

STALIN

LEON TROTSKY

**Completed with previously unpublished material
edited and translated by Alan Woods**

STALIN

AN APPRAISAL OF THE MAN
AND HIS INFLUENCE

LEON TROTSKY



London





Front cover: 'The butcher' in contemplation. Stalin in the 1930s.

Back cover: May Day celebrations in Petrograd, 1917, the year of the Revolution. The banner reads: 'Long live socialism'.

Previous double page: Stalin laying down the law to his inner circle of bureaucrats in 1935. Scratched out are those who were later arrested and purged.

This book is dedicated to Trotsky's grandson Esteban (Vsevolod) Volkov, who has spent a lifetime fighting for the truth about Trotsky and his struggle against Stalin. His enthusiastic support and encouragement for our project from start to finish has played a major role in the publication of this important book.

We also dedicate it to the memory of David King (30th April 1943-11th May 2016), who tragically died before he could see *Stalin* finally in print.

STALIN
AN APPRAISAL OF THE MAN AND HIS INFLUENCE
Leon Trotsky
First edition approved by the estate of Leon Trotsky
Wellred Books, 2016

Material translated and edited from the previous editions © Alan Woods

Background to Trotsky's *Stalin* by Rob Sewell

Foreword by Esteban Volkov

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FOREWORD

TROTSKY'S LAST WORK FINALLY COMPLETED

On the tiny planet Earth, lost like a particle of sand in the vastness of space, the most complex and wonderful phenomenon emerged: Life itself. This has taken the most diverse and unimaginable forms, the most amazing of which is the human species. Our species in turn has given rise to a wide variety of individuals. Some are gifted with high levels of generosity and heroism, to the extent of giving their lives without hesitation in the struggle for the improvement and well-being of their fellow human beings.

At the other end of the scale, one can observe the most primitive instincts of cruelty and evil. From a psychological and historical point of view, the character of Stalin is doubtless of great scientific interest. No one was in a better position than Leon Trotsky, that master of Marxist dialectics, to dissect the anatomy and morphology of the man who was raised to power by the triumph of the counter-revolution in the Soviet Union after the death of Lenin.

The last work written by Leon Trotsky before he was assassinated on 20th August 1940 was the unfinished text of the biography of Joseph Djughashvili, better known as Stalin. Here we have a truly multidimensional analysis. Always within the framework of Marxism, it enables us to decipher the inner meaning of Stalin and Stalinism; to understand the dynamic of historical circumstances and the environment that allowed one of the most bloodthirsty and cruel characters that history has recorded to rise to power.

According to the Soviet historian Volkogonov, Stalin lived in fear of the man who organised the Red Army and was Lenin's comrade in arms. The news

that in distant Mexico that same indomitable revolutionary was working on a biography which would reveal many uncomfortable truths about the tyrant in the Kremlin was deeply disturbing to him and there can be little doubt that it hastened the plans for Trotsky's assassination.

The biography of Stalin was made at the request of the US publishing house Harper & Brothers. Contrary to the opinion of many literary critics and historians, the making of this biography had nothing whatsoever to do with anger or revenge. As a matter of fact, Leon Trotsky only undertook the task reluctantly. His main interest was to conclude a biography of Lenin, which he had already begun.

At the time Trotsky was living in Coyoacan in a small 'family' composed of himself, Natalia Sedova and a group of young Trotskyist comrades. Harper & Brothers offered a substantial sum of money for the book. Obligated by pressing financial difficulties and constant shortages, the Russian revolutionary felt he had no alternative but to accept.

Charles Malamuth was assigned the task of translating Trotsky's work from Russian into English, despite the fact this did not please the author. When Trotsky was assassinated on Stalin's orders, Harper & Brothers appointed Malamuth to edit the unfinished biography with a view to its publication. Displaying a total lack of ethical spirit, Charles Malamuth introduced a large number of annotations of his own writing that contravened the author's ideas and also shortened the text, excluding a large amount of material.

The publishers' interest in the book was purely commercial. They were not worried about the accuracy and objectivity of its content. Harper & Brothers went ahead with publication of the book, which was published in 1946 in this mutilated form. The vehement protests and demands of Trotsky's widow Natalia Sedova and his lawyer Albert Goldman against these changes and irregularities were ignored.

Fortunately, three quarters of a century after the death of Leon Trotsky, some very knowledgeable Marxist revolutionaries, who fully identify with his ideas, have undertaken the admirable and difficult task of re-issuing his last great work in all of its authenticity and its fullest dimensions. For more than ten years the comrades of Wellred Books have worked to restore as much of the missing material as possible and eliminate all the additions and distortions of Malamuth.

The current edition is enlarged by a third on the previous editions. It has added to and enriched the vast arsenal of Marxist theory which is the ultimate legacy of Leon Trotsky. It only remains for me to express my great admiration

for the tenacious and enthusiastic efforts made by members of *Socialist Appeal* and the International Marxist Tendency (IMT), as well as many generous friends, whose names I will not mention as the full list would be too long.

I would like to mention Rob Sewell, who was the originator of this project, venturing into the files of the manuscript for the Stalin biography, in the Houghton Library at Harvard. The result represents a most valuable and impressive achievement made possible by the patient work of many generous and skilled collaborators, who managed to collect this very heterogeneous material in both English and Russian. Much of it was in manuscript form, often in a poor condition, which then had to be typed up from microfilm copies.

Finally, I should like to pay tribute to the British Marxist Alan Woods. With his knowledge of the Russian language and his very profound familiarity with the ideas of Leon Trotsky, I believe there is no other person more suitable for the task of translating, editing and incorporating this new material, reorganising and refining the text to produce the best version of the last work which the great Marxist revolutionary was unable to complete.

Esteban Volkov
23rd May 2016

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BACKGROUND TO TROTSKY'S *STALIN*

Leon Trotsky's *Stalin* was commissioned by the New York publisher Harper & Brothers in February 1938 and was first published in English in 1946. A year later, in 1947, it was published in London by Hollis and Carter. *Stalin* was Trotsky's last major book, on which he worked in the final years of his life. However, Trotsky's life was cut short by a Stalinist assassin on 20th August 1940 and the book was never finished.

While Trotsky worked on the book, the manuscript of each chapter of *Stalin*, originally dictated in Russian, was being translated into English by Charles Malamuth. Following his assassination, the unfinished manuscripts, on instructions from the publisher, were handed over to Malamuth, not simply for translation, but in order to edit the work for publication.

Whatever Charles Malamuth's talents, this was a political task for which he was completely unsuited. When the book was finally published, the new 'edited' version contained large chunks of material inserted by the editor, which were clearly in violation of Trotsky's political thought. Despite indignant protests from Trotsky's widow, Natalia Sedova, the offending material was retained by the publishers. In certain editions, Natalia expressed her objections in the preface to the book:

The phrases inserted throughout this book by Charles Malamuth are solely his responsibility. He was commissioned to do this job by Harper & Brothers, the publishers of the American edition of this book, and not by Natalia Trotsky, widow of Leon Trotsky. These insertions have not been checked by anyone who could claim to have been a collaborator of Leon Trotsky, and thus should be considered as only expressing the ideas of Malamuth, who is a political opponent of Trotsky.

The primary reason for the republication of this newly-expanded edition of Trotsky's *Stalin* is to put right this violation and to insert the material that was excluded by the editor. The project to re-publish Trotsky's original *Stalin* in this updated form has been more than a decade in the making. The volume removes Malamuth's political insertions, which amounted to more than 10,000 words, and restores the original manuscript from unpublished material deposited in the Trotsky archives at Harvard University.

This new edition is the most complete ever published in any language, including in English or Russian, and has increased the size compared to the original version of the book by over thirty percent. It represents the most extensive work ever undertaken to 'rebuild' the book, and comprises nearly 100,000 more words than the original 1946 edition.

Malamuth explained that he had left alone the first seven chapters, "except for a few deletions of repetitious material." We have taken the liberty of restoring this "repetitious" material to the best of our ability, the position of which is indicated for the reader. The points where these insertions begin and end are marked with an asterisk: '*'.

In the second half, rather than follow Malamuth's arrangement, we have chosen our own, following the chronology of events. The editing of this material to ensure the maximum continuity has been carried out by Alan Woods, who also translated the bulk of the Russian material. Where fragments of text require connecting phrases or longer explanation, the editor's words are indicated within square brackets: '[...]'. The very small parts of the book that were summaries of Trotsky's notes by Malamuth have been retained for continuity and are distinguished from the main body of the text by stylised brackets: '{...}'. Some material of various lengths that could not be easily inserted into the text has been placed separately in the appendices.

One further change to note is our treatment of the transition from the old Julian calendar to the new Gregorian calendar, which was implemented in Soviet Russia on 14th February 1918 in the midst of the events described in Chapter 8. In this chapter, we have used dates according to the Gregorian calendar, but Julian calendar dates are in brackets where necessary.

THE TROTSKY ARCHIVES

In 2003, while on a political trip to the United States, I visited Boston and took the opportunity to visit the Trotsky archives at the nearby university. The impressive archive at Harvard is itself a political treasure trove which fills 172 manuscript boxes and comprises Trotsky's pre- and post-exile correspondence,

articles, working papers, photographs and notes, namely, all the most significant documents of his extremely rich political life. Trotsky, who was extremely meticulous, made copies of almost everything he ever wrote. Simply for the period 1929 to 1940, covering his years of exile from the Soviet Union, the archive contains some 20,000 documents, including around 4,000 letters. Trotsky had agreed that the material would be dispatched to Harvard for safe keeping. "The archives are leaving [for the United States] this morning on the train," wrote Trotsky on 17th July 1940, a little over a month before his assassination.¹

After filling in the necessary forms, I was shown into the reading room of Houghton Library. While viewing the prospectus, I was astonished by the vast amount of material contained in the archive. I decided to look at material relating to Britain and then South Africa as part of my research on the history of British Trotskyism. After that, I began looking through the archives more or less at random due to the limited time at my disposal and the scope of the collection. After a trawl in different directions, my attention was drawn to the material about Trotsky's last book – *Stalin*. To my amazement, I discovered that there were nine large manuscript boxes in the archive, the Harper Manuscripts (items H1-H28), containing all of the preparatory materials for the Stalin book. These contained all the original files, the drafts, proof galleys, press cuttings and notes, handwritten and in typed form, as well as a number of boxes containing all of Charles Malamuth's English translations of Trotsky's Russian originals.

The first thing that strikes you about the *Stalin* collection is the different layers, built up like geological strata, which were eventually used to produce the first half of the book, that is to say, up to and including 1917. The first drafts contained hand-written and typed texts, the second drafts were completely typed, translated and then passed back to Trotsky for further correction, editing and polishing. Trotsky certainly took a great deal of pride in 'polishing' his writings as well as seeking to improve upon the English translations, so that the meaning could be as precise as possible.

My first visit to Harvard simply identified what was there. On subsequent visits, I asked to see the entire archive on *Stalin*, which was delivered to the reading room on a large trolley. The files containing the materials are housed in large archive boxes and numbered in separate folders (bMSRuss 13.3) H1-H28. These also contain all the paper clippings and various materials that

1 *Writings*, Supplement to 1934-40, p. 863.

were translated into English but not used in the final edition of the book, including the original drafts, held in folders H14-H19.

Interspersed with the hand written material is typed copy, with various underlining in red pencil. Further additions to the text were glued on. There are numerous lines penned by Trotsky changing the order of sentences, revealing his meticulous attention to detail. The work is then divided into numbered chapters, at least for the first part of the book. What really impresses you is the colossal amount of editing that Trotsky undertook, with crossings out in blue pencil and ink, until he was satisfied with the final version. It is clear that he was a stickler for detail. Eventually, the proof copies were glued together sheet by sheet to produce a continuous and extremely long strip.

Given the scarcity of paper in Mexico at this time, the original manuscript is written on different qualities of paper – from 90gsm sheets to very flimsy grease-proof type paper – which also contained a mixture of typeface and handwriting. Some are double-spaced and others single-spaced. There is text in different languages: Russian, German, French, English and Spanish.

CHARLES MALAMUTH

The first part of *Stalin* deals in a masterly fashion with the role of the individual in history, tracing the evolution of Stalin from a young boy in the Seminary to a professional revolutionary in the years before the revolution of 1917. However, the incomplete second part, which, even in the mutilated published edition, contains extremely interesting material, was marred by the additions introduced by Charles Malamuth. This was not simply bridging material, as he maintained, but was made up of whole chunks of text in certain chapters, which clearly contradicted the political line of the book.

When Trotsky's widow, Natalia Sedova, and Trotsky's attorney, Albert Goldman, were shown the text, they vehemently objected to the book's publication in this vulgarised form. Esteban Volkov, Trotsky's grandson, also tried unsuccessfully to prevent the book's re-publication. Five years after the death of Natalia, Esteban, along with Dr. Adolfo Zamora, who had been his grandfather's representative, sought to prevent the publication of the Stay and Day edition in 1967, which contained a foreword by the notorious Bertram D. Wolfe. But to no avail.

Charles Malamuth was an assistant professor in Slavonic languages at the University of California. He spent a year in 1931 in the Soviet Union as a newspaper correspondent for United Press International. It was a period of upheaval in Russia with Stalin's forced collectivisation of agriculture and

the drive to complete the first Five-Year Plan in four years. Malamuth had witnessed at first hand Stalin's repression against the Left Opposition, which was in full swing. In early January 1932, on his return to the United States, he wrote two letters, one to Trotsky's son, Leon Sedov, who was living in Germany, and a second to the Communist League of America, the name adopted by the American Trotskyists. "My year in Russia has taught me to admire the Trotskyists more than any other group," he wrote to Martin Abern, a leading member of the League, expressing admiration and offering his assistance to the movement.²

Despite this admiration for Trotskyism, he never actually joined the Communist League. He remained a 'fellow-traveller' or 'admirer' of the Trotskyists, a position he seemed to hold throughout the 1930s. This view of him was held by John G. Wright, a leading American Trotskyist, who in a letter to Trotsky in December 1938, described Malamuth simply as a "sympathiser."³

In this period of the 1930s, Trotskyism had become fashionable among certain sections of the radical intelligentsia in America. Malamuth was part of this milieu. "Trotskyism became something of a vogue which was to leave many marks in American literature," states Trotsky's biographer, Isaac Deutscher:

Among the writers, especially critics, affected by it, were Edmund Wilson, Sidney Hook, James T. Farrell, Dwight MacDonald, Charles Malamuth, Philip Rahv, James Rorty, Harold Rosenberg, Clement Greenberg, Mary McCarthy, and many, many others.

How did a man like Malamuth end up editing Trotsky's *Stalin*? Charles Malamuth's knowledge of Russian was certainly useful and his talent was put to good use in translating some of Trotsky's articles. Trotsky, as we will see, was never very impressed by this young 'sympathiser' or his abilities. Nevertheless, he was badly in need of help and had to work with the material at his disposal.

On 15th February 1938 (the day before the murder of Leon Sedov, Trotsky's son, in Paris), Trotsky was approached by Harper & Brothers, the American publishers, with an offer of \$5,000, to be paid in instalments, to write a biography of Stalin. The request also enquired about a possible translator for such a project. Trotsky, who was deeply affected by the tragic

2 Letter to Martin Abern, dated 7th January 1932, *Leon Trotsky Exile Papers* bMSRuss 13 2861, Houghton Library, Harvard University.

3 Letter from Wright to Trotsky, dated 2nd December 1938, bMSRuss13. T4738.

loss of his son, was not at all keen about the publisher's offer. The death of Sedov was a devastating blow to Trotsky and Natalia, a further act of revenge by Stalin. Moreover, Trotsky had already commenced work on another book, namely a biography of Lenin, the first part of which he had already finished in November 1934.

Pressurised by serious financial difficulties, Trotsky eventually overcame his reluctance and accepted Harper & Brothers' proposal. Charles Malamuth, who had translated some of Trotsky's smaller writings, was available, and was therefore given the task of translating the newly-commissioned work. Clearly delighted by the prospect of such a tempting offer, Malamuth wrote in a letter, "*Stalin* promises to be a milestone in my translation efforts." Trotsky, however, was not totally convinced, but had little alternative given the lack of available Russian translators. Furthermore, he had received assurances that he would be able to personally supervise and sign off all the translations before publication.

This was no secondary matter for Trotsky, who had been unhappy with Max Eastman's earlier translations of his writings. In February 1938, in a letter to Jan Frankel, Trotsky revealed these anxieties about Eastman as a possible translator for his book on Lenin.

From every point of view the translation is fundamental. *The History of the Russian Revolution*, in spite of the magnificent style, is full of errors. And why? Because I had no opportunity of supervising the translation.⁴

He was not going to make the same mistake again.

THE WORK BEGINS – AND THE PROBLEMS

In early April 1938, the work on *Stalin* began in earnest. On 26th April, Trotsky wrote to Sara Weber informing her that he was "now working on the Stalin book." He had, however, encountered a problem he wanted her to resolve. "At every page I am faced with research upon geographical, historical, chronological, biographical, etc., data," and so he asked her, "would it not be possible to find an old pre-revolutionary [Russia] encyclopaedia in New York? ... The question is very important to me because otherwise my work would be handicapped at every step."

Within a few months, on 7th July, Malamuth received the Russian manuscript of the first chapter of the work, 'Family and School', in order to translate. Things seemed to proceed quite quickly. The second chapter was

⁴ Letter to Jan Frankel, 3rd February 1938.

mailed to Malamuth on 16th August and the third chapter on 12th September. But the work did not go so smoothly because of various interruptions. Before the end of the year, Harper & Brothers had refused Trotsky financial advances on the grounds that he was slow in delivering portions of the manuscript.

There were other problems with the book. Without asking Trotsky's permission, Malamuth had shown the manuscript to third parties, namely Max Shachtman and James Burnham who were leading a minority in the American Socialist Workers' Party that opposed Trotsky's analysis of the character of the USSR. When Trotsky found out about this he was furious, regarding the incident as a breach of trust. Trotsky complained to Joseph Hansen:

Then, against all my warnings, he [Malamuth] permitted himself a condemnable indiscretion with my manuscript. I protested. His elementary duty should have been to apologise for his mistake and everything would have been in order again. I also find that comrades Burnham and Shachtman committed an error in entering into a discussion with him about the quality of the manuscript without asking him whether or not he had my authorisation to give them the manuscript. The best thing would be for comrades Burnham and Shachtman, on their own initiative, to explain that they, together with Malamuth, committed something of an indiscretion and it was best to recognise it as such and let it go at that.

In this letter, Trotsky concluded bluntly:

Malamuth seems to have at least three qualities: *he does not know Russian; he does not know English; and he is tremendously pretentious. I doubt that he is the best of translators...*⁵

In these few words Trotsky reveals a shrewd appreciation of Malamuth's pretentiousness, which was amply demonstrated by subsequent events. However, there was little choice but to continue to use his services.

Trotsky's indignation at this indiscretion reflected his deep concern about security and the fear that the *Stalin* manuscript could fall into the wrong hands. This was a very real danger at the time. Trotsky was engaged in a life-and-death struggle against the crimes of Stalinism on a world stage. Stalin was obsessed by Trotsky and was determined to silence him. He therefore ordered his secret police agents – the GPU – to penetrate the Trotskyist movement and carry out the maximum of sabotage.

Stalinist agents had already managed to set fire to his household in Prinkipo, where some of his papers and documents were destroyed. "The GPU is going

5 *Writings*, Supplement to 1934-40, p. 830, my emphasis – RS.

to do everything in its power to get its hands on my archives,” wrote Trotsky on 10th October, 1936.⁶ A month later, his archives entrusted to the Dutch Institute of Social History were ransacked in Paris and certain documents stolen. “In order to render me powerless in the face of slander, the GPU is trying to get its hands on my archives, whether by theft, housebreaking, or assassination,” stated Trotsky.⁷

Mark Zborowski, a Stalinist agent, had infiltrated the movement in France and wormed his way into Leon Sedov’s confidence. Russian speakers were in short supply and the movement was in desperate need of assistance. Eventually, he came to assist in the editing of the *Bulletin of the Opposition* in Paris. Zborowski, whose party name was ‘Etienne’, soon had access to the secure box containing the correspondence between Sedov and Trotsky. Using his position, he regularly passed on information about Trotsky to Soviet intelligence, which was then passed on to Stalin personally. It was Zborowski who ensured that copies of Trotsky’s writings were placed on Stalin’s desk before they were even published. Stalin read each issue of the *Bulletin of the Opposition*, paying particular attention to articles about himself.

Trotsky feared that through burglary or other such means, Stalin’s agents would try to steal or destroy the drafts. Therefore, all precautions were taken to keep them safe. These fears were well-founded. When Stalin was informed about Trotsky’s new work, he was furious and was prepared to go to any lengths to prevent its publication.

Throughout 1939, Trotsky soldiered on with *Stalin*, but he was faced with further interruptions, not least the need to leave Diego Rivera’s household in May, dealing with Rivera’s break with Trotskyism, and then the legal tussle over the custody of his young grandson, Sieva (Esteban Volkov). Sieva was to leave Europe and take up his new home with Trotsky and Natalia in Mexico City on 6th August 1939.

TROTSKY’S ASSASSINATION

By April 1940, at the time of the first assassination attempt on his life, half of the book had been finished (up until 1917) and the remainder of the book was at various stages of completion. The book was now on hold, with work almost completely taken up with the legal depositions needed for the investigation of the attack, as well as the Mexican courts. Trotsky also had to

6 *Writings*, 1935-6, p. 440.

7 *Ibid*, p. 462.

answer a continual barrage of lies and slander from the Stalinist newspapers in Mexico and abroad, as they stepped up their verbal assaults.

By the time of Trotsky's assassination on 20th August, the book had still only been half completed, with a large amount of material remaining in draft form in different states of readiness. Trotsky had managed to revise the original first seven chapters of the book in Russian, as well as 'Three Concepts of the Russian Revolution', contained in the appendices. He managed to check the English translation of the first six chapters, but had not had the opportunity to check the seventh.

A number of myths have been circulated about the Stalin book, mainly by Charles Malamuth himself. Malamuth invented the story that in the August attack some of the *Stalin* manuscripts were splattered with blood and some completely destroyed. He repeats this in his foreword to the Stalin book:

Some of the manuscript of the unfinished portion was in Trotsky's study, strung out in enormously long strips of many sheets pasted end to end, at the time of the murderous attack upon him, and in the struggle with the assassin portions of the manuscript were not only splattered with blood but utterly destroyed.

There is no evidence whatsoever in the Trotsky archives at Harvard to support this claim. Having examined every single page of the original *Stalin* material, including the long strips pasted end-to-end, I can safely say that there is no evidence of blood stains or anything else that would support this fairy tale. No damage at all can be seen. The police photograph of Trotsky's study following the assassination reveals some newspapers scattered on the floor following the struggle, but there is no sign of any long strips of galley proofs "splattered with blood". Clearly Charles Malamuth invented this story in order to dramatise the whole thing and thus boost his own role in 'rescuing' Trotsky's manuscript. This is not the only example of unscrupulous behaviour on his part.

Following Trotsky's death, the American publishers, who owned the rights to the book, placed Malamuth in charge, not only of the translation, but of 'editing' the final book. For them, this was simply a commercial deal to salvage the book following the author's death. Trotsky's views did not enter into their calculations. A few days after the assassination, Malamuth made enquiries about the manuscript to Joseph Hansen, Trotsky's secretary in Mexico. In his reply four days after Trotsky's death, Hansen outlines the very difficult position in the household.

Mexico City, 25th August 1940

To Charles Malamuth

All of us are oppressed and in the greatest grief.

We have not yet been able to enter the study in order to see what Trotsky had left in the way of final writings. However, he had spent, in the period from 24th May until the second assault, all of his time almost exclusively on his deposition for the court.

On the Saturday before this last assault he told me that he was now practically finished with this work and could again return to the Stalin book. I think he expected to begin the final pages of this book on the 22nd.

Naturally we will try to ascertain as soon as the court has unsealed his office whether there is anything more which could be added to the book. I suppose that Harpers will proceed with its publication immediately, in view of the fact that the book was almost finished. LD⁸ told me last December that at that time the major part of the book was completed and that all that remained was the period of the Left Opposition.

Joe Hansen

The description of “almost finished” is obviously an exaggeration, but Hansen was not to know. Trotsky was certainly looking forward to being rid of the business of the 24th May assault and to settle down to his ‘real work’, namely his biography of Stalin. But it would still have required some months of work to complete. He was eager to resume work on “my poor book” after a long interval on 22nd August 1940, as Hansen suggests – one day after his actual murder. Such was Trotsky’s unfinished plan.

The following is an interesting report by Jean van Heijenoort, who had earlier been one of Trotsky’s secretaries, dated 14th October 1940, concerning the part of the Archives connected with the Stalin book. It shows the fragmentary nature of the later ‘chapters’.

The last completed chapter of the book on *Stalin*, written a few months ago, is ‘The Year 1917’. It has already been translated into English.

For the ensuing chapters, LT prepared a series of folders, each bearing a title written by him and containing materials and manuscripts. Each folder does not correspond to a future chapter of the book; several of the folders were probably intended to be used for a single chapter. It has been impossible to find how many chapters were planned and what titles they would bear.

8 Initials for ‘Lev Davidovich’, Trotsky’s first name and patronym, by which he was known by family and close friends as was customary in Eastern Slavic culture at the time.

Our task consisted in making an exact inventory of the folders and placing in them some material obviously displaced during the last days of LT's life. We counted 70 of these folders. They are, moreover, of very different size. Some of them contain sub-folders and form a future chapter of the book; others contain merely a few sheets.

To give an idea of their contents, their titles could enter into the following categories: Brest-Litovsk, The Civil War, The First Period of the Soviets, Lenin's Sickness and Death, Toward Thermidor, The Struggle against the Opposition, Stalin's Personal Characteristics.

There is no chapter near completion – after the last one, 'The Year 1917'. Besides, numerous quotations and material of all kinds, the folders contain as manuscript only fragmentary notes, handwritten by LT or typewritten. Most often each note consists of a few lines. The longest of them attain ten pages. An estimate of the total length of these notes is rather difficult, but we estimate they may come to 300 regular typewritten pages, double spaced.

Jean van Heijenoort, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass., October 14, 1940.⁹

MALAMUTH'S DISTORTIONS

As soon as Malamuth had gained access to Trotsky's unfinished manuscripts, he continued with his translation. It seems that the method Malamuth used was to verbally translate pages of Russian text to an English-language typist. This can be seen from the numerous misspellings of Russian names in the typewritten drafts. Malamuth then went over these first versions to polish up the translation.

From this point on Malamuth, now translator and editor of Trotsky's *Stalin*, would decide what would go in and what would be left out of the book. He was also free to add his own commentaries as bridging material. "The editorial policy in regard to the unfinished portion of the manuscript was to publish Trotsky's text entirely except for repetitious and utterly extraneous material," states Malamuth in his editor's note. "Under the circumstances, extensive interpolations by the editor were unavoidable." In addition, eight pages of text were made up of "portions of the author's notes [but] summarised by the editor".

Malamuth used his position as editor to introduce his own political commentary into parts of the book, using extensive interpolations in brackets. These unauthorised additions served to distort and misrepresent Trotsky's

⁹ BMSRuss 13.1 T4801.

political standpoint and went against the entire political spirit of the book. They are similar to the views of Souvarine or Sidney Hook, who regarded Stalinism as the inevitable outgrowth of Bolshevism – a view that was in direct contradiction to the position held by Trotsky, which is clearly expressed in his biography of Stalin.

To illustrate the extent of these “interpolations”, it is sufficient to look at the original Chapter 11: ‘From Obscurity to the Triumvirate’. Of the roughly 1,200 lines in this chapter, sixty-two percent are by Malamuth and thirty-eight percent are by Trotsky. There is not a single word of Trotsky until after seven-and-a-half pages by Malamuth. All this was passed off in the editor’s note as simply “commentary” essential for “fluency and clarity”!

This political meddling led to bitter exchanges between Malamuth and Natalia Sedova. After being shown the final proofs of the book, Natalia and Trotsky’s attorney, Albert Goldman, objected strenuously to the content. There is a whole section of letters in the Trotsky archive containing their objections. Their indignation is revealed in their damning comments written on the page proofs: “False! Completely false!”; “CM writes so much crap! His opinions are like Sidney Hook,” writes Goldman. “False, completely false... Trotsky’s own and complete ending should be used. Not the ‘edited’ *Life* copy.”; “Unacceptable Revision of history!”; “Unacceptable”; “False revision of historical events.”; and so on.

Trotsky’s widow objected to the “unheard-of violence committed by the translator on the author’s rights.” She went on to insist, “everything written by the pen of Mr. Malamuth must be expunged from the book.” “As a concession,” they wrote, “we could agree to include LD’s own text – provided it is first checked against the originals by us.” They then went on to cross out pages of commentary by Malamuth. But it was all to no avail, the unauthorised commentaries were all maintained in the published version.¹⁰

Natalia resorted to legal action to prevent publication, but the case was lost. When the book finally saw the light of day, Malamuth cynically announced the publication was taking place “without censorship either by Trotskyists or by Stalinists”! The publication of *Stalin* was originally planned for 1941. But while the book was in the process of being printed and distributed to wholesalers, the US government intervened to halt publication. Following Hitler’s invasion of the Soviet Union, Roosevelt did not wish to annoy his new ally – Joseph Stalin.

¹⁰ BMSRuss 13.3 – H12 (1of2)].

"It [Trotsky's *Stalin*] was printed by its publisher, Harper & Brothers, but withdrawn by them prior to public sale late in 1941," writes Frank C. Hanighen, feature writer for La Follette's *Progressive* in the 1st May 1944 issue. "The publishers gave as the reason for withdrawal 'a concern for the work's adverse effect on international relations' says Mrs Lombard..."

Helen Lombard, a *Washington Evening Star* journalist, exposed the book's suppression.

"One member of Congress was asked not to let the book get out of his hands nor permit it to be examined by any other person ... State Department officials have made informal suggestions that any quotation from the book would be harmful to Soviet-American relations..." explained Frank Hanighen.¹¹

Only in 1946, after Britain and the United States had fallen out with Stalin, did the book finally appear. As expected, the publication of *Stalin* provoked outrage from the Stalinists. They had cheered the suppression of the book, which they hoped would be permanent. But the times had changed and the indignation of the Stalinists knew no bounds:

"He (Trotsky) set his secretaries to work on a massive, vituperative *Life of Stalin*," stated Sayers and Kahn in *The Great Conspiracy against Russia*, published in the US in early 1946. It went on:

Trotsky's friends in the United States made arrangements to have this book published by Harper Brothers of New York. Although the book was set up in print, Harper decided at the last minute not to distribute the book; and the few copies that had been sent out were withdrawn from circulation. Sections of the book had previously been published in article form by Trotsky. The last article to be published before his death appeared on August, 1940, in *Liberty* magazine; the article was entitled, 'Did Stalin Poison Lenin?' In April, 1946, amidst a new upsurge of anti-Soviet propaganda in the United States, Harper Brothers reversed their original decision and published Trotsky's tirade against Stalin.¹²

Five years after it had been withdrawn to avoid embarrassment to Stalin, it was now seen as a useful stick with which to beat him. Malamuth's insertions provided the necessary 'adjustments' to turn Trotsky's work into a weapon in the struggle not only against Stalinism but also against Bolshevism. For their part, Harper & Brothers were keen to make money from its delayed publication. The whole episode is characterised by the most blatant cynicism on all sides: the publishers, Malamuth and the US government all conspired

11 Reprinted from the British *Socialist Appeal*, August 1944.

12 *The Great Conspiracy Against Russia*, p. 111.

to use and abuse this book for their own ends. The one voice that was silenced was that of the author, Leon Trotsky.

MALAMUTH'S OMISSIONS

When *Stalin* was finally published, a great amount of the material had been left out of the book, despite being translated by Malamuth, who judged this material to be “superfluous”. The following lines are quite typical of his attitude: “I found little or nothing in this appendix,” stated Malamuth in the notes concerning the draft.

If you agree with me that it is not really indispensable how about leaving it out of the book altogether? I honestly found it the dullest, most repetitious and least illuminating of all the chapters and by taking it out we could save about 5,000 words elsewhere.

Written on the manuscript in Malamuth's handwriting is the note: “This phrase is unclear, more guesswork on my part.”¹³ In fact, Malamuth was clearly incapable of ‘guessing’ or distinguishing between what was important and what was not.

Another thing that struck me when examining the manuscripts in the archives was Malamuth's misleading use of brackets. These were supposed to distinguish his editorial handiwork from Trotsky's original text. However, when you compared the later and earlier drafts, these brackets only appeared after he had already translated Trotsky's material. In other words, in some cases, he had placed brackets around Trotsky's own words without any explanation, thus giving the impression that these comments or words were his own. Thus, the reader sometimes does not know whether he is reading Trotsky or Malamuth. This goes far beyond the bounds of what would be regarded as editing and enters the realm of deliberate distortion.

There was therefore clearly a great deal of work to be done in restoring as far as possible the original, although unfinished, text of Trotsky. The first task was to remove the political interpolations of Malamuth. In the archive, we again went through the text in order to identify the gaps and omissions. Fortunately, most of the missing material was numbered and could, with considerable detective work, be reunited with the original text to one degree or another.

¹³ BMSRuss 13.3, folder H.14, 2 of 2.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

On a visit to the archive in 2005, we purchased copies of the missing material in the form of microfilm. With kind assistance from Philip Wallace and Carol McCullum of the Trotsky collection at Glasgow Caledonian University, photocopies were produced from the film. Then these copies were meticulously typed up into a word document, including all the changes, comments and deletions. This onerous task took about two years and was carried out by Hazel Brookshaw, who struggled single-handedly to decipher and type up all the photocopies into usable Word files. Once accomplished, we were then able to painstakingly piece together the original, but still unfinished, work and to slot together all the missing parts of the book. Any small gaps we missed initially were restored thanks to the help of Steve Iverson in Boston, who made visits to the archives on our behalf.

From the time we first obtained the necessary material to the moment we were ready to publish the new edition more than ten years have passed. We have had the benefit of a committed team of people who have dedicated a great deal of time and effort to ensure the success of this important project, none of whom were able to work on it full time.

I managed to find the most appropriate places to insert the new material. The most complicated and time-consuming task, however, actually involved completely reworking the text, work that proceeded painfully slowly. This was the task of Alan Woods who, using his political judgement and knowledge of Russian, has been able to complete this important but extremely complicated and difficult work over a period of about three years. The task was further complicated by the discovery of new material, both in English and Russian. Other material, which did not easily fit, had to be inserted in the most appropriate place according to the narrative and its political context.

We must mention David King for his encouragement and support prior to his tragic passing in May this year. Thanks must go to John Peter Roberts for his valuable contributions in providing an index for this book, additional footnotes, suggestions and oversight. We would also like to pay gratitude to Ana Muñoz for her efforts in typing up the corrections and proofreading and Timur Dautov for his assistance in translating from Russian. Niklas Albin Svensson, Niki Brodin Larsson and Guy Howie worked on formatting the text and images, and on laying out the book. Moreover, José Camo deserves praise for his role in designing the cover of the book and helping with the layout. In addition, the following people should be thanked for their help in proofreading the text: Phil Sharpe, Sion Reynolds, Julianna Grant, John

Peterson, Francesco Merli, Fred Weston, Julian Sharpe, Steve Iverson and lastly Hazel Brookshaw, in addition to her transcribing of the original manuscripts.

This project could not have been successful without the kind permission of the Houghton Library at Harvard University to examine, translate, and publish material from their collection. We would like to thank in particular Thomas Ford and the other librarians at Houghton Library for their help and assistance.

In publishing this book we have finally fulfilled the wishes of Trotsky's widow, Natalia Sedova, to expunge all traces of Malamuth's interpolations from the text. Trotsky's critique of Stalin and Stalinism stands in its own right as a classic work of Marxism. We fervently hope that our decision to republish this important work by Trotsky, purged of the earlier distortions, will serve to restore Trotsky's last work to the place of honour it deserves in the political literature of the 20th century.

Rob Sewell
June 2016

EDITOR'S NOTE

Nobody can ever claim to have produced the definitive edition of *Stalin*. It was unfinished on the day of Trotsky's assassination and will remain unfinished for all time. What we can say without fear of contradiction is that this is the most complete version of the book that has ever been published. We have brought together all the material that was available from the Trotsky archives in English and supplemented it with additional material in Russian.

There have been other editions of the book; they have never been satisfactory, and some were even misleading. In preparing for this project, we compared the translations of other versions, all of which were inadequate in different ways. The most striking example is the version that was published in French in 1948 under the direction of Jean van Heijenoort, who was one of Trotsky's secretaries in the 1930s, in collaboration with Alfred Rosmer, a lifelong friend and collaborator of Trotsky.

Van Heijenoort claimed to have gone back to the Russian originals, and for this reason many people were led to believe that the French edition was more authentic than the English version of Charles Malamuth. However, a careful page-by-page examination of the French text soon revealed that this was not the case. We found only a few pages of new material, most of which was incidental and of little interest. The rest was translated word-for-word from Malamuth's English version. Van Heijenoort had omitted even more of Trotsky's words than Malamuth. Pages upon pages were missing from the French edition.

To make matters even worse, in many places the brackets that Malamuth had placed around his interpolations to distinguish them from Trotsky's text had been removed. Probably this was intended to give the impression that

Malamuth's comments had been eliminated. The reality is that not only are Malamuth's commentaries retained, but it is impossible to see where Trotsky's text ends and Malamuth's begins. This goes far beyond what is permissible for any editor of another person's work. These mutilations and arbitrary omissions are even worse than Malamuth's hatchet job, if that is possible.

In the same year that the French edition appeared, a Spanish version was produced by José Janés. This was a translation based on the Malamuth edition, but at least this Spanish edition carried a 'health warning' written by Natalia Sedova, disclaiming any responsibility for the additions and revisions made by Malamuth in the Harper & Brothers edition. The Spanish edition was later republished elsewhere, most notably in Argentina in 1975. This translation leaves a lot to be desired.

Interestingly, in 1985, the first ever Russian edition was produced, edited by Yuri Felshtinsky who, unlike the others, did take the trouble to go back to the original manuscripts in the Trotsky archive in Harvard. This version contains some new material in comparison with Malamuth's, but for whatever reason, unfortunately left out a lot of material already published in the English edition. We have compared the two versions and added the material in Felshtinsky's version that was not in any of the published editions in a new translation.

A COMPLEX TASK

When I was first approached with the proposal to edit *Stalin*, I did not hesitate to accept what was clearly a very important task of 'rescuing' a major work of Trotsky and presenting it to the reading public in a more complete and finished form. However, neither I, nor anyone else associated with it, had any idea of the enormous difficulty and complexity of this project.

I had assumed that all that was required was to find the appropriate places from where the new material had been omitted and put it back into place. But on re-reading Malamuth's translation it soon became evident that this would not be sufficient. Malamuth not only carried out many arbitrary deletions of material he did not like or considered irrelevant. He also put the text together in an equally arbitrary manner that frequently did violence not just to the political content (clearly a matter of indifference to him, though not to the author) but also to historical logic.

I had already noticed that in his Russian version Felshtinsky had radically changed the order of the paragraphs, so that the Russian edition bears very little resemblance to the English version that has been generally taken as the

model for all other translations. I therefore decided to follow his example and deconstruct the existing English version, take it to pieces and then re-assemble it, adding in all the new material at my disposal. This was a far more difficult and time-consuming task than anyone had anticipated. The criterion that I adopted was to follow, insofar as possible, a strict chronological order. That was the simplest, most logical approach, although some exceptions had to be made.

A few words have to be said about the quality of Malamuth's translation. The art of translating political works is a difficult one. It supposes three things: a good knowledge of one's own language; a good knowledge of the language to be translated from; and a good level of political understanding. In my experience it is extremely rare to find all three qualities in a translator. And when it is a question of translating Trotsky, the matter becomes far more complicated. Apart from being a master of Marxist theory, Trotsky was also a highly accomplished writer with a very keen sense of literary style. To adequately convey all the richness of the original is therefore a serious challenge to any translator.

It is no wonder then that Trotsky was so demanding and so critical of the translations of his works. He always felt that they were missing one or other element: either political precision or stylistic creativity. Of course, he was not wrong. In the case of Max Eastman, Trotsky felt that he was too inclined to sacrifice political correctness for the sake of literary effect. He undoubtedly had a point and Eastman's political weakness and impressionism was shown by his later evolution. But the reader of his brilliant translation of *The History of the Russian Revolution* will surely forgive him many of his sins and will not even have noticed those shortcomings that Trotsky corrected so mercilessly.

We know that Trotsky made some sharp criticisms of Malamuth's translation. But, as we know from his criticisms of Max Eastman's translations, he was a perfectionist in these matters, as in everything else. Moreover, Trotsky's criticism of Malamuth's work came at a time when he was exasperated by the latter's *faux pas* in showing parts of the unfinished *Stalin* to Burnham and Shachtman at a moment when they were in political conflict with him. The fact that Trotsky subsequently agreed to allow Malamuth to continue working on *Stalin* indicates that he did not completely write off his abilities as a translator, although it is true that he did not have any alternative at the time.

Charles Malamuth never reached the level of Max Eastman. His style is pedestrian and does not contain a hint of Trotsky's literary genius. But far more serious than that are his political interpolations. To cite just one example,

he describes the October Revolution as a 'coup', which simply repeats the slanders of bourgeois critics. Anyone with even the slightest knowledge of the Bolshevik Revolution will know that was not a coup at all, but the most popular and democratic revolution in history. To use the word 'coup' in this context constitutes a gross distortion of the ideas of Trotsky, a clear example of how Malamuth tried to introduce his own ideas into the text of *Stalin* – ideas that are in flat contradiction to the author's intentions.

Despite his political interference, having examined every sentence of the second half of *Stalin*, taken it to pieces and put it together again, I consider that in general Malamuth's English translation is not all bad. Although it can hardly be considered a literary masterpiece, it is mostly a correct translation – as long as we leave to one side the interpolations in brackets. We decided at the outset to delete all of Malamuth's additions. Here too we found a problem. In some places Malamuth has included material written by Trotsky in brackets and presented them as his own. We had to disentangle these twisted knots, and this task was carried out with admirable diligence (along with a hundred other detailed tasks) by Rob Sewell. Finally, every trace of Malamuth's interference with the text has been expunged. Where this has created gaping holes in the text, I have added some 'bridging' passages, which are clearly indicated in square brackets.

The work of 'deconstructing' *Stalin* was a bit like taking a Rolls Royce apart and looking at all the bits neatly laid out on the floor of the garage, wondering where to begin. At times it was a dispiriting experience. The work proceeded slowly and painfully, particularly as I had to do other work at the same time, which constantly interrupted the work on *Stalin*.

After each interruption it was more difficult to take up the strands where one had left off. Delays were caused by the need to translate parts of the Russian version, a task that only I was able to perform until, quite late in the day, I received welcome assistance from Timur Dautov. Then, just when it seemed that we were about to finish, I was informed that an American comrade had found more missing material that had to be put in! It brought to my mind the myth of Sisyphus, who was condemned to repeat forever the task of pushing a boulder up a mountain, only to see it roll downhill again.

At last, after almost three years of hard work, the task is complete. The reader will wish to know what the final balance sheet is: how much has been added and where. We initially considered indicating every addition, but this would have been a very complicated task: some of the additions were quite lengthy, whereas others were only a few sentences, or even a single sentence.

To have filled pages and pages with asterisks and footnotes would have encumbered the text and rendered it almost unreadable. We therefore decided to favour the interests of the general reader as against the curiosity of the literary specialist.

We can, however, say exactly how much new material has been added. We decided not to interfere with the first part (Chapters 1-7) that goes as far as the Russian Revolution. This is because this part was published while Trotsky was alive and was therefore approved by him. However, having read this part carefully, we found that here too Malamuth had omitted some things that were in Trotsky's original manuscript. These parts are few in number, and so in this case we have decided that they should be indicated.

The really major changes are to be found in the second half of the book (that is, in the old edition Chapters 8-12; now Chapters 8-14). Together with the new appendices ('The French Thermidor'; 'Stalin as Theoretician'; 'Stalin's Official Historiography' and 'Unpublished Fragments') this amounts to almost double the material contained in the old edition. To be precise, in the old version (excluding Malamuth's comments in brackets) there were 106,000 words. The new edition contains an additional 86,000 words, that is to say, in the second part the text has been augmented by approximately ninety percent.

If Trotsky had lived, it is very clear that he would have produced an infinitely better work. He would have made a rigorous selection of the raw material. Like an accomplished sculptor he would have polished it and then polished it again, until it reached the dazzling heights of a work of art. We cannot hope to attain such heights. We do not know what material the great man would have selected or rejected. But we feel we are under a historic obligation at least to make available to the world all the material that is available to us.

Of this material we have omitted very little – mainly those parts that are clearly repeated elsewhere. However, certain ideas may be repeated with subtle nuances that convey a slightly different meaning and these repetitions we have left in. We are aware that this approach does no justice at all to Trotsky's wonderful style. But Trotsky understood that content is more important than form. And at any rate, we believe that our criteria in the selection of material are far more reliable than that pursued by someone who did not share Trotsky's views and had no interest in propagating them.

Despite all the difficulties, this work has been of great educational value. We have found in many pieces that were discarded as things of no interest

fascinating insights into Trotsky's thought. Like the last works of Marx, Engels and Lenin, the writings of Trotsky's last few years are the products of a mature mind that was able to draw on a whole lifetime of rich experience. Of particular interest are his observations about dialectics and Marxist theory in the Appendix 'Stalin as a Theoretician', which, as far as I know, have never been published before.

In making available for the first time a great deal of material that was arbitrarily excluded from *Stalin* and hidden in dusty boxes for three quarters of a century, we are discharging a debt to a great revolutionary and simultaneously providing a wealth of new and valuable material to the new generation that is striving to find the ideas and programme to change the world. This is the only monument Trotsky would have ever wanted.

In conclusion, I wish to pay tribute to the man who, more than anyone else, has encouraged me in this work. I refer to Leon Trotsky's grandson, my old friend and comrade Esteban Volkov, who has spent a lifetime fighting for the cause of historical truth. From the moment I told him about this project, he showed the liveliest enthusiasm. More than anyone else, Esteban was extremely anxious to see this important work of his grandfather's restored after so many years. Now it is finally completed, I have no hesitation in dedicating it to him.

Alan Woods
London
30th June 2016

INTRODUCTION

BY LEON TROTSKY

The reader will note that I have dwelt with considerably more detail on the development of Stalin during the preparatory period than on his more recent political activities. The facts of the latter period are known to every literate person. Moreover, my criticisms of Stalin's political behaviour since 1923 are to be found in various works. The purpose of this political biography is to show how a personality of this sort was formed, and how it came to power by usurpation of the right to such an exceptional role. That is why, in describing the life and development of Stalin during the period when nothing, or almost nothing, was known about him, the author has concerned himself with a thoroughgoing analysis of isolated facts and details and the testimony of witnesses; whereas, in appraising the latter period, he has limited himself to a synthetic exposition, presupposing that the facts – at least, the principal ones – are sufficiently well known to the reader.

Critics in the service of the Kremlin will declare this time, even as they declared with reference to my *History of the Russian Revolution*, that the absence of bibliographical references renders a verification of the author's assertions impossible. As a matter of fact, bibliographical references to hundreds and thousands of Russian newspapers, magazines, memoirs, anthologies and the like would give the foreign critical reader very little and would only burden the text. As for Russian critics, they have at their disposal whatever is available of the Soviet archives and libraries. Had there been factual errors, misquotations, or any other improper use of material in any of my works, that would have been pointed out long ago. In fact, I do not know of a single instance of any anti-Trotskyist writings that contain a single reference to incorrect use

of source material by me. I venture to think that this fact alone is sufficient guarantee of authenticity for the foreign reader.

In writing my *History* I avoided personal reminiscences and relied chiefly on data already published and therefore subject to verification, including only such of my own testimony, previously published, as had not been controverted by anyone in the past. In this biography I ventured a departure from this too stringent method. Here, too, the basic outline of the narrative is made up of documents, memoirs and other objective sources. But in those instances where nothing can take the place of the testimony of the author's own memories, I felt that I had the right to interpolate one or another episode from my personal reminiscences, many of them hitherto unpublished, clearly indicating each time that in the given case I appear not only as the author but also as a witness. Otherwise, I have followed here the same method as in my *History of the Russian Revolution*.

Numerous of my opponents have conceded that the latter book is made up of facts arranged in a scholarly way. True, a reviewer in the *New York Times* rejected that book as prejudiced. But every line of his essay showed that he was indignant with the Russian Revolution and was transferring his indignation to its historian. This is the usual aberration of all sorts of liberal subjectivists who carry on a perpetual quarrel with the course of the class struggle. Embittered by the results of some historical process, they vent their spleen on the scientific analysis that discloses the inevitability of those results. In the final reckoning, the judgment passed on the author's method is far more pertinent than whether all or only a part of the author's conclusions will be acknowledged to be objective. And on that score this author has no fear of criticism. This work is built of facts and is solidly grounded in documents. It stands to reason that here and there partial and minor errors or trivial offences in emphasis and misinterpretation may be found. But what no one will find in this work is an unconscientious attitude toward facts, the deliberate disregard of documentary evidence or arbitrary conclusions based only on personal prejudices. The author did not overlook a single fact, document, or bit of testimony redounding to the benefit of the hero of this book. If a painstaking, thoroughgoing and conscientious gathering of facts, even of minor episodes, the verification of the testimony of witnesses with the aid of the methods of historical and biographical criticism, and finally the inclusion of facts of personal life in their relation to our hero's role in the historical process – if all of this is not objectivity, then, I ask: What is objectivity?

Again, new times have brought a new political morality. And, strangely enough, the [pendulum of history has] returned us in many respects to the epoch of the Renaissance, even exceeding it in the extent and depth of its cruelties and bestialities. Again we have political *condottieri*; again the struggle for power has assumed a grandiose character, its task – to achieve the most that is feasible for the time being by securing governmental power for one person, a power denuded to a merciless degree of all restraints. There was a time when the laws of political mechanics, painstakingly formulated by Machiavelli, were considered the height of cynicism. To Machiavelli the struggle for power was a chess theorem. Questions of morality did not exist for him, as they do not exist for a chess player, as they do not exist for a bookkeeper. His task consisted in determining the most practicable policy to be followed in regard to a given situation and in explaining how to carry that policy through in a nakedly ruthless manner, on the basis of experiences tested in the political crucibles of two continents. This approach is explained not only by the task itself but also by the character of the epoch during which this task was posed. It proceeded essentially from the state of development of feudalism and in accordance with the crucial struggle for power between the masters of two epochs – dying feudalism and the bourgeois society which was being born.

But throughout the nineteenth century, which was the age of Parliamentarism, liberalism and social reform (if you close your eyes to a few international wars and civil wars), Machiavelli was considered absurdly old-fashioned. Political ambition was confined within the parliamentary framework, and by the same token its excessively venturesome trends were curbed. It was no longer a matter of outright seizure of power by one person and his henchmen but of capturing mandates in as many electoral districts as possible. In the epoch of the struggle for ministerial portfolios Machiavelli seemed to be the quaint ideologist of a dimly distant past. The advent of new times had brought a new and a higher political morality. But, amazing thing, the twentieth century – that promised dream of a new age for which the nineteenth had so hopefully striven – has returned us in many respects to the ways and methods of the Renaissance!

This throwback to the cruellest Machiavellianism seems incomprehensible to one who until yesterday abided in the comforting confidence that human history moves along a rising line of material and cultural progress. On this score, all of us, I think, can say now: No epoch of the past was so cruel, so ruthless, so cynical as our epoch. Politically, morality has not improved at all by comparison with the standards of the Renaissance and with other even

more distant epochs. The epoch of the Renaissance was an epoch of struggles between two worlds. Social antagonisms reached extreme intensity, hence the intensity of the political struggle.

By the second half of the nineteenth century political morality had supplanted materialism (at least, in the imagination of certain politicians) only because social antagonisms had softened for a time and the political struggle had become petty. The basis of this was a general growth in the well-being of the nation and certain improvements in the situation of the upper layers of the working class. But our period, our epoch, resembles the epoch of the Renaissance in the sense that we are living on the verge of two worlds: the bourgeois one, which is suffering agony, and that new world which is going to replace it. Social contradictions have again achieved exceptional sharpness.

Political power, like morality, by no means develops uninterruptedly toward a state of perfection, as was thought at the end of the last century and during the first decade of the present century. Politics and morals suffer and have to pass through a highly complex and paradoxical orbit. Politics, like morality, is directly dependent on the class struggle. As a general rule, it may be said that the sharper and more intense the class struggle, the deeper the social crisis, and the more intense the character acquired by politics, the more concentrated and more ruthless becomes the power of the state and the more frankly does it throw aside its morality.

Some of my friends have remarked that too much space in this book is occupied by references to sources and my criticism of these sources. I fully realise the inconveniences of such a method of exposition. But I have no choice. No one is obliged to take on faith the assertions of an author as closely concerned and as directly involved as I have been in the struggle with the person whose biography he has been obliged to write. Our epoch is above all an epoch of lies. I do not therewith mean to imply that other epochs of humanity were distinguished by greater truthfulness. The lie is the fruit of contradictions, of struggle, of the clash of classes, of the suppression of personality, of the social order. In that sense it is an attribute of all human history. There are periods when social contradictions become exceptionally sharp, when the lie rises above the average, when the lie becomes an attribute of the very acuteness of social contradictions. Such is our epoch. I do not think that in all of human history anything could be found even remotely resembling the gigantic factory of lies which was organised by the Kremlin under the leadership of Stalin. And one of the principal purposes of this factory is to manufacture a new biography for Stalin... Some of these sources

were fabricated by Stalin himself... Without subjecting to criticism the details of progressively accumulating falsifications, it would be impossible to prepare the reader for such a phenomenon, for example, as the Moscow Trials...

*Stalin was the fourth child born to a woman of twenty who lost the other three and eked out a miserable living as laundress, seamstress and charwoman. His father, a peasant bootmaker of morose and uncontrolled temperament who drank up most of his meagre earnings and periodically beat him mercilessly, engendered in him a hatred 'of God and man' and a detestation of his own father. Trained for priesthood in the State Church, the drunken shoemaker's son felt himself a pariah among the sons of priests, officials and the petty gentry, and learned early in life to grit his teeth and hide his hatred and dream of vengeance. Stalin came to power through revolution but then kept his power by the most monstrous and sweeping measures to counteract not only rebellion but mere disagreement on the part of loyal courtiers sincerely devoted to his own rule. How could it have happened that this street urchin from Tiflis – this *kinto* – could become the lord and master over an empire that covers one-sixth of the earth and the ruler of two hundred million souls? Are there no precedents in history?*

Hitler is especially insistent that only the vivid oral word marks the leader. Never, according to him, can any writing influence the masses like a speech. At any rate, it cannot generate the firm and living bond between the leader and his millions of followers. Hitler's judgment is doubtless determined in large measure by the fact that he cannot write. Marx and Engels acquired millions of followers without resorting throughout their life to the art of oratory. True, it took them many years to secure influence. The writer's art ranks higher in the final reckoning, for it makes possible the union of depth with height of form. Political leaders who are nothing but orators are invariably superficial. An orator does not generate writers. On the contrary, a great writer may inspire thousands of orators. Yet it is true that for direct contact with the masses, living speech is indispensable. Lenin became the head of a powerful and influential party before he had the opportunity to turn to the masses with the living word. His public appearances in 1905 were few and passed unnoticed. As a mass orator Lenin did not appear on the scene until 1917, and then only for a short period, in the course of April, May and July. He came to power not as an orator, but above all as a writer, as an instructor of the propagandists who had trained his cadres, including also the cadres of orators.

In this respect Stalin represents a phenomenon utterly exceptional. He is neither a thinker, a writer nor an orator. He took possession of power

before the masses had learned to distinguish his figure from others during the triumphal processions across Red Square. Stalin took possession of power, not with the aid of personal qualities, but with the aid of an impersonal machine. And it was not he who created the machine, but the machine that created him. That machine, with its force and its authority, was the product of the prolonged and heroic struggle of the Bolshevik Party, which itself grew out of ideas. The machine was the bearer of the idea before it became an end in itself. Stalin headed the machine from the moment he cut off the umbilical cord that bound it to the idea and it became a thing unto itself. Lenin created the machine through constant association with the masses, if not by oral word, then by printed word, if not directly, then through the medium of his disciples. Stalin did not create the machine but took possession of it. For this, exceptional and special qualities were necessary. But they were not the qualities of the historic initiator, thinker, writer, or orator. The machine had grown out of ideas. Stalin's first qualification was a contemptuous attitude toward ideas. The idea had...

[On 20th August 1940, Trotsky was struck down by a Stalinist agent. He died the following day. It is for this reason that this and other portions of this book remain unfinished.]

1. FAMILY AND SCHOOL

The late Leonid Krassin, old revolutionist, eminent engineer, brilliant Soviet diplomat and, above all, intelligent human being, was the first, if I am not mistaken, to call Stalin an 'Asiatic'. In saying that, he had in mind no problematical racial attributes, but rather that blending of grit, shrewdness, craftiness and cruelty which have been considered characteristic of the statesmen of Asia. Bukharin¹ subsequently simplified the appellation, calling Stalin 'Genghis Khan', manifestly in order to draw attention to his cruelty, which has developed into brutality. Stalin himself, in conversation with a Japanese journalist, once called himself an 'Asiatic', not in the old but rather in the new sense of the word: with that personal allusion he wished to hint at the existence of common interests between the USSR and Japan as against the imperialist West. Contemplating the term 'Asiatic' from a scientific point of view, we must admit that in this instance it is but partially correct. Geographically, the Caucasus, especially Transcaucasia, is undoubtedly a continuation of Asia. The Georgians, however, in contrast to the Mongolian Azerbaijanis, belong to the so-called Mediterranean, European race. Thus Stalin was not exact when he called himself an Asiatic. But geography, ethnography and anthropology are not all that matters; history looms larger.

1 Nikolai Bukharin (1888-1938) joined the RSDLP in 1906. After 1923 he was the leading spokesperson for a gradualist *pro-kulak* policy based on the perspective that the Soviet Union could progress to socialism as the peasants enriched themselves. In 1926 with the defeat of the United Opposition, Bukharin was elected President of the Communist International to replace Zinoviev. In 1928 the Communist Party press opened an attack on right deviationism. In the spring of 1929 Bukharin was removed from all his Comintern posts and in November from the Politburo. In the third Moscow Trial, March 1938, he was sentenced to death and executed.

A few spatters of the human flood that has poured for centuries from Asia into Europe have clung to the valleys and mountains of the Caucasus. Disconnected tribes and groups seemed to have frozen there in the process of their development, transforming the Caucasus into a gigantic ethnographic museum. In the course of many centuries the fate of these people remained closely bound up with that of Persia and Turkey, being thus retained in the sphere of the old Asiatic culture, which has contrived to remain static despite continual jolts from war and mutiny.

Anywhere else, on a site more traversed, that small, Georgian branch of humanity – about two and a half million at the present time – undoubtedly would have dissolved in the crucible of history and left no trace. Protected by the Caucasian mountain range, the Georgians preserved in a comparatively pure form their ethnic physiognomy and their language, for which philology to this day seems to have difficulty in finding a proper place. Written language appeared in Georgia simultaneously with the penetration of Christianity, as early as the fourth century, six hundred years earlier than in Kievan Russia. The tenth, eleventh, twelfth and thirteenth centuries are considered the epoch in which Georgia's military power, and its art and literature flourished. There then followed centuries of stagnation and decay. The frequent bloody raids into the Caucasus of Genghis Khan and Tamerlane left their traces upon the national epos of Georgia. If one can believe the unfortunate Bukharin, they left their traces likewise on the character of Stalin.

At the beginning of the eighteenth century the Georgian tsar acknowledged the suzerainty of Moscow, seeking protection against his traditional enemies, Turkey and Persia. He attained his immediate goal in that his life became more secure. The tsarist government laid down the necessary strategic roads, partially renovated the cities, and established a rudimentary network of schools, primarily for the purpose of Russifying these alien subjects. Of course, in two centuries the Petersburg bureaucracy could not replace the old Asiatic barbarism with a European culture of which its own country was still in sad need.

Despite its natural wealth and supernal climate, Georgia continued to be a poor and backward country. Its semi-feudal social structure was based on a low level of economic development and was therefore distinguished by the traits of Asiatic patriarchy, not excluding Asiatic cruelty. Industry was almost non-existent. Agriculture and house building were carried on virtually as they had been two thousand years before. Wine was pressed out with the feet and stored in large clay pitchers. The cities of the Caucasus, comprising no more

than one-sixth of the population, remained like all Asia's cities, bureaucratic, military, commercial and only to a small extent industrial. Above the basic peasant mass rose a stratum of gentry, for the most part not rich and not generally cultured, in some instances distinguishable from the upper layers of the peasantry only by their pompous titles and affectations. Not without reason Georgia – with its tiny past 'power', its present economic stagnation, its beneficent sun, its vineyards, its irresponsibility, and its abundance of provincial *hidalgos* with empty pockets – has been called the Spain of the Caucasus.

The young generation of the nobility knocked at the portals of Russian universities and, breaking with the threadbare tradition of their caste, which was not taken any too seriously in Central Russia, joined sundry radical groups of Russian students. The more prosperous peasants and townsmen, ambitious to make of their sons either government officials, army officers, lawyers, or priests, followed the lead of the noble families. Wherefore Georgia acquired an excessive number of intellectuals, who, scattered in various parts of Russia, played a prominent role in all the progressive political movements and in the three revolutions.

The German writer Bodenstedt, who was director of a teachers' institute at Tiflis in 1844, came to the conclusion that the Georgians were not only slovenly and shiftless, but less intelligent than the other Caucasians; at school they could not hold their own against the Armenians and the Tatars in the study of science, the acquisition of foreign languages and aptitude for self-expression. Citing this far too cursory opinion, Elisée Reclus expressed the altogether sound surmise that the difference might be due not to nationality but rather to social causes – the fact that the Georgian students came from backward villages while the Armenians were the children of the city bourgeoisie. Indeed, further development soon erased that educational lag. By 1892, when Joseph Djughashvili was a pupil in the second form of the parochial school, the Georgians, who made up approximately one-eighth of the population in the Caucasus, contributed virtually a fifth of all the students (the Russians – more than a half, the Armenians – about fourteen percent, the Tatars – less than three percent...). It seems, however, that the peculiarities of the Georgian language, one of the most ancient tools of culture, do indeed impede the acquisition of foreign languages, leaving a decided imprint on pronunciation. But it does not follow that the Georgians are not gifted with eloquence. Like the other nations of the empire, under tsarism they were doomed to silence. But as Russia became 'Europeanised', Georgian

intellectuals produced numerous – if not first rate, at least outstanding – orators of the judiciary and later of the parliamentary rostrum. The most eloquent of the leaders of the February Revolution was perhaps the Georgian Irakli Tsereteli. Therefore it would be unjustified to account for the absence of oratorical ability in Stalin by citing his national origin. Even in his physical type he hardly represents a happy example of his people, who are known to be the handsomest in the Caucasus.

The national character of the Georgians is usually represented as trusting, impressionable, quick tempered, while at the same time devoid of energy and initiative. Above all, Reclus noted their gaiety, sociability and forthrightness. Stalin's character has few of these attributes, which, indeed, are the most immediately noticeable in personal intercourse with Georgians. Georgian *émigrés* in Paris assured Souvarine, the author of Stalin's French biography, that Joseph Djughashvili's mother was not a Georgian but an Ossetian and that there is an admixture of Mongolian blood in his veins. But a certain Iremashvili², whom we shall have occasion to meet again in the future, asserts that Stalin's mother was a pure blooded Georgian, whereas his father was an Ossetian, "a coarse, uncouth person, like all the Ossetians, who live in the high Caucasian mountains." It is difficult, if not impossible, to verify these assertions. However, they are scarcely necessary for the purpose of explaining Stalin's moral stature. In the countries of the Mediterranean Sea, in the Balkans, in Italy, in Spain, in addition to the so-called 'Southern type', which is characterised by a combination of lazy shiftlessness and explosive irascibility, one meets cold natures, in whom phlegm is combined with stubbornness and slyness. The first type prevails; the second augments it as an exception. It would seem as if each national group is doled out its due share of basic character elements, yet these are less happily distributed under the southern than under the northern sun. But we must not venture too far afield into the unprofitable region of national metaphysics.

THE EARLY YEARS

The county town of Gori is picturesquely situated on the banks of the Kura River, seventy-six kilometres from Tiflis along the Transcaucasian Railway. One of the oldest of Georgia's cities, Gori has an intensely dramatic history. Tradition has it that it was founded in the twelfth century by Armenians

2 Joseph Iremashvili (1878-1944) was a Georgian, a boyhood friend, and later political adversary, of Joseph Stalin. He is primarily known for his book *Stalin and the Tragedy of Georgia* (1932), the first and only independent memoir of Stalin's childhood.

seeking refuge from the Turks. Thereafter the little town was subjected to repeated raids, for by that time the Armenians were already a commercial and urban class notable for such great wealth that they were a tempting prey. Like all Asiatic cities, Gori grew little by little, gradually drawing into its walls settlers from Georgian and Tatar villages. At about the time the shoemaker Vissarion Djughashvili migrated there from his native village of Didi-Lilo, the little town had a mixed population of approximately six thousand, several churches, many stores and more inns for the peasantry of the adjacent regions, a teachers' seminary with a Tatar department, a preparatory classical school for girls and a junior high school.

Serfdom was abolished by the Tiflis Government only fourteen years prior to the birth of Joseph, the future General Secretary. Social relations and customs still reflected its effects. It is doubtful that his parents could read and write. True, five Georgian language daily newspapers were published in Transcaucasia, but their total circulation was less than four thousand. The life of the peasantry still lay outside history.

Shapeless streets, widely scattered houses, fruit orchards – these gave Gori the appearance of a rambling village. The houses of the city poor, at any rate, were scarcely distinguishable from peasant dwellings. The Djughashvilis occupied an old adobe hut with brick corners and a sand covered roof which freely admitted the wind and the rain. D. Gogokhiya, a former classmate of Joseph's, describing the family dwelling, writes:

Their room was no more than eight square yards and was located next to the kitchen. The entrance was directly from the court yard into the room, without a single step. The floor was laid with brick. The small window let in scarcely any light. The furnishings of the room consisted of a small table, a stool, and a wide couch, something like a plank bed, covered with a *chilopya* – a straw mat.

To this was later added his mother's old and noisy sewing machine.

No authentic documents have yet been published about the Djughashvili family and Joseph's childhood. Nor could they be numerous. The cultural level of their milieu was so primitive that life went unrecorded and flowed on almost without leaving any trace. Only after Stalin himself was more than fifty years old did reminiscences of his father's family begin to appear. They were usually second-hand, written either by embittered and not always conscientious enemies, or by forced 'friends', at the initiative – one might almost say, by order – of official commissions on Party history, and therefore, for the most part, they are exercises on an assigned theme. It would be, of

course, too simple to seek the truth along the diagonal between the two distortions. However, putting the two in juxtaposition, weighing on the one hand the reticences and on the other, the exaggerations, critically evaluating the inherent thread of the narrative itself in the light of future developments, it is possible to approximate the truth. Without seeking to paint artificially complete pictures, as I proceed, I shall endeavour to present to the reader the elements of those source materials on which rest either my surmises or my conclusions.

Most profuse in details are the reminiscences of the aforementioned [Joseph] Iremashvili, published in 1932 in the German language in Berlin, under the title *Stalin und die Tragödie Georgiens* ('Stalin and the Tragedy of Georgia'). Since their author is a former Menshevik who subsequently became something in the nature of a National Socialist, his political record as such does not inspire great confidence. It is, nevertheless, impossible to ignore his essay. Many of its pages are so patently convincing that they leave no room for doubt. Even incidents which seem doubtful at first glance, find direct or indirect confirmation in official reminiscences published several years later. It might not be amiss for me to add that certain of the guesses I had made on the basis of intentional silences or evasive expressions in Soviet publications found their confirmation in Iremashvili's book, which I had the opportunity to read only at the very last moment. It would be an error to assume that as an exile and a political enemy Iremashvili tries to belittle Stalin's figure or to paint it all black. Quite the contrary: he recounts Stalin's abilities almost triumphantly, and with obvious exaggerations; he recognises Stalin's readiness to make personal sacrifices for his ideals; he repeatedly emphasises Stalin's attachment to his mother and sketches Stalin's first marriage in most affecting strokes. A more probing examination of this former Tiflis high school teacher's reminiscences produced the impression of a document composed of various layers. The foundation is undoubtedly made up of the remote recollections of childhood. But that basic layer has been subjected to the inevitable retrospective elaboration by memory and fantasy under the influence of Stalin's latter day fate and the author's own political views. To that must be added the presence in the reminiscences of dubious, although in their essence, unimportant, details which should be ascribed to a failing rather frequent among a certain kind of memoirist – an endeavour to invest their presentation with 'artistic' finish and completeness. Thus forewarned, I deem it quite proper, as I proceed, to lean upon Iremashvili's reminiscences.

The earlier biographical references invariably speak of Stalin as the son of a peasant from the village of Didi-Lilo. Stalin for the first time referred to himself as a workingman's son only in 1926. But this contradiction is more apparent than real: like most of Russia's workers, Djughashvili the father continued to be listed in his passport as a peasant. However, that does not exhaust the difficulties. The father is invariably called: "worker of Alikhanov's shoe factory in Tiflis". Yet the family lived at Gori, not in the capital of the Caucasus. Does it mean, then, that the father lived apart from the family? Such a supposition might be justified, had the family remained in the village. It is most unlikely that the family and its provider would live in different towns. Besides, Gogokhiya, Joseph's comrade at the theological school, who lived in the same yard with him, as well as Iremashvili, who frequently visited him, both say outright that Vissarion worked nearby, on Sobornaya Street, in an adobe with a leaky roof. We therefore surmise that the father's employment at Tiflis was temporary, probably while the family still lived in the village. At Gori, however, Vissarion Djughashvili no longer worked in a shoe factory – there were no factories in the county seat – but as an independent petty tradesman. The intentional lack of clarity on that point is dictated undoubtedly by the desire not to weaken the impression of Stalin's 'proletarian' heritage.

Like most Georgian women Yekaterina Djughashvili became a mother when still quite young. The first three children died in infancy. On 21st December, 1879, when her fourth child was born, she was scarcely twenty years old. Joseph was in his seventh year when he fell ill with smallpox. Its traces remained for the rest of his life as witness of his plebeian origin and environment. To his pockmarks, Stalin's French biographer, Souvarine, adds cachexia of the left arm, which, in addition to the two toes grown together, according to this information, should serve as proof of alcoholic heredity on his father's side. Generally speaking, shoemakers, at least in Central Russia, were so notorious as drunkards that 'drunk as a shoemaker' became a byword. It is hard to tell how near the truth the speculations on heredity are communicated to Souvarine by "various persons", most likely Menshevik *émigrés*. In the enumeration of Joseph Djughashvili's "distinctive marks" by tsarist gendarmes, a withered arm was not listed, but the adhering toes were recorded once, in 1903, by Colonel Shabelsky. It is not impossible that, prior to publication, the Gendarmerie documents, like all others, had been subjected to an insufficiently thorough purge by the censor. It is impossible not to remark, however, that in later years Stalin was wont to wear a warm

glove on his left hand, even at sessions of the Politburo³. Rheumatism was the generally accepted reason for that. But after all, these secondary physical characteristics, whether real or imaginary, are in themselves scarcely of passing interest. It is far more important to try to assay the true character of his parents and the atmosphere of his family.

The first thing that strikes the eye is the fact that the officially collected reminiscences hardly mention Vissarion, passing him by in almost total silence, while at the same time dwelling sympathetically on Yekaterina's hard life of drudgery. "Joseph's mother earned very little," relates Gogokhiya, "working as a washerwoman or baking bread in the homes of Gori's well-to-do inhabitants. She had to pay a rouble and a half a month for her room. But she was not always able to save that rouble and a half." We thus learn that the responsibility of paying rent for their home rested with the mother, not the father. Furthermore, "The poverty and the mother's hard life of toil left their imprint on Joseph's character..." – as if his father were not a part of the family. Only later, in passing, the author inserts this sentence: "Joseph's father, Vissarion, spent the entire day in work, stitching and repairing footwear." However, the father's work is not mentioned in connection with the family's home life or its problems of making a living. The impression is thus created that the father is mentioned at all only in order to fill a gap.

Glurdzhidze, another classmate at the theological school, ignores the father altogether when he writes that Joseph's mother "earned her living by cutting, sewing or laundering underwear." These reticences, which are not accidental, deserve all the more attention because the customs of the people did not assign the leading role in the family to the woman. On the contrary, according to Old Georgian traditions, exceedingly persistent among the conservative mountaineers, the woman was relegated to the position of a household slave, was scarcely ever admitted into the august presence of her lord and master, had no voice in family affairs, and did not so much as dare to punish her own son. Even at church, mothers, wives and sisters were placed behind fathers, husbands and brothers. The fact that the authors of the reminiscences place the mother where normally the father should be cannot be interpreted otherwise than as a desire to avoid characterising Vissarion Djughashvili altogether. The old Russian encyclopaedia, commenting on the extreme abstinence of Georgians in the matter of food, adds: "There is scarcely

3 A portmanteau of the Russian *Politicheskoye Byuro* (Political Bureau), the Politburo was the executive committee first elected in 1917 to oversee the day-to-day running of the Bolshevik Party.

another people in the world, that drink as much wine as the Georgians.” True, after moving to Gori, Vissarion could hardly have maintained his own vineyard. But to make up for that, the city had *dukhans* on every corner, and in them vodka successfully competed with wine.

On that score Iremashvili’s evidence is especially convincing. Like the other memoirists, but antedating them by five years, he is warmly sympathetic in his characterisation of Yekaterina, who evinced great love for her only son and friendliness for his mates in play and in school. A true Georgian woman, Keke, as she was generally called, was profoundly religious. Her life of toil was one uninterrupted service: to God, to husband and to her son. Her eyesight became weak in consequence of constant sewing in a half dark dwelling, so she began to wear eyeglasses early in life. But then any Georgian matron past thirty was regarded as almost an old woman. Her neighbours treated her with all the greater sympathy because her life had turned out to be so very hard. According to Iremashvili, the head of the family, Bezo (Vissarion), was a person of stern disposition as well as a heartless dipsomaniac. He drank up most of his meagre earnings. That was why the responsibility for rent and for the support of the family fell as a double burden on the mother. In helpless grief Keke observed Bezo, by mistreating his son, “drive out of his heart the love of God and people, and fill him with aversion for his own father”: “Undeserved, frightful beatings made the boy as grim and heartless as was his father.” In bitterness Joseph began to brood over the eternal mysteries of life. He did not grieve over the premature death of his father; he merely felt freer. Iremashvili infers that when still quite young, the boy began to extend his smouldering enmity and thirst for vengeance against his father to all those who had, or could have, any power at all over him. “Since youth the carrying out of vengeful plots became for him the goal that dominated all his efforts.” Granting these words are based on retrospective judgments, they still retain the full force of their significance.

In 1930, when she was already seventy-one, Yekaterina, who then lived in the unpretentious rooms of a servant at what was formerly the palace of the Viceroy in Tiflis, replying to the questions of journalists, said through an interpreter:

Soso (Joseph) was always a good boy... I never had occasion to punish him. He studied hard, always reading or discussing, trying to understand everything... Soso was my only son. Of course, he was precious to me... His father Vissarion wanted to make of Soso a good shoemaker. But his father died when Soso was

eleven years old... I did not want him to be a shoemaker. I wanted only one thing – that he should become a priest.

Souvarine, it is true, collected quite different information among Georgians in Paris: “They knew Soso when he was already hard, unfeeling, treating his mother without respect, and in support of their reminiscences they cite ‘ticklish facts.’” The biographer himself remarks, however, that his information came from Stalin’s political enemies. In that set, too, circulate not a few legends, only in reverse. Iremashvili, on the contrary, speaks with great persistence of Soso’s warm attachment for his mother. Indeed, the boy could have had no other feelings for the family’s benefactor and his protector against his father.

The German writer Emil Ludwig, our epoch’s court portrait painter, found at the Kremlin another occasion for applying his method of asking leading questions, in which moderate psychological insight is combined with political wariness. Are you fond of nature, Signore Mussolini? What do you think of Schopenhauer, Dr. Masaryk? Do you believe in a better future, Mr. Roosevelt? During some such verbal inquisition Stalin, ill at ease in the presence of the celebrated foreigner, assiduously drew little flowers and boats with a coloured pencil. So, at any rate, recounts Ludwig. On the withered arm of Wilhelm Hohenzollern this writer had constructed a psychoanalytic biography of the former Kaiser, which old man Freud regarded with ironic perplexity. Ludwig did not notice Stalin’s withered arm, nor did he notice, needless to say, the adhering toes. Nonetheless he attempted to deduce the revolutionary career of the master at the Kremlin from the beatings administered to him in childhood by his father. After familiarising oneself with Iremashvili’s memoirs it is not difficult to understand where Ludwig got his idea. “What made you a rebel? Did it perhaps come to pass because your parents treated you badly?” It would be rather imprudent to ascribe to these words any documentary value, and not only because Stalin’s affirmations and negations, as we shall have frequent occasions to see, are prone to change with the greatest of ease. In an analogous situation anyone else might have acted similarly. In any event, one cannot blame Stalin for having refused to complain in public of his father who had been dead a long time. One is rather surprised by the deferential writer’s lack of delicacy.

Family trials were not, however, the only factor to mould the boy’s harsh, wilful and vengeful personality. The far broader influences of social environment furthered the same quality. One of Stalin’s biographers relates how from time to time the Most Illustrious Prince Amilakhviri would ride

up on a spirited horse to the poor home of the shoemaker to have his boots repaired, which had just been torn at the hunt, and how the shoemaker's son, a great shock of hair over his low forehead, pierced the Prince with eyes of hate, clenching his childish fists. By itself, that picturesque scene belongs, we think, in the realm of fantasy. However, the contrast between the poverty surrounding him and the relative sumptuousness of the last of the Georgian feudal lords could not help but make a sharp and lasting impression on the consciousness of the boy.

The situation of the city population itself was not much better. High above the lower classes rose the county officialdom, which ruled the city in the name of the Tsar and his Caucasian Viceroy, Prince Golitsyn, a sinister satrap who was universally and deservedly hated. The landowners and the Armenian merchants were in league with the county authorities. Despite its general low level, and partly in consequence of it, the basic plebeian mass of the population was itself divided by barriers of caste. Each one whoever so slightly rose above his fellow, guarded his rank vigilantly. The Didi-Lilo peasants' distrust of the city was transformed at Gori into the hostile attitude of the poor artisan toward the more prosperous families for whom Keke was obliged to sew and to wash. No less crudely did the social gradations assert themselves in school, where the children of priests, petty gentry and officials more than once made it quite clear to Joseph that he was their social inferior. As is evident from Gogokhiya's stories, the shoemaker's son first sensed the humiliation of social inequality early in life and poignantly:

He did not like to call on people who lived prosperously. Despite the fact that I visited him several times a day, he very rarely came to see me, because my uncle lived richly, according to the standards of those days.

Such were the first sources of a social protest, as yet instinctive, which, in the atmosphere of the country's political ferment, would later transform the seminary student into a revolutionist.

THE THEOLOGICAL SCHOOL

The lowest layer of the petty-bourgeoisie knows but two high careers for its gifted or only sons: those of civil servant or priest. Hitler's mother dreamed of a pastor's career for her son. The same fond hope was Yekaterina Djughashvili's some ten years earlier, in an even more modest milieu. The dream itself – to see her son in priestly robes – indicates incidentally how little the family of the shoemaker Bezo was permeated with the 'proletarian spirit'. A better future

was conceived, not in consequence of the class struggle, but as the result of breaking with one's class.

The Orthodox priesthood, despite its low social rank and cultural level, belonged to the hierarchy of the privileged in that it was free of compulsory military service, the head tax, and...the whip. Only the abolition of serfdom gave the peasants access to the ranks of the priesthood, that privilege being conditioned, however, by a police limitation: in order to be appointed to a church position, a peasant's son had to have the special dispensation of the governor.

The future priests were educated in scores of seminaries, the preparatory step for which were theological schools. By their rating in the government system of education, the seminaries approximated the middle schools, with this difference, that in them lay studies were supposed to be no more than a slender pillar for theology! In old Russia the well-known *boorsy* were notorious for the horrifying savagery of their customs, medieval pedagogy and the law of the fist, not to mention dirt, cold, and hunger. All the vices censured by Holy Scripture flourished in these hotbeds of piety. The writer Pomyalovsky found a permanent place in Russian literature as the ruthlessly veracious author of *Theological School Sketches* [*Ocherki Boorsy*, 1862]. One cannot but quote at this juncture the words Pomyalovsky's biographer used with reference to Pomyalovsky himself: "That period of his school life developed in him mistrust, dissimulation, animosity, and hatred for his environment." True, the reforms of Alexander II's reign brought about certain improvements even in the mustiest region of ecclesiastical education. Nonetheless, as late as the last decade of the last century the theological schools, especially in remote Transcaucasia, remained the darkest blots on the 'cultural' map of Russia.

The tsarist government long ago, and not without bloodshed, broke the independence of the Georgian Church, subjecting it to the Petersburg Synod. But hostility toward the Russifiers continued to smoulder among the lower ranks of the Georgian clergy. The enslavement of their church shook the traditional religiousness of the Georgians and prepared the ground for the influence of the Social-Democracy, not only in the city but in the village as well. The fustian atmosphere of the theological schools was even more marked, for they were designed not only to Russify their charges but to prepare them for the role of the church's police of the soul. A spirit of sharp hostility permeated the intercourse between teachers and pupils. Instruction was carried on in Russian; Georgian was taught only twice a week, and was not infrequently slighted, as the language of an inferior race.

In 1890, evidently soon after his father's death, the eleven-year-old Soso, carrying a calico school bag under his arm, entered the theological school. According to his schoolmates, the boy evinced a great urge for learning his catechism and his prayers. Gogokhiya remarks that, thanks to "his extraordinary memory", Soso remembered his lessons from the words of his teacher and had no need to review them. As a matter of fact, Stalin's memory – at least, his memory for theories – is quite mediocre. But all the same, in order to remember in the classroom it was necessary to excel in attentiveness. At that time the sacerdotal order was no doubt Soso's own crowning ambition. Determination stimulated both aptitude and memory. Another school comrade, Kapanadze, testifies that throughout the thirteen years of tutelage and throughout the later thirty-five years of activity as a teacher he never had occasion once "to meet such a gifted and able pupil" as Joseph Djughashvili. Yet even Iremashvili, who wrote his book not in Tiflis but in Berlin, maintains that Soso was the best pupil in the theological school. In other testimonies there are, however, substantial shadings. "During the first years, in the preparatory grades," relates Glurdzhidze, "Joseph studied superbly, and with time, as he disclosed increasingly brilliant abilities, he became one of the best pupils." In that article, which bears all the earmarks of a panegyric ordered from above, occurrence of the circumspect expression "one of the best" indicates too obviously that Joseph was not the best, was not superior to the entire class, was not an extraordinary pupil. Identical in nature are the recollections of another schoolmate, Elisabedashvili. Joseph, he says, "was one of the most indigent and one of the most gifted." In other words, not the most gifted. We are thus constrained to the surmise that either his scholastic standing varied in the various grades or that certain of the memoirists, belonging themselves to the rear guard of learning, were poor at picking the best pupils.

Without being definite as to Joseph's exact rating in his class, Gogokhiya states that in development and knowledge he ranked "much higher than his schoolmates." Soso read everything available in the school library, including Georgian and Russian classics, which were, of course, carefully sifted by the authorities. After his graduation examinations Joseph was rewarded with a certificate of merit, "which in those days was an extraordinary achievement, because his father was not a clergyman and plied the shoemaking trade." Truly a remarkable touch!

On the whole, the memoirs written in Tiflis about 'the Leader's youthful years' are rather insipid. "Soso would pull us into the chorus, and in his

ringing, pleasant voice would lead us in the beloved national songs.” When playing ball, “Joseph knew how to select the best players, and for that reason our group always won.” “Joseph learned to draw splendidly.” But not a single one of these attributes developed into a talent: Joseph became neither a singer nor a sportsman nor an artist. Even less convincing sound reports like these: “Joseph Djughashvili was remarkable for his great modesty, and he was a kind, sensitive comrade.” – “He never let anyone feel his superiority,” and the like. If all of that is true, then one is forced to conclude that with the years Joseph became transformed into his opposite.

Iremashvili’s recollections are incomparably more vivid and closer to the truth. He draws his namesake as a lanky, sinewy, freckled boy, extraordinarily persistent, uncommunicative and wilful, who could always obtain the goal he had set before him, be it a matter of bossing his playmates, throwing rocks or scaling cliffs. Although Soso was decidedly a passionate lover of nature, he had no sympathy for its living creatures. Compassion for people or for animals was foreign to him. “I never saw him weeping.” – “Soso had only a sarcastic sneer for the joys and sorrows of his fellows.” All of that may have been slightly polished in memory, like a rock in a torrent; it has not been invented.

Iremashvili commits one indubitable error when he ascribes to Joseph rebellious behaviour as far back as the Gori school. Soso was presumably subjected to almost daily punishments as the leader of schoolboy protests; particularly, hooting against “the hated Inspector Butyrski”. Yet the authors of official memoirs, this time without any premeditated purpose, portray Joseph as an exemplary pupil even in behaviour all through those years. “Usually he was serious, persistent,” writes Gogokhiya, “did not like pranks and mischief. After his schoolwork he hurried home, and he was always seen poring over a book.” According to the same Gogokhiya, the school paid Joseph a monthly stipend, which would have been quite impossible had there been any lack of respectfulness toward his superiors and above all toward “the hated Inspector Butyrski”. All the other memoirists place the inception of Joseph’s rebellious moods at the time of his Tiflis seminary days. But even then no one states anything about his participation in stormy protests. The explanation for Iremashvili’s lapses of memory, as well as for those of certain others, with reference to the place and time of individual occurrences, lies evidently in the fact that all the participants regarded the Tiflis seminary as the direct continuation of the theological school. It is more difficult to account for the fact that no one except Iremashvili mentions the hooting under Joseph’s leadership. Is that a simple aberration of memory? Or did Joseph play in

certain “concerts” a concealed role, of which only a few were informed? That would not be at all at variance with the character of the future conspirator.

The moment of Joseph’s break with the faith of his father’s remains uncertain. According to the same Iremashvili, Soso, together with two other schoolboys, gladly sang in the village church during summer vacations, although even then – that is, in the higher grades of the school – religion was already something he had outgrown. Glurdzhidze recalls in his turn that the thirteen-year-old Joseph told him once: “You know, they are deceiving us. There is no God...” In reply to the amazed cry of his interlocutor, Joseph suggested that he read a book from which it was evident that “the talk of God is empty chatter.” What book was that? “Darwin. You must read it.” The reference to Darwin adds a shade of the incredible to the episode. A thirteen-year-old boy in a backward town could hardly have read Darwin and derived atheistic convictions from him. According to his own words, Stalin took to the road of revolutionary ideas at the age of fifteen; hence, when already in Tiflis. True, he could have broken with religion earlier. But it is equally possible that Glurdzhidze, who likewise left the theological school for the seminary, erred in his dates, anticipating by a few years. To repudiate God, in whose name the cruelties against the schoolboys were perpetrated, was undoubtedly not difficult. At any rate, the inner strength necessary for that was rewarded when the instructors and the authorities as a whole had the moral ground snatched from under their feet. From then on they could not perpetrate violence merely because they were stronger. Soso’s expressive formula, “they are deceiving us”, sheds a bright light on his inward world, irrespective of where and when the conversation took place, whether at Gori, or a year or two later, at Tiflis.

THE YOUNG RADICAL

As to the time of Joseph’s matriculation at the seminary, various official publications offer the choice of three dates: 1892, 1893 and 1894. How long was he in the seminary? Six years, answers *The Communist’s Calendar*. Five, states the biographical sketch written by Stalin’s secretary. Four years, asserts his former schoolmate, Gogokhiya. The memorial shingle on the building of the former seminary states, as it is possible to decipher from a photograph, that the ‘Great Stalin’ studied in these walls from 1st September, 1894, to the 21st July, 1899; consequently, five years. Is it possible that the official biography avoids that last date, because it presents the seminary student Djughashvili as

too overgrown? At any rate, we prefer to rely on the memorial shingle, because its dates are based in all likelihood upon the documents of the seminary itself.

The certificate of good conduct from the Gori school in his satchel, the fifteen-year-old Joseph found himself for the first time in the autumn of 1894 in the big city that could not have failed to astound his imagination, Tiflis, the ancient capital of Georgian kings. It will be no exaggeration to say that the half Asiatic, half European city laid an impress on young Joseph that remained for the rest of his life. In the course of its history of almost 1,500 years Tiflis fell many times into the power of its enemies, was demolished fifteen times, on several occasions razed to its very foundations. The Arabs, the Turks and the Persians, who smashed their way in, left a profound impression upon the architecture and the customs of the people, and the traces of that influence have been preserved to this day. European sections developed after the Russian conquest of Georgia, when the former capital became the provincial seat and the administrative centre of the Transcaucasian Region. Tiflis numbered more than 150,000 inhabitants the year Joseph entered the seminary. The Russians, who composed one-fourth of that number, were either exiled religious dissenters, rather numerous in Transcaucasia, or the military and civil servants. Trade and industry were concentrated in the hands of the Armenians, since ancient days and the most numerous (thirty-eight percent) and the most prosperous sector of the population. The Georgians, who were connected with the village and who, like the Russians, formed approximately one-fourth of the population, provided the lower layer of artisans, traders, petty civil servants and officers. "Alongside of streets which bear a contemporary European character..." states a description of the city published in 1901, "... nests a labyrinth of narrow, crooked and dirty, purely Asiatic lanes, squarelets and bazaars, framed by open stalls of the Eastern type, by stands, coffee houses, barber shops, and filled with a clamorous throng of porters, water carriers, errand boys, horsemen, lines of pack mules and donkeys, caravans of camels, and the like." The absence of a sewage disposal system, insufficiency of water, the torrid summers, the caustic and infiltrating dust of the streets, kerosene lighting in the centre of the city and the absence of any light at all in the outlying streets – such were features of Transcaucasia's administrative and cultural centre at the turn of the century.

"We were admitted into a four storey house," relates Gogokhiya, who arrived there together with Joseph, "into the huge rooms of our dormitory, which held from twenty to thirty people. This building was the Tiflis Theological Seminary." Thanks to his successful graduation from the theological school

at Gori, Joseph Djughashvili was admitted to the seminary, with everything provided, including clothes, shoes and textbooks, a circumstance that would have been utterly impossible, it must be reiterated, had he revealed himself as a rebel. Who knows, perhaps the authorities had high hopes that he might become an ornament of the Georgian Church? As in preparatory school, instruction was in Russian. Most of the instructors were Russians by nationality and Russifiers by duty. Georgians were admitted to teaching only in the event that they exhibited double zeal. The rector was a Russian, the monk Hermogenes; the inspector, a Georgian, the monk Abashidze, the most sinister and detestable person in the seminary. Iremashvili, who has not only given the first but also the most complete information about the seminary, recalls:

Life in school was sad and monotonous. Locked in day and night within barrack walls, we felt like prisoners who must spend years there, without being guilty of anything. All of us were despondent and sullen. Stifled by the rooms and corridors that cut us off from the outer world, youthful joy almost never asserted itself. When, from time to time, youthful temperament did break through, it was immediately suppressed by the monks and monitors. The tsarist inspection of schools forbade us the reading of Georgian literature and newspapers... They feared our becoming inspired with ideas of our country's freedom and independence, and the infection of our young souls with the new teachings of socialism. Even the few literary works the lay authorities allowed us to read were forbidden to us by the church authorities because we were future priests. The works of Tolstoy, Dostoyevsky, Turgenyev and other classics remained inaccessible to us.

The days in the seminary passed as in a prison or in a barracks. School life began at seven o'clock in the morning. Prayers, tea drinking, classes. Again prayers. Instruction, with recesses, until two o'clock in the afternoon. Prayers. Dinner. Poor and insufficient food. Permission to leave the walls of the seminary prison was granted only for the interval between the hours of three and five. After that the gates were locked. Roll call. At eight o'clock, tea. Preparation of lessons. At ten o'clock – after more prayers – all went to their cots. “We felt trapped in a stone prison,” confirms Gogokhiya. During Sunday and holiday services the students stood on their feet for three or four hours at a stretch, always on one and the same stone slab of the church floor, shifting from one numb foot to the other, under the gaze of the monks who watched them incessantly. “Even the most pious should have unlearned to pray under the influence of the interminable service. Behind devout grimaces we hide our thought from the monks on duty.”

As a rule, the spirit of piety went hand and glove with the spirit of police repression. Inspector Abashidze, hostile and suspicious, observed the boarders, their train of thought, and their manner of spending their time. More than once when the pupils returned to their rooms from dinner, they would find fresh evidence of a raid perpetrated during their absence. Not infrequently the monks searched the seminary students themselves. Punishment was meted out in the form of crude upbraiding, the dark cell, which was seldom vacant, low marks for deportment, which threatened the collapse of all hopes, and finally, expulsion from the holy of holiest. Those who were physically weak left the seminary for the graveyard. Hard and thorny was the path of salvation!

The methods of seminary pedagogy had everything that the Jesuits had invented to curb the children's souls, but in a more primitive, a cruder and therefore a less effective form. But the main thing was that the situation in the country was hardly conducive to the spirit of humility. In almost all of the sixty seminaries of Russia there were undergraduates who, most frequently under the influence of university students, rejected their priestly robes even before they had time to put them on, who were filled with contempt for theological scholasticism, read didactic novels, radical Russian journalism and popular expositions of Darwin and Marx. In the Tiflis seminary the revolutionary ferment, nurtured by nationalistic and general political sources, already enjoyed a certain tradition. In the past it had broken through in the form of sharp conflicts with teachers, openly expressed indignation, even the killing of a rector. Ten years prior to Stalin's matriculation at the seminary Sylvester Dzhibladze had struck his teacher for a slighting reference to the Georgian language. Dzhibladze subsequently became a founder of the Social-Democratic movement in the Caucasus and one of Joseph Djughashvili's teachers.

In 1885 Tiflis saw the appearance of its first socialist circles, in which the graduates of the seminary at once took the leading place. Alongside of Sylvester Dzhibladze we meet here Noah Jordania⁴, the future leader of the Georgian Mensheviks, Nicholas Chkheidze, the future Deputy of the Duma and Chairman of the Petrograd Soviet during the month of the February

4 Noah Jordania (Noi Nikolayevich Jordania, 1870-1953) was a member of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party's Central Committee until 1907, a defencist during World War One, First President of the First Georgian Republic (1918-21) until the invasion by the Red Army. He escaped to France, where he headed a government-in-exile.

Revolution of 1917, and a number of others who were destined to play a notable role in the political movement of the Caucasus and of the entire country. Marxism in Russia was still passing through its intelligentsia stage. In the Caucasus the Theological Seminary became the principal hearth of Marxist infection simply because there was no university at Tiflis. In backward, non-industrial districts, like Georgia, Marxism was accepted in a particularly abstract, not to say scholastic form. The seminarists had at least some training in the use of logical deductions. But at the base of the turn toward Marxism lay, of course, the profound social and national dissatisfaction of the people, which compelled the young Bohemians to seek the way out along the revolutionary road.

Joseph did not have occasion to lay new roads in Tiflis, notwithstanding the attempts of the Soviet Plutarchs to present the matter in this light. The blow Dzhibladze struck was still reverberating within the seminary walls. The former seminarists were already leading the left wing of public opinion, nor did they lose contact with their step-mother, the seminary. Sufficient was any occasion, a personal encounter, a mere push, for the dissatisfied, embittered, proud youth, who needed merely a formula in order to find himself, to drift naturally into the revolutionary track. The first stage along this road had to be a break with religion. If it is possible that from Gori the boy had brought with him remnants of faith, surely they were forthwith dispelled at the seminary. Henceforth Joseph decidedly lost all taste for theology.

“His ambition,” writes Iremashvili, “reached such heights that he was away ahead of us in his achievements.” If that is true, it applies only to a very brief period. Glurdzhidze remarks that of the studies in the seminary curriculum, “Joseph liked civil history and logic,” occupying himself with the other subjects only sufficiently to pass his examinations. Having grown cold toward Holy Scriptures, he became interested in lay literature, natural science and social problems. He was aided by students in the advanced classes. “Having found out about the capable and inquiring Joseph Djughashvili, they began to converse with him and to supply him with magazines and books,” relates Gogokhiya. “The book was Joseph’s inseparable friend, and he did not part with it even while eating,” testifies Glurdzhidze. In general, avidity for reading was the distinguishing characteristic during those years of burgeoning. After the final check-up at night, the monks having put out the lamps, the young conspirators would produce their hidden candles and by their flickering flames would immerse themselves in books. Joseph, who had spent many sleepless nights pouring over his books, began to look ill and

in need of sleep. "When he began to cough," relates Iremashvili, "I would take his books away from him and put out his candle, more than once." Glurdzhidze recalls how, in stealth, the seminary students would swallow Tolstoy, Dostoyevsky, Shakespeare, Shelley, Lippert's History of Culture, the Russian radical publisher Pisarev... "At times we read in church, during service, hiding in the pews."

At that time the writings of Georgian national literature made the strongest impression upon Soso. Iremashvili describes the first explosions of the revolutionary temperament, in which an idealism still fresh combined with the sudden awakening of ambition. "Soso and I," recalls Iremashvili, "frequently talked about the tragic fate of Georgia. We were enraptured by the works of the poet Shota Rustaveli..." Soso's model became Koba, the hero of the romance *The Patricide* by the Georgian author Alexander Kazbegi. In their fight against the tsarist authorities, the oppressed mountaineers, because of betrayal, suffer defeat and lose their last remnants of freedom, while the leader of the rebellion sacrifices everything, even his life, for the sake of his country and his wife, Nunu. From then on Koba "became a divinity for Soso... He wanted to become another Koba, a fighter and a hero, as renowned as 'Koba' himself..." Joseph called himself by the name of the leader of the mountaineers, and did not want to be called by any other name:

His face shone with pride and joy when we called him Koba. Soso preserved that name for many years, and it became likewise his first pseudonym when he began to write and propagandise for the party... Even now everybody in Georgia calls him Koba or Koba Stalin.

Concerning young Joseph's enthusiasm for the national problem of Georgia, official biographers say nothing at all. In their writings Stalin appears at once as a finished Marxist. Nonetheless, it is not hard to understand that in the naive 'Marxism' of that first period, nebulous ideas of Socialism lived on in peace with the nationalistic romanticism of 'Koba'.

In the course of that year, according to Gogokhiya, Joseph developed and matured to such an extent that in his second year he began to lead a group of comrades at the seminary. If Beria⁵, the most official of the historians, is to be

5 Lavrenty Pavlovich Beria (1899-1953) was People's Commissar of Internal Affairs, head of the GPU, and First Deputy Premier (1946-53). He acquired fame as a historian after the publication of a lecture, *On the Question of the History of the Bolshevik Organisations in Transcaucasia*, delivered in July 1935. In those lectures he created a romantic early revolutionary career for Stalin. Declared a traitor and shot in 1953.

believed, “in 1896-97 Stalin led two Marxist circles at the Tiflis Theological Seminary.” Stalin himself was never led by anyone. Much more probable is Iremashvili’s story. Ten seminarists, among them Soso Djughashvili, organised, according to him, a secret socialist circle. “The oldest undergraduate, Devdariyani, elected leader, undertook his task in all seriousness.” He worked out, or rather received from his inspirers outside the walls of the seminary, a programme according to which the members of the circle had to train themselves within six years into accomplished Social-Democratic leaders. The programme began with Cosmogony and finished with a Communist society. At the secret meetings of the circle, papers were read, accompanied by a heated exchange of opinions. Matters were not limited, Gogokhiya assures us, to oral propaganda. Joseph “founded and edited” in the Georgian language a manuscript journal which appeared twice a month and circulated from hand to hand. The wide-awake Inspector Abashidze once found on Joseph’s person “a notebook with an article for our manuscript magazine.” Similar publications, irrespective of their contents, were strictly forbidden, not only in theological, but even in lay institutions of education. Since the result of Abashidze’s discovery was only a “warning” and a bad mark in behaviour, we are bound to conclude that the magazine was rather innocuous. It is noteworthy that the very thoroughgoing Iremashvili says nothing at all about that magazine.

In the seminary Joseph must have sensed his poverty even more sharply than in preparatory school. “He had no money,” Gogokhiya mentions by the way, “while we received from our parents packages and pin money.” During the two hours allowed for sojourning outside the school walls, Joseph could not afford any of the things accessible to the sons of the more privileged families. All the more unbridled were his dreams and plans of the future and more marked the effect on his instincts in dealing with his schoolmates.

“As boy and youth,” testifies Iremashvili, “he was a good friend to those who submitted to his domineering will.” But only to those. The more imperative was self-restraint in the presence of his preceptors, the more freely did his despotism assert itself in the circle of his comrades. The secret circle, fenced off from the entire world, became the natural arena on which Joseph tried his strength and the endurance of others. “He deemed it something unnatural,” writes Iremashvili, “that any other fellow student might be a leader and organiser of the group...since he read the greater part of the papers.” Whoever dared to refute him or even to attempt to explain something to him, immediately evoked his “merciless enmity”. Joseph knew how to persecute

and how to avenge himself. He knew how to strike at weak spots. Under such circumstances the initial solidarity of the circle could not long endure. In his struggle for mastery, Koba, “with his supercilious and poisonous cynicism, injected personal squabbles into the society of his friends.” These complaints about his “poisonous cynicism”, his rudeness and his vengefulness, occur many, many times during Koba’s life.

In the rather fantastic biography written by Essad Bey it is told that presumably prior to his seminary days, young Joseph led a vagabond life in Tiflis in the company of ‘*kintos*’ – heroes of the street, fast talkers, singers and hooligans – and that from them he acquired his crude ways and his virtuosity at swearing. All of that is quite obvious invention. From the theological school Joseph went directly to the seminary, so that there was no interval left for vagabondage. But the point is that the nickname ‘*Kinto*’ does not occupy the last place in the Caucasian dictionary. It signifies a clever schemer, a cynic, a person capable of the lowest sort of conniving. In the autumn of 1923 I first heard that appellation with reference to Stalin from the lips of the old Georgian Bolshevik Philip Makharadze. Is it not possible that this sobriquet had been acquired by Joseph in his more youthful years and gave birth to the legend concerning the street chapter of his life?

The same biographer speaks of the “heavy fist”, with the aid of which Joseph Djughashvili presumably assured himself of his triumph on the occasions when peaceful means proved ill suited. That too is hard to believe. Risky “direct action” was never a part of Stalin’s character, in all likelihood not even in those remote years. He preferred and knew how to find others to do the actual fighting, he himself remaining in the shadows if not altogether behind the curtains. “What brought him adherents,” states Iremashvili, “was fear of his crude anger and his vicious mockery. His partisans surrendered to his leadership, because they felt secure under his power... Only such human types as were quite poor spiritually and inclined to fights could become his friends...” The inevitable results were not far behind. Some members of the circle left, others took less and less interest in the discussions. “Two groups, for and against Koba, formed in the course of a few years; the struggle for a cause developed into a disgusting personal squabble.” This was the first big “squabble” on Joseph’s path of life, but it was not the last. Many of them were ahead.

It is impossible not to tell here, although considerably anticipating, how Stalin, already the General Secretary of the Communist Party, having painted at one of the sessions of the Central Committee a depressing picture of the

personal intrigues and squabbles which were developing in the various local committees of the Party, quite unexpectedly added: "But these squabbles have also their positive side, because they lead to the monolithicism of leadership." His hearers looked at each other in surprise; the orator continued his report undisturbed. The essence of that "monolithicism" even in his youthful years was not always identical with the idea. Says Iremashvili: "His concern was not with finding and determining the truth; he would contend against or defend that which he had previously affirmed or condemned. Victory and triumph were much more precious to him."

It is impossible to ascertain the nature of Joseph's views in those days, since they left no traces in writing. According to Soso Iremashvili, his namesake stood for the most forcible actions and for "the dictatorship of the minority". The participation of a purposeful imagination in the work of memory is quite obvious here: at the end of the past century the very question of "dictatorship" did not yet exist. "Koba's extreme views did not take form," continues Iremashvili, "in consequence of 'objective study', but came as the natural product of his personal will to power and of his merciless ambition, which dominated him physically and spiritually." Behind the undoubted prejudice in the judgments of the former Menshevik one must know how to find the kernel of truth. In Stalin's spiritual life, the personal, practical aim always stood above the theoretical truth, and the will played an immeasurably greater part than the intellect.

Iremashvili makes one more psychological observation, which, although it contains a measure of retrospective evaluation, still remains extremely pertinent: Joseph "saw everywhere and in everything only the negative, the bad side, and had no faith at all in men's idealistic motives or attributes." This point of view, which had already revealed itself during his youth, when the entire world is usually still covered with the film of idealism, was in the future to run through Joseph's entire life as its *leitmotif*. Precisely because of that, Stalin, despite the other prominent traits of his character, was to remain in the background during periods of historical progress, when the finest qualities of selflessness and heroism awaken among the masses. Inversely, his cynical disbelief in men and his special ability to appeal to the worst in their nature were to find ample scope during the epoch of reaction, which crystallises egoism and perfidy.

Joseph Djughashvili not only did not become a priest, as his mother had dreamed, but he did not even receive the certificate that could have opened for him the doors to certain provincial universities. As to how

that happened and why, there are several versions, which cannot be readily reconciled. In reminiscences written in 1929, with obvious intent to eradicate the unfavourable impression of the reminiscences written by him in 1923, Abel Yenukidze states that at the seminary Joseph began to read secret books considered harmful. His offence did not escape the attention of the Inspector and hence the dangerous pupil “flew out of the seminary.” The official Caucasian historian Beria informs us that Stalin was “expelled for unreliability.” There is, of course, nothing unlikely in that; similar expulsions were not infrequent. What does seem strange is that so far the seminary documents on that subject have not been published. That they have not been destroyed by fire and have not been lost in the maelstrom of the revolutionary years is apparent at least from the previously mentioned memorial shingle and even more so from the complete silence as to their fate. Are the documents being kept from publication because they contain inauspicious facts or because they refute certain legends of latter day origin?

Most frequently one finds the assertion that Djughashvili was expelled for leading a Social-Democratic circle. His former classmate at the seminary, Elisabedashvili, not a very reliable witness, informs us that in the Social-Democratic circles, “organised by direction and under the leadership of Stalin”, there were “a hundred to one hundred and twenty” seminarists. Had this referred to the years 1905-06, when all the waters had overflowed their banks and all the authorities were in utter bewilderment, this might have been believed. But for the year 1899 that figure is utterly fantastic. Had the organisation numbered as many members as that, the affairs could not have been limited to mere expulsion: the intervention of the gendarmes would have been quite unavoidable. Joseph nevertheless not only was not immediately arrested, but remained at liberty for nearly three years after leaving the seminary. Therefore, the version that the Social-Democratic circles were the cause of his expulsion has to be definitely rejected.

That issue is presented much more cautiously by Gogokhiya, who as a rule tries not to stray too far from the groundwork of facts. He writes:

Joseph stopped paying attention to his lessons, studied for no more than passing marks, so as to pass the examinations. The ferocious monk Abashidze guessed why the talented, well developed Djughashvili, who possessed an incredibly rich memory, studied only for passing marks...and succeeded in obtaining a decision to expel him from the seminary.

As to what the monk had “guessed”, only more guesses are possible. From Gogokhiya’s words the conclusion is inevitable that Joseph was expelled from the seminary for failure in his studies, which was the result of his break with theological super wisdom. The same conclusion might be drawn from Kapanadze’s story about the “break” which occurred at the time he studied in the Tiflis seminary: “he was no longer the assiduous pupil he had been before.” It is noteworthy that Kapanadze, Glurdzhidze and Elisabedashvili entirely avoid the question of Joseph’s expulsion from the seminary.

But most astounding of all is the circumstance that Stalin’s mother in the last period of her life, when official historians and journalists began to take an interest in her, categorically denied the very fact of expulsion. At the time he entered the seminary the fifteen-year-old boy was remarkable, according to her words, for his glowing health, but close application to his studies exhausted him to such an extent that physicians feared tuberculosis. Yekaterina added that her son did not want to leave the seminary and that she “took” him against his will. That does not sound very likely. Ill health might have called for a temporary interruption of studies, but not for a complete break with the school, not for a mother’s complete repudiation of so alluring a career for her son. Also, in the year 1899 Joseph was already twenty years old, he was not distinguished by submissiveness, and it is hardly possible that his mother could have disposed of his fate so easily. Finally, after leaving the seminary, Joseph did not return to Gori and place himself under his mother’s wing, which would have been the most natural thing in the event of illness, but remained in Tiflis, without occupation and without means. Old Keke did not tell the whole truth when she talked with the journalists. It might be supposed that at the time his mother had regarded her son’s expulsion as a dire disgrace to herself, and since the event took place in Tiflis, she had assured her neighbours at Gori that her son had not been expelled but had voluntarily left the seminary because of the state of his health. To the old woman, moreover, it must have seemed that it was unbecoming for ‘the leader’ of the State to have been expelled from school in his youth. It is hardly necessary to seek other, more recondite, reasons for the persistence with which Keke repeated, “he was not expelled, I took him out myself.”

But perhaps Joseph was not actually subjected to expulsion in the precise sense of the word. Such a version, perhaps the most likely, is given by Iremashvili. According to him, the seminary authorities, having become disappointed in their expectations, began to treat Joseph with ever increasing disfavour and to find fault constantly.

It so developed that Koba, who was convinced of the fruitlessness of any earnest study, gradually became the worst pupil in the seminary. He would reply to the reproachful remarks of his teachers with his poisonous and contemptuous leer.

The certificate which the school authorities gave him for passing from the sixth to the last form was so bad that Koba himself decided to leave the seminary the year before graduation. Taking into consideration that explanation, it at once becomes clear why Yenukidze wrote "flew out of the seminary", avoiding the more precise expressions, "was expelled", or, "left the seminary"; why most of his schoolmates say nothing at all about that significant moment of Joseph's seminary life; why no documents are published; why, finally, his mother felt she had the right to say that her son had not been expelled, although she herself gave the episode a different colouring, transferring responsibility from her son to herself. From the point of view of Stalin's personal characterisation or his political biography, the details of his break with the seminary have scarcely any significance. But they are not a bad illustration of the difficulties which totalitarian historiography places in the way of research even on such subsidiary questions.

Joseph entered the preparatory theological school at the age of eleven, in 1890, passed four years later into the seminary, and abandoned it in 1899, thus remaining altogether in the ecclesiastical schools for nine years. Georgians mature early. Joseph left the seminary a grown man, "without diploma," writes Gogokhiya, "but with definite, firm views on life." The nine-year period of theological studies could not fail to have left a profound influence on his character, on the manner of his thought, and on his style, which form an essential part of personality.

The language of the family and of their milieu was Georgian. His mother, even in her old age, did not know Russian. The situation could scarcely have been otherwise with his father. The boy studied Russian speech only in school, where again the majority of the pupils were Georgians. The spirit of the Russian language, its free nature, its inherent rhythm, Joseph never acquired. Moreover, he was called upon to study the foreign language, which was to take the place of his native tongue, in the stilted atmosphere of a theological school. He imbibed the turns of Russian speech together with the formulae of churchly scholasticism. He learned the speech itself, not as a natural and inseparable spiritual organ for the expression of his own feelings and thoughts, but as an artificial and external instrument for transmitting a foreign and hated mysticism. In later life he was even less able to become intimate with or to assimilate the language, to use it precisely or to ennoble

it, because he habitually employed words to camouflage thought and feeling rather than to express them. Consequently, Russian always remained for him not only a language half foreign and makeshift, but, far worse for his consciousness, conventional and strained.

It is not hard to understand that from the moment Joseph inwardly broke with religion the study of homiletics and liturgy became insufferable to him. What is hard to understand is how he was able to lead a double life for such a long time. If we are to credit the tale that at the early age of thirteen Soso had counterpoised Darwin to the Bible, we must conclude that from then on for seven whole years he patiently studied theology, although with diminishing eagerness. Stalin himself placed the inception of his revolutionary *Weltanschauung* at the fifteenth or sixteenth year of his life. It is quite possible that he turned away from religion two or three years before he turned toward socialism. But even if we were to allow that both changes occurred simultaneously, we shall see that the young atheist in the course of five whole years continued to explore the mysteries of Orthodoxy.

True, in tsarist educational institutions many free-thinking youths were obliged to lead a double life. But that has reference principally to universities, where the regime nevertheless was distinguished by considerable freedom and where official hypocrisy was reduced to a ritualistic minimum. In the middle schools this divergence was more difficult to endure, but it usually lasted only a year or two, when the youth saw ahead of him the doors of the university, with its relative academic freedom. The situation of young Djughashvili was extraordinary. He did not study in a lay educational institution, where the pupils were under surveillance only part of the day and where the so-called 'Religion' was actually one of the secondary subjects, but in a closed educational institution, where all of his life was subjected to the demands of the church and where his every step was taken before the eyes of the monks. In order to endure this regime for seven or even five years, extraordinary cautiousness and an exceptional aptitude for dissimulation were needed. During the years of his sojourn in the seminary no one noticed any kind of open protest by him, any bold act of indignation. Joseph laughed at his teachers behind their backs, but he was never impudent to their faces. He did not slap any chauvinistic pedagogue, as Dzhibladze had done; the most he did was to retort "with a contemptuous leer". His hostility was reserved, underhanded, watchful. The seminarist Pomyalovsky during his life as a pupil was, as we heard, inoculated with "suspiciousness, secretiveness, enmity and hatred for the surrounding

milieu.” Almost the same attitude, but even more pointed, Iremashvili states, was characteristic of Koba:

In 1899 he left the seminary, taking with him a vicious, ferocious enmity against the school administration, against the bourgeoisie, against everything that existed in the country and embodied tsarism. Hatred against all authority.

2. 'PROFESSIONAL REVOLUTIONIST'

In 1883, when Soso was going on his fourth year, Baku, the oil capital of the Caucasus, was connected by rail with the Black Sea port of Batumi. To the backbone of its mountain ranges, the Caucasus added its backbone of railways. After the oil industry the manganese industry began to grow. In 1896, when Soso had already begun to have dreams about the name of Koba, the first strike in the railway shops of Tiflis broke out.

In the development of ideas, as in industry, the Caucasus was in the row of Central Russia. During the second half of the nineties, beginning in Petersburg, the ruling tendency of the radical intelligentsia was toward Marxism. When Koba was still pining away in the fusty atmosphere of seminarist theology, the Social-Democratic movement had already managed to attain broad dimensions. A tempestuous wave of strikes was rolling over the length and breadth of the land. At first the initial hundreds, and then thousands, of intellectuals and workers suffered arrest and banishment. A new chapter opened in the revolutionary movement.

In 1901, when Koba became a member of the Tiflis Committee, there were approximately forty thousand industrial workers in Transcaucasia engaged in nine thousand enterprises, without counting the artisan shops. A negligible number, considering the extent and the riches of this region, washed by two seas; yet, the corner stones of Social-Democratic propaganda were already at hand. Fountains of Baku oil, the first extractions of Chitaurian manganese, the vivifying activities of the railways, these gave an impetus, not only to the strike movement of the workers, but also to the theoretical thought of the Georgian intelligentsia. The liberal newspaper *Kvali* ('The Furrow') recorded,

in surprise rather than with hostility, the appearance on the political arena of representatives of the new movement:

Since 1893 young men representing a singular trend and advocating a unique programme have been contributing to Georgian publications; they are supporters of the theory of economic materialism.

To distinguish them from the progressive nobility and the liberal bourgeoisie, which dominated the preceding decade, the Marxists were given the nickname 'Mesamedasi', meaning 'the third group'. At the head of it was Noah Jordania, the future leader of the Caucasian Mensheviks and the future head of the ephemeral Georgian democracy.

The petty-bourgeois intellectuals of Russia, who aspired to escape the oppression of the police regime and the backwardness of that impersonal ant-heap which was the old society, were obliged to jump over the intervening stages because of the country's extremely belated development. Protestantism and Democracy, under whose banner the revolutions of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries had taken place in the West, had long ago become transformed into conservative doctrines. The semi-mendicant Caucasian Bohemians could nowise be tempted by liberal abstractions. Their hostility to the privileged classes had acquired a natural social colouration. For the impending battle ahead these intellectuals needed a fresh theory, one that had not yet been compromised. They found that in Western Socialism, in its highest scientific expression – Marxism. The point at issue was no longer equality before God or equality before the law, but economic equality. Actually, by resorting to the remote Socialist perspective, the intellectuals insured their anti-tsarist struggle against the scepticism that threatened it prematurely in consequence of the disillusioning experiences of Western Democracy. These conditions and circumstances determined the character of Russian, and even more so of Caucasian, Marxism, which was exceedingly limited and primitive because it was adapted to the political needs of backward, provincial intellectuals. Itself lacking in theoretical realism, that Marxism nevertheless rendered a very real service to the intellectuals in that it inspired them in their struggle against tsarism.

The critical edge of the Marxism of the nineties as directed first of all against *jejune* Populism¹, which superstitiously feared capitalistic development,

1 Populism (Narodnichestvo) was an early movement of Russian radicals which began among the intelligentsia in the mid-nineteenth century. The movement later split into, among others, a Marxist strand led by Georgi Plekhanov which orientated itself

hoping to find for Russia 'exceptional', privileged historical paths. The defence of the progressive mission of capitalism became therefore the principal theme of the Marxism of the intellectuals, who not infrequently pushed into the background the programme of the proletarian class struggle. In the legal press Noah Jordania preached assiduously the unity of the "nation's" interests: in connection with that he had in mind the necessity of the union of the proletariat and the bourgeoisie against the autocracy. The idea of such a union was subsequently to become the cornerstone of Menshevik policy and in the end was to cause their ruin. Official Soviet historians continue to this very day to take cognisance of Jordania's idea, and to present it in all sorts of ways, although it was long ago lost in the course of battle. At the same time, they shut their eyes to the fact that three decades later Stalin was applying that Menshevik policy not only in China but in Spain and even in France, and under circumstances immeasurably less justifiable than those prevailing when feudal Georgia was under the heel of tsarism.

But even in those days, Jordania's ideas did not meet with universal recognition. In 1895, Sasha Tsulukidze², who subsequently became one of the outstanding propagandists of the left wing, joined Mesamedasi. He died of tuberculosis at twenty-nine, in 1905, leaving behind him a number of journalistic works which testified to his considerable Marxist training and literary talent. In 1897 the ranks of Mesamedasi were joined by Lado Ketskhoveli³ who, like Koba, was a former pupil of the Gori theological school and of the Tiflis seminary. He was, however, several years older than Koba and had served him as a guide during the first stages of his revolutionary career. Yenukidze recalled in 1923, when memoirists still enjoyed sufficient freedom, "Stalin many times stressed with amazement the extraordinary talents of the late Comrade Ketskhoveli who even in those days knew how to pose questions correctly in the spirit of revolutionary Marxism." That testimony, especially the reference to "amazement", refutes the more recent tales that even then the leadership was Koba's and that Tsulukidze and Ketskhoveli were merely his "assistants". It might also be added that young Tsulukidze's articles in their content and form rank considerably higher than anything Koba wrote two or three years later.

towards the nascent Russian proletariat, and the later Narodniks who continued to base themselves upon the peasantry.

2 Aleksandr Grigoryevich Tsulukidze (1876-1905).

3 Vladimir Zakharyevich Ketskhoveli (1877-1903), shot by his prison guard.

Having taken his place in the left wing of Mesamedasi, Ketskhoveri drew young Djughashvili into it the following year. At that time, it was not a revolutionary organisation, but a circle of like-minded people centring around the legal newspaper *Kvali*, which in 1898 passed from the hands of the liberals into the hands of the young Marxists, led by Jordania.

“In secret we frequently visited the offices of *Kvali*,” relates Iremashvili. “Koba went with us several times, but later made fun of the members of the editorial board.” The differences of opinion in the Marxist camp in those days, however elementary they might have been, were nevertheless quite substantial in character. The moderate wing did not really believe in revolution, still less that it was near, reckoning on prolonged ‘progress’ and longing for a union with the bourgeois liberals. The left wing, on the other hand, sincerely hoped for a revolutionary upheaval of the masses and therefore stood for a more independent policy. In essence the left wing consisted of revolutionary democrats who fell into a natural opposition to the ‘Marxist’, semi-liberals. Because of his early environment as well as his personal character, it was natural that Soso should instinctively incline toward the left wing. A plebeian democrat of the provincial type, armed with a rather primitive ‘Marxist’ doctrine – it was as such that he entered the revolutionary movement, and such in essence he remained to the very end, despite the fantastic orbit of his personal fate.

The differences of opinion between the two still vaguely differentiated groups temporarily converged on the question of propaganda and agitation. Some stood for circumspect educational work among small groups; others, for leadership of strikes and for agitation by means of leaflets. When those who favoured mass work won out, the subject of their differences became the content of the leaflets. The more circumspect stood for agitation on the ground of exclusively economic needs, determined to “refrain from frightening the masses.” They received from their opponents the contemptuous appellation of ‘Economists’. The left wing, on the other hand, deemed unpostponable the transition to revolutionary agitation against tsarism. Such was Plekhanov’s position among the *émigrés* abroad. Such in Russia was the position of Vladimir Ulyanov and his friends. One of the pioneers relates:

The first Social-Democratic groups arose in Tiflis. As early as 1896-97 that city had circles in which workers were the preponderant element. These circles were at first of a purely educational character... The number of these circles constantly increased. In 1900 they already numbered several score. Each circle consisted of ten to fifteen people.

With the growth of the number of circles, their activity became bolder. In 1898, while still a seminary student, Koba established contact with workers and joined the Social-Democratic organisation. Iremashvili recollects:

One evening Koba and I, secretly made our way from the seminary at Mtatsminda to a small house, which stood leaning against a cliff and which belonged to a worker of the Tiflis Railway. After us, secretly arrived others from the seminary who shared our views. There also met with us a Social-Democratic labour organisation of railway workers.

Stalin himself told about it in 1926 at a meeting in Tiflis:

I recall the year 1898, when the first circle of workers from the railway shops was assigned to me. I remember how in the home of Comrade Sturua, in the presence of Sylvester Dzhibladze (he was at that time one of my teachers)...and other advanced workers of Tiflis, I received lessons in practical work... Here, in the circle of these comrades, I then received my first revolutionary baptism by fire: here, in the circle of these comrades, I then became a pupil of the revolution.

In the years 1898-1900, in the railway shops and in a number of Tiflis factories, strikes broke out with the active, and at times leading, participation of young Social-Democrats. Proclamations, printed by hand with the aid of a bootblack brush in an underground printing shop, were distributed among the workers. The movement was still developing in the spirit of 'Economism'. Part of the illegal work fell to Koba; exactly what part it is not easy to determine. But apparently he had already managed to become an initiate in the world of the revolutionary underground.

In 1900, Lenin, who had just then completed his Siberian exile, went abroad with the express intention of founding a revolutionary newspaper, in order, with its aid, to muster the scattered party and to switch it definitely onto the rails of revolutionary endeavour. Simultaneously an old revolutionist, the engineer Victor Kurnatovsky, who was confidentially initiated into these plans, journeyed from Siberia to Tiflis. It was he, and not Koba, as the Byzantine historians now aver, who brought the Tiflis Social-Democracy out of its 'economistic' limitations and invested its activities with a more revolutionary trend.

Kurnatovsky had begun his revolutionary activity with the terroristic Narodnaya Volya ('People's Will') party. At the time of his third exile, toward the end of the century, he, who was already a Marxist, became very friendly with Lenin and his circle. The newspaper *Iskra* ('The Spark'), founded abroad by Lenin, whose adherents began to be known as Iskristis, had in the person of

Kurnatovsky its principal representative in the Caucasus. Old Tiflis workers recall: "On the occasion of any arguments and discussions all the comrades turned to Kurnatovsky. His conclusions and judgments were always accepted without argument." From that testimony one gathers the significance for the Caucasus of this tireless and inflexible revolutionist, whose personal fate was composed of two elements: the heroic and the tragic.

In 1900, undoubtedly upon Kurnatovsky's initiative, the Tiflis Committee of the Social-Democratic Party was established. It was composed entirely of intellectuals. Koba, who evidently fell soon after, like many others, under Kurnatovsky's spell, was not yet a member of that committee which, incidentally, did not long survive. From May through August, a wave of strikes affected Tiflis business establishments; among the strikers of the railroad shops are listed the locksmith Kalinin, the future President of the Soviet Republic, and another Russian worker, S. Alliluyev, Stalin's future father-in-law.⁴

In the meantime, in the North, upon the initiative of university students, a cycle of street demonstrations began. A large 1st May demonstration at Kharkov in 1900 brought to its feet a majority of the city's workers and aroused an echo of amazement and exultation throughout the country. Other cities followed suit. The Gendarme General Spiridovich wrote:

The Social-Democracy understood the tremendous agitational significance of going forth into the street. From then on it took upon itself the initiative for demonstrations, attracting to them an ever-greater number of workers. Not infrequently the street demonstrations grew out of strikes.

Tiflis did not remain quiet for long. The 1st May celebration – let us not forget that the old calendar still reigned in Russia – was marked on 22nd April 1901, by a street demonstration in the heart of the city, in which nearly two thousand people took part. At the time of the encounter with the police and the Cossacks, fourteen were wounded and more than fifty of the rioters arrested.

4 *While Stalin was in prison his friend Alliluyev moved from Tiflis to Baku where he worked as a machinist. Alliluyev married a Georgian woman. In September 1902 she gave birth to a girl who was named Nadezhda. At that time Stalin was twenty-two or twenty-three. After the Revolution, Nadezhda Alliluyeva was to become Stalin's wife. Alliluyeva and Stalin had two children in 1925 and 1932, Vassili and a daughter Svetlana. – LT* [*Proletarian Revolution*, No. 8, 1937 (p. 154) relates that S. Alliluyev personally met Stalin in January, 1904 at the home of Comrade M. Bocharidze. Stalin had shortly before that returned from eastern Siberia whither he had been exiled at the end of November 1903. But Alliluyev had first heard of Stalin in Tiflis in 1899 in connection with a railway workers' organisation of which Stalin was the young propagandist.]

Iskra did not neglect to notice the important symptomatic significance of the Tiflis demonstration: "From that day on an open revolutionary movement began in the Caucasus."

Kurnatovsky, who was in charge of the preparatory work, had been arrested on the night of 22nd March, a month before the demonstration. That same night a search was made in the observatory where Koba was employed; but he was not caught because he was away at the time. The gendarme administration resolved "...to locate the aforementioned Joseph Djughashvili and to question the accused." Thus Koba passed to the 'status of illegality' and became a 'professional revolutionist' for a long time to come. He was then twenty-two years old. There still remained sixteen years before the victory would be won.

Having escaped arrest, Koba spent the next few weeks in hiding at Tiflis, and so managed to take part in the May Day demonstration. Beria states that categorically, adding, as always, that Stalin "personally" led it. Unfortunately, Beria is not to be trusted. In this case, however, there is also the testimony of Iremashvili, who, it is true, was at that time not in Tiflis but in Gori where he had become a teacher. He says:

Koba, as one of the leaders who were being sought, managed to hide by leaving the market square as he was on the verge of arrest... He fled to his home town of Gori. He could not live in his mother's lodgings, because that was the first place where he would be sought. He therefore had to hide even in Gori. Secretly, during the hours of the night, he frequently visited me at my lodgings.

The Tiflis demonstration made an exceedingly strong impression on Koba. "Not without alarm" Iremashvili had noticed that it was precisely the bloody outcome of the clash that had inspired his friend. "The movement was to grow strong in a life and death struggle: in the opinion of Koba the bloody struggle was to bring the quickest decision." Iremashvili did not guess that his friend was merely repeating the preachings of *Iskra*.

From Gori Koba evidently again returned illegally to Tiflis, for according to the information of the gendarme administration, "in the Autumn of 1901 Djughashvili was elected to the Tiflis Committee...participated in two sessions of that committee, and toward the end of 1901 was assigned to propaganda activity in Batumi." Since the gendarmes were not inclined toward any "trend" other than the catching of revolutionists, and were, thanks to the internal agency, usually well informed, we can consider it established that 1898-1901, Koba did not play the leading role in Tiflis which has been

ascribed to him in recent years; until the autumn of 1901 he was not even a member of his local committee, but was merely one of the propagandists, that is, a leader of circles.

Toward the end of 1901, Koba moved from Tiflis to Batumi on the shores of the Black Sea, close to the Turkish border. This move can be explained on the grounds of double necessity – to hide from the eyes of the Tiflis police and to introduce revolutionary propaganda in the provinces. Menshevik publications, however, give another reason. According to them, from the very first days of his activities in workers' circles, Djughashvili attracted attention to himself by his intrigues against Dzhibladze, the principal leader of the Tiflis organisation. In spite of warnings, he continued to spread slander "for the purpose of undermining the true and recognised representatives of the movement and in order to obtain a leading position." Placed on trial before a Party court, Koba was found guilty of slander unbecoming a comrade and unanimously expelled from the organisation. There is hardly any possibility of verifying that story, which comes, we must not forget, from Stalin's bitterest opponents. The documents of the Tiflis gendarme administration – at any rate, those that have been published to date – say nothing at all about Joseph Djughashvili's expulsion from the Party, and on the contrary, speak of his assignment to Batumi "for propaganda". We might therefore set aside the Menshevik version without further ado if other testimony did not indicate that his removal to Batumi was the result of some unpleasantness.

One of the first and most conscientious historians of the labour movement in the Caucasus was T. Arkomed, whose book was published in Geneva in 1910. In it, he tells about the bitter conflict that broke out in the Tiflis organisation in the autumn of 1901 over the question of inducting into the committee elected representatives of the workers:

Against it spoke a certain young, indiscriminately 'energetic' and in all matters intelligent comrade, who, pleading conspiratorial considerations, the lack of preparation and the lack of class consciousness among the workers, came out against admitting workers into the committee. Turning to the workers, he ended his speech with the words: "Here they flatter the workers; I ask you, are there among you even one or two workers fit for the committee? Tell the truth, placing your hand on your heart!"

The workers, however, did not listen to the orator and voted to include their representatives on the committee. Arkomed did not mention the name of that "indiscriminately energetic" young man, for in those days circumstances did

not permit the disclosure of names. In 1923, when this book was republished by the Soviet publishing house, that name remained undisclosed, and, we are prone to think, not through oversight. The book itself, however, contains a valuable indirect clue. "The aforementioned young comrade," Arkomed continues, "transferred his activity from Tiflis to Batumi, from where the Tiflis workers received information about his unseemly behaviour, his hostile and disorganising agitation against the Tiflis organisation and its workers." According to this author, the hostile behaviour was dictated not by motives based on principle, but "by personal caprice and the striving for absolute power." All of this is similar to what we have heard from Iremashvili concerning the squabble in the seminary circle. The "young man" closely resembles Koba. There can be no doubt that the reference was to him, since numerous reminiscences attest that he was the only one of the Tiflis Committee who went to Batumi in November, 1901. It is therefore probable that the change in his sphere of activity was made because Tiflis became too hot to hold him. If not actually "expelled", he may have been removed merely to make the atmosphere of Tiflis healthier. From that, in turn, follows Koba's "incorrect attitude" toward the Tiflis organisation and the subsequent rumours about his expulsion. Let us note at the same time the cause of the conflict: Koba was protecting 'the apparat' against pressure from below.

THE ACTIVIST

Batumi, which at the beginning of the century had a population of nearly thirty thousand, was a significant industrial centre in the Caucasus, according to the scale of those days. The number of workers in the factories reached almost eleven thousand. The working day, as was quite customary then, exceeded fourteen hours, at wretched pay. It is no wonder then that the proletariat was in the highest degree responsive to revolutionary propaganda. As in Tiflis, Koba did not have to begin from scratch: illegal circles had been in existence at Batumi since 1896. Cooperating with the worker Kandelyaki, Koba extended the network of these circles. At a New Year's Eve party they united to form a single organisation, which however was not granted the prerogatives of a committee and remained dependent upon Tiflis. This evidently was one of the causes of the new friction to which Arkomed alluded. Koba, as a rule, could not endure anyone in authority over him.

At the beginning of 1902, the Batumi organisation managed to establish an illegal print-shop, a very primitive one, which was located at Koba's

lodgings. This direct violation of the rules of conspiracy was undoubtedly due to the dearth of material resources.

A crowded little room dimly lighted with a kerosene lamp. At a small round table Stalin sits and writes. To one side of him is the printing press, at which several typesetters are busy. The type is laid out in match and cigarette boxes and on pieces of paper. Stalin frequently hands over to the typesetters what has just been written.

That is how one of the participants of the organisation recalls the scene. It must be added that the text of the proclamation was approximately on the same level as the technique of printing. Somewhat later, with the cooperation of the Armenian revolutionist Kamo, something like a printing press, a cash register and type were brought in from Tiflis. The print shop widened and became more efficient. The literary level of the proclamations remained the same. But that did not detract from their influence.

On 25th February 1902, the management of Rothschild's kerosene plant posted a notice which proclaimed the dismissal of 389 workers. In reply a strike broke out on the 27th. The disturbance affected other factories as well. There were clashes with strikebreakers. The police chief asked the governor to help him with troops. On 7th March the police arrested 389 workers. The following morning almost 400 workers of the Rothschild plant gathered at the prison, demanding either the release of those under arrest or the arrest of all the others. The police moved all of them into deportation barracks. At that time the feeling of solidarity was welding the labouring masses of Russia closer together, and this new unity asserted itself in a new way each time in the most desolate corners of the country; the revolution was only three years off... The very next day, on 9th March, a bigger demonstration took place. The barracks were approached, according to the indictment, by "a huge crowd of workers, with leaders at their head, marching in well-formed ranks, with song, noise and whistling." There were nearly two thousand people in that crowd. The workers Khimiryants and Gogoberidze, as spokesmen, demanded that the military authorities either liberate the imprisoned ones or arrest all. The crowd, as the court later acknowledged, was "in a peaceful mood and unarmed." The authorities managed, however, to bring it out of its peaceful mood. The workers responded to the attempt of the soldiers to clear the square with their rifle butts by throwing stones. The troops began to shoot, killing fourteen and wounding fifty-four. The occurrence stirred the entire country: in the beginning of the century human nerves reacted with far greater sensitiveness to mass slaughter than they do now.

What was Koba's role in that demonstration? It is not easy to say. Soviet compilers are torn between contradictory problems: to ascribe to Stalin participation in the greatest possible number of revolutionary events, and at the same time to expand as much as possible the terms of his imprisonment and exile. Court artists have been known, in portraying two concurrent events, to represent Stalin at one and the same moment as a hero of the streets and a prison martyr. On 27th April 1937, the official Moscow *Izvestiya* published the photograph of a painting by the artist E. Khutsishvili, portraying Stalin as organiser of the strike of the Tiflis railroad workers in 1902. The next day the editorial board was compelled to apologise for the error. Its statement proclaimed:

From the biography of Comrade Stalin it is known that he...from February, 1902, until the end of 1903 was in the Batumi and Kutais prisons. Therefore, Comrade Stalin could not have been the organiser of the strike at Tbilisi (Tiflis)⁵ in 1902. Asked about that, Comrade Stalin declared that portraying him as the organiser of the railway strike at Tbilisi in 1902, from the point of view of historical truth, is a complete misunderstanding, since at that time he was in prison in Batumi.

But if it is true that Stalin was in prison from February, then "from the point of view of historical truth", he could not have led the Batumi demonstration, which occurred in March. However, on that occasion not only did the assiduous artist err badly, but likewise the *Izvestiya* editorial board, despite its reference to the primary source. Koba was, as a matter of fact, arrested not in February, but in March. He could not have led the Tiflis strike, not because he was in prison but because he was on the shores of the Black Sea. There is still the possibility that he participated in the Batumi events. It remains only to discover the nature of this participation.

Stalin's French biographer, Barbusse, who wrote to the Kremlin's dictation, asserts that Koba took his place at the head of the Batumi demonstration "as a target". That flattering phrase contradicts not only the evidence of the police records but the very nature of Stalin, who never and nowhere took his place as a target (which, by the way, is not at all necessary). The publishing house of the Central Committee, which is directly under Stalin's orders, in 1937, devoted an entire volume to the Batumi demonstration, or rather, to Stalin's part in it. However, the 240 handsome pages complicated the question even more, because the dictated "reminiscences" are at complete variance with the partial accounts previously published. "Comrade Soso was constantly on

5 Tiflis changed its name in 1936 to Tbilisi.

the scene of action and guided the central strike committee," Todria writes obligingly. "Comrade Soso was always with us," affirms Gogoberidze. The old Batumi worker Darakhvelidze says that Soso was "in the midst of the tempestuous sea of workers, directly leading the movement; he personally led out of the mob the worker G. Kalandadze, who was wounded in the arm during the shooting, and took him home." The leader could scarcely have abandoned his post in order to rescue one wounded man; the duties of a stretcher bearer could have been discharged by any rank-and-file participant of the demonstration. None of the other authors, and they number twenty-six, mentioned that dubious episode. But in the final reckoning that is a mere detail. The tales concerning Koba as the direct leader of the demonstration are more conclusively refuted by the circumstance that the demonstration, as became only too clear in court, took place without any leadership whatever. Despite the insistence of the prosecutor, the tsarist court admitted that even the workers Gogoberidze and Khimiryants, who actually marched at the head of the crowd, were only rank-and-file participants of the procession. The name of Djughashvili, despite the great number of defendants and witnesses, was not so much as mentioned throughout the court trial. The legend thus collapses of itself. Koba's participation in the Batumi events was apparently of an obscure character.

After the demonstration, Koba, according to Beria, carried through "tremendous" work, writing proclamations, organising their printing and distribution, transforming the funeral procession in honour of the victims of 9th March into "a grandiose political demonstration", and the like. Unfortunately, these prescribed exaggerations are not supported by anything at all. At that time Koba was being sought by the police and could hardly have displayed "tremendous" activity in a small town where, according to the same writer, he had previously played a prominent role before the eyes of the demonstrating crowd, the police, the troops and observers in the street. On the night of 5th April, during a session of the leading party group, Koba was arrested along with other collaborators and lodged in prison. Wearisome days began. Many of them.

Published documents disclose at this juncture an exceedingly interesting episode. Three days after Koba's arrest, during the regular meeting between the prisoners and their visitors, someone threw two notes out of a window into the prison yard, reckoning that one of the visitors might pick them up and take them to their indicated destination. One of these notes contained a request to look up the school teacher Soso Iremashvili at Gori and to tell him:

Soso Djughashvili has been arrested and asks him immediately to inform his mother about it, so that in case the gendarme should ask her, "When did thy son leave Gori?", she would say, "All summer and winter until the 15th March he was here."

The second note addressed to the teacher Elisabedashvili, touched upon the need to continue revolutionary activities. Both scraps of paper were intercepted by the prison guards, and the gendarme cavalry captain Djakeli without much difficulty reached the conclusion that the author was Djughashvili and that he had "played a prominent role in the labour troubles at Batumi⁶." Djakeli immediately sent to the chief of the Tiflis gendarme administration a demand to search Iremashvili's lodgings, to question Djughashvili's mother and also to search and arrest Elisabedashvili. About the consequences of these operations the documents say nothing.

It is with relief that we greet on the pages of an official publication a name already familiar to us: Soso Iremashvili. True, Beria had already mentioned him among the members of the seminary circle, but he said very little about the relationship of the two Sosos. However, the nature of one of the notes intercepted by the police is incontestable proof that the author of the reminiscences to which we have already referred more than once was actually on intimate terms with Koba. It is to him, his childhood friend, that the man under arrest entrusts his instruction to his mother. It likewise confirms the fact that Iremashvili also enjoyed the confidence of Keke, who, as he tells us, called him in childhood her "second Soso". The note dispels the last doubts concerning the credibility of his very valuable reminiscences, which are entirely ignored by Soviet historians. The instructions which Koba, as confirmed by his own depositions during the interrogation, attempted to transmit to his mother, were intended to deceive the gendarmes as to the time of his arrival in Baku and thus to keep him out of the impending trial. There is no reason, of course, to see anything prejudicial in that attempt. The deception of gendarmes was a rule in that very serious game which was called revolutionary conspiracy. However, one cannot help pausing with amazement at the carelessness with which Koba subjected two of his comrades to danger. The purely political aspect of his act merits no less attention. It would be natural to expect a revolutionist who had helped to prepare a demonstration that had ended so tragically to desire to share the prisoners' dock with the rank-and-file workers. Not for sentimental considerations, but in order to shed political

6 According to Iremashvili another of these notes from Koba was not intercepted but reached its destination – see Appendix 3. Stalin's Official Historiography.

light on the events and to condemn the behaviour of the authorities – that is, in order to utilise the tribune of the courtroom for purposes of revolutionary propaganda. Such opportunities were not any too frequent! The absence of such desire in Koba can be explained only by the narrowness of his outlook. It is quite evident that he did not understand the political significance of the demonstration and that his chief aim was to escape its consequences.

The very plot to deceive the gendarmes would not have been feasible, we might say, if Koba had actually led the street procession and had been marching at the head of the crowd, and had offered himself as a “target”. In that event scores of witnesses would inevitably have identified him. Koba could have stayed out of the trial only if his participation in the demonstration had remained secret, anonymous. Actually, only one police constable, Chkhiknadze, testified at the preliminary investigation that he had seen Djughashvili “in the crowd” before the prison. But the testimony of a single policeman could not carry any great weight as evidence. At any rate, despite that testimony and the interception of Koba’s own notes, he was not indicted in the case of the demonstration. The trial was held a year later and lasted nine days. The political direction of the court arguments was relegated entirely to the tender mercies of liberal lawyers. They did indeed obtain minimum punishments for the twenty-one defendants, but only at the price of lessening the revolutionary significance of the Batumi events.

PRISON LIFE

The police constable who made the arrests of the Batumi organisation’s leaders characterised Koba in his report as one “who had been expelled from the theological seminary, living in Batumi without written documents or definite occupation and without lodgings of his own, the Gori denizen Joseph Djughashvili.” The reference to expulsion from the seminary is not documentary in character, for a simple constable could have no archives at his disposal, and was apparently repeating rumours in his written report; far more significant is the reference to the fact that Koba had no passport, no definite occupation nor place of residence: the three typical characteristics of the revolutionary troglodyte.

In the old and neglected provincial prisons of Batumi, Kutais, and again Batumi, Koba spent more than a year and a half. In those days, that was the customary period of imprisonment while awaiting investigation and banishment. The regime of the prisons, as of the country as a whole, combined barbarism with paternalism. Peaceable and even familiar relations with the

prison administration would be suddenly terminated by stormy protests, when the prisoners would bang their boots against the doors of their cells, shout, whistle, break up the dishes and the furniture. After the storm subsided there would again be a lull. Lolua tells briefly about one such explosion in the Kutais prison – of course, “upon the initiative and under the leadership of Stalin.” There is no reason for doubting that Koba played a prominent part in prison conflicts and that in contacts with the prison administration he knew how to defend himself and others.

“He established an orderly routine in his prison life,” Kalandadze wrote thirty-five years later. “He rose early in the morning, exercised, then set to studying the German language and economic literature... He liked to share with his comrades his impressions of the books he had just read.” It is not at all difficult to imagine a list of those books: popular compositions on natural science; a bit from Darwin; Lippert’s *History of Culture*, perhaps Buckle and Draper in translations of the seventies; the *Biographies of Great Men* in Pavlenkov’s edition; the economic teachings of Marx, as expounded by the Russian professor Sieber; something or other on the history of Russia; Beltov’s famous book on historical materialism (under this pseudonym the *émigré* Plekhanov appeared in legal literature); finally, the weighty investigation of the development of Russian capitalism, published in 1899, written by the exile V. Ulyanov, the future N. Lenin, under his legal pseudonym of V. Ilyin. All of those were there, more or less. In the theoretical knowledge of the young revolutionist there were, of course, great gaps. Yet he seemed to be not badly armed against the teachings of the Church, the arguments of Liberalism and especially the prejudices of Populism.

In the course of the nineties, the theories of Marxism won their victory over the theories of Populism, a victory which found support in the successes of capitalism and in the growth of the labour movement. However, the strikes and demonstrations of the workers stimulated the awakening of the village, which, in turn, led to a revival of Populist ideology among the city intelligentsia. Thus, at the beginning of the century there began to develop rather rapidly that hybrid revolutionary tendency which took a bit from Marxism, repudiated the romantic terms (‘Land and Freedom’) and *Zemlya Volya* (‘The Will of the People’) and gave itself the more European title, ‘Social-Revolutionary Party of Russia’ *Narodnaya Volya* [the S-R Party]. The fight against ‘Economism’ was fundamentally finished in the winter of 1902-03. The ideas of *Iskra* found too convincing a confirmation in the successes of political agitation and street demonstrations. Beginning with 1902, *Iskra*

devoted more and more of its space to attacks against the eclectic programme of the Socialists-Revolutionaries and against the methods of individual terror, which they preached. The passionate polemic between ‘the grey-haired’ and the ‘grey’⁷ penetrated all corners of the land, including, of course, the prisons as well. On more than one occasion Koba was obliged to cross swords with his new opponents; it is credible that he did so with sufficient success: *Iskra* provided him with excellent arguments.

Since Koba was not indicted and placed on trial in the case of the demonstration, his judicial examination was conducted by the gendarmes. The methods of secret investigation, as well as the prison regime, differed considerably in different parts of the country. At the capital the gendarmes were more cultured and more circumspect; in the provinces they were cruder. In the Caucasus, with its archaic customs and colonial social relations, the gendarmes resorted to the crudest forms of violence, especially when dealing with untutored, inexperienced and weak-willed victims.

Pressure, threats, terrorism, torments, falsifying the depositions of witnesses, the subornation of false witnesses, the concoction and inflation of cases, ascribing decisive and absolute significance to the hearsay reports of secret agents – such were the special features of the method pursued by the gendarmes in disposing of cases.

Arkomed, who wrote the above lines, states that the gendarme Lavrov was wont to resort to inquisitorial methods in securing “confessions” he knew beforehand to be false. These police proceedings must have left a lasting impression on Stalin, for thirty years later he was to apply Captain Lavrov’s methods on a colossal scale. From the prison reminiscences of Lolua we learn, by the way, that “Comrade Soso did not like to address his comrades by using ‘vy,’” saying that the Tsar’s servitors used ‘vy’ in addressing revolutionists when sending them to the gallows. As a matter of fact, the use of ‘ty’⁸ was customary in revolutionary circles, especially in the Caucasus. A few decades later Koba was to send to the gallows not a few of his old comrades with whom, unlike the “Tsar’s servitors”, he had been on terms of ‘ty’ since their early years. But that is still quite far off. It is surprising that the records of Koba’s police examinations pertaining to that first arrest, as well as all the records pertaining

7 Nicknames for the Social-Democrats and the S-Rs, based on consonants in the Russian for ‘grey-haired’, ‘*sedoy*’, and ‘grey’, ‘*seroy*’.

8 In Russian, ‘vy’, the second person plural, is the polite form; ‘ty’, the second person singular, is the familiar form.

to his subsequent arrests, have not yet been published. As a rule, the *Iskra* organisation demanded that its members refuse to testify. Revolutionists usually wrote: "I have been a Social-Democrat by conviction for a long time; I repudiate and deny the accusations against me; I refuse to give testimony or to take part in any secret investigation." Only at a trial in open court, to which the authorities resorted however only in exceptional circumstances, did the Iskristis come out with their banner unfurled. The refusal to give testimony, which was quite justified from the point of view of the Party's interests as a whole, in certain cases made the situation of the arrested person rather difficult. In April, 1902, Koba, as we have seen, attempted to establish his alibi by a ruse for which others were obliged to suffer. It may be supposed that on other occasions as well he relied more on his own cunning than on the standard behaviour obligatory for all. Consequently, the entire series of his police depositions present, we should think, not a very attractive – at any rate, not a "heroic" – record. That is the only possible explanation why the records of Stalin's police examinations are still unpublished.

