

Chapter Ten. The Struggle of the Unified Opposition

The battle at the Fourteenth Congress was to be no more than a preface to the more important battle which was joined within the party. The party had just decided, unanimously, to change the name of the party for the second time, and to become "the Communist Party (Bolshevik) of the USSR". It was to witness the rise of the coalition of the two oppositions, that of 1923 and that of 1925, and the gathering together of what could appear as the elite of the party and of the Old Guard against the leadership in the hands of the General Secretary. Perhaps, as the majority of the historians think, the alliance of Trotsky with Zinoviev and Kamenev was inevitable, after first one and then the others had seen their efforts broken against the dominating power of the apparatus. However, this was less evident to the actors in the drama. In fact, it was from Zinoviev and Kamenev, whom moreover he regarded as his principal adversaries, that Trotsky had received the most serious blows, and he did not have them to thank for his isolation being only relative, since he continued to be a member of the Politburo. It was partly thanks to Trotsky's attacks and revelations that Kamenev and especially Zinoviev had lost the prestige which presented them as the lieutenants and, later, as the successors of Lenin, in the front rank of the troika.

It seems likely that neither of the contending fractions at the Fourteenth Congress ignored the important factor which the intervention of Trotsky might be in the conflict in which his conquerors were tearing each other apart. Zinoviev had revealed Stalin's underhand attacks on him. Stalin had revealed that he had refused to exclude him from the party, as the other triumvirs had demanded. Mikoyan had contrasted Trotsky's disciplined attitude to the attitude of the Leningraders, and Tomsy had contrasted the clarity of his position to their subterfuges. Yaroslavsky and Kalinin had reproached them for the methods they had used against him. Krupskaya had paid homage to him at length, while Lashevich had admitted that he had been right on many of the points in the 1923 discussion. However, Trotsky had remained silent. He had intervened only twice and then briefly, once to support Zinoviev, who justified his hostile attitude the preceding year by declaring that they could not elect a man to the Politburo who was accused of so many mistakes, and the second time to protest when Stalin announced "reprisals" against the Leningrad organisation.

We may believe, with the majority of the historians, that this abstention from the fight in 1925 was the greatest tactical error of Trotsky's career. The fact is that this appreciation is easier for anyone who knows the history that followed. Trotsky's personal feeling was that there was nothing to choose between the protagonists on either side. On January 8, 1926, he wrote to Bukharin to remind him how he (Trotsky) had been treated as a "demagogue" in 1924 for having said - with a trace of exaggeration, as he recognised - that the Communist workers of Leningrad were literally "muzzled" by the apparatus. He observed that the same unanimity reigned today, in the opposite way, on the one hand in Leningrad and on the other hand in the other organisations in

the country. All alike were gripped by the apparatuses (1). This position seems to have had the general support of Trotsky's friends and of the nucleus of the 1923 Opposition. After all, Zinoviev and Kamenev were the inventors of "Trotskyism" and the "Trotskyists" in Leningrad did not fail to express their scepticism about the rowdy defence of and example of workers' democracy by the "bosses" of the Commune of the North. Trotsky was to declare later: "This explosion caught me completely by surprise. I remained hesitant during the Congress, because the situation was developing. It was not completely clear to me" (2). Personal notes reproduced by Deutscher add some points to this: according to him there is "more than a grain of truth" in the idea that the 1925 Opposition was a continuation of that of 1923, because the hostility of the Congress to the Leningrad people reflected that of the country against the cities. Trotsky looked for a revival in the working class, which the tribune Zinoviev would thus express in his own way, but which he hoped would take forms other than the "vulgar shouting" of these people whom he believed to be "rightly discredited" (3).

#### The Unification of the Opposition

In reality, to the extent that the two groups, the old opposition and the new, stood for a working-class, internationalist programme, denounced the same danger, the alliance of the kulaks, the nepmen and the bureaucrats, the degeneration of the party under Stalin and his fraction, to this extent it was inevitable that the forces would come nearer to each other. Bukharin retained a sentimental attachment to Trotsky, but the position of the Leningraders seriously alarmed him; he hoped for a moment to check the union which many were forecasting. Trotsky agreed to discuss with him. He wrote, on January 8, to Bukharin: "I know that some comrades, including, perhaps, yourself, have developed until very recently a plan which goes like this, to give to the workers in the party cells the possibility of criticising what goes on in the factory, the unions and the region, while at the same time to beat down firmly any "opposition" which emerges from the top of the party". Trotsky warned Bukharin: "In this way the regime of the apparatus as a whole would be preserved and its base would be broadened" (4). He offered to Bukharin a bloc against Stalin for real internal democracy, but Bukharin was not to be able to bring himself to accept it.

As for Zinoviev and Kamenev, they were ready to make all the necessary concessions. As Zinoviev had confided to Ruth Fischer, they had undertaken a struggle for power, and they needed Trotsky, his prestige and his abilities, but in addition, after victory, his "firm hand to bring the party and the International back to the road of socialism" (5). Trotsky's friends were divided: Radek wanted an alliance with the Stalin group against the Right. Mrachkovsky was hostile to any bloc. Serebriakov supported the unification and served as go-between, between Trotsky and the former triumvirs. First Kamenev and then Zinoviev made advances, defended themselves, recognised their mistakes and undertook to do so before the party as a whole. At the Central Committee, Zinoviev was to repeat: "I have committed many mistakes. I believe that two of them were of

the greatest importance. My first, that of 1917, you all know. I believe that the second was the more serious, because the mistake of 1917 was committed when Lenin was there, was corrected by him and by ourselves also within a few days... There can be no doubt: the fundamental nucleus of the 1923 Opposition was correct to warn us against the dangers of deviating from the proletarian line and against the threatening development of the apparatus regime... Yes, on the question of the bureaucratic oppression of the apparatus, Trotsky was correct against us" (6).

At their first meetings, Zinoviev and Kamenev confided to an incredulous Trotsky the fear which Stalin inspired in them. He seemed to be motivated exclusively by the thirst for power and they believed him to be capable of any crime: "He makes you expect anything", declared Kamenev (7). At the Central Committee in April 1925, Kamenev and Trotsky were on the same side, voting for amendments to the resolutions on economic policy. They ended working together to draft subsequent formulations. The first step was taken and the alliance was not slow in coming. This time both camps moved a little of the way. The Unified Opposition would not defend the theses of "the Permanent Revolution", but Zinoviev and Kamenev would acknowledge not only that Trotsky was correct in 1923 but also that they themselves had fabricated "Trotskyism", in order to get rid of an obstacle on the road to power. In these conditions Trotsky could not refuse an agreement which brought to his fundamental theses the support of those who, he believed, represented "thousands of revolutionary workers in Leningrad", whatever reservations he might feel about them. Later he was to write: "In the struggle for the masses, when the political line is correct, we can make a bloc, not only with the devil, but with even a Samco Panza with two heads" (8). On both sides the hesitant and those who had not yet declared themselves remained to be convinced. Of course, the greatest difficulties would be in Leningrad. Zinoviev and Lashevich on the one side and Preobrazhensky on the other undertook to smooth these out (9). Finally the United Opposition was formed.

It must be admitted that it created a great impression. No past Opposition had brought together at the same time so many prestigious, brilliant personalities. Not only were there Zinoviev, Trotsky and Kamenev, whom no one could deny having been Lenin's first lieutenants. Besides, there were Preobrazhensky, Serebriakov, Krestinsky, the successors of Sverdlov. Here were ten of the eighteen surviving members of the Central Committee of 1919, elected at the height of the Civil War. There were Krupskaya, Lenin's widow, and Badayev, the former deputy in the Tsarist Duma, the most illustrious survivors from the pre-revolutionary period. They had with them the best-known of the victors in the Civil War, the military Bolsheviks such as Antonov-Ovseenko, Lashevich, Muralov and the great commissars, Ivan Nikitich Smirnov, the conqueror of Kolchak, the figure-head Mrachkovsky, and Smilga, the organiser of the party in the Baltic fleet, Lenin's "accomplice" in his "plot" against the Central Committee on the eve of the insurrection. The Opposition team out-classed that of its adversaries from the standpoint of talent and intellectual abilities. Sosnovsky, who was very popular for his satires on the

bureaucrats, and Karl Radek, who specialised on international questions, were the leading journalists in the country. Apart from Bukharin, there were no economists whose standing equalled that of Preobrazhensky, Piatakov or Smilga. Everyone agrees that Rakovsky and Joffe were the most able diplomats which the country possessed. Some of these men, the fine flower of the Old Guard, still held important posts, from which they derived prestige. Zinoviev was President of the International. The former sailor, Yevdokimov, his right-hand man, was in the organisation bureau. Beloborodov was Commissar for the Interior of the RSFSR, Lashevich was vice-Commissar for War and Muralov was inspector-general of the Red Army. These responsible figures, to be sure, were few in number compared with the tens of thousands of functionaries of the party and the state among whom lay the strength of Stalin. But Zinoviev and Kamenev at least, and their friends who, in Victor Serge's words, "had changed their minds in a single night", did not doubt that the elite which had thus been assembled would be recognised. Kamenev told Trotsky: "It will be enough for you and Zinoviev to appear on the same platform for the party to recognise its real Central Committee" (11).

The principal difference between the new allies lay there, for Trotsky thought that the struggle was going to be long and hard. Of course, the situation had changed since 1923, when the proletariat, in disintegration, passively watched its own defeat. In 1925 there was a real working class in the factories and an important working class layer in the party. It is true that Trotsky could not follow Bukharin, who tried to justify the authoritarian regime on the ground that all consciousness had disappeared from the working class and who fixed at decades the interval that would be needed for its re-birth among workers who most commonly were deficient in culture and freshly recruited from the countryside. <sup>But</sup> Trotsky did not under-estimate, as did his new associates, the immensity of the task, which consisted of re-creating in the party, and through it, in the working class, an enlightened and combative vanguard. Trotsky believed that the revolutionary wave which had carried the Bolshevik party to power in 1917 had definitively flowed back. Russia was experiencing a new period of reaction. This was the source of the decomposition of the party and of the beginning of its degeneration, marked by the supremacy of the apparatus. Turning in on themselves, losing confidence in each other and in collective initiatives, losing the appetite for struggle and for consciousness, millions of people who had written the revolutionary story of 1917 and of the Civil War were diverted from activity by weariness and scepticism. The "great debate" was to interest at the most a nucleus of 20,000 out of the 150 million inhabitants of the USSR. Information about it would not filter through the controlled press except in a sufficiently one-sided and distorted way for it to evoke no serious echo.

In fact the Opposition, which announced itself as "the Left Opposition" and wished to be the proletarian, Bolshevik wing of the party, was swimming against the current. Appeals to revolutionary energy, to responsibility, to devotion and to the struggle for the truth passed over the heads of people who were tired and disillusioned. They

yearned, if not for well-being, at least for security. They did not want to hear about "the Permanent Revolution", if it meant "the Un-interrupted Revolution". For they retained from the revolution and the civil war the memories of terrible sufferings, of tens of thousands of deaths, of exhaustion, hunger and every kind of destruction. Alexander Barmine, who was a Communist militant at eighteen, a former soldier and commissar in the Red Army, has confessed how, when he became a diplomat and then a highly-placed official, he found Stalin's article<sup>5</sup> against the permanent revolution a source of relief; he tells how they decided to reject it as being too dangerous (12). "Socialism in a Single Country" offered to such people as him a perspective which, to be sure, was less heroic, but more immediate, more concrete and, particularly, less adventurous. The relative recovery of the economy since the "turn" to NEP made the small material satisfactions, of which all had been so long denied, all the more valuable. They were too recent to be taken as a matter of course, and the desire to cling to the slight improvement in the standard of living worked fundamentally against those whose proposals seemed to imply the risk of calling everything into question.

Stalin knew what he was doing when he blamed Trotsky for his "heroic postures", and declared that he was addressing, not real men "but kinds of creations of ideas and dreams, revolutionaries from head to foot" (13). It is true that in 1926 - 27 the people in the party and others resembled the "real man", as Stalin, their personification, saw them, more than the "revolutionary creatures from head to foot", of whom Trotsky is the prototype and whom he led into battle in 1917 and the years that followed. In this sense, if the apparatus triumphed thanks to a demobilisation of the masses, it in turn was a factor in demobilising them and found its justification in the demobilisation. The tragic defeats of the Chinese Revolution in 1927 provided a striking confirmation of the forecasts of the Opposition when it denounced the policies which had led to them, but they weakened the Opposition terribly because they struck precisely at the confidence, the vigour and the morale of the militants. These defeats were a final reinforcement of the camp which bears the responsibility for them, because they made unreal the perspectives of those who had shown how to avoid them.

