directing her with the tip of his finger to number so-and-do, and she hesitates, turning this way and that, in front of number so-and-so, utterly helpless, and leaves the office without achieving anything.

And if she could formulate her ideas, she would formulate them, I think, in Lenin's words, what things were like seven or eight years ago they are also like today; in the same way then she went into the office and in the same way she failed to get what she went for because they said things to her she couldn't understand in a language she couldn't understand, not trying to help her, but trying to get rid of her. This, of course, doesn't go on everywhere and all the time. But if it is only one-third true to life then there is a frightful abyss between the state machine and the working masses. I recently wrote an article about this "tip of a big problem," an article which was transmitted to your newspapers by telephone for reprinting, but, as, alas, Soviet technique is still poor, I only half recognized this article as it appeared here [*laughter*] but the point of this article was what I have just expressed.<sup>8</sup>

Comrades, what is the meaning of Comrade Lenin's plan, which has now already been adopted by an overwhelming majority in the party? This plan means an approach to a *planned* reconstruction of the state machine. The party created the state machine, yes, the party created it, and then it looked at what it had created. . . . Remember what the Bible says: God created, looked at his creation and said that it was good [*laughter*], but the party has created, looked and . . . has shaken its head [*laughter, prolonged applause*]. And now, after this silent shaking of the head along comes a man who has ventured to call what has been constructed by its name and to do this at the top of his voice.

But this is not the voice of despair—oh, no! The conclusion to be drawn from the situation is this, that whereas we have in five years created this clumsy, creaking machine which to a considerable degree is not "ours," we must now devote a minimum of five years to altering and reconstructing it so as to make it more like a machine about which there will be no occasion to express oneself so strongly. . . . That is why I pay attention to that phrase which Comrade Lenin puts in parentheses.<sup>9</sup> Yes, we have now for



the first time learned to estimate the "capacity" of the time in which our efforts are confined. A lot of time is needed. And so it is not now just a question of making corrections—we shall, of course, make corrections from one case to case in the future as well—but our fundamental task is that of *systematic, planned reconstruction of the state machine*.

Through what agency? Through that which erected it, through the party. And for this party too we need a fresh, improved organ for sounding this machine, a probe which is not only moral but also political and practical—not on the plane of formal state inspection, which has already shown its complete bankruptcy, but on the plane of party penetration into the heart of the matter to carry out a selection process in the most important fields of work. Again, what this organ will be like at first, how this Central Control Commission will work in conjunction with the Workers' and Peasants' Inspection, is a matter for further experience, and serious-minded workers cannot entertain any illusions about the possibility of rapid changes.

But it would be quite base on our part to say that nothing can come of this planned approach to the problem, to report that "your ears won't grow any higher than your forehead," and so on. It is, of course, a very difficult task, but for just that reason it must be dealt with in a planned way, systematically, not on a case-to-case basis. Precisely for this reason there is needed an authoritative central party-and-Soviet organ which will be able to sound the state machine in a new way both from the angle of its general efficiency and from that of how it responds to a simple illiterate old woman; and all this, perhaps, will be given us by a combined organ of the Central Control Commission and the Workers' and Peasants' Inspection, working on the principle of selecting the best workers and systematically educating them in a combination of formal state-service practices with the methods of the Workers' and Peasants' Inspection—of what is best in it, that is, a small nucleus. This experiment must be made, and we are making it. . . .

Our work, comrades, is very slow, very partial, even though within the framework of a great plan. Our methods of work are "prosaic": balances and calculations, the food tax and the export of grain—all this we are doing step by step, brick by brick. . . . Isn't there a danger in all this of a sort of hairsplitting degeneration of the party? We cannot permit such a degeneration, any

more than a breakup of the party's unity of action even to the slightest extent, for even if the present period is going to be prolonged "seriously and for a long time, yet it is not going on forever." And perhaps it won't even last for a long time.

A revolutionary outbreak on a big scale, such as the beginning of revolution in Europe, can occur sooner than many of us now think. And if there is one of Lenin's many teachings on strategy that we ought especially firmly to keep in memory, it is what he has called *the politics of sharp turns*: today on the barricades, tomorrow in the pigsty of the Third State Duma, today the call to world revolution, to the world October, tomorrow negotiations with Kuhlmann and Czernin, signature of the obscene peace of Brest-Litovsk.<sup>10</sup>

The situation changed, or we estimated it afresh in a new way—the western campaign, "We want Warsaw." The situation was estimated afresh—the peace of Riga, also a rather foul peace, as you know. And then—stubborn work, brick by brick, thereafter, reduction in establishments, checking—do we need five telephone operators or only three, if three are enough, don't dare to employ five, for the peasant will have to give several extra bushels of grain to pay for them—petty, everyday, hairsplitting work—and there, look, the flame of revolution blazes up from the Ruhr.<sup>11</sup> What, shall it catch us in a stage of degeneration? No, comrades, no.

We are not degenerating, we are changing our methods and procedures, but the revolutionary conservatism of the party remains higher than anything else for us. We are learning to draw up balance sheets and at the same time we are looking with sharp eyes to West and East, and events won't catch us by surprise. By purging ourselves, and enlarging our proletarian base we shall strengthen ourselves.

We go forward in agreement with the peasantry and the petty bourgeoisie, we allow the Nepmen; but in the party we will allow no Nepmanism or petty bourgeois, no—we shall burn it out of the party with sulphuric acid and red-hot irons [*applause*], and at the Twelfth Congress, which will be the first congress held since October without Vladimir Ilyich and one of the few congresses in the history of our party held without him, we shall say to one another that among the basic precepts which we shall inscribe on our minds with a sharp chisel there will be this—don't get ossified, remember the art of sharp turns, maneuver but don't lose

yourself, enter into agreements with temporary or long-term allies but don't let them wedge themselves into the party, remain yourselves, the vanguard of the world revolution. And if the signal sounds from the West—and it will sound—though we may be at that moment up to our necks in calculations, balance sheets, and NEP generally, we shall respond without wavering or delay: We are revolutionaries from head to foot, we have been and we shall remain such, we shall be revolutionaries to the end [*stormy applause, all rise and applaud*].

[*Leon Trotsky Speaks* (New York: Pathfinder, 1972), pp. 155-58; 72-73. Spelling, capitalization, and punctuation slightly revised.]

#### NOTES TO PART IV

1. Poor Peasant Committees were organized at the beginning of the period of war communism to assist the Red Army in requisitioning grain from the rich peasants (kulaks). This was part of the Bolshevik policy of supporting the landless agricultural laborers and poor peasants against the wealthy peasants.

2. "State capitalism" was used by Lenin in a very specific manner as he explains in the text. Since his time, others have used the term at various times to characterize the "corporative" economy of fascism in Italy and Germany and the bureaucratized Soviet economy in the thirties.

3. This refers to the economic crisis which was discussed at the Eleventh Party Congress (March 27-April 2, 1922). It was in this connection that Preobrazhensky proposed a Central Committee Economics Bureau parallel to the Political and Organizational bureaus. The proposal was rejected.

4. The article is "How We Should Reorganize the Workers' and Peasants' Inspection," immediately preceding. Lenin is referring to his proposal to reduce Rabkrin to three or four hundred employees.

5. Construction on the power station on the Volkhov River about seventy miles east of Petrograd (Leningrad) was begun in 1918. Work was interrupted by the civil war and the project was not completed until 1926, when it was named the Lenin Hydroelectric Station.

6. The article referred to is "Better Fewer, but Better," immediately preceding. The characterization of the state machinery as having been taken over from tsarism and only "colored in the Soviet style" is from Lenin's first article on Rabkrin, "How We Should Reorganize the Workers' and Peasants' Inspection."

7. The Workers' Truth group was a small factional grouping which appeared in the Bolshevik Party around 1921. In addition to criticizing bureaucratism, it advocated syndicalist and semianarchist demands for the trade unions.

8. This article, entitled "Civility and Politeness as a Necessary Lubricant in Daily Relations," is included in Trotsky's **Problems of Everyday Life and Other Writings on Culture and Science** (New York: Monad Press, 1973).

9. A reference to "Better Fewer, but Better": "Let it be said in parentheses that we have bureaucrats in our party offices as well as in Soviet offices."

10. The State Duma was a parliamentary body with purely "consultative" powers established by Tsar Nicholas II under pressure from the 1905 revolution. The Third State Duma was convened in September 1907 after the ebb of the 1905 revolutionary wave. Lenin defended participation in this sham parliament against those who called for boycott.

Brest-Litovsk was a town on the Russo-Polish border where a treaty ending hostilities between Russia and Germany was signed in March 1918. The terms were exceedingly unfavorable to the new Soviet government, and there were sharp differences among its leaders over whether to accept them before Lenin's proposal to accept was adopted. The November 1918 revolution in Germany and the German defeat in the war enabled the Soviet government to recover most of the territory lost through the treaty.

Richard von Kuhlmann (1873-1948) was the German foreign secretary (1917-18). He headed the German delegation at Brest-Litovsk. Count Ottokar Czernin von und zu Chudenitz (1872-1932), Austro-Hungarian minister of foreign affairs (1916-18), represented Austria-Hungary at Brest-Litovsk.

11. The western campaign refers to the Russo-Polish war. In April 1920, Polish forces invaded the Soviet Ukraine in an attempt to seize territory. The Red Army successfully drove out the invaders, but an attempt to continue the campaign to the west and take Warsaw ended in a rout of Soviet forces. An armistice was declared in October and the war was officially ended by the Treaty of Riga (March 1921).

The Ruhr crisis was precipitated in January 1923 when the French occupied the heavily industrialized Ruhr region of Germany because the German government had defaulted on payment of World War I reparations demanded by the Treaty of Versailles. The resulting economic and social crisis led to the German revolution of 1923.



## Part V THE MONOPOLY OF FOREIGN TRADE

### Introduction

The monopoly of foreign trade was one of the cornerstones of the NEP. In order to revitalize Soviet industry, the state monopoly was established as the "middleman" between the internal and external markets. How this worked can be seen from the example Lenin used in the first selection printed here.

In the Soviet Union flax cost 4.5 rubles for a given quantity. The same quantity of flax cost 14 rubles in Britain. By buying flax from the peasants at 4.5 rubles and selling to the British at 14 rubles, the foreign-trade monopoly could realize a profit of 9.5 rubles per unit of flax. This profit could then be invested in industry, transport, electrification projects, etc.

The import relations operated similarly, only here they functioned to protect developing Soviet industry in addition to yielding a profit. Suppose, for instance, that Soviet factories could produce a tractor for 1,000 rubles. American factories, enjoying a higher productivity of labor, could produce a tractor for 500 rubles. By importing American tractors and selling them to peasant cooperatives at 1,000 rubles, the foreign-trade monopoly would not only realize a profit of 500 rubles but also assure that American tractors could not undersell Soviet tractors, thereby destroying the fledgling Soviet tractor industry.

Although this arrangement was in the long-term interests of Soviet development, it was directly contrary to the immediate interests of the peasants, who would have preferred to realize the higher prices of the world market for their produce and the lower prices of the world market for the manufactured goods they bought.

The disparity between the prices on the domestic and world markets made smuggling very profitable and very widespread. Lenin fiercely opposed attempts to weaken the monopoly. "It is one thing," he wrote, "to deal with the professional smuggler on the frontier and another with *all* the peasantry, who will *all*

defend themselves and fight the authorities when they try to deprive them of the profit 'belonging to them'" (original emphasis).

At a Central Committee plenary meeting on October 6, 1922, a motion was passed in Lenin and Trotsky's absence that would have weakened the monopoly. Lenin reacted with an angry note to Stalin criticizing the decision and the haste with which it was taken. He demanded that it be held in abeyance until the next plenary meeting in December.

Stalin circulated Lenin's letter, appending a memorandum of his own in which he stated that he would vote for postponement of enacting the measure although Lenin's letter had not made him change his mind as to the correctness of the decision. (Stalin's memorandum is reproduced in Lewin, *Lenin's Last Struggle*, pp. 151-52.)

As the December plenum approached, Lenin realized that his health would not allow him to attend. On December 12, he sent a short note to Trotsky asking whether he would defend the monopoly at the plenum. This same day Trotsky replied at some length affirming that "maintaining and *strengthening* the monopoly of foreign trade appears absolutely imperative" (original emphasis). Later that day Lenin wrote to M.I. Frumkin, deputy commissar for foreign trade, and B.S. Stomonyakov, Soviet trade representative in Berlin, enclosing a copy of Trotsky's letter and informing them that he would ask Trotsky to take up the defense of his position on the plenum. Curiously this letter is not included in Lenin's *Collected Works*. Explaining a reference to it in a subsequent letter, the editors of the fourth English edition of the *Collected Works* comment: "This letter has not been found" (vol. 45, p. 601n). In fact Trotsky deposited a copy of the letter with the Bureau of Party History in October 1927.