The preponderant majority of revolutionists were subjected to punishment by the so-called 'administrative order'. On the basis of the reports of local gendarmes, the 'Special Conference', at Petersburg, composed of four high-ranking officials from the Ministries of the Interior and Justice, brought out verdicts without the presence of the accused, and these verdicts were confirmed by the Minister of the Interior. On 25th July 1903, the Tiflis Governor received from the capital a verdict of that sort, ordering him to banish sixteen political prisoners to Eastern Siberia under the direct surveillance of the police. The names were listed as was customary according to the gravity of offence or the offender's culpability, and their specific place of exile in Siberia was correspondingly better or worse. The first two places in that list are occupied by Kurnatovsky and Franchesky, who were sentenced to four years. Fourteen other persons were banished for three years, the first place here being filled by Sylvester Dzhibladze, who is already known to us. Joseph Djughashvili occupies the eleventh place on that list. The gendarme authorities did not yet regard him among the important revolutionists.

In November, Koba, with other exiles, was sent from Batumi Prison to the Government of Irkutsk. Transported from one halting place for convicts to the next, their journey lasted nearly three months. In the meantime, the revolution was seething, and everyone was trying to escape as soon as possible. By the beginning of 1904 the exile system had become a sieve. In most cases it was not very difficult to escape; each province had its own secret

'centres', which provided forged passports, money, addresses. Koba remained in the village of Novaya Uda not more than a month, i.e., precisely the time necessary to look around, find the indispensable contacts, and work out a plan of action. Alliluyev, the father of Stalin's second wife, states that during his first attempt to escape, Koba froze his face and ears and was obliged to return to acquire warmer clothing. A strong Siberian troika, driven by a reliable coachman, raced him quickly over the snow-laden highway to the nearest railway station. The return journey through the Urals took not three months, but about a week.

It is pertinent here, and only fair, to complete the story of the engineer Kurnatovsky, who really inspired the revolutionary movement at Tiflis at the beginning of the century. After two years in the military prison, he was banished to the Yakut Region, from which escapes were immeasurably more difficult than from the Irkutsk Government. At Yakutsk, on the road, Kurnatovsky participated in the armed resistance of the exiles against the outrages of the authorities, and was sentenced by the court to twelve years' hard labour. Amnestied in the autumn of 1905, he reached Chita, which was then deluged with combatants of the Russo-Japanese War. There he became chairman of the Soviet of Workers', Soldiers', and Cossacks' Deputies – the head of the so-called 'Chita Republic'. At the beginning of 1906 Kurnatovsky was again arrested and sentenced to death. General Rennenkampf, the pacifier of Siberia, carried the condemned man in his train so that he might witness with his own eyes the executions of workers at every railway station. Because of the new liberal tendency in connection with elections to the First Duma, his death sentence was commuted to lifelong banishment to Siberia. Kurnatovsky managed to escape from Nerchinsk to Japan. From there he went to Australia, where he was in great need, worked as a lumberjack and strained himself. Ill with inflammation in his ears, he somehow managed to make his way to Paris. "An exceptionally difficult lot," relates Krupskaya⁹, "finally undermined him. In the autumn of 1910, after his arrival, Ilyich and I called on him at the hospital." Two years later, when Lenin and Krupskaya were already living at Krakow, Kurnatovsky died. On the shoulders of the Kurnatovskies and over their corpses the revolution marched forward.

9 Nadezhda Konstantinovna Krupskaya (1869-1939) was Lenin's wife. An active Bolshevik, she was secretary of the Central Committee during the 1905 Revolution.

ISKRA PERIOD

The revolution marched forward. The first generation of the Russian Social-Democracy, headed by Plekhanov, started its critical and propagandistic activity at the beginning of the eighties. The pioneers were counted singly; later, by tens. The second generation, which Lenin led – he was fourteen years younger than Plekhanov – entered the political arena at the beginning of the nineties. Social-Democrats were counted by hundreds. The third generation, composed of people some ten years younger than Lenin, enlisted in the revolutionary struggle at the end of the past and, the beginning of the present century. To that generation, which was already numbered by thousands, belonged Stalin, Rykov¹⁰, Zinoviev, Kamenev, the author of this book and others.

In March 1898, at the provincial town of Minsk, the representatives of nine local committees convened and founded the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party. All the participants were promptly arrested. It is hardly possible that the resolutions of the Congress were received very soon in Tiflis, where the seminary student Djughashvili contemplated joining the Social-Democracy. The Minsk congress, prepared by Lenin's coevals, merely proclaimed the Party, but did not yet create it. One strong blow by the tsarist police proved sufficient to demolish the weak party contacts for a long time to come. In the course of the next few years the movement, which was preponderantly economic in character, sank its roots locally. The young Social-Democrats usually carried out their activities on the home ground until subjected to arrest and banishment. Such a thing as Party workers traveling from one city to another was an exception. Transition to illegal status, for the purpose of eluding arrest, was almost never practiced; they had neither the experience nor the technical means nor the necessary contacts for that.

Beginning with 1900, *Iskra* began to build a centralised organisation. Without question the leader of that period was Lenin, who rightfully pushed

¹⁰ Alexey Ivanovich Rykov (1881-1938) was a veteran revolutionary and Bolshevik who was named Premier of the Soviet State from 1924 to 1930. He played an active part in the 1905 Revolution. In 1917, he became a member of the Petrograd and Moscow Soviets, and was elected to the Bolshevik Central Committee in July-August of the same year. Rykov's conciliationist tendencies often brought him into political conflict with Lenin. Nonetheless he remained an influential leader after the October Revolution. Together with Bukharin and Tomsky he was a leader of the Right Opposition after Lenin's death. In March 1938 – at the Trial of the Twenty-One – Rykov, together with Bukharin, Krestinsky, Rakovsky and seventeen others, was found guilty on a trumped-up charge of treason. They were sentenced to death and shot.

into the background 'the old people' headed by Plekhanov. Party construction found its support in the incomparably broader sweep of the labour movement, which roused the new revolutionary generation, considerably more numerous than the one from which Lenin himself had emerged. The immediate task of *Iskra* was to select from among the local workers the persons of greatest stamina and to use them in the creation of a central apparatus capable of guiding the revolutionary struggle of the entire country. The number of *Iskra* adherents was considerable, and it was constantly growing. But the number of genuine Iskrist, of trusted agents of the foreign centre, was of necessity limited: it did not exceed twenty to thirty persons. Most characteristic of the Iskrist was his severance from his own city, his own Government, his own province, for the sake of building the party. In the *Iskra* dictionary 'localism' was a synonym for backwardness, narrowness, almost for retrogression. The gendarme General Spiridovich wrote:

Welded into a compact conspirative group of professional revolutionists, they travelled from place to place wherever there were party committees, established contacts with their members, delivered illegal literature to them, helped to establish print shops and garnered the information needed by the *Iskra*. They penetrated into local committees, carried on their propaganda against 'Economism', eliminated their ideological opponents and in this way subjected the committees to their influence.

The retired gendarme gives here a sufficiently correct characterisation of the Iskrist. They were members of a wandering order, above the local organisations which they regarded as an arena for the exercise of their influence.

Koba took no part in that responsible work. He was first a Tiflis Social-Democrat, then a Batumi Social-Democrat – in other words, a revolutionist in a small, local way. The contact of the Caucasus with *Iskra* and with Central Russia was through Krassin, Kurnatovsky and others. The entire work of unifying the local committees and groups into a centralised party was accomplished without Koba. That circumstance – which is established beyond the shadow of a doubt on the basis of the correspondence of those days, memoirs and other documents – is very important in the estimation of Stalin's political development; he moved forward slowly, uncertainly, groping his way.

In June, 1900, Krassin, in his capacity as a prominent young engineer, arrived to assume a responsible post in Baku. He writes:

No less intensive was the activity in a different sphere; namely, underground Social-Democratic work in Baku itself, as well as throughout the Caucasus – in Tiflis, Kutais, Batumi, whither I journey from time to time to maintain contact with the local organisations there.

Krassin remained in Baku until 1904. Hampered by his official position, he could not participate directly in the work of the masses. The workers were not aware of his actual role and later even attempted to insist that he be removed as manager at the electric station. Krassin dealt only with the tops of the organisation; he was the leader of the local leaders. Among the revolutionists with whom he had occasion to come directly in contact he mentions the brothers Yenukidze, Lado Ketskhoveli, Alliluyev, Shelgunov, Halperin and others. It is noteworthy that the one man who carried on the leading work in the Caucasus from 1900 to 1904 does not mention Stalin even once. No less significant is the fact that as late as 1927 this pretermission passed entirely unnoticed, and Krassin's autobiography was printed by Gosizdat (the State Publishing House) without any annotations or corrections. Similarly, no place whatever is accorded to Stalin in the reminiscences of other Bolsheviks who were in any way connected with the movement in the Caucasus during those years. This is true, of course, only of reminiscences written prior to the beginning of the official revision of Party history, i.e., not later than 1929.

In February, 1902, there was supposed to take place in Kiev a conclave of the Iskristis who were agents of the foreign centre. "To that conference," writes Piatnitsky¹¹, "came representatives from all parts of Russia." Discovering that they were under surveillance, they began to leave the city hastily in various directions. However, all of them were caught, some in Kiev, some en route. Several months later they made the famous jail break from the Kiev prison. Koba, who at that time worked in Batumi, was not invited to the Kiev meeting, and undoubtedly knew nothing about it.

Koba's political provincialism is most instructively exemplified by his relations with the foreign centre, or rather, by the absence of any relations at all with it. Beginning with the middle of the past century, the *émigrés* continued almost invariably to play the dominant role in the Russian revolutionary movement. What with constant arrests, exiles and executions in tsarist Russia, the haunts of these *émigrés*, who were the most outstanding theoreticians, publicists and organisers, were the only continuously active

11 Osip Piatnitsky (1882-1938) was an old Bolshevik, who worked together with Lenin on *Iskra* in a technical capacity before the First World War. After the Revolution he was one of the secretaries of the Comintern and was executed by Stalin in the Purge of 1938.

sectors of the movement and hence by the nature of things laid their imprint upon it. The editorial board of *Iskra* became unquestionably at the beginning of the century the centre of the Social-Democracy. From there emanated not only the political slogans but also the practical directions. Every revolutionist passionately desired as soon as possible to spend some time abroad, to see and to hear the leaders, to verify the correctness of his own views, to establish permanent contact with *Iskra* and, through it, with the underground workers in Russia itself. V. Kozhevnikova, who at one time was close to Lenin in connection with work abroad, tells how “from exile and on the road to exile there began a general flight abroad to the editorial office of *Iskra*...and then again to Russia for active work.” The young working man Nogin – to take one example out of a hundred – in April, 1903, fled from exile to go abroad, “in order to catch up with life” as he wrote to one of his friends, “in order to read and learn.” A few months later he returned illegally to Russia as an *Iskra* agent. All of the ten participants of the aforementioned Kiev jail break, among them the future Soviet diplomat Litvinov, soon found themselves abroad. One after another they subsequently returned to Russia, to prepare the congress of the party. Concerning these and other trusted agents, Krupskaya writes in her reminiscences:

Iskra carried on active correspondence with all of them. Vladimir Ilyich looked through every letter. We knew in minute detail which *Iskra* agent did what, and discussed with them each phase of their entire activity; we re-established broken contacts, informed them of arrests and the like.

Among these agents were coevals of Lenin as well as of Stalin. But as yet, Koba was not included among that upper layer of revolutionists, the disseminators of centralism, the builders of a unified party. He remained a ‘local worker’, a Caucasian, and a congenial provincial.

THE 1903 SPLIT

In July, 1903, the Party Congress prepared by *Iskra* finally convened in Brussels. Under pressure from tsarist diplomats and the Belgian police subservient to them, it was obliged to transfer its deliberations to London. The congress adopted the programme worked out by Plekhanov, and passed resolutions on tactics; but when it came to organisational questions, unexpected differences of opinion suddenly arose among the *Iskrists* themselves, who dominated the congress. Both sides, including the ‘hard’ ones, headed by Lenin and the ‘soft’ ones, headed by Martov, at first supposed that the differences were not

fundamental. All the more amazing therefore was the sharp clash of these differences. The party, which had but recently been unified, suddenly found itself on the verge of a split.

As far back as 1903, while sitting in prison, and having learned through comrades returning from the Second Congress about the very serious differences of opinion between the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks, Stalin resolutely joined the Bolsheviks.

So runs a biography, written at the dictation of Stalin himself, which is in the nature of an instruction to Party historians. It would be, however, most incautious to regard that instruction with any excess of confidence. At the congress which led to the split were three Caucasian delegates. With which one of these did Koba meet, and how precisely did he meet him, being at that time in solitary confinement? How and in what way did he express his solidarity with the Bolsheviks? The only confirmation of this version of Stalin's comes from Iremashvili. "Koba, who had always been an enthusiastic partisan of Leninist violent methods," he writes, "immediately, of course, took his place on the side of Bolshevism and became its most passionate defender and leader in Georgia." However, that testimony, its categorical character notwithstanding, is flagrantly anachronous. Prior to the congress no one, including Lenin himself, had ever advocated "Leninist violent methods", as opposed to the methods of those members of the editorial board who were the future leaders of Menshevism. At the congress itself the arguments were not concerned with revolutionary methods; tactical differences of opinion had not yet arisen. Iremashvili is obviously in error, and no wonder: throughout 1903 Koba was in prison, so Iremashvili could not have had any direct impressions of him. In general, although his psychological observations and reminiscences of actual incidents are quite convincing and almost always confirmable, his political observations are less reliable. It would seem that he lacked both the instinct and the background requisite for an understanding of the evolution of the warring revolutionary tendencies; in that sphere he presents us with retrospective guesses, dictated by his own latter-day views.

The wrangle at the Second Congress flared up, as a matter of fact, over the question of party membership: whether it should include only those who were members of the illegal organisation, or anyone who systematically participated in the revolutionary struggle under the leadership of local committees. At the time of the discussion Lenin said: "I do not deem the difference of opinion among us so substantial that the life or death of our party is dependent on it.

We are far from perishing because of a bad clause in our party regulations.” Toward the end of the congress there was also argument over the question of the personnel of the editorial board of *Iskra* and of the Central Committee; and never once did the differences of opinion spread beyond those narrow limits. Lenin attempted to obtain sharp and explicit boundaries for the Party, a compact composition of the editorial board and severe discipline. Martov and his friends preferred a looser organisation, more on the order of a family circle. However, both sides were still merely feeling their way and, despite the sharpness of the conflict, no one yet thought these differences of opinion “most serious.” According to Lenin’s pointed observation of a later day, the struggle at the congress was in the nature of an “anticipation”.

Lunacharsky, the first Soviet leader in the field of education, wrote subsequently:

The greatest difficulty in that struggle consisted in this, that the Second Congress, having split the Party, had not yet plumbed the really profound differences between the Martovists on the one hand and the Leninists on the other. These differences still seemed to turn on the one paragraph of the party statutes and the personnel of the editorial board. Many were embarrassed by the insignificance of the reason that led to the split.

Piatnitsky, later a prominent official of the Comintern, but at that time a young workman, writes in his reminiscences: “I could not understand why petty differences kept us from working together.” The engineer Krzhizhanovsky¹², who was very close to Lenin in those years, and later the head of the State Planning Commission, recalls, “To me personally, the thought about Comrade Martov’s opportunism seemed particularly far-fetched.” There is a lot of such testimony. From Petersburg, from Moscow, from the provinces came protests and wails. No one wanted to acknowledge the split which transpired at the congress among the Iskrist. The parting of the ways took place in the course of the following period, slowly, with inevitable shifts to one side and the

12 Gleb Maximilianovich Krzhizhanovsky (1872-1959) was an Old Bolshevik who in 1895 was one of the co-founders, with Lenin, of the St. Petersburg League of Struggle for the Emancipation of the Working Class. Like many others he fell into inactivity after the defeat of the 1905 Revolution, only to reappear after the victory of the October Revolution. As head of Gosplan, he was formally responsible for initiating the first Five-Year Plan. He was kept on by Stalin who needed a few relics to justify his claim to be an Old Bolshevik, having murdered all but a few politically insignificant ones like Krzhizhanovsky.

other. Not infrequently the first Bolsheviks and Mensheviks continued to work peaceably together.

In the Caucasus, because of its backward social and political development, what had occurred at the Congress was understood even less than anywhere else. True, all three of the Caucasian delegates, in the heat of passion, joined the majority in London. *They were not accidental representatives as indicated by their future fate.* But it is significant that all three subsequently became Mensheviks: Topuridze deserted the Majority¹³ by the end of the Congress itself; Zurabov and Knunyants came over to the Mensheviks in the course of the next few years. *Zurabov became a Menshevik deputy in the second Duma.* The famous Caucasian illegal print-shop, in which Bolshevik sympathies predominated, continued in 1904 to reprint the Menshevik *Iskra*, which formally remained the central organ of the Party. "Our differences of opinion," writes Yenukidze, "were absolutely not reflected in our work." Only after the Third Congress of the Party, i.e., not earlier than the middle of 1905, did the print-shop pass into the hands of the Bolshevik Central Committee. There is therefore no reason whatever to credit the assertion that Koba, sitting in an out-of-the-way prison, had at once estimated the differences as "most serious". Anticipation was never his strong point. And it would hardly be possible to censure a young revolutionist even less circumspect and suspicious, had he then departed for Siberia without taking a stand on the struggle within the Party.

THE FUGITIVE

From Siberia Koba returned directly to Tiflis; that fact cannot help but evoke amazement. Fugitives who were in the least conspicuous seldom returned to their native haunts, where they could too easily be observed by the ever-vigilant police, especially when that place was not Petersburg or Moscow but a small provincial city like Tiflis. But the young Djughashvili had not yet severed his Caucasian umbilical cord; Georgian still remained almost exclusively the language of his propaganda. Moreover, he did not feel himself

13 The split between the Bolshevik and Menshevik factions of the Social-Democratic Party arose from a vote on conditions for party membership at the Second Congress of the RSDLP in 1903. The majority voted for Lenin's proposal and would form the basis of the Bolshevik (Majority) faction; the minority voted for Martov's proposal and would form the basis of the Menshevik (Minority) faction. However, these terms bore no relation to the size and influence of each faction within the Russian labour movement from that point on.

to be a focus for police attention. He had not yet made up his mind to try his talents in Central Russia. He was not known abroad, nor did he try to go there. It would seem also that a more personal reason kept him in Tiflis: if Iremashvili is not confused in his chronology, Koba was already married at that time. During his imprisonment and exile he had left his young wife behind him at Tiflis.

The war with Japan, which began in January, 1904, at first weakened the labour movement, but gave it unprecedented momentum by the end of that year. The military defeats of tsarism quickly dispelled the patriotic moods which had at first affected liberal and partly student circles. Defeatism, although with a varying coefficient, increasingly overcame, not only the revolutionary masses, but even the oppositionist bourgeoisie. Despite all of that, the Social-Democracy, before the great upheaval which was impending, lived through months of stagnation and internal ailment. The differences between the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks, overtaking because as yet indeterminate, little by little began to seep through the cramped confines of the Party headquarters and subsequently encompassed the entire field of revolutionary strategy.

“Stalin’s work during the period of 1904-05 passed under the flag of fierce struggle against Menshevism,” states his official biographer. “Literally on his own shoulders he bore the brunt of the entire struggle with the Mensheviks in the Caucasus, beginning in 1904 and ending with 1908,” writes Yenukidze in his newly-revised reminiscences. Beria affirms that after his flight from exile Stalin “organised and directed the struggle against the Mensheviks, who after the Second Congress of the Party, during Comrade Stalin’s absence, became particularly active.” These authors want to prove too much. If one were to accept on faith the statement that as early as 1901-03 Stalin was already playing a leading role in the Caucasian Social-Democracy, that he had joined the Bolsheviks as early as 1903, and, beginning with February, 1904, had already begun his struggle against Menshevism, then one must pause with amazement before the fact that all these efforts had yielded such pitiful results: on the eve of the revolution of 1905 Georgian Bolsheviks were literally counted singly. Beria’s reference to the fact that the Mensheviks became particularly active “during Stalin’s absence” sounds almost like irony. Petty-bourgeois Georgia, including Tiflis, remained the fortress of Menshevism for a score of years quite irrespective of anyone’s presence or absence. In the revolution of 1905 the Georgian workers and peasants followed indivisibly behind the

Menshevik faction; in all the four Dumas¹⁴ Georgia was invariably represented by Mensheviks; in the February Revolution of 1917 Georgian Menshevism provided all of Russia with leaders of national calibre – Tsereteli, Chkheidze and others. Finally, even after the establishment of the Soviet Government in Georgia, Menshevism continued to exert considerable influence, which was subsequently expressed in the uprising of 1924. “All of Georgia must be ploughed under!” that was how Stalin summarised the lessons of the Georgian uprising at the session of the Political Bureau in the autumn of 1924, i.e., twenty years after he had “opened a fierce struggle against Menshevism.” It would therefore be more correct and more just to Stalin not to exaggerate Koba’s role during the first years of the century.

Koba returned from exile as a member of the Caucasian Committee, to which he had been elected *in absentia*, during his tenure in prison, at a conference of the Transcaucasian organisations. It is possible that at the beginning of 1904 a majority of the Committee members, eight in all, was already sympathetic to the Majority of the London Congress; but that alone is no indication of Koba’s own sympathies. The local Caucasian organisations obviously tended in the direction of the Mensheviks. The conciliationist Central Committee of the Party, under the leadership of Krassin, was at the time opposed to Lenin. *Iskra* was entirely in the hands of the Mensheviks. Under these conditions the Caucasian Committee, with its Bolshevik sympathies, seemed suspended in mid-air. Yet Koba preferred to have firm ground under his feet. He prized the apparatus more than the idea.

Official information about Koba’s activities in 1904 is exceedingly sketchy and unreliable. It remains unknown whether he carried on any activity in Tiflis, and if he did, the nature of his work. It is hardly possible that a fugitive from Siberia could have shown himself in workers’ circles, where many knew him. It is likely that precisely for that reason Koba moved to Baku as early as June. Concerning his activity there we are informed in the stereotyped phrases: “he directed the struggle of the Baku Bolsheviks”, “he exposed the Mensheviks.” Not a single fact, not a single specific recollection! If Koba wrote

14 The first two Dumas (Russian Parliament) were elected in accordance with the election law of 24th [11th] December 1905, the first sitting (known as the ‘Witte Duma’ after politician Sergei Witte had written a manifesto calling for its convocation) from 10th May [27th April] to 22nd [9th] July 1906, and the Second Duma from 5th March [20th February] to 15th [2nd] June 1907. The last two Dumas were elected on a far more restrictive electoral law of 16th [3rd] June 1907. The Third Duma sat from 14th [1st] November 1907 to 22nd [9th] June 1912, and the Fourth Duma from 28th [15th] November 1912 to 10th March [25th February] 1917.

anything at all during those months, it is being withheld from publication, and probably not through mere oversight.

On the other hand, the belated attempts to represent Stalin as the founder of the Baku Social-Democracy are based on nothing at all. The first workers' circles in the smoky and gloomy city poisoned by the Tatar-Armenian feud appeared as early as 1896. The basis for a more complete organisation was laid three years later by Abel Yenukidze and several workmen expelled from Moscow. At the very beginning of the century, the very same Yenukidze, in collaboration with Lado Ketskhoveli, organised the Baku Committee, which was Iskrist in sympathies. Due to the efforts of the Yenukidze brothers, who were closely connected with Krassin, a large underground print-shop was established at Baku in 1903. It played an important part in laying the groundwork for the First Revolution. In that very print-shop Bolsheviks and Mensheviks worked together in the friendliest fashion until the middle of 1905. When the aged Abel Yenukidze, for many years Secretary of the Central Executive Committee of the Soviet Union, lost favour with Stalin, he was compelled in 1935 to revise his recollections of 1923 anew, substituting for well-established facts mere assertions about the inspiring and leading role of Soso in the Caucasus and particularly in Baku. His submission did not save Yenukidze from his doom¹⁵. Neither did it add a single vivid stroke to Stalin's biography.

When Koba first appeared on the Baku horizon in June, 1904, the local Social-Democratic organisation had to its credit a record of eight years of revolutionary activity. The 'Black City' had played a particularly important part in the labour movement during the preceding years. The spring had brought to Baku a general strike that unleashed an avalanche of strikes and demonstrations throughout the South of Russia. Vera Zasulich was the first to appraise those developments as the beginning of the Revolution. Due to the more proletarian character of Baku, especially by comparison with Tiflis, the Bolsheviks managed to secure there an earlier and a more stable foothold than elsewhere in the Caucasus. The same Makharadze, who had used the Tiflis term '*Kinto*' with reference to Stalin, states that in the autumn of 1904 there was created in Baku, "under the direct leadership of Soso, a special organisation for revolutionary work among the backward oil industry workers, Tatars, Azerbaijanis, and Persians." That testimony might evoke less doubt if Makharadze had made it in the first edition of his memoirs and not ten years later, when under the whip of Beria he again rewrote the entire

¹⁵ Yenukidze was killed by Stalin in 1938.

history of the Caucasian Social-Democracy. The process of his step-by-step approach to the official 'truth' was supplemented by his castigation of each preceding edition of his book in its turn as a spawn of the Evil Spirit and its withdrawal from circulation.

Upon return from Siberia, Koba undoubtedly met Kamenev, who was born in Tiflis and who was one of the first of Lenin's young followers there. It is possible that it was Kamenev, recently returned from abroad, who had helped to convert Koba to Bolshevism. But Kamenev's name was expunged from the history of the Party a few years before Kamenev himself was shot on a fantastic charge. In any event, the real history of Caucasian Bolshevism began, not with Koba's return from exile, but in the autumn of 1904. That date is established in various connections even by official authors wherever they are not obliged to refer specifically to Stalin. In November, 1904, a Bolshevik conference convened at Tiflis, composed of fifteen delegates from local Caucasian organisations, for the most part insignificant groups. It passed a resolution in favour of convoking a new Party Congress. That act was an outright declaration of war, not only against the Mensheviks but also against the conciliationist Central Committee. Had Koba participated in that first conference of the Caucasian Bolsheviks, Beria and the other historians would not have failed to report that the conference had been held "at the initiative and under the leadership of Comrade Stalin." Utter silence on that score means that Koba, who was at the time in the Caucasus, did not participate in the conference. In other words, not a single Bolshevik organisation sent him as a delegate. The conference elected a Bureau. Koba did not become a member of that important body. All of that would have been inconceivable had he enjoyed a position of any prominence at all among Caucasian Bolsheviks.

Victor Taratuta, who was at the conference as a delegate from Batumi and who was subsequently a member of the Party's Central Committee, gives us a fairly definite and unquestionable hint as to who was then the leader among the Bolsheviks in the Caucasus. He writes:

At the Caucasus regional conference, which took place at the end of 1904 or at the beginning of 1905... I first met also Comrade Kamenev, Lev Borisovich, in his capacity as leader of the Caucasian Bolshevik organisations. At that regional conference Comrade Kamenev was elected travelling propagandist and was to canvass the country far and wide in order to agitate for the convocation of a new Party Congress. At the same time he was delegated to visit the committees of the entire country and to establish contact with our foreign centres of those days.

This authoritative witness does not say a word about Koba's participation in that activity.

Under those circumstances there naturally could not have been any reason at all for including Koba in the general Russian centre of the Bolsheviks, the "Bureau of the Committees of the Majority", composed of seventeen members, which was formed for the purpose of convoking the congress. Kamenev became a member of that Bureau as the representative of the Caucasus. Among the others on the list of the Bureau members who subsequently became famous Soviet leaders we find the names of Rykov and Litvinov. It might not be amiss to add that Kamenev and Rykov were two or three years younger than Stalin. On the whole the Bureau was composed of representatives of the "third" generation.

Koba came to Baku for the second time in December, 1904, that is, soon after the Tiflis Bolshevik Conference had taken place. On the eve of his arrival a general strike broke out in the oil fields and factories, catching all of Russia by surprise. The Party's organisations manifestly had not yet learned to understand the nature of the insurrectionary mood of the masses, which was aggravated by the first year of the war. The Baku strike directly preceded the famous Bloody Sunday in Petersburg, the tragic march of the workers under the leadership of the priest Gapon to the Winter Palace on 22nd January 1905. One of the "memoirs" fabricated in 1935 vaguely mentions that Stalin led the strike committee in Baku and that everything transpired under his leadership. But according to the same author, Koba arrived in Baku after the strike had begun and remained in the city only ten days in all. As a matter of fact, he came on a special assignment, which probably had something to do with preparations for the congress. By that time he might have made his choice in favour of Bolshevism.

Stalin himself attempted to set back the date of his joining the Bolsheviks. Not satisfied with the statement that he had become a Bolshevik before his release from prison, he declared in 1924, at the memorial evening of the Kremlin cadets, that he had first established contact with Lenin as far back as the time of his first exile:

I first met Comrade Lenin in 1903. True, it was not a person-to-person meeting, but by correspondence, in the course of an exchange of letters. Yet it left me with an indelible impression that remained with me throughout the entire tenure of my work in the Party. At that time I was in Siberia, in exile. Familiarity with Comrade Lenin's revolutionary activity at the beginning of the nineties, and especially since 1901, after the appearance of *Iskra*, led me to the conviction that

in Comrade Lenin we had an extraordinary man. I did not regard him then as only a leader of the Party, but as its actual creator, for he alone understood our Party's inner substance and its urgent needs. When I compared him with the other leaders of our Party, it always seemed to me that Comrade Lenin's companions-in-arms – Plekhanov, Martov, Axelrod, and others – ranked a whole head lower than Comrade Lenin, that by comparison with them, Lenin was not only one of the leaders, but a leader of the highest type, a mountain eagle who knew no fear in the fight and who boldly led the Party forward over the unexplored paths of the Russian revolutionary movement. That impression sank so deep into my soul that I felt the necessity to write about it to one of my close friends, who was at the time in emigration, requesting a reply from him. Sometime later, when I was already in exile in Siberia – that was toward the end of 1903 – I received an exultant answer from my friend and [a] simple yet profoundly pregnant letter from Comrade Lenin, to whom it would seem my friend had shown my letter. Comrade Lenin's little letter was comparatively brief, but it subjected the practices of our Party to bold and fearless criticism and gave a remarkably clear and cogent exposition of the entire plan of the Party's work for the impending period. Only Lenin could write a letter about the most complicated matters so simply and clearly, so cogently and boldly that each phrase did not so much speak as shout. That simple and audacious letter strengthened my conviction that in Lenin we had the mountain eagle of our Party. I cannot forgive myself that due to the habits of an old underground worker, I burned Comrade Lenin's letter along with many other letters. My acquaintance with Comrade Lenin began at that time.

The chronology of that story, so typical of Stalin because of its psychological and stylistic primitiveness, is not all that is wrong with it. Koba did not reach his place of exile until January, 1904; consequently he could not have received the alleged letter there in 1903. Furthermore, it is not at all clear where and just how he wrote "to one of my closest friends" abroad, since prior to his banishment to Siberia he had been in prison for a year and a half. Exiled persons never knew ahead of time to what place they would be banished; hence, Koba could not have communicated his Siberian address in advance to his friend abroad, and certainly there was no time for a letter from exile and a reply from abroad in the course of the one month Koba spent in exile. According to Stalin's own version, Lenin's letter was not of a personal but of a programmatic character. Copies of that type of letter were invariably sent out by Krupskaya to a number of addresses, while the original was kept in the Party archives abroad. It is most unlikely that in this one instance an exception was made for the sake of an unknown young Caucasian. Yet the archives do not contain the original of that letter, the copy of which Koba burned "due to the habits of an old underground worker" (he was at the time exactly twenty-

four years old). But most amazing is the fact that Stalin says nothing at all about his reply to Lenin. Having received a letter from the leader whom he admittedly venerated as a demigod, it stands to reason that Koba would have answered him at once. Yet Stalin is silent about that – and not by accident: the archives of Lenin and Krupskaya do not contain Koba's reply. Of course, it might have been intercepted by the police. But in that event the copy would have been preserved in the files of the police department and would have been reproduced in the Soviet press years ago. But that relationship would not have been limited to one letter. A young Social-Democrat could not have failed to regard permanent contact with the leader of his Party, with its 'mountain eagle', as most precious to him. As for Lenin, he regarded every contact with Russia as precious and meticulously replied to every letter. Yet no correspondence between Lenin and Koba has come to light in the course of recent years. Everything in this tale evokes perplexity – everything except its purpose.

The year 1904 was perhaps the most difficult in Lenin's life, barring the last years of his illness. Without desiring it and without foreseeing it, he broke with all the prominent leaders of the Russian Social-Democracy and for a long time thereafter could find no one capable of replacing his former companions-in-arms. Bolshevik literary men were recruited slowly and with great effort. Nor were they up to the par of the *Iskra* editors. Lyadov, one of the most active Bolsheviks in those days, who in 1904 was with Lenin at Geneva, recalled twenty years later: "Olminsky came, Vorovsky came, Bogdanov came...we awaited the coming of Lunacharsky, for whom Bogdanov vouched that immediately upon arrival he would join us." These men were returning from exile. Their reputations preceded them. They were expected. But when mobilising the editorial staff of the factional newspaper no one suggested Koba as a possibility. Yet nowadays he is portrayed as a prominent Bolshevik leader of that period. The first issue of the newspaper *Vperyod* [Forward] was finally published on 22nd December in Geneva. Koba had nothing whatever to do with that momentous event in the life of his faction. He did not so much as get in touch with the editors. The newspaper contains neither his articles nor his news reports. That would have been unthinkable had he been a leader of the Caucasian Bolsheviks at the time.

Finally, there is direct and documentary testimony in support of the conclusion we made on the basis of circumstantial evidence. In an extensive and exceedingly interesting statement on Joseph Djughashvili written in 1911 by the chief of the Tiflis Secret Police Department, Karpov, we read: "He has

been active in the Social-Democratic organisation since 1902, at first as a Menshevik and later as a Bolshevik.”

Karpov's report is the only document known to us which states explicitly that during a certain period after the split Stalin was a Menshevik. The Tiflis newspaper *Zarya Vostoka* which was careless enough to have published that document in its issue of 23rd December 1925, either did not think of offering, or could not offer, any explanations whatsoever. No doubt the editor was later cruelly punished for that blunder. It is most significant that even Stalin did not find it convenient to refute that statement. Not a single one of the official biographers or historians of the Party ever again referred to that important document, while at the same time scores of insignificant bits of paper were reproduced, re-quoted and re-photographed without end. Let us suppose for the moment that the Tiflis Gendarmerie, which in any event should have been best informed on that score, had given incorrect information. Then immediately the supplementary question arises: how was such an error possible? Had Koba actually been at the head of the Caucasian Bolsheviks, the Secret Police Department could not have failed to know it. It could have committed such a crude error in political characterisation only with reference to some green neophyte or some third-rate figure, but never with reference to a 'leader'. Thus, the one document which fortuitously found its way into print demolishes in one fell swoop the official myth reared with such great effort. And how many more such documents are being preserved in fireproof vaults, or, on the contrary, are solicitously relegated to the flames!

It may seem that we have wasted altogether too much time and effort, in order to establish a very modest conclusion. Is it not really all the same whether Koba joined the Bolsheviks in the middle of 1903 or on the eve of 1905? Yet that modest conclusion, apart from the fact that incidentally it discloses to us the mechanics of Kremlin historiography and iconography, has very significant bearing on the proper understanding of Stalin's political personality. The majority of those who have written about him accept his transition to Bolshevism as something inherent in his character, self-evident, natural. Yet such a view is definitely one-sided. True, firmness and resoluteness predetermine a person to the acceptance of the methods of Bolshevism. Yet these characteristics in themselves are not decisive. There were any number of persons of firm character among Mensheviks and Social-Revolutionaries. On the other hand, weak people were not so very rare among the Bolsheviks. Psychology and character are not all that there is to the nature of Bolshevism, which, above all, is a philosophy of history and a political conception. Under

certain historical conditions workers are pushed onto the path of Bolshevism by the entire pattern of their social circumstances. That happens almost regardless of the hardness or softness of individual characters. An intellectual needed exceptional political intuition and theoretical imagination, unusual faith in the dialectical historical process and in the revolutionary attributes of the working class, in order seriously and firmly to tie his fate to the Bolshevik Party in the days when Bolshevism was no more than a historical anticipation. The preponderant majority of intellectuals who joined Bolshevism in the period of its revolutionary rise abandoned it in subsequent years. It was more difficult for Koba to join, but it was likewise more difficult for him to break with it, because he had neither theoretical imagination nor historical intuition nor the gift of foresight, just as, on the other hand, he was devoid of light-mindedness. His intellect always remained immeasurably inferior to his will. In a complex situation, when confronted with new considerations, Koba prefers to bide his time, to keep his peace, or to retreat. In all those instances when it is necessary for him to choose between the idea and the political machine, he invariably inclines toward the machine. The programme must first of all create its bureaucracy before Koba can have any respect for it. Lack of confidence in the masses, as well as in individuals, is the basis of his nature. His empiricism always compels him to choose the path of least resistance. That is why, as a rule, at all the great turning points of history this near-sighted revolutionist assumes an opportunist position, which brings him exceedingly close to the Mensheviks and on occasion places him to the right of them. At the same time, he invariably is inclined to favour the most resolute actions in solving the problems he has mastered. Under all conditions well-organised violence seems to him the shortest distance between two points. Here an analogy begs to be drawn. The Russian terrorists were in essence petty-bourgeois democrats, yet they were extremely resolute and audacious. Marxists were wont to refer to them as 'liberals with a bomb'. Stalin has always been what he remains to this day – a politician of the golden mean who does not hesitate to resort to the most extreme measures. Strategically he is an opportunist; tactically he is a 'revolutionist'. He is a kind of opportunist with a bomb.

THE REVOLUTIONARY

Soon after his departure from the seminary Koba became something in the nature of a bookkeeper at the Tiflis Observatory. Despite its "miserly salary", he liked his job, Iremashvili informs us, because it left him a lot of free time for revolutionary activity. "He was least of all concerned with his personal

welfare. He made no demands on life, regarding them as incompatible with Socialist principles. He had sufficient integrity to make sacrifices for his ideal." Koba was true to that vow of poverty which was taken unostentatiously and without any ado by all the young people who went into the revolutionary underground. Besides, unlike many others who took that vow, he had not been accustomed to comforts since childhood. "I visited him several times in his small, squalid, poorly furnished room on Mikhailovskaya Street," relates the irreplaceable second Soso.

Every day Koba wore a simple black Russian blouse and the red necktie that was then characteristic of all Social-Democrats. In the winter he wore an old brown cape over it. As headgear he knew only the Russian peak cap. Although when Koba left the seminary he was far from friendly with most of the young seminary Marxists, they would nevertheless make up a collection from time to time in order to help him out of his dire needs.

Barbusse informs us that in 1900, that is, a year after his departure from the seminary, Joseph found himself entirely without means: "His comrades made it possible for him to obtain food." Police documents indicate that Koba remained in the service of the observatory until March, 1901, when he was obliged to go into hiding. His job, as we have heard, scarcely gave him a living. Iremashvili continues:

... His income did not make it possible for him to dress adequately. Yet it is also true that he did not make any effort to keep his clothes at least clean and in order. He could never be seen otherwise than in a dirty blouse and in an unpolished pair of shoes. He detested from the bottom of his heart everything that reminded him of the bourgeois.

The dirty blouse, the unpolished boots, the tousled hair were likewise generally characteristic of all young revolutionists, especially in the provinces.

Passing in March 1901 to illegal status, Koba became a professional revolutionist. From then on he had no name because he had many names. At various periods, and upon occasions at one and the same time, he was called, 'David', 'Koba', 'Nizheradze', 'Chizhikov', 'Ivanovich', 'Stalin.' Similarly, the gendarmes invested him with their nicknames. The most persistent of these was 'Ryaboi', which alluded to his pockmarked face. Henceforth Koba would revert to legal status only in prison and in exile, that is, between each two periods of underground.

"He never lacked singleness of purpose," Yenukidze wrote about the young Stalin in his corrected memoirs. "All of his actions, encounters,

friendships were directed toward a definite objective... Stalin never sought personal popularity," he adds, and therefore limited his circle of contacts "to the advanced workers and to professional revolutionists." The purpose of that refrain, repeated in many official memoirs, is to explain why until his very accession to power Stalin remained unknown to the nation's masses and even to the general membership of the Party. It is untrue, however, that he presumably did not seek popularity. He sought it greedily, but he could not find it. From the first, the absence of popularity rankled in his heart. It was precisely his inability to win fame by a frontal attack that drove this forceful personality into devious and crooked ways.

Since early youth Koba had sought power over people, who for the most part seemed to him weaker than himself. Yet he was neither wiser nor more educated nor more eloquent than others. He did not possess a single one of those attributes which attract sympathy. But he was richer than others in cold persistence and practical common sense. He did not yield to impulses: rather, he knew how to subject them to his calculations. That characteristic had already shown itself when he was a schoolboy. "Usually Joseph replied to questions unhurriedly," writes Glurdzhidze. "Whenever his answer was in all its aspects well founded, he would reply; if not, he would procrastinate with his answer for a more or less brief period of time." Quite apart from the exaggeration concerning his answer having been "in all its aspects well founded", these words contain mention of the one rather vital trait of the young Stalin that gave him an important advantage among the young revolutionists, who for the most part were bighearted, precipitate, and naive.

Even in that early period Koba did not hesitate to set his opponents against each other, to slander them, and to carry on intrigues against everyone who in any way seemed superior to him or who seemed a hindrance to his path. The moral unscrupulousness of the young Stalin generated an atmosphere of suspicion and of sinister rumours about him. Much of which he was not guilty was beginning to be ascribed to him. The Socialist-Revolutionary Vereshchak, who came in close contact with Stalin in prison, related in the *émigré* press in 1928 how, presumably after Joseph Djughashvili had been expelled from the seminary, the director received from him a denunciation of a former comrade in his revolutionary group. When Joseph was obliged to give an account of himself in this affair before the Tiflis organisation, he presumably not only admitted that he had been the author of the denunciation, but even deemed it something in his favour: instead of becoming transformed into priests and teachers, those expelled would be forced to become, according to his alleged

reckoning, revolutionists. This entire episode, pounced upon by certain gullible biographers, bears the obvious brand of invention. A revolutionary organisation can maintain its existence only through ruthless strictness in regard to anything at all which in the slightest way smacks of denunciation, provocation, or betrayal. The smallest indulgence in that sphere spells the beginning of gangrene for it. Had Soso been proven capable of resorting to such means, compounded of one-third Machiavelli to two-thirds Judas, it is altogether inadmissible that the Party would have tolerated him in its ranks after that. Iremashvili, who at the time belonged to the same seminarist circle as Koba, knows nothing at all about that episode. He himself succeeded in graduating from the seminary and became a teacher. Yet it is no mere accident that so vicious an invention is connected with Stalin's name. Nothing of the kind was ever rumoured about any of the other old revolutionists.

Souvarine, who wrote the best documented of Stalin's biographies, attempts to deduce his moral personality from his membership in the ominous order of 'professional revolutionists'. In this instance, as in many others, Souvarine's generalisations are most superficial. A professional revolutionist is a person who completely dedicates himself to the labour movement under conditions of illegality and forced conspiracy. Not everyone is capable of that, and certainly, in any event, not the worst kind of person. The labour movement of the civilised world knows numerous professional officials and professional politicians; the preponderant majority of that caste is noted for its conservatism, egotism and narrow-mindedness, living not for the movement, but at its expense. By comparison with the average labour bureaucrat of Europe or America, the average professional revolutionist of Russia cut an incomparably more attractive figure.

The youth of the revolutionary generation coincided with the youth of the labour movement. It was the epoch of people between the ages of eighteen and thirty. Revolutionists above that age were few in number and seemed old men. The movement was as yet utterly devoid of careerism, lived on its faith in the future and on its spirit of self-sacrifice. There were as yet no routine, no set formulae, no theatrical gestures, no ready-made oratorical tricks. The struggle was by nature full of pathos, shy and awkward. The very words 'committee', 'party' were as yet new, with an aura of vernal freshness, and rang in young ears as a disquieting and alluring melody. Whoever joined an organisation knew that prison followed by exile awaited him within the next few months. The measure of ambition was to last as long as possible on the job prior to arrest; to hold oneself steadfast when facing the gendarmes; to ease, as far as

possible, the plight of one's comrades; to read, while in prison, as many books as possible; to escape as soon as possible from exile abroad; to acquire wisdom there; and then return to revolutionary activity in Russia.

The professional revolutionists believed what they taught. They could have had no other incentive for taking to the road to Calvary. Solidarity under persecution was no empty word, and it was augmented by contempt for cowardice and desertion. Concerning the Odessa underground of 1901-07, Eugenia Levitskaya writes:

Turning over in my mind the mass of comrades with whom I had occasion to meet. I cannot recall a single reprehensible, contemptible act, a single deception or lie. There was friction. There were factional differences of opinion. But no more than that. Somehow everyone looked after himself morally, became better and more gentle in that friendly family.

Odessa was not, of course, an exception. The young men and young women who devoted themselves entirely to the revolutionary movement, without demanding anything in return, were not the worst representatives of their generation. The order of 'professional revolutionists' cannot suffer by comparison with any other social group.

Joseph Djughashvili was a member of that order and shared many of its traits; many, but not all. He saw the purpose of his life in overthrowing the powers that be. Hatred of them was immeasurably more active in his soul than love for the oppressed. Prison, exile, sacrifices, privations did not frighten him. He knew how to look danger straight in the eye. At the same time he was keenly sensitive about such of his traits as his slowness of intellect, lack of talent, the general colourlessness of his physical and moral countenance. His overweening ambition was tinged with envy and ill will. His pertinacity marched hand-in-hand with vindictiveness. The jaundiced glint of his eyes impelled sensitive people to take notice. As far back as his schooldays he displayed an aptitude for noting the weaknesses of people and for harping upon them pitilessly. The Caucasian environment proved most favourable for nurturing these basic attributes of his nature. Without being swept off his feet while in the midst of enthusiasts, without catching fire while in the midst of those who were easily inflamed yet quick to cool down, he learned early in life to prize the advantages of icy grit, of circumspection and especially of astuteness, which in his case became subtly transformed into wiliness. Special historical circumstances were to invest these essentially secondary attributes with primary significance.

3. THE FIRST REVOLUTION

*At the beginning of the century, the leading organisational work was actually concentrated in Lenin's hands. His correspondence with Russia, which he conducted either personally or through the intermediary of Krupskaya, made up an exceptionally important part of his work. It was precisely in this period that we saw the development of young Marxists who were becoming professional revolutionaries. From these young people was gradually formed the centralised illegal apparatus of the Party, the threads of which stretched abroad and into the hands of Lenin.

Into Lenin's field of vision came all the outstanding social-democratic workers, not only of local, but of national importance. With some of them Lenin corresponded directly in person, others he mentions in the third person, while others he necessarily mentions under their pseudonyms in his articles. From that point of view, the lists of revolutionists mentioned by Lenin in the articles and letters in the period of the first revolution represent exceptional interest. The lists of these persons together with their brief biographies are given in the appendixes to each one of Lenin's *Collected Works*.

In 1903 we encounter only four or five such names, but over the following year already about forty. Approximately the same amount in the following year. Between 1904 and 1905, there were about sixty. Then the number of revolutionists began to decrease; there are almost no new persons, but then certain names are repeated with increasing frequency. That means that a certain cadre of important workers had been established, which was able to maintain itself in illegal underground conditions and after the retreat of the revolutionary wave. In this way the correspondence between Lenin and the persons to whom he refers is itself extremely instructive. From the point of

view of the development of the revolution, the Bolshevik party, Lenin's role, as well as the role of different individuals, would subsequently enter history under the name of 'Old Bolsheviks'.

The first group on which Lenin relied consisted of men of his own generation, that is, people born around 1870. The youngest of them was Martov, the future leader of the Mensheviks, who was born in 1873. Until 1903, the correspondence touches principally upon people of that generation: Lepeshinsky, Meshcheryakov, and others. From 1902 the circle of professional revolutionists is considerably broadened by ten persons born around 1880, that is, contemporaries of Stalin. The youngest of these was Kamenev, who was born in 1883. Most of these persons had participated in the revolutionary movement even earlier, some of them since the end of the preceding century. But what was necessary was a wave of the student movement, labour strikes, and street demonstrations, finally years of prison and exile, before the truly local workers were transformed into revolutionary leaders on a national level.

Especially powerful impetus in that direction was given by the year 1905, when the revolutionary movement definitely emerged from underground and even stretched out its hand for power. Agitators, who until then had devoted their time to discussion circles composed of ten or twenty persons, suddenly had the possibility of speaking with thousands. The authors of proclamations printed on underground printing presses became editors of great daily newspapers. At the head of the Soviets¹ stood revolutionists who only the day before had emerged from prison, or who had returned from exile. Illegal aliases became known to the entire press. Political reputations were created in the course of a few weeks. Upon this great wave rolls not a few accidental figures, knights for an hour, and even rogues or adventurers who soon after that turned their back upon the working class. However, at the same time, representatives of the underground who were gifted in the slightest degree as agitators, journalists, as organisers, succeeded to a greater or lesser extent to show their stature during the stormy months of 1905.

It is a remarkable thing that throughout this period, it is impossible to find either in Lenin's articles or correspondence any mention of Stalin. He did not yet enter at all into the field of vision of the central group of revolutionary leaders, and yet all the other members of the future Political Bureau from 1917 to 1926, entered into contact with Lenin and with each other in that period. If we put aside Bogdanov and Lunacharsky, who belonged to the same

1 *Soviet*, a Russian word for 'council', refers to the councils of Russian workers first set up during the 1905 Revolution.

generation as Lenin but who subsequently did not play the role of 'outstanding leaders', Lenin's closest collaborators, in the epoch of the first revolution were Zinoviev² and Kamenev³, the first of whom was two years younger than Stalin and the second almost four years younger.*

According to our surmise, Koba did not join the Bolsheviks until some time after the November Conference, which met at Tiflis. That conference resolved to take an active part in preparations, already under way, for a new congress of the Social-Democratic Labour Party. Without any objection, we accepted Beria's bare assertion that Koba had left Baku in December on a propaganda tour in favour of that congress. That much is not improbable. It was clear to all that the Party was split in two. By that time the Bolshevik faction had already gained such strength that organisationally it was superior to its Menshevik opponent. Forced to choose between the two, it is not unlikely that Koba joined the Bolshevik faction. But we would be hard put to it, if we had to offer positive proof that Koba was already a member of the Bolshevik faction by the end of 1904. Beria goes so far as to marshal a number of quotations from leaflets published at the time, yet he does not venture to say that Koba wrote any of them. That shy reticence about the authorship of these leaflets speaks louder than words. Beria's quotations from leaflets written

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- 2 Grigory Yevseyevich Zinoviev (1883-1936) was Lenin's closest collaborator from 1903 until 1917. During the war, he participated in the Zimmerwald and Kienthal Conferences and was co-author with Lenin of the book *Against the Stream*. Returning to Russia with Lenin in April 1917, he opposed Lenin's *April Theses*. In October, together with Kamenev, he opposed the decision for insurrection. After October, he was chair of the Petrograd Soviet and in 1919 became the president of the Communist International. In 1923, he joined with Stalin and Kamenev in a triumvirate against Trotsky, but in 1925 broke with Stalin and formed the Joint Opposition with Trotsky. At the 15th Congress in 1927, he and Kamenev capitulated to Stalin, but were still expelled from the Party. In 1933, he and Kamenev were arrested and were the main defendants appearing in the 1936 show trial, after which they were shot.
 - 3 Lev Borisovich Kamenev (1883-1936) was an active militant of the RSDLP from the age of eighteen. He joined Lenin in Paris and in the 1903 split supported the Bolsheviks. After a short jail sentence in 1908 he went to Geneva where he joined Lenin and Zinoviev helping edit *Proletarii* and *Pravda*. Elected a member of the Bolshevik Central Committee at the 7th Party Congress in April 1917. Despite his anti-Party activities in opposing the October Revolution, Lenin approved his appointment as President of the Moscow Soviet and Vice-President of the Council of People's Commissars. Joined Stalin and Zinoviev in an unprincipled triumvirate whose sole purpose was to oppose Trotsky's appointment as Party leader. In 1926, joined with Trotsky to form the United Opposition, capitulated to Stalin in 1928, was one of those prosecuted in the first Moscow Trial in 1936 and immediately executed.

by others than Koba serve, of course, the obvious purpose of filling in the gaping lacunae in Stalin's biography.

Meantime, the differences of opinion between the Mensheviks and the Bolsheviks passed from the domain of party regulations to the domain of revolutionary strategy. The campaign of banquets – launched by *zemstvo*⁴ workers and other liberals, and which grew apace during the autumn of 1904, largely because the distracted tsarist authorities were too negligent to do anything about it – posed point-blank the question of relations between the Social-Democracy and the oppositionist bourgeoisie. The Menshevik plan called for an attempt to transform the workers into a democratic chorus supporting liberal soloists, a chorus sufficiently considerate and circumspect not only to “refrain from frightening” the liberals, but, more than that, one dedicated to bolstering the liberals' faith in themselves. Lenin immediately launched his offensive. He derided the very idea of this plan – to substitute diplomatic support of a helpless opposition for the revolutionary struggle against tsarism. The victory of the revolution can be secured only under pressure of the masses! Only a bold social programme can rouse the masses to action: yet that is precisely what liberals fear. “We would have been fools had we taken their panic into consideration.” A smallish pamphlet by Lenin, which appeared in November, 1904, after a long silence, raised the spirits of his comrades and played an important part in developing Bolshevism's tactical ideas. Was it not perhaps this pamphlet that had won Koba over? We do not venture to answer in the affirmative. In years to come, whenever he had occasion to exercise his own discretion in assuming a position with reference to the liberals, he invariably floundered toward the Menshevik notion of the importance of “refraining from frightening” the liberals. (Witness the revolutions in Russia in 1917, in China, in Spain and elsewhere.) The possibility is not excluded, however, that on the eve of the First Revolution, the plebeian Democrat appeared to be sincerely indignant with the opportunistic plan, which evoked great dissatisfaction even among rank-and-file Mensheviks. It must be said that, on the whole, among the radical intelligentsia, the tradition of maintaining a contemptuous attitude toward liberalism had not yet had time to fade away. It is also possible, however, that only Bloody Sunday⁵ in Petersburg and the wave of strikes that swept the country in its wake had

4 *Zemstvos* were semi-official local self-governments principally in the provinces of Central Russia.

5 22nd January 1905 (commonly known in Russia as The Ninth of January) became known as “Bloody Sunday” after Tsar Nicholas II met a procession of unarmed workers

nudged the cautious and suspicious Caucasian to the path of Bolshevism. In any event, the milestone of that turn remained unrecorded in the annals of history.

The two old Bolsheviks, Stopani and Lehman, in their elaborately detailed reminiscences list all the revolutionists with whom they had occasion to deal at Baku and Tiflis toward the end of 1904 and the beginning of 1905: Koba is not on that list. Lehman names the people “who were at the head” of the Caucasian Union: Koba is not one of them. Stopani names the Bolsheviks who, jointly with the Mensheviks, led the famous Baku strike in December, 1904: again Koba’s name is among the missing. Yet Stopani should know whereof he writes, since he was himself a member of that strike committee. The reminiscences of both authors were published in the official Communist historical journal, and both memoirists, far from being “enemies of the people”, were good Stalinists; but they wrote their pieces in 1925, before planned falsification on assignment from above was developed into a system. In an article written as recently as 1926, Taratuta, a former member of the Bolshevik Central Committee, discussing *The Eve of the Revolution of 1905 in the Caucasus*, makes no mention whatever of Stalin. In the commentaries to the correspondence of Lenin and Krupskaya with the Caucasian organisation Stalin’s name does not appear so much as once throughout the entire fifty pages. It is simply impossible to find around the latter part of 1904 and the beginning of 1905 any trace of activity by him who is nowadays portrayed as the founding father of Caucasian Bolshevism.

Nor does this conclusion run counter to the very latest of the interminable asseverations about Stalin’s implacable campaigning against the Mensheviks. All that is needed to reconcile these apparent contradictions is to push his campaigning some two years back, which is not hard, since there is no need to cite documents and no occasion to apprehend disproof. On the other hand, there is no reason to doubt that, having once made his choice, Koba waged his fight against the Mensheviks in the harshest, crudest and most unscrupulous manner. That penchant for underhand ways and intrigues, which had been charged against him while he was a participant in the seminarist circles, a propagandist of the Tiflis Committee and a member of the Batumi group, now found a far wider and bolder expression in the factional struggle.

Beria names Tiflis, Batumi, Chituary, Kutais and Poti as the places at which Stalin had engaged in debates against Noah Jordania, Irakli Tsereteli,

and their families, petitioning the Tsar for grievances, with volleys of gunfire that killed hundreds. It marked the beginning of the 1905 Revolution.

Noah Ramishvili and other Menshevik leaders, as well as against the Anarchists and the Federalists. But Beria cavalierly ignores all dates – an omission far from unintentional. As a matter of fact, the first of these discussions, which he fixes with some semblance of exactitude, took place in May, 1905. The situation is exactly the same in the case of Koba's published writings. His first Bolshevik composition, a thin little pamphlet, was issued in May, 1905, under the rather odd title, *In Passing about Party Differences*⁶. Beria deems it necessary to remark, without revealing on what grounds, that this pamphlet was written "at the beginning of 1905", thereby disclosing more flagrantly than ever his attempt to shorten the two-year gap. One of the correspondents, evidently the future Litvinov, who did not know any Georgian, reported abroad the appearance in Tiflis of a pamphlet "which created a sensation." This "sensation" can be explained only by the circumstance that the Georgian audience had heretofore heard nothing but the voice of the Mensheviks. In substance, this pamphlet amounts to no more than a sophomoric summary of Lenin's writings. No wonder that it has never been reprinted. Beria cites from it painstakingly culled quotations, which easily explain why the author himself was content to cast over that pamphlet, as over his other literary works of that period, the pall of oblivion.

In August, 1905, Stalin restated that chapter of Lenin's book, *What Is to Be Done?*, which attempted to explain the correlation of the elemental labour movement and socialistic class-consciousness. According to Lenin's representations, the labour movement, when left to its own devices, was inclined irrevocably toward opportunism; revolutionary class-consciousness was brought to the proletariat from the outside, by Marxist intellectuals. This is not the place for a criticism of that concept, which in its entirety belongs in a biography of Lenin rather than of Stalin. The author of *What Is to Be Done?* himself subsequently acknowledged the biased nature, and therewith the erroneousness, of his theory, which he had parenthetically interjected as a battery in the battle against 'Economism' and its deference to the elemental nature of the labour movement. After his break with Lenin, Plekhanov came out with a belated, but all the more severe, criticism of *What Is to Be Done?* The question of introducing revolutionary class-consciousness into the proletariat "from the outside" became timely again. The central organ of the Bolshevik Party recorded "the splendid posing of the question" concerning the introduction of class-consciousness "from the outside" in an anonymous article in a Georgian newspaper. That praise is cited nowadays as a kind of

6 Officially translated into English as *A Glance at the Disagreements in the Party*.

testimonial of Koba's maturity as a theorist. As a matter of fact, it was nothing more than one of the customary encouraging remarks usually made by the foreign centre whenever some provincial publication placed itself on record in defence of the ideas or the leaders of its own faction. As to the quality of the article, a sufficiently clear idea of it may be obtained from the following quotation in Beria's Russian translation:

Contemporary life is arranged capitalistically. In it exist two great classes: the bourgeoisie and the proletariat; a life or death struggle is waged between them. The circumstances of life compel the former to uphold the capitalist order. The same circumstances compel the latter to undermine and to destroy the capitalist order. Corresponding to these two classes, a twofold, class-consciousness, bourgeois and socialistic, is likewise created. Socialist class-consciousness corresponds to the situation of the proletariat... But what significance can socialist class-consciousness alone have, when it is not disseminated in the proletariat? It remains merely an empty phrase, and no more! Matters will take quite a different turn when that class-consciousness finds circulation in the proletariat: the proletariat will then realise its situation and will strive at an increasing pace to achieve the socialist way of life...

...and so forth. Such articles were rescued from duly merited oblivion only by the subsequent fate of their author. Yet, it is quite self-evident that the articles themselves do not explain that fate; rather, they render it even more enigmatic.

Throughout 1905 Koba did not figure at all among Lenin's and Krupskaya's Caucasian correspondents, even as he had not figured prior to that. On the 8th March a certain Tari, writing from Tiflis, summarised the reactions of certain Caucasian Mensheviks in the following words: "Lenin grasped the meaning of our times before anyone else and better than anyone else." The same Tari wrote: "Lenin is referred to as a kind of Bazarov among these Arcady Nikolayeviches." The reference is, of course, to Turgenev's heroes: Bazarov, the practical realist type; and Arcady Nikolayevich, the idealist and phrasemonger. Under the name of Tari the editors of the historical journal incited the footnote, "Author unknown". But the pointed literary reference alone suffices to show that Stalin could not have been the author of that letter. In Lenin's articles and letters for the second half of 1905 – at least in those published to date – are mentioned more than thirty Social-Democrats who had worked in Russia; of these, nineteen are closest in age to Lenin and twelve to Stalin. Stalin himself does not figure in that correspondence, either as a direct participant or as a third person. We are therefore obliged to adhere as

firmly as ever to the conclusion we have already enunciated – that Stalin's tale of having received a letter from Lenin in 1903 is simply a fabrication.

After his break with the editorial board of *Iskra*, Lenin, who was then about thirty-four years old, lived through months of wavering – a condition doubly difficult for him because so flagrantly at variance with his character – before he became convinced that his followers were comparatively numerous and his young authority sufficiently strong. The successful culmination of the arrangements for the new congress made plain beyond a doubt that the Social-Democratic organisations were preponderantly Bolshevik. The conciliatory Central Committee, led by Krassin, finally capitulated to the “illegal” Bureau of the Committees of the Majority and participated in the congress it could not prevent. Thus, the Third Congress – which convened in April, 1905, in London, and from which the Mensheviks deliberately stayed away, satisfying themselves with a conference in Geneva – became the constituent congress of Bolshevism. The twenty-four voting and fourteen advisory delegates were all, almost without exception, those Bolsheviks who had been faithful to Lenin from the moment of the split at the Second Congress and had aroused the Committees of the Party against the combined authority of Plekhanov, Axelrod, Vera Zasulich, Martov, and Potresov. At this Congress was legitimatised that view on the moving forces of the Russian Revolution which Lenin developed in the course of his forthright fight against his former teachers and closest collaborators on the *Iskra*, and which thenceforth acquired greater practical significance than the Party's official programme worked out in common with the Mensheviks.

The ill-starred and inglorious war with Japan was hastening the disintegration of the tsarist regime. Coming after the first great wave of strikes and demonstrations, the Third Congress reflected the approach of the revolutionary denouement. “The entire history of the past year has shown,” Lenin said in his report to the assembled delegates, “that we had underestimated the significance and the inevitability of insurrection.” The Congress took a resolute step forward on the agrarian question by acknowledging the necessity of supporting the peasant movement then current even to the extent of confiscating the lands of the landed gentry. More concretely than heretofore, it outlined the general perspective of the revolutionary struggle and the conquest of power, particularly on the question of the provisional revolutionary government as the organiser of civil war. As Lenin put it, “Even if we were to take possession of Petersburg and guillotine Nicholas, we would

still be confronted with several Vendées⁷.” The Congress undertook, with greater boldness than ever, the technical preparation of the insurrection. “On the question of creating special fighting groups,” said Lenin, “I must say that I deem them indispensable.”

The greater one’s regard for the significance of the Third Congress, the more noteworthy is Koba’s absence from it. By that time he had to his credit nearly seven years of revolutionary activity, including prison, exile and escape. Had he been a person of any consequence at all among the Bolsheviki, surely that record would have assured at least his candidacy as a delegate. Koba was moreover at liberty all through the year 1905, and according to Beria, “took the most active part in the matter of organising the Third Congress of the Bolsheviki.” If that is true, surely he should have been the chief of the Caucasian delegation. Why, then, wasn’t he? Had illness or any other exceptional cause prevented his journeying abroad, the official biographers would surely not have failed to tell us about it. Their uncommunicativeness is explicable only on the grounds of their not having at their disposal a single credible explanation for the absence of the “leader of the Caucasian Bolsheviki” from that historically important congress. Beria’s assertions about “the most active” participation of Koba in organising the Congress is one of those meaningless phrases with which official Soviet historiography is replete. In an article devoted to the thirtieth anniversary of the Third Congress, the well-informed Osip Piatnitsky says nothing whatsoever about Stalin’s participation in the arrangements for the Congress, while the court historian Yaroslavsky⁸ limits himself to a vague remark, the substance of which is that Stalin’s work in the Caucasus “had undoubtedly tremendous significance” for the Congress, without elucidating the precise nature of that significance. Yet, from all we have so far managed to learn, the situation appears to be quite clear: after hesitating for a considerable period of time, Koba joined the Bolsheviki shortly before the Third Congress; he took no part in the November Conference in the Caucasus; he was never a member of the bureau

7 The Vendée revolt was a counter-revolutionary peasant uprising in March 1793 led by aristocrats in that region of France.

8 Yemelyan Mikhailovich Yaroslavsky (1878-1943) was a journalist, historian and functionary of the Communist Party who faithfully served Stalin by providing him with material from the Party archives to attack Trotsky and other oppositionists. He was known for his vitriolic attacks on Communist and non-Party intellectuals. In 1931 his tirade against the prominent Marxist historian and scholar David Ryazanov, the head of the Marx-Engels Institute, caused the latter to be condemned as “an agent of counter-revolutionary Menshevism”, leading to his arrest and exile.

established by it; and being a newcomer, he could not have even hoped for a delegate's mandate. The delegation consisted of Kamenev, Nevsky, Tskhakaya, and Dzhaparidze; these were the leaders of Caucasian Bolshevism at that time. Their subsequent fate is not irrelevant to our narrative: Dzhaparidze was shot by the English in 1918; Kamenev was shot eighteen years later by Stalin; Nevsky was proclaimed an "enemy of the people" by Stalin's fiat and vanished without a trace; and only the aged Tskhakaya has survived, having managed to outlive himself.

The negative aspect of Bolshevism's centripetal tendencies first became apparent at the Third Congress of the Russian Social-Democracy. The habits peculiar to a political machine were already forming in the underground. The young revolutionary bureaucrat was already emerging as a type. The conditions of conspiracy, true enough, offered rather meagre scope for such of the formalities of democracy as electiveness, accountability and control. Yet, undoubtedly the committeemen narrowed these limitations considerably more than necessity demanded and were far more intransigent and severe with the revolutionary workingmen than with themselves, preferring to domineer even on occasions that called imperatively for lending an attentive ear to the voice of the masses. Krupskaya notes that, just as in the Bolshevik committees, so at the Congress itself, there were almost no workingmen. The intellectuals predominated. Krupskaya writes:

The 'committeeman', was usually quite a self-confident person; he was fully aware of the tremendous influence wielded by the Committee's activities on the masses; the 'committeeman,' as a rule, did not recognise any internal party democracy; inherently the 'committeeman' was contemptuous of the 'foreign centre', which raged and ranted and started squabbles: 'they ought to try Russian conditions for a change'... At the same time, he did not want any innovations. The 'committeeman' did not desire, and did not know how, to adapt himself to rapidly changing conditions."

That restrained yet very pithy characterisation is most helpful to an understanding of Koba's political psychology, for he was the 'committeeman' *par excellence*. As early as 1901, at the outset of his revolutionary career at Tiflis, he opposed drafting workingmen into his Committee. As a 'practico' – that is, as a political empiricist – he reacted with indifference, and subsequently with contempt, toward the *émigrés*, toward the 'foreign centre'. Devoid of personal qualifications for directly influencing the masses, he clung with redoubled tenacity to the political machine. The axis of his universe was his Committee – the Tiflis, the Baku, the Caucasian, before it became the Central Committee.

In time to come his blind loyalty to the Party machine was to develop with extraordinary force; the committeeman became the super-machine man, the Party's General Secretary, the very personification of the bureaucracy and its peerless leader.

In this connection it is rather tempting to draw the inference that future Stalinism was already rooted in Bolshevik centralism or, more sweepingly, in the underground hierarchy of professional revolutionists. But upon analysis that inference crumbles to dust, disclosing an astounding paucity of historical content. Of course, there are dangers of one kind or another in the very process of stringently picking and choosing persons of advanced views and welding them into a tightly centralised organisation. But the roots of such dangers will never be found in the so-called 'principle' of centralism; rather they should be sought in the lack of homogeneity and the backwardness of the toilers – that is, in the general social conditions which make imperative that very centripetal leadership of the class by its vanguard. The key to the dynamic problem of leadership is in the actual interrelationships between the political machine and its party, between the vanguard and its class, between centralism and democracy. Those interrelationships cannot, of their nature, be established a priori and remain immutable. They are dependent on concrete historical conditions; their mobile balance is regulated by the vital struggle of tendencies, which, as represented by their extreme wings, oscillate between the despotism of the political machine and the impotence of phrasemongering.

In the pamphlet, *Our Political Problems*, written by me in 1904, which contains not a little that is immature and erroneous in my criticism of Lenin, there are, however, pages which present a fairly accurate characterisation of the cast of thought of the 'committeemen' of those days, who "have foregone the need to rely upon the workers after they had found support in the 'principles' of centralism." The fight Lenin was obliged to wage the following year at the Congress against the high and mighty 'committeemen' completely confirmed the justice of my criticism. "The debates assumed a more passionate character," recounts Lyadov, one of the delegates.

There began to emerge definite groupings into theoreticians and practicos, 'literaries' and committeemen... In the course of these disputes the rather youngish worker Rykov came most prominently to the forefront. He succeeded in grouping around himself a majority of the committeemen.

Lyadov's sympathies were with Rykov. "I could not contain myself," Lenin exclaimed in his concluding remarks, "when I heard it said that there were

no workingmen fit for committee membership." Let us recall how insistently Koba had challenged the Tiflis workingmen to acknowledge – "placing your hand on your heart" – that among them there were none fit for taking the holy orders of the priestly caste. "The question is being put off," Lenin persisted. "There is evidently an illness in the Party." That illness was the high-handedness of the political machine, the beginning of bureaucracy.

Lenin understood better than anyone else the need for a centralised organisation; but he saw in it, above all, a lever for enhancing the activity of the advanced working men. The idea of making a fetish of the political machine was not only alien but repugnant to his nature. At the Congress he spotted the caste tendency of the committeemen at once and opened an impassioned fight against it. "Vladimir Ilyich was very much excited," confirms Krupskaya, "and the committeemen were very much excited." On that occasion the victory was with the committeemen, whose leader was Rykov, Lenin's future successor in the post of Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars. Lenin's resolution, proposing that each Committee should necessarily contain a majority of working men, failed to pass. Again against the will of Lenin, the committeemen resolved to place the editorial board abroad under the control of the Central Committee. A year earlier Lenin would have chosen to split rather than consent to have the direction of the Party dependent upon the Russian Centre, which was subjected to raids by the police and was, therefore, unstable in its composition. But now he firmly reckoned that the decisive word would be his. Having grown strong in his fight against the old authoritative leaders of the Russian Social-Democracy, he felt much more self-confident than at the Second Congress and, therefore, calmer. If, as Krupskaya states, he was indeed "excited" during the debates or rather, seemed excited, he was all the more circumspect about the organisational steps he undertook. He not only accepted his defeat on two exceedingly important questions in silence, but even helped to include Rykov in the Central Committee. He did not doubt for a moment that the Revolution, that great teacher of the masses in matters of initiative and enterprise, would be able, simultaneously and without great difficulty, to demolish the youthful and as yet unstable conservatism of the Party's political machine.

In addition to Lenin, to the Central Committee were elected the engineer Leonid Krassin and the naturalist, physician and philosopher A.A. Bogdanov, both coevals of Lenin, Postolovsky, who soon after abandoned the Party, and Rykov. The alternates were the "literary", Rumyantsev and the two practicos

Gusev and Bour. Needless to say, no one thought of proposing Koba for the first Bolshevik Central Committee.

THE 1905 PERIOD

In 1934, the Congress of the Communist Party of Georgia, using as a basis Beria's report, declared that "nothing so far written reflects the real and authentic role of Comrade Stalin, who had actually led the struggle of the Bolsheviks in the Caucasus for a good many years." How that happened, the Congress did not explain. But all the old memoirists and historians were forthwith proscribed, and some of them were eventually shot. Then, to correct all the iniquities of the past, it was decided to establish a special 'Stalin Institute'. With that was launched a sweeping purge of all the old documents, which were instantly covered with new characters. Never before under the vault of heaven had there been such large-scale invention of falsehoods. Yet, the situation of the biographer is not utterly hopeless.

Koba returned from exile to Tiflis in February, 1904, always invariably and triumphantly "directing the activity of the Bolsheviks." With the exception of brief departures, he spent the major part of the years 1904 and 1905 at Tiflis. According to the latest memoirs, the workers were wont to say, "Koba is skinning the Mensheviks alive." Yet it would seem that the Georgian Mensheviks hardly suffered from that surgical operation. It was only as late as the latter half of 1905 that the Tiflis Bolsheviks entered the "period of lining up together" and "considered" issuing news sheets. What then was the nature of the organisation to which Koba belonged during most of 1904 and during the first half of 1905? If he did not stay out of the labour movement altogether, which is unlikely, everything we have heard from Beria notwithstanding, he must have been a member of the Menshevik organisation. By the beginning of 1906 the number of Lenin's followers at Tiflis had increased to three hundred. But the Mensheviks numbered about three thousand. The mere correlation of forces doomed Koba to literary opposition at the very climax of revolutionary development.

"Two years (1905-07) of revolutionary work among the workers of the oil industry," Stalin testifies, "hardened me." It is decidedly improbable that in a painstakingly edited and re-edited text of his own speech the orator merely happened to be muddled as to where exactly he had been during the year when the nation underwent its revolutionary baptism by fire, as well as the following year, 1906, when the entire country was still in the throes of convulsions and was living in constant apprehension of the denouement.

Such events cannot be forgotten! It is impossible to be rid of the impression that Stalin deliberately avoided mention of the First Revolution because he simply had nothing at all to say about it. Since Baku conjured a more heroic background than Tiflis, he retrospectively moved himself to Baku two and a half years earlier than he had a right to. True, he has no reason to fear objections by Soviet historians. Yet the question, "What did Koba really do in 1905?" remains unanswered.

The first year of the Revolution opened with the shooting of the Petersburg workers who had marched with a petition to the Tsar. The appeal written by Koba on the occasion of the events of 22nd January is crowned with this adjuration:

"Let us hold out our hands to each other and rally around our Party's committees. We must not forget even for a minute that only the Party committees can worthily lead us, only they will light our way to the Promised Land." and the like. What self-assurance in the voice of this 'committeeman'! During those very days, or perchance hours, in far-off Geneva, Lenin was writing into an article by one of his collaborators the following adjuration to the insurgent masses: "Make way for the anger and hatred that have accumulated in your hearts throughout the centuries of exploitation, suffering and grief!"

All of Lenin is in that phrase. He hates and rebels together with the masses, feels the rebellion in his bones, and does not ask of those in revolt that they act only with the permission of the "committees". The contrast between these two personalities in their attitude toward the one thing that united them politically – toward the Revolution – could not be expressed more concisely or more cogently.

The establishment of the Soviets began five months after the Third Congress, at which no place had been found for Koba. The initiative was that of the Mensheviks, who, however, had never dreamed whither their handiwork would lead. The Menshevik faction predominated in the Soviets. The rank-and-file Mensheviks were carried away by the revolutionary developments; the leaders mused in perplexity over the sudden leftward swing of their own faction. The Petersburg Committee of the Bolsheviks was frightened at first by such an innovation as a non-partisan representation of the embattled masses, and could find nothing better to do than to present the Soviet with an ultimatum: immediately adopt a Social-Democratic programme or disband. The Petersburg Soviet as a whole, including the contingent of Bolshevik working men as well, ignored this ultimatum without batting an

eyelash. Only after Lenin's arrival in November did a radical turn take place in the policy of the 'committeemen' toward the Soviet. But the ultimatum had wreaked its havoc by decidedly weakening the Bolshevik position. On that issue, as on the others, the provinces followed the lead of the capital. By that time the profound differences of opinion in the estimation of the historical significance of the Soviets had already begun. The Mensheviks attempted to evaluate the Soviet as no more than a fortuitous form of labour representation – a "proletarian parliament", an "organ of revolutionary self-administration", and the like. All of that was exceedingly vague. Lenin, on the contrary, knew how to eavesdrop thoroughly on the Petersburg masses, who called the Soviet "the proletarian government", and at once evaluated that new form of organisation as the lever of the struggle for power.

In the writings of Koba for the year 1905, sparse in both form and content, we find nothing at all about the Soviets. This is not only because there were not any in Georgia, but because he simply did not pay any attention to them, passed them by. Is it not astounding? The Soviet as a powerful political machine should have impressed the future General Secretary at first glance. But he regarded it as an alien political machine which directly represented the masses. The Soviet did not submit to the discipline of the Committee, requiring more complex, and more resilient methods of leadership. In a certain sense, the Soviet was a mighty competitor of the Committee. So, during the Revolution of 1905, Koba stood with his back to the Soviets. Essentially, he stood with his back to the Revolution itself, as though taking umbrage at it.

The reason for his resentment was his inability to see his own way to the Revolution. Muscovite biographers and artists constantly endeavour to represent Koba at the head of one or another demonstration, "as a target", as a fiery orator, as a tribune. All of that is a lie. Even in his later years Stalin did not become an orator; no one ever heard him deliver "fiery" speeches. Throughout 1917, when all the agitators of the Party, beginning with Lenin, went around with cracked voices, Stalin did not address any public meetings at all. It could not have been otherwise in 1905. Koba was not even an orator on the modest scale that other young Caucasian revolutionists were; such as, Knunyants, Zurabov, Kamenev, Tsereteli. At a closed session of the Party he was able to expound fairly well thoughts he had firmly made his own. But there was nothing of the agitator in him. He would force himself to utter sentences with great difficulty, without tonality, without warmth, without emphasis. The organic weakness of his nature, the reverse side of his strength, consisted in his complete inability to catch fire, to rise above the humdrum

level of trivialities, to conjure a vital bond between himself and his audience, to arouse in an audience its better self. Unable to catch fire himself, he was incapable of inflaming others. Cold spite is not enough for mastering the soul of the masses.

1905 unsealed the lips of all. The country that had been silent for a thousand years began to speak for the first time. Anyone who was at all capable of expressing his detestation of the bureaucracy and of the Tsar found tireless and grateful listeners. Undoubtedly, Koba, too, tried himself out. But comparison with other *extempore* orators proved altogether too disadvantageous to him. He could not bear that. Although insensitive to the feelings of others, Koba is extremely easily hurt, exceedingly sensitive about his own feelings, and, although it may seem startling, he is moody to the point of capriciousness. His reactions are primitive. Whenever he feels himself ignored or neglected, he is inclined to turn his back upon developments as well as upon people, creep into a corner, moodily pull on his pipe and dream of revenge. That was why in 1905 he walked into the shadows with hidden resentment and became something in the nature of an editor.

But Koba was far from a born journalist. His thinking is too slow, his associations too single-tracked, his style too plodding and barren. When he desires to produce a forceful effect he resorts to vile expressions. Not a single one of the articles he then wrote would have been accepted by an editorial board in the slightest degree thoughtful or exacting. True enough, underground publications were not, as a rule, notable for their literary excellence, since they were, for the most part, written by people who took to the pen of necessity and not because it was their calling. Koba, at any rate, did not rise above that level. His writing revealed an attempt to attain a systematic exposition of the theme; but that effort usually expressed itself in schematic arrangement of material, the enumeration of arguments, artificial rhetorical questions, and in unwieldy repetitions heavily on the didactic side. The absence of his own thought, of original form, of vivid imagery – these mark every line of his with the brand of banality. Here is an author who never freely expresses his own thoughts, but diffidently restates the thoughts of others. The word ‘diffidently’ may seem startling when applied to Stalin; it nevertheless characterises his groping manner as a writer most adequately, from his Caucasian period to this very day.

It would, of course, be erroneous to assume that such articles did not lead to action. There was great need for them. They answered a pressing demand. They drew their strength from that need, for they expressed the ideas and slogans of

the Revolution. To the mass reader, who could not find anything of the kind in the bourgeois press, they were new and fresh. But their passing influence was limited to the circle for which they were written. Now it is impossible to read these dryly, clumsily, and not always grammatically formulated phrases, startlingly decorated with the paper flowers of rhetoric, without a sense of constraint, embarrassment, annoyance, and at times laughter over lapses into unconscious humour. And no wonder: even at that time no one looked upon Koba as a journalist. All the Bolshevik writers, prominent and obscure, from the capital and from the provinces, contributed to the first legal Bolshevik daily newspaper *Novaya Zhizn* ('New Life'), which began publication in October, 1905, at Petersburg under Lenin's guidance. Yet Stalin's name is not among them. It was Kamenev, not Stalin, who was called upon to represent the Caucasus on that newspaper in an editorial capacity. Koba was no born writer and never became a writer. That he plied the pen with greater than usual diligence in 1905 merely emphasises the fact that the alternate method of communicating with the masses was even less native to him.

Many of the committeemen proved themselves not big enough for the period of endless meetings, of stormy strikes, of street demonstrations. Revolutionists must harangue crowds in the public square, must write on the spur of the moment, make grave decisions instantaneously. Neither the first nor the second nor the third is a gift of Stalin's: his voice is as weak as his imagination; the gift of improvisation is alien to this plodding thinker, who ever gropes his way. Far brighter luminaries outshone him on the Caucasian firmament. He watched the Revolution with envious alarm, and almost with hostility: it was not his element. Yenukidze writes:

Right along, in addition to going to meetings and attending to a lot of business in the Party locals, he sat in his little cubbyhole filled with books and newspapers or in the similarly 'roomy' editorial office of the Bolshevik newspaper.

One need but visualize for a moment the maelstrom of 'the mad year' and recall the grandeur of its pathos, in order fully to appreciate this portrait of a lonely and ambitious young man, who buried himself, pen in hand, in a tiny room – which most likely was not any too neat, either – bound on the fruitless quest of the unyielding phrase that might in some small measure be in tune with the epoch.

Developments followed upon developments. Koba remained on the sidelines, dissatisfied with everybody and with himself. All the prominent Bolsheviks, among them many who in those years were the leaders of the

movement in the Caucasus – Krassin, Postolovsky, Stopani, Lehman, Halperin, Kamenev, Taratuta, and others – passed Stalin by, did not mention him in their memoirs, and he himself has nothing to say about them. Some, like Kurnatovsky and Kamenev, undoubtedly came in contact with him in the course of their revolutionary activities. Others might have met him, but did not deem him different from the average run of ‘committeemen’. Not one of them singled him out with so much as a word of appreciation or fellow-feeling, nor did any of them give the future official biographers the slenderest foothold in the way of a sympathetic reference.

In 1926, the official commission on Party history issued a revised edition – that is, one adapted to the new post-Leninist tendency – of source materials about the year 1905. Of the more than one hundred documents nearly thirty were Lenin’s articles; there were approximately as many articles by various other authors. Despite the fact that the campaign against Trotskyism was already approaching its paroxysm of rage, the editorial board of true believers could not avoid including in the anthology four of my articles. Yet throughout the four-hundred-and-fifty-five pages there was not a single line by Stalin. In the alphabetical index, which included several hundred names, listing anyone at all who was in the slightest way prominent during the revolutionary years, Stalin’s name did not appear even once; only Ivanovich is mentioned as one who had attended the Tammerfors Conference of the Party in December, 1905. Remarkable is the fact that as recently as 1926 the editorial board was still ignorant of the fact that Ivanovich and Stalin were one and the same person. These impartial details are far more convincing than all the retrospective panegyrics.

Stalin seems to stand apart from the revolutionary year, 1905. His “pupillage” had come during the pre-revolutionary years, which he spent at Tiflis, Batumi and subsequently in prison and exile. According to his own avowal, he had turned “apprentice” at Baku – that is, in 1907-08. The period of the First Revolution is thus totally eliminated as a training period in the development of the future “craftsman”. Whenever he waxes autobiographic, Stalin does not mention that great year, which brought out into the world and moulded the most distinguished revolutionary leaders of the older generation. That should be firmly kept in mind, for it is far from accidental. In his autobiography, the very next revolutionary year, 1917, was to become almost as misty a spot as 1905. Again we shall find Koba, now become Stalin, in an unpretentious editorial office, this time of the Petersburg *Pravda*, unhurriedly writing dull comments on brilliant events. Here is a revolutionist

so constituted that a real revolution of the masses upsets him by throwing him out of his rut and kicking him aside. Never a tribune, never the strategist or leader of a rebellion, he has ever been only a bureaucrat of revolution. That was why, in order to find full play for his peculiar talents, he was condemned to bide his time in a semi-comatose condition until the revolution's raging torrents had subsided.

The split into the Majority and Minority had been ratified at the Third Congress, which declared the Mensheviks "a seceded portion of the Party". The Party was in a state of utter disunion, when the developments transpiring in the autumn of 1905 exerted their beneficent pressure and somewhat softened factional hostility. On the eve of his long-awaited departure from exile in Switzerland to revolutionary Russia in October of that year, Lenin wrote Plekhanov a warm and conciliatory letter, in which he referred to his erstwhile teacher and opponent as "the finest influence among Russian Social-Democrats" and appealed to him for cooperation, declaring, "Our tactical differences of opinion are being swept aside at an astounding rate by the revolution itself." That was true. But not for long, because the revolution itself did not long endure.

There is no doubt that in the beginning the Mensheviks were more resourceful than the Bolsheviks in establishing and utilising mass organisations. But as a political party they merely floated with the current and almost drowned in it. The Bolsheviks, on the other hand, adjusted themselves more slowly to the sweep of the movement. But they enriched it with their ringing slogans – the product of their realistic estimation of the Revolution's forces. The Mensheviks were preponderant in the Soviet; yet the general direction of the Soviet's policy proceeded in the main along Bolshevik lines. Opportunists to the very marrow of their bones, the Mensheviks were temporarily able to adapt themselves even to the revolutionary upsurge; yet they were incapable either of guiding it or of remaining faithful to its historic tasks during the Revolution's ebb-tide.

After the October General Strike – which snatched the constitutional manifesto from the Tsar, while generating in the workers' districts a mood of optimism and daring – unification tendencies assumed irresistible force in both factions. Unifying or federative committees of Bolsheviks and Mensheviks sprang up in all sorts of places. The leaders succumbed to this tendency. As a step toward complete fusion, each faction convoked its preliminary conference. The Mensheviks convened at Petersburg toward the end of November. In that city the newfangled "liberties" were still respected.

But the Bolsheviks met in December, when the reaction was already in full swing, and they were therefore obliged to hold their conclave on Finnish soil, at Tammerfors.

Initially the Bolshevik conference was conceived as an extraordinary congress of the Party. But the railway strike, the uprising in Moscow and a number of other exceptional developments in the provinces made it imperative for many delegates to remain at home, rendering the representation exceedingly unrepresentative. The forty-one delegates that arrived represented twenty-six organisations with a total voting strength of approximately four thousand. The figure seems insignificant for a revolutionary party contemplating the overthrow of tsarism and the assumption of its place in the impending revolutionary government. Yet these four thousand had already learned to express the will of hundreds of thousands. Still, because of its numerical inadequacy, the congress transformed itself into a mere conference. Koba, using the pseudonym Ivanovich, and the workingman, Teliya, came as representatives of the Transcaucasian Bolshevik organisations. The stirring events then transpiring in Tiflis did not deter Koba from abandoning his editorial office.

The minutes of the Tammerfors discussions, which proceeded while Moscow was being cannonaded, have not yet been found. The memory of the delegates, overwhelmed by the grandeur of the events then taking place, has retained very little. "What a pity that the minutes of that conference have not been preserved," Krupskaya wrote thirty years later:

It was such an enthusiastic gathering! It took place at the very climax of the Revolution, when every comrade was spoiling for a fight. They practiced shooting between sessions... None of the delegates at the conference could have forgotten that. There were Lozovsky, Baransky, Yaroslavsky, and many others. I remember these comrades because their reports of local conditions were exceptionally interesting.

Krupskaya did not name Ivanovich: she did not remember him. In the memoirs of Gorev, a member of the conference's presidium, we read in part: "Among the delegates were Sverdlov⁹, Lozovsky, Stalin, Nevsky and others."

9 Yakov Mikhailovich Sverdlov (1885-1919) was a member of RSDLP from 1901 and a supporter of Lenin. After four years of high school, he became a prominent underground activist and speaker in his home town of Nizhny Novgorod. Active in the 1905 Revolution, from then until 1917 he was either in prison or exile, for the last period with Stalin in Turukhansk, Siberia. Took an active part in preparing and organising the October Revolution, as a member of the Petrograd Revolutionary

Not devoid of interest is the order of these names. It is also known that Ivanovich, who spoke in favour of boycotting the elections to the State Duma, was chosen as a member of the committee concerned with that question.

The waves of the surf still beat so high that even the Mensheviks, frightened by their own recent opportunistic mistakes, did not dare to place both their feet on the uncertain board of Parliamentaryism. In the interest of agitation they proposed to take part only in the preliminary stage of the elections, but not to take their seats in the Duma. The predominant mood among the Bolsheviks was for an "active boycott". In his own peculiar way Stalin described Lenin's position of those days at the unpretentious celebration of Lenin's fiftieth birthday in 1920, as follows:

I remember how that giant, Lenin, twice admitted the errors of his ways. The first episode was in Finland, in 1905, in December, at the All-Russian Bolshevik Conference. At that time the question was posed concerning the advisability to boycott the Witte Duma... The discussion opened, the attack was begun by the provincials, the Siberians, the Caucasians. But what was our surprise, when at the end of our speeches, Lenin stepped forward and declared that he had been in favour of participating in the elections, but that now he saw that he had been mistaken and was ready to support our faction. We were amazed. That produced the impression of an electric shock. We gave him a thunderous ovation.

No one else mentioned that "electric shock" nor the "thunderous ovation" given by fifty pairs of hands. It is nevertheless possible that Stalin's version of the occurrence is substantially correct. In those days Bolshevik 'firmness' had not yet become associated with tactical resilience, especially among the 'practico', who were devoid of both background and mental outlook. Lenin himself might have wavered; the pressure of the provincials might have seemed to him the pressure of the revolutionary elements themselves. But regardless of whether it was so or not, the conference resolved "to attempt to undermine this police Duma, rejecting all participation in it." The only strange thing about it is that Stalin in 1920 continued to see Lenin's "mistake" in his initial readiness to take part in the elections; by that time Lenin himself had come to acknowledge his yielding in favour of the boycott as his real mistake.

Concerning Ivanovich's participation in the debates on the question of boycotting the Duma elections, there is the colourful tale of a certain Dmitrievsky, which seems to be a pure and simple fabrication. He writes:

Committee. From 1917 to his death from Spanish influenza, he headed the Secretariat of the CC and was Chair of the All-Russia Central Executive Committee.

Stalin was at first excited. This was the first time he spoke before a meeting of the Party's leading group. This was the first time he spoke before Lenin. But Lenin regarded him with interested eyes, nodding his head approvingly. Stalin's voice grew stronger. When he finished, everybody approved of him. His point of view was accepted.

Whence this information of the author, who had nothing at all to do with the conference? Dmitrievsky is a former Soviet diplomat, a chauvinist and anti-Semite, who temporarily joined Stalin's faction during its struggle against Trotskyism and later, while abroad, deserted to the camp of the right wing of the White emigration. It is significant that even as a functioning outright fascist, Dmitrievsky continues to regard Stalin highly, to detest all of his opponents, and to repeat all the legends of the Kremlin. But let us hear more of his tale. After the session at which the boycott of the Duma was considered, Lenin and Stalin "together walked out of the People's House, where the conference was being held. It was cold. A sharp wind blew. For a long time they continued to walk through the streets of Tammerfors."

Lenin was interested in that man, who he had heard was one of the most resolute and hard-headed revolutionists of Transcaucasia. He wanted to take a good look at him at close range. Attentively, for a long time and in great detail he questioned him about his work, about his life, about the people he had met, about the books he had read. From time to time, Lenin would drop brief comments...and their tone was satisfactory, approving. That man was precisely the kind he needed.

Dmitrievsky was not at Tammerfors, he could not have eavesdropped on Lenin's conversation with Stalin in the street at night and, as is evident from his book, he had never talked with Stalin himself, to whose authority he does not refer. Yet in that story of his, one senses something vivid and...familiar. After some tugs on my memory, I realised that Dmitrievsky had simply adapted to the Finnish climate my own account of my first meeting with Lenin and of our walk in the streets of London in the autumn of 1902. Folklore is rich with the transposition of brilliant episodes from one mythological person to another. The bureaucracy pursues the very same methods, ill-creating its own myths.

Koba was exactly twenty-six years old when he finally pecked his way out of his provincial shell and emerged into the orbit of the Party as a whole. True, that emergence of his was hardly noticed, and seven additional years were to pass before he became a Central Committee member. The Tammerfors conference was nonetheless an important milestone in his life. He visited

Petersburg, met the staff of the Party, observed its mechanism, compared himself with other delegates, took part in discussions, was elected to a committee and (as his official biography has it) "definitely connected himself with Lenin." To our regret, very little is known about all of that.

THE STOCKHOLM CONGRESS

It was possible to convene the unification congress only in April 1906, at Stockholm. By that time the Petersburg Soviet had been arrested, the Moscow uprising crushed, the Juggernaut of repression had rolled over the entire country. The Mensheviks scattered to the Right. Plekhanov expressed their state of mind in his winged phrase, "We should not have taken up arms!" The Bolsheviks continued to hold true to their course of insurrection. Over the bones of the revolution, the Tsar was convoking the First Duma, in which, from the very beginning of the elections, the victory of the Liberals over the frank monarchical reaction was clearly apparent. The Mensheviks, who a mere few weeks back had stood for a semi-boycott of the Duma, now transferred their hopes from the revolutionary struggle to constitutional conquests. At the time of the Stockholm Congress, the support of the Liberals seemed to them the most important task of the Social-Democracy. The Bolsheviks awaited the further development of the peasant uprisings, which were expected to help the proletarian struggle to resume the offensive, at the same time sweeping aside the tsarist Duma. Counterpoising the Mensheviks, they continued to support the boycott. As always after a defeat, the differences of opinion at once assumed an acute character. It was under such bad auspices that the unifying Congress began its session.

The number of voting delegates at the Congress was 113, consisting of 62 Mensheviks and 42 Bolsheviks. Since theoretically each delegate represented 300 organised Social-Democrats, it might be said that the entire Party had about 34,000 members, of whom 19,000 were Mensheviks and 14,000 Bolsheviks. Considering the vehemence of electioneering, these figures are undoubtedly considerably exaggerated. In any event, at the time the Congress convened, the Party was no longer growing, but shrinking. Of the 113 delegates, Tiflis had eleven. Of these eleven, ten were Mensheviks, one was a Bolshevik. That single Bolshevik was Koba, under the pseudonym of Ivanovich. The relationship of forces is herewith expressed in the exact terminology of plain arithmetic. Beria had the temerity to state that "under the leadership of Stalin" the Caucasian Bolsheviks had isolated the Mensheviks from the masses. These figures hardly bear him out. And besides, the closely

knit Caucasian Mensheviks played a tremendous role in their own fraction at the Congress.

Ivanovich's rather active participation in the work of the Congress was recorded in the minutes. Yet unless one knew while reading the record that Ivanovich was Stalin, one would not pay the slightest heed to his speeches and remarks. As recently as ten years ago no one quoted those speeches, and even Party historians had not noticed the circumstance that Ivanovich and the General Secretary of the Party were one and the same person. Ivanovich was placed on one of the technical committees set up to find out how the delegates had been elected to the Congress. For all its insignificance, that appointment was symptomatic: Koba was quite in his element when it came to machine technicalities. Incidentally, the Mensheviks twice accused him of lying in the course of his report. It is impossible to vouch for the objectivity of the accusers themselves. Yet it is likewise impossible not to note again that such incidents were always connected with Koba's name.

At the heart of the Congress's business was the agrarian question. The peasant movement had caught the Party virtually napping. The old agrarian programme, which had made almost no encroachments on the large land holdings, simply collapsed. Confiscation of the lands of the landed gentry became imminent. The Mensheviks were fighting for the programme of 'municipalisation' – that is, the transference of the land into the hands of the democratic organs of local self-administration. Lenin stood for nationalisation, on condition of the passing of all power to the people. Plekhanov, the chief theoretician of Menshevism, recommended not trusting the future central government and not arming it with the land funds of the country. He said:

That republic, of which Lenin has dreamed, once established would not maintain itself forever. We cannot proceed on the basis that in the near future there will be established in Russia the same sort of democratic order as in Switzerland, in England or in the United States. Considering the possibilities of restoration, nationalisation is dangerous.

This is how circumspect and modest were the expectations of the founder of Russian Marxism! In his opinion, the transference of land into the hands of the State would have been admissible only in the event that the State itself belonged to the workers.

"The seizure of power is compulsory for us," Plekhanov was saying, "when we are making a proletarian revolution. But since the revolution now impending can be only petty-bourgeois, we are duty-bound to refuse to seize

power.” Plekhanov subordinated the question of the struggle for power – and that was the Achilles’ heel of his entire doctrinaire strategy – to the *a priori* sociological definition, or rather, nomenclature, of the revolution, and not to the real interrelationship of its inherent forces.

Lenin fought for the seizure of the land of the landed gentry by revolutionary peasant committees and for the sanction of that seizure by the Constituent Assembly through a law on nationalisation. “My agrarian programme,” he wrote and said, “is entirely a programme of peasant insurrection and the complete fulfilment of the bourgeois democratic revolution.” On the basic point he remained in agreement with Plekhanov: the Revolution would not only begin, but would also culminate, as a bourgeois revolution. The leader of Bolshevism not only considered Russia unable to establish socialism independently, it had not even entered anyone’s head to pose that question prior to 1924, but he believed that it was impossible to retain even the forthcoming democratic conquests in Russia without a Socialist revolution in the West. It was at that very Stockholm Congress that he expressed this view most unequivocally. “The Russian [bourgeois democratic] Revolution can achieve victory by its own efforts,” he said, “but it cannot possibly hold and consolidate its gains by its own strength. It cannot do this unless there is a socialist revolution in the West.” It would be erroneous to think that, in tune with Stalin’s latter day interpretation, Lenin had in mind the danger of outside military intervention. No, he spoke of the inevitability of an internal restoration, in consequence of the peasant, as a petty proprietor, turning against the revolution after the agrarian upheaval. “Restoration is inevitable, whether we have municipalisation or nationalisation, or division of the land: for under each and every form of possession and property the small proprietor will always be a bulwark of restoration. After the complete victory of the democratic revolution,” Lenin insisted, “the small proprietor will inevitably turn against the proletariat; and the sooner the common enemies of the proletariat and the small proprietors, such as the capitalists, the landlords, the financial bourgeoisie, and so forth are overthrown, the sooner will this happen. Our democratic republic has no other reserve force than the socialist proletariat in the West.” (*LCW*, vol. 10, p. 280)

But to Lenin, who placed the fate of Russian Democracy in direct dependence on the fate of European socialism, the so-called “final aim” was not separated from the democratic upheaval by some boundless historical epoch. As early as during the period of the struggle for democracy, he aspired to marshal the points of support for the swiftest advancement toward the

socialist goal. The sense of land nationalisation lay in the fact that it opened a window into the future. He said:

In the epoch of the democratic revolution and the peasant uprising, one cannot limit oneself to mere confiscation of the land of the landed gentry. It is necessary to go beyond that to strike the fatal blow at the private ownership of land, in order to clear the way for the further struggle for socialism.

Ivanovich disagreed with Lenin on this crucial question of the Revolution. At this congress he expressed himself resolutely against nationalisation and in favour of distributing the confiscated lands among the peasants. To this very day few people in the Soviet Union know of this difference of opinion, which is fully recorded on the pages of the minutes, because no one is permitted either to quote, or to comment upon, Ivanovich's speech during the debate on the agrarian programme. Yet, surely it is worthy of notice. Stalin said:

Since we are concluding a temporary revolutionary union with the struggling peasantry, since we cannot on that account ignore the demands of that peasantry, we must support those demands, if, as a whole and in general, they do not conflict with the tendencies of economic development and with the progress of the revolution. The peasants demand division; division is not inconsistent with the above mentioned phenomena (?); therefore, we must support complete confiscation and division. From that point of view, both nationalisation and municipalisation are equally unacceptable.

Later Stalin was to say that in Tammerfors Lenin had delivered an insuperable speech on the agrarian question which had evoked general enthusiasm without revealing that he had not only spoken against Lenin's agrarian programme, but had declared it "equally unacceptable" with Plekhanov's.

In the first place, the very fact that a young Caucasian, who did not know Russia at all dared to come out so uncompromisingly against the leader of his faction on the agrarian question, in which field Lenin's authority was considered particularly formidable, cannot but evoke surprise. The cautious Koba, as a rule, did not relish either stepping on unfamiliar ice or remaining in a minority. He usually engaged in debate only when he felt that the majority was behind him, or, as in later years, when the machine assured his victory, irrespective of the majority. All the more compelling should have been the motives that induced him to speak on that occasion in defence of the not-so-popular land division. These motives, insofar as it is possible to decipher them some thirty-odd years later, were two, and both of them very characteristic of Stalin.

Koba came to revolution as a plebeian democrat, a provincial and an empiricist. Lenin's ideas about the international nature of the revolution were both remote and alien to him. He sought "guarantees" closer at hand. The individualistic approach to land ownership asserted itself more acutely and found a far more spontaneous expression among the Georgian than among the Russian peasants, because the former had no direct experience with communal land holdings. Wherefore the peasant's son from the village of Didi-Lilo decided that investing these small proprietors with additional parcels of land would be the most reliable guarantee against counter-revolution. It is thus clear that in his case 'divisionism' was no doctrinaire conviction – he was, indeed, inclined to reject convictions derived from doctrines with the greatest of ease – but rather his organic programme, in perfect harmony with the most fundamental inclinations of his nature, his upbringing and his social milieu. Indeed, twenty years later we shall rediscover in him an atavistic reversion to 'divisionism'.

Almost as unmistakable seems Koba's second motive. In his eyes, Lenin's prestige was decidedly lowered by the December defeat: he always attached greater significance to the fact than to the idea. At this congress Lenin was in a minority. Koba could not win with Lenin. That alone considerably diminished his interest in the nationalisation programme. Both the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks looked upon division as the lesser evil by comparison with the programme of the opposing faction. Koba had therefore reason to hope that the majority of the congress would in the final reckoning come to terms on the lesser evil. Thus, the organic inclinations of the radical democrat coincided with the tactical calculations of the schemer. But Koba figured wrongly: the Mensheviks had a good majority, so there was no need for them to choose the lesser when they preferred the greater evil.

It is important to note for future reference that during the Stockholm Congress, following in Lenin's footsteps, Stalin regarded the union of the proletariat with the peasantry as "temporary", that is, limited merely to common democratic tasks. It did not even occur to him to maintain that the peasantry as such could ever become an ally of the proletariat in the cause of the socialist revolution. Twenty years later that "disbelief" in the peasantry was to be proclaimed as the principal heresy of 'Trotskyism'. Indeed, much was to reappear in an altered aspect twenty years later. Declaring the agrarian programme of the Mensheviks and the Bolsheviks "equally unacceptable" in 1906, Stalin deemed land division "not in conflict with the tendencies of economic development." What he really had in mind were the tendencies of

capitalistic development. As for the impending socialist revolution, to which he did not devote so much as a single serious thought in those days, he was quite certain that scores of years would elapse before it was likely to come about, and in the interim, capitalism's natural laws would perform the task of concentration and proletarianisation in the economic structure of the village. Not without reason did Koba refer in his leaflets to the remote socialist goal with the biblical words, "the Promised Land".

The chief report on behalf of the adherents of division was, of course, not by the virtually unknown Ivanovich, but the more authoritative Bolshevik, Suvorov, who developed the point of view of his group with sufficient amplitude. "It is said that this is a bourgeois measure; but the peasant movement itself is petty-bourgeois," Suvorov argued, "and if it is possible for us to support the peasantry, then it must be only in that direction. By comparison with serfdom, the independent economy of the peasants represents a step forward; yet, later it will be outstripped by further developments." The socialist transformation of society will be able to take its turn only when capitalist development will have "outstripped" – that is, it will have ruined and appropriated – the independent farmer created by the bourgeois revolution.

The original author of the land division programme was, of course, not Suvorov, but the radical historian Rozhkov, who had joined the Bolsheviks shortly before the revolution. He did not appear as a reporter at the Congress only because he was then in prison. According to Rozhkov's view, which was developed in his polemic against the author of this book, not only Russia, but even the most advanced countries were far from prepared for a socialist revolution. Worldwide capitalism still had the prospect of a long epoch of progressive work, the completion of which was lost in the mists of the future. In order to subvert the obstacles in the way of the creative endeavour of Russian capitalism, the most backward of all capitalist systems, the proletariat was bound to pay the price of land division for its union with the peasantry. Capitalism would then make short shrift of such illusions as agrarian levelling by gradually concentrating the land in the hands of the more powerful and progressive landowners. Lenin had named the adherents of this programme, which directly preached reliance on the bourgeois farmer, "Rozhkovists", after their leader. It is not superfluous to note that Rozhkov himself, whose attitude was serious in matters of doctrine, passed during the years of reaction to the side of the Mensheviks.

On the first ballot Lenin joined the partisans of division, in order, according to his own explanation "not to break up the votes against municipalisation."

He regarded the programme of division as the lesser evil, adding, however, that although division presented a certain defence against the restoration of the landed gentry and the Tsar, unfortunately it could also create the basis for a Bonapartist dictatorship. He accused the adherents of division of being “one-sided in regarding the peasant movement only from the point of view of the past and the present, without taking into consideration the point of view of the future”, of socialism. There was a lot of confusion and not a little of individualism glossed over with mysticism in the peasant view of the land as ‘God’s’ or ‘nobody’s’; yet, inherent in that view was a progressive tendency, and it was therefore necessary to discover how to seize upon it and utilise it against the bourgeois social order. The partisans of division did not know how to do that.

The practicos...will vulgarise the present programme...will expand a small error into a large one... They will cry to the peasant crowd that the land is nobody’s, God’s, the government’s, will argue for the advantages of division, and in that way they will defame and vulgarise Marxism.

On Lenin’s lips the word “practicos” signified in this case revolutionists with a narrow outlook, propagandists of the neat little formulae. That blow strikes the nail on the head all the more accurately when we consider that in the course of the next quarter of a century Stalin was to call himself proudly nothing other than a ‘practico’, in distinction from ‘literaries’ and ‘émigrés’. He was to proclaim himself a theoretician only after the political machine secured his practical victory and sheltered him from criticism.

Plekhanov was, of course, right when he placed the agrarian question in inseverable conjunction with the question of power. But Lenin, too, understood the nature of that conjuncture, and rather more deeply than Plekhanov. According to his formulation, in order to make nationalisation possible, the revolution must perforce establish “the democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry”, which he strictly distinguished from the socialistic dictatorship of the proletariat. In distinction from Plekhanov, Lenin thought that the agrarian revolution would be consummated, not by liberal, but by plebeian hands, or it would not be consummated at all. However, the nature of the “democratic dictatorship” he preached remained hazy and paradoxical. According to Lenin, should the representatives of the small property holders obtain a dominant position in a revolutionary government – an unlikely eventuality in a bourgeois revolution occurring in the twentieth century – that very government would threaten to become a tool of reactionary

forces. Yet acceptance of the proposition that the proletariat was bound to take possession of the government in the wake of the agrarian revolution removes the fences between the democratic revolution and the socialistic revolution, for the one would naturally pass into the other, the revolution thus becoming 'permanent'. Lenin had no ready answer for that argument. But needless to say, Koba the 'practico' and 'divisionist' regarded the perspective of permanent revolution with sovereign contempt.

Arguing against the Mensheviks in defence of the revolutionary peasant committees as instrumental for the seizure of the landed gentry's lands, Ivanovich said, "If the liberation of the proletariat can be the act of the proletariat itself, then the liberation of the peasantry can likewise be the act of the peasants themselves." As a matter of fact, that symmetrical formula is a parody on Marxism. The historical mission of the proletariat grows to considerable extent precisely out of the inability of the petty-bourgeoisie to liberate itself, by means of its own forces. The peasant revolution is impossible, of course, without the active participation of the peasants in the form of armed detachments, local committees, and the like. Yet the fate of the peasant revolution is decided, not in the village, but in the city. A shapeless remnant of medievalism in contemporary society, the peasantry cannot have an independent policy; it needs an outside leader. Two new classes vie for that leadership. Should the peasantry follow the liberal bourgeoisie, the revolution would stop halfway, in order subsequently to roll back. Should the peasantry find its leader in the proletariat, the revolution must inevitably pass beyond bourgeois limits. It was precisely on that peculiar correlation of classes in a historically belated bourgeois society that the perspective of permanent revolution was founded.

No one, however, at the Stockholm Congress defended that perspective, which I again attempted to expound while lodged in a Petersburg prison cell. The uprising had already been repulsed. The revolution was in retreat. The Mensheviks longed for a bloc with the Liberals. The Bolsheviks were in a minority; besides, they were split. The perspective of permanent revolution seemed compromised. It would have to await its return match for eleven years. By a vote of sixty-two against forty-two with seven abstaining, the Congress adopted the Menshevik programme of municipalisation. That played no role whatsoever in the future course of events. The peasants remained deaf to it, while the Liberals were hostile. In 1917 the peasants accepted land nationalisation as they accepted the Soviet Government and the leadership of the Bolsheviks.

Ivanovich's two other speeches at the Congress were no more than a paraphrased digest of Lenin's speeches and articles. On the question of the general political situation, he justly attacked the endeavour of the Mensheviks to abate the movement of the masses by adapting it to the political course of the Liberal bourgeoisie. "Either the hegemony of the proletariat," he reiterated the widespread formula, "or the hegemony of the democratic bourgeoisie – that is how the question stands in the Party, and therein are our differences." But the orator was very far from understanding all the historical implications of that alternative. The "hegemony of the proletariat" means its political supremacy over all the revolutionary forces of the country, and above all, over the peasantry. In the event of the complete victory of the revolution, that "hegemony" must naturally lead to the dictatorship of the proletariat, with all its implied consequences. Yet Ivanovich firmly held on to the view that the Russian Revolution was capable of no more than merely clearing the way for the bourgeois regime. In some incomprehensible way he connected the idea of the proletariat's hegemony with the notion of an independent policy by the peasantry, which would liberate itself by dividing the land into small parcels.

This so-called 'unifying' congress did attain the unification of the Party's two main factions as well as of the national organisations – the Social-Democracy of Poland and Lithuania, the Latvian Social-Democracy and the Jewish Bund¹⁰. The congress thus justified its name. But its real significance, as Lenin put it, was rather in the fact that it "helped to make more distinct the cleavage between the Social-Democracy's right and left wings." If the split at the Second Congress was no more than an "anticipation" and was subsequently overcome, the "unification" at the Stockholm Congress became merely a milestone on the road to the final and definitive split that occurred six years later. Yet during the Congress Lenin was far from thinking that a split was inevitable. The experience of the turbulent months of 1905, when the Mensheviks had made a sharp turn to the left, was altogether too fresh. Despite the fact that thereafter, as Krupskaya writes, they "showed their hand plainly enough," Lenin, according to her testimony, still continued to hope "that the new rise of the revolutionary wave, of which he had no doubt, would overwhelm them and reconcile them to the Bolshevik line." But the new rise of the revolution did not come.

10 The common name for the General Union of Jewish Workers of Lithuania, Poland and Russia, the first really successful workers' organisation in Russia. It organised the Jewish workers and artisans and led a series of strikes towards the end of the 19th century.

Immediately after the Congress Lenin wrote an appeal to the Party which contained a restrained yet in no way ambiguous criticism of the resolutions adopted. The appeal was signed by delegates from among “the former faction of Bolsheviks”, which was considered dissolved on paper. The remarkable thing is that of the forty-two Bolshevik participants of the congress, only twenty-six signed that appeal. Ivanovich’s signature is lacking, even as the signature of the leader of his group, Suvorov. Apparently the adherents of division regarded their differences of opinion with Lenin’s group so important that they declined to appear jointly with them before the Party, despite the very circumspect formulation of the appeal on the question of land. It would be useless to seek commentaries on that fact in the Party’s official publications of today. Yet neither did Lenin refer so much as once to any of Ivanovich’s speeches in his extensive printed report about the Stockholm Congress, in which he gave a detailed account of the debates, mentioning all the important speakers, Mensheviks as well as Bolsheviks: evidently Lenin did not deem Ivanovich’s speeches as essential to these debates as it has been attempted to represent them thirty years later. Stalin’s position inside the Party – outwardly, at any rate – had not altered. No one proposed him for the Central Committee, which was composed of seven Mensheviks and the three Bolsheviks, Krassin, Rykov, and Desnitsky. After the Stockholm Congress, even as prior to it, Koba remained a Party worker of merely “Caucasian calibre.”

During the last two months of the revolutionary years the Caucasus was a seething cauldron. In December 1905, the strike committee, having assumed the management of the Transcaucasian railway and telegraph, began to regulate the transport movement and the economic life of Tiflis. The suburbs were in the hands of the armed workers. But not for long. The armed authorities quickly repulsed their enemies. Tiflis Government was declared under martial law. Armed conflicts raged on at Kutais, Chituary and other places. Western Georgia was in the throes of a peasant uprising. On 10th December, Chief of Police Shirinkin, of the Caucasus, reported to the director of his department at Petersburg:

The Kutais Government is in a state of emergency...the gendarmes have been disarmed, the rebels have taken possession of the western sector of the railroad and are themselves selling tickets and looking after public order... I have received no reports from Kutais. The gendarmes have been removed from the line and are concentrated in Tiflis. Couriers sent with reports are searched by the revolutionists and their documents confiscated; the situation there is insufferable... The

Governor-General is ill from nervous exhaustion... I shall send details by mail, or, if that is not possible, by courier.

All these developments did not take place of their own free will. The collective initiative of the aroused masses was, of course, chiefly responsible for it; and at every step it had to have individuals as its agents, organisers, leaders. Koba was not among them. Unhurriedly, he commented on the developments after they had transpired. Only that had made it possible for him to go away to Tammerfors during the most stirring of times. No one noticed his absence and no one noticed his return.

Matters were brought to a head by the suppression of the uprising in Moscow. By that time the Petersburg workers, exhausted by preceding battles and lockouts, were already passive. The suppression of rebellions in Transcaucasia, the Trans Baltic Region and Siberia came after the pacification of Moscow. Reaction was beginning to come into its own. The Bolsheviks were all the more reluctant to acknowledge this because the surf's belated waves were still running counter to the all-encompassing ebb-tide. All the revolutionary parties were determined to believe that the ninth wave was on the verge of breaking. When some of Lenin's more sceptical followers suggested to him the possibility that the reaction had already set in, he responded, "I'll be the last to admit it!" The pulse beats of the Russian Revolution were still finding their most emphatic expression in labour strikes, ever the basic way of mobilising the masses. There were two-and-three-quarter-million strikers in 1905; nearly a million in 1906: that figure, tremendous in itself, was indicative of acute regression.

According to Koba's explanation, the proletariat had suffered an episodic defeat, "first of all, because it did not have, or had too few, weapons; no matter how class-conscious you might be, you cannot oppose bullets with your bare hands!" Obviously, that explanation oversimplified the problem. Naturally, it is rather hard to "oppose" bullets with bare hands. But there were also more profound causes for the defeat. The peasantry did not rise in its entire mass; it rose less in the centre of the country than on the outskirts. The army was only partially won over. The proletariat did not yet really know its own strength or the strength of its opponent. The year 1905 went down in history and therein is its immeasurable significance – as "the general rehearsal." But Lenin was able to characterise it thus only after the fact. In 1906 he himself awaited a quick showdown. In January, Koba, paraphrasing Lenin, wrote, with oversimplification, as usual:

We must once and for all reject all wavering, cast aside all indefiniteness, and irrevocably assume the point of view of attack... A united party, an armed uprising organised by the Party, and the policy of attack – this is what is demanded of us by the victory of the uprising.

Even the Mensheviks did not yet dare to say aloud that the Revolution had ended. At the congress in Stockholm Ivanovich had the opportunity to declare without fear of contradiction: “And so, we are on the eve of a new explosion... On that all of us are agreed.” As a matter of fact, at that time, the “explosion” was already in the past. The “policy of attack” became increasingly the policy of guerrilla clashes and scattered blows. The land was widely inundated with so-called ‘expropriations’ – armed raids on banks, treasuries, and other repositories of money.

THE REIGN OF TERROR

The disintegration of the Revolution was relinquishing the initiative of attack, which was passing into the hands of the government, and by that time the government was managing to cope with its own shattered nerves. In the autumn and winter the revolutionary parties began to emerge from the underground. The jousts continued, with visors open. The tsarist police agents came to know the enemy by its face, as a whole and individually. The reign of terror began on 3rd December 1905, with the arrest of the Petersburg Soviet. All those who had compromised themselves and had not managed to hide were in due course arrested. Admiral Dubasov’s victory over the Moscow warriors merely added more viciousness to the current acts of repression. Between January, 1905, and the convocation of the First Duma on 27th April [10th May] 1906, the tsarist government, according to approximate calculations, had killed more than fourteen thousand people, had executed more than a thousand, had wounded twenty thousand, had arrested, exiled and imprisoned about seventy thousand. The principal number of victims fell in December, 1905, and during the first months of 1906. Koba did not offer himself – “as a target”. He was neither wounded nor exiled nor arrested. It was not even necessary for him to go into hiding. He remained, as formerly, in Tiflis. That can in no way be explained by his personal skill or by a happy accident. It was possible for him to go to the Tammerfors Conference secretly, by stealth. But it was quite impossible to lead the mass movement of 1905 by stealth. No “happy accident” could have possibly shielded an active revolutionist in small Tiflis. As a matter of fact, Koba kept aloof from important developments to such

an extent that the police paid no attention to him. In the middle of 1906 he continued to vegetate in the editorial office of a legal Bolshevik newspaper.

In the meantime, Lenin was in hiding in Finland, at Kuokalla, in constant contact with Petersburg and the entire country. The other members of the Bolshevik Centre were also there. That was where the torn threads of the illegal organisation were picked up and rewoven. "From all the ends of Russia," writes Krupskaya, "came comrades with whom we discussed our work." Krupskaya mentions a number of names, including that of Sverdlov, who in the Urals "enjoyed tremendous influence", mentions, by the way, Voroshilov, and others. But, despite the ominous reproaches of official criticism, she does not mention Stalin even once during that period. And not because she avoids the mention of his name; on the contrary, wherever she has the slightest foundation in fact, she tries to push him forward. She simply could find no trace of him in her memory.

The First Duma was dissolved on 8th July 1906. The strike of protest, for which the left-wing parties had appealed, did not materialise: the workers had learned to understand that a strike alone was not enough, and there was no strength left for anything more than that. The attempt by the revolutionists to hamper the mobilisation of army recruits failed pitifully. The uprising at the Sveaborg fortress, with the participation of the Bolsheviks, proved to be an isolated flare-up, and was quickly suppressed. The reaction gained strength. The Party went deeper and deeper into the underground. "From Kuokalla, Ilyich actually guided the entire activity of the Bolsheviks," Krupskaya wrote. Again a number of names and episodes, but no mention of Stalin. Nor is he mentioned in connection with the November session of the Party at Terioki, where the question of elections to the Second Duma was being decided. Koba did not journey to Kuokalla. Not the slightest trace of the alleged correspondence between him and Lenin for the year 1906 has been preserved. No personal contact between them was established, despite the meeting at Tammerfors. Nor did the second meeting, at Stockholm, bring them any closer together. Krupskaya, telling about a walk through the Swedish capital in which Lenin, Rykov, Stroyev, Alexinsky, and others took part, does not name Stalin as being among them. It is also possible that the personal relations, having scarcely arisen, became strained because of the differences of opinion on the agrarian question: Ivanovich did not sign the appeal, so Lenin did not mention Ivanovich in his report.

In accordance with the resolutions adopted at Tammerfors and Stockholm, the Caucasian Bolsheviks united with the Mensheviks. Koba did not become

a member of the United Regional Committee. But then, if one is to trust Beria, he did become a member of the Caucasian Bolshevik Bureau, which existed secretly in 1906 parallel to the Party's official committee. Yet there is no evidence about the activity of that Bureau and about Koba's role in it. One thing is certain: the organisational views of the 'committeeman' of the days of the Tiflis-Batumi period underwent a change – if not in their essence, at least, in the form of their expression. Koba no longer dared to urge workingmen to confess that they were not yet sufficiently mature to serve on committees. The soviets and the trade unions advanced revolutionary workingmen to the first plane of importance, and they usually proved to be far better prepared to lead the masses than the majority of underground intellectuals. As Lenin had foreseen, the 'committeemen' were forced to change their views rather suddenly, or at least, their arguments. Now Koba defended in the press the need for party democracy; more than that, the kind of democracy in which "the mass itself decides the issues and acts by itself." Mere elective democracy was insufficient: "Napoleon III was elected by universal suffrage; yet, who does not know that this elected emperor was the greatest enslaver of the people?" Could Besoshvili (Koba's pseudonym at the time) have foreseen his own future, he would have refrained from referring to a Bonapartistic plebiscite. But there was much that he did not foresee. His gift of foresight was good for short distances only. Therein, as we shall see, was not only his weakness but also his strength – at least, for a certain epoch.

The defeats of the proletariat forced Marxism to retreat to defensive positions. Enemies and opponents silenced during the stormy months again raised their heads. The Left as well as the Right held materialism and dialectics responsible for the rage of the reaction. On the Right, the Liberals, Democrats, Populists; on the Left, the Anarchists. Anarchism played no part at all in the 1905 movement. There were only three factions in the Petersburg Soviet – the Mensheviks, the Bolsheviks, and the S-Rs. The Anarchists found a more reverberating sounding board in the atmosphere of disillusionment after the downfall of the Soviets. The ebb-tide also left its imprint in backward Caucasus, where in many respects the conditions were more favourable for Anarchism than elsewhere in the country. As part of his defence of Marxist positions then under attack, Koba wrote in his native Georgian a series of newspaper articles on the theme of *Anarchism and Socialism*. These articles, which testify to their author's good intentions, do not lend themselves to restatement because they are in themselves no more than a restatement of the works of others. Nor is it easy to cull quotations from them, for they are

smoothly stained an even grey that renders the selection of any individualistic expressions even more difficult. It is sufficient to say that this work of his was never republished.

To the right of the Georgian Mensheviks, who continued to regard themselves as Marxist, arose the party of Federalists – a local parody, partly of the S-Rs and partly of the Kadets. Besoshvili quite justly denounced that Party's penchant for cowardly manoeuvres and compromises, but in doing so, he resorted to rather venturesome figures of speech. He wrote:

As is well known, every animal has its definite colouration. But the nature of the chameleon is not satisfied with that; with a lion, he assumes the colouration of a lion; with a wolf, that of a wolf; with a frog, that of a frog, depending on when which colouration is most advantageous to him.

A zoologist would be rather likely to protest against such slander of the chameleon. But since the Bolshevik critic was essentially right, he may be forgiven the style of one who failed to become a village priest.

That is all there is to say about the doings of Koba-Ivanovich-Besoshvili during the First Revolution. It is not much, even in the purely quantitative sense. Yet the author has tried very hard not to omit anything at all worthy of notice. The point is that Koba's intellect, devoid of imagination, was not very productive. The discipline of intellectual labour was alien to him. An overpowering personal motivation was required to stir him to prolonged and systematic application. He did not find that stirring motivation in the Revolution, which brushed him aside. That is why his contributions to the Revolution appear so pitifully meagre by comparison with the Revolution's gift to his personal fortunes.

4. THE PERIOD OF REACTION

The personal life of underground revolutionists was always relegated to the background, repressed. Yet it persisted. Like the palms on a Diego Rivera landscape, love struggled toward the sun from under heavy boulders. It was almost always identified with revolution. The same ideas, the same struggle, the same danger, a common isolation from the rest of the world, welded strong bonds. Couples came together in the underground, were parted by prison, and again sought each other out in exile. We know little of young Stalin's personal life, but that little is all the more precious for the light it shed on him as a man.

Iremashvili tells us:

He married in 1903. His marriage, according to his lights, was a happy one. True, it was impossible to discover in his own home that equality of the sexes which he himself advocated as the basic form for marriage in the new state. But it was not in his character to share equal rights with any other person. His marriage was a happy one because his wife, who could not come up to him in general intelligence, regarded him as a demigod and because, being a Georgian woman, she was brought up in the sacrosanct tradition which obligates the woman to serve.

Although Iremashvili considered himself a Social-Democrat, he himself subscribed almost religiously to the tradition which made the Georgian woman essentially a family slave. He ascribed to Koba's wife the same characteristics that he had ascribed to his mother, Keke.

That truly Georgian woman...with all her heart looked after her husband's welfare. Passing countless nights in ardent prayers, she waited for her Soso while he was busy at secret conferences. She prayed that Koba might turn away from

his ideas that were displeasing to God and turn to a peaceful home life of toil and contentment.

Not without astonishment do we learn from these lines that Koba, who had repudiated religion at thirteen, was married to a naively and profoundly religious wife. That might seem quite an ordinary case in a stable bourgeois environment, in which the husband regards himself as an agnostic or amuses himself with Masonic rites, while his wife, having consummated her latest adultery, duly kneels in the confession box before her priest. But among Russian revolutionists such matters were immeasurably more important. There was no anaemic agnosticism at the core of their revolutionary philosophy, but militant atheism. How could they have any personal tolerance toward religion, which was inextricably linked to everything against which they fought at constant risk to themselves?

Among working people, who married early, one might find not a few instances of the husband turning revolutionist after marriage while his wife continued to cling stubbornly to the old faith. But even that usually led to dramatic collisions. The husband would keep his new life a secret from his wife and would grow further and further away from her. In other cases, the husband would win his wife over to his own views and away from her kinsfolk. Young workers would frequently complain that it was hard for them to find girls who were free of the old superstitions. Among the student youth the choice of mates was considerably easier. There were almost no cases of a revolutionary intellectual marrying a believer. Not that there were any rules to that effect. But such things were not in keeping with the customs, the views and the feelings of these people. Koba was undoubtedly a rare exception. It would seem that the divergence in views led to no dramatic conflict:

This man, so restless in spirit, who felt himself spied upon, under the constant surveillance of the tsarist secret police at every step and in everything he did, could find love only in his impoverished home. Only his wife, his child and his mother were exempt from the scorn he poured on all others.

The idyllic family picture drawn by Iremashvili allows the inference that Koba was indulgently tolerant of his intimate companion's beliefs. But since that runs counter to his tyrannical nature, what appears to be tolerance must really be moral indifference. Koba did not seek in his wife a friend capable of sharing his views or at least his ambitions. He was satisfied with a submissive and devoted woman. In his views he was a Marxist; in his feelings and spiritual

needs – he was the son of the Ossetian Beso from Didi-Lilo. He required no more of his wife than his father had found in the long-suffering Keke.

Iremashvili's chronology, which is not faultless as a rule, is more reliable in personal matters than in the field of politics. But his marriage date arouses some doubt. He gives it as 1903. Yet Koba was arrested in April, 1902, and returned from exile, in February, 1904. It is possible that the wedding took place in prison. Such cases were not rare. But it is also possible that the marriage took place only after his flight from exile at the beginning of 1904. In that event a church wedding did present certain difficulties for one of 'illegal' status; yet, in view of the primitive ways of those times, especially in the Caucasus, police obstacles were not insurmountable. If Koba's wedding took place after his exile, it can in part explain his political passivity during 1904.

Koba's wife – we do not even know her name¹ – died in 1907; according to some accounts, of pneumonia. By that time the two Sosos were no longer on friendly terms. Iremashvili complains:

The brunt of his struggle was henceforth directed against us, his former friends. He attacked us at every meeting and discussion in the most savage and unscrupulous manner, trying to sow poison and hatred against us everywhere. If possible, he would have rooted us out with fire and sword... But the overwhelming majority of Georgian Marxists remained with us. That merely enraged and incensed him all the more.

But Georgian customs proved so prepotent that political disagreement did not deter Iremashvili from visiting Koba on the occasion of his wife's death in order to bring him words of comfort:

He was very downcast, yet he met me in a friendly manner, as in the old days. This hard man's pale face reflected the heartfelt anguish caused by the death of his faithful life's companion. His emotional distress... must have been very deep-seated and enduring, for he was incapable of hiding it any longer from outsiders.

The deceased was buried in accordance with all the rules of Orthodox ritual. Her relatives insisted on it. Nor did Koba object. Iremashvili tells us:

When the modest procession reached the entrance to the cemetery, Koba firmly pressed my hand, pointed to the coffin and said: "Soso, this creature softened my heart of stone; she died, and with her died my last warm feelings for all human

1 Yekaterina 'Kato' Svanidze (1885-1907).

beings.” He placed his right hand on his heart: “It is all so desolate here inside, so inexpressibly desolate!”

These words may seem theatrically pathetic and unnatural; yet it is not unlikely that they are true, not only because they refer to a young man overwhelmed by his first heartfelt sorrow but also because in time to come we shall rediscover in Stalin the same penchant for strained pathos, a trait not unusual among persons of harsh character. The awkward style for expressing his feelings came to him from the seminary training in homiletics.

Koba's wife left him a little boy with fine and delicate features. In 1919-20, he was a student at the Tiflis secondary school, where Iremashvili was an instructor. Soon after that, his father transferred Yasha to Moscow. We shall meet him again in the Kremlin. That is all we know about this marriage, which in point of time (1903-07) fits rather neatly into the framework of the First Revolution. It is no fortuitous coincidence: the rhythms of the revolutionist's personal life were too closely intertwined for that with the rhythms of great events.

“Beginning with the day he buried his wife,” insists Iremashvili, “he lost the last vestige of human feelings. His heart filled with the inexpressibly malicious hatred his merciless father had already begun to engender in him when he was still a child. He crushed with sarcasm his less and less frequently recurring moral impulses. Ruthless with himself, he became ruthless with all people.” Such was he during the period of reaction which meantime had advanced upon the country.

The beginning of mass strikes in the second half of the nineties signified the approach of revolution. But the average number of strikers was even less than fifty thousand a year. In 1905 that number rose at once to two and three-quarter millions; in 1906 it came down to one million; in 1907 to three-quarters of a million, including repeat strikes. Such were the figures for the three years of the revolution. Never before had the world witnessed a similar wave of strikes! The period of reaction opened in 1908. The number of strikers fell at once to 174,000; in 1909 to 64,000; in 1910 to 50,000. But while the proletariat was rapidly closing its ranks, the peasants it had aroused not only continued but even strengthened their offensive. The ravaging of landowners' estates became particularly widespread during the months of the First Duma's tenure. There came a wave of soldiers' mutinies. After the suppression of the attempted uprisings at Sveaborg and Kronstadt in July, 1906, the monarchy became bolder, introduced courts-martial, and, with the aid of the Senate,

vitiating the election law. But it did not attain the requisite results. The Second Duma proved even more radical than the First.

In February, 1907, Lenin characterised the political situation of the country in the following words: "The most unrestrained, the most brazen lawlessness... The most reactionary election law in Europe. The most revolutionary body of popular representatives in Europe in the most backward country!" Hence his conclusion: "Ahead is a new, an even more menacing...revolutionary crisis." This conclusion proved erroneous. Although the revolution was still strong enough to leave its impress on the arena of tsarist pseudo-Parliamentarism, it was already broken. Its convulsions became increasingly weaker.

The Social-Democratic party was undergoing a similar process. It continued to grow in membership. But its influence on the masses declined. A hundred Social-Democrats were no longer able to lead as many workers into the street as ten Social-Democrats had led the year before. The different aspects of a revolutionary movement, as a homogeneous historical process and generally as a development possessing survival value, are neither uniform nor harmonious in content or movement. Not only workers but even the petty-bourgeois attempted to avenge their defeat by tsarism in open battle by voting on the Left; but they were no longer capable of a new insurrection. Deprived of the apparatus of the Soviets and of direct contact with the masses, who quickly succumbed to gloomy apathy, the more active workers felt the need for a revolutionary party. Thus, this time the leftward swing of the Duma and the growth of the Social-Democracy were symptoms of the revolution's decline, not of its rise.

No doubt, Lenin admitted such a possibility even then. But, pending final verification by experience, he continued to base his policy on a revolutionary prognosis. Such was the fundamental rule of that strategist. "The revolutionary Social-Democracy," he wrote in October, 1906, "must be the first to take its place in the most resolute and the most direct struggle, and the last to resort to the more roundabout methods of struggle." Under direct struggle come demonstrations, strikes, the general strike, clashes with the police, the insurrection. Under roundabout methods – the utilisation of legal opportunities, including Parliamentarism – for the mobilisation of forces. That strategy inevitably implied the danger of resorting to militant methods after the objective conditions for the employment of such methods no longer prevailed. Yet on the scales of the revolutionary party, that tactical risk weighed immeasurably less than the strategic danger of not keeping up with developments and losing sight of a revolutionary situation.

THE 1907 CONGRESS

The Fifth Congress of the Party, held in London in May, 1907, was remarkable for the number of people that attended it. In the hall of the 'Socialist' Church there were 302 voting delegates (one delegate for each 300 party members), about 50 with advisory voices, and not a few guests. Of these, 90 were Bolsheviks and 85 Mensheviks. The national delegations formed the 'centre' between these two flanks. At the previous congress 13,000 Bolsheviks and 18,000 Mensheviks (one delegate for each 300 party members) were represented. During the twelve months between the Stockholm and the London congresses, the Russian section of the Party had increased from 31,000 to 77,000 members, i.e., two-and-a-half times. Inevitably, the keener the factional struggle, the more inflated the figures. Yet, no doubt, the advanced workers did continue to join the Party during that year. At the same time the left wing grew stronger at a considerably faster rate than its opponent. In the 1905 Soviet the Mensheviks were preponderant; the Bolsheviks were a modest minority. At the beginning of 1906 the forces of both factions in St. Petersburg were approximately equal. During the interval between the First and the Second Dumas, the Bolsheviks began to get ahead. By the time of the Second Duma, they had already won complete dominance among the advanced workers. Judging by the nature of the resolutions adopted, the Stockholm Congress was Menshevik, the London Congress – Bolshevik.

This shift of the Party leftward was carefully noted by the authorities. Shortly before the Congress the Police Department explained to its local branches, "the Menshevik groups in their present state of mind do not present as serious a danger as the Bolsheviks." In the regular report on the progress of the Congress, presented to the Police Department by one of its foreign agents, the following appraisal was included: "Among the orators who in the course of discussion spoke in defence of the extreme revolutionary point of view were Stanislav (Bolshevik), Trotsky, Pokrovsky (Bolshevik), Tyszko (Polish Social-Democrat); in defence of the opportunist point of view – Martov and Plekhanov," (leaders of the Mensheviks). "There is clear intimation," the Okhrana² agent continued, "that the Social-Democrats are turning toward revolutionary methods of struggle... Menshevism, which blossomed thanks to the Duma, declined in due time, when the Duma demonstrated its impotence, giving ample scope to Bolshevik, or rather, to extreme revolutionary tendencies." As a matter of fact, as was already pointed

2 The Okhrana (short for Okhranayeye Otdyelyeniye, or Department of Safety) was the political secret police of the tsarist Imperial Police Department.

out, the shift in sentiment within the proletariat was much more complicated and inconsistent. Thus, while the vanguard, buoyed by its own experiences, moved to the Left, the mass, discouraged by defeats, moved to the Right. The breath of the reaction was already hovering over the Congress. "Our revolution is passing through trying times," said Lenin at the session of 12th May. "We need all the strength and will-power, all the self-restraint and perseverance of a united proletarian party, if we are to endure in the face of the pervasive moods of disbelief, defection, apathy, submissiveness."

"In London," wrote a French biographer, "Stalin for the first time saw Trotsky. But the latter hardly noticed him. The leader of the Petersburg Soviet is not the sort of person who readily strikes up acquaintances or becomes chummy without genuine spiritual affinity." Whether that is true or not, the fact remains that I first learned about Koba's presence at the London Congress from Souvarine's book and subsequently found confirmation of it in the official records. As in Stockholm, Ivanovich took part not as one of the 302 voting delegates, but as one of the 42 whose participation was only consultative. Bolshevism was still so weak in Georgia that Koba could not muster the necessary 500 votes in all of Tiflis! "Even in Koba's and my native town of Gori," writes Iremashvili, "there was not a single Bolshevik." The complete predominance of the Mensheviks in the Caucasus was attested to in the course of the Congress debates by Koba's rival, Shaumyan, a leading Caucasian Bolshevik and future member of the Central Committee. "The Caucasian Mensheviks," he complained, "taking full advantage of their crushing numerical weight and official dominance in the Caucasus, do everything in their power to prevent Bolsheviks from getting elected." In a declaration signed by the same Shaumyan and Ivanovich, we read: "The Caucasian Menshevik organisations are composed almost entirely of the town and village petty-bourgeoisie." Of the 18,000 Caucasian members of the Party, no more than 6,000 were workers; but even most of these followed the Mensheviks.

Koba's appointment as a mere consultative delegate was accompanied by an incident not devoid of piquancy. When it was Lenin's turn to preside at the Congress, he proposed adoption without discussion of a resolution by the mandate commission, which recommended the granting of consultative participation to four delegates, including Ivanovich. The indefatigable Martov shouted from his place: "I should like to know who is being granted an advisory voice. Who are these people, where do they come from, and so forth?" To which Lenin responded: "I really don't know, but the Congress

may rely on the unanimous opinion of the mandate commission.” It is quite likely that Martov already had some secret information about the specific nature of Ivanovich’s record – we shall touch upon it more fully – and that it was precisely for this reason that Lenin hastened to dispose of the ominous hint by referring to the unanimity of the mandate commission. In any event, Martov deemed it proper to refer to “these people” as nobodies: “Who are they, where do they come from, and so forth?” while Lenin, for his part, not only did not object to this characterisation but confirmed it. In 1907, Stalin was still utterly unknown, not only to the Party generally but even to the three hundred delegates of the Congress. The mandate commission’s resolution was adopted, with a considerable number of delegates not voting.

Most remarkable, however, is the fact that Koba did not even once take advantage of the consultative voice granted to him. The Congress lasted nearly three weeks, discussions were exceedingly extensive and ample. Yet Ivanovich’s name is not listed so much as once among the numerous speakers. His signature appears only on two short statements by Caucasian Bolsheviks about their local conflicts with the Mensheviks, and even then in third place. He left no other traces of his presence at the Congress. To appreciate the full significance of that, it is necessary to know the backstage mechanics of the Congress. Each of the factions and national organisations met separately during recesses between official sessions, worked out its own line of conduct and designated its own speakers. Thus, in the course of three weeks of debates, in which all the more noticeable members of the Party took part, the Bolshevik faction did not deem it fit to entrust a single speech to Ivanovich.

Toward the end of one of the last sessions of the Congress a young Petersburg delegate spoke. All had hastily left their seats and almost no one listened to him. The speaker was obliged to mount a chair in order to attract attention. But notwithstanding these extremely unfavourable circumstances, he managed to draw an ever-growing press of delegates around him and before long the assemblage quieted down. That speech made the novice a member of the Central Committee. Ivanovich, doomed to silence, noted the young newcomer’s success – Zinoviev was only twenty-five – probably without sympathy, but hardly without envy. Not a soul paid the slightest heed to the ambitious Caucasian with his unused consultative voice. The Bolshevik Gandurin, a rank-and-filer at the Congress, stated in his memoirs: “During the recesses we usually surrounded one or another of the important workers, overwhelming him with questions.” Gandurin mentioned among

the delegates Litvinov, Voroshilov, Tomsky³, and other comparatively obscure Bolsheviks of those days. But he did not mention Stalin even once. Yet he wrote his memoirs in 1931, when it was much harder to forget Stalin than to remember him.

Among the elected members of the new Central Committee, the Bolsheviks were Myeshkovsky, Rozhkov, Teodorovich and Nogin, with Lenin, Bogdanov, Krassin, Zinoviev, Rykov, Shantser, Sammer, Leitheisen, Taratuta and A. Smirnov as alternates. The most prominent leaders of the faction were elected alternates, because persons able to work in Russia were pushed to the forefront. But Ivanovich was neither among the members nor among the alternates. It would be incorrect to seek the reason for that in the tricks of the Mensheviks: as a matter of fact, each faction elected its own candidates. Certain of the Bolsheviks on the Central Committee, like Zinoviev, Rykov, Taratuta and A. Smirnov, were of the same generation as Ivanovich and even younger in actual age.

At the final session of the Bolshevik faction, after the closing of the Congress, a secret Bolshevik Centre was elected, the so-called 'BC', composed of fifteen members. Among them were the theoreticians and 'literaries' of the time and of the future, such as Lenin, Bogdanov, Pokrovsky, Rozhkov, Zinoviev, Kamenev, as well as the most prominent organisers, such as Krassin, Rykov, Dubrovinsky, Nogin, and others. Ivanovich was not a member of that collegium either. The significance of that is perfectly obvious. Stalin could not become a member of the Central Committee without being known to the entire party. Another obstacle – let us admit for the nonce – was that the Caucasian Mensheviks were particularly hostile to him. But had he any weight and influence inside his own faction, he could not have failed to become a member of the Bolshevik Centre, which badly needed an authoritative

3 Mikhail Pavlovich Tomsky (1880-1936) was a factory worker, trade union activist and Bolshevik who joined the RSDLP in 1904. Arrested for revolutionary activity among the workers, he escaped from Siberia and returned to St. Petersburg where he became president of the Union of Engravers and Chromolithographers. Arrested again in 1908 and then exiled to France, but returned to Russia in 1909 where he was again arrested for his political activities and sentenced to five years of hard labour. He participated in the October Revolution in Moscow. After the Revolution he held leading positions in Party and State. After Lenin's death he was a leading member of the Right Opposition together with Bukharin and Rykov. In August 1936 he was accused of terrorist connections during the First Moscow Trial of Zinoviev and Kamenev. To cheat Stalin's executioners, Tomsky shot himself.

representative of the Caucasus. Ivanovich himself could not have failed to dream of a place in the 'BC'. Yet no such place was found for him.

In view of all this, why did Koba come at all to London? He could not raise his arm as a voting delegate. He proved unnecessary as a speaker. He obviously played no role whatever at the closed sessions of the Bolshevik faction. It is inconceivable that he should have to come out of mere curiosity to listen and to look around. He must have had other tasks. Just what were they?

THE BOYCOTTISTS

The Congress came to an end on 19th May. As early as 1st June, Premier Stolypin challenged the Duma with his demand that it immediately expel fifty-five Social-Democratic deputies and sanction the arrest of sixteen of them. Without waiting for the Duma's authorisation, the police proceeded to make arrests on the night of 2nd June. On 3rd June the Duma was prorogued, and in the course of this governmental shake-up a new election law was promulgated. Mass arrests, carefully prearranged, took place simultaneously throughout the country, with railway workers among those taken into custody, in an effort to forestall a general strike. The attempted mutinies in the Black Sea Fleet and in a Kiev regiment ended in failure. The monarchy was triumphant. When Stolypin looked into his mirror, he saw there the image of St. George, Bearer of Victory.

The obvious disintegration of the revolution led to several new crises in the Party and in the Bolshevik faction itself, which overwhelmingly assumed the Boycottist position. This was almost an instinctive reaction against the government's violence, but at the same time it was an attempt to cover their own impotence with a radical gesture. While relaxing after the Congress in Finland, Lenin thought the matter over in all its aspects, and came out resolutely against the boycott. His situation in his own faction became rather difficult. It is not too easy to pass from revolutionary heydays to workaday dreariness. "With the exception of Lenin and Rozhkov," wrote Martov, "all the prominent representatives of the Bolshevik faction (Bogdanov, Kamenev, Lunacharsky, Volsky, and others) came out for the boycott." The quotation is partly interesting in that, while it includes among the "prominent representatives" not only Lunacharsky but even the long-forgotten Volsky, it does not mention Stalin. In 1924, when the official Moscow-historical journal reproduced Martov's testimony, it had not yet occurred to the editorial board to evince interest in how Stalin had voted.

Yet Koba was among the Boycottists. In addition to direct testimonies on that score, which, it is true, come from Mensheviks, there is a bit of indirect testimony which is the most convincing of all: not a single one of the present official historians refers with so much as a single word to Stalin's position on elections to the Third Duma. In a pamphlet entitled *Concerning the Boycott of the Third Duma*, which was published shortly after the Revolution, and in which Lenin defended participation in balloting, it was Kamenev who voiced the Boycottists' point of view. It has been all the easier for Koba to preserve his incognito, because it did not occur to anyone in 1907 to ask him to come out with an article. The old Bolshevik Piryenko recalls that the Boycottists "upbraided Comrade Lenin for his Menshevism." There is no reason to doubt that Koba, too, was not backward in his intimate circle with rather trenchant epithets in Georgian and Russian. As for Lenin, he demanded of his faction readiness and ability to face realities. "The boycott is a declaration of outright war against the old government, a direct attack against it. Barring a widespread revolutionary revival...there can be no talk of the boycott's success." Much later, in 1920, Lenin wrote: "It was an error...for the Bolsheviks to have boycotted the Duma in 1906." It was an error, because after the December defeat it was impossible to expect a revolutionary attack in the near future; it was therefore senseless to spurn the Duma's tribune for mobilising the revolutionary ranks.

At the Party Conference which met at Finland in July [1907], all of the nine Bolshevik delegates, with the exception of Lenin, were in favour of the boycott. Ivanovich did not take part in that conference. The Boycottists had Bogdanov as their spokesman. The affirmative resolution on the question of whether to participate in the balloting passed with the united votes of "the Mensheviks, the Bundists, the Poles, one of the Letts, and one Bolshevik," wrote Dan. That "one Bolshevik" was Lenin. "In a small summer house Ilyich ardently defended his position," Krupskaya recalled, "Krassin pedalled up on his bicycle, stopped at a window for a while and listened closely to Ilyich. Then, without coming into the house, he went away, thoughtful..." Krassin went away from that window for more than ten years. He returned to the Party only after the October Revolution, and even then not at once. Gradually, under the influence of new lessons, the Bolsheviks came over to Lenin's position, although, as we shall see, not all of them. Quietly, Koba too repudiated Boycottism. His Caucasian articles and speeches in favour of the boycott have been magnanimously relegated to oblivion.

The Third Duma began its inglorious activity on 1st November. The big bourgeoisie and the landed gentry had been previously assured of a majority in it. Then began the gloomiest period in the life of “renovated Russia”. Labour organisations were dispersed, the revolutionary press was stifled, courts martial came in the wake of the punitive expeditions. But more frightful than the outward blows was the internal reaction. Desertion assumed a mass character. Intellectuals abandoned politics for science, art, religion, and erotic mysticism. The finishing touch on this picture was the epidemic of suicides. The transvaluation of values was first of all directed against the revolutionary parties and their leaders. The sharp change of mood found a bright reflection in the archives of the Police Department, where suspicious letters were censored, thus preserving the most interesting ones for history.

At Geneva Lenin received a letter from Petersburg, which read: “It is quiet both above and below, but the silence below is tainted. Under its cover such anger looms as will make men howl, for howl they must. But so far we, too, suffer the brunt of that anger...” A certain Zakharov wrote to his friend in Odessa:

We have absolutely lost faith in those whom we had so highly regarded... Think of it, at the end of 1905 Trotsky said in all seriousness that the political revolution had culminated in a grand success, and that it would be followed immediately by the beginning of the social revolution!... And what about the wonderful tactic of armed insurrection, which the Bolsheviks had bruted about? Truly, I have lost all faith in our leaders and in all of the so-called revolutionary intellectuals.

Neither did the liberal and radical press spare the vanquished their sarcasm.

News dispatches from local organisations to the Party’s central organ, which was again transferred abroad, were no less eloquent in recording the revolution’s disintegration. Even in the hard-labour prisons, the heroes and heroines of uprisings and of terrorist acts turned their backs in enmity upon their own yesterdays and used such words as ‘party’, ‘comrade’, ‘socialism’, in no other than the ironic sense.