The same contradiction hangs over the methods of struggle of the Opposition. They were convinced that the policies of the leadership were weakening the Soviet regime and the International, and the militants denounced the danger of capitalist restoration, which they believed to be relatively close. Indeed, the cleavage between the party and the masses and between the apparatus and the party members was a factor which weakened the regime in the face of this danger. The Opposition did not, therefore, permit itself to advance demoralising criticisms or to make public gestures which could enlarge the cracks inside the party, which in their eyes remained the historic instrument of the world revolution and which they

criticised, not for existing, but for not being a sufficiently effective instrument, because of its bureaucratic methods and its short-sightedness. As long as the Opposition could have a legal existence in the party, these contradictions did not prevent it from presenting itself as a unity, but when the pressure of the apparatus came down on it, it became exhausted, trapped between the fire of those who did not want to remain within the framework of the party and those who could not conceive of leaving it, the latter being divided, in turn, into those who wanted to stay there in order to fight and those who were ready to stop fighting.

These conditions explain the esoteric language in which these controversies developed, for the handful of initiates who had the means to follow them. More than half of the members of the party were illiterate and the discussions there were conducted in conventional party language: both sides appealed to Marx, Engels and Lenin and both sides bludgeoned each other with huge piles of quotations, both sides appealed to tradition, to authorities and to formulae which, for the majority of party members, were no more than meaningless.

The leaders of the Opposition were distinguished Marxists. They posed questions on a high theoretical level, but how could the rank and file understand the analyses of Preobrazhensky on the rate of accumulation? When Bukharin seized upon the phrase about "exploiting" the peasantry, what member would know that, in the language of a Marxist economist, the word does not have the vulgar, immoral meaning which he claimed to give it? In this connection, the mediocrity of the arguments of Stalin, the flatness of the comparisons and the vulgarity of the re-iterated abuse, carried infinitely more weight than the wisest analyses of the Opposition, which in any case were never published and always distorted. When the Opposition advanced the plan for the Dnieprostroy dam, Stalin replied that it was as stupid to build it as to give a phonograph to a peasant who has not a cow or a cart. To be sure, this was absurd, and Dnieprostroy was to become "a great Stalinist accomplishment", but few people were in a position to understand the economic factors which made accomplishments of this kind necessary. The plan of industrialisation and planning which Trotsky, Piatakov and Preobrazhensky elaborated is a triumph of socialist thinking, and their adversaries were to make use of it, in their own way, but after having said that this "super-industrial programme", "super-proletarian", was only the utopian superstructure of social-democratic illusions, a demagogic masquerade to conceal the right-wing essence of the real platform of the Opposition (14) - and after having eliminated its authors.

In this way the Opposition was to be incessantly encircled. It was denounced as "fractional" as soon as it tried to show itself within the party, pursued and restricted to fighting in the leading bodies which it could not hope to convince and from which it could not hope to emerge without being ignominiously hounded with the accusation of the major crime of wishing for a split, under the pressure of

repression and of the differences which sharpened as its possibilities of acting diminished.

### The Right-ist Policy of Stalin and Bukharin

The policy against which the Unified Opposition asserted itself was not at all new. It was the same as the troika had outlined at the Twelfth Congress and of which Bukharin had made himself the theoretician in 1924 and 1925. Its consequences merely became clearer with the passing of time. Social differences were continuing to grow in the countryside, where the power of the kulak was revealing itself in the un-interrupted process of concentration of land. In 1925 - 26, fifteen million hectares were hired, against 7.7 million in 1924 - 25, nearly all by the kulaks. The poor peasant hired himself as a day-labourer or as a tenant farmer and continued to pay to the money-lender sums four times bigger than what he owed in taxes. The process was particularly marked in certain regions: in the Ukraine, 45% of the peasants had no horses and 35% had no cows. The control of the co-operatives belonged less and less to the poor peasants and more and more to the kulaks, who represented 6% of the leading elements in them. The 22,000 co-operative farms were a mere drop in the ocean of the 30 to 40 million individual holdings and even of the mass of the 2,160,000 agricultural proletarians, employed in August 1926 on the kulak undertakings which employed more than ten wage-workers each (15).

This rural petty bourgeois, in the full flood of its development, did not restrict its ambitions to the immediate sphere of its personal interests. It exerted its pressure in the Soviets and even in the party, in order to be defended against the unions of the poor peasants or the trade unions which included no more than 20% of the agricultural workers. It openly intervened against the new Soviet legislative demands that registered marriages should be privileged as against free unions, protested against the rights accorded to women in the code and called for its property to be defended by draconian measures, such as the death penalty for horse-stealing, which, moreover, it sometimes applied summarily. It was the vanguard and the basis for all the forces which in Russia could support one day a capitalist restoration.

The rhythm of industrialisation was far from sufficient to create the conditions for its being absorbed. To be sure, Russian industry had nearly recovered its prewar level, in the new conditions since it had not had the advantage of the foreign capital which had been the basis of industrialisation in Tsarist Russia. None the less, the population had risen by more than ten million inhabitants in the interval and Russia's backwardness was more considerable than it had been, because the reconstruction had been effected on the basis of the pre-war level of technique, while the capitalist countries had improved theirs. While pre-war Russian prices had been close to those on the world market, in 1926 they were two

and a half times higher. The Communist Academy estimated, in that year, the "premium of scarcity" carried by the Russian consumer to be over a milliard roubles. The inadequacy of industry revealed itself in what people called "the scarcity of products". The same sources believed that it amounted to more than 400 million roubles of industrial products which, other things being equal, the market could have absorbed. This explains the survival and the progress of private capital, the share in production of which was valued, according to the sources, at between 4% and 10%. There were 20,000 workers in private industry in Moscow alone, and in the whole of the Ukraine there were 620,000. Private capital dominated the internal market, and levied its heavy toll upon it. It did as much business, in Moscow, as the co-operatives. For the country as a whole, it reached over 7½ milliards per year, out of a total figure of sales in the country of 31 milliards. It is impossible to evaluate its total profits, which were considerable, and which represented so much capital withdrawn from accumulation, and, therefore, from industrialisation.

The elements of a vigorous, formidable bourgeoisie had, therefore, reappeared at the heart of Soviet society. They were all the more dangerous in that the economic administration and organisations were an ever heavier weight, in their enormous bureaucratic apparatus. Their parasitic functioning retarded industrial development. The statistics show that in 1927 there were 2,766,136 workers and clerks in industry, while administration engaged 2,076,977 clerks and functionaries. A letter by Stalin and Rykov, on August 16, 1926, estimated at 2 milliard roubles the administrative costs of functioning, and thought that 300 to 400 millions could be saved right away. A report by Orjonikidze, which appeared in Pravda on December 15, 1926, mentions that the State personnel had increased by 43,199, after a year-long campaign to bring the total down. He quoted the most scandalous cases, such as the fact that an annual balance-sheet by a Moscow trust took 13 volumes of 7,354 pages, and cost, by itself, 1,306,000 roubles. Meanwhile, the real earnings of the worker continued to fall between 1926 and 1927, and stabilised in 1927.

The alliance of the Nepman, the kulak and the bureaucrat, which the Unified Opposition denounced, expressed itself in the policy of changing nothing and of laissez-faire. This was implied and was supported by the theories of Bukharin to the effect that capitalism had been stabilised for a long period and of Stalin about the construction of socialism in one country alone. In the International, these ideas were expressed in a new policy, which was a direct break from the conceptions which had been expressed in the course of the first four Congresses: the "united front" with the reformist organisations, parties and trade unions, without a revolutionary perspective. As Deutscher has written: "To assume beforehand that the Soviet Union would have to build socialism alone throughout was to abandon the prospect of the international revolution; and to abandon it was to refuse to work for it, even to obstruct it" (16).

The desire to declare themselves to be "Leninists", the anxiety of the non-Russian



Communist leaders to distance themselves with regard to "Trotskyism", the confusion, at first involuntary but more and more often repeated and affirmed between the interests of the Soviet state, its foreign policy and its diplomatic needs, on the one hand, and the interests of the world revolution, of the Communist parties and the necessities of the struggle of the working class in this or that country, on the other, explain the rest.

Thus, the Polish Communists wrongly believed that they had the support of the International when in May 1926 they supported Marshall Pilsudski in the coup d'etat which raised him to power and permitted him to break the workers' movement; the policy of alliances with non-proletarian classes, the kulak and the petty bourgeoisie in Russia, expressed itself in Polish in an alliance with a petty bourgeois movement, labeled as a socialist and peasant movement, but which was immediately to transform itself into a military dictatorship, backed by the magnates of high finance. In May 1925, after a year of contacts with Purcell, the leaders of the British Trade Unions, the Russian unions formed the Anglo-Soviet Trade Union Committee, on which the diplomats counted to struggle against the hostile attempts of the British bourgeoisie: it was especially to confer upon the reformist leaders in Britain the prestige of being supported by the Bolsheviks. They, after having by their attitude broken the general strike of May 1926, were to end up supporting the offensive against the USSR which their government was waging in 1927.

The reader who is interested in this unique episode in the class struggle in Britain can refer to the monograph by Julian Symons, "The General Strike", which appeared in 1957. Numerous examples are to be found in it of the way in which the British workers, in the course of the strike, developed real sovietic forms - in the true sense of the word - of organisation, which leads the author to declare that "in many places, the workers intensely desired to take on the responsibilities of power". He particularly quotes the organisation of the central strike committee in Merthyr Tydfil (p.146), with its sub-committees for feeding, transport, finance, information, etc., and the example, a little everywhere, of workers' defence groups, real workers' militias, which the General Council condemned as both "imprudent and impossible to realise" (p. 148). He concludes also (p. 231) with the total responsibility of the leadership for the defeat of the movement which they were unable to prevent, to the extent that it refused to give to this movement the "political, indeed revolutionary" character which it demanded. The fact that the overwhelming majority of the strikers had the impression that they had been betrayed by them did not, however, contribute to strengthening the revolutionary "minority" which the Communists influenced, because of the fact that the policy of the leaders seemed to be endorsed by the Anglo-Russian Committee.

More significant still of this line is the policy which the party leadership and the International operated in China. This policy was to produce its results in 1927 at the moment of the Second Chinese Revolution, in the great controversy with the

Opposition.

The Beginnings of the Opposition

Aware of the difficulties which awaited them, after the double check of their separate attempts at opposition, the leaders of the Opposition began by organising. This was an important step, because by taking it they violated a discipline which they claimed to accept: they entered clandestinity in relation to the party. Its members, after years of public activity and state responsibilities, found themselves plunged back again into a form of activity which they had not practiced since the days of Tsarism, but which was completely familiar to them; secret meetings, gatherings in private houses or in the woods with pickets and patrols, couriers, emissaries, body-guards, "contacts", all the paraphernalia of illegality in new conditions, because the group, clandestine in the party, acted by doing its best to throw off the surveillance of the GPU. The first stage consisted of organising a network covering the whole country, with a structure parallel to that of the party; for that many contacts had to be obtained, beyond the circle of the personal friends of each member, old relations had to be renewed, new militants had to be brought in in order everywhere to form a kernel, to start with.

In a few months, the most determined elements of the successive oppositions were organised in this way, former members of the Workers' Opposition, the friends of Zinoviev being rather fewer in numbers than those of Trotsky, the oppositionists of 1923. In all, between 4,000 and 8,000, according to the extreme estimates; the figure is, of course, derisory in relation to the 750,000 members which the party had, but we are dealing here with a vanguard, which would have to struggle in a more restricted circle than the party itself, and, above all, as Deutscher stresses, its recruits, whether old militants or, on the contrary, youth, were all holders of responsible positions, cadres and leaders. Among them were neither opportunists nor careerists. Even though the only representative of the Opposition in the Organisation Bureau, Yevdokimov, had just been removed from his post, possibilities existed of getting support from certain sectors of the apparatus. The offices of Zinoviev and of the International were used considerably for recruitment and forming connections. Of course, many journeys were necessary to set up this network, and many meetings. One after another, the emissaries were called before control commissions which did their utmost to uncover any proof of the existence of a fraction. They were to obtain it when an agent-provocateur betrayed a meeting in the woods near Moscow, where the chairman was Bilensky, a high official of the International, and Lashevich, a member of the government, took part.

