

THE BOLSHEVIK - LENINISTS

IN THE U. S. S. R.

1927 - 1929

Chapter XXXV of "TROTSKY" by Pierre Broue (1)
First published in French by Artheme Fayard, in
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As soon as the supporters of Trotsky, who had formed part of the now-destroyed "Unified Opposition", were excluded from the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, they made clear that, whatever might happen to them, they continued to regard themselves as members of the Party, and that they were organised in the Bolshevik-Fraction, which worked clandestinely only because it was obliged to do so.

Three sectors can be distinguished in their ranks, though, it is true, there were one-way communications between these sectors and they defended each other. First, there were those whom L. S. Sosnovsky called "the new colonists of the third generation". These consisted of the people who had been sent into exile or deported, and could be found scattered across Siberia and Central Asia, in the urban centres or even the villages where they had to take up residence. Secondly, there were those in what the exiles called "the other side", or "the outside": they were the people who were still at large, had not yet been arrested and continued to struggle in clandestinity. Thirdly, there were those who had been imprisoned, either after being sentenced or while their trials were being prepared; these were the Bolshevik-Leninists in the prisons which were known as the "isolators", where their numbers were continually being swollen from the other two categories.

We know little about the prisons and what happened to the arrested Oppositionists in 1928. A whole group of militants, including S. V. Mrachkovsky (2), Ja. A. Kievlenko (3) and others, were charged with "military conspiracy" and held in jail for nearly two months. They complained particularly of the overcrowding of the cells. They were released for lack of confessions, of hostile witnesses or of proofs, but they were immediately deported. A number of members of the armed forces also were arrested, on a charge of having meditated an attack on the life of the official poet, Demyan Biedny. These were Arkadi Heller, Bulatov and Lado Yenukidze - the nephew of Avelii, the secretary of the Executive of the Soviets (4). In the end they too were released, but deported like the others. Those who were imprisoned were concentrated in the isolators (4a) at Verkhne-Uralsk, Chelyabinsk and Tobolsk, mixed up with common criminals and subjected to hard conditions.

More is known about the underground organisation of the people "on the outside", as the deportees put it. Reports which reached Trotsky, as well as the underground bulletins preserved in the archives and the information which the authorities released after they had caught someone (5), enable us to reconstruct its main outlines.

In the first place there was Moscow. The "centre" was located there. It appears to have been very active, publishing several issues of a substantial bulletin, leaflets, declarations and proclamations. It was this "centre" which succeeded in maintaining contact with Trotsky and with Alma Ata through most of the year 1928. Its leader signed his reports "Otets" ("Father") or "Stavichok" ("little old man"): this was the Old Bolshevik Boris Mikhailovich Elstin, the father of Victor Borissovich, a man whose life had worn out, probably suffering from a tubercular bone infection, which at the beginning served to spare him from being arrested.

We have the names of some of his collaborators, and sometimes a silhouette of people of whom little or nothing is known, for example, M. S. Blumenfeld, a former Communist Youth leader, Sokrat Gevorkian, a young head of economic teaching in Moscow University; these were people of the generation of 1917. A little older were Khanaan Markovich Pevzner, a former Chekist, who had been badly wounded in the Civil War, and was in charge of

publications, and Grigori Jakovlevich Jakovin, a historian of Germany and a Leningrad militant. The latter is known to us through two sources, Victor Serge and Rosa Levine-Meyer. Others are no more than names that one meets in the archive documents, often those of militants who played important roles, such as V. Jannuchevsky or B. Volotnikov, but of them we know nothing more. (6) (7)

There were either "centres" in other cities, of which we can take account when he read the news of arrests or the sources of information in circulation. This was the case in Moscow, Leningrad, Kiev and Kharkov, Baku and Tiflis, Odessa, Dniepropetrovsk, Nikolaev, Saratov, Ivano-Voznessensk, Krasnoyarsk, Yekaterinoslav, Kremenchug, Rostov, Tula, Kostroma, Bryansk, Nijni-Novgorod, Tver, Zaporozje, etc.

So we have relatively abundant information about the activity of the Left Opposition. Its militants undertook activities and have left accounts of them; their traces have been preserved in the archives at Harvard and at Hoover (Stanford).

There was, for example, the mobilisation of the workers in June 1928 at Kremenchug, in the wagon-building workshops, against a change in the methods of wage-payment. The workers in the tramway repair shops at Dniepropetrovsk threatened to take strike action following a decision to take away the right to free travel which they had enjoyed since ... 1905.

Much of these materials are about votes or declarations hostile to the Party leadership in the workers' organisations. In the Vek. factory at Kharkov, and in the Spartak factory at Kazan, in a factory at Kiev (8), workers meeting in a general assembly qualified the decisions of the July Plenum as "opportunist". Many discussions developed round the campaign about "self-criticism", in which people sometimes recalled those who had expressed criticisms and been deported, or at other times foresaw the future fate of the new critics. In the course of an assembly of women textile workers at Ivano-Voznessensk, one woman quoted the example of her own daughter, who had lost her job for criticising. At the beginning of September, there had been a strike at the Kolomensky factory, and then at the Khalturinskaya textile plant, involving 5,000 workers (10) Here and there, workers were demanding genuine elections and higher pay.

From the beginning of July 1928 the Oppositionists began to express themselves freely in open meetings. They called for an end to the repression and sometimes won a significant number of votes. At the end of July, in the Ilyich factory, in the Zamoskrorechie district of Moscow, there were 19 votes for the re-admission of the excluded comrades against 270 (11) At the Krasnaya Oborona factory, the Oppositionist Nefel got 72 votes - out of 256 votes cast - for a resolution which denounced the policy of the Moscow Soviet as "anti-working-class" (12) Following their interventions, Oppositionists were elected to commissions, trade union positions and factory committees at Pervy Mai at the tea factory and at Tilmensi, at the Bogorodsk tannery (13)

The Opposition also produced information bulletins of several pages - there are three of them at Harvard - as well as leaflets or handbills which were often distributed thanks to sympathisers. Some of the leaflets were prompt replies to measures of repression: on October 20, at Kiev, for example in protest against the arrests and at the same time at the Moscow Aviakhim plant, to protest against the dismissal of Gr. M. Novikov, a known Oppositionist, who had formerly been an organiser of partisans against Kolchak (14) On the occasion of the eleventh anniversary of the October Revolution, the Left Opposition in Moscow got out 10,000 copies of a leaflet.