Desertions took place not only among the intellectuals, not only among those who were here today and gone tomorrow and to whom the movement was but a halfway house, but even among the advanced workers, who had been part and parcel of the Party for years. Religiousness, on the one hand, and drunkenness, card playing and the like, on the other, waxed stronger than ever in the backward strata of the working class. In the upper stratum the tone was beginning to be set by individualists who strove to raise their

personal, cultural, and economic status above that of the mass of their fellow workers. The Mensheviks found their support in that thin layer of the labour aristocracy which was made up for the most part of metal workers and printers. Workers of the middle stratum, whom the revolution had accustomed to reading newspapers, displayed greater stability. But, having entered political life under the leadership of intellectuals and being suddenly left on their own, they became petrified and marked time.

Not everybody deserted. But the revolutionists who did not wish to surrender ran against insurmountable difficulties. An illegal organisation needs sympathetic surroundings and constant renewal of reserves. In an atmosphere of decadence, it was not only hard but virtually impossible to abide by the indispensable rules of conspiracy and maintain revolutionary contacts. "Underground work proceeded lackadaisically. During 1909 there were raids on Party print-shops at Rostov-on-the-Don, Moscow, Tyumen, Petersburg..." and elsewhere; "supplies of proclamations in Petersburg, Byelostok, Moscow; the archives of the Central Committee in Petersburg. In all these arrests the Party was losing good workers." This is recounted almost in a tone of distress by the retired Gendarme General Spiridovich.

"We have no people at all," Krupskaya wrote in invisible ink to Odessa, at the beginning of 1909. "All are scattered in prisons and places of exile." The gendarmes made visible the invisible text of the letter and – increased the population of the prisons. The scantiness of revolutionary ranks led unavoidably to the lowering of the Committee's standards. Insufficiency of choice made it possible for secret agents to mount the steps of the underground hierarchy. With a snap of his finger the provocateur doomed to arrest any revolutionist who blocked his progress. Attempts to purge the organisation of dubious elements immediately led to mass arrests. An atmosphere of suspicion and mutual distrust stymied all initiative. After a number of well-calculated arrests, the provocateur Kukushkin, at the beginning of 1910 became head of the Moscow district organisation. "The ideal of the Okhrana is being realised," wrote an active participant of the movement. "Secret agents are at the head of all the Moscow organisations." The situation in Petersburg was not much better. "The leadership seemed to have been routed, there was no way of restoring it, provocation gnawed away at our vitals, organisations fell apart..." In 1909 Russia still had five or six active organisations; but even they soon sank into desuetude. Membership in the Moscow district organisation, which was as high as 500 toward the end of 1908, dropped to 250 in the middle

of the following year and half a year later to 150. In 1910 the organisation ceased to exist.

The former Duma deputy Samoilov tells how at the beginning of 1910 the Ivanovo-Voznesensk organisation, which until recently had been rather influential and active, fell apart. Right after it the trade unions faded away. Their places were taken by gangs of the Black Hundreds. The pre-revolutionary regime was being gradually restored in the textile factories, which meant the lowering of wages, severe penalties, dismissals, and the like. "The workers kept on the job bore it in silence." Yet there could be no return to the old order. Abroad, Lenin pointed to letters from workers, who, telling of the renewed oppression and persecution by the manufacturers, would add, "Wait, 1905 will come again!"

TERRORISM

Terror from above was supplemented by terror from below. The fight of the routed insurrectionists continued convulsively for a long time in the form of scattered local explosions, guerrilla raids, group and individual terrorist acts. The course of the revolution was characterised with remarkable clarity by statistics of the terror. 233 persons were assassinated in 1905; 768 in 1906; 1,231 in 1907. The number of wounded showed a somewhat different ratio, since the terrorists were learning to be better shots. The terrorist wave reached its crest in 1907. "There were days," wrote a liberal observer, "when several big acts of terror were accompanied by as many as scores of minor attempts and assassinations of lower rank officialdom... Bomb laboratories were established in all cities, the bombs destroying some of their careless makers..." and the like. Krassin's alchemy became strongly democratised.

On the whole, the three-year period from 1905 through 1907 is particularly notable for both terrorist acts and strikes. But what stands out is the divergence between their statistical records: while the number of strikers fell off rapidly from year to year, the number of terrorist acts mounted with equal rapidity. Clearly, individual terrorism increased as the mass movement declined. Yet terrorism could not grow stronger indefinitely. The impetus unleashed by the revolution was bound to spend itself in terrorism as it had spent itself in other spheres. Indeed, while there were 1,231 assassinations in 1907, they dropped to 400 in 1908 and to about a hundred in 1909. The growing percentage of the merely wounded indicated, moreover, that now the shooting was being done by untrained amateurs, mostly by callow youngsters.

In the Caucasus, with its romantic traditions of highway robbery and gory feuds still very much alive, guerrilla warfare found any number of fearless practitioners. More than a thousand terrorist acts of all kinds were perpetrated in Transcaucasia alone during 1905-07, the years of the First Revolution. Fighting detachments found also a great spread of activity in the Urals, under the leadership of the Bolsheviks, and in Poland under the banner of the PPS (Polish Socialist Party). On 2nd August 1906, scores of policemen and soldiers were assassinated on the streets of Warsaw and other Polish cities. According to the explanation of the leaders, the purpose of these attacks was "to bolster the revolutionary mood of the proletariat." The leader of these leaders was Joseph Pilsudski, the future 'liberator' of Poland, and its oppressor. Commenting on the Warsaw events, Lenin wrote: "We advise the numerous fighting groups of our Party to terminate their inactivity and to initiate some guerrilla operations..." "And these appeals of the Bolshevik leaders," commented General Spiridovich, "were not without issue, despite the countermanding action of the [Menshevik] Central Committee."

Of great moment in the sanguine encounters of the terrorists with the police was the question of money, the sinews of any war, including civil war. Prior to the Constitutional Manifesto of 1905 the revolutionary movement was financed principally by the liberal bourgeoisie and by the radical intellectuals. That was true also in the case of the Bolsheviks, whom the liberal opposition then regarded as merely somewhat bolder revolutionary democrats. But when the bourgeoisie shifted its hopes to the future Duma, it began to regard the revolutionists as an obstacle in the way of coming to terms with the monarchy. That change of front struck a powerful blow at the finances of the revolution. Lockouts and unemployment stopped the intake of money from the workers. In the meantime, the revolutionary organisations had developed large political machines with their own print-shops, publishing houses, staffs of agitators, and, finally, fighting detachments in constant need of armaments. Under the circumstances, there was no way to continue financing the revolution except by securing the wherewithal by force. The initiative, as almost always, came from below. The first expropriations went off rather peacefully, quite often with a tacit understanding between the 'expropriators' and the employees of the expropriated institutions. There was the story of the clerks in the Nadezhda Insurance Company reassuring the faltering expropriators with the words, "Don't worry, comrades!" But this idyllic period did not last long. Following the bourgeoisie, the intellectuals, including the selfsame bank clerks, drifted away from the revolution. Police measures became more stringent. Casualties

increased on both sides. Deprived of support and sympathy, the 'fighting organisations' quickly went up in smoke or just as quickly disintegrated.

A typical picture of how even the most disciplined detachments degenerated is given in his memoirs by the already-cited Samoilov, the former Duma deputy of the Ivanovo-Voznesensk textile workers. The detachment, acting originally "under the directives of the Party Centre", began to "misbehave" during the second half of 1906. When it offered the Party only a part of the money it had stolen at a factory (having killed the cashier during the act), the Party Committee refused it flatly and reprimanded the fighters. But it was already too late; they were disintegrating rapidly and soon descended to "bandit attacks of the most ordinary criminal type." Always having large sums of money, the fighters began to preoccupy themselves with carousing, in the course of which they often fell into the hands of the police. Thus, little by little, the entire fighting detachment came to an ignominious end. "We must, however, admit," writes Samoilov, "that in its ranks were not a few... genuinely devoted comrades who were loyal to the cause of the revolution and some with hearts as pure as crystal..."

The original purpose of the fighting organisations was to assume leadership of the rebellious masses, teaching them how to use arms and how to deliver the most telling blows at the enemy. The main, if not the only, theoretician in that field of endeavour was Lenin. After the December insurrection was crushed, the new problem was what to do about the fighting organisations. Lenin came to the Stockholm Congress with the draft of a resolution, which, while giving due credit to guerrilla activities as the inevitable continuation of the December insurrection and as part of the preparation for the impending major offensive against tsarism, allowed the so-called expropriations of financial means "under the control of the Party." But the Bolsheviks withdrew this resolution of theirs under the pressure of disagreement in their own midst. By a majority of sixty-four votes to four, with twenty not voting, the Menshevik resolution was passed, which categorically forbade "expropriations" of private persons and institutions, while tolerating the seizure of state finances only in the event that organs of revolutionary government were set up in a given locality; that is, only in direct connection with a popular uprising. The twenty-four delegates who either abstained from voting or voted against this resolution made up the Leninist irreconcilable half of the Bolshevik faction.

In the extensive printed report about the Stockholm Congress, Lenin avoided mention of the resolution concerning armed acts altogether, on the grounds that he was not present during the discussion. "Besides, it is, of

course, not a question of principle.” It is hardly possible that Lenin’s absence was accidental: he simply did not want to have his hands tied. Similarly, a year later at the London Congress, Lenin, who as chairman was obliged to be present during the discussion on the question of expropriations, did not vote, in spite of violent protests from the Menshevik benches. The London resolution categorically forbade expropriations and ordered dissolution of the Party’s ‘fighting organisations’.

It was not, of course, a matter of abstract morality. All classes and all parties approached the problem of assassination not from the point of view of the Biblical commandment but from the vantage point of the historical interests represented. When the Pope and his cardinals blessed the arms of Franco none of the conservative statesmen suggested that they be imprisoned for inciting murders. Official moralists come out against violence when the violence in question is revolutionary. On the contrary, whoever really fights against class oppression, must perforce acknowledge revolution. Whoever acknowledges revolution, acknowledges civil war. Finally, “guerrilla warfare is an inescapable form of struggle... whenever more or less extensive intervals occur between major engagements in a civil war.” From the point of view of the general principles of the class struggle, all of that was quite irrefutable. Disagreements came with the evaluation of concrete historical circumstances. When two major battles of the civil war are separated from each other by two or three months, that interval will inevitably be filled in with guerrilla blows against the enemy. But when the “intermission” is stretched out over years, guerrilla war ceases to be a preparation for a new battle and becomes instead a mere convulsion after defeat. It is, of course, not easy to determine the moment of the break.

Questions of Boycottism and of guerrilla activities were closely interrelated. It is permissible to boycott representative assemblies only in the event that the mass movement is sufficiently strong either to overthrow them or to ignore them. But when the masses are in retreat, the tactic of the boycott loses its revolutionary meaning. Lenin understood that and explained it better than others. As early as 1906 he repudiated the boycott of the Duma. After the coup of 3rd June, 1907, he led a resolute fight against the Boycottists precisely because the high-tide had been succeeded by the ebb-tide. It was self-evident that guerrilla activities had become sheer anarchism when it was necessary to utilise even the arena of tsarist ‘Parliamentarism’ in order to prepare the ground for the mobilisation of the masses. At the crest of the civil war guerrilla activities augmented and stimulated the mass movement; in the

period of reaction they attempted to replace it, but, as a matter of fact, merely embarrassed the Party and speeded its disintegration. Olminsky, one of the more noticeable of Lenin's companions-in-arms, shed critical light on that period from the perspective of Soviet times. He wrote:

Not a few of the fine youth perished on the gibbet; others degenerated; still others were disappointed in the revolution. At the same time people at large began to confound revolutionists with ordinary bandits. Later, when the revival of the revolutionary labour movement began, that revival was slowest in those cities where 'exes'⁴ had been most numerous. (As an example, I might name Baku and Saratov.)

Let us keep in mind the reference to Baku.

KOBA'S 'EXCESSES'

The sum total of Koba's revolutionary activities during the years of the First Revolution seems to be so inconsiderable that willy-nilly it gives rise to the question: is it possible that this was all? In the vortex of events, which passed him by, Koba could not have failed to seek such means of action as would have enabled him to demonstrate his worth. Koba's participation in terrorist acts and in expropriations cannot be doubted. And yet, it is hard to determine the nature of that participation.

"The chief inspirer and general supervisor...of fighting activity," writes Spiridovich, "was Lenin himself, aided by trusted people close to him." Who were they? The former Bolshevik Alexinsky, who with the outbreak of the war became a specialist in exposing the Bolsheviks, stated in the foreign press that inside the Central Committee was a "small committee, whose existence was hidden not only from the eyes of the tsarist police but also from the members of the Party. That small committee, consisting of Lenin, Krassin, and a third person...was particularly concerned with the party's finances." By concern with finances Alexinsky means leadership in expropriations. The unnamed "third person" was the naturalist, physician, economist and philosopher Bogdanov, whom we already know. Alexinsky had no reason to be reticent about Stalin's participation in fighting operations. He says nothing about it because he knows nothing about it. Yet during these years Alexinsky was not only very intimate with the Bolshevik Centre but was also in touch with Stalin. As a general rule, that muckraker told more than he knew.

⁴ 'Expropriations' on an individual basis.

The notes to Lenin's works state about Krassin that he "guided the fighting technical bureau of the Central Committee." Krupskaya in her turn wrote:

The Party members now know about the important work which Krassin carried on at the time of the Revolution of 1905 in arming the fighters, in supervising the manufacture of explosives, and so forth. All of it was done in secrecy without any fanfare, yet a lot of energy was invested in that cause. Vladimir Ilyich knew about that work of Krassin's more than anyone else, and from then on always prized him.

Voitinsky, who at the time of the First Revolution was a prominent Bolshevik, wrote: "I have a distinct impression that Nikitich [Krassin] was the only man in the Bolshevik organisation whom Lenin regarded with genuine respect and with complete confidence." True, Krassin concentrated his efforts principally in Petersburg. But had Koba guided in the Caucasus operations of a similar type, Krassin, Lenin and Krupskaya could not have failed to know about it. Yet Krupskaya, who, in order to prove her loyalty, tried to mention Stalin as often as possible, did not say anything at all about his role in the Party's fighting activities.

On 3rd July, 1938, the Moscow *Pravda* quite unexpectedly declared, "the unprecedented powerful sweep of the revolutionary movement in the Caucasus" in 1905 was connected with the "leadership of the most militant organisations of our Party, created there for the first time directly by Comrade Stalin." But that single official assertion that Stalin had something to do with "the most militant organisations" refers to the beginning of 1905, before the question of expropriation arose; it gives no information about Koba's actual work; finally, it is doubtful from the very nature of things, since there was no Bolshevik organisation at Tiflis until the latter half of 1905.

Let us see what Iremashvili has to say about it. Speaking with indignation about terrorist acts, 'exes', and the like, he declares: "Koba was the initiator of the crimes perpetrated by the Bolsheviks in Georgia, which played into the hands of the reaction." After his wife's death, when Koba lost "the last remnant of human feelings", he became "a passionate defender and organiser...of the vicious systematic murder of princes, priests and bourgeois." We already had occasion to be convinced that Iremashvili's testimony becomes less reliable the further it strays from personal experiences to politics, and from childhood and youth to the more mature years. Political ties between these friends of youthful days terminated at the beginning of the First Revolution. It was only by accident that on 17th October, on the day the Constitutional Manifesto was published, Iremashvili saw in the streets of Tiflis – only saw, but did not

hear – how Koba, hanging onto an iron street lamp (on that day everybody climbed up street lamps), was haranguing a crowd. Being a Menshevik, Iremashvili could find out about Koba's terroristic activity only second-hand or third-hand. This testimony is therefore obviously unreliable. Iremashvili cites two examples: the famous Tiflis expropriation of 1907, which we shall have occasion to discuss later, and the killing of the popular Georgian writer, Prince Chavchavadze. With reference to the expropriation, which he placed erroneously in 1905, Iremashvili remarks: "Koba was able to deceive the police on that occasion, too; it did not even have sufficient evidence to suspect his initiative in that cruel attempt. But that time the Social-Democratic Party of Georgia expelled Koba officially..." Not the slightest proof of Stalin's having anything to do with the assassination of Prince Chavchavadze is adduced by Iremashvili, who limits himself to the meaningless observation: "Indirectly Koba likewise was in favour of murder. He was the instigator of all the crimes, that agitator seething with hatred." Iremashvili's recollections in this part are interesting only insofar as they shed light on Koba's reputation among his political opponents.

The well-informed author of an article in a German newspaper (*Volksstme*, Mannheim, 2nd September, 1932), most likely a Georgian Menshevik, emphasises that both friends and enemies considerably exaggerated Koba's terroristic adventures. "It is true that Stalin possessed exceptional ability and inclination for organising attacks of that kind... However, in such affairs he usually performed the work of organiser, inspirer, supervisor, but not of direct participant."

Certain biographers are therefore quite incorrect in representing him as "running around with bombs and revolvers and carrying out the wildest sort of adventures." The story of Koba's alleged participation in the assassination of the Tiflis military dictator, General Gryaznov on 17th January, 1906, appears to be that sort of invention:

That affair was executed in accordance with the decision of the Social-Democratic Party of Georgia (Mensheviks) through Party terrorists especially designated for that purpose. Stalin, like all other Bolsheviks, had no influence in Georgia and did not take part either directly or indirectly in that affair.

This testimony of the anonymous author deserves consideration. Yet in its positive aspect, it is virtually meaningless: acknowledging in Stalin "exceptional aptitude and inclination" for expropriations and assassinations, it does not support that characterisation with any data.

The old Georgian Bolshevik terrorist Kote Tsintsadze⁵, a conscientious and reliable witness, states that Stalin, dissatisfied with the backwardness of the Mensheviks in the matter of the attempt to assassinate General Gryaznov, invited Kote to help him organise for that purpose a fighting detachment of their own. However, the Mensheviks soon managed to carry out this task themselves. The same Kote recollects that in 1906 it occurred to him alone to organise a fighting detachment of Bolsheviks for the purpose of robbing state treasuries. "Our prominent comrades, especially Koba-Stalin, approved of my initiative." This testimony is doubly interesting: in the first place, it shows that Tsintsadze regarded Koba as a "prominent comrade" – that is, as a local leader; in the second place, it leaves us free to draw the conclusion that in these matters Koba did not go beyond approving the initiative of others.

Against the direct resistance of the Menshevik Central Committee, but with the active cooperation of Lenin, the fighting groups of the Party managed to convoke a conference of their own at Tammerfors in November, 1906. Among the leading participants of that conference were revolutionists who subsequently played either an important or noticeable role in the Party, such as, Krassin, Yaroslavsky, Zemlyachka, Lalayants, Trilisser, and others. Stalin is not among them, although at the time he was at liberty in Tiflis.

5 In 1931 Kote Tsintsadze died in exile, imposed by the "prominent comrade Koba-Stalin" - LT. *It took altogether extraordinary conditions like tsarism, illegality, prison, and deportation, many years of struggle against the Mensheviks, and especially the experience of three revolutions to produce fighters like Kote Tsintsadze. His life was entirely bound up with the history of the revolutionary movement for more than a quarter of a century. He participated in all the stages of the proletarian uprising, beginning with the first propaganda circles up to the barricades and the seizure of power. He carried out the onerous work of illegal organisation, and any time revolutionists were caught in the net of the police he devoted himself to freeing them. Later he was head of the special Cheka commission in Caucasia, the very centre of power during the most heroic period of the proletarian dictatorship. When the reaction against October had changed the composition and the character of the party apparatus and its policies, Kote Tsintsadze was one of the first to begin a struggle against these new tendencies hostile to the spirit of Bolshevism... The Stalin faction crushed the Lenin faction in the Caucasus. This was the initial victory for reaction in the party and opened up the second chapter of the revolution. Tsintsadze, suffering from tuberculosis, bearing the weight of decades of revolutionary work, persecuted by the apparatus at every step, did not desert his post of struggle for a moment. In 1928 he was deported to Bakhchysarai, where the wind and dust did their disastrous work on the remnants of his lungs. Later he was transferred to Alushta, where the chill and rainy winter completed the destruction. With the death of Tsintsadze, one of the most attractive figures of early Bolshevism has disappeared...*

It might be supposed that he preferred not to risk putting in an appearance at the conference because of conspiratorial considerations. Yet Krassin, who was then at the head of the Party's fighting activities and who because of his renown was subject to greater risk than anyone else, played a leading role at that conference.

On 18th March, 1918 – that is, a few months after the founding of the Soviet regime – the Menshevik leader, Julius Martov, wrote in his Moscow newspaper: “That the Caucasian Bolsheviks attached themselves to all sorts of daring enterprises of an expropriatory kind should be well known to the same citizen Stalin, who in his time was expelled from his Party organisation for having something to do with expropriation.” Stalin deemed it necessary to have Martov brought before the judgment of the revolutionary tribunal:

“Never in my life,” he told the court and the crowded courtroom, “was I placed on trial before my Party organisation or expelled. This is a vicious libel.” But Stalin said nothing about expropriations. “With accusations like Martov's, one has a right to come out only with documents in hand. But it is dishonourable to throw mud on the basis of rumours, without having any facts.” Wherein is the political source of Stalin's indignation? It was no secret that the Bolsheviks as a whole were involved in expropriations: Lenin openly defended expropriation in the press. On the other hand, expulsion from a Menshevik organisation could scarcely be regarded by a Bolshevik as a shameful circumstance, especially ten years later. Stalin, therefore, could not have had any impelling motives for denying Martov's “accusations”, had they corresponded to actuality. Besides, to challenge a clever and resourceful opponent to come into court under these conditions meant to risk giving him the chance to try him. Does it mean, then, that Martov's accusations were false? Generally speaking, Martov, carried away by his journalistic temperament and his detestation of the Bolsheviks, had more than once overstepped the pale within which the indubitable nobility of his nature should have confined him. However, in this instance the point at issue was the trial. Martov remained quite categorical in his affirmation. He demanded that certain witnesses be subpoenaed:

First of all, the well-known Georgian Social-Democratic public figure, Isidor Ramishvili, who was the chairman of the revolutionary court which determined Stalin's participation in expropriating the steamship *Nicholas I* in Baku; Noah Jordania; the Bolshevik Shaumyan, and other members of the Transcaucasian district committee of 1907-08. In the second place, a group of witnesses headed by Gukovsky, the present Commissar of Finance, under whose chairmanship was

tried the case of the attempted assassination of the worker Zharinov, who, before the party organisation, had exposed the Baku committee and its leader, Stalin, as being connected with an expropriation.

In his reply, Stalin said nothing either about the expropriation of the steamship or about the attempt to assassinate Zharinov, at the same time insisting: "I was never tried; if Martov says so, he is a vicious libeller."

In the strictly legal sense of the word, it was impossible to expel 'expropriators', since they had themselves prudently resigned from the Party beforehand. But it was possible to pose the question of whether to accept them back in the organisation. Direct expulsion could be meted out only to those instigators who remained in the ranks of the Party. But there were apparently no direct incriminations of Koba. It is therefore possible that to a certain extent Martov was right when he affirmed that Koba had been expelled: 'in principle' it was so. But Stalin was also right: individually he had never been tried. It was not easy for the tribunal to make head or tail of this, especially in the absence of witnesses. Stalin objected to their being subpoenaed, pleading the difficulty and the unreliability of communications with the Caucasus in those crucial days. The revolutionary tribunal did not delve into the essentials of the case, declaring that libel was not under its jurisdiction, but sentenced Martov to "social censure" for insulting the Soviet government ("the government of Lenin and Trotsky", as the report of the trial in the Menshevik publication proclaimed it ironically). It is impossible not to pause with apprehension at the mention of the attempt on the life of the worker Zharinov for his protest against expropriations. Although we know nothing at all about that episode, it throws off an ominous reflection into the future.

In 1925 the Menshevik Dan wrote that expropriators like Ordzhonikidze⁶ and Stalin in the Caucasus provided the Bolshevik faction with the wherewithal; but this is merely a repetition of what Martov had said, and undoubtedly on the basis of the same sources. No one informs us of anything concrete. Yet there was no lack of attempts to raise the curtain over that romantic period in Koba's life. With the ingratiating legerity characteristic of him, Emil Ludwig asked Stalin during their conversation in the Kremlin to tell him "anything" about the adventures of his youth, such as, for example, the robbing of a

6 Grigol Ordzhonikidze (generally known as Sergo Ordzhonikidze, 1886-1937), a Georgian Bolshevik, was a close friend and associate of Stalin who led the invasion of Georgia in 1921. A faithful lieutenant of Stalin, by late 1936 he had fallen into disfavour and was either killed or forced to commit suicide on Stalin's orders.

bank. In reply, Stalin gave his inquiring interlocutor a pamphlet biography in which presumably “everything” was told; but there was not a word in it about robberies.

Stalin himself has never, anywhere, said anything at all, not so much as a word, about his fighting adventures. It is hard to say why. He was never distinguished by autobiographical modesty. What he deems inconvenient to tell, others do by his orders. Beginning with his dizzying rise, he might have been motivated by consideration of governmental “prestige”. But in the first years after the October Revolution such considerations were quite foreign to him. The former fighters contributed nothing about it in print during that period when Stalin was not yet the inspirer and the controller of historical reminiscences. His reputation as organiser of fighting activities does not find support in any other documents: neither in police records nor in the depositions of traitors and turncoats. True, Stalin has a firm grip on the police records. But if the gendarme archives contained in them any concrete data about Djughashvili as an expropriator, the punishments to which he had been subjected would have been immeasurably more stringent than they were.

Of all the hypotheses, only one has some verisimilitude. “Stalin does not refer and does not allow others to refer to terroristic acts which in one way or another are connected with his name,” writes Souvarine, “otherwise, it would inevitably have been apparent that others took part in these acts while he merely supervised them from afar.” At the same time, it is quite possible – and this is consonant with Koba’s character – that with the aid of understatements and emphases, wherever it was necessary, he circumspectly ascribed to himself those achievements which as a matter of fact he had no right to claim as his own. It was impossible to check up on him under the conditions of underground conspiracy. Hence, the absence of his further interest in disclosures of details. On the other hand, the actual participants in expropriations and persons close to him do not mention Koba in their reminiscences, only because they have nothing to say. Others did the fighting; Stalin supervised them from afar.

Concerning the London Congress Ivanovich wrote the following in his illegal Baku newspaper:

Of the Menshevik resolutions, only the resolution on guerrilla activities was passed, and that only accidentally: the Bolsheviks did not take up the challenge on that occasion, or rather, they did not wish to carry the fight to the bitter end, simply from the desire to give the Mensheviks at least one chance to be glad about something.

The explanation is astounding, because of its absurdity; “to give the Mensheviks a chance to be glad” – such philanthropic solicitude did not figure among Lenin’s political habits. As a matter of fact, the Bolsheviks “did not take up the challenge” only because on that question they had against them not only the Mensheviks, the Bundists and the Lefts, but also their closest allies, the Poles. Moreover, there were very sharp disagreements among the Bolsheviks themselves on the question of expropriations. Yet it would be erroneous to assume that the author of the article had simply talked too much without any ulterior motives. As a matter of fact, he found it necessary to derogate the restrictive decision of the Congress in the eyes of the fighters. That, of course, does not render the explanation itself any the less senseless. Yet such is Stalin’s way: whenever he wants to camouflage his purpose, he does not hesitate to resort to the crudest tricks. And not infrequently the very obvious crudity of his arguments does just that, freeing him from the necessity to seek more profound motives. A conscientious Party member would have merely shrugged his shoulders in chagrin after reading how Lenin had failed to take up the challenge in order to “give the Mensheviks something to be glad about”, but the simple fighter gladly agreed that the “quite accidental” restriction against expropriations need not be taken seriously. For the next fighting operation that was sufficient.

At 10.45 in the morning on 12th June [1907], in the Erivan Square of Tiflis, an exceptionally daring armed attack took place on a convoy of Cossacks that accompanied an equipage transporting a bag of money. The course of the operation was calculated with the precision of clockwork. Several bombs of exceptional strength were thrown in a set rotation. There were numerous revolver shots. The bag of money (341,000 roubles) vanished with the revolutionists. Not a single one of the fighters was caught by the police. Three members of the convoy were left dead on the spot; about fifty persons were wounded, most of them slightly. The chief organiser of the enterprise, protected by an officer’s uniform, sauntered about the square, observing all the movements of the convoy and of the fighters and at the same time, by means of clever remarks, keeping the public away from the scene of the pending attack, so that there would be no unnecessary victims. At a critical moment, when it might seem that all was lost, the pseudo-officer took hold of the bag of money with amazing self-possession and temporarily hid it in a couch belonging to the director of the observatory, the same one in which the youthful Koba had at one time worked as a bookkeeper. This leader was the Armenian fighter Petrosyan, who bore the alias Kamo.

Having come to Tiflis at the end of the preceding century, he fell into the hands of propagandists, among them Koba. Knowing almost no Russian, Petrosyan once asked Koba again: "Kamo [instead of *komu*, meaning: to whom] shall I take this?" Koba began to laugh at him: "Hey, you – Kamo, Kamo!" From that indelicate jest was born a revolutionary alias which became historical. So Kamo's widow, Medvedeva, tells us. She says nothing more about the relations of these two people. But she does tell about the touching attachment of Kamo for Lenin, whom he visited for the first time in 1906 in Finland. Krupskaya writes:

That fearless fighter of limitless audacity and unbreakable will-power was at the same time an exceedingly sensitive person, somewhat naive, and a tender comrade. He was passionately attached to Ilyich, Krassin and Bogdanov... He made friends with my mother, told her about his aunt and about his sisters. Kamo often went from Finland to Petersburg, always taking his weapons with him, and each time, with special care, mother would tie his revolvers on his back.

This is all the more remarkable because Krupskaya's mother was the widow of a tsarist official and did not renounce religion until she was quite old.

Shortly before the Tiflis expropriation, Kamo again visited the staff in Finland. Medvedeva writes: "Disguised as an officer, Kamo went to Finland, called on Lenin, and with arms and explosives returned to Tiflis." The journey took place either on the eve of the London Congress or immediately after it. The bombs came from Krassin's laboratory. A chemist by education, Leonid, when still a student, dreamed of bombs the size of a nut. The year 1905 gave him an opportunity to extend his research in that direction. True, he never succeeded in making one of those ideal dimensions, but the laboratories under his supervision produced bombs of great devastating force. This was not the first time that the fighters tested them on a square in Tiflis.

After the expropriation Kamo appeared in Berlin. There he was arrested upon the denunciation of the provocateur Zhitomirsky, who occupied a prominent place in the foreign organisation of the Bolsheviks. During the arrest the Prussian police seized his suitcase, in which presumably bombs and revolvers were discovered. According to the information of the Mensheviks (the investigation was conducted by the future diplomat Chicherin), Kamo's dynamite was intended for an attack on the banking house of Mendelssohn in Berlin. "That is not true," declares the well-informed Bolshevik Piatnitsky, "the dynamite was prepared for the Caucasus." Let us leave the destination of the dynamite an open question. Kamo remained in a German prison more

than a year and a half, continuously simulating violent insanity upon the advice of Krassin. As an incurable madman he was surrendered to Russia, and spent another year and a half in Metekhi Castle in Tiflis, subjected to the most trying tests. Declared finally hopelessly insane, Kamo was transferred to a psychiatric hospital, from which he escaped. "After that, illegally, hiding in the hold of a ship, he went to Paris to have a talk with Ilyich." That was in 1911. Kamo suffered frightfully because of the split that occurred between Lenin on the one hand, Bogdanov and Krassin on the other. "He was ardently attached to all three," Krupskaya repeats. Then follows an idyll: Kamo asked that almonds be brought to him, sat in the kitchen, which was also the dining room, ate almonds, as in his native Caucasus, and related the story of the frightful years, told how he simulated madness and how he had tamed a swallow while in prison.

Ilyich listened to him, and he was poignantly sorry for this recklessly audacious man, who was childish and naive and warm-hearted and ready for the greatest exploits, and who after his escape did not know what exactly to do.

Again arrested in Russia, Kamo was condemned to death. The manifesto issued in 1913, on the occasion of the three hundredth anniversary of the Romanov dynasty, brought an unexpected commutation to lifelong hard labour in place of the gibbet. Four years later the February Revolution brought him unexpected liberation. The October Revolution brought power to the Bolsheviks. But it threw Kamo out of his rut. He was like a mighty fish flung out on the shore. During the civil war I tried to interest him in guerrilla warfare in the enemy's rear, but work on the battlefield was apparently not to his liking. Besides, the frightful years he had endured had not passed without taking their toll. Kamo was stifling. He had not risked his and other people's lives scores of times, in order to become a prosperous official. Kote Tsintsadze, another legendary figure, died of tuberculosis in Stalin's exile. A similar end would undoubtedly have been Kamo's lot had he not been accidentally run over and killed by an automobile on one of the streets of Tiflis in the summer of 1922. Most likely a member of the new bureaucracy sat in that automobile. Kamo was wending his way through the darkness on a modest bicycle: he had not made a brilliant career. The very way he perished is symbolic.

Apropos of Kamo, Souvarine writes with unwarranted superciliousness about "the anachronistic mysticism" which is incompatible with the rationalism of the advanced countries. As a matter of fact, only a few traits of the revolutionary type, which is far from being no longer of any use in the

countries of 'Western civilisation', had found a limited expression in Kamo. Insufficiency of the revolutionary spirit in the labour movement of Europe has already brought about the triumph of Fascism in a number of countries in which "anachronistic mysticism" – this is where the word is apt! – finds its most disgusting expression. The struggle against the iron tyranny of Fascism will undoubtedly bring out among the revolutionary fighters of the West all those traits which in Kamo so astonish the sceptical Philistine. In his *Iron Heel*, Jack London foretold a whole epoch of American Kamos in the service of Socialism. The historical process is far more complex than a superficial rationalist would wish to believe it.

THE TIFLIS EXPROPRIATION

In Party circles, Koba's personal participation in the Tiflis expropriation has long ago been regarded as indubitable. The former Soviet diplomat Bessedovsky, who had heard various tales in second and third-rate bureaucratic salons, tells that Stalin, "in accordance with Lenin's instruction" did not take a direct part in the expropriations but that he himself had presumably "later bragged that it was he who had worked out the plan of action to its minutest detail and that the first bomb was thrown by him from the roof of the house of Prince Sumbatov." It is hard to tell whether Stalin had actually bragged about his participation or whether Bessedovsky is merely bragging about his information. In any event, during the Soviet epoch Stalin never confirmed or denied these rumours. Evidently he was not at all opposed to having the tragic romanticism of expropriations connected with his name in the consciousness of the youth. In 1932, I still had no doubt about Stalin's leading role in the armed attack on Erivan Square and referred to it incidentally in one of my articles. However, a closer study of the circumstances of those days compels me to revise my view of the traditional version.

In the chronology attached to the twelfth volume of Lenin's *Works*, under the date of 12th June, 1907, we read: "Tiflis expropriation (341,000 roubles), organised by Kamo-Petrosyan." And that is all. In an anthology dedicated to Krassin, in which much is said about the famous illegal print-shop in the Caucasus and about the Party's military activities, Stalin is not mentioned even once. An old militant, well informed about the activities of that period writes: "The plans for all the expropriations organised by the latter [Kamo], at the Kvirili and Dushet chancelleries and at Erivan Square, were made and considered by him jointly with Nikitich [Krassin]." Not a word about Stalin. Another former militant states: "Such expropriations as the one in Tiflis and

elsewhere were carried out under the direct leadership of Leonid Borisovich [Krassin].” Again nothing about Stalin. Nor is Stalin mentioned even once in Bibineishvili’s book, which recites all the minutiae concerning the preparations and performance of the expropriations. It undoubtedly follows from these omissions that Koba was not in direct contact with the members of the detachments, did not instruct them, consequently was not the organiser of the act in the real sense of the word, let alone a direct participant.

The Congress in London came to an end on 27th April⁷. The expropriation in Tiflis occurred on 12th June, a month and a half later. Stalin had too little time left between his return from abroad and the day of the expropriation to supervise the preparation of such a complicated enterprise. It is more likely that the fighters had been selected and had been drawn together in the course of several preceding reckless adventures. Possibly they marked time, pending the Congress’s decision. Some of them might have had doubts as to how Lenin would look upon expropriations. The fighters were waiting for the signal. Stalin might have brought them that signal. But did his participation go beyond that?

We know virtually nothing about the relations of Kamo and Koba. Kamo was inclined to attach himself to people. Yet no one speaks of his attachment to Koba. The reticence about their relations leads one to think that there was no attachment; that, rather, there were conflicts. The source of that might have been Koba’s attempts to boss Kamo or to ascribe to himself what he had no right to claim. Bibineishvili tells in his book on Kamo that “a mysterious stranger” appeared in Georgia after it had become Soviet, and under false pretences took possession of Kamo’s correspondence and of other valuable material. Who needed them and for what purpose? The documents, as well as the man who absconded with them, disappeared without a trace. Would it be too hasty to presume that through one of his agents Stalin had snatched from Kamo certain evidence which for one reason or another he found disturbing? That does not exclude, of course, the possibility of close collaboration between them in June, 1907. Neither is there anything to restrain us from conceding that the relationship between the two might have become worse after the Tiflis ‘affair’, in which Koba might have been Kamo’s adviser in working out the final details. Moreover, the adviser might have fostered abroad a highly coloured version of his own role. After all, it is easier to ascribe to one’s self the

7 The date is mistaken. The London Congress was held from 13th May to 1st June [30th April to 19th May], 1907. Therefore, there was less than a month from the time it ended and the Tiflis expropriation.

leadership of an expropriation than the leadership of the October Revolution. Yet Stalin will not hesitate to do even the latter.

Barbusse states that in 1907 Koba went to Berlin and remained there for a certain time “for conversations with Lenin.” What sort of conversations the author does not know. The text of Barbusse’s book consists mostly of errors. But the reference to the Berlin journey commands our attention all the more, because in the dialogue with Ludwig, Stalin also refers to his having been in Berlin in 1907. If Lenin journeyed especially for that meeting to the capital of Germany, then in any event it was not for the sake of theoretical “conversations”. The meeting might have taken place either directly before, or more likely, immediately after, the Congress, and almost undoubtedly was devoted to the impending expropriation, the means of forwarding the money, and the like. Why did these negotiations take place in Berlin and not in London? It is quite likely that Lenin might have deemed it careless to meet with Ivanovich in London, where he was in full sight of the other delegates and of numerous tsarist and other spies attracted by the Congress. It is also possible that a third person, who had nothing to do with the Congress, was supposed to participate in these conferences.

From Berlin Koba returned to Tiflis, but a short time after moved to Baku, from where, according to Barbusse, “he again went abroad for a meeting with Lenin.” One of the trusted Caucasians (Barbusse was in the Caucasus and while there wrote down a number of stories arranged for him by Beria) apparently said something about Stalin’s two meetings with Lenin abroad, in order to emphasise their close relationship. The chronology of these meetings is very significant: one precedes the expropriation and the other directly follows it. That sufficiently determines their purpose. The second meeting was in all likelihood concerned with the problem: to continue or to stop?

Iremashvili writes: “The friendship of Koba-Stalin with Lenin began with that.” The word “friendship” is patently a misnomer. The distance separating these two men precluded personal friendship. But it would seem that just about that time they did begin to know each other. If the assumption is warranted that Lenin had previously made arrangements with Koba about plans for the Tiflis expropriation, then it was quite natural for him to have been filled with admiration for the man he regarded as the organiser of that coup. It is likely that upon reading the telegram about the seizure of the booty without a single loss of life by the revolutionists, Lenin exclaimed to himself, or he might have told Krupskaya, “Splendid Georgian!” These are the words we shall find in one of his letters to Gorky. Enthusiasm for people who showed resoluteness,

or were simply successful in carrying out an operation assigned to them, was highly characteristic of Lenin to the very end of his life. Above all, he prized men of action. Basing his judgment of Koba on the latter's vaunted record in the Caucasian expropriations, Lenin apparently came to regard him as a person capable of seeing things through or of leading others unflinchingly. He made up his mind that the "splendid Georgian" would be useful.

The Tiflis booty brought no good. The entire sum consisted of five-hundred rouble notes. It was impossible to circulate currency of such large denomination. After the adverse publicity received by the unfortunate skirmish in Erivan Square, it was senseless to try to exchange these bills at any Russian bank. The operation was transferred abroad. But the provocateur Zhitomirsky, who warned the police about it betimes [in good time], participated in the organisation of the exchange operations. The future Commissar of Foreign Affairs Litvinov was arrested while attempting to exchange them in Paris. Olga Ravich, who subsequently became Zinoviev's wife, fell into the hands of the police at Stockholm. The future People's Commissar of Public Health Semashko was arrested at Geneva, apparently by accident. "I was one of those Bolsheviki," he wrote, "who at the time was on principle opposed to expropriations." The mishaps connected with the exchange considerably increased the number of such Bolsheviki. "The average Swiss," says Krupskaya, "was scared to death. All they talked about was the Russian expropriators. They talked about it with horror at the boarding house where Ilyich and I took our meals." It is noteworthy that Olga Ravich, as well as Semashko, disappeared during the recent Soviet 'purges'.

The Tiflis expropriation could in no way be regarded as a guerrilla clash between two battles in a civil war. Lenin could not help but see that the insurrection had been shoved ahead into the hazy future. As far as he was concerned, the problem consisted this time only of a simple attempt to assure financial means to the Party at the expense of the enemy, for the impending period of uncertainty. Lenin could not resist the temptation, took advantage of a favourable opportunity, of a happy "exception". In that sense, one must say outright that the idea of the Tiflis expropriation contained in it a goodly element of adventurism, which, as a rule, was foreign to Lenin's politics. The case with Stalin was different. Broad historical considerations had little value in his eyes. The resolution of the London Congress was only an irksome scrap of paper, to be nullified by means of a crude trick. Success would justify the risk. Souvarine argues that it is not fair to shift responsibility from the leader of the faction to a secondary figure. There is no question here of shifting

responsibility. At the time, the majority of the Bolshevik faction was opposed to Lenin on the question of expropriations. The Bolsheviks, in direct contact with the fighting detachments, had extremely convincing observations of their own, which Lenin, again an emigrant, did not have. Without corrections from below, the leader of the greatest genius is bound to make crude errors. The fact remains that Stalin was not among those who understood the inadmissibility of guerrilla actions under conditions of revolutionary retreat. And that was no accident. To him the Party was first of all a machine. The machine required financial means in order to exist. The financial means could be obtained with the aid of another machine, independent of life and of the struggle of the masses. There Stalin was in his own element.

The consequences of this tragic adventure, which rounded out an entire phase of Party life, were rather serious. The fight over the Tiflis expropriation poisoned relations inside the Party and inside the Bolshevik faction itself for a long time to come. From then on, Lenin changed front and came out more resolutely than ever against the tactic of expropriations, which for a time became the heritage of the 'Left' Wing among the Bolsheviks. For the last time the Tiflis 'affair' was officially reviewed by the Party Central Committee in January, 1910, upon the insistence of the Mensheviks. The resolution sharply condemned expropriation as an inadmissible violation of Party discipline, while conceding that rendering harm to the labour movement was not the intention of the participants, who had been "guided solely by a faulty understanding of Party interests." No one was expelled. No one was mentioned by name. Koba was thus amnestied along with others, as one who had been guided by "a faulty understanding of Party interests."

In the meantime, the disintegration of revolutionary organisations proceeded apace. As early as October, 1907, the Menshevik 'literary' Potresov wrote to Axelrod: "We are undergoing complete disintegration and utter demoralisation... There is not only no organisation, but not even the elements for it. And this non-existence is even extolled as a principle." This extolling of disintegration as a principle soon became the task of most leaders of Menshevism, including Potresov himself. They declared the illegal Party liquidated once and for all, and the aim to restore it – a reactionary utopia. Martov insisted that it was precisely "scandalous incidents like the exchange of the Tiflis currency" which forced "the most devoted parties and the most active elements of the working class" to shun all contact with an illegal political machine. The Mensheviks, now known as the Liquidators, saw in the frightful development of provocation another convincing argument in favour of the

“necessity” to forsake the mephitic underground. Entrenching themselves in trade unions, educational clubs and insurance societies, they carried on their work as cultural propagandists, not as revolutionists. To safeguard their jobs in the legal organisations, the officials from among the workers began to resort to protective colouration. They avoided the strike struggle, so as not to compromise the scarcely tolerated trade unions. In practice, legality at any price meant outright repudiation of revolutionary methods.

The Liquidators were in the forefront during the most desolate years. “They suffered less from police persecution,” writes Olminsky. “They had many of the writers, a good part of the lecturers and on the whole most of the intellectuals. They were the cocks of the walk and they crowed about it.” The attempts of the Bolshevik faction, whose ranks were thinning every hour, to preserve its illegal machine were dashed at each turn against hostile circumstances. Bolshevism seemed definitely doomed. “All of present-day development,” wrote Martov, “renders the formation of any kind of durable party-sect a pathetic reactionary utopia.” In that fundamental prognosis Martov and, with him, Russian Menshevism, made a cruel mistake. The perspectives and the slogans of the Liquidators proved to be the reactionary utopia. There was no place for an open labour party in the Third of June regime. Even the party of the liberals was refused registration. “The Liquidators have shaken off the illegal party,” wrote Lenin, “but they have not carried out the obligation to found a legal one either.” Precisely because Bolshevism remained loyal to the tasks of the revolution in the period of its decline and degradation, it prepared its unprecedented blossoming in the years of the revolution’s new resurgence.

Meantime, at the opposite pole to the Liquidators, in the left wing of the Bolshevik faction, an extremist group formed, which stubbornly refused to recognise the altered situation and continued to defend the tactic of direct action. After the elections, the differences of opinion that arose on the question of boycotting the Duma led to the formation of the Recallist faction, which called for the recall of the Social-Democratic deputies from the Duma. The Recallists were undoubtedly the symmetrical supplement of the Liquidators. While the Mensheviks, always and everywhere, even under the irresistible pressure of revolution, deemed it necessary to participate in any ‘parliament’, even a purely fortuitous one patterned by the Tsar, the Recallists thought that by boycotting the parliament established in consequence of the defeat of the revolution, they would be able to evoke new mass pressure. Since electrical discharges are accompanied by thunderclaps, the ‘irreconcilables’ attempted to evoke electrical discharges by means of artificial thunderclaps.

The period of dynamite laboratories still exerted its powerful influence upon Krassin. That shrewd and sensible man joined for a time the sect of Recallists, in order to abandon the Revolution altogether for years to come. Bogdanov, another of Lenin's closest collaborators in the secret Bolshevik trinity, likewise moved to the Left. With the breakup of this secret triumvirate the old top leadership of Bolshevism fell apart. But Lenin did not budge. In the summer of 1907 the majority of the [Bolshevik] faction was for the boycott. By the spring of 1908 the Recallists were already a minority in Petersburg and Moscow. Lenin's preponderance was made obvious beyond doubt. Koba speedily took that into account. His unfortunate experience with the agrarian programme, when he had come out openly against Lenin, made him more circumspect. Noiselessly and unobtrusively, he reneged on his fellow boycotters. From then on his regular behaviour at each turn was to keep out of sight and keep quiet while changing his stand.

The continued splintering of the Party into petty groups, which waged ruthless battles in a vacuum, aroused in sundry factions a longing for reconciliation, for agreement, for unity at any price. It was precisely at that period that another aspect of 'Trotskyism' came to the forefront: not the theory of permanent revolution, but 'reconciliation' of the Party. That will have to be discussed, however briefly, so as to facilitate understanding of the subsequent conflict between Stalinism and Trotskyism. In 1904 – that is, from the moment differences of opinion arose as to the nature of the liberal bourgeoisie – I broke with the Minority of the Second Congress and during the ensuing thirteen years belonged to no faction. My position on the intra-party conflict came down to this: as long as the revolutionary intellectuals were dominant among the Bolsheviks as well as among the Mensheviks and as long as both factions did not venture beyond the bourgeois democratic revolution, there was no justification for a split between them; in the new revolution, under the pressure of the labouring masses, both factions would in any case be compelled to assume an identical revolutionary position, as they did in 1905. Certain critics of Bolshevism to this day regard my old conciliationism as the voice of wisdom. Yet its profound erroneousness had been long ago demonstrated both in theory and practice. A simple conciliation of factions is possible only along some sort of 'middle' line. But where is the guarantee that this artificially drawn diagonal line will coincide with the needs of objective development? The task of scientific politics is to deduce a programme and a tactic from an analysis of the struggle of classes, not from the ever-shifting parallelogram of such secondary and transitory forces as political factions.

True, the position of the reaction was such that it cramped the political activity of the entire Party within extremely narrow limits. At the time, it might have seemed that the differences of opinion were unimportant and artificially inflated by the *émigré* leaders. Yet it was precisely during the period of reaction that the revolutionary party was unable to train its cadres without a major perspective. The preparation for tomorrow was a most important element in the policy of today. The policy of conciliation thrived on the hope that the course of events itself would prompt the necessary tactic. But that fatalistic optimism meant in practice not only repudiation of factional struggle but of the very idea of a party, because, if 'the course of events' is capable of directly dictating to the masses the correct policy, what is the use of any special unification of the proletarian vanguard, the working out of a programme, the choice of leaders, the training in a spirit of discipline?

Later, in 1911, Lenin observed that [the struggle against] conciliationism was indissolubly connected with the very essence of the Party's historical task during the years of counter-revolution. He wrote:

A number of Social-Democrats in that period sank into conciliationism, proceeding from the most varied motives. Most consistently of all was Conciliationism expressed by Trotsky, about the only one who tried to provide a theoretical foundation for that policy.

Just because in those years conciliationism became epidemic, Lenin saw in it the greatest menace to the development of a revolutionary party. He was well aware of the fact that the Conciliators claimed "the most varied motives", opportunistic as well as revolutionary. But in his crusade against that dangerous tendency he felt he had the right not to make any distinction between its subjective sources. On the contrary, he attacked with redoubled ferocity those Conciliators whose basic positions were closest to Bolshevism. Avoiding public conflict with the Conciliationist wing of the Bolshevik faction itself, Lenin chose to direct his polemics against 'Trotskyism', especially since I, as has already been said, attempted to provide a 'theoretical foundation' for Conciliationism. Quotations from that violent polemic were later to render Stalin a service for which they were certainly not intended.

Lenin's work during the years of reaction, minute and painstaking in its detail, audacious in its sweep of thought, will always offer a great lesson in revolutionary training. In July 1909 Lenin wrote:

We learned at the time of revolution 'to speak French', i.e....to arouse the energy and the sweep of direct mass struggle. We must now, at the time of stagnancy,

reaction, disintegration, learn 'to speak German', i.e., act slowly...conquering inch by inch.

The leader of the Mensheviks, Martov, wrote in 1911:

That which two or three years ago the leaders of the open movement [i.e., the Liquidators] acknowledged only in principle the necessity to build the Party 'in German'...is now everywhere acknowledged as the task to the practical realisation of which it is high time to set to work.

Although both Lenin and Martov had apparently begun "to speak German", as a matter of fact, they talked different languages. For Martov, "to speak German" meant to adapt himself to the Russian semi-absolutism in the hope of gradually 'Europeanising' it. For Lenin, the same expression meant: to utilise with the aid of the illegal party the meagre legal possibilities of preparing a new revolution. As the subsequent opportunistic degeneration of the German Social-Democracy demonstrated, the Mensheviks more truly reflected the spirit of 'the German language' in politics. But Lenin understood much more correctly the objective course of development in Germany as well as in Russia: the epoch of peaceful reform was being superseded by the epoch of catastrophes.

As for Koba, he knew neither French nor German. Yet all his inclinations drew him toward Lenin's position. Koba did not seek the open arena, like the orators and journalists of Menshevism, because the open arena exposed his weak rather than his strong attributes. He needed above all a centralised machine. But under the conditions of a counter-revolutionary regime that machine could be only illegal. Although Koba lacked historical perspective, he was more than amply endowed with perseverance. During the years of reaction he was not one of the tens of thousands who deserted the Party, but one of the very few hundreds who, despite everything, remained loyal to it.

Soon after the London Congress both young Zinoviev, who was elected to the Central Committee, and young Kamenev, who became a member of the Bolshevik Centre, became *émigrés*. Koba remained in Russia. Subsequently he credited that to himself as an extraordinary achievement. As a matter of fact, it was nothing of the kind. The selection of place and nature of work depended to a very minor extent on the choice of the individual in question. Had the Central Committee seen in Koba a young theoretician and publicist capable of rising to higher things abroad, he undoubtedly would have been ordered to emigrate and he would have had neither the chance nor the desire to decline. But no one called him abroad. From the time the top leadership

of the Party became aware of him, he was looked upon as a 'practico', i.e., as a rank-and-file revolutionist, useful primarily for local organisational activity. And Koba himself, who had tested his own abilities at the congresses in Tammerfors, Stockholm and London, was hardly inclined to join the *émigrés*, among whom he would have been relegated to third place. Later, after Lenin's death, necessity was transformed into virtue, and the very word '*émigré*' came to sound on the lips of the new bureaucracy pretty much as it had sounded on the lips of the conservatives of the tsarist epoch.

Resuming his exile, Lenin felt, according to his own words, as if he were stepping into his grave. "We here are frightfully cut off from everything now..." he wrote from Paris in the autumn of 1909. "These years have actually been hellishly difficult..." In the Russian bourgeois press there began to appear disparaging articles about the emigration, which presumably epitomised the defeated revolution repudiated by cultivated circles. In 1912, Lenin replied to these libels in the Petersburg newspaper of the Bolsheviks: "Yes, there is much that is hard to bear in the *émigré* environment... There is more want and poverty here than elsewhere. Especially high among us is the percentage of suicides." However, "only here and nowhere else have been posed and considered the most important fundamental questions of the entire Russian democracy during the years of confusion and interregnum." The leading ideas of the Revolution of 1917 were being prepared in the course of the wearisome and exhausting battles of the *émigré* groups. In that work Koba took no part at all.

THE 'BLACK CITY'

From the autumn of 1907 until March, 1908, Koba carried on revolutionary activity in Baku. It is impossible to establish the date of his removal there. He may have left Tiflis at the very moment that Kamo was loading his last bomb; circumspection was the dominant aspect of Koba's courage. Baku, city of many diverse races, which at the beginning of the century had already a population of more than a hundred thousand, continued to grow rapidly, drawing into the oil industry masses of Azerbaijan Tatars. The tsarist authorities replied, not without some success, to the revolutionary movement of 1905, by instigating the Tatars against the more advanced Armenians. However, the revolution took hold even of the backward Azerbaijanis. Belatedly, as far as the rest of the country was concerned, they participated *en masse* in the strikes of 1907.

In the 'Black City' Koba spent about eight months, from which should be deducted the time he took for his journey to Berlin. "Under the leadership of Comrade Stalin," wrote the not too inventive Beria, "the Baku Bolshevik organisation grew up, gained strength and was tempered during its struggle against the Mensheviks." Koba was sent to regions where the opponents were particularly strong. "Under the leadership of Comrade Stalin, the Bolsheviks broke the influence of the Mensheviks and the S-Rs," and so forth. We learn little more from Alliluyev. The gathering of Bolshevik forces after the havoc wrought by the police occurred, according to him, "under the direct leadership and with the active participation of Comrade Stalin... His organisational talent, genuine revolutionary enthusiasm, inexhaustible energy, firm will and Bolshevik persistence..." and the like. Unfortunately, the reminiscences of Stalin's father-in-law were written in 1937. The formula "under the direct leadership and with the active participation" faultlessly betrays the Beria trademark. The S-R Vereshchak, who was active in Baku at the same time and observed Koba with the eyes of a political opponent, recognises in him exceptional organisational talent but completely denies him any personal influence among the workers. He writes:

His personality, produced a bad first impression. Koba took that into account as well. He never spoke openly at mass meetings... Koba's presence in this or that labour district was always a secret matter, and one could guess at it only by the enlivened activity of the Bolsheviks.

This is more like the truth. We shall have occasion to meet Vereshchak again.

The reminiscences of Bolsheviks written prior to the totalitarian era give the first place in the Baku organisation not to Koba but to Shaumyan⁸ and Dzhaparidze⁹, two exceptional revolutionists killed by the English during their occupation of Transcaucasia, on 20th September, 1918. "Of the old comrades in Baku," writes Shaumyan's biographer Karimyan, "Comrades A. Yenukidze, Koba (Stalin), Timofei (Spandaryan), Alyosha (Dzhaparidze) were then active. The Bolshevik organisation...had a broad base for activity in the trade union of the oil industry workers. The actual organiser and secretary of all the trade union work was Alyosha (Dzhaparidze)." Yenukidze is mentioned ahead of Koba; the principal role is assigned to Dzhaparidze. Further: "Both of them (Shaumyan and Dzhaparidze) were the most beloved leaders of the

8 Stepan Grigoryevich Shaumyan (1878-1918).

9 Prokofy Aprasionovich Dzhaparidze (1880-1918).

Baku proletariat.” It had not yet occurred to Karimyan, who was writing in 1924, to name Koba among ‘the most beloved leaders’.

The Baku Bolshevik Stopani tells how in 1907 he became absorbed in trade union work, “the most burning task for the Baku of those days.” The trade union was under the leadership of the Bolsheviks. In the union “a prominent role was played by the irreplaceable Alyosha Dzhaparidze and a lesser role by Comrade Koh (Djughashvili), who gave most of his strength primarily to Party work, of which he was in charge.” Of what this “Party work” consisted, apart from “the most burning task” of leading the trade unions, Stopani does not specify. But he does contribute a very interesting casual remark about disagreements among the Baku Bolsheviks. All of them agreed on the need of organisationally “consolidating” the Party’s influence in the trade unions, but “with reference to the degree and form of that consolidation there were also disagreements among ourselves: we had our own ‘Left’ (Koba-Stalin) and ‘Right’ (Alyosha Dzhaparidze and others, including myself); the disagreements were not on fundamentals but with reference to the tactics or the methods of establishing that contact.” Stopani’s deliberately vague words – Stalin was then already very powerful – enable us faultlessly to imagine the actual disposition of figures. Due to the belated wave of the strike movement, the trade union had become of foremost importance. The leaders of the union naturally proved to be those who knew how to talk with the masses and how to lead them: Dzhaparidze and Shaumyan. Again pushed into second place, Koba entrenched himself in the underground committee. The Party’s struggle to win influence in the trade union meant to Koba that the leaders of the masses, Dzhaparidze and Shaumyan, should submit to his bossing. In the fight for this sort of “consolidation” of his own personal power, Koba, as is evident from Stopani’s words, roused against himself all the leading Bolsheviks. The activity of the masses was not favourable to the plans of the underhanded schemer.

Exceptionally bitter became the rivalry between Koba and Shaumyan. Matters reached such a pass that after Shaumyan’s arrest, according to the testimony of the Georgian Mensheviks, the workers suspected Koba of having denounced his rival to the police, and demanded that he be tried by a party court. Their campaign was terminated only by Koba’s own arrest. It is unlikely that the accusers had definite proofs. Their suspicion might have been aroused by any number of circumstantial coincidences. Suffice it, though, that Koba’s Party comrades thought him capable of turning informer, when motivated by thwarted ambition. Such things have never been told about anyone else!

Concerning the financing of the Baku Committee at the time of Koba's participation in it, there is circumstantial but far from indubitable evidence concerning armed 'expropriation'; financial tributes imposed on industrialists under the threat of death or of firing their oil wells; the fabrication and circulation of counterfeit currency, and the like. It is hard to decide whether these deeds, which actually took place, were imputed to Koba's initiative as far back as those remote years or whether the greater part of them were first connected with his name considerably later. In any event, Koba's participation in such risky enterprises could not have been direct; otherwise, it would have been inevitably revealed. In all likelihood, he guided the militant operations, as he had tried to guide the trade union, from the sidelines. It is noteworthy in this connection that very little is known about the Baku period of Koba's life. The most insignificant episodes are recorded whenever they tend to enhance the 'Leader's' fame, yet his revolutionary activity is referred to only in the most general phrases. The amount of suppression is hardly accidental.

CRUEL GAME

The S-R Vereshchak, while still quite young, landed in 1909 in the so-called Bailov Prison of Baku, where he spent three and a half years. Koba, who was arrested on 25th March, spent half a year in that prison, left it to go into exile, spent nine months there, returned illegally to Baku, was again arrested in March, 1910, and was again imprisoned there, side-by-side with Vereshchak, for nearly six months. In 1912 the prison buddies met again at Narym, in Siberia. Finally, after the February Revolution, Vereshchak, then a delegate from the Tiflis garrison, met his old acquaintance at the First Congress of Soviets in Petrograd.

After the rise of Stalin's political star, Vereshchak gave a detailed account of their joint prison life in the *émigré* press. Perhaps not everything in his story is reliable and not all of his judgments are convincing. Thus, Vereshchak asserts, no doubt on the basis of hearsay, that Koba had himself acknowledged that "for revolutionary reasons" he had betrayed certain of his seminary comrades; the unlikelihood of that tale has already been indicated. The Populist author's discussions of Koba's Marxism are extremely naive. But Vereshchak had the invaluable advantage of observing Koba in an environment where, willy-nilly, the habits and conditions of cultured coexistence atrophy. Intended for four hundred inmates, the Baku prison held at the time more than fifteen hundred. The prisoners slept in the overcrowded cells, in the corridors, on the steps of stairways. There could have been no isolation of any kind under such

conditions of overcrowding. All the doors, except those of the punitive cells, were wide open. Criminals and politicals moved freely about from cell to cell, from building to building, and in the yard. "It was impossible to sit or to lie down without stepping on someone's toes." In such circumstances people saw each other, and many saw themselves, in quite unexpected lights. Even cold and reserved persons disclosed traits of character which under ordinary conditions they managed to keep hidden. Vereshchak writes:

Koba was an extremely one-sided person. He had no general principles and no adequate educational background. By his very nature he had always been a person of little culture, a crude person. All this in him was combined with a peculiarly studied slyness, which at first obscured from the view of even the most observing person the other traits hidden behind it.

By "general principles" the author seems to imply moral principles: as a Populist he was an adherent of the school of 'ethical' socialism. Vereshchak was surprised by Koba's stamina. A cruel game was played in that prison, the purpose of which was by hook or crook to drive one's opponent frantic: this was called 'chasing into a bubble'. "It was never possible to drive Koba off his balance..." states Vereshchak, "nothing would get his goat."

That game was quite innocent by comparison with the game the authorities played. Among the imprisoned were persons more or less recently sentenced to death who hourly awaited the culmination of their fate. The condemned ate and slept with the others. Before the eyes of the prisoners, they were led out at night and hanged in the prison yard, so that in the cells "were heard the cries and moans of the hanged." All the prisoners suffered from the nervous strain. "Koba slept soundly," says Vereshchak, "or calmly studied Esperanto (he was convinced that Esperanto was the international language of the future)." It would be silly to think that Koba was indifferent to the executions. But he had strong nerves. He did not feel for others as for himself. Nerves like that were in themselves an important asset.

Despite the chaos, the hangings, the party and personal conflicts, the Baku prison was an important revolutionary school. Koba stood out among the Marxist leaders. He did not participate in person to person discussions, preferring public forums, a sure sign that in education and experience Koba was superior to the majority of his fellow prisoners. "Koba's outward appearance and his polemical coarseness made his presentation always unpleasant. His speeches were devoid of wit; in form they were a dry and formal exposition." Vereshchak recalls a certain "agrarian discussion", when

Koba's comrade Ordzhonikidze, "struck the face of the co-reporter, the S-R Ilya Kartsevadze, for which he was cruelly beaten up by the other S-Rs." This is no invention: the very ardent Ordzhonikidze preserved his predilection for physical arguments even when he became a prominent Soviet dignitary. Once Lenin even proposed expelling him from the party for that.

Vereshchak was astonished by the "mechanical memory" of Koba, whose little head "with its undeveloped forehead" presumably contained all of Marx's *Capital*. "Marxism was his element, in it he was unconquerable... He knew how to substantiate anything with the appropriate formulae from Marx. This man made a strong impression on young party people unenlightened in politics." Vereshchak himself was among the 'unenlightened'. To this young Populist, brought up on homespun Russian belletristic sociology, Koba's Marxist baggage must have seemed exceedingly imposing. As a matter of fact, it was modest enough. Koba had neither theoretical curiosity nor perseverance in study nor discipline of thought. It is hardly correct to speak of his "mechanical memory". It is narrow, empirical, utilitarian, but, despite the seminary training, not in the least mechanical. It is a peasant memory, devoid of sweep and synthesis, but firm and tenacious, especially in rancour. It is not at all true that Koba's head was full of ready quotations for all the occasions of life. Koba was never a bookworm or a scholastic. Through Plekhanov and Lenin he culled from Marxism the most elementary statements on the class struggle and on the subordinate significance of ideas in relation to material factors. Although he oversimplified these propositions, he was nevertheless able to apply them with success against the Populists, even as a person with the crudest sort of revolver is able to fight successfully against a man with a boomerang. But on the whole Koba remained essentially indifferent to the Marxist doctrine.

During his confinement in the prisons of Batumi and Kutais, as we remember, Koba attempted to probe the mysteries of the German language: at the time the influence of the German Social-Democracy on the Russian one was exceedingly great. Yet Koba was even less successful in learning Marx's language than his doctrine. In the Baku prison he began to study Esperanto as "the language of the future". That touch most instructively exposes the quality of Koba's intellectual equipment, which in the sphere of learning always sought the line of least resistance. Although he spent eight years in prison and exile, he never managed to learn a single foreign language, not excluding his ill-starred Esperanto.

As a general rule, political prisoners tried not to associate with criminals. Koba, on the contrary, “could be always seen in the society of ruffians, blackmailers, and among the mauserist robbers.” He felt himself on an equal footing with them. “He was always impressed by people of real ‘business’. And he looked upon politics as a ‘business’ which one should know how to ‘do’ and how to ‘outdo’.” This is a very apt observation. But this very observation refutes better than anything else the remarks about his “mechanical memory”, filled with ready-made quotations. The company of people with higher intellectual interests than his own was irksome to Koba. In the Politburo of Lenin’s day, he almost always sat silent, morose and irritable. Conversely, he became more sociable, more even tempered and more human among people of primitive mentality who were unrestrained by any predilection for brains. During the civil war, when certain sections of the army, usually the cavalry branches, became unruly and went in for violence and roistering, Lenin was wont to say, “Hadn’t we better send Stalin there? He knows how to talk with people of that kind.”

Koba was not the initiator of prison protests and demonstrations, but he always supported the initiators. “That made him a good comrade in the eyes of the prison public.” This observation, too, is apt. Koba was never, in anything or anywhere, an initiator. But he was quite capable of utilising the initiative of others, of pushing the initiators ahead, and of retaining for himself freedom of choice. That does not mean that Koba was devoid of courage; he merely preferred to spend it economically. The prison regime was a mixture of laxity and cruelty. The inmates enjoyed considerable freedom inside the prison walls. But whenever a certain elusive pale was transgressed, the administration resorted to military force. Vereshchak tells how in 1909 (obviously, he means 1908), on the first day of Easter, a company of the Salyan Regiment beat up all the political prisoners, without exception, forcing them to run the gauntlet. “Koba walked, his head unbowed, under the blows of rifle butts, a book in his hands. And when the free-for-all was let loose, Koba forced the doors of his cell with a slop bucket, ignoring the threat of bayonets.” That self-contained man – true, on rare occasions – was capable of blinding rage.

The Moscow ‘historian’ Yaroslavsky restates Vereshchak, as follows: “Stalin ran the gauntlet of soldiers, reading Marx.” Marx’s name is dragged in here for the same reason that a rose appears in the hands of the Virgin Mary.

All of Soviet historiography is made up of such roses. Koba holding “Marx” under rifle butts has become the subject of Soviet scholarship, prose and poetry. Yet such behaviour was in no way exceptional. Prison beatings,

just like prison heroism, were the order of the day. Piatnitsky tells how after his arrest at Vilno in 1902, the police proposed to send him, then still quite a young worker, to the district police officer, who was notorious for his beatings, in order to force testimony from him. But the elder policeman replied: "He won't say anything there, either. He belongs to the *Iskra* organisation." Even in those early days the revolutionists of Lenin's school had the reputation of being unyielding. In order to ascertain that Kamo had actually lost his sensitivity, as alleged, physicians pushed pins under his fingernails, and only because Kamo had adamantly endured such tests for a number of years was he finally declared hopelessly insane. What then is the weight of a few rifle butt blows, by comparison with that? There is no basis for underestimating Koba's courage, but it must be confined within the limits of its time and place.

Because of the prison conditions, Vereshchak had no difficulty in observing a certain trait of Stalin's, which enabled him to remain unknown for such a long time: "That was his ability quietly to incite others while he himself remained on the sidelines." Then follow two examples. On one occasion a young Georgian was being beaten up in the corridor of the 'political' building. The evil word 'provocateur' resounded through the building. Only the soldiers on guard were able to stop the chastisement. His bloody body was removed on a stretcher to the city hospital. Was he a provocateur? And if so, why was he not killed? "In Bailov prison, provocateurs, when proved to be such, were usually killed," Vereshchak remarks in passing. "No one knew anything or could make head or tail of it, and only a long time later we learned that the rumour had originated with Koba." It was never found out whether the man who had been beaten up was actually a provocateur. Might he have been simply one of the workers who were opposed to expropriations or who accused Koba of having denounced Shaumyan?

Another instance. On the steps of the stairway which led into the 'political' building a certain prisoner known as "the Greek" stabbed a young worker who had but recently been brought to the prison. The Greek himself regarded the man he had killed as a stool-pigeon, although he had never before met him at any time. This sanguine incident, which naturally aroused the entire prison, remained a mystery for a long time. Finally, the Greek began to intimate that he evidently had been "misled" for no good reason: the misinformation had come from Koba.

Caucasians are easily aroused and easily resort to the knife. The cool and calculating Koba, who knew the language and the customs of these people, found it easy to set one against another. In both instances it was undoubtedly

a matter of vengeance. The instigator did not need to have the victims know who was responsible for their mishap. Koba is not inclined to share his feelings, not even the joy of vengeance. He prefers to enjoy it alone by himself. Both episodes, sordid though they are, do not seem unlikely; subsequent events invest them with inherent verisimilitude... In Bailov Prison the preparation of future events went on. Koba acquired experience, Koba grew strong, Koba matured. The grey figure of the former seminarist with pock marks on his face cast an ever more sinister shadow.

Vereshchak further mentions, this time obviously on the basis of hearsay, Koba's various risky enterprises during his activities at Baku: the organisation of counterfeiters, the robbing of state treasuries, and the like. "He was never tried in court for any of these affairs, although the counterfeiters and the expropriators were in prison together with him." If they had known of his role, someone among them would inevitably have betrayed him. "The ability to achieve his purpose quietly by making use of others, while at the same time remaining unnoticed himself, made Koba a sly schemer who did not spurn any means and who avoided public accounting and responsibility."

We thus learn more about Koba's life in prison than about his activities outside. But in both places he remained true to himself. Between discussions with the Populists and small talk with hold-up men, he did not forget about his revolutionary organisation. Beria informs us that from prison Koba managed to establish regular contact with the Baku Committee. That was quite possible: where there was no isolation of politicals from the criminals and of the politicals from each other, it was impossible to remain cut off from the outside. One of the issues of the illegal newspaper was entirely prepared in prison. The pulse of the revolution, although considerably weakened, continued to beat. The prison may not have stimulated Koba's interest in theories, but neither did it break his fighting spirit.

EXILE

On 20th September, Koba was sent to Solvychegodsk, in the northern part of Vologda Province. This was privileged banishment: only for two years; not in Siberia, but in European Russia; not in a village, but in a small town of two thousand inhabitants, with fine opportunities for escape. It is thus obvious that the gendarmes did not have even moderately weighty evidence against Koba. In view of the extremely low cost of living in those remote borderlands, it was not hard for exiles to get along on the few roubles a month the government allotted them; for their extra needs they received aid from friends and from the

revolutionary Red Cross. How Koba spent his nine months in Solvychevodsk, what he did, what he studied, we do not know. No documents have been published: neither his essays, nor his diaries, nor his letters. In the local police “case of Joseph Djughashvili”, under the heading “behaviour”, is recorded: “rude, impudent, disrespectful to superiors.” “Disrespectfulness” was a trait common to all revolutionists; “rudeness” was his individual trait.

In the spring of 1909, Alliluyev, who was already in Petersburg, received a letter from Koba, then in exile, asking him for his address. “At the end of that summer of the same year Stalin escaped from exile to Petersburg, where I met him accidentally on one of the streets in the Lityeiny district.” It so happened that Stalin did not find Alliluyev at his home nor at his place of work, and was obliged to wander through the streets for a long time without any place of shelter. “When I met him accidentally on the street, he was extremely tired.” Alliluyev arranged for Koba to stay at the home of a janitor of one of the guard regiments who was a sympathiser of the revolution. “Here Stalin lived quietly for a while, saw some of the members of the Bolshevik fraction of the Third Duma, and later proceeded southward, to Baku.”

Again to Baku! He could hardly have been drawn there by local patriotism. It would be more accurate to suppose that Koba was not known in Petersburg, that the deputies of the Duma did not display any interest in him, that no one asked him to remain or offered the aid which was so indispensable to an illegal resident.

Returning to Baku, he again undertook energetically to strengthen further the Bolshevik organisations... In October, 1909, he came to Tiflis, organised and directed the fight of the Tiflis Bolshevik organisation against the Menshevik-Liquidators.”

The reader, no doubt, recognises Beria's style.

In the illegal press Koba published several articles, interesting only because they were written by the future Stalin. Owing to the absence of anything more noteworthy, exceptional significance is nowadays accorded to the correspondence written by Koba in December, 1909, for the Party's foreign newspaper. Contrasting the active industrial centre of Baku to Tiflis, stagnant with civil servants, storekeepers and artisans, his *Letter From The Caucasus* quite correctly explains the dominance of the Mensheviks at Tiflis in terms of its social structure. Then follows a polemic against the perennial leader of Georgian Social-Democracy, Jordania, who again proclaimed the need “to unite the forces of the bourgeoisie and the proletariat.” The workers

must renounce their policy of irreconcilability because, Jordania argued, “the weaker the class struggle between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, the more victorious will be the bourgeoisie.” Koba counterpoised to that the directly contrary proposition: “The more the revolution will rely on the class struggle of the proletariat, which will lead the village poor against the landlords and the liberal bourgeoisie, the more complete will be the victory of the revolution.” All of this was quite right in essence, but did not contain a single new word; beginning with the spring of 1905 such polemics were reiterated a countless number of times. If this correspondence had any value for Lenin, it was not because of the sophomoric reproduction of his own thought, but because it was a living voice from Russia at a time when the majority of such voices had died down. However, in 1937, this *Letter From The Caucasus* was proclaimed “the classic example of Leninist-Stalinist tactics.” “In our writings and in all of our teachings,” writes one such panegyrist, “not enough light has been shed on this article, extraordinary in its profundity, wealth of implications, and historical significance.” The most generous thing to do is to disregard it.

“In March and April, 1910, it was finally possible,” the same historian (a certain Rabichev) informs us, “to create a Russian collegium of the Central Committee. Stalin was on the staff of that collegium. However, before that collegium got down to work, it was arrested.” If this is true, then Koba, at least formally, joined the staff of the Central Committee in 1910. An important milestone in his biography! But it is not true. Fifteen years prior to Rabichev, the old Bolshevik Germanov (Frumkin) related the following:

At the conference between the writer of these lines and Nogin it was decided to propose that the Central Committee confirm the following list of five as the Russian section of the Central Committee: Nogin, Dubrovinsky, Malinovsky, Stalin, and Milyutin.

Thus, under consideration was not a decision of the Central Committee, but merely the project of two Bolsheviks. “Stalin was personally known to both of us,” continues Germanov, “as one of the best and most active of Baku workers. Nogin went to Baku to talk things over with him; but for a number of reasons, Stalin could not assume the duties of a Central Committee member.” Germanov does not state the exact reason for the difficulty. Nogin himself wrote about his journey to Baku two years later, as follows: “...in the deep underground was Stalin (Koba), well known in the Caucasus in those days and forced to hide in the Balakhana oil fields.” It follows from Nogin’s account that he did not even see Koba.

*My collaboration with Lenin began in 1902, only to turn within a year into a factional struggle. Rykov appeared for the first time in the arena of the Bolshevik Third Congress from 1905 and, as is evidenced from the minutes, displayed complete independence with regard to Lenin. On the platform of the London conference in 1907, the young worker Michael Tomsky, born in 1880, draws attention to himself. In 1908 Lenin quotes Tomsky's correspondence in St. Petersburg in the central organ of the Party, constantly trying to point out in his article that Tomsky was a thousand times right.

Throughout this period no one knew anything about Stalin outside of the Caucasus or rather a few places in the Caucasus. True, Stalin too appears at the London Congress of 1907, with the dubious mandate unrecognised by the Congress, but unlike Tomsky, he did not pronounce a single word throughout the proceedings, and unlike Zinoviev, who at that Congress was elected to the Central Committee, Stalin left the Congress as unknown as when he had arrived. For the first time Stalin's name is mentioned by Lenin in March, 1910, in a footnote to correspondence in the Caucasus in the central organ of the Party.

It stands to reason that this chronology alone is utterly insufficient for determining the specific weight or gravity of the future leaders of the October revolution. But this chronology is far from secondary. However, the attempt began some ten years ago to represent Stalin as the most prominent leader of the revolutionary movement, even beginning with the end of the last century. But the facts do not support this in the slightest. The political development of Stalin has an extremely slow character. At any rate, there was nothing in him of the prodigy with which certain biographers are trying to impress us. While Zinoviev entered the Central Committee at the age of twenty-six, and Rykov a few years earlier before he was twenty-four, Stalin was thirty-three when he was first co-opted into the leading body of the Party.*

The reticence about the reasons why Stalin could not enter the Russian collegium of the Central Committee suggests some interesting deductions. 1910 was the period of the most complete degeneration of the movement and of the most widespread flood of conciliatory tendencies. In January, a plenum of the Central Committee was held in Paris, at which the Conciliators gained a very unstable victory. It was decided to restore the Central Committee in Russia with the participation of the Liquidators. Nogin and Germanov were Bolshevik Conciliators. The revival of the 'Russian' collegium – that is, of the one acting illegally in Russia – was Nogin's task. Owing to the absence of prominent figures, several attempts were made to draw in the

provincials. Among them was Koba, whom Nogin and Germanov knew as “one of the best of the Baku workers”. However, nothing came of that idea. The well-informed author of the German article to which we have already referred states that although “the official Bolshevik biographers attempt to present [his] expropriations and expulsion from the Party as never having happened...nevertheless, the Bolsheviks themselves hesitated to place Koba in any noticeable post of leadership.” It may be safely assumed that the reason for the failure of Nogin’s mission was Koba’s recent participation in “militant activities”. The Paris plenum had branded the expropriators as persons guided by “a faulty understanding of party interests”. Fighting for legality, the Mensheviks could in no way consent to collaboration with an outright leader of expropriations. Nogin came to understand that, it would seem, only in the course of his negotiations with leading Mensheviks in the Caucasus. No collegium with Koba on it was set up. Note that of the two Conciliators whose protégé Stalin was, Germanov is among those missing without a trace; as for Nogin, only his premature death in 1924 saved him from the fate of Rykov, Tomsky, Germanov and other of his closest friends.

Koba’s activity in Baku was undoubtedly more successful than in Tiflis, irrespective of whether he played a primary, secondary or tertiary role. But the idea that the Baku organisation was the only unconquerable fortress of Bolshevism belongs to the realm of myths. At the end of 1911 Lenin himself accidentally laid the foundation for that myth by listing the Baku organisation alongside of the Kiev organisation as among “the model and progressive for Russia in 1910 and 1911” – that is, for the years of the Party’s complete disintegration and the beginning of its revival. “The Baku organisation existed without interruption during the difficult years of reaction and played a most active part in all the manifestations of the labour movement,” states one of the footnotes to the fifteenth volume of Lenin’s works. Both of these judgments, which are nowadays closely connected with Koba’s activities, have proved to be completely erroneous upon investigation. As a matter of fact, after its resurgence, Baku passed through the same stages of decline as the other industrial centres of the country – true, somewhat belatedly, but even more drastically.

Stopani writes in his memoirs: “Beginning with 1910, Party and trade union life in Baku died down completely.” Here and there remnants of trade unions still continued to exist for some time, but even they did so with the Mensheviks playing the preponderant role. “Soon Bolshevik activity virtually died down, thanks to constant failures due to arrest, lack of active workers

and general chaos." The situation was still worse in 1911. Ordzhonikidze, who visited Baku in March, 1912, when the tide was again beginning to rise noticeably throughout the country, wrote abroad: "Yesterday I managed finally to get together a few workingmen... There is no organisation, i.e., of the local centre; therefore, we had to be content with private conferences..." These two testimonials are sufficient. Let us recall in addition the testimony of Olminsky, which has already been cited, that "revival was slowest in those cities where 'exes' had been most numerous (as an example, I might name Baku and Saratov)." Lenin's mistake in estimating the Baku organisation is an ordinary instance of the error of an exile who is obliged to judge from afar on the basis of partial or unreliable information, among which might have been the excessively optimistic intelligence supplied by Koba himself.

The general picture thus drawn is clear enough. Koba did not take an active part in the trade union movement, which at that time was the principal arena of struggle (Karimyan, Stopani). He did not speak at workers' meetings (Vereshchak), but sat in "deep underground" (Nogin). He could not "for a number of reasons" enter the Russian collegium of the Central Committee (Germanov). In Baku 'exes' had been more numerous than elsewhere (Olminsky) and so were acts of individual terror (Vereshchak). To Koba was ascribed direct leadership of the Baku "militant activities" (Vereshchak, Martov and others). Such activity undoubtedly demanded departure from the masses into the "deep underground". For some time, the existence of the illegal organisation was artificially sustained by means of monetary plunder. Hence all the stronger was the impact of the reaction and all the more belated the beginning of the revival. That conclusion is not only of biographical but likewise of theoretical significance, for it helps to shed light on certain general laws of the mass movement.

On 24th March, 1910, the gendarme Captain Martynov stated that he had arrested Joseph Djughashvili, known under the alias of "Koba", a member of the Baku Committee, "a most active Party worker who occupied a leading position" (granting that the document had not been corrected by Beria's hand). In connection with that arrest, another gendarme reported in line of duty: "In view of the persistent participation" of Djughashvili in revolutionary activity and his "two escapes," he, Captain Galimbatovsky, "would suggest that the highest measure of punishment be invoked." But one need not suppose that the reference was to execution: "the highest measure of punishment" by administrative order meant exile to the remote places of Siberia for a term of five years.

Meantime Koba was in the Baku prison, already well known to him. The political situation of the country and the prison regime had undergone profound changes in the course of the intervening year and a half. 1910 was dawning. Reaction was triumphing all along the line. Not only the mass movement, but even the expropriations, the terror, the acts of individual despair struck a new low. The prison became stricter and calmer. There was not even any talk of collective discussion. Koba had sufficient leisure to study Esperanto, if he had not become disillusioned with the language of the future. On 27th August, by order of the Governor-General of the Caucasus, Djughashvili was forbidden to live in Transcaucasia for the duration of the next five years. But the recommendations of Captain Galimbatovsky, who apparently was unable to present any serious charges, fell on deaf ears in Petersburg: Koba was again sent away to Vologda Province to complete his unfinished two-year term of exile. The Petersburg authorities quite obviously did not yet regard Joseph Djughashvili as a serious menace.

5. THE NEW RESURGENCE

For about five years (1906-11) Stolypin lorded it over the country. He exhausted all of the reaction's resources. The Third of June Regime managed to disclose its worthlessness in all spheres, but above all in the domain of the agrarian problem. Stolypin was obliged to descend from political combinations to the police club. And, as if the better to expose the utter bankruptcy of his system, Stolypin's assassin came from the ranks of his own secret police.

By 1910 the industrial revival became an indisputable fact. The revolutionary parties were confronted with the question: What effect will this break in the situation have on the political condition of the country? The majority of Social-Democrats maintained their schematic position: the crisis revolutionises the masses, the industrial resurgence pacifies them. Both factions, Bolshevik as well as Menshevik, tended, therefore, to disparage or flatly deny the revival that had actually begun. The exception was the Vienna newspaper *Pravda*, which, notwithstanding its conciliationist illusions, defended the very correct thought that the political consequences of the revival, as well as of the crisis, far from being automatic in character, are each time determined anew, depending on the preceding course of the struggle and on the entire situation in the country. Thus, following the industrial resurgence, in the course of which a very widespread strike struggle had managed to develop, a sudden decline in the situation might call forth a direct revolutionary resurgence, provided the other necessary conditions were present. On the other hand, after a long period of revolutionary struggle which ended in defeat, an industrial crisis, dividing and weakening the proletariat, might destroy its fighting spirit altogether. Or again, an industrial resurgence, coming after a long period of reaction, is capable of reviving the labour movement, largely in the form of an

economic struggle, after which the new crisis might switch the energy of the masses onto political rails.

The Russo-Japanese War and the shocks of the revolution prevented Russian capitalism from sharing the worldwide industrial resurgence of 1903-07. In the meantime, the uninterrupted revolutionary battles, defeats, and repressions, had exhausted the strength of the masses. The world industrial crisis, which broke out in 1907, extended the prolonged depression in Russia for three additional years, and far from inspiring the workers to engage in a new fight, dispersed them and weakened them more than ever. Under the blows of lockouts, unemployment and poverty, the weary masses became definitely discouraged. Such was the material basis for the 'achievements' of Stolypin's reaction. The proletariat needed the resuscitative font of a new industrial resurgence to revive its strength, fill its ranks, again feel itself the indispensable factor in production and plunge into a new fight.

At the end of 1910, street demonstrations – a sight long unseen – took place in connection with the deaths of the liberal Muromtsev, the erstwhile First Duma president, and of Leo Tolstoy. The student movement entered a new phase. Superficially – such is the customary aberration of historical idealism – it might have seemed that the thin layer of the intellectuals was the breeding place of the political revival and that by the force of its own example it was beginning to attract the upper layer of the workers. As a matter of fact, the wave of revival was not proceeding from the top down but from the bottom up. Thanks to the industrial resurgence, the working class was gradually emerging from its torpor. But before the chemical changes that had transformed the masses became apparent, they were transmitted to the students through the intervening social groups. Since the university youth was easier to set in motion, the revival manifested itself first of all in the form of student disturbances. But to the properly prepared observer it was clear beforehand that the demonstrations of the intellectuals were no more than a symptom of much more profound and significant processes within the proletariat itself.

Indeed, the graph of the strike movement soon began to climb. True, the number of strikers in 1911 amounted to a mere hundred thousand (the previous year it had not reached even half of that), but the slowness of the resurgence showed how strong was the torpor that had to be overcome. At any rate, by the end of the year the workers' districts looked quite different than at the beginning of the year. After the plentiful harvests of 1909 and 1910, which gave the impetus to the industrial resurgence, came a disastrous failure

of crops in 1911, which, without stopping the resurgence, doomed twenty million peasants to starvation. The unrest, starting in the villages, again placed the agrarian question on the order of the day. The Bolshevik conference of January, 1912, had every right to refer to “the beginning of political revival”. But the sudden break did not take place until the spring of 1912, after the famous massacre of the workers on the Lena River. In the deep taiga, more than five thousand miles from Petersburg and over fourteen hundred miles from the nearest railway, the pariahs of the gold mines, who each year provided millions of roubles in profit to English and Russian stockholders, demanded an eight-hour day, an increase in wages and abolition of fines. The soldiers, called out from Irkutsk, fired on the unarmed crowd. 150 killed, 250 wounded; deprived of medical aid, scores of the wounded died.

During the debate on the Lena events in the Duma, Minister of the Interior Makarov, a stupid official, no worse and no better than other of his contemporaries, declared, to the applause of the Rightist deputies, “This is what happened and this is what will happen again!” These amazingly brazen words produced an electric shock. At first from the factories of Petersburg, then from all over the country news about declarations and demonstrations of protest began to come in by telephone and telegraph. The repercussion of the Lena events was comparable only to the wave of indignation that had swept the toiling masses seven years before, following Bloody Sunday. “Perhaps never since the days of 1905,” wrote a liberal newspaper, “have the streets of the capital been so alive.”

In those days Stalin was in Petersburg, at liberty between two exiles. “The Lena shots broke the ice of silence,” he wrote in the newspaper *Zvezda* [“The Star”], to which we shall have occasion to refer again, “and the river of popular resentment was set in motion. It has begun!... All that was evil and destructive in the contemporary regime, all that had ailed long-suffering Russia – all of it has merged into the one fact of the events on the Lena. That is why the Lena shots were the signal for strikes and demonstrations.”

The strikes affected about three hundred thousand workers. The 1st May strike set four hundred thousand marching. According to official data, a total of seven hundred and twenty-five thousand struck in 1912. The total number of workers increased by no less than twenty percent during the years of industrial resurgence, while, because of the feverish concentration of production, their economic role assumed even greater importance. The revival in the working class affected all the other strata of the population. The hungry village stirred portentously. Flare-ups of dissatisfaction were observed in the army and navy.

“In Russia the revolutionary resurgence,” Lenin wrote to Gorky in August, 1912, “is not any other kind, but definitely revolutionary.”

The new movement was not a repetition of the past, but its continuation. In 1905, the mighty January strike had been accompanied by a naive petition to the Tsar. In 1912, the workers at once advanced the slogan of a democratic republic. The ideas, traditions and organisational experience of 1905, enriched by the hard lessons learned during the years of reaction, fertilised the new revolutionary period. From the very beginning the leading role belonged to the workers. Inside the proletarian vanguard the leadership belonged to the Bolsheviks. That, in essence, predetermined the character of the future revolution, although the Bolsheviks themselves were not as yet clearly aware of that. By strengthening the proletariat and securing for it a tremendously important role in the economic and political life of the country, the industrial resurgence reinforced the foundation for the perspective of permanent revolution. The cleansing of the stables of the old regime could not be accomplished otherwise than with the broom of the proletarian dictatorship. The democratic revolution could conquer only by transforming itself into the socialist revolution and thus, only by overcoming its own self.

Such continued to be the position of ‘Trotskyism’. But it had its Achilles’ heel: Conciliationism, associated with the hope for the revolutionary resurrection of Menshevism. The new resurgence – “not any other kind, but definitely revolutionary” struck an irreparable blow at Conciliationism. Bolshevism relied on the revolutionary vanguard of the proletariat and taught it to lead the peasant poor behind it. Menshevism relied on the labour aristocracy and inclined toward the liberal bourgeoisie. The moment the masses again entered the arena of open conflict, there could have been no talk of ‘conciliation’ between these two factions. The Conciliators were forced into new positions: the revolutionists among them – with the Bolsheviks, the opportunists – with the Mensheviks.

This time Koba spent more than eight months in exile. Virtually nothing is known about his life at Solvychegodsk, the exiles with whom he maintained contact, the books he read, the problems that interested him. From two of his letters of that period it appears that he received publications from abroad and was able to follow the life of the Party or rather of the emigrants where the conflict between the factions had reached an acute phase. Plekhanov, plus an inconsequential group of his followers, again broke with his closest friends and came to the defence of the illegal Party against the Liquidators. That was the last flare of radicalism in the life of this remarkable man who

was rapidly verging toward his decline. Thus arose the startling, paradoxical and short-lived bloc of Lenin with Plekhanov. On the other hand, there was the rapprochement of the Liquidators (Martov and others), the Vperyodists (Bogdanov, Lunacharsky) and the Conciliators (Trotsky). This second bloc, utterly devoid of any basis in principles, was formed, in a measure, to the surprise of the participants themselves. The Conciliators still aimed at “conciliating” the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks; and since Bolshevism, in the person of Lenin, ruthlessly rejected the very idea of any sort of agreement with the Liquidators, the Conciliators naturally shifted to the position of a union or a semi-union with the Mensheviks and the Vperyodists. The cement of that episodic bloc, as Lenin wrote to Gorky, was “detestation of the Bolshevik Centre for its merciless struggle in defence of its ideas.” The question of the two blocs was subjected to a lively discussion in the thinned Party ranks of those days.

On 31st December, 1910, Stalin wrote abroad to Paris: “Comrade Simeon! Yesterday I received from comrades your letter. First of all, ardent greetings to Lenin, Kamenev and others.” This salutation is no longer reprinted because of Kamenev’s name. Then follows his estimate of the situation in the Party:

In my opinion the line of the bloc (Lenin-Plekhanov) is the only normal one... Lenin’s hand is apparent in the plan of the bloc – he is a smart peasant and knows on which side his bread is buttered. But that does not mean yet that any old bloc is good. The Trotskyist bloc (he would have said ‘synthesis’) – that’s putrid unscrupulousness... The Lenin-Plekhanov bloc is vital because it is profoundly principled, is grounded in unity of views on the question of the ways to revive the Party. But precisely because it is a bloc, and not a fusion, precisely for that reason the Bolsheviks need their own faction.

All this was quite in line with Lenin’s views, was essentially a mere paraphrasing of his articles, and was in the nature of a self-recommendation as to principles. Having further proclaimed, as if *en passant*, that “the main thing” was, after all, not the emigration, but the practical work in Russia, Stalin forthwith hastened to explain that the practical work means “the application of principles”. Having thus reinforced his position by repeating the magic word, “principle”, Koba came closer to the point. “In my opinion,” he writes, “our next task, which must not be postponed, is the organisation of a central (Russian) group, which would coordinate the illegal, semi-legal and legal work... Such a group is as necessary as air, as bread.” There was nothing new in the plan itself. Attempts to re-establish the Russian nucleus of the Central Committee had been made by Lenin more than once since

the London Congress, but hitherto the dispersion of the Party had doomed them all to failure. Koba proposed the convocation of a conference of Party workers. "It is quite possible that this very conference would bring forth the suitable people for the above-mentioned central group." Having exposed his aim to switch the centre of Party gravity from abroad to Russia, Koba again hastened to allay any possible apprehensions of Lenin's: "It will be necessary to act steadfastly and mercilessly, braving the reproaches of the Liquidators, the Trotskyists and the Vperyodists..." With calculated modesty, he wrote about the central group of his project: "Call it what you like – 'the Russian section of the Central Committee' or 'the assistance group of the Central Committee' – that is of no moment." The pretended indifference was supposed to cover Koba's personal ambition. "Now about myself. I have six months left. At the end of the term I am at your service. If the need of organisers is really acute, I can fly the coop at once." The purpose of the letter was clear: Koba advanced his own candidacy. He wanted to become, at last, a member of the Central Committee.

Koba's ambition, in no way reprehensible, was unexpectedly illuminated by his other letter, addressed to the Moscow Bolsheviks. "The Caucasian Soso is writing to you." (This is the way the letter began.) "You remember in 1904 at Tiflis and Baku. First of all, my ardent greetings to Olga, to you, to Germanov. I.M. Golubev, with whom I am beguiling my days in exile, told me about all of you. Germanov knows me as K...b...a (he'll understand)." It is curious that as late as 1911, Koba was obliged to remind the old party members about himself by resorting to indirect and purely accidental indications: he was still unknown or in danger of being easily forgotten. "I am ending (exile) in July of this year," he continued.

Ilyich and Co. are calling me to one of two centres, without waiting for the end of the term. However, I should like to finish my term (a legal person has more opportunities)... But if the need is great (I am awaiting their answer), then, of course, I'll fly the coop... We here are stifling without anything to do, I am literally choking.

From the point of view of elementary circumspection, that part of the letter seems astounding. An exile, whose letters always run the risk of falling into the hands of the police, for no apparent practical reason sends by mail to members of the Party with whom he is scarcely acquainted, information about his conspiratorial correspondence with Lenin, about the fact that he is being urged to flee from exile and that in case of need he would "of course,

fly the coop.” As we shall see, the letter actually did fall into the hands of the gendarmes, who without much ado established the identity of the sender and of all the persons mentioned by him. One explanation of this carelessness is inescapable: impatient boastfulness! “The Caucasian Soso,” who may not have been sufficiently noticed in 1904, cannot resist the temptation to inform the Moscow Bolsheviks that Lenin himself had included him among the central workers of the Party. However, the motive of boastfulness plays only a subsidiary role. The key to this mysterious letter is in its last part:

...about the ‘tempest in the teapot’ abroad we have heard, of course: the blocs of Lenin-Plekhanov on the one hand and of Trotsky-Martov-Bogdanov on the other. The attitude of the workers to the first bloc, as far as I know, is favourable. But in general the workers are beginning to look disdainfully at the emigration: “Let them crawl on the wall as much as their hearts desire; but as for us, whoever values the interests of the movement – work, the rest will take care of itself.” That I think is for the best.

Amazing lines! Lenin’s struggle against the Liquidators and the Conciliators Stalin regarded as a “tempest in a teapot”. “The workers” – and Stalin with them – “are beginning to look disdainfully” at the emigration (including also the general staff of the Bolsheviks). “Whoever values the interests of the movement – work, the rest will take care of itself.” The interests of the movement appeared to have no connection with the theoretical struggle which was working out the programme of the movement.

A year and a half later, when, under the influence of the beginning of the swing, the struggle among the *émigrés* became more acute than ever, the sentimental semi-Bolshevik Gorky bemoaned in a letter to Lenin the “squabbles” abroad – the tempest in a teapot. “As to the squabbles among Social-Democrats,” Lenin answered him reprovingly, “it is a favourite complaint of the bourgeois, the liberals, the S-Rs, whose attitude toward trying questions is far from serious, who lag behind others, play at diplomacy, sustain themselves with eclecticism...” “The business of those who understand the roots these squabbles have in ideas...” he insisted in a subsequent letter, “is to aid the mass in seeking out these roots and not to justify the mass in its attitude toward these debates as the ‘personal affair of the generals’.” “In Russia now,” Gorky persisted for his part, “among the workers there is a lot of good...youth, but it is so fiercely set against the emigration...” Lenin replied: “This is actually true. But it is not the leaders’ fault... That which is torn should be bound together; while it is cheap, popular, but of little use, to scold

the leaders...” It seems as if in his restrained rebuttals to Gorky, Lenin was indignantly refuting Stalin.

A careful comparison of Stalin’s two letters, which their author never intended should be compared, is exceedingly valuable for an insight into his character and his ways. His real attitude toward ‘principles’ is far more truthfully expressed in the second letter: “Work, the rest will take care of itself.” Such essentially was the attitude of many a not over-sapient Conciliator. Stalin resorted to the crudely contemptuous expressions about the “émigration” not only because rudeness is an integral part of his nature, but chiefly because he counted on the sympathy of the practicos, especially Germanov. He knew all about their moods from Golubev, who had recently been banished from Moscow. Activities in Russia were in a bad way, the underground organisation had declined to the lowest point, and the practicos were very apt to take it out on the *émigrés* for raising much ado about trifles.

To understand the practical aim behind Stalin’s double dealing, remember that Germanov, who several months before had proposed Koba’s candidacy for the Central Committee, was himself closely connected with other Conciliators influential among the higher-ups of the Party. Koba deemed it useful to show that group his solidarity with it. But he was clearly aware of the strength of Lenin’s influence and therefore began with a declaration of his loyalty to “principles”. In his letter to Paris he humoured Lenin’s irreconcilability, for Stalin was afraid of Lenin; in his letter to the Muscovites, he set them against Lenin, who for no good reason “crawls on the wall”. The first letter was a crude restatement of Lenin’s articles against the Conciliators. The second letter repeated the arguments of the Conciliators against Lenin. All this within twenty-four days.

True, the letter to “Comrade Simeon” contains the cautious phrase: the centre abroad “is not everything and not even the main thing. The main thing is to organise activities in Russia.” On the other hand, in the letter to the Muscovites there was what appears to be an inadvertently dropped innuendo: the attitude of the workers toward the Lenin-Plekhanov bloc, “as far as I know, is favourable.” But what in one letter is a subsidiary correction, serves in the other letter as the starting point for developing the contrary line of thought. The task of the vague asides, which are almost mental reservations, is to soften the contradiction between both letters. But, as a matter of fact, they merely betray the author’s guilty conscience.

The technique of any intrigue, however primitive, is sufficient unto its goal. Koba purposely did not write directly to Lenin, preferring to address

himself to “Simeon”. That made it possible for him to refer to Lenin in a tone of admiring intimacy, without making it incumbent upon him to probe into the substance of the question. Doubtless, Koba’s actual motivations were no mystery to Lenin. But his was the approach of the politician. A professional revolutionist who in the past had demonstrated will-power and resoluteness was now eager to advance himself in the Party machine. Lenin took note of that. On the other hand, Germanov, too, remembered that in Koba’s person the Conciliators would have an ally. His goal was thus achieved; at any rate, for the present. Koba had many qualifications for becoming an outstanding member of the Central Committee. His ambition was well-founded. But amazing were the ways by which the young revolutionist approached his goal – the ways of duplicity, deceit, deliberate cynicism!

In conspiratorial life, compromising letters were destroyed; personal contacts with people abroad were rare, so Koba had no fear that his two letters might be compared. The credit for saving these invaluable human documents for the future goes entirely to the censors of the tsarist post office. On 23rd December, 1925, when the totalitarian regime was still very far from having attained its present automatism, the Tiflis newspaper, *Zarya Vostoka*, was heedless enough to have published a copy of Koba’s letter to the Muscovites, taken from the police archives. It is not hard to imagine the drubbing the ill-starred editorial board got for that! The letter was subsequently never reprinted, and not a single one of the official biographers ever refers to it.

Notwithstanding the dire need of organisers, Koba did not ‘fly the coop at once’, – that is, he did not escape, but this time served his sentence to the end. The newspapers brought information about student meetings and street demonstrations. No less than ten thousand people crowded into Nevsky Prospect¹. Workers began to join in with the students. “Is this not the beginning of the change?” Lenin asked in an article several weeks before he received Koba’s letter from exile. During the first months of 1911 the revival became indisputable, yet Koba, who already had three escapes to his credit, was this time calmly awaiting the end of his term of exile. The awakening of the new spring seemed to have left him cold. Remembering his experiences of 1905, was he fearful of the new resurgence?

All biographers without exception refer to Koba’s new escape. As a matter of fact, there was no need of escape; the term of his exile ended in July, 1911. The Moscow Okhrana, mentioning in passing Joseph Djughashvili, referred to him this time as one who “completed his term of administrative exile in

1 The main street in St. Petersburg.

the city of Solvychegodsk.” The conference of the Bolshevik members of the Central Committee, which meantime took place abroad, appointed a special commission to arrange a Party conference, and it appears that Koba, along with four others, was appointed to that commission. After exile, he went to Baku and Tiflis, in order to stir up the local Bolsheviks and to induce them to participate in the conference. There were no formal organisations in the Caucasus, so it was necessary to begin building almost from scratch. The Tiflis Bolsheviks approved the appeal Koba wrote on the need for a revolutionary party:

Unfortunately, in addition to political adventurers, provocateurs and other riff-raff, the advanced workers in our very own cause of strengthening our own Social-Democratic Party, are obliged to meet a new obstacle in our ranks – namely, people of bourgeois mentality.

The reference was to the Liquidators. The appeal was rounded out with a metaphor characteristic of our author:

The sombre sanguine clouds of black reaction hanging over the country are beginning to disperse, are beginning to be superseded by the stormy clouds of the people’s rage and indignation. The black background of our life is slashed by lightning, while in the distance the dawn is flaring, the storm is approaching...

The object of the appeal was to proclaim the emergence of the Tiflis group and thus secure for the few local Bolsheviks participation in the forthcoming conference.

Koba left Vologda Province lawfully. It is doubtful that he went lawfully from the Caucasus to Petersburg: former exiles were usually forbidden for a definite period of time to live in the important cities. But whether with or without permission, the provincial finally set forth to the territory of the capital. The Party was just emerging from its torpor. The best forces were in prison, exile, or had emigrated. It was precisely for that reason that Koba was needed in Petersburg. But his first appearance in the capital was brief. Only two months elapsed between the end of his banishment and his next arrest, and of this from three to four weeks must have been consumed by his journey to the Caucasus. Nothing is known to us about Koba’s adjustment to his new environment or how he began to work in the new setting.

The only memento of that period is the very brief news item Koba sent abroad concerning the secret meeting of the forty-six Social-Democrats of the Vyborg district. The main thought of a speech delivered by a prominent

Liquidator consisted in this: that “in a party sense no organisations are needed”, since for activity in the open it was sufficient to have “initiating groups” that would concern themselves with arranging public speeches and legal meetings on questions of state insurance, municipal politics and the like. According to Koba’s news item, this plan of the Liquidators for adaptation to the pseudo-constitutional monarchy was met with the wholehearted resistance of all workers, including the Mensheviks as well. At the end of the meeting, all, with the exception of the principal speaker, voted in favour of an illegal revolutionary party.

Either Lenin or Zinoviev provided this letter from Petersburg with the following editorial note:

Comrade K’s correspondence merits the greatest attention of all to whom the Party is dear... One could hardly imagine a better rebuttal to the views and hopes of our peacemakers and Conciliators. Is the incident described by Comrade K exceptional? No, it is typical...

Yet it is very rarely that “the Party receives such definite information, for which we are grateful to Comrade K.” Referring to this newspaper episode, the *Soviet Encyclopaedia* writes:

Stalin’s letters and articles testify to the unshakable unity of fighting effort and political line that bound Lenin and the genius who was his companion in arms.

In order to achieve this appreciation it was necessary to issue one after another several editions of the encyclopedia, liquidating along the way no mean number of editors.

Alliluyev tells how one day early in September, on his way home, he noticed spies at the gate of his house, and, going upstairs to his flat, he found Stalin and another Georgian Bolshevik there. When Alliluyev told him about the “tail” he left downstairs, Stalin retorted, not any too courteously: “What the devil is the matter with you?... Some comrades are turning into scared Philistines and yokels!” But the spies proved real enough: on 9th September Koba was arrested and by 22nd December he was already in his place of exile, this time in the provincial capital of Vologda – that is, in more favourable circumstances than heretofore. It is likely that this exile was simply punishment for unlawful residence in Petersburg.

The Bolshevik centre abroad continued to send emissaries to Russia, to prepare the conference. The contact between local Social-Democratic groups was established slowly and was frequently broken. Provocation raged, the

arrests were devastating. However, the sympathy with which the idea of a conference was met by the advanced workers showed at once, according to Olminsky, that “the workers merely tolerated liquidationism, and inwardly were far from desiring it.” Extremely difficult conditions notwithstanding, the emissaries managed to establish contact with a great many local illegal groups. “It was like a gust of fresh air,” wrote the same Olminsky.

PRAGUE CONFERENCE

At the conference convoked in Prague on 5th January, 1912, were fifteen delegates from a score of underground organisations – for the most part very weak ones. The reports of the delegates drew a sufficiently clear picture of the state of the Party: the few local organisations were composed almost exclusively of Bolsheviks, with a large percentage of provocateurs, who betrayed the organisation as soon as it began to get on its feet. Particularly sad was the situation in the Caucasus. “There is no organisation of any kind at Chiatury,” reported Ordzhonikidze about the only industrial spot in Georgia. “Nor is there any organisation in Batumi.” In Tiflis – “the same picture. During the last few years there was not a single leaflet and no illegal work of any kind...” In spite of the obvious weakness of local groups, the conference reflected the new spirit of optimism. The masses were getting into motion, the Party sensed the trade wind in its sails.

The decisions reached at Prague determined the Party’s course for a long time to come. In the first place, the conference recognised as necessary the creation of Social-Democratic nuclei surrounded by as extensive a network as possible of all sorts of legal workers’ societies. The poor harvest, which led to the famine of twenty million peasants, confirmed once more, according to the conference, “the impossibility of securing any sort of normal bourgeois development in Russia as long as its policy is directed... by the class of serfdom-minded landlords.” “The task of the conquest of power by the proletariat, leading the peasantry, remains as ever the task of the democratic revolution in Russia.” The conference declared the faction of Liquidators outside the Party’s ranks and appealed to all Social-Democrats, “regardless of tendencies and shadings”, to wage war on the Liquidators in the name of reconstituting the illegal Party. Having thus gone all the way in breaking with the Mensheviks, the Prague Conference opened the era of the independent existence of the Bolshevik Party, with its own Central Committee.

The newest ‘History’ of the Party, published in 1938 under Stalin’s editorial guidance, states:

The members of that Central Committee were Lenin, Stalin, Ordzhonikidze, Sverdlov, Goloshchekin, and others. Stalin and Sverdlov were elected to the Central Committee *in absentia*, since at the time they were in exile.

But in the official collection of party documents (1926) we read:

The conference elected a new Central Committee composed of Lenin, Zinoviev, Ordzhonikidze, Spandaryan, Victor (Ordynsky), Malinovsky and Goloshchekin.

The 'History' does not include in the Central Committee either Zinoviev, or the provocateur Malinovsky; but it does include Stalin, who was not on the old list. The explanation of this riddle can throw some light on Stalin's position in the Party of those days as well as on the present methods of Muscovite historiography. As a matter of fact, Stalin was not elected at the conference, but was made a member of the Central Committee soon after the conference by way of what was called co-optation. The above-mentioned official source states that quite definitely:

Later Comrade Koba (Djughashvili-Stalin) and Vladimir (Belostostky, former worker of the Putilov plant) were co-opted into the Central Committee.

Likewise, according to the materials of the Moscow Okhrana, Djughashvili was made a member of the Central Committee after the conference on the basis of the right of co-optation reserved for members of the Central Committee. The same information is given by all Soviet reference books, without exception, until the year 1929, when Stalin's instruction, which revolutionised historical scholarship, was published. In the jubilee publication of 1937 devoted to the conference we read:

Stalin could not participate in the work of the Prague Conference because at the time he was in banishment at Solvychevodsk. At the time Lenin and the Party already knew Stalin as an important leader... Therefore, in accordance with Lenin's proposal, the delegates to the conference elected Stalin to the Central Committee *in absentia*.

The question whether Stalin was elected at the conference or co-opted later by the Central Committee may seem of minor importance. As a matter of fact, that is not the case. Stalin wanted to become a member of the Central Committee. Lenin deemed it necessary to have him elected to the Central Committee. The choice of available candidates was so limited that second-rate figures became members of the Central Committee. Yet Koba was not elected. Why? Lenin was far from being a dictator in his Party. Besides, a

revolutionary party would not brook any dictatorship over itself! After preliminary negotiations with delegates, Lenin apparently deemed it wiser not to advance Koba's candidacy. "When in 1912 Lenin brought Stalin into the Central Committee of the Party," writes Dmitrievsky, "it was met with indignation. Openly no one opposed it. But they gave vent to their indignation among themselves." The information of the former diplomat, which as a rule does not merit confidence, is nevertheless of interest insofar as it reflects bureaucratic recollections and gossip. Lenin undoubtedly met with serious opposition. There was but one thing he could do: wait until the conference came to an end and then appeal to the small leading circle, which either relied on Lenin's recommendation or shared his estimate of the candidate. Thus, Stalin for the first time came into the Central Committee through the back door.

The story about the internal organisation of the Central Committee underwent similar metamorphoses.

The Central Committee...upon Lenin's motion, created a Bureau of the Central Committee, headed by Comrade Stalin, for guiding Party activity in Russia. In addition to Stalin, the Russian Bureau of the Central Committee was composed of Sverdlov, Spandaryan, Ordzhonikidze, Kalinin.

So states Beria, who, while I was at work on this chapter, was appointed chief of Stalin's secret police; his scholarly endeavours did not remain unrewarded. In vain, however, would we look for any documentary support of this version, which is repeated in the latest 'History'. In the first place, no one was ever placed "at the head" of Party institutions: such a method of election did not exist at all. According to the old official reference books, the Central Committee elected "a bureau composed of: Ordzhonikidze, Spandaryan, Stalin, and Goloshchekin." The same list is given also in the notes to Lenin's works. Among the papers of the Moscow Okhrana the first three – "Timofei, Sergo, and Koba" – are named as members of the Russian Bureau of the Central Committee under their aliases. It is not devoid of interest that in all the old lists Stalin occupies invariably either the last or the next to the last place, which could not have been the case, of course, had he been placed "at the head". Goloshchekin, having been expelled from the Party machine in the course of one of the later purges, was likewise crowded out of the 1912 bureau; his place was taken by the fortunate Kalinin. History is becoming clay in the hands of the potter.

On 24th February, Ordzhonikidze informed Lenin that at Vologda he had visited Ivanovich [Stalin]: “Came to a definite understanding with him. He is satisfied with the way things turned out.” The reference is to the decision of the Prague Conference. Koba learned that, at last, he had been co-opted into the recently created “centre”. On 28th February he escaped from exile, in his new capacity as member of the Central Committee. After a brief sojourn at Baku, he proceeded to Petersburg. Two months earlier he had turned thirty-two.

THE NEWSPAPER

Koba's advancement from the provincial arena to the national one coincided with the resurgence of the labour movement and the comparatively widespread development of the labour press. Under the pressure of the underground forces, the tsarist authorities lost their erstwhile self-assurance. The hand of the censor weakened. Lawful possibilities became more extensive. Bolshevism broke through into the open, at first with a weekly, later with a daily newspaper. At once the possibilities for exerting influence on the workers increased. The Party continued in the underground, but the editorial boards of its newspapers became for the time being the legal staffs of the revolution. The name of the Petersburg *Pravda* coloured an entire period of the labour movement, when the Bolsheviks began to be called ‘Pravdists’. During the two and a half years of the newspaper's existence, the government closed it eight times, but each time it reappeared under some similar name. On some of the most crucial questions the *Pravda* was often forced to limit itself to understatements and hints. But its underground agitators and proclamations said for it what it itself could not say openly. Besides, the advanced workers had meantime learned to read between the lines. A circulation of forty thousand may seem all too modest by comparison with Western European or American standards. But under the over-sensitive political acoustics of tsarist Russia, the Bolshevik newspaper, through its direct subscribers and readers, found a responsive echo among hundreds of thousands. Thus, the young revolutionary generation rallied around *Pravda* under the leadership of those veterans who had withstood the years of reaction. “The *Pravda* of 1912 was laying the foundation for the victory of Bolshevism in 1917,” Stalin wrote subsequently, hinting at his own participation in that activity.

Lenin, whom the news of Stalin's escape had not yet reached, complained on 15th March: “Nothing from Ivanovich – what's the matter with him? Where is he? How is he?...” Men were scarce. There were no suitable people

even at the capital. In the same letter Lenin wrote that an illegal person was “damnably” needed at Petersburg, “since things are in a bad way there. It’s a hard and furious war. We have no information, no leadership, no supervision of the newspaper.” Lenin was waging “a hard and furious war” with the editorial board of *Zvezda* [‘The Star’] which balked about waging war with the Liquidators. “Hurry up and fight with *Zhiuoye Dyelo* [‘The Living Cause’, a journal of the Liquidators] – then victory is assured. Otherwise, it will go badly with us. Don’t be afraid of polemics...” Lenin insisted again in March, 1912. Such was the leitmotif of all his letters in those days.

“What’s the matter with him? Where is he? How is he?” we might well repeat after Lenin. Stalin’s actual role – as usual, behind the scenes – is not easy to determine: a thorough appraisal of facts and documents is needed. His duties as a member of the Central Committee in Petersburg – that is, as one of the official leaders of the Party – extended, of course, to the illegal press as well. Yet prior to the instructions to the ‘historians’ that circumstance was relegated to utter oblivion. Collective memory has its own laws, which do not always coincide with Party regulations. *Zvezda* was founded in December, 1910, when the first signs of revival became evident. “Lenin, Zinoviev and Kamenev,” states the official notice, “were most closely associated in making arrangements for the publication and in editing it from abroad.” The editorial board of Lenin’s works names eleven persons among its chief collaborators in Russia, forgetting to mention Stalin among them. Yet there is no doubt that he was a member of this newspaper’s staff and by virtue of his position an influential one. The same forgetfulness – nowadays it might be called sabotage of memory – is characteristic of all the old memoirs and reference books. Even in a special issue which in 1927 *Pravda* devoted to its own fifteenth anniversary, not a single article, not even the editorial, mentions the name of Stalin. Studying the old publications, one refuses at times to credit his own eyes!

The only exception is found in the valuable memoirs of Olminsky, one of those most closely associated with *Zvezda* and *Pravda*, who describes Stalin’s role in the following words:

Stalin and Sverdlov appeared in Petersburg at various times after their flight from exile... The presence of both at Petersburg (until their new arrest) was brief, but each time managed to produce considerable effect on the work of the newspaper, the faction, and the like.

This bare statement, incorporated, moreover, not in the main text, but as a footnote, probably characterises the situation most accurately. Stalin would show up in Petersburg for short periods from time to time, bring pressure to bear on the organisation, on the Duma faction, on the newspaper, and would again disappear. His appearances were too transitory, his influence too much of the Party machine kind, his ideas and articles too commonplace to have left a lasting impression on anyone's memory. When people write memoirs otherwise than under duress, they do not remember the official functions of bureaucrats but the vital activity of vital people, vivid facts, clear-cut formulae, original proposals. Stalin did not distinguish himself with anything of the kind. No wonder then that the grey copy was not remembered alongside the vivid original. True, Stalin did not merely paraphrase Lenin. Bound by his support of the Conciliators, he continued to ply simultaneously the two lines with which we are already familiar from his Solvychegodsk letters – with Lenin, against the Liquidators; with the Conciliators, against Lenin. The first policy was in the open, the second was masked. Neither did Stalin's fight against the *émigré* centre inspire the memoirists, although for a different reason: all of them, actively or passively, took part in the "conspiracy" of the Conciliators against Lenin and hence preferred to turn away from that page of the Party's past. Only subsequent to 1929 did Stalin's official position as a representative of the Central Committee become the basis for the new interpretation of the historical period preceding the war.

Stalin could not have left the impress of his personality on the newspaper for the simple reason that he is not by nature a newspaperman. From April, 1912, through February, 1913, according to the calculations of one of his intimate associates, he published in the Bolshevik press "no less than a score of articles", which is an average of about two articles a month. And that at the high tide of events when life posed new problems each exciting day! True, in the course of that year Stalin spent nearly six months in exile. But it was much easier to contribute to *Pravda* from Solvychegodsk or Vologda than from Krakow, from where Lenin and Zinoviev sent articles and letters every single day. Sluggishness and inordinate cautiousness, utter lack of literary resourcefulness, and, finally, extreme Oriental laziness combined to make Stalin's pen rather unproductive. His articles, more self-assured in tone than during the years of the First Revolution, continued to bear the indelible imprint of mediocrity. He wrote in *Zvezda* of 15th April:

Following the economic demonstrations of the workers, came their political demonstrations. Following strikes for increase in pay, came protests, meetings, political strikes occasioned by the Lena shooting... There is no doubt that the underground forces of the liberation movement have begun to work. Greetings to you, first swallows!

The image of “swallows” as a symbol of “the underground forces” is typical of our author’s style. But, after all, it is clear what he is trying to say. Drawing “conclusions” from the so-called “Lena events,” Stalin analyses – as always, schematically, without regard for living reality – the behaviour of the government and of the political parties, accuses the bourgeoisie of shedding “crocodile tears” over the shooting of the workers and concludes with the admonition: “Now that the first wave of the upswing is passing, the dark forces, which had attempted to hide behind a screen of crocodile tears, are again beginning to appear.” Notwithstanding the startling effect of his image, “the screen of crocodile tears”, which seems particularly whimsical against the otherwise neutral background of the text, the article does state, by and large, what, roughly, should have been said and what scores of others would have said. But it is precisely the “roughness” of his exposition – not only of his style, but of the analysis itself – which makes the reading of Stalin’s writings as unendurable as discordant music to a sensitive ear. He wrote in an illegal proclamation:

It is today, on the first day of May, when nature awakens from the slumber of winter, the woods and mountains are covered with greensward, the fields and meadows are decorated with flowers, the sun begins to warm more warmly, the joy of renewal is sensed in the air, while nature indulges in dancing and exultation – it is precisely today that the workers decided to proclaim to the world that they bring to humanity spring and liberation from the graves of capitalism... The ocean of the labour movement spreads ever wider... The sea of proletarian anger rises in mounting waves... Certain of victory, calm and strong, they march proudly on the road to the Promised Land, on the road to effulgent socialism.

Here is the Petersburg revolution speaking the language of Tiflis homiletics.

The strike wave swelled, contacts with the workers multiplied. The weekly could no longer fill the needs of the movement. *Zvezda* began to collect money for a daily newspaper. “At the end of the winter of 1912,” writes the former deputy Poletayev, “Stalin, who had fled from exile, came to Petersburg. The work of establishing a labour newspaper gained momentum.” In his 1922 article on the tenth anniversary of *Pravda* Stalin himself wrote:

It was in the middle of April 1912, in the evening, at the apartment of Poletayev, that two Duma deputies (Pokrovsky and Poletayev), two literaries (Olminsky and Baturin) and I, a member of the Central Committee... came to agreement on the platform of *Pravda* and made up the newspaper's first issue.

Stalin's responsibility for the *Pravda* platform was thus established by Stalin himself. The essence of that platform may be summarised in the words, "work, the rest will take care of itself." True, Stalin himself was arrested on 22nd April, the very day the first issue of *Pravda* came out. But for almost three months *Pravda* was true to the platform worked out jointly with him. The word 'liquidator' was expunged from the newspaper's vocabulary.

"Irreconcilable war with liquidationism was indispensable," writes Krupskaya. "That is why Vladimir Ilyich was so disturbed when from the very start the *Pravda* persistently deleted from his articles all polemics with the Liquidators. He wrote irate letters to *Pravda*." A part of them – evidently, only a small part – has managed to see the light. "At times, although that was rare," she further complains, "Ilyich's articles would be lost without a trace. At other times, his articles were held up, were not published at once. It was then that Ilyich became nervous, wrote irate letters to *Pravda*, but it didn't do much good."

The fight with the editorial board of *Pravda* was a direct continuation of the fight with the editorial board of *Zvezda*. "It is harmful, disastrous, ridiculous to hide differences of opinion from the workers," wrote Lenin on 11th July, 1912. Several days later he demanded that the secretary of the editorial board, Molotov, the present [Vice] Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars and People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs, explain why the newspaper "persistently and systematically strikes out of my articles and out of the articles of other colleagues any mention of the Liquidators?" Meantime, elections to the Fourth Duma were approaching. Lenin warned:

The elections in the workers' curiae of Petersburg will undoubtedly be accompanied by a fight all along the line with the Liquidators. This will prove the most vital issue for the advanced workers. Yet their newspaper will be silent, will avoid the word, 'liquidator!'... To dodge these questions is to commit suicide.

Sitting in Krakow, Lenin discerned sharply enough the tacit yet persistent conspiracy of the conciliatory higher-ups of the Party. But he was thoroughly convinced that he was right. The rapid revitalisation of the labour movement was bound to pose sharply the fundamental problems of the revolution, sweeping away the ground not only from under the feet of the Liquidators

but of the Conciliators as well. Lenin's strength did not lie so much in his ability to build a machine – he knew how to do that, too – as in his ability at all critical moments to utilise the living energy of the masses for overcoming the limitations and the conservatism characteristic of any political machine. It was so in this instance, too. Under the growing pressure of the workers and under the lash from Krakow, *Pravda*, reluctantly and constantly balking, began to abandon its position of dilatory neutrality.

Stalin spent a little more than two months in the Petersburg prison. On 2nd July he left for his new exile of four years, this time across the Urals, in the northern part of Tomsk Province – in Narym Region, famous for its forests, lakes and swamps. Vereshchak, already known to us, again met Koba in the village of Kolpashevo, where the latter spent several days *en route* to his destination. Here were Sverdlov, I. Smirnov², Lashevich³, classic old Bolsheviks. It was not easy to predict then that Lashevich would die in Stalin's exile, that Smirnov would be shot by him and that only premature death would save Sverdlov from a similar fate. "Stalin's arrival at the Narym Region," wrote Vereshchak, "enlivened the activity of the Bolsheviks and was marked by quite a few escapes." After several others, Stalin himself escaped: "He went away almost openly with the first spring steamer..." As a matter of fact, Stalin escaped at the end of summer. This was his fourth escape.

2 Ivan Nikitich Smirnov (1881-1936) joined the RSDLP on its founding and became a Bolshevik. Called up for military service in 1916 he was stationed in Tomsk where he led the formation of the Soviet in 1917. During the Civil War he was first a member of the Revolutionary Military Council of the Eastern Front and then the 5th Army; in the early 1920s he was a member of the Executive of the Bolshevik Party, the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet and People's Commissar for Telegraphs and Communications. In 1923 he declared himself for the Trotskyist Opposition which led to his removal from his post of People's Commissar and his expulsion from the Party. In 1929 he recanted and was re-admitted to the Party only to be re-expelled in 1933, arrested again in 1936 when he was charged with being an 'Anti-Soviet Trotskyite-Zinovievite'. Found guilty, he was executed the following day.

3 Mikhail Lashevich (1884-1928) joined the RSDLP in 1901 and was a Bolshevik from 1903. Conscripted into the tsarist army during World War I he returned to Petrograd after the February Revolution and was active in the Petrograd Soviet, helping to plan the overthrow of the Provisional Government and the capture of the Winter Palace. During the Civil War, Lashevich was a senior commander in the Red Army and contributed to the defeat of Kolchak, Denikin and Yudenich. In 1923 he was elected to the CC of the Bolshevik Party, but he was critical of Stalin and supported the Left Opposition. Expelled as an Oppositionist in 1927 and sent to Harbin to act as chairman of the Chinese Eastern Railway, Lashevich committed suicide in August, 1928.

Upon his return to Petersburg on 12th September, he found a considerably altered situation there. Stormy strikes were going on. The workers again poured into the streets with revolutionary slogans. The policy of the Mensheviks was obviously discredited. *Pravda's* influence grew apace. Besides, Duma elections were near. The tone for the election campaign had already been set by Krakow. The grounds of argument were chosen. The Bolsheviks engaged in the election fight apart from the Liquidators and against them. The workers were to be welded together under the banner of the three main slogans of the democratic revolution: the republic, the eight-hour day, and confiscation of landed estates. Liberate the petty-bourgeois democrats from the influence of the liberals, draw the peasants to the side of the workers – such were the leading ideas of Lenin's election platform. Combining painstaking attention to details with audacious sweep of thought, Lenin was practically the only Marxist who had thoroughly studied all the possibilities and pitfalls of Stolypin's election law. Having politically inspired the election campaign, he guided it technically day by day. To help Petersburg, he sent in from abroad articles and instructions and thoroughly prepared emissaries.

Safarov, now among the missing, on his way from Switzerland to Petersburg in the spring of 1912, stopped at Krakow, where he learned that Inessa⁴, a leading Party activist who was close to Lenin, was also going there to help in the election campaign. "For at least a couple of days on end Ilyich pumped us full of instructions." The election of the workers' curiae representatives in Petersburg was set for 16th September. Inessa and Safarov were arrested on the 14th. "But the police did not yet know," wrote Krupskaya, "that on the 12th Stalin, who had escaped from exile, had arrived. The elections to the workers' curiae were a great success." Krupskaya did not say: "Thanks to Stalin." She merely placed two sentences side-by-side. That was a measure of passive self-defence. "At extempore meetings in a number of factories," we read in a new edition of the reminiscences of the former Duma deputy Badayev (this was not in the first edition), "Stalin, who had recently escaped from Narym, spoke." According to Alliluyev, who wrote his reminiscences as late as 1937, "Stalin directly managed the entire tremendous Fourth Duma election campaign..."

Living illegally in Petersburg, without a definite permanent haven, and not wishing to disturb any of his close comrades during the late hours of the night, after a workers' meeting that had dragged on and also because of conspiratorial considerations, Stalin would often spend the remainder of the night in some tavern over a glass of tea.

4 Inessa Fedorovna Armand (1874-1920).

Here he also managed occasionally "to take a short nap, sitting in the tavern that reeked of *makhorka* smoke."

Stalin could not have exerted great influence on the issue of the elections in the earlier stages, when it was necessary to come in direct contact with the voters, not only because he was a poor speaker, but because he had no more than four days at his disposal. He made up for that by playing an important part throughout the subsequent stages of the many-storied electoral system, whenever it was necessary to muster the curiae representatives and manage them by pulling wires from behind the scenes, relying on the illegal apparatus. In that activity Stalin undoubtedly proved himself more apt than anyone else.

An important document of the election campaign was *The Instruction of the Petersburg Workers to Their Deputy*. In the first edition of his memoirs Badayev states that this instruction was composed by the Central Committee, but in the new edition its authorship is ascribed personally to Stalin. In all likelihood the instruction was the product of collective effort, in which the final say might have been Stalin's, as the representative of the Central Committee.

"We think," it is stated in the *Instruction*, "that Russia lives on the eve of impending mass movements probably far more fundamental than in 1905... As in 1905, the initiator of these movements will be the most progressive class of Russian society, the Russian proletariat. Its ally can be only the long-suffering peasantry, which is deeply concerned with the liberation of Russia." Lenin wrote to the *Pravda* editorial board: "Publish without fail... this *Instruction*...in large type and in a prominent place." The convention of provincial representatives adopted the Bolshevik *Instruction* by an overwhelming majority. In those stirring days Stalin also figured more actively as a publicist; I counted four of his articles in *Pravda* within one week.

The election results in Petersburg, as in all the industrial regions generally, were quite favourable. Bolshevik candidates were elected in six of the most important provinces, which altogether comprised about four-fifths of the working class. The seven Liquidators were elected chiefly by the votes of the city petty-bourgeoisie. "In contradistinction to the elections of 1907," wrote Stalin in his correspondence to the central organ published abroad, "the elections of 1912 coincided with the revolutionary revival among the workers." Precisely for that reason the workers, who were quite remote from the Boycottist tendency, fought actively for their rights of suffrage. The government commission made an attempt to invalidate the elections in some of the largest Petersburg factories. The workers countered that with a

unanimous strike of protest, which achieved its purpose. “It is not superfluous to add,” the author of this correspondence continues, “that the initiative in this election campaign was that of the Central Committee representative.” The reference here is to Stalin himself. His political conclusions on the election campaign were: “The revolutionary Social-Democracy is alive and powerful – such is the first conclusion. The Liquidators are political bankrupts – such is the second conclusion.” And that was right.

THE DUMA FACTION

The seven Mensheviks, largely intellectuals, tried to place the six Bolsheviks, workers with little political experience, under their own control. At the end of November Lenin wrote personally to Vassilyev [Stalin]: “If all of our six are from the workers’ curiae, they must not submit in silence to a lot of Siberians. The six must come out with a very clear-cut protest, if they are being lorded over...” Stalin’s reply to that letter, as to others, remains under lock and key. But Lenin’s appeal did not meet with sympathy: the six themselves rated unity with the Liquidators, who had been declared “out of the Party”, above their own political independence. In a special resolution published in *Pravda*, the united faction acknowledged that “the unity of the Social-Democracy is a pressing need”, expressed itself in favour of merging *Pravda* with the Liquidators’ newspaper *Lootch* (‘The Ray’) and, as a step in that direction, recommended that all of its members become contributors to both newspapers. On 18th December the Menshevik *Lootch* triumphantly published the names of four of the Bolshevik deputies (two having declined) on its list of contributors; the names of the members of the Menshevik faction appeared simultaneously on the *Pravda* masthead. Conciliationism had won again, which in essence meant a defeat for the spirit and the letter of the Prague Conference.

Soon on the list of the *Lootch* contributors appeared still another name – Gorky’s. That smelled of a plot. “And how did you happen to get mixed up with *Lootch*???” Lenin wrote to Gorky with three question marks. “Is it possible that you are following in the footsteps of the deputies? But they have simply fallen into a trap!” Stalin was in Petersburg during this ephemeral triumph of the Conciliators, affecting the Central Committee’s control over the faction and over *Pravda*. No one has disclosed anything concerning a protest from him against decisions that struck a cruel blow at Lenin’s policy – a sure sign that behind the scenes of the Conciliationist manoeuvres stood Stalin himself. Justifying subsequently his sinful behaviour, Deputy Badayev wrote: “As on all other occasions, our decision... was in agreement with the attitude of those

Party circles in which we had then occasion to discuss our activities...” This roundabout excuse hints at the Petersburg Bureau of the Central Committee and first of all at Stalin. Badayev is circumspectly pleading that the blame should not be shifted from the leaders to the led.

Several years ago it was observed in the Soviet press, that not enough light has been shed on the history of Lenin’s internal struggle with the Duma fraction and with the editorial board of *Pravda*. In recent years everything has been done to make such enlightenment more difficult than ever. Lenin’s correspondence of that critical period has not yet been published in full. At the historians’ disposal are only such documents as for one reason or another had been taken out of the archives prior to the institution of totalitarian control. However, even from these scattered fragments a faultless picture emerges. Lenin’s intractability was only the other side of his realistic far-sightedness. He insisted on division along the line which in the final reckoning was bound to become the battle line of the civil war. The empiricist Stalin was constitutionally incapable of taking a long-range point of view. He energetically fought the Liquidators during the campaign, in order to have his own deputies: it was a matter of securing an important point of support. But once this organisational task had been performed, he did not deem it necessary to raise a new “tempest in a teapot”, especially since even the Mensheviks, under the influence of the revolutionary wave, seemed to be inclined to talk a different language. Truly, there was no reason for “crawling up the wall”! As far as Lenin was concerned, his whole policy came down to the revolutionary education of the masses. The struggle of the election campaign meant nothing to him as long as after the election the Social-Democratic deputies in the Duma remained united. He deemed it necessary to give the workers every opportunity – at each step, with each act – to convince themselves that in all fundamental questions the Bolsheviks were clearly distinguishable from all other political groups. This was the most important point of conflict between Krakow and Petersburg.

The waverings of the Duma fraction were closely connected with *Pravda*’s policy. “During that period,” wrote Badayev in 1930, “Stalin, whose status was illegal, ran *Pravda*”. The well-informed Savelyev wrote likewise: “Remaining in illegal status, Stalin actually ran the newspaper during the autumn of 1912 and the winter of 1912-13. Only for a short while did he leave during that time, going abroad, to Moscow, and other places.” These eyewitness accounts, consistent with all the factual circumstances, cannot be questioned. Yet it was not true that Stalin ran the paper in the real sense of the word. The man who really ran the newspaper was Lenin. Every day he sent articles, criticisms of

the articles of others, proposals, instructions, corrections. Stalin, a sluggish thinker, could not possibly keep up with this active stream of suggestions and ideas, nine-tenths of which seemed to him superfluous or exaggerated. Essentially the editorial board maintained a defensive position. It had no political ideas of its own, and tried merely to dull the sharp edges of the Krakow policy. Lenin not only knew how to shield these sharp edges, but also how to sharpen them anew. Under these conditions, Stalin naturally became the secret inspirer of the Conciliators' opposition to Lenin's pressure. The editorial board of Lenin's *Works* (Bukharin, Molotov, Savelyev) states:

New conflicts arose in consequence of the weakness of the stand taken against the Liquidators at the end of the election campaign and also in connection with the invitation extended to the Vperyodists to contribute to *Pravda*. These relations became still worse in January, 1913, after the departure from Petersburg of J. Stalin...

The thoroughly considered expression, "became still worse," testifies that even prior to Stalin's departure Lenin's relations with the editorial board were not marked by friendliness. But Stalin avoided in every way making "a target" of himself.

The members of the editorial staff were figures of little influence in a Party sense and some of them chance figures. It would not have been hard for Lenin to have secured their replacement. But they had support in the attitude of the Party's higher-ups and in the person of the Central Committee's representative. A violent conflict with Stalin, who was closely connected with the editorial board and the fraction, would have meant a shake-up of the Party staff. That is why, for all its persistence, Lenin's policy was circumspect. On 13th November he was "deeply grieved" to reproach the editorial board for having failed to have an article on the opening of the International Socialist Congress at Basel: "It would not have been very hard to write such an article, and the *Pravda* editorial board knew that the Congress was opening on Sunday." Stalin, no doubt, was genuinely surprised. An international congress? In Basel? That was utterly remote from him. Yet the chief source of friction was not the incidental – although continually recurring – errors, but rather the fundamental divergence in views on the Party's course of development. Lenin's policy made sense only to one with an audacious revolutionary perspective; from the point of view of newspaper circulation or the building of a machine, it could not seem other than highly extravagant. In the depth of his heart Stalin continued to regard the 'émigré' Lenin as a sectarian.

We cannot avoid noting a delicate episode that occurred at that time. During those years Lenin was in dire need. When *Pravda* got on its feet, the editorial board designated for its inspirer and chief contributor an honorarium, which, its very modest size notwithstanding, was his financial mainstay. Just when the conflict waxed sharpest, the money stopped coming. Although he was exceptionally sensitive about matters of that sort, Lenin was compelled to remind them rather insistently about himself. “Why don’t you send the money due me? The delay causes us considerable embarrassment. Don’t be late, please.” The holding up of the money can hardly be looked upon as a kind of financial punishment (although subsequently, when he was in power, Stalin did not hesitate to resort to such methods time and again). But even if it was all a matter of simple inattentiveness, it casts a sufficient light on the relations between Petersburg and Krakow. Indeed, they were very far from friendly.

Indignation with *Pravda* breaks through into the open in Lenin’s letters immediately after Stalin’s departure for Krakow to attend the conference at the Party headquarters. The irresistible impression is created that Lenin was only waiting for that departure in order to break up the Petersburg nest of Conciliators, preserving at the same time the possibility of a peaceful understanding with Stalin. The moment the most influential enemy was neutralised, Lenin launched a devastating attack on the Petersburg editorial board. In his letter of 12th January, addressed to a trusted person in Petersburg, he refers to “the unpardonable stupidity” committed by *Pravda* in regard to the newspaper of the textile workers, insists on the correction of “your stupidity” and the like. The letter in its entirety was written in Krupskaya’s hand. Further, in Lenin’s handwriting:

We received a stupid and impudent letter from the editorial board. We will not reply. They must be got rid of... We are exceedingly disturbed by the absence of news about the plan for reorganising the editorial board... Reorganisation, but better yet, the complete expulsion of all the old timers, is extremely necessary. It’s managed absurdly. They praise the Bund and *Zeit* (an opportunist Jewish publication), which is simply despicable. They don’t know how to proceed against *Lootch*, and their attitude toward the articles [that is, the articles of Lenin himself] is monstrous. I’ve simply lost patience...

The tone of the letter shows that Lenin’s indignation – and he knew how to contain himself when necessary – had reached the limit. The devastating criticism of the newspaper referred to the entire period when the responsibility for its direct supervision was Stalin’s. The identity of the person who wrote

the “stupid and impudent letter from the editorial board” has not yet been disclosed, and, of course, not by chance. It could hardly have been written by Stalin: he was too cautious for that; besides, he was most likely already away from Petersburg at the time. It is more likely that the letter was written by Molotov, the official secretary of the editorial board, who is just as inclined to rudeness as Stalin but is devoid of the latter’s flexibility.

How resolutely Lenin now tackled the chronic conflict is evident from further lines in his letter: “What has been done about the control of money? Who got the subscription money? In whose possession is it? How much does it amount to?” Lenin apparently did not exclude the possibility of a break and was concerned with keeping the financial resources in his own hands. But it did not come to a break; the disconcerted Conciliators could scarcely have dared to think of it. Passive resistance was their sole weapon. Now even that would be knocked out of their hands.

Replying to Shklovsky’s pessimistic letter from Bern and arguing that the affairs of the Bolsheviks were not so bad as they seemed, Krupskaya began with the acknowledgment, “of course, *Pravda* is badly managed.” That phrase sounds like common ground, like something beyond dispute. “Every Tom, Dick and Harry is on that editorial staff, and most of them are not literaries... The workers’ protests against *Lootch* are not published, in order to avoid polemics.” However, Krupskaya promises “substantial reforms” in the near future. This letter was written on 19th January. The next day Lenin wrote to Petersburg, through Krupskaya:

...we must plant our own editorial staff in *Pravda* and kick the present one out. Things are now in a very bad way. The absence of a campaign for unity from below is stupid and despicable... Would you call such people editors? They are not men but pitiful dish-rags and they are ruining the cause.

This was the style to which Lenin resorted when he wanted to show that he would fight it out to the bitter end.

He opened a parallel fire from carefully placed batteries against the conciliationism of the Duma fraction. As early as 3rd January he wrote to Petersburg: “See to it unconditionally that the letter of the Baku workers which we are sending you is published...” The letter demands that the Bolshevik deputies break with *Lootch*. Pointing to the fact that in the course of five years, the Liquidators “have been reiterating in every way that the party has died”, the Baku workers asked: “Wherefore now their present urge to unite with a corpse?” The question hits the mark rather neatly. “When

will the four [deputies] resign from *Lootch*?" Lenin persisted for his part. "Must we wait much longer?... Even from distant Baku twenty workers are protesting." It would not be amiss to presume that, having failed to obtain through letter-writing the break of the deputies with *Lootch*. Lenin discreetly began to mobilise the lower ranks while Stalin was still in Petersburg. No doubt it was upon his initiative that the Baku workers protested – not by chance did Lenin choose Baku! – and besides, they sent their protest not to the editorial office of *Pravda*, where the Baku leader Koba was in charge, but to Lenin in Krakow. The complex threads of the conflict become flagrantly apparent. Lenin advances. Stalin manoeuvres. With the Conciliators balking, though not without the unwitting aid of the Liquidators, who more and more exposed their opportunism, Lenin managed before long to induce the Bolshevik deputies to resign under protest as contributors to *Lootch*. But they continued to be bound by the discipline of the liquidationist majority of the Duma fraction.

Preparing for the worst, even for a split, Lenin, as always, did all he could to achieve his political goal with the least disturbance and fewest victims possible. This was exactly why he first asked Stalin to come abroad and then was able to make him understand that it would be best for him to stay away from *Pravda* during the forthcoming "reforms". Meantime another member of the Central Committee was sent to Petersburg – Sverdlov, the future First President of the Soviet Republic. That significant fact has been officially attested. "For the purpose of reorganising the editorial board," proclaims a footnote in the sixteenth volume of Lenin's *Works*, "the Central Committee sent Sverdlov to Petersburg." Lenin wrote him: "Today we learned about the beginning of reforms on *Pravda*. A thousand greetings, congratulations and wishes for success... You cannot imagine how tired we are of working with an utterly hostile editorial staff." With these words, in which accumulated bitterness mingled with a sigh of relief, Lenin settled scores with the editorial board for the whole period of difficulties during which, as we have been told, "Stalin actually ran the newspaper."

POLICE AGENTS

"The author of these lines vividly remembers," wrote Zinoviev in 1934, when the sword of Damocles was already hanging over his head, "what an event was Stalin's arrival in Krakow..." Lenin was doubly glad – because during Stalin's absence from Petersburg he would be able to carry out his delicate operation there and because he would probably be able to do it without any shake-up

inside the Central Committee. In her sparing and wary account of Stalin's sojourn in Krakow, Krupskaya, as if slipping it in, observed: "Ilyich was then very nervous about *Pravda*; Stalin was also nervous. They were parleying as to how to adjust matters." These very significant lines, for all their intentional obscurity, is all that apparently remains from franker text set aside upon the censor's demand. In connection with circumstances already known to us, it is hardly possible to doubt that Lenin and Stalin "were nervous" for different reasons, each trying to defend his policy. However, the struggle was too unequal: Stalin had to retreat.

The Conference for which he was called lasted from 28th December to 1st January, 1913, and was attended by eleven persons – members of the Central Committee and the Duma fraction and prominent local leaders. In addition to general political problems arising from the revolutionary resurgence, the conference considered the acute questions of internal Party life – the Duma fraction, the Party press, the attitude toward the Liquidators and toward the slogan of 'unity'. The principal reports were made by Lenin. It must be supposed that the Duma deputies and their leader, Stalin, were obliged to listen to not a few bitter truths, although these were expressed in a friendly tone. It seems that Stalin kept his peace at the conference; only that can explain the fact that in the first edition of his memoirs (1929), the deferential Badayev failed even to list him among the participants. To keep silent under critical conditions is, moreover, Stalin's favourite method. The protocols and other documents of the conference "have not yet been found." Very likely special measures were taken to make sure that they should not be found. In one of Krupskaya's letters of that period to Russia it is stated:

At this conference the reports from locals were very interesting. Everybody was saying that the masses have now grown up... During the elections it had become apparent that there were self-made workers' organisations everywhere... For the most part they are not connected with the Party, but they are of the Party in spirit.

As for Lenin, he noted in a letter to Gorky that the conference "was very successful" and "will play its part." Above all, he had in mind the straightening out of the Party's policy.

Not without a touch of irony, the Police Department informed the man in charge of its agency abroad that, his last report notwithstanding, deputy Poletayev was not present at the conference, while the following persons were: Lenin, Zinoviev, Krupskaya; deputies Malinovsky, Petrovsky, Badayev; Lobov,

the worker Medvedev, the Lieutenant of Russian Artillery Troyanovsky⁵, Troyanovsky's wife and Koba. Not devoid of interest is the order of the names: on the Department's list Koba's name is last. In the notes to Lenin's *Works* (1929) he is named fifth, after Lenin, Zinoviev, Kamenev and Krupskaya, although Zinoviev, Kamenev and Krupskaya had already been long in disfavour at the time. In the listing of the newest era Stalin invariably occupies the second place, directly after Lenin. These shufflings reflect rather aptly the nature of his historical career.

With this letter the Police Department wanted to show that Petersburg was better informed about what was going on in Krakow than its agent abroad. No wonder one of the important roles at the conference was played by Malinovsky, whose real character as a provocateur was known only to the most exalted on the police Olympus. True, certain Social-Democrats who had come in contact with him became suspicious of him as far back as the years of reaction, but they could not substantiate their misgivings with proofs, and their suspicions relaxed. In January, 1912, Malinovsky was delegated by the Moscow Bolsheviks to attend the conference in Prague. Lenin greedily seized upon this capable and energetic worker and helped to advance his candidacy at the Duma elections. The police, for its part, also supported its agent by arresting all his possible rivals. This representative of the Moscow workers at once established his authority in the Duma fraction. Upon receiving from Lenin the ready-made texts of his parliamentary speeches, Malinovsky would transmit the manuscripts for review to the director of the Police Department. The latter attempted at first to introduce emendations; but the regime of the Bolshevik fraction confined the autonomy of the individual deputy within very narrow limits. Consequently, although the Social-Democratic deputy was the best informer of the Okhrana, the Okhrana agent became the most militant orator of the Social-Democratic fraction.

Suspensions of Malinovsky cropped up again in the summer of 1913 among a number of prominent Bolsheviks; but because of lack of proof, the matter was again dropped. But then the government itself became frightened of possible exposure and of an accompanying political scandal. By order of his superiors, in May of 1914, Malinovsky filed with the President of the Duma a declaration of intention to resign his mandate as a deputy. Rumours of his role spread again and with renewed force, and this time got into the press.

5 Alexander A. Troyanovsky, subsequently Soviet Ambassador to Japan and then the United States and lastly to China, was a former Menshevik who became an ardent follower of Stalin.

Malinovsky went abroad, called on Lenin and demanded an investigation. He had apparently carefully laid out his line of behaviour in collaboration with his police superiors. Two weeks later the Party's Petersburg newspaper published a telegram which indirectly declared that the Central Committee, having investigated the Malinovsky affair, was convinced of his personal integrity. After another few days a resolution was published to the effect that by the wilful resignation of his mandate Malinovsky "placed himself outside the ranks of organised Marxists." In the language of the legal newspaper that meant expulsion from the Party.

Lenin's opponents subjected him to a prolonged and cruel barrage for "sheltering" Malinovsky. The participation of a police agent in the Duma fraction, and especially in the Central Committee, was, of course, a great calamity to the Party. As a matter of fact, Stalin had gone to his last exile because of Malinovsky's betrayal. But in those days suspicions, complicated at times by factional hostility, poisoned the atmosphere of the underground. No one presented any direct evidence against Malinovsky. After all, it was impossible to condemn a member of the Party to political – and perhaps even physical – death on the basis of vague suspicion. And since Malinovsky occupied a responsible position and the reputation of the Party depended to a certain extent on his reputation, Lenin deemed it his duty to defend Malinovsky with the energy which always distinguished him. After the overthrow of the monarchy the fact that Malinovsky had served in the Police Department was fully substantiated. After the October Revolution the provocateur, who returned to Moscow from a German war prisoners' camp, was shot by order of the Tribunal.