The unified Opposition made its first official political demonstration at the Central Committee in June, where Trotsky read, on his own responsibility, the "Declaration of the Thirteen". It started from the resolution of December 5, 1923, which recognised the existence of bureaucratism in the state and in the party and described how

the evil was constantly becoming worse, as well as the rise of the internal dangers due to the pro-capitalist elements, kulaks and nepmen. This was the situation in which the opposition, the Left Opposition, was formed, Bolshevik and proletarian, in opposition to the ruling fraction, itself an alliance between the "Stalin fraction", the expression of the apparatus, and the right, the Bukharin fraction, spokesmen of the kulaks. It declared that it was ready, immediately, to co-operate with others to "restore together a party regime... which would fully conform to its traditions" of workers' democracy. In case this offer was refused, it would struggle, within the party constitution, to win a majority and to become the leadership which would regenerate the party.

Its programme is a class programme, a programme of "defence of the proletariat" (17). In the first place, it pronounces in favour of raising workers' pay and for reform in the tax system, to free the small peasants from taxes, to lighten the taxes on the middle peasants and heavily tax the kulaks. The longer-range measures which it advocated were a policy of support for collectivisation in the countryside and, in particular an acceleration of the pace of industrial development; the Opposition called for "a Five-Year Plan". In this way it proposed to strengthen the role of the working class in the workers' state, by raising its specific weight in the country as well as giving back to it the right to speak within the framework of the party, and driving back the elements of capitalism which were being re-born in the countryside. It stressed the danger of the growing confusion between the interests of the Russian state as such and those of the international working class. The Declaration of the 13 condemned the opportunist policy which inspired the agreement with the British trade unions in the Anglo-Russian Committee and provided a cover from the Russian revolutionaries for the reformist leaders who had just sabotaged the General Strike in the month of May. In this way the Opposition declared war on the theory of "Socialism in a Single Country", which justified the opportunist concessions by the foreign Communist parties and the abandonment of revolutionary perspectives.

The discussions were exceedingly sharp. Dzerzhinsky, the head of the GPU, was to die of heart failure after a violent speech attacking Kamenev. All the proposals of the Thirteen were defeated and the majority, in its turn, counter-attacked on "breaches of discipline". An Oppositionist, Ossovski, who was guilty of having written in Bolshevik an article calling for a new party, was excluded. Trotsky and his friend who did not express solidarity with him, none the less refused to vote for his exclusion, on the ground that, in their opinion, the apparatus was responsible for this "serious mistake". The Lashevitch affair was regarded as "an illegal conspiracy". The guilty were censured, Lashevitch was removed from his post as a Commissar, and was barred from the Central Committee and from any responsible post for two years; Zinoviev was removed from the Politburo and replaced by Rudzutak. The closing resolution accused the Opposition of having decided to "go over from the legal defence of

of its viewpoint to the creation of a vast illegal organisation throughout the whole country, setting itself up against the party and in this way preparing to split it" (18).

The lesson for the Opposition was clear. The party would never hear what it said at the Central Committee. It must address the public opinion of the party directly, utilising the hitherto clandestine network for an open struggle in the party cells and nuclei. It decided to attempt this "break out" for the end of September, with the Fifteenth Conference of the party in prospect. As it was probable that the apparatus would hit back, it was decided that the leaders of the Opposition themselves would go, as the party constitution permitted, to the workers' cells to defend their viewpoint there. Trotsky, Piatakov, Radek, Smilga and Saprnov went to the meeting of the cell of the railway workers at Riazan-Ural, and were received and heard there. The cell approved a motion which repeated the principal points in the programme of the Opposition. The Opposition was rejoicing; its first "break out" had been a victory. But the Moscow Committee protested; the "chiefs of the Opposition were not to be allowed to inject an opposition fever into the party". Several days later the same leaders presented themselves at the meeting of the party cell in the Aviopribor aircraft factory, the party officials called on the regional committee for support. Uglanov, with his deputy Riutin at his side, at the head of a shock troop, arrived to re-inforce them, too late to prevent Trotsky from speaking, but in time to threaten and intimidate. From September 27 onwards, Pravda began to publish the names of people "excluded for fractional activities". In the vote in which the "unity" thesis, defended by Riutin and Uglanov, confronted the "discussion" thesis, there were 78 votes for unity and 27 for discussion. Given the circumstances, this was encouraging for the Opposition.

But in reality this half-success was only the preface to serious defeats. In Moscow as in Leningrad, the apparatus decided to silence the Opposition. From that time onwards its speakers ran into shock groups - of which Riutin in Moscow was the organiser - which whistled, shouted, made them inaudible, provoked incidents and fights. At the Putilov factory in Leningrad Zinoviev was able to speak for a quarter of an hour amid the uproar, and got 25 votes against 1375. The Opposition denounced the methods of political gangsterism of the apparatus, which put "hooligans" into the meetings to intimidate the workers. Stalin retorted that it was "the voice of the party", healthy and solid, which was drowning that of the agitators. In fact, the most serious thing is that the strong-arm men of the committees ruled with impunity in the party cells and that the workers remained indifferent and, in the end, docile. They could vote for the Opposition on a "special occasion", but they changed their minds immediately when confronted with violence and threats. The Riazan-Ural cell had another meeting; it reversed its earlier decision, and Molotov denounced those who had not hesitated to "try to fling themselves into a workers' cell". The Opposition was bottled up, caught in a trap. If it tried to continue its efforts to break

out, the cell meetings were to be the restricted scene of organised battles, of which they would be accused of being the instigators, without their being able to win a single supporter. The mass of the party had demonstrated this; it would accept without flinching, both the brutal rejection of discussion and the exclusions which would not fail to come afterwards.

The "bloc" was splitting up; some of the former supporters of the Workers' Opposition or of the Democratic Centralism group were thinking that the demonstration was completed, that no regeneration of the party was possible and that the revolutionaries must break with it. Zinoviev and Kamenev, on the other hand, were terrified by the development of the activity which they had undertaken. They knew that they had placed themselves in difficulty by effectively organising a fraction, after they had many times publicly defended the prohibition of fractions, thereby agitating the base against the Central Committee of which they were members. They therefore wanted to go no further down the road which was leading the Opposition to exclusion. Trotsky likewise condemned any project to construct a second party, and continued to believe in the possibility of regeneration. However, he did not think that the outcome of the battle would be decided in a few weeks. He was not resigned to being excluded without saying what he had to say, but he also feared the discouragement and collapse of Zinoviev and Kamenev, who fell from higher than he did, because they would drag the Opposition down with them. He therefore believed that he could possibly negotiate to remain in the party without capitulating, while avoiding the exclusion, which the working-class base, the stake in the struggle, was in danger, for the moment, of accepting with indifference.

Discussion between the secretariat and the heads of the Opposition began on October 4. Stalin finally accepted a text which permitted the Opposition not to be excluded. A declaration signed by Trotsky, Zinoviev, Piatakov, Yevdokimov, Kamenev and Sokolnikov, declared that it stood as a whole by the positions expressed in the Declaration of the 13. But it disclaimed the position of Shliapnikov and Medvedev in favour of a new party, as well as those of the foreign supporters of the Opposition, Suvarin, Maslow, Ruth Fischer and others, who publicly criticised the International. Above all, the heads of the Opposition admitted the fractional character of their activity and recognised that they had infringed discipline. They undertook thenceforth to observe discipline and called upon their comrades "to dissolve all fractional elements which have been formed round the viewpoints of the Opposition". The Opposition declared that the allusion made by Krupskaya to the Stockholm Conference was mistaken, to the extent that it "could be regarded as a threat to split". It concluded: "Each of us undertakes to defend his conceptions solely within the forms laid down by the constitution and the decisions of the congresses and of the Central Committee of our party, because we are convinced that all that is correct in our ideas will be adopted by the party in the course of its future work" (19).

The declaration of October 16 was the capitulation about which historians talk so much. None the less; it was the recognition of a severe defeat. The leaders who signed it cut themselves off from part of their supporters when they disavowed the Medvedev-Shliapnikov group, and they gave to some people the impression that they had retreated at the moment when they were personally threatened with exclusion. Above all, they accepted being put back into the vicious circle from which they had tried to break out during the spring, first by organising their fraction and, secondly, in the autumn by penetrating the party cells. They accepted that, while maintaining the viewpoints, they would express them only in the leading committees, where they stood no chance of being followed up and would never be known by the party members. Many supporters of the Opposition understood the declaration as a confession of impotence; the advocates of workers' democracy gave up defending it. In the eyes of many, also, the game was played out. Numerous militants abandoned positions which from that time onwards they regarded as being without perspective.

#### The Fifteenth Conference

The Opposition would, however, not obtain the truce which it had negotiated and hoped to get in the perspective of a democratically prepared congress. The fight started up again and the Fifteenth Congress was not to meet until the end of 1927, after the leaders of the Opposition had been excluded. On October 18, Max Eastman published in the New York Times the Testament of Lenin. The preceding autumn, following the publication of a book by Eastman which mentioned the existence of this document and quoted large extracts from it, Trotsky had agreed - on the instructions, as he wrote to Muralov in 1928, of the leading nucleus of the Opposition (20) - to publish in "Bolshevik" a very strongly worded disclaimer of the American writer, practically accusing him of false slanders on the Russian party (21). In reality, because Eastman was well known to be a personal friend of Trotsky, it is evident to everyone that Trotsky had not been able to ignore this initiative. When he agreed to the ultimatum of the Politburo because he judged the moment inopportune to start a new battle, Trotsky ran the risk of cutting himself off from his own friends abroad and of being regarded even among the members of the Opposition as a "capitulator". In 1926 Trotsky's situation was even worse: Eastman took the initiative, in the thick of the battle of the Russian Opposition for a break-through, to publish this document and believed that he had the approval of Rakovsky for doing so. But he could not guess that, in the interval, the Opposition had had to retreat and that the document was to appear two days after the declaration of October 16. Stalin immediately accused the Opposition of playing a double game, of asking for a truce in Moscow and at the same time of stabbing the Party in the back. So he declared that the armistice had been broken and obtained from the Central Committee a decision that a debate of the Opposition, to be opened by himself, should be placed on the agenda of the Fifteenth Conference. He submitted his draft report to the Politburo on October 25; in it he characterised the Opposition as a "Social-Democratic fraction". At that point

there developed a scene of extraordinary violence, in the course of which Trotsky called Stalin "the grave-digger of the revolution". Natalia Sedova has described the reaction of Trotsky's friends, who were terrified, and Piatakov, who was very upset, repeating: "Why did you say that? He will never forgive it" (22).

During the Fifteenth Conference, from October 26 to November 3, the heads of the Opposition stood by the terms of their October declaration, and remained silent for six days, despite the attacks and sarcasm of which they were the object. On the seventh day of the conference, Stalin spent three hours presenting his report on the Opposition and the internal situation in the party. After having recalled, at length, what Zinoviev and Kamenev had said about Trotsky, and what Trotsky had said about Zinoviev and Kamenev, he repeated the attack, which by now was traditional, on "Trotskyism", which, he said, the people of the "new opposition" had joined. He denounced the fractional activity, of which, according to him, the declaration of October 16, a manoeuvre to deceive the party, was only one aspect. Since the Opposition had insisted on maintaining its point of view "as a whole", then let it eat the soup it has itself cooked!". He counter-posed, to the policy of industrialisation which it supported, when it "would condemn thousands of workers and peasants to poverty", the policy of the Central Committee, for an improvement of welfare without social convulsions, gradually: "Less chatter, more positive, creative work for socialist construction". He ended with an appeal for struggle to force the Opposition to capitulate: "To realise the most complete unity, we must take one more step forward, we must get the Opposition bloc to renounce its fundamental mistakes and thus protect the party and Leninism against all revisionist attacks and attempts" (23).

Kamenev spoke first for the Opposition. He was frequently interrupted, but was dignified and in control of himself. He explained the declaration of October 16 as a demonstration that they wanted to avoid a threatening split. None the less, the Opposition could not remain silent in the face of the accusations which Stalin had made. The beginning of his speech indicates how high feeling was running in the conference hall. The delegates who had received Stalin with "enthusiastic ovations" when he recalled the past polemics between Zinoviev, Kamenev or Trotsky and Lenin, screamed about "inadmissible methods" when reminded of Bukharin's attacks on Lenin in 1918. Kamenev calmly discussed the "exaggerated accusations" hurled at the Opposition and developed the arguments which it advanced on the economic field. On the question of the bureaucratisation of the party, he declared that the alliance of the new Opposition with Trotsky rested on the will to "defend certain well-established conceptions". Stalin's resolution made difficult "the common work which the Opposition desired". The shrieks of the delegates would not advance the discussion one inch: "Accuse us, comrades, if you wish, but we no longer live in the Middle Ages. We no longer live in the time of witch-hunts" (24).