On December 13, Lenin answered Trotsky's letter urging him to defend their "common standpoint on the unquestionable need to maintain and consolidate the foreign-trade monopoly" and to postpone discussion about the role of the State Planning Commission. He also sent a statement of his position on the monopoly to Stalin for the Central Committee (*Collected Works*, vol. 33, pp. 455-59). That night Lenin suffered two more dangerous strokes.

On December 15, Lenin was back at work again dictating three letters. The first is to Stalin. Lenin declares his intention to speak at the Congress of Soviets to be held at the end of December if there is any chance at all of doing so. He rejects any postpone-

ment of the question, stating that he will rely on Trotsky to defend his views and has heard that several members of the Central Committee have altered their views. This same day there are two letters to Trotsky on tactics for the fight. He asks Trotsky to press for a decision at the plenum. An acceptable compromise would be a decision confirming the monopoly for the time being and then bringing up the question again at the party congress. The last sentence of this second letter of December 15, "I do not believe that we could accept any other compromise either *in our own interests* or the interests of the cause" (emphasis added), appears to be an oblique reference to the "bloc against bureaucracy" Lenin and Trotsky had concluded in a private meeting shortly before this time.

On December 18, the Central Committee met and reaffirmed the monopoly of foreign trade, rescinding the resolution passed in October. Three days later (December 21) Lenin wrote a victory note to Trotsky: "It looks as though it has been possible to take the position without a single shot, by a simple maneuver. I suggest that we should not stop and should continue the offensive. . . ." The suggestion to continue the offensive at the party congress even though the position had been won at the plenum is worthy of comment. The tactical maneuvers outlined in this series of letters show that Lenin was far from being an unquestioned dictator of the party and state as Stalin later came to be. Here we see him organizing a fight against Stalin, Bukharin, Zinoviev, and Kamenev, the most prominent figures in the Bolshevik Old Guard. His only ally in the Politburo is Trotsky. He draws into the struggle a number of specialists in foreign trade—Frumkin, Krestinsky, Stomonyakov, Avanesov—none of whom are in the Politburo or on the Central Committee. Later, in 1927, Trotsky would wryly comment that Lenin, given the ban on factions, was organizing a "conspiracy" against the Central Committee (*Stalin School of Falsification*, p. 59).

Having won a victory, it was not Lenin's practice to "rub it in," to remind his opponents that they had been bested. Lenin was interested in obtaining practical results, not in crushing personalities or undermining the authority of other leaders. Lenin evidently felt the need to reaffirm the monopoly before the whole party. His suspicions were aroused by the easy victory and he was not sure that he could count on Stalin and his associates to carry out the decision they had agreed to. His suspicions would be confirmed by the dispute over the nationalities question.

## Letter to J.V. Stalin for Members of the CC, RCP(B) re the Foreign Trade Monopoly

To Comrade Stalin, Secretary of the CC

October 13, 1922

The decision of the plenary meeting of the CC of October 6 (Minutes no. 7, point 3) institutes what seems to be an unimportant, partial reform: "implement a number of separate decisions of the Council of Labor and Defense on temporary permission for the import and export of individual categories of goods or on granting the permission for specific frontiers."

In actual fact, however, this wrecks the foreign-trade monopoly. Small wonder that Comrade Sokolnikov has been trying to get this done and has succeeded. He has always been for it; he likes paradoxes and has always undertaken to prove that monopoly is not to our advantage. But it is surprising that people who in principle favor the monopoly have voted for this without asking for detailed information from any of the business executives.

What does the decision that has been adopted signify?

Purchasing offices are being opened for the import and export trade. The owner of such an office has the right to buy and sell *only* specially listed goods.

Where is the control over this? Where are the means of control?

In Russia flax costs 4 rubles 50 kopeks, in Britain it costs 14 rubles. All of us have read in *Capital* how capitalism changes internally and grows more daring when interest rates and profits rise quickly. All of us recall that capitalism is capable of taking deadly risks and that Marx recognized this long before the war and before capitalism began its "leaps".

What is the situation now? What force is capable of holding the peasants and the traders from extremely profitable deals? Cover Russia with a network of overseers? Catch the neighbor in a purchasing office and prove that his flax has been sold to be smuggled out of the country?

Comrade Sokolnikov's paradoxes are always clever, but one must distinguish between paradoxes and the grim truth.



No "legality" on such a question is at all possible in the Russian countryside. No comparison with smuggling in general ("All the same," they say, "smuggling is also flourishing in spite of the monopoly") is in any way correct; it is one thing to deal with the professional smuggler on the frontier and another with *all* the peasantry, who will *all* defend themselves and fight the authorities when they try to deprive them of the profit "belonging to them."

Before we have had an opportunity to test the monopoly system, which is only just beginning to bring us millions (and will give us tens of millions and more), we are introducing complete chaos; we are shaking loose the very supports that we have only just begun to strengthen.

We have begun to build up a system; the foreign-trade monopoly and the cooperatives are both only in the process of being built up. Some results will be forthcoming in a year or two. The profit from foreign trade runs into hundreds percent, and we are *beginning* to receive millions and tens of millions. We have *begun* to build up mixed companies<sup>1</sup>; we have begun to learn to receive *half* of their (monstrous) profits. We can already see signs of very substantial state profits. We are giving this up in the hope of duties which cannot yield any comparable profit; we are giving everything up and chasing a specter!

The question was brought up at the plenary meeting hastily. There was no serious discussion worth mentioning. We have no reason for haste. Our business executives are only just beginning to go into things. Is there anything like a correct approach to the matter when major questions of trade policy are decided in a slapdash manner, without collecting the pertinent material, without weighing the *pros* and *cons* with documents and figures? Tired people vote in a few minutes and that's the end of it. We have weighed less complicated political questions over and over again and frequently it took us several months to reach a decision.

I regret it very much that illness prevented me from attending the meeting on that day and that I am now compelled to seek an exception to the rule.

But I think that the question must be weighed and studied, that haste is harmful.

I propose that the decision on this question be deferred for two months, i.e., until the next plenary meeting; in the interim infor-

mation and verified *documents* on the experience of our trade policy should be collected.

V. Ulyanov (Lenin)<sup>2</sup>

PS: In the conversation I had with Comrade Stalin yesterday (I did not attend the plenary meeting and tried to get my information from the comrades who were there), we spoke, incidentally, of the proposal temporarily to open the Petrograd and Novorossiisk ports. It seems to me that both examples show the extreme danger of such experiments even for a most restricted list of goods. The opening of the Petrograd port would intensify the smuggling of flax across the Finnish frontier to prodigious proportions. Instead of combating professional smugglers we shall have to combat *all the peasantry* of the flax-growing region. In this fight we shall almost assuredly be beaten, and beaten irreparably. The opening of the Novorossiisk port would quickly drain us of surplus grain. Is this a cautious policy at a time when our reserves for war are small? When a series of systematic measures to increase them have not yet had time to show results?

Then the following should be given consideration. The foreign trade monopoly has started a stream of gold into Russia. It is only just becoming possible to calculate; the first trip of such and such a merchant to Russia for six months has given him, say, hundreds percent of profit; he increases his price for this right from 25 to 50 percent in favor of the Commissariat of Foreign Trade. Furthermore, it has become possible for us to learn and to *increase* this profit. Everything will at once collapse, the whole work will stop, because if here and there various ports are opened for a time, *not a single merchant will pay a penny for this kind of "monopoly."* That is obvious. Before taking such a risk things have to be thought over and weighed several times. Besides there is the political risk of letting through not foreign merchants by name, which we check, but the entire petty bourgeoisie in general.

With the start of foreign trade we have begun to reckon on an influx of gold. I see no other settlement except for a liquor monopoly,<sup>3</sup> but here there are very serious moral considerations, and also some businesslike objections from Sokolnikov.

Lenin

PPS: I have just been informed (1:30 a.m.) that some business

executives have applied for a postponement. I have not yet read this application, but I wholeheartedly support it. It is only a matter of two months.

Lenin

[Lenin, *Collected Works*, vol. 33, pp. 375-78.]

## To L.D. Trotsky

Comrade Trotsky:

I am sending you Krestinsky's letter. Write me as soon as possible whether you agree; at the plenum, I am going to fight for the monopoly.

What about you?

Yours,  
Lenin

PS: It would be best returned *soon*.

[December 12, 1922]

[Lenin, *Collected Works*, vol. 45, p. 601.]

December 12, 1922

## To Comrade Lenin

V.I.:

Maintaining and *strengthening* the monopoly of foreign trade appears absolutely imperative. But at the present time, in practice, the opponents of foreign trade are not staging a frontal assault against it, but rather are employing intricate, flanking maneuvers. On the other hand, modification and improvement of the methods of the monopoly of foreign trade is absolutely imperative.

The danger may arise that under the guise of improving the methods of implementing the monopoly, measures may be slipped in that essentially undercut the monopoly.

Comrade Avanesov came by today and let me in on the basic conclusions of his commission. As I understood him, he does not want the trade monopoly to be implemented directly by the People's Commissariat of Foreign Trade, but rather by large-scale economic units (syndicates, concerns) under the control of Foreign Trade. Krestinsky, obviously in agreement with Stomonyakov, is proposing that important economic units (i.e., once again, obviously, syndicates and concerns, in part departments) have their permanent representatives at corresponding points and that these representatives should establish sections in the trade delegations. This plan has something in common with Avanesov's, however with this very important difference—Krestinsky is taking the trade delegations as the basis, as the direct trading (buying and selling) organs of the republic. Individual economic units will operate through sections of the trade delegations, while these sections are organized in agreement with the corresponding economic units. Avanesov, however, directly designates these representative bodies of the syndicates as basic trading organs, retaining controlling functions for the trade delegations.

Perhaps the development of these will lead to something. But for the moment, perhaps it would be safer to take the trade delegations as the basis. It is possible, however, that I did not fully understand the plan of Avanesov's commission. He promised to send the proposals in writing tomorrow.

The most important question, however, has been and remains the regulation of our foreign trade out of Russia in connection with our overall economic work. It is necessary for someone to know and decide what may be imported and what may not, what may be exported and what we must keep for ourselves. The decisions needed here are not on the plane of legislative regulation, set lists, but practical flexible ones, always adjusted to economic requirements taken as a whole. This obviously should be the task of Gosplan, which comes, in turn, under the heading of development of state industry. But this is a different matter, which I have written about more than once. Avanesov's commission has only confirmed that *this kind* of calculation of our imports and exports has not been made up to now.

Trotsky

[*The Trotsky Papers*, vol. 2, pp. 778-80. Translated from the Russian by the editor.]



## To Comrades Frumkin and Stomonyakov Copy to Trotsky

In view of my increasing sickness, I cannot be present at the plenum. I am conscious how awkwardly, and even worse than awkwardly, I am behaving in relation to you, but all the same, I cannot possibly speak.

Today I have received the enclosed letter from Comrade Trotsky with which I agree in all essentials, with the exception perhaps of the last lines about the State Planning Commission. I will write Trotsky of my agreement with him and ask him to take upon himself, in view of my sickness, the defense of my position at the plenum.

I think that this defense ought to be divided into three parts. *First*, the defense of the fundamental principle of the monopoly of foreign trade, its full and final confirmation; *second*, delegate to a special commission the detailed consideration of those practical plans for realizing this monopoly which are advanced by Avanesov—at least half of this commission ought to consist of representatives from the Commissariat of Foreign Trade; *third*, the question of the work of the State Planning Commission ought to be considered separately. And by the way, I think that there will be no disagreement between me and Trotsky if he confines himself to the demand that the work of the State Planning Commission, carried on under the aegis of the development of state industry, should give its opinion about all parts of the activity of the People's Commissariat of Foreign Trade.

I hope to write again today or tomorrow and send you my declaration on the essence of the given problem at the plenum of the Central Committee. At any rate, I think that this question is of such fundamental importance that in case I do not get the agreement of the plenum, I ought to carry it into the party congress and before that announce the existing disagreement in the fraction of our party at the coming congress of the soviets.

Lenin

Dictated to L.F.

December 12, 1922.

[Trotsky, *The Stalin School of Falsification*, pp. 59-60. Spelling,

capitalization, and punctuation slightly revised. This letter is not included in the *Collected Works*.]

## To L.D. Trotsky

Comrade Trotsky  
Copy to Frumkin and Stomonyakov

Comrade Trotsky:

I have received your comments on Krestinsky's letter and Avanesov's plans. I think that you and I are in maximum agreement, and I believe that the State Planning Commission question, as presented in this case, rules out (or postpones) any discussion on whether the State Planning Commission needs to have any administrative rights.

At any rate, it is my request<sup>4</sup> that at the forthcoming plenum you should undertake the defense of our common standpoint on the unquestionable need to maintain and consolidate the foreign-trade monopoly. Since the preceding plenum passed a decision in this respect which runs entirely counter to the foreign-trade monopoly, and since there can be no concessions on this matter, I believe, as I say in my letter to Frumkin and Stomonyakov, that in the event of our defeat on this question we must refer the question to a party congress. This will require a brief exposition of our differences before the party group of the forthcoming congress of soviets. If I have time, I shall write this, and I would be very glad if you did the same. Hesitation on this question is doing us unprecedented harm, and the negative arguments boil down entirely to accusations of shortcomings in the apparatus. But our apparatus is everywhere imperfect, and to abandon the monopoly because of an imperfect apparatus would be throwing out the baby with the bath water.