During that year there are examples of at least two activities organised against the repression; at Tiflis on May 3 when the leading Oppositionists in Georgia were arrested and sent into deportation (16) and at Kiev on October 27 after the arrest of several Oppositionists who were known in their factories (17).

The reports which were sent to Trotsky and Sedov convey the feeling that the Left Opposition was making progress in the country, notably among the workers. Moreover, we find more and more frequent references in the correspondence to militants who had moved away in 1927 and who were resuming activity. New elements also were joining the Opposition.

In these conditions, repression struck hard and repeatedly. The Georgians were arrested later than their comrades in Russia or in the Ukraine. Some days later, a letter from one of the most brilliant products of the young generation of "Red Professors", B. S.

Lifshitz, describes what he calls, not without conscious irony, "St. Bartholemew's Day": 150 arrests in Moscow alone (18). A bulletin from Moscow bearing the date November 22, 1928, gives a statement of recent arrests. There will have been, at the end of October and the beginning of November, more than 300 known arrests: 80 oppositionists in Lenin-grad, 51 in Kharkov, 47 at Kiev including several Old Bolsheviks and a real workers' leader, Korfman, 28 at Odessa, 16 at Tiflis, 15 at Saratov (19). Among the 150 arrests in Moscow we find names familiar to the reader of Trotsky's archives; B. Volotnikov, G. Ja. Jacovin and an Eltsin, who could be old Boris Mikhailovich (20). Recovery was ensured, because the "centre" continued, as the publication of this bulletin precisely bears witness.

How many Oppositionists were arrested, deported or imprisoned? Trotsky and his people arrived, by putting together official figures and private sources of information, at a total of 8,000 for the year 1928 alone. It seems that the underground sector of the Opposition had not ceased to grow by the influx of new recruits, but that it had also lost both old and new elements under the blows of the repression. The relation between deported and arrested Oppositionists has revealed itself to be no less unstable, because many of the people who were deported had been arrested.

It was the cadres of the Opposition, numbering between 1,000 and 2,000 militants who were regarded as un-breakable, who were deported immediately after Zinoviev and Kamenev had capitulated, were deported - that is, they were assigned to live in distant places, from the beginning of January 1928 onwards. However, not all of them were there. Like the Zinovievists, some had escaped deportation by a precipitate and generally foreseeable capitulation, which none the less had some effect when the people concerned were well-known. This was the case with Piatakov, who had long been known to be demoralised, but whose confessions none the less were striking. It was also the case with Antonov-Ovseenko and with N. V. Krestinsky (21). A rather important group of former Zinovievists, who had come out of the Communist Youth, but who had not followed their leaders in December 1927, was included in the first wave of arrests and deportations. These people were called "the leaderless". Their leaders, however, were G. I. Safarov and the Yugoslav, Voya Vuyovich - a former active militant in the Communist Youth in France. This group made a public declaration in April 1928 (22), which ensured, though not without difficulty, that its members returned from exile.

All the other militants who were known to have the slightest relation with the Opposition were included among those who were excluded from the Party and deported at the beginning of 1928, with only a few exceptions: Victor Serge, Andres Nin, Alexandra Lvovna Sokolovskaya, B. M. Eltsin. Khristian Rakovsky was at Astrakhan, which letters from Moscow reached in six days and newspaper in three. Serebriakov was at Semipalatinsk; Smilga was at Loppachevo, Preobrazhensky was at Uralsk, Radek at Tobolsk, Muralov at Tara, Sosnovsky at Barnaul, I. N. Smirnov at Novo-Bajazet, Beloborodov at Ust-Kulom, Mrachkovsky at Voronezh. Very few were near a railway line. They had been intentionally sent to remote places. The little towns and villages where authority installed the Oppositionists often made it impossible for them to enjoy elementary comforts or the benefit of any culture. For the others, the obscure rank and file and at any rate the NCO's, a hundred places of residence were decreed. According to the information in the Harvard papers and according to the calculation by I. Longuet, we can identify 108 "colonies", that is, 108 local groups of deportees who claimed to support the Opposition. The young comrades of Trotsky had also earned their right to deportation: Syermux and V. B. Eltsin were at Ust-Vym, Poznansky at Kotlas and N. V. Nechayev at Kolpachevo.

Immediately, we can see, some kind of politico-personal correspondence was established with Alma Ata and in return. Trotsky stated on February 28 1928 that, of all the deportees to whom he had sent telegrams, Serebriakov was the only one who had not yet replied; in fact, Serebriakov contented himself with writing a letter (23) and lost no time in capitulating. Once again the organisation was perfected. The colonies in European Russia were organised round Rakovsky, those in the North around Mrachkovsky and those in Siberia and Soviet Asia round Sosnovsky. The intermediary "centres" passed on the documents which arrived from Alma Ata by themselves distributing those which seemed to them to be interesting.

The political material which circulated in this way naturally includes the "letters to friends", real letter-circulars written by Trotsky or by leaders such as Rakovsky, Sosnov-

sky or others, and numerous documents emanating from Oppositional individuals or groups. The same system appears to have been applied in the field of information, an operation of supreme importance, in which we discover new people, friends of Sedov, such as Ja. A. Kievlenko at Kainsk, Boris N. Viaznikovtsev at Tiumen, Vsevolod Patriarkha at Yenisseisk, F. S. Radzevich, who was deported to Termez, or the young Bulgarian Vassil Sidorov, the son of an old "Tesnyak" Social-Democrat, the leader in the colony of Rubtsovsk.

The deportees were allowed to work, if they could find work. Most did not succeed in doing so. This was the case only of certain privileged people, aided by their own talents, their name or good fortune. The Leningrad metal-worker Chtykhgold built houses of brick. The student-engineer Viaznikovtsev taught mathematics. His fellow-student Kantorovich helped to manage collective farms. Rakovsky, like Trotsky, had contracts with Gosidzat. In the end, the best-known, Rakovsky, Preobrazhensky, I. N. Smirnov and Muralov were employed by the administrators of the Plan. These were in a decent material situation, but the majority lived with great difficulty, because the allowance of 30 roubles a month from the GPU was barely sufficient.