According to Trotsky's biographer, Deutscher, he delivered one of his greatest speeches. It was moderate in form and brilliant and elevated in content. He compelled

his audience to listen in a hostile but respectful silence, and several times was to obtain an extension of his speaking time. He explained the reasons behind the declaration of October 16: "The fractional sharpness of the struggle on the part of the Opposition - whatever may have been the conditions which provoked it - could have been interpreted by many militants - and really were so interpreted - as if the differences of opinion went so far as to make joint work impossible... The object and the meaning of the declaration of October 16 were to integrate the defence of the opinions which we hold in the framework of the common work and solidifying responsibility of the policy of the party as a whole." On the economic situation, he gave statistics. It was in no way catastrophic, but the worst thing would be to close one's eyes, not to speak the truth, in time. He recalled the proposals of the Opposition, admitted that they could have been mistaken, but demanded to know how, as the reporter had declared, they could be considered as "social-democratic", if the word had any meaning. He was, he said, accused of lacking confidence; none the less, he had proposed, in "Towards Socialism or Capitalism", rates of industrial development three times as high as those proposed by the Central Committee. He was, he said, accused of spreading panic, by forecasting a conflict between town and country, and speaking of Russia's need for the support of the workers of Europe. None the less, the recent past was there, to demonstrate that the hypothesis was plausible. Had they forgotten Kronstadt and the crisis of 1921? Had they forgotten the influence of the Russian Revolution on Europe and the defence of it by the European working class?

He then went to the heart of the debate, the discussion about the construction of socialism in a single country. He began by making the conference laugh at the expense of Bukharin - and this was no small achievement - who had recently written that it was possible to construct socialism independently of international conditions. Bukharin can just as well go stark naked out in the streets in Moscow in January, Trotsky said, "independently" of the police or the temperature. Trotsky said that he was concerned that the party leadership did not seek to use this theory to justify routinist working, which concealed a renunciation and loss of confidence in revolutionary perspectives. The real danger lay there. For there was no reason to think that the Russians, in their country, would succeed in constructing socialism any more readily than the workers of Europe could make the revolution. He summed up his position: "I think that the victory of socialism in our country can only be guaranteed by a victorious revolution of the European proletariat". But we must not distort his words: "If we do not believe that our state is a proletarian state, with bureaucratic deformations, it is true, that is, a state which must be brought still closer to the working class, despite certain mistaken bureaucratic opinions: if we do not believe that our building is socialist; if we do not believe that there are in our country, sufficient resources to develop the socialist economy; if we were not convinced of our complete and final victory, it is evident that our place would no longer



be in the ranks of a Communist party". This is why the Opposition condemns any split. "But anyone who believes that our State is a proletarian state, with bureaucratic deformations due to the pressure of the petty bourgeois element and to capitalist encirclement, anyone who thinks that our policy does not sufficiently ensure the new allocation of the national resources, that person should struggle, with the means provided by the party and on the road of the party, against what he regards as dangerous, while taking full responsibility for the whole of the policy of the party and of the workers' state" (25).

The methods of the apparatus, of which the resolution presented by Stalin was an example, present a real danger, that of transforming the agreement reached on October 16 into a scrap of paper, of leading to the re-birth of fractional methods and, finally, of the danger of splits.

Zinoviev, who spoke after Trotsky, cut a poor figure. He did not succeed in dominating the disorderly assembly. He attacked the tone of the articles in the press which were against the Opposition, such as the "Communist Voice" of Saratov, which quoted the verse of Blok, "Is it our fault that your skeleton cracks under our heavy feet?", and other journals which wrote about "beating down the Opposition". But his moralising and his reminiscences about how Lenin treated the opposition in his time provoked the hilarity of the delegates, who heard him, at the same time, excuse them on the pretext that the internal struggle "is not waged in kid gloves" and that "exaggerations are inevitable". After he had referred to the real divergences by hiding behind quotations from Lenin, he could not make himself heard above the riot, despite his declarations: "I am only justifying myself and I accuse no one". He had to avoid speaking about the International and the "bloc" with Trotsky; his time was exhausted, and despite his appeals the Congress refused to extend it (26).

He was an easy prey for a hitherto unknown Bukharin, who was sarcastic, mordant, violent, cynical and determined to crush the Oppositionists by thoroughly exploiting their hesitations and contradictions. "Comrade Zinoviev... has told us how Lenin well knew how to deal with an opposition, without needing to exclude everybody, when Zinoviev himself, in a workers' meeting, could get only two votes. Lenin well knew what to do. But how can we exclude everybody, when these people only have two votes? When we have all the votes on our side and two against, when these two votes shout about "Thermidor", then we need to think about it." Stalin jumped up to show his delighted approval, as did the whole conference, when Bukharin said: "You say you retreated for fear of a catastrophe. Tell us straight, is the catastrophe a split? Three people put out of the party, there you have all that the split consists of." After a ferocious gibe at Zinoviev and his "measureless vanity", Bukharin let fly this cruel remark: "All this is a farce".(27)

Bukharin's speech set the tone. Molotov denounced the Opposition as set "on the road to Kronstadt". He declared that "propaganda for ideas hostile to Leninism

is incompatible with the quality of membership of the party" and that a party member could not permit "the development and deepening of the Social-Democratic deviation". Rykov, who in his opening speech, in which he accused the Opposition of "defeatism", had none the less recognised that "it would be absurd to accuse the Opposition of working consciously for the defeat of the dictatorship of the proletariat", called at the end of the conference for "the party to take the measures necessary to ensure its unity and to maintain the ideological firmness of its line" (28). The former Oppositionist Larin denounced "what is rotten in the ideas of the Opposition" and declared: "The revolution is developing over the heads of certain of its leaders" (29). More serious things were to follow. Shliapnikov and Medvedev denounced their own mistakes and called on their supporters to submit (30). Krupskaya broke with the Opposition. With the capitulation of one who was the incarnation of the spirit of the Old Bolsheviks, in the eyes of many, the apparatus won a great moral victory.

In Stalin's reply to the discussion, he demanded the capitulation of the whole of the Opposition, and threatened: "Either you fulfill these conditions, which represent the pre-conditions for the unity of the party to be complete, or you do not, and the party, which defeated you yesterday, tomorrow will finally destroy you" (31). The resolution, which was voted unanimously, condemned the Opposition as a "social-democratic deviation" and its activity, "which can only undermine the unity of the party, weaken the dictatorship of the proletariat and let loose in the country the anti-proletarian forces which seek to be weakened and to bring down the dictatorship" (32). Trotsky and Kamenev were excluded from the Politburo. The conference demanded that the Executive Committee of the Communist International remove Zinoviev from his position.

This time, on the level of highly-placed individuals, the rout was complete. At the meeting of the Executive Committee of the Communist International in December 1926 (the Seventh Plenum), the supporters of the Opposition in foreign Communist parties were expelled, after a report by Stalin. Zinoviev did not appeal, but delivered "some explanations". Trotsky pleaded once again against the theory of "socialism in a single country". Nearly all the foreign delegates had been lined-up in advance. The French delegate, Jacques Doriot, distinguished himself by his denunciation of the proposals of the Opposition which had been advanced privately in his presence by the Yugoslav, Vuya Vuyovitch, who had already been removed from his post as secretary of the Young Communist International. Stalin's closing statement set the tone: "To the question about his past as a Menshevik, Trotsky has replied, not with posing, that the very fact that he joined the party proves that he has left behind all that separated him from Bolshevism up to that time on the threshold of the party. How can anyone deposit such filth on the threshold of the party? Did Trotsky put it there so as to have to hand what he could use in future struggles within the party?"

a new party, the former supporters of the Democratic Centralism tendency, the "Dec-ists", regarded the Fifteenth Conference as having demonstrated not only that the apparatus was determined and that it dominated the degenerated party, but also that the leaders of the Opposition were opportunist<sup>ists</sup> and persistently retained the illusions which led to their capitulation on October 16. They broke away from the Unified Opposition and, with Saprnov and Vladimir Smirnov, formed the "Group of Fifteen", who believed that the inner-party struggle was taking on a class character:

"On Stalin's side, he has the army of functionaries, while the Opposition attracts the working-class fraction of the party; Stalin's group and the petty bourgeoisie who support him can be overthrown only if the Opposition can be sure of the active sympathy and support of the working class; it is therefore necessary to form a nucleus to defend the cause of the proletarian revolution" (34).

At the other extreme, other members of the Opposition drew the conclusion that the Fifteenth conference had shown that any compromise was impossible; militants who were convinced that the formation of the second party would be a catastrophe for the cause of socialism had no alternative to capitulation, to bow before the victorious leadership, to dissolve the fraction and to keep silent. Zinoviev and Kamenev were quite ready to support that point of view. Confronted by the repression in the party and by rising number of expulsions which were in process, they issued as their slogan for their supporters that they should seek at all costs not to be excluded, concealing their views if necessary and voting with the majority to protect themselves: in their opinion, no struggle was possible otherwise than within the party.

Trotsky and his close friends of the nucleus of the Twenty-Three had no illusion about the effectiveness of this tactic, which led inevitably to demoralisation and finally to abandoning the struggle. They thought that every day was bringing more proof that they were on the right road. Had not the "class-enemy", Ustrialov, just written in his emigre journal, Novosti Jisny, on October 19:

"Glory to the Politburo if the declaration of repentance by the leaders of the Opposition is the result of their unilateral, un-conditional capitulation. But it would be delorable if it were the outcome of a compromise... The victorious Central Committee must acquire an inner immunity against the deleterious poison of the Opposition... Otherwise this will be a calamity for the country... This is why we are not only against Zinoviev but deliberately for Stalin" (35).

Nonethe less, these were arguments which, to be solid, could germinate only in another soil, another party and in a working class less indifferent and less exhausted.

Trotsky gave Victor Serge to understand, in a conversation with him, that the disloyalty of Stalin and the methods of the apparatus were not the only reasons for their plight. On November 26 he drafted, for himself, some theses which were never completely finished, but which provide us with his personal appreciation of the situation and

was being abused and to preserve the possibilities of revolution outside. The apparatus took root in the backwardness of the Russian masses, their poverty and lack of culture, in their disillusionment, their inertia, their despair and an instinctive conservatism. The victory of a revolution abroad, especially if it happened in an advanced country - which his analysis led him to believe was possible - could reverse the situation. In a few days it would deflate the nonsense about "socialism in a single country", and would bring back the masses into activity, those masses who "make politics", as Lenin loved to repeat. Therefore, above all, the Marxist analyses and internationalist principles based upon them had to be maintained. The fight had to be kept up against consolatory lies and disarming illusions. Revolutionary perspectives had to be maintained, even though at that moment they were neither accepted nor understood. In the end the Opposition followed him and at the end of December (1926) it was functioning again, even more clandestinely than before, and seriously diminished.

#### The Chinese Revolution

The winter of 1926 - 27 passed without incidents or polemics. From April onwards the battle broke out again, this time about the Chinese Revolution. The Opposition attacked the policy which the International, on the instruction of the leaders of the Russian Communist Party, was operating in China. The stake in the battle was an important one; it concerned, as Trotsky said, "the fate of the Chinese proletariat", but through the revolution which was mobilising the two million workers and tens of millions of peasants of China in <sup>their onslaught</sup> on the old China, the whole of revolutionary strategy, the role of the party, the place of the mass organisations, the nature of the State power and the relations between the vanguard and the masses came into question, as in 1917.

To be sure, there were important differences. The Chinese proletariat, like industrial capitalism, was less developed than it had been in Russia. The old landlords' rule was nearly intact in the countryside, while the authority of the state was broken and in pieces, under the combined blows of foreign dismemberment and of the first revolution, with a series of war-lords controlling different regions. Essentially, however, the development of Chinese society conformed to the law of uneven development and the revolution unfolded in accordance with the law of combined development, as in Russia since the beginning of the 19th century. In fact the essential difference between the two revolutions lies in the fact that the Russian Revolution was the first of this kind in a semi-colonial country. China, the colonial characteristics of which were more accentuated, had, in return, the possibility of benefitting not only by the experience but still more from the advice and technical and military assistance of the Russian Communists.