Lenin

December 13, 1922

[Lenin, *Collected Works*, vol. 45, pp. 601-02.]

## Letter to J.V. Stalin for members of the RCP(B) CC

I am now through with putting my business in order, and am in a position to leave without worry.<sup>5</sup> I have also come to an arrangement with Trotsky to stand up for my views on the foreign-trade monopoly. There is only one thing that is worrying me extremely—it is that I am unable to speak at the congress of soviets. On Tuesday, I shall have the doctors in to see me and we shall discuss whether there is any chance at all of my doing so. I would regard my missing it as a great inconvenience, to put it no stronger. I have had the outline of my speech written several days ago.<sup>6</sup> I propose, therefore, without suspending preparations by some other speaker in my place, to keep open until Wednesday the possibility that I will perhaps personally make a speech, much shorter than the usual one, say, lasting forty-five minutes. Such a speech would in no way prevent a substitute (whomsoever you would authorize for that purpose) from making a speech, but I think it would be useful both in the political and in the personal sense because it would remove any cause for great agitation. Please have this in mind, and if the opening of the congress should be further delayed, inform me in good time through my secretary.

Lenin

December 15, 1922

I am resolutely opposed to any delay on the question of the foreign-trade monopoly. If the idea should arise, for whatever reason (including the proposition that my participation in the question is desirable), to postpone it until the next plenum, I should most resolutely object to this, because I am sure that Trotsky will be able to stand up for my views just as well as I myself. That is the first thing. The second is that your statement and Zinoviev's and, according to rumor, Kamenev's as well confirm that some members of the CC have already altered their earlier opinion; third, and most important: any further hesitation

on this highly important question is absolutely intolerable and will tend to frustrate any work.

Lenin

December 15, 1922

[Lenin, *Collected Works*, vol. 45, pp. 602-03.]

## To L.D. Trotsky

Comrade Trotsky:

I consider that we have quite reached agreement. I ask you to declare our solidarity at the plenum. I hope that our decision will be passed, because some of those who had voted against it in October have now partially or altogether switched to our side.

If for some reason our decision should not be passed, we shall apply to the group of the congress of soviets, and declare that we are referring the question to the party congress.

In that case, inform me and I shall send in my statement.

Yours,  
Lenin

PS: If this question should be removed from the present plenum (which I do not expect, and against which you should of course protest as strongly as you can on our common behalf), I think that we should apply to the group of the congress of soviets anyway and demand that the question be referred to the party congress because any further hesitation is absolutely intolerable.

You can keep all the material I have sent you until after the plenum.

[December 15, 1922]

[Lenin, *Collected Works*, vol. 45, p. 604.]



## To L.D. Trotsky

Comrade Trotsky:

I am sending on to you Frumkin's letter<sup>7</sup> which I have received today. I also think that it is absolutely necessary to have done with this question once and for all. If there are any fears that I am being worried by this question and that it could even have an effect on my health, I think that this is absolutely wrong because I am infinitely more worried by the delay which makes our policy on one of the most basic questions quite unstable. That is why I call your attention to the enclosed letter and ask you to support an immediate discussion of this question. I am sure that if we are threatened with the danger of failure, it would be much better to fail before the party congress and at once to apply to the group of the congress, than to fail after the congress. Perhaps an acceptable compromise is that we pass a decision just now confirming the monopoly, and still bring up the question at the party congress, making an arrangement about this right away. I do not believe that we could accept any other compromise either in our own interests or the interests of the cause.

Lenin

December 15, 1922

[Lenin, *Collected Works*, vol. 45, pp. 604-05]

## To L.D. Trotsky

It looks as though it has been possible to take the position without a single shot, by a simple maneuver. I suggest that we should not stop and should continue the offensive and for that purpose put through a motion to raise at the party congress the question of consolidating our foreign trade and the measures to improve its implementation. This is to be announced in the group

of the congress of soviets. I hope that you will not object to this and will not refuse to give a report in the group.

N. Lenin

December 21, 1922

[Lenin, *Collected Works*, vol. 45, p. 606.]

#### NOTES TO PART V

1. Mixed companies were joint enterprises involving the Soviet government and foreign investors. These ventures were concentrated in the area of extraction of raw materials. The foreign investors put up the capital and shared the profits equally with the Soviet government. Sokolnikov proposed allowing direct exploitation by foreign capital, imposing "export duties" instead of equal profit sharing.

2. V. Ulyanov (Lenin). Lenin's real name was Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov. He took the name N. or Nikolai Lenin for underground political work. After the revolution he often used his real name, putting the more familiar "Lenin" in parentheses.

3. In 1914 the tsarist government abolished the state liquor monopoly and instituted prohibition in order to encourage sobriety in the interests of the war effort. The Bolshevik government continued prohibition to combat the traditionally widespread alcoholism among the populace. Lenin and especially Trotsky opposed restoring the state liquor monopoly as a source of revenue. (See Trotsky, "Vodka, the Church, and the Cinema," in *Problems of Everyday Life*, pp. 25-30.) Prohibition was lifted in 1925.

4. "It is my request. . . ." Original Russian has "**ya by ochen prosil Vas. . . .** (Sochineniya, vol. 54, p. 324), agreeing with Trotsky's version: "I earnestly urge you. . . ."

5. Lenin was preparing to leave Moscow on doctor's orders for recuperation at Gorki, a village seventeen miles south of the capital.

6. This outline is in *Collected Works*, vol. 36, pp. 588-89.

7. The editors of the *Collected Works* comment: "This letter has not been found" (vol. 45, p. 756 [note to p. 604]). The letter is reproduced in *The Trotsky Papers*, vol. 2, pp. 786-87. Frumkin reports that there is a proposal to postpone discussion of the monopoly question until the following plenum so that Lenin would be able to participate. He expresses his alarm: "I should consider it utterly essential to finish with this question. Any further uncertainty about the situation will wreck all work." As the correspondence shows, Lenin shared Frumkin's sense of urgency. As long as the question of the monopoly was pending, foreign traders would be reluctant to enter into trade agreements, preferring to wait for more favorable terms that would become available should the monopoly be weakened or abolished.

## Part VI THE NATIONALITIES QUESTION

### Introduction

The dispute on the nationalities question centered about the project for the formation of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and the struggle between Stalin and the Central Committee of the Georgian Communist Party.

Georgia, formerly a province of tsarist Russia, is bounded on the west by the Black Sea and on the north by the Caucasus mountains. From 1918 to 1921 it was under Menshevik rule and served as a base for British and French forces. In February 1921, the Red Army invaded Georgia and established Bolshevik rule with the aid of local Georgian Bolsheviks. The Politburo, acting on information from Stalin, the commissar of nationalities, and Ordzhonikidze, the military commander of the Caucasian front, authorized the invasion to support a Bolshevik rising with assumed powerful popular support. The reality was somewhat different, and the Red Army met stiff resistance.

Hence relations from the first were strained, with the local Bolsheviks anxious to legitimize their rule by rigorously respecting the rights of Georgians as a former oppressed nationality, and Ordzhonikidze, backed by Stalin, acting in the manner of a military satrap.

Differences came to a head over the plan for establishing the Soviet Union. Stalin's autonomization plan called for the formal "entry" of the non-Russian republics into the RSFSR, with centralized control residing in Moscow. Resistance to this plan, which violated the right of self-determination of the formerly oppressed nationalities, was centered in Georgia.

The first document in Part VI is Lenin's letter of September 26, 1922, criticizing "autonomization" and counterposing a union of equals between all the republics.

The specific impetus for the second document, Lenin's note to Kamenev declaring "war to the death on Great Russian chauvinism" and demanding a rotating chairmanship for the Union

Central Executive Committee, is unknown. By this time he was well aware of the Georgians' complaints of ill-treatment, and although he still supported Stalin and Ordzhonikidze in the dispute, he may have believed that where there was so much smoke there must be some fire—that insensitivity on the part of the Russian (or Russified) leadership was exacerbating the dispute.

The third document presented here is Lenin's most powerful attack on Stalin and his associates. The diplomatic tone of September is gone. No longer is Stalin "in rather too much of a hurry" and Mdivani, a leader of the Georgian opposition to Stalin, "suspected of 'separatist' sentiments." The autonomization plan and the handling of the Georgian situation is now seen as a "truly Great Russian nationalist campaign" and Lenin names those responsible for it: Stalin, Ordzhonikidze, Dzerzhinsky. According to his secretary L. Fotieva, Lenin intended to publish this letter but not immediately after it was written (see *The Stalin School of Falsification*, p. 70). He sent a copy of it to Trotsky along with the note dated March 5 and refers to it in the letter of March 6 to Mdivani and the other Georgian oppositionists. It was part of the "bomb" he was preparing for Stalin at the Twelfth Party Congress in April. Trotsky quotes several phrases from the document in his letter to the Bureau of Party History (October 1927). He notes there that the full text is contained in the stenographic report of the July 1926 party plenum (see *The Stalin School of Falsification*, p. 65) but that he did not have a copy of the letter in his possession at the time the English-language edition of *The Stalin School of Falsification* was published in 1937. Thus the complete text did not come to light until it was published as part of Khrushchev's "de-Stalinization" campaign in 1956.<sup>1</sup>

Besides the two short notes on March 5 and March 6—Lenin's last political acts—we are including Trotsky's article "The National Question and the Education of the Party Youth." This article was published in *Pravda* on March 20, 1923, as part of a series called "Thoughts on the Party." The first two articles in this series were reprinted along with Trotsky's speech "The Tasks of the Twelfth Party Congress" in a pamphlet entitled *The Tasks of the Twelfth Congress of the Russian Communist Party* and issued in a printing of 15,000 copies before the congress. This article, like the others published in *Tasks of the Twelfth Congress*, can be seen as a popularization of the common program Lenin



and Trotsky arrived at during the final months of Lenin's political life. Intended for the party ranks and the broad public, the article explains the basis for Soviet policy in Georgia: "The only convincing policy for us can be a policy that in deeds shows the Georgian peasantry that its national-cultural interests, its national feelings, its national self-respect, which in the past has too often been insulted, find today all the satisfaction that is possible under the objective circumstances." Trotsky calls for an educational program to counter Great Russian chauvinism: "*In the field of the national question the party as a whole undoubtedly needs a refresher course, and the youth a beginners' course. And this course must be undertaken in good time and according to a very stiff program, for whoever ignores the national question risks getting bogged down in it*" (original emphasis).

Unfortunately the emerging bureaucracy had a different course in mind. Lenin fell silent with the last two letters included here. The triumvirate of Stalin, Zinoviev, and Kamenev agreed to the terms put forward by Trotsky and there was no fight at the party congress. Stalin made a rotten compromise and then deceived as Lenin had predicted he would. It wasn't until October 1923 that the fight broke out in the party ranks and Trotsky began to organize the Left Opposition.

## Letter to L.B. Kamenev for the Members of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party (Bolsheviks)

September 29 [1922]

Comrade Kamenev! No doubt you have already received from Stalin the resolution of his commission on incorporating the independent republics in the RSFSR.

If you have not received it, get it from the secretary and read it immediately, please. I discussed it yesterday with Sokolnikov and today with Stalin. Tomorrow I will be seeing Mdivani (a Georgian Communist suspected of "separatist" sentiments).

In my opinion, the question is of prime importance. Stalin is rather in too much of a hurry. You must—since at one time you intended to take up the question and have also studied it to some extent—think the matter through and Zinoviev likewise.

Stalin has already agreed to make one concession—to say in paragraph 1 in place of "entry" into the RSFSR:

"Formal union with the RSFSR in a Union of Soviet Republics of Europe and Asia."

The spirit of this concession is, I hope, clear: we see ourselves as equals in law with the Ukrainian SSR and the others and enter with them into a new union, a new federation, "The Union of Soviet Republics of Europe and Asia."

Paragraph 2 will then also have to be amended. Something like creating an "All-Federation Central Executive Committee of the Union of Soviet Republics of Europe and Asia" to meet side by side with CEC of the RSFSR.

If the latter meets once a week and the former meets once a week (or even once every two weeks), it should not be difficult to arrange this.

It is important not to give the supporters of "independence" grist for their mill, not to destroy their *independence*, but rather to establish a *new stage*, a federation of republics *with equal rights*.

The second part of paragraph 2 could stand as is: dissatisfaction (with decisions of STO [Council of Labor and Defense] and SNK [Council of People's Commissars]) will be appealed to the All-Federation CEC *without suspending execution* (the same goes for the RSFSR).

Paragraph 3 could stand with an editorial amendment: "[The services of foreign affairs, foreign trade, defense, communications, and posts and telegraphs of the republics. . .] will be merged into *all-federation* people's commissariats with headquarters in Moscow, and the corresponding people's commissariats of the RSFSR will have their authorized representatives with a small staff in all the republics *belonging to the Union of Republics of Europe and Asia*."