What the Russians called "literary" activity was important. Many of the deportees wrote, not just to pass time, but because at last they had the opportunity to do so. There is, for example, in circulation a "Critique of the Draft Programme of the Communist International", which Trotsky highly valued and was written by Dmitri Lapine - a work of which we know nothing. We know that Sosnovsky wrote a "Agricultural Policy of Centrism", Smilga a book on "The Conquests of the Proletariat in Year Eleven of the Revolution", Preobrazhensky a "Sociology of the Capitalist World". We have information about many works and projects; Dingelstedt, who had done a thesis on the agrarian question in India, was now working on the social structures of that country. Radek was launched into a big biography of Lenin; Smilga was working on the theories of Bukharin and his "school"; Preobrazhensky was researching into the economy of the Middle Ages, Eltsin into the French Revolution, Vilensky-Sibiriakov returned to his studies of China and Boris S. Lifshitz studied the cycles of the capitalist economy.

It appears that Rakovsky was one of those who did most work at the beginning of his exile. Khristian Georgevich had been employed at Astrakhan by the administrator of the Plan at the Regional Commission as a "specialist-economist" at 180 roubles a month. His best-known writing in this period is his letter to Valentinov at the beginning of August 1928, which Trotsky had circulated all round the colonies and which was to be known later under the title "The Professional Dangers of Power". In it he shows the corruption of a section of the working class which had given birth to the bureaucracy and to the Party apparatus, the formation of a privileged layer which rested on holding on to the power which it had usurped by taking advantage of the passivity and of a certain indifference among the masses. He emphasised in passing the decisive role of the "party regime", one of the principal stakes in the struggle against the degeneration.

But in a general way Rakovsky worked hard at Astrakhan. He also contracted malaria there. He took the lead in preparing a biography of Saint-Simon, an examination of the origins of utopian socialism, a History of the Civil War in the Ukraine, works commissioned to be published, as well as memoirs, which, according to what he wrote to Trotsky, included souvenirs about the principal personalities and Congresses of the Second International. These works were completed, and then seized by the GPU. No information about them was given in February 1988, or whether they still exist, when the rehabilitation of Rakovsky was officially announced.

This over-rapid sketch does not lack impressiveness. These men of different generations did not often in the course of their lives find time enough to put some ideas down on paper. Others of them, on the contrary, had earned their livings by their pens. But none of them ceased to be stimulated by ideas, and this may well be what gave them confidence in their own inner resources.

Maria Mikhailovna Joffe is perhaps right when she wrote from Moscow to Alma-Ata: "Those who are not making their careers are drinking vodka... Only the Oppositionists are continuing really to think" (24). In any case, in deportation, they thought and they wrote and this discussion unfolds before our eyes through the documents - usually hand-written,

which they exchanged.

A letter from Nadejda Ostrovskaya, from Voronezh, first informed Alma Ata that Preobrazhensky believed that the Party leadership had just operated "a turn to the left". This was the first intimation of the birth of the tendency of those who were at first to be called "the conciliators", Preobrazhensky and Ishchenko, who received the re-inforcement after a time of Radek.(25)

His first document, written in March, was prudent enough, to tell the truth. The "urgent measures" were the reply to the offensive of the rich peasants and the expression in Russia of the sharpening of the class-struggle in Europe. The "left course" could quickly abort, which was hardly to be expected, because in that case it would be necessary to go much further to the right than the right-wing supporters of a neo-NEP dreamed of. Therefore, according to Preobrazhensky, "the return to a Leninist agricultural policy", which would be supported by "an upward movement of the poor and middle peasants against the capitalist elements", was most probable.

According to him, it would be necessary, if this happened, "for the Left Opposition collectively to approach the Party majority, irrespective of the stupidities and vulgarity with which it now has to put up". He proposed that a document be written in which the Left Opposition would recognise the positive aspects of the new policy and should offer its support to the leadership to ensure the success of its policies, without demanding "the re-integration of the Bolshevik-Leninists or mentioning the repression". In order to prepare such a declaration, the Left Opposition should demand from the leadership an authorisation to hold a conference, which would permit it to reach agreement. Preobrazhensky suggested that Trotsky and Radek should present this demand. He insisted on the nature of the policy in which Stalin was engaged: the "Left turn", he urged, reflected as it were in a distorting mirror the positions which the Left Opposition defended (26)

The same tune came from Ischenko, who declared that "the war in the countryside" had begun with "the appearance of a turn to the left. The issue of the battle would be determined, in his opinion, by the place which the Opposition occupied at the decisive moment. He declared:

"Such a situation offers to us the possibility of taking a course which is much more concrete in order to put the party together again and not to delay this re-integration until the indefinite future. A prolonged maintenance of the Opposition outside the Party would be very dangerous for the dictatorship of the proletariat."(27)

In this way the discussion was immediately opened. Some of the replies were sharp. F. N. Dingelstedt wrote:

"The measures are provoked by the threat of famine and economic crisis... The rise of unemployment and the slowing-down of industry continue: where is it, this new course?" (28)

On April 4, Smilga was nearly as cutting:

"The present zig-zag cannot be regarded as a consistent left-ward course. The terror which the leadership is inflicting on the Left Opposition cannot work seriously for the regeneration of the Party" (29)

Sosnovsky took the same hard line, rejecting the very idea of a turn.

But a new tendency was forming itself, intermediary between the first two. Rakovsky, for example, fully accepted Preobrazhensky's analysis of the two possible variants. To him it signified that the Opposition "must rely on the zig-zag to the left and on the activity of the workers to turn this zig-zag into a genuine left policy". But, one could not arrive at that by way of an alliance with the leadership, but only by "work with the base". Khristian Georgevich criticised Preobrazhensky's practical proposals and retorted that "a regeneration can only happen today at the price of a capitulation": the necessary declaration should be addressed, not to the Party leaders, but to the workers.(30)

Valentinov defended a somewhat analogous position. In his opinion, they were preparing in Moscow "the final act of Thermidor", and the practical proposals of Preobrazhensky

led in the direction of capitulation; none the less, the Left Opposition could "support the authors of the urgency measures, if they turn towards the masses and openly break with the Right of the Party". (31)

However, on April 30, V. D. Kasparova made herself the spokesperson of those among the deportees, of whom there remained not a few, it appears, who "had difficulty in analysing the situation" and did not know very clearly where they stood (32).

It was after having let a discussion develop, - the evidence and accounts of it (particularly by Valentinov and Sosnovsky, give the same picture of it for different regions - that Trotsky decided to formulate a position which opposed the proposals of Preobrazhensky and Ishchenko but did not mean an irretrievable break. He letter of May 9 tackles the problem.