It was in April 1927 that the Opposition made the "Chinese question" their war-horse. However, the activity of the Chinese Communists seems, and moreover in self-defence,

seems to have developed differently from that of the Bolsheviks in 1917, at a time when the mass movement was developing along similar lines. In 1922 the very small Communist Party, which was led by Ch'en Tu-hsiu, a distinguished intellectual, decided that its members should individually enter the Kuomintang, the nationalist party which Sun Yat-Sen, the father of the first Chinese revolution, had inspired and organised. At the time, the Kuomintang itself was in dispute with its own generals over the control of South China.

The Kuomintang was a cowardly enough organisation. Its programme included the realisation of national unity, agrarian reform and, in a certain sense, socialism. Communists entered it in order to make contact with its working-class supporters, who were numerous in the Canton region. In 1924 the Sun Yat-Sen government signed a treaty of alliance with Yoffe, the Soviet ambassador. The young Chinese nationalist movement was seeking external points of support and did not overlook the prestige which the first victorious revolution enjoyed in the eyes of the Chinese workers and peasants. The Russian Politburo sent a resident counsellor to the Kuomintang, Borodin. The Chinese Communist Party, which joined the Kuomintang, provided it with organising cadres who did their best to copy the structure and methods of the Bolsheviks. Russian officers led the new nationalist army and Chinese officers followed courses in Moscow.

One of these, Chiang Kai-Chek, on his return in 1924, founded the Whampoa military academy. This ambitious soldier, a gifted man, the incarnation of the young Chinese bourgeoisie, learned to use revolutionary language. He declared before a conference of the Kuomintang:

"Our alliance with the Soviet Union, with the world revolution, is in reality an alliance with all the revolutionary parties which struggle in common against the imperialists in order to accomplish the world revolution" (38). The Canton chamber of commerce ended a proclamation with the cry, "Long Live the World Revolution!". In fact the construction of the nationalist state in South China was carried out thanks to the mobilisation of the worker and peasant masses.

However, the workers and peasants began to act on their own account. The great strike in Canton and Hong Kong in 1924 saw the appearance of what was in fact the first Chinese Soviet, the committee of the strikers' delegates, elected by the workers. It disposed of a force of 2,000 armed pickets. It had a police. It created its own law court, its own schools. It legislated and carried out its decisions, organising its committees for feeding and transport etc. From that moment the difficulties began. While the leaders of the Kuomintang did their best to check the development of the workers' movement, the leadership of the Chinese Communist party proposed, in October 1925, that they should leave the Kuomintang, so as to be able to lead the workers' struggle in an independent way. The Executive Committee of the Communist International opposed the suggestion. The line which it laid down for the Chinese

Communist Party consisted of evading the engagement of class battles with the patriotic bourgeoisie of the Kuomintang, of acting as a brake, especially, on the agrarian movements and of refraining from any criticism of the official ideology, "Sun-ism". Stalin and Bukharin had an analytical justification for this: the Chinese revolution was a bourgeois revolution, but, in the struggle against feudalism and the international bourgeoisie, the Chinese bourgeoisie had an anti-imperialist, revolutionary role, and the alliance between it and the workers and peasants had to be preserved. Bukharin was to explain: "The Kuomintang is an organisation of a special kind, something midway between a political party and an organisation like the Soviets, into which different class groupings enter.... The Kuomintang includes the liberal bourgeoisie (who in Russia were organised in the Cadet party, which became counter-revolutionary in the stages before the revolution), as well as the petty bourgeoisie and the working class. From the organisational point of view, the Kuomintang is not an organisation in the generally accepted meaning of the term. Its structure enables us to win it from below, by effecting a class regroupment... We have to take advantage of this peculiarity in the course of the Chinese Revolution.... We must more and more transform the Kuomintang into an elective mass organisation... displace its centre of gravity towards the left and change the social composition of the organisation" (39).

At the beginning of 1926, the International accepted the Kuomintang into affiliation "as an associated party". Chiang Kai-Shek, who shared the leadership with Wang Ching-wei after the death of Sun, became an "associate member" of the Executive Committee. None the less on March 20, 1927 he mounted his "little coup d'etat" at Canton, arrested the Communist trade union leaders, closed the offices of the General Workers' Union, eliminated the Communists from the leadership of the Kuomintang and makes their remaining in the organisation dependent on making absolutely no criticism of "Sun-ism" and handing over a list of their members. The International and the Russian Party put pressure on the Chinese Communist Party to accept these conditions. On this occasion, in April 1926, Trotsky raised for the first time the problem of the independence of the Chinese Communist Party and criticised the admission of the Kuomintang into the International. This discussion took place behind closed doors and no other disagreement was to reveal itself until April 1927.

During this time a conflict ripened between Chiang, who controlled the army, and Wang the leader of the civilians and the government. Chiang undertook the Northern march against the war-lords, and this campaign provided the pretext to prohibit, in the name of patriotism, any strikes or peasant uprisings, land seizures or workers' insurrections. The Chinese Communist Party witnessed the enthusiasm of the general for the restoration of "order" as his conquests went forward, and once more demanded, through the agency of Ch'en Tu-hsiu, authorisation to follow an independent policy. At the Fourteenth Conference, Stalin declared:

"It is to our party that the historic role was assigned to lead the first proletarian revolution in China. We are convinced that the Kuomintang will succeed in

playing this role in the Orient".(40)

On May 18, 1925, Stalin defined the Kuomintang as "a unique workers' and peasants' party", and, at the Sixth Plenum of the ECCI, as "a revolutionary bloc of workers, peasants and intellectuals, and of the urban democracy (bourgeoisie) on the basis of the community of class-interests of these layers in the struggle against the imperialists and the military-feudal order in general" (41). He hailed the advance of Chiang as "signifying freedom of meeting, freedom of organisation for all the revolutionary elements and especially the workers" (42). Bukharin characterised the stage of the revolution by reference "to the fact that the revolutionary forces are already organised in a state power with a regular, organised army", and concluded: "The advance of these armies is a particular form of the revolutionary process" (43). In opposition to Ch'en Tu-hsiu, they declared once again that the bourgeoisie had "objectively, a revolutionary role"; they approved the entry of the two Communists into the Kuomintang government, where they occupied the ministries of agriculture and labour.

In these conditions the hesitations of the Chinese Communists are understandable. On March 19, a general strike in Shanghai transformed itself almost spontaneously into an insurrection. The Communist Party issued the slogan for "An Assembly of delegates", but it did not make this a slogan for action; it organised a committee "at the top" and not a single election of delegates. Its allies abandoned it and, for lack of perspectives, the insurrection was crushed. The delegate of the International at Shanghai, Voitinsky, was to declare:

"We have let slip an extremely favourable historic moment. Power was in the street and the party did not pick it up. Worse, it did not want it, and feared it" (44).

In March the troops of Chiang stopped outside the gates of Shanghai. It was an insurrection of workers, led by the General Workers' Union, which drove out the last of the Northern soldiers. Pravda for March 22 announced:

"The victorious workers handed the keys of Shanghai to the Canton army. In this gesture is expressed the heroic action of the Chinese proletariat".

From then on Ch'iang Kai-Shek openly prepared to eliminate the Communists in Shanghai.

At this point the Opposition intervened. On March 31 Trotsky wrote to the Central Committee, complaining of the lack of information about China. He emphasised that they seemed to be facing a powerful upsurge of the workers' movement. Why was the slogan of soviets not being issued? Why was the agrarian revolution not being encouraged? In the absence of applying this line, there was a risk of handing over the Chinese proletariat to a military coup d'etat. On April 3 he wrote an article, publication of which was refused. In this he declared that the party was involving

the workers and peasants in the camp of the bourgeoisie; making the Communist party a hostage in the Kuomintang was equivalent to an act of treachery. It had to be said that the Kuomintang was not a workers' and peasants party. On April 5 he wrote that Ch'iang was preparing a coup and that only the organisation of soviets could block its road. On April 12 he undertook a long refutation<sup>of an article</sup> by Martynov, the former economist and right-wing Menshevik, who joined the Communist party after the civil war, and who now defended on behalf of Bukharin and Stalin on China the theory of "the revolution by stages" which he had defended in Russia before 1971.

(Of course, the presence of Martynov in the editorial committee of Communist International was throughout this period one of the main points of the Opposition. It is of interest that Stalin personally proposed that Martynov be accepted in the party at the Thirteenth Congress, and that Stalin said that he was "one of the most honest and effective of the Menshevik militants". Later on Martynov was to make the "mistake" of voting for a resolution of the Opposition, in the course of the debate on the "new course". At the Thirteenth Conference, Stalin took this point up: "The Martynovs are in the Opposition. Note this. Is it by chance that those who express non-proletarian currents vote for the Opposition? No! it is not by chance". From then on, Martynov became completely disciplined, and only the Opposition used his past against him and accused him of "representing a non-proletarian current". For the leadership, he had turned into "a genuine Bolshevik". Was this by chance? Certainly not! Manuilsky was to provide the proof of this at the Seventh Plenum of the Executive of the International in November 1926 ("International Correspondence", 1927, No. 11). Manuilsky was flying to the defence of the Czech Smeral, whom Trotsky had just violently attacked for the position which he had taken against the Opposition by reminding him of his chauvinist past and his many compromises with the bourgeoisie: since he has become a Communist, declared Manuilsky, 'Smeral, like a disciplined soldier, standing at attention with his thumbs down his trouser-seams, has applied all the decisions of his party and of the Communist International'. The ex-Mensheviks or <sup>ex-</sup>Oppositionists had, in relation to such a situation, no other possibility but of being blindly disciplined if they did not want to see their past dragged up a flung in their faces).

On May 5 Stalin delivered a speech to 3,000 party members in the Hall of Columns: "Ch'iang Kai-shek is submitting to discipline. The Kuomintang is a bloc, a kind of revolutionary Parliament... Ch'iang Kai-Shek can do no otherwise but to lead the army against the imperialists" (45).

The Chinese Communist party warned Moscow that Ch'iang wanted to disarm the workers and Shanghai. The reply came: "Bury the arms". Bukharin was to say that in effect they could ask themselves "whether it would not be better to hide their weapons, not to accept the battle and in that way not to let themselves be disarmed" (46). The Chinese Communist Party stepped up its advances to Ch'iang, denied the rumours of discord and refused the offers by the First Division of the Canton army to help



to support the workers' unions against the "generalissimo".

On April 12, 1927, seven days after Stalin had spoken, and on the same day as Trotsky wrote his attack on Martynov, Ch'iang's strong-arm men attacked the workers' pickets and premises, secure in the support of the Western bankers and business men. Tens of thousands of workers, among them many Communists, accused of being "reactionaries" and of conspiring with "the militarists of the North", were massacred. On April 21 Stalin was to declare: "The events have fully and entirely proved the correctness of the line" (47) of the International. Bukharin was to write off the destruction of the workers' vanguard by observing: "The bourgeoisie has passed over to the side of the counter-revolution" (48).

#### The "Chinese Discussion"

The destruction of the proletariat of Shanghai and the "treachery" of Ch'iang were obviously a very severe blow to the prestige of the Stalin - Bukharin leadership. They could also have restored that of the Opposition, which, though deprived of information, had none the less forecast them. But the criticisms of the Opposition had never penetrated the silence which surrounded the deliberations of the leading bodies. Only a handful of cadres had known what the position of Trotsky and Zinoviev was. None the less, the leaders of the Opposition grasped the "Chinese question" in the party as well as in the International with all the more energy when Stalin and Bukharin denied that a defeat had taken place in order to deny their own responsibility for it and obstinately continued to follow the same line. Bukharin analysed the Shanghai coup d'etat as "the insurrection of the big bourgeoisie against the Kuomintang and the bloc of the Left of the Kuomintang". From then on, the Chinese Communist Party had to support Wang Ching-wei's government at Hankow against Ch'iang.

Trotsky delivered his attack on May 24 at the Executive Committee of the International. He argued that, this time, the leadership would not be able to conceal from the party how great a defeat it had suffered and its own responsibility. The situation should be corrected immediately, the peasant movements which were developing all over China should be encouraged and the slogan of soviets should be advanced, to support and organise the movement and to prepare the alliance of workers and peasants. The Politburo had "politically disarmed" the Chinese working class, because it had compelled the same "bureaucratic, apparatus conception" to be applied in China, the conception which it held of revolutionary authority, as expressed itself in the regime in the Communist Party in Russia. It was pure insanity to issue the slogan of arming, while at the same time opposing that of soviets, as Stalin was doing. The trade unions and mass organisations, which Stalin proposed to strengthen could only play the essential role of defending and organising the "second power", which would be the soviets (49).