The second part of paragraph 3 stands; perhaps it might be more equitable to say: "[these representatives will be appointed] after agreement with the CECs of the member republics of the Union of Soviet Republics of Europe and Asia."

The third part ["The participation of the representatives of the republics concerned in the commissariats of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade must be regarded as useful"] needs more consideration. Shouldn't "useful" be replaced by "*obligatory*"? Or shouldn't we insert a *conditional* obligation, if only in the form of *interpellation*, accepting decisions without interpellation applying only in matters of "special emergency importance"?

Paragraph 4, ["The commissariats of Finance, Food, Labor, and Economics of the republics will be strictly subject to the directives of the corresponding commissariats of the RSFSR"] perhaps add "merged by agreement of the CECs"?

Paragraph 5, ["The other commissariats of the republics . . . will be regarded as independent"] perhaps add "with the establishment of combined or general conferences and meetings having a *purely consultative* character (or *merely consultative* character)"?

Corresponding changes in first and second addenda.

Stalin has agreed to delay presenting the resolution to the Politburo of the CC until my arrival. I shall arrive on Monday, October 2. I would like to see you along with Rykov for a couple of hours in the morning, say, between noon and two o'clock, or if necessary in the evening, say, between five and seven or six and eight.

This is my initial proposal. On the basis of discussions with

Mdivani and other comrades, I will make additions or alterations. I strongly urge your doing likewise and sending me your reply.

Yours, Lenin

PS: Send copies to *all* members of the Politburo.

[Lenin, *Sochineniya* (Collected Works), 5th ed., vol. 45 (Moscow: Izdatelstvo Politicheskoi Literatury, 1970), pp. 211-13. Translated from Russian by the editor. This document does not appear in the English *Collected Works*. The text of Stalin's "autonomization plan" is in Lewin, *Lenin's Last Struggle*, pp. 146-47. Relevant passages have been interpolated in brackets to make Lenin's comments clear.]

## Memo to L.B. Kamenev on Combating Great Russian Chauvinism

Comrade Kamenev:

I declare war to the death on Great Russian chauvinism. I shall eat it with all my healthy teeth as soon as I get rid of this accursed bad tooth.

It must be *absolutely* insisted that the Union Central Executive Committee should be *presided over* in turn by a

Russian,

Ukrainian,

Georgian, etc.

*Absolutely!*

Yours,  
Lenin

[October 6, 1922]

[Lenin, *Collected Works*, vol. 33, p. 372 and *Sochineniya*, vol. 45, p. 214. The version in the English edition is corrupt, substituting "the Political Bureau" for L.B. Kamenev in the title, and omitting the salutation. In addition, *Velikorusskii shovinizm* (Great Russian chauvinism) is rendered by "dominant nation chauvinism."]



## The Question of Nationalities or "Autonomization"

I suppose I have been very remiss<sup>2</sup> with respect to the workers of Russia for not having intervened energetically and decisively enough in the notorious question of autonomization, which, it appears, is officially called the question of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

When this question arose last summer, I was ill; and then in autumn I relied too much on my recovery and on the October and December plenary meetings giving me an opportunity of intervening in this question. However, I did not manage to attend the October plenary meeting (when this question came up) or the one in December, and so the question passed me by almost completely.

I have only had time for a talk with Comrade Dzerzhinsky, who came from the Caucasus and told me how this matter stood in Georgia. I have also managed to exchange a few words with Comrade Zinoviev and express my apprehensions on this matter. From what I was told by Comrade Dzerzhinsky, who was at the head of the commission sent by the CC to "investigate" the Georgian incident, I could only draw the greatest apprehensions. If matters had come to such a pass that Ordzhonikidze could go to the extreme of applying physical violence, as Comrade Dzerzhinsky informed me, we can imagine what a mess we have got ourselves into. Obviously the whole business of "autonomization" was radically wrong and badly timed.

It is said that a united apparatus was needed. Where did that assurance come from? Did it not come from that same Russian apparatus which, as I pointed out in one of the preceding sections of my diary,<sup>3</sup> we took over from tsarism and slightly anointed with Soviet oil?

There is no doubt that that measure should have been delayed somewhat until we could say that we vouched for our apparatus as our own. But now, we must, in all conscience, admit the contrary; the apparatus we call ours is, in fact, still quite alien to us; it is a bourgeois and tsarist hotchpotch and there has been no possibility of getting rid of it in the course of the past five years without the help of other countries and because we have been

"busy" most of the time with military engagements and the fight against famine.

It is quite natural that in such circumstances the "freedom to secede from the union" by which we justify ourselves will be a mere scrap of paper, unable to defend the non-Russians from the onslaught of that really Russian man, the Great Russian chauvinist, in substance a rascal and a tyrant, such as the typical Russian bureaucrat is. There is no doubt that the infinitesimal percentage of Soviet and sovietized workers will drown in that tide of chauvinistic Great Russian ruffraff like a fly in milk.

It is said in defense of this measure that the people's commissariats directly concerned with national psychology and national education were set up as separate bodies. But there the question arises: can these people's commissariats be made quite independent? And secondly: were we careful enough to take measures to provide the non-Russians with a real safeguard against the truly Russian bully? I do not think we took such measures although we could and should have done so.

I think that Stalin's haste and his infatuation with pure administration, together with his spite against the notorious "nationalist-socialism," played a fatal role here. In politics spite generally plays the basest of roles.

I also fear that Comrade Dzerzhinsky, who went to the Caucasus to investigate the "crime" of those "nationalist-socialists," distinguished himself there by his truly Russian frame of mind (it is common knowledge that people of other nationalities who have become Russified overdo this Russian frame of mind)<sup>4</sup> and that the impartiality of his whole commission was typified well enough by Ordzhonikidze's "manhandling." I think that no provocation or even insult can justify such Russian manhandling and that Comrade Dzerzhinsky was inexcusably guilty in adopting a light-hearted attitude towards it.

For all the citizens in the Caucasus, Ordzhonikidze was the authority. Ordzhonikidze had no right to display that irritability to which he and Dzerzhinsky referred. On the contrary, Ordzhonikidze should have behaved with a restraint which cannot be demanded of any ordinary citizen, still less of a man accused of a "political" crime. And, to tell the truth, those nationalist-socialists were citizens who were accused of a political crime, and the terms of the accusation were such that it could not be described otherwise.

Here we have an important question of principle: how is internationalism to be understood?<sup>5</sup>

Lenin

December 30, 1922  
Taken down by M.V.

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Continuation of the notes.  
December 31, 1922

In my writings on the national question, I have already said that an abstract presentation of the question of nationalism in general is of no use at all. A distinction must necessarily be made between the nationalism of an oppressor nation and that of an oppressed nation, the nationalism of a big nation and that of a small nation.

In respect of the second kind of nationalism we, nationals of a big nation, have nearly always been guilty, in historic practice, of an infinite number of cases of violence; furthermore, we commit violence and insult an infinite number of times without noticing it. It is sufficient to recall my Volga reminiscences of how non-Russians are treated; how the Poles are not called by any other name than "Polyachiska," how the Tatar is nicknamed "Prince," how the Ukrainians are always "Khokhols" and the Georgians and other Caucasian nationals always "Kapkasiens."

That is why internationalism on the part of oppressors or "great" nations, as they are called (though they are great only in their violence, only great as bullies), must consist not only in the observance of the formal equality of nations but even in an inequality of the oppressor nation, the great nation, that must make up for the inequality which obtains in actual practice. Anybody who does not understand this has not grasped the real proletarian attitude to the national question, he is still essentially petty bourgeois in his point of view and is, therefore, sure to descend to the bourgeois point of view.

What is important for the proletarian? For the proletarian it is not only important, it is absolutely essential that he should be assured that the non-Russians place the greatest possible trust in the proletarian class struggle. What is needed to ensure this? Not

merely formal equality. In one way or another, by one's attitude or by concessions, it is necessary to compensate the non-Russians for the lack of trust, for the suspicion and the insults to which the government of the "dominant" nation subjected them in the past.

I think it is unnecessary to explain this to Bolsheviks, to Communists, in greater detail. And I think that in the present instance, as far as the Georgian nation is concerned, we have a typical case in which a genuinely proletarian attitude makes profound caution, thoughtfulness, and a readiness to compromise a matter of necessity for us. The Georgian who is neglectful of this aspect of the question, or who carelessly flings about accusations of "nationalist-socialism" (whereas he himself is a real and true "nationalist-socialist," and even a vulgar Great Russian bully), violates, in substance, the interests of proletarian class solidarity, for nothing holds up the development and strengthening of proletarian class solidarity so much as national injustice; "offended" nationals are not sensitive to anything so much as to the feeling of equality and the violation of this equality, if only through negligence or jest—to the violation of that equality by their proletarian comrades. That is why in this case it is better to overdo rather than underdo the concessions and leniency towards the national minorities. That is why, in this case, the fundamental interest of proletarian solidarity, and consequently of the proletarian class struggle, requires that we never adopt a formal attitude to the national question, but always take into account the specific attitude of the proletarian of the oppressed (or small) nation towards the oppressor (or great) nation.

Lenin

Taken down by M.V.

December 31, 1922

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Continuation of the notes

December 31, 1922

What practical measures must be taken in the present situation?

*Firstly*, we must maintain and strengthen the union of socialist republics. Of this there can be no doubt. This measure is necessary for us and it is necessary for the world communist proletar-



iat in its struggle against the world bourgeoisie and its defense against bourgeois intrigues.

*Secondly*, the union of socialist republics must be retained for its diplomatic apparatus. By the way, this apparatus is an exceptional component of our state apparatus. We have not allowed a single influential person from the old tsarist apparatus into it. All sections with any authority are composed of Communists. That is why it has already won for itself (this may be said boldly) the name of a reliable communist apparatus purged to an incomparably greater extent of the old tsarist, bourgeois, and petty-bourgeois elements than that which we have had to make do with in other people's commissariats.

*Thirdly*, exemplary punishment must be inflicted on Comrade Ordzhonikidze (I say this all the more regretfully as I am one of his personal friends and have worked with him abroad) and the investigation of all the material which Dzerzhinsky's commission has collected must be completed or started over again to correct the enormous mass of wrongs and biased judgments which it doubtlessly contains. The political responsibility for all this truly Great Russian nationalist campaign must, of course, be laid on Stalin and Dzerzhinsky.

*Fourthly*, the strictest rules must be introduced on the use of the national language in the non-Russian republics of our union, and these rules must be checked with special care. There is no doubt that our apparatus being what it is, there is bound to be, on the pretext of unity in the railway service, unity in the fiscal service and so on, a mass of truly Russian abuses. Special ingenuity is necessary for the struggle against these abuses, not to mention special sincerity on the part of those who undertake this struggle. A detailed code will be required, and only the nationals living in the republic in question can draw it up at all successfully. And then we cannot be sure in advance that as a result of this work we shall not take a step backward at our next congress of soviets, i.e., retain the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics only for military and diplomatic affairs, and in all other respects restore full independence to the individual people's commissariats.

It must be borne in mind that the decentralization of the people's commissariats and the lack of coordination in their work as far as Moscow and other centers are concerned can be compensated sufficiently by party authority if it is exercised with sufficient prudence and impartiality; the harm that can result to our

state from a lack of unification between the national apparatuses and the Russian apparatus is infinitely less than that which will be done not only to us, but to the whole International, and to the hundreds of millions of the peoples of Asia, which is destined to follow us on to the stage of history in the near future. It would be unpardonable opportunism if, on the eve of the debut of the East, just as it is awakening, we undermined our prestige with its peoples, even if only by the slightest crudity or injustice towards our own non-Russian nationalities. The need to rally against the imperialists of the West, who are defending the capitalist world, is one thing. There can be no doubt about that and it would be superfluous for me to speak about my unconditional approval of it. It is another thing when we ourselves lapse, even if only in trifles, into imperialist attitudes towards oppressed nationalities, thus undermining all our principled sincerity, all our principled defense of the struggle against imperialism. But the morrow of world history will be a day when the awakening peoples oppressed by imperialism are finally aroused and the decisive long and hard struggle for their liberation begins.

Lenin

December 31, 1922  
Taken down by M. V.

[Lenin, *Collected Works*, vol. 36, pp. 605-11.]

## To L.D. Trotsky

Top secret  
Personal

Dear Comrade Trotsky:

It is my earnest request that you should undertake the defense of the Georgian case in the Party CC. This case is now under "persecution" by Stalin and Dzerzhinsky, and I cannot rely on their impartiality. Quite to the contrary. I would feel at ease if you agreed to undertake its defense. If you should refuse to do so for any reason, return the whole case to me. I shall consider it a sign that you do not accept.

With best comradely greetings,<sup>6</sup>  
Lenin

[March 5, 1923]

[Lenin, *Collected Works*, vol. 45, p. 607.]