As he saw them, the measures against the kulaks were a step "inconsistent, contradictory but all the same undeniable" in the direction of the policies of the Opposition, and therefore in the right direction. He declared:

"We have to say that clearly and sharply. But, at the same time, do not let us exaggerate the importance of this step - from our experience, we have to be more prudent about turns - without superfluous excesses, let us explain succinctly the reasons, for it, the mechanics of it and the ideology behind it." (33)

On the question of the origin of the "yurn" - he accepted the term - there was an objective necessity. Who created it? He replied:

"Obviously, we created it, who are the conscious expression of the unconscious process. Without our presence, today's economic difficulties would have led to a huge success for the supporters of Ustrialov." (34)

Accepting the class-analysis and the theoretical appreciation of the new policy which Preobrazhensky advanced, Trotsky warned, at the same time, against the tendency to think that the question of the kulak could be settled in the countryside alone: it would be settled on the ground of industrialisation, of the correct leadership of the International, of the formation of cadres. As to the practical attitude towards the "turn", he first stated sharply:

"Are we ready to support today's movement? Absolutely. With all our strength and all our means. Do we believe that this movement increases the chances of restoring the health of the Party? Yes, we think so. Are we ready to co-operate precisely along this road? Entirely and un-reservedly." (35)

This was also what he proposed to say, in a very calm tone, in the declaration which should be sent to the Congress of the Communist International, where the Opposition should (in his opinion) demand the re-admission which the whole situation proved to be legitimate and more so (36). Was Trotsky convinced? We may doubt it. At the end of May, Preobrazhensky wrote:

"We based our tactic in 1927 on the worse variant; we put our money on pessimism. We now need to have another tactic, and we should take a chance on the side of optimism. If Thermidor has not been realised, we must take pleasure in the fact, and go towards a rapprochement with the Party. Otherwise we shall transform ourselves into a little sect of 'genuine Leninists'". (37)

Some days later, he declared that it was completely wrong to affirm, as Trotsky had done, that it was the activity of the Opposition which had precipitated the turn, whereas all the evidence suggested that it was the result of the initiative of the kulaks. He revealed the underlying basis of his argument when he said:

"The capacity of the majority of the leadership to seek a way out by returning to a Leninist policy has been demonstrated by the facts, through its struggle against the kulaks." (38)

V. B. Eltsin, who opposed Preobrazhensky and the conciliators, developed a case which showed that he did not share the diplomatic or pedagogic concerns of Trotsky in relation to Preobrazhensky and his co-thinkers. Already, on May 16, he was writing to Trotsky that "centrism is doubly dangerous when it plays with a left policy" (39). Some days later, in a circular letter, he attacks what he evidently regards as the roots of the

position of Preobrazhensky.

He did not regard the conflict as one of ideas within the apparatus and its corridors, but as a struggle of classes. The causes of the degeneration of the Party and of the State, which led to the kulak policy and ideology, were evidently social causes. The sliding to the right had not been the result of an evolution of ideas, but of a displacement of the leadership of the proletarian party in power towards the rural and the urban petty bourgeoisie, of the pressure of international capital. Speaking of the years 1926 and 1927, he wrote:

"Our struggle was an attempt on the part of the vanguard of the proletariat to place ourselves in opposition to this process; in this struggle, we came up against the inertia, the passivity of the worker-masses, which, in their turn, were the result of internal and international factors." (40)

The worst of these mistakes would be to believe that the Party could be saved without the initiative and the movement of the working-class itself. That was why it was necessary to oppose everything which relied on conciliation with the apparatus, and, hence, with the forces of enemy classes and combinations at the top. Evidently he was aiming at the "authorised conference" which Proebrazhensky was advocating. Eltsin advised support for the measures against the kulaks and at the same time thorough criticism and denunciation of the general policy of those who were taking the urgency measures against the kulaks:

"Nothing but a powerful upward movement of the international working class and a rise in the activity and the capacity for self-defence of the Russian workers will blow a new wind into the political life of the proletariat and of the Russian Party." (41)

The definition by V. B. Eltsin of what he regards as a correct policy towards the "centrists" appears a little more to the "left" than Trotsky's:

"Our task is to combat the danger from the right and to unmask, today, the centrism, in order that tomorrow we may have behind us the re-awakened worker-masses". (42)

The divergences seemed to widen on another point; this was that of German policy. In March, the founding congress of the organisation of the "Left Communists" - the supporters in Germany of the "Unified Opposition" - the Leninbund, decided to participate in the elections by presenting their own candidates against those of the KPD. A strong current revealed itself in their ranks from autumn 1927 onwards in favour of this initiative: Trotsky criticised it in a letter which he addressed, no doubt in January, to what he calls "the Fischer-Maslov Group". In the face of this initiative, which Trotsky considered to be a step towards "a second Party", Radek proposed to send to Die Rote Fahne a telegram rejecting responsibility for this candidature, and proposed to Trotsky that he should send it, which Trotsky refused to do (43). Radek then sent his telegram alone.

His initiative was very badly received in the ranks of the exiled Oppositionists. The deportees at Kainsk sent him a very dry letter, in which they reminded him that, between militants, one should "warn against dangers in advance", while he was contenting himself with "judging them after the event". They blamed his taking of this position as resting on insufficient information: while they, for their part, were hostile to the struggle for "a new party" and "a Fourth International", they did not think that the candidature of the Leninbund must necessarily go in that direction. They harshly demanded that Radek tell them what he would say if the German Oppositionists addressed themselves directly to Stalin to repudiate him. They argued that his telegram had done nothing but "demoralise" the ranks of the Opposition, and they asked him about the rumour that suggested that he had written to Zinoviev and Kamenev, assuring him that this would be an "act of treachery". (44)

The camp of the "conciliators" thus included a new recruit, and, this time, they went so far as to oppose Trotsky on the question of the declaration of the Left Opposition to the Sixth Congress of the Communist International. After his circular letter of May 9 which set out the principles of the declaration, it was a new discussion which began among the "colonists".