Stalin interrupted the debate, to announce that Great Britain had just broken off diplomatic relations with the USSR, and commented: Trotsky has chosen for his

attack the moment when the party faces a "general crusade", which thus becomes "a united front stretching from Chamberlain to Trotsky". Trotsky had little difficulty in retorting that "no one has better supported the policy of Chamberlain, especially in China, than Stalin by his policy". But that had little or no importance, because the end was in sight. Stalin had decided on his line and expounded it in his scholastic manner:

"The agrarian revolution is the basis and the content of the democratic-bourgeois revolution in China. The Kuomintang and the Hankow government are the centre of the bourgeois democratic revolutionary movement."

To issue the slogan of soviets would mean struggle against Hankow. But:

"Since there exists a specific revolutionary organisation, adapted to Chinese conditions and proving its worth for the future development of the democratic-bourgeois revolution in China... it would be stupid to destroy it".

He rejected any comparison with Russia, "because Russia was on the eve of a proletarian revolution, while China faces a democratic-bourgeois revolution, but also because the Russian Provisional Government was counter-revolutionary, while the government of Hankow today is a revolutionary government in the bourgeois-democratic meaning of the word". Stalin went so far as to say that "the Left Kuomintang is playing nearly the same role in the Chinese democratic revolution today as the Soviets in 1905" (50).

"An admirable comparison", cried Wang Ching-wei, who was busy during the following weeks in suppressing the peasant movements at the hands of the Hankow government and in effecting a reconciliation with Ch'iang Kai-shek. It remained only for Stalin to censor all the news from China, to prepare to eliminate the leaders of the Chinese Communist Party who were bearing the responsibilities which he had imposed on them, and to carry through the turn which was to end in October in the suicidal rising in Canton, which resulted from a decision reached in Moscow and was organised in the name of a soviet which was formed in secret in the offices of the Chinese Communist Party by Lominadze and Neumann, the emissaries of Moscow.

The insight of the Opposition had not enabled it either to "save the Chinese proletariat" or to overthrow the tendency in the USSR thanks to a revolutionary victory. But the discussion about China revealed that, if the party leadership did not scruple to appropriate the slogans of the Opposition, at least in appearance, it could accommodate itself only less and less to the existence of the Opposition.

#### The Appeal of the Eighty-Three

In fact the Chinese discussion, for all that, at first brought the Opposition together again and restored to it a coherence which it had lost at the end of 1926. According to Krupskaya, there had been many more defections at the Fifteenth Conference. The Old Bolshevik Badayev, then Zalutsky, then Sokolnikov and others also deserted it. Trotsky had to have long discussions before he could convince his comrades. Preo-

brazhensky and Radek, no less than Zinoviev and Kamenev remained hostile to "the permanent revolution" and clung to affirming their Leninist orthodoxy by remaining faithful to "the democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry". They did not agree that the Opposition should demand that the Chinese party leave the Kuomintang and were to reconcile themselves to this only at the end of the discussion, contenting themselves during the decisive months with demanding for it the right to an independent policy. But events confirmed Trotsky's views and permitted him to display once again his <sup>temp-</sup>erament as a fighter and a polemicist as well as his faculties of analysis and foresight. The Opposition gathered itself again around him.

On the eve of the plenary meeting in April, it decided to collect signatures to a declaration of solidarity with Trotsky and Zinoviev from leading party members; this was to be "the Appeal of the 83". Victor Serge tells how "the Chinese Revolution electrified us all". He bears witness that "in all the party cells in which there were supporters of the Opposition... the discussions on the Central Committee were reproduced with the same violence" (51). It is at this time that Serge and his friend Tchadaev, who had been isolated in their cell for months, saw a young worker vote with them. They learned from him that others agreed with them, and had in mind to join them. "The ice was melting. Our contacts told us that this was generally so in the party. Tchadaev said: 'I think that they will wipe us out before the big thaw comes'" (52).

In fact they were announcing the first arrests of members of the Opposition. The secretariat was systematically dismantling its leadership. Rakovsky, who remained as ambassador in Paris, was joined there by Piatakov and Preobrazhensky, who were sent there on a "mission". Antonov-Ovseenko was sent to Prague, Safarov to Ankara and Kamenev as ambassador to fascist Italy. The most brilliant of the younger generation of the Oppositionists, Elzear Solntsev, who had worked with Trotsky since 1923, was to be sent to USA and then to Germany. Other militants were sent to appointments in Siberia or in Central Asia. Exasperation against these "appointments" mounted, and, in mid-June, several thousand Oppositionists massed in front of the Yaroslavl railway station in Moscow to demonstrate their sympathy and solidarity with Smilga, who had just been posted to Khabarovsk. Paradoxically, it was the repression itself which led to prudence being forgotten, and the crowd was noisy. Trotsky and Zinoviev had to take the decision to address the crowd, despite the risk of being accused of indiscipline, if only to appeal for calm. Trotsky stressed the danger of war and the necessity to gather round the party. The demonstration went no further, but on the following day some of the demonstrators were summoned before control commissions. At the Central Committee of June 28, Trotsky denounced the slanders and the provocations to which the Opposition was being subjected, and declared:

"The route of the Stalinists' group is strictly determined. Today they falsify what we say; tomorrow they will falsify what we do."

He reminded them of the campaign of slander against Lenin in 1917 and foretold:

"They will talk about 'the sealed train', about 'foreign gold' and 'conspiracies'"  
(53)

It is clear that Trotsky was fighting from that moment. As a member of the Central Committee he spoke at the Fifteenth Congress, even though the Opposition did not have a single delegate there. He revealed to the party, the country and the International what the Russian press had carefully disguised and the responsibilities of the Politburo in the Chinese business. Stalin therefore put down a demand that he and Zinoviev be excluded. Yaroslavsky presented the charges: they were attacked for their intervention at the Executive of the International, for the declaration of the 83 as a "fractional activity", for the demonstration at the Yaroslavl station and for criticisms which Zinoviev had made in front of a non-party audience on the occasion of the jubilee of Pravda.

Trotsky continue to fight before the Commission. He developed the comparison with the Thermidor of the French Revolution. He accused Stalin of weakening the defence of the USSR by his policy, of systematically embittering the internal conflicts and of operating the alliance with the English trade unions which supported Chamberlain against the USSR. He declared:

"We shall continue to criticise the Stalinist regime as long as you have not physically closed our mouths."(54)

The Presidium, through Ordjonikidze, proposed to exclude Trotsky and Zinoviev from the Central Committee. However, it is clear that the majority was hesitant, because Stalin added another head to the indictment, that of "defeatism". Trotsky had stated in a letter to Ordjonikidze that in the event of war he would adopt the same attitude as Clemenceau in 1917 in relation to a government which he regarded as incapable of waging the war. The "Clemenceau thesis" became a threat of coup d'etat.

At the meeting of the Central Committee and of the Control Commission, Krupskaya called on the members of the Opposition to "close the ranks" and to "rally behind the Central Committee" (55). Trotsky returned to the attack, calling for "revolutionary unity" in place of "hypocritical sacred union"; he accused the leadership of having weakened the USSR by sabotaging the Chinese Revolution, quoting a speech in which Voroshilov condemned soviets on the ground that they might weaken the rear of Ch'iang's armies, calling it "a catastrophe" and "the equivalent of a lost battle". Weighing his words, he said:

"In the case of war, the Stalin leadership will make victory more difficult" (56).

The majority still hesitated. The Opposition tried to break its grip and to divide it by means of a "pacific declaration". It rejected the defeatist interpretation which had been placed on the Clemenceau thesis and declared itself "absolutely and unreservedly for the defence of the Soviet fatherland against imperialism". Maintain-

ing its right to criticise, and affirming that there existed serious elements of Thermidorean degeneration in the country, it made clear that it accused neither the party nor the leadership of being Thermidoreans. It condemned any suggestion of a split and concluded:

"We shall carry out all the decisions of the party and of its Central Committee. We are ready to do everything to destroy all the elements of fraction which have formed themselves, because we have been obliged, given the regime in the party, to declare our real thoughts to it, when they have been distorted in the press which the whole country reads" (57).

The "pacific declaration" removed the immediate danger of exclusion. The historian Yaroslavsky writes: "The plenary assembly confined itself to a categorical warning to the Opposition and allowed Zinoviev and Trotsky to remain members of the Central Committee" (58). In fact it seemed that this time the Opposition had cleverly taken advantage of the hesitations of the majority. The vote was a set-back for Stalin, who did not get the exclusion which he demanded. The "pacific declaration" was not a capitulation, and the isolation<sup>ion</sup> of the Opposition seemed ready to relax in the party when the letter known as "the letter of the group-stamp", and which was baptised by Yaroslavsky "the letter of the widow", was circulated. It was signed by old militants, including the widow of Sverdlov, Novgorodtseva, and demanded "mutual forgiveness" and the formation of a Central Committee which brought together the representatives of all the tendencies (59).

#### The Battle of the Platform

It remains to consider what forces were in play on August 8 to spare the leaders of the Opposition and let them have a reprieve, what conflicts had developed among the majority and how the general secretary had come to the end of the compromises in his own fraction. For immediately after August 8 the press was filled with resolutions, obviously inspired, which called for "heightened vigilance" and called the declaration "inadequate". There were more expulsions. Finally, the party congress, planned for November, was deferred for a month. The Opposition elaborated its platform, which was drafted by Trotsky, Zinoviev, Kamenev, Smilga and Piatakov, with a team of younger comrades, Yakovin, Dingelstedt and Leon Sedov, Trotsky's elder son. It was submitted to all the groups of the Opposition and, wherever possible, to groups of workers. On September 6 the leaders of the Opposition addressed the Politburo and the Central Committee complaining of their persecution at the hands of the apparatus, in contravention of the decisions of the plenary meeting of August. They demanded that the forthcoming congress be loyally prepared by the publication in the press of all the documents. The Central Committee replied by refusing to publish the platform, the elaboration of which was regarded as "fractional". They prohibited its circulation in the party. Mere discussion was purely and simply outlawed. The Central Committee refused, following the declaration by Stalin, to "legitimise Trotsky's fraction".

The Opposition once again had its back to the wall: it commented:

"It appears that the Central Committee fears discussion like the plague, that it ~~will~~ hope to defend its political line in any honest internal party discussion... The Stalin group has decided... to put the Fifteenth Congress together out of nothing but secretaries". (60)

Therefore, the Opposition had to go straight ahead into illegality and, as Alsky, Trotsky's collaborator was to say, "to break a way through to legality" (61). The Opposition was to print the text of its platform and circulate it in the party and among non-party people, to collect a mass of signatures in support of it, and, despite the prohibition, to hold gatherings and meetings, and in this way to force the recognition of its "legality"; such finally was the only way out, the break-through, as in the autumn of 1926, but with no possibility of retreat, without any possible outcome but "legitimation" or exclusion.

Hardly had the decision been taken when repression struck. On the night of the 12th and 13th of September 1927, the agents of the GPU uncovered "the illegal print shop" of the Opposition. This was managed by the Old Bolshevik Mratchkovsky, who was arrested and excluded with fourteen other militants, as well as Preobrazhensky and Serebriakov, who publicly accepted responsibility for the enterprise. Under orders, the newspapers announced that a "plot" had been uncovered, in which a White Guard, a former officer in Wrangel's army, was involved with the Oppositionists. This was true: a former White Guard officer helped the young comrades of the Opposition to roneotype the text of the Platform. What the papers did not tell, but what Trotsky, Zinoviev and Kamenev forced the head of the GPU, Menzhinsky, to admit, as he confirmed before the Central Committee, was that this White Guard officer, whose name was Stroilov, was working in relation to the provocateur Tverskoy, had become an officer in the GPU, and under the orders of Tverskoy was mounting an organised provocation - because it was he who offered the means of distributing the Platform to the young Oppositionist Shterbatov. At the Central Committee Stalin was to admit the facts and to try to justify the provocation:

"The Opposition has made a great song and dance about the former Wrangel officer, to whom the allies of the Opposition addressed themselves, being exposed as an agent of the GPU. But what is wrong about the same Wrangel officer helping the Soviet power to uncover counter-revolutionary conspiracies? Who can dispute the right of the Soviet power to draw round itself former officers in order to use them to unmask counter-revolutionary conspiracies?" (62).