## To P.G. Mdivani, F.Y. Makharadze and Others

Top secret

Copy to Comrades Trotsky and Kamenev

Dear Comrades:

I am following your case with all my heart. I am indignant over Ordzhonikidze's rudeness and the connivance of Stalin and Dzerzhinsky. I am preparing for you notes and a speech.

Respectfully yours,  
Lenin

March 6, 1923

[Lenin, *Collected Works*, vol. 45, p. 608.]

## Thoughts on the Party: The National Question and the Education of the Party Youth

Goethe said long ago that old truths have to be won afresh again and again. This applies to individuals, to parties, and to entire classes. Our party must win for itself afresh, that is, must think out anew, its national program, and consciously check it in actual experience.

Both the domestic policy and the international policy of our party are determined by two fundamental lines—the revolutionary class movement of the Western proletariat and the national revolutionary movement of the East. We have said before how important it is for us to forge strong living ties between the education of our youth—indeed, of the whole party—and the actual course of the proletarian movement throughout the world. (The education of the party, like that of the individual, is never finished; as long as you live, you learn.) Here we must say that not the least useful political exercise for the orientation and self-education of the party is a clear understanding of the national question. In saying *not the least* we may risk being misunderstood. After all, what we have in the West is the proletariat, the struggle for power, while in the East, “all in all,” it is only a matter of liberating predominantly peasant nations from an alien yoke. Of course, considered abstractly, these two movements belong to different epochs of social development; but historically they are linked together, directed from two sides against one and the same mighty foe: imperialism. And if we should fail to understand the colossal importance of the national revolutionary factor, its immeasurable explosive power, we would risk hopelessly compromising the revolutionary movement of the West, and ourselves along with it, for many years if not forever.<sup>7</sup>

From the experience of our revolution we have firmly mastered the importance of correct relations between the proletariat and the peasantry, that is, relations corresponding to their class forces and the course of development of the revolutionary movement throughout the world. We have learned to decline the word *smychka* (bond)<sup>8</sup> in all its cases, and that is not accidental—it must be admitted that sometimes we even bring this word in



where it is quite irrelevant! But we have thoroughly mastered the basic question. Our government is not called a workers' and peasants' government for nothing. If the success of our revolution depends on correct collaboration between the proletariat and the peasantry, the success of the world revolution depends, above all, on correct collaboration between the West European proletariat and the peasant, national-revolutionary East. Russia is a gigantic junction of the proletarian West and the peasant East; a junction and at the same time a proving ground.

In Russia itself, however, the question of relations between the proletariat and the peasantry is not at all homogeneous. One part of the question is the relations between the Great Russian proletariat and the Great Russian peasantry. Here the question stands in its purely class content. This strips and simplifies the task, thereby rendering it easier to solve. The relations between the Great Russian proletariat, which plays first fiddle in our Union state, and the Azerbaidzhani, Turkestani, Georgian, or Ukrainian peasantry, however, are something else again. There, in the formerly oppressed "borderlands," all social, class, economic, administrative, and cultural questions are sharply refracted through a national prism. There, misunderstandings between proletariat and peasantry (and we have seen not a few in these last few years) inevitably assume a national coloring. This also applies to a considerable extent to the proletariat of the formerly oppressed nations. What in Moscow or Petrograd will be understood as a simple practical conflict between the center and the localities, town and country, textile workers and metal workers, can easily assume in Georgia, Azerbaidzhan, and even in the Ukraine, the form of a conflict between "great-power" Moscow and the demands of small and weaker nations. In certain cases this is the truth of the matter; in others it can appear to be true. Our task consists, first, in preventing it from being true, and, second, in preventing it from seeming true. And this is a very big task, which we must accomplish at all costs, by both constitutional and administrative methods, and above all by party methods.

In what does the danger consist as regards an incorrect policy toward the peasantry? In the fact that the peasantry may cease to be led by the proletariat and fall under the leadership of the bourgeoisie. But this danger is ten times greater when it is a question of the peasant masses—and to a considerable extent

also, the young and numerically weak proletariat—of *the small and backward nations that were oppressed by tsarism*. The national link between classes is also a *smychka*, one that has often shown itself in history to be a very strong and tenacious bond. The Georgian Mensheviks, the Ukrainian Petlyurists, the Armenian Dashnaks, the Azerbaidzhani Mussavatists,<sup>9</sup> and the rest were condemned to insignificance by our correct, that is, attentive and courteous, attitude toward the national demands of those people whose ancient historical resentments were being exploited by those parties. Conversely, a lack of understanding or an insufficient understanding on our part of the enormous historical importance of winning the complete and unconditional trust of the formerly oppressed nations would inevitably lend each and every demand, every resentment, every discontent of the indigent working masses a *national*-oppositional coloring. On that basis a nationalist ideology would create, or more exactly, would re-create, a strong “bond” between the bourgeoisie and the toilers, wholly directed against the revolution.

The dictatorship of the working class has opened up for the first time in history the possibility of a correct solution to the national question. The Soviet system establishes a completely favorable state framework for this: elastic, resilient, and at the same time always capable of giving expression both to the centripetal tendencies of the revolution, surrounded as it is by innumerable and irreconcilable enemies, and to the planning requirements of a socialist economy. But we should fall into crude self-delusion if we conceitedly supposed that we have already solved the national question. Actually, great-power chauvinism is often hidden under this complacency (and it can be found even in the ranks of our party). It is not of the aggressive kind, but slumbering and not liking to be disturbed. A “solution” to the national question can be secured only by ensuring to every nation completely unconstrained access to world culture in the language the given nation considers to be its mother tongue. This presumes a great material and cultural advance by our entire union, and we are still far away from that. It is beyond our power to arbitrarily shorten the time that such an advance must take. But one thing *is* in our power: to show and prove to all the small, weak, and backward nations and nationalities formerly oppressed by tsarism that if very important and considerable demands of theirs are not satisfied, this is due to objective conditions common to the

whole union, and not at all to inattention, and not at all to great-power partiality. This must be done not in programmatic declarations, but in our day-to-day state work. And this task, the winning of the complete and unconditional trust of the small and weak nations, confirmed by all their experience, is a paramount party task.

The civil war cut the deepest and clearest channel in the consciousness of the millions of people living in the Soviet Union. In the motives and aims of this war, so far as our party was concerned, there was not an atom of nationalism or "imperialism." The war was essentially a class revolutionary war and in this form it embraced the entire territory of the old tsarist empire, even at moments overflowing the old frontiers. The civil war intersected national groupings in different directions and at different angles, and often bore heavily on certain parts of the present union. During this very severe struggle to save the revolution, the laws of war took precedence over all other laws. Bridges were blown up regardless of what damage would result to economic life. Buildings were taken over for headquarters and barracks from which schoolchildren and their teachers had to be evicted. A harsh military regime cannot but bear heavily on cultural life in general and national culture in particular. Contributing to this was the fact that in particular cases the backwardness of a Red Army unit, the ill will of certain elements in the Communist organization in such a unit, and the inadequate efforts of the political commissars concerned gave rise to ignoring and even roughly trampling upon national feelings and moods. But these were all isolated and passing phenomena. The civil war welded together with blood the working people of all nationalities in struggle against their class oppressors. But in general, by its very essence, it could not be a school of everyday coexistence and cooperation. It could not go beyond formal and "constitutional" principles to practical, material, and moral equality of the citizens of small and backward nationalities with citizens of the former ruling nationality in *enjoying all those benefits, tangible and intangible, which can and must be ensured by belonging to the Soviet Union*. A feeling of national resentment has been accumulated in the formerly oppressed nations over decades and centuries. And this heritage, as with the oppressed position of women it should be said, cannot be disposed of merely by declarations, however sincere they may be and even if they are given

legislative character. It is necessary that a woman should feel, in ordinary life, in everyday experience, that there are no external restrictions and constraints upon her and no contemptuous or condescending attitude is being taken toward her. On the contrary, she must feel that she not only has her "rights" but is being given fraternal collaboration directed toward helping her to rise to a higher level. It is necessary that a small nation should feel that a radical and irreversible change has taken place in the consciousness of the former "ruling" nation. It should feel that all departures by members of this nation from practical and moral equality, from actual, living national fraternity will be punished as strikebreaking and treason by the "ruling" nation itself, that is, by its ruling class. Precisely now, with the onset of more organic work, both economic and cultural, the small nations will observe with watchful attention how they are affected by the general economic, political, juridical, and cultural measures of the government of the Soviet Union, that is, primarily what line our party is carrying out in these questions.

Our enemies seek and will continue to seek opportunities for themselves in this sphere. What a rabid international campaign the Social Democrats waged and are still waging around the Georgian question, depicting the eviction of the Mensheviks from Georgia as the suppression of the Georgian nation! We have shown, and with complete justification, that the purging of the Menshevik agents of imperialism from Georgia was a question of life and death for our entire revolution. For us it is beyond question that the proletarian revolution wholly coincides in its aims and consequences with the interests of the small and oppressed peoples. But the living, struggling, as yet uncompleted revolution may in its advance clash with and, without wishing to, inflict blows upon national interests and sentiments. It is not to be doubted that the invasion of Georgia by the Red Army, going to the aid of the Georgian insurgents, not only was interpreted by the charlatans of international Menshevism as a "predatory" policy on the part of the Soviet power, but could also be understood in that sense, and was in fact so understood, by a certain section of the Georgian peasantry and even of the Georgian workers. In struggling against this mood and these views it is absolutely insufficient to show, even with documentation, that the Georgian Mensheviks had deliberately provided an opening for world imperialism that was of the greatest danger to the



revolution. The backward section of the Georgian working people that was gripped by national mistrust of the Red Army is distinguished by this fact: it cannot grasp the significance of revolutionary events in their European and worldwide setting. The only convincing policy for us can be a policy that in deeds shows the Georgian peasantry that its national-cultural interests, its national feelings, its national self-respect, which in the past has too often been insulted, find today all the satisfaction that is possible under the objective circumstances.

It is very possible that we can expect a certain exacerbation of national sensitivity and even national mistrust among those nationalities which formerly were oppressed and which, of course, demand of the revolution, and quite rightly, that it guarantee them against any sort of relapse into national inequality in the future. On this basis, it is quite possible that a penetration or intensification of nationalistic tendencies (predominantly *defensive*-nationalistic) may take place even among the Communists of the small nations. Such phenomena, however, as a general rule are not of an independent nature but are reflexive, symptomatic. Just as anarchist-adventurist tendencies in working-class circles are usually a sign and result of the opportunist character of the leaders of the labor organizations, so nationalist tendencies among the Communists of the small nations are a sign that the aims of great-powerism are not yet everywhere eradicated in the general state machine or even in some corners of the ruling party itself.

The danger in this direction is all the greater because the young generation of party members have not, on the whole, come up against the national question in politics. In tsarist Russia this question inescapably confronted the revolutionary party in the form of national oppression and played an outstanding role in our day-to-day agitation. Party theory accorded a big place to the national question. The "old men" passed through all this—although even here cases of recidivism have not been rare. The youth were born to politics in a country without national oppression. They know about the question of military defense of the republic; they went on to questions of the economy. The national question hardly faced them in any real way. For this reason it sometimes seems to them that it is something already settled, like religion, for instance. Is there really, they ask, anything to be said or thought about such a matter?

Among the small or backward nations themselves there is often to be observed insufficient attention to the national question on the part of the more revolutionary elements, including the proletarians. Having adhered to the Russian Communist Party and at once enlarged their own horizons, these young, sincere, ardent revolutionists are sometimes inclined to look upon the national question on their own doorstep not as a problem to be solved but as a mere obstacle to be jumped over. It is certainly the case that a struggle against their own domestic nationalism, even if it has grown out of former oppression, is an important task for revolutionary elements everywhere. But on soil that has been plowed by the old oppression, this struggle must assume a patient, propagandist character and must rely on thoughtfully meeting national demands, not on ignoring them.

A brushing aside of the national question is sometimes found in the case of quite old comrades on the grounds that it is, they say, a temporary "concession," something like our "Narodnik" agrarian program,<sup>10</sup> or NEP. Well, this comparison can be accepted, conditionally. It would of course be easier to build socialism if there were no need to make national "concessions"; that is, if there had not been oppression in the past, and if in the present there were not differences in language and national culture. It would also be easier to build socialism if we did not have millions of peasants. One can go even further and say: It would be better for the proletarian revolution if Asia constituted a capitalist arena of class struggle like Europe. But putting the question like that is utterly remote from life. Essentially, inattention or a contemptuous attitude to the national question often conceals a lifeless, confused, rationalistic attitude toward history. The mighty revolutionary realism of our party, on the contrary, consists in taking facts as they are and combining them practically in the interests of the revolution.

If, on the eve of October, we had closed our eyes to the peasantry we would, of course, not have been any nearer to socialism today, and indeed we should not have got so far as Soviet power. Only in these years since October has our party fully understood the significance of the peasantry: The "old men" understood in practice what previously they had only known in theory, and the youth, having come up against the question in practice, is now comprehending its experience theoretically. *In the field of the national question the party as a whole undoubtedly needs a*

*refresher course, and the youth a beginners' course.* And this course must be undertaken in good time and according to a very stiff program, for whoever ignores the national question risks getting bogged down in it.