THE NATIONAL QUESTION

Notwithstanding the lack of men, Lenin was in no hurry to send Stalin back to Russia. It was necessary to complete "the essential reforms" in Petersburg before he returned. On the other hand, Stalin himself was hardly eager to return to the place of his former labours after the Krakow conference, which, however indirectly, had unmistakably condemned his policy. As usual, Lenin did all he could to obtain an honourable retreat for the vanquished man. Vengeance was altogether alien to his nature. In order to keep Stalin abroad during the crucial period, Lenin got him interested in working on the problem of minor nationalities – an arrangement thoroughly in the spirit of Lenin!

A native of the Caucasus, with its scores of semi-cultured and primitive yet rapidly awakening nationalities, he did not have to have proved to him

the importance of the nationalities problem. The tradition of national independence continued to flourish in Georgia. It was from that that Koba himself had received his first revolutionary impulse. His very pseudonym harked back to his own nationality's struggle for national independence. True, according to Iremashvili, during the years of the First Revolution he had grown cool to the Georgian problem. "National liberation... no longer meant anything to him. He did not want to set any limitations upon his will to power. Russia and the whole world must henceforth be his prize." Iremashvili obviously anticipates the facts and attitudes of a much later time. The one thing beyond doubt is that, having become a Bolshevik, Koba forsook the nationalistic romanticism that continued to live in peace and harmony with the nerveless socialism of the Georgian Mensheviks. But after repudiating the idea of Georgian independence, Koba could not, like many Great-Russians, remain wholly indifferent to the nationalities problem, because relations between Georgians, Armenians, Tatars, Russians and others constantly complicated revolutionary activities in the Caucasus.

In his views Koba became an internationalist. But did he ever become one in his feelings? The Great-Russian Lenin could not endure any jests or anecdotes that were likely to hurt the sensibilities of an oppressed nationality. Stalin had in him too much of the peasant from the village of Didi-Lilo. During the pre-revolutionary years he did not dare, of course, to trifle with national prejudices, as he did later, when he was already in power. But that disposition disclosed itself in small matters even then. Referring to the preponderance of Jews in the Menshevik faction at the London Congress of 1907, Koba wrote:

Apropos of that, one of the Bolsheviks jestingly remarked (I think it was Comrade Alexinsky) that the Mensheviks were a Jewish faction while the Bolsheviks were truly Russian, and hence it would not be amiss for us Bolsheviks to instigate a pogrom in the Party.

It is impossible not to be astonished even now that in an article intended for the workers of the Caucasus, where the air was rife with nationalistic animosities, Stalin ventured to quote a jest of such suspicious odour. It was, moreover, no mere matter of accidental tactlessness but of conscious calculation. In the very same article, the author jauntily "jested" about the congressional resolution on expropriations, for the purpose of dispelling the doubts of the Caucasian fighters. One may confidently assume that the Menshevik faction in Baku was then headed by Jews and that with his "jest" anent [concerning] a pogrom the author intended to discredit his factional opponents in the eyes of the

backward workers. That was easier than to win them through persuasion and education, and Stalin always and in everything sought the line of least resistance. It might be added that neither was Alexinsky's "jest" accidental: that ultra-left Bolshevik subsequently became a downright reactionary and anti-Semite.

Naturally, in his political activities Koba upheld the Party's official position. Yet prior to his journey abroad, his political articles had never been above the level of daily propaganda. Only now, upon Lenin's initiative, did he approach the problem of nationalities from a broader theoretical and political point of view. First-hand knowledge of the intricate national relations in the Caucasus undoubtedly made it easier for him to orient himself in that complicated field, in which abstract theorising was particularly dangerous.

In two countries of pre-war Europe the national question was of exceptional political significance: in tsarist Russia and in Hapsburg Austria-Hungary. In each of these the workers' party created its own school. In the sphere of theory, the Austrian Social-Democracy, in the persons of Otto Bauer and Karl Renner, considered nationality independent of territory, economy and class, transforming it into a species of abstraction limited by so-called 'national character'. In the field of national policy, as for that matter in all other fields, it did not venture beyond a corrective of the *status quo*. Fearing the very thought of dismembering the monarchy, the Austrian Social-Democracy strove to adapt its national programme to the borders of the patchwork state. The programme of so-called 'national cultural autonomy' required that the citizens of one and the same nationality, irrespective of their dispersal over the territory of Austria-Hungary and irrespective of the administrative divisions of the state, should be united, on the basis of purely personal attributes, into one community for the solution of their 'cultural' tasks (the theatre, the church, the school and the like). That programme was artificial and utopian, insofar as it attempted to separate culture from territory and economy in a society torn apart by social contradictions; it was at the same time reactionary, insofar as it led to a forced disunion into various nationalities of the workers of one and the same state, undermining their class strength.

Lenin's position was the direct opposite. Regarding nationality as inseverably connected with territory, economy and class structure, he refused at the same time to regard the historical state, the borders of which cut across the living body of the nations, as a sacrosanct and inviolate category. He demanded recognition of the right to secession and independent existence for each national portion of the state. Insofar as the various nationalities,

voluntarily or through force of necessity, coexist within the borders of one state, their cultural interests must find the highest possible satisfaction within the framework of the broadest regional (and consequently, territorial) autonomy, including statutory guarantees of the rights of each minority. At the same time, Lenin deemed it the incontrovertible duty of all the workers of a given state, irrespective of nationality, to unite in one and the same class organisation.

The national problem was particularly acute in Poland, aggravated by the historical fate of that country. The so-called PPS (Polish Socialist Party), headed by Josef Pilsudski, came out ardently for Polish independence; the "socialism" of the PPS was no more than a vague appendage of its militant nationalism. On the other hand, the Polish Social-Democracy, whose leader was Rosa Luxembourg, counterpoised to the slogan of Polish independence the demand for the autonomy of the Polish region as a constituent part of democratic Russia. Luxembourg proceeded from the consideration that in the epoch of imperialism the separation of Poland from Russia was economically infeasible and in the epoch of socialism – unnecessary. She looked upon "the right of self-determination" as an empty abstraction. The polemic on that question lasted for years. Lenin insisted that imperialism did not reign similarly or equably in all countries, regions and spheres of life; that the heritage of the past represented an accumulation and interpenetration of various historical epochs; that although monopolistic capitalism towers above everything, it does not supersede everything; that, notwithstanding the domination of imperialism, the numerous national problems retained their full force and that, contingent upon the internal and world conjunctures, Poland might become independent even in the epoch of imperialism.

It was Lenin's view that the right of self-determination was merely an application of the principles of bourgeois democracy in the sphere of national relations. A real, full-bodied, all-sided democracy under capitalism was unrealisable; in that sense the national independence of small and weak peoples was likewise "unrealisable". However, even under imperialism, the working class did not refuse to fight for democratic rights, including among them the right of each nation to its independent existence. Moreover, in certain portions of our planet it was imperialism itself that invested the slogan of national self-determination with extraordinary significance. Although Western and Central Europe have somehow managed to solve their national problems in the course of the nineteenth century, in Eastern Europe, Asia, Africa and South America the epoch of national democratic movements had

not really begun to unfold until the twentieth century. To deny the right of nations to self-determination is tantamount in effect to offering aid and comfort to the imperialists against their colonies and generally against all oppressed nationalities.

The problem of nationalities was considerably aggravated in Russia during the period of reaction. Stalin wrote:

The wave of militant nationalism called attention from above to numerous acts of repressions by those in power, who wreaked their vengeance upon the Border States for their love of freedom, calling forth in response a wave of nationalism from below, which at times passed into crude chauvinism.

This was the time of the ritual murder trial of the Kiev Jew Beilis. Retrospectively, in the light of civilisation's latest achievements, especially in Germany and in the USSR, that trial today seems almost a humanitarian experiment. But in 1913 it shocked the whole world. The poison of nationalism began to affect many sections of the working class as well. Alarmed, Gorky wrote to Lenin about the need for counteracting this chauvinistic rabidness. Lenin replied:

As for nationalism, I quite agree with you that we must cope with it more earnestly than ever. We have a splendid Georgian staying with us here who is writing a long article for *Prostreshcheniye* ('Enlightenment'), after garnering all the Austrian and other material. We will bear down on it.

The reference was to Stalin. Gorky, long connected with the party, knew all its leading cadres well. But Stalin evidently was utterly unknown to him, since Lenin had to resort to such an impersonal, although flattering, expression as "a splendid Georgian." This is, by the way, the only occasion when Lenin characterised a prominent Russian revolutionist by the token of his nationality. He had in mind, of course, not a Georgian, but a Caucasian: the element of primitiveness undoubtedly attracted Lenin; small wonder that he treated Kamo with such tenderness.

NATIONAL QUESTION REVISITED

During his two months' sojourn abroad Stalin wrote a brief but very trenchant piece of research entitled *Marxism and the National Question*. Since it was intended for a lawful magazine, the article resorted to a discreet vocabulary. Its revolutionary tendencies were nonetheless distinctly apparent. The author set out by counterpoising the historico-materialistic definition of nation to the abstract-psychological, in the spirit of the Austrian school. "The nation,"

he wrote, "is a historically formed enduring community of language, territory, economic life and psychological composition, asserting itself in the community of culture." This combined definition, compounding the psychological attributes of a nation with the geographic and economic conditions of its development, is not only correct theoretically but also practically fruitful, for then the solution to the problem of each nation's fate must perforce be sought along the lines of changing the material conditions of its existence, beginning with territory. Bolshevism was never addicted to the fetishistic worship of a state's borders. Politically the point was to reconstruct the tsarist empire, that prison of nations, territorially, politically, and administratively, in line with the needs and wishes of the nations themselves.

The party of the proletariat does not enjoin the various nationalities either to remain within the bounds of a given state or to separate from it: that is their own affair. But it does obligate itself to help each of them to realise its actual national will. As for the possibility of separating from a state, that is a matter of concrete historical circumstances and the relation of forces. Stalin wrote:

No one can say that the Balkan War is the end and not the beginning of complications. Quite possible is such a combination of internal and external circumstances that one or another nationality in Russia will deem it necessary to postulate and to solve the problem of its own independence. And, of course, it is no business of the Marxists to place barriers in such cases. But for that very reason Russian Marxists cannot get along without the right of nations to self-determination.

The interests of the nations which voluntarily remain within the bounds of democratic Russia would be fenced off by means of "the autonomies of such self-determined units as Poland, Lithuania, the Ukraine, the Caucasus, and the like. Regional autonomy is conducive to a better utilisation of the natural wealth of the region; it does not divide citizens along national lines and makes it possible for them to group themselves in class parties." The territorial self-administration of regions in all spheres of social life is counterpoised to the extraterritorial – that is, platonic – self-administration of nationalities in matters of "culture" only.

However, most directly and acutely significant, from the point of view of the proletariat's struggle, was the problem of the relations between workers of various nationalities inside the same state. Bolshevism stood for a compact and indivisible unification of workers of all nationalities in the party and in the trade unions on the basis of democratic centralism.

The type of organisation does not exert its influence on practical work alone. It places an indelible stamp on the worker's whole spiritual life. The worker lives the life of his organisation, within which he develops spiritually and is educated... The international type of organisation is a school of comradely feelings, of the greatest agitation in favour of internationalism.

One of the aims of the Austrian programme of "cultural autonomy" was "the preservation and development of the national idiosyncrasies of peoples." "Why and for what purpose?" asked Bolshevism in amazement. Segregating the various nationalistic portions of mankind was never our concern. True, Bolshevism insisted that each nation should have the right to secede – the right, but not the duty – as the ultimate, most effective guarantee against oppression. But the thought of artificially preserving national idiosyncrasies was profoundly alien to Bolshevism. The removal of any, even disguised, even the most refined and practically "imponderable" national oppression or indignity, must be used for the revolutionary unification rather than the segregation of the workers of various nationalities. Wherever national privileges and injuries exist, nations must have the possibility to separate from each other, that thus they may facilitate the free unification of the workers, in the name of a close rapprochement of nations, with the distant perspective of the eventual complete fusion of all. Such was the basic tendency of Bolshevism, which revealed the full measure of its force in the October Revolution.

The Austrian programme disclosed nothing but its own weaknesses: it saved neither the Empire of the Hapsburgs nor the Austrian Social-Democracy itself. Cultivating the idiosyncrasies of proletarian national groups, while at the same time failing really to satisfy the oppressed nationalities, the Austrian programme merely camouflaged the dominance of the Germans and the Magyars, and was, as Stalin justly pointed out, "a refined form of nationalism." However, it should be pointed out in all fairness that while criticising their concern about "national idiosyncrasies", the author invested his opponents' thoughts with a patently oversimplified interpretation. "Only think," he exclaims, "of preserving such national idiosyncrasies of the Transcaucasian Tatars as self-flagellation during the Shabelsky-Vakhsey festival! To develop such national idiosyncrasies of Georgia as the law of retaliation!" As a matter of fact, the Austro-Marxists did not have in mind, of course, the preservation of any such patently reactionary survivals. As for such "national idiosyncrasies of Georgia as the law of retaliation," it was none other than Stalin who subsequently "developed" it to such an extent as perhaps no one else in human history. But that belongs in another sequence of ideas.

A prominent place in this study was allotted to a polemic against his old opponent Noah Jordania, who during the years of reaction began to lean toward the Austrian programme. By example after example, Stalin showed that cultural national autonomy, “generally... becomes even more senseless and ridiculous from the point of view of Caucasian conditions.” No less resolute was his criticism of the policy of the Jewish Bund, which was organised not on the territorial but on the national principle and attempted to impose that system upon the whole party.

One of two things: either the federalism of the Bund, and then the Russian Social-Democracy must be reconstructed on the principle of ‘dividing’ the workers by nationalities; or an international type of organisation, and then the Bund would have to be reconstructed on the principle of territorial economy... There is no middle ground: principles conquer, they never become reconciled.

Marxism and the National Question is undoubtedly Stalin’s most important – rather, his one and only – theoretical work. On the basis of that single article, which was forty printed pages long, its author is entitled to recognition as an outstanding theoretician. What is rather mystifying is why he did not write anything else of even remotely comparable quality either before or after. The key to the mystery is hidden away in this, that Stalin’s work was wholly inspired by Lenin, written under his unremitting supervision and edited by him line by line.

Twice in his life Lenin broke with close collaborators who were high-grade theoreticians. The first time in 1903-04, when he broke with all of the old authorities of the Russian Social-Democracy – Plekhanov, Axelrod, Zasulich – and with the outstanding young Marxists, Martov and Potresov; the second time during the years of reaction – when Bogdanov, Lunacharsky, Pokrovsky, Rozhkov, all highly qualified writers, left him. Zinoviev and Kamenev, his closest collaborators, were not theoreticians. In that sense, the new revolutionary resurgence found Lenin stranded. No wonder then that he greedily pounced upon any young comrade who might be useful in working out one or another problem of the party programme. Krupskaya recalls:

This time, Ilyich talked a lot with Stalin about the national problem, was glad to find a man who was seriously interested in this problem and knew his way about in it. Prior to that Stalin lived approximately two months in Vienna, studying the national problem there, became well acquainted with our Viennese public, with Bukharin, with Trotsky.

Some things were left unsaid. “Ilyich talked a lot with Stalin” – that means: he gave him the key ideas, shed light on all their aspects, explained misconceptions, suggested the literature, looked over the first drafts and made corrections... The same Krupskaya relates:

I recall Ilyich’s attitude toward authors of little experience. He looked for the substance, for fundamentals, he thought in every way how best to help, how to set them straight. But he did it all somehow with very great care, so that the author in question did not realise that he was being corrected. And Ilyich certainly knew how to help people in their work. If, for example, he wanted to assign the writing of an article to someone but was not certain whether that person would write it properly, he would first start a detailed conversation with him on the theme, develop his own thoughts, get the person interested, sound him out thoroughly, and then he would suggest: “Won’t you write an article on that theme?” And the author did not even notice how the preliminary conversation with Ilyich had helped him, would not realise that he was incorporating in his article even Ilyich’s favourite words and expressions.

Krupskaya, of course, does not name Stalin. But this characterisation of Lenin as coach of young authors is included in that chapter of her memoirs in which she tells about Stalin’s work on the problem of nationalities: Krupskaya was not infrequently compelled to resort to roundabout devices, so as to protect at least a portion of Lenin’s intellectual rights from usurpation.

Stalin’s progress on his article is pictured for us with sufficient clarity. At first, leading conversations with Lenin in Krakow, the outlining of the dominating ideas and of the research material. Later Stalin’s journey to Vienna, into the heart of the ‘Austrian school’. Since he did not know German, Stalin could not cope with his source material. But there was Bukharin, who unquestionably had a head for theory, knew languages, knew the literature of the subject, knew how to use documents. Bukharin, like Troyanovsky, was under instructions from Lenin to help the “splendid” but poorly educated Georgian. Evidently, the selection of the most important quotations was their handiwork. The logical construction of the article, not devoid of pedantry, is due most likely to the influence of Bukharin, who inclined toward professorial ways, in distinction from Lenin, for whom the structure of a composition was determined by its political or polemical interest. Bukharin’s influence did not go beyond that, since on the problem of nationalities he was much closer to Rosa Luxembourgh than to Lenin. Just what was the amount of Troyanovsky’s participation, we do not know. But from that time dates the beginning of his contact with Stalin, which several years later, after circumstances had

changed, secured for the insignificant and unstable Troyanovsky one of the most responsible of diplomatic posts.

From Vienna Stalin returned with his material to Krakow. Here again came Lenin's turn, the turn of the attentive and tireless editor. The stamp of his thought and the traces of his pen are readily discoverable on every page. Certain phrases, mechanically incorporated by the author, or certain lines, obviously written in by the editor, seem unexpected or incomprehensible without reference to the corresponding works of Lenin. "Not the national but the agrarian problem decides the fate of progress in Russia," writes Stalin without any explanations. "The national problem is subsidiary to it." This correct and profound thought about the relative effect of the agrarian and national problems on the course of the Russian Revolution is entirely Lenin's and was expounded by him innumerable times during the years of reaction. In Italy and in Germany the struggle for national liberation and unification was at one time the crux of the bourgeois revolution. It was otherwise in Russia, where the dominating nationality, the Great Russians, did not experience national oppression, but, on the contrary, oppressed others; yet it was none other than the vast peasant mass of the Great Russians themselves that had experienced the profound oppression of serfdom. Such complex and seriously considered thoughts would never have been expressed by their real author as if in passing, as a generality, without proofs and commentaries.

Zinoviev and Kamenev, who long lived side-by-side with Lenin, acquired not only his ideas but even his turns of phrase, even his handwriting. That cannot be said about Stalin. Of course, he too lived by Lenin's ideas, but at a distance, away from him, and he used them only as he needed them for his own independent purposes. He was too sturdy, too stubborn, too dull and too organic, to acquire the literary methods of his teacher. That is why Lenin's corrections of his text, to quote the poet, look "like bright patches on dilapidated tatters." The exposure of the Austrian school as "a refined form of nationalism" is undoubtedly Lenin's, as are a number of other simple but pertinent formulae. Stalin did not write like that. With reference to Otto Bauer's definition of the nation as "a relative community of character," we read in the article: "Wherein then does Bauer's nation differ from the mystical and self-sufficient 'national spirit', of the spiritualists?" That sentence was written by Lenin. Neither before nor after this did Stalin express himself like that. And further, when, referring to Bauer's own eclectic corrections of his own definition of a nation, the article comments, "thus, the theory sewn with idealistic threads refutes itself," one cannot help but recognise Lenin's

pen. The same is true of the characterisation of the national type of labour organisation as “a school of comradely feelings.” Stalin did not write like that. On the other hand, throughout the entire work, notwithstanding its numerous angularities, we find no chameleons assuming the hue of rabbits, no underground swallows, no screens made of tears: Lenin had expunged all these seminarist embellishments. The original manuscript with its corrections can, of course, be hidden. But it is impossible, in any way, to hide the hand of Lenin, as it is impossible to hide the fact that throughout all the years of his imprisonment and exile Stalin produced nothing which, even remotely resembles the work he wrote in the course of a few weeks in Vienna and Krakow.

PETERSBURG

On 8th February, when Stalin was still abroad, Lenin congratulated the editorial board of *Pravda* “on the tremendous improvement in all phases of managing the newspaper, which has been noticeable during recent days.” The improvement was in the matter of principles, and expressed itself chiefly in intensified fighting against the Liquidators. According to Samoilov, Sverdlov was then carrying out the duties of the actual editor; living in illegal status and never emerging from the apartment of an “immune” deputy, he busied himself all day long with newspaper manuscripts. “He was, besides all that, a very fine comrade in all personal matters as well.” This is correct. Samoilov does not say anything of the kind about Stalin, with whom he came in close contact and toward whom he is very respectful. On 10th February the police entered the “immune” apartment, arrested Sverdlov, and soon banished him to Siberia, undoubtedly because of Malinovsky’s denunciation. Toward the end of February, Stalin, who had returned from abroad, made his home with the same deputies: “He played the leading role in the life of our [Duma] faction and of the newspaper *Pravda*,” relates Samoilov, “and he attended not only all the conferences, which we arranged in our apartment, but not infrequently, with great risk to himself, visited also the sessions of the Social-Democratic faction, where, by upholding our position in arguments against the Mensheviks and on various other questions, he rendered us great service.”

Stalin found the situation in Petersburg considerably changed. The advanced workers firmly supported Sverdlov’s reforms, inspired by Lenin. *Pravda* had a new staff. The Conciliators had been set back. Stalin did not even think of really defending the positions from which he had been torn away two months before. That was not in his spirit. He was now concerned

only with saving his face. On 26th February he published in *Pravda* an article, in which he called upon the workers “to raise their voice against the separatist efforts inside the fraction, no matter where they come from.” In substance, the article was part of the campaign to prepare the split of the Duma fraction, at the same time to place the responsibility on the opponents. No longer bound by his own past record, Stalin attempted to express his new purpose in the old phraseology. Hence, his misleading expression about attempts to split the fraction, “no matter where they come from.” In any event, it is evident from the article that, after attending school in Krakow, the author tried to change his line and start off on the new policy as inconspicuously as possible. But he had practically no opportunity to do that, for he was soon arrested.

In March the Bolshevik organisation, under the lawful sponsorship of *Pravda*, arranged for a concert and evening of entertainment. Stalin “wanted to go there,” relates Samoilov: there one could see many comrades. He asked Malinovsky’s advice: was it safe to go, was it not dangerous? The perfidious adviser replied that, in his opinion, there was no danger. However, the danger was prepared by Malinovsky himself. As soon as Stalin came, the hall filled with spies. Comrades attempted to lead him through the stage entrance, having previously dressed him up in a woman’s mantle. But he was arrested. This time he was fated to disappear from circulation for exactly four years.

Two months after that arrest Lenin wrote to *Pravda*: “I congratulate you heartily upon your success...the improvement is tremendous and important. Let us hope it is permanent and definite and final...if only no evil spell is cast on it!” In the interest of completeness, we cannot refrain from quoting also the letter which Lenin sent to Petersburg in October, 1913, when Stalin was already in distant exile and Kamenev was in charge of the editorial board: “Here everybody is satisfied with the newspaper and its editor. In all this time I haven’t heard a single word of criticism...everybody is satisfied and myself especially, for I have proved to be a prophet. Do you remember?” And at the end of the letter: “Dear Friend, all attention is now devoted to the fight of the six for their rights. I beg you to bear down with all your strength, so as not to let either the newspaper or Marxist public opinion waver even once.”

All the cited evidence leads to one inescapable conclusion: in Lenin’s opinion, the newspaper was very badly conducted when Stalin was in charge. During that same period the Duma fraction wavered toward conciliationism. The newspaper began to straighten out politically, only after Sverdlov, with Stalin away, brought about “substantial reforms”. The newspaper improved and became satisfactory when Kamenev took charge of it. Likewise, under

his leadership, the Bolshevik deputies of the Duma won their political independence.

Malinovsky played an active role, even two roles at the same time, in splitting the fraction. The gendarme General Spiridovich wrote apropos of that: "Malinovsky, carrying out the directives of Lenin and of the Police Department, achieved in October, 1913...the final quarrel between the 'seven' and the 'six'." Then Mensheviks, for their part, gloated repeatedly over the "coincidence" of Lenin's policy with that of the Police Department. Now that the course of events has rendered its own verdict, the old argument has lost its significance. The Police Department hoped that the split of the Social-Democracy would weaken the labour movement. On the contrary, Lenin reckoned that only a split would secure for the workers the needed revolutionary leadership. The police Machiavellis obviously figured wrong. The Mensheviks were doomed to insignificance. The Bolsheviks won all along the line.

Stalin devoted himself to intensive work in Petersburg and abroad for more than six months prior to his last arrest. He helped to conduct the Duma election campaign, managed *Pravda*, participated in an important conference of the Party staff abroad, and wrote his essay on the national question. That half year was undoubtedly of great importance to his personal development. For the first time he bore responsibility for activities on the soil of the capital, for the first time he came in contact with major politics, for the first time he came in close touch with Lenin. That feeling of supposed superiority which was so much a part of him as a realistic 'practico' could not help having been shaken by personal contact with the great *émigré*. His estimation of himself had to become more critical and sober, his ambition more secretive, guarded. His hurt provincial self-satisfaction must inevitably have been coloured with envy, mitigated only by cautiousness.

6. WAR AND EXILE

Seeing in the street a man squatting and gesturing strangely, Leo Tolstoy decided that he was looking at a madman; on coming closer he was satisfied that the man was attending to necessary work – sharpening a knife on a stone.

Lenin was fond of citing this example. The interminable discussions, factional squabbles, splits between the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks, arguments and splits inside the Bolshevik faction itself, seemed to the observer on the sidelines like the activities of maniacs. But the test of events proved that these people were attending to necessary work; the struggle was waged not over scholastic subtleties, as it seemed to the dilettantes, but over the most fundamental questions of the revolutionary movement.

Because of their painstaking and precise definitions of ideas and because they drew clear political boundary lines, only Lenin and his disciples were ready to meet the new revolutionary resurgence. Hence, the uninterrupted series of successes which very quickly secured for the Pravdists dominance over the labour movement. The majority of the older generation had abandoned the struggle during the years of reaction. “Lenin has nothing but boys,” the Liquidators were wont to say contemptuously. But in that Lenin saw his Party’s great advantage. Revolution, like war, necessarily places the main part of its burden on the shoulders of youth. That socialist party which is unable to draw the ‘youngsters’, is hopeless.

In its secret correspondence, the tsarist police, who came face to face with the revolutionary parties, was far from niggardly with flattering admissions concerning the Bolsheviks. The Director of the Police Department in 1913 wrote:

During the past ten years the most energetic, courageous element, capable of tireless struggle, resistance and constant organisation, have been...the organisations and persons concentrating around Lenin...

The permanent organisational heart and soul of all Party undertakings of any importance is Lenin... The faction of Leninists is always better organised than the others, stronger in its singleness of purpose, more resourceful in propagating its ideas among the workers... When during the last two years the labour movement began to grow stronger, Lenin and his followers came closer to the workers than others, and he was the first to proclaim purely revolutionary slogans... The Bolshevik circles, nuclei and organisations are now scattered through all the cities. Permanent correspondence and contacts have been established with almost all the factory centres. The Central Committee functions almost regularly and is entirely in the hands of Lenin... In view of the aforesaid, there is nothing surprising in the fact that at the present time the assembling of the entire underground Party is proceeding around the Bolshevik organisations and that indeed the latter really are the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party.

There is almost nothing to add to this.

The correspondence of the foreign staff acquired a new optimistic tone. Krupskaya wrote to Shklovsky at the beginning of 1913: "All the contacts are somehow different than before. Somehow you feel more as if you were dealing with like-minded people... The affairs of Bolshevism are sounder than ever." The Liquidators, who prided themselves on their realism and only yesterday derided Lenin as the head of a degenerate sect, suddenly found themselves relegated to the sidelines and isolated. From Krakow Lenin watched tirelessly for all the manifestations of the labour movement, registering and classifying all the facts that might enable him to take the pulse of the proletariat. From the painstaking calculations in Krakow of money collections for the labour press it was evident that in Petersburg eighty-six percent of the reading workers were on the side of *Pravda* and only fourteen percent on the side of the Liquidators; almost the same relation of forces existed in Moscow; in the backward provinces the Liquidators were somewhat better off, but on the whole four-fifths of the advanced workers sided with *Pravda*. Of what value could be abstract appeals to the unity of factions and tendencies, when the correct policy counterpoised to these 'factions and tendencies' was able, in the course of three years, to rally around Bolshevism the preponderant majority of the advanced workers? During elections to the Fourth Duma, when not Social-Democrats but ordinary voters cast their ballots, sixty-seven percent of the workers' curiae came out for the Bolsheviks. During the conflict between

the two factions of the Duma fraction in Petersburg, 5,000 votes were cast for the Bolshevik deputies and only 621 for the Mensheviks. The Liquidators were utterly crushed in the capital. There was the same relation of forces in the trade union movement: of the thirteen Moscow unions, not one belonged to the Liquidators; of the twenty Petersburg unions, only four, the least proletarian and the least important, found themselves partly or entirely in the hands of the Mensheviks. At the beginning of 1914, during the elections of representatives of workers to the Petersburg sick benefit funds, the tickets of *Pravda's* nominees won completely. All the groups hostile to Bolshevism – the Liquidators, the Recallists, all sorts of Conciliators – proved utterly incapable of sinking their roots into the working class. Hence, Lenin drew his conclusions: “Only in the course of fighting against these groups can the real workers’ Social-Democratic Party be formed in Russia.”

In the spring of 1914 Emile Vandervelde, who was then President of the Second International, visited Petersburg, in order to acquaint himself on the spot with the conflict of the factions inside the working class. The opportunistic sceptic measured the arguments of the Russian barbarians by the rule of Belgian Parliamentarism. The Mensheviks, he reported upon his return, wanted to organise legally and demand the right of coalition; the Bolsheviks wanted to demand the immediate proclamation of the republic and the expropriation of the land. This disagreement Vandervelde called “rather childish”. There was nothing Lenin could do but smile bitterly. Soon came developments that made possible an incontestable verification of men and ideas. The “childish” differences of opinion between the Marxists and the opportunists gradually spread throughout the worldwide labour movement.

IMPERIALIST WAR

“The war between Austria and Russia,” Lenin wrote to Gorky at the beginning of 1913, “would be a very useful thing for the revolution (throughout all of Eastern Europe), but it is hardly possible that Franz-Josef and Nicki would give us this pleasure.” Yet they did – although not until a year and a half later.

Meantime the industrial conjuncture had passed its zenith. The first underground tremors of the crisis began to be felt. But they did not stop the strike struggle. On the contrary, they invested it with a more aggressive character. Only a little more than six months prior to the outbreak of the war there were almost a million and a half strikers. The last great explosion occurred on the very eve of mobilisation. On 3rd July, the Petersburg police was shooting into a crowd of workers. In response to an appeal by the Bolshevik

Committee, the most important factories struck as a sign of protest. There were as many as two hundred thousand strikers. Meetings and demonstrations were held everywhere. Attempts were made to construct barricades. Into the welter of these events in the capital that became a military encampment, came the French President Poincaré for final negotiations with his crowned 'friend'; and had the opportunity to peek with one eye into the laboratory of the Russian Revolution. But several days later the government took advantage of the declaration of war to wipe off the face of the earth both the labour organisations and the labour press. The first victim was *Pravda*. The attractive idea of the tsarist government was to stifle the revolution with a war.

The assertion of certain biographers that Stalin was the author of the 'defeatist' theory, or the formula for 'transforming the imperialist war into a civil war', is pure invention and attests to the complete lack of understanding of Stalin's intellectual and political character. Least of all was he in tune with the spirit of political innovation and theoretical daring. He never anticipated anything; he never ran ahead of anyone. Being an empiricist, he was ever afraid of *a priori* conclusions, preferring to measure ten times before cutting the cloth. Inside this revolutionist always lurked a conservative bureaucrat. The Second International was a powerful political machine. Stalin would never have ventured to break with it on his own initiative. The elaboration of the Bolshevik doctrine on war is in its entirety part and parcel of Lenin's record. Stalin did not contribute to it a single word, even as he contributed nothing to the doctrine of revolution. However, in order to understand Stalin's behaviour during the years of exile, and especially during the first critical weeks after the February Revolution, as well as his subsequent break with all the principles of Bolshevism, it is necessary to outline briefly the system of views which Lenin had already elaborated at the beginning of the war and to which he had gradually converted his Party.

The first question posed by the European catastrophe was whether socialists could take upon themselves the 'defence of the fatherland'. It was not a question of whether the individual socialist should carry out his duties as a soldier. There was nothing else he could do. Desertion was never a revolutionary policy. The question was whether a socialist party should support the war politically – vote for the military budget, terminate its fight against the government, agitate for 'defence of the fatherland'. Lenin answered: No, it should not, it has no right to do so – not because it was war, but because it was a reactionary war, a bloody shambles brought about by slave-owners who wanted to divide the world.

The formation of national states on the continent of Europe covered an epoch which began approximately with the Great French Revolution and ended with the Versailles Peace of 1871. During that period, wars for the establishment or defence of national states, as a condition prerequisite to the development of productive forces and culture, had a progressive historical character. Revolutionists not only could, but were duty-bound, to support these national wars politically. From 1871 to 1914 European capitalism, having attained its fruition on the basis of national states, outlived itself, transforming itself into monopolistic or imperialistic capitalism. "Imperialism is that state of capitalism which, having accomplished all that it could accomplish, turns toward decline." The cause of the decline lies in the fact that the productive forces become equally constrained by the framework of private property and by the borders of the national state. Seeking a way out, imperialism strives to divide and to redivide the world. National wars are succeeded by imperialist wars. The latter are thoroughly reactionary in character, epitomising the historical blind alley, the stagnation, the decay of monopoly capitalism.

Imperialism can exist only because there are backward nations on our planet, colonial and semi-colonial countries. The struggle of these oppressed peoples for national unity and independence has a twofold progressive character, since, on the one hand, it prepares favourable conditions of development for their own use, and on the other, it strikes blows at imperialism. Hence, in part, the conclusion that in a war between a civilized imperialist democratic republic and the backward barbarian monarchy of a colonial country, the socialists will be entirely on the side of the oppressed country, notwithstanding its monarchy, and against the oppressor country, notwithstanding its 'democracy'.

Imperialism covers its predatory aims – the seizure of colonies, of markets, of sources of raw materials, of spheres of influence – with the ideas of 'protecting peace from the aggressors', 'defence of the fatherland', 'defence of democracy', and the like. These ideas are false to the core. Lenin wrote in March 1915:

The question of whether one or another group struck the first military blow or was the first to declare war, has no significance whatever in determining the tactic of socialists. Phrases about 'defence of the fatherland', about resisting the invasion of the enemy, about a war of defence, and the like, are an utter deception of the people on both sides...

As far as the proletariat is concerned, the objective historical significance of the war is the only thing that has any meaning: which class is waging it and for what aims? – and not the ruses of diplomacy, which knows how to represent the enemy in the role of the aggressor.

Equally spurious are the references of the imperialists to the interests of democracy and culture. Since the war is waged by both camps, not for the sake of defending the fatherland, democracy and culture, but for the sake of partitioning the world and for the sake of colonial enslavement, no socialist has the right to prefer one imperialist camp to another. Utterly useless would be the attempt “to say, from the point of view of the international proletariat, which nation’s defeat would be the least evil for socialism.” To sacrifice in the name of that supposedly lesser “evil” the political independence of the proletariat, is to betray the future of humanity.

The policy of ‘national unity’ means in time of war, even more than in time of peace, the support of reaction and the eternisation of imperialist barbarism. Refusal of that support, which is a socialist’s elementary duty, is, however, merely the negative or passive side of internationalism. That alone is not enough. The task of the party of the proletariat is to present “a manifold propaganda of socialist revolution, embracing the army and the theatre of war, propaganda showing the necessity to turn the guns, not against their own brothers, the hired slaves of the other countries, but against the reactionary and bourgeois governments and parties of all countries.”

But the revolutionary struggle in time of war may bring defeat to one’s own government! Lenin is not frightened by that conclusion. “In every country the struggle with one’s own government, which wages the imperialist war, must not stop short before the possibility of the defeat of that country in consequence of revolutionary agitation.” Therein is the essence of the so-called theory of ‘defeatism’. Unscrupulous opponents attempted to interpret this as meaning that Lenin admitted the possibility of collaboration between internationalists and foreign imperialists for the sake of victory over one’s own national reaction. As a matter of fact, what was under consideration was the general struggle of the world proletariat against world imperialism by way of the simultaneous struggle of the proletariat of each country against its own imperialism as the direct and main enemy. “From the point of view of the interests of the toiling masses and the working class of Russia,” wrote Lenin to Shlyapnikov in October, 1914, “we Russians cannot doubt in the slightest way, absolutely cannot doubt at all, that now and at once the least evil would be – the defeat of tsarism in the present war...”

It is impossible to fight against the imperialist war with pious lamentations for peace in the manner of the pacifists. "One of the forms of fooling the working class is pacifism and the abstract preachment of peace. Under capitalism, and especially in its imperialist stage, wars are inescapable." Peace, concluded by the imperialists, will be a mere breathing spell before a new war. Only a revolutionary mass struggle against war and the imperialism engendered by it is capable of securing a real peace. "Without a series of revolutions the so-called democratic peace is a philistine utopia."

The struggle against the illusions of pacifism is one of the most important elements in Lenin's doctrine. He rejected with particular abhorrence the demand for 'disarmament' as flagrantly utopian under capitalism and capable only of deflecting the attention of the workers from the need to arm themselves. "The oppressed class that does not strive to learn how to use guns and to have guns, such an oppressed class deserves to be treated as slaves." And further:

Our slogan must be: the arming of the proletariat in order to win, to expropriate and to disarm the bourgeoisie... Only after the proletariat has disarmed the bourgeoisie can it throw all arms on the scrap heap, without playing false to its worldwide historic task...

Lenin rejects the bare slogan of "peace", counterpoising to it the slogan of 'transforming imperialist war into civil war'.

Most of the leaders of labour parties found themselves during the war on the side of their own bourgeoisie. Lenin christened their tendency "social-chauvinism": socialism in words, chauvinism in deeds. The betrayal of internationalism did not, however, fall from the sky but was the inescapable continuation and development of the policy of reformist adjustment to the capitalist state.

The content of political ideas in opportunism and social-chauvinism is one and the same: collaboration of classes instead of their struggle, repudiation of the revolutionary need to struggle, aid to 'one's own' government in a difficult situation instead of utilising those difficulties for the revolution.

The final period of capitalist prosperity before the war (1909-13) secured the particularly strong attachment of the proletarian upper layer to imperialism. Out of the surplus profit the bourgeoisie secured from the colonies and from the backward countries generally, fat morsels fell into the laps of the labour aristocracy and the labour bureaucracy as well. Their patriotism was thus dictated by direct self-interest in the policy of imperialism. During the war,

which exposed all the social relations, “the opportunists and the chauvinists derived their tremendous power from their union with the bourgeoisie, the governments and the general staffs.” The opportunists definitely went over to the camp of the class enemy.

The intermediate, and perhaps the broadest tendency in socialism, the so-called Centre (Kautsky and others), which in time of peace wavered between reformism and Marxism, became almost wholly the prisoner of the social-chauvinists under the cover of pacifist phrases. As for the masses, they were found unprepared and deceived by their own party machine which they had been building for decades. Having given the sociological and political evaluation of the labour bureaucracy of the Second International, Lenin did not stop half way. “Unity with opportunists is the unity of workers with ‘their own’ national bourgeoisie and the splitting of the international revolutionary working class.” Hence, his conclusion about the need, once and for all, to sever all contact with the social-chauvinists. “It is impossible to carry out the tasks of Socialism at the present time, it is impossible to achieve the actual international mobilisation of the workers, without a resolute break with opportunism,” as well as with centrism, “that bourgeois tendency in Socialism.” The very name of the party must be changed. “Is it not better to repudiate the sullied and discredited name ‘Social-Democrats’ and return to the old Marxist name of ‘Communists’?” It is high time to break with the Second International and build the Third!

That was where the difference of opinion [lay], which only two or three months before the war had seemed “childish” to Emile Vandervelde. The President of the Second International had meantime himself become a patriotic minister of his king.

DEFEATISM

The Bolshevik Party was the most revolutionary – indeed, the only revolutionary – section of the Second International. Yet even the Bolshevik Party did not at once find its way in the labyrinth of the war. As a general rule, the confusion was most pervasive and lasted longest among the Party’s higher-ups, who came in direct contact with bourgeois public opinion. The Bolshevik Duma fraction at once made a sharp right turn by joining the Mensheviks in an equivocal declaration. True, the document proclaimed in the Duma on 26th July kept its skirts clear of “false patriotism under the cover of which the ruling classes waged their predatory policy”, but at the same time promised that the proletariat “would defend the cultural weal of the people against all

encroachments, no matter where they came from, whether from within or from without." Under the subterfuge of 'defending culture', the fraction was assuming a patriotic position.

Lenin's theses on the war did not reach Petersburg until the beginning of September. The reception accorded them by the Party was far from one of general approbation. Most of the objections were to Lenin's slogan of 'defeatism', which, according to Shlyapnikov, aroused 'perplexity'. The Duma fraction, which was then led by Kamenev, again tried to smooth down the sharp edges of Lenin's formulations. It was the same story in Moscow and in the provinces. "The war caught the 'Leninists' unprepared," testifies the Moscow Okhrana, "and for a long time...they could not agree on their attitude toward the war..." The Moscow Bolsheviks wrote in code by way of Stockholm for transmission to Lenin, "notwithstanding all respect for him, his advice to sell the house [the slogan of 'defeatism'] has not struck a responsive chord." In Saratov, according to the local leader Antonov, "the workers of the Bolshevik, Menshevik and S-R tendencies did not agree with the defeatist position. More than that...they were (with rare exception) decided defencists." Among the advanced workers the situation was more favourable. At Petersburg factories inscriptions appeared, reading: "If Russia wins, we'll not be better off, we'll be oppressed more than ever." And Samoilov wrote: "The Ivanovo-Voznesensk comrades sensed, with the class instinct of proletarians, what was...the right road and definitely took to it as early as the very first months of the war."

However, only a very few individuals managed to formulate their opinions. Sweeping arrests blotted out the Social-Democratic organisations. The smashing of the press scattered the workers. All the more important, therefore, became the role of the Duma fraction. Recovering from the first siege of panic, the Bolshevik deputies began to develop important illegal activities. But they were arrested as early as 4th November. The chief evidence against them consisted of the documents of the party staff abroad. The authorities charged the arrested deputies with treason. During the preliminary investigation Kamenev and all the deputies, with the single exception of Muranov, repudiated Lenin's theses. At the trial, which took place on 10th February, the defendants maintained the same line. Kamenev's declaration that the documents with which he was confronted "decidedly contradicts his own views on the current war" was not dictated only by concern for his own safety; essentially, it expressed the negative attitude of the entire Party upper layer toward defeatism. To Lenin's great indignation, the purely defencist tactics of the defendants extremely weakened the agitational effectiveness of the trial. The legal defence could

have proceeded hand-in-hand with a political offensive. But Kamenev, who was a clever and well-educated politician, was not born to meet extraordinary situations. The attorneys, for their part, did whatever they could. Repudiating the charge of treason, one of them, Pereverzev, prophesied at the trial that the loyalty of the labour deputies to their class will be forever preserved in the memory of future generations; whereas their weaknesses – lack of preparation, dependence on their intellectual advisers, and the like – “all of that will fall away, like an empty shell, together with the libellous charge of treason.”

By virtue of one of those sadistic jests which history never tires of perpetrating, it fell to none other than Pereverzev in his capacity as Minister of Justice in Kerensky's government, to charge all the Bolshevik leaders with treason to the state and espionage, doing so with the aid of cynical forgeries to which even the tsarist prosecutor would never have resorted. Only Stalin's prosecutor, Vyshinsky, outdid in that respect the democratic Minister of Justice.

Notwithstanding the equivocal behaviour of the defendants, the very fact of the trial of the labour deputies delivered a smashing blow to the myth of 'civil peace' and aroused the stratum of workers that had gone through the revolutionary school. Lenin wrote in March 1915:

About 40,000 workers bought *Pravda*, many more read it...It is impossible to destroy that layer. It lives... It alone stands up among the popular masses, and in the very heart of them, as the propagator of the internationalism of the toilers, the exploited, the oppressed.

The awakening of the masses began soon, but its influence made its way slowly to the outside. Being subject to military service, the workers were tied hand and foot. Every violation of discipline threatened them with immediate evacuation to the front, accompanied by a special police notation that was tantamount to a death sentence. This was particularly effective in Petersburg, where surveillance was doubly severe.

Meantime, the defeats of the tsarist army pursued their course. The hypnosis of patriotism and the hypnosis of fear gradually relaxed. During the second half of 1915 sporadic strikes broke out, occasioned by high prices in the Moscow textile region, but they were not developed. The masses were dissatisfied, but they kept their peace. In May, 1916, scattered disturbances among recruits flared up in the provinces. Food riots began in the south, and at once spread to Kronstadt, the fortress that guarded the approaches to the capital. Finally, toward the end of December, came Petrograd's turn. The

political strike involved as many as two hundred thousand workers at once, with the unquestionable participation of the Bolshevik organisations. The ice was broken. In February began a series of stormy strikes and disturbances, which developed rapidly into an uprising and culminated when the capital's garrison went over to the side of the workers. 'The German course of development', on which the liberals and the Mensheviks relied, did not materialise. As a matter of fact, the Germans themselves soon drifted away from the so-called German way... In distant exile Stalin was fated to find out about the triumph of the insurrection and the Tsar's abdication.

ONCE AGAIN IN EXILE

Over the approximately thirty thousand square miles of the Turukhansk Region, located in the northern part of Yeniseisk Province, was scattered a population of approximately ten thousand souls, Russians and aliens. The small settlements of two to ten, rarely more, houses were hundreds of miles apart. Since winter endures here for fully eight months, agriculture is non-existent. The inhabitants fish and hunt, for there is an abundance of both fish and game. Stalin reached that inhospitable region in the middle of 1913 and found Sverdlov already there. Soon Alliluyev received a letter, in which Stalin urged him to hurry Deputy Badayev about forwarding the money sent by Lenin from abroad... "Stalin explained in detail that he needed the money in a hurry, so as to provide himself with the necessary food supplies, kerosene and other things before the approach of the harsh Arctic winter."

On 25th August, the Police Department warned the Yeniseisk Gendarmerie about the possibility of an attempt to escape by the exiles Sverdlov and Djughashvili. On 18th December the Department requested by telegraph that the Governor of Yeniseisk undertake measures to forestall the escape. In January the Department telegraphed the Yeniseisk Gendarmerie that Sverdlov and Djughashvili, in addition to the hundred roubles previously received, were to receive another fifty roubles toward the organisation of their escape. In March the agents of the Okhrana had even heard that Sverdlov had been seen in Moscow. The Governor of Yeniseisk hastened to report that both exiles "are present in person and that measures to forestall their escape have been undertaken." In vain did Stalin write to Alliluyev that the money sent by Lenin was presumably for kerosene and other such necessities: the Department knew first-hand – that is, from Malinovsky himself – that an escape was being prepared.

In February, 1914, Sverdlov wrote to his sister:

Joseph Djughashvili and I are being transferred a hundred versts [nearly seventy miles] north – eighty versts [nearly fifty-five miles] north of the Arctic Circle. The surveillance is stronger. We have been separated from mail delivery, which reaches us once a month through a walker, who is frequently late. Actually, we have no more than eight to nine mail deliveries a year...

The new place assigned to them was the forsaken settlement of Kureika. But that was not enough. “Because he received money, Djughashvili has been deprived of his allowance for four months. Both he and I need money. But you cannot send it in our names.” By sequestering the allowance, the police helped the tsarist budget and lessened the chances of escape.

In his first letter from Kureika, Sverdlov clearly described the manner of his joint life with Stalin:

My arrangements in the new place are considerably worse. For one thing, I no longer live alone in the room. There are two of us. With me is the Georgian Djughashvili, an old acquaintance, for we had already met elsewhere in exile. He is a good chap, but too much of an individualist in everyday life, while I believe in at least a semblance of order. That’s why I am nervous at times. But that is not so important. Much worse is the fact that there is no seclusion from our landlord’s family. Our room is next to theirs, and has no separate entrance. They have children. Naturally, the youngsters spend many hours with us. Sometimes they are in the way. Besides, grown-ups from the village drop in. They come, sit down, keep quiet for half an hour and suddenly rise: “Well, I’ve got to go, goodbye!” No sooner do they leave when someone else comes in, and it’s the same thing all over again. They come, as if in spite, at the very best time for study, in the evening. That’s understandable: in the daytime they work. We had to part with our former arrangements and plan our day differently. We had to give up the habit of poring over a book until long after midnight. There is absolutely no kerosene. We use candles. Since that provides too little light for my eyes, I do all my studying in the daytime now. As a matter of fact, I don’t study very much. We have virtually no books...

Thus lived the future President of the Soviet Republic and the future dictator of the Soviet Union.

What interests us most in that letter is the restrained characterisation of Stalin as “a good chap, but too much of an individualist.” The first part of the testimonial has the obvious aim of softening the second part. “An individualist in everyday life” meant in this case a man who, being obliged to live side-by-side with another person, did not take into consideration either the latter’s habits or interests. “A semblance of order”, on which Sverdlov insisted

unsuccessfully, called for a certain voluntary self-limitation in the interests of one's roommate. Sverdlov was by nature a considerate person. Samoilov testified that he was "a fine comrade" in personal relations. There was not a shadow of considerateness in Stalin's nature. Moreover, there may have been a goodly measure of vengeance in his behaviour: let us not forget that it was Sverdlov who had been commissioned to liquidate the very editorial staff of *Pravda* on which Stalin had relied for support against Lenin. Stalin never forgave such things; he never forgave anything. The publication of Sverdlov's entire Turukhansk correspondence, promised in 1924, never took place; apparently, it contained the history of the subsequent sharpening of relations.

Schweitzer – the wife of Spandaryan, the third member of the Central Committee who journeyed to Kureika on the eve of the war, after Sverdlov had already had himself transferred from there – tells that in Stalin's room "the table was piled with books and large packages of newspapers, while on a rope in the corner hung various tackle, fishing and hunting, of his own making." Evidently, Sverdlov's complaint about the insufficiency of books had led to action: friends added to the Kureika library. The tackle "of his own making" could not, of course, have been a rifle and firearm supplies. It consisted of nets for fish and traps for rabbits and other such game. Subsequently Stalin became neither a marksman nor a hunter, in the sporting sense of the word. Indeed, judging by general appearances, it is easier to imagine him placing traps at night than firing a gun at a bird in flight.

The Socialist-Revolutionary Karganov, who subsequently became an opera singer, places his meeting with Stalin in the Turukhansk exile in 1911 instead of 1913; in such cases chronological errors are usual. Among other things, Karganov tells how Stalin, coming out in defence of a criminal in exile called Tchaika, who had robbed a peasant, argued that Tchaika could not be condemned, that Tchaika should be brought over to their side, that people of that sort were needed for the forthcoming struggle. We have already heard from Vereshchak about Koba's partiality for criminals. On one occasion, in the course of an argument, Stalin had presumably revealed himself as an anti-Semite, resorting to coarse Georgian expressions against the Jews. Violating the traditions of the political exiles, if one is to believe Karganov, he entered into friendly relations with a police constable, the Osetiri Kibirov. Replying to the reproaches of his comrades, Stalin declared that such friendly relations would not deter him, when necessary, from doing away with the constable as a political enemy. According to the same Karganov, Stalin astonished the exiles "by his complete lack of principles, his slyness and exceptional cruelty...

Even in trifles his extraordinary ambition showed itself.” It is hard to decide at what point in this tale truth ends and invention begins. But on the whole, Karganov’s story is quite closely reminiscent of Vereshchak’s observations in the Baku prison.

For postal and other connections Kureika depended on the village Monastyrskoye, from where the threads led to Yeniseisk and beyond into Krasnoyarsk. The former exile Gaven, now among the missing, tells us that the Yeniseisk commune was in touch with political life, underground as well as lawful. It carried on correspondence with the other regions of exile as well as with Krasnoyarsk, which in its turn had contacts with the Petersburg and Moscow committees of the Bolsheviks and provided the exiles with underground documents. Even in the Arctic Circle people managed to live on party interests, divided into groups, argued until they were hoarse and sometimes to the point of fierce hatred. However, the exiles began to differ on principles only in the middle of 1914 after the arrival in the Turukhansk region of the third member of the Central Committee, the zealous Spandaryan.

As for Stalin, he kept aloof. According to Shumyatsky:

Stalin...withdrew inside himself. Preoccupied with hunting and fishing, he lived in almost complete solitude... He had practically no need for intercourse with people, and only once in a while would go to visit his friend Suren Spandaryan at the village of Monastyrskoye, returning several days later to his anchorite’s cave. He was sparing with his disjointed remarks on this or that question, whenever he happened to be at gatherings arranged by the exiles.

These lines, softened and embellished in one of the subsequent versions (even the “cave” for some reason became a “laboratory”), must be understood to mean that Stalin terminated personal relations with the majority of the exiles and avoided them. No wonder that his relations with Sverdlov were likewise severed: under the monotonous condition of exile even more adaptable persons than he were not able to avoid quarrels.

“The moral atmosphere...” Sverdlov wrote discreetly in one of his letters that happened to be published, “is not especially favourable... A number of encounters (personal conflicts), possible only under the conditions of prison and exile, their pettiness notwithstanding, have had a pretty strong effect on my nerves...” Because of such “encounters”, Sverdlov secured his transfer to another settlement. Two other Bolsheviks hastened to abandon Kureika: Goloshchekin and Medvedev, who are now likewise among the missing. Choleric, rude, consumed by ambition, Stalin was not easy to get along with.

The biographers obviously exaggerate when they say that this time an escape was physically impossible, although undoubtedly it was bound to involve serious difficulties. Stalin's preceding escapes were not escapes in the true sense of the word, but simply unlawful departures from places of exile. To get away from Solvychegodsk, Vologda, even Narym, involved no great effort, once one decided to dispense with one's 'legality'. The Turukhansk Region was quite different: there one had to effect a rather difficult passage by deer or dogs, or by boat in the summertime, or by carefully hiding under the boards of a ship's hold, provided the captain of the ship was friendly toward political exiles; in a word, the Turukhansk exile intent on escape incurred serious risks. But that these difficulties were not insurmountable was best of all demonstrated by the fact that during those years several persons did manage to escape from the Turukhansk exile. True, after the Police Department learned about their plan of escape, Sverdlov and Stalin were placed under special surveillance. But the Arctic 'guards', notoriously lazy and easily tempted by wine, had never deterred others from running away. The Turukhansk exiles enjoyed a sufficient latitude of movement for that. "Stalin often came down to the village of Monastyrskoye," wrote Schweitzer, "where the exiles were wont to foregather. To do that, he employed illegal as well as every legal subterfuge." The surveillance could not have been very active in the limitless Northern wastelands. Throughout the first year Stalin seemed to have been getting his bearings and taking preparatory steps rather unhurriedly: he was cautious. But in July of the following year the war broke out. The dangers of illegal existence under the conditions of a wartime regime were added to the physical and political difficulties of an escape. It was precisely that heightened risk that kept Stalin from escaping, as it deterred many others.

"This time," writes Schweitzer, "Stalin decided to remain in exile. There he continued his work on the national question, finished the second part of his book." Shumyatsky, too, mentions Stalin's work on that subject. Stalin actually did write an article on the national question during the first months of exile: with regard to that we have the categorical testimony of Alliluyev. "The same year (1913), at the beginning of winter," he writes, "I received a second letter from Stalin... An article on the national question which Stalin asked me to forward abroad to Lenin was enclosed in the envelope." The essay could not have been very extensive if it could have been included in a letter envelope. But what became of that article? Throughout all of 1913 Lenin continued to develop and define the national programme. He could not have failed to pounce greedily on Stalin's new effort. Silence about the fate of the

article simply testifies that it was considered inadequate for publication. His endeavour to pursue independently the line of the thought suggested to him at Krakow had apparently sidetracked Stalin onto the wrong road, so that Lenin found it impossible to revise the article. Only thus may be explained the astounding fact that during the ensuing three and a half years of exile the offended Stalin made no further effort to appear in the Bolshevik press.

In exile, as in prison, great events seem particularly incredible. According to Shumyatsky, “news of the war stunned our public, some of whom took utterly false notes...” “Defencist tendencies were strong among the exiles, everybody was disoriented,” writes Gaven. No wonder: even in Petersburg, recently renamed Petrograd, revolutionists were disoriented. “But Stalin’s authority among the Bolsheviks was so great,” declares Schweitzer, “that his very first letter to the exiles put an end to all doubts and steadied the vacillators.” What became of that letter? Such documents were copied as they passed from hand to hand, circulating throughout the colonies of exiles. All of the copies could not have been lost: those that fell into the hands of the police should have been found in its archives. If Stalin’s historical “letter” is not available, it is only because it was never written. Despite all its triteness, Schweitzer’s testimonial is a tragic human document. She wrote her memoirs in 1937, a quarter of a century after the events, as a compulsory assignment. The political contribution she had been forced to ascribe to Stalin belonged, as a matter of fact, although on a more modest scale, to her husband, the untameable Spandaryan, who died in exile in 1916. Of course, Schweitzer knows well enough what really happened. But the mechanism of falsification works automatically.

Closer to facts are the memoirs of Shumyatsky, published some thirteen years before Schweitzer’s article. Shumyatsky ascribed the leading role in the struggle with the patriots to Spandaryan. “He was one of the first to assume an unyielding position of ‘defeatism’, and at the rare gatherings of the comrades sarcastically upbraided the social-patriots...” Even in the much later edition Shumyatsky, characterising the general confusion of ideas, preserved the phrase: “The late Spandaryan saw the matter clearly and distinctly...” The others, apparently, saw the matter less clearly. True, Shumyatsky, who never visited Kureika, hastens to add, “Stalin, being completely isolated in his cave, without any vacillation at once assumed a defeatist line”, and that Stalin’s letters “supported Suren in his fight against his opponents.” But the credibility of that insertion, which attempts to insure for Stalin second place among the ‘defeatists’, is weakened considerably by Shumyatsky himself. “Only toward

the end of 1914 and at the beginning of 1915,” he writes further, “after Stalin had managed to visit in Monastyrskoye and support Spandaryan, did the latter cease to be subjected to the attacks of the opposition groups.” Had Stalin assumed his internationalist position openly only after meeting with Spandaryan rather than at the beginning of the war? In his attempt to mask Stalin’s prolonged silence, but, as a matter of fact, thereby underscoring it more than ever, Shumyatsky eliminated from the new edition all reference to the fact that Stalin’s visit to Monastyrskoye occurred “only at the end of 1914 and at the beginning of 1915.” As a matter of fact, the journey took place at the end of February, 1915 when, thanks to the experience of seven months of the war, not only the vacillators but even many active ‘patriots’ had managed to recover from the opiate. As a matter of fact, it could not have been otherwise. The leading Bolsheviks of Petersburg, Moscow, and the provinces met Lenin’s theses with perplexity and alarm. Not one of them accepted them as they were. There was therefore not the slightest reason for expecting that Stalin’s slow and conservative mind would independently reach the conclusions which meant a complete upheaval in the labour movement.

Throughout his term of exile only two documents became known in which Stalin’s position on the war found reflection: these were a personal letter of his to Lenin and his signature to a collective declaration of the Bolshevik group. The personal letter, written on 27th February from the village of Monastyrskoye, is Stalin’s first and apparently only communication to Lenin throughout the war. We quote it in its entirety:

My greetings to you, dear Ilyich, warm, warm greetings. Greetings to Zinoviev, greetings to Nadezhda Konstantinovna [Krupskaya]. How are you, how is your health? I live, as before, chew my bread, completing half of my term. It is rather dull, but it can’t be helped. But how are things with you? It must be much livelier where you are... I read recently Kropotkin’s¹ articles – the old fool must have completely lost his mind. I also read a short article by Plekhanov in *Ryech*² – an incorrigible old gossip. Ekhnah! And the Liquidators with their deputy-agents of the Free Economic Society? There’s no one to beat them, the devil take me! Is it possible that they will get away with it and go unpunished? Make us happy and let us know that in the near future a newspaper will appear that will lash them across their mugs, and do it regularly, and without getting tired. If it should occur to you to write, do so to the address: Turukhan Territory, Yeniseisk Province,

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- 1 Prince Peter Alexeyevich Kropotkin (1842-1921), Russian Anarchist, scientist, historian and philosopher, who lived in London at the time.
 - 2 *Ryech* was the daily newspaper of the Kadets (Constitutional Democrats), the liberal bourgeois party of tsarist Russia.

Village Monastyrskoye, for Suren Spandaryan. Your Koba. Timofei [Spandaryan] asks that his sour greetings be conveyed to Guesde³, Sembat⁴ and Vandervelde⁵ on their glorious – ha-ha – post of ministers.

This letter, obviously influenced by conversations with Spandaryan, offers essentially very little for an evaluation of Stalin's political position. The aged Kropotkin, theoretician of pure anarchy, became a rabid chauvinist at the beginning of the war. Plekhanov, whom even the Mensheviks completely repudiated, did not cut any better figure. Vandervelde, Guesde and Sembat were too exposed a target in their role of bourgeois ministers. Stalin's letter does not contain the slightest hint of the new problems which at the time dominated the thoughts of revolutionary Marxists. The attitude toward pacifism, the slogans of 'defeatism' and of 'transforming the imperialist war into a civil war', the problem of forming a new international – these were then the pivotal points of innumerable debates. Lenin's ideas were far from popular. What would have been more natural than for Stalin to suggest to Lenin his agreement with him, if that agreement were a fact? If one is to believe Schweitzer, it was here, at Monastyrskoye, that Stalin first became acquainted with Lenin's theses. "It is hard to express," she writes in the style of Beria, "with what feeling of joy, confidence and triumph Stalin read Lenin's theses, which confirmed his own thoughts..." Why then did he not drop a single hint about those theses in his letter? Had he worked independently over the problems of the new International, he could not have refrained from sharing at least a few words with his teacher about his own conclusions or from consulting him about some of the most trying questions. But there is no evidence of that. Stalin assimilated from Lenin's ideas those which suited his own outlook. The rest seemed to him the dubious music of the future, if not a foreign "tempest in a teapot". It was with these views that he subsequently came to the February Revolution.

The letter from Monastyrskoye, poor in content, with its artificial tone of jaunty bravado ("the devil take me", "ha-ha" and the like), reveals a lot more than its author intended to reveal. "It is rather dull, but that can't be helped." A man capable of living an intense intellectual life does not write like that. "If

3 Jules Basile Guesde (1845-1922), former left-wing leader of the French Socialist Party, became a defencist and Government Minister (August 1914-October 1915).

4 Marcel Sembat (1862-1922), French reformist Socialist, also Government Minister (1914-16).

5 Emile Vandervelde (1866-1938), Belgian reformist Socialist, chairman of International Socialist Bureau (2nd International), Minister of State during First World War.

it should occur to you to write, do so to the address of..." A man, who really values an exchange of theoretical thoughts, does not write like that. The letter bears the characteristic threefold stamp: slyness, stupidity and vulgarity. No systematic correspondence with Lenin developed throughout his four years of exile, despite the importance Lenin attached to contacts with like-minded people and his penchant for keeping up a correspondence.

In the autumn of 1915 Lenin asked the *émigré* Karpinsky: "I have a great favour to ask: find out...the surname of 'Koba' (Joseph Dj...?? we forgot). Very important!!" Karpinsky replied: "Joseph Djughashvili." What was it about: a new money order, or a letter? The need to make inquiry about his surname certainly shows that there was no constant correspondence.

The other document which bears Stalin's signature is an address by a group of exiles to the editorial board of a legal journal devoted to workers' insurance:

*Voprosy Strakhovaniya*⁶ should also devote all its diligence and endeavour to the cause of insuring the working class of our country with ideas against the thoroughly corrupting anti-proletarian preachments of Messrs. Potresovs, Levitskies and Plekhanovs, which run radically counter to the principles of internationalism.

This was undoubtedly a declaration against social patriotism, but, again, strictly within the limits of ideas common not only among Bolsheviks but even among left-wing Mensheviks. The letter, which, judging from the style, must have been written by Kamenev, was dated 12th March, 1916 – that is, at a time when revolutionary pressure had already gained considerable impetus while patriotic pressure had largely relaxed.

Kamenev and the convicted deputies arrived for their exile at Turukhansk in the summer of 1915. The deputies' behaviour at the trial continued to be a source of great controversy among Party members. About eighteen Bolsheviks, including four members of the Central Committee – Spandaryan, Sverdlov, Stalin and Kamenev – came together at Monastyrskoye. Petrovsky delivered a report on the trial and Kamenev supplemented it. The participants of the discussion, relates Samoilov, "pointed to the mistakes we had made at the trial: Spandaryan did it particularly sharply, all the others expressing themselves more indulgently." Samoilov does not mention at all Stalin's participation in the discussion. But then Spandaryan's widow was forced to

6 *Voprosy Strakhovaniya* ('Insurance Problems') was a paper founded in October 1913 as an offshoot of *Pravda*, which used its ostensible focus on workers' insurance as a front for raising key political questions after *Pravda* was suppressed by the Russian state during the First World War.

ascribe to Stalin what had actually been done by her husband. "After the discussion," continues Samoilov, "a resolution was passed which, on the whole, approved...the behaviour of the fraction at the trial." Such indulgence was very far from the irreconcilability of Lenin, who publicly castigated Kamenev's behaviour as "unworthy of a revolutionary Social-Democrat." At Lenin's request, Shklovsky, from Berne, wrote to Samoilov, at Monastyrskoye, in roundabout terms:

I am very glad that you have no desire to quarrel with my family, yet how much unpleasantness he (Kamenev) caused us (and not he alone)... Any man can make a mistake or do something foolish, but he must rectify his mistake at least through a public apology, if he and his friends have any regard for my honour and the honour of my kinsmen.

Samoilov explains that the words "my family" and "my kinsmen" must be understood as "the Party Central Committee." The letter was in the nature of an ultimatum. However, neither Kamenev nor the deputies made the declaration Lenin demanded of them. And there is no reason for assuming Stalin's support of that demand, although Shklovsky's letter was received at Monastyrskoye just before the conference.

Stalin's tolerance of the deputies' behaviour was essentially a discreet expression of solidarity. In the face of a trial pregnant with dire consequences, Lenin's sharpened formulae must have seemed doubly out of place: what is the sense of making sacrifices for something you regard as a mistake? In the past Stalin himself had not displayed any inclination to use the prisoners' dock as a revolutionary tribunal: while the trial of the Baku demonstrators was pending, he had resorted to rather dubious tricks in order to set himself apart from the other defendants. He judged Kamenev's tactic at the trial as a stratagem rather than as an opportunity for political agitation. Anyway, he remained an intimate friend of Kamenev's throughout their term of exile and during the revolution. They stand together on the group photograph taken in Monastyrskoye. Twelve years would pass before Stalin, not as a matter of principle, merely as a weapon in the struggle for personal power, would bring out Kamenev's behaviour at the trial as a dire accusation against him. However, the tone of Shklovsky's letter should have intimated to Stalin that the issue was far more crucial than he had supposed and that he could no longer continue marking time. It was precisely because he understood this that he wrote the above-cited letter to Lenin; its free and easy form was intended to cover up his unwillingness to commit himself politically.

In 1915 Lenin tried to publish in Moscow a legal Marxist anthology, in order to express at least in an undertone the Bolshevik Party's views on the war. The anthology was held up by the censor, but the articles were preserved and were published after the revolution. Besides Lenin, we find among the authors the literary Stepanov, Olminsky (whom we already know), the comparatively recent Bolshevik Milyutin, the Conciliator Nogin, all *émigrés*. We also find there an article entitled *On the Split of the German Social-Democracy* by Sverdlov. But there was no contribution to this anthology by Stalin, who lived under the same conditions of exile as Sverdlov. That might be explained either by Stalin's apprehension that he would not be in tune with the others or by his annoyance at his failure to place his article on nationalities: touchiness and capriciousness were just as much a part of him as cautiousness.

Shumyatsky states that Stalin was called to the colours while in exile, apparently in 1916, when the older ages were being mobilised (Stalin was then going on thirty-seven), but was not inducted into the army because of his unbending left arm. Patiently he bided his time beyond the Arctic Circle, fishing, setting his traps for rabbits, reading and possibly also writing. "It is rather dull, but it can't be helped." A recluse, taciturn, choleric, he was far from the central figure among the exiles. "Clearer than many others," writes Shumyatsky, a Stalin adherent, "in the memory of the Turukhanites is the monumental figure of Suren Spandaryan...the intransigent revolutionary Marxist and magnificent organiser." Spandaryan reached Turukhansk on the eve of the war, a year later than Stalin. "What peace and quiet here!" he was wont to remark sarcastically. "Everybody agrees with everybody else on everything – the S-Rs, the Bolsheviks, the Mensheviks, the Anarchists... Don't you know that the Petersburg proletariat is listening to the voice of the exiles...?" Suren was the first to assume an anti-patriotic position and made everybody listen to him. But in personal influence on his comrades Sverdlov held first place. "Lively and sociable", an extrovert constitutionally incapable of being self-centred, Sverdlov always rallied the others, gathered important news and circulated through the various colonies of exiles, and organised an exiles' cooperative, besides conducting systematic observations at the meteorological station. The relations between Spandaryan and Sverdlov came to be strained. The exiles grouped themselves around these two figures. Although both groups fought together against the administration, rivalry "for spheres of influence", as Shumyatsky puts it, never stopped. It is not easy to ascertain today that struggle's basis in principles. Antagonistic to Sverdlov, Stalin supported Spandaryan discreetly and at arm's length.

In the first edition of his memoirs Shumyatsky wrote: "The administration of the region realised that Suren Spandaryan was the most active of the revolutionists and regarded him as their leader." In a subsequent edition this sentence was stretched to include two persons: Sverdlov as well as Spandaryan. Constable Kibirov, with whom Stalin had presumably established friendly relations, had established a prying surveillance of Spandaryan and Sverdlov, considering them "the ringleaders of all the exiles." Losing for a time the official thread, Shumyatsky entirely forgot to mention Stalin in that connection. The reason is not hard to understand. The general level of the Turukhansk exiles was considerably above the average. Here were held simultaneously the men who constituted the essential nucleus of the Russian centre: Kamenev, Stalin, Spandaryan, Sverdlov, Goloshchekin, and several other prominent Bolsheviks. There was no official Party machine in exile and it was impossible to lead anonymously, pulling the strings behind the scenes. Everyone was in full view of the others. Slyness, firmness and persistence were not enough to win these thoroughly experienced people: one had to be cultured, an independent thinker and a skilled debater. Spandaryan, apparently, was distinguished for the superior daring of his thinking, Kamenev for his broader scholarship and greater catholicity of views, Sverdlov for his greater receptivity, initiative and flexibility. It was for that reason that Stalin "became self-centred", content with monosyllabic remarks, which Shumyatsky thought of describing as "pointed" only in a later edition of his composition.

Did Stalin study in exile and what did he study? He had long passed the age when one is satisfied with aimless and random reading. He could advance only by studying specific questions, taking notes, trying to formulate his own ideas in writing. Yet apart from the reference to his article on the national question, no one has anything to say about Stalin's intellectual life during those four years. Sverdlov, who was in no sense a theoretician or a literary, wrote five articles during those years, translated from foreign languages, contributed regularly to the Siberian press. "In that way my affairs are not in bad shape," he wrote in an optimistic tone to one of his friends. After the death of Ordzhonikidze, who had absolutely no predilection for theory, his wife wrote about her late husband's prison years: "He studied and read without end. Long excerpts from what he had read during that period were preserved in the thick oilcloth bound copybook issued to Sergo by the prison authorities." Every revolutionist brought out from prison and exile such oil clothbound copybooks. True, much was lost during escapes and searches. But from his last exile Stalin could have brought out anything he liked and

under the best of conditions, and in the years to come it was not he who was subjected to searches but, on the contrary, he who subjected others to them. Yet it is useless to seek any traces of his intellectual life throughout that entire period of solitude and leisure. For four years – the years of the revolutionary movement’s resurgence in Russia, of the World War, of the international Social-Democracy’s collapse, of a vehement struggle of ideas in Socialism, of laying the groundwork for the new International – it is impossible that throughout that entire period Stalin did not take pen in hand. Yet in all that he then wrote there does not seem to be even a single line that could have been used to enhance his latter-day reputation. The years of war, the years of paving the way for the October Revolution are a blank space in the history of Stalin’s ideas.⁷

Revolutionary internationalism found its finished expression under the pen of the *émigré* Lenin. The arena of a single country, moreover, of backward Russia, was too limited to permit the proper evaluation of a worldwide perspective. Just as the *émigré* Marx needed London, which was in his day the hub of capitalism, in order to integrate German philosophy and the French Revolution with English economics, so Lenin had to be during the war at the focal point of European and world events, in order to draw the decisive revolutionary inferences from the premises of Marxism. Manuilsky, the official leader of the Communist International after Bukharin and preceding Dimitrov, in 1922 wrote:

...*Sotsial-Demokrat* [‘The Social-Democrat’], published in Switzerland by Lenin and Zinoviev, and the Paris *Golos* [‘The Voice’] ([later called] *Nashe Slovo* [‘Our Word’]), published by Trotsky, will be to the future historian of the Third International the basic fragments out of which was forged the new revolutionary ideology of the international proletariat.

It is cheerfully conceded that Manuilsky overestimated Trotsky’s role. However, he did not even have a pretext for naming Stalin. But then, years later he would do his utmost to rectify that omission.

Tranquillised by the monotonous rhythms of the snowy waste, the exiles were far from expecting the events that transpired in February, 1917. All of them were caught by surprise, notwithstanding that they always lived by their faith in the inevitability of revolution. “At first,” writes Samoilov, “we seemed to have suddenly forgotten our differences of opinion... Political

7 In Stalin’s *Works*, it is reported that from July 1913 to March 1917, Stalin wrote only six letters in the entire period. No letters in 1914, two in 1915, and four in 1916.

disagreements and mutual antipathies seemed suddenly to have vanished...” That interesting confession is confirmed by all the publications, speeches and practical steps of that time. The barriers between the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks, between the Internationalists and the Patriots, fell down. The whole country was flooded with buoyant but near-sighted and verbose conciliationism. People floundered in the welter of heroic phrases, the principal element of the February Revolution, especially during its first weeks. Groups of exiles started from all the ends of Siberia, merged into one stream and flowed westward in an atmosphere of exultant intoxication.

At one of the meetings in Siberia, Kamenev, who sat in the presidium together with Liberals, Populists and Mensheviks, as it was later told, joined in signing a telegram which greeted the Grand Duke Michael Romanov on the occasion of his presumably magnanimous but, as a matter of fact, cowardly renunciation of the throne, pending the decision of the Constituent Assembly. It is not impossible that Kamenev, sodden with sentimentality, thought it best not to worry his colleagues in the presidium with a disrespectful refusal. In the great confusion of those days no one paid the slightest heed to that, and Stalin, whom no one even thought of including in the presidium, did not protest against Kamenev’s fall from grace until a pitiless struggle began between them.

The first great point on the way, which contained a considerable number of workers, was Krasnoyarsk. Here a Soviet of deputies was already in existence. The local Bolsheviks, who were members of the general organisation together with the Mensheviks, awaited directives from the leaders who were travelling through. Caught entirely by the wave of unification, these leaders did not even require the establishment of an independent Bolshevik organisation. What was the use? The Bolsheviks, like the Mensheviks, stood for supporting the provisional government which was headed by the Liberal Prince Lvov. Differences of opinion were also avoided on the question of the war: it was necessary to defend Revolutionary Russia! In such a mood Stalin, Kamenev and others were proceeding toward Petrograd. “The path along the railroad,” recalls Samoilov, was “extraordinary and tumultuous, a mass of welcoming demonstrations, meetings and the like.” At most stations the exiles were met by the exultant populace with military bands playing the Marseillaise: the day of the Internationale had not yet dawned. At the larger railway stations there were gala banquets. The amnestied had to “talk, talk without end.” Many lost their voices, became ill from fatigue, refused to leave their cars; “but even in the carriages we were not left in peace.”

UNKNOWN

Stalin did not lose his voice, for he made no speeches. There were many other, more skilled orators, among them the puny Sverdlov with his powerful bass. Stalin remained on the sidelines, sullen, alarmed by the flood of nature at spring-tide and, as always, malevolent. He was again being elbowed out of the way by persons of far smaller calibre. He had already established a record of well-nigh a score of years of revolutionary activity, intersected by unavoidable arrests and resumed after escapes. Almost ten years had passed since Koba had abandoned "the stagnant morass" of Tiflis for industrial Baku. He had worked in the capital of the oil industry for nearly eight months, he had spent nearly six months in the Baku prison, nearly nine months in the Vologda exile. A month of underground activity was paid for with two months of punishment. After escaping he had again worked in the underground for nearly nine months, spent about six months in prison, stayed nine months in exile – a somewhat more favourable ratio. At the end of exile – less than two months of illegal work, nearly three months of prison, nearly two months in Vologda province: two and a half months of punishment for one month of activity. Again two months of underground, nearly four months of prison and exile. Another escape. More than half a year of revolutionary activity, then prison and exile, this time until the February Revolution; that is, lasting four years. On the whole, of the nineteen years of his participation in the revolutionary movement, he spent two and three-quarter years in prison, five and three-quarter years in exile. That was not a bad proportion; most professional revolutionists spent much longer periods in prison.

During those nineteen years Stalin did not emerge as a figure of either primary or even secondary rank. He was unknown. Referring in 1911 to Koba's intercepted letter from Solvychevodsk to Moscow, the chief of the Tiflis Okhrana wrote a detailed report on Joseph Djughashvili that contained neither notable facts nor striking features, barring perhaps the mention that "Soso", alias "Koba" had begun his career as a Menshevik. At the same time, referring to Gurgen (Tskhakaya), who was mentioned incidentally in the same letter, the gendarme remarked that the latter "has long been one of the important revolutionists..." According to this record, Gurgen was arrested "together with the famous revolutionist Bogdan Knunyants." The latter was not only a fellow Georgian but the same age as Koba. As for the "fame" of Djughashvili himself, there is not even the remotest suggestion of it.

Two years later, characterising in detail the structure of the Bolshevik Party and its general staff, the Director of the Police Department remarked in

passing that Sverdlov and “a certain Joseph Djughashvili” had been inducted by co-optation into the Bureau of the Central Committee. The expression, “a certain” indicates that Djughashvili’s name did not yet mean anything to the Chief of Police in 1913, notwithstanding such a source of information as Malinovsky. Until recently, Stalin’s revolutionary biography up to March, 1917, was quite unremarkable. Scores of professional revolutionists, if not hundreds, had done the same sort of work as he, some better, others worse. Industrious Moscow researchers have figured out that during the three years, 1906-09, Koba wrote sixty-seven appeals and newspaper articles, or less than two a month. Not one of these articles, which were no more than a mere rehash of other people’s ideas for his Caucasian readers, was ever translated from the Georgian language or reprinted in the leading organs of the party or the faction. There is no article by Stalin or any reference to him in any list of contributors to the Petersburg, Moscow or foreign publications of that period, legal or illegal, newspapers, magazines, or anthologies. He continued to be regarded not as a Marxist writer, but as a small-time propagandist and organiser.

In 1912, when his articles began to appear more or less regularly in the Bolshevik press of Petersburg, Koba gave himself the pseudonym Stalin, taking it from the word for steel, just as Rosenfeld before him had taken the pseudonym Kamenev from the word for stone: it was fashionable among young Bolsheviks to choose hard pseudonyms. Articles under Stalin’s signature do not arrest anyone’s attention: they are devoid of personality, barring crudity of exposition. Beyond the narrow circle of leading Bolsheviks, no one knew who the author of the articles was, and hardly anyone wondered about it. In January, 1913 Lenin wrote in a carefully considered note on Bolshevism for the famous Rubakin bibliographic reference book: “The principal Bolshevik writers are: G. Zinoviev, V. Ilyin⁸, Yu. Kamenev⁹, P. Orlovsky, and others.” It could not have occurred to Lenin to name Stalin among the “principal writers” of Bolshevism, although at that very time he was abroad and at work on his “nationality” article.

Piatnitsky, who was uninterruptedly connected with the entire history of the Party, with its foreign staff as well as with its underground agency in Russia, with the literary men as well as with the illegal transporters, in his careful and on the whole conscientious memoirs, embracing the period 1896-1917 discusses all more or less prominent Bolsheviks but never once mentions

8 V. I. Lenin.

9 L. B. Kamenev.

Stalin; that name is not included even in the index at the end of the book. This fact deserves all the more attention because Piatnitsky was far from hostile to Stalin; on the contrary, he remains to this day in the second rank of his entourage. In a large anthology of materials of the Moscow Okhrana, which covers the history of Bolshevism from 1903 to 1917, Stalin is mentioned three times: with reference to his co-optation into the Central Committee, with reference to his appointment to the Bureau of the Central Committee, and with reference to his participation in the Krakow Conference. There is nothing there about his work, not a word of evaluation, no mention of a single distinguishing individual trait.

Stalin emerges for the first time within range of police vision, as within range of party vision, not as a personality but as a member of the Bolshevik Centre. In the gendarme reports, as in the revolutionary memoirs, he is never mentioned personally as a leader, as an initiator, as a writer in connection with his own ideas or actions, but always as part of the Party machine – as member of the local Committee, as member of the Central Committee, as one of the contributors to a newspaper, as one of many others in a list of names, and then never in the first place. It was no accident that he found himself on the Central Committee considerably later than others of his age, and not through election but by way of co-optation.

This telegram from Perm was sent to Lenin in Switzerland: “Fraternal greetings. Leaving today for Petrograd. Kamenev, Muranov, Stalin.” The thought of sending the telegram was, of course, Kamenev’s. Stalin signed last. That trinity felt itself bound by ties of solidarity. The amnesty had liberated the best forces of the Party and Stalin thought with trepidation of the revolutionary capital. He needed Kamenev’s relative popularity and Muranov’s title of deputy. Thus the three of them together arrived in a Petrograd shaken by revolution. One of his German biographers, Ch. Windecke writes:

His name was at that time known only in narrow Party circles. He was not greeted like Lenin was a month later...by an inspired crowd of the people with red banners and music. He was not greeted, as two months later Trotsky, hurrying from America, had been, by a deputation which rode out to greet him halfway and which carried him on its shoulders. He arrived without a sound and without any noise, and sat down to work... Outside the borders of Russia no one had any idea of his existence.

7. THE YEAR 1917

This was the most important year in the life of the country and of Joseph Djughashvili's generation of professional revolutionists. As a touchstone, that year tested ideas, parties, men.

At Petersburg, now called Petrograd, Stalin found a state of affairs he had not expected. Bolshevism had dominated the labour movement prior to the war's outbreak, especially in the capital. In March 1917, the Bolsheviks in the Soviet were an insignificant minority. How had that happened? The impressive mass that had taken part in the movement of 1911-14 actually amounted to no more than a small fraction of the working class. Revolution had made millions, not mere hundreds of thousands, spring to their feet. Because of mobilisation, nearly forty percent of these workers were new. The old-timers were at the front, playing there the part of the revolutionary yeast; their places at the factories were taken by nondescript newcomers fresh from the country, by peasant lads and peasant women. These novices had to go through the same political experiences, however briefly, as the vanguard of the preceding period. The February Revolution in Petrograd was led by class-conscious workers, Bolsheviks mostly, but not by the Bolshevik Party. Leadership by rank-and-file Bolsheviks could secure victory for the insurrection but not political power for the Party.

Even less auspicious was the state of affairs in the provinces. The wave of exultant illusions and indiscriminate fraternisation, coupled with the political naiveté of the recently awakened masses, swept in the natural conditions for the flourishing of petty-bourgeois socialism, Menshevism and Populism. Workers – and following their lead, the soldiers, too – were electing to the Soviet those who, at least in words, were opposed not only to the monarchy

but to the bourgeoisie as well. The Mensheviks and the Populists, having gathered very nearly all of the intellectuals into their fold, had a countless number of agitators at their disposal, all of them proclaiming the need of unity, fraternity and other equally attractive civic virtues. The spokesmen for the Army were for the most part the S-Rs, those traditional guardians of the peasantry, which alone sufficed to bolster that party's authority among the proletarians of recent vintage. Hence, the dominance of the compromisers' parties seemed assured – at least, to themselves.

Worst of all, the course of events had caught the Bolshevik Party napping. None of its tried and trusted leaders were in Petrograd. The Central Committee's Bureau there consisted of two workingmen, Shlyapnikov and Zalutsky, and one college boy, Molotov. The "manifesto" they issued in the name of the Central Committee after the victory of February called upon "the workers of plants and factories, and the insurrectionary troops as well, immediately to elect their chosen representatives to the provisional revolutionary government." However, the authors of this "manifesto" themselves attached no practical significance to this call of theirs. Furthest from their intentions, was the launching of an independent struggle for power. Instead, they were getting ready to settle down to the more modest role of a Leftist opposition for many years to come.

From the very beginning the masses repudiated the liberal bourgeoisie, deeming it no different from the nobility and the bureaucracy. It was out of the question, for example, that either workers or soldiers should vote for a Kadet. The power was entirely in the hands of the Socialist Compromisers, who had the backing of the people in arms. But, lacking confidence in themselves, the Compromisers yielded their power to the bourgeoisie. The latter was detested by the masses and politically isolated. The regime based itself on *quid pro quo*. The workers, and not only the Bolsheviks, looked upon the Provisional Government as their enemy. Resolutions urging the transfer of governmental power to the Soviets passed almost unanimously at factory meetings. The Bolshevik Dingelstead, subsequently a victim of the purge, has testified: "There was not a single meeting of workers that would have refused to pass such a resolution proposed by us." But, yielding to the pressure of the Compromisers, the Petrograd Committee of the Bolshevik Party stopped this campaign. The advanced workers tried their utmost to throw off the tutelage on top, but they did not know how to parry the learned arguments about the bourgeois nature of the revolution. Several shades of opinion clashed in Bolshevism itself, but the necessary inferences from the various arguments

were not drawn. The Party was in a state of abysmal chaos. "No one knew what were the slogans of the Bolsheviks," the prominent Saratov Bolshevik Antonov subsequently recalled, "It was a most distasteful spectacle."

The twenty-two days that elapsed between Stalin's arrival from Siberia and Lenin's from Switzerland are exceptionally significant for the light they throw on Stalin's political complexion. He was suddenly thrust into a wide-open field of action. Neither Lenin nor Zinoviev was yet in Petrograd. Kamenev was there, the Kamenev compromised by his recent behaviour in court and generally renowned for his opportunistic tendencies. There was also young Sverdlov, scarcely known in the Party, more of an organiser than a politico. The furious Spandaryan was no more: he had died in Siberia. As in 1912, so now again Stalin was for the time being, if not the leading, at least one of the two leading Bolsheviks in Petrograd. The disoriented Party expected clear instructions. It was no longer possible to evade issues by keeping still. Stalin had to give answers to the most urgent questions – about the Soviets, the government, the war, the land. His answers were published; they speak for themselves.

As soon as he reached Petrograd, which was one vast mass meeting in those days, Stalin went directly to Bolshevik headquarters. The three members of the Central Committee Bureau, assisted by several writers, were deciding *Pravda's* complexion. Although the Party leadership was in their hands, they went about the job helplessly. Letting others crack their voices addressing workers' and soldiers' meetings, Stalin entrenched himself at headquarters. More than four years earlier, after the Prague conference, he had been co-opted into the Central Committee. Since then much water had run over the dam. But the exile from Kureika had the knack of keeping his hold on the Party machine: he still regarded his old mandate as valid. Aided by Kamenev and Muranov, he first of all removed from leadership the "Leftist" Central Committee Bureau and the *Pravda* editorial board. He went about it rather rudely, the more so since he had no fear of resistance and was in a hurry to show that he was boss.

"The comrades who arrived," Shlyapnikov wrote later, "were critical and negative in their attitude toward our work." They did not find fault with its lack of colour and indecisiveness, but, on the contrary, with its persistent effort to draw the line between themselves and the Compromisers. Like Kamenev, Stalin stood closer to the Soviet majority. *Pravda*, after passing into the hands of the new editorial board, declared as early as 15th March that the Bolsheviks would resolutely support the Provisional Government "insofar

as it fights reaction or counter-revolution.” The paradox of this declaration was that the only important agent of counter-revolution was the Provisional Government itself. Stalin’s stand on war showed the same mettle: as long as the German Army remained subservient to its Emperor, the Russian soldier should “staunchly stand at his post, answering bullet for bullet and salvo for salvo.” As if all there was to the problem of imperialism was the Emperor! The article was Kamenev’s, but Stalin raised not the slightest objection to it. If he differed at all from Kamenev in those days, it was in being more evasive than his partner. “All defeatism,” *Pravda* explained, “or rather what the venal press stigmatised by that name under the aegis of tsarist censorship, died the moment the first revolutionary regiment appeared on the streets of Petrograd.” This was an outright disclaimer of Lenin, who had preached defeatism out of reach of the tsarist censorship, and at the same time a reaffirmation of Kamenev’s declaration at the trial of the Duma fraction. But on this occasion it was countersigned by Stalin. As for “the first revolutionary regiment”, all its appearance meant was a step from Byzantine barbarism to imperialist civilisation. Shlyapnikov recounts:

The day the transformed *Pravda* appeared... was a day of triumph for the Defencists. The whole Tauride Palace, from the businessmen of the Duma Committee to the Executive Committee, the very heart of revolutionary democracy, buzzed with but one news item – the triumph of the moderate and sensible Bolsheviks over the extremists. In the Executive Committee itself we were greeted with malicious smiles... When that issue of *Pravda* reached the factories, it created confusion and indignation among Party members and sympathisers, spiteful satisfaction among our opponents... The indignation in the outlying districts was stupendous, and, when the proletarians found out that *Pravda* had been taken in tow by three of its former managing editors recently arrived from Siberia, they demanded the expulsion of the latter from the Party.

Shlyapnikov’s account was retouched and softened by him in 1925 under the pressure of Stalin, Kamenev and Zinoviev, the ‘Triumvirate’ that then ruled the Party. Yet it does record clearly enough Stalin’s initial steps in the arena of the Revolution and the reaction to them of class-conscious workers. The sharp protest of the Vyborgites, which *Pravda* was soon obliged to publish in its own columns, forced the editorial board henceforth to formulate its opinions more circumspectly but not to change its policy.

Soviet politics was shot through and through with compromise and equivocation. The great need of the masses was above all to find someone who would call a spade a spade; that is, of course, the sum and substance of

revolutionary politics. Everybody shied from that, for fear of upsetting the delicate structure of dual power.

The greatest amount of falsehood accumulated around the war issue. On 14th March, the Executive Committee proposed to the Soviet its draft of the manifesto *To the Peoples of the World*. This document called upon the workers of Germany and Austria-Hungary to refuse “to serve as a tool of conquest and violence in the hands of kings, landowners and bankers.” But the Soviet leaders themselves had not the slightest intention of breaking with the kings of Great Britain and Belgium, the Emperor of Japan, or the bankers and landowners, their own and those of all the Entente countries. The newspaper of the Minister of Foreign Affairs Milyukov noted with satisfaction, “the appeal is blossoming into an ideology shared by us and our allies.” That was quite right – and quite in the spirit of the French Socialist ministers since the outbreak of war. During practically the very same hours, Lenin was writing to Petrograd by way of Stockholm that the revolution was threatened with the danger of having the old imperialist policy camouflaged behind new revolutionary phrases. “I shall even prefer to split with anyone at all in our Party rather than yield to social-patriotism.” But in those days Lenin’s ideas did not have a single champion.

Besides marking a victory for the imperialist Milyukov over the petty-bourgeois democrats, the unanimous adoption of this manifesto by the Petrograd Soviet meant the triumph of Stalin and Kamenev over the left-wing Bolsheviks. All bowed their heads before the discipline of patriotic hypocrisy. “We welcome wholeheartedly,” Stalin wrote in *Pravda*, “the Soviet’s appeal of yesterday... This appeal, if it reaches the broad masses, will undoubtedly bring back hundreds and thousands of workers to the forgotten slogan: Workers of the world, unite!” There was really no lack of similar appeals in the West, and all they did was to help the ruling classes preserve the mirage of a war for democracy.

Stalin’s article on the manifesto is not only highly revealing as to his stand on this particular issue but also of his way of thinking in general. His organic opportunism, forced by time and circumstance to seek temporary cover in abstract revolutionary principles, made short shrift of these principles when it came to an issue. He began his article by repeating almost word for word Lenin’s argumentation that even after the overthrow of tsarism, Russia’s participation in the war would continue to be imperialistic. Nevertheless, when he came to draw his practical conclusions, he not only welcomed the social-patriotic manifesto with equivocal qualifications but, following Kamenev’s

lead, rejected out of hand the revolutionary mobilisation of the masses against war. "First of all," he wrote, "it is undeniable that the bare slogan, 'Down with War!' is utterly inapplicable as a practical solution..." And his suggested solution was: "pressure on the Provisional Government with the demand that it immediately express its readiness to start peace negotiations..." With the aid of friendly "pressure" on the bourgeoisie, to whom conquest was the whole purpose of the war, Stalin wanted to achieve peace "on the basis of the self-determination of nations." Since the beginning of the war Lenin had been directing his hardest blows against precisely this sort of philistine utopianism. No amount of "pressure" can make the bourgeoisie stop being the bourgeoisie: it must be overthrown. But Stalin stopped short before this conclusion, in sheer fright – just like the Compromisers.

No less significant was Stalin's article, *On the Abolition of National Limitations*. His basic idea, acquired from propagandist pamphlets as far back as his Tiflis seminary days, was that national oppression was a relic of medievalism. Imperialism, viewed as the domination of strong nations over weak ones, was a conception quite beyond his ken. He wrote:

The social basis of national oppression, the force that inspires it, is the degenerating landed aristocracy... In England, where the landed aristocracy shares its power with the bourgeoisie... national oppression is softer, less inhuman, provided of course we do not take into consideration the special consideration that during the war, when the power passed into the hands of the landlords, national oppression increased considerably (persecution of the Irish, the Hindus).

The absurd assertions with which his article bristles – that supposedly racial and national equality is secure in the democracies; that in England during the war the power had passed to the landlords; that the overthrow of the feudal aristocracy would mean the abolition of national oppression – are shot through and through with the spirit of vulgar democratism and parochial obtuseness. Not a word to the effect that imperialism was responsible for national oppression on a scale of which feudalism was utterly incapable, if only because of its indolent provincial makeup. In theory he had not moved forward since the beginning of the century; more than that, he seemed to have entirely forgotten his own work on the national question, written early in 1913 under Lenin's guidance.

"To the extent that the Russian Revolution has won," the article concluded, "it has already created actual conditions [for national freedom] by having overthrown the sovereignty of feudalism and serfdom." As far as

our author was concerned the Revolution was already completely a thing of the past. In prospect, quite in the spirit of Milyukov and Tsereteli, were “the drafting of laws” and “their statutory ratification.” Yet still untouched was not only capitalist exploitation, the overthrow of which had not even occurred to Stalin, but even the ownership of land by the landed gentry, something he himself had designated as the basis of national oppression. The government was run by Russian landlords like Rodzianko and Prince Lvov. Such was – hard though it is to believe even now! – Stalin’s historical and political slant a mere ten days before Lenin was to proclaim the course toward socialist revolution.

The All-Russian Conference of Bolsheviks, convoked by the Central Committee Bureau, opened in Petrograd on 28th March, simultaneously with the conference of representatives of Russia’s most important Soviets. Although fully a month had elapsed since the Revolution, the Party was still in the throes of utter confusion, which was further enhanced by the leadership of the past two weeks. Differentiation of political trends had not yet crystallised. In exile that had needed the arrival of Spandaryan; now the Party had to wait for the arrival of Lenin. Rabid chauvinists like Voitinsky and Eliava, among others, continued to call themselves Bolsheviks and took part in the Party Conference alongside those who considered themselves internationalists. The patriots vented their sentiments far more explicitly and boldly than the semi-patriots, who constantly backed down and apologised. Since a majority of the delegates belonged to the Swamp, their natural spokesman was Stalin. “We all feel alike about the Provisional Government,” said the Saratov delegate Vassilyev. “There are no differences as to practical steps between Stalin and Voitinsky,” Krestinsky chimed in with pleasure. The very next day Voitinsky joined the Mensheviks and seven months later he led a detachment of Cossacks against the Bolsheviks.

It seems that Kamenev’s behaviour at the trial had not been forgotten. It is possible that there was also talk among the delegates about the mysterious telegram to the Grand Duke. Perhaps Stalin took the trouble to remind others of these errors by his friend. Anyway, it was not Kamenev but the far lesser-known Stalin who was delegated to present the chief political report on the policy toward the Provisional Government. The protocol record of that report has been preserved; it is a priceless document to historians and biographers. Its subject was the central problem of the revolution – the relations between the Soviets, directly supported by the armed workers and soldiers, and the bourgeois government, existing only by the grace of the Soviet leaders. “The

government,” said Stalin in part, “is split into two organs, neither of which has full sovereignty...”

The Soviet has indeed taken the initiative in revolutionary changes; the Soviet is the sole revolutionary leader of the insurgent people – the organ that controls the Provisional Government. The Provisional Government has undertaken the task of actually fortifying the achievements of the revolutionary people. The Soviet mobilises the forces and exercises control, while the Provisional Government, balking and bungling, takes upon itself the role of defender of those achievements of the people which the latter have already actually made.

This excerpt is worth a whole programme!

The reporter presented the relationship between the two basic classes of society as a division of labour between two “organs”. The Soviets, i.e., the workers and soldiers, make the Revolution; the government, i.e., capitalists and liberal landed gentry, “fortify” it. During 1905-07 Stalin himself wrote over and over again, reiterating after Lenin: “The Russian bourgeoisie is anti-revolutionary; it cannot be the prime mover, let alone the leader, of the Revolution; it is the sworn enemy of revolution, and a stubborn struggle must be waged against it.” Nor was this guiding political idea of Bolshevism in any sense nullified by the course of the February Revolution. Milyukov, the leader of the liberal bourgeoisie, said at the conference of his party a few days before the uprising: “We are walking on a volcano... Whatever the nature of the government – whether good or bad – we need a firm government now more than ever before.” When the uprising began, notwithstanding the resistance of the bourgeoisie, there was nothing left for the liberals to do except take their stand on the ground prepared by its victory. It was none other than Milyukov who, having declared only yesterday that a Rasputinite monarchy was better than a volcanic eruption, was now running the Provisional Government which, according to Stalin, was supposed to be “fortifying” the conquests of the revolution but which actually was doing its utmost to strangle it. To the insurgent masses the meaning of the Revolution was in the abolition of the old forms of property, the very forms the Provisional Government was defending. Stalin presented the irreconcilable class struggle which, defying all the efforts of the Compromisers, was straining day after day to turn into civil war, as a mere division of labour between two political machines. Not even the Left Menshevik Martov would have put the issue in such fashion. This was Tsereteli’s theory – and Tsereteli was the oracle of the Compromisers – in its most vulgar expression: “moderate” and more “resolute” forces perform

in an arena called “democracy” and divide the act between them, some “conquering” and others “fortifying”. Here ready-made for us is the formula of future Stalinist policy in China (1924-27), in Spain (1934-39) as well as generally in all his ill-starred “popular fronts”. The reporter continued:

It is not to our advantage to force the course of events now, accelerating the secession of the bourgeois layers... We have to gain time by checking the secession of the middle bourgeois layers, in order to get ready for the struggle against the Provisional Government.

The delegates listened to these arguments with vague misgivings. ‘Don’t frighten away the bourgeoisie’ had ever been Plekhanov’s slogan, and in the Caucasus, Jordania’s Menshevism attained its maturity in fierce combat with that trend of thought. It is impossible to “check the secession” of the bourgeoisie without checking the proletariat’s class struggle; essentially, both are merely the two aspects of the same process. “The talk about not frightening away the bourgeoisie...” Stalin himself had written in 1913, shortly before his arrest, “evoked only smiles, for it was clear that the task of the Social-Democracy was not merely ‘to frighten away’ the very same bourgeoisie but to dislodge it in the person of its advocates, the Kadets.” It is even hard to understand how any old Bolshevik could have so forgotten the fourteen-year-old history of his faction as to resort at the most crucial moment to the most odious of Menshevik formulae. The explanation is to be found in Stalin’s way of thinking: he is not receptive to general ideas, and his memory does not retain them. He uses them from time to time, as they are needed, and casts them aside without a twinge, almost as a reflex. In his 1913 article he was referring to Duma elections. “To dislodge” the bourgeoisie meant merely to take mandates away from the liberals. The present reference was to the revolutionary overthrow of the bourgeoisie. That was a job that Stalin relegated to the remote future. For the present, quite like the Mensheviks, he deemed it necessary “not to frighten them away.”

After reading the Central Committee’s resolution, which he had helped to draw up, Stalin declared rather unexpectedly that he was not in complete accord with it and would rather support the resolution proposed by the Krasnoyarsk Soviet. The secret significance of this manoeuvre is not clear. On his way from Siberia Stalin might have had a hand in drafting the resolution of the Krasnoyarsk Soviet. It is possible that, having sensed the attitude of the delegates, he thought it best to edge away from Kamenev ever so little.

However, the Krasnoyarsk resolution ranked even lower in quality than the Petersburg document:

...to make completely clear that the only source of the Provisional Government's power and authority is the will of the people, to whom the Provisional Government must wholly submit, and to support the Provisional Government...only insofar as it pursues the course of satisfying the demands of the working class and of the revolutionary peasantry.

The nostrum brought out of Siberia proved quite simple: the bourgeoisie "must wholly submit" to the people and "pursue the course" of the workers and peasants. Several weeks later the formula of supporting the bourgeoisie "insofar as", was to become the butt of general ridicule among Bolsheviks. But already several of the delegates protested against supporting the government of Prince Lvov: the very idea ran too drastically counter to the whole tradition of Bolshevism. Next day the Social-Democrat Steklov, himself a supporter of the "insofar as" formula, and at the same time as a member of the "contact commission" close to the ruling circles, was careless enough at the conference of the Soviets to draw such a dismal picture of the Provisional Government's actual machinations – opposition to social reforms, efforts on behalf of the monarchy and annexations – that the conference of Bolsheviks recoiled in alarm from the formula of support. "It is now clear," was the way the moderate delegate Nogin expressed the feeling of many others, "that it is not support we should be discussing but counteraction." The left-wing delegate Skrypnik expressed the same thought: "Much has changed since Stalin's report of yesterday... The Provisional Government is plotting against the people and the revolution...yet the resolution speaks of support." The crestfallen Stalin, whose appraisal of the situation could not stand the test of time even to the extent of twenty-four hours, moved "to instruct the committee to alter the clause about support." But the conference went one better: "By a majority against four, the clause about support is stricken from the resolution."

One might think that henceforth the reporter's whole schema about the division of labour between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie would be cast into oblivion. Actually, only the phrase was stricken from the resolution, not the thought. The dread of "frightening away the bourgeoisie" remained. In substance the resolution was an appeal exhorting the Provisional Government to wage "the most energetic struggle for the total liquidation of the old regime" at the very time it was busy waging "the most energetic struggle" for the restoration of the monarchy. The conference did not venture beyond friendly

pressure on the liberals. No mention was made of an independent struggle for the conquest of power – if only for the sake of democratic objectives. As if intent upon exposing in the most lurid light the true spirit behind the resolutions passed, Kamenev declared at the conference of Soviets, which was going on simultaneously, that on the issue of power he was “happy” to add the vote of the Bolsheviks to the official resolution which had been moved and sponsored by the Right Menshevik leader Dan. In the light of these facts, the split of 1903, made permanent by the Prague conference of 1913, must have seemed a mere misunderstanding.

Hence it was not by chance that at the next day’s session the Bolshevik conference was deliberating the proposal of the Right Menshevik leader Tsereteli to merge the two parties. Stalin reacted to this in the most sympathetic manner: “We ought to do it. It is necessary to define our proposals as to the terms of unification. Unification is possible along the line of Zimmerwald-Kienthal.” The reference was to the “line” of two socialist conferences in Switzerland at which moderate pacifists had been preponderant. Molotov, who two weeks earlier had been punished for his Leftism, came out with timid objections: “Tsereteli wants to unite divergent elements... Unity along that line is wrong...” More resolute was Zalutsky’s protest:

Only a philistine can be motivated by the mere desire for unity, not a Social-Democrat... It is impossible to unite on the basis of superficial adherence to Zimmerwald-Kienthal... It is necessary to advance a definite platform.

But Stalin, who had been dubbed a philistine, stuck to his guns: “We ought not to run ahead and anticipate disagreements. Party life is impossible without disagreements. We will live down these trivial disagreements inside the Party.” It is hard to believe one’s eyes: Stalin declared differences with Tsereteli, the inspirer of the dominant Soviet bloc, to be petty disagreements that could be “lived down” inside the Party. The discussion took place on 1st April. Three days later Lenin was to declare war unto death against Tsereteli. Two months later Tsereteli was to disarm and arrest Bolsheviks.

The conference of March 1917, is extraordinarily important for insight into the state of mind of the Bolshevik Party’s leading members immediately after the February Revolution – and particularly of Stalin as he was upon his return from Siberia after four years of brooding on his own. He emerges from the scanty chronicle of the protocols as a plebeian democrat and oafish provincial forced by the trend of the times to assume the Marxist tinge. His articles and speeches of those weeks cast a faultlessly clear light on his position

during the years of war: had he drawn the least bit toward Lenin's ideas during his Siberian sojourn, as memoirs written twenty years after the fact avow, he could not have gotten as hopelessly stuck in the morass of opportunism as he did in March 1917. Lenin's absence and Kamenev's influence made it possible for Stalin to show himself at the outbreak of the revolution for what he really was, revealing his most deeply rooted traits – distrust of the masses, utter lack of imagination, short-sightedness, a penchant for the line of least resistance. These characteristics continued to reassert themselves in later years whenever Stalin had occasion to play a leading role in important developments. That is why the March conference, at which Stalin revealed himself so utterly as a politician, is today expunged from Party history and its records are kept under lock and key. In 1923, three copies were secretly prepared for the members of the 'Triumvirate' – Stalin, Zinoviev, Kamenev. Only in 1926, when Zinoviev and Kamenev joined the opposition against Stalin, did I manage to procure from them this remarkable document, which enabled me to have it published abroad in Russian and English.

But after all, this record does not differ in any essential from his *Pravda* articles and merely supplements them. Not a single declaration, proposal, protest in which Stalin more or less articulately counterpoised the Bolshevik point of view to the policy of the petty-bourgeois democrats has come down to us from those days. An eyewitness of those times, the left-wing Menshevik Sukhanov – author of the already-mentioned manifesto, *To the Toilers of the World* – wrote in his invaluable *Notes On The Revolution*:

In addition to Kamenev, the Bolsheviks then had Stalin on the Executive Committee... During his nondescript tenure...[he] made – and not only on me – the impression of a grey spot which was occasionally dimly apparent and left no trace. There is really nothing more that can be said about him.

For that description, which was admittedly rather one-sided, Sukhanov later paid with his life.

On 3rd April, having traversed belligerent Germany, Lenin, Krupskaya, Zinoviev and others crossed the Finnish border and arrived in Petrograd. A group of Bolsheviks headed by Kamenev had gone to meet Lenin in Finland. Stalin was not one of them, and that little fact shows better than anything else that there was nothing even remotely resembling personal intimacy between him and Lenin. "The moment Vladimir Ilyich came in and sat down on the couch," relates Raskolnikov, an officer of the Navy and subsequently a Soviet diplomat, "he opened up on Kamenev: 'What have you people been writing in

Pravda? We saw several issues and were very angry with you.” During his years of working with Lenin abroad Kamenev had grown quite used to such cold showers. They did not deter him from loving Lenin, even from worshipping him, all of him, his passion, his profundity, his simplicity, his witticisms, at which Kamenev laughed before they were uttered, and his handwriting, which he involuntarily imitated. Many years later somebody remembered that on the way Lenin had asked about Stalin. That natural question (Lenin undoubtedly inquired about all the members of the old Bolshevik staff) later served as the starting point for the plot of a Soviet motion picture.

LENIN RE-ARMS THE PARTY

An observant and conscientious reporter of the revolution wrote the following about Lenin’s first public appearance before the foregathered Bolsheviks: “I shall never forget that speech which, like thunder, shook and astonished not only me, a heretic who had accidentally wandered in, but even all the faithful. Decidedly, no one expected anything of the kind.”

It was not a question of oratorical thunder, with which Lenin was sparing, but of the whole trend of his thought. “We don’t want a parliamentary republic, we don’t want a bourgeois democracy, we don’t want any government except the Soviet of Workers’, Soldiers’ and Poor Peasants’ Deputies!” In the coalition of socialists with the liberal bourgeoisie – i.e., in the “popular front” of those days – Lenin saw nothing but treason to the people. He jeered fiercely at the fashionable phrase “revolutionary democracy”, which lumped into one workers and petty-bourgeoisie, Populists, Mensheviks and Bolsheviks. The Compromisist parties which ruled in the Soviets were not allies to him but irreconcilable enemies. “That alone,” remarks Sukhanov, “sufficed in those days to make the listeners’ heads spin!”

The Party was as unprepared for Lenin as it had been for the February Revolution. All the criteria, slogans, turns of speech accumulated during the five weeks of revolution were smashed to smithereens. “He resolutely attacked the tactics of the leading Party groups and individual comrades prior to his arrival,” wrote Raskolnikov, referring first and foremost to Stalin and Kamenev. “The most responsible Party workers were on hand. Yet even to them Ilyich’s speech was something utterly new.” There was no discussion. All were too stunned for that. No one wanted to expose himself to the blows of this desperate leader. In corners, they whispered among themselves that Ilyich had been too long abroad, that he had lost touch with Russia, that he did not understand the situation, and worse than that, that he had gone over to the

position of Trotskyism. Stalin, yesterday's reporter at the Party Conference, was silent. He realised that he had made a frightful mistake, far more serious than on that occasion at the Stockholm Congress when he had defended land division, or a year later, when for a while he was one of the Boycottists. Decidedly, the best thing to do was to make himself scarce. No one cared to know Stalin's opinion on the question anyway. Subsequently, no one could remember anything, in his memoirs, about what Stalin did during the next few weeks.

Meantime Lenin was far from idle: he surveyed the situation with his sharp eyes, tormented his friends with questions, sounded out the workers. The very next day he presented the Party with a short resume of his views. These came to be the most important document of the revolution, famous as The April Theses. Lenin was not only unafraid "to frighten away" liberals but even members of the Bolshevik Central Committee. He did not play hide and seek with the pretentious leaders of the Bolshevik Party. He laid bare the logic of class war. Casting aside the cowardly and futile formula, "insofar as", he confronted the Party with the task of seizing the government. But first and foremost it was necessary to determine who was the enemy. The Black Hundred Monarchists cowering in their nooks and corners were of no consequence whatever. The staff of the bourgeois counter-revolution was made up of the central committee of the Kadet Party and the Provisional Government inspired by it. But the latter existed by grace of the Social-Revolutionists and the Mensheviks, who in their turn held power because of the gullibility of the masses. Under these conditions, application of revolutionary violence was out of the question. First of all, the masses had to be won. Instead of uniting and fraternising with the Populists and the Mensheviks, it was necessary to expose them before the workers, soldiers and peasants as agents of the bourgeoisie.

The real government is the Soviet of Workers' Deputies... Our Party is a minority in the Soviet... That can't be helped! It is up to us to explain – patiently, persistently, systematically – the erroneousness of their tactics. As long as we are a minority, our job is to criticise in order to open the eyes of the masses.

Everything in that programme was simple and reliable and every nail was driven in firmly. These theses bore only one single signature: "Lenin". Neither the Party Central Committee nor the editorial board of *Pravda* would countersign this explosive document.

On that very 4th April, Lenin appeared before the same Party Conference at which Stalin had expounded his theory of peaceful division of labour between

the Provisional Government and the Soviets. The contrast was too cruel. To soften it, Lenin, contrary to his custom, did not subject the resolutions that had been passed to analysis but merely turned his back on them. He raised the conference to a much higher plane. He forced it to see new perspectives – perspectives at which the makeshift leaders had not even guessed. “Why didn’t you seize power?” the new reporter demanded, and proceeded to recapitulate the current explanations: the revolution was presumably bourgeois; it was only in its initial stage; the war created unforeseen difficulties and the like.

That’s all nonsense. The point is that the proletariat is not sufficiently conscious and not sufficiently organised. That should be admitted. The material force is in the hands of the proletariat, but the bourgeoisie is wide awake and ready.

Lenin shifted the issue from the sphere of pseudo-objectivism, where Stalin, Kamenev and others tried to hide from the tasks of the revolution, into the sphere of awareness and action. The proletariat failed to seize power in February, not because seizure of power was forbidden by sociology, but because their failure to seize power enabled the Compromisers to deceive the proletariat in the interests of the bourgeoisie – and that was all! “Even our Bolsheviks,” he continued, so far without mentioning any names, “display confidence in the government. That can be explained only by intoxication with the revolution. This is the end of socialism... If that’s the case, I cannot go along. I would rather remain in a minority.” It was not hard for Stalin and Kamenev to recognise the reference to themselves. The entire conference understood to whom the speech referred. The delegates had no doubt that Lenin was not joking when he threatened to break away. This was a far cry from the “insofar as” formula and from the generally homespun policy of the preceding days.

The axis of the war issue was no less resolutely shifted. Nicholas Romanov had been overthrown. The Provisional Government had half promised a republic. But did this change the nature of the war? France had long been a republic, and more than once. Yet its participation in the war remained imperialist. The nature of war is determined by the nature of the ruling class. “When the masses declare that they do not want any conquests, I believe them. When Guchkov and Lvov say that they do not want any conquests – they are liars.” This simple criterion is profoundly scientific and at the same time understandable to every soldier in the trenches. Lenin then delivered a direct blow, calling the *Pravda* by its right name. “To demand from a government of the capitalists that it should repudiate annexation is nonsense,

crying mockery...” These words struck directly at Stalin. “It is impossible to end this war without a peace of violence unless capitalism is overthrown.” Yet the Compromisers were supporting the capitalists, and *Pravda* was supporting the Compromisers. “The appeal of the Soviet – not a single word of it has a semblance of class consciousness. It is all phrasemongering.” The reference is to the very manifesto that had been welcomed by Stalin as the voice of internationalism. Pacifist phrases, while preserving the old alliances, the old treaties, the old aims, were meant only to deceive the masses. “What is unique for Russia is the incredibly rapid transition from uncontrollable violence to the most subtle deception.” Three days earlier Stalin had declared his readiness to unite with Tsereteli’s party. “I hear,” said Lenin, “that there is a unification tendency afoot in Russia: unity with a Defencist is treason to Socialism. I think that it is better to remain alone, like Liebknecht, one against a hundred and ten!” It was no longer permissible even to bear the same name as the Mensheviks, the name of Social-Democracy. “I propose for my part that we change the Party name, that we call ourselves the Communist Party.” Not a single one of the participants of the conference, not even Zinoviev, who had just arrived with Lenin, supported this proposal, which seemed a sacrilegious break with their own past.

Pravda, which continued to be edited by Kamenev and Stalin, declared that Lenin’s theses were his personal opinion, that the Central Committee Bureau did not share his opinion, and that *Pravda* itself pursued its old policy. That declaration was written by Kamenev. Stalin supported him in silence. He would have to be silent for a long time. Lenin’s ideas seemed to him the phantasmagoria of an *émigré*, yet he bided his time to see how the Party machine would react. “It must be openly acknowledged,” wrote subsequently the Bolshevik Angarsky, who had passed through the same evolution as the others, “that a great many of the Old Bolsheviks...maintained the Old Bolshevik opinions of 1905 on the question of the character of the Revolution of 1917 and that the repudiation of these views was not easily accomplished.” As a matter of fact, it was not a question of “a great many of the Old Bolsheviks” but of all of them without exception. At the March conference, at which the Party cadres of the entire country met, not a single voice was heard in favour of striving to win the power for the Soviets. All of them had to re-educate themselves. Out of the sixteen members of the Petrograd Committee, only two supported the theses, and even they did not do it at once. “Many of the comrades pointed out,” Tsikhon recalled, “that Lenin has lost contact with Russia, did not take into consideration present conditions,

and so forth.” The provincial Bolshevik Lebedev tells how in the beginning the Bolsheviks condemned Lenin’s agitation, “which seemed Utopian and which was explained by his prolonged lack of contact with Russian life.” One of the inspirers of such judgments was undoubtedly Stalin, who always had looked down at the ‘*émigrés*’. Several years later Raskolnikov recalled:

The arrival of Vladimir Ilyich laid down a sharp Rubicon in the tactic of our Party. It must be acknowledged that prior to his arrival there was decidedly great chaos in the Party... The task of taking possession of the power of the State was conceived of as a remote ideal... It was considered sufficient to support the Provisional Government with one or another kind of qualification... The party had no leader of authority capable of welding it together into a unit and leading it.

In 1922 it could not have occurred to Raskolnikov to see Stalin as the “leader of authority”. Wrote the Ural worker Markov, whom the revolution had found at his lathe, “Our leaders were groping until the arrival of Vladimir Ilyich... Our Party’s position began to clarify with the appearance of his famous theses.” “Remember the reception given to Vladimir Ilyich’s *April Theses*,” Bukharin was saying soon after Lenin’s death, “when part of our own Party looked upon them as a virtual betrayal of accepted Marxist ideology.” This “part of our own Party” consisted of its entire leadership without a single exception. “With Lenin’s arrival in Russia in 1917,” wrote Molotov in 1924, “our Party began to feel firm ground under its feet... Until that moment it had merely felt its way weakly and uncertainly... The Party lacked the clarity and resoluteness required by the revolutionary moment...” Earlier than the others, more precisely and more clearly, did Ludmilla Stahl define the change that had taken place: “Until Lenin’s arrival all the comrades wandered in darkness...” she said on 4th April, 1917, at the time of the sharpest moment of the Party crisis.

Seeing the independent creativeness of the people, we could not help taking it into consideration... Our comrades were content with mere preparations for the Constituent Assembly through parliamentary methods and did not even consider the possibility of proceeding further. By accepting Lenin’s slogans we shall be doing that which life itself urges us to do.

The Party’s re-armament of April was a hard blow to Stalin’s prestige. He had come from Siberia with the authority of an Old Bolshevik, with the rank of a member of the Central Committee, with the support of Kamenev and Muranov. He too began with his own kind of “re-armament”, rejecting the policy of the local leaders as too radical and committing himself through a

number of articles in *Pravda*, a report at the conference, and the resolution of the Krasnoyarsk Soviet. In the midst of this activity, which by its very nature was the work of a leader, Lenin appeared. He came into the conference like an inspector entering a classroom. After having heard several sentences, he turned his back on the teacher and with a wet sponge wiped off the blackboard all of his futile scrawls. The feelings of astonishment and protest among the delegates dissolved in the feeling of admiration. But Stalin had no admiration to offer. His was a sharp hurt, with a sense of helplessness and green envy. He had been humiliated before the entire party far worse than at the closed Krakow conference after his unfortunate leadership of the *Pravda*. It was useless to fight against it. He, too, now beheld new horizons at which he had not even guessed the day before. All he could do was to grit his teeth and keep his peace. The memory of the revolution brought about by Lenin in April, 1917, was stamped forever on his consciousness. It rankled. He got hold of the records of the March Conference and tried to hide them from the Party and from history. But that in itself did not settle matters. Collections of the *Pravda* for 1917 remained in the libraries. Moreover, those issues of *Pravda* came out in a reprint edition – and Stalin's articles spoke for themselves. During the first years of the Soviet regime innumerable reminiscences about the April crisis filled all the historical journals and the anniversary issues of newspapers. All this had to be gradually removed from circulation, counterfeited, and new material substituted. The very word, “re-armament” of the Party, used by me casually in 1922 became subject in time to increasingly ferocious attacks by Stalin and his satellite historians.

True, as late as 1924 Stalin still deemed it the better part of wisdom to admit, with all due indulgence for himself, the error of his ways at the outset of the revolution. He wrote:

The Party... accepted the policy of pressure by the Soviets on the Provisional Government in the question of peace, and did not at once decide to take a forward step...toward the new slogan of power to the Soviets... That was a profoundly erroneous position, for it multiplied pacifist illusions, poured water into the mill of defencism and hampered the revolutionary education of the masses. I shared that erroneous position at that time with other comrades in the Party and repudiated it completely only in the middle of April, after subscribing to Lenin's theses.

This public admission, necessary in order to protect his own rear in the struggle against Trotskyism, which was then beginning, proved too circumscribing two years later. In 1926 Stalin categorically denied the opportunist character

of his policy in March, 1917 – “This is not true, comrades, this is gossip!” – and admitted merely that he had “certain waverings...but who among us did not have momentary waverings?” Four years later, Yaroslavsky, who in his capacity as historian mentioned the fact that Stalin at the beginning of the revolution had assumed “an erroneous position”, was subjected to ferocious persecution from all sides.

It was no longer permissible so much as to mention the “passing waverings.” The idol of prestige is a voracious monster! Finally, in the “History” of the Party edited by himself Stalin ascribes to himself Lenin’s position, reserving his own views as the position of his enemies. “Kamenev and certain workers of the Moscow organisation, as for example, Rykov, Bubnov, Nogin,” proclaims this remarkable history, “stood on the semi-Menshevik position of conditional support for the Provisional Government and the policy of the Defencists. Stalin, who had just returned from exile, Molotov and others, together with the majority of the Party, defended the policy of no confidence to the Provisional Government, came out against defencism,” and the like. Thus, by way of gradual change from fact to fiction, black was transformed into white. This method, which Kamenev called “doling out the lie”, runs through Stalin’s entire biography, finding its culminating expression, and at the same time its collapse, in the Moscow Trials.

THE APRIL CONFERENCE

Analysing the basic ideas of the two factions of the Social-Democracy in 1909, I wrote: “The anti-revolutionary aspects of Menshevism are already apparent in all their force; the anti-revolutionary characteristics of Bolshevism are a threat of tremendous danger only in the event of a revolutionary victory.” In March, 1917, after the overthrow of tsarism, the old cadres of the Party carried these anti-revolutionary characteristics of Bolshevism to their extreme expression: the very differentiation between Bolshevism and Menshevism appeared to have been lost. Imperative was a radical re-armament of the Party. Lenin, the only man big enough for the job, accomplished that in the course of April. Apparently, Stalin did not want to come out publicly against Lenin. But neither did he come out for him. Without much ado he shook clear from Kamenev, just as ten years before he had deserted the Boycottists and just as at the Krakow Conference he quietly abandoned the Conciliators to their fate. He was not in the habit of defending any idea that did not promise immediate success. The conference of the Petrograd organisation was in session from the 14th to the 22nd April. Although Lenin’s influence already predominated, the

debates were pretty sharp now and then. Among those who participated were Zinoviev, Tomsy, Molotov and other well-known Bolsheviks. Stalin did not even show up. Obviously, he sought to be forgotten for a while.

The All-Russian Conference convened in Petrograd on 24th April. It was supposed to clear up any matters left over from the March conference. About 150 delegates represented 79,000 Party members, of whom 15,000 were in the capital. This was not at all a bad record for an anti-patriotic party that had emerged from the underground only yesterday. Lenin's victory became clear from the very start, with the elections to the presidium of five members, for among those elected were neither Kamenev nor Stalin, the two men responsible for the opportunist policy in March. Kamenev had sufficient courage to demand the privilege of a minority report at the conference.

Recognising that formally and factually the classic remnant of feudalism, the ownership of land by the landed gentry, has not yet been liquidated...it is too soon to assert that bourgeois democracy has exhausted all of its possibilities.

Such was the basic thought of Kamenev and of Rykov, Nogin, Dzerzhinsky¹, Angarsky and others. "The impetus for social revolution," Rykov was saying, "should have come from the West." The democratic revolution has not ended, the orators of the opposition insisted, supporting Kamenev. That was true. However, the mission of the Provisional Government was not to complete the revolution but to reverse its course. Hence it followed that the democratic revolution could be completed only under the rule of the working class. The debates were animated yet peaceful, since in all essentials the issue had been decided beforehand and Lenin did everything possible to make his opponents' retreat easy.

During these debates Stalin came out with a brief statement against his ally of yesterday. In his minority report Kamenev had argued that since we were not calling for the immediate overthrow of the Provisional Government, we must demand control over it; otherwise the masses would not understand us. Lenin protested that the proletariat's "control" of a bourgeois government, especially under revolutionary conditions, would either be fictitious or amount to no more than mere collaboration with it. Stalin decided this was

1 Felix Edmundovich Dzerzhinsky (1877-1926) was a Polish revolutionary who played an important role in the Russian revolutionary movement from 1895 until his death in 1926. Repeatedly arrested for his revolutionary activities, he spent long periods in tsarist prisons. During the Civil War he was head of the Cheka (the All-Russia Extraordinary Commission to Combat Counter-revolution and Sabotage), a force to combat the threat posed by internal counter-revolution and terrorism.

a good time to register his disagreement with Kamenev. To provide some semblance of an explanation for the change in his own position, he took advantage of a note issued on the 19th April by Minister of Foreign Affairs Milyukov. The latter's extreme imperialist frankness literally drove the soldiers into the street and caused a government crisis. Lenin's conception of the revolution was based on the interrelationship of classes, not on some isolated diplomatic note, which differed little from other acts of the government. But Stalin was not interested in general ideas. All he needed was some obvious pretext in order that he might make his shift with the least damage to his vanity. He was "doling out" his retreat. At first, as he put it, "it was the Soviet that outlined the programme, while now it is the Provisional Government." After Milyukov's note "the government is advancing upon the Soviet, while the Soviet is retreating. After that to speak of control is to speak nonsense." It sounded strained and false. But it turned the trick: Stalin managed thus to separate himself in time from the opposition, which got only seven votes when the ballots were cast.

In his report on the question of national minorities, Stalin did whatever he could to bridge the gap between his March report, which saw the source of national oppression solely in the landed aristocracy, and the new position, which the Party was now assimilating. "National oppression," he said, unavoidably arguing against himself, "is not only supported by the landed aristocracy but also by another force – the imperialist groups, which apply the method of enslaving nations, learned in the colonies, to their own country as well..." Moreover, the big bourgeoisie is followed by "the petty-bourgeoisie, part of the intellectuals and part of the labour aristocracy, who also enjoy the fruits of this robbery." This was the very theme Lenin had so persistently harped upon during the war years. "Thus," his report continued, "there is a whole chorus of social forces that supports national oppression." In order to put an end to this oppression, it was necessary "to remove this chorus from the political scene." By placing the imperialist bourgeoisie in power, the February Revolution certainly did not lay the ground for the liberation of national minorities. Thus, for example, the Provisional Government resisted with all its might all efforts to broaden the autonomy of Finland. "Whose side should we take? It is clear that it must be the side of the Finnish people..." The Ukrainian Pyatakov and the Pole Dzerzhinsky came out against the programme of national self-determination as utopian and reactionary. "We should not advance the national question," Dzerzhinsky was saying naively, "since that retards the moment of social revolution. I would therefore suggest

that the question of Poland's independence should be removed from the resolution." "The social-democracy," Stalin replied, "insofar as it pursues a course directed toward a socialist revolution, should support the revolutionary movement of the nationalities against imperialism." Here for the first time in his life Stalin said something about "a course directed toward a socialist revolution." The sheet of the Julian calendar that day bore the date: 29th April, 1917.

Having assumed the prerogatives of a congress, the Conference elected a new Central Committee, which consisted of Lenin, Zinoviev, Kamenev, Milyutin, Nogin, Sverdlov, Smilga, Stalin, Fedorov; and the alternates: Teodorovich, Bubnov, Glebov-Avilov and Pravdin. Of the 133 delegates, for some reason only 109 took part in the secret balloting with full vote; it is possible that part of them had already left town. Lenin got 104 votes (was Stalin perhaps one of the five delegates who refused to support Lenin?), Zinoviev 101, Stalin 97, Kamenev 95. For the first time Stalin was elected to the Central Committee in the normal party way. He was going on thirty-eight. Rykov, Zinoviev and Kamenev were about twenty-three or twenty-four when first elected by Party Congresses to the Bolshevik general staff.

At the Conference an attempt was made to leave Sverdlov out of the Central Committee. Lenin told about it after the latter's death, treating it as his own glaring mistake. "Fortunately," he added, "we were corrected from below." Lenin could hardly have had any reason for opposing Sverdlov's candidacy. He knew him only through correspondence as a tireless professional revolutionist. It is not unlikely that the opposition came from Stalin, who had not forgotten how Sverdlov had had to straighten things out after him in Petersburg and reorganise *Pravda*; their joint life in Kureika had merely enhanced his enmity. Stalin never forgave anything. He apparently tried to take his revenge at the conference and in one way or another, we can only guess how, managed to win Lenin's support. But his attempt did not succeed. If in 1912 Lenin met with the resistance of the delegates when he tried to get Stalin onto the Central Committee, he now met with no less resistance when he tried to keep Sverdlov off. Of the members of this Central Committee elected at the April Conference, only Sverdlov managed to die a natural death. All the others – with the exception of Stalin himself – as well as the four alternates, have either been officially shot or have been done away with unofficially.

'OLD BOLSHEVIKS'

Without Lenin, no one had known what to make of the unprecedented situation; all were slaves of old formulae. Yet clinging to the slogan of democratic dictatorship now meant, as Lenin put it, "actually going over to the petty-bourgeoisie." It may well be that Stalin's advantage over the others was in his lack of compunction about going over and his readiness for rapprochement with the Compromisers and fusion with the Mensheviks. He was not in the least hampered by reverence for old formulae. Ideological fetishism was alien to him: thus, without the least remorse he repudiated the long-held theory of the counter-revolutionary role of the Russian bourgeoisie. As always, Stalin acted empirically, under the pressure of his natural opportunism, which has always driven him to seek the line of least resistance. But he had not been alone in his stand; in the course of the three weeks before Lenin's arrival, he had been giving expression to the hidden convictions of very many of the 'Old Bolsheviks'.

It should not be forgotten that the political machine of the Bolshevik Party was predominantly made up of the intelligentsia, which was petty-bourgeois in its origin and conditions of life and Marxist in its ideas and in its relations with the proletariat. Workers who turned professional revolutionists joined this set with great eagerness and lost their identity in it. The peculiar social structure of the Party machine and its authority over the proletariat (neither of which is accidental but dictated by strict historical necessity) were more than once the cause of the Party's vacillation and finally became the source of its degeneration. The Party rested on the Marxist doctrine, which expressed the historical interests of the proletariat as a whole; but the human beings of the Party machine assimilated only scattered portions of that doctrine according to their own comparatively limited experience. Quite often, as Lenin complained, they simply learned ready-made formulae by rote and shut their eyes to the change in conditions. In most cases they lacked independent daily contact with the labouring masses as well as a comprehensive understanding of the historical process. They thus left themselves exposed to the influence of alien classes. During the war, the higher-ups of the Party were largely affected by compromisist tendencies, which emanated from bourgeois circles, while the rank-and-file Bolshevik workingmen displayed far greater stability in resisting the patriotic hysteria that had swept the country.

In opening a broad field of action to democratic processes, the revolution was far more satisfying to "professional revolutionists" of all parties than to soldiers in the trenches, to peasants in villages and to workers in munitions

factories. The obscure underground men of yesterday suddenly became leading political figures. Instead of parliaments they had Soviets, and there they were free to argue and to rule. As far as they were concerned, the very class contradictions that had caused the revolution seemed to be melting away under the rays of the democratic sun. That was why almost everywhere in Russia Bolsheviks and Mensheviks joined hands. Even where they remained apart, as in Petrograd, the urge for unity was decidedly compelling in both organisations. At the same time, in the trenches, in the villages and in the factories, the chronic antagonisms assumed an ever more open and more intense character, foreboding civil war instead of unity. As often happens, a sharp cleavage developed between the classes in motion and the interests of the party machines. Even the Bolshevik Party cadres, who enjoyed the benefit of exceptional revolutionary training, were definitely inclined to disregard the masses and to identify their own special interests with the interests of the machine on the very day after the monarchy was overthrown. What then, could be expected of these cadres when they became an all-powerful state bureaucracy? It is unlikely that Stalin gave this matter any thought. He was flesh of the flesh of the machine and the toughest of its bones.

But by what miracle did Lenin manage in a few short weeks to turn the Party's course into a new channel? The answer should be sought simultaneously in two directions – Lenin's personal attributes and the objective situation. Lenin was strong not only because he understood the laws of the class struggle but also because his ear was faultlessly attuned to the stirrings of the masses in motion. He represented not so much the Party machine as the vanguard of the proletariat. He was definitely convinced that thousands from among those workers who had borne the brunt of supporting the underground Party would now support him. The masses at the moment were more revolutionary than the Party, and the Party more revolutionary than its machine. As early as March the actual attitude of the workers and soldiers had in many cases become stormily apparent and it was widely at variance with the instructions issued by all the parties, including the Bolshevik. Lenin's authority was not absolute, but it was tremendous, for all of past experience was a confirmation of his prescience. On the other hand, the authority of the Party machine, like its conservatism, was only in the making at that time. Lenin exerted influence not so much as an individual but because he embodied the influence of the class on the Party and of the Party on its machine. Under such circumstances, whoever tried to resist soon lost his footing. Vacillators fell in line with those in front, the cautious joined the majority. Thus, with comparatively small

losses, Lenin managed in time to orient the Party and to prepare it for the new revolution.

Every time that the Bolshevik leaders had to act without Lenin they fell into error, usually inclining to the right. Then Lenin would appear like a *deus ex machina* and indicate the right road. Does it mean then that in the Bolshevik Party Lenin was everything and all the others nothing? Such a conclusion, which is rather widespread in democratic circles, is extremely biased and hence false. The same thing might be said about science. Mechanics without Newton and biology without Darwin seemed to amount to nothing for many years. This is both true and false. It took the work of thousands of rank-and-file scientists to gather the facts, to group them, to pose the problem and to prepare the ground for the comprehensive solutions of a Newton or a Darwin. That solution in turn affected the work of new thousands of rank-and-file investigators. Geniuses do not create science out of themselves; they merely accelerate the process of collective thinking. The Bolshevik Party had a leader of genius. That was no accident. A revolutionist of Lenin's makeup and breadth could be the leader only of the most fearless party, capable of carrying its thoughts and actions to their logical conclusion. But genius in itself is the rarest of exceptions. A leader of genius orients himself faster, estimates the situation more thoroughly, sees further than others. It was unavoidable that a great gap should develop between the leader of genius and his closest collaborators. It may even be conceded that to a certain extent the very power of Lenin's vision acted as a brake on the development of self-reliance among his collaborators. Nevertheless, that does not mean that Lenin was "everything", and that the Party without Lenin was nothing. Without the Party Lenin would have been as helpless as Newton and Darwin without collective scientific work. It is consequently not a question of the special sins of Bolshevism, conditioned presumably by centralisation, discipline and the like, but a question of the problem of genius within the historical process. Writers who attempt to disparage Bolshevism on the grounds that the Bolshevik Party had the good luck to have a leader of genius merely confess their own mental vulgarity.

The Bolshevik leadership would have found the right line of action without Lenin, but slowly, at the price of friction and internal struggles. The class conflicts would have continued to condemn and reject the meaningless slogans of the Bolshevik Old Guard. Stalin, Kamenev and other second-raters had the alternative of giving consistent expression to the tendencies of the proletarian vanguard or simply deserting to the opposite side of the barricades.

We must not forget that Shlyapnikov, Zalutsky and Molotov tried to take a more leftist course from the very beginning of the revolution.

However, that does not mean that the right path would have been found anyway. The factor of time plays a decisive role in politics – especially, in a revolution. The class struggle will hardly bide its time indefinitely until the political leaders discover the right thing to do. The leader of genius is important because, in shortening the learning period by means of object lessons, he enables the party to influence the development of events at the proper moment. Had Lenin failed to come at the beginning of April, no doubt the Party would have groped its way eventually to the course propounded in his *Theses*. But could anyone else have prepared the Party in time for the October denouement? That question cannot be answered categorically. One thing is certain: in this situation – which called for resolute confrontation of the sluggish Party machine with masses and ideas in motion – Stalin could not have acted with the necessary creative initiative and would have been a brake rather than a propeller. His power began only after it became possible to harness the masses with the aid of the machine.

THE COMPROMISERS

It is hard to trace Stalin's activities during the next two months. He was suddenly relegated to a third-rate position. Lenin himself was now directly in charge of the *Pravda* editorial board day in and day out – not merely by remote control, as before the War – and *Pravda* piped the tune for the whole Party. Zinoviev was lord and master in the field of agitation. Stalin still did not address any public meetings. Kamenev, half-hearted about the new policy, represented the Party in the Soviet Central Executive Committee and on the floor of the Soviet. Stalin practically disappeared from that scene and was hardly ever seen even at Smolny. Sverdlov assumed paramount leadership of the most outstanding organisational activity, assigning tasks to Party workers, dealing with the provincials, adjusting conflicts. In addition to his routine duties on the *Pravda* and his presence at sessions of the Central Committee, Stalin was given occasional assignments of an administrative, technical or diplomatic nature. They are far from numerous. Naturally lazy, Stalin can work under pressure only when his personal interests are directly involved. Otherwise, he prefers to suck his pipe and bide his time. For a while he felt acutely unwell. Everywhere he was superseded either by more important or more gifted men. His vanity was stung to the quick by the memory of March

and April days. Violating his own integrity, he slowly reversed the trend of his thoughts. But in the final reckoning it was a half-hearted turn.

During the stormy 'April days', when the soldiers went out into the streets in protest against Milyukov's imperialist note, the Compromisers were busy as always with exhortations addressed to the government and soothing promises addressed to the masses. On the 21st, the Central Executive Committee sent a telegram, under the signature of Chkheidze, to Kronstadt and to other garrisons, conceding that Milyukov's militant note was undeserving of approval, but adding, "negotiations, not yet concluded, have begun between the Executive Committee and the Provisional Government" (by their very nature these negotiations could never come to an end), and, "recognising the harm of all scattered and unorganised public appearances, the Executive Committee asks you to restrain yourself", and so forth.

From the official protocols we note, not without surprise, that the text of the telegram was composed by a commission that consisted of two Compromisers and one Bolshevik, and that this Bolshevik was Stalin. It is a minor episode (we find no important episodes pertaining to him throughout that period), but decidedly a typical one. The reassuring telegram was a classic little example of that "control" which was an indispensable element in the mechanics of dual power. The slightest Bolshevik contact with that policy of futility was denounced by Lenin with particular vehemence. If the public appearance of the Kronstadtites was not opportune, the commission should have told them so in the name of the Party, in its own words, and not taken upon itself responsibility for the "negotiations" between Chkheidze and Prince Lvov. The Compromisers placed Stalin on the commission because the Bolsheviks alone enjoyed any authority in Kronstadt. This was all the more reason for declining the appointment. But Stalin did not refuse it. Three days after the telegram of reassurance, he spoke at the Party conference in opposition to Kamenev, selecting none other than the controversy over Milyukov's note as particularly cogent proof that "control" was senseless. Logical contradictions never disconcerted that empiricist.

*When I arrived in Petrograd at the beginning of May, I hardly remembered Stalin's name. I probably came across it in the Bolshevik press, appended to articles that barely attracted my attention. My first meetings were with Kamenev, Lenin and Zinoviev, with whom negotiations about fusion [with the Inter-Districters or Mezhrayontsy]² were carried on. Upon

2 Inter-Districters or Mezhrayontsy (Inter-District Committee) was a Petrograd organisation which comprised between 3,000 and 4,000 workers and many prominent

arrival, I immediately came into close contact with all the leading figures by virtue of my work in the Central Executive Committee, or other numerous meetings, but I did not notice Stalin even among the second rate members of the Bolshevik Central Committee such as Bubnov, Milyutin, Nogin and others. Neither at the sessions of the Soviets, nor of its Central Executive Committee, nor at the numerous meetings, which consumed a considerable part of my time, did I ever meet Stalin.

“Stalin was little known to anybody even at that time – only to a small group at the top and to those with whom he came in contact previously in underground work,” states the former Soviet diplomat Dmitrievsky.

But the people at the top looked down on him. To them he was merely the technical agent of Lenin’s plans, but not a leader. Some like Trotsky hardly noticed him at all. The broad masses of people in the Party and the Soviets, with the exception of individuals, saw him only as an accidental figure, a nondescript scarcely noticeable person. In those days even Antonov-Ovseyenko³, Kollentsky or Krylenko⁴ seemed stars in comparison with him.*

At the conference of the Bolshevik military organisations in June, after the basic political speeches by Lenin and Zinoviev, Stalin reported on “the nationalist movement in the nationalist regiments”. In the active army, influenced by the awakening of the oppressed nationalities, there was a spontaneous regrouping of army units in accordance with nationality. Thus there sprang up Ukrainian,

Left figures such as Uritsky, Joffe, Lunacharsky, Ryazanov and Volodarsky, who later played leading roles in the Bolshevik Party and the Revolution. The Mezhrayontsy was the same programmatically as the Bolshevik Party, but organisationally independent. Trotsky consulted Lenin and they mutually agreed that Trotsky would enter the Inter-District Committee and work for the unification of the two organisations.

3 Vladimir Alexandrovich Antonov-Ovseyenko (1883-1938) during the Russian Revolution of 1905 led an uprising in Novo-Alexandria in Poland. He was subsequently arrested and sentenced to twenty years’ exile in Siberia. In 1917 he led the Bolshevik assault to capture the Winter Palace, and arrested the ministers of the Russian Provisional Government. He was later appointed the Russian SFSR’s chief prosecutor and then, in 1937, the People’s Commissar for Justice. He was arrested in February 1938 and executed.

4 Nikolai Vasilyevich Krylenko (1885-1938) was a Bolshevik revolutionary from 1906, a member of the Bolshevik faction in the Russian Parliament in 1913, and in 1917 he was chairperson of the soldiers’ committee of the 11th Army, and in that capacity a delegate to the first All-Russian Congress of Soviets. Later he would become a Soviet politician. Arrested and tortured by the NKVD in the 1938 Purge, Krylenko confessed to involvement in wrecking and anti-Soviet agitation. He was sentenced to death by a military court in a trial lasting twenty minutes, and executed immediately afterwards.

Mussulman, Polish regiments, and the like. The Provisional Government openly combated this “disorganisation of the army”, while here, too, the Bolsheviks came out in defence of the oppressed nationalities. Stalin’s speech was not preserved. But it could hardly have added anything new.

The First All-Russian Congress of Soviets, which opened on the 3rd June, dragged on for almost three weeks. The score or two of Bolshevik delegates from the provinces, lost in the mass of Compromisers, constituted a group far from homogeneous and still subject to the moods of March. It was not easy to lead them. It was to this Congress that an interesting reference was made by a Populist already known to us, who had at one time observed Koba in a Baku prison. In 1928 Vereshchak wrote:

I tried in every way to understand the role of Stalin and Sverdlov in the Bolshevik Party. While Kamenev, Zinoviev, Nogin and Krylenko sat at the table of the Congress presidium, and Lenin, Zinoviev and Kamenev were the main speakers, Sverdlov and Stalin silently directed the Bolshevik Fraction. They were the tactical force. It was then for the first time that I realised the full significance of the man.

Vereshchak was not mistaken. Stalin was very valuable behind the scenes in preparing the Fraction for balloting. He did not always resort to arguments of principle. However, he did have the knack of convincing the average run of leaders, especially the provincials. But even on that job the pre-eminent place was Sverdlov’s, who was permanent chairman of the Bolshevik Fraction at the Congress.

Meantime, the Army was being treated to ‘moral’ preparation for the offensive, which unnerved the masses at home as well as at the front. The Bolshevik Fraction resolutely protested against this military venture and predicted a catastrophe. The Congress majority supported Kerensky. The Bolsheviks decided to counter with a street demonstration, but while this was being considered differences of opinion arose. Volodarsky⁵, mainstay of the Petrograd Committee, was not sure that the workers would come out into the streets. The representatives of the military organisations insisted that

5 V. Volodarsky (1891-1918) was active in the revolutionary movement since the 1905 Revolution. During World War I, Volodarsky sided with the internationalist Mensheviks and was a contributor to the New York-based Marxist newspaper *Novy Mir* (‘New World’), edited by Nikolai Bukharin. Returning to Russia he became a member of the Mezhrayontsy (Inter-District Committee), and together with them joined the Bolsheviks at the 6th Party Congress in July-August 1917. He was one of their best known Bolshevik agitators. Volodarsky was assassinated on 20th June 1918 by a member of the Socialist-Revolutionary Party.

the soldiers would not come out without arms. Stalin thought it “a fact that there is ferment among the soldiers, while there is no such definite mood among the workers,” yet he nevertheless supposed that it was necessary to offer resistance to the Government. The demonstration was finally set for Sunday, 10th June. The Compromisers were alarmed and in the name of the Congress forbade the demonstration. The Bolsheviks submitted. But frightened by the bad impression of their own interdict against the masses, the Congress itself appointed a general demonstration for the 18th June. The result was unexpected: all the factories and all the regiments came out with Bolshevik placards. An irreparable blow had been struck at the authority of the Congress. The workers and soldiers of the capital sensed their own power. Two weeks later they attempted to cash in on it. Thus developed the ‘July Days’, the most important borderline between the two revolutions.

THE ‘JULY DAYS’

On 4th May, Stalin wrote in *Pravda*: “The Revolution is growing in breadth and depth... The provinces are marching at the head of the movement. Just as Petrograd marched in front during the first days of the Revolution, so now it is beginning to lag behind.” Exactly two months later the ‘July Days’ proved that the provinces were lagging considerably behind Petrograd. What Stalin had in mind when he made his appraisal were the organisations, not the masses. “The Soviets of the capital,” Lenin observed as early as the April conference, “are politically more dependent upon the bourgeois central government than the provincial Soviets.” While the Central Executive Committee tried with all its might to concentrate the power in the hands of the government, the Soviets in the provinces, Menshevik and S-R in their composition, in many cases took over the local governments against their will and even attempted to regulate economic life. But the “backwardness” of the Soviet institutions in the capital was due to the fact that the Petrograd proletariat had advanced so far that the radicalism of its demands frightened the petty-bourgeois democrats. When the July demonstration was under discussion, Stalin argued that the workers were not eager for the fray. That argument was disproved by the July Days themselves, when, defying the proscription of the Compromisers and even the warnings of the Bolshevik Party, the proletariat poured out into the street, shoulder to shoulder with the garrison. Both of Stalin’s mistakes are notably characteristic of him: he did not breathe the air of workers’ meetings, was not in contact with the masses and did not trust them. The information at his disposal came through the machine. Yet the masses were incomparably more

revolutionary than the Party, which in its turn was more revolutionary than its committeemen. As on other occasions, Stalin expressed the conservative inclinations of the Party machine and not the dynamic force of the masses.

By the beginning of July Petrograd was already completely on the side of the Bolsheviks. Acquainting the new French Ambassador with the new situation in the capital, the journalist Claude Anet pointed across the Neva to the Vyborg district, where the largest factories were concentrated. "There Lenin and Trotsky reign as masters." The regiments of the garrison were either Bolshevik or wavering in the direction of the Bolsheviks. "Should Lenin and Trotsky desire to seize Petrograd, who will deter them from it?" The characterisation of the situation was correct. But it was not yet possible to seize power because, notwithstanding what Stalin had written in May, the provinces lagged considerably behind the capital.

On the 2nd July, at the All-City Conference of the Bolsheviks, where Stalin represented the Central Committee, two excited machine gunners appeared with the declaration that their regiments had decided to go out into the street immediately, fully armed. The conference went on record against this move. Stalin, in the name of the Central Committee, upheld this decision of the conference. Thirteen years later Pestkovsky, one of Stalin's collaborators and a repentant oppositionist, recalled this conference.

There I first saw Stalin. The room in which the conference was taking place could not hold all those present: part of the public followed the course of the debates from the corridor through the open door. I was among that part of the public, and therefore, I did not hear the report very well... Stalin appeared in the name of the Central Committee. Since he spoke quietly, I did not make out much of what he said from the corridor. But there was one thing I noticed: each of Stalin's sentences was sharp and crisp, his statements were distinguished by their clarity of formulation.