But the newspapers were evidently not to give the second part of the story the same coverage as they had given the first: the "myth of the 'Wrangel officer' was broadcast throughout the land, poisoning the minds of millions of party members and tens of millions of non-party people" (63). It added a dimension to the accusations about counter-revolutionary activities, and enabled attention to be diverted from

the questions which the Opposition raised. Trotsky appeared before the Executive of the International on September 27: among those who judged him sat Marcel Cachin, who had collaborated with the bourgeois government during the war, the chief editor of L'Humanite, who had hailed Chiang Kai-shek as the "hero of the Shanghai Commune". Trotsky cudgelled them, pointing out that they wanted to exclude him, when they had forgotten to exclude Chiang Kai-Shek and Wang Ching-wei, who were still "associate members", despite the massacres of workers and peasants. "Not a single organism", he said, "discusses and takes decisions today; they do nothing but carry out the decisions, and the Presidium of the Executive of the International is no exception". Of course, he, like Vuyovitch, was excluded (64).

None the less, the Opposition had succeeded in getting its Platform printed in a state printing plant, the director of which was arrested. Thirty thousand copies, according to the Politburo, and 12,000 according to the Opposition, of which the greatest part were seized. Under the cover of a literary work, "The Road of the Struggle", by Furmanov, it began to circulate. Zinoviev and Kamenev counted on 20,000 to 30,000 signatures to make Stalin retreat. But after the first thousand progress was slow. At the same time, people's fears had to be overcome. On that road the Opposition won some success. Trotsky, Zinoviev, Kamenev and Smilga went into the working-class quarters in Leningrad and Moscow, to speak to groups of tens of workers crowded in the tiny dwellings. Then, with their ranks strengthened, they opened up a public campaign, and held meetings despite the activities of the toughs whom the apparatus mobilised in every district to stop them. They were careful to point out that they were compelled, obliged to work illegally, and the heads of the Opposition demanded halls to meet in and occupied them when they were refused. In this way they were able to hold a real meeting in a lecture hall in the Higher Technical School in Moscow, which they occupied by surprise. The electricity was cut off, and Kamenev and Trotsky spoke by candlelight for two hours to an audience of two thousand people, while a large crowd walked about outside the packed hall. A similar operation was prepared in Leningrad, to occupy a hall in the Palace of Labour, where Radek and Zinoviev were to speak. But Zinoviev disappeared at the last moment and Radek refused to speak alone. Their supporters came simply to demonstrate at an official conference of metal-workers. At Kharkov Rakovsky spoke in public to three hundred workers, in an unauthorised meeting. Trotsky spoke at two factories in Moscow where the Opposition had supporters.

All these results were encouraging and the Opposition thought for a moment that it had realised its aim and succeeded in breaking through; the mass of the party began to take an interest in its arguments. Certain leaders were even to believe that success was near when, on October 17 in Leningrad, during the celebration of the jubilee of the Central Committee, Zinoviev and Trotsky, who were not on the official speakers' platform, were welcomed by workers who gathered round them. Victor Serge says that the two leaders believed that the situation was turning back in their favour: "'The masses are with us', they said that evening" (65). Zinoviev was to write: "It is the

most important element in the party for the last two years... of enormous political significance." (66). In Trotsky's autobiography, he qualifies this optimistic appraisal, and says that, in his opinion, this platonic demonstration of sympathy reflected the discontent of the Leningrad workers, but not a determination to fight against the apparatus (67). The opinion according to which the leaders of the Opposition took their desires for reality and interpreted cheerful welcomes on a holiday as a political demonstration cannot be accepted unreservedly. It seems likely that Zinoviev was right when he argued that this demonstration had made Stalin anxious and decided to act more quickly. There can be no dispute that, from that moment onwards, he showed a great haste to finish off the Opposition.

At the same time, the Central Committee was hearing Kirov propose the programme for the tenth anniversary of the revolution, in which were included the five-day week and the seven-hour day. The Opposition protested that this was "pure demagoguery", and suggested that they should first try to operate the eight-hour day, which most often remained on paper, and that the lowest wages be raised. And it voted against. At once Pravda and the official propaganda seized upon this vote to "unmask" once more an opposition which claimed to be "proletarian" and opposed measures favourable to the working class. The tone is conveyed by Yaroslavsky, the official historian: "The shameful vote of the Trotskyists against the seven hours reveals better than all their declarations the Menshevik character of the Opposition" (68).

On this point the Opposition lost ground. The official flood drowned its protests and arguments. For the defence of the workers' interests was practically the only point in the Platform which was understood and approved outside the thin layer of its sympathisers. This was the atmosphere in which Stalin was to demand again from the Central Committee (of October 21 - 23) that Trotsky and Zinoviev be excluded. The tale of these scenes of savagery has been told many times, with Trotsky speaking, protected by his friends, insulted and threatened. Books, inkwells and a glass were thrown at him. He contemptuously hammered his words:

"The fundamental character of our leadership today is its belief that violent methods can achieve anything - even in relation to its own party... Your books - one cannot read them any more, but they can still serve to knock people down" (69). He said that Stalin now wanted to draw "a line of blood" between the Opposition and the party; he forecast the massacres and the purges and ended:

"You can exclude us. You will not prevent us from being victorious".

Stalin remained as calm as Trotsky in this assembly of unchained demons, and answered Zinoviev, who had raised Lenin's Testament and the postscript about Stalin's brutality:

"Yes, I am brutal, comrades, with those who work brutally and disloyally to ruin and to split the party. I have never hidden it" (70).



In Stalin's opinion, the Opposition had been supported "against its will and its wishes by anti-Soviet elements", as the affair of the printing press had shown. The Opposition was taking the road of a split. It had to be struck down. Zinoviev and Trotsky were excluded from the Central Committee, defeated.

None the less the battle went on. Ivan Nikitich Smirnov succeeded in speaking at the members' meeting in Moscow, but Kamenev and Rakovsky were driven off the platform, as were Bakayev and Yevdokimov in Leningrad the same day. Pravda announced that the Opposition had received one vote against 2,000 in Moscow and none against 6,000 in Leningrad. It was to be well and truly driven out of the party, because it is certain that from that time onwards its spokesmen would not address the Congress. It lost the battle of signatures and already knew that it would not even submit the full list of signatures to the Politburo, to avoid all its forces being struck by repression.

On November 4 the leading centre of the Opposition met at Smilga's house. Kamenev was in the chair. Divergences showed themselves between Trotsky, who wanted to fight on to the end because there remained nothing to expect, and Zinoviev, who was thinking again about a compromise. In the end the memory of the demonstration of October 17 won the day. They decided that on November 7 the Opposition would take part in the official procession, with its own slogans: "Down with Opportunism!", "Fulfill Lenin's Testament!", "Beware of a Split!", "Maintain Bolshevik Unity!" and "Down with the Kulak, the Nefman and the Bureaucrat!". On November 5 the Central Control Commission had up Zinoviev, Kamenev, Trotsky and Smilga and demanded that they give up their plan. Smilga replied that they must guarantee freedom of opinion before they laid down conditions.

Both sides prepared well for the demonstration of November 7, but the Opposition, a courageous handful of fighters amid the indifferent mass, were beaten in advance. There are few details about the defeat of the Opposition's demonstration at Kharkov, where Rakovsky led men into the street. At Leningrad they made their way with their banners as far as the official platform, and were then adroitly diverted by the stewards, who cut them off from the crowd and held Zinoviev and Radek until everyone had gone home. There were some skirmishes between the militia and several hundreds of demonstrators, led by Bakayev and Lashevich in uniform. Matters were more serious in Moscow: the demonstrators for the Opposition were dispersed in small groups in the crowd which converged on Red Square, and displayed placards and banners to the number of over a hundred (according to the estimate of someone who deserted the Opposition), which were immediately smashed or torn up by the activists posted along the road, who then surrounded those who were carrying them. Immediately afterwards the groups which had been located in this way were dispersed and beaten up, and some demonstrators were arrested. One commando made its way into the House of the Soviets, where Smilga had tied to the balcony of his flat a banner with pictures of Lenin and Trotsky. The militants who were there were beaten. The same incidents took place at the Grand Paris hotel, where Preobrazhensky, who was i

charge of the demonstration, was heavily beaten. Trotsky travelled to it in a car and tried to address a column of workers in the Place of the Revolution. He was immediately surrounded by militiamen and shouted down. A shot rang out, breaking the windows of the car, and he had to cease.

That evening the defeat was crowned. In all the meetings of Oppositionists, the "Trotskyists" and the "Zinovievists" already confronted each other. Zinoviev said: "Lev Davidovich, the time has come to have the courage to surrender". The old lion replied: "If that kind of courage were enough, the revolution would be world wide" (71). On November 15 they were all excluded together from the party. Rakovski, Yevdikomov, Smilga and Kamenev were excluded from the Central Committee. On November 16 Trotsky's old friend, Adolph Joffe, incurably sick, committed suicide in a gesture of protest. The leaders of the Opposition spoke for the last time, at Joffe's graveside, before their supporters, on the 19th. According to Trotsky, there were 10,000 present, and according to Serge "several thousand". Trotsky said: "The struggle goes on; each of us remains at his post". At the graveside, Rakovsky took the oath on behalf of those present to follow the banner of the revolution to the end.

#### The Fifteenth Congress of the CPSU

Meanwhile the Congress was being prepared, based completely on the struggle against the Opposition. The speeches of the leaders of the majority indicated the tone which was to prevail there. Tomsky declared:

"Stalin is not at all happy with the role of leader... The efforts of the Opposition came down to presenting him as an obscure malefactor and the members of the Central Committee and the Politburo as cringing lackeys, whom he manipulates as he pleases. Beneath him there would be the apparatus of the functionaries, who tremble before him, and, lower down still, the other members tremble before the branch secretaries.... What a ridiculous hypothesis! A fable that no one could credit. How could a party in which anyone goes in fear of anyone else lead a great state?"

Tomsky addressed his former comrades, who he now accused of wanting to form a "second party", and coined the expression which history was to attribute to Bukharin: "Under the dictatorship of the proletariat, it is possible for two, three or even four parties to exist, but only on condition that one is in power and all the others are in prison" (72). Bukharin was no less precise: "We have already had here every form of struggle except an armed uprising... when there have already been efforts to organise strikes, the only thing left is armed uprising" (73).

When the Congress opened on December 2, it was already known that the apparatus was demanding unconditional capitulation and total renunciation. Stalin said:

"The Opposition must surrender unconditionally and totally, both on the political and the organisational level.... They must renounce their anti-Bolshevik views,

openly and before the whole world. They must denounce the crimes which they have committed against the party, openly and before the whole world" (74).

It was clear the next day that the Opposition was beginning to break up. Rakovsky refused to make any "self-criticism" and was driven off the platform. On the other hand, Kamenev was listened to. His speech was both poignant and courageous; it already foreshadowed the end of the Bolsheviks. He said: "We must find the way out to reconciliation". The road of the "second party" would be ruinous for the revolution. "It was excluded by the whole of our ideas and by all Lenin's teaching about the dictatorship of the proletariat". "The only way which remains is to submit to the decisions of the Congress, however hard they may appear". However, at the same time, Kamenev appealed to the Congress not to press his comrades to do what they could not do: "If we were to renounce our opinions, that would not be Bolshevik. Comrades, the demand to renounce our personal opinions has never yet been expressed in our party... If I have to come here today and say: I renounce the views which have been printed in my documents a fortnight ago, you would not believe me. It would be hypocrisy on my part. Such hypocrisy is not necessary. Stretch out a helping hand to us" (78).

But the Congress Commission was not to be persuaded. It insisted that the Oppositionists must explicitly condemn the ideas of the Opposition. Ordjonikidze, speaking on his own behalf on December 10, complained that these "former Bolsheviks" were forcing the party to inflict such serious punishments; he proposed that they be excluded because they had not condemned the policy of the Opposition. Rakovsky, Radek and Muralov declared that in no circumstances would they cease to defend their ideas as individuals. But the Zinovievists weakened: Kamenev, Bakayev and Yevdokimov agreed to submit. In their name, Kamenev gave the assurance: "We are obliged to bend our will <sup>before</sup> the judgements of the party, which is the only supreme judge of what is useful or harmful in the forward march of the revolution" (76).