An attentive attitude toward national demands does not mean at all, of course, the cultivation of economic separation. That could only be of advantage to the local ("national") bureaucracy but certainly not to the masses. It is quite obvious that a centralized administration of the railways throughout the Union does not at all exclude the use of national languages on the railways. And when evaluating demands and programs for autonomy it is proper to strictly and attentively distinguish between the purely bureaucratic, "prestige and precedence" pretensions of the administrative upper circles and the genuine, everyday, vital interests and demands of the masses. The former are sometimes extremely Russified in relation to the local population, and at the same time separatist in relation to the center.

The widest independence in the national-cultural sphere is in principle fully compatible with economic centralization, insofar as centralization is required by national and production-technique conditions. But state coordination of economic centralization with national-cultural decentralization—in life, in practice—is a big and complex task. Its implementation requires prudence, thoughtfulness, and self-control. Undoubtedly, the nationalities that formerly suffered oppression and that still bear the marks of it may show themselves inclined to uphold their autonomy also in those fields that could be essentially centralized without any loss to national independence and with great administrative or economic benefit to all. But even in such doubtful matters it is necessary first of all to do everything that can be done so that at least the leading circles of the small or backward nation may appreciate the advantages and benefits of centralization. They can then help the masses to appreciate the measure in question, not as some sort of pressure from the center but as a measure that meets the interests of all and is being put into effect by consent. In politics it is impossible to think rationalistically, and in the national question less than anywhere else.

Two more words in conclusion. Not long ago I had occasion to hear from a certain not-so-young Communist that to bring forward the importance of the national factor in the revolution is—it is embarrassing but it must be confessed—Menshevism and liber-

alism. Here already we see what it really means to turn things and concepts upside down! The position of Menshevism on the national question is this: While Menshevism is in opposition, it is nationally sentimental and given to democratic appeals, never daring to put the question sharply, that is, on the plane of calling on the oppressed to revolt. When the national bourgeoisie is in danger, or when Menshevism itself is in power, it is filled to the brim with awareness of the importance and responsibility of the great-power mission entrusted to it by the bourgeoisie and continues the centralizing oppressive policy, dressing it up with charges of nationalism against . . . the oppressed nations. Bolshevism showed its revolutionary farsightedness in the fact that it knew how to appreciate from the class point of view the enormous revolutionary importance of the national factor. And in this spirit and direction Bolshevism will continue in the future to educate the youth.

March 19, 1923

[Trotsky, *Pokolenie Oktyabrya* (Generation of October) (Moscow, 1924), pp. 28-37. Translated from the Russian by Brian Pearce.]

## NOTES TO PART VI

1. *Sotsialisticheskii Vestnik* (Socialist Messenger), a Menshevik emigre periodical published in Berlin, printed the full text of Lenin's notes on the nationalities question in its December 17, 1923, issue (nos. 23-24). There is a copy of this issue among Trotsky's papers preserved in the Harvard College Library. Evidently, in making his case against Stalin's falsifications, Trotsky wished to rely only on documents whose authenticity he could personally vouch for.

2. The Russian is stronger: **silno vinovat** (strongly to blame).

3. Reference to "Letter to the Congress," section 3, December 26, 1922, printed in Part III of this volume.

4. Dzerzhinsky was of Polish origin.

5. After this the following phrase was crossed out in the shorthand text: "It seems to me that our comrades have not studied this important question of principle sufficiently."—Note of **Collected Works** editors.

6. The Russian has: **S nailuchshim tovarishcheskim privetom** (with the very best comradely greetings), agreeing with Trotsky's version.

7. In Europe to the west of us, too, the national question will still play an enormous role in the revolution. It is sufficient to mention Poland, Rumania, and the Balkans, the whole of Central Europe. But in the text we are considering the fundamental lines of the revolution.—L.T.



8. The term **smychka** (bond) was used to signify the alliance or bond between the working class and the bulk of the peasantry that was the basis of the Soviet state. "Decline the word **smychka** in all its cases": Russian, like Latin, has a complex system of noun declension to indicate the grammatical relationship between words in a sentence.

9. The Mensheviks were the ruling party in Georgia from 1918 to 1921. They used the Georgians' resentment against Great Russian chauvinism to whip up anti-Bolshevik sentiment. At the same time, they preserved capitalist property relations in Georgia and collaborated with the French and British counterrevolutionary forces. The Ukrainian Petlyurists were the followers of the bourgeois nationalist leader Simon Vasilyevich Petlyura (1877-1926). Petlyura was the head of the Ukrainian Central Rada (Soviet), a bourgeois government that opposed the Bolsheviks. During the Russo-Polish war, he fought on the side of the Poles under Pilsudski. After the Treaty of Riga was signed in 1922, he emigrated to Paris where he was assassinated in 1926 by Shalom Schwarzbard in retaliation for the pogroms carried out by his armies during the civil war. The Armenian Dashnaks were members of the Dashnaktsutun, or Armenian Revolutionary Federation, established in 1890. They had a populist program similar to that of the Social Revolutionaries. In May 1918 they formed a government in Armenia which was officially recognized by the Allies. During the Georgian campaign they staged a rising against the soviets, which was crushed. The Azerbaidzhani Mussavatists were members of the Mussavat (Equality) Party, founded in 1912. Its program was based on Pan-Islamism although later, in 1919, it placed some stress on democratic rights. After the creation of Soviet Azerbaidzhan, the Mussavatists went underground and remained active for a few years.

10. Our "Narodnik" agrarian program. The "Narodniks" or Narodnaya Volya (People's Will) Party was a populist party based on the intelligentsia. It gave rise to the Social Revolutionary Party, which advocated radical land reform. When the SRs in the provisional government that was established after the February Revolution defaulted on their program, the left wing of their party broke off and joined with the Bolsheviks in the first government formed after the October Revolution. One of the first measures taken by this coalition government was to enact the SR's "Narodnik" agrarian program.

## BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

**Avanesov, Varlaam Aleksandrovich** (1884-1930)—Member of Russian Social Democratic Labor Party from 1903. In 1917-19, secretary of Presidium of All-Russia Central Executive Committee. In 1920-24, deputy people's commissar of Rabkrin.

**Bukharin, Nikolai Ivanovich** (1888-1938)—Joined Bolsheviks in 1906. In 1918, was a spokesman of the "Left Communists" but emerged after Lenin's death as chief theoretician for right-wing prokulak tendency. From 1926 to 1929 chairman of the Comintern, succeeding Zinoviev. In 1928, organized Right Opposition against Stalin's forced collectivization of peasantry and forced industrialization. In 1929, Right Opposition was crushed and he was forced to capitulate. Defendant in the March 1938 Moscow show trial. "Confessed" and was shot.

**Dzerzhinsky, Feliks Edmundovich** (1877-1926)—A founder of Social Democratic Party of Poland and Lithuania. In 1906, was elected to the Central Committee of the Russian party. After the revolution, he organized and became chairman of All-Russia Extraordinary Commission for Combating Counterrevolution and Sabotage (Cheka).

**Eastman, Max** (1883-1969)—Editor of **The Masses** before World War I, then editor of **The Liberator**. An early supporter of Russian Left Opposition although not a member of any party. Translated several of Trotsky's books and was the first to acquaint American public with issues of Trotsky-Stalin struggle. In mid-1930s, began a retreat from Marxism, repudiating socialism in 1940. Became an anticommunist and an editor of the **Reader's Digest**.

**Eltsin, Boris Mikhailovich** (1879-1937?)—Joined Russian Social Democratic Labor Party in 1899. In 1917, head of Ekaterinoslav Soviet. Member of Left Opposition. Directed small group of Oppositionists still at liberty in 1928-29. Arrested along with his two sons, also Oppositionists. Disappeared in labor camps.

**Eltsin, Viktor Borisovich**—Son of Boris Eltsin. One of Trotsky's secretaries in 1927-28. Arrested along with father and brother. Spent five years in prison and then deported to Archangel. Subsequent fate unknown.

**Fotieva, Lydia Alexandrovna** (1881- )—Member of Russian Social Democratic Labor Party from 1904. From 1918, Lenin's secretary and secretary of the Council of People's Commissars, and Council of Labor

and Defense. Survived the purge. In 1956, as part of "de-Stalinization," was awarded the Order of Lenin.

**Frumkin, Moisei Ilyich** (1878-1939)—Joined Russian Social Democratic Labor Party in 1898. From April 1922, deputy people's commissar for foreign trade of the RSFSR. Held prominent posts in Soviet trade and finance. In 1928-29 and again later, supported Right Opposition. Expelled from party in 1937.

**Glyasser, Maria Ignatyevna** (1890-1951)—Joined Bolsheviks in 1917. From 1918 to 1924, worked in the Secretariat of the Council of People's Commissars. One of Lenin's private secretaries. Subsequently worked in the Lenin Institute.

**Kabanidze**—L.A. Fotieva, in her memoirs *Iz Vospominaniy o Lenine* (Moscow: Gosizdat, Polit. Lit., 1964), p. 75, identifies Kabanidze as the Georgian oppositionist struck by Ordzhonikidze.

**Kalinin, Mikhail Ivanovich** (1875-1946)—Active since 1898. Member of first illegal Marxist study circles. In 1919, became chairman of All-Russia Central Executive Committee and a member of Bolshevik Central Committee. Survived the purges. From 1938 to 1946, headed Presidium of Supreme Soviet of USSR.

**Kamenev, Lev Borisovich** (1883-1936)—Joined Russian Social Democratic Labor Party in 1901. Head of Bolshevik Duma fraction before World War I. Arrested and exiled to Siberia in November 1914. After February Revolution in 1917, returned to Petrograd and, with Stalin, led Bolsheviks until Lenin's arrival in April. With Zinoviev (q.v.) opposed October insurrection. After Lenin's death, emerged as a member of ruling triumvirate (Zinoviev, Kamenev, Stalin). Followed Zinoviev into Joint Opposition with Trotsky in 1926-27. Expelled from party as Oppositionist in December 1927 but recanted and was readmitted. Expelled again in 1932 and again readmitted after recanting. In 1935, after Kirov assassination, sentenced to five years' imprisonment for "moral complicity" with the murder. In 1936, was rearraigned in first Moscow show trial. "Confessed" and was executed.

**Kavtaradze, Sergei Ivanovich** (1885- )—Joined Russian Social Democratic Labor Party in 1903. In 1917, was a leader of Bolsheviks in Georgia and editor of the Bolshevik paper. After establishment of Soviet power in Georgia, was people's commissar of justice. In 1922-23, chairman of the Council of People's Commissars in Georgia. Supported Left Opposition and was expelled from party in 1927. Exiled to Siberia. After assassination of Sergei Kirov (1934), recanted in a personal letter to Stalin. Was pardoned but did not rejoin the party. Arrested again in 1936 and accused, with Budu Mdivani, of plotting to kill Stalin. Reported in Maryinsk and Kolyma labor camps in 1936. Rehabilitated in 1940. Became assistant people's commissar for foreign affairs. After World War II, Soviet ambassador to Rumania.

**Kerzhentsev, Platon Mikhailovich** (1881-1940)—Joined Russian Social Democratic Labor Party in 1904. In 1918-20, deputy editor of *Izvestia*. Held posts in foreign service. President of Rabkrin Council for the Scientific Organization of Labor in 1923-24. In 1923, founded "League of Time," with a journal *Vremya* (Time) to promote rationalization of work.

**Kirov, Sergei Mironovich** (1886-1934)—A member of Political Bureau and head of party organization in Leningrad. Was the leader of a tendency favoring liberalization of regime. His assassination in December 1934 was followed by a wave of terror against Trotskyists, Zinovievists, and disgruntled Stalinists.

**Krestinsky, Nikolai Nikolayevich** (1883-1938)—Joined Russian Social Democratic Labor Party in 1903. From December 1919 to March 1921, secretary of Bolshevik Central Committee. From October 1921, ambassador of RSFSR to Germany. Was a leading figure in third Moscow show trial (March 1938). Created a stir by at first repudiating his "confession." Executed in 1938, posthumously rehabilitated during "de-Stalinization."

**Krupskaya, Nadezhda Konstantinova** (1869-1939)—Joined Russian Social Democratic Labor Party in 1898. Wife and political associate of Lenin. Worked on editorial boards of Bolshevik papers before the revolution. Afterward, worked in public education.

**Krzhizhanovsky, Gleb Maksimilianovich** (1872-1959)—Joined Russian Social Democracy in 1893. Together with Lenin organized League of Struggle for the Emancipation of the Working Class in St. Petersburg. Graduated from Petersburg Technological Institute as electrical engineer in 1894. Became politically inactive after 1907. A member of the Bolshevik fraction in the Moscow Soviet after the February 1917 revolution. In 1920, headed the State Commission for the Electrification of Russia. Director of State Planning Commission 1921-30. From 1929 to 1939, vice-president of the Soviet Academy of Sciences.