The members of the conference parted and went to their regiments and factories in order to restrain the masses from a public demonstration. "About five o'clock," Stalin reported after the event, "at the session of the Central Executive Committee I declared officially in the name of the Central Executive Committee at the conference that we decided not to come out." Nevertheless, the demonstration developed by about six o'clock.

Did the Party have the right to wash its hands...and stand apart?... As the party of the proletariat we should have intervened in its public demonstration and given it a peaceful and organised character, without aiming at armed seizure of power.

Somewhat later Stalin told about the July Days at a Party Congress:

The Party did not want the demonstration, the Party wanted to bide its time until the policy of the offensive at the front should be discredited. Nevertheless, the elemental demonstration, evoked by the chaos in the country, by the orders of Kerensky, by the dispatch of detachments to the front, took place.

The Central Committee decided to make the demonstration peaceful in character.

To the question posed by the soldiers whether it was permissible to go out armed, the Central Committee answered no. But the soldiers said that it was impossible to go out unarmed...that they would take their arms only for self-defence.

At this point, however, we come across the enigmatic testimony of Demyan Bedny. In a very exultant tone, the poet laureate told in 1929 how in the headquarters of the *Pravda*, Stalin was called to the telephone from Kronstadt and how in reply to the question asked of him, whether to go out with arms in hand or without arms, Stalin replied: "Rifles?... You comrades know best!... As for us scribblers we always take our arms, pencils, everywhere with us... As for you and your arms, you know best!" The story was probably stylised. But one senses a grain of truth in it. In general, Stalin was inclined to underestimate the readiness of the workers and soldiers to fight: he was always mistrustful of the masses. But wherever a fight started, whether on a square in Tiflis, in the Baku prison, or on the streets of Petrograd, he always strove to make it as sharp in character as possible. The decision of the Central Committee? That could always be cautiously turned upside down with the parable about the pencils. However, one must not exaggerate the significance of that episode. The question probably came from the Kronstadt Committee of the Party. As for the sailors, they would have gone out with their arms anyway.

Without developing into an insurrection, the July Days broke through the framework of a mere demonstration. There were provocative shots from windows and rooftops. There were armed clashes without plan or clear purpose but with many killed and wounded. There was the accidental half-seizure of the Fortress of Peter and Paul by the Kronstadt sailors, there was the siege of the Tauride Palace. The Bolsheviks proved themselves complete masters in the capital, yet deliberately repudiated the insurrection as an adventure. "We could have seized power on the 3rd and 4th July," Stalin said at the Petrograd Conference. "But against us would have risen the fronts, the provinces, the Soviets. Without support in the provinces, our government would have been

without hands and feet.” Lacking a direct goal, the movement began to peter out. The workers returned to their factories, the soldiers to their barracks. There remained the problem of the Peter and Paul Fortress, still occupied by the Kronstadtites. “The Central Committee delegated me to the Peter and Paul Fortress,” Stalin has told, “where I managed to persuade the sailors present not to accept battle...”

As a representative of the Central Executive Committee I went with [the Menshevik] Bogdanov to [the Commanding Officer] Kozmin. He was ready for battle... We persuaded him not to resort to armed force... It was apparent to me that the right wing wanted blood in order to teach a ‘lesson’ to the workers, soldiers and sailors. We made it impossible for them to attain their wish.

Stalin was able to carry out such a delicate mission successfully only because he was not an odious figure in the eyes of the Compromisers: their hatred was directed against other people. Besides, he was able, like no one else, to assume in these negotiations the tone of a sober and moderate Bolshevik who avoided excesses and was inclined to compromise. He surely did not mention his advice about “the pencils” to the sailors.

DRIVEN UNDERGROUND

In the teeth of the obvious facts, the Compromisers proclaimed the July demonstration an armed uprising and accused the Bolsheviks of conspiracy. When the movement was already over, reactionary troops arrived from the front. In the press appeared news, based on the “documents” of the Minister of Justice Pereverzev, that Lenin and his collaborators were outright agents of the German General Staff. Then began days of calumny, persecution and rioting. The *Pravda* offices were demolished. The authorities issued an order for the arrest of Lenin, Zinoviev and others responsible for the “insurrection”. The bourgeois and Compromisist press ominously demanded that the guilty surrender themselves to the hands of justice. There were conferences in the Central Committee of the Bolsheviks: should Lenin appear before the authorities, in order to give open battle to the calumny, or should he hide? Would the matter go as far as a court trial? There was no lack of wavering, inevitable in the midst of such a sharp break in the situation.

The question of who “saved” Lenin in those days and who wanted to “ruin” him occupies no small place in Soviet literature. Demyan Bedny told some time ago how he rushed to Lenin by car and argued with him not to imitate Christ who “gave himself up into the hands of his enemies.”

Bonch-Bruyevich, the former office manager of the Sovnarkom⁶, completely contradicted his friend by telling in the press how Demyan Bedny passed the critical hours at his country place in Finland. The implication that the honour of having convinced Lenin “belonged to other comrades” clearly indicates that Bonch was obliged to annoy his close friend in order to give satisfaction to somebody more influential.

In her reminiscences Krupskaya states:

On the 7th I visited Ilyich at his quarters in the apartment of the Alliluyevs together with Maria Ilyinichna [Lenin’s sister]. This was just at the moment when Ilyich was wavering. He marshalled arguments in favour of the necessity to appear in court. Maria Ilyinichna argued against him hotly. “Gregory [Zinoviev] and I have decided to appear. Go and tell Kamenev about it,” Ilyich told me. I made haste. “Let’s say goodbye,” Vladimir Ilyich said to me, “we may never see each other again.” We embraced. I went to Kamenev and gave him Vladimir Ilyich’s message. In the evening Stalin and others persuaded Ilyich not to appear in court and thereby saved his life.

These trying hours were described in greater detail by Ordzhonikidze.

The fierce hounding of our Party leaders began... Some of our comrades took the point of view that Lenin must not hide, that he must appear... So reasoned many prominent Bolsheviks. I met Stalin in the Tauride Palace. We went together to see Lenin.

The first thing that strikes the eye is the fact that during those hours when “a fierce hounding of our Party leaders” was going on, Ordzhonikidze and Stalin calmly meet at the Tauride Palace, headquarters of the enemy, and leave it unpunished. The same old argument was renewed at Alliluyev’s apartment: to surrender or to hide? Lenin supposed that there would be no open trial. More categorical than any other against surrender was Stalin: “The Junkers [military students] won’t take you as far as prison, they’ll kill you on the way...” At that moment Stasova appeared and informed them of a new rumour – that Lenin was according to the documents of the Police Department, a provocateur. “These words produced an incredibly strong impression on Lenin. A nervous shudder ran over his face, and he declared with the utmost determination that he must go to jail.” Ordzhonikidze and Nogin were sent to the Tauride Palace, to attempt to persuade the parties in power to guarantee “that Ilyich would not be lynched... by the Junkers.” But the frightened Mensheviks were

6 Sovnarkom is a portmanteau of Soviet Narodnik Kommissarov, the People’s Council of Commissars.

seeking guarantees for themselves. Stalin in his turn reported at the Petrograd Conference: "I personally posed the question of making a declaration to Lieber and Anisimov [Mensheviks, members of the Soviet Central Executive Committee], and they replied to me that they could not give guarantees of any kind." After this feeler in the camp of the enemy, it was decided that Lenin should leave Petrograd and hide securely underground. "Stalin undertook to organise Lenin's departure."

To what extent the opponents of Lenin's surrender to the authorities were right was proved subsequently by the story of the officer commanding the troops, General Polovtsev. "The officer going to Terioki [Finland] in hopes of catching Lenin asked me if I wanted to receive that gentleman whole or in pieces... I replied with a smile that people under arrest very often try to escape." For the organisers of judicial forgery it was not a question of "justice" but of seizing and killing Lenin, as was done two years later in Germany with Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg. Stalin was more convinced than the others of the inevitability of a bloody reprisal; such a solution was quite in accord with his own cast of thought. Moreover, he was far from inclined to worry about what "public opinion" might say. Others, including Lenin and Zinoviev, wavered. Nogin and Lunacharsky became opponents of surrender in the course of the day, after having been in favour of it. Stalin held out more tenaciously than others and was proved right.

Let us see now what the latest Soviet historiography has made of this dramatic episode. "The Mensheviks, the S-Rs and Trotsky, who subsequently became a Fascist bandit," writes an official publication of 1938, "demanded Lenin's voluntary appearance in court. Also in favour of it were those who have since been exposed as enemies of the people, the Fascist hirelings Kamenev and Rykov. Stalin fought them tooth and nail," and so on. As a matter of fact, I personally took no part in those conferences, since during those hours I was myself obliged to go into hiding. On 10th July, I addressed myself in writing to the Government of the Mensheviks and S-Rs, declaring my complete solidarity with Lenin, Zinoviev and Kamenev, and on the 22nd July I was arrested. In a letter to the Petrograd Conference Lenin deemed it necessary to note particularly that "during the difficult July days (Trotsky) proved himself equal to the situation." Stalin was not arrested and was not even formally indicted in this case for the very simple reason that he was politically non-existent as far as the authorities or public opinion were concerned. During the fierce persecution of Lenin, Zinoviev, Kamenev, myself and others, Stalin was hardly ever mentioned in the press, although he was an editor of *Pravda* and

signed his articles. No one paid the slightest attention to these articles and no one was interested in their author.

Lenin hid at first in Alliluyev's apartment, then moved to Sestroretsk, where he stayed with the worker Emelyanov, whom he trusted implicitly and to whom he refers respectfully without mentioning him by name in one of his articles. Alliluyev relates:

At the time of Vladimir Ilyich's departure for Sestroretsk – that was in the evening of 11th July – Comrade Stalin and I escorted Ilyich to the Sestroretsk station. During his sojourn in the tent at Razliv, and later in Finland, Vladimir Ilyich sent notes to Stalin through me from time to time. The notes were brought to me at my apartment; and, since it was necessary to answer them immediately, Stalin moved in with me in the month of August and lived with me in the very room in which Vladimir Ilyich hid out during the July days.

Here he evidently met his future wife, Alliluyev's daughter Nadezhda, who was a mere adolescent at the time. Another of the veteran Bolshevik workers, Rahia, a Russified Finn, told in print how Lenin instructed him on one occasion "to bring Stalin the next evening. I was supposed to find Stalin in the editorial offices of *Pravda*. They talked very long." Along with Krupskaya, Stalin was during that period an important connecting link between the Central Committee and Lenin, who undoubtedly trusted him completely as a cautious conspirator. Besides, all the circumstances naturally pushed Stalin into that role: Zinoviev was in hiding, Kamenev and I were in jail, Sverdlov was in charge of all the organisational work. Stalin was freer than others and less in the eye of the police.

*"In the Presidium of the Pre-parliament," state the minutes of the Party Central Committee, "Trotsky and Kamenev represented the Bolsheviks." [When the time came in July to send leading representatives of the Party to the repeatedly deferred Constituent Assembly, Stalin was used as the spokesman of the Party Central Committee to nominate them.] "Comrades, I propose as candidates to the Constituent Assembly Comrades Lenin, Zinoviev, Kollontai⁷, Trotsky and Lunacharsky." These were the five persons who [among others] were put forward in the name of the entire Party. Let us

7 Alexandra Mikhailovna Kollontai (1872-1952) was a Russian revolutionary, first as a Menshevik, then from 1914 a Bolshevik. Held an ultra-left position and led the Workers' Opposition, which had a syndicalist position in 1921. Ironically, after accusing Lenin and Trotsky of "bureaucratism", she made her peace with Stalin and was the only one of Lenin's Central Committee to survive. In 1923, Kollontai was appointed Soviet Ambassador to Norway and died of natural causes in 1952, one year before Stalin.

recall that according to the official historiography only two weeks before I, together with the Mensheviks and the S-Rs, had allegedly demanded Lenin's appearance in court. On the 24th September (7th October), the Central Committee decided "to make Trotsky President of the Soviets."*

During the period of reaction after the July movement, Stalin's role grew considerably more important. Pestkovsky wrote in his apologetic reminiscences about Stalin's work during the summer of 1917:

The labouring masses of Petrograd knew Stalin very little then. Nor was he seeking popular acclaim. Having no talent as an orator, he avoided addressing mass meetings. But no Party conference, no serious organisational conclave got along without a political speech by Stalin. Because of that, the Party activists knew him well. When the question arose about Bolshevik candidates from Petrograd to the Constituent Assembly, the candidacy of Stalin was advanced to one of the foremost places upon the initiative of the Party activists.

Stalin's name in the Petrograd list was in the sixth place. As late as 1930 in order to explain why Stalin did not enjoy popularity, it was still deemed necessary to point out that he lacked "the oratorical talent". Now such an expression would be utterly impossible: Stalin has been proclaimed the idol of the Petrograd workers and a classic orator. But it is true that, although he did not appear before the masses, Stalin, alongside of Sverdlov, carried out in July and August extremely responsible work at headquarters, at conclaves and conferences, in contacts with the Petersburg Committee, and the like.

Concerning the leadership of the Party during that period, Lunacharsky wrote in 1923: "Until the July days Sverdlov was, so to speak, at the chief headquarters of the Bolsheviks, in charge of all that happened, together with Lenin, Zinoviev and Stalin. During the July days he advanced to the forefront." That was true. In the midst of the cruel devastation which fell upon the Party that little dark man in eyeglasses behaved as if nothing untoward had happened. He continued to assign people to their tasks, encouraged those who needed encouragement, gave advice, and when necessary gave orders. He was the authentic "General Secretary" of the revolutionary year, although he did not bear that title. But he was the secretary of a party whose unchallenged political leader, Lenin, remained underground. From Finland Lenin sent articles, letters, drafts of resolutions, on all the basic questions of policy. Although the fact that he was at a distance led him not infrequently into tactical errors, it enabled him all the more surely to define the Party's strategy. The daily leadership fell to Sverdlov and Stalin, as the most influential members of

the Central Committee remaining at liberty. The mass movement had in the meantime weakened considerably. Half of the Party had gone underground. The preponderance of the machine had grown correspondingly. Inside of the machine, the role of Stalin grew automatically. That law operates unalterably through his entire political biography and forms, as it were, its mainspring.

*Let us note here that ten years later in an anniversary issue of *Pravda* entirely devoted to the July days, Stalin's name, which by that time already had acquired the status of first citizen of the country, was not mentioned even once. Memories had not yet had time to reconstruct themselves. A few more years were necessary in order to reserve for Stalin the place among events that he himself had indicated.*

It was the workers and soldiers of Petrograd who suffered the direct defeat in July. In the final reckoning, it was their impetuosity that was smashed to pieces against the relative backwardness of the provinces. The defeatist mood among the masses of the capital was therefore deeper than anywhere else. But it lasted only a few weeks. Open agitation was resumed in the middle of July, when at small meetings in various parts of the city three courageous revolutionists appeared: Slutsky, who was later killed by the White Guards in Crimea; Volodarsky, killed by the S-Rs in Petrograd; and Yevdokimov, killed by Stalin in 1936. After losing accidental fellow-travellers here and there, by the end of the month the Party again began to grow.

On 21st and 22nd July, an exceptionally important conference, which remained unnoticed by the authorities and by the press, was held in Petrograd. After the tragic failure of the adventurous offensive, delegates from the front began to arrive at the capital more and more often with protests against the suppression of liberties in the army and against continuation of the war. They were not admitted to the Central Executive Committee, because the Compromisers had nothing to tell them. The soldiers from the front got acquainted with one another in the corridors and reception rooms, and exchanged opinions on the grandees of the Central Executive Committee in vigorous soldierly words. The Bolsheviks, who had the knack of insinuating themselves everywhere, advised the bewildered and irate delegates to confer with the workers, soldiers and sailors of the capital. The conference that thus originated was attended by representatives of twenty-nine front-line regiments, of Petrograd factories, of Kronstadt sailors and of several surrounding garrisons. The front-line soldiers told about the senseless offensive, about the carnage, and about the collaboration between the Compromisist commissars and the reactionary officers, who were again getting cocky. Although most

of the front-line soldiers continued to regard themselves as S-Rs, the sharply worded Bolshevik resolution was passed unanimously. From Petrograd the delegates went back to the trenches as matchless agitators for a workers' and peasants' revolution. It would seem that the leading roles in the organisation of this remarkable conference were played by Sverdlov and Stalin.

The Petrograd Conference, which had tried in vain to keep the masses from demonstrating, dragged on, after considerable interruption, until the night of the 20th July. The course of its activities sheds considerable light on Stalin's role and his place in the Party. The organisational leadership on behalf of the Central Committee was borne by Sverdlov, who unpretentiously and without any false airs of modesty, left the sphere of theories and important questions of policy to others. The conference was mainly concerned with appraising the political situation as it developed after the havoc of July. Volodarsky, leading member of the Petrograd Committee, declared in the very beginning: "On the current moment only Zinoviev can be the reporter... It would be well to hear Lenin." No one mentioned Stalin. The conference, cut short by the mass movement, was resumed only on 16th July. By that time Zinoviev and Lenin were in hiding, and the basic political report fell to Stalin, who appeared as a substitute for Zinoviev. "It is clear to me," he said, "that at the given moment the counter-revolution has conquered us. We are isolated and betrayed by the Mensheviks and the S-Rs, lied about." The reporter's chief point was the victory of the bourgeois counter-revolution. However, it was an unstable victory; as long as the war continued, as long as the economic collapse had not been overcome, as long as the peasants had not received their land, "there are bound to be crises, the masses will repeatedly come out into the streets, and more, there will be bolder battles. The revolution's peaceful period is over." Hence the slogan, "All power to the Soviets," was no longer practical. The Compromisist Soviets had helped the militarist bourgeois counter-revolution to crush the Bolsheviks and to disarm the workers and soldiers, and in that way they themselves had forfeited actual power. Only yesterday they could have removed the Provisional Government with a mere decree; within the Soviets the Bolsheviks could have secured power in simple by-elections. But now this was no longer possible. Aided by the Compromisers, the counter-revolution had armed itself. The Soviets themselves had become a mere camouflage for the counter-revolution. It would be silly to demand power for these Soviets! "It is not the institution, but what class policy an institution pursues that matters." Peaceful conquest of power was out of the question now. There was nothing left to do but prepare for an armed uprising, which would become

possible as soon as the humblest villagers, and with them the soldiers at the fronts, turned toward the workers. But this bold strategic perspective was followed by an extremely cautious tactical directive for the impending period. "Our task is to gather forces, to strengthen the existing organisations and to restrain the masses from premature demonstrations... That is the general tactical line of the Central Committee."

Although quite elementary in form, this report contained a thoroughgoing appraisal of the situation that had developed within the last few days. The debates added comparatively little to what the reporter had said. In 1927 the editorial board of the protocols recorded: "The basic propositions of this report had been agreed upon jointly with Lenin and developed in accordance with Lenin's article, *Three Crises*, which had not yet had time to appear in print." Moreover, the delegates knew, most likely through Krupskaya, that Lenin had written special theses for the reporter. "The group of the conferees," declares the protocol, "requested that Lenin's theses be made public. Stalin stated that he did not have the theses with him." The demand of the delegates is all too understandable: the change in orientation was so radical that they wanted to hear the authentic voice of their leader. But Stalin's reply is incomprehensible: had he simply left the theses at home, they could have been presented at the next session; however, the theses were never delivered. The impression thus created was that they had been hidden from the conference. Even more astonishing is the fact that the 'July Theses', quite unlike all the other documents written by Lenin in the underground, have not been published to this day. Since the only copy was in Stalin's possession, we must presume that he lost them. However, he himself said nothing about having lost them. The editorial board of the protocols expresses the supposition that Lenin's theses were composed by him in the spirit of his articles, *Three Crises* and *About Slogans*, written before the conference but published after it at Kronstadt, where there was still freedom of the press. As a matter of fact, a juxtaposition of texts shows that Stalin's report was no more than a simple exposition of these two articles, without a single original word added by him. Evidently Stalin had not read the articles themselves and did not suspect their existence; but he used the theses, which were identical with the articles in the tenor of their thought, and that circumstance sufficiently explains why the reporter "forgot" to bring Lenin's theses to the conference and why that document was never preserved. Stalin's character makes that hypothesis not only admissible but unavoidable.

Inside the conference committee, where a fierce struggle was going on, Volodarsky, who refused to admit that the counter-revolution had won a decisive victory in July, gathered a majority. The resolution that had now emerged from the committee was no longer defended before the conference by Stalin but by Volodarsky. Stalin made no demand for a minority report and took no part in the debate. There was confusion among the delegates. Volodarsky's resolution was finally supported by twenty-eight delegates against three, with twenty-eight not voting. The group of Vyborg delegates excused their abstention from voting by the fact that "Lenin's theses had not been made public and the resolution was not defended by the reporter." The hint at the improper hiding of the theses was plain enough. Stalin said nothing. He had sustained a double defeat, since he had evoked dissatisfaction with his concealment of the theses and could not secure a majority for them.

As for Volodarsky, he continued to defend in substance the Bolshevik schema for the Revolution of 1905: first, the democratic dictatorship; then the inevitable break with the peasantry; and, in the event of the victory of the proletariat in the West, the struggle for the socialist dictatorship. Stalin, supported by Molotov and several others, defended Lenin's new conception: the dictatorship of the proletariat, resting on the poorest peasants, can alone assure a solution of the tasks of the democratic revolution and at the same time open the era of socialist transformations. Stalin was right as against Volodarsky, but he did not know how to prove it. On the other hand, in refusing to recognise that the bourgeois counter-revolution had won a decisive victory, Volodarsky was proved right against both Lenin and Stalin. That debate was to come up again at the Party Congress several days later. The conference ended with passing an appeal written by Stalin, *To All the Toilers*, which read in part:

The corrupt hirelings and cowardly calumniators dare openly to accuse the leaders of our Party of 'treason'... Never before have the names of our leaders been as dear and as close to the working class as now when the impudent bourgeois rabble is throwing mud at them!

Besides Lenin, the chief victims of persecution and calumny were Zinoviev, Kamenev and myself. These names were especially dear to Stalin "when the bourgeois rabble" threw mud at them.

'UNIFYING' CONFERENCE

The Petrograd Conference was in the nature of a rehearsal for the Party Congress that convened on the 26th July. By that time nearly all the district Soviets of Petrograd were in the hands of the Bolsheviks. At the headquarters of the trade unions, as well as in factory and shop committees, the influence of the Bolsheviks had become dominant. The organisational preparation for the Congress was concentrated in Sverdlov's hands. The political preparation was guided by Lenin from underground. In letters to the Central Committee and in the Bolshevik press, which began to come out again, he shed light on the political situation from various angles. He it was who wrote the drafts of all the basic resolutions for the Congress, carefully weighing all the arguments at clandestine meetings with the various reporters.

The Congress was called 'Unifying', because in it was to take place the fusion into the Party of the Petrograd Inter-District [Mezhrayontsy] organisation, to which belonged Joffe, Uritsky⁸, Ryazanov, Lunacharsky, Pokrovsky, Manuilsky, Yurenev, Karakhan and I, as well as other revolutionists who in one way or another entered into the history of the Soviet Revolution. "During the years of the War," states a footnote to Lenin's *Works*, "the Inter-Districters were close to the Bolshevik Petersburg Committee." At the time of the Congress the organisation numbered about 4,000 workers.

News of the Congress, which met semi-legally in two different working class districts, got into the newspapers. In government circles there was talk of breaking it up. But when it came to a showdown, Kerensky decided that it would be more sensible not to butt into the Vyborg District. As far as the general public was concerned, the people in charge of the Congress were unknown. Among the Bolsheviks at the Congress who subsequently became famous were Sverdlov, Bukharin, Stalin, Molotov, Voroshilov, Ordzhonikidze, Yurenev, Manuilsky... The presidium consisted of Sverdlov, Olminsky, Lomov, Yurenev and Stalin. Even here, with the most prominent figures of Bolshevism absent, Stalin's name is listed in the last place. The Congress resolved to send greetings to "Lenin, Trotsky, Zinoviev, Lunacharsky, Kamenev, Kollontai and

8 Moisei Solomonovich Uritsky (1873-1918) was active in the revolutionary movement since 1903. Like Volodarsky, a member of the Mezhrayontsy, which was incorporated into the Bolshevik Party in the summer of 1917 when he was elected to the Bolshevik Central Committee. Uritsky was assassinated on 17th August 1918 by an S-R terrorist. This was quickly followed by the attempt on Lenin's life by Fanya Kaplan on 28th August, as a result of which the Bolsheviks launched the Red Terror.

all the other arrested and persecuted comrades.” These were elected to the honorary presidium. The 1938 edition records only Lenin’s election.

Sverdlov reported on the organisational work of the Central Committee. Since the April Conference the Party had grown from 80,000 to 240,000 members, i.e., had tripled in size. The growth, under the blows of July, was a healthy one. Astonishing because of its insignificance was the total circulation of the entire Bolshevik press – a mere three hundred and twenty thousand copies for such a gigantic country! But the revolutionary setup is electric: Bolshevik ideas made their way into the consciousness of millions.

In April 1917, Stalin was, for the first time, elected onto the Central Committee of the party under normal procedure at the April Conference. But now, again, he was moved into the background. Only in July, after Lenin and Zinoviev were forced into hiding and Kamenev and Trotsky were arrested, did the figures of Stalin and Bukharin grow in importance at the Party Congress. The Sixth Congress was, undoubtedly, the highest point of Stalin’s activity in all of 1917. For the first time since March he delivers an extremely important political report to the representatives of the whole party. However, the Congress sees him only as a substitute, “due to the leaders’ absence”.

Stalin repeated two of his reports – on the political activity of the Central Committee and on the state of the country. Referring to the municipal elections, at which the Bolsheviks won about twenty percent of the vote in the capital, Stalin reported: “The Central Committee...did its utmost to fight not only the Kadets, the basic force of the counter-revolution, but likewise the Mensheviks and S-Rs, who willy-nilly followed the Kadets.” Much water had gone under the bridge since the days of the March Conference, when Stalin had considered the Mensheviks and the S-Rs as part of “the revolutionary democracy” and had relied on the Kadets to “fortify” the conquests of the Revolution.

The proceedings were based on Lenin’s theses. Bukharin and Stalin were the main speakers. Stalin’s report does a good job in indicating the progress made by the speaker and all the Party’s cadres in the four months since Lenin’s arrival. Unconfident theoretically, but confident politically, Stalin tries to list the features which define the “deep character of the socialist, workers’ revolution”. In comparison with the April Conference, the unanimity of the Congress is striking.

Contrary to custom, questions of war, social patriotism, the collapse of the Second International and the groupings inside of world socialism, were excerpted from the political report and assigned to Bukharin, since Stalin

could not make head or tail of international matters. Bukharin argued that the campaign for peace by way of “pressure” on the Provisional Government and the other governments of the Entente had suffered complete collapse and that only the overthrow of the Provisional Government could bring an early approach to a democratic liquidation of the war. Following Bukharin, Stalin made his report on the tasks of the Party. The debates were carried on jointly on both reports, although it soon became apparent that the two reporters were not in agreement. Stalin reported:

Some comrades have argued that, because capitalism is poorly developed in our country, it is utopian to pose the question of the socialist revolution. They would have been right, had there been no war, no collapse, had not the very foundations of national economy gone to pieces. But today these questions of intervention in the economic sphere are posed in all countries as imperative questions...

Moreover:

Nowhere did the proletariat have such broad organisations as the Soviets... All this precludes the possibility that the labouring masses should refrain from intervening in economic life. Therein is the realistic foundation for posing the question of the socialist revolution in Russia.

Amazing is the obvious incongruity of his main argument: if the weak development of capitalism makes the programme of socialist revolution utopian, then the demolition of the productive forces through war should not bring the era of socialism any closer but on the contrary make it more remote than ever. As a matter of fact, the tendency to transform the democratic revolution into the socialist one is not grounded in the demolition of the productive forces through war, but in the social structure of Russian capitalism. That tendency could have been perceived – as indeed it was – before the war and independently of it. True, the war accelerated the revolutionary process in the masses to an immeasurably more rapid tempo, but it did not in the least change the social content of the revolution. However, it should be added that Stalin cribbed his argument from some isolated and undeveloped remarks of Lenin, whose purpose was to get the old cadres used to the need of re-arming.

During the debates, Bukharin tried partly to defend the old Bolshevik schema: in the first revolution the Russian proletariat marches shoulder to shoulder with the peasantry, in the name of democracy; in the second revolution – shoulder to shoulder with the European proletariat, in the name of socialism. Stalin retorted:

What is the sense of Bukharin's perspective? According to him, we are working for a peasant revolution during the first stage. But that cannot...fail to coincide with the workers' revolution. It is impossible that the working class, which is the vanguard of revolution, should at the same time fail to fight for its own demands. Therefore, I consider Bukharin's schema light-minded.

This idea is undoubtedly correct. The irreconcilable class position of the Bolshevik Party excluded the possibility of a democratic dictatorship that had no foundation in social conditions and which inescapably and unavoidably led toward the dictatorship of the proletariat. In that sense it was correct. But the whole position of the Bolsheviks carried within itself in embryonic notion of the international nature of the revolution. This radically contradicts the claim that the Bolsheviks, not in embryo but in a developed form, had the perspective not merely of the socialist revolution but also the construction of socialism in one country.

A peasant revolution could only succeed by placing the proletariat in power. The proletariat could not assume power, without beginning the socialist revolution. Stalin employed against Bukharin the very same reflections which, expounded for the first time in the beginning of 1905, were branded "utopian" until April, 1917. But in a few years Stalin was to forget these arguments which he voiced at the Sixth Congress; instead, jointly with Bukharin he was to revive the 'democratic dictatorship' formula, which would have an important place in the programme of the Comintern and play a fatal role in the revolutionary movement of China and other countries.

The basic task of the Congress was to change the keynote from peaceful transition of power to the Soviets to preparedness for armed insurrection. To do that, it was first of all necessary to understand the shift in the correlation of forces that had taken place. Its general direction was obvious – from the people to the bourgeoisie. It was far more difficult to determine the extent of the change: only another open clash between the classes could measure the new correlation of forces. This test came toward the end of August with General Kornilov's revolt, which made it immediately clear that the bourgeoisie continued to have no support either among the people or the army. The July shift was consequently superficial and episodic in character; nevertheless it was real enough. Henceforth, it was unthinkable to suggest peaceful transition of power to the Soviets. Formulating the new course, Lenin was above all concerned with making the Party face the changed correlation of forces as resolutely as possible. In a certain sense he resorted to deliberate exaggeration: it is more dangerous to underestimate the enemy's forces than to overestimate

them. But an overdrawn appraisal would have made the Congress balk, just as it had done at the Petrograd Conference – especially, because of Stalin’s oversimplified expression of Lenin’s ideas.

“The situation is clear,” Stalin was saying. “No one talks any more about dual power. The Soviets, which were once a real force, are now merely powerless organs for rallying the masses.” Certain of the delegates were absolutely right in protesting that the triumph of the reaction in July was temporary, that the counter-revolution had not won and that dual power had not yet been abolished to the advantage of the bourgeoisie. Stalin replied to these arguments as he had done at the Conference, with the stock phrase: “Reaction does not occur during revolution.” As a matter of fact, the orbit of every revolution is made up of exceptional curves of ascent and descent. Counter-jolts by the enemy, or resulting from the very backwardness of the masses themselves, which render the regime more acceptable to the needs of the counter-revolutionary class, bring forth reaction, without yet displacing those in power. But the victory of the counter-revolution is quite another matter: that is inconceivable without the passing of power into the hands of another class. No such decisive transition took place in July. To this very day, Soviet historians and commentators continue to copy Stalin’s formula from book to book, without asking themselves this question: if the power had passed into the hands of the bourgeoisie in July, why did the bourgeoisie have to resort to an uprising in August? Until the July events, under the regime of dual power the Provisional Government was a mere phantom while real power reposed in the Soviet. After the July events, part of the real power passed from the Soviet to the bourgeoisie, but only a part: dual power did not disappear. That was the very thing that subsequently determined the character of the October Revolution. Stalin said further:

Should the counter-revolutionaries manage to last a month or two, it would be only because the principle of coalition has not been abolished. As the forces of the revolution develop, explosions will occur, and the moment will come when the workers will arouse and rally around themselves the strata of the poor peasantry, raise the banner of the workers’ revolution and start the era of socialist revolution in the West.

Let us note: the mission of the Russian proletariat is to start “the era of socialist revolution in the West.” That was the Party formula for the ensuing years. In all essentials Stalin’s report gives the correct appraisal of the situation and the correct prognosis – Lenin’s appraisal and prognosis. But, as usual,

his report lacks elaboration of thought. The orator asserts and proclaims; he never proves or argues. His appraisals are made by rule of thumb or taken ready-made; they do not pass through the laboratory of analytic thinking and there is no indication of that organic connection between them which in itself generates the necessary arguments, analogies and illustrations. Stalin, as a polemicist, is given to reiterating propositions already expressed, at times in the form of aphorisms, which assume as already proved the very things that need proving. Often the arguments are spiced with churlishness, especially in the peroration, when there is no need to fear an opponent's rebuttals.

*“Neither Lenin nor Trotsky nor Zinoviev nor Kamenev were present at this Congress... It was sad, but the compulsory absence of all the leaders drew the delegates even closer together...” explains Osip Piatnitsky. He adds: “Although the question of the Party programme was removed from the agenda, the Congress went well and proceeded in an orderly manner...” (Osip Piatnitsky, *My Work in the Moscow Committee in Anthology from February to October*, pp. 51-55)*

In a 1938 publication concerning the Sixth Congress, we read: “Lenin, Stalin, Sverdlov, Dzerzhinsky and others were elected members of the Central Committee.” Only three dead men are named side-by-side with Stalin. Yet the protocols of the Congress inform us that twenty-one members and ten alternates were elected to the Central Committee. In view of the Party's semi-legality the names of persons elected by secret ballot were not announced at the Congress, with the exception of the four who had received the largest number of votes. Lenin – 133 out of a possible 134, Zinoviev – 132, Kamenev – 131, Trotsky – 131. Besides them the following were elected: Nogin, Kollontai, Stalin, Sverdlov, Rykov, Bubnov, Artem, Uritsky, Milyutin, Berzin, Dzerzhinsky, Krestinsky, Muranov, Smilga, Sokolnikov, Shaumyan.⁹ The names are arranged in the order of the number of votes received. The names of eight alternates have been definitely established: Lomov, Joffe, Stasova, Yakovleva, Dzhaparidze, Kiselyov, Preobrazhensky¹⁰, Skrypnik.

9 Bukharin's name has been accidentally missed out of the full CC members.

10 Yevgeni Alexeyevich Preobrazhensky (1886-1937) was an Old Bolshevik, an economist and a member of the Bolshevik Central Committee. Together with Bukharin he was the author of *The ABC of Communism*, which became an official handbook for the Communist International. He also wrote *The New Economics*, a polemical essay on the dynamics of an economy in transition to socialism. He was a prominent member of the Left Opposition but later capitulated to Stalin. Arrested again on 20th December 1936, he refused to confess and on 13th July 1937 he was sentenced to death and shot.

The Congress ended on the 3rd August. The next day Kamenev was liberated from prison. From then on he not only spoke regularly in Soviet institutions but exerted an unmistakable influence on the Party's general policy and on Stalin personally. Although in varying degrees both of them had adapted themselves to the new line, it was not so easy for them to rid themselves of their own mental habits. Wherever possible, Kamenev rounded out the sharp angles of Lenin's policy. Stalin did not object to that; he merely kept out of harm's way. An open conflict flared up on the issue of the Socialist conference in Stockholm, the initiative for which had come from the German Social-Democrats. The Russian patriots and compromisers, inclined to grasp at any straw, saw in that conference an important means of "fighting for peace". But Lenin, who had been accused of connections with the German General Staff, came out resolutely against participation in this enterprise, which was obviously sponsored by the German Government. At the session of the Central Executive Committee of 6th August, Kamenev openly came out for participation in the conference. It did not even occur to Stalin to come to the defence of the Party position in the *Proletarian* (which was then *Pravda's* name). Instead, Stalin held back from publication Lenin's sharp article against Kamenev, which appeared only after a delay of ten days and only because of its author's persistent demands, reinforced by his appeal to other members of the Central Committee. Nevertheless, even then, Stalin did not come out openly in support of Kamenev.

Immediately after Kamenev's liberation a rumour was launched in the press by the democratic Ministry of Justice to the effect that he had had some connections with the tsarist secret police. Kamenev demanded an investigation. The Central Committee commissioned Stalin "to discuss with Gotz [one of the S-R leaders] a commission in the case of Kamenev." He had been given similar assignments in the past: "to discuss" with the Menshevik Bogdanov the case of the Kronstadtites, "to discuss" with the Menshevik Anisimov guarantees for Lenin. Remaining behind the scenes, Stalin was more suitable than others for all sorts of delicate assignments. Besides, the Central Committee was always sure that in discussions with opponents Stalin would not let anyone pull the wool over his eyes.

"The reptilian hissing of the counter-revolution," wrote Stalin on 13th August about the calumny against Kamenev, "is again becoming louder. The disgusting serpent of reaction thrusts its poisonous fang from round the corner. It will sting and slink back into its dark lair..." and so forth in the

typical style of his Tiflis “chameleons”. But the article is interesting not only stylistically. The author continued:

The infamous baiting, the bacchanal of lies and calumnies, the shameless deception, the low-grade forgery and falsification assume proportions hitherto unknown in history... At first they tried to smear the tested revolutionary fighters as German spies, and that having failed, they want to make them out tsarist spies. Thus they are trying to brand those who have devoted their entire conscious life to the cause of the revolutionary struggle against the tsarist regime as... tsarist varlets... The political meaning of all this is self-evident: the masters of the counter-revolution are intent at all cost to render Kamenev harmless and to extirpate him as one of the recognised leaders of the revolutionary proletariat.

It is a pity that this article did not figure in Prosecutor Vyshinsky’s material during Kamenev’s trial in 1936.

On 13th August, Stalin published without a word of reservation an unsigned article by Zinoviev, *What Not to Do*, which was obviously directed against preparations for the insurrection. “It is necessary to face the truth: in Petrograd there are now many circumstances favourable to the emergence of an insurrection typified by the Paris Commune of 1871.” Without mentioning Zinoviev, Lenin wrote on 3rd September:

The reference to the Commune is very superficial and even foolish... The Commune could not at once offer to the people all that the Bolsheviks can offer them when they become the government: namely, land to the peasants, immediate peace proposals.

The blow at Zinoviev rebounded at the editor of the newspaper. But Stalin kept silent. Anonymously, he was ready to support any right-wing polemic against Lenin. But he was careful not to involve himself in it. At the first sign of danger he stepped aside.

There is practically nothing to say about Stalin’s newspaper work during that period. He was the editor of the central organ, not because he was a writer by nature, but because he was not an orator and simply did not fit into any public activity. He did not write a single notable article; did not pose a single new question for discussion; did not introduce a single slogan into general circulation. His comments on events were impersonal, and strictly within the framework of current Party views. He was a Party functionary assigned to a newspaper, not a revolutionary publicist.

The revival of the mass movement and the return to activity of the Central Committee members who had been temporarily severed from it, naturally

threw Stalin out of the position of prominence he held during the July congress. From then on, his activities were carried on in obscurity, unknown to the masses, unnoted by the enemy. In 1924, the Commission on Party History published a copious chronicle of the revolution in several volumes. The 422 pages of the fourth volume, dealing with August and September, record all the happenings, occurrences, brawls, resolutions, speeches, articles in any way deserving of notice. Sverdlov, then practically unknown, was mentioned three times in that volume; Kamenev, forty-six times; I, who spent August and the beginning of September in prison, thirty-one times; Lenin, who was in the underground, sixteen times; Zinoviev, who shared Lenin's fate, six times; Stalin was not mentioned even once. Stalin's name is not even in the index of approximately 500 proper names. In other words, throughout those two months the press did not take cognisance of anything he did or of a single speech he spoke and not one of the more or less prominent participants in the events of those days mentioned his name even once.

Fortunately, it is possible to trace Stalin's role in the life of the Party, or rather of its headquarters staff, more or less closely through the protocols of the Central Committee for seven months (August, 1917 to February, 1918), which have been preserved but which, true enough, are incomplete. During the absence of the political leaders, Milyutin, Smilga, Glebov, figures of little influence but better fit for public appearances than Stalin, were delegated to the various conferences and congresses. Stalin's name seldom occurs in Party decisions. Uritsky, Sokolnikov and Stalin were delegated to organise a committee for elections to the Constituent Assembly. The same three were delegated to draft the resolution on the Stockholm Conference. Stalin was delegated to negotiate with a print-shop about re-establishing the central organ. He was on still another committee for drafting a resolution, and the like. After the July congress Stalin's motion to organise the work of the Central Committee on the principle of "strict allocation of functions" was passed. However, that motion was easier to write than to execute: the course of events was to continue for some time to confound functions and to upset decisions. On 2nd September the Central Committee designated editorial boards for the weekly and monthly journals, in both of which Stalin participated. On 6th September – after my liberation from prison – Stalin and Ryazanov were replaced on the editorial board of the theoretical journal by Kamenev and me. But that decision, too, remained only in the protocol. As a matter of fact, both journals published only one issue each, and the actual editorial board was quite different from the one designated.

On 5th October, the Central Committee appointed a committee to prepare a Draft Party Programme for the forthcoming convention. That committee was made up of Lenin, Bukharin, myself, Kamenev, Sokolnikov and Kollontai. Stalin was not included in it, not because there was any opposition to his candidature, but simply because his name never occurred to anyone when it was a matter of drafting a theoretical Party document of prime importance. But the programme committee never met – not even once. Quite different tasks were on the order of the day. The Party won the insurrection and came to power without having a finished programme. Even in purely Party matters, events did not always dispose of people in correspondence with the foresight and plans of the Party hierarchy. The Central Committee designated editorial boards, committees, groups of three, of five, of seven, which, before they could meet, were upset by new events, and everybody forgot yesterday's decision. Besides, for reasons of conspiracy, the protocols were securely hidden away, and no one ever referred to them.

Rather strange was Stalin's comparatively frequent absence. He was absent six times from twenty-four sessions of the Central Committee for August, September and the first week of October. The list of participants for the other six sessions is not available. This lack of punctuality is all the more inexcusable in Stalin's case, because he took no part in the work of the Soviet and its Central Executive Committee and never spoke at public meetings. He himself evidently did not attach the importance to his own participation in the sessions of the Central Committee which is ascribed to him nowadays. In a number of cases his absence was undoubtedly explained by hurt feelings and irritation: whenever he cannot carry his point he is inclined to sulk in hiding and dream of revenge. Noteworthy is the order in which the presence of Central Committee members at its sessions was recorded in the protocol: 13th September: Trotsky, Kamenev, Stalin, Sverdlov and others; 15th September: Trotsky, Kamenev, Rykov, Nogin, Stalin, Sverdlov, and others; 20th September: Trotsky, Uritsky, Bubnov, Bukharin, and others (Stalin and Kamenev absent); 21st September: Trotsky, Kamenev, Stalin, Sokolnikov, and others; 23rd September: Trotsky; Kamenev, Zinoviev, and so forth (Stalin absent). The order of the names was not of course regulated and was sometimes violated. Yet it was not accidental, especially when we consider that in the preceding period, when Trotsky, Kamenev and Zinoviev were absent, Stalin's name was occasionally listed in first place. These are, of course, trifling matters. But there is nothing bigger to be found with reference to Stalin; besides, these

trifles mirror impartially the Party's life from day to day and Stalin's place in it.

The greater the sweep of the movement, the smaller is Stalin's place in it and the harder it is for him to stand out among the ordinary members of the Central Committee. In October, the decisive month of the decisive year, Stalin was less noticeable than ever. The truncated Central Committee, his only substantial base, was itself devoid of innate self-confidence during those months. Its decisions were too often nullified through outside initiative. On the whole, the Party machine never felt itself firmly grounded in the revolutionary turmoil. The broader and deeper the influence of Bolshevism's slogans, the harder it was for the committeemen to grasp the movement. The more the Soviets fell under the influence of the Party, the less of a place did the machine find for itself. Such is one of the paradoxes of revolution.

Transferring to 1917 conditions that crystallised considerably later, when the waters of the flood-tide had receded inside the banks, many historians, even quite conscientious ones, tell the story as if the Central Committee had directly guided the policy of the Petrograd Soviet, which became Bolshevik about the beginning of September. As a matter of fact, that was not the case. The protocols undoubtedly show that, with the exception of several plenary sessions in which Lenin, Zinoviev and I participated, the Central Committee did not play a political role. It did not assume the initiative in a single important issue. Many of the Central Committee decisions for that period remained hanging in the air, having clashed with the decisions of the Soviet. The most important resolutions of the Soviet were transformed into action before the Central Committee had the time to consider them. Only after the conquest of power, the end of the civil war, and the establishment of a stable regime, would the Central Committee little by little begin to concentrate the leadership of Soviet activity in its hands. Then would come Stalin's turn.

GENERAL KORNILOV

On 8th August, the Central Committee launched a vigorous campaign against the Government Conference convoked by Kerensky in Moscow, which was crudely manipulated in the interests of the bourgeoisie. The conference opened on 12th August under the stress of the general strike of protest by the Moscow workers. Not admitted to the conference, the Bolsheviks found a more effective expression for their power. The bourgeoisie was frightened and furious. Having surrendered Riga to the Germans on the 21st, Commander-in-Chief Kornilov started his march on Petrograd on the 25th, intent on a

personal dictatorship. Kerensky, who had been deceived in his calculations about Kornilov, declared the Commander-in-Chief "a traitor to the fatherland". Even at that crucial moment, on 27th August, Stalin did not show up at the Soviet Central Executive Committee. Sokolnikov appeared there in the name of the Bolsheviks. He proclaimed the readiness of the Bolsheviks to come to terms about military measures with the organs of the Soviet majority. The Mensheviks and the S-Rs accepted the offer with thanks and with gritting of teeth, for the soldiers and workers were now following the Bolsheviks. The rapid and bloodless liquidation of the Kornilov mutiny completely restored the power the Soviets had partly lost in July. The Bolsheviks revived the slogan, 'All Power to the Soviets!' In the press Lenin proposed a compromise to the Compromisers: let the Soviets take power and guarantee complete freedom of propaganda, and the Bolsheviks would take their stand entirely on the ground of Soviet legality. The Compromisers belliciously rejected a compromise with the Bolsheviks. They continued to seek their allies on the Right.

The high-handed refusal of the Compromisers only strengthened the Bolsheviks. As in 1905, the preponderance which the first wave of revolution brought to the Mensheviks soon melted in the atmosphere of the sharpening class struggle. But unlike its tendency in the First Revolution, the growth of Bolshevism now corresponded to the rise rather than the decline of the mass movement. The same essential process assumed a different form in the villages: a left-wing split off from the S-R Party, which was dominant among the peasantry, and tried to march in step with the Bolsheviks. The garrisons of the large cities were almost entirely with the workers. "Indeed, the Bolsheviks worked hard and tirelessly," testified Sukhanov, a left-wing Menshevik. "They were among the masses at the lathe, daily, constantly... The mass lived and breathed with the Bolsheviks. It was in the hands of the Party of Lenin and Trotsky." It was in the hands of the Party, but not in the hands of the Party's machine.

On the 31st August, the Petrograd Soviet for the first time passed a political resolution of the Bolsheviks. Trying hard not to yield, the Compromisers decided on a new test of strength. Nine days later the question was put point-blank in the Soviet. The old presidium and the coalition policy received 414 votes with 519 opposed and 67 not voting. The Mensheviks and the S-Rs reaped the harvest of their policy of compromise with the bourgeoisie. The Soviets greeted the new coalition government they organised with a resolution which I, as its new president, introduced. "The new government... will enter the history of the revolution as the government of civil war... The All-Russian

Congress of Soviets will organise a genuinely revolutionary government.” That was an outright declaration of war against the Compromisers who had rejected our “compromise”.

The so-called Democratic Conference, convoked by the Soviet Central Executive Committee, ostensibly to offset the Government Conference but actually to sanction the same old thoroughly rotten coalition, opened in Petrograd on the 14th September. The Compromisers were getting frantic. A few days earlier Krupskaya had gone on a secret trip to Lenin in Finland. In a railroad coach full of soldiers the talk was not about coalition but about insurrection.

When I told Ilyich about this talk of the soldiers, his face became thoughtful; later, no matter what was under discussion, that thoughtfulness did not leave his face. It was clear that he was saying one thing and thinking of something else – the insurrection and how best to prepare for it.

On the day the Democratic Conference opened – the silliest of all the pseudo-parliaments of democracy – Lenin wrote to the Party Central Committee his famous letters, *The Bolsheviks Must Take Power* and *Marxism and the Insurrection*. This time he demanded immediate action: the rousing of regiments and factories, the arrest of the government and the Democratic Conference, the seizure of power. Obviously the plan could not be carried out that very day; but it did direct the thinking and activity of the Central Committee into new channels. Kamenev insisted on a categorical rejection of Lenin’s proposal – as disastrous! Fearing that these letters might circulate through the Party as well as in the Central Committee, Kamenev gathered six votes in favour of destroying all copies except the one intended for the archives. Stalin proposed “to send the letters to the most important organisations and to suggest their discussion.” The latest commentary declares that the purpose of Stalin’s proposal was “to organise the influence of local Party Committees on the Central Committee and to urge it to carry out Lenin’s directives.” Had such been the case, Stalin would have come right out in defence of Lenin’s proposals and would have countered Kamenev’s resolution with – his own! But that was far from his thought. Most of the committeemen in the provinces were more Rightist than the Central Committee. To send them Lenin’s letters without the Central Committee’s endorsement was tantamount to expressing disapproval of them. Stalin’s proposal was made to gain time and in the event of a conflict to secure the possibility of pleading that the local Committees were balking. The Central Committee was paralysed by vacillation. It was

decided to defer the question of Lenin's letters to the next session. Lenin was awaiting the answer in frenzied impatience. But Stalin did not even put in an appearance at the next session, which met no sooner than five days later, and the question of the letters was not even included in the order of the day. The hotter the atmosphere, the colder are Stalin's manoeuvrings.

The Democratic Conference resolved to organise in agreement with the bourgeoisie some semblance of a representative institution, to which Kerensky promised to grant consultative rights. What the Bolshevik attitude should be toward this Council of the Republic or Pre-Parliament, became at once a crucial issue of tactics among the Bolsheviks: should they participate in it, or should they ignore it on their way to the insurrection? As reporter of the Central Committee at the forthcoming Party Fraction of the Democratic Conference, I proposed the idea of a boycott. The Central Committee, which divided almost in half on this debatable question (nine for the boycott and eight against), referred the question for decision to the Fraction. To expound the contradictory points of view "two reports were proposed: Trotsky's and Rykov's." "As a matter of fact," Stalin insisted in 1925 "there were four reporters: two for the boycott of the Pre-Parliament (Trotsky and Stalin) and two for participation (Kamenev and Nogin)." This is almost right: when the Fraction decided to terminate the debates, it decided to allow one more representative to speak for each side: Stalin on behalf of the Boycottists and Kamenev (but not Nogin) for those favouring participation. Rykov and Kamenev received seventy-seven votes; Stalin and I, – fifty. The defeat of the tactic of the boycott was delivered by the provincials, whose separation from the Mensheviks was quite recent in many parts of the country.

Superficially it might seem that the differences were of minor importance. As a matter of fact, the underlying issue was whether the Party was to prepare to play the part of the Opposition in a bourgeois republic or whether it was to set itself the task of taking power by storm. Stalin later recalled his role as a reporter because of the importance this episode had assumed in the official historiography. The obliging editor added of his own accord that I had come out for "a middle of the road position". In subsequent editing my name has been entirely deleted. The new history proclaims: "Stalin came out resolutely against participation in the Pre-Parliament." But in addition to the testimony of the protocols, there is also Lenin's testimony. "We must boycott the Pre-Parliament," he wrote on the 23rd September. "We must go...to the masses. We must give them a clear and correct slogan: kick out the Bonapartist Kerensky gang and his fake Pre-Parliament." Then a footnote: "Trotsky was

for the boycott. Bravo, Comrade Trotsky!" But, of course, the Kremlin has officially prescribed the elimination of all such sins from the new edition of Lenin's *Works*.

'ALL POWER TO THE SOVIETS!'

On 7th October, the Bolshevik Fraction demonstratively walked out of the Pre-Parliament. "We appeal to the people. All Power to the Soviets!" This was tantamount to calling for insurrection. That very day at the Central Committee session it was decreed to organise an Information Bureau on Fighting the Counter-Revolution. The deliberately foggy name covered a concrete task – reconnaissance and preparation of the insurrection. Sverdlov, Bubnov and I were delegated to organise that Bureau. In view of the laconic nature of the protocol and the absence of other documents, the author is compelled to resort to his own memory at this point. Stalin declined to participate in the Bureau, suggesting Bubnov, a man of little authority, in place of himself. His attitude was one of reserve, if not of scepticism, toward the idea itself. He was in favour of an insurrection. But he did not believe that the workers and soldiers were ready for action. He lived isolated not only from the masses, but even from their Soviet representation, and was content with the refracted impressions of the Party machine. So far as the masses were concerned, the July experiences had not passed without a trace. Actually blind pressure had disappeared, cautiousness had replaced it. On the other hand, confidence in the Bolsheviks was already coloured with misgivings: will they be able to do what they promised? The Bolshevik agitators were complaining at times that they were being somewhat cold shouldered by the masses. As a matter of fact, the masses were getting tired of waiting, of indecisiveness, of mere words. But in the machine this tiredness was frequently described as "absence of fighting mood", hence the tarnish of scepticism on many committeemen. Besides, even the bravest of men is bound to feel a little chill in the pit of the stomach just before an insurrection. This is not always acknowledged, but it is so. Stalin himself was in an equivocal frame of mind. He never forgot April, when his wisdom of a 'practico' was so cruelly disgraced. On the other hand, Stalin trusted the machine far more than the masses. On all the most important occasions he insured himself by voting with Lenin. But he showed no initiative in support of the resolutions passed, refrained from directly tackling any decisive action, protected the bridges of retreat, influenced others as a dampener, and in the end missed the October Revolution because he was off on a tangent.

True, nothing came of the "Bureau on Fighting the Counter-Revolution", but it was not the fault of the masses. On the 9th, Smolny got into a new sharp conflict with the Government, which had decreed the transfer of the revolutionary troops from the capital to the front. The garrison rallied more closely than ever around its protector, the Soviet. At once the preparation of the insurrection acquired a concrete basis. Yesterday's initiator of the Bureau transferred all his attention to the creation of a military staff in the Soviet itself. The first step was taken that very day, on 9th October. "For counteraction against the attempts of the General Staff to lead the revolutionary troops out of Petrograd," the Executive Committee decided to launch the Military Revolutionary Committee. Thus, by the logic of things, without any discussion in the Central Committee, almost unexpectedly, the insurrection was started in the Soviet arena and began to recruit its Soviet general staff, which was far more effective than the Bureau of 7th October.

The next session of the Central Committee, with the participation of Lenin in a wig, took place on 10th October. It achieved historical significance. The crux of the discussion was Lenin's motion, which proposed armed insurrection as the pressing practical task. The difficulty, even for the most convinced supporter of insurrection, was the question of time. As far back as the days of the Democratic Conference the Compromisist Central Executive Committee under the pressure of the Bolsheviks, had set 20th October as the date for the Congress of the Soviets. Now there was complete assurance of a Bolshevik majority at that Congress. At least in Petrograd, the insurrection had to take place before the 20th; otherwise, the Congress would not be in position to seize the reins of government and would risk being dispersed. It was decided at the Central Committee session, without recording it on paper, to begin the insurrection in Petrograd about the 15th. There was, therefore, something like five days left for preparations. Everybody felt that this was not enough. But the Party was a prisoner of the date it had itself imposed upon the compromisers on a different occasion. My announcement that the Executive Committee had decided to organise a military staff of its own did not produce a great impression, because it was more a matter of plan than of fact. Everybody's attention was concentrated on polemics with Zinoviev and Kamenev, who resolutely argued against the insurrection. It seems that Stalin either did not speak at all at this session, or limited himself to a brief remark; at any rate, in the protocols there is no trace of anything he might have said. The motion was passed by ten votes against two. But misgivings about the date remained with all who took part.

Toward the very end of that session, which lasted until way past midnight, on the rather fortuitous initiative of Dzerzhinsky, it was decreed “to organise for the political guidance of the insurrection a bureau consisting of Lenin, Zinoviev, Kamenev, Trotsky, Stalin, Sokolnikov and Bubnov.” This important decision, however, led nowhere: Lenin and Zinoviev continued in hiding, Zinoviev and Kamenev became irreconcilably opposed to the decision of 10th October. “The Bureau for the Political Guidance of the Insurrection” did not meet even once. Only its name has been preserved in a pen and ink postscript to the desultory protocol written in pencil. Under the abbreviated name of ‘the seven’ this phantom bureau entered into the official science of history.

The job of organising the Military Revolutionary Committee of the Soviet went on apace. Of course, the lumbering machinery of Soviet democracy precluded any decided spurt. Yet very little time was left before the Congress. Not without reason did Lenin fear delay. At his request another session of the Central Committee was convoked on 16th October, with the most important Petrograd organisers present. Zinoviev and Kamenev persisted in their opposition. Formally their position had become stronger than ever: six days had passed and the insurrection had not begun. Zinoviev demanded that the decision be postponed until the Congress of the Soviets met, in order “to confer” with the delegates from the provinces: deep in his heart he was hoping for their support. Passions ran high during the debate. For the first time Stalin took part in this discussion. He said:

Expediency must decide the day of the insurrection. That alone is the sense of the resolution... What Kamenev and Zinoviev propose leads objectively to opportunity for the counter-revolution to organise itself; if we continue to retreat without end, we shall lose the revolution. Why not ourselves name the day and the circumstances, so as not to give the counter-revolution an opportunity to organise itself?

He was defending the Party’s abstract right to choose its moment for the blow – when the problem was to set a definite date. Had the Bolshevik Congress of Soviets proved incapable of seizing the reins of government there and then, it would have merely compromised the slogan, ‘All Power to the Soviets!’ by turning it into a hollow phrase. Zinoviev insisted: “We must tell ourselves frankly that we will not attempt an insurrection during the next five days.” Kamenev was driving at the same point. Stalin did not meet this issue directly; instead, he wound up with the startling words: “The Petrograd Soviet has already taken the road to insurrection by refusing to sanction the removal

of the troops." He was simply reiterating the formula, which had nothing to do with his own abstract speech that had been recently advocated by the leaders of the Military Revolutionary Committee. But what was the meaning of "being already on the road to insurrection"? Was it a matter of days or of weeks? Stalin cautiously refrained from making that specific. He was not clear in his own mind about the situation.

The resolution of the 10th October was endorsed by a majority of twenty votes to two, with three abstaining. However, nobody had answered the crucial question of whether the decision that the insurrection in Petrograd had to take place prior to the 20th October was still valid. It was hard to find that answer. Politically the resolve to have the insurrection before the Congress was absolutely right. But too little time was left for carrying it out. The session of 16th October never did manage to reconcile that contradiction. But at this point the Compromisers came to the rescue: the very next day, for reasons of their own, they decided to postpone the opening of the Congress, which they hadn't wanted anyway, to 25th October. The Bolsheviks received this unexpected postponement with an open protest but with secret gratitude. Five additional days completely solved the difficulties of the Military Revolutionary Committee.

THE OCTOBER INSURRECTION

The Central Committee protocol and the issues of *Pravda* for the last few weeks prior to the insurrection trace Stalin's political career against the background of the insurrection fully enough. Just as before the war he had formally sided with Lenin while at the same time seeking the support of the conciliators against the *émigré* "crawling on the wall", so now too he aligned himself with the official majority of the Central Committee while simultaneously supporting the Right opposition. As always, he acted cautiously; however, the sweep of events and the acuteness of the conflicts compelled him from time to time to venture farther than he would have liked.

On 11th October, Zinoviev and Kamenev published in Maxim Gorky's newspaper a letter against the insurrection. At once the situation among the leaders of the Party became exceedingly acute. Lenin stormed and fumed in the underground. In order to be free to spread his views about the insurrection, Kamenev resigned from the Central Committee. The question was discussed at the session of 20th October. Sverdlov made public Lenin's letter which castigated Zinoviev and Kamenev as strike-breakers and demanded their expulsion from the Party. The crisis was unexpectedly complicated by the

fact that on that very morning *Pravda* published a declaration by the editorial board in defence of Zinoviev and Kamenev: “The sharpness of the tone of Comrade Lenin’s article does not alter the fact that in the main we continue to share his opinion.” The central organ deemed it proper to find fault with “the sharpness” of Lenin’s protest rather than with the public stand of two Central Committee members against the Party decision on the insurrection and moreover expressed its solidarity with Zinoviev and Kamenev “on fundamentals”. As if at that moment there was anything more fundamental than the question of the uprising! The Central Committee members rubbed their eyes with amazement.

Stalin’s only associate on the editorial board was Sokolnikov, the future Soviet diplomat and subsequently a victim of the ‘purge’. However, Sokolnikov declared that he had nothing whatever to do with writing the editorial rebuke of Lenin and considered it erroneous. Thus Stalin alone – in opposition to the Central Committee and his own editorial colleague – supported Kamenev and Zinoviev as late as four days before the insurrection. The Central Committee restrained its indignation only because it was apprehensive about extending the crisis.

Continuing to manoeuvre between the protagonists and opponents of insurrection, Stalin went on record against accepting Kamenev’s resignation, arguing, “our entire situation is inconsistent.” By five votes, against Stalin’s and two others, Kamenev’s resignation was accepted. By six votes, again against Stalin’s, a resolution was passed, forbidding Kamenev and Zinoviev to wage their fight against the Central Committee. The protocol states: “Stalin declared that he was leaving the editorial board.” In his case it meant abandoning the only post he was capable of filling in the circumstances of revolution. But the Central Committee refused to accept Stalin’s resignation, thus precluding the development of another rift.

Stalin’s behaviour might seem inexplicable in the light of the legend that has been created around him; but as a matter of fact, it is quite in line with his inner makeup. Distrust of the masses and suspicious cautiousness force him, in moments of historical decisions to retreat into the shadows, bide his time and, if possible, insure himself coming and going. His defence of Zinoviev and Kamenev was certainly not motivated by sentimental considerations. In April Stalin had changed his official position but not his mental makeup. Although he voted with Lenin, he was far closer in his feelings to Kamenev. Moreover, dissatisfaction with his own role naturally inclined him to align

himself with others who were dissatisfied, even if politically he was not in complete accord with them.

All of the last week preceding the insurrection Stalin manoeuvred between Lenin, Sverdlov and me on the one hand, and Kamenev and Zinoviev, on the other. At the Central Committee session of 21st October, he restored the recently upset balance by proposing that Lenin be appointed to prepare the theses for the forthcoming Congress of Soviets and that I be appointed to prepare the political report. Both of these motions passed unanimously. Had there been then any disagreements at all between me and the Central Committee – a canard invented several years later – would the Central Committee upon Stalin's initiative have entrusted me with the most important report at the most crucial moment? Having thus insured himself on the Left, Stalin again retreated into the shadows and bided his time.

The biographer, no matter how willing, can have nothing to say about Stalin's participation in the October Revolution. Nowhere does one find mention of his name – neither in documents nor the numerous memoirs. In order somehow to fill in this yawning gap, the official historiographer implies his participation in the insurrection by connecting the insurrection with some mysterious party 'centre' that had presumably prepared it. However, no one tells us anything about the activity of that 'centre', the place and the time of its sessions, the means it employed in directing the insurrection. And no wonder: there never was any such 'centre'. But the story of this legend is noteworthy.

At the 16th October Conference of the Central Committee with some of the leading Petrograd Party organisers it was decided to organise "a military revolutionary centre" of five Central Committee members. "This centre," states the resolution hastily written by Lenin in a corner of the hall, "will become a part of the Revolutionary Soviet Committee." Thus, in the direct sense of the decision, 'the centre' was not designed for independent leadership of the insurrection but to complement the Soviet staff. However, like many other improvisations of those feverish days this idea was fated never to be realised. During the very hours when, in my absence, the Central Committee was organising a new 'centre' on a piece of paper, the Petrograd Soviet, under my chairmanship, definitely launched the Military Revolutionary Committee, which from the moment of its origin was in complete charge of all the preparations for the insurrection. Sverdlov, whose name appeared first (and not Stalin's name, as is falsely recorded in recent Soviet publications) on the list of the 'centre' members, worked before and after the resolution of 16th October in close contact with the Chairman of the Military Revolutionary

Committee. Three other members of the 'centre', Uritsky, Dzerzhinsky and Bubnov, were drawn into work for the Military Revolutionary Committee, each of them individually, as late as the 24th October, as if the resolution of the 16th October had never been passed. As for Stalin, in line with his entire policy of behaviour at that period, he stubbornly kept from joining either the Executive Committee of the Petrograd Soviet or the Military Revolutionary Committee, and did not appear at any of its sessions. All of these circumstances are easily established on the basis of officially published protocols.

At the Central Committee session of 20th October, the 'centre' created four days before was supposed to make a report about its work or at least mention that it had begun working: only five days remained before the Congress of Soviets, and the insurrection was supposed to precede the opening of the Congress. Stalin was too busy for that. Defending Zinoviev and Kamenev, he submitted his resignation from the editorial board of *Pravda* at that very session. But not one of the other members of the 'centre' present at the session – Sverdlov, Dzerzhinsky, Uritsky – bothered to drop even a hint about it. The protocol record of the 16th October session had evidently been carefully put away, in order to hide all traces of Lenin's 'illegal' participation in it, and during the ensuing four dramatic days the 'centre' was all the easier forgotten because the very need of any such supplementary institution was absolutely excluded by the intense activity of the Military Revolutionary Committee.

At the very next session, on 21st October, with Stalin, Sverdlov and Dzerzhinsky present, there was again no report about the 'centre' and not even any mention of it. The Central Committee carried on as if there had never been any resolution whatever passed about a 'centre'. Incidentally, it was at this session that it was decided to put ten more prominent Bolsheviks, among them Stalin, onto the Executive Committee of the Petrograd Soviet for the purpose of improving its activity. But that was just another resolution that remained on paper.

Preparations for the insurrection proceeded apace, but along an entirely different channel. The actual master of the capital's garrison, the Military Revolutionary Committee, was seeking an excuse for openly breaking with the Government. That pretext was provided on 22nd October by the officer commanding the troops of the district when he refused to let the Committee's commissars control his staff. We had to strike while the iron was hot. The Bureau of the Military Revolutionary Committee, Sverdlov and I participating, decided to recognise the break with the garrison staff as an accomplished fact and to take the offensive. Stalin was not at this conference. It never occurred

to anyone to call him. Whenever the burning of all bridges was at stake, no one mentioned the existence of the so-called 'centre'.

The Central Committee session that directly launched the insurrection was held at Smolny, now transformed into a fortress, on the morning of 24th October. At the very outset a motion of Kamenev's was passed: "No member of the Central Committee may absent himself from Smolny today without special dispensation."¹¹ The report of the Military Revolutionary Committee was on the agenda. At that very moment when the insurrection began there was no mention of the so called 'centre'. The protocol states:

Trotsky proposed that two members of the Central Committee be placed at the disposal of the Military Revolutionary Committee for maintaining contact with the post and telegraph operators and the railway men; a third member to keep an eye on the Provisional Government.

Dzerzhinsky was assigned to the post and telegraph operators, Bubnov to the railway workers. Sverdlov was delegated to keep a watchful eye over the Provisional Government. Further:

Trotsky proposed the establishment of a reserve staff in the Peter and Paul Fortress and the assignment of one member of the Central Committee there for that purpose. Resolved: 'Sverdlov delegated to maintain constant contact with the Fortress.'

Thus three members of the 'centre' were for the first time placed at the direct disposal of the Military Revolutionary Committee. Naturally, that would not have been necessary had the 'centre' existed and been occupied with preparing the insurrection. The protocol records that a fourth member of the 'centre', Uritsky, made some practical suggestions. But where was the fifth member, Stalin?

Most amazing of all is the fact that Stalin was not even present at this decisive session. Central Committee members obligated themselves not to leave Smolny. But Stalin did not even show up in the first place. This is irrefutably attested to by the protocols published in 1929. Stalin never explained his absence, either orally or in writing. No one made any issue of it, probably in order not to provoke unnecessary trouble. All the most important decisions on conducting the insurrection were made without Stalin, without even the slightest indirect participation by him. When the parts were being assigned to the various actors in that drama, no one mentioned Stalin or

¹¹ Kamenev had meantime been reinstated as a member of the Central Committee. – LT

proposed any sort of appointment for him. He simply dropped out of the game. Did he perhaps run his 'centre' from some secret hiding place? But all the other members of the 'centre' stayed continually at Smolny.

During the hours when the open insurrection had already begun Lenin, who was aflame with impatience in his isolation, appealed to the district leaders:

Comrades! I am writing these lines on the evening of the 24th... I assure you with all my strength that now everything hangs by a thread, that we are confronted with issues which cannot be decided by conferences or by congresses (not even by Soviet Congresses), but exclusively by the struggle of the armed masses.

It is perfectly clear from this letter that until the very evening of 24th October Lenin knew nothing about the launching of the offensive by the Military Revolutionary Committee. Contact with Lenin was chiefly maintained through Stalin, because he was one of those in whom the police showed not the slightest interest. Unavoidable is the inference that having failed to come to the Central Committee session in the morning and having stayed away from Smolny throughout the rest of the day, Stalin did not find out that the insurrection had already begun and was in full swing until rather late that evening. Not that he was a coward. There is no basis for accusing Stalin of cowardice. He was simply politically non-committal. The cautious schemer preferred to stay on the fence at the crucial moment. He was waiting to see how the insurrection turned out before committing himself to a position. In the event of failure he could tell Lenin, and me and our adherents: "It's all your fault!" One must clearly recapture the red hot temper of those days in order to appreciate according to its deserts the man's cool grit or, if you like, his insidiousness.

No, Stalin did not lead the insurrection – either personally or by means of some 'centre'. In the protocols, reminiscences, countless documents, works of reference, history textbooks published while Lenin was alive, and even later, the so-called 'centre' was never mentioned and Stalin's name either as its leader or as a prominent participant in the insurrection in some other capacity was not mentioned by anyone. The Party's memory passed him by. It was only in 1924 that the Committee on Party History, in the course of collecting all sorts of data, dug up the minutes of the session of 16th October with the text of the resolution to organise a practical 'centre'. The fight against the Left Opposition and against me personally which was then raging called for a new version of Party history and the history of the Revolution. I remember that

Serebryakov, who had friends and contacts everywhere, told me once that there was great rejoicing in Stalin's secretariat over the discovery of the 'centre'.

"Of what significance could that possibly be?" I asked in astonishment.

"They are going to wind something around that bobbin," the shrewd Serebryakov replied.

Yet even then the matter of the 'centre' did not go beyond a repeat reprint of the protocol and vague references to it. The events of 1917 were still too fresh in everybody's memory. The participants of the Revolution had not yet been liquidated. Dzerzhinsky and Bubnov, who were listed as members of the 'centre', were still alive. Out of sheer factional fanaticism Dzerzhinsky was, of course, quite capable of agreeing to ascribe to Stalin achievements which the latter did not have to his credit; but he was not capable of ascribing such achievements to himself: that was beyond his power. Dzerzhinsky died in due time. One of the causes of Bubnov's fall from grace and his liquidation was undoubtedly his refusal to bear false witness. No one else remembered anything about the 'centre's' existence. The phantom of the protocol continued to lead its protocolish existence – sans bones or flesh, sans ears or eyes.

That did not preclude it from being turned into the nucleus of a new version of the October Revolution. In 1925 Stalin was already arguing:

It is strange that Comrade Trotsky, the 'inspirer', 'chief figure' and 'sole leader' of the insurrection was not a member of the practical centre which was called upon to lead the insurrection. How is it possible to reconcile that with the current opinion about Comrade Trotsky's special role?

The argument was patently illogical: according to the precise sense of the resolution, the 'centre' was to have become a part of the very same Military Revolutionary Committee of which I was Chairman. Stalin fully exposed his intention of "winding" a new history of the insurrection around that protocol. What he failed to explain was the source of "the current opinion about Trotsky's special role." Yet that might be worth considering.

The following is contained under my name in the notes to the first edition of Lenin's *Works*: "After the Petersburg Soviet passed into the hands of the Bolsheviks [Trotsky] was elected its President and as such organised and led the insurrection of the 25th October." The "legend" thus found a place for itself in Lenin's *Works* during their author's lifetime. It never occurred to anyone to challenge it until 1925. Moreover, Stalin himself at one time paid his tribute to this "current opinion". In the first anniversary article, in 1918, he wrote:

All the work of practical organisation of the insurrection was conducted under the direct leadership of the President of the Petrograd Soviet, Comrade Trotsky. It may be said with certainty that the swift passing of the garrison to the side of the Soviet, and the bold execution of the work of the Military Revolutionary Committee, the Party owes principally and above all to Comrade Trotsky. Comrades Antonov and Podvoisky were Comrade Trotsky's chief assistants.

Today these words sound like a panegyric. As a matter of fact, what the author had in the back of his mind was to remind the Party that during the days of the insurrection, in addition to Trotsky, there existed also the Central Committee, of which Stalin was a member. But forced to invest his article with at least a semblance of objectivity, Stalin could not have avoided saying in 1918 what he did say. Anyway, on the first anniversary of the Soviet Government he ascribed "the practical organisation of the insurrection" to Trotsky. What then was the mysterious role of the 'centre'? Stalin did not even mention it; it was then still six years before the discovery of the protocol of 16th October.

In 1920, no longer mentioning Trotsky, Stalin advanced Lenin against the Central Committee as the author of the erroneous plan for insurrection. He repeated this in 1922, but substituted for Lenin, "one part of the comrades," and cautiously intimated that he (Stalin) had something to do with saving the insurrection from the erroneous plan. Another two years passed, and it seems that Trotsky was the one who had maliciously invented the canard about Lenin's erroneous plan; indeed, Trotsky himself proposed the erroneous plan, which was fortunately rejected by the Central Committee. Finally, the "History" of the Party, published in 1938, represented Trotsky as a rabid opponent of the October Revolution, which had really been conducted by Stalin. Parallel to all this occurred the mobilisation of all the arts: poetry, painting, the theatre, the cinema, suddenly discovered the urge to invest the mythical 'centre' with the breath of life, although the most assiduous historians were unable to find any trace of it with a magnifying glass. Today Stalin figures as the leader of the October Revolution on the screens of the world, not to mention the publications of the Comintern.

The facts of history were revised in the same way, although perhaps not quite so flagrantly, with regard to all the Old Bolsheviks, time and time again, depending on changing political combinations. In 1917 Stalin defended Zinoviev and Kamenev, in an attempt to use them against Lenin and me and in preparation for his future 'Triumvirate'. In 1924, when the 'Triumvirate' already controlled the political machine, Stalin argued in the press that the differences of opinion with Zinoviev and Kamenev prior to October were

of a fleeting and secondary character. "The differences lasted only a few days because, and only because, in the person of Kamenev and Zinoviev we had Leninists, Bolsheviks." After the 'Triumvirate' fell apart, Zinoviev's and Kamenev's behaviour in 1917 figured for a number of years as the chief reason for denouncing them as "agents of the bourgeoisie", until finally it was included in the fatal indictment which brought both of them to the firing squad.

One is forced to pause in sheer amazement before the cold, patient and at the same time cruel persistence directed toward one invariably personal goal. Just as at one time in Batumi the youthful Koba had persistently undermined the members of the Tiflis Committee who were his superiors; just as in prison and in exile he had incited simpletons against his rivals, so now in Petrograd he tirelessly schemed with people and circumstances, in order to push aside, derogate, blacken, belittle anyone who in one way or another eclipsed him or interfered with his ambition.

Naturally the October Revolution, as the source of the new regime, has assumed the central position in the ideology of the new ruling circles. How did it all happen? Who led at the centre and in the branches? Stalin had to have practically twenty years to impose upon the country a historical panorama, in which he replaced the actual organisers of the insurrection and ascribed to them roles as the Revolution's betrayers. It would be incorrect to think that he started out with a finished plan of action for personal aggrandisement. Extraordinary historical circumstances invested his ambition with a sweep startling even to himself. In one way he remained invariably consistent: regardless of all other considerations, he used each concrete situation to entrench his own position at the expense of his comrades – step by step, stone by stone, patiently, without passion, but also without mercy! It is in the uninterrupted weaving of intrigues, in the cautious doling out of truth and falsehood, in the organic rhythm of his falsifications that Stalin is best reflected as a human personality and as the leader of the new privileged stratum, which, by and large, has to concoct fresh biographies for itself.

Having made a bad beginning in March, which was not improved in April, Stalin stayed behind the scenes throughout the year of the Revolution. He never knew direct association with the masses and never felt responsible for the fate of the Revolution. At certain moments he was chief of staff, never the Commander-in-Chief. Preferring to keep his peace, he waited for others to take the initiative, took note of their weaknesses and mistakes, and himself lagged behind developments. He had to have a certain stability of relations

and a lot of time at his disposal in order to succeed. The Revolution deprived him of both.

Even more than 1905, 1917 was the year in which Stalin clearly realised his own incompetence. Behind the scenes he performs administrative and technical tasks assigned to him by the Central Committee. Someone would always publicly correct him, overshadow and push him aside, and this was done not only by Lenin but also younger, less influential Party members, including new recruits. Stalin could not advance by virtue of his qualities, which others possessed in greater measure, and so all his thoughts and efforts were directed towards backstage intrigue. Stalin felt ill at ease in the company of people with wider intellectual horizons.

Never forced to analyse the problems of revolution under that mental pressure which is generated only by the feeling of immediate responsibility, Stalin never acquired an intimate understanding of the October Revolution's inherent logic. That is why his recollections of it are so empirical, scattered and uncoordinated, his latter-day judgments on the strategy of the insurrection so contradictory, his mistakes in a number of latter-day revolutions (Germany, China, Spain) so monstrous. Truly, revolution is not the element of this former 'professional revolutionist'.

*To some extent pressure from Lenin and events forced Stalin to rise to the heights of revolutionary generalisations, but he could not maintain himself at this height for long and would slide back. Whatever he had decided upon he would pursue with great stubbornness, and with much greater persistence than most other. But he is incapable of choosing for himself a great aim independently or to pursue it for long. He does so to the extent that he is propelled by events or other people. The revolutionary [ideal] gives people wings, demands boldness of thought and a long-term perspective. It is precisely at such periods that we find Stalin in a state of confusion. Events relegate him to a second or third plane. Reactionary epochs are at the same time epochs of ideological backsliding. Bold revolutionary thinking in the epoch of reaction can only lay the path for the future, preparing the future perspective in the consciousness of a small vanguard. However, it cannot find a direct practical application. On the other hand, a strong will or character can preserve its attributes during a period of reaction. In the Party, Stalin comes to the fore for the first time during the years of reaction after 1907. But in the years of the beginning of the upsurge he plays an unimportant role, no more important than the vast majority of advanced Bolsheviks for

one or another reason. During the war, which presages and prepares grandiose changes, Stalin definitely retires into himself.*

During the revolution of 1917 he plays an extremely obscure role. Nevertheless, 1917 was a most important stage in the growth of the future dictator. He himself said later that at Tiflis he was a schoolboy, at Baku he turned an apprentice, in Petrograd he became a craftsman. After four years of political and intellectual hibernation in Siberia, where he descended to the level of the Left Mensheviks, the year of the Revolution, during which he was under the direct leadership of Lenin, in the circle of highly qualified comrades, had immeasurable significance in his political development. For the first time he had the opportunity to learn much that hitherto had been beyond the range of his experience. He listened and observed with malevolence, but sharply and vigilantly. At the core of political life was the problem of power. The Provisional Government, supported by the Mensheviks and the Populists, yesterday's comrades of the underground, prison and exile, enabled him to look more closely into that mysterious laboratory where, as everybody knows, it is not gods that glaze the pots. The unspannable distance, which in the epoch of tsarism separated the underground revolutionists from the government, shrank into nothing. The government became something close, a familiar concept. Koba threw off much of his provincialism, if not in habits and customs, at least in the measure of his political thinking. He sensed – keenly, resentfully – what he lacked as an individual, but at the same time he tested the power of a closely knit collection of gifted and experienced revolutionists ready to fight to the bitter end. He became a recognised member of the general staff of the Party the masses were bearing to power. He stopped being Koba. He definitely became Stalin.

8. THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR

'CONCILIATION'

Immediately after the insurrection, on the insistence of the Bolshevik right wing – Zinoviev, Kamenev, Rykov, Lunacharsky and others – negotiations were begun with the Mensheviks and the Populists concerning the formation of a coalition government. The parties overthrown by the uprising demanded a majority for themselves and, over and above that, the removal from the government of Lenin and myself as the persons responsible for the October 'adventure'. The rightist members of the Central Committee were inclined to accept this demand.¹

[In response to a dangerous situation, which threatened to destroy the whole of the gains made by October, Lenin demanded the expulsion of the leading miscreants. It was in this situation that Lenin delivered the speech which ends with the words: "No compromise! A homogeneous Bolshevik government." In the original text of Lenin's speech the following words occur: "As for coalition, I cannot speak about that seriously. Trotsky long ago said that a union was impossible. Trotsky understood this, and from that time on there has been no better Bolshevik."]

The question was considered in the Central Committee during the session of the 14th (1st) November. This is what the minutes state: "Ultimatum of the majority of the Central Committee to the minority... It is proposed to

1 Kamenev, Zinoviev and Nogin were demanding the formation of a coalition government "otherwise the only course that remains is to maintain a purely Bolshevik Government by means of political terror." They ended their statement with an appeal to the workers for "immediate conciliation" on the basis of their slogan 'Long live the government of all Soviet parties!'

exclude Lenin and Trotsky. This is a proposal to decapitate our Party and we do not accept it." The readiness of the rightists to go as far as an actual surrender of power was condemned by the Central Committee as "fear of the Soviet Majority to utilise its own majority." The Bolsheviks did not refuse to share power with other parties, but would share it only on the basis of the proper relation of forces in the Soviets. Lenin declared that the negotiations with the petty-bourgeois parties made sense only as a cover for military actions. A motion, proposed by me, to break off the negotiations with the Compromisers was passed. Stalin took no part in the debates, but he voted with the majority.

At the moment of the crisis inside the Central Committee, a packed conference of loyal women workers from Petrograd unanimously carried the following resolution: "To welcome the policy of the Central Committee of our Party led by Lenin and Trotsky."

In protest, the representatives of the rightists resigned from the Central Committee and the Government. The majority of the Central Committee presented the minority with the demand to submit unconditionally to the discipline of the Party. The ultimatum was signed by ten members and candidates of the Central Committee: Lenin, myself, Stalin, Sverdlov and others.

Concerning the origin of the document, one of the members of the Central Committee, Bubnov, states: "After writing it he (Lenin) invited into his office individually each of the members of the Central Committee, acquainting them with the text of the declaration and suggesting that they sign it." The story is interesting insofar as it enables us correctly to evaluate the significance of the order of the signatures. Lenin first of all showed the ultimatum to me and, having secured my signature, called in the others, beginning with Stalin. It was always like that or almost always. Had the document not been directed against Zinoviev and Kamenev, their signatures would probably have stood above Stalin's signature.

In the official Party history published only twenty-two years after the event, fantastic though it may seem, Trotsky is relegated to an opponent of the October Revolution. Yet from the Minutes of the Central Committee published when Stalin had already achieved supreme power in 1928, it is clear that the most resolute positions in the fight for the insurrection were known in the Party at that time as "the point of view of Lenin-Trotsky". This expression was reproduced in a great number of Party documents and has been preserved in the press of that time.

After the Revolution other Leftist parties magnanimously agreed to a coalition with the Bolsheviks under the sole condition that only two persons be eliminated from the government – Lenin and Trotsky. Absolutely no one named Stalin. In December, 1917, when a group of Social-Revolutionarists decided “to decapitate the Bolsheviks” they agreed, according to Boris Sokolov, one of the conspirators, “it was clear that the most vicious and important leaders of the Bolsheviks are Lenin and Trotsky. It is necessary to begin with them.”

Pestkovsky tells how during the October days “it was necessary to select from among the Central Committee the leadership of the insurrection. Those selected were Lenin, Stalin and Trotsky.” In assigning the leadership to these three, let us note in passing Stalin’s crony buries once and for all the practical ‘centre’, of which neither Lenin nor I were members. On this occasion Pestkovsky’s testimony contains a kernel of truth. Not during the days of the uprising but after its victory in the important centres, yet before the establishment of any kind of stable regime, it was necessary to create a compact Party staff that could ensure the carrying out of all the necessary decisions down to local level.

The CC minutes state that on the 12th December (29th November) 1917, the Central Committee elected a Bureau composed of four persons for the solution of pressing questions:

As it is so difficult to assemble a session of the CC, it is decided that these four (Stalin, Sverdlov, Lenin, Trotsky) shall be given the right to decide all urgent matters, but that they are obliged to include all CC members in the Smolny at the time in the decision-making.

At that time Zinoviev, Kamenev and Rykov, because of their sharp disagreement, had resigned from the Central Committee. This explains the composition of the foursome. Sverdlov, however, was absorbed by the Secretariat of the Party, speaking at meetings, settling conflicts and was seldom to be found at Smolny. The foursome practically came down to a threesome.

Lashing out against the policy of the Bolsheviks after 1917, Iremashvili writes: “The Triumvirate, filled with unappeasable vengeance, began to exterminate with inhuman cruelty everything living and dead,” and so on and so forth. In the Triumvirate Iremashvili includes Lenin, myself and Stalin. It may be said with assurance that this idea of the Triumvirate arose in the mind of Iremashvili only considerably later, after Stalin had advanced to the first plane of importance. There is, however, a grain – or, at any rate, a semblance

of truth – in these words of Iremashvili's. However, one must not imagine that this was yet a 'triumvirate'. The Central Committee met frequently and would resolve all important and particularly controversial questions. The threesome was needed for immediate practical solutions in the course of the insurrection in the provinces, the attempt by Kerensky to enter Petrograd, the provision of food to the capital and so on. The Troika existed, at least nominally, until the transfer of the government to Moscow.

Even after this transfer from Petrograd to Moscow, Lenin continued to abide by the axiomatic rule of not issuing personal orders. When, about three years later, on the 24th September, 1920, Ordzhonikidze asked by direct wire from Baku for his [Lenin's] permission to send a destroyer to Enzeli (Persia), Lenin wrote over the dispatch: "I'll ask Trotsky and Krestinsky." Actually there are a countless number of such inscriptions on telegrams, letters and reports. Lenin never decided himself, but always turned to the Political Bureau. The composition of the Political Bureau [elected on 23rd October (10th) 1917] was Lenin, Zinoviev, Kamenev, Trotsky, Stalin, Sokolnikov and Bubnov. [Zinoviev and Kamenev withdrew shortly afterwards.] All the remaining members of the Central Committee had the possibility of occasionally attending meetings of the Political Bureau with a consultative vote. The first Organisational Bureau (16th June 1919) consisted of five members of the Central Committee: Stalin, Krestinsky, Beloborodov, Serebryakov and Stasova. Each member of the Organisational Bureau was in charge of a relevant department.

During this time there was often talk of a 'duumvirate'. During the Civil War the Soviet 'poet laureate' Demyan Bedny wrote verses about "our twosome". No one then spoke of a triumvirate. At any rate anyone using that term then would have selected as the third person not Stalin but Sverdlov, who was the very popular Chairman of the Central Executive Committee of the Soviets, and who signed all the more important decrees. I remember speaking to him several times about the insufficient authority of certain of our directives in the provinces. On one such occasion Sverdlov remarked: "Locally, they accept only three signatures: Ilyich's, yours and also to a small extent mine." [After Sverdlov's death] Lenin said at the Party Congress in 1920: "No one could so unite in himself alone organisational and political work as Sverdlov was able to do and we had to try to replace his activity with the work of a collegium."

The decree introducing the Western European calendar was published on 7th February (25th January) 1918. [On the night of 19th February, 1918, the coalition of Bolsheviks and Left S-Rs that made up the Council of the People's

Commissars] elected an executive committee made up of Lenin, Trotsky, Stalin, Proshyan and Karelin [two Left S-Rs], which was authorised to carry on all current work in the interim between the sessions of the Council.

The most important decisions of that period were not infrequently arrived at by Lenin in agreement with me. But in cases when such agreement was not reached, a third person was needed. Zinoviev was in Petrograd. Kamenev was not always in Moscow. Besides, he, like other members of the Politburo and the Central Committee, devoted a considerable portion of his time to agitation. Stalin had more free time than all the other members of the Politburo from agitation, leadership of the Soviets and the rest. That was why prior to his departure for Tsaritsyn he usually carried out the duties of the "third party". The point is that such a threesome did actually exist at certain moments, although not always with the participation of Stalin.

It was natural that the leadership was concentrated in the hands of the Political Bureau. According to the regulations, the Political Bureau "makes decisions on questions that cannot suffer postponement." But such essentially were all questions. The Orgburo and the Secretariat preserved an altogether subordinate position. With the exception of those occasions when there were great disagreements in the Political Bureau, the Central Committee as a whole usually decided. The Central Committee organises, in the first place, the work of the Political Bureau; in the second place, the Organisational Bureau; in the third place, the Secretariat. The Political Bureau makes a report concerning its work every two weeks to the next Plenary Session of the Central Committee. The Secretary of the Central Committee, Krestinsky, was also in the Political Bureau. Two or three of the Political Bureau members, and sometimes no more than two, were usually in Moscow. Out of these hundreds of notes consulting members of the Politburo, only those which bore the inscription "ask Stalin" have been selected, and these are interpreted to mean that Lenin did not take a step without Stalin.

For example, in connection with the negotiations in Brest-Litovsk, Lenin's words, "I'll consult Stalin and give you an answer", are cited time and time again. Dmitrievsky likewise refers to his threesome, although in a somewhat different tone and point of reference:

Even Lenin at that period felt the need of Stalin to such an extent that when communications came from Trotsky at Brest-Litovsk and an immediate decision had to be made while Stalin was not in Moscow, Lenin would inform Trotsky: "I would like first to consult with Stalin before replying to your question." And just

three days later Lenin would telegraph: "Stalin has just arrived. I will consider it with him and we will at once give you our joint answer."

Lenin was a stickler for form and therefore naturally did not take it upon himself to reply in his own name alone. The not infrequent remarks in recent literature to the effect that Lenin directed, ordered and the like are generally motivated solely by a desire to draw an analogy with the Stalinist regime. As a matter of fact, no such a state of affairs existed. Directives were actually given, and moreover orders issued, only by the Politburo and, during the absence of the complete staff, by the threesome, which made up the quorum of the five members of the Bureau. When Stalin was away, Lenin would consult with Krestinsky, the Secretary of the Central Committee, with the same scrupulousness; and in the archives one can find any number of recorded references to such consultations.

BREST-LITOVSK

[The collapse of the Western Front and the advance of the German army placed the Revolution in great danger. The Bolsheviks had no army with which to fight the Germans. On the other hand, surrender would tend to confirm the counter-revolutionary propoganda that the Bolsheviks were agents of German imperialism. The policy initially pursued by the Bolsheviks was to prolong the negotiations as long as possible, in the hope that a revolutionary movement in the West would come to the assistance of the revolution. Trotsky carried out this policy very effectively, turning the conference into a platform for expounding the ideas of the revolution to the war-weary workers of Europe.

[The delay of the revolution in the West and the military weakness of the Russian Revolution caused a difference of opinion in the Party leadership, a difference in which Lenin found himself in a minority. The first time the differences were expressed was on 21st January 1918 – when the negotiations were nearing a climax. Fearing a new offensive if the Bolsheviks rejected a German ultimatum, Lenin proposed an immediate signing of the peace, even on the disastrous terms offered by the Germans. Trotsky agreed that there was no possibility of continuing the war, but thought that negotiations should be broken off and the Bolsheviks should only capitulate in the event of a new German advance.

[Bukharin demanded the waging of a revolutionary war. This position had a majority in the Party and the Soviets. When the leadership invited the Soviets to give their views on Brest-Litovsk over two hundred responded:

of these, only two large Soviets (Petrograd and Sevastopol – the latter with reservations) supported peace. All the other big workers' centres, Moscow, Yekaterinburg, Kharkov, Yekaterinoslav, Ivanovo-Voznesensk, Kronstadt, etc, voted by overwhelming majorities to break off the negotiations. Trotsky did not support the proposal for a revolutionary war. Instead he advanced the slogan of neither peace nor war. He was attempting to drag out the negotiations as long as possible, in the hope that revolutions would break out in Germany and Austria that would end the war. In fact, this tactic almost succeeded and Trotsky's speeches had a great effect among the German and Austrian workers who were moving in the direction of revolution. However, the German imperialists were aware of the danger and decided to act against the Russian Revolution.

[When the Germans reiterated their ultimatum, Lenin again argued for an immediate signing of the peace, but was defeated by a narrow majority in the Central Committee. Trotsky still voted against, since the offensive had not begun. Lenin then reformulated the question as follows: "If the German offensive begins, and no revolutionary upheaval takes place in Germany, are we still not to sign peace?" On this the "left" Communists (Bukharin and the supporters of revolutionary war) abstained. Trotsky voted for the motion, which was in line with an agreement he had reached earlier with Lenin. When, on the next day, the Bolsheviks received evidence of the German advance, Trotsky switched over to Lenin's side, giving him a majority on the Central Committee.

[On 21st February, General Hoffmann announced new and harsher terms with the clear intention of making impossible the signing of a peace. The German general staff staged a provocation in Finland, where they crushed the Finnish workers' movement. This underlined the fears of the Bolsheviks that the Allies had come to an agreement with German imperialism to crush the Soviet Republic. There was a serious possibility that even if the Bolsheviks signed the treaty the Germans would continue their advance. Trotsky initially held this view, but when Lenin reiterated his position, in the teeth of renewed opposition from the 'Lefts', Trotsky did not side with the advocates of revolutionary war, but abstained to give Lenin a majority.

[Trotsky's speeches at Brest-Litovsk were later collected together and published in several editions and in many languages by the Communist International during Lenin's lifetime. Only after 1924 did the Stalinists suddenly discover in them the "revolutionary phrase", which warranted their suppression.]

For several years, Stalin and all the Kuusinens² spread all over the world the version that Trotsky, wilfully opposing the Central Committee, decided not to sign the Brest peace. Stalin even went into print to prove this. But now we are in a position to quote what is stated in the official minutes. Despite their incomplete character and tendentious slant, the minutes for 1918 provide invaluable guidance on this question also.

In 1935, a certain V.G. Sorin [a Stalinist falsifier of history] wrote:

In a letter to Lenin from Brest, Trotsky proposed the following essentially profoundly adventurist plan: not to sign an annexationist peace, but not to continue the war, while demobilising the army. On the 15th (2nd) January, in a conversation by direct wire with Trotsky, who asked for an immediate reply, Vladimir Ilyich characterised Trotsky's plan as 'questionable' and postponed the final answer until the arrival of Stalin, who at that time was not in Petrograd and whom Vladimir Ilyich wanted to consult. We quote the complete record of these conversations:

15th (2nd) January – the following conversations by direct wire took place between Trotsky and Lenin. Trotsky asks Lenin whether he received a letter sent to him through a Latvian soldier. Trotsky must have an immediate answer to that letter. The answer should be expressed in words of agreement or disagreement.

“This is Lenin here. I have just now received your special letter. Stalin is not here, and I have not yet been able to show it to him. Your plan seems questionable to me. Is it not possible to postpone taking the final decision until after a special session of the Central Executive Committee here? As soon as Stalin returns I will show the letter to him. Lenin.”

“We shall try to postpone the decision as long as possible, awaiting communication from you. Please try to hurry. The Rada³ delegation is carrying on a flagrantly

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- 2 Otto Wilhelm Kuusinen (1881-1964) joined the Finnish Social-Democratic Party in 1907 and edited the Party's official journal, *The Worker*. Fled to the Soviet Union when the Finnish Soviet Republic was defeated in 1918. Active in the Comintern where he was a loyal and vigorous supporter of the Stalin faction and energetically campaigned first against Trotsky, then Zinoviev and later Bukharin. In 1952 was promoted to the Politburo of the Russian Communist Party.
 - 3 The Ukrainian Rada was the government of the Ukrainian bourgeois national movement. During its brief existence from 1917 to 1918, the Rada took an aggressive opposition against the October Revolution. In answer to the Kiev workers' uprising the forces of the Rada on 13th November occupied the city and established a reign of terror. On 25th December, 1917 the All-Ukrainian Congress of the Soviet Ukraine declared the Rada illegitimate. The Rada participated in intrigues with the Central Powers against the Bolsheviks. This led eventually to the German occupation of Ukraine and a civil war, which finally ended with the victory of soviet power in Ukraine.

treacherous policy. The consideration of the plan in the Central Committee seems to me inconvenient, since it may evoke a reaction before the plan is carried out. Trotsky.”

Reply to Trotsky: “I should like to consult first with Stalin before replying to your question. Today a delegation of the Kharkov Ukrainian Central Executive Committee, which assures me that the Kiev Rada was breathing its last, has departed to visit you. Lenin.”

When the negotiations of the 18th (5th) January reached a critical moment, L.D. Trotsky asked for a directive by direct wire and received one after the other the following two notes:

1. “To Trotsky – Stalin has just arrived. I shall consider with him and we shall give you our joint answer. Lenin.”
2. “Inform Trotsky he is requested to get a recess and come to Petrograd. Lenin. Stalin.”

The official *History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union*, published in 1939, declares:

On 10th February 1918, the peace negotiations in Brest-Litovsk were broken off. Although Lenin and Stalin, in the name of the Central Committee of the Party, had insisted that peace be signed, Trotsky, who was chairman of the Soviet delegation at Brest-Litovsk, treacherously violated the direct instructions of the Bolshevik Party. He announced that the Soviet Republic refused to conclude peace on the terms proposed by Germany. At the same time he informed the Germans that the Soviet Republic would not fight and would continue to demobilise the army. This was monstrous. The German imperialists could have desired nothing more from this traitor to the interests of the Soviet country.

Turning from page 266 to 268-9 of the same book, we find the following elaboration:

Lenin called this decision “strange and monstrous”. At that time the real cause of this anti-Party behaviour of Trotsky and of the ‘Left Communists’ was not yet clear to the Party. But the recent trial of the Anti-Soviet ‘Bloc of Rights and Trotskyists’ (beginning of 1938), has now revealed that Bukharin and the group of ‘Left Communists’, headed by him, together with Trotsky and the ‘Left’ Socialist-Revolutionaries, were at that time secretly conspiring against the Soviet Government. Now it is known that Bukharin, Trotsky and their fellow-conspirators had determined to wreck the Peace of Brest-Litovsk, arrest V.I. Lenin, J.V. Stalin, Ya. M. Sverdlov, assassinate them, and form a new government of Bukharinites, Trotskyites and the ‘Left’ Socialist-Revolutionaries.

Now let us examine the record. On the night of 21st (8th) November [1917] Dukhonin was sent a radiogram signed by Lenin, Trotsky and N.V. Krylenko, proposing to immediately open negotiations for an armistice. From that moment, the question of a separate peace was discussed repeatedly in the Central Committee. Sixty-three Bolsheviks were present at the conference of 21st (8th) January, 1918, of whom an absolute majority (thirty-two) voted in favour of waging a revolutionary war. Trotsky's position – neither war nor peace – received sixteen votes; Lenin's [to sign a peace with Germany], fifteen votes.

The minutes of the conference of 21st (8th) January have not been preserved in the archives of the Lenin Institute. All that is preserved is a record of the speeches made by the opponents of a separate peace, which Lenin wrote in pencil on the back of the 'thesis'. (There is a record of speeches made by V.V. Obolensky-Osinsky, L.D. Trotsky, G.I. Lomov, E.A. Preobrazhensky, L.B. Kamenev and V.N. Yakovleva.)

The question was considered again three days later by the Party's Central Committee. The full minutes recording the session of 24th (11th) January, 1918 read as follows:

At this meeting, Lenin was supported by Stalin, G.E. Zinoviev, G.Ya. Sokolnikov and Artem (Sergeyev); revolutionary war was supported by G.I. Lomov and N.N. Krestinsky; in addition to his own vote, L.D. Trotsky's view was supported by Bukharin and M.S. Uritsky. Three proposals were put to the vote. Lenin: "We drag out the signing of the peace in every way" (For: 12, Against: 1). L.D. Trotsky: "Do we intend to issue a call for a revolutionary war?" (For: 2, Against: 11, Not voting: 1); and: "We stop the war, do not conclude peace, demobilise army" (For: 9, Against: 7).

At that session Stalin defended the need to sign a separate peace basing himself on the following argument: "There is no revolutionary movement in the West, nothing existing, only a potential and we cannot count on a potential." Lenin at once repudiated Stalin's support: "Of course, a mass movement does not exist in the West but the revolution has not yet started there. If we were to change our tactics on the strength of that, however, then we would be betraying international socialism."

Comrade Sergeyev [Artem], a member of the Central Committee, bears witness to the fact that all the members of the Central Committee were agreed: "Our Soviet Republic is threatened with destruction in the absence of a socialist revolution in the West." This is an accurate reflection of the mind-set in those days and is expressed in particular in the affirmation of Artem that

all the members of the Central Committee were agreed on one thing: without the victory of the international revolution in the near future (according to Stalin in the next few months), the Soviet power could not survive.

On the 25th (12th) January, the question of peace was considered at the joint session of the Central Committees of the Bolsheviks and the Left Social-Revolutionaries. By a majority of votes, it was resolved to propose for the consideration of the Congress of Soviets the formula: "Not to wage war, not to sign the peace." What was Stalin's attitude toward this formula? Stalin declared during the session of 1st February (19th January) 1918 – a week after that session at which the formula was accepted by nine votes against seven: "The way out of this difficult situation was provided to us by the middle road – the position of Trotsky."

It is really extraordinary that these words of Stalin, despite the vigilance of Savelyev, are preserved in the minutes: they do not leave one stone upon another of all the later years of hullabaloo about the Brest-Litovsk peace. So it turns out that on 1st February (19th January) Stalin believed that Trotsky gave the Party "the way out of a difficult situation." Stalin's words would be quite understandable if we take into account that during this critical period, the vast majority of Party organisations and the Soviets stood for a revolutionary war and that, consequently, Lenin's position could not be carried out except by overthrowing the Party and the state (which of course was out of the question). Thus, Stalin was not wrong, but only stated an undeniable fact when he said that Trotsky's position at that time offered the Party the only conceivable way out.

THE GERMANS ADVANCE

On the 27th (14th) January in connection with the peace negotiations in Brest-Litovsk mass strikes broke out in Germany and Austria-Hungary, demanding a speedy conclusion of peace and an improvement in the food situation. However, in the German working class passionate debates were raging among the progressive layers as to why the Bolsheviks had entered into negotiations and were preparing to conclude peace. There were not a few who voiced the opinion that the Bolsheviks and the government of Hohenzollern were playing a comedy in which the cues were prearranged.

The struggle for the revolution required that we make clear to the workers that we could not act otherwise, that the enemies were walking all over us, that we were forced to sign the peace treaty. Precisely for that reason, the German advance was our best proof of the forced character of the treaty. An

ultimatum from Germany would not have been enough; an ultimatum might likewise have been a part of a well-rehearsed play. Quite a different matter was the actual movement of German troops, the seizure of cities and of military annexations. We were losing tremendous wealth, but we were winning the political confidence of the working class of the whole world. Such was the meaning of the disagreement.

The argument that the Germans “cannot attack” was repeated millions of times already in January and early February 1918 by the opponents of a separate peace. The most cautious among them calculated the likelihood of a German advance – approximately, of course – at twenty-five to thirty-three percent. Actually the advance of the German troops lasted fourteen days, from the 18th February to the 3rd March. The whole of the 18th February the Central Committee was devoted to the question of how to react to the German advance that had already begun.

On the 10th February, the Soviet delegation at the Peace Conference in Brest-Litovsk made public the official declaration of the refusal of the Soviet Government to sign the annexationist peace and of the termination of the war with the powers of the Quadruple Alliance. Two days later the order of Supreme Commander-in-Chief, N.V. Krylenko, for the termination of military activity against the same powers and for the demobilisation of the Russian Army was published.

After the breaking off of negotiations in Brest on the 10th February and the publication by the Russian delegation of the declaration of the termination of the war and the refusal to sign peace with Germany, the “military party” – the party of extreme annexation [in Germany] – had finally won out. At a conference in Hamburg on the 13th February, which took place under the chairmanship of the Emperor Wilhelm, the following statement proposed by him was accepted: “Trotsky’s refusal to sign the peace treaty automatically leads to the termination of the Armistice.” On the 16th February the German High Command officially informed the Soviet Government of the termination of the Armistice with the Soviet Republic, beginning at twelve noon of the 18th February, thus violating the stipulated agreement that notice of termination of the Armistice must be given seven days before the commencement of military action.

The question of how to react to the German advance was first broached at the session of the Central Committee of the Party on the evening of the 17th February. Germany’s immediate proposal to enter into new negotiations for the signing of peace was rejected by six votes against five. On the other hand,

no-one voted "for a revolutionary war", while N.I. Bukharin, G.I. Lomov and A.A. Joffe "declined to vote on such a way of posing the question." By a majority of votes a resolution was passed "to postpone the renewal of peace negotiations until the advance shows itself in a sufficient degree, and until its influence on the labour movement becomes evident." With three abstentions, the following decision was passed unanimously: "When the German advance is a fact, and yet no revolutionary upsurge begins in Germany and Austria, we shall conclude peace."

On the 18th February, with the Germans advancing, the Central Committee of the Party was in session throughout the day, with brief interruptions (in one of the minutes the time indicated is "in the evening", the two others are not dated more precisely). At the first session, after speeches by Lenin and Zinoviev in favour of signing peace, and by me and N.I. Bukharin against, the motion "to offer immediately a proposal to renew peace negotiations", was voted down by seven to six. At the second (evening) session⁴, after speeches by Lenin, Stalin, Sverdlov and Krestinsky in favour of renewing peace negotiations, Uritsky and Bukharin against, and a speech by me proposing that we do not renew negotiations but ask the Germans for their formulated demands, the following question was put to the vote: "Shall we immediately offer the German Government a proposal to conclude a peace at once?"

This proposal was passed by seven votes (Lenin, Smilga, Stalin, Sverdlov, G. Sokolnikov, myself and Zinoviev), against five (Uritsky, Lomov, Bukharin, Joffe and Krestinsky), with one abstaining (Stasova). It was then decided immediately to draft a precise statement of the accepted decision and to work out the text of the communication to the German government. Lenin's proposal about the points that needed to be in the telegram was put to the vote. Apart from two abstentions, everyone else voted for acceptance while referring to the harshness of the peace terms. They were ready to sign on the old conditions, while indicating that there would be no refusal to accept worse conditions: seven voted in favour, four voted against and two abstained. The task of working out the text itself was delegated to Lenin and me. The telegram was written then and there by Lenin and, with minor corrections by me, approved at the joint session of the Central Committee of the Bolsheviks and the Left S-Rs, and sent with the signatures of the Council of People's Commissars to Berlin on the 19th February.

4 After receiving news that Dvinsk had been attacked and occupied by the Germans, the Central Committee met again in the evening.

It seems that Lenin originally intended to publish his theses [on the immediate signing of peace] soon after the Party meeting and even began to write an afterword to them (available in the archive of the Lenin Institute). But as Lenin's point of view was not accepted by the Party Central Committee, the theses were only published in *Pravda* on the 24th February, after the Central Committee adopted Lenin's proposal on the necessity of signing a separate peace. When publishing these theses Lenin appended to them an introductory article: 'On the History of the Question of the Unfortunate Peace'. Referring to these events later, Lenin wrote:

How did it happen that there was not a single tendency, not a single leading body, not a single organisation of our Party that was not opposed to that demobilisation? What was the matter with us – had we completely lost our minds? Not in the least. Officers, not Bolsheviks, were saying even before October that the Army cannot fight, that it cannot be kept at the front another few weeks. After October this became self-evident to everyone who wanted to look facts in the face, who wanted to see the unpleasantly bitter reality, and not hide himself or pull his hat over his eyes and be satisfied with high-sounding phrases. There was no army. It was impossible to hold on to it. The best that could be done was to demobilise as soon as possible.

This was a sick part of the Russian State organism that could not endure any longer the burden of the war. The sooner we demobilised it, the sooner it was dissolved among parts which were not yet sick, the sooner would the country be able to get ready for new and difficult tasks. This is what we felt when unanimously, without the slightest protest, we passed the resolution, a decision which, when looked at from the point of view of outward events was absurd – to demobilise the army. It was the right thing to do. We were saying that to keep the army was a frivolous illusion. The sooner we demobilise the army, the sooner we will begin the convalescence of the social organism as a whole. That is why revolutionary phrases like 'the German cannot advance', from which followed the second, 'we cannot declare the state of war terminated; neither war nor the signing of peace', were such a profound error, such an overestimation of events. But suppose the German advances? 'No, he will be unable to advance.'

At the session of the Council of People's Commissars on the 21st February, the representatives of the Left S-Rs voted against utilising the help of the Entente for counteracting the German advance. Negotiations with the Allies about military and technical help had begun soon after the October Revolution. They were carried on by Lenin and me, with Generals Lavergne and Niessel and Captain Jacques Sadoul representing the French, and with Colonel Raymond Robbins representing the Americans. On the same day, in connection with

the continuing advance of the Germans, the French Ambassador Noulens sent a telegram to me: "In your resistance to Germany you may count on the military and financial co-operation of France." Of course, the difference between German militarism and French militarism was not for us a question of principle. It was only a question of the necessity of neutralising certain forces antagonistic to us in order to save the Soviet Government. But the French Government did not keep its word. Clemenceau proclaimed a holy war against the Bolsheviks. Then we were forced to conclude the peace of Brest-Litovsk.

The reply to the Soviet radiogram which outlined the German peace terms was received in Petrograd at 10.30 in the morning of 23rd February. In comparison with the conditions for peace presented on the 10th February, these terms were considerably worse. Livonia and Estonia had to be cleared immediately of the Red Army, and the German police was to occupy them, Russia was obliged to conclude peace with the bourgeois Ukrainian and Finnish governments and so on. The question of accepting the German peace terms was discussed the same day, first at the session of the Central Committee of the Bolshevik Party, then at the joint session of our Central Committee and the Central Committee of the Left S-Rs, and finally at the Plenary Session of the All-Russian Central Executive Committee itself.

At the session of the Central Committee of the Bolshevik Party Lenin, Zinoviev, Sverdlov and Sokolnikov spoke in favour of accepting these conditions and signing the peace. Bukharin, Dzerzhinsky, Uritsky and Lomov spoke against. I declared:

If we had unanimity, we could have taken upon ourselves the task of organising a defence. We could have managed it... But that would require the maximum unity. Since that is lacking, I will not take upon myself the responsibility of voting for war.

The Central Committee resolved by seven votes to four, with four not voting, immediately to accept the German proposal, and (unanimously, with three not voting) carry out a poll of the Soviet electors of Petrograd and Moscow, in order to determine the attitude of the masses toward the conclusion of peace.

At that session of the Central Committee on the 23rd February Stalin declared: "We need not sign, but we must begin peace negotiations." To which Lenin replied: "Stalin is wrong in saying that we need not sign. These conditions must be signed. If you do not sign them, then you will sign the death sentence of the Soviet Government within three weeks." And

the minutes further state: "Comrade Uritsky protests against Stalin that the conditions had either to be accepted or rejected, but that it was no longer possible to carry on negotiations."

To everyone familiar with the state of affairs at that moment – even to an ardent and consistent advocate of a revolutionary war against Imperial Germany like Uritsky – it was clear that resistance was hopeless. Stalin's statement was due entirely to the utter lack of any kind of thought-out position. As far back as the 18th February the German Army had taken Dvinsk. Its advance was developing with extraordinary rapidity. The policy of holding back had been exhausted to the very dregs. Yet Stalin proposed five days later, on the 23rd February, not to sign peace but ... to carry on negotiations.

Stalin spoke for a second time at the session of the 23rd February, this time in defence of the necessity to sign the peace treaty. He took advantage of the occasion to correct himself likewise on the question of the international revolution. "We also are banking on the revolution, but you are reckoning in weeks, while we are reckoning in months." This fully corresponded to the mood of those days. It was summed up by the words of Artem (Sergeyev) at the session of 24th January 1918:

All members of the Central Committee were agreed on one thing, that without the victory of the international revolution in the shortest possible space of time (according to Stalin during the next few months) the Soviet Republic would perish.

Thus, 'Trotskyism' at that time prevailed unanimously in the Central Committee of the Party.

Basically, in the period of the Brest negotiations Stalin did not assume any kind of independent position. He hesitated, bided his time, kept his mouth shut – and schemed. "The Old Man is still hoping for peace," he said to me, nodding his head in the direction of Lenin, "but he won't get any peace." Then quite probably he went to Lenin and made the same sort of remarks about me. Stalin never really came out into the open. True, no one was particularly interested either in his view or his contradictions. I am sure that my main task, which was to make our attitude toward the question of peace as understandable as possible to the world proletariat, was a secondary consideration with Stalin. He was interested in 'peace in one country', just as subsequently he was to become interested merely in 'socialism in one country'. In the decisive votes he lined up with Lenin. It was only several years later, in

the interests of his struggle with Trotskyism, that he took the trouble to work out for himself a certain semblance of a 'point of view' about the Brest events.

There was of course a profound difference between the policy of Lenin throughout the Brest-Litovsk crisis and the policy of Stalin, who stood closer to Zinoviev. It must be said that Zinoviev alone had the courage to demand the immediate signing of peace, prophesying that putting off the negotiations would increase the severity of the peace conditions, and in reality trying to frighten us with this.

None of us doubted that from the 'patriotic' point of view it would have been more advantageous to sign the conditions immediately, but Lenin thought that the drawing out of the peace negotiations was revolutionary agitation and that the tasks of the international revolution stood above patriotic considerations – above the territorial and all other conditions of the peace treaty. To Lenin it was a question of securing a breathing spell in the struggle for the international revolution. Stalin felt that the international revolution was a 'potential' with which we could not reckon. True, later he did amend these words, in order to set himself up against others, but essentially the international revolution in those days, just as considerably later, remained for him a lifeless formula which he did not know how to use in practical politics. It was precisely at the time of this crisis that it became clear that to Stalin the factors of world politics were so many unknown quantities. He did not know anything about them, and he was not interested in them.

Compare this to Lenin, who addressed the Seventh Congress of the Party on 8th March:

Now I must say something about Comrade Trotsky's position. There are two aspects of his activities; when he began the negotiations at Brest and made splendid use of them for agitation, we all agreed with Comrade Trotsky. He has quoted part of a conversation with me, but I must add that it was agreed between us that we would hold out until the Germans presented an ultimatum, and then we would give way. The Germans deceived us – they stole five days out of seven from us. Trotsky's tactics were correct as long as they were aimed at delaying matters; they became incorrect when it was announced that the state of war had been terminated but peace had not been concluded ... Since history has swept that away, it is not worth recalling.

THE CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY

At the time of the Brest-Litovsk negotiations, the Constituent Assembly was dissolved. This step was taken on Lenin's initiative and he also took the lead

in working out the corresponding decree. During the very first days, if not hours, after the insurrection Lenin raised the question of the Constituent Assembly: "We must postpone it," he insisted.

We must postpone the elections. We must broaden electoral rights by giving them to the eighteen-year-olds. We must make it possible to revamp the lists of candidates. Our own are no good: too many untried intellectuals, when what we need are workers and peasants. The Kornilovites and the Kadets [Constitutional Democrats] must be deprived of legal status.

To those who argued: "It is not politic to postpone it now; it will be construed as liquidation of the Constituent Assembly, especially since we ourselves had accused the Provisional Government of putting it off," Lenin replied:

Nonsense! Facts are important, not words. As against the Provisional Government, the Constituent Assembly was or could have been a step forward, but in relation to the Soviet Government it can only be a step backward. Why is it not politic to postpone it? And if the Constituent Assembly turns out to be Kadet-Menshevik-S-R, will that be politic?"

Others argued:

But by that time we shall be stronger, while now we are weak. The Soviet Government is practically unknown in the provinces. And should it become known there that we postponed the Constituent Assembly, our position would become even weaker than it is.

Sverdlov was particularly energetic in his opposition to postponing it, and he was more closely connected with the provinces than any of us. Lenin proved to be alone in his position. He would shake his head in disapproval and reiterate: "It's a mistake, an obvious mistake that may cost us dear! I hope this mistake will not cost the Revolution its head..." Yet once the decision was made against postponement, Lenin concentrated his entire attention on measures for bringing about the convening of the Constituent Assembly.

In the meantime, it became clear that we would be in a minority, even with the Left S-Rs, who ran on the same ticket with the Right S-Rs and were bamboozled at every turn. "Of course, we shall have to disperse the Constituent Assembly," Lenin said. "But what about the Left S-Rs?" However, old Natanson reassured us on that score. He dropped in to "consult" us, but his very first words were, "I dare-say we'll have to disperse the Constituent Assembly forcibly." Lenin exclaimed: "Bravo! What's right is right! But will your people go that far?" Natanson replied: "Some of us are wavering, but I

think that in the end they'll all agree to it." The Left S-Rs were then going through the honeymoon of their extreme radicalism: they actually did consent to it. Lenin devoted himself passionately to the problem of the Constituent Assembly. He was meticulous in all the preparations, thinking through all the details and subjecting Uritsky, who to his great distress had been appointed Commissar of the Constituent Assembly, to the rack of pitiless cross-examination.

The question of the dissolution of the Constituent Assembly was decided in a closed meeting of the Council of People's Commissars, which took place on the evening of the 18th (5th) January in the Tauride Palace. In the same meeting Lenin sketched out the thesis of a decree on the dissolution of the Constituent Assembly. On the 19th (6th) January the issue of the dissolution was considered at the meeting of the Council of People's Commissars. At this meeting Lenin's theses were approved. Several amendments to the draft decree written by Lenin were made by Stalin. The decree of dissolution was announced by V.A. Karelin at a meeting of the Central Executive Committee and adopted by the Central Executive Committee at 1.30 am on the 20th (7th) January.

During the same days *The Declaration of the Rights of Toilers and the Exploited Peoples* was published. On the text of these historical documents are corrections introduced by Bukharin and Stalin. "Most of their corrections," states a footnote to the *Works* of Lenin, "do not have a principled character." [This footnote was removed from later editions of Lenin's *Works*.]

In the complete list of Bolshevik candidates for the Constituent Assembly, headed by Lenin, the name of Stalin stands in eighth place. The first twenty-five candidates were official candidates of the Central Committee. The list was drawn up by a commission headed by three members of the Central Committee: Uritsky, Sokolnikov and Stalin. Lenin sharply protested about the composition of the list: too many doubtful intellectuals, too few reliable workers.

In a letter to the Central Committee on the slate of Bolshevik candidates for the Constituent Assembly, Vladimir Ilyich wrote:

Such an exaggerated number of candidates of half-baked individuals (such as Yuri Larin), who have only recently joined our Party, is absolutely unacceptable. By stuffing the list with this kind of candidate, who ought first to have been put through a period of probation for several months in the Party, the Central Committee has thrown the doors wide open to careerists who are scrambling after

seats in the Constituent Assembly. The list needs to be thoroughly revised and corrected...

It goes without saying that from among the Inter-Districters, altogether little tested in proletarian work and the direction of our Party, nobody would oppose such a nomination, for example, as that of L.D. Trotsky, for in the first place, Trotsky immediately upon arrival, took the position of an internationalist; in the second place, he fought among the Inter-Districters for fusion with the Bolsheviks; and finally, during the onerous July Days he proved himself both equal to the task and was a devoted adherent of the Party of the revolutionary proletariat. Obviously that cannot be said for a majority of the recent members of the Party who appear on the slate.

Of the twenty-five Bolshevik representatives, thirteen suffered repression at the hands of Stalin, some being condemned to death.

The Bolshevik delegates to the Constituent Assembly who gathered from all parts of Russia were – under Lenin's pressure and Sverdlov's management – distributed through all the factories, plants and military units. They were an important element in the organisational machine of the 'supplementary revolution' of 5th January. As for the Right S-R delegates, they deemed fighting to be beneath their dignity: "The people elected us, let the people defend us." In one word, these provincial bourgeois had not the slightest idea what to do with themselves, and most of them had a yellow streak. But to make up for that, they worked out the ritual of the first session most meticulously. They brought along candles, in case the Bolsheviks were to turn out the electric lights, and a large quantity of sandwiches, in the event of their being deprived of victuals. Thus, Democracy came to do battle against Dictatorship – armed to the teeth with sandwiches and candles. It did not even occur to the people to defend those who considered themselves the elect of the people but actually were mere shadows of a period of the Revolution that had passed beyond recall.

As is generally known, the criticism of formal democracy has its own long history. Both we and our predecessors explained the transitional nature of the Revolution of 1848 by the collapse of political democracy. 'Social' democracy had come to replace it. But the bourgeois social order was able to force the latter to occupy the place that pure democracy was no longer able to hold. Political history then passed through a prolonged period during which Social-Democracy, battenning upon its criticism of pure democracy, actually carried out the functions of the latter and became thoroughly permeated with its vices. What happened has occurred more than once in history: the opposition

was called upon to provide conservative solutions for the very tasks with which the compromised forces of yesterday were no longer able to cope.

Democracy, which was originally just a provisional preparatory stage for proletarian dictatorship, became transformed into the supreme criterion, the court of final appeal, the inviolable Holy of Holies, i.e., the ultimate embodiment of the hypocrisy of the bourgeois social order. That was true even in our case. Having received the *coup de grace* in October, the bourgeoisie attempted to bring about its own resurrection in January in the ghostly apparition of the Constituent Assembly. Subsequently, by its fearless, bold and public dispersal of the Constituent Assembly, the victoriously advancing proletarian revolution put formal democracy out of its misery with a merciful blow from which it will never recover. That is why Lenin was right when he said: "In the final reckoning, it worked out better that way!" In the person of the S-R Constituent Assembly the February Republic had only achieved the opportunity to die a second death.

I was in Brest-Litovsk during the liquidation of the Constituent Assembly. But as soon as I came back for a conference to Petrograd, Lenin told me concerning the dispersal of the Constituent Assembly:

It was of course very risky on our part not to have postponed its convening – very, very incautious of us. But in the final reckoning it was better that it turned out that way. The dispersal of the Constituent Assembly by the Soviet Government is a frank and complete liquidation of formal democracy in the name of the revolutionary dictatorship. Henceforth the lesson will be clear-cut.

Incidentally, Lenin attended personally to the transfer of one of the Latvian regiments, predominantly proletarian in composition, to Petrograd. "The *muzhik* might waver on this or that question," he observed, "but here we must have proletarian decisiveness." Thus, theoretical generalisation went hand-in-hand with the utilisation of the Latvian Rifle Regiment. It was undoubtedly then that Lenin must have become fully conscious of the ideas he later formulated at the First Congress of the Communist International in his remarkable theses on democracy.

PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR

After the conquest of power, Stalin began to feel more confident, while remaining, however, a second-rate figure. He moves slowly and carefully, and remains silent where possible. But victories in Petrograd and, later, in Moscow finally convince him. He begins to acquire a taste for power. I soon

noticed that Lenin 'promotes' Stalin. Without giving too much attention to this fact, I did not doubt for a minute that Lenin is motivated not by personal preference, but organisational considerations. Gradually, they became apparent to me. Lenin, undoubtedly, highly valued certain traits in Stalin – firmness, tenacity, perseverance, persistence, cunning and even mercilessness – as qualities necessary for the struggle. But Lenin did not at all consider these traits, even if exceptional in scale, to be sufficient for a leader of the party and the country. Lenin saw Stalin as a revolutionary, not a large scale politician. He did not expect or demand independent ideas, political initiative or creative imagination from him. Stalin's value in Lenin's eyes was almost exclusively in the sphere of administration and manoeuvring in the apparatus.

The posts that Stalin occupied during the first years after the Revolution and the sundry assignments, predominantly of an organisational and diplomatic character, which he carried out, were exceedingly varied. But such was the position of the majority of responsible functionaries of those times. Directly or indirectly, everybody was occupied with the Civil War; routine duties were usually placed on the shoulders of the closest assistants. Stalin was listed as a member of the editorial board of the central organ, but as a matter of fact had practically nothing to do with *Pravda*. He carried out more systematic work in the Commissariat of Nationalities, interrupted by journeys to the front. The Soviet state was only just forming itself, and it was not easy to determine what the new manner of this interrelationship of the various nationalities would be.

On 15th (2nd) November 1917, the *Declaration of the Rights of the Nations of Russia* was published under the signatures of Lenin and Stalin. This declared that the national policy of the Soviet Government would be guided by four principles:

1. Equality of all the nations of Russia.
2. The right to secession and the organisation of independent states.
3. The repeal of all national limitations.
4. The free development of national minorities within the composition of each of the nations.

The text of the document which, notwithstanding its brevity, bears the hallmarks of a seminarist's clumsiness was evidently cleaned up by the hand of Lenin. The essence of this policy can be expressed in a few words: the rejection of each and every 'claim' and 'right' over the regions inhabited by non-Russian nationalities, a recognition (not in words but in deeds) of the right of these nationalities to national state independence, a voluntary military-economic

union of these nationalities to Russia; assistance to backward nationalities in their cultural and economic development, without which the so-called national equality becomes an empty phrase, all this on the basis of the complete emancipation of the peasants and the concentration of all power in the hands of the toiling masses of the border nationalities – such was the national policy of the Russian Communists.

At the end of January, 1918, as a representative of the Party, Stalin participated in a conference of representatives of several foreign Left Socialist parties: Grimlund and Hoglund (Swedish Marxist Left Party), Nissen (Norwegian Social-Democratic Party), Natanson⁵ and Ustinov (Left S-Rs), Petrov (British Socialist Party), J. Doletsky (CC of the Social-Democrats of Poland and Lithuania), Buzhor (Romanian Social-Democrats), Radosevic (Yugoslav Social-Democrats), B. Reinstein (American Socialist Labor Party), Aykuni (Armenian SD), etc.

This conference, which decided to convene a Left Internationalist Conference, came to the conclusion that “an international Socialist conference...should be convened under the following conditions: firstly, that the parties and organisations agree to take the path of revolutionary struggle against ‘their own governments’ for immediate peace; and secondly, that they support the Russian October Revolution and the Soviet Government.” (*Pravda*, No.23, 6th February [24th January], 1918.) The meeting also elected an International Bureau.

During this period Stalin conducted negotiations with representatives of the various national organisations that recognised the authority of the Council of People's Commissars and expressed a desire to establish proper relations with it. Most of them were hostile or semi-hostile organisations that were manoeuvring for the time being, trying to extract some advantages from

5 Mark Andreyevich Natanson, alias Bobrov (1849-1919), one of Russia's great revolutionists and a leading Populist, was one of the organisers of the Chaikovsky Circle, which played a very important role in the '*khozhdniye v narod*' ('going to the people') movement. He became a leader of the Narodnaya Volya ('People's Will') and a leading protagonist of its terrorist policy. Arrested in 1881, in connection with the assassination of Tsar Alexander II, he was sentenced to ten years' exile in Siberia. He was one of the founders of the S-R (Social-Revolutionary) Party, member of its Central Committee, leader of its left wing from 1905. He became a leader of the Left S-Rs after the split in 1917-8, and in July, 1918, after the abortive Left S-R coup against the Bolsheviks, headed a group of Left S-Rs opposed to the coup and known as the Revolutionary Communists. He was a member of the presidium of the All-Russian Central Executive Committee of the Soviet. He died abroad in 1919.

the change of regime. In these negotiations with the Muslims and Belarusians more than ever Stalin was in his element. He manoeuvred against the manoeuvrers, answered cunning with cunning and in general did not allow himself to be outwitted. It was precisely these qualities that Lenin appreciated in him.

On the 22nd (9th) November, 1917, from two to half past four in the morning, Stalin was at Lenin's side when Vladimir Ilyich was carrying on negotiations by direct wire with Commander-in-Chief General Dukhonin. He issued orders for the immediate commencement of peace negotiations with all countries at war. When Dukhonin refused, he wrote an order for his removal and the appointment of N.V. Krylenko as Commander-in-Chief. On the basis of incidents such as this, Pestkovsky writes that Stalin became "Lenin's deputy in the leadership of militant revolutionary actions. He was in charge of looking after military operations on the Don, the Ukraine and in other parts of Russia."

The word "deputy" does not fit here; it would be more correct to say "technical assistant". Since the observation of the course of the Civil War in the country was carried on principally by the direct medium of the telegraphic wire, this function too was carried on by Stalin since he had more time from his duties than any other member of the Central Committee. Stalin's conversations by direct wire were essentially semi-technical, semi-political in character. He was carrying out instructions.

The general guidance of this work, not to mention the initiative, was completely down to Lenin, who since time immemorial had accorded to the national question a tremendous significance, second in importance only to the agrarian question. It is evident from the diary of his secretariat how often he received all sorts of national delegations and addressed letters, inquiries and instructions with reference to one or another national group. All the more principal measures had to pass through the Politburo; the less important ones were discussed over the telephone with Lenin. The Commissariat of Nationalities was charged merely with the technical implementation of decisions that had already been made.

PESTKOVSKY RECALLS

Information concerning the work of this Commissariat can be found in the memoirs of Pestkovsky, published in 1922 and 1930.⁶ He was Stalin's closest

6 Pestkovsky, Stanislav, 'The October Days in Petrograd', *Proletarian Revolution*, No. 10 (October 1922).

assistant during the first twenty months of the Soviet regime. An old Polish revolutionist who had been condemned to hard labour in Siberia, and a participant of the October insurrection who held the most varied positions after the victory, including among them the post of Soviet Minister to Mexico between 1924 and 1926, Pestkovsky was for a long time involved in one of the oppositional groups, but managed to repent in time. The mark of recent repentance lies on the second edition of these memoirs, but it does not deprive them either of their freshness or interest. The initiative in their collaboration was taken by Pestkovsky, who knocked on various doors, seeking but not finding an outlet for his modest talents.

[Pestkovsky recalls his first meeting with Stalin:]

“Comrade Stalin,” said I, “are you the People’s Commissar for the Affairs of the Nationalities?”

“Yes.”

“But have you got a Commissariat?”

“No.”

“Well, then, I will make you a Commissariat.”

“All right, but what do you need for that?”

“For the present, merely a mandate.”

At this point Stalin, who hated to waste words, went to the executive offices of the Council of People’s Commissars and several minutes later returned with a mandate.

“After October,” writes S. Alliluyev, “Stalin moved into Smolny and settled there in two small rooms on the ground floor.” In one of the rooms of the Smolny already occupied, Pestkovsky found a vacant table and placed it against the wall, pinning above it a sheet of paper with the inscription: “People’s Commissariat for the Affairs of the Nationalities”. To all this two chairs were added.

“Comrade Stalin,” said I, “we haven’t got a farthing to our name.” In those days the new government had not yet taken possession of the State Bank.

“Do you need much?” asked Stalin.

“To begin with, a thousand roubles will do.”

“Come in an hour.”

When I appeared an hour later Stalin ordered me to borrow three thousand roubles from Trotsky. “He has money. He found it in the former Ministry of Foreign Affairs.” I went to Trotsky and gave him the formal receipt for three thousand

roubles. As far as I know, the People's Commissariat of Nationalities has not yet returned this money to Comrade Trotsky.

No less colourful is Pestkovsky's description of the search for the Commissariat's quarters in Moscow, where the government moved the following March from Petrograd. A fierce struggle for the private houses of merchants raged between the departments.

Living in the Kremlin was crowded. The majority worked outside the walls of the Kremlin. Sessions end at all times of the day. The rooms are distinguished by the simplicity of those of a respectable second rate hotel. The dining room is oval shaped, and here food is served, which is brought from the restaurant, or which is prepared and served in house. I dare say in capitalist countries a modest clerk would cock his nose up at the room and the unsatisfactory food.

The People's Commissariat of Nationalities had absolutely nothing in the beginning. "I brought pressure to bear on Stalin." On whom Stalin brought pressure to bear, I don't know.

After a while, the People's Commissariat of Nationalities was in possession of several private houses. The Central Office and the Belarusians were located on the Povarskaya, the Latvians and Estonians on the Nikitskaya, the Poles on the Arbat, the Jews on Prechistenka, while the Tatars were somewhere on the Moscow River Quay. Besides that, Stalin and I had offices in the Kremlin. Stalin proved to be quite dissatisfied with this situation. "Now it is quite impossible to keep an eye on you at all. We ought to find one large house and get everyone together there." This idea did not desert him for a single minute. Several days later he said to me: "We have been given the Great Siberian Hotel, but the Supreme Council of National Economy has wilfully taken possession of it. However, we shall not retreat. Tell Alliluyeva to type out the following on several pieces of paper: 'These quarters occupied by the People's Commissariat of Nationalities.' And take along some thumb tacks."

Alliluyeva, Stalin's future wife, was a typist in the Commissariat of Nationalities. Armed with the magic bits of paper and the thumb tacks, Stalin and his assistant went by automobile to the Zlatoustensky Lane.

It was already getting dark. The main entrance to the hotel was closed. The door was decorated by a piece of paper which read: "This dwelling is occupied by the Supreme Council." Stalin tore it down, and we fastened our insignia in its place. "All we have to do now is get inside," Stalin said. It was no easy task. With great difficulty we found the back door entrance. For some inexplicable reason the electricity was not working. We lighted our way with matches. On the second

floor we stumbled into a long corridor. We fastened our notices on a number of doors at random. When it was time to go back, we had no more matches. Going down in pitch darkness, we landed in the basement and nearly broke our necks. At long last we managed to make our way to the automobile.

It requires a certain effort of the imagination to visualise the figure of a member of the government under cover of darkness breaking into a building occupied by another ministry, tearing down one set of notices and posting another. It may be said with certainty that it would not have occurred to any of the other People's Commissars or members of the Central Committee to do anything like that. Here we recognise the Koba of the Baku prison days. Stalin could not fail to know that the debatable question of a building would be decided in the final reckoning by the Council of People's Commissars or in the Political Bureau. It would have been simpler in the very beginning to apply to one of these institutions. Apparently Stalin had reason for supposing that the contest would not be decided in his favour and tried to confront the Council of People's Commissars with an accomplished fact. The attempt failed; the building was assigned to the Supreme Council of National Economy, which was a more important ministry. Stalin had to silently swallow yet another grudge against Lenin.

In 1930 Stalin's power was already indisputable, but the State Cult of his personality was just beginning. This explains the fact that in his [Pestkovsky's] memoirs, despite the overall laudatory tone, a note of familiarity can be detected, and even a hint of gentle irony could be allowed. A few years later, when the advent of purges and firing squads had established the basis for the necessary historical respect, the stories about Stalin hiding in the commandant's kitchen or how he seized a mansion house under cover of darkness, would already sound like an act of literary obscenity and it is quite likely that the author paid dearly for this breach of etiquette.

Retrospective light on the childhood of Joseph Djughashvili is also cast by the childhood of his son, Jacob Djughashvili, who passed many times before the eyes of my family in the Kremlin. Yasha as he is shown by early photos resembles his father. Only the son had more softness in his face, inherited from his mother, Stalin's first wife.

Like most boys of those stormy years, Yasha smoked. His father who never left the pipe out of his mouth pursued this vice with the vindictiveness of a backward family despot. Yasha was at times forced to spend the night on the landing because his father would not let him into the house. With burning

eyes, and grey shadows on his cheeks, and smelling strongly of tobacco, Yasha often sought refuge in our Kremlin flat.

“My father is crazy,” he would say in his sharp Georgian accent. It seems to me now that, taking into account the unavoidable differences of time and place, these scenes with their vengeful character were a reproduction of episodes that took place thirty-five years earlier in the little house of the shoemaker Vissarion in Gori.

According to the text of the Constitution, a People’s Commissariat was made up of the chairman and of the collegium, which in turn consisted of half a dozen and sometimes even a dozen members. It was no easy task to guide a department. According to Pestkovsky, “all members of the Collegium on the National Question were in opposition to Stalin, frequently leaving their People’s Commissar in a minority.” The repentant author hastens to add: “Stalin decided to re-educate us and worked at it persistently. In this he displayed a lot of gumption and wisdom.” Unfortunately Pestkovsky does not go into details on this aspect of the matter. But we do learn from him about the original manner in which Stalin would terminate conflicts with his collegium. Pestkovsky relates:

At times he would lose patience but he would never show it during the sessions. On these occasions, when as a result of our endless discussions at conferences his patience would be exhausted, he would suddenly disappear, doing it with extraordinary skill; “just for a moment” he would disappear from the room and hide in one of the recesses of the Smolny and later the Kremlin. It was impossible to find him. In the beginning we used to wait for him, but finally we would adjourn. I would remain alone in our common office, patiently awaiting his return, but to no avail. Usually at such moments the telephone would ring; it was Vladimir Ilyich calling for Stalin. Whenever I replied that Stalin had disappeared, he would invariably tell me: “Find him at once.” It was no easy task. I would go out for a long walk through the endless corridors of the Smolny and the Kremlin in search of Stalin. I would find him in the most unexpected places. A couple of times I found him in the apartment of the sailor, Comrade Vorontsov, in the kitchen, where Stalin was lying on a divan smoking a pipe and thinking over his thesis.

It may be doubted that he was thinking over his thesis in the kitchen. It is more likely that he was nursing his inner hurt and brooding on how good it would be if those who disagreed with him would not dare to object. But in those days it did not even enter his head that a time would come when he would merely command and all others would obey in silence.

The same Pestkovsky refers to the close collaboration between Lenin and Stalin.

Lenin could not get along without Stalin even for a single day. Probably for that reason our office in the Smolny was 'under the wing' of Lenin. In the course of the day, he would call Stalin out an endless number of times, or would appear in our office and lead him away. Stalin spent most of the day with Lenin. What they did there I don't know, but on one occasion, upon entering Lenin's office, I discovered an interesting picture. A large map of Russia hung on the wall. Before it stood two chairs, and on them stood Ilyich and Stalin, moving their fingers over the northern part, I think across Finland.

At night when the commotion in the Smolny subsided a bit, Stalin would go to the direct wire and spend hours there. He carried on the longest negotiations either with our military leaders (Antonov, Pavlunovsky, Muravyov and others) or with our enemies, with the War Minister of the Ukrainian Rada, Porsh. Occasionally, when he had some pressing business and he was called out, he would send me to the wire.

The facts here are given more or less correctly, but the interpretation is one-sided. At that period, Lenin had great need of Stalin. There can be no doubt about that. Zinoviev and Kamenev had been waging a struggle against Lenin. I spent my time either at meetings or in Brest-Litovsk, principally in Brest-Litovsk. Sverdlov carried the responsibility for the entire organisational work of the Party. Stalin really had no definite duties. The Commissariat of Nationalities, especially in the beginning, took up very little of his time. He therefore played the role of chief-of-staff or of a clerk on responsible missions under Lenin. The conversations by direct wire were essentially technical, although very responsible, and Lenin could entrust them only to an experienced man who was fully informed of all the tasks and concerns of Smolny.

As a member of the Political Bureau, Stalin was included in the delegation from the Russian Communist Party to the Congress of the Finnish Socialist Party. But this inclusion was purely nominal in character. Stalin did not take part in the work of the Congress. In that first chaotic period the work was not yet distributed, the roles had not yet been assigned. The time had not yet come for the administrative work of the Commissar of Nationalities. Stalin took no part in agitation. He carried out various assignments, helping Lenin in his day-to-day work. Later he spoke of himself as the beginning of Lenin's staff. That would not have been devoid of sense had Stalin's work been distinguished by greater conscientiousness.

“When at the end of December, 1917, the Congress of the Finnish Socialist Party took place,” writes Pestkovsky, “there arose the question as to whom the working class of Finland would follow. The Central Committee of the Bolsheviks sent to that Congress as its representative, Stalin.” Neither Lenin nor I nor Sverdlov could leave Petrograd. On the other hand, Zinoviev and Kamenev were not suitable at that period for the task of raising an insurrection in Finland. Stalin’s candidature appeared the most suitable. It was at that Congress that Stalin evidently met for the first time Tanner, with whom twenty-two years later he was to carry on negotiations on the eve of the Soviet-Finnish War.

ULTRA-LEFT DEVIATIONS ON THE NATIONAL QUESTION

The People’s Commissariat of Nationalities was created to organise all the formerly oppressed nations of Russia through national commissariats – such as the Armenian, the Belarussian, the Jewish, the Latvian, the Muslim (which was later renamed the Tatar-Bashkir) and the Polish departments – and those of the Mountains of the Caucasus, the German, the Kirghiz, the Ukrainian, the Chuvash, the Estonian, the Kalmyk, the South Slavs, the Czechoslovaks (looking after the Czech military prisoners), the Votyak and the Komi. The Commissariat tried to organise the education of the nationalities on a Soviet basis. It published a weekly newspaper, *The Life of the Nationalities*, in Russian and a number of publications in various national languages. But it devoted itself chiefly to organising national republics and regions, to find the necessary cadres of leaders from among the nationalities themselves for the general guidance of the newly organised territorial entities, as well as caring for the national minorities living outside of their own territories.

In the eyes of the backward nationalities, which were for the first time called upon by the Revolution to lead an independent national existence, the Commissariat of Nationalities had an undoubted authority. It opened to them the doors leading to an independent existence within the framework of the Soviet regime. In that sphere Stalin was an irreplaceable assistant to Lenin. Stalin knew the life of the aboriginal peoples of the Caucasus intimately, as only a native could. That aboriginality was in his very blood. He enjoyed the company of primitive people, found a common language with them, was not afraid they would excel him in anything, and therefore with them behaved in a democratic, friendly way.

Lenin valued these attributes of Stalin’s, which were not shared by others, and in every way tried to bolster Stalin’s authority in the eyes of all sorts of

national delegations. "Talk it over with Stalin. He knows that question well. He knows the conditions. Discuss the question with him." Such recommendations were repeated by him scores and hundreds of times. [However,] the conduct of members of the People's Commissariat for Nationalities towards the interests of backward nationalities was essentially characterised by haughty disdain or indifference. Either openly or half consciously, they stood for those ideas of Rosa Luxemburg that were already well known to us: national self-determination under capitalism is impossible, and under socialism it is superfluous. They were much more inclined to preaching internationalism in an abstract way than ensuring to the formally oppressed backward nationalities conditions for a dignified existence.

According to Pestkovsky's account the majority of the Collegium reasoned in the following way: all national oppression was merely one of the manifestations of class oppression. The October Revolution had destroyed the basis of class oppression. Therefore, there was no need to organise national republics and autonomous regions in Russia. Territorial division should be exclusively along economic lines.

The opposition to the Leninist policy was, strange though it may seem at first glance, especially strong among the non-Russian Bolsheviks (Latvians, Ukrainians, Armenians, Jews and the like). The Bolsheviks in the borderlands that suffered oppression had been brought up in the struggle with local nationalistic parties and were inclined to reject not only the poison of chauvinism but even progressive social demands. The Collegium of the People's Commissariat of Nationalities consisted of these Russified non-Russians, who counterpoised their abstract internationalism to the real needs of development of the oppressed nationalities. Actually this policy supported the old tradition of Russification and was in itself a special danger under the conditions of civil war.

In their opposition to Stalin they were, in the great majority of cases, in the wrong. On all questions Stalin followed the directives of Lenin, with whom he had a direct phone line, or with whom he consulted first in Smolny, then in the Kremlin. On all those occasions when Stalin had serious conflicts with the national delegates, or in his own collegium, the question was referred to the Political Bureau, where all the decisions invariably came down in favour of Stalin. This must have reinforced his authority even more in the eyes of the ruling circles of the backward nationalities; in the Caucasus, on the Volga and in Asia. The new bureaucracy of the national minorities later became a not unimportant bulwark of Stalin's power.

[A concrete example of this was the Bashkir question. Pestkovsky informs us:]

In the spring of 1918, the Central Committee decreed the creation of the Tatar-Bashkir Republic. In order to work out this decision more concretely, a special conference was convoked in May at Moscow, composed of representatives of Party and Soviet organisations of the Ural Territory, representatives of the Tatar and Bashkir nationalities, and officials of the People's Commissariat of Nationalities.

The delegates to this conference from the Ural Territory were Comrades Syromolotov and Tuntul, and they brought with them a 'real' Bashkir Communist, Comrade Shamigulov. All three were resolute opponents of the creation of the Tatar-Bashkir Republic, regarding it as something in the nature of a concession to Pan-Islamic nationalism. Having received such unexpected support, we 'Leftists' in the Collegium of the Commissariat of Nationalities perked up in spirit and resolved on firm resistance to Stalin's 'opportunism'. In this way those who were in favour of creating a republic found themselves in a minority.

The only one who resolutely supported Stalin was Nur-Vakhitov, leader of the Tatar Communists, and Ibragimov, a Left S-R and representative of the Ufa Tatars. The one Bashkir Communist, Shamigulov, expressed himself against the Republic, considering it an unnecessary concession to nationalism. Even worse was the action of another Bashkir, Manatov. At the session he voted for the republic, not wishing to "quarrel with his superiors", but in the hall he urged us to fight resolutely against its establishment because according to him the Bashkirs did not want to be in the same republic with the Tatars.

After that Stalin convened a session of the conference and declared that in view of the fact that the question had already been decided beforehand by the Central Committee, we must vote in favour of organising a republic. But we did not yield and, making a protest against the decision of the question before the convening of the conference, we left the fraction meeting and refused to participate in the further deliberations of the council. At the same time we teased Stalin, saying that he "was left with a Left S-R". For that we subsequently received a written reprimand from the Central Committee.

Since the best forces of the Party had gone in for military or economic work, the Collegium of the Commissariat of Nationalities consisted of people of minor importance. Nevertheless, they indulged in the practice of marshalling arguments to counter Stalin's contentions and of putting questions to him to which he could not find answers. He had power. But that power was utterly insufficient for compulsion; he had to convince or persuade. Stalin could not cope with that situation. The contradictions between his overbearing nature

and his insufficient intellectual resources created an insufferable situation for him. He did not enjoy authority in his own department. When his patience would be exhausted he would simply hide "in the most unexpected places".

STALIN AND THE NATIONAL QUESTION

It is curious that Stalin's biographer, Souvarine, resolutely (to the extent that he is capable of resolution in the sphere of theory) rejects the principle of the right of nations to self-determination, a principle lying at the very basis of the People's Commissariat of Nationalities and Stalin's corresponding activities. At the same time, Souvarine resolutely defends the principle of democracy as against dictatorship. It never enters the poor author's head that the principle of democracy as applied to the national sphere does mean the right to self-determination.

The national question is similar to the question of democracy. A really ideal and complete democracy has proved to be unthinkable in capitalist society. But that does not mean that it is unthinkable generally, with all those limitations which a class regime imposes upon them. The very same thing applies to the question of national self-determination. If democracy is the power of the people, then it is obvious that the people should 'have the right' to organise their power (the government) in accordance with their national interests as they understand them. To say that this is not realisable means simply not to know that democracy is not realisable.

Pre-revolutionary Russia was in many respects an experimental field for the study of the political nature of different classes and particularly of the different national segments of the ruling classes. All the forms of oppression were combined in tsarist Russia: the privileged feudal classes, the bureaucratic-police apparatus, the bourgeoisie and the chauvinists. National oppression in its turn was combined with oppression based upon class and privilege.

The oppressed nationalities represented a wide range of social and historical stages. Certain of the oppressed nationalities, far from being on a lower economic and cultural level, were often on a higher one than the ruling nationalities (the Finns, the Poles, to some extent the Jews and others). On the other hand, in the Caucasus and in Asia there were scores of nationalities that had not yet emerged from the nomadic state or had hardly entered upon the stage of sedentary culture. In any event one can say that as a general rule all the nationalities except the Great Russians were trapped under a complex web of oppression, since all the other forms of exploitation and oppression were compounded by national oppression.

Here the question arises: what was the nature of the bourgeoisie of the oppressed nationalities? From the standpoint of abstract reasoning, it would have to conclude that the Polish, Jewish, Armenian, German or Tatar bourgeoisie in the tsarist empire was more resolute, more radical and more revolutionary than the Great-Russian bourgeoisie. Yet in reality this supposition is refuted by the facts. And this is no accident.