Preobrazhensky wrote to Trotsky on June 2, insisting that a clear distinction be drawn between the general world situation of the workers' movement and the negative results due

directly to the errors of the Communist International: "It is more useful to criticise less but better", he wrote, paraphrasing Lenin. He wrote that the "left turn" must be described as what it is, a positive step forward, but that note should be taken at the same time that the leadership had maintained its position on the question of internal democracy, and that this was exactly the same as it had been at the time of the kulak offensive. He did not wish to speak all the time either about "re-admission" or about "democracy", and proposed to end the declaration in the following way:

"We want to make peace with the majority of the Party on the basis of the new course. We demand that the Congress re-admit us in order that we may carry out our duties loyally, but without fractional activity." (45)

Trotsky's reply was a vigorous counter-attack. In his "letter to friends" of June 24, he attacked the idea of the conference, which Preobrazhensky was advanced, and which Trotsky thought ridiculous. He quoted Sosnovsky and Rakovsky, who both counter-posed to Preobrazhensky their own method of approaching the political questions from the standpoint of the party regime:

"Now this is precisely the one and only correct and useful criterion. Not because the party regime is the independent source of all the other phenomena and processes.. .. But to the extent that the Party is the one and only instrument by which we can act upon the social processes; for us, the criterion of the seriousness and the depth of the movement is above all the refraction of this turn in the Party." (46)

At this point, Radek intervened for the second time, in a completely independent way, because that time was short, he sent a draft to eight Oppositionists announcing that, if there could not be a discussion, he would send the draft to the Congress over his name alone. This was a gesture of defiance which was to earn him much animosity in the colonies. (47)

As regards the situation in the USSR, Radek's draft declaration seems less diplomatic than that of Preobrazhensky. He declared that it must be emphasised that the crisis in the grain collections revealed the character of the official policy. However, according to him, the Central Committee had "recognised the reality of the kulak danger" and "called for struggle against it", which was important. He proposed to organise the agrarian proletariat, to purge the party and the Soviet apparatus of the pro-kulak elements, to change its social make-up, to deepen the self-criticism and to re-admit the Opposition. On the international level, he wanted a revision of the positions formerly defended in China. In his opinion, the theses which the Opposition had accepted mis-understood the **role** of the peasantry in such countries of "nascent capitalism" as India and China. The Radek draft declared - though in the end this passage was not retained.

"If History demonstrates to us that certain party leaders with whom even yesterday we were crossing swords, are worth more than the ideas that they were defending, no one will be happier than us." (48)

At the moment which Trotsky learned of this Radek draft, he had just ended his own "declaration" to the Sixth Congress and his "letter", which close with a phrase very differently inspired than Radek's document:

"Well-intentioned functionaries see the solution of the greatest of historic tasks in the formula 'We must decisively change'. The Party should reply: 'It is not you who must effect the changing, but it is yourselves who must be decisively changed, and in the majority of cases - removed and replaced.'" (49)

The difference is worth noting. An improvised consultation in the colonies revealed a hundred votes for Trotsky's draft as against three for Radek's. Radek was bombarded with reproachful letters and telegrams from the colonies. He explained that he had not sent his letter, because the postal service had not delivered Trotsky's draft to him. He withdrew his own document and signed Trotsky's.

The Opposition front was in this way temporarily re-united. The unfolding of the July Plenum made matters considerably easier. All those who observed the discussion there and in particular nearly all of those who took a leading part in it regarded the plenum as a victory for the right and the burial of the "left course"; only Ishchenko continued

to work for a rapprochement which in the new setting appeared from that time as purely and simply his going-over to the Party leadership. The elements who had fought against the conciliators won the day. Dingelstedt writes:

"The Opposition must reject any illusion about a regeneration of the Party apparatus by way of a compromise with the present leadership." (50)

A letter from Viktor Borissovich Eltsin reveals that there were still traces of this tough fight:

"The series of letters, the drafts of declarations, the theses and fresh theses of E.A. (Evgenii Aleksandrovich Preobrazhensky), K.B. (Karl Bernhardovich Radek) and I.T. (Ivar Tenissovich Smilga) etc, is beginning to become excessive. Our patience has narrow historic limits. He put up with the first theses of E.A. and then the letter from K.B. (which he did not send) and finally we have endured for too long the profoundly opportunist theses of E.A., which have nothing to do with Marxist policy." (51)

It was at about the same time that Radek drafted his work entitled "Development and Significance of the Slogan of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat" (52), in which he tried to show that Trotsky was incorrectly interpreting, as support for his theory of the "permanent revolution" the passing by Lenin in 1917 from the slogan of "the democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry" to that of "the dictatorship of the proletariat". (53) This was the long treatise to which Trotsky was to begin to reply in the document which was finally published under the title "The Permanent Revolution". But for the moment he was above all pre-occupied with strengthening the unity of the Opposition, which had been seriously shaken by these fits of ill-humour.

Trotsky badly wanted, in fact, to calm the conflict down, all the more so because he was certain that the July Plenum, a zig-zag to the right, would be followed by a whole series of other zigzags and attacks of fever. He was convinced of the need to retain Preobrazhensky in the ranks of the Opposition and perhaps Radek even more so. He did not despair even of winning back Ishchenko, even when the latter went to Moscow apparently in the hope of reaching a deal with Yaroslavsky. In a letter to Smilga, Trotsky wrote about "mis-understandings" which separated them and the responsibility of the postal service in the multiplicity of "declarations" to the Sixth Congress. (54)

In a letter to V. D. Kasparova, he admits that he had had lively reproaches from the young comrades for an excessively conciliatory attitude on his part towards Preobrazhensky, and he admits complacently to having perhaps shown too much diplomacy. He recognised also that Radek had deserved in the end the brickbats which he had received from the same young comrades, but he declares, however, that he was doing all he could to pour upon the waves the oil which would calm them. (55)

The discussion had been very enriching for him; it had taught him personally a great deal and had contributed decisively to the education of the young generation of Oppositionists. He saw a conclusive proof of this in the numerical progress of the Opposition within the working class and the youth, as well as the support by workers who had until then been Dec-ists to the declaration of the Opposition to the Congress of the Communist International. His correspondence with S. A. Ashkenazi (56) and especially with the Ukrainian Rafail (R.B. Farbman) (57) shows the value he attached to winning worker cadres.

In reality, his way of looking at things from the viewpoint of the historical perspective gave him an obvious superiority over those with whom he was discussing. He had his eyes fixed on a world horizon and on decades. How, moreover, could he let himself be impressed by people who, in the best of cases, could only follow in the tracks of Zinoviev and Kamenev, who were far superior to them. The problems were elsewhere: to all appearances, it was his support that Bukharin was soliciting in July 1928 in his pan-stricken confidences in Kamenev's apartment.