**Kuibyshev, Valerian Vladimirovich** (1888-1935)—Joined Russian Social Democratic Labor Party in 1904. During civil war held military and diplomatic posts. Elected to Bolshevik Central Committee in 1922. Became head of the Central Control Commission in 1923, later of Rabkrin as well. Became member of the Politburo in 1927. In 1934, was reportedly part of a group favoring liberalization of regime. Died, apparently of natural causes, but defendants in the third Moscow show trial (March 1938) were accused of having murdered him.

**Ludwig, Emil** (1881-1948)—German biographer and dramatist. Emigrated to Switzerland in 1907. Served as war correspondent in World War I. The Nazis burned his works.

**Makharadze, Filipp Yeseyevich** (1868-1941)—Joined Russian Social Democratic Labor Party in 1903. From March 1921 to February 1922, chairman of the Revolutionary Committee in Georgia. From 1922, chairman of the Georgian Central Executive Committee. Escaped the purges.



**Mdivani, Polikarp Gurgenovitch (Budu)** (1877-1937)—Joined Russian Social Democratic Labor Party in 1903. During civil war, was head of Political Department of Tenth Army. In 1920-21, a member of the Caucasus Bureau of Bolshevik Central Committee. In 1924, made Soviet trade representative in France. Expelled for "Trotskyist oppositional activity" in 1928. Rehabilitated in 1931. From 1931 to 1936, people's commissar for light industry and first deputy chairman of the Georgian Council of People's Commissars. Expelled from the party again for "anti-party activities" in 1936. Arrested in 1937, given secret trial and executed.

**Molotov, Vyacheslav Mikhailovich** (1890- )—Joined Russian Social Democratic Labor Party in 1906. Became candidate member of Politburo in 1921, full member in 1926. Consistent supporter of Stalin in political struggles. In 1930, became chairman of Council of People's Commissars and in 1939 also took over portfolio of foreign affairs. In 1957, dropped from Central Committee for opposing "de-Stalinization" and made ambassador to Outer Mongolia. In 1960, named Soviet representative to the International Atomic Energy Agency in Vienna. The Twenty-second Party Congress (1961) recommended his expulsion from the party. Retired from public life in 1962.

**Oldenburg, S.S.** (d. 1940)—Political correspondent for *Russkaya Mysl* (Russian Thought), a white-guard journal published in Prague in 1922.

**Ordzhonikidze, Grigory Konstantinovich (Sergo)** (1886-1937)—Joined Russian Social Democratic Labor Party in 1903. Held military posts during civil war. A close personal friend and political supporter of Stalin. From 1926, chairman of Central Control Commission and Rabkrin. From 1930, chairman of Supreme Economic Council. Reportedly opposed continuation of the purge. Died under mysterious circumstances.

**Pokrovsky, Mikhail Nikolayevich** (1868-1932)—Joined the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party in 1905. In 1918, appointed deputy people's commissar for education of the RSFSR. A prominent Stalinist historian.

**Pyatakov, Georgi Leonidovich** (1890-1937)—Joined Russian Social Democratic Labor Party in 1910. A prominent theoretician and economist. Supporter of Left Opposition, 1923-28. Expelled from party in 1927. Capitulated. Played an important role in the development of Soviet industry in the earlier five-year plans. Purged in the second Moscow show trial (January 1937). Executed.

**Radek, Karl Berngardovich** (1885-1939?)—Active in Polish and German Social Democratic parties prior to World War I. Returned to Russia with Lenin in April 1917 and joined Bolsheviks. Held diplomatic posts during civil war and was Comintern representative in Germany during 1923 revolution. A member of Left Opposition, he was expelled

from party in December 1927, but quickly capitulated and was reinstated. During early thirties, was the principal journalistic interpreter of Stalinist foreign policy. Sentenced to ten years' imprisonment at the second Moscow show trial (January 1937) and probably died in prison.

**Rakovsky, Khristian Georgievich** (1873-1941)—A leading figure in Balkan revolutionary movement before World War I. In 1918, became chairman of Ukrainian Soviet and later Soviet ambassador in London and Paris. An early leader of Left Opposition, was expelled from the party in 1927 and exiled to Siberia. Capitulated in 1934. In 1938, he was one of principal defendants in third Moscow show trial, where he was sentenced to twenty years' imprisonment. Died in prison.

**Rykov, Aleksei Ivanovich** (1881-1938)—Joined Russian Social Democratic Labor Party in 1899. Succeeded Lenin as head of state. With Bukharin, led right-wing tendency in party during NEP period. Removed from post as premier in 1930. Was a defendant in the third Moscow show trial (March 1938). "Confessed" and was executed.

**Smirnov, Aleksandr Petrovich** (1877-1938)—Joined Russian Social Democratic movement in 1896. After October Revolution, was deputy people's commissar for internal affairs and deputy people's commissar for food. In 1933, was accused of forming an "antiparty group" designed to remove Stalin. Dropped from the Central Committee and later (December 1934) expelled from the party. His name figures prominently in "confessions" extracted from the defendants in the Moscow trials, but he himself was not brought to the dock.

**Sokolnikov, Grigory Yakovlevich** (1888-1939)—Joined Russian Social Democratic Labor Party in 1905. Member of Soviet delegation at Brest-Litovsk peace negotiations. People's commissar of finance from 1922 to 1926. Founded an opposition grouping but did not join Joint Opposition. Ambassador to London 1927-33. Expelled from party and arrested in 1936. Sentenced to ten years in prison at second Moscow show trial (January 1937). Died or was executed in prison.

**Stomonyakov, Boris Spiridonovich** (1882-1941)—Joined Russian Social Democratic Labor Party in 1902. From 1920 to 1925, Soviet trade representative in Berlin.

**Sverdlov, Yakov Mikhailovich** (1885-1919)—Joined Russian Social Democratic Labor Party in 1901. One of ablest organizers in Bolshevik Party. From 1917 to 1919, head of Secretariat of the Central Committee. From November 1917, chairman of All-Russia Central Executive Committee.

**Tsintsadze, Kote Maksimovich** (1887-1937?)—Joined Russian Social Democratic Labor Party in 1904. Was active in the Caucasus. After establishment of Soviet power in Georgia, chairman of Cheka in Georgia and a member of Central Committee of Georgian CP and Central Executive Committee of Georgian Republic. Expelled from the party in 1927 as a Left Oppositionist and deported to Siberia. Official Soviet sources list

his date of death as 1930, but was reported alive in Verkhne-Uralsk Prison in 1933. According to same report, was shot on Stalin's orders in 1937.

**Tsyurupa, Aleksandr Dmitrievich** (1870-1928)—Joined Russian Social Democracy in 1898. In 1922-23, people's commissar of Rabkrin. In 1923-25, chairman of Gosplan. In 1925-26, people's commissar for domestic and foreign trade. A member of Bolshevik Central Committee from 1923.

**Ulyanova, Maria Ilyinichna** (1878-1937)—Lenin's younger sister. Joined Russian Social Democracy in 1898. From March 1917 to spring 1929, a member of editorial board and executive secretary of **Pravda**. Backed Bukharin against Stalin in 1928-29 and was dismissed from **Pravda**.

**Volodicheva, Maria Akinovna** (1881- )—Joined Bolsheviks in 1917. After October Revolution to July 1918, secretary of press bureau of Council of People's Commissars. Served as one of Lenin's private secretaries during his last illness.

**Yermansky, O.A.** (1866-1941)—In 1918, a member of Central Committee of Menshevik Party. In 1921, left Mensheviks and became involved in scientific work in Moscow.

**Zinoviev, Grigory Yevseyevich** (1883-1936)—Joined Russian Social Democratic Labor Party in 1901. Lenin's closest associate during World War I. He and Kamenev opposed Central Committee decision to go ahead with October insurrection and published a statement to that effect in a semi-Menshevik newspaper. After Lenin's death, emerged as apparent leader of ruling triumvirate (Zinoviev, Kamenev, Stalin). Broke with Stalin in 1925 and joined Trotsky's Left Opposition forming Joint Opposition in 1926. Expelled at Fifteenth Party Congress (December 1927) and banished to Siberia. Capitulated in 1928 and was readmitted to party. In 1932, again expelled and again capitulated. In 1935, after Kirov assassination, was sentenced to ten years' imprisonment on trumped-up charges of complicity in the murder. A principal defendant in first Moscow show trial (August 1936). "Confessed" and was executed.

## Index

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Only the main entries in the Biographical Notes are included in this index. They are identified by the letter "b" after the page number.

- All-Russia Central Executive Committee, 82
- Aristotle, 30, 31
- Armenia, 18, 19, 142, 149n
- Autonomization plan, 18-20, 127, 128, 133-138
- Avanesov, V., 115, 120, 121, 122, 150b
- Azerbaijdzhan, 18, 19, 141, 142, 149n
- "Better Fewer, But Better," Lenin, 9, 16, 47, 72, 111n, 112n; text of, 92-105
- Bolshevik Party, *see* Communist Party of Soviet Union
- Bolshevism, 35, 41, 148
- Brest-Litovsk, Treaty of, 26
- Bukharin, N., 17, 20, 44, 65, 150b
- Bureaucracy, 5, 7, 8, 49, 112n; defined, 11; Lenin on, 15, 17, 71, 75-76, 98-99, 100; and national question, 134, 147; and NEP, 73; resists reform of Rabkrin, 48; and Stalin, 6, 50; Trotsky on, 17, 71, 72
- Bureau of Party History, 114, 128
- Byelorussia, 18
- 1922 plenum of, 124, 133; July 1926 plenum of, 50, 53, 56; Political Bureau of, 42, 44, 45, 67, 72, 80, 86, 87, 90, 98, 99-100, 111n, 115, 130, 131, 132; Secretariat of, 34, 49, 87; danger of split in, 64; Supreme Econcommission of, 81; receives testament, 7. *See also* Monopoly of foreign trade
- Central Control Commission, 43, 44, 47, 48, 72, 97, 99; Lenin proposes expansion of, 87-88; merger with Rabkrin, 88-91, 109; oversees Politburo, 98; requirements for members of, 95
- Central Institute of Labor, 88
- Central Statistical Administration, 79
- Civil war, 8, 56, 143
- "Comments on Lenin's Proposal Concerning the Work of Deputies," Trotsky, 79-81
- Commissariat of Foreign Affairs, 87, 88
- Commissariat of Foreign Trade, 118, 120, 121
- Communist International, 13-14, 26, 28, 52, 56, 77, 106
- Communist Party of Georgia, Central Committee of resigns, 20, 22; rejects autonomization plan, 18; and Stalin, 20, 127, 128
- Communist Party of Germany, 28
- Communist Party of Soviet Union, 26, 27, 58, 76, 77, 96, 104, 106, 112n, 130; bureaucratism in, 7, 98; forms coalition with Social Revolutionaries, 8; Seventh Congress of, 53; Tenth Congress of, 42; Eleventh Congress of, 13, 70, 111n; Twelfth Congress of, 7, 15, 23-24, 25-26, 49, 61, 70, 87, 110-111, 124, 128; Thirteenth Con-



- gress of, 7, 33, 38, 61; demoralization in, 24; difficulties facing, 8; bans factions, 11; and international revolution, 9; Left Opposition organized in, 6; myths about, 5-6; and national question, 143, 145, 146; concentrates power in own hands, 11. *See also* Central Committee
- Communist Party of the Ukraine, 73
- Communists, 33, 60n, 73; inexperience of, 107; Lenin on low cultural level of, 75-77; and self-determination, 19
- Control Commission, *see* Central Control Commission
- Council of Elders, 33, 34, 49, 53
- Council of Labor and Defense (STO), 80, 86, 116, 131
- Council of People's Commissars (SNK), 86, 131
- Czernin, O., 110, 112n
- Dashnaks, 142, 149n
- Dashnaktsutiun (Armenian Revolutionary Federation), 149n
- Duma, 110, 112n
- Duumvirate hypothesis, 51-52
- Dzerzhinsky, F., 20, 24, 46, 128, 150b; investigates Georgian question, 21, 49, 54, 133, 134, 137, 139
- Dzhugashvili, *see* Stalin
- Eastman, M., 7, 61, 150b
- Eltsin, B., 57, 150b
- Eltsin, V., 57, 150b
- Financial Committee (Finkomitet), 86
- Fotieva, L., 23, 47, 61, 128, 150b
- Fourth International, 7, 28. *See also* International Left Opposition and Left Opposition
- Freud, S., 30, 31
- Frumkin, M., 114, 115, 121, 122, 125, 126n, 151b
- Georgia, 16, 18, 19, 20, 45-46, 127, 128, 129, 133ff, 135, 136, 141-142, 144-145, 149n; Lenin on, 16, 21, 49, 54, 62, 139; Stalin's role in, 20, 62, 127, 128; Trotsky on, 23. *See also* Peasantry, Georgian and Communist Party of Georgia
- Germany, 9, 28, 97, 101-102, 103, 111n; end of war with, 8; Left Opposition formed in, 6-7; 1918 revolution in, 112n; 1923 revolution in, 24, 112n. *See also* Communist Party of Germany
- Glyasser, M., 47, 151b
- Gosplan (State Planning Commission), 14-15, 16, 63, 86, 114, 121; bourgeois influences in, 85; Lenin on, 15, 82-85, 122; and monopoly of foreign trade, 120; Trotsky on, 71-72, 79-81
- Grain requisitioning, 8, 10, 21, 111n
- "Granting Legislative Functions to the State Planning Commission," Lenin, 15, 71; text of, 82-85
- Great Russian chauvinism, 46, 127-128, 129, 132, 134, 137, 142, 149n
- "How We Should Reorganize the Workers' and Peasants' Inspection," Lenin, 16, 17, 59n, 72, 111n; text of, 87-91
- "The Immediate Tasks of the Soviet Government," Lenin, 12
- International Left Opposition, 27-28. *See also* Fourth International, and Left Opposition
- Institute for the Scientific Organization of Labor, 89
- Institute of Marxism-Leninism, 60n
- Joint Opposition, 53, 56
- Kabanidze, 20, 151b
- Kalinin, M., 44, 151b
- Kamenev, L., 19, 20, 23-24, 25, 26, 53, 62, 68, 115, 127-128, 130, 151b; Lenin on, 23, 55, 65; on monopoly of foreign trade, 123; during October Revolution, 35, 55; and testament, 33, 34; Trotsky compromises with, 129; on "Trotskyism," 56-57
- Kavtaradze, S., 20, 151b
- Kerzhentsev, P., 97, 152b
- Khrushchev, N., 7, 128