The point is that national oppression itself is not a one-sided affair. It is divided along class lines. No doubt the workers and peasants of the oppressed nationalities were more responsive to revolutionary ideas and were the first to take to the road of mass struggle. Politically speaking, for a long time proletarian Warsaw marched ahead of Petersburg and Moscow. Jewish artisans in the Pale of Settlement⁷ were the first to launch a broad strike movement. The agrarian struggle acquired its most revolutionary sweep in Georgia and the Baltic provinces even before the Revolution of 1905.

But precisely this circumstance is what paralysed the national bourgeoisie. It may be said, for example, that the Polish bourgeoisie clung to absolutism for so long because the Polish proletariat stood at the head of the revolutionary vanguard. This conclusion is of exceptional importance for the revolution in colonial countries.

The Second Congress of the Comintern was held from 19th July to 6th August 1920. The theses on the national and colonial question were worked out by Lenin, and he was invited to guide the work of the Commission on the national and colonial question. At one of the sessions he delivered a report in the name of that Commission. It would have never entered anyone's head to assign the composition of such theses or report on the national question to Stalin. In a letter to Lenin dated 12th June 1920, Trotsky wrote:

Your project for thesis on the national-colonial question at the Second Congress of the Comintern was received by me this 11th June. At the present moment I have no possibility to express myself in detail or at length (I have no time) about the thesis, but can express myself briefly about one omission in the thesis. I am referring to the failure of the thesis to mention confederation as one of the transitional forms of closer intercourse among the toilers of different nations.

7 This was an area in the western region of tsarist Russia, in which Jews were allowed to have permanent residency and outside of which Jewish permanent settlement was generally prohibited. This area, on the border with Germany and the Austro-Hungarian Empire, became industrialised earlier than most other parts of the Russian Empire. It was the centre of activity of the Bund.

For formations that had been a part of Old Russia, our (Soviet) type of federation may and should be considered feasible as a road toward international unity. The motives are well known; these nationalities either did not have in the past their own state or had lost it long ago, in view of which the Soviet (centralised) type of federation is grafted on to them without any special friction.

The same cannot be said about those nationalities that did not enter into the composition of Old Russia, had existed as independent formations, had developed their own statehood, and which even when they become Soviet will be obliged by the nature of things to assume one or another kind of state relation with Soviet Russia: for example, a future Soviet Germany, Poland, Hungary and Finland. These nationalities, which have their own statehood, their own army, their own finances, upon becoming Soviet, would hardly consent at once to agree to a Federative Union with Soviet Russia of the Bashkir or the Ukrainian type (in your thesis you differentiate between the Bashkir and the Ukrainian type of Federal Union, but as a matter of fact there is no such difference, or it is so small that it is equal to zero), because they would have regarded the Federation of the Soviet type as a form which reduces their state (sovereign) independence, as an attempt to destroy the latter.

I have no doubt that for those nationalities the most acceptable form of rapprochement would be confederation (union of independent states). I am no longer speaking of backward nationalities; for example, Persia and Turkey, with reference to whom or for whom the Soviet type of federation or federation in general would have been even more unacceptable.

On the basis of these considerations, I think that in the well-known point of your thesis concerning the transitional forms of drawing together with the toilers of various nations, it is necessary to introduce (along with federation) confederation. Such a correction would invest the theses with greater elasticity, enrich them with still another transitional form of rapprochement among the toilers of the various nations, and would facilitate those nationalities that previously had not been part of Russia to achieve state rapprochement with Soviet Russia.

In Vienna, under the guidance of Lenin, Stalin had written a valuable work on the national problem, but his attempt to continue this work independently in Siberia produced such a result that Lenin deemed it impossible even to publish his article. At the March conference of 1917 Stalin was developing the view that national oppression is the product of feudalism, utterly losing sight of imperialism as the main factor of national oppression in our epoch.

In *Pravda* of 28th March, 1917, namely a few days before the arrival of Lenin, Stalin published an article 'Against Federalism'. He argues that federation in the past was progressive only in those cases when it led from

complete fragmentation to the complete independence of states, cantons, etc., to further the unitary state. Capitalist development tends towards centralisation. Federation can only be a temporary stage. Russia is already united. Federation would be a step backwards for it.

It is unreasonable to advocate a Russian Federation, something which life itself has doomed to extinction ... To transform Russia into a federation would break the already existing political and economic ties that bind the region together, which is completely unreasonable and reactionary ... Since imperialism in Russia has not solved and cannot solve the national question, is it not clear that federalism in Russia does not solve and cannot solve the national question, that such quixotic attempts to turn back the wheel of history can only confuse and complicate things? ... As a half-hearted transitional form, federation does not satisfy and cannot satisfy the interests of democracy.

All this was written seven months before Russia became the Soviet Federal Republic.

In the same article, the author acknowledges the right of secession for those nations who do not want to remain within the Republic, but for those who remain within it, it offers:

Political autonomy within the framework of a single (integral) state with the same constitutional norms for its regions, distinguished by certain national rules and remaining within the framework of the whole. In this way, and only in this way, the question of the regions of Russia must be resolved.

The principle of federation has not enjoyed great success in Marxist literature. In earlier works of Lenin one can also find negative remarks about federation. But the same can be said about small scale landed property. By itself, it certainly does not solve the problems of human culture, but in relation to feudal land ownership it is a huge step forward. Likewise, the federation of autonomous ethnic republics meant a huge step forward compared to the old oppressive bureaucratic centralism. In March 1917 Stalin could not see this and he repeated a general abstract formula, which in practice was a justification of bureaucratic centralism.

Stalin wrote in *Pravda* of 10th October, 1920:

Recognition of the right to secede does not mean the recommendation to secede. The secession of the borderlands would have undermined the revolutionary might of Central Russia, which stimulated the liberation movement of the West and the East. The seceded borderlands would have inevitably fallen into slavery to international imperialism. It is enough to take a look at Georgia, Armenia, Poland,

Finland, etc., which have separated from Russia and which have preserved merely the appearance of independence, while actually having become transformed into unconditional vassals of the Entente. It is sufficient to recall the recent history of the Ukraine and of Azerbaijan, the former ravished by German capitalism and the latter by the Entente, in order to understand fully the counter-revolutionary demand for the secession of a borderland under contemporary international conditions.

At the Ninth Congress in March 1921, Stalin again read his inevitable report on the national question. As often happens with him as a result of his empiricism, his generalisations do not come from living material, not from the experience of the Soviet regime, but from the realm of superficial abstractions. In 1921, as in 1917, he repeated some general observations to the effect that bourgeois countries cannot solve the national problem, whereas the land of the Soviets has every possibility to do so. This report provoked anger and bewilderment amongst the most interested delegates, the representatives of the national parties, who gave voice to their discontent in the debate. Even Mikoyan, already one of the closest allies of Stalin and later one of his faithful shield-bearers, complained that the Party needed to be specific about "what changes need to be made to the system, what type of Soviet system must be established in the outlying territories, etc. Comrade Stalin has not explained this."

In 1923 he was to place on the same plane with Great-Russian nationalism, which had behind it age-old traditions and the oppression of weak nations, the defensive nationalism of these latter nations. These crude errors – Stalinist errors – taken together, are explicable, as has already been pointed out, by the fact that not on a single question does he rise to a systematic conception. He utilises disjointed propositions of Marxism as he needs them at the moment, selecting them just as shoes are selected according to size in a shoe store. That is why at each turn of events he contradicts himself with such ease. Thus, even in the field of the national problem, which became his special sphere, Stalin could not rise to an integrated conception.

THE LIFE OF THE NATIONALITIES

Along with leaders of the Party and the country, there were leaders of so-called departmental importance. Stalin became such a leader in the sphere of oppressed nationalities. At the various congresses of the oppressed nationalities, at congresses devoted to the national question, Stalin's name was included on the list of speakers – although, true enough, in the last place.

On the 27th November 1919, the Second All-Russian Congress of Muslim Communist Organisations and Peoples of the East was held in Moscow. The Congress was opened by Stalin in the name of the Central Committee of the Party. Four persons were elected honorary members: Lenin, myself, Zinoviev and Stalin. The president of the Congress, Sultan-Galiyev⁸, one of those who subsequently ended up badly, proposed that the Congress greet Stalin as “one of those fighters who burned with a flame of hatred for international imperialism.” Yet it is extremely characteristic of the gradation of leaders at that time that even at this Congress the report of Sultan-Galiyev on the general political revolution concludes with the greeting: “Long Live the Russian Communist Party! Long Live its Leaders, Comrades Lenin and Trotsky.” Even this Congress of the Peoples of the East which was held under Stalin’s direct leadership did not deem it necessary to include Stalin among the leaders of the Party.

The First Congress of the Chuvash Communists took place in April 1920, and therefore more than two years after the establishment of the Soviet Government. The honorary presidium consisted of the same four persons: Lenin, myself, Zinoviev and Stalin. Describing the opening of the Congress, the journal of the People’s Commissariat of Nationalities pointed out that the walls were decorated with portraits of the leaders of the world revolution – Karl Marx, Lenin, Trotsky and Zinoviev. At that time there were as yet no portraits of Stalin in existence; they were not hung anywhere and it never occurred to anyone to decorate even the Hall of the Congress with one of them. Yet this occasion was wholly in Stalin’s own sphere of activity.

On the 7th November 1920 – that is, on the third anniversary of the October Revolution – we find Stalin in Baku, where he spoke at the solemn session of the Soviets, delivering a report entitled “Three Years of the Proletarian Dictatorship”. At the Congress of the People of Dagestan on the 13th November, Stalin proclaimed the autonomy of Dagestan. “Comrade Stalin’s speech,” as the journal of the Commissariat of Nationalities informs us, “was in many places interrupted by thunderclaps of applause, the Internationale, and ended in a stormy ovation.”

On the 17th November at the Congress of the People of the Terek Territory at Vladikavkaz, Stalin personally “proclaimed the Soviet autonomy of the Gurian people” and appeared with a report about the aforementioned autonomous Gurian Soviet Republic. Between the 18th and 21st December 1920 the first All-Russian Conference of Representatives of Autonomous

8 Mirsaid Sultan-Galiyev (1892-1940).

Republics, Territories and Regions took place. Kaminsky conveyed to the Conference greetings in the name of Stalin, who could not be present because of illness. The motion to send greetings to Stalin was adopted unanimously. But at that Congress of the Peoples of the East the record reads: "... Honorary Chairmen of the Congress were elected: Comrades Lenin, Zinoviev and Trotsky ... storms of applause ... Honorary members of the Presidium were elected ... and Djughashvili-Stalin..." Again in the last place!

On the 19th January, 1921, sessions of the Soviets of the Nationalities under the chairmanship of Stalin took place. Hence his illness, of which Kaminsky reported on the 18th December, could not have begun before the middle of November, for on the 13th November, 1920, he had taken part in the Congress of Peoples of Dagestan. The illness was over before the 19th January, when the sessions of the Soviets of Nationalities under Stalin's chairmanship took place. The period of his illness could have lasted under these conditions, together with the period of convalescence and rest, no longer than two months. Was it at this time that Stalin had his operation?

Stalin was People's Commissar of Nationalities from the moment of the Revolution until the liquidation of the Commissariat in 1923 in connection with the creation of the Soviet Union and the Council of Nationalities of the Central Executive Committee of the USSR. It may be considered firmly established that at least until May, 1919, Stalin was not very busy with the affairs of the Commissariat. At first Stalin did not write the editorials in *The Life of the Nationalities*, but later, when the journal began to come out in large format, Stalin's editorials began to appear in one issue after another. However, Stalin's literary productivity was not great, and it decreased from year to year. In 1920-21 we find only two or three articles by him. In 1922 not even a single article. By that time Stalin had completely gone over to machine politics.

In 1922 the editorial board of the journal stated:

In the beginning of the publication of *The Life of the Nationalities* Comrade Stalin, the People's Commissar for the Affairs of the Nationalities, took an active part. He wrote during that period not only editorial articles, but often made up the informational review, contributed notes to the department of Party life and the like.

Reading these contributions, we recognise the old editor of the Tiflis publications and the editor of the Petersburg *Pravda* of 1913.

In a number of issues he devoted his attention to the East. It may be followed in a number of his articles and speeches. No doubt Stalin's interest in the East was in large measure personal in character. He was himself a native of the East. Before representatives of the West, he, who was familiar neither with the life of the West nor with its languages, always felt himself at a loss. But with representatives of the backward nations of the East he, the Commissar who in large measure decided their fate, felt himself incomparably more confident and on firmer ground.

In 1918 the problems of the West occupied the foreground, not the East. The World War was coming to an end, there were upheavals in all the countries [of Europe], revolutions in Germany and Austria-Hungary and elsewhere. So Stalin's article entitled 'Don't Forget the East' that was published in the issue of the 24th November, 1918, appeared at the very time of the Revolution in Austria-Hungary and Germany. We all regarded those revolutions as forerunners of the socialist revolutions of Europe. At that time Stalin wrote, "without the revolutionary movement in the East, it is useless even to think about the final triumph of socialism" – in other words, Stalin considered the final triumph of socialism impossible not only in Russia, but even in Europe without a revolutionary awakening of the East.

This was a repetition of Lenin's guiding idea, but Lenin saw that both the Eastern and Western perspectives were closely interrelated. In this repetition of ideas, however, there was a division not only of labour but also of interests. Stalin had absolutely nothing to say concerning the revolutions in the West. He was unacquainted with Germany and did not know its life or its language whereas others wrote about it with much greater knowledge. Stalin concentrated on the East.

On the 1st December, 1918, Stalin wrote in *The Life of the Nationalities* an article entitled 'The Ukraine Is Being Freed'. It was the same old seminarist rhetoric. Repetition takes the place of other resources: "We do not doubt that the Ukrainian Soviet Government will be able to offer proper resistance to the new unwelcome guests, the enslavers from England and France. We do not doubt that the Ukrainian Soviet Government will be able to expose their reactionary role," and so on *ad nauseam*. In an article in the same magazine on 22nd December, Stalin wrote:

With the help of the best Communist forces, the Soviet state machine [in the Ukraine] is being re-established. The members of the Central Committee of the Soviets in the Ukraine are headed by Comrade Pyatakov ... The best Communist

forces which composed the government of the Ukraine were: Pyatakov, Voroshilov, Artem (Sergeyev), Kviring, Zatonsky and Kotsubinsky.

Of these only Voroshilov remains alive, having become a Marshal. Sergeyev died in an accident; all the others were either executed outright or have disappeared without a trace. Such was the fate of “the best Communist forces.”⁹

On the 22nd February, 1919, at the time that Stalin was working rather diligently on *The Life of the Nationalities*, he published an editorial entitled ‘Two Camps’, in which he said among other things:

The world has divided itself resolutely and irrevocably into two camps – the camp of imperialism and the camp of socialism ... The waves of the socialist revolution are growing without restraint, assailing the fortresses of imperialism ... Their resonance resounds in the lands of the oppressed peoples ... The ground under the feet of imperialism is catching fire ...

Notwithstanding the waves, the images are clichés and not in agreement with each other. In all of this there is the unmistakable ring of insincerity under the bathos of bureaucratic slipperiness.

On the 9th March, *The Life of the Nationalities* published an article by Stalin entitled ‘Two Years Later’, which expressed his conclusions: “The experience of the two years’ struggle of the proletariat has completely confirmed what Bolshevism had foreseen ... the inevitability of the world proletarian revolution ...” In those days the perspective of Bolshevism had not yet been reduced to socialism in one country. Of the same type were all the other articles, all of them utterly devoid of originality of thought or attractiveness of form. The articles were formally educational in character, dry, flabby and false.

THE BASHKIR QUESTION AND THE CIVIL WAR

On the first anniversary of the October Revolution Stalin wrote:

The revolutionary wave from the north has spread over all of Russia, pouring over one borderland after another. But at this point it met with a dam in the form of the ‘national councils’ and territorial ‘governments’ (Don, Kuban¹⁰ and Siberia)

9 The article as it presently appears in Stalin’s *Collected Works* has been edited to remove any reference to these “best Communists” – ‘Things are Moving’, 22nd Dec 1918, J. Stalin, *CW4*, pp. 187-189.

10 The Kuban is a region of Southern Russia surrounding the Kuban River on the Black Sea between the Don Steppe, the Volga Delta and the Caucasus. From the 18th century

which had been formed even before October. Bourgeois by nature, they did not at all desire to destroy the old bourgeois world. On the contrary, they deemed it their duty to preserve and fortify it with all their strength ... They naturally became the focal points of reaction, drawing around themselves all that was counter-revolutionary in Russia ... But the struggle of the 'national' and territorial 'governments' (against the Soviet Centre) proved to be an unequal struggle. Attacked from both sides, from the outside by the Soviet Government and on the inside by their own workers and peasants, the 'national governments' had to retreat after the first battle ... Completely routed, the 'national governments' were obliged to turn for help against their own workers and peasants to the imperialists of the West.

Thus began the wave of foreign intervention and the occupation of the borderlands, populated predominately by non-Russian nationalities, which could not help hating Kolchak¹¹, Denikin¹², Wrangel¹³, or their imperialistic and Russifying policy. In a report Stalin made in Baku on 8th November, 1920, under the title 'Three Years of the Proletarian Dictatorship', we find the following concluding words: "There is no doubt that our road is not one of the

it was occupied by Cossacks. During the Revolution and Civil War, the Cossacks were divided on class lines. Although most of the Cossacks initially sided with the Whites, many also joined the Bolsheviks who promised them autonomy. This process is well described in Sholokhov's famous novel *Quiet Flows the Don*.

- 11 Admiral Alexander Vasilyevich Kolchak (1874-1920) established a counter-revolutionary government in Siberia, calling itself the Provisional All-Russian Government. Kolchak was a brutal dictator who called himself the "Supreme Ruler and Commander-in-Chief of All Russian Land and Sea Forces". His regime was characterised by nepotism, corruption, brutality, greed, and incompetence. From 1918 to 1920 he was the main leader of the counter-revolutionary White armies. At the end of the Civil War, with his White forces falling apart, he was arrested by the Czechs and handed over to the local Bolsheviks who put him on trial and sentenced him to be shot.
- 12 Anton Ivanovich Denikin (1872-1947), a Lieutenant General in the tsarist army, became a leading general of the counter-revolutionary White forces in the Civil War. The White forces of Denikin, Yudenich, Wrangel and Kolchak were supported by Western and Japanese armies, weapons and funds. The defeat by the Red Army at the Front definitely deprived him of support among generals and the landed gentry. Public lack of confidence in him was expressed, after which on the 26th March, 1920, he yielded the office of Commander-in-Chief to General Wrangel, who was still holding out in the Crimea, and emigrated to England.
- 13 Baron Pyotr Nikolayevich Wrangel (1878-1928) was an officer in the Imperial Russian army and later commanding general of the White Army in Southern Russia in the later stages of the Civil War. He replaced Denikin as Commander-in-Chief of the White forces in Crimea in 1920. After defeats in which he lost half his army, and facing the danger of a rout, Wrangel fled with the remnant of his forces to Turkey.

easiest, but there is equally no doubt that we are not afraid of difficulties..." Paraphrasing certain words of Luther, Russia might have said:

Here I stand on the border between the old capitalist and the new socialist world; here on this border I unite the efforts of the proletarians of the West with the efforts of the peasantry of the East, in order to demolish the old world. May the God of History help me in this!

In the given historical context, the outcome of the Civil War depended on whether the peasantry and the oppressed nationalities would support the workers of Petrograd and Moscow or the bourgeoisie. We must start with the fact that out of a population of 140 million in the Russian Federation of Soviet Socialist Republics (excluding Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland) the Great Russians represent not more than 75 million, and the remaining 65 million do not belong to the Great-Russian nationality. Furthermore, these nationalities mainly inhabit the border regions, the most vulnerable points exposed to military invasion, and these border regions abound in raw materials, fuel and foodstuffs.

In the last analysis, these border regions are less developed in the industrial and military sense (or not developed at all) than Central Russia, in view of which they are not able to maintain their independent existence without the military and economic assistance of the latter, just as Central Russia is unable to maintain its military and economic power without the fuel and raw material aid of the outlying areas. These circumstances plus the well-known position of the national programme of Communism determine the character of the national policy of the Russian communists.

After the proclamation of the Bashkir Autonomous Republic in November 1917, there was a surge of sympathy for the Soviet Government among the masses. The leadership of the Bashkir masses passed into the hands of the nationalistic elements headed by Zaki Validov, who represented the interests of the bourgeois-*kulak* portion of the population. Gradually this group degenerated into an outpost of anti-Soviet activity and established contact with Dutov and Kolchak. However, under the pressure of the masses, after the liquidation of Bashkir autonomy by Kolchak, Zaki Validov was compelled to begin negotiations with the Soviet Government.

In February 1919, after the liquidation of Kolchak, the Bashkir government went over to the side of the Soviet Government and toward the end of the same month at Simbirsk, at the staff headquarters of the Eastern Front, the delegation of the Bashkir government signed a preliminary agreement which

guaranteed autonomy to the Bashkir people on condition that it establish a government on the basis of the Soviet constitution, open common action of Bashkir detachments with the Red Army against the Whites, and others.

In the beginning of March 1919, Stalin commenced negotiations in Moscow with the Bashkir delegation about the formation of the Bashkir Soviet Republic. The result of these negotiations was the agreement of the Central Soviet Government with the Bashkir Government concerning Soviet Autonomous Bashkiria, which was concluded on the 20th March 1919. In the beginning of March, I was obliged to leave Moscow, having declined to participate in the Eighth Congress of the Party in view of military reverses near Ufa. Stalin calmly remained in Moscow at the Congress and until the 20th March carried on the negotiations with the Bashkir delegation. Nevertheless, Stalin is hardly remembered in connection with that matter by contemporary historians of Bashkiria. Thus Antagulov in Bashkiria, published in 1925, relates:

The struggle between the Russian and the Bashkir comrades deepened; complete anarchy began. In one place Russians were arrested in the name of the Bashkir government; in another, Bashkirs were arrested in the name of the local government. Comrade Trotsky's journey to Ufa happened to coincide with this movement (March 1920). The Bashkir officials again began to carry on negotiations with the Soviet Government in the person of Comrade Trotsky and achieved a degree of agreement.

F. Samoilov in his 'Little Bashkiria' in 1918-20, and published in *Proletarian Revolution*, December 1920, states:

Meantime, as a result of information received from Bashkiria, the Centre accorded quite a lot of attention to the Bashkir question. In the middle of March Comrade Trotsky, who had arrived in Ufa with special powers, called us there for a conference on Bashkir affairs. To that conference from Sterlitamak, representing the Bashkirs, came Validov, Tukhvatulin, Rake Hamatuvin and Kaspransky; representing the Territorial Committee and the officials of the Centre, Dudnik, Samoilov, Artem (Sergeyev), Preobrazhensky and the Chairman of the Ufa Provisional Executive Committee, Yeltsin.

[Trotsky was sent to Bashkir region to deal with the problems arising from rebellion and the dangerous frictions between the Bashkir Revolutionary Committee, in the person of its chairman, Validov, and the Soviet representatives, Artem and Preobrazhensky. Lenin had been forced to intervene on behalf of the Politburo in January 1920 to warn Artem and

Preobrazhensky about their behaviour. "Under these circumstances I am quite sure that Artem, Preobrazhensky and Samoilov will give no real cause for complications," wrote Lenin on 20th January 1920. But he was over confident. By March the situation had deteriorated. Their behaviour provoked Trotsky to urge their removal and replacement with "tactful and firm people who understand the meaning of our national policy".

[In May 1920 the Bashkir Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic was declared, which also involved the removal of the troublesome Validov. This caused problems in the summer and autumn, including a movement to restore the Validov government. Validov nevertheless attended the Congress of the Peoples of the East held in Baku in September 1920, where he participated in drawing up the statutes of ERK, a Muslim Socialist organisation. However, Validov broke with the Bolsheviks and he moved to Central Asia.]

Additional light on this situation is shed by the following exchanges of telegrams:

ABSOLUTELY SECRET

(By direct wire in code)

To Yekaterinburg.

To the Chairman of the Revolutionary Military Council of the Republic, Comrade Trotsky.

The revolt of the Muslim peasantry in the Kazan and Ufa gubernias is growing. The mutineers have seized Belebey. They are threatening other county seats of the Ufa government, are trying to break through to the Bashkir regions and to entice the latter to follow them. That this danger cannot be excluded has been demonstrated by the events of January and the Chernov letter intercepted by the Cheka¹⁴. After Sterlitamak and Yamagulov were cut off, the situation improved, but according to information from Artem friendly co-operation began with the remaining members of the Bashkir Revolutionary Committee.

Validov's arrival at Sterlitamak again complicated everything. He demanded in an ultimatum manner that the Party conference set for the 6th March should be cancelled notwithstanding Artem's promise not to raise the question there about the January events, and demands by telegraph the temporary recall of Artem until the arrival of Stalin. We sent Artem (and a copy to Validov) a telegram stating that the conference must be held and that the members of the Oblast Committee,

¹⁴ The All-Russian Emergency Commission for Combating Counter-Revolution and Sabotage, abbreviated to 'Vecheka' or 'Cheka', was the first Soviet state security organisation created in December 1917 and dissolved in 1922.

Shamigulov and Izmailov, may take part in it. Perhaps we ought to rebuke Validov firmly and definitely at this point, which will save him as a valuable worker for us in the future, but it is hard to decide from here what should be the tone and character of our communication.

Considering the very serious significance of the growing rebellion and the situation in Bashkiria, the Political Bureau requests that you undertake to supervise the military measures for suppressing the rebellion and [undertake] the direct [means] to solve the Bashkir conference, at which you would have to see both Validov and Artem. In the event of your positive reply, please send simultaneously a telegram to Sterlitamak, concerning the place of the conference for the liquidation of mutual recriminations.

2/3, 1920, No. 63.

Secretary of the Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party, Krestinsky.

DIRECT WIRE.

To Moscow

To Krestinsky.

I am watching the course of the uprising. It has no military significance. Scandals like the surrender of Belebey are explained by [Validov's] incompetence.

The Bashkirs are not participating in the uprising. The Bashkir troops are behaving well. Of course, complications with the Bashkir are possible. The Revolutionary Committee needs a comrade capable of forestalling complications instead of provoking them. I think that Artem should be recalled and Preobrazhensky transferred. What is [needed is] internal work, the introduction of political differentiation, the selection of suitable people and the like. Instead of that the Ufites are substituting the national question for the class question.

Yesterday by direct wire I warned Validov concerning the Bashkir troops that might be drawn away from us and into the Muslim uprising. Validov replied with a long explanation in which he swore that not a single Bashkir would come out against the Soviet government, and offered the Bashkir troops for the purpose of pacification. Today in addition he sent the following:

"Today a parade of the Bashkir troops was held at Sterlitamak and after the parade a meeting was held at which the causes for the *kulak* refusal to give bread to the hungry toiling population were explained. The situation of twelve Bashkir mountain volosts¹⁵ dying of hunger and typhoid because of the obdurate

15 A *volost*, after the Russian land reforms of 1861, was a unit of peasants' local self-rule which united a number of village-communes or *mirs*.

unwillingness of the *kulak* agricultural regions of Bashkiria to give bread was described.

“All the Red Army men of Bashkiria, who come principally from those regions, have a clear and distinct conception of the aims of the fight against the *kulaks*. At the end of the meeting the following resolution was adopted: ‘To the dear leader of the Red Army, Comrade Trotsky, from us, Bashkir Red Army men – warm soldierly greetings! We ask him to mobilise our energies and our force for service to the World Revolution and Communism, for the benefit of the poor and against the *kulaks*, who are killing our brothers and parents with starvation.’

“I beg you most earnestly in the name of the Red Army men to return on your way back – stop with us for a short time – because we cannot imagine the possibility that the remote regions of our young Bashkiria will be visited by one of the four principal leaders of the world revolution – Comrades Lenin, Trotsky, Zinoviev and Stalin.

“We would very much like to take advantage of your sojourn in the Urals. Your visits will have tremendous significance not only for Bashkiria but for all Kirghizia.

“Always at your service, Validov.”

In order to settle the Bashkir conflict, I shall have to travel on the way back through Ufa, but I had intended to go by way of the northern route in order to visit Perm and Viatka, which are a part of the First Workers' Army. If you deem it unconditionally necessary I can go by way of Ufa. But unless Artem and Preobrazhensky are replaced by tactful and firm people who understand the meaning of our national policy, it will be impossible to accomplish anything anywhere.

Let us know how matters stand with Poland. Is it necessary to start agitation concerning the Polish danger, recruit volunteers from the Workers' Army and the rest?

Trotsky

2nd March 1920

Yekaterinburg

THE EIGHTH PARTY CONGRESS

[The Eighth Congress of the Russian Communist Party (b) was held in Moscow from 18th to 23rd March 1919. The Congress was attended by 301 voting delegates who represented 313,766 Party members. A further 102 delegates attended with speaking rights, but no vote.] Incidentally, at the

Central Committee session of 24th January 1919, a commission was elected to work out the Party programme for the Congress consisting of Bukharin, Lenin and Sokolnikov. Stalin, who was in Petrograd, was not included in the commission.

Thus, the People's Commissar of Nationalities and in a certain sense the theoretician of the national question did not participate in the debates on the national programme of the Party. In the course of these debates it was suddenly disclosed that Stalin had temporarily fallen under Bukharin's influence on the national question, although Bukharin's line differed officially from the Party line.

At the Third Congress of Soviets, which preceded the Eighth Party Congress, instead of advocating the self-determination of nations, Stalin put forward the idea of self-determination for the toiling classes of every nationality. In other words, he proposed that from now on the solution of the national question would depend, not on the will of the nation as a whole but on the will of the toiling classes. It seemed to him that he was drawing an elementary conclusion from the October Revolution. Stalin's use of this formula, which may have been suggested to him by Bukharin who had always opposed the slogan of national self-determination, passed unnoticed. At the Eighth Congress, however, it received reinforcement.

The commission on the national question was headed by Lenin, Zinoviev, Bukharin, Stalin, Kamenev and Sokolnikov. The order of the names was interesting in itself. We should recall that at this congress Trotsky was absent. The debates at the Eighth Congress on the national question were far less sharp than on the military question, but they were in the highest degree characteristic of Stalin, his methods of action and his relations with Lenin. The journal *The Life of the Nationalities* for March 1919 mentions "a debate on the national question at the Eighth Party Congress." A debate – without Stalin! Why? Because he had come out in favour of self-determination for the toiling classes and thus placed himself in a difficult position. So Stalin's position was defended by Bukharin, Preobrazhensky and (it seems) Pyatakov, but not by Stalin himself. In his speech at the Congress session of the 19th March, during the consideration of the Party programme, Bukharin declared:

In the commission, basing myself on the declaration made by Comrade Stalin at the Third Congress of Soviets, I proposed the self-determination of the toiling classes of each nationality.

Lenin, in his speech, called Bukharin's formula "unacceptable in principle," without referring to Stalin by name. Lenin argued from the premise that the dictatorship of the proletariat was far from a universal fact, but rather an exception, which was none too secure even in Russia itself. There were any number of nationalities that had not yet gone through the stage of their national liberation. Therefore, to combine the self-determination of nations with the dictatorship of the proletariat within each national region would be to jump heedlessly over unknown and perhaps numerous historical stages. Lenin reminded Bukharin about the Bashkirs:

Let us assume that the Bashkirs had overthrown their exploiters and that we had helped them to do it. But even that would have been possible only where the revolution had fully ripened. That must be done very cautiously, so that our own intervention should not hold back the very process of differentiation by the proletariat, which we have to accelerate. What then can we do in regard to such nations as the Kirghiz or the Sardis, who until this very day are still under the influence of their mullahs... We must always take into consideration the stage of development at which a given nation stands along the road from medievalism toward bourgeois democracy... If we were to say that we do not recognise any such thing as a complete nation but only the toiling masses, we would be saying the most nonsensical thing of all. It is impossible not to recognise that which exists: it will compel its own recognition... "I want to recognise only the right of the toiling classes to self-determination," says Comrade Bukharin. In other words, you want to recognise that which in reality has not been achieved in any other country except Russia. That is ridiculous.

Stalin naturally did not pick up the gauntlet and did not say a word during the debate. He did not repudiate Bukharin's reference to his speech. But neither did he support Bukharin. This discussion on the national question was published in the official organ of Stalin's commissariat, *The Life of the Nationalities* in March 1919, under the title, 'Debates on the National Question at the Eighth Congress of the Russian Communist Party'. Bukharin's reference to Stalin's formula was carefully deleted from its text. However, at another moment during the debates Ryazanov, arguing against Bukharin, said right out that his formulation "is the formulation which he [Bukharin] repeats after Comrade Stalin". Strangely enough this second reference to Stalin was reprinted in *The Life of the Nationalities*, because of the carelessness and oversight of Stalin himself.

Notwithstanding all his firmness and strength on issues when he knows what he wants, Stalin, the empiricist, is always open to the most unexpected

influences in the sphere of theory, which he always relegates to second place. Lenin knew about these qualities of Stalin's and therefore turned his fire on Bukharin, who always had his own theoretical positions and was ever ready to defend them. Lenin did not challenge Stalin, even as he had not in April, 1917 and on a number of other occasions, for he wanted to make it possible for him to repudiate his erroneous theories without any fuss. Lenin achieved his aim. Stalin did not participate in the debates, just as in fact he had not participated in the debates of the April Conference of 1917. He was preoccupied with only one thing: to let everybody forget about his mistake, which compromised his authority as People's Commissar of Nationalities. He even resorted to the technical trickery of deleting his name from Bukharin's speech. This slippery way of straightening out his political line and deserting a political ally is typical of him.

THE UKRAINIAN QUESTION

During the initial years of the Soviet regime, Bolshevism in the Ukraine was weak. The cause of it is to be sought in the national and social structures of the country. The cities, the population of which consisted of Great Russians, Jews, Poles and, only to a small extent, of Ukrainians, were to a considerable extent colonial in character. Among the industrial workers of the Ukraine, a large percentage were Great Russians. Between the city and the village lay a yawning, almost impassable abyss.

Those Ukrainian intellectuals who interested themselves in the village, the Ukrainian language and culture, met with semi-ironical treatment in the city and that, of course, pushed them resentfully in the direction of chauvinism. The non-Ukrainian Socialist factions in the cities had no sense of kinship with the life of the masses in the villages. In the Ukrainian cities they represented the culture of the Great-Russians with which most of them, especially the Jewish intellectuals, were not too well acquainted. The exotic character of Ukrainian Bolshevism, its absence at a time when it should have been sinking deep roots and its obstinate independence were, to a considerable extent, the cause of multitudinous conflicts, quarrels and constant internal factional struggles.

It was Stalin's duty as People's Commissar of Nationalities to keep the development of the nationalist movement in the Ukraine under constant observation. By virtue of that alone, he was more closely connected than others with the Ukrainian Bolshevik Party. That closer connection began as far back as 1917, soon after the October Revolution, and continued for several

years. In the Ukraine, Stalin represented the Russian Central Committee of the Bolsheviks. On the other hand, at certain general Party Congresses he represented the Ukrainian organisations. This was customary at that time. He took part in the conferences of the Ukrainian Communist Party as one of its actual leaders, and since the life of the Ukrainian organisation was to a great extent wasted in constant squabbles, conflicts and factional groupings, Stalin felt like a fish in water in this atmosphere. His Ukrainian period was full of failures and, therefore, remains completely hidden.

From 16th May (the date of the Ninth Ukrainian Conference), at least until 20th May, Stalin participated in various meetings and conferences of the Ukrainian party. At the Ninth Party Conference he wrote articles and speeches (on Lenin's 50th birthday, etc.) By the end of this year (October, November and December) he is busy with all sorts of congresses.

[At the Fourth All-Ukrainian Party Conference in 16th March 1920, Stalin had been instructed by the Central Committee to defend the theses on the Ukrainian question that had been drafted by Trotsky. The theses, which were opposed by the ultra-left Democratic Centralist tendency of Sapronov, were defeated. Trotsky explains the reason for this.] The Central Committee's resolution adopted at the All-Russian Party Conference in December 1919 declared:

In view of the fact that Ukrainian culture ... has for centuries been suppressed by tsarism and the exploiting classes of Russia, the Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party makes it obligatory for all members of the Party to help in every way to remove all obstacles to the free development of the Ukrainian language and culture. Owing to the centuries of oppression, nationalist tendencies are to be found among the backward sections of the Ukrainian masses, and in view of this fact, it is the duty of members of the Party to treat them with the utmost forbearance and discretion, placing before them a comradely explanation of the identity of interests of the toiling masses of the Ukraine and of Russia. Members of the Party ... must actually enforce the right of the toiling masses to study in the Ukrainian language and to use it in all Soviet institutions ... striving ... to render the Ukrainian language a weapon for the Communist education of the toiling masses. Steps must immediately be taken to assure a sufficient number of employees in all Soviet institutions who know the Ukrainian language and to see that in the future all employees should be able to speak Ukrainian.

This should have proved an extremely easy thesis to defend. Even though as a rule Stalin was not a successful debater, considering the relation of forces, his defeat still seems surprising. It is quite possible that, having felt previously

that the mood of the conference was unfavourable to his thesis, Stalin decided to play at the game, he who loses wins, letting it be understood through intermediaries that he was defending the thesis not from his own conviction, but only from a sense of discipline. In this way he could count on killing two birds with one stone – acquiring the sympathy of the Ukrainian delegates and transferring the odium of defeat to me, as the author of the thesis. Such an intrigue was quite in the spirit of the man!

Of extraordinary interest is one of his very first conversations by direct wire on the 30th (17th) November 1917, with the representative of the Ukrainian Rada, Porsh. The Ukrainian Rada was similar to the government of Kerensky. It was supported by the top layer of the petty-bourgeoisie. No doubt it also had the support of the upper bourgeoisie and of the Allies against the Bolsheviks. The Ukrainian Soviets were at the same time falling under the influence of the Bolsheviks and were in direct opposition to the Rada. Needless to say, the Mensheviks and Social Revolutionaries, who denied autonomy to the Ukraine when they were in power, now recognised the central Ukrainian Rada as the sole authority in Ukraine and offered her full support against the Bolsheviks. A clash between the Soviets and the Rada was unavoidable, especially after the October Revolution in Petrograd and Moscow.

In the name of the Rada, Porsh asked what was the attitude of the Petrograd government toward the national question in general and the fate of the Ukraine and its internal regime in particular. Stalin answered with generalities. Stalin said:

The power in the Ukraine, as in other regions, should belong to the entire totality of Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Deputies, including in it also the organisation of the Rada. In that sphere there is a broad field for agreement between the Central Rada and the Soviet of People's Commissars.

This was precisely the combination that the Mensheviks and the S-Rs demanded after the October Revolution, and it was on this question that the negotiations conducted by Kamenev had broken down.

At the direct wire in Kiev, sitting alongside the Ukrainian Minister Porsh, was the Bolshevik Sergei Bakinsky, who likewise demanded answers to questions. They controlled one another. Bakinsky represented the Soviets. He stated that the Central Rada did not deem it possible to transfer power to the Soviets locally. Replying to Bakinsky, Stalin said that if the Central Rada should refuse to convene a Congress of Soviets with the Bolsheviks, then they would “convene it without the Rada.” Further: “The government of the

Soviets must be accepted locally. This is the one revolutionary commandment we cannot repudiate, and we do not understand how the Ukrainian Central Rada can argue against an axiom.”

A quarter of an hour earlier Stalin had declared that it was possible to combine the Soviets with the democratic organisations of the Rada; now he was declaring for a government of the Soviets without any sort of combination as an axiom. How to explain this contradiction? We have no documents at hand. But the mechanics behind the conversation are quite clear. During the negotiations Stalin was sending the tape from the lower storey of the Smolny to the upper storey, to Lenin. Having read Stalin's proposal about combining the Soviets with the organisations of the Rada, Lenin could not have done otherwise than to send him a severe note. Perhaps he even ran downstairs into the telegraph room in order to tell Stalin what he thought of it. Stalin did not argue, and in the second part of his conversation gave an instruction that was directly opposed to the one which he had given in the first part.

GEORGIA

The oppression of nationalities in Transcaucasia [South Caucasus] naturally generated autonomist and even separatist tendencies in the bourgeoisie itself. In Georgia we see the socialist-federalists (their socialism is of the same type as that of the French Radical-Socialists, for example), in Armenia the Dashnaks¹⁶ and in Azerbaijan the Musavatists¹⁷. Through the medium of these three parties the native bourgeoisie seeks to use its opposition to the tsarist bureaucracy in order to subjugate the workers. One can draw an accurate analogy between the aforementioned parties and the national-bourgeois parties of colonial and semi-colonial countries around the world. Not only Bolshevism, but even Menshevism developed in the Caucasus in struggle against the parties of bourgeois nationalism. This did not stop Stalin later from doing everything possible to subjugate the Chinese workers to the Kuomintang, which did

16 The Armenian Revolutionary Federation, Dashnaksutyun, or Dashnak for short, was founded in 1890 and became the ruling party after the First Republic of Armenia was declared in May 1918, even though they had played no role in the Military Council that led the defeat of the Turkish army that month. After the communists took power in Armenia in 1921, the Dashnak party was exiled.

17 Founded in 1911, the Musavat (Equality) Party of Azerbaijan adopted pan-Islamic and pan-Turkic positions and also supported tsarist Russia in the First World War. After the October Revolution, they became the leading party of the newly declared Azerbaijan Democratic Republic. The Bolsheviks took power in April 1920 and the hostile Musavatists continued underground activities until 1923.

not differ in the least from the federalists, Dashnaks and Musavatists of the Caucasus.

The Georgian Social-Democracy not only led the impoverished peasantry of little Georgia, but also aspired, and not without a measure of success, to the leadership of the movement of the revolutionary democracy of the whole of Russia. During the first months of the Revolution, the leading circles of the Georgian intelligentsia regarded Georgia not as a national fatherland but as a Gironde, a kind of Chosen Land in the South, which was called upon to supply leaders to the whole country. But this continued only as long as there was still hope of harnessing the revolution within the framework of bourgeois democracy. When the danger that Bolshevism would win became quite clear, the Georgian Social-Democracy immediately broke its ties with the Russian Compromisers and united with the reactionary elements of Georgia itself. When the Soviets won, the Georgian champions of a single indivisible Russia became equally ardent champions of separatism...

[Lenin was anxious about how things were being handled in Georgia, especially by Stalin's ally Ordzhonikidze. In May 1920, the Tiflis Bolsheviks attempted an uprising in Georgia, hoping for support from the Eleventh Army, then in Baku, but this failed. The Red Army was needed on the Polish Front and its units were withdrawn, as indicated by the telegram below. On 7th May, the Soviet Government signed a treaty with Georgia, recognising its independence. The following exchanges illustrate the point. Lenin wrote to Ordzhonikidze demanding information about Georgia, but received complaints instead.]

To the Revolutionary Council of War of the Caucasian Front. For Ordzhonikidze.
Received your complaining letter. You are mistaken in regarding my inquiry, which is my duty, as lack of confidence. I hope that before a personal meeting between us, you will abandon this unbecoming tone of injury.

No. 96. 3rd April, 1920.

Lenin.

To Baku via Rostov.

To the Member of the Revolutionary Military Council of the Caucasian Front, Ordzhonikidze:

(To be delivered through responsible persons and the delivery reported to Sklyansky of the Revolutionary Military Council of the Republic.)

The Central Committee orders you to remove all units from the territory of Georgia to the border and to refrain from incursion into Georgia. After negotiations with Tiflis, it is clear that peace with Georgia is not excluded.

Immediately report all the most accurate facts about the rebels. By order of the Political Bureau: Lenin. Stalin.

No. 004/109. 5th May 1920.

Concerning the treaty between the Soviet Republic and Georgia, Iremashvili writes:

Stalin was against this treaty. He did not want to allow his homeland to remain outside the Russian state, or that there should be a free government under the control of the hated Mensheviks... His ambition drove him to seize control of Georgia, where a peaceful and reasonable population with icy determination prevented the success of his destructive propaganda. His thirst for revenge against those Menshevik leaders who long ago refused to accept his utopian plans and expelled him from their ranks gave him no rest. Against the will of Lenin, following his own selfish initiative, Stalin carried out the Bolshevisation or Stalinisation of his country...

[Soviet rule in Georgia was eventually established by the Red Army in February-March 1921 in a military intervention that was engineered by Stalin and Ordzhonikidze. Lenin had serious doubts about the Georgian campaign that threatened possible serious international consequences and a conflict with Turkey. Trotsky favoured a period of preparatory work inside Georgia, in order to develop conditions for a successful uprising that would allow the Red Army to come to its aid. Lenin finally agreed to the intervention in Georgia, but later repeatedly insisted on caution and sensitivity in relation to the Georgian people. The Georgian Bolshevik leaders like Filipp Makharadze agreed with Lenin's approach, advocating a flexible attitude toward the Georgian Mensheviks and, above all, respect for Georgian national feelings. But Ordzhonikidze and Stalin rode roughshod over Lenin's policies.]

Does the right of self-determination mean the right to harm one's neighbours with impunity? To this question Lenin replied in the negative. Menshevik Georgia could not hold out. That was clear to all of us. However, there was no unanimity as to the movement and methods of sovietisation. I stood for a certain preparatory period of work inside Georgia, in order to develop the uprising and later come to its aid. I felt that after the peace with Poland and the defeat of Wrangel there was no direct danger from Georgia and the denouement could be postponed. Ordzhonikidze, supported by

Stalin, insisted the Red Army should immediately invade Georgia, where the uprising had presumably ripened. Lenin was inclined to side with the two Georgian members of the Central Committee. The question in the Political Bureau was decided on the 14th February 1921, when I was in the Urals.

[Stalin and Ordzhonikidze ordered the Red Army to invade Georgia on their own initiative. Faced with a *fait accompli* Lenin was obliged to accept this. But he continued to insist on the absolute necessity of treating the Georgian people with tact and respect, as we see from a whole series of telegrams.]

Comrade Sklyansky, immediately in your own presence have this coded with extreme care, after photographing the original send to Smilga, so that he should personally stand at the direct wire and personally decode it. (Tell the Commander in Chief about it without showing it to him.)

Stalin himself will send Ordzhonikidze.

And so, a threefold and manifold carefulness. Under your responsibility.

14th February 1921.

Lenin.

(Written in the hand of Comrade Lenin)

Absolutely Secret.

The Central Committee was inclined to permit the Second Army to support actively the uprising in Georgia and the occupation of Tiflis, while maintaining the international norms, and on condition that all the members of the Second Revolutionary War Council, after seriously considering all the evidence, are certain of success. We warn you that we are sitting without bread, because of the transport, and therefore we will not give you a single train or a single car. We are compelled to obtain from the Caucasus only grain and oil. We demand an immediate reply by direct wire under the signature of all the members of the Second Revolutionary War Council, as well as Smilga, Sytin, Trifonov, Frumkin. Until our reply to the telegrams of all these persons, do not undertake anything decisive.

By order of the Central Committee: Krestinsky. Sklyansky.

[Undated] (written by Lenin; copy of a secret document; typed, signed by Comrade Sklyansky.)

[A letter typed on the stationery of the Commander-in-Chief of all the Armed Forces of the Republic dated Moscow, 17th February 1921, No.

864, superscribed "Secret, Personal", addressed to the Vice-Chairman of the Revolutionary Military Council of the Republic. It bore two inscriptions on the margin – one by Sklyansky, forwarding it to Lenin; the other by Lenin, returning it to Sklyansky.]

Upon the initiative of the command of the Second Army, we are confronted with the accomplished fact of incursion into Georgia: the borders of Georgia were crossed and the Red Army has already clashed with the Army of Georgia...

Commander-in-Chief, S. Kamenev,

Military Commissar of the Staff, [S.] Danilov.

Chief of Staff of the Revolutionary Military Council, [P.] Lebedev.

Yekaterinburg

Secret.

To Moscow, To Sklyansky.

Please write me a brief memorandum on the question of military operations against Georgia, when these operations began, by whose order, and the rest. I need the memorandum for the plenum.

Trotsky

No.16. 21st February 1921.

The military intervention passed off quite successfully and did not provoke any international complications, if one does not take into account the frantic campaign of the bourgeoisie and the Second International. And yet, the method of the sovietisation of Georgia had tremendous significance during the next few years. In regions where the toiling masses prior to the Revolution had managed in most cases to go over to Bolshevism, they accepted subsequent difficulties and sufferings as connected with their own cause. This was not so in the more backward regions, where sovietisation was carried out by the Army. There the toiling masses considered further deprivations a result of the regime imposed from the outside. In Georgia, premature sovietisation strengthened the Mensheviks for a certain period and led to the broad mass insurrection in 1924, when, according to Stalin's own admission, Georgia had to be "re-ploughed" anew.

The almost entirely peasant and petty-bourgeois composition of the Georgian people in itself, of course, created great difficulties. To this we

must add the way in which Georgia was taken by surprise when sovietisation was carried out by military means. Under these conditions, the ruling party needed to be doubly cautious in approaching the Georgian masses. Precisely out of this, sharp disagreements emerged between Lenin, who demanded that Georgia and the Caucasus in general should be treated in a flexible, patient and cautious manner, and Stalin, who believed that once the apparatus of state power was in our hands, the whole matter was settled. Stalin's agent in the Caucasus was Ordzhonikidze, the hot-headed and impatient conqueror of Georgia, who treated any form of resistance as a personal insult.

At the time of Stalin's arrival in Tiflis in July 1921, Iremashvili was in prison. His sister appealed to Stalin on behalf of her brother. Stalin allegedly said: "I am very sorry. My heart bleeds for him, we have the same ideas and yet he stands on the other side of the barricades..." The next day Iremashvili was released along with several other prisoners from the Metekhi fortress "by the direct order of Stalin". Shekhanov, a mutual youthful friend of him and Soso, came to him shortly after his release, and invited him to go to the palace to talk with Stalin. It seems that Iremashvili replied: "Go back to Soso and tell him that I will not shake hands with a traitor to our country..." Unfortunately, the minutes of these negotiations have not been preserved, and nobody is obliged to take this extract from Iremashvili's memoirs too literally.

After the arrest of several of the Mensheviks, "he [Stalin] convened another meeting, this time in my constituency. But this time it was limited to an attempt to speak. He ran into the same honest internal revolt against him as before. After only two days in Tiflis, he again left Georgia and came back to Moscow." In mid-September 1922, sixty-two Georgians, including Iremashvili, were notified in Metekhi fortress that they were going to be deported to Germany. By the 3rd December 1922, they arrived in Berlin.

If in his relations with Moscow, Stalin relied for his authority on his quality as a Georgian, and his acquaintance with local conditions, then with respect to Georgia, he acted as a representative of the central power, independent of local national sympathies and prejudices. He especially wanted to show that he was not a Georgian, but a Bolshevik delegated from Moscow, that he was the Commissar of Nationalities, and that for him Georgia was just one of the nationalities. By rudely ignoring Georgia's national conditions, he was obviously striving to overcome the strong national sentiment of his own youth. That is precisely why Lenin, when he spoke of the extreme non-Russian Russifiers, was referring in equal measure to Stalin and Dzerzhinsky.

9. HOW THE REVOLUTION WAS ARMED

THE BOLSHEVIKS AND OTHER PARTIES¹

The Seventh Congress of the Party, which met from 6th to 8th March 1918, changed the Party's name on Lenin's initiative from the Social-Democratic Labour Party to the Communist Party. Far from spurning the co-operation of revolutionaries of all the currents of Socialism, the Bolsheviks of the heroic era of the revolution eagerly sought it on every occasion and made every possible concession to secure it. {Although we had seized power on our own in October, we demonstrated our willingness to co-operate with other Soviet parties by engaging in negotiations with them. But their demands were fantastically outrageous; they wanted no less than the decapitation of our Party.

{We then formed a coalition government with the only other Soviet party with which co-operation seemed possible at the time, the Party of the Left S-Rs. But the Left S-Rs resigned from the government in protest against the Peace of Brest-Litovsk in March, 1918, and in July they stabbed the Soviet government in the back by confronting it with the *fait accompli*

1 The monopoly of power by one party was never envisaged by Lenin or Trotsky. It was not a principle but something forced on the Bolsheviks by circumstances. The only party banned at first was the fascist Union of the Russian People, generally known as the Black Hundreds who organised bloody pogroms against the Jews. Even the bourgeois Constitutional Democrat Party (known as the Kadets) was not immediately banned. But during the Civil War parties opposed to the Bolsheviks, including elements of the Social-Revolutionary Party, Left Social-Revolutionaries, Mensheviks and anarchists participated in armed uprisings against the Soviet power. These revolts started in 1918 and continued during and after the Civil War.

of the assassination of the German Ambassador Mirbach² and an attempted *coup d'état*. What would the Messieurs Liberals have had us do under the circumstances: let the October Revolution, the country and ourselves be devastated by our treacherous former partners in the coalition government and be trampled under the marching boots of the German Imperial Army?

{Facts are stubborn things. History records that the Party of the Left S-Rs crumbled to dust under the impact of events and many of its bravest members became stalwart Bolsheviks, among them Blumkin³, the assassin of Count von Mirbach. Were the Bolsheviks merely vengeful or were they 'liberal' when they perceived the revolutionary motivation behind Blumkin's stupidly disastrous act of provocation and admitted him to full-fledged membership in the Party and to highly responsible work? (And Blumkin was far from the only one. His case is merely better known than others.) Far from hurting us, the rebellion of the Left S-Rs, which deprived us of an ally and a fellow traveller, strengthened us in the final analysis. It put an end to the defection of the Left Communists. The Party closed its ranks tighter than ever. The influence of Communist cells in the Army and in the Soviet institutions rose tremendously. The policy of the government became considerably firmer.

{The Bolsheviks began the heroic period of revolution by erring on the side of tolerance and forbearance in the treatment of all the non-Bolshevik political parties. From the first days of October the bourgeois, S-R and Menshevik newspapers turned into a synchronised chorus of howling wolves, prowling jackals and baying mad dogs. Only *Novoye Vremya* [The New Times], the shameless organ of blackest tsarist reaction, attempted super-subtle manoeuvring by trying to maintain a 'loyal' tone, wagging its tail. Lenin

2 Wilhelm Graf von Mirbach-Harff (1871-1918) was a German diplomat who participated in the Brest-Litovsk negotiations. In April 1918 he was appointed German ambassador to Russia. Mirbach was assassinated by Yakov Grigoryevich Blumkin on orders from the Central Committee of the Left Socialist-Revolutionaries, who were trying to provoke a war between Russia and Germany and as a signal for the revolt of the Left Socialist-Revolutionaries in Moscow in 1918.

3 Yakov Grigoryevich Blumkin (1898-1929) was a member of the Left S-Rs who carried out the assassination of the German ambassador Mirbach in 1916. He later joined the Communist Party and as a member of the Cheka under Felix Dzerzhinsky, was an active participant in the Civil War when he specialised in the most dangerous missions. A sympathiser with the Left Opposition, he visited Trotsky in exile in Prinkipo, though still an agent of the Soviet secret service. He was betrayed on his return to Moscow and shot on 3rd November 1929. According to Aleksandr Mikhailovich Orlov, who defected from the GPU, as Blumkin stood before the firing squad he shouted, "Long live Trotsky!"

saw through them all, perceiving the danger of tolerating the whole pack of them. "Are we going to let this rabble get away with it?" Vladimir Ilyich demanded on every occasion. "Good lord! What kind of dictatorship do we have!" The newspapers of these hyenas pounced upon the phrase "plunder the plunderers" and made the most of it in editorials, in verse and in special articles. "What aren't they doing with that 'plunder the plunderers!'" Lenin exclaimed once in jocular despair. "Did you really say it?" I asked, "Or is it pure fabrication?" – "Not at all!" Lenin retorted. "I did actually use those words. I said them and forgot all about them. And here they are making a whole programme out of them!" He waved his hand humorously.}

[The rebellion of General Kaledin⁴ was supported by the Kadets, S-Rs and some Mensheviks. The Bolsheviks banned the Kadets but were trying to negotiate with S-Rs and Mensheviks, who were still operating legally. In the end the Bolsheviks were compelled to abandon attempts to invite these groups to join the Government and to meet force with force.] {Yet we did not interfere with public expression of dissenting views, although the Mensheviks deliberately sabotaged vital defence activity through their hold on the railway unions and others elsewhere did likewise – until the assassination of Volodarsky and Uritsky and the attempted murder of Lenin on 30th August, 1918.} [The Revolution was now in extreme danger.] Lenin and Sverdlov sent the following telegram to Trotsky:

CODED TELEGRAM TO SVIYAZHISK, TO TROTSKY:

Treason at the Saratov front, although discovered in time, has nevertheless evoked extremely dangerous vacillations. We deem your immediate journey there absolutely indispensable, because your appearance at the front has influence with the soldiers and with the entire army. We shall discuss your visits to other fronts. Reply indicating the day of your departure. Everything in code. No. 22, 22nd August 1918.

Sverdlov, Lenin.

Nine days later Sverdlov telegraphed:

Come immediately. Ilyich wounded. Unknown how seriously. Complete calm.

4 Alexey Maximovich Kaledin (1861-1918) was a cavalry general. Arrested by Red Guards shortly after the October Revolution, he was released on parole, having given his word not to take up arms against the Revolution. That promise naturally was worthless. He fled to the Don where he led a bloody counter-revolutionary uprising of the Cossacks that marked the start of the Civil War. Lenin frequently protested against such impermissible softness in a time of war.

31st August 1918.

Sverdlov.

{It was in those tragic days that something snapped in the heart of the revolution. It began to lose its “kindness” and forbearance. The sword of the Party received its final tempering. Our resolution increased and, where necessary, ruthlessness also. At the front the Army’s political departments, hand-in-hand with the shock troops and the revolutionary tribunals, put backbone into the immature body of the Army.} The same process was in time reflected behind the lines. When on Kamenev’s initiative the death penalty for soldiers introduced by Kerensky was repealed, there was no end to Lenin’s indignation. “What rubbish!” he raged.

How can you expect to carry out a revolution without executions? Do you really think you can deal with all these enemies when you have disarmed yourself? What other measures of repression are there? Imprisonment? Who attaches any significance to it during a civil war, when each side hopes to win?

Kamenev tried to argue that it was only a matter of repealing the death penalty that Kerensky had intended specifically for deserting soldiers. But Lenin was irreconcilable. It was clear to him that behind this decree was a frivolous attitude toward the unprecedented difficulties we were facing. “It’s a mistake,” he reiterated, “unpardonable weakness, pacifist illusions,” and so on. He proposed an immediate repeal of the decree. It was objected that this would produce an unfavourable impression. Someone suggested that it would be better to resort to executions when it became clear that there was no other way out. Finally, we let the matter rest there.

{At the front we then recaptured Kazan and Simbirsk. Throughout the country we gained a new lease of life. When Sverdlov and I went to visit Lenin in Gorky, where he was convalescing from his wounds, he showered us with detailed inquiries about the organisation of the Army, its morale, the role of the Communists in it, the growth of discipline, interjecting happily, “Now, that’s good, that’s fine! The strengthening of the Army will be immediately reflected throughout the country in the growth of discipline, the growth of a sense of responsibility ...” And indeed, by the autumn the effects of a great change were evident on all sides. The helplessness we had sensed during the spring months was definitely a thing of the past. Something had happened. It was no longer a respite, a breathing space, that had saved the Revolution,

but the imminence of a new and great danger which had opened up in the proletariat hitherto untapped subterranean springs of revolutionary energy.}

A note from Lenin's *Collected Works*, Vol.24, explained:

The party of the Mensheviks and S-Rs [of the Right and Centre] were deprived of legality in the summer of 1918, when their direct participation in the civil war against the Soviet had been exposed. On the 14th June 1918, the All-Russian Central Executive Committee ... passed a decree "to expel from its ranks the representatives of the parties of the S-Rs (of the Right and Centre) and the Mensheviks, and likewise to propose to all the Soviets of Workers, Peasants and Red Army deputies to expel the representatives of these fractions from their midst." (*Izvestiya*, 18th June, 1918.)

Having deprived the parties of the Mensheviks and the S-Rs of Soviet legality, the Bolsheviks were compelled to add the Left S-Rs to the proscribed list, following their treacherous attempted *coup d'état* in July. This decision was reconsidered five months later, after those parties returned to the class struggle line that is axiomatic for those who claim to be Socialists. The petty-bourgeois democracy at that time was under the influence of the German revolution, the liquidation of the Brest Peace, the experience of collaboration with the foreign and Russian bourgeoisie and the lessons of Kolchakovism.

{In October 1918, the Central Committee of the Mensheviks acknowledged in a resolution that the Bolshevik Revolution of October 1917 was "historically necessary" and, repudiating "every kind of political collaboration with classes hostile to the Democracy", refused "to participate in any governmental combinations, even those covered by the democratic flag, that are based on 'general national' coalitions of democracy with the capitalistic bourgeoisie or which depend on foreign imperialism and militarism." In view of these declarations by the Mensheviks, the All-Russian Central Executive Committee voted to consider null and void its resolution of the 14th June 1918 "insofar as it refers to the party of the Mensheviks."

{Several months later the process of 'going left' began among a section of the S-Rs. A conference of the representatives of the various organisations of the S-R parties on the territory of Soviet Russia, which took place on the 8th February 1919 in Petrograd, "resolutely repudiated the attempt to overthrow the Soviet Government by way of armed struggle." As a result, the All-Russian Central Executive Committee decided to annul its decree of the 14th June 1918, "with reference to all groups of the party of the S-Rs which consider as binding upon themselves the above-mentioned resolution of the conference of the parties of the S-Rs."

{In the spring the outbreak of *kulak* uprisings in a number of provinces and the successful advance of Kolchak induced these parties, with the exception of a few of their representatives, to revert to their old positions. In view of this, the Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party of Bolsheviks in May 1919 issued a directive “concerning the arrest of all prominent Mensheviks and S-Rs who were not known to have actively and personally supported the Soviet Government in its struggle against Kolchak.”

{The Stalinist school of falsification is not the only one that flourishes today in the field of Russian history. In fact, it derives quite a lot of its sustenance from certain legends built on ignorance and sentimentality, such as the lurid tales concerning Kronstadt⁵, Makhno⁶ and other episodes of the Revolution. It goes without saying that what the Soviet government did reluctantly at Kronstadt was a tragic necessity. Obviously, the revolutionary government could not have presented on a plate to mutinous sailors the fortress that was protecting Petrograd just because a few dubious anarchists and S-Rs were instigating a handful of reactionary peasants and soldiers to rebellion. Similar considerations were involved in the case of Makhno and other potentially revolutionary elements that were perhaps well-meaning but whose actions were definitely damaging and ill-advised.

{At one time Lenin and I seriously considered allotting certain territories to the anarchists, naturally with the consent of the local population, and letting them carry on their experiment of a stateless social order there. That project died a death whilst still in the discussion stage through no fault of ours. The anarchist movement itself failed to pass the test of actual events on the proving ground of the Russian Revolution. Many of the more able and sane of the anarchists decided that they could serve their cause best by joining the ranks of our Party.}

COUNTER-REVOLUTION

[In March 1918 the capital of the Soviet Republic was transferred from Petrograd to Moscow for protection and better communications. In May of

5 The Kronstadt rebellion was an uprising of soldiers and sailors against the Soviet government in March 1921, during the civil war, which was put down by the Red Army.

6 Nestor Ivanovich Makhno (1888-1934) was a Ukrainian anarchist and the commander of a guerrilla army in Ukraine during the Russian Civil War. Defeated by the Bolsheviks, he died in emigration.

the same year the Czech Legion⁷ rose against the Soviet power and in June captured Samara where a counter-revolutionary government (Komuch) was set up by former members of the Constituent Assembly.

[The imperialists lost no time in attacking Soviet Russia. Japan and the United States launched an offensive in the Far Eastern region and Siberia. The French were to occupy Bessarabia and the Ukraine, while Britain would seize Transcaucasia (Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan) and invade Russia through the southern peninsula. In the north, the British navy, together with the French and American fleets, would occupy the Karelian isthmus and the region of Arkhangelsk. The Soviet Republic was surrounded on all sides.

[In this moment of extreme danger Trotsky was appointed Commissar for War by the Bolshevik government. Although he had never had any military training, he created the Red Army, transforming the shattered remnants of the old tsarist army into a fighting force of five million in just two and a half years. In order to do this he recruited thousands of former officers of the old army, many of them brilliant men like Tukhachevsky whose talents could not be used by the corrupt tsarist regime. Although some of them betrayed and went over to the Whites, there were many more who served the Revolution loyally and gave their lives in its service.

[However, the backbone of the Red Army was the workers in uniform. Trotsky introduced strict discipline and boosted the morale of the soldiers of the Red Army, who were educated in the spirit of proletarian internationalism. He composed a new form of military oath, which bound the soldiers of the Red Army to serve not merely Soviet Russia and the Russian workers, but the proletariat of the whole world:

[1. I, son of working-class parents and a citizen of the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics, assume the title of a soldier in the Army of Workers and Peasants.

[2. Before the workers of the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics and the whole world I pledge myself to bear this title in honour, to learn the art of war

7 The Czech Legion was composed of over 50,000 troops who had volunteered to fight alongside the tsarist imperial army against Austria-Germany. They opposed the Bolshevik revolution and Russia's withdrawal from the war. In May 1918 open warfare commenced between Bolshevik forces and the Legion which swept eastwards along the Trans-Siberian railway; capturing Novonikolayevsk, Penza, Syzran, Tomsk, Omsk, Samara and finally Vladivostok from whence they hoped to embark for France. The Legion was important in safe-guarding the railway and maintaining supplies to the White Army led by Kolchak. The last legionaries left Vladivostok in September 1920.

conscientiously and to cherish as the apple of my eye the property of the people and protect it against all robbery and destruction.

[3. I pledge myself to observe revolutionary discipline strictly and resolutely and to obey without demur all orders given to me by the commanders set over me by the government of workers and peasants.

[4. I pledge myself to abstain from all actions derogatory to the dignity of a citizen of the Soviet Union and to restrain my comrades from such actions, and to direct my every action and thought towards the freeing of all workers.

[5. I pledge myself to respond to the first call from the government of workers and peasants by placing myself at its disposal for the defence of the republic of workers and peasants against any attack and peril from any enemy, and to spare neither my strength nor my life in battle for the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics and for the cause of socialism and the fraternisation of all races.

[6. May the scorn of all be my lot and may the hard hand of the revolutionary law punish me, if ever with evil intent I break this my solemn oath.

[In moments of extreme danger, Trotsky assumed personal command of areas under threat. Travelling from one front to another in his famous armoured train, he delivered speeches inspiring and encouraging the troops to greater efforts, preparing the road to the final victory. The Statutes of the Red Army contained a brief biography of its founder, which ended with these words:

[Comrade Trotsky is the leader and organiser of the Red Army. Standing at the head of the Red Army, Comrade Trotsky is leading it to victory over all the enemies of the Soviet Republic.

[Despite this, the Stalinists subsequently tried to erase the name of Trotsky from the Revolution and Civil War, inventing the legend of an alleged constant struggle between Lenin and Trotsky.]

HOW THE RED ARMY WAS BUILT

The first three years of the Soviet regime were years of civil war. The War Department defined the government's work throughout the entire country. All the other governmental activity was subordinate to it. The next in importance was the Commissariat of Supplies. Industry worked chiefly to supply the Fronts. As a result, all departments and institutions were subjected to the constant ebb and flow of the war effort. All those who were economically active were subject to mobilisation. The war itself was a hard school of governmental discipline, especially for a revolutionary party, which only a

few months earlier had emerged from underground conditions. Members of the Central Committee, People's Commissars and other [leading Bolsheviks] spent most of their time at the front as members of Revolutionary Military Councils or as army commanders.

The Red Army was built under fire. The methods of building it, in which improvisation predominated, were tested immediately in action. In order to solve each new military problem, it was necessary to organise new regiments and divisions from scratch. The army – growing chaotically by leaps and bounds – was built by the worker, who mobilised the peasant and attracted the former tsarist officers to his cause and placed them under his control. This was no easy task. The material conditions were extremely difficult. Industry and transport were completely disorganised, there were no reserve supplies, there was no developing agriculture, and industry was in a continual state of disintegration. Under such conditions, there could be no question of immediate compulsory military service and compulsory mobilisation. Temporarily, at least for the moment, it was necessary to resort to a volunteer system.

The men who had military training were tired of fighting in the trenches. For them the Revolution meant the end of war. It was therefore not a simple matter of mobilising them once again for another war. Certainly, it was easier to mobilise the youth who, lacking experience of war, had to be trained. Unfortunately, the enemy's onslaught did not allow us sufficient time for that. The number of our own commanding officers, connected in one way or another with our Party and unconditionally trustworthy, was very small indeed. They nevertheless played an important political role in developing the Army. But their military vision was limited. When their military knowledge proved insufficient, they often used their political authority unwisely, which proved a hindrance in building the Army.

The Party itself, which nine months previous had emerged from underground and had then been subjected to persecutions by the government, found it very difficult, even after the brilliant victory of October, to accustom itself to the thought of Civil War. To be truthful, huge difficulties accumulated which obstructed the building of the Red Army. At times it seemed that arguments among us were consuming all our energies. Will we or won't we be able to create an army? The fate of the Revolution rested on this simple question.

The transition from the revolutionary struggle against the old state and the creation of a new state, from the destruction of the tsarist army to the

creation of a Red Army, was accompanied by a series of Party crises. At every step the old methods of thought and the old ways came into conflict with the new tasks. The re-arming of the Party was indispensable. Since the Army is the most essential of all state organisations and since the centre of attention during the first years was the defence of the Revolution, it is no wonder that all the discussions, conflicts and groupings inside the Party revolved around the questions of building the Army.

In July, I reported to the Fifth Congress of Soviets [the Congress which ratified the Brest-Litovsk Treaty and the plan for creating the Red Army] that many of the lower commissariats had not yet been organised because of the lack of competent military men. Our objective was to centralise the military-administrative organs for the purpose of mobilisation and the formation of Regular Army units. Each military region was headed by a Revolutionary Military Council of three members: one representative each from the Party and the government, and one military specialist. Since a considerable number of military specialists were appointed simultaneously to the front as well as to regional, provincial, territorial and township war commissariats, we were, of course, to a large extent feeling our way in the dark.

We organised a guiding military committee, but that did not have at its disposal the necessary information for an adequate appraisal of the old generals and officers from the point of view of their loyalty to the new revolutionary regime. Let us not forget that the job was undertaken in the spring of 1918 – that is, a few months after the conquest of power – and that the administrative machine was being built amid the greatest chaos with the aid of the improvisations of chance assistants, who were taken on largely on the basis of accidental recommendations. Indeed, there could have been no other way under the circumstances. The verification of the military specialists, their definitive selection and the like took place gradually.

Pedantry and set patterns were alien to us. We resorted to all sorts of combinations and experiments in our pursuit of success. One army was commanded by a former non-commissioned officer with a general as chief-of-staff. Another army was commanded by a former general with a guerrilla fighter as second in command. One division was commanded by a former private, while a neighbouring division was commanded by a colonel of the General Staff. This 'eclecticism' was forced on us by circumstances.

Repelled by the dilettantism to which all the others were more or less afflicted, I tried in every way to avoid concentrating too many duties and obligations in my hands. Thus for a long time I resisted in every way possible

the unification of the Navy Commissariat with that of the Army. Upon my insistence Shlyapnikov was appointed Commissar for Naval Affairs. Only as a result of the forceful decree of the Central Committee did I consent to take on the responsibility of the People's Commissariat of Naval Affairs.

From the old officer corps there entered into the Red Army, on the one hand, progressive elements who sensed the meaning of the new epoch (they were a small minority); a broad layer of those who were inert and talentless and who joined the Army only because they did not know how to do anything else; and on the other hand active counter-revolutionaries who were waiting for a favourable moment to betray us. From them came no small number of deserters who played an active role in counter-revolutionary uprisings and in the White Army. However, the considerable percentage of educated officers exerted an exceedingly favourable influence on the general level of the command. The amateur commanders learned as they went along, and many of them became first-rate officers.

Originally, those commanders drawn from the ranks of former officers were recruited on a voluntary basis. Only after the passing of the decree of 29th July [1918] was the mobilisation of former officers carried out in Moscow, Petrograd and in some of the major cities. At the side of each of these specialists we placed a commissar. The Communists were the backbone of the army. On 1st October 1919, there were approximately 200,000 Communists in the entire apparatus of the army and navy, both in the rear and at the front. Party members and candidates were organised in 7,000 cells. Formally, the Communists in the army did not have any special rights and privileges, other than those that they used in connection with their military duties.

A commissar, usually a worker-Bolshevik with experience in the World War, was attached to each commander. We were looking forward to preparing a reliable officer corps. Among the officers there were many, perhaps a great majority, who did not know themselves where they stood. The outright reactionaries had fled in the very beginning, the most active of them to the peripheries, which were then building up the White Fronts. The rest hesitated, bided their time, could not make themselves abandon their families, did not know what would become of them, and by inertia found themselves in the military-administrative or commanding apparatuses of the Red Army.

The future behaviour of many of them was determined by the treatment they were accorded. Wise, energetic and tactful commissars – and such were in the minority – won over the officers at once, while the latter, who from force of habit had looked down on the commissars, were amazed by their

resoluteness, daring and political sharpness. Such unity between commanders and commissars often lasted for a long time and was distinguished by great stability. When the commissar was ignorant and boorish and baited the military specialist, thoughtlessly compromising him before the Red Army soldiers, friendship was out of the question, and the hesitating officer was finally pushed toward the enemies of the new regime.

BOLSHEVIKS IN THE FRONT LINE

War, with its pitiless demands, separated the wheat from the chaff within the Party and within the state machine. Very few members of the Central Committee remained in Moscow. There were exceptions. Lenin was at the political centre of things, including the centre of the government; Sverdlov was not only President of the Central Executive Committee of the Soviet but also General Secretary of the Party, even before such a post was formally created; Bukharin, as editor of *Pravda*, remained there. Zinoviev, whom everyone including himself regarded as unsuitable for military affairs, stayed in Petrograd. Kamenev, the head of Moscow, was several times sent to the Front, although he was, by nature, a civilian. In contrast, Lashevich, Smilga, I.N. Smirnov, Sokolnikov and Serebryakov, all leading members of the Central Committee, were almost constantly at the Front.

{The Supreme War Council was created on 4th March, 1918, consisting of myself as Chairman, with Podvoisky, Sklyansky and Danishevsky as members, Bonch-Bruyevich as chief clerk, and a staff of tsarist officers acting as military specialists. When this body was reorganised on 2nd September, 1918, into the Revolutionary Military Council of the Republic, it was made up of myself, as Chairman, Vatzetis was appointed Commander in Chief of the armed forces, with the following as members: Ivan Smirnov, Rosengoltz, Raskolnikov, Sklyansky, Muralov⁸ and Yurenev. When on the 8th July, 1919, it was decided to have a smaller and more compact staff, the Revolutionary Military Council was made up of myself as Chairman, Sklyansky as Vice-Chairman, and Rykov, Smilga, Gusev as members, with S. Kamenev as Commander in Chief. [Below this Council were fourteen different Revolutionary Military Councils in the armies and at the Fronts, with a similar structure.] Like others, Stalin found himself in the Army, which duly found a suitable application for his talents. However, what runs contrary to the facts is the latter day claim of Stalin's pre-

8 Nikolai Ivanovich Muralov (1877-1937) was a Bolshevik revolutionary leader and hero of the Civil War. A member of the Left Opposition, he was arrested, tortured and then executed by Stalin in 1937.

eminent role in the organisation of the Red Army and his conduct in the Civil War. It is sufficient to recall that when the Red Army was being assembled, other men were considered more suitable than Stalin for the task.

{It would carry us too far afield to enumerate on the careers of all these and many another militants in October and during the Civil War. They were in no way inferior to Stalin and many excelled him in those values that revolutionists prized most – political clarity, moral courage, ability as an agitator, propagandist and organiser.} In his early years, Lashevich was a pupil of the Odessa Jewish Trade Union School *Trud* (Labour), and accordingly bore the nickname ‘Misha Trudnik’ (Misha, the Labourer). He began his revolutionary underground work at the age of sixteen, and the rest of his life, as recorded by the chronicler of the Odessa underground, Eugenia Levitskaya, was an uninterrupted succession of prison and exile, broken only by years of soldiering as a conscript in the tsarist army. He worked under insufferably difficult conditions, a brief period of liberty, then again prison and exile – at first in the Vologodak Government, then in the Narym Region, from which he escaped; underground work in Petersburg, then again arrest and return to his former place of exile. Such was the record of the future commander of the Third Army – the typical biography of a professional revolutionist, in no way inferior to the biography of Stalin during the same period.

To be sure, Smilga, the youngest member of the Central Committee, was a far more able revolutionary thinker and organiser than Stalin. During the crucial days of September 1917, Lenin called for immediate steps to organise the insurrection. The Bolshevik Central Committee as a whole was taken by surprise by this bold change of line and rejected his proposal. In this moment it was to Smilga, who through his own initiative had become the powerful President of the Regional Committee of the Soviets in Finland, that Lenin turned for support. In a sort of conspiracy with him Lenin developed a supplementary plan for insurrection, which called for the capture of Petrograd from the outside by the Baltic Fleet and the troops stationed in Finland. Smilga, who was on the extreme Left in the Central Committee, had been ready for insurrection as early as July; Stalin hesitated, and faded out of the picture during the crucial hours, only to reappear on the scene when the victory was an accomplished fact.

Or take Ivan Nikitich Smirnov, whose father was an impoverished peasant turned day labourer and whose mother was a household servant. He had a life full of privations and heroic effort as a railway and factory worker, as a Bolshevik agitator and revolutionary organiser. He began his revolutionary

career at the age of seventeen, in 1898. His record of imprisonments, deportations to Siberia and escapes, repeated time again until he was drafted into the tsarist army in 1916, is more impressive than Stalin's. Moreover, his participation in the Civil War passed from military to secret revolutionary activity, when in December 1919, this member of the Revolutionary Military Council of the Eastern Front was put in charge of organising the Bolshevik forces in the rear of Kolchak's Army. His conspiratorial activity in Siberia was of incalculable value and, after Kolchak's defeat, he became President of the Siberian Revolutionary Committee, where he came to be known as 'the Lenin of Siberia'.

No less impressive than Stalin's was the record of the Old Bolshevik Leonid Petrovich Serebryakov, himself a worker and the son of a metal worker, who during the Revolution of 1905, at the age of fifteen, was already a member of the Lugansk Committee of the Party. After years of imprisonment and deportation, interspersed with escapes, he was already a travelling organiser of the Party while still in his early twenties. After escaping from Narym, he led the Party's May Day demonstration in Moscow in 1914. Again deported and finally drafted as a soldier into the Eighty-Eighth Reserve Infantry Regiment, he continued Bolshevik activity in the tsarist army, and at the outbreak of the Revolution organised the Kostroma Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies. He took a leading part in the October Insurrection, was a member of the presidium of the Moscow Soviet, Secretary of the Moscow District Committee of the Party, member and Secretary of the Central Executive Committee of the Soviet, in 1919-20 one of Stalin's predecessors as Secretary of the Central Committee of the Party, a leading trade union official member of the Revolutionary Military Council of the Southern Front and, finally, Chief of the Political Administration of the Red Army.

Far more original intellectually than Stalin and many other members of the Central Committee was Gregory Yakovlevich Sokolnikov, a doctor's son, who began his revolutionary career at the age of seventeen as organiser of students on behalf of the Moscow Bolshevik Committee for participation in the December general strike and insurrection of 1905, working at the time in contact with mature men like professors Pokrovsky, Rozhkov, Mickiewicz and Zeitlin. He acquired his revolutionary pseudonym the following spring, when he became Party organiser of the Sokolniki District of Moscow (his family name was Brilliant). He was simultaneously a member of the Military Technical Bureau of the Moscow Party Committee, which organised the Bolshevik Armed Guards, an indefatigable agitator and organiser of street

meetings, mass meetings in forests, factories, barracks, a writer of leaflets and proclamations, until finally in the autumn of 1907 he was caught up in a wave of arrests. Kept in solitary confinement for a year and a half because he persistently refused to take his hat off to the prison warden, he was transported in chains to hard labour in Siberia and treated as a common criminal. At his trial he got a life sentence of deportation to Siberia, a far more severe sentence than Stalin ever earned, because notwithstanding his youth (Sokolnikov was hardly twenty at the time) he was regarded as an important revolutionary leader by the tsarist authorities.

During solitary confinement and until his escape from Siberia in 1909, he devoted himself to systematic study in economics, history and philosophy as well as to Marxist polemics and chess, played with fellow inmates by tapping out signals on the prison wall. Upon his escape, he went directly to Paris, where Lenin placed him in charge of a workers' club and made him news editor of the Party newspaper. In Paris, Sokolnikov completed his formal education, graduating from law school and receiving a doctorate in economics. He broke away from Lenin and joined with Bolshevik factions that worked for unification of the Party. An internationalist since the outbreak of the war, he carried on active anti-war work in the Swiss Socialist Party, was a contributor to the Russian daily anti-war newspaper in Paris *Nashe Slovo* and after the outbreak of the Revolution of 1917 returned to Russia in the 'sealed train' with Lenin and Zinoviev.

He was one of the few Old Bolsheviks who supported Lenin's revolutionary position from the very beginning. Immediately upon arrival he was elected to the Central Committee of the Party and became co-editor with Stalin of the Party organ under its various names. A member of the Soviet delegations that negotiated the Brest-Litovsk Treaty, he was chairman of the last delegation and, to the amazement of General von Hoffman and other delegates of the imperialist powers at the peace conference, castigated the German ultimatum in no uncertain terms before he attached his signature to the treaty on behalf of the Soviet Government; during the debates in the Central Committee he had unswervingly supported Lenin's position. He was in charge of the nationalisation and reorganisation of the banks and, in addition to his editorial work on *Pravda*, wrote numerous works on the subject of finance, laying down the theory of Soviet banking and the new role of credit institutions.

Time and again Sokolnikov reported on financial policy at Party Congresses and conferences. He was sent to Berlin in June 1918, as a member of the Soviet Commission to negotiate economic and legal treaties with the

German Government, but was recalled from there to be drafted into military work after failures on the Eastern Front, where he was sent as member of the Military Council of the Second Army, commanded by a former tsarist Colonel, Shorin. He had to cope with a discouraging mixture of chaos, mutiny, treason, *kulak* uprisings and lack of discipline. After two months of hard work, he brought order out of chaos, suppressed the mutinies, weeded out treason, mollified the Volga peasants, defeated the troops of the Constituent Assembly Committee at Kazan and soon the Second Army began to win victories over the Whites. Sokolnikov was then shifted to the Ninth Army, on the Southern Front, where again he displayed remarkable ability as an organiser in coping with chaos and lack of discipline.

Sent out again, as political commissar to the Thirteenth Army, after reporting on the military question to the Eighth Congress of the Party, Sokolnikov rectified the serious errors made by Soviet punitive and food supply expeditions and organised the struggle against the Cossack uprisings in the Don region. Shifted again, this time to the Revolutionary Military Council of the Eighth Army at Voronezh, Sokolnikov participated in the advance on Kharkov. This was the crucial moment when Denikin was advancing on Moscow after capturing Orel and threatening Tula, while Mamontov's cavalry raids were demoralising the Soviet forces in the rear. To save the situation and to strengthen confidence in the army command, Sokolnikov was placed in actual command of the Eighth Army, although he was not a soldier by training.⁹

THE GUERRILLA SPIRIT

[Trotsky's recruitment of many officers of the former tsarist army was bitterly resented by a layer of former NCOs and Communists who later coalesced to form the so-called Military Opposition, the inspirer of which was Stalin. These

9 With the exception of Lashevich, all of the leading Bolsheviks of whom Trotsky writes in this section were later murdered by Stalin in the notorious Purge Trials. Smilga was arrested in 1935 after Kirov's assassination, imprisoned and finally executed in 1938. I.N. Smirnov, a leading member of the Left Opposition, after repeated arrests and deportations, was sentenced to death and executed in 1937. Sokolnikov was arrested and tried at the Trial of the Seventeen and sentenced to ten years of imprisonment. He was murdered in prison in 1939. Serebryakov, who had been a left oppositionist, was arrested in January 1937. During the second Moscow Show Trial he was accused of membership of a "terrorist Trotskyist organisation". Having been forced to make a false confession under torture, he was sentenced to death and shot. Countless other Bolsheviks and heroes of the Civil War suffered the same fate.

discontented elements opposed the employment of former tsarist officers, resisted attempts to create a centralised military command and advocated guerrilla methods. They were cultivated by Stalin in deliberate defiance of the orders of the central headquarters. This opposition was centred on Tsaritsyn and led by Stalin's crony Voroshilov, who was in charge of the Tenth Army on the Southern Front. The Stalinist histories have attempted to glorify Stalin's role in the Civil War through pure invention and the denigration of the 'traitor' Trotsky, who was, in fact, the Commissar of War and head of the Revolutionary Military Council.]

In 1918, 76 percent of the whole command and administration of the Red Army was composed of former officers of the tsarist army and only 12.8 percent consisted of fledgling Red Commanders, who naturally occupied the lower positions. By the end of the Civil War, the commanding staff was made up of workers and peasants without any military education except direct battle experience who had risen from the ranks in the course of the war and those who had gone through short-term Soviet military schools. Lastly, there were cadre officers and wartime officers of the tsarist army. More than forty-three percent of the commanders had no military education, thirteen percent were former non-commissioned officers, ten percent had gone through the courses of the Soviet military school, and thirty-four percent were officers of the tsarist army.

However, there was no lack of attacks and wavering over this issue. An opposition appeared almost from the moment we made our first efforts to pass from disjointed armed detachments to a centralised army. In the end, the majority of the Party and the Central Committee supported the military leadership, which proved its worth by military victory after victory. Barmine describes the situation in the army:

The War College began to talk of the necessity of reorganisation, of injecting new blood into the senior ranks, of preparing for the next war in terms of the military doctrine of Marxism – of which Tukhachevsky had become the unexpected theorist – and the general attitude was made vocal in the simple slogan: "Make room for the young Red generals!"

The political problem was further complicated by the fact that the president of the Revolutionary Military Council, the one member of the Party who had gained the most glory by the recent victories, and was the most admired for the energy that he displayed on the various fronts, Trotsky, seemed to consider that the old professionals had still a part to play in events.

A sort of underground opposition to Trotsky, taking advantage of the state of feeling then prevalent, began to show its head both in the Party and in the Army. Its rallying points were Stalin and Voroshilov. It set its face against the trust reposed in the 'professionals', and also against the policy of centralised command. It had even wrecked certain strategic plans.

The Party enjoyed full freedom of criticism and opposition in the very thick of the Civil War. Even at the Front, at closed Party meetings, the Communist ranks often subjected the policy of the military command to merciless attacks. Punishments at the Front were very stringent – and they included Communists – but they were imposed only for the non-fulfilment of military duties. But it never occurred to anyone in those days to persecute those critical Communists. Within the Central Committee, the opposition was of a very much weaker character, since I enjoyed the support of Lenin. In general, it must be said that whenever Lenin and I were in agreement, and we were on the majority of occasions, the remaining members of the Central Committee invariably supported us, almost always unanimously. The experience of the October Revolution had entered the life of the Party as a potent lesson.

I must add, however, that Lenin's support was not unconditional. Lenin wavered more than once, and in several instances was gravely mistaken. My advantage over him was in the fact that I was travelling uninterrupted along the various fronts and came in contact with a tremendous number of people, from local peasants, prisoners of war and deserters, to the highest Army and Party leaders at the front. This mass of varied impressions was of inestimable value. Lenin never left Moscow, and all the threads were concentrated in his hands. He had to pass judgment on military questions, which were new to all of us, on the basis of information, which for the most part came from the higher-ups of the Party. No one was able to understand individual voices coming from below better than Lenin. But these reached him only on exceptional occasions. In August 1919, when I was at the front near Sviyazhsk, Lenin asked my opinion concerning a proposal introduced by one of the prominent Party members to replace all officers of the General Staff with Communists. I replied sharply in the negative.

Copy

Telegram from Sviyazhsk

23rd August 1918, No. 234

Moscow, Chairman of the Sovnarkom, Lenin.

Yegorov's proposal for a unified command is almost indisputable and in practice was put forward by me more than once. The difficulty lies in the person concerned. I have suggested the candidate you advocate more than once. His candidacy should be judged, not by defeats and the surrender of cities, but by victories. The appointment you are talking about can only take place after the first victory when it would have some justification.

As regards Larin's proposal to replace the General Staff with Communists, in the first place it runs counter to the first proposal you are making, because your candidate is not a Communist and the people he gathers around himself are not Communists but those with military education and military experience. Many of them do betray. But even on the railways we have observed sabotage by engine drivers. However, no one is suggesting that we replace engineers and train drivers with Communists. I consider Larin's proposal to be fundamentally untenable. The conditions are now being created under which we will carry out a very rigorous sorting-out of officers: some will end up in prison camps, while others will be fighting on the Eastern Front. The kind of catastrophic measures proposed by Larin are probably dictated by panic.

Victories at the front will enable us to strengthen the selection that has already begun and provide us with reliable cadres for the General Staff ... Why don't you send Larin here to give us a hand with the work? To sum up: firstly, a unified command is necessary, but it can only be brought about after the first victory and, secondly, we need a drastic reduction of the entire military establishment, throwing the useless ballast overboard, winning over to our side the most hard-working and capable members of the General Staff and those who are loyal to us, and certainly not by replacing them with ignorant individuals with Party cards.

Raskolnikov, an educated sailor and militant revolutionary, believes that even the most modest naval department cannot be established by any other means and requests you to send educated naval officers here, even if they are worse than landlubbers and the percentage of traitors among them is higher. Most of the people who are doing all this shouting and bawling against the employment of officers are either individuals of a panicky disposition, or else those types who stand aloof from any kind of practical military work, or the kind of Party military leaders who are themselves worse than any saboteur – people who do not know how to organise anything but only swagger and bully and mess around, and when they fail, blame it all on the General Staff.

Trotsky.

Lenin did not insist. Meantime, victories alternated with defeats. The victories strengthened confidence in my military policy, while reverses, inevitably multiplying the number of betrayals, would evoke a new wave of criticism and

protests in the Party. In March, 1919, at the evening session of the Council of People's Commissars, in connection with a dispatch concerning the treason of certain Red Army commanders, Lenin wrote me a note: "Hadn't we better kick out all the specialists and appoint Lashevich Commander-in-Chief?" I understood that the opponents of the policy of the War Department, and particularly Stalin, had pressed Lenin with special insistence during the preceding days and had aroused certain doubts in him. I wrote my reply on the reverse side of his query: "Childish!" Apparently the angry retort produced an impression. Lenin appreciated clear-cut formulations. The next day, with the report from the General Staff in my pocket, I walked into Lenin's office in the Kremlin and asked him:

"Do you know how many tsarist officers we have in the Army?"

"No, I don't know," he answered, interested.

"Approximately?"

"I don't know." He categorically refused to guess.

"No less than thirty thousand!" The figure simply astonished him. "Now count up," I insisted, "the percentage of traitors and deserters among them, and you will see that it is not so great. In the meantime, we have built an army out of nothing. This army is growing and getting stronger."

Several days later at a meeting in Petrograd, Lenin drew the balance sheet of his own doubts on the question of military policy:

When recently Comrade Trotsky told me that ... the number of officers runs into several tens of thousands, I got a definite idea of how best to make use of our enemy; how to compel those who are the opponents of Communism to build it; how to build Communism out of the bricks gathered by the capitalists for use against us ... We have no other bricks.

When I was at the head of the War Department in December 1919, I declared: "The institution of commissars is to serve as a scaffolding ... Little by little we shall be able to remove this scaffolding." At that time no one foresaw that twenty years later the institution of commissars would again be revived, but this time for opposite purposes. The commissars of the Revolution were representatives of the victorious proletariat watching over commanders who had come mostly from bourgeois classes; the latter-day commissars were representatives of the bureaucratic caste watching over officers who for the most part had come from the rank-and-file.

Our fronts had a tendency to close into a ring of more than 8,000 kilometres in circumference. Our enemies themselves selected a point of

attack, created a base on the periphery, received aid from abroad and delivered a blow directed towards the centre. The advantage of our situation consisted in that we occupied a central position and acted along internal operational lines. As soon as the enemy selected his direction for the attack, we were able to select our direction for the counter-attack. We were able to move our forces and mass them for thrusts in the most important directions at any given moment. But this advantage was available to us on the sole condition of complete centralisation in management and command.

In order temporarily to sacrifice certain of the more remote or less important sectors for the sake of saving the closer and more important ones, we had to be in a position to issue orders and have them obeyed instead of arguing about them. All of this is too elementary to require explanation here. Failure to understand this was due to those centrifugal tendencies, which were aroused by the Revolution, the provincialism of a vast country made up of isolated communities and the elemental spirit of independence that had not yet had the time or the opportunity to mature. Suffice it to say, that in the beginning, not only provinces, but even region after region had its own Council of People's Commissars with its very own Commissar of War.

The successes of regular organisation prodded these scattered detachments into adapting themselves to certain norms and conditions, consolidating themselves into regiments and divisions. But the spirit and the methods often remained as before. A chief of a division who was unsure of himself was very easygoing with his colonels. Voroshilov, as an army commander, was very indulgent with the chiefs of his divisions. But all the more resentful was their attitude toward the Centre, which was not satisfied with the outward transformation of the guerrilla detachments into regiments and divisions, but insisted on the more fundamental requirements of military organisation.

During the first period, when the Revolution was spreading from the industrial centres toward the periphery, armed fighting detachments of workers, sailors and ex-soldiers were organised to establish the Soviet regime in various localities. These detachments frequently had to wage minor wars. Enjoying as they did the sympathy of the masses, they easily became victorious. They received a certain tempering and their leaders gained a certain authority. There was no proper liaison between these detachments. Their tactics had the character of guerrilla raids, and as far as they went that was sufficient. But with the aid of their foreign protectors, the classes that had been overthrown began to organise armies of their own. Well-armed and well-staffed, they began to take the offensive.

Accustomed to easy victories, the guerrilla detachments immediately revealed their worthlessness; they did not have adequate intelligence sections; there was no liaison between them; nor were they ever able to execute a complex manoeuvre. Hence – at various times, in various parts of the country – guerrillaism met with disaster. It was no easy task to include these separate detachments in a centralised system. The military capabilities of the commanders were not great, and they were hostile to the old officers, partly because they had no political confidence in them and partly to cover up their own lack of confidence. Yet as late as July 1918, at the Fifth Congress of Soviets the Left S-Rs still insisted that we could defend ourselves with guerrilla detachments and had no need of a centralised army. “This is tantamount to being told,” I replied to them, “that we don’t need railways and can get along with horse-drawn carts for transportation.”

THE MILITARY OPPOSITION

The Military Opposition consisted of two groups. There were numerous underground workers who were utterly worn out by prison and exile, and who now could not find a place for themselves in the building of the Army and the state. They held a grudge against the upstarts – and there was no lack of them in responsible posts. But in this opposition there were also very many advanced workers, militant elements with fresh reserves of energy, who trembled with political apprehension when they saw yesterday’s engineers, officers, teachers, professors, once again in commanding positions. This Workers’ Opposition reflected, in the final analysis, a lack of confidence in its own powers and uncertainty that the new class which had come to power would be able to dominate and control the broad circles of the old intelligentsia.

With reference to the Military Opposition, Stalin behaved just as he had with regard to the opposition of Zinoviev and Kamenev during the pre-October period, or with reference to the conciliators of 1912-13. He did not come out openly for them but he supported them against Lenin and tried to find support from them. In an argument with one of Stalin’s guerrilla partisans I wrote in January 1919:

In one of our armies, it was considered a mark of the highest revolutionism not so very long ago to jeer rather vulgarly and stupidly at ‘Military specialists’, i.e., at all who had studied in military schools; yet in this very same army practically no political work was carried on. The attitude there was no less hostile, perhaps even more so, towards Communist Commissars than towards the specialists. Who was sowing this hostility? The worst kind of the new commanders – military know-

nothings, half guerrillas, half Party people who did not want to have anyone around, whether Party workers or serious military workers ... Clinging fiercely to their jobs, they cursed the very mention of military studies ... Finally having gotten into a hopeless mess, many of them simply ended up by rebelling against the Soviet Government.

During the period of the Civil War there were two aspects to military work. One was to select the necessary workers, organise them properly, establish the necessary supervision over the commanding staff, weed out unsuitable elements, exert the necessary pressure and also punish the miscreants. All such activities of the administrative machine suited Stalin's talents to perfection. The craving for lording it over others found here its fullest expression. Here he could answer all objections and arguments with an order that was not subject to appeal. That is why the military front undoubtedly attracted Stalin; the military apparatus is the most absolute of all apparatuses.

In the military the masses are de-personalised and held tightly in the vice of the machine. But there is also another side, which has to do with the necessity of improvising an organised force out of human raw material by appealing to the hearts of the soldiers and the commanders, arousing their better selves, and inspiring them with confidence in the new leadership. Stalin was utterly incapable of this. It is impossible, for example, to imagine Stalin appearing under the open sky before a regiment; for such a task he had absolutely no qualifications. He never addressed the troops with either verbal or written appeals. Evidently he lacked confidence in his own seminarist rhetoric. His influence in those sectors at the front where he worked was not significant, and remained impersonal, bureaucratic and policeman-like.

According to a certain author, Essad Bey:

It is said that Trotsky, in a fit of indignation over some military reverses, was capable of having a whole regiment shot for having failed at a critical moment and that he, in a fit of rage, sentenced masses of people to death. If by any chance, however, his orders had not been carried out immediately, he would cancel them when his fury had subsided and give expression to his wrath in highly polemical and extremely intellectual articles.

Stalin is quite incapable of acting in this way. He would never, for instance, have a whole regiment shot; but he might have the officers responsible for the reverses simply cut to pieces, if necessary, in cold blood and in the presence of all the rank-and-file. When once he has passed sentence, or come to a conclusion, nothing in the world will make him recant or transmute his resolve into an article.

The author then concluded: "Lenin, on his part, knew how to appreciate the 'legendary Georgian' at his true worth." Such are the myths that are woven.

I remember during the Civil War asking a member of the Central Committee, Serebryakov, who at that time was working with Stalin in the Revolutionary Military Council of the Southern Front, whether he could manage without Stalin. Serebryakov replied: "No, I cannot exert pressure like Stalin." The ability to "exert pressure" was the characteristic that Lenin prized so highly in Stalin. The more the state machine needed to "exert pressure" and the further the spirit of the revolution was removed from this machine, the more confident Stalin felt.

If the military front attracted Stalin, it also repelled him. The military machine gave him the right to issue orders. But Stalin was not at the head of that machine. At first he was in charge of only one out of twenty armies; later he was at the head of one of five or six fronts. He established severe discipline, keeping an iron grip on all the levers, and did not tolerate disobedience. At the same time, while at the head of an army, he systematically encouraged others to violate orders from headquarters. Rudeness, violation of orders that were intended to resolve problems – all these were not simply the explosions of temperament but deliberate methods for boosting his own authority.

The military commissars, like most of the other commissars, did not know Stalin, but they had meantime learned to be very attentive to orders from the Centre. Stalin's aim was to show that he was equal in rank to those who signed the orders that came from the Centre. His provocative actions could have had no other aim: had he wanted to change some ill-advised order, all he had to do was to communicate with Moscow by direct wire. Stalin strove to raise his authority at the expense of the Centre's authority.

Formally, a member of the Central Committee had in the army only as much power as was accorded to him by virtue of his military position. But alongside the written law there existed an unwritten unofficial one. Every member of the Central Committee in the army inevitably exerted undue influence by virtue of their political position. Stalin systematically and deliberately took advantage of this position and exploited it. Tensions and conflicts in military affairs between the lower and higher orders are in the nature of things. The army is almost always dissatisfied with the front, and the front is always agitating against the General Staff, especially when things do not go as planned. Stalin repeatedly exploited these frictions and developed them into bitter feuds.

In the tsarist army, in addition to military subordination, there existed an unwritten subordination: the Grand Dukes who held one or other commanding or high administrative posts often ignored their superior officers and introduced chaos in the administration of the Army and Navy. I remember remarking to Lenin that Stalin, taking undue advantage of his position as member of the Central Committee of the Party, was introducing the regime of the Grand Dukes into our army. Ten years later, Voroshilov glibly admitted in his essay *Stalin and the Red Army*, "Stalin was ready to counter any regulation with insubordination." Gamekeepers are recruited from poachers!

While in command of the Southern or South-Western Front, Stalin continually violated orders of the Chief Command. [Voroshilov quotes Nossovich: "A characteristic peculiarity of this drive was the attitude of Stalin to instructions wired from the Centre. When Trotsky, worried because of the destruction of the command administrations formed by him with such difficulty, sent a telegram concerning the necessity of leaving the staff and the war commissariat on the previous footing and giving them a chance to work, Stalin wrote a categorical, most significant inscription on the telegram – 'To be ignored!'"]

Ordinarily, Voroshilov would never have dared to ignore orders from above. But it was another matter when side-by-side by him was a member of the Central Committee who recklessly urged him on, proffering his authority as a protection. Yegorov, a former colonel of the tsarist army, would never have dared to violate a direct order of the general staff. However, under the protection of Stalin, he went chasing after the adventure and glory that was promised to him through the seizure of Lvov. By drawing his collaborators into risky ventures, Stalin welded them together and made them dependent on him. In this way Stalin achieved his immediate objective. Through his single-handed dominance at the Southern Front, he undermined the authority of the commanding bodies, which he indiscriminately regarded as his real enemies. Considerations of the general authority of the high command never restrained him so long as it was a question of his personal position.

On two occasions Stalin was recalled from the front by direct order of the Central Committee. But at each new turn of events he was again sent out into the field. Notwithstanding repeated opportunities, he nevertheless acquired no prestige in the Army. At military headquarters there was indignation about his violation of discipline. In the ranks there was indignation with the boorishness with which he tried to exert pressure. His comrades at the front

preferred not to establish contact with him. However, those military personnel under his command, once having been drawn into the struggle against the Centre, remained closely connected with him in the future. The Tsaritsyn group, Voroshilov, Sergei Minin and Rukhimovich, became the nucleus of the future Stalinist faction.¹⁰ True, in those years this group did not play any political role, but later when unfavourable historical winds began to blow, the Tsaritsynites helped Stalin to hoist his political sails to full effect.

THE LEGEND OF TSARITSYN

The reader who is not acquainted with the actual course of events, and who at the present time cannot gain access to the archives, will find it difficult to imagine the extent to which events have been distorted. By now the whole world has heard about the defence of Tsaritsyn, about Stalin's journey to the Perm front or about the so-called Trade Union Discussion. These episodes loom large today, like peaks in the historical range of events. But these alleged peaks have been artificially created. From the tremendous amount of material with which the archives are overflowing, certain specific episodes have been singled out, and these have been surrounded with imposing historical stage effects.

Subsequent works of official historiography have piled up new exaggerations upon the old exaggerations; to these, outright inventions have been added from time to time. The total effect is the product of stagecraft rather than of historic fact. Almost never does one come across any reference to documents. The press abroad, and even learned historians, have come to regard these fairy tales as original sources. In various countries one may now find specialists in history who know at third hand every detail of Tsaritsyn or the Trade Union Discussion but have practically no conception of events which were immeasurably more important and significant. Falsification in this matter has assumed the dimensions of an avalanche. Yet it is simply astonishing how very few documents and other authentic materials have been published concerning Stalin's activity at the front and generally during the Civil War period.

According to accounts published during the years of the Civil War, the story of Tsaritsyn was one of many completely unconnected with the name of Stalin. His role behind the scenes, which was very short-lived at best, was known to only a small number of people and could be dealt with in very few words. In the anniversary article on the Tenth Army by Ordzhonikidze, an

¹⁰ Tsaritsyn was later renamed Stalingrad.

old crony of Stalin's who was faithful to him to the point of suicide, Stalin is not even mentioned. It was the same with other such articles. The Bolshevik Minin, who was Mayor of Tsaritsyn at the time and subsequently a member of the Tenth Army's Revolutionary Military Council, wrote a heroic drama in 1925 entitled *The Encircled City*, which had so few references to Stalin in connection with the Tsaritsyn events that Minin eventually ended up as 'an enemy of the people'. The pendulum of history had to swing very far before Stalin was raised to the heights of a hero of the Tsaritsyn epic.

For years now it has become a tradition to represent matters as if in the spring of 1918 Tsaritsyn was of great strategic importance and Stalin was sent there to save the military situation. It was nothing of the kind. It was entirely a question of supplies and provisions. At a session of the Council of People's Commissars on 28th May 1918, Lenin discussed with Tsurypa, then in charge of supplies, the extraordinary methods then in fashion for supplying the capitals Moscow and Petrograd as well as the industrial centres with their urgent requirements. At the close of the meeting Lenin wrote to Tsurypa: "This very day get in touch with Trotsky, by telephone, so that by tomorrow he can get everything started."

Further in the same communication, Lenin informed Tsurypa of the Sovnarkom's decision that the People's Commissar of Supplies, Shlyapnikov, was to leave immediately for the Kuban to coordinate the provisioning in the South for the benefit of the industrial regions. Tsurypa replied in part: "Stalin agrees to go to the Northern Caucasus. Do send him. He knows local conditions there and Shlyapnikov will find it useful to have him around." Lenin agreed: "Send them both off today." During the next few days several additional decisions were made about Stalin and Shlyapnikov. Finally, as recorded in Lenin's Miscellany, "Stalin was sent to the Northern Caucasus and to Tsaritsyn as general manager of provisioning in the South of Russia." There was no mention whatever of any military tasks.

The previous reports concerning Tsaritsyn, especially those by Ordzhonikidze made in April and May, were to the effect that train-loads of grain were being held up in Tsaritsyn only for the lack of locomotives. In *The Defence of Tsaritsyn* there is a reference to this and also to the fact that Ordzhonikidze was himself in Tsaritsyn in June 1918.

The first 'military' order signed by Stalin and reproduced in the volume *The Defence of Tsaritsyn* is dated 24th July, that is about a week prior to his report of 4th August. Stalin's name appears together with those of Sergei Minin and Kovalevsky. By 7th September, that is, about a week prior to his first

very brief journey to Moscow, he had signed fifty-five orders. All these orders were routine in character. The most important of them were the mobilisation orders. I have quoted from one or two primarily to indicate what kind of 'discipline' prevailed under the reign of Stalin, Voroshilov and Minin. The secretary of the 'military council' thought nothing of showing up "drunk"! At first he was merely sent home to sleep it off.

STALIN AND TSARITSYN

What happened to Stalin was what happened to droves of other Soviet officials. They were sent to various provinces to mobilise the collection of grain surpluses. Once there, they ran into White resistance, whereupon their provisioning detachments turned into military detachments. Many workers in the Commissariats of Education, of Agriculture or other departments were thus sucked into the maelstrom of the Civil War in outlying regions, and, in a manner of speaking, were obliged to change their various professions for the profession of arms. L.B. Kamenev, who next to Zinoviev was the most unmilitary member of the Central Committee, was sent in April 1919, to the Ukraine to accelerate the movement of supplies toward Moscow. He found that Lugansk had been surrendered and that danger threatened the entire Don Basin; moreover, the situation in the recently won Ukraine soon became increasingly less favourable.

Precisely as Stalin had in Tsaritsyn, Kamenev, whilst in the Ukraine found himself drawn into military operations. Lenin telegraphed to Kamenev:

Absolutely necessary that you personally ... should not only inspect and expedite matters, but that you yourself, should bring the reinforcements to Lugansk and to the entire Don Basin, because otherwise there is no doubt that the catastrophe will be tremendous and almost impossible to resolve; we will most surely perish if we do not completely clear the Don Basin in a short time...

This was Lenin's customary style in those days. On the basis of such quotations it is possible to 'prove' that Lenin regarded the fate of the Russian Revolution dependent on the military leadership of Kamenev in the South. At different times the very unmilitary Kamenev played a very prominent role at various fronts.

Under a totalitarian control of all the means of oral and printed propaganda, it is as possible to create a false reputation for a city as for a man. Nowadays many heroic episodes of the Civil War are forgotten. Cities where Stalin played no part are scarcely remembered, while the very name of

Tsaritsyn has been invested with a mystic significance. It is necessary to bear in mind that our central authority and the presence of the enemy in a large circle made it possible for us to act along internal operational lines. This fact reduced our military strategy to one simple idea: the consecutive liquidation of fronts depending on their relative importance.

In this highly mobile war of manoeuvres, various parts of the country acquired exceptional significance at certain important moments, and later lost such importance. However, the struggle for Tsaritsyn could never have attained the same significance, for example, as the struggle for Kazan, which directly opened the road to Moscow, or the struggle for Oryol, from which there was a short roadway via Tula to Moscow, or the struggle for Petrograd, the loss of which would have been a dire blow in itself and would have also opened the road to Moscow from the north.

Moreover, notwithstanding the assertions of latter-day historians that Tsaritsyn “was the embryo of the War College, where the cadres of the commanders for other numerous fronts were created, commanders who today are at the head of the basic units of the army,” the fact remains that the most talented organisers and army leaders did not come from Tsaritsyn. And I do not mean simply central figures, like Sklyansky, the real Carnot of the Red Army; or Frunze, a very talented military leader who was subsequently placed at the head of the Red Army; or Tukhachevsky, the future re-constructor of the army; or Yegorov, the future Chief-of-Staff; or Yakir or Uborevich, or Kork, but many, many other military leaders. Every one of them was tested and trained in other armies and on other fronts. All of them incidentally had an extremely negative attitude toward Tsaritsyn, its know-nothing smugness, its constant extortions; on their lips the very word ‘Tsaritsynite’ had a derogatory meaning. We had to pay the price for the mistakes of the Tsaritsynites by having to fight not only the Cossacks, but the English and the French.

On 23rd May 1918, Sergo Ordzhonikidze telegraphed Lenin:

The situation here is bad. We need resolute measures ... The local comrades are too flabby. Every desire to help is regarded as interference in local affairs. Six trains of grain ready to move for Moscow are standing at the station and not being sent ... I repeat again that what we need are the most resolute measures...

As a result, Stalin arrived at Tsaritsyn in June 1918, with a detachment of Red Guards, two armoured trains and with unlimited powers, in order to arrange for the provisioning of grain to the hungry political and industrial centres. Soon after his arrival several Cossack regiments surrounded Tsaritsyn.

The Cossack villages of the Don and the Kuban had risen against the Soviet Government. The Volunteer Army of the Whites, which had been meandering aimlessly through the steppes of the Kuban, had grown strong. The Soviet Army of the North Caucasus – the only granary of the Soviet Republic at the time – suffered severely under its blows.

Stalin remained in Tsaritsyn until the latter was surrounded by the Whites in July. Stalin had expected to find little trouble and great glory in forwarding millions of bushels of grain to Moscow and other centres. But notwithstanding his ruthlessness, all he managed to send was a shipment of three barges, referred to in his telegram of 26th June. Had he sent more, then other telegrams to this effect would have been published and commented on long ago. Instead of that, there are inadvertent admissions in his own reports of his failure as the deliverer of grain, culminating on 4th August in his statement that it was useless to expect any further provisions from Tsaritsyn.

Unable to make good on his boastful promise to supply food to the Centre, Stalin turned from the 'food front' to the 'military front'. He became dictator of Tsaritsyn and the North Caucasian Front. As a member of the Revolutionary Military Council of the army with special powers from the Central Committee and the Military Council of the Republic, Stalin enjoyed very wide, almost unlimited powers. He could order local mobilisations, requisition property, militarise factories, arrest people, bring them to trial, appoint and dismiss. Other members of the Army Council – Voroshilov for example – were of too minor importance compared with him to stand in his way.

Stalin exercised authority with a heavy hand. All efforts were concentrated on the task of defence. All the local Party and workers' organisations were taken in hand and supplemented with new forces; the free-booting guerrillas were harnessed. The life of the entire city was suddenly squeezed in the vice of a ruthless dictatorship. Tarasov-Rodionov writes:

On the streets and at crossings were Red Army patrols, and in the middle of the Volga on an anchor, raising its black belly high out of the water, was a large barge, and looking askance as if it was a flabby official in a faded uniform cap whispering anxiously to a little old women on shore: 'There ... is the Cheka!' But that was not the Cheka itself. That was only its floating prison. The Cheka was working in the centre of the city, next to the Army headquarters. It was working full blast. Not a day passed without bringing to light all sorts of conspiracies in what seemed the most reliable and respectable places.

On the 7th July, approximately one month after his arrival in Tsaritsyn, Stalin wrote to Lenin (on the letter is the notation, “Hurrying to the front – writing only on [urgent] business”):

The line south of Tsaritsyn has not yet been re-established. I'm hurrying them up, scolding everyone I should. I hope that soon we shall have it re-established. You may be sure that I will not spare anyone, neither myself nor others. But we will get you the grain. If our military 'specialists' (the cobblers!) were not asleep, the line would not have been broken, and if the line is restored it will not be thanks to the military, but in spite of them.

Stalin was not supposed to stay in Tsaritsyn. He was supposed to organise the dispatch of provisions to Moscow and proceed to the North Caucasus. But within one week of his arrival in Tsaritsyn, that is, on 13th June he wired to Lenin that the situation in Tsaritsyn “has sharply changed, because a detachment of Cossacks has made a sally at a point some forty versts from Tsaritsyn.” From Stalin's telegram of 13th June it is clear that he had been expected by Lenin to go to Novorossiysk and take charge of the crucial developments in connection with the scuttling of the Black Sea Fleet. For at least the next two weeks he was still supposed to go to Novorossiysk. In his speech of 28th June 1918, at the Fourth Conference of the Trade Union and Factory Committees of Moscow, Lenin said:

Comrades! I shall now ... reply to the question about the Black Sea Fleet ... I am going to tell you that it was Comrade Raskolnikov who acted there ... Comrade Raskolnikov will be here himself and will tell you how he had urged us to oversee the destruction of the fleet, rather than let the German troops use it against Novorossiysk ... This was the situation, and the People's Commissars Stalin, Shlyapnikov and Raskolnikov will soon come to Moscow and will tell you everything that happened.

On the 11th July Stalin again telegraphed Lenin:

Matters are complicated by the fact that the staff of the North Caucasian Military Region proved to be utterly unsuited to the conditions of fighting against counter-revolution. It is not only that our 'specialists' are psychologically incapable of resolute struggle with counter-revolution, but also because, being staff men who know only how to draw up blueprints and how to propose plans for reforms, they are utterly indifferent to active operations... and generally feel themselves to be outsiders ... I do not think that I have any right to regard this with indifference, when Kaledin's front has been separated from the provisioning point and the north from the grain region. I will continue to straighten out these and many other

deficiencies wherever I find them; I am undertaking a number of measures and will continue to do so, even if I have to remove all the ranking men and commanders who put up resistance, notwithstanding the difficulties or formalities, which I will break whenever necessary. Let it be understood that I assume full responsibility before all the highest institutions.

The Southern Front was commanded in turn by Sytin, Yegorov, Shorov, and Frunze. Stalin was on the staff of the Southern Front twice during two different periods. On the staff of the Revolutionary Military Council were in turn: Stalin (for the second time), Voroshilov, as assistant to the commander of the front, Minin, Gusev, Lashevich, and Smilga. Voroshilov was appointed assistant commander of the front in order to relieve him from the command of the Tenth Army. The South-Western Front was formed in 1919 by way of separating the western group from the Southern Front. Command of that front was under Yegorov, and Rakovsky and Gusev were part of the front's Revolutionary Military Council.

On the 4th August, Stalin wrote from Tsaritsyn "to Lenin, Trotsky and Tsuryupa":

The situation in the South is not one of the best. The Military Council has received an inheritance of utter disorder, due partly to the inertness of the former military leader, partly to the conspiracy of persons brought by the military leader into the various departments of the military region. We had to begin all over again ... We repealed what I would call the criminal old order, and only after that did our advance begin.

Similar communications were received in those days from all parts of the country, because chaos reigned everywhere. What is surprising are the words about the "heritage of utter disorder". The military regions were established in April and had hardly started working, so that it was rather premature to speak of a "heritage of utter disorder". The task of provisioning on any sort of wide scale proved to be insoluble because of the military situation. Stalin wrote on the 4th August: "Contacts with the South and with its loads of provisions are broken and the Tsaritsyn region itself, which connects the Centre with the Northern Caucasus, is in turn cut off or practically cut off from the Centre."

Stalin explained the cause of the extreme aggravation of the military situation on the one hand by a change on the part of the strong peasant, "who in October had fought for the Soviet government, [but is now] against the Soviet government (he hates with all his heart the grain monopoly, stable

prices, requisitioning, the struggle with the baggers¹¹); on the other hand, by the poor condition of our troops ... In general it must be said," he concluded, "that until we re-establish contact with the Northern Caucasus we must not rely ... upon the Tsaritsyn sector for provisions."

There is additional proof of his failure, if that were needed, in the fact that Moscow and Petrograd were in the grip of hunger during that period. I have adduced only two telegrams – one from Zinoviev and another from Lenin to substantiate this. These are hardly necessary. The picture is clear enough without them.

Stalin's assumption of the functions of manager of all the military forces at the front had been confirmed by Moscow. The telegram from the Revolutionary Military Council of the Republic carried a note to the effect that it was sent with Lenin's agreement. It expressly delegated Stalin "to establish order, unite all detachments into regular formations, and establish proper command, after expelling all insubordinates." Thus the rights given to Stalin were signed [by me], and as far as one is able to judge from the text, were even formulated by me. Our common task at the time was to subordinate the provinces to the Centre, to establish discipline, and to subordinate all sorts of volunteer and guerrilla units to the army and to the front.

Unfortunately, Stalin's activity at Tsaritsyn took an altogether different direction. At the time I did not know that Stalin had inscribed the words "to be disregarded" on one of my telegrams, since he himself never mustered sufficient courage to report the matter to the Centre. My impression was that Stalin did not fight resolutely enough against local self-rule, the local guerrillas and the general insubordination of the local people. I accused him of being too lenient toward the incorrect policy of Voroshilov and others, but it never entered my head that he was the actual instigator of that policy. This became evident somewhat later from his own telegrams and from the admissions of Voroshilov and others.

VOROSHILOV AND THE TSARITSYNITES

The atmosphere of Tsaritsyn, with its administrative anarchy, guerrilla spirit, disrespect for the Centre, absence of administrative order and provocative boorishness toward military specialists, was naturally not conducive to winning the goodwill of the latter and turning them into loyal servants of the new regime. It would be, of course, a mistake to think that Tsaritsyn got along without military specialists. Every one of the improvised commanders

11 Black market retailers, largely of grain.

was in need of an officer who was fully acquainted with the routine of military affairs. But the Tsaritsyn sort of specialist was recruited from the dregs of the officers – drunkards or those who had otherwise lost all semblance of human dignity, worthless men who were ready to crawl on their belly before the new boss, flatter him, refrain from contradicting him in anything, and so on.

That was the sort of specialist I found in Tsaritsyn. Voroshilov's Chief-of-Staff was precisely that type of specialist. The name of this insignificant officer was never mentioned anywhere else and I know nothing of his fate. He was a docile and submissive former captain of the tsarist army, irresistibly addicted to alcoholic beverages. When he looked this Chief-of-Staff in the eyes, the Tenth Army Commander was never obliged to lower his head in embarrassment.

Stalin spent several months at Tsaritsyn. His underhanded work against me, which even then made up an essential part of his activity, went hand-in-hand with the vulgar oppositionism of Voroshilov who was his closest associate. However, Stalin conducted himself in such a way that at any moment he would be able to dodge out of sight, keeping his hands clean. Lenin knew Stalin better than I and apparently suspected that the stubbornness of the Tsaritsynites could be explained by Stalin's behind-the-scenes activity. I made up my mind to put things right at Tsaritsyn. Following a new clash with the command there I decided upon the recall of Stalin. This was accomplished through the good offices of Sverdlov, who went himself on a special train to bring Stalin back. Lenin wanted to reduce the conflict to a minimum, and was of course right in that respect.

In order to promote personnel from the ranks who stood closer to the Soviet regime a special mobilisation was initiated of former tsarist non-commissioned officers. Most of them had been promoted to the rank of NCOs in the last period of the war and had no serious military value. But the old non-commissioned officers who were well acquainted with the army, especially the artillery and cavalry, were often far superior to the officers under whose command they served. From among them came a number of exceptional military commanders, the most famous of whom was the former Cavalry Sergeant-Major, Simeon Budyonny¹². But they, too, were none too reliable as a class.

12 Semyon Mikhailovich Budyonny (1883-1973) was a red Cossack who organised a Red Cavalry force in the Don region, which eventually became the 1st Cavalry Army. This Army played an important role in driving the White General Anton Denikin back from

These elements were recruited in tsarist times from those who were more competent, more cultured and more accustomed to command, rather than those who passively obey. Naturally, the non-commissioned officers were drawn almost exclusively from the sons of large farmers, small landowners, sons of the urban bourgeoisie, accountants, petty bureaucrats or rich peasants, especially in the cavalry. This breed of non-commissioned officers were very willing to accept positions of command, but were not at all inclined to take orders or tolerate superior officers, and they were equally disinclined to submit to the discipline of the Communist Party or accept its goals, especially in the field of the agrarian question.

Purchases at fixed prices, not to speak of the requisition of grain from the peasants, was met by them with outraged hostility. To that class belonged the cavalryman, Dumenko¹³, the corps commander at Tsaritsyn and Budyonny's immediate superior (Budyonny at that time commanded a division). Dumenko was more gifted than Budyonny. But he ended up mutinying. He killed all the Communists in his corps, attempted to join the forces of Denikin, but was captured and executed. Budyonny and the commanders close to him likewise experienced a period of wavering. One of the Tsaritsyn commanders of a brigade, a subordinate of Budyonny's, mutinied, and many of the cavalrymen joined the Greens¹⁴. The treason of the former tsarist officer, Nossovich, who occupied a purely bureaucratic administrative post, produced of course less harm than Dumenko's betrayal. But since the Military Opposition – the breeding ground for the Stalin faction – depended on elements of the Dumenko type at the front, this mutiny is not mentioned at all nowadays.

The Tsaritsyn oppositionists were a curious lot. The man who most detested the military specialists was Voroshilov – “the locksmith of Lugansk”, as he came to be called by latter-day chroniclers – a hearty and impudent

Moscow. Budyonny joined the Bolshevik Party in 1919, and became a close collaborator of Stalin and Voroshilov.

13 Boris Mokeyevich Dumenko (1888-1920) joined the cavalry of the imperial army and by 1917 had risen to the rank of sergeant-major. In the spring of 1918 he organised a detachment of partisan cavalry, joined the Bolshevik Party in 1919 and soon was in command of a cavalry regiment. After being seriously wounded in May 1919 he returned to active service in November to take command of the Combined Cavalry Corps. But he ended up mutinying, killing all the Communists in his corps. Attempted to join forces with Denikin, but was captured and executed.

14 Peasant guerrilla forces which fought both the White Army and the Red Army during the civil war, but allied with the Reds to defeat General Denikin's army in the South. The Greens' struggle ended in 1921 with the introduction of the New Economic Policy.

fellow, not overly intellectual but shrewd and unscrupulous. He never could make head or tail of military theory, but he was an accomplished bully and had no compunction about utilising the ideas of brighter subordinates, and no false modesty about taking full credit for them. His intellectual naiveté in both military theory and Marxism was to be amply demonstrated in 1921, when, following uncritically the lead of some obscure ultra-Leftist, he argued that aggressiveness and the tactic of the offensive was a consequence of “the class nature of the Red Army”, at the same time offering “proof” of the necessity of the offensive in the form of quotations from the French military regulations of 1921.

[Voroshilov was typical of the kind of former tsarist NCOs described earlier. Arrogant and narrow-minded, he created a factional base in Tsaritsyn, where he linked up with Stalin to form the so-called Military Opposition.] According to the biographer, N.N. Kharitonov:

In April 1918, Voroshilov called together the commanders of the various detachments at Station Rodakova... and assumed command of the Red Forces acting on that sector... They had to retreat fighting... the danger of being surrounded, which soon arose, forced Comrade Voroshilov to begin to retreat to the Volga, toward Tsaritsyn along the only road free of the Germans. It was not an easy expedition... This march from Lugansk to Tsaritsyn lasted for three months. Voroshilov brought to Tsaritsyn 15,000 guerrilla fighters. From them and similar other guerrilla detachments that converged upon Tsaritsyn was made up the regular Tenth Soviet Army. The worker-Bolshevik Voroshilov became its commander.

From the beginning to the end the Tsaritsyn episode is a series of “coincidences”. Voroshilov’s arrival in Tsaritsyn was not due to any previously worked out plan or any consideration of the strategic importance of the latter. It was rather due to necessity. Voroshilov retreated to Tsaritsyn because that was the only avenue open to him. He had nowhere else to go. What the Tsaritsynites are will be clear from reading the Okulov report, which consists throughout of factual material and the reports of commissars, which describe the demoralisation of the Tsaritsyn army by Voroshilov assisted by Stalin. I considered Stalin’s patronising of the Tsaritsynian tendency a most dangerous ulcer, worse than any treason and betrayal by the military specialists.

“Trotsky,” Tarasov-Rodionov wrote later, “spoke at the Revolutionary Military Council haughtily and irritably. He let loose a hailstorm of stinging rebukes for the tremendous waste of material ... Trotsky was not interested in explanations ...”

Life at the staff headquarters was far from idyllic. Voroshilov and Budyonny each defended his own patch. On 1st November I telegraphed to Sverdlov and Lenin from Tsaritsyn:

The situation with the Tenth Army is as follows: There are many forces here but no operational leadership. The staff of the Southern Front and Vatzetis is inclined to favour changing the commander. I would consider it possible to keep Voroshilov by giving him an experienced operational staff. He objects to that, but I don't doubt that the question could be settled ... The only serious obstacle is Minin, who carries on an extremely harmful policy. I insist in every way on his transfer. When will the medals be ready?

Voroshilov's "loyal right hand" was Shchadenko, the political commissar of the Tenth Army, a tailor by trade, whom later chroniclers were to immortalise thus: "Angrily frowning under his eagle-like eyebrows, his belligerent eyes squinting, he rushed around the front, burning with the effort to be Klim's [Voroshilov's] loyal right hand." Equally zealous but quite different from both was Sergei Minin, who was the head of this army. He was a curious mixture of poet and demagogue who had given himself heart and soul to the cause and suffered from a blinding phobia of all tsarist officers. Popular among the workers of Tsaritsyn since his participation as a young student in the Revolution of 1905, Tsaritsyn was proud of him as its leading and most impassioned orator. He was by far the most honest of the lot, but also possibly the most unreasonable. Sincere in his intransigence, he contributed his full share of earnest mischief to the aggravation of the military situation in Tsaritsyn.

Then there was the engineer Rukhimovich, former 'People's Commissar of War of the Donetsk-Krivorog Republic' – one of the Red republics that sprang up like mushrooms in the early days of the Revolution – who had given Voroshilov his first mandate to organise a proletarian army. Placed in charge of supplies, the provincial-minded Rukhimovich could conceive of no needs except the needs of the Tenth Army. No other army swallowed as many rifles and bullets, and at the first refusal he yelled about the treason of the specialists in Moscow. He, like the youngest member of the Council of War, Valerii Mezhlauk, subsequently rose to the heights of the secondary ranks of the Stalinist hierarchy only to disappear from view [for reasons unknown. There were] Zhloba, Kharchenko, Gorodovik, Savitsky, Parhomenko and others, whose contributions to the Red Army and the Soviet State did not rank above that of hundreds of thousands of others, but whose names were

saved from utter oblivion only because of their early association with Stalin at Tsaritsyn.

STALIN RECALLED

At a time when the Red Army had already managed to win big victories on the Eastern Front, almost completely clearing the Volga, matters continued to go badly in the South, where everything was in chaos because orders were not carried out. On the 5th October, at Kozlov, I issued an order concerning the unification of all armies and groups of the Southern Front under the command of the Revolutionary Military Council of the Southern Front, consisting of the former General Sytin and three Bolsheviks – Shlyapnikov, Mekhonoshin and Lazimir: “All orders and instructions of the Council are subject to unconditional and immediate execution.” The order threatened the insubordinates with dire punishments.

Then I telegraphed Lenin:

I insist categorically on Stalin’s recall. Things are going badly at the Tsaritsyn Front in spite of superabundant forces. Voroshilov is capable of commanding a regiment, not an army of 50,000. However, I shall leave him in command of the Tenth Army at Tsaritsyn, provided he reports to the Commander of the Army of the South, Sytin. To date, Tsaritsyn has not even sent reports of operations to Kozlov. I have required reconnaissance and operational reports to be sent twice daily. If that is not done by tomorrow, I shall send Voroshilov and Minin for court martial and shall publish the fact in an Army Order. According to the statutes of the Revolutionary Military Council of the Republic, Stalin and Minin, as long as they remain in Tsaritsyn, are nothing more than members of the Revolutionary Military Council of the Tenth Army. We have only a short time left for going onto the offensive before the autumn mud sets in, when the local roads will be impassable either for infantry or mounted troops. No serious action will be possible without coordination with Tsaritsyn. There is no time to lose on diplomatic negotiations. Tsaritsyn must either submit or take the consequences. We have a colossal superiority of forces, but there is utter anarchy at the top. I can put a stop to it in twenty-four hours, provided I have your firm and clear-cut support. At all events, this is the only course I can see.

This was followed the next day by this direct wire to Lenin:

I have received the following telegram: “Stalin’s military order No.118 must be cancelled. I have issued full instructions to the Commander of the Southern Front, Sytin. Stalin’s activities undermine all my plans ... Vatzetis, Commander-in-Chief; Danishevsky, member of the Revolutionary Council of War.”

Stalin was immediately recalled from Tsaritsyn in October. This is what he wrote in *Pravda* (30th October 1918) about the Southern Front:

The point of the greatest attack by the enemy was Tsaritsyn. That was understandable, because the capture of Tsaritsyn and the interruption of communications with the South would have assured the achievement of all the enemy's goals. It would have united the Don counter-revolutionaries with the upper layer of the Cossacks of the Astrakhan and Ural Armies, creating a united front of the counter-revolution from the Don to the Czechoslovaks. It would have secured the South and the Caspian for the counter-revolutionaries, internally and externally. It would have left the Soviet troops of the Northern Caucasus in a state of helplessness.

Was Stalin "confessing" that he was guilty of having aggravated the situation by his intrigues and insubordination? Hardly. However, on his way back to Moscow from Tsaritsyn, Sverdlov inquired cautiously about my intentions and then proposed to me that I have a talk with Stalin, who, as it turned out, was on his train:

"Do you really want to dismiss all of them?" Stalin asked me in a tone of exaggerated subservience. "They're fine boys."

"Those fine boys will ruin the Revolution, which can't wait for them to grow up," I answered him. "All I want is to draw Tsaritsyn back into Soviet Russia."

Thereafter, whenever I had occasion to tread on the toes of personal predilections, friendships or vanities, Stalin carefully gathered up all the people whose toes had been stepped on. He had all the time in the world for that, since it furthered his personal ends. The leading spirits of Tsaritsyn became from that time on his principal tools. As soon as Lenin fell ill, Stalin through his henchmen had Tsaritsyn renamed Stalingrad.

After inspecting all the sectors of the Tsaritsyn Army, in a special order of 4th November 1918, I recognised the services of many of the units and their commanders, at the same time noting that parts of the army consisted of units calling themselves divisions which actually were not such in substance; that "political work in certain units has not even been started yet"; that "the disposition of military reserves does not always proceed with military caution"; that "in certain instances the commander, not wishing to carry out an operational order, would pass it on for the consideration of a meeting ..." and the like. "As citizens," the order stated, "the soldiers are free during their leisure hours to hold meetings on any question. As soldiers, they must carry out military orders without any objections."

After visiting the Southern Front, including Tsaritsyn, I reported to the Sixth Congress of Soviets on the 9th November 1918:

Not all Soviet workers have understood that our administration has been centralised and that all orders issued from above must be final ... We shall be pitiless with those Soviet workers who have not yet understood this; we will remove them, cast them out of our ranks, pull them up with repressions.

This was aimed at Stalin to a much greater extent than at Voroshilov, against whom these words were ostensibly directed at the time.

Stalin was present at the Congress and kept silent. He was silent at the session of the Politburo. He could not openly defend his behaviour. All the more did he store up his anger. It was in those days – recalled from Tsaritsyn, with deep anger and a thirst of vengeance in his heart – that he wrote his piece on the ‘First Anniversary of the Revolution’. The purpose of the article was to strike a blow at my prestige, turning against me the authority of the Central Committee headed by Lenin. In that anniversary article, dictated by suppressed anger, Stalin was nevertheless forced to write:

All the work of practical organisation of the insurrection was conducted under the immediate leadership of the President of the Petrograd Soviet, Comrade Trotsky. It is possible to declare with certainty that the swift passing of the garrison to the side of the Soviet, and the bold execution of the work of the Revolutionary Military Council, the Party owes principally and first of all to Comrade Trotsky.

On the 30th November, acting on the proposal of the Commissariat of War to organise a Council of Defence, the All-Russian Central Executive Committee, which had already proclaimed the Soviet Republic to be an armed camp, passed a resolution calling for the convening of the Council of Defence, composed of Lenin, myself, Krassin, the Commissar of Ways of Communication, the Commissar of Supplies and the Chairman of the Presidium of the Central Executive Committee, Sverdlov. By agreement with Lenin I proposed that Stalin be also included. Lenin wanted to give Stalin some satisfaction for removing him from the Army in Tsaritsyn; I wanted to give Stalin the chance to formulate openly his criticisms and proposals, without wetting the powder in the War Department.

The first session, which outlined our tasks in a general way, was held in the daytime on the 1st December. From Lenin’s notes at the session, it appears that Stalin spoke six times, Krassin nine times, Sklyansky nine times, Lenin eight times. Each orator was allowed no more than two minutes. The leadership in

the work of the Council of Defence, not only on major questions, but even on details, was concentrated entirely in the hands of Lenin. Stalin was assigned the task of formulating a thesis on the struggle against regionalism and another on fighting red tape. There is no evidence that either thesis was ever composed. Moreover, in the interest of expediting the work, it was decided, "the decrees of the commission appointed by the Council of Defence, signed by Lenin, Stalin and the representatives of the appropriate department, will have the force of a decree by the Council of Defence." But as far as Stalin was concerned the whole matter boiled down to another title instead of actual work.

[Notwithstanding these concessions, Stalin continued to support the Tsaritsyn opposition secretly, nullifying the efforts of the War Department to enforce order and discipline in that sector. Trotsky felt it necessary to send a telegram to Lenin from Kursk on 14th December:]

To the Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars, Lenin. The question of recalling Okulov cannot be decided by itself. Okulov was appointed as a counterbalance to Voroshilov, as a guarantee that military orders would be carried out. It is impossible to let Voroshilov remain after he has nullified all attempts at compromise. Tsaritsyn must have a new Revolutionary Military Council with a new commander and Voroshilov must go to the Ukraine.

Chairman of the Revolutionary Council of War of the Republic, Trotsky.

[Voroshilov was then transferred to the Ukraine and the military situation at Tsaritsyn soon improved. But this was not the end of the matter. Voroshilov's activities in Ukraine soon became intolerable so that on the 10th January 1919, it was necessary for Trotsky to telegraph:]

To Moscow.

To the Chairman of the Central Executive Committee, Sverdlov.

... I must state categorically that the Tsaritsyn policy, which has led to the complete disintegration of the Tsaritsyn army, cannot be tolerated in the Ukraine ... Okulov is leaving for Moscow. I propose that you and Comrade Lenin give the utmost attention to his report on Voroshilov's work. The line of Stalin, Voroshilov and Rukhimovich means the ruin of everything we are doing.

Chairman of the Revolutionary Council of War of the Republic, Trotsky

[In order to avoid a damaging conflict in the leadership, Lenin attempted to soothe relations between Trotsky and Stalin.] While Stalin with the aid of

Dzerzhinsky was conniving in Vyatka, Lenin insisted that it was necessary for me to conclude a compromise with Stalin:

Stalin would very much like to work on the Southern Front ... Stalin hopes that on the job he will succeed in convincing us of the correctness of his views ... In informing you, Lev Davidovich, about all these declarations of Stalin, I beg you to give them your most thoughtful consideration and to answer me: in the first place, whether you agree to let Stalin explain the matter to you in person, for which he is willing to report to you and, in the second place, whether you deem it possible on the basis of certain concrete conditions to adjust the previous conflict and to arrange to work together, which is what Stalin desires so very much. As for me, I think that it is necessary to make every effort for joint work with Stalin.

Lenin.

Lenin's letter was obviously written under the influence of Stalin's insistence. Stalin was seeking agreement, conciliation, further military work, even at the cost of a temporary and insincere capitulation. The front attracted him, because here for the first time he could work with the most finished of all the administrative machines, the military machine. As a member of the Revolutionary Military Council who was at the same time a member of the Central Committee of the Party, he was inevitably the dominant figure in every Military Council, in every army, on every front. When others hesitated, he decided. He could command, and each command was followed by a practically automatic execution of his order – in contrast to the collegium of the Commissariat of Nationalities, where he had to hide from opponents in the commandant's kitchen.

On the 11th January, I replied by direct wire to Lenin:

Compromise is of course necessary, but not a rotten one. The fact of the matter is that all the Tsaritsynites have now congregated at Kharkov... Rukhimovich is only another name for Voroshilov. Within a month we shall again have to choke on the Tsaritsyn mess, only this time we will not have the Cossacks against us but the English and French. Nor is Rukhimovich the only one. They firmly cling to each other, elevating ignorance to a principle. Voroshilov plus the Ukrainian guerrillas plus the low cultural level of the population plus demagogy – we cannot tolerate that on any account. Let them appoint Artem, but not Voroshilov or Rukhimovich ... Once again I urge a careful reading of Okulov's report on the Tsaritsyn Army and how Voroshilov demoralised it with Stalin's connivance.

My reply to Lenin about the need for a compromise, but not a rotten one, was repeated four or five years later, when Lenin repeated my formula in the form

of a warning against Stalin. This fact has an exceedingly great significance in the estimation of the relation between these three persons.

Concerning this first period of Stalin's work at the Southern Front no materials have been published. The point is that this period did not last very long and ended up quite sadly for him. It is a pity that I cannot rely on any material to supplement my memory of this episode, for it left no traces whatever in my personal archives. The official archives have naturally remained in the Commissariat of War. On the Revolutionary Military Council of the Southern Front, with Yegorov in command, were Stalin and Berzin, who subsequently devoted himself entirely to military work and played a prominent if not a leading role in the military operations of Republican Spain [in 1936].

Once, at night – I regret I cannot be precise with regard to the exact date – Berzin called me to the direct wire and asked me whether he was “obliged to sign an operative order by the Commander of the Front Yegorov.” According to the rules, the signature of the commissar or political member of the Military Council on an operative order meant merely that the order did not have any hidden counter-revolutionary significance. As for the operative significance of the order, that was entirely the responsibility of the Commander. In this particular case the order of the Front Commander was merely a matter of passing on an operative order of the Commander-in-Chief, a transmission and interpretation of that Army order to the army under his command. Stalin declared that Yegorov's order was not valid and that he would not sign it. In view of the refusal of a member of the Central Committee to sign the order, Berzin did not dare to place his own signature on it. At the same time, an operative order signed only by the officer in command had no actual force.

What argument did Stalin advance against an order, which, as far as I remember, was of secondary importance and the nature of which I cannot now recall? No argument at all. He simply would not sign it. It would have been quite possible for him to have called me to the direct wire and explained his reasons to me, or, if he preferred, to have called Lenin to the direct wire. The Commander of the Front, if he were in disagreement with Stalin, by the same rule could have expressed his own considerations to the Commander-in-Chief or to me. Stalin's objection would have been immediately discussed in the Political Bureau, and the Commander-in-Chief would have been requested to submit supplementary explanations. But just as in Tsaritsyn, Stalin preferred a different form of action: “I won't sign it,” he declared, in order to show off his importance to his collaborators and to his subordinates. I replied to Berzin: “The order of the Commander-in-Chief certified by a

commissar is obligatory for you. Sign it immediately; otherwise, you will be turned over to the Tribunal.” Berzin immediately attached his signature to the commander’s order.

The question was referred to the Political Bureau. Lenin said, not without embarrassment: “What can we do about it? Stalin has again been caught out red handed!” It was decided to recall Stalin from the Southern Front. This was his second important misfire. I remember he came back sheepish but seemingly not resentful. On the contrary, he even said that he had achieved his purpose that he had wanted to call attention to improper relations between the Commander-in-Chief and the commander at the front, that although the order of the Commander-in-Chief contained nothing objectionable, it was issued without previously sounding out the opinion of the Southern Front, which was not right. That, he said, was what he was really protesting against. He felt quite satisfied with himself. My impression was that he had bitten off more than he could chew. Caught off balance by a chance swaggering remark, he had been unable to extricate himself. At any rate, it was perfectly obvious that he was doing everything possible to cover up the traces and pretend that nothing had happened. [It was then proposed to move Stalin to the South-western Front. Stalin replied:]

4th February, 1919.

To the Central Committee of the Party.

To Comrades Lenin and Trotsky.

... My own profound conviction is: no change in the situation can possibly be effected by my going there... Stalin.

THE EIGHTH CONGRESS AND THE MILITARY QUESTION

[The Eastern Front was of great importance and, at certain moments, the decisive front for the Soviet Republic. In the beginning of March 1919, the White general Kolchak brought up freshly-formed reserves from out of the depths of Siberia and attacked with a heavy mass of men, forcing the Red Army to fall back. The situation was critical. Kolchak’s troops drew near to the middle reaches of the Volga, where they were only seventy or eighty versts from Kazan. The stock exchanges of the world were already naming Kolchak as the crowned ruler of Russia. It was then that the first great effort was made by the Soviet power, by the Party and the workers’ organisations. Within a short time, fresh units were mobilised, formed, armed and trained,

and thousands of Communists poured into the armies of the Eastern front. These dramatic events occurred while the Eighth Congress of the Party was in session, as Trotsky recalls.]

The Eighth Congress of the Party was in session from the 18th to the 23rd March 1919, in Moscow. At the Congress Lenin said: "Without the heritage of capitalist culture we cannot build socialism. There is nothing from which we can build Communism, except with what capitalism has left us." On the very eve of the Congress we received a heavy blow from the Whites near Ufa. Regardless of the Congress, I decided, to go immediately to the Eastern Front. After suggesting the immediate return to the front of all the military delegates, I made ready to go to Ufa. A section of the delegates was dissatisfied; they had come to the capital for the few days' furlough and did not want to leave it.

Someone started the rumour that I wanted to avoid debates on military policy. That lie took me completely by surprise. I introduced a proposal in the Central Committee on 16th March 1919, to repeal the directive about the immediate return of the military delegates, assigned the defence of the military policy to Sokolnikov and immediately went east. The discussion of the military question at the Eighth Congress, notwithstanding the presence of quite a significant opposition, did not deter me; the situation at the front seemed to me much more important than electioneering at the Congress, especially since I had no doubt that the policy I considered the only correct one was bound to win on its own merits.

The Central Committee approved the thesis I had previously introduced and designated Sokolnikov its official reporter. The Opposition's report was to be presented by I.N. Smirnov, an Old Bolshevik and a former artillery officer during the World War. Smirnov was one of the leaders of the Left Communists, who were determined opponents of the Brest-Litovsk Peace and had demanded the launching of a guerrilla war against the German regular army. This continued to be the basis of their platform even as late as 1919, although, true enough, they had somewhat cooled off in the interim. The formation of a centralised and regular army was impossible without military specialists and without the replacement of improvisation by proper and systematic leadership. The Left Communists, having managed to cool down to some extent, tried to adapt their previous views to the growth of the state machine and the needs of the regular army. But they retreated step by step, utilising all they could out of their old baggage, and camouflaging their essentially guerrilla tendencies with new formulas.

A minor but very characteristic episode took place at the beginning of the Congress with regard to the composition of the presidium. It indicated to a certain extent the nature of the Congress, if only in its preliminary stage. On the order of the day was the troublesome military question. It was no secret to Lenin that behind the scenes Stalin was in fact at the head of the opposition on that issue. It appeared he had been hard at work striving to pack the Congress with his partisans, and lobbying among the delegates. Lenin was aware of this.

Lenin had come to an agreement with the Petrograd delegation concerning the composition of the presidium. The oppositionists proposed several supplementary candidatures under various pretexts, naming not only oppositionists but others as well. For example, they proposed the candidature of Sokolnikov, the chief spokesman of the official point of view. However, Bukharin, Stasova, Oborin, Rykov and Sokolnikov declined, honouring as a personal obligation the agreement that had been concluded unofficially concerning the presidium.

Stalin did not decline. That flagrantly revealed his oppositionist status. Despite this, Lenin did his utmost to spare Stalin the embarrassment of a vote either for or against him. Through one of the delegates Lenin put the preliminary question: "Are supplementary candidates for members of the presidium necessary at all?" And without any effort he secured a negative answer to that question. Stalin suffered defeat, which Lenin had made as impersonal and inoffensive as was humanly possible.

By the time of the Eighth Congress, the disagreement on the military question was considerably less pronounced than it had been previously. The opposition no longer put the question as frankly as it had the year before. At that time the centralised army was proclaimed to be characteristic of the imperialist state and in its place the opposition advocated the system of guerrilla detachments, rejecting the utilisation of contemporary technical means of struggle, such as planes and tanks. This time they came out against the 'imperialistic' principle of manoeuvrability: the corps, the division, even the brigade, these units were declared to be too top-heavy. It was proposed to reduce all the armed forces of the Republic into distinct units of the combined services, each unit about the size of a regiment. This was essentially the ideology of guerrillism, only slightly masked. The guerrillas of the extreme 'Left' defended themselves more openly. The use of the old officer corps, especially in commanding positions, was declared incompatible in action with loyalty to revolutionary military doctrine.

The actual work of organising the military forces of the workers' government proceeded along entirely different lines. We tried, especially in the beginning, to utilise as much as possible the experience, method, knowledge and other means we had inherited from the old army. We built the revolutionary army from the human and technical material at hand, striving always and everywhere to secure in it the dominance of the proletarian vanguard. The institution of commissars was under the circumstances an indispensable instrument of proletarian control. We combined the old commanding staff with the new, and only thus were we able to achieve the required results. This had become crystal-clear to a majority of the delegates by the time the Congress convened. No one any longer dared to reject in principle the foundations of the military policy. The opposition turned to criticism of occasional errors and excesses, regaling the Congress with all manner of sad anecdotes.

At the Ukrainian Party conference in March, 1920, Stalin had formally defended me, appearing as the speaker representing the Central Committee; at the same time, through trusted people, he exerted no little effort to achieve the failure of his own theses. At the Eighth Congress of the Party such a manoeuvre was difficult, since all the proceedings were taking place directly under the observation of Lenin, several other members of the Central Committee and responsible military workers. But here too Stalin essentially played quite the same game as at the Ukrainian conference. As a member of the Central Committee he either spoke equivocally in defence of the official military policy or kept quiet; but through his closest friends – Voroshilov, Rukhimovich and other Tsaritsynites who were the shock troops of the Opposition at the Congress – he continued to undermine not so much the military policy, it is true, as its chief spokesman. He incited these delegates to launch the vilest kind of personal attack against Sokolnikov, who had assumed the defence of the War Commissariat without any reservations. Sokolnikov reported to the Eighth Congress of the Party:

A year ago, at the moment of the complete collapse of the [tsarist] army, when there was no military organisation to defend the proletarian revolution, the Soviet Government resorted to the system of voluntary army formations, and in its day this volunteer army played its part. Now, looking back at this period, as at a stage we have passed, we should take into consideration both the positive and the negative aspects. The essence of the positive side was that the best elements of the working class participated ... But in addition to these bright aspects of the guerrilla period there were also the dark sides, which in the end outweighed whatever was good in it. The best elements left, died, or were taken prisoner ... What remained was a

conglomeration of the worst elements... These rotten elements were supplemented by those who chose to enlist in the Volunteer Army because they had been kicked out onto the street in consequence of the catastrophic collapse of the entire social order ... These were, finally, supplemented by the demobilised riff-raff of the Old Army. That is why during the guerrilla period of our military organisation the forces that developed compelled us to liquidate this guerrilla system. In the end it had resulted in a system in which small, independent detachments grouped themselves around separate leaders. These detachments in the final reckoning were devoted not only to the struggle in defence of the Soviet Government, in defence of the victories of the Revolution, but also to banditry and marauding. They turned the guerrilla detachments into the bulwark of adventurism ...