This meeting took place on July 11, 1928. It was organised by Sokolnikov, who tried to prevent Zinoviev and Kamenev from supporting Stalin and tried to win them into a "bloc" with Bukharin. Bukharin appeared, very anxious, agitated and tormented: things had gone a very long way and he had been thinking for two months that one or other of the groups, the Stalinists or the Bukharinists, would seek an alliance with the Zinovievists and the Trotskyists. He talked about peasant uprisings, members of the Central Committee who

supported the right - such as Yagoda - and people who had betrayed him - such as Voroshilov and Kalinin. His reflections on the character of Stalin were those of a hunted man: Stalin was a "Genghis Khan", who would "cut their throats", who was interested only in power and who was far further away from the other fractions than they were from each other. It is clear from the account of this interview that Bukharin was seeking also an alliance with Trotsky against Stalin. Trotsky was to reply indirectly. (58)

Trotsky took advantage of a letter from a right-winger in the Party, his former collaborator Ja. M. Tchatunovsky, to open up the problem of a possible alliance with the right-wingers. At the end of this long document, he made a list of the conditions for organising a genuine Party congress, up to and including in the selection of delegates, which led him on to remind his reader, as we pointed out above, that "the centrists" are "the principal support and protection of opportunism in the Party". (59)

He returned with as much sharpness as firmness to the question which many had not expected after the struggle opened. At nearly the same moment a new indication appeared that the crisis in the Parti was worsening. On September 22, following a chance meeting in the Place du Theatre in Moscow, Kamenev invited two of the leading Trotskyists in the capital to his apartment. An account reached Alma Ata several weeks later. The writer, who signed the message "Anton", reports on what Kamenev said:

"Everything is going to be reviewed in the October Plenum. The result will be; a direct step towards Thermidor, or a step forward, disguised in the eyes of the masses. He thinks that L. D. 's analysis of the July Plenum is quite right... He says that L. D. should write a document in which he says: 'Call upon us! We will work together!' But he will not do that, and he will wait in Alma Ata so long as no one comes in an express train to fetch him. But when they do send the train, the situation in the country will be so bad that Kerensky could climb up the stair-case." (60)

In a letter of October 21 devoted to general problems, Trotsky restricted himself to noting these advances with biting irony, and concluded:

"The fact that he is singing without fear of Yaroslavsky shows that the grip of the apparatus is weakening and that the chances of the Opposition are improving. We give him credit for telling us. But we can only conclude: we have to hit the capitulators twice, thrice, ten times harder." (61)

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The last months of 1928 were no longer months of intense discussion, but months of elaboration and of thinking after the storm. Trotsky was already very isolated by the "blockade": he returned to the necessity which the discussions had revealed, to deepen the analysis, not only of the situation in the Party and in the apparatus, but of the very perspectives of the "approach to Thermidor" which the Opposition intended to fight. On the consequences of the Plenum of July, after Uglanov was eliminated from the Moscow leadership, he wrote:

"After having retreated politically and thereby assured himself a majority, Stalin is attacking on the ground of the organisation." (62)

In his opinion, the outcome of the battle between the centrists and the right-wingers was settled; the leaders of the latter would retreat in the face of attack. But the question remains of knowing how the "danger of the right" could be concretely realised in the country. Trotsky suggests a variant which he calls that of "Bonapartism" - a higher concentration of power raising itself above the masses. For the first time, he considered as a possible alternative to the victory of the right - Thermidor pure and simple - a temporary victory of the Centrists, which would result from "the conjunction of the centrist apparatus with the governmental apparatuses of repression". Thence he reaches the conclusion that "centrism after all represents only one variety of the tendency to conciliation with bourgeois society which is doing its best to be re-born." (63)

In the struggle at the top which was opening, he denounced the illusion of the conciliatory wing of the Opposition; the centrists would rely to be sure on deserters from the Opposition, but in no case on the Opposition itself. The Opposition must go boldly before the masses and above all help them everywhere to break down the defences which the bureaucrats had erected against their intervention:

"The axis of our internal policy consists in maintaining really the power in the hands of the proletariat or, more exactly, in restoring to it this power which has been usurped by the apparatus and in ultimately re-enforcing the dictatorship of the proletariat on the basis of a systematic improvement of the workers' conditions of existence." (64)

Taking one more step towards abandoning, not yet definitively, the notion of Thermidor which had been utilised up to that time, he devoted his thought to the question of the nature of what he still called "centrism". He drew out of it the social basis for the development of the Soviet bureaucracy, which every day was growing more independent of the working class and more dependent on the bourgeoisie. He re-affirmed the line of the necessity for the independence of the Opposition:

"The Bolshevick-Leninists have only one road to follow, to mobilise the elements which are alive and capable of living for their Party, to bind together the proletarian nucleus of the Party and mobilise the entire working-class... The centrist campaign today against the right must reveal to every proletarian revolutionary the necessity and the duty of multiplying ten-fold their efforts to follow an independent line, forged by the whole history of Bolshevism, which is proved to be right through all the colossal tests of the events of these last years." (65)



The Alma Ata operation thus appeared definitively to be a searing defeat for Stalin. Trotsky was neither isolated nor muzzled. Not only had he succeeded, despite the distances, in maintaining the unity of the Opposition, but he had showed himself able to mount the political offensive, to galvanise the adversaries of Stalin, and appeared more and more to be the man on whom they should fall back. One of the proofs of the failure of the Stalinist enterprise is without doubt the introduction of what the deported were to call the "postal blockade": letters were not even delivered to them - except the infrequent letters of capitulators. "The snows are settling on our isolation", wrote Natalia Ivanovna.