## 158 *Lenin's Fight Against Stalinism*

- Krasin, L., 81
- Krestinsky, N., 115, 119, 120, 122, 152b
- Krupskaya, N., 7, 33-34, 44, 49, 50, 61, 62, 68-69, 152b
- Krzhizhanovsky, G., 83-84, 152b
- von Kuhlmann, R., 110, 112n
- Kuibyshev, V., 44, 152b
- Left Opposition, 6-7, 27-28, 52-53, 129. *See also* Fourth International and International Left Opposition
- Lenin, V.I., absent from Twelfth Congress, 25; on autonomization plan, 19, 20-21, 22, 127, 133-138; on bureaucracy, 12, 13, 14, 15, 70, 72, 98-99; proposes expansion of Central Committee, 63-65, 66-68; on danger of split in Central Committee, 64; on role of Central Control Commission, 47, 87-88; on "commanding heights of industry," 10; on reorganization of central institutions, 44; on Georgian question, 16, 18, 21, 49, 54, 62, 137, 139; on Gosplan, 15, 63; illness of, 7, 16, 25, 42-43, 49, 56, 61, 114, 121ff, 126n; internationalism of, 102-104, 135; on Kamenov, 23, 55, 65; on monopoly of foreign trade, 45, 113-114, 116-119, 123, 124-126; as revolutionary moralist, 40; myths about, 5-6, 50; on national question, 17-23, 45-47, 53-54, 133-138; on NEP, 13, 75, 76-77; calls for punishment of Ordzhonikidze, 21, 137; on proletarian culture, 92; on Rabkrin, 12, 14-16, 47-48, 111n; on Radek, 53; on state apparatus, 11, 106, 108-109; on state capitalism, 70, 74ff, 111n; and Sverdlov, 41; on reading of testament, 34, 52; speech to Fourth Comintern Congress, 13-14; attitude to Stalin, 15-16, 19, 38-41, 43, 45-51, 58, 128; assesses Stalin and Trotsky, 7, 51, 64, 65-66; threatens break in relations with Stalin, 62, 68-69; proposes Stalin's removal as general secretary, 48; blames Stalin in Georgian question, 134, 137; and Stalin discuss monopoly of foreign trade, 114, 118; swims against stream, 26; on Trotsky as a Bolshevik, 34-35, 59n; forms bloc with Trotsky, 15, 17, 21, 23, 35, 128-129; blocs with Trotsky on monopoly of foreign trade, 114-115, 123, 124, 125; differs with Trotsky on planning, 14-15, 121; differs with Trotsky on Russo-Polish war, 60n; on USSR structure, 130-132; on Zinoviev, 55, 65
- Lenin's Last Struggle*, Lewin, 60n, 114, 132
- Lenin's testament, 33, 52-55, 58, 59; made public by Khrushchev, 7; published in *New York Times*, 61; read to Thirteenth Party Congress, 38, 61; text of, 63-68
- "Letter to Bolshevik Party Members," Lenin, 69n
- "Letter to the Bureau of Party History," Trotsky, 7
- Ludwig, E., 6, 30-33, 35, 38-39, 40, 50, 51, 55, 152b
- Makharadze, F., 18, 21, 46, 139, 152b
- Mdivani, P., 18, 19, 21, 46, 128, 130, 132, 139, 153b
- Mensheviks, 34, 97, 106, 127, 142, 144-145, 147-148, 149n
- Molotov, V., 44, 153b
- Monopoly of foreign trade, 10, 15, 16-17, 62, 113-126; and Central Committee, 16-17, 45, 114, 115, 116, 123, 125-126; and peasants, 116-117, 118; profits from, 117. *See also* Lenin, Stalin, and Trotsky
- Moscow, 10, 13, 137, 141
- Mussavatists, 142, 149n
- Mussolini, B., 31, 32
- National question, 17-23, 45-47, 49, 115, 127-149; Lenin on, 133-138; and peasantry, 141-142; proletarian attitude towards, 135-136; Trotsky on, 140-148
- New Economic Policy (NEP), 8, 22, 60n, 70, 73, 91, 98, 101-102, 110-111, 113, 146; introduction of, 10;

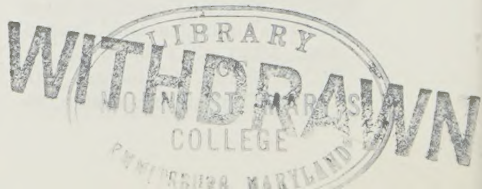
- Lenin on, 13, 75, 76-77; Stalin on, 73; Trotsky on, 80
- October Revolution, 8, 9, 34, 35, 55, 146, 149n
- Old Bolsheviks, 25, 27, 34, 56, 115
- Ordzhonikidze, G., 18, 24, 56, 153b; cleared by Dzerzhinsky's report, 20; assaults Kabanidze, 20; opposed by Lenin, 21, 49, 137; role of in Georgian question, 46, 127, 128, 133, 134, 139
- Peasantry, 75, 103, 104-105, 111n; Georgian, 129, 141-142, 144-145; grain requisitions from, 8, 10; and monopoly of foreign trade, 113-114, 116-117, 118; and national question, 129, 141-142, 144-145; and Russian revolution, 9, 74, 111n, 140-141, 142, 149n
- People's Commissariat for Communications, 64
- People's Commissariat of Foreign Trade, *see* Commissariat of Foreign Trade
- People's Commissariat of Workers' and Peasants' Inspection, *see* Rabkrin
- Petlyurists, 142, 149n
- Petrograd, 10, 118, 141
- Pilsudski, J., 149n
- "Platform of the Forty-Six," 27
- Pokrovsky, M., 32, 153b
- Poland, 135, 148n
- Political Bureau, *see* Central Committee, Political Bureau
- "Political Report of the Central Committee," Lenin, 13
- Poor Peasant Committees, 74, 111n
- Pravda*, 44, 47, 72, 128
- Preobrazhensky, Y., 57, 81, 111n
- Problems of Everyday Life and Other Writings on Culture and Science*, Trotsky, 112n, 126n
- Pyatak, G., 65, 83-84, 153b; on "Trotskyism," 57
- 91, 109; criticisms of, 14, 95-96; Lenin proposes reorganization of, 16, 72, 87-91, 111n; requirements of members of, 95; Trotsky on, 71
- Radek, K., 32-33, 36, 37-38, 52, 60n, 153b; on testament, 53-55; on "Trotskyism," 57
- Rakovsky, K., 46, 57, 154b
- Red Army, 10, 12, 56, 87, 106, 111n, 127, 143, 144-145
- Riga, Treaty of, 110, 112n, 149n
- Right Opposition, 37
- Ruhr, 110, 112n
- Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic, 18, 130-132
- Russo-Polish war, 60n, 112n, 149n
- Ryazanov, D., 60n
- Rykov, A., 44, 131, 154b
- Smirnov, A., 37, 154b
- Smychka, 140-141, 142, 149n
- SNK, *see* Council of People's Commissars
- Social Revolutionaries, 8, 149n
- Sokolnikov, G., 116, 118, 126n, 130, 154b
- Sotsialisticheskii Vestnik*, 148n
- Soviets, 11, 106, 142; congresses of, 14, 114, 121, 124
- Stalin, J., 31, 32, 33, 60n, 115; backs down on autonomization plan, 22; as instrument of bureaucracy, 58; cleared by Dzerzhinsky's report, 20; and Georgian question, 20, 49, 127, 128, 134, 137, 139; relations with Lenin, 15-16, 21, 38-41, 44, 45-51, 54-55, 57, 62, 64, 65-66, 68-69, 72, 128, 134; and monopoly of foreign trade, 17, 45, 114, 118; myths about, 5-6, 50; on national question, 15-16, 19, 24, 45-47; as commissar of nationalities, 18, 45, 127; on NEP, 73; role of in October Revolution, 42; as head of Rabkrin, 12, 14; exploits succession question, 25; contrasted with Sverdlov, 40-42; and testament, 7, 34, 37, 53-54; Trotsky compromises with, 129; brings up Trotsky's past, 35, 57; compromises on USSR structure, 131



## 160 *Lenin's Fight Against Stalinism*

- The Stalin School of Falsification*, Trotsky, 59n, 60n, 121
- State apparatus, 45, 106ff, 133; bureaucracy in, 7, 12; plans to reorganize, 108-109
- State capitalism, 70, 74ff, 111n
- State liquor monopoly, 118, 126n
- State Planning Commission, *see* Gosplan
- STO, *see* Council of Labor and Defense
- Stomonyakov, B., 114, 115, 120, 121, 122, 154b
- Sverdlov, Y., 40-42, 59n, 154b
- "The Tasks of the Twelfth Congress of the Russian Communist Party," Trotsky, 9, 72-73, 106-111, 128
- Tatars, 134
- "Theses on Industry," Trotsky, 15
- Trade union question, 35, 60n
- Transcaucasian Federation, 19-20, 22
- Triumvirate, 24, 129. *See also* Troika
- Troika, 34, 38, 39. *See also* Triumvirate
- Trotsky, L., accusations against, 34; assessed by Lenin, 64, 65-66; on bureaucracy, 14, 70; on compromise with Stalin, 24-26; compromises with triumvirate, 129; differences with Lenin, 14-15, 60n, 70; expelled from CP, 27; on deputies, 71; and Georgian question, 16, 23; on Gosplan, 63, 71-72, 79-81; on monopoly of foreign trade, 114-115, 119-120, 123, 124, 126; on national question, 140-148; opens fight in party, 26-27; on rebuilding proletariat, 11; on party-state relations, 106; relations with Lenin, 14-15, 16, 17, 35, 64, 65-66, 70, 114-115, 123, 124-125, 125-126, 128-129; on Rabkrin, 12-13, 14, 71, 79, 80; Radek on, 32-33; reorganizes rail transport, 60n; on reorganization of state apparatus, 108-109; on trade unions, 60n; underestimates opponents, 25
- Trotskyism, legend of, 55-59, 73
- The Trotsky Papers*, 59n, 126n
- Tsintsadze, K., 18, 20, 154b
- Turkestan, 141, 142
- Ukraine, 18, 112n, 130, 135, 141, 142. *See also* Communist Party of the Ukraine
- Ukrainian Central Rada, 149n
- Ulyanov, *see* Lenin
- Ulyanova, M.I., 50, 155b
- Union Central Executive Committee, 127-128, 130, 132
- Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, formation of, 17-18, 127, 130ff; structure of, 133, 136-137
- Versailles, Treaty of, 112n
- Vesenkha (Supreme Council of the National Economy), 86
- Volodicheva, M., 33, 59, 61, 155b
- Volkhov Power Project, 104-105, 111n
- War communism, 8, 60n, 111n
- Workers' and Peasants' Inspection, *see* Rabkrin
- Workers' Truth group, 106-107, 112n
- World War I, 102-103, 112n
- Yermansky, O., 97, 155b
- Zinoviev, G., 19, 24, 25, 26, 50, 68, 115, 130, 133, 155b; assessed by Lenin, 65; and Lenin's testament, 34; changes view on monopoly of foreign trade, 123; during October Revolution, 35, 55, 69n; supports Stalin for general secretary, 42; on "Trotskyism," 56-57; Trotsky compromises with, 129; brings up Trotsky's past, 35

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