On the other hand, “in the present period,” Sokolnikov continued, “the building of the State ... the Army ... is going forward ...” Turning to another phase of his report, Sokolnikov said:

A great deal of heated discussion arose around the question of military specialists ... Now this question has been essentially solved both theoretically and practically. Even the opponents of the use of military specialists themselves admit that this question is out of date ... Military specialists were used in the reorganisation of the guerrilla army into the regular army ... This is how we achieved the stability of the front, this is how we achieved military success. Conversely, where the military specialists were not used, we frittered away our forces to the point of utter disintegration ... In the problem of the military specialists, we are confronted not with a purely military problem but with a general special problem. When the question was brought up of inviting engineers to the factories, of inviting the former capitalist organisers, do you remember how the ultra-Red Left Communists taunted us with their merciless ‘super-Communist’ criticism ... that to return the engineers to the factories meant to return the commanding staff of the bourgeoisie? And here we have an analogous criticism, applied now to the building of the Army. We are told that by returning former officers to the Army we will restore the former officer class and the former army. But these comrades forget that side-by-side with these commanders there are commissars, the representatives of the Soviet Government; that these military specialists are in the ranks of an army which is entirely at the service of the proletarian revolution ... This Army, which has tens of thousands of old specialists, has shown in practice that it is the Army of the proletarian revolution.

Replying directly to Sokolnikov’s statement that “some presumably stand for a guerrilla army and others for the regular army,” Smirnov, the spokesman for the opposition, pointed out that on the question of using military specialists “there are no disagreements among us over the dominant trend in our military

policy.” The basic disagreement was over the necessity of broadening the functions of commissars and members of the Revolutionary Military Council so as to ensure their greater participation in the management of the Army and in decisions pertaining to operational matters, and thereby reduce the role of the commanding staff.

The Congress met this criticism about half way. It was decided to continue the recruiting of the old military specialists in full force, but on the other hand, it was emphasised that it was necessary to prepare a new commanding staff as an absolutely reliable instrument of the Soviet system. That this and all the other decisions were adopted unanimously with one abstaining vote is explained by the fact that the opposition had in the meantime repudiated most of its principal prejudices. Powerless to counterpoise its own line to that of the majority of the Party, it had to join in the general conclusion. Nevertheless, some of the effects of the guerrillaism of the preceding period were evident throughout all of 1919, particularly in the South – in the Ukraine, in the Caucasus and in Transcaucasia, where the elimination of the guerrilla tendency proved to be no easy task.

A special military conference was held during the Congress, the minutes of which were kept but never published. The purpose of this conference was to give an opportunity to all participants, especially the dissatisfied members of the opposition, to express themselves fully, freely and frankly. Lenin delivered an energetic speech at this conference in defence of the military policy. What did Stalin say? Did he speak in defence of the Central Committee’s position? It is hard to answer this question categorically. There is no doubt that he acted behind the scenes, inciting various oppositionists against the Commissariat of War. There can be no doubt of that because of the circumstances and the recollections of the participants of the Congress. A flagrant piece of evidence is the very fact that the minutes of the military conference of the Eighth Congress have not yet been published – either because Stalin did not speak at it, at all, or because his speech on that occasion would be too embarrassing for him now. [Stalin, with Zinoviev, was also a member of a] special conciliation commission for working out the final resolutions. What he did there remains unknown beyond the bare fact that a satellite of his, Yaroslavsky, was advanced as its reporter.

As regards Stalin’s relations with the Military Opposition, all the available documents, especially Podvoisky’s telegram in late August and Lenin’s letter dated 3rd October lead irrefutably to the conclusion that through his position in the Central Committee and the government, Stalin was the leader of the

Opposition. If I suspected it before, now I am fully convinced that Stalin's machinations with the Ukrainians were directly connected with the activities of the Military Opposition. Since Stalin had not won any laurels in Tsaritsyn now, quite naturally, he was trying to take revenge.

The nucleus of the Opposition was the Tsaritsyn group and most prominent among them was Voroshilov. For some time preceding the Congress they were in constant contact with Stalin, who gave them instructions and held their premature hastiness in check, at the same time centralising the intrigue against the War Department. This was the sum and substance of his activity at the Eighth Congress.

Today the official version is that Stalin supported Lenin's position on the military question at the Eighth Congress. Why then are the minutes not published now when there is no longer any need to preserve any military secrets?

Soon after the Eighth Congress I replied to the declaration of Zinoviev, who, undoubtedly by agreement with Stalin, had taken it upon himself to defend "the insulted" Voroshilov, in a letter to the Central Committee. I said:

The only offence of which I may be considered guilty regarding him [Voroshilov] is that I spent too long, namely two or three months, trying to act by means of negotiations, persuasions, personal combinations, when in the interests of the cause, what was necessary was a firm organisational decision. For, in the end, the task in connection with the Tenth Army did not consist of convincing Voroshilov, but of attaining military successes in the shortest possible time.

And that, of course, depended on the maximum coordination of plans throughout the country, which was divided into eight military districts composed of 46 provincial and 344 regional military commissariats.

THE 'SHOOTING OF COMMUNISTS'

The main Opposition retreated, losing ground and supporters; sensing its own weakness, it resorted to all kinds of trivia, gossip and yet more gossip. New defeats gave it an opportunity to renew activities for a time, but only in order to expose its inconsistency: it had nothing to offer. In 1920, a prominent military worker wrote:

Despite all the hullabaloo and screams of pain raised about our military policy regarding the involvement of military specialists in the Red Army etc., Comrade Trotsky the Defence Minister was right. With an iron hand he carried out the

agreed military policy, fearing no threats. The Red Army's victory on all fronts was the best proof of the correctness of the military policy.

This notwithstanding, to this very day the hoary old tales about the treachery of the "generals" appointed by Trotsky are still being regurgitated in innumerable books and articles. These accusations are particularly incongruous, if we remember that twenty years after the October Revolution almost the entire Commanding Staff, which was appointed by none other than Stalin have been accused of treason and destroyed by him. We might add that Sokolnikov, the official spokesperson at the Congress, and Smirnov, the co-reporter for the opposition, both of them active participants in the Civil War, have subsequently fallen victims to Stalin's Purges.

[Among the most scandalous rumours put in circulation by Trotsky's enemies was the accusation that he had ordered the shooting of Communists. Here Trotsky answers this lie and explains the reason for it.]

At a moment of grave danger, the Second Petrograd Regiment, occupying a crucial sector, abandoned the front on its own initiative and, headed by its commander and commissar, seized a river steamer and sailed down the Volga from the vicinity of Kazan, in the direction of Nizhny-Novgorod. The boat was stopped by my order and the deserters were placed on trial. The commander and commissar of the regiment were shot. This was the first instance of the shooting of a Communist, Commissar Panteleyev, for violation of military duty. In the Party there was a lot of talk and gossip about this incident. In December 1918, *Pravda* published an article which, without mentioning my name but obviously hinting at me, referred to the shooting of "the best comrades without a trial."

In response, I addressed a letter to the Central Committee:

Copy

Secret

25th December 1918

To the Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party.

Dear comrades,

The disgruntlement among certain elements in the Party with the general policy of the War Department found its reflection in an article by CEC member Kamensky in issue 281 of the central organ of our party *Pravda*. The article includes a sweeping condemnation of the use of military specialists as "tsarist counter-revolutionaries" and so on. I consider it problematic in the extreme to pass such judgments about

people who the Soviet authorities have placed in responsible positions. Such questions have to be resolved either on a case by case basis or through Party bodies, but not by indiscriminate accusations that create a poisonous atmosphere in the respective military establishments and have a detrimental effect on the work.

But quite apart from this, the article contains grave accusations against my person, even though I am not directly named in it. Thus, it is reported that following the desertion of seven officers on the Eastern Front “two of our best comrades, Zalutsky and Bakai (evidently he means Bakayev), were almost shot, as happened with Panteleyev, and it was only the resistance of Smilga that saved their lives”. It goes on to refer to the shooting of the best comrades without trial.

Incidentally, the Central Committee has already heard a message about the alleged attempted shooting of Zalutsky and Bakayev. That was actually the case. Learning at third-hand, partly from the newspapers about the treasonable conduct of several officers of the Third Army, and basing myself on a previously issued order, according to which commissars are required to keep registered lists of the families of officers and, in the event of a possible act of treason, to take responsibility for seizing family members as hostages, I sent a telegram to Comrades Lashevich and Smilga, drawing their attention to the desertion of the officers and their complete failure to report this on the part of the relevant Commissars, who displayed their inability either to monitor or to punish the officers. I ended the telegram with a phrase in the sense that Commissars who allow White Guards to go free ought to be shot.

Of course, that was not an order to shoot Zalutsky and Bakayev (I had not the least idea of who the Commissars in charge of the Division were and, in any case, this was not about the Division Commissars, but people on a lower level). But I had sufficient grounds for believing that Smilga and Lashevich, being on the spot, would shoot only those who deserved to be shot. The incident had no serious consequences, except that Lashevich and Smilga, in an exaggeratedly formal tone, said that if they were bad Commissars, they should be removed. In response to this I telegraphed them that there were no better Commissars than Lashevich and Smilga in the whole army and asked them to stop making such a fuss.

It could never have entered my head that out of this telegraphic correspondence there could grow up a legend that only resistance from Smilga saved two of the best comrades from execution dictated by me, “as happened with Panteleyev”. Panteleyev was shot by order of a court, and the court appointed by me was not for Panteleyev – I was not aware of his presence among the deserters and did not know his name. It was set up to deal with the deserters who were captured on the [mutineers’] ship. The court condemned Panteleyev to be shot, together with all the others. No other shootings of Commissars, if I remember rightly, ever took place with even the slightest involvement on my part. Such executions, however,

were carried out in a significant number of cases when Commissars turned out to be crooks, drunkards or other kinds of traitors.

I have never heard of any occasion when any authoritative institution carried out an illegal execution without trial of any comrade, except for the complaint of the Western Regional Committee of the Party over the aforementioned case of Panteleyev.

In view of the above, I ask the Central Committee to:

Clarify for everybody's information whether the policy of the War Department represents my personal policy, the policy of a group, or the policy of our Party as a whole;

Specify before the public opinion of the whole Party the grounds on which comrade Kamensky made his claim concerning the shooting of the best comrades without trial;

Point out to the editors of the Central Organ the absolute inadmissibility of printing articles that contain not merely criticisms of the general policy of certain departments, or possibly the Party itself, but direct accusations of the gravest actions of the most serious nature (the shooting of the best comrades without trial) without any prior consultation with Party institutions to substantiate these charges, since it is clear that if any such charges were substantiated even in the smallest degree, the case could not be restricted to a Party polemic but would be the subject of judicial Party proceedings.

Trotsky

It seemed incomprehensible that an article containing such dire and weighty accusations could appear in the central organ. The author of the article, a certain A. Kamensky, was in himself a figure of little importance – obviously, a mere pawn. The editor was Bukharin, a Left Communist and therefore opposed to the employment of 'generals' in the Army. But, especially at that time, he was utterly incapable of intrigue. The riddle was solved when I discovered upon investigation that the author of the article, or rather the man who signed it, A. Kamensky was on the staff of the Tenth Army and at the time was under the direct influence of Stalin.

The Central Committee settled the matter. I recall that Kamensky and the editorial board were reprimanded, but Stalin's manipulating hand remained invisible. The Organisational Bureau unanimously appointed a commission composed of Krestinsky, Serebryakov and Smilga, all members of the Organisation Bureau and the Central Committee, to look into the entire question of the shooting of Panteleyev. The Commission naturally reached

the conclusion that Panteleyev was shot after a trial, not as a Communist and a [Commissar], but as a vicious deserter. In the words of Army Commander Slavin, the commanding officer of the army to which Panteleyev's regiment belonged:

Together with the regimental commander, Commissar Panteleyev deserted his post at the head of a significant part of his regiment, and later appeared on the boat hijacked by the deserters for the purpose of making an unauthorised expedition from Kazan to Nizhny. He was not shot for the fact that his regiment abandoned its position but for the fact that he, along with his regiment, deserted his post.

It is beyond doubt that Stalin surreptitiously ensured the publication of the article. The very terminology of the accusation: the brazen reference to the shooting of "the best" comrades, and moreover, "without a trial", was astonishing because of the monstrous nature of the fabrication as well as its inherent absurdity. But it was precisely this crude exaggeration of the accusation that revealed the hand of Stalin, the organiser of the future Moscow Trials. Ten years later this episode would again play a part in Stalin's campaign against me under the very same title: 'The Shooting of the Best Communists without a Trial'.

Meanwhile, Lenin replied with this note:

RSFSR

Chairman of the Soviet of People's Commissars,

Moscow, the Kremlin

July ... 1919

Comrades:

Knowing the strict character of Comrade Trotsky's orders, I am so convinced, so absolutely convinced, of the correctness, expediency, and necessity for the success of the cause of the order given by Comrade Trotsky, that I unreservedly endorse this order.

V. Ulyanov/Lenin

Some reactionary writer or other branded this document a *lettre de cachet*¹⁵. But there is not even a superficial resemblance. I did not require any exceptional

15 *Lettre de cachet* (French) signified a 'letter of the sign' (or 'signet'), a letter signed by the king and countersigned by a secretary of state, used to authorise someone's imprisonment without trial. It was an important instrument of repression under the *ancien régime* in France.

powers for the use of repression. Lenin's statement did not possess the slightest legal value. It was a demonstrative expression of his full and unconditional trust in the motives of my actions, intended exclusively for the Party and was essentially directed against Stalin's back-room campaign. I must add that I never once made any use of this document.

MYTHS AND LEGENDS

The Red Army anniversary articles, which are published every year on the 23rd February, give an extremely instructive reflection of conscious or semi-conscious twists and turns in official ideology. They provide detailed milestones in the growth of the official legend concerning Stalin's role in the Civil War. During the early years, when the old Spartan traditions still prevailed in the Party, the names of the military or Party leaders were rarely mentioned except when appreciation or admiration was deemed necessary. Certainly praise in those days meant a lot more than it did today. The Red Army anniversary articles of those early years made no reference to the subject of who built the Army. In the first place, this fact was well known to everyone; in the second place, articles containing Byzantine flattery were frowned upon. By special order in 1921, a journalist who attempted – true enough, in very modest form – to anticipate the blatant tone of the Stalinist period, was summarily dismissed from his post in the War Department.

{The five volumes [*How the Revolution Armed*] published by the War Department in which my orders, appeals and speeches were gathered, were not only confiscated and destroyed, but the merest reference to them, let alone quotations from them, was banned.} That history of the Civil War, which found its direct documentary reflection in these writings, collected and published not by me, but by an official institution of the government, was declared to be an “invention of Trotskyism”. {However, *The Proletarian Revolution*, the official historical journal of the Party, in its issue of October, 1924, wrote recommending these five volumes, which contained nothing but documents of the Civil War: “In these ... volumes the historians of our revolution will find a great quantity of tremendously valuable documentary material.”}

All those who became the leaders of the Red Army – Tukhachevsky, Yegorov, Blucher, Budyonny, Yakir, Uborevich, Gamarnik¹⁶, Dybenko¹⁷, Fedko, [and many others] – were each promoted to responsible military posts when I was at the head of the War Department, in most cases promoted personally by me during my tours of the fronts and during my direct observation of their military work. Therefore, however bad my own leadership was, it was apparently good enough to have selected the best available military leaders, since for more than ten years Stalin could find no one to replace them. True, almost all the Red Army leaders of the Civil War, all those who subsequently built our army, eventually turned out to be “traitors” and “spies”! But that does not alter the argument. It was they who had defended the Revolution and the country.

If, in 1933, it was suddenly discovered that it was Stalin and no one else who had built the Red Army, then it would seem that the responsibility of selecting such a “treacherous” commanding staff was his responsibility. Official historians have struggled to extricate themselves from this contradiction, not without a little difficulty. The responsibility for appointing traitors to commanding positions in the military has been placed entirely upon myself, while all the honours of victories secured by these very same “traitors” belongs indisputably to Stalin. Today this unique division of historical labour is known to every schoolboy from the *History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolshevik)* edited by Stalin himself.

According to the current historical publications, there was a new clash at every step: in Brest-Litovsk Trotsky did not carry out Lenin’s instructions;

16 Jakiv Borisovich Pudykovych Gamarnik (1894-1937), sometimes known as Yakov Gamarnik, was prominent in the Red Army during the Civil War and a supporter of Marshal Tukhachevsky. In 1937 Gamarnik was accused of participating in an anti-Soviet conspiracy after the Case of the so-called Trotskyist Anti-Soviet Military Organisation. He insisted on Tukhachevsky’s innocence and committed suicide to cheat the GPU executioners.

17 Pavel Dybenko (1889-1938), an active Bolshevik from 1907, moved to Riga where he worked as a port labourer. In November 1911, he joined the Baltic Fleet and in 1915 participated in the mutiny on the battleship *Emperor Paul I*. He was imprisoned for six months and sent as an infantry soldier to the German front. For his anti-war propaganda activities he was again imprisoned for six months but was released after the February 1917 revolution. In March 1921 Dybenko was given responsibility, under the command of Tukhachevsky, for the suppression of the Kronstadt mutiny. In 1938 he was a judge in the trial of Tukhachevsky who was summarily shot. This did not save him and he was arrested soon after for having collaborated with Tukhachevsky in organising a Nazi plot. Tortured, he confessed and was shot.

at the Southern Front Trotsky went against Lenin's directives; on the Eastern Front Trotsky acted contrary to Lenin's orders; and so on and so forth. In the first place, it should be pointed out that Lenin could not give me personal directives. Relations in the Party were not like that. We were both members of the Central Committee, which settled all differences of opinion. Whenever there was disagreement between Lenin and me, and such disagreements occurred more than once, the question was automatically referred to the Political Bureau of the Central Committee, which made the decision. Hence, strictly speaking, it was never in any way a question of my violating Lenin's directives. No one can dare to say that I have violated decisions of the Politburo or the Central Committee.

But this is only one aspect of the matter – the formal side. Getting down to essentials, one cannot help asking the question: was there any sound reason for carrying out the directives of Lenin, who had placed at the head of the War Department Trotsky who, according to legend, committed nothing but “errors” and “crimes”; at the head of the national economy – Rykov, a “self-confessed” restorer of capitalism and future agent of fascism; at the head of the Communist International – Zinoviev, that future fascist and traitor; at the head of the Party's official newspaper and among the leaders of the Communist International – Bukharin, that future fascist bandit?

In some of the official publications it is mentioned in passing, seemingly on the basis of some sort of evidence in the archives, that Stalin was at one time on the Revolutionary Military Council of the Republic. No specific reference is made to the precise period of his participation in this highest of military bodies. {A history of the Communist Party edited by N.L. Meshcheryakov in 1934, after glibly repeating the falsehood that Stalin “spent the period of the Civil War principally at the front,” declares that Stalin “was a member of the Revolutionary Military Council of the Republic from 1920 to 1923.” In the twentieth volume of the *Lenin Miscellany* (page 9), Stalin is referred to as a “member of the presidium of the Revolutionary Military Council of the Republic ... since 1920.”}

“Stalin was appointed a member of the Revolutionary Military Council of the Republic and secured the possibility of direct influence on the central leadership of the armies,” states Dmitrievsky. {Furthermore, in the Red Army anniversary issue of *Pravda* for February 1931 three “unpublished documents” appeared – all of them telegrams from 1920. One of these telegrams is from Stalin as a member of the Revolutionary Military Council of the Republic to Budyonny and Voroshilov, dated 3rd June 1920; the second is a routine report

on the situation at the front from Budyonny and Voroshilov to Stalin in his above capacity, dated 25th June 1920. The third telegram is from Frunze, in command of the Southern Front, to Lenin, as Chairman of the Council of Defence, announcing termination of military operations against Wrangel – that is, the end of the Civil War proper – dated 15th November 1920.

{On the basis of these documents, the only evidence so far published, it would seem that Stalin was actually a member of the Supreme Revolutionary Military Council of the Republic at least from 3rd June to 25th June, or for slightly more than three full weeks in 1920. No evidence of his membership is adduced before or after these two dates in June of that year.} Why is this? In a special article, 'The Revolutionary Military Council of the USSR for Ten Years', composed by three authors in 1928, when all power was already concentrated in Stalin's hands, we read the following:

On 2nd December 1919, Comrade Gusev was included in the Revolutionary Military Council. Subsequently throughout the course of the entire period of the Civil War, Comrades Stalin, Podvoisky, Okulov, Antonov-Ovseyenko and Serebryakov were appointed to the Revolutionary Military Council at various times.

Thus the authors of a specialist study, who had in their hands all the necessary archive material, were unable to determine the period during which Stalin was a member of the Revolutionary Military Council of the Republic. {Stenographic transcripts of the sessions of the Revolutionary Military Council are still kept in the archives of the War Department. The minutes of that institution were maintained in a state of the most scrupulous accuracy and kept in conditions of complete security. Why are not these records cited to establish the actual period during which Stalin was a member of the Revolutionary Council of War of the Republic? The answer is simple enough: because Stalin is not mentioned in the minutes of its sessions as among those present, except once or twice as a petitioner on local matters, and never mentioned as an actual member of the Council, let alone its non-existent 'presidium.'}

What is true is that [in the spring of 1920] Stalin was brought onto the Revolutionary Military Council of the Republic, as far as I remember, at my initiative as Chairman and by order of the Party Central Committee. Stalin, Podvoisky, Okulov, Antonov-Ovseyenko and Serebryakov were members of the Revolutionary Military Council of the Republic at different times. The explanation of this puzzle is rather revealing of Stalin's character. While Stalin's intrigues were obvious, he nevertheless had absolutely no special experience of

military work. Throughout the years of the Civil War, during every conflict with Stalin, I tried to force him into a position of having to express his views clearly on military problems. I felt the best thing to do was to give him the opportunity to show in action what he could do. I tried to force his skulking and surreptitious behind-the-scenes opposition into an open one, or at least to replace it with an open constructive involvement in the leading military bodies.

By agreement with Lenin and Krestinsky, who wholeheartedly supported my military policy, I finally succeeded – I no longer remember under what pretext – in securing Stalin's appointment to the Revolutionary Military Council of the Republic. He had no alternative but to accept the appointment. But Stalin immediately realised the danger of an open collaboration. He never appeared at any of the meetings of the Military Council, giving the excuse that he was overburdened with other work. This can easily be checked in the very precise minutes of the Revolutionary Military Council.

E.P. Berzin, himself a prominent military worker during the Civil War and subsequently Chief of Soviet Military Intelligence, explained [how most of the work fell on the shoulders of Trotsky and a few others]:

The number of members of the Revolutionary Military Council of the Republic was never definitely set and at one time, if I am not mistaken, the Council had as many as ten members. However, the only ones who actually worked were the Chairman, the Commander-in-Chief and one or two other members ... The Revolutionary Military Council of the Republic never actually met in its complete composition.

The order of the Central Committee concerning Stalin's appointment to the Revolutionary Council was forgotten in the same way as the decision of the Central Committee in October 1917 to set up a revolutionary 'centre' involving Stalin. This was yet another fictitious body which never met and was instantly forgotten. It may now seem strange that no one in the course of the first twelve years of the Soviet Republic, namely up until 1929, ever mentioned either the alleged 'leadership' of Stalin in military affairs or even his 'active' participation in the Civil War. This is easily explained by the simple fact that there were many thousands of key military men around who knew what had actually taken place and how.

"At that difficult period, 1918-20," remark the recent Red historians, "Comrade Stalin was transferred from one front to another, to the greatest danger spots of the Revolution." If this were so, how come that in 1922 the

People's Commissariat of Education published an *Anthology for Five Years*, made up of fifteen articles, among them an article on 'Building the Red Army', and another, 'Two Years in the Ukraine', both of them dealing with the Civil War, without a single word about Stalin appearing in either article?

The following year a two-volume anthology entitled *The Civil War* was published. It consists of documents and other material on the history of the Red Army. At that time no one was interested in giving such an anthology a tendentious character. In the whole anthology there is not one word about Stalin. In the same year, 1923, the Central Executive Committee of the Soviet published a volume of four hundred pages entitled, *Soviet Culture*. In the section devoted to the Army there are numerous portraits under the title, 'The Creators of the Red Army'. Stalin is not among them.

In the section entitled 'The Armed Forces of the Revolution during the First Seven Years of October', Stalin's name is not mentioned a single time. Yet this section is illustrated not only with my portrait as well as those of Budyonny and Blucher, but even with a portrait of Voroshilov. Among the Civil War leaders named are to be found Antonov-Ovseyenko, Dybenko, Yegorov, Tukhachevsky, Uborevich, Putna, Sharangovich, and many others, almost all of whom were subsequently proclaimed 'enemies of the people' and shot. Of those mentioned, only two – Frunze and S. Kamenev – managed a natural death. That said, even now a cloud still hangs over the circumstances of Frunze's death. Among those mentioned in this volume, as commander of the Baltic and Caspian Fleets during the Civil War, is Raskolnikov [who died mysteriously, apparently poisoned].

{Voroshilov, a close companion of Stalin, claims nonchalantly, "In the period 1918-20, Stalin was perhaps the only man in the Central Committee sent from one fighting front to another." The word "perhaps" is designed, no doubt, as balm for Voroshilov's conscience, for while he wrote that statement he was fully aware of the fact that any number of members and agents of the Central Committee played no less a part in the Civil War, and others an immeasurably greater part – among them I.N. Smirnov, Smilga, Sokolnikov, Lashevich, Muralov, Rosengoltz, Ordzhonikidze, Frunze, Antonov-Ovseyenko, Berzin and Gusev. All of these, as he knew, spent the entire three years at the various fronts either as members of the Revolutionary Military Councils of the Republic, or (as in the case of Sokolnikov and Lashevich) as military commanders. In comparison Stalin's total period at all the fronts was less than a year out of the three years of the Civil War.}

10. THE CIVIL WAR

STALIN THE MYTH-MAKER

[There are countless eyewitness accounts that testify to the key role played by Trotsky at many key moments of the Civil War. The following extract from the memoirs of Alexander Barmine¹ is just one:]

Trotsky paid a visit to the front lines. He made us a speech. We felt the breath of that energy which he took everywhere he went in moments of crisis. The situation, catastrophic but twenty-four hours earlier, had improved as though by a miracle, though in fact the only miraculous thing about it was the perfectly natural effect of organisation and determination. For a long time, I used to carry about with me a copy of the speech made by Trotsky to the School, typed out in the Red Army train. Those pages of greyish paper were very precious to me. Did the OGPU, I wonder, find them among my things in Moscow and file them as further evidence of my complicity in the ‘Trotskyist treason’ of 1919? Why not? Every standard of good sense went down in chaos with the truths of history... Among the men dressed in black leather who accompanied the inspirer of the Red Army on the occasion of his visit to our trenches, was a young fellow of whom I took no particular notice. Leon Sedov, at that time about fifteen years old, was with his father. I have already mentioned his visit, when, like me, he was exiled

1 Alexander Gregory Barmine (1899-1987) was an officer in the Red Army and later a Soviet diplomat who fled to the West to escape Stalin's purges. Barmine was never a Trotskyist and remained with Stalin until 1938. After settling in France, he later moved to the United States. Although in later years he moved to the right, his reminiscences written after his break with Stalin are distinguished by indubitable sincerity.

and a Soviet outlaw. Together, a few days before his sudden death, we lived over again these happy memories.²

In the autumn of 1918, Kolchak was justly regarded as our chief enemy. That is why the fight for Kazan acquired decisive significance. After the loss of Simbirsk, we had surrendered Kazan practically without a fight. Nizhny was next. Had the Whites taken possession of Nizhny Novgorod, they would have had a clear road to Moscow. It was a grave and terrifying moment.

It was natural then that the revolutionary country skimmed the cream of everything for the Eastern Front. The Eastern Front was, so to speak, the first-born of the Red Armies. It was more amply provided with everything needed, including Communists, than any other front. The reinforcements, consisting of units from other fronts, were concentrated on that sector. On 12th August 1918, the Revolutionary Military Council of the Kazan sector of the Eastern Front was organised. All the various units were welded into one – the Fifth Army.

Scattered volunteer detachments were transformed into regular companies, battalions, regiments and divisions. Violations of discipline, wilfulness and irresponsibility were ruthlessly put down. S.I. Gusev, who subsequently became a Stalinist, described those days thus:

The difficult situation in which the young Soviet Republic found itself – the Czechoslovak uprising, which cut us off from Siberian grain, the Government of the Constituent Assembly at Samara, the insurrection at Yaroslavl, the landing of the English at Archangel – called insistently for quick and decisive measures of defence against the unexpectedly arisen danger, although prior to that we knew very little about the conspiracy of the Entente. That is why the necessity arose for the journey of Comrade Trotsky. In the beginning of August, the Central Committee of the Party decreed the mobilisation of an extensive group of responsible comrades in Petrograd and Moscow, some of whom were on Comrade Trotsky's train... Comrade Trotsky's arrival brought a decisive turn in the state of affairs. When Comrade Trotsky's train arrived at the station of Sviyazhsk, it brought with it a firm will for victory, resoluteness and drive from the very first day. All the organs of supplies and all units of the Army at a radius of fifteen versts sensed a decisive change in the situation. This was apparent above all in the sphere of discipline. Comrade Trotsky's harsh measures were undoubtedly the most appropriate and were indispensable in that epoch of guerrilla warfare, characterised

2 Trotsky's role was also recognised by Lenin. In a conversation with Gorky, Lenin said of Trotsky: "Show me another man able to organise almost a model army within a single year and win the respect of military experts. We have such a man. We have everything. And we shall work wonders."

by wilfulness, lack of discipline and rule-of-thumb strategy. Nothing could be accomplished by persuasion; besides, there was no time for it. The prodigious labour of transforming the disorganised parts of the Fifth Army into a fighting unit and preparing it for the capture of Kazan was performed by Comrade Trotsky in the incredibly brief 25 days he spent at Sviyazhsk. The victory of 29th August predetermined the rapid capture of Kazan. The following day, Trotsky's train set out for Moscow, upon receiving news on the attempt on Lenin's life.

On the 7th September units of the Fifth Army began to attack the approaches to Kazan. It was a stubborn battle. Great losses were sustained. The Fifth Army, created in the heat of this battle, covered itself with glory. The Czechs did not hold out and fell back. On the 10th September the Fifth Army took Kazan. It was the first great Soviet victory. This was the breakthrough that saved the young Republic from a complete rout. It occurred before my eyes at Kazan. We tore Kazan out of the grasp of the White Guards and the Czechoslovaks. That day was the turning point in the course of the Revolution. The capture of Kazan was the starting point for the liquidation of the counter-revolution in the East. The toilers of the entire country celebrated the capture of Kazan as a great victory. Even greater was the significance of this victory for the Army.

In March 1919, with 3,000 infantry and 60,000 cavalry at his disposal, Kolchak moved quickly toward the Volga. The situation was again precarious. On the eve of the Eighth Party Congress it was Lenin's opinion that I should personally supervise the operations on the Eastern Front. This detail has to be recalled now and substantiated by documentary evidence in rebuttal of the current falsification.

1)

10th April 1919.

To Sklyansky for transmission to Trotsky at Nizhny Novgorod.

In view of the extremely difficult situation on the Eastern Front, I think it would be best for you to remain there, especially since there will be no serious questions on the 13th. The Organisational Bureau of the Central Committee decided to send you the same telegram yesterday, but I am afraid it did not do so because of Stasova's departure. We are considering hurriedly a series of the most extraordinary measures for aiding the Eastern Front, of which Sklyansky will inform you. Let us have your opinion.

Lenin.

2)

10th April 1919. No. 1047

By direct wire from Nizhny Novgorod to Lenin in Moscow:

Completely agree with the necessity of my remaining on the Eastern Front. I call the attention of the Central Committee to the Left Communistic demagogic agitation in the Third Army, where agitation is carried on against military commanders and against an alleged order introducing saluting and the like. It is necessary to send strong Party men, centralists. Extremely important that the workers support Simbirsk, where the provincial committee is extremely weak, especially in the counties.

Trotsky.

3)

Secret

Excerpt from the Protocol of the Session of the Politburo of the Central Committee, Russian Communist Party (Bolsheviks) of 18th April 1919.

Present: Comrades Lenin, Krestinsky, Stalin, Trotsky.

Considered:

Declaration by Comrade Trotsky that the Southern Group of the Eastern Front, consisting of four armies, is under the command of Comrade Frunze, who is insufficiently experienced to manage such a great undertaking and that it is necessary to reinforce the front.

Decided:

To propose to Commander-in-Chief Vatzetis that he go to the Eastern Front, so that the present commander of the front, Comrade [S.S.] Kamenev³, may devote himself entirely to the leadership of the armies of the Southern Group.

4)

Secret

Excerpt from The Protocol of the Politburo of the Central Committee, Russian Communist Party (Bolsheviks) of 12th May 1919.

Present: Comrades Lenin, Stalin, Krestinsky.

Considered:

3 The reference is to General Sergei Kamenev (1881-1936), not to be confused with the better known Lev B. Kamenev, the Old Bolshevik.

Telegram from Comrade Trotsky to Comrade Lenin about the need to devote special attention to Saratov, which, due to the uprising of the [Ural] Cossacks is becoming an important strategic point.

Decided:

- a) Immediately recall from Saratov Comrades Antonov, Fedor Ivanov, Ritzberg and Plaksin.
- b) Immediately send A.P. Smirnov to work in Saratov as Chairman of the Provincial Executive Committee and member of the fortress council ...

Towards the end of 1918, a catastrophic situation had arisen on the Eastern Front where the armies of Admiral Kolchak were advancing. The Third Soviet Army was in the most difficult situation of all. Six months without relief, without reinforcements, with its rear disorganised, supplies were in a frightful state: for example, one division fought an uninterrupted battle for five days without a piece of bread. Half-naked in thirty-five degrees of frost, without any means of transportation, without any roads, with a weak general staff, with confused and unclear directives from the Centre, this army could not hold out any longer: it wavered and by the end of November it was completely demoralised and [on 2nd January 1919] Perm surrendered.

In a disorderly rout, the Army fell back to positions three hundred kilometres to the rear. In the course of twenty days, they lost 18,000 fighters, scores of guns and hundreds of machine guns. Entire regiments deserted to the side of the enemy. The officers fled *en masse*. The situation of the Army was now utterly hopeless. The enemy had surrounded it in a semi-circle. In a day or two that circle might close. More than that, following in the footsteps of the demoralised Army, the enemy was already threatening Vyatka and thereby the entire front.

[The following exchanges revealed the urgent measures required in an attempt to salvage the situation.]

On 13th December 1918, Lenin sent the following messages from Moscow:

Coded Telegram to Comrade Trotsky at Kursk or any other place where the Chairman of the Revolutionary Military Council of the Republic may be:

Extremely alarming news from vicinity of Perm. It is in danger. I am afraid we have forgotten about the Urals. Are the reinforcements to Perm and the Urals being sent with sufficient energy? Lashevich told Zinoviev that only units that had been under fire should be sent.

Lenin.

Moscow, 31st December 1918.

To Trotsky at Kozlov or wherever the Chairman of the Revolutionary Military Council of the Republic may be:

There are several Party reports from around Perm about the catastrophic condition of the Army and about drunkenness. I am forwarding them to you. They are asking for you to go there. I thought of sending Stalin. I am afraid Smilga will be too soft with Lashevich, who it is said drinks himself and is unable to restore order. Telegraph your opinion. #66847.

Lenin

Voronezh, 1st January 1919. 19 o'clock [7 p.m.]

By direct wire in code to Moscow, Kremlin, for the Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars, Lenin.

Reply to #66847.

From the reports of the operations of the Third Army I concluded that the leadership there is completely at a loss and proposed a change of command. The decision was postponed. Now I deem replacement unpostponable.

I completely share your misgivings concerning the excessive softness of the comrade who has gone there. I agree to Stalin's journey with powers from both the Party and the Revolutionary Military Council of the Republic for restoring order, purging the staff of Commissars, and severely punishing the guilty. The new commander will be appointed upon agreement with Serpukhov. I propose that Lashevich be appointed a member of the Revolutionary Military Council of the Northern Front, where we do not have a responsible Party man, and the front may soon acquire greater significance. #9.

Chairman of the Revolutionary Military Council of the Republic,

Trotsky.

[The matter was then referred to the Central Committee, which decided] to appoint a Party investigating committee of the Central Committee members Stalin and Dzerzhinsky to conduct a detailed investigation into the reasons for the surrender of Perm and the latest defeats on the Ural Front, and also to elucidate all the circumstances surrounding the above facts.

[Stalin and Dzerzhinsky reached Vyatka while the Third Army was holding it against the attacks of the enemy. On the day of their arrival there, 5th January 1919, Stalin and Dzerzhinsky telegraphed Lenin:]

The investigation has begun. We shall inform you from time to time about the course of the investigation. Meantime we deem it necessary to inform you about those needs of the Third Army that do not bear postponement. The point is that out of the Third Army of more than 30,000 men, there remain only 11,000 weary, exhausted soldiers who can hardly withstand the pressure of the enemy. The units sent by the Commander-in-Chief are unreliable, partly even hostile to us, and are in need of serious filtering. In order to save the remnants of the Third Army and to prevent the rapid movement of the enemy upon Vyatka (according to information secured from the commanding staff of the front and of the Third Army, this danger is quite real), it is absolutely necessary at once to transfer from Russia and place at the disposal of the army commander at least three entirely reliable regiments. We insistently urge that you exert the proper pressure in this direction upon the corresponding military institution. We repeat: without this measure the fate of Perm awaits Vyatka.

[On the 15th January 1919, Stalin and Dzerzhinsky informed the Council of Defence:]

1,200 reliable soldiers and cavalry were sent to the front; the next day two squadrons of cavalry. On the 10th, the 62nd Regiment of the Third Brigade (previously thoroughly filtered) was sent. These units made it possible for us to check the advance of the enemy, to raise the morale of the Third Army and to begin our advance upon Perm, so far successful. A thorough purge of Soviet and Party institutions is going on in the rear of the Army. Revolutionary committees have been organised in Vyatka and at county HQs. Strong revolutionary organisations have begun to be set up and continue to be set up in villages. The entire Party and the Soviet work is being reconstructed along new lines. The military control has been cleaned up and reorganised. The provincial Cheka has been purged and staffed with new workers...

[After investigating the causes of catastrophe, Stalin and Dzerzhinsky reported to Lenin that these were:]

The fatigue and exhaustion of the army at the moment of the enemy's advance, our lack of reserves at that moment, the staff's lack of contact with the army, the mismanagement of the army commander, and inadmissibly criminal methods of administering the front by the Revolutionary Military Council of the Republic, which paralysed the possibility of offering timely aid to the Third Army, the unreliability of reinforcements sent from the rear due to old methods

of recruitment, absolute unsteadiness of the rear due to the complete helplessness and the inability of local Soviet and Party organisations.

[Almost every statement in this report was an attack on Trotsky. Had Lenin, the Council of Defence, the Central Committee and its Political Bureau taken these charges against Trotsky seriously, they would have had no alternative but to remove him from office. However, Lenin knew full well that Stalin had manipulated this report as an act of revenge for his recall from Tsaritsyn the previous summer and for Trotsky's refusal to give him yet one more chance.]

CONFLICTS ON THE EASTERN FRONT

The advance against Kolchak, after two periods of retreat, was now proceeding with complete success. Commander-in-Chief Vatzetis considered that the chief danger was now in the South and proposed to keep the Army of the Eastern Front in the Urals during the winter, until the danger should subside sufficiently, in order to transfer a number of divisions to the Southern Front. My general position was expounded even earlier in my telegram of 1st January. I was in favour of pursuing an uninterrupted offensive against Kolchak. However, the concrete question was determined by the relation of forces and the general strategic situation. If Kolchak had serious reserves beyond the Urals, and our advance with uninterrupted battles had seriously exhausted the Red Army, then to engage in additional battles beyond the Urals would have constituted a danger. It would have required replacements of fresh Communists and Commanders, while all of that was at present necessary for the Southern Front.

It must be added that I had to a considerable extent lost contact with the Eastern Front, now that it was quite safe and that I lived with all my thoughts on the Southern Front. It was hard to judge at a distance to what extent the advancing armies of the Eastern Front had preserved their vitality, i.e. to what extent they were able to pursue a further offensive not only without the aid of the Centre but even with sacrifices to the advantage of the Southern Front, which needed the best divisions. To some degree, I permitted Vatzetis freedom of action. I calculated that even if there was resistance on the part of the Eastern command, it might be possible to stage a further advance in the East without inflicting any damage on the Southern Front. There would then be time enough to correct the Commander-in-Chief with the aid of directives from the government. In strategic matters I have always given the first word to

the Commander-in-Chief. The first task of the new commander was to work out a plan for regrouping our forces on the Southern Front.

Under these conditions, a disagreement developed about the strategy on the Eastern Front between the Commander-in-Chief Vatzetis and the commanding officer of the Eastern Front, S.S. Kamenev. Both of them had been General Staff colonels of the tsarist army.⁴ No doubt there was rivalry between them. And the commissars became involved in that conflict. The Communists on our General Staff supported Vatzetis, while the members of the Revolutionary Military Council of the Eastern Front – Smilga, Lashevich and Gusev – sided wholeheartedly with Kamenev. Objecting to a number of evasive replies by the Eastern Front, which was trying to carry on its own policy, Vatzetis demanded the replacement of Kamenev by Samoilov, the former Commander of the Sixth Army. It is hard to say which one of the two colonels was the more gifted. Both were undoubtedly endowed with first rate talents for strategy, both had had a lot of experience in the World War and both had a decidedly optimistic mind-set, without which it is impossible to command.

Vatzetis was the more stubborn and bad-tempered and undoubtedly prone to yield to the influence of elements hostile to the Revolution. Kamenev was easier to get along with and yielded more readily to the influence of the Communists working with him. But although an able officer and a man of imagination fully capable of taking risks, he was lacking in depth and firmness. Lenin subsequently became disappointed with him and more than once criticised his reports very sharply. On one occasion Lenin's comment was, "his answer is stupid and in places illiterate."

In the end the Politburo decided the issue in favour of the Eastern Front. I wrote [in May 1919]:

In view of the tremendous importance of the Trans-Volga and the Urals, industrially and as a provisioning source, and in view of the fact that Kolchak is now the head of the counter-revolution and his government is about to be recognised, the Eastern Front continues to have decisive significance. It is necessary to secure our uninterrupted advance by providing an uninterrupted stream of replacements and supplies. I insist, for I have misgivings about it, that concern about the Southern and Petrograd fronts are weakening the Eastern Front from which several brigades and regiments are already being transferred. On the other hand, ROSTA reports

4 Among the many former tsarist officers who joined the Red Army and served it loyally was the old aristocratic, tsarist General Alexey Brusilov, the last commander of the tsarist Imperial Army.

the words of Lincoln Steffens to the effect that the League of Nations 'has flooded' Siberia with the troops of the Entente, including the Americans. Immediate verification is imperative by way of organising thorough espionage in Siberia. It is necessary to indicate the strategic line of defence, to work out the plan of defence and at the same time to assign tasks to the field staff and to Bonch-Bruyevich. The advance on the Eastern Front must proceed uninterruptedly as far as the line of defence previously indicated, since it is clear that at the present time we shall not be able to reach Vladivostok. In connection with this it is necessary to concentrate all attention, all means and all forces upon building strategic roads ... in the Trans-Volga and the Cis-Volga. All these are pressing matters since any delay, not to mention a retreat, by us on the Eastern Front will create favourable conditions for Kolchak's recognition. Having gone this far in committing itself, the Entente will go further and further. This can be stopped only by treating the Eastern Front as the most important one.

And again on 21st May, 1919:

I agree to the return of Kamenev to the Eastern Front in place of Samoilov, but I don't know where Kamenev is at present. Nor am I opposed to the replacement of Kostyayev; I have often raised that question myself, but the difficulty is to find someone to replace him who would not be worse. I don't think that Lashevich is any firmer than Aralov. His deviation is simply a different kind of softness. Gusev is more suitable for the field staff. At any rate, if we send Kamenev and replace Kostyayev, we should first discuss the matter with the Commander-in-Chief, so as not to disorganise the whole machinery. I suggest we start with the most urgent matters, i.e. the return of Kamenev and to accomplish that, we must find him and call him immediately to Moscow. At the same time suggest possible substitutes for Kostyayev and Aralov, which is less urgent. Communicate the decision you make.

Trotsky.

P.S. I must say, however, that Kuzmin, Orekhov, Naumov and Vatoshin have the same opinion of Samoilov as Lashevich, Gusev and Smilga have of Kamenev, as Aralov has of Kostyayev. These loyalties of the front are our common misfortune.

Trotsky.

Stalin seized upon the conflict between the Eastern Front and the Commander-in-Chief. He treated Vazetis, who had officially condemned his intervention in strategic matters, with hostility and lay in wait for an opportunity to wreak vengeance upon him. Now such an opportunity presented itself. Smilga, Lashevich and Gusev proposed, obviously with the co-operation of Stalin, to appoint Kamenev Commander-in-Chief. The success on the Eastern Front seduced Lenin and broke down my resistance. Kamenev was appointed

Commander-in-Chief and, at the morning session of 3rd July 1919, the Central Committee reconstituted the Revolutionary Military Council of the Republic. It was now to be made up of Trotsky (chairman), Sklyansky (deputy chairman), Gusev, Smilga, Rykov and Commander-in-Chief Kamenev.

PETROGRAD IN DANGER

General Yudenich⁵ tried to capture Petrograd on two occasions in the course of 1919 – in May and again in October. The first raid by Yudenich with negligible forces was a mere sally, and passed practically unnoticed by the Party, whose attention was absorbed by the Eastern and Southern fronts. The Petrograd situation was brought under control in very short order, and again the entire attention of the Party and the country was transferred to the East and the South. This first advance was quickly and easily terminated. Towards the end of August, the White troops retreated to their initial position. They merely withdrew, but were not routed.

In the spring of 1919, the North-Western Volunteer Army under the command of General Yudenich unexpectedly went onto the offensive and threatened Petrograd. Simultaneously, the British Navy steamed into the Bay of Finland. Colonel Bulak Balakhovich, at the head of his unit, led the drive against Pskov, and at the same time Estonian units moved into action at the front. On the 14th May, the corps of General Rodzianko broke through against the Seventh Army, which had been considerably weakened by the drafting of troops to more active fronts. He occupied Yamburg and Pskov and began a rapid advance against Gatchina, Petrograd and Luga.

The commander of the Seventh Army stationed on the outskirts of Petrograd entered into communication with Yudenich and organised a conspiracy among the garrisons surrounding the capital – Kronstadt, Oranienbaum, Krasnaya Gorka, Syeraya Loshad and Krasnoye Syelo. The conspirators, in accordance with their deal with Yudenich, were preparing to occupy the capital simultaneously with the troops of his army. They were hoping to get the support of disgruntled sailors and especially the active support of the [British] navy. But the sailors of the two Soviet dreadnoughts did not support the insurrection, while the British fleet restricted itself for the time being to watchful waiting.

5 Nikolai Nikolayevich Yudenich (1862-1933), a tsarist officer during World War I was the leader of the anti-communist Whites in North-Western Russia who led an unsuccessful attack on Petrograd.

It was necessary to reinforce the Seventh Army with troops hastily dispatched from Moscow to take charge of the situation in Petrograd, because Zinoviev, the leader of the Party and all Soviet activities there, was not cut out for such emergencies, a fact of which he himself was fully aware. Stalin was sent there in order to organise the repulse of Yudenich. He arrived in Petrograd armed with special powers from the Central Committee of the Party and the Soviet Government. He dealt with the task quite successfully – a task that demanded firmness, resoluteness and a cool head.

The whole [Yudenich] business proved abortive. As for the conspiracy, that also turned out to be an adventure. By the 12th June 1919, only Krasnaya Gorka and Syeraya Loshad remained in the hands of the conspirators, and for four days no attempt was made to capture them. Finally, after an exchange of shots with Kronstadt, Krasnaya Gorka was occupied on the 16th June by a detachment of red sailors. Syeraya Loshad fell just as easily.

In the latter part of June 1919, Stalin telegraphed Lenin:

After Krasnaya Gorka, Syeraya Loshad was likewise liquidated. The guns there are under our complete control. Lightning mopping up and reinforcement of the forts and fortresses is now in full swing. The naval specialists assure me that the capture of Krasnaya Gorka from the sea stands all naval science on its head. All I can do about it is to brush aside this so-called science. The rapid capture of Gorka is explained by the rudest intervention in operational matters by me and by other civilians, which reached the point of cancelling orders on land and sea and imposing our own orders. I deem it my duty to declare that in the future I shall continue to proceed similarly, notwithstanding all my respect for science.

Lenin was annoyed by this tone of provocative braggadocio. From Petrograd it was possible at any moment to communicate with the Kremlin and its staff, to replace incompetent or unreliable commanders, to strengthen the staff, i.e., to do all that every one of the responsible military workers of the Party did time and time again at one front after another without violating the elementary rules of good taste, good manners or the maintenance of correct relations, and without undermining the authority of the Army command and of the General Staff. But Stalin could not act in that way. He could feel his superiority over others only by insulting them. He could derive no satisfaction from his work without giving violent vent to his contempt for all who were subordinate to him. Having no other resources at his disposal, he converted coarseness into a resource and flaunted his special genius for insolent disrespect for institutions and persons that enjoyed the respect of

others. His telegram ended with the words: "Quickly send two million rounds of ammunition at my disposal for six divisions."

This postscript, so typical of Stalin, contains within itself a whole system. The Army had of course its own Chief of Supplies. There was always a shortage of bullets, and they were distributed on the direct instructions of the Commander-in-Chief, depending on available reserves and the relative importance of fronts and armies. But Stalin skipped over all the intervening steps and violated every semblance of order. Ignoring the Chief of Supplies, he demanded bullets through Lenin, not even to be placed at the disposal of the Army command, but at his personal disposal, so that he might present them as a gift to a particular division commander whom he wanted to impress with his own importance.

On the 4th June 1919, Stalin tried to frighten Lenin from the south of Petrograd with news of the disastrous character of the military leadership:

To Comrade Lenin:

Secret.

I am sending you a document taken from the Swiss. It is evident from the document not only that the Chief of Staff of the Seventh Army is working for the Whites (remember the desertion of the 11th Division to the side of Krasnov⁶ in the autumn of last year near Borisoglebsk, or the desertion of regiments on the Perm front), but also the entire staff of the Revolutionary Military Council of the Republic, headed by Kostyayev. (The reserves are allocated and moved by Kostyayev.)

It is now up to the Central Committee to draw the necessary inferences. Will it have the courage to do it?

The analysis of the evidence continues, and new "possibilities" are opening up. I would write in greater detail, but I have not a minute to spare. Let Peters tell you.

My profound conviction is:

1. Nadezhin is not a commander. He is incapable of commanding. He will end up by losing the Western Front.

6 General Pyotr Nikolayevich Krasnov (1869-1947). Immediately after the October insurrection, Alexander Kerensky sent Krasnov at the head of an army to Petrograd to suppress the Bolshevik revolution. Krasnov was defeated and taken prisoner, but released on the condition that he promised not to continue his struggle against the revolution. He agreed to this but reneged on his promise and fled to the Don region where he organised an uprising of the Cossacks against the Soviet power.

2. Workers like Okulov, who incite the specialists against our commissars who are sufficiently discouraged anyway, are harmful, because they debilitate the vitality of our army.

Stalin.

[The background of these telegrams is as follows:] Several naval forts had been abandoned in a panic by their undermanned garrisons. Kostyayev, although he was a very able general, did not inspire me with much confidence either. He gave the impression of being an alien element. However, Vatzetis stood up for him, and Kostyayev complemented the irascible and capricious Commander-in-Chief rather well. It was not easy to replace Kostyayev. Besides, there were no facts against him. Evidently the “document taken from the Swiss” proved to be superfluous to requirements, since it never again figured anywhere. In any case, it was obviously a crude and blatant attempt to link Kostyayev with the treasonable conduct of regiments that had been organised under the vigilant eye of the Party itself.

As for Nadezhin, he had occasion to command the Seventh Army, the army that actually did save Petrograd in the most crucial moment. Okulov's guilt consisted solely in his earnest endeavour to abide faithfully by all orders and regulations and in his outright refusal to take part in any of the intrigues against the Centre. Stalin's provocatively bold and insistent tone is explained by the fact that he felt he had at last mustered real support in the Council of War of the Eastern Front, where dissatisfaction with the Commander-in-Chief was turning into dissatisfaction with me.

[Stalin wrote:] “It is now up to the Central Committee to draw the necessary inferences. Will it have the courage to do it?” The meaning of these lines is quite clear. Their tone testifies that Stalin had raised the question more than once and that more than once he met with Lenin's resistance.

In response [to Stalin's telegram], Lenin sent a telegram to Sklyansky, the vice-chairman of the Revolutionary Military Council:

“Stalin demands the recall of Okulov who is allegedly preoccupied with intrigues and disorganising work.” The ironic “allegedly” speaks for itself. Sklyansky replied on the same piece of paper: “Okulov is the only decent worker there.” Lenin ordered an immediate telegram:

In that case, compose text of telegram (exact exposition of what Okulov accuses the Seventh Army) and I shall send it by code to Stalin and Zinoviev, so that the conflict will not grow and will be adequately settled.

[The Central Committee is informed and a copy sent to Trotsky at Kharkov by direct wire:]

4th June 1919. No. 2995.

For the Political Bureau and the Organisation Bureau of the Central Committee, Lenin, [L.B.] Kamenev, Serebryakov, Stasova.

In view of the conflict, which at any rate is growing, between all the Petersburg central committeemen and Okulov, and recognising as absolutely necessary the maximum solidarity in Petersburg military work and the necessity of an immediate victory on that front, the Political Bureau and the Organisation Bureau of the Central Committee have resolved temporarily to recall Okulov and to place him at the disposal of Comrade Trotsky.

This was a necessary concession to Stalin and Zinoviev. There was nothing to do but accept it.

Yudenich continued to assemble his troops. This corps was converted into the North-Western Army, which numbered about 100 battalions and squadrons. In the meantime, in the course of the next four months, under the cover of Estonia and with assistance from England sharply stepped up, Yudenich assembled a fresh army amply provided with officers and equipment.

This second attempt was the real campaign. It began very successfully for Yudenich. Feeling that we would not be able to manage all the fronts simultaneously, Lenin proposed to surrender Petrograd. I opposed it. The majority of the Political Bureau, including Stalin, decided to support me. After I had already gone to Petrograd Lenin wrote to me on the 17th October, 1919:

Spent last night at the Council of Defence and sent you ... the decree of the Council of Defence. As you see, your plan has been adopted. But the removal of the Petrograd workers to the South has not been repealed, of course. (It is said that you developed it in conversation with Krassin and Rykov) ... Attached is an appeal which the Council of Defence assigned to me. I was in a hurry. It came out badly. Better put my signature beneath your appeal.

Greetings.

Lenin.

The struggle for Petrograd acquired an extremely dramatic character. The enemy was in full view of the capital, which was preparing to carry on the fight in the streets and squares. Whenever the defence of Petrograd was mentioned in the Soviet press without any further explanations, it was this

second (autumn) campaign of Yudenich that was understood and not the spring campaign. But in the autumn of 1919 Stalin was at the Southern Front and had nothing whatever to do with the real saving of Petrograd. The official documents pertaining to this key operation against Yudenich were published years ago. Yet nowadays Yudenich's two campaigns have been merged into one, and the famous defence of Petrograd is represented as Stalin's handiwork. By now this seed has grown into a full-blown myth, entitled 'Stalin, the saviour of Petrograd'. It is a cunning myth, strangely grafted onto a deliberate anachronism.

TROTSKY'S 'RESIGNATION'

[At the beginning of 1919 the White Supreme Command decided to advance in two directions. The purpose of the northern advance was to connect with the North Russia Front and to attack Petrograd, while the White offensive on the Southern Front was aimed at dealing a crushing blow to the Reds on the middle of the Volga and to strike at Moscow. The Revolution was thus faced with multiple enemy offensives on different fronts at the same time.]

During the first months of 1919 the Red Army delivered a crushing blow to the Southern counter-revolution, which was composed chiefly of the Don Cossack Army under the command of General Krasnov covered by a curtain of cavalry. But behind Krasnov in the Kuban and the Northern Caucasus, the Volunteer Army of Denikin was being formed.

At the moment of the greatest exertion of the Red Army in the East, Denikin, who had at his disposal considerable technical resources in addition to good cavalry and enjoying the support of the wealthy peasantry in the south-east of Russia, moved rapidly forward, beginning in May 1919, to hastily join the forces with Kolchak on the border and to take Moscow. A note in Volume 26 of the first edition of Lenin's *Collected Works* says about Denikin:

After the death of Kornilov in 1918, Denikin had assumed a post of the commander-in-chief of the armed forces of south Russia and attempted to base his activity on the "living forces" of Russian public opinion. With that aim in view, upon his initiative a 'Special Concilium' was established at the office of the commander-in-chief; from the very first days of its existence it revealed considerable friction inside itself and utter inability to survive. Denikin's attempt to win over the peasant population by means of 'agrarian reforms' likewise proved a failure. Denikin attempted to establish a definite "measure of land which may be preserved by former owners" and "an order for the transfer of the remaining

land privately owned to the land poor” for the purpose of “reinforcing small and middling agrarian economic units”.

This transfer was to have been accomplished “by way of voluntary agreements or by way of forcible severance, but always for a consideration.” Denikin’s ‘agrarian reform’ led to the resistance of the extreme right wing of the officers and of ‘Russian public opinion’, which laid the foundation for the open opposition against Denikin.

On the Eastern Front, where the former Colonel Kamenev was in command, with Smilga and Lashevich as members of the Revolutionary Military Council, the situation had improved to such an extent and matters were proceeding so well that I gave up going there altogether and almost forgot what Kamenev looked like. Intoxicated with success, Smilga, Lashevich and Gusev carried their commander on their shoulders, drank *Bruderschaft* with him and wrote the most enthusiastic reports about him to Moscow. When the Commander-in-Chief, that is, Vatzetis, agreeing with me in principle, had suggested that the Eastern Front remain for the winter in the Urals, in order to transfer several divisions to the South where the situation was becoming threatening, Kamenev, supported by Smilga and Lashevich, offered very resolute resistance.

I did not overestimate Vatzetis. I greeted Kamenev in a friendly fashion and tried in every way to lighten his burdens. But the erroneousness of the plan [to pursue Kolchak into the Urals and not to meet the advance of Denikin in the South] was so clear beyond any doubt that, when it was confirmed by the Political Bureau, with everybody, including Stalin, voting against me, I submitted my resignation. The question was so important, and the struggle around the plan and questions of the command had assumed such a sharp character, that on the 4th July I resorted to this extreme measure. On the 5th July 1919, the highest Party executive ruled as follows with reference to my resignation:

The Organisational and Political Bureau of the Central Committee, having examined Comrade Trotsky’s declaration and having considered it in all its aspects, have come to the unanimous conclusion that they cannot accept Comrade Trotsky’s resignation and they are absolutely unable to grant his petition.

The Organisational and Political Bureau of the Central Committee will do everything they can to make Comrade Trotsky’s work at the Southern Front – the most difficult, the most dangerous and the most important at the present time, which Comrade Trotsky has himself chosen – as convenient as possible for him and as fruitful as possible for the Republic. As People’s Commissar of War and Chairman of the Revolutionary Military Council of the Republic, Comrade

Trotsky is fully empowered to act also as a member of the Revolutionary Military Council of the Southern Front in concert with the very same Commander of the Front (Yegoryev), whom he himself has appointed and the Central Committee has confirmed.

The Organisational and Political Bureau of the Central Committee offer Comrade Trotsky full opportunity to strive by any means for what he considers an improvement of the policy in the military question and, if he so desires, will try to expedite the convocation of the Party Congress.

Firmly convinced that the retirement of Comrade Trotsky at the present moment is absolutely impossible and would be most detrimental to the interests of the Republic, the Organisational and Political Bureau of the Central Committee urge Comrade Trotsky not to raise that question again, and to carry out his functions in the future to the maximum, curtailing them in the event he so desires, while he concentrates his efforts upon the Southern Front.

In view of the aforesaid, the Organisational and Political Bureau of the Central Committee likewise reject Comrade Trotsky's resignation from the Political Bureau as well as from the post of Chairman of the Revolutionary Military Council of the Republic and People's Commissar of War...

Lenin, [L.B.] Kamenev, Krestinsky, Kalinin, Serebryakov, Stalin, Stasova...

I withdrew my resignation and immediately departed for the Southern Front. But Stalin recorded things differently:

It took place in the summer of 1919. Our troops were advancing upon Kolchak and operating near Ufa. At the session of the Central Committee, Comrade Trotsky proposed to stop the advance along the line of the river Belaya (near Ufa), leaving the Urals in Kolchak's hands, taking part of the troops from the Eastern Front and sending them to the Southern Front. A heated debate followed. The Central Committee did not agree with Comrade Trotsky, finding that it was impossible to leave the Urals with its factories and railway networks in the hands of Kolchak, where he could soon recover, gather his forces, and again find himself on the Volga. It was necessary first to chase Kolchak beyond the Ural range into the steppes of Siberia and only after that to begin the transfer of troops to the South. The Central Committee rejected Comrade Trotsky's plan and he submitted his resignation. His place was taken by the new Commander-in-Chief, Comrade Kamenev. From that moment on Comrade Trotsky was removed from direct participation from the affairs of the Eastern Front.

In order to understand the line-up among the Party leaders at that moment it is necessary to recall the conflicts between the Eastern Front and the Commander-in-Chief Vatzetis, and indirectly also with me. But at this point

an unexpected episode cut across the course of events. On 8th July, while at the Southern Front in Kozlov, I received a coded telegram from the Council of People's Commissars, from the Kremlin, to the effect that an officer accused of treason had confessed and made depositions from which it was possible to infer that Vatzetis had knowledge of a military conspiracy.

RSFSR

Council of People's Commissars

The Kremlin, Moscow

Strictly Secret All in Code

8th July 1919.

To Trotsky at Kozlov:

Domozhirov, who has confessed and has been definitively proved to be a traitor, has given factual testimony about a conspiracy in which an active part was played by Isayev, who was for a long time attached on duty to the Commander-in-Chief and lived with him in the same apartment. Many other proofs and a whole lot of evidence convict the Commander-in-Chief of knowing about the conspiracy. The Commander-in-Chief has had to be arrested...

This telegram was signed by Dzerzhinsky, [head of the Cheka]; Krestinsky [Secretary of the Central Committee of the Party]; Lenin; and my deputy Sklyansky. It was clear from the names mentioned in the telegram that the reference was to the recently removed Commander-in-Chief. Vatzetis was thus arrested almost immediately after his removal from his post on no less a charge than suspicion of treason. That invested the controversy over strategy with sinister implications. Relations inside the Political Bureau became more strained; the change of the Chief Command became considerably complicated.

To this very day the exact circumstances and implications of this episode are not altogether clear to me. The incident did not have tragic consequences. Since Vatzetis was soon set free and even appointed Professor of the War College, it is safe to assume that his knowledge of any military conspiracy was less than infinitesimal. It is not unlikely that, dissatisfied with his removal from the post of Commander-in-Chief, he had engaged in reckless talk with officers close to him. However, it is decidedly likely that Stalin played quite a role in his arrest. Stalin had a score of old slights to settle with Vatzetis. Moreover, he derived a sense of impunity and safety from the friendly influence he exerted over the head of the Cheka and from the support of the leaders of the Eastern

Front and of the new Commander-in-Chief. He had the added satisfaction of striking an indirect blow at the Commissar of War [Trotsky]. One was conscious of the obvious intrigue behind this episode and of the invisible presence of Stalin behind Dzerzhinsky. Finding support among the leaders of the Eastern Front, Stalin took his revenge against the Revolutionary Military Council of the Republic.

On the 27th July, I was hastily called out to Kozlov by Sokolnikov "because of extraordinary circumstances." There I discovered that the Commander of the Southern Front, Yegoryev, considered Kamenev's plan of operations [for the South] incorrect and, although he was carrying it out, did not expect success. Such also was the attitude of the Chief of the Operational Department, Peremytov, and such also was the opinion held by Sokolnikov himself. At first I did not discuss the matter with anyone except Sokolnikov and did not ask Yegoryev to elaborate when he referred to the irrationality of the plan, but telegraphed to Lenin:

27th July 1919. No.277/s

Without going into an analysis of the controversy on its merits, I consider entirely inadmissible a situation under which a plan is carried out by a person who has no faith in its success. The only course is the immediate (before the beginning of operations) replacement of the Commander of the South by a person who recognises the operative authority of the Commander-in-Chief and agrees with his plan. Perhaps Selivachev will agree with Kamenev. In that case he should be immediately appointed Assistant Commander of the South, so that a week later he may be appointed Commander of the South. Awaiting instructions.

L.D. Trotsky.

[The reply to this telegram came from the Politburo and bore the sole signature of CC's technical secretary:]

28th July 1919

Secret

To Comrade Trotsky in Penza:

The Politburo of the Central Committee has considered your telegram No. 277/s and fully agrees with you concerning the danger of any sort of wavering in the firm execution of an accepted plan. The Political Bureau fully recognises the operative authority of the Commander-in-Chief and requests that you make the necessary explanation to all responsible workers. The Politburo appoints as members of the

Revolutionary Military Council of the Southern Front, in addition to the present members, Smilga, Serebryakov and Lashevich. By order of the Central Committee, Stasova.

[The immediate acknowledgment of the above instructions was addressed to Trotsky's deputy in Moscow for transmission to the Central Committee. It read as follows:]

29th July 1919, No. 284

Secret

To Comrade Sklyansky for transmission to the Central Committee:

Do not understand the sense of your telegram. In view of Yegoryev's doubts I suggest an assistant for him who, if necessary, could replace him. This is the least painful solution of the problem. While in Kozlov, I removed the Chief of Operations, Peremytov, who expressed disagreement with the plan of the Commander-in-Chief and replaced him with Beranda, who I hastily summoned from the Military Inspection. Before I left, by agreement with Sokolnikov and in his presence, I bluntly confronted Yegoryev with the issue of unconditional execution of the Commander-in-Chief's plan. He replied in an extremely categorical way and, as far as I could judge, does not have any mental reservations. Nevertheless, I consider the sending of Selivachev as assistant, after the preliminary conversation the Commander-in-Chief had with him, extremely desirable. I have received no reply to this single proposal except the recommendation to instil (into whom?) the rule of discipline.

I think it is absurd to add to the Revolutionary Military Council, already overstaffed with six members (Yegoryev, Yegorov, Sokolnikov, Okulov, Vladimirov and Serebryakov) two new ones, and suggest that this decision be revoked, especially since Lashevich has been appointed Commandant of Petrograd, while Smilga is a member of Shorin's group.

What is disastrous for the front is the absence of bullets and extreme lack of rifles. The Ninth Army has 20,000 fighters at the ready, but they are all without rifles, and only half of them expect to receive them. Bullets are issued in a frightfully small quantity, which in the event of the slightest complication leads to disastrous consequences. On the basis of observing the situation in the four armies of the Southern Front and conversations with the Commander of the South, I warn you that the whole operation may fail because of the lack of bullets.

Trotsky

PROLETARIANS, TO HORSE!

In the middle of May our advancing and, in large measure, exhausted army had clashed with the fresh troops of Denikin and began to roll back. We lost everything we had gained as well as all of the Ukraine, which had recently been liberated. Tsaritsyn on the left flank of the Southern Front was the indisputable rallying point for any army fight against Kolchak and Denikin. When Denikin captured Sevsk and presented a clear threat to Tula and the capital, a Defence Council was set up in Moscow with Gusev at its head. Since this was the same Gusev who believed that the best way to defend Moscow was by launching an offensive against the Kuban, this appointment was not without a certain irony.

It was perfectly clear that Denikin was more than likely to direct his main thrust against the Ukraine rather than eastward, in order to establish contact with Romania and Poland and transfer his base from Yekaterinodar to Odessa and Sevastopol. Irrespective of the measures undertaken by the Commander-in-Chief to obviate this danger, which was the most serious for the moment, it was necessary to decide at once how to proceed in the impending struggle for the Ukraine. The Revolutionary Military Council of the Fourteenth Army was keeping constant contact with the Staff of the Southern Front. Lenin intensely followed the preparation for the offensive. On the eve of the offensive, the Political Bureau was faced with several problems of grave importance.

The first task of the new Commander-in-Chief was to work out a plan for grouping the forces on the Southern Front. Kamenev was distinguished by optimism and a lively strategic imagination. But his outlook was still comparatively narrow. The social factors of the Southern Front – the workers, the Ukrainian peasants, the Cossacks – were not apparent to him. He approached the Southern Front from the point of view of the commander of the Eastern Front. The easiest thing to do was to concentrate the divisions removed from the East along the Volga and to strike against the Kuban, the headquarters of Denikin. This had been the basis of his plan when he [as Commander of the Eastern Front] promised to supply the divisions in time without stopping his advance. In matters of strategy, I always immediately yielded to the opinion of the Commander-in-Chief. However, my familiarity with the Southern Front prompted me to believe that this plan was fundamentally wrong.

Toward the end of September, I wrote to the Political Bureau:

An all-out offensive along the line of the greatest resistance has proved, as was predicted, to be entirely to the advantage of Denikin... As a result of a month and

a half of fighting...our situation on the Southern Front right now is worse than it was at the moment when the command set out on its preconceived plan. It would be childish to shut one's eyes to this.

The words "as was predicted" clearly referred to the debates that had preceded the acceptance of the strategic plan. These debates had taken place in the beginning of July.

Denikin had managed to transfer his base from the Kuban to the Ukraine. To advance against the Cossacks meant to drive them forcibly in the direction of Denikin. It was clear to me that the main blow should instead be delivered along the line of division between Denikin and the Cossacks, along the strip where the population was entirely against the Cossacks, against Denikin and for us. But my opposition to [Sergei] Kamenev's plan was interpreted as a continuation of the conflict between the Revolutionary Military Council of the Republic and the Eastern Front. Smilga and Gusev, with the collaboration of Stalin, made it look as if I was against the plan because I did not trust the new Commander-in-Chief on general principles. Lenin apparently had the same misgivings. But these misgivings were fundamentally wrong.

On the Don, in Kuban and on the Terek⁷, the counter-revolution was being transformed into a serious and formidable force. The White Generals Kornilov, Alexeyev, Denikin, Kaledin and Krasnov had found support among the Cossacks, especially, of course, among its well-to-do layers. Zinaida Ordzhonikidze writes: "Simultaneously with this, particularly here on the Don, Kuban and Terek, genuinely popular leaders of the real people's army have emerged. It is enough to point to Budyonny, Podtelkov, Kryvoshlykov and Kachubei."

First of all it was necessary to unite the Twelfth Army with the Fourteenth Army, which, owing to the absence of telegraphic connections, was cut off from the Southern Front. Not only were the rears of the two armies already merged by then but both were increasingly obliged to act against one and the same enemy, Denikin. I therefore proposed the removal of the Fourteenth Army from the jurisdiction of the Southern Front, fusing the command of the two armies in the person of the commander of the Fourteenth Army, Yegorov, and his staff, designating this new group of the South-Western Front, with its headquarters at Konotop, and placing it directly under the jurisdiction of the Commander-in-Chief and the General Staff. To maintain the fighting ability of this proposed South-Western Front at the barest minimum, it was

7 The Terek province was a province in the north-eastern Caucasus region.

necessary to exert extraordinary effort to put a stop to banditry, the destruction of railway tracks and the like with the aid of Communist units temporarily transferred from more secure sectors, regional workers from Moscow and even certain absolutely reliable units of the Czech army.

On the 26th August 1919, *Izvestiya* published my communication to the press:

From the Southern Front, where I visited all the armies several times and was in many divisions, I returned with the most profound confidence in the invincibility of the Red Army. All available Red officers throughout the country were immediately sent to the Ukraine by special trains, irrespective of any prior assignments. All political workers, previously assigned to various other armies, had to be sent to the Ukraine, along with boots, bullets and rifles.

The Military Councils of both armies were weak. By agreement between the Ukrainian Council of Defence and the Revolutionary Military Council of both armies, Voroshilov was appointed to suppress the rebellion in the rears of both armies. All persons and institutions engaged in the suppression of insurrections in the Ukraine were placed under his command. The Twelfth Army was without bullets. For the lack of them, it fought against the mutinous colonists in Odessa with hand grenades. Analogous difficulties, as varied as the localities in which they arose, yet essentially the same in nature, were confronted everywhere and on every hand.

Lenin was getting worried. At the very outset of the offensive he wrote to Sklyansky:

I am sick. Had to lie down. Therefore answer by messenger. The delay of the offensive in the direction of Voronezh (from the 1st August to the 10th!!) is monstrous. Denikin's success is tremendous.

What's the matter? Sokolnikov said that there our forces were four times as big as theirs.

What is the matter then? How could we have missed the opportunity so badly?

Tell the Commander-in-Chief that things cannot go on like this. He must pay serious attention.

Hadn't we better send this sort of telegram to the Revolutionary Military Council of the Southern Front (copy to Smilga) in code?

"Utterly inadmissible to delay attack because such delay is handing all of Ukraine over to Denikin and is destroying us. You are responsible for every extra day and

even hour of delaying the offensive. Communicate immediately your explanations and when at last you will begin a resolute offensive.”

Chairman of the Council of Defence,

Lenin.

Within two months the course of military operations had nullified the original plan. Moreover, during these two months of continuous fruitless battles many of the roads were utterly wrecked and the concentration of reserves became incomparably more difficult than in June and July. A radical regrouping of forces was therefore all the more necessary. I suggested that Budyonny's mounted corps be sent by forced marches to the North-east, and that several other units be transferred in that direction. But the Political Bureau, including of course Stalin, throughout this period continued to reject these and other suggestions and persistently approved the directives of the Commander-in-Chief, who continued to reiterate, “the basic plan for the advance along the Southern Front remains unaltered; in other words, the main attack is to be delivered by Shorin's special group, its task being to destroy the enemy in the Don and the Kuban.” Yet in the meantime the offensive had been utterly bogged down. The situation in the Kuban, where the best troops had been sent, became extremely grave and Denikin was moving to the North.

Barmine states:

When things looked blackest, the Central Committee decided to launch a recruiting drive on behalf of the Party. The idea was a good one; anyone who joined us now, at a time when it was far more likely that a Communist would be hanged or shot than that he would find a Government job, had some claim to be regarded as sincere...

We went everywhere, into the factories, offices, schools, saying in substance: “Join a Party which offers you neither privileges nor advantages. If we win, we will build a new world; if we lose we will sell our lives dearly. Who is not with us is against us!” From that small town alone our desperate cause drew 1,500 new adherents. The Military College joined to a man. Our ‘cell’ increased from 15 to 370 members. Among them were a number of former officers of the Imperial Army. Through the length and breadth of Russia this recruiting campaign resulted in the formation of a Party consisting of hundreds of thousands of fighters pledged to achieve miracles. It is the survivors of this period whom Stalin's creatures are exterminating as I write...

[One of the most brutal episodes of the Russian civil war was ‘Mamontov's Raid’ (August 1919), in which a force of counter-revolutionary Don Cossack

cavalry under the White general Konstantin Mamontov, advanced deep into Soviet territory in the south of Russia, disrupting vital Red Army supply and communications links with the front line. The cavalry raids of the White Cossacks under Denikin and Mamontov made it imperative to organise the Red cavalry. Trotsky launched the inspiring slogan: 'Proletarians, to horse!']

By this time the fatal error of the plan had become clear to many of its former proponents, including Lashevich, who had been transferred from the Eastern to the Southern Front. Some three weeks earlier, on the 6th September, I had telegraphed from the front in code to the Commander-in-Chief and to the Central Committee that "the central difficulty of the struggle on the Southern Front has shifted in the direction of Kursk-Voronezh, where there are no reserves."

I called their attention also to the following problems:

The effort to liquidate Mamontov has so far yielded practically no results. The motorised machine gun units were not formed because the machine guns were not received nor even a small number of automobiles. Mamontov is obviously proceeding to link up with his own troops through the Kursk front. Our weak and scattered infantry units hardly disturb him. Lashevich's command is paralysed by the absence of any means of communication. Mamontov's link-up may be regarded as assured. The danger of a breakthrough in the front in the Kursk-Voronezh sector is becoming apparent. Lashevich's next task is to pursue the enemy in an effort to plug that hole.

An attempt will be made to harass Mamontov with guerrilla raids ... The destruction of railways interferes with transfers from the direction of Tsaritsyn to Kursk. Yet the situation urgently demands the transfer of reserves to the West. It may be possible to transfer the mounted corps of Budyonny by forced marches. It is necessary to add that the situation is going from bad to worse because of the complete breakdown of the apparatus of the front. The practical tasks appear to us in the following form:

1. Immediately appoint Selivachev commander of the Southern Front.
2. Selivachev's place should be taken by the assistant commander of the Southern Front, Yegorov.
3. Send the reserves, including the 21st Division, after Mamontov in the direction of Kursk.
4. Turn the Ninth Army from the direction of Novorossiysk to Starobelsk.
5. Transfer the corps of Budyonny as far as possible to right centre.
6. Hasten marching reserves and supplies for the Eighth and Thirteenth Armies.

In addition, I proposed a number of army regroupings which amounted to a liquidation of the failed plan. Serebryakov and Lashevich signed the telegram with me. But the new Commander-in-Chief was just as stubborn and persisted, and the Politburo resolutely supported him. The very same day, on the 6th September, I received this reply by direct wire at Oryol:

The Political Bureau of the Central Committee, having considered the telegram of Trotsky, Serebryakov and Lashevich, has confirmed the reply of the Commander-in-Chief and expresses its surprise with reference to efforts being made to reconsider the basic strategic plan decided upon. 6th September 1919. No.96/ sh.

By order of the Politburo of the Central Committee,

Lenin.

The Red Army Anniversary issue of *Pravda* of 1930 never claimed that Stalin was the chief organiser of the Red Army, but simply said he was the organiser of the Red Cavalry. But this is not the case. The founding of the Red Cavalry was not Stalin's initiative, but mine. Eight years earlier to the day, on 23rd February 1922, *Pravda* had published a somewhat different account of the formation of the Red Cavalry in an article on the Civil War:

Our hardest task was to create a cavalry, because the old cavalry had its home in the steppes, which was populated by wealthy peasants and Cossacks. The creation of the cavalry was the highest achievement of that period...

Mamontov occupied Kozlov and Tambov for a time and was wreaking great havoc. 'Proletarians, to horse!' That slogan of Comrade Trotsky's for the formation of the mounted cavalry was greeted with enthusiasm, and as a result by the 19th October, Budyonny's Army was striking blows at Mamontov in the region of Voronezh.

The campaign for the creation of the Red Cavalry made up the major portion of my work during 1919. As I have said elsewhere, the Red Army was built by the proletarians who were successfully mobilising the peasants. The worker had an advantage over the peasant not only in his general level of culture, but especially in his ability to use new technical weapons. This meant a double advantage for the worker in the Army. With the cavalry it was quite a different matter. The homeland of the cavalymen was the Russian steppes. The best horsemen were the Cossacks. Next to them were the sons of the rich peasants of the steppes who owned horses and knew how to ride them. From this point of view, the cavalry was the most reactionary part of the old army and it supported the tsarist regime longer than any other branch of the military. It

was, therefore, doubly difficult to form a mounted army. It was necessary first of all to accustom the worker to the horse.

We had to get the Petrograd and Moscow proletarians to mount a horse, if only in the role of commissars. Their task as commissars was to create strong and reliable revolutionary cells in the cavalry squadrons and regiments. This was the meaning of my slogan 'Proletarians, to horse!' The whole country, every industrial city, was covered with placards bearing that slogan. I toured the country from end to end and assigned tasks concerning the formation of cavalry squadrons and cavalry regiments by reliable Bolshevik workers. One of my secretaries, Poznansky, was personally occupied in the formation of Red Cavalry units, and with great success, I might add. Only the example of workers on horseback was able to transform the unstable guerrilla detachments into well-trained cavalry units and made possible the formation of a reliable mounted army.

As late as 1926, after my removal from the head of the War Department, and after I had already been subjected to cruel denunciations, the War College published a work of historic research, as I have already mentioned, *How The Revolution Was Fought*, in which the authors, today's well-known Stalinists, wrote: "Comrade Trotsky's slogan, 'Proletarians, to horse!' was the stirring slogan for accomplishing the organisation of the Red Army on those lines."

In other words, in 1926 there was no mention of Stalin as the organiser of the Red Cavalry. And yet three years later, Voroshilov insists upon this great role. Voroshilov writes:

This was the first experiment in uniting cavalry regiments into a single division. Stalin foresaw the might of mounted forces in the Civil War. He thoroughly understood their tremendous significance for a flexible and devastating manoeuvre. In the past no one had experienced such action by cavalry. There was nothing written about it in any scientific military works, and therefore such a proposal evoked either amazement or direct opposition. Trotsky was especially opposed to it.

Voroshilov merely exposes his ignorance of military affairs which is exceeded only by his aptitude for prevarication. The point is that the question of whether we should bring together separate brigades into a special mounted cavalry or to leave them as separate units at the disposal of the front command was a problem that had nothing whatever to do with any appreciation of the cavalry. The most important criterion was the question of the command. Without an exceptional commander at the front who knew and understood

the cavalry, and without reliable means of communication, the creation of special mounted forces would have been unwise, since an excessive massing of cavalry always threatens to undermine the unit's basic advantage, which is its mobility. The disagreements on such matters had an episodic character, and if history were to repeat itself I would again express my doubts.

[Trotsky's opposition to the plan of the Commander-in-Chief in relation to the Southern Front in the end was shown to be correct.] I wrote at the end of September:

In order to evaluate the operational plan, it would not be superfluous to consider its results. The Southern Front has received more forces than any other front has ever had. At the beginning of the offensive the Southern Front had no less than 180,000 soldiers and cavalry, as well as a corresponding number of guns and machine guns. After a month and a half of battles, we are pathetically marking time in the Eastern half of the Southern Front, while in the Western half we have a difficult retreat, a loss of units, the destruction of organisation ... The cause of the failure must be sought entirely in the operational plan ... Units of average resistance were directed ... to localities populated entirely by Cossacks, who were not advancing, but were defending their villages and homes. The atmosphere of a national Don War is exerting a disintegrating influence on our units. Under these conditions Denikin's tanks, skilful manoeuvring and the like, give him a colossal superiority.

Soon it was no longer a question of the plan but of its disastrous consequences, material and psychological. The Commander-in-Chief, in consonance with Napoleon's maxim, had apparently hoped, by persisting in his error, to derive from it all possible advantages and in the end to secure victory. The Political Bureau, although it was losing confidence, persisted in its own decision. On the 21st September our troops abandoned Kursk. On the 13th October Denikin took Oryol and opened up for himself the road to Tula, where the most important munitions factories were concentrated and beyond which lay Moscow. I confronted the Politburo with the alternatives: either change our strategy or evacuate Tula, destroying the war industries there, and resist the direct threat to Moscow. By that time the stubbornness of the Commander-in-Chief, who was himself already discarding parts of the old plan, and the support of the Politburo were broken.

In the middle of October a new grouping of troops for the counter-attack was completed. One group was concentrated to the north-west of Oryol for action against the Kursk-Oryol railway. Another group, east of Voronezh, was headed by Budyonny's mounted corps. This was tantamount to the plan I

had been insisting on. On the 20th our troops took Oryol. The enemy army was shattered by the blows inflicted by the brunt of Budyonny's army and retreated without resistance, having suffered tremendous losses. The eastern part fled to the White capitals Rostov and Novorossiysk, and the western part to the Crimean Peninsula.

FALSIFICATIONS BY ORDZHONIKIDZE AND STALIN

Sergo Ordzhonikidze had established personal direct contact with Stalin and also with Lenin in Moscow. In October 1919, Lenin and Stalin had sent Ordzhonikidze as the head of a Latvian division to a new important sector of the struggle – the Southern Front. On the 15th October, Ordzhonikidze, who had become a stooge of Stalin's, in one of his regular letters to Lenin wrote in alarming terms from the village of Sergievskoe:

Dear Vladimir Ilyich,

Today I thought of coming to Moscow for several hours but decided that it would be better to go to the army. I have now been appointed to the Revolutionary Military Council of the Fourteenth Army. Nonetheless I decided to share with you in the highest degree important impressions which I obtained from my observations during these last two days of the staffs of the local armies. Something incredible, something bordering on treason is happening. A kind of light-minded attitude toward duty, absolute lack of understanding of the seriousness of the moment is present. There is not even a hint of order in the staffs. The staff at the front is a rowdy house, and Stalin is only beginning to bring about some order. Among the units, a mood has been created that the cause of the Soviet government is lost, that nothing can be done about it anyway. In the Fourteenth Army an interloper by the name of Shuba, who calls himself an anarchist attacked our staff, arrested everyone, took away the trains and sent the Brigade Commander to the front to supervise the restoration of the situation. In the Thirteenth Army matters are no better. Generally what you hear and see here is anecdotal. Where are all those orders, discipline and the regular army of Trotsky? How could he have let things descend into such a mess? This is simply incomprehensible. And, finally, Vladimir Ilyich, where did they get the idea that Sokolnikov was any good as an army Commander? Is it possible that our military leaders are unable to think of anything cleverer than that? I suffer for the army and the country. Is it possible that in order not to wound Sokolnikov's vanity he has to be permitted to play with a whole army? But enough, I will not disturb you anymore. Perhaps even this was too much but I cannot make myself keep still. The moment is threatening in the highest degree. I come to the end, dear Vladimir Ilyich. Strongly, strongly, I press your hands.

Greetings, Sergo.

[The truth about Sokolnikov is that he played a decisive role in the defeat of Denikin on the Southern Front.] Denikin was driven back and retreated towards Kuban. Sokolnikov at the head of the Eighth Army pursued Denikin, captured arms and ammunition from the tsarist General, recruited deserters from his ranks into the Red Army, and by a flanking movement along the seashore in the direction of Novorossiysk delivered the final blow that created utter panic among the retreating Whites. Thousands of Cossacks surrendered. Novorossiysk with its rich stores of arms, ammunition and military equipment fell into the hands of the Red Army. After this brilliant military achievement at the head of the Eighth Army – the movement from Voronezh to Novorossiysk became a classic of the Civil War – Sokolnikov returned to Moscow in April 1920 and resumed his editorial duties on *Pravda*, became active again as member of the Moscow Committee of the Party, and was placed in charge of the School for Party Propagandists. But not for long.

In August, he was appointed Commander-in-Chief of the Turkestan Front and delegated to organise the Soviet Government in Bokhara. He led the military operations against the Basmakhy at Fergana, defeated the Basmakh leader Kholkhadza, effected drastic political and economic reforms, including a reform of the money system, sovietising the country, and laid the foundation for the future Soviet activities of the Uzbek, Kirghiz and Turkmen leaders of a later day. Early in 1921, he fell seriously ill, and was on sick leave for the greater part of the year, returning to activity late in 1921. As a member of the Collegium of the Commissariat of Finance, he was in practice People's Commissar of Finance (after Krestinsky's appointment as Ambassador to Berlin), an appointment that was formalised in 1922 and which he continued to hold until 1926. He represented the Soviet Government in numerous economic and diplomatic negotiations beginning with The Hague Economic Conference of 1922, became Deputy Chairman of the State Planning Commission in 1926, Chairman of the State Oil Syndicate in 1928, Ambassador to Great Britain in 1929 and Deputy Commissar of Foreign Affairs in 1934. Whilst still in the latter post he was arrested in 1936 and sentenced to imprisonment as an 'enemy of the people' in 1937.

[In 1923 Stalin told the story of the Southern Front, ostensibly in order to demonstrate certain political principles, but actually in order to settle certain political scores of his own.] This is what the Stalinist historiography states:

During September and early October 1919 Denikin achieved considerable success on the Southern Front. On 13th October he was able to take Oryol. To address the dire and dangerous situation for the country created as a result of long-term failures on the Southern Front, the Party Central Committee sent Comrade Stalin to the Revolutionary Council of the [Southern] Front. Comrade Stalin developed a new strategic plan for the fight against Denikin, which was approved by Lenin and the Party Central Committee. The implementation of this plan led to the complete defeat and destruction of Denikin.

In his article 'On the Strategy and Tactics of the Communists', Stalin says the following about the situation on the Southern Front:

The main features of political strategy can be easily outlined by drawing an analogy with military strategy, for example, during the Civil War in the struggle against Denikin. Everybody remembers when in late 1919, Denikin was almost at the gates of Tula. During this time there was an interesting debate among our military men about where to strike a decisive blow against the armies of Denikin. Some military men proposed that the main direction of the blow should be the Tsaritsyn-Novorossiysk line. Others, on the contrary, proposed that the decisive blow should be delivered on the Voronezh-Rostov line, in order that, proceeding along this line, we would split Denikin's army into two parts, then smash them one by one. ... The first plan was faulty because it assumed we would have to advance through a part of the country (the Don Region) hostile to Soviet power and thus would suffer heavy casualties; it was also dangerous because it opened the way for Denikin's armies to Moscow via Tula and Serpukhov. The second plan for a decisive blow was the only correct one because it assumed the advance of our main group through areas (Voronezh Province and Donbas) that were sympathetic towards the Soviet power, and thus did not involve any especially high losses, also it would disrupt the operations of the main body of Denikin troops in their advance on Moscow. Most of the military voted for the second plan, and this determined the fate of the war against Denikin.

This fairy tale might well have served Stalin as an example taken at random from the field of tactics in order to illustrate some political consideration or other. Actually this example was not at all accidental. This was in 1923. Stalin was anticipating a formidable attack from Lenin and was systematically striving to undermine his authority. The Party leaders knew very well that the "erroneous and costly plan" had been supported not just by some of the "military" (i.e. the Commander-in-Chief), but by most of the Politburo, headed by Lenin. Since Stalin himself had at the last moment hastily detached himself from this majority, he placed the responsibility on the shoulders of Lenin alone. He preferred to talk about the differences among the "military"

without mentioning the struggle within the Politburo, however, the Party leaders remembered all too well that as far back as July I had raised this plan. Stalin backed this alternative plan only at the end of October or the beginning of November, by which time the Commander-in-Chief himself had in practice renounced his initial plan.

However, on 19th November 1924, ten months after Lenin's death, Stalin went further. He then made the first attempt to create a deliberately fictitious version of the struggle on the Southern Front and to direct it against me:

It happened in the autumn of 1919. The offensive against Denikin had failed... Denikin takes Kursk. Denikin advances on Oryol. Comrade Trotsky is recalled from the Southern Front to a session of the Central Committee. The Central Committee recognises the situation as alarming and decides to send new military workers to the Southern Front, recalling Comrade Trotsky. The new military workers demand "non-interference" by Comrade Trotsky in the affairs of the Southern Front. Comrade Trotsky retires from direct participation in the affairs of the Southern Front. Operations on the Southern Front all the way to the capture of Rostov-on-the-Don and Odessa by us take place without Comrade Trotsky. Let anybody try to deny these facts!

True, I left the Southern Front about the 10th October and went to Petrograd. Our counter-attack on the Southern Front was to begin on that same day. Everything was in place: the concentration of units for the attack was almost completed, and my presence was much more necessary around Petrograd which was in mortal danger of capture by Yudenich.

Looking back over three years of Civil War and examining the journals and the correspondence of my trips along the various fronts, I see that I almost never had occasion to accompany a victorious army, to participate in an attack or directly to share its victories with others. My journeys were not a holiday. I went only to those sectors in distress after the enemy had broken through the front. My task was to turn fleeing regiments into an attacking force. I retreated with the troops, but never advanced with them. As soon as the routed divisions were restored to order and the command gave the signal to advance, I bade farewell to the Army and went to another unfavourable sector, or returned for several days to Moscow in order to solve the accumulated problems of the Centre. Thus, for three years I literally did not have occasion even once to see the happy faces of soldiers after a victory or to enter with them into captured cities. I did not visit the Southern Front even once throughout the entire period of our victorious offensive.

TROTSKY'S "INTERFERENCE"

According to the official story we get the following picture:

Without any doubt, the autumn of 1919 was the most difficult time for the Soviet Republic. We were swiftly approaching the decisive moment of the entire Civil War. The Army of General Denikin advanced ever closer to Moscow. Already their forces had taken Kursk and Oryol, and Tula was under threat. From there it is a mere arm's length to Moscow. General Yudenich was again preparing to advance on Petrograd. The situation was most desperate. In many armies the mood was panicky. This mood was being transmitted to the population – especially since among the great mass of the population there was no longer much sympathy for the Soviet Government. Many desired the coming of the Whites as deliverance. Everywhere organisations for aid for the White Army began to raise their heads, even in Moscow itself. Here the food situation had become sharper than ever. In the capitals, especially in Petrograd, there was real hunger. Instead of bread, unground oats were being issued. Industry was almost at a standstill; there was no fuel and there was nothing with which to provision the army.

A breakthrough in the front was necessary. A steel hand was necessary. Who was experienced in military affairs and possessed the confidence and support of the army and the masses? Who? – Only Stalin.

In his article 'Stalin and the Red Army', written in 1929, K. Voroshilov states:

In this estimate of directions, the basic qualities of Comrade Stalin as a proletarian revolutionist and the real strategist of the Civil War were revealed:

Stalin placed before the Central Committee three main conditions: 1) Trotsky must not interfere in the affairs of the Southern Front and must not cross beyond its line of demarcation; 2) a whole series of workers who Stalin considered incapable of restoring order among the troops must be immediately recalled from the Southern Front, and 3) new workers selected by Stalin who would be capable of carrying out this task must immediately be sent to the Southern Front. These conditions were accepted in full.

At this stage everything boils down only to the hazy assertion concerning new military workers who demanded "non-interference" by Comrade Trotsky (from whom?). As a matter of fact, the thirteen decrees issued by the Central Committee on the 15th October were proposed by me in written form and unanimously approved by everybody, including Stalin. Lenin, Kamenev, Krestinsky and I were on the Commission which, in accordance with my proposal, was charged with the task of sending new workers to the Southern Front to replace old workers worn out by constant defeats. Stalin

was not on this Commission. Which of the new workers demanded my “non-interference”, and from whom, in particular, Stalin does not state.

According to S. Dmitrievsky:

Stalin went to the Southern Front in the capacity of a member of the Revolutionary Military Council with unlimited powers. His headquarters were at Serpukhov not far from Moscow. From there he guided military activity. Occasionally – in serious moments – he would come to Moscow. He was in Moscow when the question was decided: whether or not to surrender Petrograd to the advancing Yudenich. He was against surrendering. He was convinced: ‘We shall win!’.

Where? How? When? By whom? Yet even while crediting Stalin with the revision of the erroneous plan, in 1929 Voroshilov did not dare to assert that the erroneous plan was mine. By his very silence on that point he admitted that I was an opponent of this plan. However, this oversight was likewise filled in by the newest historiography. We now have it on the authority of Zinaida Ordzhonikidze that:

Stalin ... categorically rejected the old plan to smash Denikin worked out by the General Staff, headed by Trotsky ... “This insane proposed march through a roadless, hostile country, threatens us with complete collapse,” wrote Stalin in a note to Lenin ... Instead of the plan already rejected by life itself, Stalin worked out a plan for the advance of the Reds through proletarian Kharkov and the Donets Basin on Rostov ... The strategy of the Great Stalin secured victory for the Revolution.

Stalin repeats almost word for word those arguments against the July-September plan which I had developed at first orally and then in writing and which he had rejected together with the majority of the Political Bureau. Stalin asks a question concerning the plans of the chief command in Moscow who are proposing the old plan of delivering the main blow to the enemy through the Eastern flank.

“What impels the Commander-in-Chief to defend the old plan?” asks Stalin in a letter to Lenin.

Evidently, sheer stubbornness, or if you wish factionalism, most stupid and most dangerous to the Republic, fostered in the Commander-in-Chief by the strategic fighting cock attached to him ... The other day the Commander-in-Chief gave Shorin a directive to advance upon Novorossiysk through the Don Steppes along the line which might be convenient for our [plans].

But Stalin sharply rejected this plan. He proposed his own.

Since all the members of the Political Bureau were perfectly familiar with the development of the question, it could not, at that time, have even entered Stalin's head to place the responsibility for the old plan on me. On the contrary, he blamed the Commander-in-Chief and the 'strategic fighting cock' attached to him, the very same Gusev on whom he had relied in July when the command was changed. In that note Stalin argued:

It is not even necessary to prove that this 'proposed' mad march in the midst of enemy territory under conditions of complete direction-less threatens us with utter collapse. It is not hard to understand that this march on Cossack villages, as recent practice has demonstrated, can only unite the Cossacks against us around Denikin. It can only serve to present him as the saviour of the Don and strengthen his position. It is precisely for that reason that it is necessary without losing time to change the old plan which has already been rejected in practice and substitute for it the plan of attack through Kharkov and the Donets Basin on Rostov.

Stalin continues:

In the first place, here we shall not face a hostile community, but on the contrary, one sympathising with us, which will ease our progress. In the second place, we shall receive a most important railroad network (the Donetsk one) and the main artery that feeds the army of Denikin – the Voronezh-Rostov line. In the third place, with this movement we shall cut Denikin's army into two parts, of which the volunteer army we shall leave for Kazhno, while the Cossack army we shall attack from the rear. In the fourth place, we have the possibility of provoking a quarrel between the Cossacks and Denikin, who, in the event of our successful movement, will attempt to move the Cossacks to the west, against their will. In the fifth place, we receive coal while Denikin remains without coal. We must accept this plan without delay.

To sum up, the old plan, which is already rejected by events, cannot be resuscitated under any circumstances – it is too dangerous for the Republic, and will surely make Denikin's position easier. It must be replaced by another plan. The circumstances and conditions are not only right but dictate such a change.

Without it my work on the Southern Front will be senseless, criminal and unnecessary. This gives me the right or rather obligates me to go away anywhere, even to Hell, rather than remain on the Southern Front.

Yours,

Stalin.

Stalin's telegram came at the very moment that the Commander-in-Chief himself was acting contrary to his own plan, staging a direct frontal attack

with a group of shock-troops instead of concentrating them in Denikin's Cossack rear. There was nothing the Political Bureau could do except to sanction after the event the substitution of the new plan for the old. After receiving this telegram, Lenin in his own hand wrote an order to the High Command about changing the directive. Stalin's plan was accepted. According to official legend, its realisation was followed by the smashing of Denikin – and a decisive change in the entire situation on the fronts of the Civil War in favour of the Reds.

Whether such a decision was actually taken, or whether the Political Bureau simply accepted the accomplished fact, rejoicing inwardly, it is not possible to establish on the basis of published documents, nor is it of much significance. [However, there is the following document, which speaks for itself:]

Excerpt

Secret

From the Protocol of the Session of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party (Bolshevik) of 14th September 1919.

Present: Comrades Lenin, Trotsky, [L.B.] Kamenev, Krestinsky.

Considered:

5. Declaration by Comrades Stalin and Serebryakov concerning reinforcements for the Southern Front and concerning the transfer of certain persons, and Comrade Stalin's telegram in support of this declaration as an ultimatum.

Decided:

5. (a) To request Comrade Lenin to send Comrade Smilga a coded telegram with inquiry concerning the Political Bureau's opinion about a possible transfer.

(b) To request Comrade Trotsky to transmit to Commander-in-Chief Kamenev in the name of the Government the political economic directive about the necessity to capture Kursk and to move upon Kharkov and the Donets Basin, and about the distribution of reinforcements on the basis of this directive between the Southern and South-Eastern fronts, these reinforcements to be removed from the Eastern and Kazakhstan fronts (the exact text of the directive is herewith attached). Also, to suggest to Vladimir Ilyich personally to talk matters over with the Commander-in-Chief in accordance with the contents of the above directive.

(c) To inform Comrade Stalin that the Politburo considers it absolutely inadmissible to back up practical suggestions with threats of resignation.

STALIN DEFIES LENIN

[On 4th December 1919, Ivan Smirnov reported:]

Kolchak has lost his army ... There will be no more battles ... I hope to capture the entire mobile staff before Station Taiga ... The tempo of the pursuit is such that by the 20th December Barnaul and Novonikolayevsk will be in our hands.

[Lenin and Trotsky wrote to Stalin, who was at the time on the Revolutionary Military Council of the South-Western Front:]

No.36/sh.

20th January 1920,

To Comrade Stalin,

Member of the Revolutionary Military Council of the South-Western Front

The situation in the Caucasus is becoming increasingly serious in character. Judging by yesterday's situation the possibility of our losing Rostov and Novocherkassk is not excluded, as also the enemy's attempt to develop his success further to the North with a threat against the Don Territory. Undertake extraordinary measures for expediting the transfer of the 42nd and the Latvian divisions and for reinforcing their fighting potential. I expect that, realising the general situation, you will exert your energy to the utmost and will achieve impressive results.

Lenin.

[Nearly two weeks later, they wrote again to Stalin:]

No.9/sh

3rd February 1920.

The Central Committee deems it necessary in order to save the situation that you travel immediately to the right wing of the Caucasian Front by way of Debaltsevo, where Shorin is at present. At the same time, you will have to undertake extraordinary measures for the transfer of considerable reinforcements and workers from the South-Western Front. To stabilise the situation, you are inducted into the staff of the Revolutionary Military Council of the Caucasian Front, remaining at the same time on the Revolutionary Military Council of the South-Western Front.

Lenin. Trotsky.

[Stalin apparently raised objections to the new assignment, which drew the following rejoinder:]

No.512.

4th February 1920.

The Central Committee does not insist upon your journey, on condition that in the course of the next few weeks you will concentrate all your attention and all your energy on servicing the Caucasian Front in preference to the interests of the South-Western Front. Arzhanov is being sent to Voronezh to expedite the necessary transfers. Please show him the necessary co-operation and inform us accurately about the course of transfers.

Chairman of the Council of Defence, Lenin.

Chairman of the Revolutionary Military Council of the Republic, Trotsky.

Lenin understood Stalin's motives. He no longer insisted. On the 10th February 1920 he wrote to Stalin: "I have not lost hope that the whole matter will be adjusted without transferring you..."

[One week later Lenin telegraphed Stalin:]

No.34. 19th February 1920.

[...] The Political Bureau cannot ask you to come in person, since it considers the mopping up of Denikin as the most important and pressing task, which is why you have to expedite reinforcements to the Caucasian Front to the best of your ability.

Lenin.

No.970. 20th February 1920.

Absolutely Secret In Code

Lenin, Kremlin, Moscow. Copy for the Central Committee of the Party.

It is not clear to me why the concern about the Caucasian Front is imposed first of all upon me. In the order of things the responsibility for strengthening the Caucasian Front rests entirely with the Revolutionary Military Council of the Republic whose members, according to my information, are in excellent health, and not with Stalin, who is overloaded with work anyway.

Stalin

No.37/sh.

20th February 1920.

The concern for expediting the shipment of reinforcements from the South-Western Front to the Caucasian Front has been imposed upon you. Generally one must try to help in every way possible and not quibble about departmental jurisdictions.

Lenin

While stubbornly refusing to accept orders, Stalin was always grumbling about the lack of supplies, as is shown by the following note from Lenin to E. Sklyansky, dated 15th October 1919:

Absolutely necessary for the Southern Front are cavalry, radio stations, as well as light field mobile stations, which are available in large quantities in the stores of the chief military engineering department. Immediately give out an order about a rapid transmission to the Southern Front 50 pieces each of both types. This is demanded by Stalin who complains exceedingly about insufficient communications.

Write to tell me what exactly you have done and, by the way, order for me at the GVI a short report of the general number of radio stations they have and their disposal among the troops.

Chairman of the Council of Defence,

V. Ulyanov, Lenin.

THE POLISH WAR

[One of the most momentous wars of the 20th century was the conflict between Bolshevik Russia and the bourgeois Polish Republic under Jozef Klemens Pilsudski, which reached a dramatic climax during the summer of 1920 with the defeat of the Red Army under Tukhachevsky at the gates of Warsaw. The Polish War was more than the final episode of the Russian Civil War. It was a decisive turning point in world history. The defeat of the Red Army set the seal on the defeat of the European Revolution and brought about the isolation of the Russian Revolution in conditions of frightful backwardness, which was the material condition for the bureaucratic degeneration and the victory of the Stalinist counter-revolution.

[In February 1919, Pilsudski sent his troops north-east, capturing Vilno (Vilnius) from the Lithuanians. By the autumn of 1919, the Poles were preparing for another thrust into Belorussia and the Ukraine. This act of

aggression meant war with the Soviet Republic. Rejecting Lenin's offer of a frontier settlement, on 25th April 1920 Pilsudski launched a sudden offensive deep into the Ukraine. By 7th May, Kiev had fallen to the Poles without resistance. But the Polish celebrations were short-lived. Trotsky, no longer concerned about the White threat, threw a sizeable force of battle-hardened troops against the Poles who were forced back across the border.

[Mikhail Nikolayevich Tukhachevsky was a twenty-seven-year-old former tsarist lieutenant who had joined the Bolshevik cause shortly after the triumph of the Revolution in 1917. Considered by many a military genius, Tukhachevsky had served with distinction throughout the Civil War. On 9th January 1920 Tukhachevsky, from Kursk, wrote a despairing letter to Trotsky, the Chairman of the Revolutionary Military Council of the Republic, in Moscow:]

I appeal to you with this urgent plea to free me from unemployment. For almost three weeks I have been at the headquarters of the South-Western Front for no good reason. I have done nothing for two months. I can find out neither the cause of this delay nor can I secure a further appointment. If during the almost two years that I have commanded various armies I have demonstrated any merit at all, I beg you to give me the opportunity to apply my talents to actual work, and if none such can be found at the front, then please let me have something to do in transportation or in the Commissariat of War.

Army Commander Tukhachevsky.

[Tukhachevsky was later put in charge of the Red Army in its main front against Pilsudski, where he achieved remarkable successes. Under his leadership, at first the Red Army advanced rapidly into Poland. Even Pilsudski referred to Tukhachevsky with respect: "With such a march upon Warsaw, due undoubtedly to his will and energy, Tukhachevsky has proved that he has become one of those Generals who are altogether superior to the ordinary average commander." On 12th July, Minsk, the Belarusian capital, fell to the Bolsheviks followed by Vilno on the 14th and Grodno on the 19th. In his order of the day for 20th July Tukhachevsky sounded a euphoric note: "The fate of the world revolution is being decided in the West; the way leads over the corpse of Poland to a universal conflagration... To Warsaw!"] According to Barmine:

A day came when the officers, commanding their various units, read to their men on parade the orders issued by Tukhachevsky as Commander-in-Chief and by Kork, the Sixteenth Army Commander. Tukhachevsky concluded by detailing for

our information the objectives of the campaign. 'Forward, to Vilno, Minsk and Warsaw!' and Kork took up the refrain with a 'Forward, Sixteenth Army' adding, 'For the liberation of the workers of Poland and in the name of the Communist International, forward!' Vilno and Minsk were taken without difficulty; we were but fifteen kilometres from Warsaw. I shall make no effort to give a detailed history of the campaign which I saw, much as Stendhal's soldier saw the Battle of Waterloo, in terms of forced marches, first towards Warsaw and then away from it. We advanced without meeting any very serious resistance, so rapidly that our baggage train was sometimes as much as a hundred or hundred and fifty kilometres to our rear. Our army was stretched out along the roads like string. That our communications were in danger of being cut was obvious to all.

... The opening offensive had been crowned by such complete success and pushed forward with such enthusiasm, that the reserves had become involved without orders, breaking discipline and merely confusing the operations.

The enemy avoided engagement, the population remained hostile. Supplies became increasingly difficult; at times the guns could not get any ammunition. The back of the Red Army was broken beneath the walls of Warsaw by the French artillery. We began to fall back *en masse* hundreds of kilometres homewards along the way we had come in fear of finding our communications cut. Tukhachevsky's army, the Political Commissars of which Unszlicht, Rakovsky and Smilga (all three imprisoned during the years 1933-37) had, at the last moment, not been supported by the cavalry of Budyonny and Voroshilov. These mounted formations, under the direction of, among others, a little-known member of the Central Committee named Stalin, had manoeuvred without reference to the main body in an attempt to win a contributory victory at Lvov... The result had been two defeats.

[The swift success of Tukhachevsky aroused in Lenin's mind the tantalising prospect of the Red Army carrying out a revolutionary war and breaking through to Germany, helping the German working class to establish a Socialist Republic. But Trotsky was unconvinced both on military and political grounds.]

I was opposed to the march on Warsaw because, considering the weakness of our forces and resources, it could end successfully only on condition of an immediate insurrection in Poland itself, and there was absolutely no assurance of that. I have expounded the essence of the conflict in the most general terms in my autobiography. At the end of 1921, in connection with a polemic concerning the militia and other questions, I wrote: "Unsecured offensives are generally speaking the weak side of Comrade Tukhachevsky, who is one of the most gifted of our young military leaders." The reference here was not only to his theoretical abilities, but above all, to his march on Warsaw. The majority

of the Political Bureau undoubtedly relied on his over-optimistic estimation of the situation in deciding the question against my advice.

The chief initiator of the campaign was Lenin. He was supported against me by Zinoviev, Stalin and even by the cautious [L.B.] Kamenev. Rykov was one of the Central Committee members who sided with me on the issue, but he was not yet a member of the Political Bureau. Radek was also opposed to the Polish adventure. All the secret documents of that time are at the disposal of the present ruling circles of the Kremlin, and if there were at least one line in those documents affirming the latter day version of this venture, it would have been published long ago. It is precisely the unsupported character of the [official] version, and moreover the radical contradiction of one assertion by another, which shows that here too we have to deal with the same Thermidorian mythology. As Barmine explains:

The War Council at this time was planning a large-scale offensive against Warsaw, which was to be undertaken because Lenin wished it though Trotsky had raised several objections. We knew nothing of what was happening in the higher circles of the Party, but the Sixteenth Army was destined, apparently, to a feverish and chaotic existence.

On the 30th April, I wrote to the Central Committee of the Party: "Precisely because it is a life and death struggle, it will have an extremely intensive and severe character." Hence it was necessary "to evaluate the war with Poland not as merely the task of the Western Front but as the central task of all of Workers' and Peasant's Russia." On the 2nd May, I issued a general warning through the press against overly optimistic hopes for a revolution in Poland:

That the war will end with the workers' revolution in Poland there can be no doubt; but at the same time there is no basis for supposing that the war will begin with such a revolution ... It would be extremely light-minded to think that the victory ... will simply fall into our laps." On the 5th May, in a report to the Joint Session of All Soviet Institutions, I said: "It would be a grave error to suppose that history will begin by opening the Polish workers' revolution for our sakes and therefore will free us from the necessity of waging an armed struggle." And I concluded: "Comrades, I should like you to carry away from this meeting as your chief conclusion the thought that the struggle still ahead of us will be a hard and intense struggle.

The outcome of the Polish War has carved its way into the consciousness of the army, especially of the young commanding officers and the commissar staff like a razor. From this sharp razor has grown the urge to study. Thousands

of commanders and commissars who during the Civil War seemed to have emerged from the underground bringing to the Army courage and initiative and moral authority, have turned seriously to their military education after the results of the Polish campaign.

The War with Poland revealed the weak as well as the strong sides of the Red Army of those days: revolutionary loyalty, unexampled enthusiasm and the greatest endurance. Nevertheless, together with these [there was also] insufficient preparation, organisational weakness and a lack of stability. The Army advanced without respite, but it also rolled back without stopping.

“At the present time, the Western Front is the most important front of the Republic,” states an order of the 9th May, signed by me at Smolensk. “The organs of supply must be prepared, not for an easy and brief campaign but for a prolonged and stubborn struggle.” All my military orders and public declarations of that time were permeated with this idea. Tukhachevsky was getting ready to take Warsaw. The rapid advance of our armies toward the Vistula had compelled the Polish command to concentrate all efforts and, with the aid of the French Military Mission, considerable reserves in the regions of Warsaw and Lublin.

At this decisive moment, the line of operations on the South-Western Front diverged at right angles from the line of operations on the main Western Front. When the danger to Tukhachevsky’s army became clearly evident and the Commander-in-Chief ordered Yegorov, commanding the South-Western Front, to shift its direction sharply toward Zamostye-Tomashev, to support Tukhachevsky by striking at the rear of the Polish troops near Warsaw, the command of the South-Western Front, encouraged by Stalin, continued to move to the West.

Particularly serious consequences flowed from his [Stalin’s] insubordination at the time of the Polish Campaign. One of the reasons that the catastrophe near Warsaw assumed such extraordinary proportions was the behaviour of the command of the Western group of the Southern armies. Tukhachevsky’s front was approaching Warsaw. The South-Western Front was moving on Lemberg [Lvov]. In the course of three or four days, the General Staff could not obtain the execution of its orders, until I insisted. The chief political figure in the Revolutionary Military Council of the [South-Western] group was Stalin, who was waging his own war. He wanted at all costs to enter Lvov at the same time that Smilga and Tukhachevsky were to enter Warsaw.

That possibility [i.e., the taking of Warsaw by Tukhachevsky] was lost only because the Budyonny-Voroshilov Cavalry, in agreement with the directives

of Yegorov-Stalin and contrary to the orders of the Commander-in-Chief, turned toward Lublin several days late. For three or four days our General Staff could not secure the execution of this order. Was it not more important to take possession of Lvov itself than to help "others" to take Warsaw? Only after repeated demands reinforced by threats did the South-Western command change direction, but by then the delay of several days had already played its fatal role. Unfortunately, I might add, I secured this change of direction too late. On the 16th August the Poles launched their counter-offensive and forced our troops to roll back.

The capture of Lvov, which in itself was not devoid of military significance, could have been invested with revolutionary significance by raising an insurrection of the people of Galicia against Polish rule. But that required time. The tempos of the military and revolutionary tasks did not coincide in the least. From the moment that the danger of a decisive counter-attack near Warsaw became apparent, the continuation of the advance on Lvov became not only pointless but downright criminal. However, at this point jealousy between the two fronts intervened. Stalin, according to Voroshilov's own admission, did not hesitate to violate rules and orders.

[The criminal nature of Stalin's conduct is proved by the words of Pilsudski himself:] "Our situation seemed to me utterly hopeless," wrote Pilsudski. "I saw the only bright spot on the dark horizon in Budyonny's failure to launch his attack on my rear ... the weakness which was exhibited by the Twelfth Army," i.e. the army which, on the orders of Commissar Stalin, had failed to support Tukhachevsky's army and had broken away from it.

If Stalin and Voroshilov and the illiterate Budyonny had not been "waging war on their own account" in Galicia and the Red Cavalry had been at Lublin in time, the Red Army would not have suffered the disaster which forced upon the country the Peace of Riga, which by cutting us off from Germany exerted a tremendous influence on the future development of both countries. After the hopes awakened by the determined drive on Warsaw, the defeat reverberated like an earthquake throughout the Party, upsetting its equilibrium and finding partial expression in the so-called Trade Union Discussion.

REWRITING HISTORY

During the secret debates on the Polish War at a closed session of the Tenth Congress of the Party, Stalin came out with the declaration, equally startling in its viciousness and untruthfulness, that Smilga, the leading member of

the Revolutionary Military Council of the Western Front had “deceived the Central Committee” by “promising” to take Warsaw by a definite date and by failing to make good his “promise”. The actions of the South-Western Front, i.e., of Stalin himself, had presumably been determined by the “promise” of Smilga, on whom therefore, lay the responsibility for the catastrophe. In silent hostility the Congress listened to the sullen orator with the yellow glint in his eyes.

With that speech of his Stalin hurt no one but himself. Not a single vote supported him. I protested on the spot against this startling insinuation: Smilga’s “promise” meant merely that he had hoped to take Warsaw; but that hope did not eliminate the element of the unexpected, which is peculiar to all wars, and under no circumstances did it give anybody the right to act on the basis of an *a priori* calculation instead of the actual development of the operations. Lenin, terribly upset by the dissensions, joined in the discussion and expressed himself to the effect that we did not want to blame anybody personally. Why does Stalin not publish the stenographic record of this debate?

In 1929, A. Yegorov, former Commander of the South-Western Front during the Polish Campaign, attempted to justify his action in a special monograph entitled *Lvov-Warsaw*:

... It is precisely in this respect that all our historians have criticised the campaign on the South-Western Front. No one acquainted with this campaign on the basis of writings now extant will consider it a secret that the explanation for the failure of the Western operations is directly connected with the actions on the South-Western Front. Accusations made in this sense against the command of the Front come down basically to this, that the South-Western Front carried on a completely independent operational policy, without taking into consideration either the general situation on the entire Polish Front or the action of the neighbouring Western Front; at the decisive moment they did not render to the latter the necessary co-operation ... Such, in general outline, is the version reiterated in all works devoted more or less to the question of the mutual interaction of the front in 1920, including even the most recent publications ... We find, for example, in the serious and interesting work of M. Movchin, *The Subsequent Operations According to the Experience of the Marne and the Vistula* (published by the State Publishers in 1928) a direct reference to ‘the failure by the South-Western Front to carry out the categorical directives of the Commander-in-Chief concerning the advance of the First Mounted Army upon Zamostye-Tomashev’ (page 74). The graduates of our War College have studied the history of the Polish Campaign on the basis of these and analogous statements, and continue to carry away with them into the ranks of our Army corresponding impressions. To put it more briefly, the legend about the

disastrous role of the South-Western Front in 1920 ... apparently does not evoke at present any doubt and is recognised as a fact which the future generation of tacticians and strategists are supposed to study.

It is not at all surprising that Yegorov, who as Commander-in-Chief of the South-Western Front bore a serious responsibility for the wilful strategy of Stalin, proceeds to minimise the gravity of his mistake by offering an interpretation of the military events of 1920 less unfavourable to himself. However, suspicion is at once evoked by the fact that Yegorov made his attempt at self-defence only nine years after the event, when "the legend about the disastrous role of the South-Western Front" had already managed, according to his own words, to find definitive confirmation and even to become a part of military history. This tardiness is explained by the fact that the Army and the country, having suffered a great deal because of the failure of the Polish Campaign, would have indignantly resented any falsification, especially by those responsible for the failure. He had to wait and keep quiet.

As for me, guided by my concern for the prestige of the Government as a whole and the desire not to inject quarrels into the Army which was sufficiently disturbed anyway, I did not remind them publicly about the sharp conflict preceding the campaign with so much as a single word. Yegorov had to wait for the establishment of the totalitarian regime before he could come out with a rebuttal. Lacking in independence, the cautious Yegorov was undoubtedly writing by direct assignment from Stalin, although that name, incredible as it may seem, remains entirely unmentioned in the book. Let us remember that 1929 opens the first period of the systematic revision of the past.

But if Yegorov tried indirectly to minimise Stalin's guilt along with his own, he did not yet try to place the blame on the other side. Nor was this done by Voroshilov in the thoroughly apologetic article signed by him, 'Stalin and the Red Army', published during the same year, 1929. "Only the failure of our troops near Warsaw," Voroshilov states vaguely, "interrupted the advance of the Mounted Army which had made ready to attack Lvov and was at the time ten kilometres from it." However, the matter could not rest with mere self-justification. In such questions Stalin never stops half way. The moment did finally arrive when the responsibility for the failure of the front could be placed on those who had interfered with the march on Lvov. In 1935, S. Rabinovich in his *History of the Civil War* wrote:

The First Army, which became involved in the battle for Lvov, could not directly help the Western Front without taking Lvov. It could not have given greater aid

to the Western Front because that would have entailed the transfer of large forces near Lvov. Notwithstanding that, Trotsky categorically demanded the withdrawal of the First Mounted Army from Lvov and its concentration near Lublin to strike a blow along the rear of the Polish armies advancing on the flank of the troops of the Western Front ... In consequence of this profoundly erroneous directive of Trotsky, the First Mounted had to abandon the capture of Lvov without being able at the same time to offer help to the armies of the Western Front.

Stalin and Voroshilov, preoccupied with the occupation of Galicia, an objective of only secondary importance, simply did not want to help Tukhachevsky to achieve the central task of the advance on Warsaw. Now Voroshilov argued that only the capture of Lvov would have enabled him "to deliver a crushing blow in the rear of the White Guard Poles and their shock troops." Years later, justifying Stalin's action, the *Red Star* exclaimed indignantly: "Covering up his disgusting defeatist manoeuvres, the traitor Trotsky deliberately and consciously achieved the transfer of the Mounted Army to the north, allegedly to aid the Western Front."

In 1937, in issue two of *Krasnaya Konnitsa* ('Red Cavalry') they went even further. In 'The Fighting Road of the First Mounted Army', the author declared that the Mounted Army ... "not only could not prevent the Polish Army from retreating behind the River Bug, but could not even break up the counter-attack of the Poles against the flanks of the Red troops marching upon Warsaw."

It is quite impossible to understand how the capture of Lvov, which was 300 kilometres distant from the main theatre of war, would have struck at the "rear" of the Polish shock formations, which in the meantime had already pursued the Red Army to within 100 kilometres east of Warsaw. In order to attempt to strike a blow at the Poles in the "rear" it would have been necessary to pursue them in the first place and therefore first of all to abandon Lvov. Why, in that case, was it necessary to occupy it?

N. Popov on the tenth anniversary of the Soviet-Polish War, in an article published in *Pravda* on 23rd February 1930, gives a brief review of the lessons of the war. He warns about the Polish military aggression, but admits the mistake about the march on Warsaw. He nevertheless makes an attack on me:

Trotsky ... was opposed to this advance as a petty-bourgeois revolutionist. He considered it inadmissible to carry the revolution into Poland from the outside. (For this very same reason Trotsky in 1921 expressed himself against our Red Army helping the Georgian insurrectionists. The Party did not listen to Trotsky in 1921 and so instead of a Menshevik Georgia we have a Soviet Georgia.) The Party

... rejected the petty-bourgeois pedantry of Trotsky when the Red Army marched towards Warsaw. Our mistake was not in the campaign itself but in the fact that it was carried out with utterly insufficient forces.

With the entire military archive at the disposal of these historians, it would have cost them absolutely nothing to cite documentary proof of their assertions, if such proofs actually existed. But the historical researches of the Thermidorian historians merely foreshadow the future Moscow Trials. Here we have neither references nor proofs. Eight years after Popov, another of the historians of the same Stalinist school, S. Rabinovich in his *History of the Civil War* (1938), on page 135, mentions Commanders Sablin, Mekhlis and Primakov, Members of the Revolutionary Military Council of the Army, Zatonsky and Aralov, Divisional Commander Fedko and many others. And on page 159 he mentions:

Trotsky's errors in determining the Polish War, namely that the fundamental political aim of the war on our part was to hasten the revolution in Poland and bring the revolution to Europe from the outside on the bayonets of the Red Army [...] Otherwise, the victory of Socialism in Russia is impossible. That was why Trotsky, in opposition to the arguments of Lenin and Stalin, declared, "the Polish front is the front of life and death for the Soviet Republic."

In this way the old accusation was turned inside out! As late as 1927, it was recognised that I was an opponent of the March on Warsaw and the crime charged against me was my disinclination to introduce Socialism at the point of a bayonet. But in 1938, it was proclaimed that I advocated the March on Warsaw, guided by my determination to bring Socialism into Poland at the point of a bayonet! Thus, step by step, Stalin solved the problem in his own peculiar way. He placed the responsibility for the Warsaw campaign on me. But as a matter of fact, I was an opponent of the campaign. The responsibility for the disaster to the Red Army, predetermined by the absence of an uprising in the country and made worse by his own independent strategy, he again placed upon me, although I had warned them of the possibility of a catastrophe and called for reining in enthusiasm over ephemeral successes like the capture of Lvov.

To shift the blame bit by bit onto his opponent is, with Stalin, a fundamental method of political struggle and this reaches its highest development in the Moscow Trials. Let us also note in passing that Stalin contributed no constructive effort worthy of any attention to the Polish War. The mail and telegrams of the time show with whom I had occasion to correspond from

day to day in determining the daily policy in connection with the Polish War: Lenin, Chicherin, Karakhan, Krestinsky, Kamenev and Radek. Of these six persons, only Lenin managed to die in time. Chicherin died in disgrace, in complete isolation; Radek is living out the end of his days under arrest; Karakhan, Krestinsky and Kamenev have been executed.⁸

[The final stage of the Civil War was the liquidation of the White Forces under Baron Wrangel, which had now been pushed back into a small corner of the Crimea. The defeated and demoralised remnants of the White Army were evacuated to Constantinople on 8th to 16th November 1920.]

The end of the Polish campaign enabled us to concentrate our forces against Wrangel, who in the spring [of 1920] emerged from the Crimean Peninsula and threatened to take the Donets Basin thereby placing the coal supplies of the Republic in jeopardy. Overwhelming attacks at Nikopol and Stakhovka dislodged Wrangel's units from their positions and the Red Army marched ahead, demolishing the fortifications of Perekop and the Sivash Isthmus at the climax of the campaign. The Crimea again became part of the Soviet Republic.

The Red Army had to fight in extremely difficult conditions, taking the offensive to Wrangel's forces while simultaneously suppressing the Makhno-anarchist bands that were helping Wrangel. Nevertheless, despite Wrangel's technical superiority and although the Red Army had no tanks, our forces drove Wrangel back to the Crimean Peninsula. The intervention of Curzon and the allied squadron helped General Wrangel [to escape by sea to Constantinople], while we had to pay the price for failing to carry through his defeat.

According to the Stalinist Yegorov, writing in *Pravda* on 14th November 1935:

Trotsky maintained the most harmful view that the Wrangel front was nothing else than a separate sector of third-rate significance. Comrade Stalin was forced to come out most resolutely against this most dangerous view. The Central Committee headed by Lenin entirely supported Stalin.

Suffice it to say that in his article, 'The Rout of Wrangel', published in 1925, S. Gusev, who was a genuine agent of Stalin's in the Red Army, as Mekhlis is now, did not deem it necessary even once to mention the name of Stalin.

8 Karl Radek was executed in 1939 by an agent under direct orders from NKVD head Beria.

STALIN AND THE RED ARMY

Throughout the period of the Civil War, Stalin remained a third-rate figure, not only in the Army but in the field of politics as well. He presided at the congresses of the Collegium of the Commissariat of Nationalities and at the congresses of certain nationalities. He carried on negotiations with Finland, with the Ukraine, with the Bashkirs, that is, executing essential but nevertheless secondary commissions of the government. He had nothing to do with the matters of major policy presented at the Congresses of the Party, of the Soviet or the Third International.

Barmine recalls:

Dressed in the uniform of the Military Academy, decorated with Orders won at the cost of their blood, the heroes of the Civil War discovered in their wanderings about Moscow that they had nothing, that everything was beyond their reach, that the profiteers could snap their fingers at them with impunity; and they began to wonder whether they had fought in vain. Confidence in the leaders of a Party, in Lenin, Trotsky, Bukharin and Zinoviev, made it possible for us, however, to stifle these doubts. They knew where they were going and whither they were leading us – or so we argued. They, surely, would never admit defeat; they, certainly, would never betray us.

This moral confidence in the leadership which had arisen as a result of the long history of the party and the revolution represented a tremendous capital at the disposal of the Party and of the Soviet Government.

In a little celebration pamphlet issued by the Party entitled *Long Live the Sixth Anniversary of the October Revolution 1917-1923*, there appeared portraits of Lenin, Kalinin and me, accompanied by “brief biographical information”. The pamphlet also contained a group photograph entitled, “Members of the Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party.” There was not a word about Stalin, except that his name appeared as a signature under the slogan for the sixth anniversary. The biographical note about me said among other things: “Having organised the mighty Red Army, Trotsky won a number of victories over the external and internal counter-revolution, sweeping it completely out of the borders of Russia...” By that time, in 1923, the struggle of the apparatus against me was already proceeding in full swing. The anniversary pamphlet only stated as much as it could not avoid stating.

The sixth anniversary of the Red Army was celebrated by *Pravda* on 23rd February 1924, with an article by S. Kamenev called ‘We Note Many Innovations and Achievements’, another entitled ‘Lenin, Organiser of

the Armed Forces of the Proletariat' by Yaroslavsky, and a third article by Budyonny, entitled 'The Ways of the Red Army'. However, *Pravda* also contained the following message from the Friends of the Air Force:

GREETINGS TO COMRADE TROTSKY

In the name of the half million members of the Society of Friends of the Air Force of the USSR we send our ardent greeting to the victorious Red Army, which enters upon the sixth anniversary of its existence. The Society of Friends of the Air Force, which has come to the aid of the Soviet Government of the country, in carrying tasks common to it with the Red Army, declares:

Just as before, our slogan is: 'Nation of Toilers, Build an Air Force!' This will rally millions of toilers for the creation of a mighty Red Air Force – the true friend and helper of the Red Army.

Long Live the First Worker-Peasant Army in the world!

Long Live the mighty Red Air Force!

Long Live the Leader of the Red Army, the inspirer of the Society of Friends of the Air Force, Comrade Trotsky!

The Presidium of the Society of Friends of the Air Force of the USSR

On 25th March 1924, Sklyansky was removed from the Military Council and replaced by M.V. Frunze. The new Revolutionary Military Council included Trotsky (chairman), Frunze (vice-chair), Bubnov (Head PUR), Unszlicht (Chief of Supplies), Voroshilov, Lashevich, Budyonny, Kamenev, Rosengoltz, Ordzhonikidze, Adeliava, Myasnikov, Hadyr-Aliyev and Karayev. Stalin's name was not mentioned.

Just one year later, beginning in early 1925, the above names disappeared entirely from articles. The reason for this was not because the Party had become stricter in this respect, but because the names of the old leaders were becoming an embarrassment to the Triumvirate. It was not possible at this stage to push the names of others who played a negligible role in connection with the glorious history of the Red Army. Thus, in *Pravda* of the 23rd February 1925, a statement commemorating the Anniversary of the Red Army appeared, signed only by "order of the chairman of the Revolutionary Military Council of the USSR, Frunze".

The basic idea behind this was that the Red Army was created by the Party as a whole, and not by individuals. The 'heroic' tradition and the cult of personality, which had never existed in the Party, were symbolically subjected

to systematic condemnation. This issue was explained more fully by Stalin in 1925 in the campaign pamphlet of his faction, *Trotskyism and Leninism*:

Among such legends must be placed the very widely disseminated version that Comrade Trotsky is presumably the ‘only’ or ‘the main organiser’ of the victories at the fronts in the Civil War. I must declare, comrades, in the interest of truth, that this version does not at all correspond to the facts. I am far from denying the important role of Comrade Trotsky ... but I must declare with all resoluteness that the high honour of organiser of our victory belongs not to individuals but to the great collective of progressive workers of our country, the Russian Communist Party.

If this picture of Trotsky was a ‘legend’, then at any rate no one deliberately fostered it. When I was removed from the post of People’s Commissar of Military Affairs by the decision of the Central Committee in the course of 1925 the official press persistently peddled the story that my successor, M.V. Frunze, had played an exceptional role in creating the Red Army. After his strange and untimely death, Frunze was definitely proclaimed to be the organiser of the Red Army. There can be no doubt that at that time, absolutely no one had thought of ascribing this role to Stalin.

Frunze undoubtedly played a leading role in the Civil War and generally was several heads taller than his successor in office, Voroshilov. The same Voroshilov on 23rd February 1926, the eighth anniversary of the Red Army, in an article clearly written for him by his secretaries, sang the praises of “the unforgettable leader of the Red Army, Mikhail Vasilyevich Frunze.” But this was merely the belated echo of an unrealised plan.

Even before the myth of Frunze could be firmly established in people’s minds and in military text books, preparations were being made for the myth of Stalin. In the same issue of *Pravda*, Voroshilov’s deputy in the Commissariat of War, Unszlicht, wrote: “The theoretical and practical leader in the construction of the armed forces throughout the period was our strategist and tactician of genius – Vladimir Ilyich.” For Stalin, the trick was to cover oneself with the name of Lenin, to hide behind the curtain of Lenin’s name. Of course, as yet no one had even mentioned the name of Stalin. His name was missing from all the anniversary articles. As far as Stalin was concerned, the immediate objective was merely to destroy the reputations of men who were already established, but not yet to create his own.

Stalin’s name was not mentioned even in the articles celebrating the ninth anniversary of the Red Army on 23rd February 1927. He was still patiently clearing the ground. Not even orally, let alone in print, was any intimation

given of Stalin's forthcoming military glory. On the 2nd November 1927, on the eve of the expulsion of the Opposition from the Party, Voroshilov delivered a speech on the Red Army at a Party conference in the Krasnaya Presnya district of Moscow. But there was not even a hint in it of Stalin's role as the organiser of the Red Army. Not yet. A definite signal from above was necessary, supplemented by direct assignment to the Party apparatus, before anonymity could be cast aside and Stalin's name substituted for the name of the Party. The stages of transition from historical truth to bureaucratic mythology may be observed from year to year, from anniversary to anniversary. We limit ourselves to only a few illustrations.

In 1929, in connection with the eleventh anniversary of the Red Army, Voroshilov for the first time attacked the old leadership of the Army – not for their role during the period of the Civil War, but for the following three years when Trotsky, presumably preoccupied with factional struggles, failed to devote sufficient attention to the reorganisation of the army. The task of reorganisation then fell entirely upon my successor, Frunze. Voroshilov wrote:

The Kronstadt Mutiny in the Fleet, the decisive weakening of discipline in the military units at that time, the constant vacillation of the military strata of the working class, all of this was the direct consequence of the inner party struggle carried to an extreme ... Only after the wave of intra-party clashes with Trotsky had begun did the Central Committee seriously consider the question of army reorganisation. This was actually carried out by a new group of Bolshevik military workers, headed by M.V. Frunze ... to whose lot it fell to undertake the extremely difficult and honourable task of the reorganisation of the armed forces.

So far, Stalin is still not mentioned. Thus, in *Pravda* on 23rd February 1929, the Anniversary articles, written by Voroshilov, Unszlicht, Bubnov, S. Kamenev, Eideman, Degtyarev and others, failed to make any reference to Stalin's role. But the lava-like movement of falsification has its own laws and inherent rhythm. At that moment, notwithstanding the prodigious labours of falsification carried on during the preceding six years (1923-29), it was still psychologically unthinkable to represent Stalin as the organiser of past military victories. Hence, articles mentioned only the role of Lenin and the Central Committee, of which Stalin was a member. Further revisionist preparation was deemed necessary. Frunze had died under the surgeon's knife. His death had already given rise to a chain of rumours that even found expression in works of literature. In time these rumours took shape as direct accusations against Stalin.

[It was not until the occasion of Stalin's fiftieth birthday celebrations that] Voroshilov, in an article published in *Pravda* entitled Stalin and the Red Army, on 21st December 1929, provided the initial outline for a new history of the Civil War. But that article, full of crude anachronisms and distortions, did not enter at once into the thinking of even the military commanders. Neither in 1930 nor in 1931 did the Anniversary articles on the Red Army accord to Stalin a place in the Civil War.

In February 1930, Stalin figured not as the creator of the entire Red Army, but only of the First Army Corps which actually had been formed in Tsaritsyn with Stalin's participation. Thus, in its initial stages, the Stalin myth sought a basis in fact. As late as 1931, on the 23rd February Anniversary, Stalin's name was mentioned only episodically, principally in connection with the Red Cavalry. Only a year later, in February, 1932, did Stalin's portrait appear for the first time on the front page of *Pravda*, alongside the new revised formula: "The leader of the Red Army is the Communist Party and its Leninist Central Committee headed by Comrade Stalin."

This formula became the substitute for an oath of personal allegiance to Stalin. But even in 1932, his power had not yet extended itself over into the past. Stalin did not yet figure as the builder of the Red Army and the leader of the Civil War. At this time, the main achievement of the Army's political apparatus was its "brilliant struggle against Trotskyism." However, the head of this "struggle against Trotskyism" was Commander Yan B. Gamarnik, who was to perish six years later as a 'Trotskyist'.

HOW STALIN PREPARED HIS PLACE IN HISTORY

For the first time the history of the Red Army was officially revised on the 23rd February 1933 by "order of the Revolutionary Military Council of the USSR". This was the turning point. After an introduction in *Pravda* which referred to Lenin as the "leader and organiser of the Bolshevik Party and also the organiser and leader of the Red Army", it stated:

The name of Comrade Stalin, the finest Leninist leader of the Bolshevik Party, the leader of all comrades, is closely bound up with the armed struggle for victory and the construction of the Red Army. During the years of the Civil War, the Party always sent Comrade Stalin to the most dangerous fronts and those most decisive for the survival of the proletarian revolution.

It concluded with the following refrain: "Let us rally closer than ever before around our Communist Party, around our Best Friend, Leader and Teacher, Comrade Stalin."

This order to the Army was at the same time an order to historical scholarship. Another article by Tukhachevsky, advocating the mechanisation of the Red Army, ended with the inevitable Byzantine phrase, "the guarantee of victory is the art of our Party, its Leader, Comrade Stalin, and of his true collaborator, Comrade Voroshilov." In the same issue of *Pravda*, a telegram from the Leningrad organisation of the Party, that is, from Kirov, greeted "the Organiser of the great victories of the Red Army, Comrade Stalin!" In *The Bolshevik* of 30th June 1935, an article under the title 'The Struggle of the Party against Trotskyism: on Military Questions during the Period of the Civil War' contained this justification for Stalin's new role:

The Party achieved victory at the time of the Civil War exclusively because it was welded around its leaders, Lenin and Stalin... The Party was obliged to wage a particularly cruel struggle against Trotskyism on military questions... Trotsky repeatedly attempted to segregate the army from the Party and from the Leninist leadership, attempted to free himself from the control of the Central Committee and from the control of Lenin ... The actual leadership in building the Red Army and in the conduct of the Civil War was concentrated in the hands of Lenin and Stalin...

Now, after the publication of a whole series of documents, it has become widely known what a tremendous role Comrade Stalin had played in carrying out the recommendations of Lenin ... In the fight against Yudenich, Kolchak, Denikin, the Poles and on the Wrangel front, at the most difficult and critical moments in one front or another, the genius Stalin would appear with his strategy and organisational plans for routing the enemy which radically changed the 'strategy' of Trotsky, securing victory for the Red Army...

As People's Commissar of War, he (Trotsky) published a declaration (26/3/1918) in which he proposed the creation of a people's army of all citizens. This most harmful anti-Party proposal of Trotsky was immediately resisted. But Trotsky's supporters, especially the representatives of the old officer class, who enjoyed his unlimited confidence, continued to carry on the work of sabotage, drawing into the Red Army persons hostile from a class point of view to the dictatorship of the proletariat, especially in regions removed from the proletarian centres. The invaluable achievement of exposing this sabotage by certain members in the All-Russian General Staff and its local organs belongs to Comrade Stalin.

This was followed by details of Stalin's alleged role in clearing out nests of counter-revolutionaries on the General Staff at General Headquarters in Tsaritsyn, as well as Stalin's and Voroshilov's struggle against the indiscriminate recruiting of military specialists. The article also told how the Trotskyist Smilga had "dared" as early as 1919 to propose abolishing the institution of military commissars. It then continues:

The Central Committee, under Lenin and Stalin, had to correct the errors made possible by laxity, to reorganise its affairs and strive for victory. All the decisive orders in crucial moments of the struggle against the counter-revolution were the work of Lenin and Stalin. And Vladimir Ilyich sent no one except Stalin to the most important sectors of the Civil War ... The military leadership at the Centre was opposed to the creation of a mounted army, which was actually created thanks to the persistence of Comrade Stalin. In 1919 during Kolchak's advance on the Volga, Trotsky gave an order not to send Party workers to the rear of the White Army, because it was pointless...

Both of these Fronts (the Eastern and the Southern) were liquidated under the direct leadership of Lenin and Stalin, in spite of the plans and proposals of Trotsky ... Lenin and the Central Committee of the Party commissioned Comrade Stalin to rout Denikin. It was none other than Stalin who subjected the old Trotskyist plan of struggle against Denikin to a crushing criticism and it was none other than Stalin who was the creator of that one and only correct plan to rout Denikin...

It is noteworthy that the great service of organising the defence of Petrograd in 1919 against Yudenich belongs to Comrade Stalin ... Concerning the Kronstadt Rebellion ... when Trotsky in a panic yelled, "the cuckoo is sounding the death knell of the Soviet Government", the crushing of the rebellion was delegated by the Party to Comrade Voroshilov ... Trotsky and Trotskyists in the ranks of the Red Army (Sklyansky and others) were directly guilty of the failure of our troops in Warsaw ... Under the direct leadership of Stalin, the Red Army, headed by the iron People's Commissar, Voroshilov, became in action the first world army, the mighty defender of our great motherland.

Even today, it is impossible to read this without astonishment. One cannot help being amazed at the way Stalin acted so true to his nature. The fundamental traits of his character are revealed in the perseverance with which he prepared his new place in history. He wanted to move ahead, to assume the most prominent and, if possible, the most powerful position in the government and state. This ambition overwhelmed all other emotions – not only personal attachments, but even loyalty to a definite programme.

In the successes of other men, he always saw a threat to his purposes, a blow to his personality. With the force of a reflex action, he always and immediately assumed a defensive and, if possible, a threatening attitude. He could not ascribe to himself the role of the theoretician and founder of the Bolshevik Party. He therefore tried to denigrate the role of theory and theoreticians; he cautiously cultivated any dissatisfaction with Lenin; he belittled the significance of those contributions which Lenin made at the decisive moments of history and drew attention to his real or alleged mistakes. Only after Lenin's death did he turn him into a saint, in order eventually to crowd out the memory of the real Lenin.

Since Stalin could not credit himself with the leadership of the October Revolution or the leadership of the Civil War, he strove to undermine the authority of those who had participated and in the leadership of the struggle. Stalin did this tirelessly, cautiously, step by step, at first without any general plan, merely yielding to the dictates of his own nature. As early as the first year following the Revolution, even while acknowledging my leading role in the Revolution [he wrote:]

All the practical work in connection with the organisation of the uprising was done under the immediate direction of Comrade Trotsky, the president of the Petrograd Soviet," wrote Stalin in *Pravda* on 6th November 1918. "It can be stated with certainty that the Party is indebted primarily and principally to Comrade Trotsky for the rapid going-over of the garrison to the side of the Soviet and the efficient manner in which the work of the Revolutionary Military Council was organised.

Nevertheless, Stalin at the same time cautiously counterpoised the Central Committee as a whole to Trotsky. He mentioned Lenin by name, in order to create a counterweight to Trotsky, but at the same time, under the impersonal name of the Central Committee, he reserved a place [for himself]. To pursue this policy, he undertook the same method of revising stage by stage attitudes on the October Revolution, just as he had done on the Red Army. He began by recognising the leading role of individuals and then gradually undermining them. He undermined other rival members of the Central Committee, except of course the dead Lenin who was no longer a danger to him and could be used as a cover for his schemes. Finally, the aim of Stalin was the complete obliteration and execration of each and all except Stalin.

Stalin's role in the Civil War may be measured best by the fact that at the end of it his personal authority had not grown in the slightest. It could never enter

anyone's head at that time to say or to write that Stalin 'saved' the Southern Front or had played an important role on the Eastern Front or even that he had prevented the fall of Tsaritsyn. In numerous documents, reminiscences and anthologies devoted to the Civil War, Stalin's name is either completely absent or is mentioned amongst a long list of other names. Moreover, the Polish War of 1920 placed an ineradicable stain on his reputation – at least in the more well-informed circles of the Party. He avoided participation in the campaign against the White General Wrangel, whether because of illness or because of other considerations, it is difficult to know which. In any event, he emerged from the Civil War just as unknown to the masses as he had from the October Revolution.

11. FROM OBSCURITY TO THE TRIUMVIRATE

LENIN AND STALIN

Lenin's relations with Stalin are officially characterised as a close friendship. As a matter of fact, these two political figures were widely separated not only by the ten years' difference in their ages, but by the very size of their respective personalities. There could be no such thing as friendship between the two. No doubt, Lenin came to appreciate Stalin's ability as a practical organiser during the parlous times of the reaction of 1907-13. But during the years of the Soviet regime Stalin's coarseness repelled him again and again, and increasingly militated against smooth collaboration between them. Owing largely to that, Stalin continued his clandestine opposition to Lenin. Envious and ambitious, Stalin could not help growing restive as he sensed at every step Lenin's crushing intellectual and moral superiority.

It seems he tried to get close to me. The first session of the Bolshevik Government took place in Smolny, in Lenin's office, which an unpainted wooden partition segregated from the cubbyhole of the telephone girl and the typist. Stalin and I were the first to arrive. From behind the partition we heard the thick bass tones of Dybenko. He was speaking by telephone with Finland, and the conversation had a rather tender character. The twenty-nine-year-old, black bearded sailor, a jolly and self-confident giant, had recently become intimate with Alexandra Kollontai, a woman of aristocratic antecedents who knew half dozen foreign languages and was approaching her forty sixth year.

In certain circles of the Party there was undoubtedly a good deal of gossip about this. Stalin, with whom until then I had not carried on a personal

conversation, came up to me with a kind of unexpected jauntiness and, pointing with his shoulder toward the partition, said, smirking: "That's him with Kollontai, with Kollontai!" To me his gestures and laughter seemed out of place and unendurably vulgar, especially on that occasion and in that place. How Stalin sniggered about Dybenko's conversation.¹ I don't remember whether I simply said nothing, turning my eyes away, or answered drily, "That's their affair." But Stalin sensed that he had made a mistake. His face changed and in his yellow eyes appeared the same glint of animosity that I had noticed at our first meeting in Vienna.

From that time on he never again attempted to engage me in conversation on personal themes. Only later did I become aware of his attempts to create a kind of familiarity in our relationship. But I was repelled by those very features that later constituted the source of his strength in the period of revolutionary ebb: the narrowness of his interests, his empiricism, his psychological crudeness and a particular brand of provincial cynicism.

The iconography produced in the last few years, rich in quantity (to say nothing of its quality), invariably portrays Lenin in Stalin's company. They sit side-by-side, discussing, and look upon each other as close friends. The obtrusiveness of this composition, reiterated in paintings, sculpture, and on cinema screens, is dictated by the desire to make people forget the fact that the last period of Lenin's life was completely taken up with intense conflicts between him and Stalin, culminating in a complete break between them.

Outside of the Caucasian period, recorded mostly in not very reliable retrospective reminiscences, we know Stalin during four periods: in the first period, when in 1910-11, during the most acute struggle within the Party, Stalin, seeking out his way onto the Central Committee, supported the conciliators in Russia while at the same time writing to Lenin in a spirit of solidarity against the conciliators; in the second period, when on the editorial board of *Pravda*, he supported the conciliators against Lenin until his duplicity culminated in a sharp conflict with Lenin.

[In order to create the impression of a close personal relationship, the Stalinists cite a letter from Lenin to Stalin beginning with "Dear friend", but] Lenin's letters to the *Pravda* editorial board from abroad usually begin with the words: "Dear friend". This is now used to prove the intimate nature of the friendly relations between Lenin and Stalin. As a matter of fact, these words are quite impersonal. The letter itself was directed to the entire editorial board. The unusual address, "Dear friend" instead of "Dear comrade" is explained by

1 This sentence was written in Trotsky's own handwriting.

the fact that the word “comrade” meant direct membership of the Party, while the word “friend” appeared more personal and less politically compromising in character. All of Lenin’s letters to Party comrades begin with the words “Dear comrade”, all his letters sent to Russia begin with the words “Dear friend”. Other *émigré* revolutionists resorted to the same method.

We also remember his conduct very well and how leniently Stalin treated Kamenev when he was put on trial in 1915². While Lenin saw such behaviour as unworthy of a revolutionary Social-Democrat, Stalin voted for a resolution that generally approved of the behaviour of Kamenev and the other Duma deputies in the court; thirdly, in Siberia where he manoeuvred between Lenin and the international conciliators. This position became particularly flagrant in March 1917, when he proclaimed his solidarity with Lenin while at the same time defending a union with the Mensheviks.

Finally, in the October period we see Stalin among the majority of the Central Committee, while at the same time championing the Right opposition of Kamenev and Zinoviev. The disagreements of Zinoviev and Kamenev with Lenin seemed to him to be of secondary importance. He saw no reason to “go off the deep end”. As a general rule, he agreed with both sides. Whenever it was a question of the masses, he was out of his depth. Stalin was in no hurry to burn bridges to the position of Zinoviev and Kamenev.