On December 16 a specially authorised of the GPU, Volynsky, presented himself at the house in Alma Ata. This was the man who had succeeded in finding D., in getting him arrested and interrupting the communication between Trotsky and the "Moscow centre". He was the bearer of a message which was a veritable ultimatum, quoted by Trotsky from memory:

"The work of your supporters in the country has recently taken on a sharply counter-revolutionary character: the conditions in which you are placed in Alma Ata give you every possibility to lead this activity; therefore, the collegium of the GPU has decided to demand from you a categorical undertaking to cease your activity; otherwise the college will be obliged to modify your conditions of existence, in the sense that it will isolate you completely from political life and that consequently the question of moving your place of residence elsewhere will be posed." (66)

Convinced that the ultimatum of the GPU announced that he would be arrested and that the duration and outcome of his imprisonment could not be foreseen. Trotsky refused to give a written reply. But on December 16, he addressed to the Central Committee of the Party and to the Executive of the International a letter which was really intended for the world and for posterity:

"The demand that I abstain from political activity is a demand that I renounce the struggle for the interests of the international proletariat, a struggle I have been waging continually for thirty-two years, throughout all my conscious life. The attempt to represent this activity as 'counter-revolutionary' comes from those whom I charge, before the international proletariat, with violating the fundamental principle of the teachings of Marx and Lenin, with infringing on the historical interests of

the world revolution, with renouncing the traditions and precepts of October and with unconsciously, but all the more menacingly, preparing the Thermidor." (67)

He declared that he would not give up "the struggle against a strangling party regime", "against the blindness of the present leadership" and "the political economy of opportunism". He recalled the repression which had been inflicted on the Opposition since 1923, and wrote:

"For six years we have been living in the USSR under the conditions of a growing reaction against October and, consequently, of a clearing of the way for the Thermidor. The most obvious and complete expression of this reaction within the Party is the savage persecution and routing of the Left wing in the Party organisation." (68)

He counter-posed to "the incurable weakness if the reaction headed by the apparatus", which "does not know what it is doing", because it is "executing the orders of the enemy classes", the "historical strength of the Opposition", which "sees the dynamics of the mass forces clearly, foresees the coming day and consciously prepares for it." (69)

In reply to the threat about changing the conditions of his life and isolating him from political activity, he reminds that he has been banished four thousand kilometres from Moscow, two hundred and fifty kilometres from the nearest railway, in a region where malaria, plague and leprosy are common, where newspapers take ten days at least to arrive and the delivery of letters is measured in months. He recalled the arrest of Syermux and Poznansky, who were guilty of wanting to share his exile, as well as the delay of letters containing news about the illness of his daughters. He recalled Lenin's judgement on the brutality and disloyalty of Stalin, and pointed to the cruelty of the methods employed against the Opposition, the hunger-strike by Butov which ended in his death, "the violence, beatings and torture - both physical and moral - inflicted on the best Bolshevik workers for their adherence to the precepts of October".

He recalled the incessant efforts since 1923 to reduce him to silence in one way or another. He recalled his declaration to the Sixth Congress of the Communist International: the demand that he should give up political activity could come only from "completely depraved officialdom". His conclusion is clear:

"To everyone his fate. You wish to continue carrying out policies inspired by class forces hostile to the proletariat. We know our duty and we will do it to the end." (70)

A month then passed of the most complete isolation and postal blockade. The newspapers which the exiles received gave very large coverage to the polemic against "the right". Bukharin still expressed himself from time to time. His "Notes of an Economist", published in "Pravda" for September 30, were evidently an attack on Stalin. In a speech on November 28, he mounted an attack in terms which recalled those of Trotsky, on the Party "functionaries who transform themselves into bureaucrats", on the provincial chiefs who have become "bureaucratic idols", with nothing but contempt for those entrusted to their care.

The decision to exile Trotsky was finally taken by the Politburo in mid-January. Bukharin opposed it. According to the minutes of a subsequent Politburo meeting, Stalin argued in the following way:

"Trotsky should be exiled abroad (i) because as long as he remains in the country he is capable of ideologically leading the Opposition and its strength does not cease to grow; (ii) so that he can be discredited in the eyes of the masses as an accomplice of the bourgeoisie on his arrival in a bourgeois country; (iii) in order to discredit him in the eyes of the world proletariat; the social-democracy will, no doubt, utilise his exile against the USSR and fly to Trotsky's help as 'a victim of Bolshevik terror'; (iv) Trotsky attacks the leadership by making revelations, and if so we can present him as a traitor. Everything there speaks in favour of the need for exile." (71)

Volynsky remained in Alma Ata awaiting instructions, after his visit of December 16. On January 20, 1929, he presented himself again at the exiles' house, carrying an extract from the minutes of the collegium of the GPU. This accused Trotsky of "counter-revolutionary activity which was manifesting itself in the organisation of an illegal, anti-Soviet party, the activity of which in recent times aimed at provoking anti-Soviet demon-

strations and at preparing an armed struggle against the Soviet power" Consequently the decision was reached to expel him from the Soviet Union. The day of January 21 was devoted to packing up the baggage. Trotsky and Sedov were not to go, as they had intended, to hunt the predatory tigers which had come from Balkhash up the Ili river and were approaching Alma Ata. ON January 22 at first light the interminable journey began. (72)

It was to last twenty-two days. A motor-bus took the travellers, their escort and their baggage away from Alma Ata. But the tractor which had been sent to meet them was unable to cross the Kurday pass. They had to go on in light sledges as far as Pishpek, where they took the train. It was in the neighbourhood of Aktyubinsk that Trotsky learned from one of the high officers of the GPU who accompanied them that he was going to be expelled to Turkey - to which he once more replied with a refusal. At Ryazhsk, Seryozha and Lyova's wife Ana joined the train for the rest of the journey. But the journey was interrupted. For eleven days and nights the train stood still, probably in the region of Kursk, in terrible cold, probably awaiting instructions. Had Trotsky read the article by Bukharin which appeared in "Pravda" for January 24, 1928 on Lenin's "Political Testament", a political testament which Bukharin, without saying so, did not use to oppose Trotsky's ideas? He was not to comment upon it. But, on the other hand, he took note that it was during this period that he heard of the arrest of numerous Oppositionists, who were presented as "the centre", the Georgians kavtaradze and Budu Mdivani, the literary critic A. K. Voronsky, the former kronstadt sailor V. S. Pankratov, the old soldiers Dreitser, Gayevsky and Yenukidze, to a total of 350 arrests in the Moscow region, 350 in several large cities, Leningrad, Kharkov, Odessa, and Dniepropetrovsk, without counting the arrests of deportees (73). By now it was in prison that that the majority of the Bolshevik-Leninists were to be found. We possess a description of the sordid conditions in which a hundred of them were incarcerated at Tobolsk, while Verkhne-Uralsk, Suzdal and Chelyabinsk began to fill up.