However, the apparatus insisted on still more. The "History of the Communist Party (Bolsheviks) of the USSR" (1938) was to provide a justification for this insistence. The party:

"laid down a certain number of conditions for their re-integration. The expelledes must; a) openly condemn Trotskyism as an anti-Bolshevik, anti-Soviet ideology; b) openly recognise that the policy of the party is the only correct one; c) submit without reserve to the decisions of the party and its institutions; d) undergo a period of probation, during which the party will check on the authors of the declaration, at the end of which it will consider separately the re-admission of each of them, in the light of the results of the check. The party expected that the public recognition of all these points by the expelledes would in any case have a positive importance for the party, because it would break the unity of the Trotskyist-Zinovievist ranks, would disorganise their milieu, would demonstrate

once again the power of the party and its firm foundation, would permit the party, if the authors of the declaration were acting in good faith, to take its former members back and, in the case of bad faith, to denounce them in the eyes of all, not as mistaken people, but as unprincipled adventurers, people who want to deceive the working class, self-exposed frauds" (77).

When the former Oppositionists subjected themselves to these requirements, they ipso facto surrendered all personal thought and, consequently, any future divergence from the leadership, however minimal. They were required to surrender utterly and unconditionally, to commit political suicide. They spent another week in discussion, after which they decided, on December 18, to capitulate and to condemn the ideas of the Opposition - their ideas - as "erroneous and anti-Leninist". Bukharin was wild with joy. He congratulated them: "You have done well. It was time; the iron curtain of History was about to fall" (78). This final recantation, moreover, won them little enough mercy: the Central Committee decided to examine their applications for re-admission in six months' time. They remained excluded. Rakovsky, Smilga, Radek and Muralov declared on the same day:

"Excluded from the party, we shall do our utmost to return to it. We are excluded for our ideas. We consider our ideas to be those of Bolshevism and Leninism. We cannot give them up" (79).

### The Two Roads

In this way the alliance of Zinoviev and Kamenev with Trotsky came to an end. Despite their repugnance and after long agonising they finished by repudiating themselves in front of Stalin, doing what they had demanded in vain that Trotsky should do in 1924 in front of the troika of which they were then part. Themselves "bureaucrats" and "apparatus men", they had failed in their revolt. Did they try to win forgiveness and earn pardon (as Trotsky thought) by helping Stalin to liquidate Trotsky more quickly, by isolating him? In fact Pravda published, on January 27, 1928, a letter from them attacking the "Trotskyists". However, such a calculation presupposes that they had analysed the situation. So did they under-estimate the depth of the transformation undergone by the party - in which Kamenev had believed "witch trials" to be impossible? Did they think that they must remain in the party at all costs in anticipation of an early reversal of the situation, in order to be there at the decisive moment? Or did they, on the contrary, think that there would be no other perspective for decades but <sup>the</sup> bureaucratic retribution and strait-jacket? Did they think that <sup>their</sup> political and personal safety lay, as Zinoviev is reported to have said, in "going forward on their stomachs, if necessary, but going forward in the party"? It is impossible to answer these questions today. One fact, however, we possess: the two Old Bolsheviks certainly did not foresee the road strewn with capitulations which was opening up in front of them - and which, less than ten years later, was to lead them to accusing themselves of the foulest crimes, in the dock in new

witch trials.

The irreconcilables did not follow them. Like Trotsky, Rakovsky, Smilga, Muralov and Radek formally condemned the perspective of "a new party". Like Zinoviev and Kamenev, they believed that the party would be able to regenerate itself and to free itself from <sup>its</sup> parasitic excrescence", the bureaucracy. But they did not believe that they could possibly assist the regeneration by staying in the party at any price. Rakovsky declared: "For us to abstain from defending our ideas would mean that we give them up; we would fail in our most elementary duty to the party and to the working class" (79).

The fissure which had separated the two principal groups in the Opposition at the beginning of 1926 had thus become a gulf. When Zinoviev and Kamenev expected victory, Trotsky foresaw the worst, the slanders and the physical extermination. He prepared himself for a long struggle, and was not sure that he knew its outcome: he told Victor Serge, "Our duty is to exhaust every possibility of regeneration; we can finish like Lenin or like Liebknecht. We must rise to the level of either eventuality" (80). This is, no doubt, the explanation of what historians have called an attitude of "political suicide" and in which they have often seen no more than hesitations and contradictions. The European revolution had failed. The USSR was isolated for a long time. The Stalinist leadership compromised the chances of victory of proletarian revolutions to come. But the pendulum of history would swing back sooner or later in the direction of the revolution. From now until then it was necessary to hold on, "to preserve the revolutionary traditions, to maintain contact with the advanced elements in the party, to analyse the development of the Thermidorean period and to prepare for the next revolutionary upheaval, in the world as well as in the USSR" (81).

In a word, it was no longer today but tomorrow for which they had to fight, to preserve for the day, when the masses would again take their destiny into their own hands, the heritage of Bolshevism which had been corrupted and which would otherwise be destroyed by the Stalinists.

Were these "irreconcilables" correct to try "to exhaust the possibilities of a regeneration"? To be sure, it is easy today to criticise their illusions and to smile at their "fetishistic" fear of a restoration of capitalism. The fact is that the road was still long. The fifteen hundred "Trotskyists" who had been excluded from the party, the hundreds, soon to be thousands, of Oppositionists who went to Siberia, following Trotsky, who was deported to Alma Ata on January 17, 1928, following Preobrazhensky, Rakovsky, Smilga, Serebriakov and Saprionov, were no more than an advance guard. After them, nearly the whole of the Bolsheviks of the revolution, old and young, were to follow that same road, whatever may have been their position in the great political battle of 1926 - 27.

FOOTNOTES

- (1) The document is published in "Fourth International", Vol. 2, No. 8, October 1941, pp. 252 - 3.
- (2) L. Trotsky, "The Case of Leon Trotsky", p. 248.
- (3) Quoted in Deutscher, "The Prophet Unarmed", p. 255 - 6.
- (4) "Fourth International", *ibid.* p. 253.
- (5) Ralph Fisher, "Pattern for Soviet Youth", p. 548.
- (6) Quoted in Trotsky, "The Case of Leon Trotsky", pp. 81 - 2.
- (7) Trotsky, "Stalin", p. 417.
- (8) Trotsky's letter to I. N. Smirnov is published in "La Lutte des Classes", No. 6, August - September 1928, pp. 163 - 4.
- (9) Deutscher, *op. cit.*, p. 268.
- (10) Victor Serge, "Memoires d'un Revolutionnaire", p. 209.
- (11) Trotsky, "My Life", Penguin ed., p. 544.
- (12) A. Barmin, "Vingt Ans au Service de l'URSS", Paris, 1939, p. 244 - 5.
- (13) Quoted in Deutscher, *op. cit.*, p. 284.
- (14) Pravda, November 3, 1926, quoted in R. Daniels, "The Conscience of the Revolution", p. 291.
- (15) See "La Lutte des Classes", 1927 - 28; Naville and Sizoff, "L'Economie Sovietique", pp. 458 - 460, and Serge, "Vers l'Industrialisation", No. 15, pp. 438ff and No. 16, pp. 486 - 8.
- (16) Quoted in Deutscher, *op. cit.*, p. 278.
- (17) R. Daniels, "Documentary History of Communism", Vol. 1, pp. 280 - 287.
- (18) Correspondance Internationale, No. 87, July 31, 1926, pp. 950 - 1.
- (19) Correspondance Internationale, No. 114, October 23, 1926.
- (20) The letter to Muralov dated September 11, 1928, is published in "New International", November 1934, pp. 125 - 6.
- (21) For Trotsky's declarations about Eastman's book, see Correspondance Internationale, No. 72, July 22, 1925 and No. 82, August 22, 1925.
- (22) V. Serge, "Vie et Mort de Trotsky", p. 181.
- (23) Cahiers du Bolshevisme, Special Number, December 20, 1926, pp. 2177 - 2122.
- (24) *Ibid.*, pp. 2222,- 2245.
- (25) *Ibid.*, pp. 2245 - 2270.
- (26) *Ibid.*, pp. 2274 - 2292.

- (27) Ibid., pp. 2292 - 2313.
- (28) Ibid., pp. 2176 - 2318.
- (29) Quoted in Deutscher, op. cit., p. 303.
- (30) Cahiers du Bolshevisme, op. cit., p. 2127.
- (31) Ibid., pp. 2270 - 2274.
- (32) Quoted in Yaroslavsky, "Histoire du PC de l'URSS", p. 452.
- (33) Correspondance Internationale, No. 143, December 29, 1926, p. 1867.
- (34) Quoted in Yaroslavsky, op. cit., p. 452.
- (35) Novosty Jisny, October 19, 1926, quoted by Kamenev, see Correspondance Internationale, No. 11, January 24, 1927, p. 156.
- (36) The text is in "Fourth International", No. 8, 1941, pp. 251 - 2.
- (37) Trotsky, "Stalin", p. 403.
- (38) Harold R. Isaacs, "The Tragedy of the Chinese Revolution", p. 86.
- (39) Bukharin, "Problems of the Chinese Revolution", pp. 50 - 51.
- (40) Isaacs, op. cit., p. 85.
- (41) Stalin's thesis is published in full in International Press Correspondence, April 28, 1927, immediately after the Eighth Plenum of the ECCI.
- (42) Isaacs, op. cit., p. 119.
- (43) Isaacs, op. cit., p. 112.
- (44) Ibid., p. 136.
- (45) Ibid., p. 162.
- (46) Bukharin, op. cit., p. 57.
- (47) Quoted in Isaacs, op. cit., p. 185.
- (48) Bukharin, op. cit., p. 57.
- (49) Deutscher, op. cit., pp. 334 - 338, quoted from Trotsky's Archives.
- (50) Quoted in Isaacs, op. cit., pp. 241 - 258.
- (51) V. Serge, "Memoires d'un Revolutionnaire", pp. 212 - 3.
- (52) Ibid., p. 214.
- (53) Deutscher, op. cit., p. 340, quoted from Trotsky's Archives.
- (54) Ibid, p. 343.
- (55) Correspondance Internationale, No. 84, August 13, 1927.
- (56) Deutscher, op. cit., p. 353, quoted from Trotsky's Archives.

- (57) Correspondance Internationale, No. 85, August 18, 1927, pp. 1166 - 7.
- (58) Quoted in Yaroslavsky, op. cit., p. 457.
- (59) Correspondance Internationale, No. 85, August 18, 1927, p. 1169.
- (60) R. Daniels, "The Conscience of the Revolution", p. 312, quoted from Trotsky's Archives.
- (61) Quoted by Kritchevsky, in Correspondance Internationale, No. 127, December 21, 1927, p. 1949.
- (62) Correspondance Internationale, No. 114, November 12, 1927, p. 1642.
- (63) "New International", Vol. 1, No. 4, November 1934, pp. 120 - 124.
- (64) Correspondance Internationale, No. 101, October 5, 1927, p. 1425.
- (65) V. Serge, op. cit., p. 214.
- (66) Pravda. November 2, 1927, quoted in Sorlin, "Lenin, Trotsky, Staline", Paris 1962, p. 212.
- (67) Trotsky, "My Life", p. 556.
- (68) Quoted in Yaroslavsky, op. cit., p. 474 - 5.
- (69) Quoted in V. Serge, op. cit., p. 220.
- (70) Quoted in R. Daniels, op. cit., p. 315.
- (71) Serge, op. cit., p. 226.
- (72) Correspondance Internationale, No. 120, December 3, 1927, p. 1758.
- (73) Ibid., p. 1754.
- (74) Quoted in R. Daniels, op. cit., pp. 318 - 9.
- (75) Correspondance Internationale, No. 128, 1927, p. 1965.
- (76) Correspondance Internationale, No. 3, January 11, 1928, p. 54.
- (77) "Histoire du PC(b) de l'URSS", ed. 1949, p. 321.
- (78) Quoted in Deutscher, op. cit., p. 388.
- (79) Correspondance Internationale, No. 3, January 11, 1928, p. 53.
- (80) Quoted in V. Serge, op. cit., p. 216.
- (81) Trotsky, "Stalin", p. 404.

Translator's Note: The reader may be interested to know that, since this was written, an important work has appeared in English on the General Strike and the Anglo-Russian Joint Trade Union Committee. This is "The United Front: the TUC and the Russians (1925 - 1928)", by Daniel F. Calhoun, Cambridge University Press, 1976.