Trotsky no doubt did not know, either, that on January 30 the Bolshevik-Leninists in Moscow had published the record of the conversations of the preceding July between Bukharin and Kamenev, and that these were to allow Stalin to make a ferocious attack on Bukharin (74), a publication which was perhaps a provocation.

The train reached Odessa on February 10, 1929. Trotsky could not look except from far off at this city where he had had his secondary-school studies, his first experiences as a militant in his adolescence and not a few months in prison. After new hesitations due to the fact that the port was blocked by ice, Trotsky, Natalia Ivanovna and Lyova were finally put on board the steam-ship Ilych, which was to land them at Constantinople on February 12. When he arrived, Trotsky handed to the Turkish authorities a written declaration explaining that he was entering their country against his will.

He was never to return to the USSR.

F O O T N O T E S

- (1) The first systematic research into the correspondence of Trotsky and Sedov at Alma Ata is that undertaken by Isabella Longuet, "The Crisis of the Left Opposition in 1926 - 29", a thesis for a Master's degree in the Department of Slavonic Studies in University VIII, Paris. But on the context of the Party and of the government, we go with interest to the very well documented book by Michel Reiman, "Die Geburt des Stalinismus", Frankfurt-am-Main, 1979.
- (2) Mrachkovsky to Trotsky, April 14, 1928, Harvard Archives T 1310.
- (3) Kievlenko to Sedov, March 14, 1928, Harvard Archives, T 1211.
- (4) The Moscow Trotskyists to Trotsky, Harvard Archives, T 1175.
- (5) Hoover Archives, Nikolayevsky Collection.
- (6) Victor Serge, "Memoires d'un Revolutionnaire", p. 227.

- (7) Rose Levine-Meyer, "Jakovine et Pankratova", in "Inside German Communism", London, 1977, pp. 209 - 213.
- (8) Letter from Moscow, September 1928, Harvard Archives T 2439.
- (9) Letter from Moscow, September 13, 1928, Harvard Archives, T 2560.
- (10) Letter from Moscow, September 7, 1928, Harvard Archives, T 2502.
- (11) Letter from Moscow, end of July, 1928, Harvard Archives, T 2001.
- (12) Letter from Moscow, November 1, 1928, Harvard Archives, T 2854.
- (13) Letter from Moscow, September 1928, Harvard Archives, T 2533.
- (14) Letter from Moscow, September 13, 1928, Harvard Archives, T 2560.
- (15) Letter from Moscow, Mid-November, Harvard Archives, T 2875.
- (16) Tsintsadze to Trotsky, May 17, 1928, Harvard Archives, T 1476.
- (17) Letter to Kiev, November 1928, Harvard Archives, T 2849.
- (18) Livshitz to Trotsky, May 28, 1929, Harvard Archives, T 1552.
- (19) Letter from Moscow, November 22, 1928, Harvard Archives, T. 2898.
- (20) "Pravda", February 29, 1928, Piatakov, "Declaration".
- (21) Antonov-Ovseenko, "Declaration", "Pravda", April 4, 1928.
- (22) "Pravda", May 31, 1928.
- (23) Trotsky, circular letter, February 28, 1928, Harvard Archives, T 1161. In fact Serebriakov had written, but only on February 25.
- (24) Undated letter by M. Joffe, Harvard Archive, T 1090.
- (25) Ostrovaskaya to Trotsky, February 20, 1928, Harvard Archives, T 1139.
- (26) Preobrazhensky, "The Left Course", Harvard Archives, T 1262.
- (27) Ishchenko to Trotsky, April 1928, Harvard Archives, T 1254.
- (28) Dingelstedt to Trotsky, July 8, 1928, T 1891.
- (29) Smilga to Trotsky, April 4, 1928, T 1273.
- (30) Valentinov to Trotsky, April 14, 1928, T 1309.
- (31) Valentinov to Trotsky, April 19, 1928, T 1326.
- (32) Kasparova to Trotsky, April 30, 1928, T 1377.
- (33) Trotsky, circular letter, May 9, 1928, T 3112.
- (34) Ibid.
- (35) Ibid.
- (36) Ibid.

- (37) Preobrazhensky to Trotsky, end of May 1928, T 1497.
- (38) Preobrazhensky, June 1928, T 1593.
- (39) V. B. Eltsin, May 16, 1928, T 1464.
- (40) V. B. Eltsin, beginning of June 1928, T 1587.
- (41) Ibid.
- (42) Ibid.
- (43) Radek to Trotsky, April 18, 1928, T 1325.
- (44) Letter from Kainsk, May 1928, T 1404.
- (45) Preobrazhensky to Trotsky, June 2, 1928, T 3114.
- (46) Trotsky, circular letter, June 24, 1928, T 3114.
- (47) Circular-letter by Radek, June 24, 1928, T 1780a.
- (48) Draft declaration by Radek, June 24, 1928, *ibid.* T 1780b.
- (49) Letter to the Sixth Congress of the Communist International.
- (50) Dingelstedt to Trotsky, July 8, 1928, T 1891.
- (51) V. B. Eltsin to Trotsky, August 20, 1928, T 2310.
- (52) Radek, T 2324.
- (53) I. Longuet, *op. cit.*, p. 93.
- (54) Trotsky to Smilga, September 4, 1928, T 2480.
- (55) Trotsky to Kasparova, August 30, 1928, T 2419.
- (56) Trotsky to Ashkenazi, August 30, 1928, T 2420.
- (57) Trotsky to Rafail, November 10, 1928, T 2874.
- (58) Kamenev's notes on his interview with Bukharin, July 11, 1928, T 1897.
- (59) Trotsky to Chatunovsky, September 12, 1928, T 3132.
- (60) Anton to Trotsky, September 22, 1928, T 2630.
- (61) Trotsky, circular letter, October 21, T 3146.
- (62) Ibid.
- (63) Ibid.
- (64) Ibid.
- (65) Ibid.
- (66) L. Trotsky, "My Life", Penguin Books, London, 1975, pp. 584 - 5.
- (67) Ibid., p. 581.

- (68) Ibid., p. 582.
- (69) Ibid.
- (70) Ibid., p. 584.
- (71) Letter from Moscow, March 22, 1929, in "Bulletin of the Opposition", No. 1, p. 3.
- (72) "My Life", p. 585.
- (73) "Pravda", February 23, 1929.
- (74) Stalin, Sochinenya, Vol. XI, p. 319, "The Bukharin Group and the Right Deviation"