If Stalin’s article on Lenin, ‘Lenin as Organiser and Leader of the Russian Communist Party’, which has been republished innumerable times since then in innumerable quantities and in innumerable languages, was a rather simple-minded characterisation of its subject, it does provide us with a key to the political nature of its author. It even contains lines which are in a certain sense autobiographical:

Not infrequently our own comrades (not only the Mensheviks) accused Comrade Lenin of being unduly inclined toward polemics and toward splits in his irreconcilable struggle against the Compromisers ... There is no doubt that both took place in their time ...

[Lenin did not resort lightly to polemics and splits. He always showed great tactfulness and flexibility in his approach. But on issues of political principle he was always implacable. Lenin was always fond of the simile used by Tolstoy

2 L.B. Kamenev was arrested after the outbreak of World War I. During his trial, he did not act with the courage expected of a leading Bolshevik, distancing himself from Lenin’s policy of revolutionary defeatism. Kamenev was exiled to Siberia where he spent two years until he was freed by the February Revolution.

when he saw from afar a man rigorously waving his arms. He thought it was a madman, but when he drew nearer, he saw it to be a man sharpening a knife on the kerb. The same thing happens in theoretical disputes.]

In 1920, Stalin still considered Lenin to be unduly inclined to polemics and splits, as he had already concluded in 1913. Furthermore, he justified this tendency in Lenin, but without removing the stigma of the accusation that Lenin was prone to exaggerations and to extremism. This unstable relationship persisted until Lenin fell seriously ill, when it became transformed into an outright struggle that culminated in the final break. On the other hand, from the time he first came into contact with Lenin, that is, especially after the October Revolution, Stalin always kept up a kind of opposition to him that was unspoken and impotent but all the more irritating for that.

On 23rd April 1920, the Moscow Party organisation celebrated Lenin's fiftieth birthday. The celebration was a very modest, intimate affair and Lenin only put in a very brief appearance, flatly refusing to listen to the eulogies that were delivered in his honour. Among the dozen speakers was Stalin. To everybody's surprise, the theme he chose for his speech was Lenin's mistakes – hardly a suitable theme for the festivities, but very typical of Stalin. His own mistakes in 1917 were still too fresh in people's memory and he felt an inner need to remind the Party that Lenin was not blameless. This speech, extremely formalistic and awkward, took as its theme Lenin's "modesty", his willingness to admit mistakes.

It is hard to make out what Stalin's intention was. Anyway, it all seemed so incongruous that the next day, 24th April, *Pravda* and *Izvestiya* said only: "Comrade Stalin mentioned a few episodes of their pre-revolutionary work together." And that was all. According to Stalin, he disagreed with Lenin only in those cases when ... Lenin was wrong: the rejection of the slogan of Soviets after July 1917 and the preparation of the October uprising. Stalin found Lenin in his later years, just as the medieval scholastics found Aristotle, or the Catholics, St. Thomas Aquinas. He needed Lenin as a support for his own empirical and therefore insecure thoughts.

In his article about 'Lenin's plan' in 1905-1914-1917, Stalin wrote:

The advantage of this plan was that, by directly and resolutely articulating the class demands of the proletariat in the epoch of the bourgeois-democratic revolution in Russia, it facilitated the transition to a socialist revolution, it carried the embryo of the nature of the proletariat.

This idea is undoubtedly correct. The irreconcilable class position of the Bolshevik Party ruled out the democratic dictatorship, which had no basis in the existing social conditions and inevitably led to the dictatorship of the proletariat. In this sense, it is correct. But this correct statement fundamentally disproves the position and interpretation which says that the Bolsheviks' position included, not in embryo, but in full scale, not only socialist revolution, but also the building of socialism in one country.

Stalin went on to record in print regarding what he had learned and wanted to learn from Lenin, in his general article written for the same occasion under the title 'Lenin as Organiser and Leader of the Russian Communist Party'. From the point of view of its theoretical or literary value it would be hardly worth the effort to examine this piece. Suffice it to say that the article opens with the assertion:

Whereas in the West, in France and in Germany, the workers' party emerged from the trade unions at a time when trade unions and parties were legal, when the bourgeois revolution had already taken place, when bourgeois parliaments existed, when the bourgeoisie, having climbed into power, found itself confronted by the proletariat – in Russia, on the contrary, the formation of the proletarian party took place under a most ferocious absolutism, in expectation of a bourgeois-democratic revolution.

His assertion is, of course, true of Great Britain, which he fails to mention as an example, but it is not true of France and monstrously untrue of Germany, where the party built the trade unions practically from scratch. To this day, as in 1920, the history of the European labour movement remains a closed book to Stalin, and hence it is useless to expect theoretical guidance from him in that sphere. The article is interesting because, not only in the title but in his whole conception of Lenin, Stalin acclaim him primarily as an organiser, and only secondarily as a political leader. "The greatest credit to Comrade Lenin," which Stalin puts first, was "his furious assault upon the organisational formlessness of the Mensheviks."

Lenin is accorded credit for his organisational plan because he "generalised in a masterly way the organisational experience of the best practical workers." Furthermore:

Only as a result of this organisational policy could the Party have achieved the internal unity and amazing solidarity which enabled it to emerge effortlessly from the July crisis and Kerensky, to take upon its shoulders the October Revolution,

to live through the crisis of the Brest period without cracking, and to organise the victory over the Entente.

Only after that did Stalin add: "But the organisational value of the Russian Communist Party represents only one side of the matter," and then turn to the political content of Party work, its programme and tactics. It is no exaggeration to say that no other Marxist, certainly no other Russian Marxist, would have constructed such an appraisal of Lenin. Surely, organisational questions are not the basis of policy but rather the inferences that flow from the crystallisation of theory, programme and practice? Yet it is no accident that Stalin saw the organisational lever as fundamental; anything pertaining to programmes and policies was for him always essentially an embellishment on the organisational foundation.

In the same article, Stalin formulated for the last time, more or less correctly, the Bolshevik view, rather new at the time, of the role of the proletarian party under the conditions of the bourgeois-democratic revolutions of our epoch. Ridiculing the Mensheviks, Stalin wrote that to those who had poorly digested the history of the old revolutions it seemed that the proletariat could not possess the hegemony of the Russian Revolution; the leadership must be offered to the Russian bourgeoisie, the very same bourgeoisie that was opposed to the revolution. The peasantry must likewise be placed under the patronage of the bourgeoisie, while the proletariat ought to be relegated to the position of an extreme Left opposition. These disgusting echoes of bad liberalism were offered up by the Mensheviks as the latest word of genuine Marxism.

It is remarkable that a mere three years later Stalin applied this very conception of the Mensheviks, word for word, letter for letter, to the Chinese bourgeois-democratic revolution and subsequently, with incomparably greater cynicism, to the Spanish Revolution of 1931-39. Such a monstrous reversal would have been utterly impossible if at the time Stalin had really assimilated and thoroughly understood the Leninist conception of revolution. But what Stalin had assimilated was merely the Leninist conception of a centralised Party machine. The moment he grasped this, he lost sight of its roots in theoretical considerations, its programmatic base became essentially unimportant and in consonance with his own past, his own social origin, training and education, he was naturally inclined toward a petty-bourgeois conception, toward opportunism, toward compromise.

In 1917 he began the capitulation to the liberal bourgeoisie and its compromiser agents. Lenin stopped him from taking this policy to its end. Lenin was able to stop him because in this period the Bolshevik Party was an organisation of the proletarian vanguard, and its apparatus, which, like all apparatuses, had an embryo of a conservative tendency, constituted only an instrument of the party, not its unchecked overlord. The qualities of a conservative *apparatchik* received immense development in later years, corresponding to the development of the apparatus itself. Stalin's vacillations and evasiveness, evident in 1905 and 1917, were the result exactly of the fact that his own organic tendencies were in contradiction with the tendencies of the proletarian vanguard, and the latter, represented by the Vyborg district, was giving him serious warning signs.

In 1925-26, and even more so during the following decade, the balance of forces and the psychology changed radically. Stalin's conservative tendencies completely corresponded to the main tendencies of the bureaucratic apparatus. His conservatism could not provoke another warning of the Vyborg district, for the latter, like the rest of the proletarian vanguard, was in the tight grip of the bureaucracy.

THE TRADE UNION CONTROVERSY

[The early years of the Soviet Republic were the years of War Communism, which Lenin described as "communism in a besieged fortress." This system, based upon strict centralisation and the introduction of quasi-military measures into all fields of life, flowed from the difficulties of the revolution faced in the first years of Soviet power, partly the result of war and civil war, partly as a result of the shortage of both materials and skilled manpower, and partly of the opposition of the peasant small property owners to the socialist measures of the Bolsheviks.

[The appalling conditions of the workers in the towns led to a mass exodus from industry to the land. By 1920, the figure for industrial workers generally fell from three million in 1917 to 1,240,000 – i.e. *to less than half*. Even these figures do not convey the full extent of the catastrophe since they leave out *the decline in labour productivity* of those ragged half-starved workers who remained in the factories.

[In order to put a stop to this catastrophic decline, drastic measures were introduced to get industry moving, to feed the hungry workers and to end the drift from town to country. That was the essential meaning of War Communism. The Seventh Party Congress in March 1918 called for "the

most energetic, unsparingly decisive, draconian measures to raise the self-discipline and discipline of the workers and peasants.” To the complaints of the Mensheviks, Lenin replied: “We should be ridiculous utopians if we imagined that such a task could be carried out on the day after the fall of the bourgeoisie, i.e. in the first stage of transition from capitalism to socialism, or without compulsion.”

[Trotsky was in charge of carrying out these unpopular policies and was well aware of the difficulties they were causing. As early as February 1920, Trotsky submitted to the Central Committee a set of theses which pointed to the continued disruption of the economy, the weakening of the proletariat, and the widening gulf between town and country. He advocated the replacement of forced requisition of grain by a grain tax, and measures aimed at the partial restoration of the shattered market economy. But at that time Lenin opposed it, hoping that the success of the German revolution would come to the aid of the Soviets.

[The continuation of the policies of War Communism gave rise to labour unrest and exposed serious contradictions, particularly concerning the relations between the trade unions and the workers’ state. Even in the darkest days of the Civil War Lenin and Trotsky maintained the letter and spirit of inner-Party democracy. The Trade Union discussion was one episode in the whole crisis of the political and economic mode of organisation known as War Communism, and cannot be understood apart from this question. The democratic nature of the Party was exemplified by the conduct of this debate, as illustrated by the Soviet diplomat Alexander Barmine:]

In 1920 the [Military] College took part in the violent Party discussions on the subject of Trade Unions... What form should the Unions take in the Soviet State? It was the view of the Workers’ Opposition that they should control production. Lenin and Zinoviev held that they should be entirely subordinate to the Party and become a vast organisation, with its objects being the education of the workers and the defence of the interests of the wage-earners. Trotsky wanted to see them more and more incorporated in the State. These were the main proposals. Bubnov’s Democratic Centralism group had another. Bukharin put forward a compromise. Rudzutak and nine other well-known militants signed what was called the Manifesto of Ten, to which Lenin gave his support. Alexandra Kollontai voiced in a fiery speech the ideals of the Workers’ Opposition...

When the moment for voting came, out of 300 Communist students of the College, 13 sided with Trotsky, 32 with Lenin, and 250 with Kollontai. Views were expressed with complete freedom, as between comrades. These figures were characteristic not only as an indicator of profound dissatisfaction outside of the

Party, but also of the freedom that reigned in it then. The entire military academy consisted of Red officers, that is, men, most closely connected with discipline. Nevertheless, the overwhelming majority voted against the military commissars and against the government without fearing in the least that this vote would in any way affect their future.

[The sharpness of the debate was used by Stalin to undermine Trotsky's popularity, not with the broad masses, but among a layer of the Party cadres that was beginning to crystallise around him.] Entirely typical of Stalin was the way he sneaked in the last word during the Trade Union discussion. Lozovsky introduced the report for the All-Russian Central Council of Trade Unions. In the debate, I was to deliver my reply just before Lozovsky's response. But Stalin persuaded the latter to allow him to deliver the closing remarks. Lozovsky having made his arguments in his introductory speech and having been challenged in the course of the discussion was due to clarify the issues. But it was not to be. This was Stalin's golden opportunity to say anything he liked with impunity – without being challenged or criticised. He had the last word – in accordance with parliamentary rules! It was not exactly sporting of him, but I had no legitimate grounds for complaint. Since Lozovsky agreed, Stalin was within his rights.

I still remember the scene. It was on the eve of the New Economic Policy: peasant revolts, insurrections, hunger and bitter cold were on the order of the day; our world was in turmoil. During the meeting most of the audience were coughing. Most of the faces were haggard and drawn. Stalin stood there in his long soldier's great-coat which covered him from his pock-marked chin to the soles of his feet. He had his say without interruption. He enjoyed every minute, in a dreary sort of way. But when he faced that audience, he was looking into the face of black dejection.

He spoke slowly and cautiously. But behind these seemingly apathetic tones one could detect the presence of a terrible pent up anger that was mirrored in the yellowish glint of his eyes. For the first time it seemed to me, and I think not only to me, that in his whole figure there was something ominous. His speech did not deal with the topics under discussion and was not founded on any arguments. Instead, it contained a number of carefully calculated insinuations that were utterly incomprehensible to the majority, but were designed to appeal to the cadres, that is to say, the *apparatchiks*. Stalin was, so to speak, giving them a lesson on how to address the masses, where no Party leaders are present and where one can speak without any hesitation.

[The new Central Committee elected by the Congress included many of Stalin's future supporters such as Komarov, Molotov, Mikhailov, Yaroslavsky, Ordzhonikidze, Petrovsky, Frunze, Voroshilov and Tuntul. The new candidate members Chubar, Kirov, Kuibyshev and Gusev were also supporters of Stalin. On the other hand, Krestinsky, Preobrazhensky, I.N. Smirnov and Serebryakov, who were known to be close to Trotsky, were not re-elected.

[However, despite the sharpness of the trade union discussion, the clash between Lenin and Trotsky on the trade union question proved to be of an ephemeral character. The problems under discussion could not be solved except by the adoption of radical new economic policies. Trotsky predicted that the resolution adopted by the Tenth Congress on the trade unions would not survive to the Eleventh Congress. He was shown to be correct. Following the Kronstadt revolt, War Communism was abandoned and the New Economic Policy adopted. Trotsky later admitted that he had been wrong on the trade union question and Lenin was right. This did not stop Trotsky's opponents from later spreading gossip exaggerating the differences between Lenin and Trotsky.]

Gossip plays the same role with Bukharin as alcohol does amongst some others. He was the source of gossip in 1920, or in 1921 in regard to my so-called intention, to resign from the Party. If I could ever entertain such a fantasy, I would have certainly confided in comrades of a different type and with a different background to Bukharin, namely, with people who are not made of 'soft wax' or those who can be influenced by whatever first comes into their head. It was only through such gossip that I learned that at one time Bukharin in his role of as official story-teller attempted to alarm Vladimir Ilyich with my "intentions" to leave the Party. I only recently found out about this incident. Lenin had already explained that in moments of weakness, gossip became Bukharin's key attribute. In any event, such hearsay did not change Lenin's attitude toward me in the least.

Without doubt, Lenin valued highly certain of Stalin's abilities, namely firmness of character, tenacity, stubbornness, even his ruthlessness, attributes indispensable in the Civil War, and consequently in the state. But Lenin never for a moment considered these attributes, even in exceptional circumstances, as important for leading the Party and the government. Lenin saw in Stalin a revolutionist, but not a politician of great depth. Stalin's value in Lenin's eyes was almost confined to the sphere of administrative work in the apparatus. It was precisely in those days that, when objecting to Stalin's appointment as

General Secretary, Lenin uttered his famous phrase: "I don't advise it. That cook will prepare only peppery dishes." What prophetic words!

Stalin was elected General Secretary at the Eleventh Congress, toward the end of March 1922, and not at the Tenth Congress as was erroneously stated in my autobiography. Zinoviev and his closest allies backed Stalin for the post of General Secretary, in the hope of utilising the latter's hostility toward me for their own ends. Without Zinoviev's initiative Stalin would have never become General Secretary. Zinoviev wanted to use the discussion about trade unions in the winter of 1920-21 to further the struggle against me. Stalin seemed to Zinoviev, not without reason, to be the most suitable candidate for his behind-the-scenes work.

It was the Petrograd delegation, led by Zinoviev that won out at the Congress. Their victory was all the easier because Lenin did not fight back. He did not want to attach an exaggerated significance to his warnings. As long as the old Political Bureau remained in command, the General Secretary could always be no more than a subordinate figure. Lenin was apprehensive about the recurrence of his illness and was anxious to utilise the period until his next attack, which might prove fatal, to establish a harmonious collective leadership by common agreement and particularly his own agreement with Stalin.

BUREAUCRATISATION OF THE STATE

[In the last period of his life Lenin was increasingly anxious about the danger of bureaucratisation of the Soviet State. One of his last articles, 'Better Fewer But Better', he wrote: "Our state apparatus is so deplorable, not to say wretched, that we must first think very carefully how to combat its defects, bearing in mind that these defects are rooted in the past, which, although it has been overthrown, has not yet been overcome, not yet reached the stage of a culture that has receded into the past."]

Every class engaged in struggle has its own political bureaucracy. But the relations of the bureaucracy are different in different classes. For the bourgeoisie as a ruling class, of course, it is the easiest thing to form a political bureaucracy out of its own intelligentsia. The intelligentsia is bourgeois in its very essence. It can only exist as a result of the economically dominant position of the bourgeoisie, and in part thanks to the economic benefits conferred on certain sections of the petty-bourgeoisie. From the ranks of the intellectuals are recruited the political personnel, the overwhelmingly majority of whom are thoroughly imbued with bourgeois ideas. In their daily lives, the intellectuals,

including professional people and the political bureaucracy, are inextricably linked with the top and middle bourgeoisie. The conditions of their everyday life, their social contacts and circles of friends in most cases exercise a decisive influence on their thinking. The bourgeois intelligentsia naturally lives in a bourgeois milieu, and by that fact alone cements its relationship with its boss – the bourgeoisie.

At the opposite pole is the peasantry, especially the lower strata. Scattered over a large area, the peasantry is not able to produce its own intellectuals, its own political bureaucracy and its own party. It is true that from among the peasants, especially the upper layers, comes a very large number of intellectuals. But those intellectuals immediately rush off to the city, and the most gifted are concentrated in the capital. There they discover a whole new realm of knowledge, relationships, and social dependence. In this way, the intellectuals of peasant origin inevitably fall into capitalist captivity. The so-called peasant parties are in essence bourgeois parties for the exploitation of the peasants.

The conditions of the proletariat are quite different. The working class is concentrated in factories in the big cities. These conditions permit the worker to raise his level significantly above that of the peasantry. Those intellectuals who come from the ranks of the proletariat do not break contact with it; they live in the cities and workers are under their influence. When the masses abandon the field of public life and return to their living quarters, retreating, confused, frustrated and exhausted, into the four walls of their homes, then a vacuum is created. This vacuum is filled by a new bureaucracy. That is why in the era of triumphant reaction the state apparatus, the military-police machine, plays such a huge role, which was unknown to the old regime.

During the Civil War years, not a few people were cast aside because they were not up to the job. Many of these people carried a grudge and, as time went by, came to occupy posts in various departments of the state machine. They added to the already existing frictions by playing one department off against another. In the civil administration, they tried to accumulate as much influence as possible at the expense of the very popular and all-powerful Commissariat of War. Stalin, whose role in the Civil War had been secondary, now became the foremost among those who were tired of the Civil War with its trials and tribulations and were demanding a transition to peacetime conditions. This was the ground on which the class struggle between the upper layers of the petty-bourgeoisie and the workers revived and intensified. The state power acted as a regulator of the class struggle and thereby increased its independence from the workers' organisations. This was the basis for the

Thermidorian degeneration of the state apparatus. More correctly, it was not its basis but its underlying cause and the first chapter of this transformation.

In July 1921, a book appeared in Prague with the title *A Change of Signposts* (*Smena Vekh*). The authors of this book said that the time has come for a radical reappraisal of attitudes towards Soviet Russia. Professor Ustryalov³, head of this school of thought, asked whether the meaning of the NEP was a tactic or an evolution? This question disturbed Lenin very much. The further course of events showed that the ‘tactic’, thanks to a special configuration of historical conditions, became the source of an ‘evolution’. An inescapable strategic retreat by the revolutionary party was the starting point for its degeneration. Ustryalov wrote that the extinction of the older generation of Bolsheviks would open the gates to new, more realistic trends. In writing like this, he showed that our enemies had correctly noted the danger [that we were facing]. The Old Bolsheviks stood for the revolutionary tradition and international connections, for an international perspective. From the point of view of the tasks of the international revolution this was irreplaceable capital.

Lenin attentively read and commented on the words of Ustryalov regarding the possibility of the old generation degenerating by force of natural causes, thus opening up the possibility of new social [counter-revolutionary] tendencies. [“We must say frankly that the things Ustryalov speaks about are possible. History knows all sorts of metamorphoses...” explained Lenin. “If we take Moscow with its 4,700 Communists in responsible positions, and if we take that huge bureaucratic machine, that gigantic heap, we must ask: who is directing whom? I doubt very much whether it can truthfully be said that the Communists are directing that heap. To tell the truth, they are not directing, they are being directed.”

[In order to combat these tendencies, Lenin initially supported the creation of Rabkrin – the Workers’ and Peasants’ Inspectorate – to fight bureaucracy in the state institutions.] The following note in Lenin’s *Collected Works* records the aim of the Inspection:

3 Nikolai Vasilyevich Ustryalov (1890-1937), university professor and member of the bourgeois Kadet Party, was a supporter of the Whites in the Civil War but later changed his views, advocating a fusion of nationalism with Bolshevism. Ustryalov believed that the Bolsheviks would be forced to adopt capitalist policies, a prediction that seemed to be confirmed by the NEP. His views appeared in print in the anthology *Smena Vekh* (‘change of signposts’) published in Prague in 1921. He returned to Russia in 1935 but was arrested in 1937 on charges of espionage and anti-Soviet agitation and shot.

In accordance with this decree, the broad mass of workers and peasants were drawn into the business of State control and their work in the inspection was looked upon as a practical school for preparing the workers and peasants to control the state apparatus. Besides the functions of control and supervision for the exact execution of decrees, the Worker-Peasant Inspection was also expected to carry on the struggle against bureaucratism and red tape in Soviet institutions.

From March 1919, Stalin was People's Commissar of the Workers' and Peasants' Inspection, which he gradually transformed into an instrument of promotion, favouritism and intrigues. He turned the Party's General Secretariat into an inexhaustible fountain-head of favours and dispensations. He likewise misused for personal ends his position as a member of the Organisation Bureau and the Political Bureau. Personal motives could be discerned in all his actions. Bessedovsky wrote:

Stalin has a mania for intrigue. He loves creating obscure back-room intrigues and combinations – and the best moments of his life were associated with a titanic struggle against Lenin and Trotsky.

In December 1920, opened an epoch of broad demobilisation, together with a contraction in the size of the army, a reduction and reconstruction of its entire apparatus. This period continued from January 1921 to January 1923. The army and the fleet were reduced for that period from 5,300,000 to 610,000 souls. The transition to the New Economic Policy was inevitable and connected with the demobilisation following the Civil War. The desire to leave the army and return home was practically general. On occasions it was necessary to remind our forces that we were still surrounded on all sides by capitalist enemies: none of our major antagonists, big or small, had vanished from the scene.

I gave a report to the Commanding and Political Staff of the Moscow Military District in Zimin's Theatre, 25th October 1921:

Comrades, all of us feel and realise that the internal life of our country is entering some sort of new phase in its development, that the morrow will not be like yesterday. We talk about our having passed from the military period to the period of economic construction and our newspapers also write about this.

We are now emerging from the period of improvisation, leaving behind the old 'we will muddle along somehow or other', and moving as best we can to some semblance of a more organised economic and ideological state of affairs.

Many individuals could not adapt themselves to this new environment of running of the country. Many heroes of the Civil War felt themselves alienated and disgruntled by how they were treated. As far back as 31st October 1920 a special order issued under the title "More equality!" reads:

Without setting ourselves the impossible task of immediately eliminating each and every privilege in the army, we must systematically seek to ensure that these benefits are reduced to the minimum that is really necessary. Eliminate as soon as possible all benefits that do not stem from the needs of military affairs and inevitably offend the feelings of equality and partnership in the Red Army.

It was during this difficult period that Stalin found himself in charge of the Workers' and Peasants' Inspection which aimed to mitigate the rivalry between civilian and military departments. Rivalry between departments was evident in the sphere of budget allocations, the assignment of personnel and, in the final reckoning, even in the sharing out of available government automobiles. However, rather than lessen the conflict, Stalin took advantage of the situation to [win to] his cause all those who felt aggrieved and dissatisfied. As time went on, Stalin increasingly took advantage of the opportunities his post presented to recruit people personally devoted to him and take revenge on his opponents. He deliberately cultivated all those who had been pushed out or sacked from different departments. With such people, he covered up the weak sides in the work of the various apparatuses, especially the military one.

In this way, Stalin's Workers' and Peasants' Inspection antagonised almost everyone. This finally undermined the last shred of confidence and respect it had won for itself in the beginning. Subsequently, Lenin wrote about the work of the Inspection as a "hopeless affair" and that "none of the commissariats is worse organised than the Workers' and Peasants' Inspection, [which] is utterly devoid of authority." I also attacked the Workers' and Peasants' Inspection in the following terms:

It is impossible to shut one's eyes to the fact that those involved in the work of the Worker-Peasant Inspection are largely workers who have been rejected in other spheres. Hence the extraordinary intrigues in the organs of the Workers' and Peasants' Inspection which have long ago become universally recognised throughout the country. There is no reason to think that this apparatus (not simply its small upper layer, but the entire organisation) can be restored to health, because genuinely good workers will be absorbed in the Workers' and Peasants' Inspection and not used for its work. It is therefore clearly impossible to improve the state soviet apparatus by using the Workers' and Peasants' Inspection as the weapon.

STALIN AND THE GEORGIAN QUESTION

Principles never exerted any influence over Stalin – and in the national question perhaps less than on any other. In his eyes immediate administrative tasks always loomed larger than all the laws of history. In 1905 he came to notice the swelling mass movement only by permission of his Party Committee. In the years of reaction he defended the underground movement because his nature craved a centralised political machine. After the February Revolution, when that machine was smashed along with illegality, Stalin lost sight of the difference between Menshevism and Bolshevism and was getting ready to unite with Tsereteli's party. Finally, after the conquest of power in October, 1917, all tasks, all problems, all perspectives were subordinated to the needs of that apparatus of apparatuses, the State.

The only piece of serious Marxist writing Stalin ever contributed to the arsenal of Bolshevik theory was on the national question. Being a Caucasian he was naturally interested in this question. From the beginning of 1913, Stalin spent several weeks abroad, where under the direct guidance of Lenin, and it was under his editorial guidance that he wrote an article about the national question, his only theoretical work worthy of mention. It presumably contained the *summa summarum* [general picture] of his own observations in the Caucasus, the results of conclusions from practical revolutionary work, and a number of broad historical generalisations, which, as we had earlier indicated, he had cribbed from Lenin. Stalin had made them his own in a literary sense, i.e., by tying them up with his own conclusions, but without completely digesting them and certainly without assimilating them.

This was fully exposed during the Soviet period, when problems seemingly resolved on paper resurfaced as administrative tasks of paramount importance, and as such determined all the other aspects of policy. It was then that the much-vaunted agreement of Stalin with Lenin in all things and especially their solidarity of principles on the national question, the proof of which was Stalin's essay of 1913, turned out to be, in large measure, fictitious. As Commissar of Nationalities, Stalin no longer approached the national question from the point of view of the laws of history, to which he had paid his tribute in full in 1913, but from the standpoint of the convenience of the administrative office. Thus he necessarily found himself at loggerheads with the needs of the most backward and most oppressed nationalities and secured undue advantages for Great-Russian bureaucratic imperialism.

The Georgian people, almost entirely peasant or petty-bourgeois in composition, vigorously resisted the sovietisation of their country. Under

these conditions extreme cautiousness toward the Georgian masses was required of the ruling party. But the serious difficulties arising from this were greatly exacerbated by the militaristic arbitrariness and methods with which Georgia was subjected to sovietisation. It was on precisely this that a sharp disagreement developed between Lenin, who insisted on an especially careful, circumspect and patient policy toward Georgia and in Transcaucasia generally, and Stalin, who felt that, since the machinery of the State was in our hands, our position was secure. [Stalin seemed to have forgotten that not so long ago] we had recognised the independence of Georgia and had concluded a treaty with her. [That was on 7th May 1920. But on 11th February 1921,] detachments of the Red Army had invaded Georgia upon Stalin's orders and had confronted us with a *fait accompli*. Stalin's boyhood friend, Iremashvili writes:

Stalin was opposed to the treaty. He did not want to let his native land remain outside the Russian State and live under the free rule of the Mensheviks he detested. His ambition pushed him toward ruling over Georgia, where the peaceable, sensible population resisted his destructive propaganda with icy stubbornness ... Revenge against the Menshevik leaders, who had persistently refused to countenance his utopian plans and expelled him from their ranks, would not let him rest. Against Lenin's will, on his own egotistical initiative, Stalin achieved the Bolshevisation or Stalinisation of his native land... Stalin organised the expedition to Georgia from Moscow and directed it from there. In the middle of July, 1921, he himself entered Tiflis as a conqueror.

In 1921, Stalin visited Georgia in quite a different capacity from the one in which they had been accustomed to see him in his native land when he was still Soso and later Koba. Now he was the representative of the government, of the omnipotent Politburo, of the Central Committee. Yet no-one in Georgia saw in him a leader, especially in the upper tiers of the Party, where he was accorded recognition not as Stalin but as a member of the highest leadership of the Party, i.e., not on the basis of his personality, but on the basis of his office. His former comrades in illegal work who regarded themselves at least as competent in Georgian affairs as he, freely disagreed with him, and when they were compelled to submit, did so reluctantly, voicing sharp criticisms and threatening to demand a review of the entire question in the Politburo of the Central Committee. Stalin was not yet a leader even in his own [native haunts. That cut him to the quick. He would never forgive such an affront to his authority] as a representative of the Central Committee of the Party and of the Soviet Government, as People's Commissar of Nationalities.

According to Iremashvili:

The Georgian Bolsheviks, who in the beginning were included in the Russian Stalinist invasion, pursued as their aim the independence of the Georgian Soviet Republic, which should have had nothing in common with Russia except the Bolshevik point of view and political friendship. They were still Georgians to whom the independence of their country was more important than anything else ... But then came the declaration of war by Stalin, who found loyal points of support among the Russian Red Guards and the Cheka he sent there.

Iremashvili tells us that Stalin met with general hostility in Tiflis. At a meeting in a theatre convened by Tiflis Socialists Stalin became the object of a hostile demonstration. It seems that the old Menshevik Iremashvili himself seized control of the meeting and flung accusations in Stalin's face. Other orators denounced Stalin in the same vein, so we are told. Unfortunately, no stenographic record of these proceedings has been preserved and no one is obliged to accept this part of Iremashvili's recollections too literally. [He writes:]

For hours Stalin was forced to listen in silence to his opponents and to admit the accusations. Never before or since did Stalin have to endure such an open and courageous outburst of indignation.

Stalin found the most loyal of his initial collaborators in Ordzhonikidze and Dzerzhinsky, both of whom were at the time out of favour with Lenin. In order to build solid political support for himself in Georgia, he instigated there, behind the back of Lenin and the entire Central Committee, with the aid of Ordzhonikidze and not without the support of Dzerzhinsky, a veritable 'revolution' against the finest members of the Party while perfidiously covering himself with the authority of the Central Committee. Stalin again betrayed Lenin's confidence. Taking advantage of the fact that meetings with the Georgian comrades were not accessible to Lenin, [Stalin deliberately kept Lenin in the dark about the real situation.]

Ordzhonikidze, who was decidedly gifted with forcefulness, courage and firmness of character, was essentially a man of little culture, hot-tempered and utterly incapable of self-control. As long as he was a revolutionist, his daring and his resolute self-sacrifice predominated. But when he became a high official, his uncouthness and crudity overshadowed his other qualities. Lenin, who had entertained warm feelings for him in the past, more and more avoided him. Ordzhonikidze felt it. Their unsatisfactory relationship came to

a head when Lenin proposed that Ordzhonikidze be excluded from the Party for a year or two, for misusing his power.

Similarly, Lenin's friendly regard for Dzerzhinsky cooled off. Dzerzhinsky was distinguished by his deeply inherent honesty, passionate nature and impulsiveness. He remained uncorrupted by power. But he did not always measure up in ability to the tasks imposed upon him. He was invariably re-elected to the Central Committee. But as long as Lenin lived, it was out of the question to include him in the Politburo. In 1921, or it may have been in 1922, Dzerzhinsky, an exceedingly proud man, complained to me, with a note of resignation in his voice, that Lenin did not consider him a political figure. Of course, I tried as best I could to dispel that impression. "He does not consider me an organiser, a statesman," Dzerzhinsky insisted.

"What makes you think so?"

"He stubbornly refuses to accept my report as People's Commissar of Ways of Communication."

Lenin was apparently not enthusiastic about Dzerzhinsky's record in that position. As a matter of fact, Dzerzhinsky was not an organiser in the broad sense of the word. He would call his collaborators together and organise them around his personality, not according to his method. This was obviously no way to bring order into the Commissariat of Ways of Communication. By 1922 Ordzhonikidze and Dzerzhinsky felt thoroughly dissatisfied with their position and in considerable measure hurt. Stalin immediately recruited both of them.

LENIN'S LAST STRUGGLE

Towards the end of 1921, Lenin's health sharply deteriorated. He spent months in agonising and exhausting waiting, partially removed from regular work by the doctors. Alarmed, he struggled against the illness that was gradually eroding his health. In May 1922 Lenin suffered his first stroke [from which he is partly paralysed and loses his ability to speak]. After this bout of ill health, Lenin returned to work on 2nd October 1922. In the first weeks Lenin attempted to co-ordinate his work with the secretariat. Regarding the national question, he even tried to give backing to Stalin's and Ordzhonikidze's authority against the Georgian opposition. On 21st October 1922, he replied with a harsh telegram to a protest, written in a very feisty southern style, of the opposition against Ordzhonikidze and Stalin. As always, there was nothing in any way personal about Lenin's hostility toward Stalin.

Little by little Lenin became convinced that certain of Stalin's traits, exaggerated by the political apparatus, were directly harmful to the Party. From that his decision gradually matured to remove Stalin from the machine and thereby transform him into a rank-and-file member of the Central Committee. In the present-day USSR Lenin's letters of that time constitute the most taboo of all his writings. Fortunately, copies and photocopies of a number of them are in my archives, some of which I have already published.

In the middle of December 1922, Lenin's health again deteriorated [suffering two serious strokes]. He was forced to miss conferences, and kept in touch with the Central Committee by means of notes and messages. Stalin tried at once to capitalise on this situation by hiding from Lenin much of the information which he retained in the Party Secretariat. Stalin extensively used the period of Lenin's illness for selecting people devoted to him personally. Obstructive measures were taken to block the people closest to Lenin. Krupskaya did whatever she could to shield the sick man from the aggressive conduct of the Secretariat. But Lenin knew how to piece together a complete picture of the situation from accidental and barely perceptible hints.

"Shield him from worries!" the doctors insisted. That was easier said than done. Chained to his bed, isolated from the outside world, Lenin was consumed with alarm and indignation. His chief source of worry was Stalin. Stalin attempted to surround him with false information. Lenin smelled a rat and instructed his private secretariat to collect complete data on the Georgian Question; after studying it, he decided to come out into the open. It is hard to say what shocked Lenin most: Stalin's personal disloyalty or his chronic inability to grasp the gist of Bolshevik policy on the national question; most likely a combination of both. On 5th March 1923, Lenin dictated the following note to me:

Strictly Confidential. Personal.

Esteemed Comrade Trotsky,

I earnestly ask you to undertake the defence of the Georgian matter in the Party Central Committee. It is now being 'persecuted' by Stalin and Dzerzhinsky, so that I cannot rely on their impartiality. Indeed, quite the contrary! Should you agree to undertake its defence, I would rest easy. If for some reason you do not agree, please return all the papers. I shall consider that a sign of your disagreement.

With the very best comradely greetings,

Lenin.

[Lenin's secretaries called on Trotsky on Wednesday 7th March.]

"Having read our correspondence with you," Glyasser, Lenin's secretary, told me, "Vladimir Ilyich brightened up. That makes things different. He instructed me to transmit to you the manuscript material which was intended to be his bombshell for the Twelfth Congress." Kamenev had informed me that Lenin had just written a letter breaking off all comradesly relations with Stalin, so I suggested that since Kamenev was leaving that day for Georgia to attend a Party Congress, it might be advisable to show him the letter on the national question so that he might do whatever was necessary. Fotieva replied: "I don't know. Vladimir Ilyich did not instruct me to transmit the letter to Comrade Kamenev, but I can ask him." A few minutes later she returned with the following message: "Absolutely not. Vladimir Ilyich says that Kamenev would show the letter to Stalin, who would make a rotten compromise, in order later to double-cross us."

"In other words, the matter has gone so far that Ilyich does not deem it possible to conclude a compromise with Stalin even along correct lines?" I inquired.

"Yes," she confirmed, "Ilyich does not trust Stalin. He wants to come out openly against him before the whole Party. He is preparing a bombshell."

"How do you explain the change?" I asked Fotieva.

"Evidently," she replied, "Vladimir Ilyich is feeling worse and is in a hurry to do everything he can."

[Three days later Lenin had his third stroke, which paralyses half his body and deprives him of his capacity to speak. The following two documents written by Trotsky shed some light on the situation:]

Secret No. 200T

7th July 1923

To the Members of the Central Committee

Re: Comrade Stalin's Declaration of 16th April

1. Comrade Lenin's article was sent to me secretly and personally by Comrade Lenin through Comrade Fotieva and, notwithstanding my expressed intention to acquaint the members of the Politburo with the article, Comrade Lenin categorically expressed himself against this through Comrade Fotieva.

2. Since two days after I had received the article Comrade Lenin's condition became worse, further communication with him on this question naturally terminated.

3. After some time Comrade Glyasser asked me for the article and I returned it.

4. I made a copy of it for my own use (for formulating corrections to Comrade Stalin's thesis, for writing an article, and the like).
5. I know nothing about the instructions Comrade Lenin gave with regard to his article and other documents on the Georgian matter ("I am preparing speeches and articles"); I suppose that the proper instructions are in the possession of Nadezhda Konstantinovna [Krupskaya], Maria Ilyinichna [Lenin's sister], or Comrade Lenin's secretaries. I did not deem it proper to question anyone about it for reasons that do not require clarification.
6. Only from Comrade Fotieva's communication to me yesterday by telephone and from her note to Comrade Kamenev did I learn that Comrade Lenin had made no arrangements about the article. Since Comrade Lenin had not formally expressed his wishes on this matter, it had to be decided on the principle of political feasibility. It stands to reason that I could not personally assume responsibility for such a decision and therefore I referred the matter to the Central Committee. I did it without wasting a minute after I learned that Comrade Lenin had not given any direct and formal instructions as to the future fate of his article, the original of which is kept by his secretaries.
7. If anyone thinks that I acted improperly in this matter I for my part propose that this matter be investigated either by the conflict commission of the congress or by some special commission. I see no other way.

No. 201T

18th April 1923.

Personal, written without a copy

Comrade Stalin:

Yesterday in personal conversation with me you said it was perfectly clear to you that in the matter of Comrade Lenin's article I did not act improperly and that you will formulate a written declaration in that sense.

Until this morning (11 o'clock) I have not received such a declaration. It is possible that you were delayed by your report of yesterday.

In any event, your first declaration remains until the present moment unrepudiated by you and gives certain comrades a justification for spreading a corresponding version among certain of the delegates.

Since I cannot permit even the shadow of vagueness in this matter – for reasons which, of course, you have no difficulty in understanding – I deem it necessary to expedite its termination. If in reply to this note I do not receive from you a

communication to the effect that in the course of today you will send to all members of the Central Committee a declaration that would exclude the possibility of any sort of equivocation in this matter, then I shall conclude that you have changed your intention of yesterday and will appeal to the conflict commission, requesting an investigation from beginning to end.

You can understand and appreciate better than anyone else that if I have not done this so far it was not because it could have hurt my interests in any way.

The behaviour of the General Secretary became bolder as the reports of physicians on Lenin's health became less favourable. In those days Stalin was morose, his pipe firmly clenched between his teeth. A sinister gleam in his jaundiced eyes, he snarled back instead of answering. His fate was at stake. He had made up his mind to overcome all obstacles. That was when the final break between him and Lenin took place.

[The following is Krupskaya's letter to Kamenev of 23rd December 1922, concerning Stalin's behaviour towards her:]

Lev Borisovich! Stalin subjected me to a storm of the coarsest abuse yesterday about a brief note that Lenin dictated to me, with the permission of the doctors. I didn't join the Party yesterday. In the whole of these last thirty years I have never heard a single coarse word from a comrade. The interests of the Party and of Ilyich are no less dear to me than to Stalin. At the moment I need all the self-control I can muster. I know better than all the doctors what can and what cannot be said to Ilyich, for I know what disturbs him and what doesn't, and in any case I know this better than Stalin.

(Krupskaya asks – it is the editors who summarise without quoting – to be protected “from gross interference in her private life, unworthy abuse and threats.” She continues:)

I have no doubt as to the unanimous decision of the Control Commission with which Stalin takes it upon himself to threaten me, but I have neither the time nor the energy to lose in such a stupid farce. I too am human and my nerves are at breaking point.

N. Krupskaya.

It was then that they turned into open struggle and a complete break: shortly before the second stroke Lenin wrote Stalin a short letter breaking off all personal and comradely relations between them. Lenin's intention now became utterly clear. Using Stalin's policy as an example, he wanted to expose before the Party (and to do so ruthlessly) the danger of a bureaucratic degeneration

of the dictatorship. But almost immediately after that, possibly within half an hour, Fotieva returned with another message from Vladimir Ilyich, who, she said, had decided to act immediately and had written the note to Mdivani and Makharadze, with instructions to transmit copies to Kamenev as well as to me.

The former Soviet diplomat Dmitrievsky, who is very friendly toward Stalin, tells us about this dramatic episode as it was bandied about in the General Secretary's entourage:

When Krupskaya, who he was thoroughly sick of because of her constant annoyances, telephoned him in the country, asking once more for information, Stalin... abused her in the most outrageous language. Krupskaya, in tears, immediately ran to complain to Lenin. Lenin's nerves, already strained to breaking point by the intrigues, could stand no more. Krupskaya hastened to send Lenin's letter to Stalin ... "But you know Vladimir Ilyich," Krupskaya said triumphantly to Kamenev. "He would never have ventured to break off personal relations, if he had not thought it necessary to crush Stalin politically."

Krupskaya actually did say this, but far from "triumphantly"; on the contrary, that thoroughly sincere and sensitive woman was frightfully apprehensive and worried by what had taken place. It is not true that she "complained" about Stalin; on the contrary, as far as she was able, she played the part of a shock-absorber. But in reply to Lenin's persistent questioning, she could not tell him more than she had been told by the Secretariat, and Stalin concealed the most important matters. The letter about the break, or rather the few lines dictated as a note on the 5th March to a trusted stenographer, announced dryly the breaking off of "all personal and comradely relations with Stalin".

[The full text is as follows:]

To Comrade Stalin,

Highly secret, personal,

Copies to Comrades Kamenev and Zinoviev

Comrade Stalin,

You allowed yourself to be so rude as to call my wife on the telephone and to swear at her. She has agreed to forget what was said. Nevertheless, she has told Zinoviev and Kamenev about the incident. I have no intention of forgetting what has been done against me, and it goes without saying that what was done against my wife I also consider to have been directed against myself. Consequently, I must ask you to consider whether you would be inclined to withdraw what you said and to apologise, or whether you prefer to break off relations between us.

Respectfully yours,
 Lenin.

LENIN'S TESTAMENT

[From the time Trotsky joined the Bolsheviks in the summer of 1917 he was generally seen as the most outstanding leader of the Party, practically on an equal footing with Lenin who said in November 1918 that "there was no better Bolshevik"⁴ than Trotsky. At that time the Bolshevik Party was commonly referred to as "the Party of Lenin-Trotsky." The close relations between the two men can be shown by the following conversation that took place in the darkest days of the Civil War.]

"And what," Vladimir Ilyich asked me once quite unexpectedly, "if the White Guards should kill both of us? Will Bukharin and Sverdlov be able to cope with the situation?" Sverdlov was truly irreplaceable: confident, courageous, firm, resourceful, he was the finest type of Bolshevik. Lenin came to know and appreciate Sverdlov fully in those troubled months. How many times did Vladimir Ilyich telephone Sverdlov to suggest one or another urgent measure? And in most cases he would receive the reply: "Done already!" This meant that the measure had already been undertaken. We often joked about it, saying, "With Sverdlov it is no doubt – Done already!"

This was especially the case during the last period of Lenin's life. In July 1919, Lenin signed a *carte blanche* endorsing any future action undertaken by me in the most difficult circumstances of the Civil War. [However, this close relationship did not mean that Lenin always agreed with Trotsky. On the issue of the Workers' and Peasants' Inspection] for example on 5th May 1922 he wrote:

As regards the Workers' and Peasants' Inspection, Comrade Trotsky is fundamentally wrong. In view of the hidebound 'departmentalism' that prevails even among the best Communists, the low standard of efficiency of the employees and the internal intrigues in the departments (worse than any Workers' and Peasants' Inspection intrigues) we cannot at the moment dispense with the Workers' and Peasants' Inspection. A lot of hard and systematic work has to be put in to convert it into an apparatus for investigating and improving all government work.

However, Lenin's views were to undergo a radical change, as can be seen from the following criticisms which were contained in his article 'Better Fewer, But

4 This reference is to the minutes of the Petrograd Committee of the Bolshevik Party as they appeared prior to 1927, after which the offending passage was removed.

Better', written by 10th February, but did not appear in *Pravda* until 4th March 1923. "Our state apparatus is so deplorable, not to say wretched, that we must first think very carefully how to combat its defects..." Lenin continued: "Let it be said in parenthesis that we have bureaucrats in our Party offices as well as in Soviet offices." Around this time, Lenin summoned me to his room in the Kremlin, spoke of the frightful growth of bureaucratism in our Soviet apparatus and of the need to find a solution for the problem. He suggested a special commission of the Central Committee and asked me to take an active part in it. I replied:

Vladimir Ilyich, I am convinced that in the present fight against bureaucratism in the Soviet apparatus we must not lose sight of what is going on: a very special selection of officials and specialists, Party members and non-Party people, in the Centre and in the provinces, even for district and local Party offices, is taking place on the basis of loyalty to certain dominant Party personalities and ruling groups inside the Central Committee itself. Every time you attack a minor official, you run up against an important Party leader ... I could not undertake the work under present circumstances.

Lenin was thoughtful for a moment and – I am quoting him literally – said:

In other words, I am proposing a campaign against bureaucratism in the Soviet apparatus and you are proposing to extend the fight to include the bureaucratism of the Party's Organisational Bureau?

I laughed at the very unexpectedness of this, because no such finished formulation of the idea was in my mind at the time. I replied: "I suppose that's it."

"Very well, then," Lenin retorted, "I propose a bloc."

"It is a pleasure to form a bloc with a good man," I said.

It was agreed that Lenin would initiate the proposal for this commission of the Central Committee to fight bureaucratism "in general" and in the Organisational Bureau in particular. He promised to think over "further" organisational details of the matter. On that we parted. Two weeks passed. Lenin's health became worse. Then his secretaries brought me his notes and letter on the national question. For months he was prostrate with arteriosclerosis and nothing could be done about our bloc against the bureaucratism of the Organisational Bureau. Obviously, Lenin's plan was directed against Stalin, although his name was not mentioned; it was in line with the train of thought Lenin expressed explicitly in his Testament.

I have still another document which characterises Lenin's attitude toward me. It is Krupskaya's letter to me about Lenin:

Dear Lev Davidovich,

I write to tell you that about a month before his death, as he was looking through your book, Vladimir Ilyich stopped at the place where you sum up Marx and Lenin, and asked me to read it over again to him; he listened very attentively, and then looked it over again himself. And here is another thing I want to tell you. The attitude of VI towards you at the time when you came to us in London from Siberia did not change prior to his death. I wish you, Lev Davidovich, strength and health, and I embrace you warmly.

N. Krupskaya.

These were years of life and death struggle. There were obviously conflicts during our work together. But neither the old struggles nor the unavoidable conflicts, nor the intrigues spread by gossips, caused any change in Lenin's attitude toward me. Kamenev as editor of Lenin's *Works* asked me, "what shall I do? There are a lot of sharp polemics!!" I replied (by telephone) "Publish everything. Let the youngsters learn for themselves." "Is that so?" He sighed with relief. I understood that he was speaking on the insistence of Lenin.

For two months after the first stroke Lenin was unable either to move, to speak or to write. Beginning in July, he began to convalesce slowly. In October he returned from the country to the Kremlin and resumed his work. On his return, he was literally shaken by the spread of bureaucracy, arbitrariness and intrigues within Party institutions and Government. In December he directed his fire against Stalin's bullying in the field of the nationalities policy. This he especially inflicted on Georgia, where the authority of the General Secretary was being openly defied.

He came out against Stalin on the question of foreign trade monopoly and was preparing for the forthcoming Party Congress an address which Lenin's secretaries, quoting his own words, called "a bombshell against Stalin". On 23rd January, to the great trepidation of the General Secretary, he proposed the project for organising a control commission of workers⁵ that would check the power of the bureaucracy. "Let us speak frankly," wrote Lenin on the second of March, "the Commissariat of Inspection⁶ does not today enjoy the slightest authority... There is no worse institution among us than our People's

5 As opposed to the Central Control Commission.

6 Rabkrin.

Commissariat of Inspection...” and so on. At the head of the Inspection was Stalin. He well understood the implications of such language.

Moreover, it was no accident that he turned to me with a proposal to come out against the Central Committee when it adopted a resolution against the monopoly of foreign trade. Again, Vladimir Ilyich did not hesitate to approach me with his letters and notes on the national question when he decided to take up the fight against the national policy of Stalin at the Twelfth Congress of the Party. In his last conversation with me – which I repeated in the Central Control Commission – Vladimir Ilyich proposed to me in a straight-forward fashion that we organise a “bloc” (his own expression) against bureaucracy and in particular against the Organisation Bureau. Finally, the clearest expression of Lenin’s attitude toward me, as well as toward the other comrades, was contained in his suppressed Testament, where every word is weighed up and thought out. It could never have occurred to anyone at that time to challenge the content of that Testament. The facts clearly testify that Lenin did not see Stalin as his successor.

[In his Testament Lenin deals with each of the leading members of the Party, carefully evaluating both the positive and negative features of their character. In Trotsky’s case, he makes some relatively minor criticisms (a “far-reaching self-confidence” and “a tendency to be too much attracted by the purely administrative side of affairs”) but goes on to refer to his “exceptional abilities” and describes him as “the most able man on the Central Committee at the present time.”

[In order not to exacerbate the split in the Party leadership, Lenin tried to express his estimate of Stalin in as inoffensive language as possible. Yet he did broach the subject of removing Stalin from the one post that could give him power. The diplomatic mode of expression does not conceal the indirect accusation, very clear in the light of the Georgian events, of Stalin’s rudeness, capriciousness and disloyalty.]

The so-called Lenin Testament – that is, his last advice on how to organise the Party leadership – was written in two instalments during his second illness: on 25th December 1922, and on 4th January 1923.

In his Testament, Lenin writes:

I think that from this standpoint the prime factors in the question of stability are such members of the CC as Stalin and Trotsky. I think relations between them make up the greater part of the danger of a split, which could be avoided, and this purpose, in my opinion, would be served, among other things, by increasing the number of CC members to 50 or 100.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Lenin

25th December, 1922

Taken down by MV

Stalin is too rude and this defect, although quite tolerable in our midst and in dealing among us Communists, becomes intolerable in a Secretary-General. That is why I suggest that the comrades think about a way of removing Stalin from that post and appointing another man in his stead who in all other respects differs from

Comrade Stalin in having only one advantage, namely, that of being more tolerant, more loyal, more polite and more considerate to the comrades, less capricious, etc. This circumstance may appear to be a negligible detail. But I think that from the standpoint of safeguards against a split and from the standpoint of what I wrote above about the relationship between Stalin and Trotsky it is not a [minor] detail, but it is a detail which can assume decisive importance.

Lenin

Taken down by LF

4th January, 1923

These days there are considerable efforts being made to say that Lenin had written his Testament after he was losing his mind. In the same way Stalin during the Twelfth Congress circulated the rumour that Lenin's views on the national question were written by an invalid under the influence of old women. The bed-ridden Lenin was preparing an open attack against Stalin, who knew about this only too well. Fortunately, Lenin left sufficient evidence about the state of his mind during this period when he was writing his Testament. It was at the same time when he wrote his devastating article about the work of the Workers' and Peasants' Inspection, 'Better Fewer, But Better'.

After all that had taken place during the preceding months, the Testament could not have been such a surprise to Stalin. Nevertheless he took it as a cruel blow. When he first read the text – which Krupskaya had transmitted to him for the forthcoming Party Congress – in the presence of his secretary, Mekhlia, later the political chief of the Red Army, and of the prominent Soviet politician Syrtsov, who has since disappeared, Stalin exploded into fury against Lenin and gave vent to his true feelings about his then 'master'. That note, the last surviving document of Lenin, is at the same time the final summing-up of his relations with Stalin before the most severe stroke of all deprived Lenin of speech. I can say quite calmly and with complete confidence that this was the balance sheet of Ilyich's attitude toward me. He expressed that consistent attitude – with pluses and minuses – in his Testament. No power on earth can wipe that out.

DID STALIN POISON LENIN?

Politically, Stalin and I have long been in opposite and irreconcilable camps. But in certain circles it has become fashionable to speak of my 'hatred' of Stalin and to assume *a priori* that everything I write, not only about the Moscow dictator but about the USSR as well, is inspired by that feeling.

During more than ten years of my present exile, the Kremlin's literary agents have systematically relieved themselves of the need to answer pertinently anything I write about the USSR by conveniently alluding to my 'hatred' of Stalin. The late Freud regarded this cheap sort of psychoanalysis most disapprovingly. Hatred is, after all, a kind of personal bond. Yet Stalin and I have been separated by such stormy events as have consumed in flames and reduced to ashes everything personal, without leaving any residue whatever. In hatred there is an element of envy. Yet to me, in mind and feeling, Stalin's unprecedented elevation represents the very deepest fall.

Stalin is my enemy. But Hitler too is my enemy, and so is Mussolini, and so are many others. Today I bear as little 'hatred' toward Stalin as toward Hitler, Franco, or the Mikado⁷. Above all, I try to understand them, so that I may be better equipped to fight them. Generally speaking, in matters of historic importance, personal hatred is a petty and contemptible feeling. It is not only degrading but blinding. Yet in the light of recent events on the world arena, as well as in the USSR, even many of my opponents have now become convinced that I was not so very blind: those very predictions of mine which seemed least likely have proved to be correct.

These introductory lines *pro domo sua* [in themselves] are all the more necessary, since I am about to broach a particularly trying theme. I have endeavoured to give a general characterisation of Stalin on the basis of a close observation of him and a painstaking study of his biography. I do not deny that the portrait which emerges from this is sombre and even sinister. But I challenge anyone else to try to substitute another, more humane figure on the back of those facts that have shocked the imagination of mankind during the last few years – the mass 'purges', the unprecedented accusations, the fantastic trials, the extermination of a whole revolutionary generation, and finally, the latest manoeuvres on the international arena. Now I am about to adduce a few rather unusual facts, supplemented by certain thoughts and suspicions, from the story of how a provincial revolutionary became the dictator of a great country.

These thoughts and suspicions have not come to me fully developed. They have matured slowly. Whenever they occurred to me in the past, I brushed them aside as the product of an excessive mistrustfulness. But the Moscow

7 Mikado is an archaic term for the Japanese emperor. At the time this was Hirohito (1901-89), who oversaw the brutal subjugation of the Chinese people by Japanese imperialism along with the atrocities committed by Japanese forces in the Second World War.

Trials – which revealed an infernal hive of intrigues, forgeries, falsifications, surreptitious poisonings and murders behind the back of the Kremlin dictator – have cast a sinister light on the preceding years. I began to ask myself with growing insistence: What was Stalin's actual role at the time of Lenin's illness? Did not the disciple do something to expedite his master's death?

During Lenin's second illness, toward the end of February 1923, at a meeting of the Political Bureau members Zinoviev, Kamenev and the author of these lines, Stalin informed us, once the secretary had left, that Lenin had suddenly called him in and had asked him for poison. Lenin, who was again losing the power of speech and considered his situation hopeless, foresaw the approach of a new stroke, and did not trust his physicians, whom he had no difficulty catching out in contradictions. His mind was perfectly clear and he was suffering unendurably. I was able to follow the course of Lenin's illness day by day through the doctor we had in common, Dr. Fedor Guetier, who was also a family friend of ours.

"Is it possible, Fedor Alexandrovich, that this is the end?" my wife and I would ask him time and again.

"You cannot really say that. Vladimir Ilyich can get on his feet again. He has a powerful constitution."

"And his mental faculties?"

"Basically, they will remain unimpaired. Not every note, perhaps, will keep its former purity, but the virtuoso will remain a virtuoso."

We continued to hope. Yet here I was unexpectedly confronted with the disclosure that Lenin, who seemed the very incarnation of the will to live, was seeking poison for himself. What must have been his inner state! I remember how extraordinary, enigmatic and out of tune with the circumstances Stalin's face seemed to me. The request he was transmitting to us was tragic; yet a sickly smile was transfixed on his face, as on a mask. We were not unfamiliar with the discrepancy between his facial expressions and his speech. But this time it was utterly insufferable. The horror of it was enhanced by Stalin's failure to express any opinion about Lenin's request, as if he were waiting to see what others would say: did he want to catch the overtones of our reaction to it, without committing himself? Or did he have some hidden thoughts of his own? ... I see before me the pale and silent Kamenev, who sincerely loved Lenin, and Zinoviev, bewildered as always in difficult moments. Had they known about Lenin's request even before the session? Or had Stalin sprung this as a surprise on his allies in the Triumvirate as well as on me?

“Naturally, we cannot even consider carrying out this request!” I exclaimed. “Guetier has not lost hope. Lenin can still recover.”

“I told him all that,” Stalin replied, not without a touch of annoyance. “But he wouldn’t listen to reason. The Old Man is suffering. He says he wants to have the poison at hand ... he’ll use it only when he is convinced that his condition is hopeless.”

“Anyway, it’s out of the question,” I insisted – this time, I think, with Zinoviev’s support. “He might succumb to a passing mood and take an irrevocable step.”

“The Old Man is suffering,” Stalin repeated, staring vaguely past us and, as before, saying nothing one way or the other. A line of thought, parallel to the conversation but not quite in consonance with it, must have been running through his mind.

Why did Stalin inform the Political Bureau about Lenin’s request if he had intended to carry it out? At that period Stalin was still far from power. [After Lenin’s death] he had reason to fear that following a post mortem of the body it would be revealed what had happened and the poisoner sought after. Under such conditions it was much more convenient for him to inform the Politburo that Lenin had poisoned himself. The Politburo decided against giving him poison, but Lenin could obtain the poison in another way. Among the members of Lenin’s guard were Stalin’s people. They decided to give him the poison in such a way that no one knew its nature except Lenin and Stalin.

It is possible, of course, that subsequent events have influenced certain details of my recollection, though, as a general rule, I have learned to trust my memory. However, this episode is one of those that leave an indelible imprint on one’s consciousness for all time. Moreover, upon my return home, I related everything in detail to my wife. And ever since, each time I turn over this scene in my mind, I cannot help repeating to myself: Stalin’s behaviour, his whole manner, was baffling and sinister. What does the man want? And why doesn’t he take that insidious smile off his face? ... No vote was taken, since this was not a formal meeting, but we parted with the implicit understanding that poison would not be allowed to Lenin.

Why did Stalin communicate Lenin’s request to other members of the Political Bureau? Surely he could not reckon on their support or co-operation. On the contrary he was convinced beforehand that he would meet with resistance, especially from me. But Stalin’s behaviour in this case appears to be inexplicable only on the surface. The Political Bureau deprived him of the possibility of fulfilling Lenin’s (actual or presumed) request legally. But

there was no need of that. Stalin had everything to gain and nothing to lose from Lenin's death. When his personal fate is at stake Stalin is a virtuoso of resourcefulness. Poison could be passed to a sick man in various ways through very reliable people around him. No one need have known the nature of the poison except Lenin and Stalin.

No one would ever have found out who it was that had rendered that fatal service to a sick man. Stalin could always refer to the fact that in view of his refusal, in accordance with the decision of the Political Bureau, Lenin had apparently found another source. In the event of some slip in the execution of the plot, and should the autopsy definitely establish poisoning, the advantages of forestalling this verdict were truly invaluable: three other members of the Political Bureau knew that Lenin had asked for poison and that Stalin had warned the Political Bureau about it. He was therefore free to carry out his poisoning with impunity.

Here naturally arises the question of how and why could Lenin, who at the time was extremely suspicious of Stalin, turn to him with such a request, which on the face of it presupposed the highest degree of personal confidence? A mere month before this request, Lenin had written his merciless postscript to his Testament. Several days after the request, he broke off all personal relations with Stalin. Stalin himself could not have failed to ask himself the question of why did Lenin turn to him of all people? The answer is simple: Lenin saw in Stalin the only man who would grant his tragic request, since he was directly and personally interested in doing so. If Lenin turned to him he did so not officially but personally, certain in the knowledge that only Stalin would willingly render that service.

With his faultless instinct, the sick man guessed what was going on in the Kremlin and outside its walls and how Stalin really felt about him. Lenin did not even have to review the list of his closest comrades in order to say to himself that no one but Stalin would do him this 'favour'. At the same time, it is possible that he wanted to test Stalin: just how eager would this chef of the peppery dishes be to take advantage of this opportunity? In those days Lenin thought not only of death but of the fate of the Party. Lenin's revolutionary nerve was undoubtedly the last of his nerves to surrender to death.

I imagine the course of affairs somewhat like this. Lenin asked for poison at the end of February 1923. In the beginning of March, he was again paralysed. The medical prognosis at the time was cautiously unfavourable. Feeling surer of himself, Stalin began to act as if Lenin were already dead. But the sick man fooled him. His powerful organism, supported by his steely will, reasserted

itself. Towards winter Lenin began to improve slowly, moving around more freely; listening to reading and reading himself; his faculty of speech began to return. The findings of the physicians became increasingly more hopeful. Lenin's recovery could not, of course, have prevented the crushing of the Revolution by the bureaucratic reaction. Krupskaya had sound reasons for observing in 1926, "if Volodya were alive, he would now be in prison."

It is remarkable that Stalin did not warn either Krupskaya or Lenin's sister Maria about Lenin's request for poison. Both of them were constantly at the sick man's bedside. If Lenin had actually made that request to Stalin, and if Stalin had actually wanted to refuse the sick man's request, he would surely have warned first and foremost his wife or sister. In fact, both of them only found out about the episode after Lenin's death.

For Stalin himself it was not a question of the general course of development, but rather of his own fate: either he would succeed at once, that very day, in becoming the boss of the political machine and hence of the Party and of the country, or he would be relegated to a third rate role for the rest of his life. Stalin was after power – all of it – come what may. He already had a firm grip on it. His goal was near, but the danger emanating from Lenin was even nearer. At this time Stalin must have made up his mind that it was imperative to act without delay. Everywhere he had accomplices whose fate was completely bound to his. At his side was the pharmacist Yagoda⁸. Whether Stalin sent the poison to Lenin with a hint that the doctors had left no hope for his recovery, or whether he resorted to more direct means, I do not know. But I am firmly convinced that Stalin could not have waited passively when his fate hung by a thread and the decision depended on a small, very small motion of his hand.

I realise more than anyone else the monstrous nature of such suspicions. But that cannot be helped, when such suspicions flow from the circumstances, the facts and Stalin's very character. When in 1922, on the insistence of Zinoviev and against Lenin's opposition, Stalin was appointed General Secretary, Lenin said to his close circle, "that chef will prepare only peppery dishes." They proved to be not only peppery but poisonous, and not only figuratively but

8 Genrikh Grigoryevich Yagoda (1891-1938) had joined the Bolshevik Party before the Revolution but remained an inconspicuous figure. He went to work for the Cheka (later the GPU or NKVD) when Dzerzhinsky was still in charge. He was its head from 1934 to 1936. Yagoda supervised the arrest, show trial, and execution of Kamenev and Zinoviev, events that marked the beginnings of the Great Purge, but he was himself arrested in 1937. At the Trial of the Twenty-One, the last of the notorious Show Trials, he was found guilty and shot.

literally so. For Stalin, as nature and history made him, the temptation must have been irresistible. For him, it was not a question of murder or killing, but of assisting in a suicide for the purpose of relieving a sick man of suffering, while at the same time relieving Stalin himself of an even greater danger.

Stalin had gone too far to retreat. Fearful of the offensive that Lenin was preparing against him, Stalin decided to take a chance. He had openly recruited supporters by distributing government posts, while terrorising those who appealed to Lenin's close circle. He persistently spread the rumours that Lenin was not responsible for his actions. It was in this atmosphere that Lenin's note about a complete break with Stalin appeared. This is certified to by a number of testimonies and witnesses.

Two years ago⁹, I wrote down for the first time the facts which in 1923 and 1924 were known to no more than seven or eight individuals, and even then only in part. Of that number, besides me, only Stalin and Molotov are still among the living. But these two – even assuming that Molotov was among those in the know, something of which I am not certain – have no desire to confess what I am now about to tell. I should add that every fact I mention, every reference and quotation, can be substantiated either by official Soviet publications or by documents preserved in my archives. I had occasion to give oral and written explanations before Dr. John Dewey's commission that investigated the Moscow Trials, and not a single one of the hundreds of documents that I presented was ever called into question.

One month before the Twelfth Congress Lenin was definitely bedridden. One may pursue these suspicions further by posing the question whether Lenin actually asked Stalin for poison. Was it perhaps a whole story invented earlier in order to establish Stalin's alibi? There was not the slightest danger of inspection. It would naturally not have occurred to any of us to ask Lenin whether he had actually attempted to obtain poison from Stalin. But in the event that poison was discovered in the body of the corpse, the explanation would not have been difficult to find. The Political Bureau had already been forewarned that Lenin was seeking his own death. Notwithstanding Stalin's refusal to help Lenin [to obtain poison], he had still managed to find it. Whichever variant you chose to accept, it adds up to something truly fiendish.

THE DEATH OF LENIN – 21ST JANUARY 1924

Lenin was dead. How did it happen? All things are self-assured before death makes its unwelcome appearance. That day comes to all things. This is true of

9 Probably 1937: Trotsky wrote this passage in or around October 1939.

a blade of grass and of a man, of a tree and of a social order, of a stream and of a political movement. The tragic news of Lenin's death made a tremendous impression upon everyone. Here is the testimony of Alexander Barmine, a Soviet diplomat:

One morning in January I was called to the telephone. I heard the Vice-Consul at Enzeli speaking in a voice shaken by emotion.

"Vladimir Ilyich is dead."

"What's that? – Lenin?"

"Lenin is dead."

We had all forgotten that he was mortal. We had known that he was ill. What would happen to the Party and to the Revolution without him? The overwhelming terrible news was like an angry gust of wind blowing through the open windows of the house. From that moment I knew no peace, and the nerves of my staff were on edge. There was no time to think, no time to realise the immense significance of what had occurred... What was going to happen to us now? Who was to take the wheel of this great ship with its course set to the future through uncharted seas, with its amateur crew, its battered machinery, and its young and daring engineers? A few brilliant men remained: Trotsky, Dzerzhinsky, Pyatakov, Rykov, Bukharin, Radek... I scarcely thought of Stalin. He was very little known and back there in 1924 it seemed unlikely that he could ever play a leading role. Undoubtedly Zinoviev and Kamenev would dispute with Trotsky the moral right to be Vladimir Ilyich's successor, but to the men of my generation they had no claim.

It may be worthwhile dealing at this point with the oft-repeated assertion that I lost political power because I did not participate in Lenin's funeral. This explanation is made in part by Walter Duranty, who combines irresponsibility with well-disciplined cynicism. However, this argument can hardly be taken seriously. The rise of Stalin marked the victory of bureaucracy over the people and had much deeper reasons than my absence at Lenin's funeral. Nevertheless, my non-participation at the mourning ceremonies undoubtedly made an unfavourable impression. It caused serious misgivings among many of my friends. In a letter from my oldest son who was then nearing eighteen, there was a note of youthful despair: I should have come at any price! Those were my own intentions too.

Sometime after the middle of January, 1924, I had left for Sukhumi in the Caucasus, to try to get rid of a dogged, mysterious infection, the nature of which still remains a mystery to my physicians. I was without newspapers throughout the entire trip and was scarcely able to read even if they had been

available. The coded telegram about Lenin's death found my wife and me at the railway station in Tiflis. I immediately sent a coded note by direct wire to the Kremlin: "I deem it necessary to return to Moscow. When is the funeral?" The reply came from Moscow in about an hour:

The funeral will take place on Saturday. You will not be able to return on time. The Politburo thinks that because of the state of your health you must proceed to Sukhumi. Stalin.

I did not feel that I should request postponement of the funeral for my sake alone. Only on the shores of the Black Sea in a sanatorium, did I learn that the date of the funeral had been changed. I was lying on a balcony covered with several blankets, when I heard repeated salvos. I asked the reason for this. "It is the hour of Lenin's funeral," I was told. It was Sunday. And at four o'clock in the afternoon in Moscow, Lenin's corpse was being lowered into the grave.

The circumstances connected with the initial fixing of the date of the funeral and the subsequent change were so involved that they cannot be clarified in a few lines. Stalin was manoeuvring, deceiving not only me but also, so it appears, his allies in the Triumvirate. Contrary to Zinoviev, who approached every question from the standpoint of its immediate effectiveness as agitation, Stalin was guided in his risky manoeuvres by more tangible considerations. He might have feared that I would connect Lenin's death with last year's conversation about poison, that I would ask the doctors whether poisoning was involved and demand a special autopsy. It was, therefore, safer in all respects to keep me away until after the body had been embalmed, the viscera cremated, and a post mortem examination motivated by such suspicions no longer feasible.

The date of the funeral is thus tied up with Stalin's intrigues. When I returned from Sukhumi to Moscow and had occasion to discuss the funeral with intimate comrades (rather in passing, since more than three months had elapsed in the meantime), I was told that Stalin, or perhaps the Troika "had no intention of holding the funeral on the Saturday; they only wanted to secure your absence." Who told me that? Perhaps it was I.N. Smirnov or Muralov; hardly Sklyansky, who was very reserved and circumspect. Thus, I had the impression that Saturday was not even under consideration. Later I saw that the machination was more complex. Stalin did not dare to limit himself to the telegram sent to me to the effect that the funeral would be on Saturday. In the name of the Political Bureau – or it might have been the Secretariat of the Central Committee – he issued orders to the military concerning preparations

for Saturday. Muralov and Sklyansky, although surprised at the haste, took the order as good coin.

A number of circumstances indicate that Stalin looked upon Saturday as a purely fictitious date. Many people had enough time to come to Moscow from places further away than Tiflis. How could that miracle have occurred? The explanation is simple. Naturally, the people from faraway places were the most trusted functionaries – secretaries of local Party committees, chairmen of the executive committees and the like. As was subsequently revealed at the Fourteenth Party Congress, Stalin was then already in close contact with most of the important apparatus politicians and had a special ‘personal’ code for communication with them on all questions concerning me. Before any announcement of Lenin’s death appeared in the press, all these provincial politicians received telegrams, no doubt in code, ordering them to proceed to Moscow immediately, most likely without indicating the date of the funeral. In view of the critical nature of the moment, Stalin mobilised all his political machine men from all over the country. He would not have called to the funeral people living further away from Moscow than Tiflis if he had actually intended to have the funeral on Saturday in the first place. The very fact that Stalinist journalists took great care to explain the incident elaborately – naturally following orders from above – shows that Stalin deemed it necessary to cover up these tracks thoroughly.

Stalin would have fixed the funeral for Saturday with only one aim in view: to prevent me from coming to Moscow on time. [In the nature of things, it should have been set for Sunday from the beginning.] so that workers attending it would not lose a day of work. In any event, the telegram which reached me in Tiflis, signed by Stalin, was a decision of the Political Bureau. I had no reason to question it. A number of times the Political Bureau adopted decisions requesting Lenin to rest and the like, and he obeyed. For every one of us a decision of the Political Bureau had the force of a categorical imperative.

Nor did I question to what extent the railroads in the North might be covered with snow at this time of the year. Had it been a question of saving Lenin’s life, I would have sought every means of transportation humanly possible. But it was no more than a question of my presence at Lenin’s funeral – and I did not attribute any transcendental importance to that. During the Civil War I had two trains with four locomotives at my disposal. But I never used them for personal purposes. I well remember how embarrassed Lenin was when he had to go from Moscow to Leningrad to attend his brother-in-

law's funeral; even for this purpose he did not want a private car. When I was Commissar of Communications in 1920, I introduced the most stringent rules about the use of special trains and cars. To order a special locomotive and a special clearing of snow from the tracks (even if it were physically possible) was politically and morally impossible for me. Any attempt for me to do so would have meant acting in direct opposition to the decision of the Political Bureau. It did not even occur to me to question it at the time.

When I asked the physicians in Moscow about the immediate cause of Lenin's death, which they did not expect, they were at a loss to account for it. I did not bother Krupskaya, who had written a very warm letter to me at Sukhumi, with questions about this. I did not renew personal relations with Zinoviev and Kamenev until two years later, after they had broken with Stalin. They were obviously avoiding all discussion concerning the circumstances of Lenin's death, answering in single syllables and avoiding direct eye contact. Did they know anything or were they merely suspicious? In any case, they had been so closely involved with Stalin during the preceding three years that they could not help being apprehensive, lest the shadow of suspicion should fall also on them. The body was not subjected to an autopsy. No one had demanded it. Certainly not Stalin who together with Zinoviev and Kamenev were the masters of the situation and who were in charge of everything pertaining to death, post mortems, release of news to the population and then the funeral arrangements.

In Zinoviev's account of what happened immediately after Lenin died is the following passage, pregnant with deliberate political intent: "In an hour we were on our way to Gorky, this time to the dead Ilyich: Bukharin, Tomsky, Kalinin, Stalin, Kamenev and I. (Rykov was ill in bed)..." Zinoviev did not forget to mention that Rykov was ill, too ill to see the dead Lenin with them. But he forgets to make any mention of Trotsky whatever. The implication was clear: all the members of the Political Bureau, with the exception of Rykov, who was ill, had gone to pay their respects to Lenin – all except Trotsky. Where was Trotsky? Why was he away? Was Trotsky as devoted to Lenin as the others? That this failure to mention Trotsky among the leaders was a corollary to keeping me away from the funeral is confirmed by the failure of *Pravda*, the official Party organ, to mention my name throughout the week of mourning. One would never suspect from a perusal of *Pravda* for that week that I ever existed.

On this fertile soil grew up the carefully-nurtured version that I was 'sulking, like Achilles in his tent' – without of course stating explicitly just

what I was supposed to be sulking about. Was I 'sulking' about the dead Lenin? Or 'sulking' about the people in mourning? The stupidity of this story is only exceeded by its vileness. But it does show how Stalin, who caused my absence, explained it to his circle, including his journalistic lackeys. That is how Stalin manoeuvred, deceiving not only me but possibly also his allies in the Troika. Over Lenin's body Stalin read from a scrap of paper his oath of fealty to his master's legacy, couched in the style of the homiletics he had studied at the Tiflis theological seminary.

In leaving us, Comrade Lenin enjoined us to be faithful to and pure the great calling of Party Member. We swear to Thee, Comrade Lenin, to honour Thy command.

In leaving us, Comrade Lenin commanded us to keep the unity of our Party as the apple of our eye. We swear to Thee, Comrade Lenin, to honour Thy command.

In leaving us, Comrade Lenin ordered us to maintain and strengthen the dictatorship of the proletariat. We swear to Thee, Comrade Lenin, to exert our full strength to honour Thy command.

In leaving us, Comrade Lenin ordered us to strengthen with all our might the union of workers and peasants. We swear to Thee, Comrade Lenin, to honour Thy command.

In leaving us, Comrade Lenin ordered us to strengthen and expand the Union of the Republics. We swear to Thee, Comrade Lenin, to honour Thy command.

In leaving us, Comrade Lenin enjoined us to be faithful to the Communist International. We swear to Thee, Comrade Lenin, that we shall dedicate our lives to the enlargement and reinforcement of the union of the workers of the whole world, the Communist International.

In those days that oath was scarcely noticed. Today it is in all the textbooks, having superseded the Ten Commandments.

"Do not let your sorrow for Ilyich find expression in outward veneration of his personality," said Krupskaya, regarding how Lenin should be treated in death.

Do not raise monuments to him... do not organise pompous ceremonies in commemoration of him... During his lifetime he took very little stock in that sort of thing... If you wish to honour the name of Vladimir Ilyich, organise crèches, playgrounds, children's homes, schools, libraries... and above all practice his teachings in your daily living.

But Krupskaya's gentle chiding remained unheard. Later I protested against the erection of the mausoleum for the embalmed body of the country's leading atheist within a stone's throw of the Cathedral of St. Basil, filled with the mummified bodies of Orthodox Catholic saints and converted by the Bolshevik government into an anti-religious museum. As Ryazanov had once bitterly prophesied, Red Square was being transformed "into a cemetery, with funeral monuments into the bargain." Krassin also objected. And there were other Old Bolsheviks who felt the same way. But we were no longer free to make these objections public. The death and embalment of Lenin [represented] the deification of Lenin, physically, physiologically and psychologically.

A year later, when Lenin's body was already embalmed and laid to rest in his mausoleum, the blame for Lenin's break with Stalin, as is clearly apparent from Dmitrievsky's story, was openly placed at Krupskaya's door. Stalin accused Krupskaya of "intriguing" against him. The notorious Yaroslavsky, who normally carried out Stalin's dubious errands, said in July 1926, at a session of the Central Committee:

They sank so low that they dared to come to the sick Lenin with their complaints of having been hurt by Stalin. How disgraceful – to confuse politics on such major issues with personal matters!

"They" referred to Krupskaya. She was being vengefully punished for Lenin's clash with Stalin. Krupskaya, for her part, told me about Lenin's deep distrust of Stalin during the last period of his life. Volodya was saying: "He," (Krupskaya did not call him by name, but nodded her head in the direction of Stalin's apartment), "is devoid of the most elementary honesty, the most basic human honesty..."

LENIN'S TESTAMENT SUPPRESSED

Addressing the Twelfth Congress on the 23rd April, 1923, Stalin said in his concluding remarks on the national question:

Here very many have referred to the notes and articles of Vladimir Ilyich. I shouldn't like to quote my master, Comrade Lenin, since he is not here, for I fear that I may be referring to him incorrectly and not to the point ...

These words undoubtedly are a model of the most extraordinary Jesuitism on record. Stalin knew very well how indignantly Lenin was opposed to his national policy, how his "master" was prevented from blowing this "disciple" sky-high on this very issue only because of grave illness.

Stalin had no longer any doubt that Lenin's return to activity would mean the political death of the General Secretary. And conversely, only Lenin's death could clear the way for Stalin. [Commenting on] Stalin's intrigues, Manuilsky states: "[There were] so many threads that he himself gets tangled up in them." Immediately after Lenin's death, Stalin removed all the old secretaries, who were very well acquainted with the relations inside the Political Bureau and in particular the real relations between Lenin and Stalin. Lasser, an old revolutionary who was deeply devoted to Lenin, was replaced by Bazhanov, a young man of the new school. The selection did not prove to be a very happy one. Bazhanov soon broke with the Party, fled abroad and exposed everything that he managed to find out in the course of his brief sojourn in the Political Bureau, while of course adding his own gossip and inventions.

N.K. Krupskaya, Lenin's faithful companion and tireless political collaborator from youth to old age, and Maria Ilyinichna Ulyanova, his youngest sister, had both sat up every night with the patient. Ulyanova, never having known her own family, transferred all the resources of her inner-being to her brother. In her character there were certain traits that she shared in common with her brother: loyalty, persistence, and irreconcilability. However, her limited intellect had often served to transform these traits into somewhat of a caricature. Ulyanova was jealous of Krupskaya's and Lenin's closeness, which caused her many an unhappy hour.

As long as Lenin was alive, his skilfulness and authority was enough to reconcile this relationship. After his death, the situation changed. Both women strove to be the interpreter of Lenin's will but for different ends. Both women lived together in the old quarters, but due to Ulyanova's personal animosity towards Krupskaya, she ended up in Stalin's camp. Stalin sought revenge against Krupskaya for Lenin's treatment, as well as for her superiority towards him in general. Thus, Ulyanova [became a willing tool of Stalin] who continually attempted to undermine Krupskaya.

When the Opposition later raised the issue of the Testament in 1926, although she said nothing, Krupskaya simply confirmed our words with her silence. But Ulyanova, who was at that time closely connected with Bukharin, Stalin's closest ally, made a written declaration to the effect that Lenin's letter to Stalin breaking off relations had only a personal momentary character due to temporary circumstances. She said that this was self-evident from the fact that not long before this letter, Lenin had made a request of Stalin that reflected only the maximum personal confidence. Ulyanova did not venture beyond this bold hint, but it is clear that it was a reference to Lenin's request

for poison. As a matter of fact, Ulyanova's interpretation, notwithstanding its outward conviction, was plainly false, at least in that part which interests us.

Lenin had entrusted all his secret papers to his wife, with whom he had a political bond incomparably stronger than with this sister. Krupskaya alone knew everything about Lenin's plans with regard to Stalin. She conveyed these plans to the Central Committee through Lenin's political Testament, and then demanded – of course, in vain – that it be published and made available to the Thirteenth Congress of the Party.

[At first only two persons knew of the document that became known as Lenin's Testament: the stenographer M. Volodicheva, who wrote it from dictation, and Lenin's wife, Krupskaya. As long as there remained a glimmer of hope for Lenin's recovery, Krupskaya kept the document under lock and key. After Lenin's death, not long before the Thirteenth Congress, she handed the Testament to the Secretariat of the Central Committee, in order that through the Party Congress it should be brought to the attention of the Party for whom it was destined. "Vladimir Ilyich," she wrote, "expressed a strong desire after his death this memorandum should be communicated to the next Party Congress." The Central Committee met on 22nd May 1924, on the eve of the Thirteenth Party Congress to decide the question of what to do with Lenin's Testament.

[By that time the Party apparatus was already in the hands of the Troika. They opposed reading the Testament at the Congress despite Krupskaya's insistent demands. The members of the Troika manoeuvred to prevent the contents of Lenin's letters being known to the Party. They could not immediately suppress them, but instead organised a reading of the Testament in the Council of Elders at the Thirteenth Congress of the Party on 22nd May 1924, when it was read out by Kamenev. A decision had been taken that nobody should make notes, nor would it be published.

[The Troika proposed that the document should be read to each delegation at the Congress, and again no one should be allowed to make notes. At the plenary session the Testament must not be referred to. Krupskaya protested that this was a direct violation of the will of Lenin to bring his last advice to the attention of the Party. But the members of the Council, following factional discipline, adopted the proposal by an overwhelming majority. The Testament was quietly shelved and later denounced as a "Trotskyist fabrication". In *Let History Judge* (1971) Roy Medvedev points out that the possession of such a "counter-revolutionary" document could condemn a person to long terms of imprisonment or even execution.]

Bazhanov, another former secretary of Stalin's, has described the session of the Central Committee at which Kamenev first made the Testament known. "Terrible embarrassment paralysed all those present. Stalin, sitting on the steps of the Presidium's rostrum, felt small and miserable." I studied him closely; notwithstanding his self-possession and show of calm, it was clearly evident that his fate was at stake... Radek, who sat beside me at this memorable session, leaned over to me and whispered: "Now they won't dare to go against you." He had in mind two places in the Testament: one, which characterised me as "the most talented man in the present Central Committee", and the other, which demanded Stalin's removal in view of his rudeness, disloyalty and tendency to misuse power. I told Radek: "On the contrary, now they will have to see the struggle through to the bitter end, and moreover as quickly as possible." Actually, the Testament not only failed to terminate the internal struggle, which was what Lenin had wanted, but, on the contrary, intensified it to a fever pitch.

At a July United Plenum of the Central Committee in 1926, the Opposition insisted that Lenin's Testament and other documents, which showed Lenin's real attitude towards Stalin, be made public. Zinoviev, Kamenev and I outlined for the stenographic records that Lenin's last letter broke off all relations with Stalin. Under the pressure of the Opposition, the CC agreed to make public the forbidden texts in the Leninist Miscellanies.

Stalin seldom loses control of himself and seldom raises his voice or resorts to gesticulations. Only by the boorishness of expressions, the cynicism of his accusations, and the hollow timbre of his voice does he reveal the anger that stifles him. It was in that very tone that he read out Lenin's Testament. At the same time, he read certain old documents that might hurt members of the Opposition. He read them with deliberate distortions that were intended for the record. He was interrupted, corrected, caught red-handed. He could not find any response to these exclamations from the audience.

His clumsy mind is not capable of agility in polemics. Finally, he completely lost his balance and rising on his toes, forcing his voice, his hand raised high, he began to roar hoarsely, furious accusations and threats, which made everybody in the hall shudder. "Yes, I am coarse, comrades, in dealing with those who coarsely and treacherously destroy and splinter the Party. I have not concealed this and do not conceal it," he said. Neither before nor after have I seen him in such a state of madness. Finally, Stalin introduced a proposal that the Plenum request permission from the Fifteenth Congress to repeal the decision of the Thirteenth Congress not to publish Lenin's

Testament, so that the document might be published in a Lenin anthology. Naturally this decision was never carried out.

Come to think of it, I can recall only one other time when Stalin lost control of himself. That took place in a session of the Soviet delegation to the Communist International. There was an incident in which Stalin was intriguing behind the back of Zinoviev, then the President of the International. As usual, Stalin tried to sidestep an accusation by talking about being sincere, while accusing his opponents of insincerity. This was Stalin's favourite manoeuvre, which always provoked protests from the Opposition. Even Stalin's supporters felt uncomfortable about his manners. Kamenev shouted some remark against Stalin, such as "hypocrite". This provoked Stalin who responded with a stream of coarse abuse, which sparked off a regular hullabaloo. Kamenev stood there, pale and shocked. It was a very embarrassing scene.

THE CAMPAIGN AGAINST TROTSKY BEGINS

The decisive turning point in the evolution of the bureaucracy began at the time of Lenin's last illness and the beginning of the campaign against 'Trotskyism'. When Lenin fell ill, Zinoviev took the initiative to launch a struggle against me. He figured that the ponderous Stalin would remain his loyal chief-of-staff in this struggle. In those days, the General Secretary moved with extreme caution. He was completely unknown to the masses. He was an authoritative figure only to a part of the Party apparatus, and even they did not like him.

In 1924 Stalin wavered a lot, but Zinoviev was pushing him forward. Stalin needed Zinoviev and Kamenev for political reasons. He needed the mantle of the 'Old Bolsheviks' as a cover for his behind the scenes activities. This was the fundamental mechanism of the functioning of the 'Troika'. At the time of Lenin's illness the main political work of the Triumvirate – Zinoviev, Kamenev and Stalin – consisted of undermining my influence. Thanks to the cautiousness and persistence of Stalin, who constantly restrained Zinoviev, this work was carried on behind the scenes with all the necessary circumspectness. Zinoviev was invariably the one to display the greatest fervour: he was steering his path towards his future executioner.

At the Fourteenth Congress of the Party in 1925 Zinoviev stated:

We all know perfectly well and it is quite clear that the Secretariat with Vladimir Ilyich was one thing and without him quite another. In Vladimir Ilyich's lifetime, no matter who was in the Secretariat, they played a limited role. It was an organisational instrument which was obliged to carry out a definite policy. Now

that Vladimir Ilyich is no longer with us, it has become clear to everyone that the Secretariat of the Central Committee must acquire an absolutely decisive significance.

After Lenin's death a gaping hole was left in the Central Committee. Inside the Political Bureau all the members united against a single individual. People began to change, and certain of their traits disappeared into the background. In their stead, traits which had been hidden and suppressed came to the fore. In the Party such characteristics were held in check by the moral authority and political make-up of the Political Bureau. As long as this remained the case, the recollection of yesterday which bound people together and limited their actions against each other, also remained.

Striving to compromise my political views (on the peasantry and all the rest), they were at the same time concerned about compromising themselves through a premature exposure of their conspiracy; so the Triumvirate attempted to invest itself with the semblance of impartiality. This it attempted to do by calling attention whenever possible to my military achievements. Only in this way was it possible, without evoking any immediate response from the ranks, to mobilise those who were dissatisfied in the Party. The struggle against 'Trotskyism', which opened in 1923, was directed not against [my past] 'conciliationism' which had nothing to do with the questions under discussion, but against the concept of the international [character of] the proletarian revolution.

The Thermidorians often repeated the arguments which were put forward during the first [1905] Revolution by the Liberals and Mensheviks. No wonder that in this fight Stalin found firm support in the former Liberals, Socialist-Revolutionaries and Mensheviks who were flooding into the state and partly (and, to some extent) into the Party apparatus. By the time of the sixth anniversary of the October Revolution in November 1923, this work was steadily progressing.

[The disagreements among the leaders surfaced over the German question. In 1923 a bankrupt Germany stopped paying the reparations imposed by the Treaty of Versailles. As a result, French and Belgium forces occupied the Ruhr, the heartland of German industry, leading to a revolutionary situation. The German currency collapsed, the middle class was in a revolutionary mood and the Social-Democrats were discredited. The Communist Party was growing rapidly and the question of power was posed. Even the Fascists were saying: let the Communists take power first, then it will be our turn.]

[In a speech to Russian metalworkers in October 1923 Trotsky said: “What are the conditions for carrying through a revolution? It is essential that the economic, technical, and class development of the country should have sufficiently ripened. The first two conditions have been obviously fulfilled. Even with regard to the third Germany is favourably placed. We see there a large working class numbering fifteen million out of sixty million total population, a working class more and more emancipating itself from the social-pacifist leaders and adhering to the Communist Party. One naturally asks: This party is still very young, will it have the necessary force and resoluteness to will to carry through a revolution, and to know how to do it?”

[The leaders of the German Communist Party vacillated and failed to take decisive action. They looked to Moscow for guidance but Lenin was incapacitated by his final illness and Trotsky was also ill. The German leaders instead saw Stalin and Zinoviev, who advised them not to try to take power. The masses were disappointed and turned away from the Communist Party and so an exceptionally favourable opportunity was lost. The failure of the 1923 revolution marked a turning point that determined the fate of the European revolution. It confirmed the isolation of the Soviet Republic and was a major factor in the rise of the Stalinist bureaucracy.]

On 7th August 1923, Stalin had written to Zinoviev and Bukharin:

Should the [German] Communists strive, at the present stage, to seize power without the Social-Democrats? Are they sufficiently ripe for that? That is the question, in my opinion. When we seized power we had in Russia such resources in reserve as (a) the promise [of] peace; (b) the slogan ‘land to the peasants’; (c) the support of the great majority of the working class; and (d) the sympathy of the peasantry. At the moment, the German Communists have nothing of the kind. They have, of course, a Soviet country as neighbour, which we did not have; but what can we offer them? ...If the Government in Germany were to topple over now, in a manner of speaking, and the Communists were to seize hold of it, they will end up in a crash. That is in the ‘best’ case. While, at worst, they will be smashed to smithereens and thrown way back. The whole point is not that Brandler wants to ‘educate the masses’ but that the bourgeoisie plus the right-wing Social-Democrats are bound to turn such lessons – the demonstration – into a general battle (at present all the odds are on their side) and exterminate them [the German Communists]. Of course, the Fascists are not asleep; but it is to our advantage to let them attack first: that will attract the whole working class to the Communists (Germany is not Bulgaria). Besides, all our information indicates that fascism is weak in Germany. In my opinion we should restrain the Germans, not spur them on.

In *Lessons of October*, written by me under the influence of the capitulation of the German Central Committee, I developed the idea that under the conditions of the present epoch, in the course of a few days a revolutionary situation can be lost for several years. The success of the Russian and World revolution is determined by two or three days of struggle. It may be hard to believe, but this opinion was characterised as “Blanquism” and “subjectivism.” The innumerable articles written against the *Lessons of October* reveal just how completely the experience of the October Revolution has been forgotten and how little its lessons have penetrated consciousness.

In November [1923] when the situation changed sharply and I proposed in the Political Bureau immediately to recall the Russian comrades from Germany, Stalin said: “Yet again you are in a hurry. Before you felt that the Revolution was imminent, and now you think the opportunity is lost. It is too early to recall them.” Nevertheless we did decide to recall them. Stalin did not see the approach of the Revolution, nor did he notice it when it ebbed. In the evaluation of important events, Stalin always revealed his utter helplessness, since no amount of cautiousness or slyness can replace theoretical preparation, a broad political understanding and creative imagination, that is, those attributes of which Stalin is utterly devoid.

Stalin declared in 1923 that I supported Brandler¹⁰ in Germany, and there have been several attempts, after the event, to claim that I was in solidarity with the line of Brandler. Stalin had already misled the Italian delegation by falsely giving it the information about my relations to the German Central Committee in 1923. At the time I explained the question in a letter, a copy of which I sent to Stalin. What I supported in 1923 is clear from that letter. The belated attempts to ascribe to me solidarity with the line of the Brandlerite Central Committee, whose mistakes were only a reflection of the general mistakes of the Comintern leadership, were chiefly due to the fact that after the capitulation of the German Party, I was opposed to making a scapegoat of Brandler. More correctly, it was because I judged the German defeat to be much more serious than the majority of the Central Committee did. In this case as in others, I fought against the inadmissible system which only seeks

¹⁰ Heinrich Brandler (1881-1967) was a German trade unionist who was leader of the Communist Party (KPD) during the revolutionary situation of 1923. Stalin needed a scapegoat for the defeat and blamed Brandler and the other German leaders. Expelled from the Communist Party in December 1928, Brandler went on to become co-founder of the Communist Party of Germany Opposition, the leading section of the so-called ‘International Right Opposition’.

to maintain the infallibility of the central leadership by the periodic removal of national leaderships, subjecting the latter to savage persecution and even expulsion from the party.

What was Stalin's position in Germany in 1923? Stalin himself was a Right Brandlerite. Stalin, who did not know the German situation, who most likely had never seriously studied German conditions, being unable to follow the German press, was guided only by his prevaricating instinct which is least of all useful in important affairs. "When analysing the German events of the autumn of 1923," Stalin explains, "it should above all be borne in mind that Comrade Trotsky indiscriminately draws an analogy between the October Revolution and the revolution in Germany and intemperately attacks the German Communist Party for its real and alleged errors."

[The growing discontent in the ranks of the Party with the bureaucratic regime finally found its expression with the Declaration of forty-six in October 1923, signed by prominent Russian Bolsheviks, including Pyatakov, Preobrazhensky, Sosnovsky, Beloborodov, Saprionov, Muralov, Antonov, Kassior, Serebryakov, Rafael, Rosengoltz and others, criticising the growing bureaucratic trends and demanding a change of course. Later, Radek and others associated themselves with what was to develop into the Left Opposition.]

At the time of the Party discussion in the autumn of 1923, the Moscow organisation was roughly divided down the middle. In the beginning, there was even a majority in favour of the Left Opposition. However, the two halves were not equal in relation to their social weight. On the side of the Opposition were the youth and a considerable portion of the rank and file; on the side of Stalin and the Central Committee were primarily the specially trained and disciplined politicians who were most closely connected to the political machine of the General Secretary.

It was during this very same autumn discussion that the methods of the apparatus in the struggle of the Opposition were definitely worked out and tested in practice. Under no circumstances was it possible to permit the breaking up of the machine under pressure from below. The machine had to be preserved. The Party itself could always be reshuffled, recast or regrouped. Some Party members might be expelled or compromised and others scared off. Finally, it was possible to manipulate facts and figures. The machine men were dispatched in automobiles from one factory to another.

The control commissions, which had been established for the purpose of fighting this very usurpation of power by the machine, became mere cogs in the wheels. At Party meetings specially trusted officials of the control commissions

wrote down the name of every speaker suspected of Oppositionist leanings, and afterwards busied themselves with research into their past. Always, or almost always, it was not too hard to find something more or less tangible – some mistake in the past or simply a bad social origin – to justify a charge or provoke a violation of Party discipline. It was then possible to expel, transfer or intimidate them into silence, or else strike a bargain with the Oppositionist enemy.

Those who supported the Left Opposition were not spurred on by the hope of great and serious changes. On the other hand, the bureaucracy fought with extraordinary ferocity. True, there was at least one period of complete confusion in their camp, but we did not know it at the time. This was subsequently disclosed to us by Zinoviev. Once, upon arriving in Moscow from Petrograd, he found the Central Committee and the Moscow leaders in a state of utter panic. Stalin was seriously considering a manoeuvre behind their backs with the aim of making peace with the Opposition at the expense of his allies, Zinoviev and Kamenev.

It was around this time I remember Stalin saying [in a meeting of the leadership] “Comrade Trotsky is a wonderful leader.” This was said with a wry smile, as if he was forcing himself to speak. I looked at him with surprise. This was typical of Stalin. During this time, because of my illness the sessions of the Political Bureau were held at my home. Stalin made obvious overtures towards me and displayed a completely unexpected interest in my health. Zinoviev, according to his account, put a stop to this equivocal situation in Moscow by turning to Petrograd for support. There he launched the organisation of an illegal staff of agitators and shock troops, who were sent by automobile from one establishment to another to spread distortions and calumnies. Stalin was cautious. Without breaking with his allies of course, Stalin carefully protected for himself the road of retreat to the Opposition. Zinoviev was much bolder, but more adventurous and irresponsible.

Stalin did not yet fully appreciate the extent of the changes that had taken place in the higher echelons of the Party and especially in the apparatus. He did not rely on his own individual strength. He was still groping around, feeling out each point of resistance, and taking every aspect into account. He let Zinoviev and Kamenev commit themselves, while he himself remained non-committal. Who could have thought during those hours that from the midst of the Bolshevik Party itself would emerge a totalitarian dictator who would repeat the calumny of Yarmelenko with reference to the entire staff of

Bolshevism? If at that time anyone would have shown Stalin his own future role he would have turned away from himself in disgust.

During the rise of the Troika, my presence at the Political Bureau was only required when purely formal discussions were being held, the purpose of which were to find out my opinion on some question or other and to place some responsibility upon me. At one of these meetings, a most sensitive question was raised as to who should deliver the keynote address [at the Twelfth Congress], which ever since the founding of the Party had always been Lenin's prerogative. When the subject was broached in the Political Bureau meeting, Stalin was the first to say, "The Political Report will of course be made by Comrade Trotsky."

I looked at him with astonishment and refused the offer, since it seemed to me equivalent to announcing my candidacy for the role of Lenin's successor at a time when Lenin was gravely ill and fighting for his life. I replied approximately as follows:

This is an interim situation. Let us hope that Lenin will soon recover. In the meantime the report should be made, in keeping with his office, by the General Secretary. That will eliminate all grounds for idle speculations. Besides, you and I have serious differences on economic questions, and I am in a minority.

"But suppose there were to be no differences?" Stalin asked, letting me know that he was ready to go far in making concessions, that is, to conclude a rotten compromise. Kalinin intervened in this dialogue. "What differences?" he asked. "Your proposals are always passed at the Political Bureau." I continued to insist on Stalin making the report. "Under no circumstances," he replied with demonstrative modesty. "The Party will not understand it. The report must be made by the most popular member of the Central Committee." [In the end, the Triumvirate decided that Zinoviev would make the political report.]

"BURY TROTSKYISM"

There are numerous contradictions in Stalin's arguments at different stages of the struggle against his rivals. Placed side-by-side, they show that Stalin is a thoroughly slovenly man. Yet at each stage his lie serves his purpose at a given moment. He is not embarrassed by events concerning yesterday or tomorrow; he calculates on the short memory of the majority and on the physical impossibility of the minority publicly refuting Stalin's lies. It would, however, be childishness to reduce the entire rise of Stalin to this one thing. It was not

possible for him to secure his leading role in the country – to fabricate his own biographical history which reads like a fantastic tale – simply by means of lies, deception and intrigue. Lies, deception and intrigues are far from being all-powerful, and in any case, they failed to raise Stalin out of obscurity prior to 1923. There must first be a demand for a lie. It must serve definite social interests. These interests must objectively be rooted in the needs of the day. Only then can the lie become a historical factor. In the final analysis, any great political struggle on a broad scale can be reduced to the question of the ‘meal ticket’.

In 1923 the situation began to stabilise. The Civil War, like the War with Poland, was definitely in the past. The most horrible consequences of the famine had been overcome and the NEP had given an impetus to an energising revival of the national economy. The constant shifting of Communists from post to post, from one sphere of activity to another, soon became the exception rather than the rule. Communists began to acquire permanent positions. They began to rule in a planned fashion the regions and districts of economic and political life entrusted to their administrative discretion. The placement of Party members and officials acquired a more systematic and planned character. No longer were assignments to positions regarded as temporary and almost fortuitous. The question of appointments came to have ever more to do with the personal life, the living conditions of the appointee’s family and his career.

Within ten years of the October Revolution the overwhelming majority of the Party’s one million members had only a dim conception of what the Party had been in the first period of the Revolution, not to mention the pre-Revolution underground. Suffice it to say that by then fully three-quarters of the Party consisted of members who had joined only after 1923. The number of Party members with a pre-Revolution record – that is, revolutionaries of the underground – was now less than one percent. By 1923 the Party had been pretty well diluted by the green and callow mass which was to play the role of yes-men with a nudge from the professionals of the machine. This thinning out of the revolutionary nucleus of the Party was a necessary prerequisite to the machine’s victories over ‘Trotskyism’. To the perspective of the permanent revolution, the bureaucracy counterpoised the perspective of peace and quiet, of personal well-being. Inside the Kremlin and outside its walls, a series of secret banquets and parties were taking place. Their political aim was to weld together the ‘Old Guard’ against me. The disagreements, which grew out of the discussions of 1923, in turn, grew ever wider and deeper.

The general conduct of the conspirators, the staging of their plans, the division of roles among them – all of this was crude and vulgar even to the point of legal fraud. At the Twelfth Party Congress in 1923, Osinsky, one of the old Bolsheviks, expressed the dissatisfaction of broad layers of the Party with the dictatorship of the ‘Troika’. Stalin answered him by saying that Osinsky would not succeed in separating him from Zinoviev and Kamenev. From the prisoners’ dock, the latter might have wanted to remind Stalin of that declaration in their concluding remarks at their Trial, but their deal with the GPU deprived them of even of that platonic satisfaction.

The majority of the Political Bureau had firmly resolved to strangle the Opposition – at least, to choke them off, crowd them out, expel them, and arrest them. This was Stalin’s way of answering arguments. Not all the members of the Political Bureau agreed with this course. But little by little, Stalin drew them into the struggle. He whittled away their mental reservations, wore down their preconceptions, made each succeeding step the inevitable consequence of each preceding one. Here he was in his element. In this his mastery was beyond dispute. The time came when the dissenting members of the Political Bureau gave up protesting even mildly against the outrages of Stalin’s crasser “activists”. And little by little, they were forced out of non-committal silence into public approval of outrage after outrage.

Barmine writes:

The interest of Party members in Moscow was entirely taken up by discussions on the subject of Trotskyism. Far away in Persia and elsewhere I had heard but faint echoes of the quarrel. The younger people, like myself, were inclined to simplify the issue. For us it was merely a question of who was to succeed Lenin, and we were strongly of the opinion that one man, and one man only, had a right to the position, because he was head and shoulders superior to his fellow-claimants and could depend upon our unswerving loyalty. That one man was Trotsky. But the older members of the Party were plotting against him. They produced a number of charges, sometimes very plausible, of heretical doctrine, a matter on which we were fitted neither by experience nor knowledge to pronounce. The issue of Marxist doctrine served at that time to profoundly disorientate the ranks of the Party.

The decisive attack on the Opposition was made at the session of the Thirteenth Party Conference. The Troika had now burned all the bridges behind it. The atmosphere of the session was permeated with a feeling of terror. Such was the atmosphere that no one objected, no one asked questions, no one applauded, everybody just stared. They were all straining not to miss even

a single word, to decipher the hidden reasoning behind this sudden attack. But it was shocking only for the uninitiated majority. Dozens of the more prominent representatives had been prepared beforehand for the forthcoming attack. Amidst the general confusion it was they who determined the tone of the meeting.

Most of the Party members voted for the defeat of the Opposition against their will, against their sympathies, against their own memories. They were driven to voting as they did, little by little, under the pressure of the machine, even as the machine itself was drawn into the fight against the Opposition from the top down. Barmine later admitted:

The 'Permanent Revolution' seemed to me to be a dangerous theory. I felt relieved that I, with the majority of the members of the Communist cell at the Commissariat for External Trade, could vote for the Central Committee, that is to say, for Zinoviev, Kamenev and Stalin. I deplored the necessity of voting against Trotsky, but, since he persisted in his errors, I felt it to be my duty to do so.

Nevertheless, he then states, "Trotsky was enormously popular with us."

Stalin left the leading role to Zinoviev, Kamenev, Bukharin and Rykov because they were much better equipped than he to carry on an open polemic against the Opposition, but also because he did not wish to burn all his bridges behind him. The hard blows struck at the Opposition, blows which seemed decisive at that time, evoked secret but nonetheless deep sympathy for the vanquished and outright hostility toward the victors, especially toward the two leading figures, Zinoviev and Kamenev. Stalin made capital out of that, too. He publicly dissociated himself from Kamenev and Zinoviev as the chief culprits in the unpopular campaign against Trotsky. He assumed the role of conciliator, an impartial and moderate mediator in the factional struggle. Thus, in 1925 the majority of the Party, including those who had been tested in the fire of the Civil War, did not as yet see in Stalin the head of the Party or of the Government, which he was already in all but name. It was typical of his cautiousness that he still continued to cover himself with the figures of Zinoviev and Kamenev.

In May 1925, Stalin said at a gathering of the Moscow organisation: "The Party which hides the truth from the people, the party which fears the light of criticism, the party of a clique of deceivers is doomed to perish." In his article 'For Leninism', published in the same year, he writes:

Trotskyism comes forward now in order to dethrone Bolshevism and to undermine its foundations... The Party's task is to bury Trotskyism as an intellectual tendency.

There is talk of repressions against the Opposition and of the possibility of a split. This is nonsense, comrades. Our party is strong and mighty. It will not stand for any splits. As for repressions, I am decidedly against them. What we need now is not repressions but a fulsome struggle of ideas against reviving Trotskyism.

By that time Kamenev and Stalin were no longer on speaking terms, but the general indignation at the meetings pushed them closer together. Moreover, they were satisfied with the results. When they left together in an automobile, they exchanged impressions of the meetings and worked out plans for the future. This was all told to me by Kamenev in 1926 after the two members of the Troika [Zinoviev and Kamenev] broke with Stalin and joined the ranks of the Opposition.

INTRIGUES IN THE ARMY

At an evening celebration of the Kremlin military students on the 28th January 1924, in a speech devoted to the memory of Lenin, Stalin said:

The theoreticians and leaders of the Party who know the history of the country, who study the history of Revolutions from beginning to end are sometimes gripped with a disgraceful disease. That disease is called fear of the masses. It represents a lack of faith in the creative ability of the masses. On that basis arises a certain aristocratism of the leaders in relation to the masses, who, uninstructed in the history of revolutions, are called upon to break the old and build the new."

Lenin was the norm for revolution. He was truly the genius of revolutionary events and the greatest master of revolutionary leadership. Never did he feel as free and joyous as in the epoch of revolutionary cataclysm... Never did Comrade Lenin's genius or sagacity, show itself so fully and distinctly as in the time of revolutionary explosions. In these revolutionary days he literally blossomed, became a seer, foretold the movement of classes, and the possible zig-zags of revolution as if seeing them in the palm of his hand.

Both the occasion and the audience were profoundly significant. The Kremlin military students made up the military guard of both the Central Committee and the government. As a military unit they were under the jurisdiction of the Commissariat of War, of which at the time I was the head. Stalin's purpose was to introduce himself to the military students, to establish contact with them, and at the same time drop certain hints and insinuations, which his stooges could repeat in private conversation against me. This speech of Stalin's was recast by him and reproduced in a new version. We therefore quote not from a transcript but from the finished product of Stalin's pen.

This is the same speech in which Stalin revealed for the first time a letter of doubtful authenticity from Lenin allegedly received by him while still in Siberia at the end of 1903. In the speech is also the story about his first meeting with Lenin in December, 1905, at the conference of the Bolsheviks in Tammerfors, Finland. "I had hoped to see," Stalin related, "the mountain Eagle of our Party, a great man, great not only politically, but, if you will, even physically, as Comrade Lenin waxed in my imagination in the form of a giant, stately and dignified."

A mountain eagle suddenly transformed into a stately giant is a typical example of Stalin's style. The section of the speech from which this gem is quoted is sub-titled 'Modesty'. From then on to the end of the speech the mountain eagle is the symbol for Lenin. Hardly anyone would have resorted to the eagle as a symbol of modesty. But after all, this is a literary consideration – and the purpose of Stalin's speech was far from literary. "What was my feeling," Stalin continued with affected naiveté, "when I saw this most ordinary of mortals, less than middle height, who in intelligence literally was undistinguishable from any other ordinary mortal...?" At this point Stalin was obviously not speaking of Lenin but of himself. His underlying thought may be expressed thus: I seem to my audience as colourless and insignificant, but even Lenin seemed like that to me at first. However, it was a mistake.

In view of this, it become clear to me why Stalin needed, at the very beginning of the struggle against "Trotsky", to present to the military students of the Kremlin a letter of Lenin's from 1903. In itself, the fact of receiving or not receiving the letter might be considered superfluous for a biography of Stalin, but this is not so as it reveals his character and how he seeks to resort to petty tricks. The orator goes on to describe with a touch of irony how comrades waited at the conference for this ordinary man "with bated breath", and how before his appearance, comrades would tell each other: "Tssh... Quiet... He's coming." This description was directed against those who enjoyed such popularity, of which Stalin was in such great need.

Imagine my disappointment when I learned that Lenin had come to the conference and, wedging himself into a corner, was carrying on a conversation with somebody else...

Stalin had to explain to his young listeners that the reason he was not greeted personally by Lenin, or given any special recognition, was simply due to the fact that he was on the same level as Lenin. All of this story-telling is false through and through. In regard to the illegal Bolshevik conference in Tammerfors,

attended by about a score of delegates, it stands to reason that there could have been no possibility [of discussing individually with everyone.] Thus, to the military students, Stalin explained away his having been unnoticed, his absence of popularity, simply by his simplicity and modesty. The entire speech is composed on the same fashion.

“Only subsequently did I understand,” he explained, “that this simplicity and modesty of Comrade Lenin represents one of the strongest sides ... of the new leader of the new proletarian masses.” Stalin then went on to describe the epoch of reaction (1909-11) and the confusion amongst the leaders. Stalin observed, “Lenin was then the only one who did not yield to the general epidemic.” With this praise, he also excluded himself from the ranks of those who had not lost their bearings. But he hardly noticed that as the formula of “the Party of Lenin and Stalin” had not yet even been dreamed up by anyone.

Stalin had not yet ventured even in his most secret dreams to speak of himself as a leader, especially with reference to the past. He would have to remove very many other names before he would dare to think of attaching his own name to that of Lenin. That was why for the time being it was necessary to portray Lenin as the only leader who had not succumbed to the general confusion. Stalin explains his very sketchy reminiscences of that critical moment in November, 1917 when Lenin, standing at the direct wire with Stalin and Krylenko, learns that the commander-in-chief, General Dukhonin, refused to begin armistice negotiations.

After a certain pause at the wire, the face of Comrade Lenin was illumined by some extraordinary light. It was evident that he had already made his decision. ‘Let’s go to the radio station. It will be useful. We shall remove General Dukhonin by special order, appoint Comrade Krylenko commander-in-chief in his place, and appeal to the soldiers over the heads of the commanding staff with the call, ‘Surround the Generals, terminate military action, establish contact with the Austro-German soldiers, take the cause of peace into your own hands.’”

No doubt, this episode was described formally, but it failed to disclose a single living trait of Lenin’s, except for the point about Lenin’s face being illumined by some light. In times to come, such anecdotes will be used to prove that Lenin would not dare take a single step without Stalin, in the most critical moments Lenin was forced to consult Stalin, and so on and so forth. As a matter of fact, Stalin was only alongside Lenin on the direct wire because the other members of the Political Bureau were busy with more responsible work. The actual relation between Stalin and Lenin would be best conveyed with the

words: "It was evident that he had already made his decision", and therefore did not need to consult Stalin.

Stalin's position as General Secretary gave him many possibilities, the extent of which interested persons could not even guess. Barmine writes:

About this time I met a number of men whose future careers are not without interest. Michael Ostrovsky, until recently Political Commissar with Budyonny's army, a personal friend of Voroshilov's, and involved with Stalin in the conspiracy against Trotsky, had just been appointed Assistant Commissar, under Maklavich, at the College.

During that period I had proved this candidature of Ostrovsky's was apparently advanced by the Bureau without any knowledge of the backstage wire-pulling connected with this appointment.

In 1923, the Central Committee of the Party offered twenty places in the new rest home at Marina to officers that had graduated from the Academy. This was undoubtedly the Central Committee offering exceptional privileges to the most important groups of the bureaucracy and first of all to the military command. In essence this was political bribery. It proved to be an important weapon in the campaign which was beginning against the head of the military department. "When I first entered the large dining room, with its glittering crystal chandeliers, with a buffet laden with fresh fruits, where voices and laughter spread with the echo of joy, I could not think of anything, except the extent of deprivations through which we have passed through in recent years," commented Barmine.

In the last period of my role as the head of the Military Department, incredible as it may seem, Stalin's efforts as well as those of Zinoviev and Kamenev were directed toward placing the Army in an impossible financial situation. All financial assignments for the Military Departments were mercilessly slashed. Immediately after my removal, however, the Military Department received large supplementary assignments of money and the salaries of the commanding staff were raised considerably. This measure was supposed to reconcile the army to the changes that had occurred.

[After a lengthy campaign to undermine and slander him, Trotsky was finally removed from his position as People's Commissar of Army and Fleet Affairs and Chairman of the Revolutionary Military Council on 6th January 1925.]

THE SPLIT IN THE TROIKA

In 1926, after more than three years of the joint conspiracy against me, the Troika of Stalin, Zinoviev and Kamenev eventually fell apart. Out of this split emerged the Leningrad Opposition, against which the Stalin group led a struggle every bit as ferocious as the one against the Opposition of 1923.

In 1925, Zinoviev, trying to impress Rakovsky with his factional victories, said about me: "He is a poor politician. He could not find the right tactic. That's why he was beaten." A year later this unfortunate critic of my tactic was knocking at the door of the Left Opposition for admission. As late as 1925 neither he nor Kamenev had guessed that they had become tools of bureaucratic reaction – even as they had made the wrong decision in 1917.

By 1926 they realised there was no other "tactic" possible for a revolutionist, for after all they were of the Old Guard that could not honestly conceive of Bolshevism without its internationalist perspective and its revolutionary dynamism. That was the tradition of which the Old Bolsheviks were the bearers. That was why the entire Party of Lenin's day regarded them as irreplaceable capital. The July declaration of 1926, signed by Comrades Kamenev and Zinoviev states:

Now there can no longer be any doubt that the basic core of the Opposition of 1923 was right to warn about the danger of deviating from the proletarian line and the menacing growth of the apparatus and its regime.

At the same time, inside the leading group disagreements were noticeable: a new 'split' or realignment was being prepared. The Party was in a state of profound crisis, the essence of which was that the bureaucratic upstarts were crowding out the old revolutionaries.

Recalling this situation Alexander Barmine writes:

At the Fourteenth Conference of the Party¹¹ an unheard-of, an incredible, thing happened. Zinoviev found himself in a minority, and with him all his Leningrad friends, including Kamenev, president of the Moscow Soviet, vice-president of the Council of Labour and Defence, in fact, the directing influence in the government.

¹¹ The Fourteenth Conference of the Party was held in Moscow from 27th April to 29th April 1925. Zinoviev moved draft theses that stated that the victory of socialism could be achieved only on an international scale, but found himself in a minority. The conference unanimously approved the view that the Soviet Union had all the prerequisites for the creation of a socialist society on the basis of an alliance of the working class and the toiling peasantry. A few months later Kamenev and Zinoviev broke with Stalin and later joined Trotsky in the 1926 United Opposition.

Stalin had prepared the ground well. All the delegates, with the exception of those from Leningrad, who were drawn from the ranks of the civil servants who owed everything to Zinoviev and had worked with him since the beginning of the Revolution, had been appointed by the secretaries of the various organisations, themselves appointed by Stalin, the General Secretary.

Stalin's slow sapping was beginning to show results. Zinoviev, too, had made himself unpopular by the violent and disloyal tone of his attacks against Trotsky, and by the disciplinary action which he had applied to the Opposition. Nor did the defeats incurred by the Communist International under his direction add to his reputation. In Germany, in Bulgaria, in Estonia, the Communist Party had suffered a number of bloody setbacks. I was one of those who was not sorry to hear of his sudden fall from power, and my general impression was that the Party as a whole shared my feeling of satisfaction.

At the end of 1925 Stalin still spoke of the leaders in respectful terms, while inciting the Party against them. He received the plaudits of the middle layer of the bureaucracy, which refused to bow its head to any leader. Yet in reality, Stalin himself was already dictator. He was a dictator, but he did not feel as yet that he was leader, since no one recognised him as such. He was a dictator not through the force of his personality, but through the power of the political machine that had broken with the old leaders. In Stalin's concluding remarks at the Fifteenth Party Congress in 1927, when no one could answer him back anymore, Stalin said of Kamenev, who had already been expelled from the Party:

This speech (of Kamenev's) is the most lying, the most hypocritical, the most good-for-nothing and crooked of all the Oppositional speeches delivered from this rostrum.

As late as the Sixteenth Congress, in 1930, Stalin said:

You ask why we expelled Trotsky and Zinoviev? Because we did not want to have aristocrats in the Party; because we have only one law in the Party; and all the Party members are equal in their rights.

He reiterated this at the Seventeenth Congress in 1934.

Kamenev himself knew Stalin well. Both of them began their revolutionary careers at the beginning of the century. They spent their early years together in the Caucasian organisation, both went into exile, returned from exile to Petersburg in March, 1917, and together they were collectively responsible for the opportunist line of the Bolshevik paper until Lenin's arrival. When

Zinoviev and Kamenev came over to the Left Opposition in its conflict with the apparatus, they provided me with a number of very instructive pieces of information, together with some warnings. Zinoviev told me during the first weeks of our short-lived bloc in 1926-27:

Do you think that Stalin has not weighed the question of your physical extermination? He has done that more than once, but each time he was restrained by one and the same thought – the danger that the youth would place the responsibility on the Triumvirate or on him personally and in retaliation might resort to terrorist acts.

In 1924, there was a heart-to-heart talk between Stalin, Dzerzhinsky and Kamenev over a bottle of wine in the country (at Zubalov). In answer to the question what was the thing he loved most in life, Stalin who had warmed up, replied with his usual frankness: “To mark a victim, prepare everything, revenge myself pitilessly and then go to sleep.” Kamenev told me:

Do you think that Stalin is now wondering how best to reply to your criticism? You're mistaken. He is thinking of how best to destroy you... first morally and later, if possible, physically: to slander, to organise a provocation, plant a military conspiracy, cook up a terrorist act. Believe me, this is no theory; we had to be frank with each other in the Troika, although personal relations even then more than once threatened to blow up. Stalin wages the struggle on a quite different plane to you. You don't know that Asiatic...

Kamenev told me about this conversation repeatedly after he had broken with Stalin. Kamenev feared the very words of his former ally, and yet he did not foresee the frightful vengeance that Stalin would wreak against him after long preparations. I have no information as to whether Stalin slept well on the night after Kamenev was shot.

12. THE ROAD TO POWER

THE PARTY AFTER THE CIVIL WAR

I cannot imagine that in human history one can find another example of such solidarity, such idealistic resurgence, such devotion, such selflessness, as distinguished the Bolshevick Party, which was reflected in its leadership. Within the Bolshevick Party there were internal debates, conflicts, in a word, all those things that are a natural part of human existence. As for the members of the Central Committee, they too were only human, but a special epoch lifted them above themselves. Without idealising anything, and without closing one's eyes to human weaknesses, we can nevertheless say that in those years, the air that one breathed in the Party was that of the mountain peaks.

The atmosphere within the Party began to change and change sharply, with the new influx of large numbers of philistine and careerist elements. The Party purged itself and once again raised itself up, but the problems we faced were not simply a question of the new recruits. The revolution had lost its impetus. After the Civil War, and especially after the defeat of the revolution in Germany, the Bolsheviks no longer felt like warriors on the march. At the same time, the Party passed from a revolutionary period to a sedentary one. Not a few marriages took place during the years of the Civil War. Towards its end, couples produced children. The question of apartments, of furnishings, of the family began to assume an ever greater importance. The ties of revolutionary solidarity which had overcome difficulties on the whole were replaced to a considerable degree with ties of bureaucratic and material dependants. Before, it was possible to win by means of revolutionary ideals alone. Now, many began to learn to win with material positions and privileges.

Once upon a time the Russian religious dissenters used to say: why do we need well-built houses? We are awaiting the coming of Christ. Such feelings were to be found in the Bolshevik Party as well. Personal life was relegated to the background, and people hardly thought of comfort in the expectation of the new great events, but naturally such a situation could not endure forever. In its daily life, the Bolshevik Party experienced additional obstacles: the increasing poverty and backwardness of the country, and the expectation of immediate, great developments that were replaced by the conscious need for a long, stubborn and painstaking period of work.

The end of the Civil War and the introduction of the so-called New Economic Policy was marked by an intensification in the rate of change of the habits of the ruling layer. In the bureaucracy itself a process of inner differentiation was taking place. A minority of those in power still continued to live in conditions that were not much better than in the years of exile; people did not attach any importance to such things. When Yenukidze suggested to Lenin any improvement in the conditions of his personal life, Lenin, who lived very modestly, always replied with the same phrase: "Old shoes are more comfy."

The life of my family remained unchanged. Bukharin still remained an old student. Zinoviev lived modestly in Leningrad. On the other hand, Kamenev quickly adapted himself to the new ways, but then this revolutionary had always been a bit of a sybarite in his lifestyle. Lunacharsky, the People's Commissar of Education, drifted even faster in the same direction. I scarcely think that Stalin would have altered the conditions of his life in any significant way after October. But at that time he scarcely ever entered into my field of vision and very few others paid any attention to him.

In any case, the personal life of Stalin at that time was very dependent on Yenukidze who treated his fellow countryman not only without a hint of 'adoration', but even without much sympathy, mainly because of his rude and capricious behaviour, that is to say, precisely those features which Lenin thought it necessary to mention in his Testament. The rank-and-file Kremlin staff greatly appreciated Yenukidze for his simplicity, friendliness and fairness while their attitude to Stalin was, on the contrary, extremely unfriendly.

It was only when the bureaucracy began to rise above society on the basis of the aggravation of social contradictions at the time of the NEP that Stalin began to raise himself above the Party. In the first period he was taken by surprise by his own enthusiasm. He was groping forward hesitantly, peering around, always preparing to beat a retreat. But Zinoviev and Kamenev, and

in part Rykov, Bukharin and Tomsky, supported and encouraged him as a counterweight to me. None of them thought then that Stalin would raise himself over their heads. During the period of the 'Troika' Zinoviev's attitude to Stalin was cautiously patronising, while Kamenev's was slightly ironic.

Lenin had explained at the time the dangers that could arise in a predominantly petty-bourgeois country, within a Party with a preponderant majority of young, untested members on a low cultural level. The Old Guard of Bolshevism, brought up on the Marxist doctrine and with an international experience, held itself together only thanks to the tremendous authority won in the October Revolution and the invincible unity of its ranks. Lenin's words at the time of his illness, privately noted down by Zinoviev, took the form of a paradox: "In the absence of the world revolution our Marxist Party rests on a bond of honour..."

[Lenin's constant concern for the health and well-being of his colleagues was shown by the following extract by one of the Kremlin doctors.] At one time, Stalin was taken ill and an operation was called for. Stalin was transferred to a Moscow hospital in December 1920. Dr. Rosenov who was attending to Stalin wrote:

Vladimir Ilyich called me by telephone every day, twice a day, morning and evening and not only inquired about his health but demanded the most thorough and extensive report. Comrade Stalin's operation was very difficult. In addition to the removal of the appendix they had to make a wide dissection around the appendix and it was very hard to guarantee the results. Vladimir Ilyich, obviously worried, told me: "If anything happens telephone at any time, day or night."

[This passage is meant to prove a special relationship between Lenin and Stalin.] In fact, Lenin showed exceptional attentiveness towards the health and condition of every old Bolshevik. This was dictated not only by feelings of comradeship toward his old co-workers, but also by purely political considerations in preserving the most important capital of the Party. He foresaw a great deal. But it could not even have entered his head that this capital would be squandered in a deliberately organised manner by Stalin, one of Lenin's co-workers.

The Opposition was accused of undermining the Bolshevik Old Guard. When Zinoviev bragged to Rakovsky of his own successful "tactic" against me, he was boasting of how he had used and squandered that political capital. From 1923 to 1926, on the initiative and at first under the leadership of Zinoviev, the struggle against Marxist internationalism, now branded as

'Trotskyism', was carried on under the slogan of preserving the Old Guard. Nowhere did the movement in the direction of open Thermidorianism express itself so flagrantly as in the political compromises of the Old Guard itself. A special commission was set up to look after the health of the Old Bolshevik veterans. That was followed by their physical extermination. The commission to preserve the health of the Old Bolsheviks was finally replaced by a small detachment of GPU executioners, whom Stalin rewarded with the Order of the Red Banner.

Stalin was, however, not able to carry out his intentions to the bitter end. In order to maintain a certain semblance of the old traditions of the Bolshevik Party, it was necessary to preserve a group of the Old Bolsheviks within the leading bodies. This group, however, was made up of second and third-rank figures which were gradually recruited in the struggle with various opposition groups. They were made up from a grouping of former People's Commissars, dissatisfied and disappointed people, whose pride had been bruised. These people were intriguers, such as Kobozev, Gusev and others, who had been trained by Stalin and who had been drawn back into the fold.

Stalin deliberately placed every one of them in such a position that they were forced to betray their former friends and comrades. All friendships were destroyed and they were forced to come out against them ferociously. This, for instance, was the behaviour of Kalinin with regard to the so-called Workers' Opposition and later to the Right Opposition. It was also true of Voroshilov, first with regard to the Right Opposition, and later with regard to his associates in the military. The members of the Politburo were no longer embarrassed by their lack of background or by their downright ignorance. Discussions and arguments lost all relevance, especially with reference to the Comintern. In the course of the preceding years one of my tasks in the Comintern had been to observe the French labour movement. After the upheaval in the Comintern, which began at the end of 1923 and continued throughout 1924, the new leaders of the various sections tended to stray further and further from the old doctrines.

I remember I once brought to a session of the Political Bureau the latest issue of the central organ of the French Communist Party, *L'Humanité*, and translated several excerpts of the programmatic article. These excerpts were so expressive of the authors' ignorance and opportunism that for a minute there was confusion in the Political Bureau. But of course they could not let their 'boys' down. The only member of that Stalinist Political Bureau who thought he knew a little French, a wistful echo of his adolescent school days, was

Rudzutak. He asked me for the newspaper clipping and immediately began to translate it, omitting unfamiliar words and phrases, distorting the meaning of others and supplementing them with his own fantastic comments. At once everybody supported him in unison. It is hard to convey one's feeling of pain and indignation...

Is it possible to build Communism without the aid of the party of international revolution, without faith 'in the victory of the Socialist Revolution'? People like Zinoviev, Kamenev and Bukharin bent to the bureaucracy. As their outlook narrowed, they lost interest in understanding the theory and practice of the world labour movement. While they have a knowledge of foreign languages, this is used only to translate what is needed. Here is the crux of the matter: the national arena became decisive, while the international is merely helpful and decorative.

By that time no member of the Political Bureau would accept that any of the foreign sections had any independent significance. Everything was reduced to the question of whether they were 'for' or 'against' the Opposition. After the split of the Troika, the Political Bureau was staffed with adventurous outsiders, marked only the readiness to support Stalin against all others. Utterly alien moods affected the Politburo; the newcomers competed with each other in brandishing their hostility toward the Opposition in their readiness to support every step of the Leader, and in their striving to excel one another in boorishness and dashing behaviour. People like Voroshilov, Rudzutak, Mikoyan, who formerly revered the Political Bureau, suddenly saw that it was all a myth, since they themselves could feel themselves the master of the Political Bureau. Nothing was left of the atmosphere of mountain peaks.

HOW STALIN BLACKMAILED THE 'OLD BOLSHEVIKS'

What is the secret of Stalin's unquestioned strength? He controls every cog in the Party machine, which is the source of authority and power. This is extremely important. As a dynamic and disciplined driving force, the Russian Communist Party is unique in the world, perhaps even in the whole of history. But Party manipulations are not everything. To explain Stalin's influence by his absolute domination of the Party apparatus is to ignore the most decisive factors in the situation.

Stalin is not an initiator. Marxism freed him from many prejudices, but without replacing them with any properly thought out world outlook or any fundamental change in his psychology. He looked around for a long time sceptically before he joined somebody else's initiative. He could not advance

himself with the attributes of others, and for that reason his thoughts and character were directed toward back-stage intrigue. Stalin could not endure anyone who had a higher intellectual level than himself.

Stalin's technique consisted of gradually advancing himself to the position of dictator in small steps, while all the time acting the part of a self-effacing defender of the Central Committee and collective leadership. He utilised the period of Lenin's illness extensively for the placement of people devoted to him. He took advantage of every situation, every political circumstance, any combination of people to further his own advancement, to assist his struggle for power and achieve his desire to dominate others. If he could not raise himself to their height intellectually, he could bring about a conflict between two stronger competitors. He raised the art of manipulating personal or group antagonisms to new heights. In this field he developed an almost unerring instinct.

Stalin systematically selected people around him who were of the same ilk as he himself, or else simpletons who wanted to live life without any problems, or finally, those who held a grudge. And there quite a few people like that. From some random remarks made by him, which at the time seemed pointless, but in fact were not at all accidental, [it was apparent that] Stalin was attempting to find in me a point of support against the controlling hand of Lenin, which had become intolerable for him. At each such attempt I took an instinctive step back and avoided him. I think that it is here that one must seek the source of Stalin's cold hostility towards me, a hostility that in the beginning was cowardly but thoroughly treacherous.

Purges in the revolutionary party – ridding it of undesirable elements – are the inevitable consequence of its rapid growth. In the Soviet Union prior to 1923, the Party set about purging itself of alien elements, former Mensheviks, the likes of today's Vyshinsky¹, Troyanovsky, and Maisky², who had attached

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- 1 Andrey Yanuarevich Vyshinsky (1883-1954), the notorious Stalinist state prosecutor in the Moscow Trials, was an active Menshevik and bitter opponent of Bolshevism before the October Revolution. In 1917, as a minor official under the Provisional Government, he undersigned an order to arrest Lenin. After the Bolsheviks came to power he joined the staff of the People's Commissariat of Food where he cultivated relations with Stalin, having first met him in prison in 1908, who helped him rise in influence and prestige. Only in 1920, after the defeat of Denikin, did he join the Communist Party. This is the man who sentenced to death the leaders of Lenin's Party with the cry: "Crush the accursed reptiles!"
 - 2 Ivan Mikhailovich Maisky (1884-1975), chiefly known as the Soviet Ambassador to Britain during much of the Second World War, was originally a Menshevik. At the

themselves to the Party. To this end, committees of revolutionary workers were formed to oversee the operation. Adventurers, careerists or simply scoundrels, who had joined the Party in considerable numbers, were unceremoniously thrown out. But the purges of recent years were, on the contrary, qualitatively different and were entirely directed against the old revolutionary cadre. Under Stalin, the Party was purged of revolutionary elements, especially the Old Bolsheviks.

This part of the work Stalin took under his direct management. Inside the Central Control Commission he had his own special agency headed by Yaroslavsky and Shkiryatov. Their task was to make up blacklists of nonconformists and then conduct investigations into their past in the tsarist police archives. During my last year in Moscow I learned through the Kremlin grapevine that Stalin has a special archive full of all sorts of documents, accusations, libellous rumours against all the prominent Soviet leaders without exception.

Gleb Maximilianovich Krzhizhanovsky wrote in his book *The Old Guard*:

Prison, exile, and emigration became ever more inescapable stages in the life of the fighters for the cause of the proletariat. But every action calls forth a counter-action. The severe realities break the weak and temper the strong. Betrayal and treason are compensated by enthusiastic friendships and true fraternity. The isolated, solitary cell is transformed into a temple of revolutionary science and association with the noblest minds of humanity, while enforced isolation makes possible the most reliable revaluation of values from the most exalted heights of international practice and experience. In that process of struggle and life the building materials of the proletarian party, its regulating nerve centres, and its old guard were reliably selected.

However, not all the young revolutionists of the tsarist era were strong individuals. There were also among them some who did not conduct themselves with sufficient courage during investigations [by the secret police.] If they made up for that by their subsequent behaviour, the Party did not expel them irrevocably and took them back into its ranks. When he became General Secretary in 1923 Stalin began to concentrate all such evidence in his own hands in order to use it to blackmail hundreds of old revolutionists

outbreak of the Civil War Maisky joined the government of the so-called People's Army of the Committee of Members of the Constituent Assembly – an anti-Bolshevik force, which fought in June-September 1918 in the Volga Region, for which he was expelled by the Mensheviks. Like Vyshinsky he only joined the Communist Party when the Whites had been decisively defeated.

who had more than redeemed their earlier weaknesses and he always had this information up his sleeve. By threatening to expose their past record, he forced these people into slavish obedience and reduced them step by step to a state of complete demoralisation or even suicide. As early as 1924, one of my closest collaborators, my personal secretary Glazman, a man of exceptional modesty and devotion to the Party, was driven to commit suicide by these methods. His desperate act produced such an adverse reaction that the Central Control Commission was compelled to exonerate him after his death and to deliver a very cautious and mild rebuke to its own executive organ.

In 1929, at the time of the open breach with the Rightist members of the Political Bureau – Bukharin, Rykov and Tomsky – Stalin managed to keep Kalinin and Voroshilov loyal to himself only by the threat of exposing their past. So, at least, friends wrote to me in Constantinople. Stalin took Zinoviev and Kamenev under his wing when I criticised their behaviour in 1917. Stalin wrote:

It is quite possible that some Bolsheviks actually did wobble in connection with the July defeats. I know, for example, that some of the Bolsheviks who were arrested then were even ready to desert our ranks. But to use that against certain members of the Central Committee is to distort history mercilessly.

The interesting part of this quotation is not so much the resolute defence of Zinoviev and Kamenev as the gratuitously dragged-in reference to “some of the Bolsheviks who were arrested then”. That was clearly aimed at Lunacharsky.

Among the documents seized after the Revolution, Lunacharsky's testimony at the police investigation was found. It did not exactly cast his political courage in an honourable light. In itself, that would have mattered little to Stalin; a whole host of much less courageous Bolsheviks were members of his immediate entourage. What really bothered him was that in 1923 Lunacharsky had published his book *Silhouettes of the Leaders of the Revolution*, in which he failed to include a silhouette of Stalin. The omission was not deliberate. Lunacharsky was not opposed to Stalin. It simply did not occur to him any more than to anyone else at the time to count Stalin among the leaders of the Revolution. But by 1925 the situation had changed. That was Stalin's way of dropping a hint to Lunacharsky to change his policy accordingly or fall victim to an exposé. It was precisely for this reason that Lunacharsky was not mentioned by name. He was given a certain amount of time to straighten out his 'story'. Lunacharsky understood to whom reference

was made and radically changed his position. His 'sins' of July [1917] were immediately forgotten.

YENUKIDZE AND KALININ

Abel Yenukidze was a Georgian, like Stalin. The Biblical Abel was younger than Cain. Yenukidze on the contrary was two years older than Stalin. At the time of his execution in 1938 he was not quite sixty-one. He joined the Bolsheviks in his youth, in the period of its formation. During the first years of the century a remarkable underground print shop was established in the Caucasus which played a considerable part in the preparations for the Revolution of 1905. The Yenukidze brothers, 'Red' Abel, and 'Blacky' Simon were very active in the operation of this print shop, financed by Leonid Krassin, who was to become a leading Soviet administrator and diplomat.

Krassin was a talented young engineer and Maxim Gorky was a talented young writer. Both were Bolsheviks. Their devotion to the cause taught them how to obtain money for the revolution from liberal millionaires like Savva Morozov. It was in that period that Krassin began his friendly relations with A.S. Yenukidze; they called each other by their nicknames. And it was from the lips of Krassin that I first heard the Biblical name and the nickname of that red-haired Bolshevik.

Like most of the so-called 'Old Bolsheviks', Yenukidze strayed from the fold during the interregnum of reaction between the first and the second revolutions. Krassin succeeded in becoming a prominent businessman during those years. Yenukidze did not amass any wealth. Exiled at the outbreak of the war, he was drafted into the army in 1916 and found himself in Petersburg in 1917. During that revolutionary summer I met him for the first time in the soldiers' section of the Petersburg Soviet.

The [1917] Revolution had revived many of the Old Bolsheviks, but they had a perplexed and hostile attitude toward Lenin's programme of seizing power. Yenukidze was no exception. But he behaved more respectfully and circumspectly than the others. Although no orator, he spoke Russian well, and with far less of an accent than most Georgians, particularly Stalin. Personally, Yenukidze was very likeable. His kindness, his unpretentiousness, his considerateness, his simplicity were irresistible. His charm was further enhanced by his extreme bashfulness; at the slightest provocation Abel's freckled face would burn intensely red.

I have not the remotest idea what Yenukidze did during the 'ten days that shook the world'. At least I can say that he was not on the other side of

the barricades, as were Ivan Maisky, the present Soviet Ambassador to the Court of St. James, and hundreds of other dignitaries. As soon as the Soviet Regime was established Yenukidze became a member of the Presidium of the Central Executive Committee as well as its Secretary. It is quite likely that this was done on the initiative of Sverdlov, the president of the Central Executive Committee, who, despite his youth, was gifted with an insight into human nature and knew how to place the right person in the right position.

Yenukidze was never a member of the Central Committee or any important Party institution under Lenin. Neither, for example, was Krassin. In the early years 'Old Bolsheviks' who had broken with the Party in the period of reaction were assigned to government jobs but were not entrusted with responsible posts in the Party. That made no difference to Yenukidze, who was free of political pretensions. He had blind confidence in the Party leadership, his deep devotion to Lenin bordered on sheer adoration, and he was strongly attached to me. When on occasion Lenin and I had differences of opinion, Yenukidze suffered deeply. I might say in passing that many others shared his feelings.

Sverdlov tried to invest his Presidium with political importance which led to occasional friction between him and the Council of People's Commissars, and particularly between him and the Political Bureau. After Sverdlov's death in March 1919, Mikhail Ivanovich Kalinin was elected to succeed him as president on my initiative, a position he has maintained to this very day – no mean feat in and of itself. Yenukidze continued as secretary. These two figures, Mikhail Ivanovich and Abel Safronovich personified the Soviet government – rather like the President and Vice-President in the United States. The uninitiated were even under the impression that Yenukidze held a good part of the power in his hands. But this was an optical illusion.

The basic legislative and administrative work was carried on in the Council of People's Commissars under the leadership of Lenin, and the basic issues, problems and conflicts were resolved in the Political Bureau, which from the very beginning played the role of a higher government. During the first three years, when all forces were centred on winning the Civil War, by the very nature of things enormous power was concentrated in the hands of the military. In any event, the Presidium of the Central Executive Committee did not occupy either a very well defined or a very independent position in that system. Yet it would be unjust to deny it any importance.

At that time, nobody was afraid of complaining, criticising, or openly expressing demands. These three important functions – demands, criticisms and

complaints – were addressed principally to the Central Executive Committee. During discussions on difficult problems in the Political Bureau Lenin would now and then address himself in a tone of friendly irony towards Kalinin: “Well, and what does the State President have to say about this subject?” It took Kalinin quite some time to recognise himself in this exalted position. This peasant from Tver and then Petersburg worker did not give himself any false airs and graces. He adapted himself to his unexpectedly high post with modesty, and even greater prudence. Little by little the Soviet press built up his name and his authority in the eyes of the country. The ruling group did not take Kalinin seriously then, and does not take him seriously now. But the peasant masses were gradually familiarised to the idea that ‘petitioning’ had to be done through Mikhail Ivanovich. Nor was this limited to the peasants. Ex-tsarist officers, admirals, senators, professors, doctors, lawyers, artists, and, last but not least, actresses addressed themselves to the head of State who duly received them all. And all had complaints to register, favours to ask – if not for themselves, for their sons and daughters.

The subjects touched upon all phases of life – from requisitioned houses to purchases in foreign countries of cosmetics needed by the theatres. Kalinin had no trouble talking with the peasants. But at first he was rather ill at ease in the presence of the bourgeois intelligentsia. It was here that he was particularly in need of the aid of Yenukidze, who was better educated and more worldly wise. Besides, Kalinin toured the country a lot and therefore at Presidential receptions he was often substituted by the Secretary. They worked together amicably. Both were by nature opportunists, both always sought the line of least resistance, both were extremely tractable. In view of the high office he held, Kalinin was elected to the Party Central Committee and was even made alternate member of the Political Bureau. Thanks to the extensiveness of his contacts and conversations throughout the country, he brought to the meetings of both bodies not a few valuable everyday observations. True, his suggestions were rarely adopted, but they were listened to attentively and taken into consideration.

Kalinin, who was acquainted with the past only too well, refused at first to acknowledge Stalin as a leader. For a long time he was afraid to tie his own fate to that of Stalin's. “That horse,” Kalinin used to say to his close friends, “will someday drag our wagon into a ditch.” But gradually, moaning and resisting, he turned first against me, then against Zinoviev and finally, with even greater reluctance, against Rykov, Bukharin and Tomsky, with whom he was more closely connected because of his moderate views. I knew about this almost

at first hand. Although even in those days the system of denunciation had already poisoned not only political life, but even personal relations, there still remained here and there an oasis of mutual trust. Yenukidze was very friendly with Serebryakov, despite the fact that he was a prominent leader of the Left Opposition, and not infrequently poured out his heart to him. "What more does Stalin want?" Yenukidze complained. "I am doing everything he has asked me to do, but it is not enough for him. He wants me to admit that he is a genius." In 1925 one of the Soviet satirical magazines published a caricature which portrayed the head of the government in a compromising situation. The resemblance was striking. Moreover, in the text, written in highly suggestive style, Kalinin was referred to by his initials, "MK" I could not believe my eyes.

"What does this mean?" I asked several comrades close to me, among them Serebryakov, who had known Stalin intimately in prison and exile.

"This is Stalin's last warning to Kalinin," he explained.

"But why?"

"Certainly not because he is concerned about his morals," Serebryakov laughed. "Evidently Kalinin is being stubborn about something."

Kalinin himself by that time had managed to become a different man. Not that he had augmented his knowledge or had deepened his political view but he had acquired the routine of a 'statesman'. He had worked out his peculiar style of sly simpleton, gave up being embarrassed in front of professors, and gave little thought to the secret life of the Kremlin. Yenukidze passed through the same evolution, following in the footsteps of Kalinin, only more in the shadows and undoubtedly with much more internal struggling and suffering. Because of the very nature of a man whose principal trait was adaptability, Yenukidze could not help finding himself in the camp of the Thermidor. But he was no careerist and certainly not a scoundrel. It was hard for him to break away from old traditions and still harder to turn against those people whom he had grown accustomed to respect. At critical moments, Yenukidze not only did not exhibit aggressive zeal but, on the contrary, complained, grumbled and resisted. Stalin knew about this very well and he gave Yenukidze more than one warning.

Without playing a political role, Yenukidze had his place of importance in the life of the ruling circles. For one thing, he was in charge of living accommodation at the Kremlin from its very inception as the seat of the Soviet Government and of the Party. He lived in the same cavalry corps accommodation as ourselves; an old bachelor, he occupied a small apartment in which in the old days was the living quarters of some second-grade officer.

We often met in the corridor. He walked heavily, and looked rather old and self-conscious. Unlike the other 'initiates' he would greet my wife and me and our boys with a special cordiality, but politically Yenukidze marched along the lines of least resistance. He followed Kalinin's example. And "the head of the government" began to understand that henceforth power was not to be found in the masses, but in the bureaucracy, and that the bureaucracy was "against the permanent revolution", for banquets "for the happy life", for Stalin.

At the banquets of the 'Old Guard', the organisation of which was largely delegated to Yenukidze, they no longer limited themselves to the modest Kakhetian wine. From that time on begins that "degenerate lifestyle" which subsequently was a charge levelled against Yenukidze thirteen years later. Abel himself was hardly ever invited to these intimate banquets where the loose ends of conspiracy was tied and reinforced. Nor did he make any effort to attend them, although generally he was quite partial to banquets. The struggle which had opened up against me was not to his liking and he showed it as much as he could.

Stalin broke the unwritten rule about Old Bolsheviks who had deserted the Party during the period of reaction and flattered them by securing their election to the highest Party institutions, and even to the Central Committee. In order to tie Yenukidze more firmly to his machine, Stalin had him elected an alternate member of the Central Control Commission. His task was to help watch over Party morals.

Stalin had known Yenukidze practically since early youth. Had he foreseen that Yenukidze himself would one day be accused of violating Party morals? In any event such inconsistencies never gave him pause for concern. Suffice it to say that the Old Bolshevik Rudzutak, arrested on a similar charge, was for several years not only a member but Chairman of the Central Control Commission, that is, something in the nature of High Priest of Party and Soviet morality.

THE STRUGGLE AGAINST 'TROTSKYISM'

Today, it would hardly seem worthwhile to subject to a theoretical evaluation the outpouring of anti-Trotskyist literature which, notwithstanding the shortage of paper, literally flooded the Soviet Union. Stalin himself could not bear to be reminded of everything that he alone wrote and said from approximately 1923 to 1929, for it is in flagrant contradiction to all that he wrote, said and did in the course of the following decade. So completely is it repudiated by his later testimony that to reproduce this political trash, even in

the briefest excerpts, would be a sheer Sisyphean labour for me and as dull as dishwater even for the most patient reader.

By contrast, the literature of the Left Opposition of 1926-27 is distinguished by its exceptional richness. The Opposition reacted to each fact of life at home and abroad, to each act of the government, to each decision of the Political Bureau, with individual or collective documents addressed to the various institutions of the Party, but mostly the Political Bureau. These were the years of the Chinese Revolution, the Anglo-Russian Committee, and of great confusion in internal matters. The bureaucracy was still only feeling its way, casting about from Right to Left and then again from Left to Right. Much of what the Opposition wrote was not intended for the general press but only for the information of the leading institutions of the Party. But even that which was especially written for *Pravda*, or for the theoretical monthly, *The Bolshevik*, was never published in the Soviet press.

That part of the Oppositionist writings that I managed to bring out with me at the time of my expulsion to Turkey is now in the Harvard Library and at the disposal of all those who may be interested in studying the record of that remarkable struggle by going to the original sources. Reading over those documents while engaged in the writing of this book – that is, nearly fifteen years later – I had to acknowledge the correctness of the Opposition in two respects: it predicted correctly and spoke up boldly at the same time; it exhibited remarkable stamina and persistence in carrying out its political line. The arguments of the Opposition were never refuted.

It is not hard to imagine the fury they evoked in Stalin and among his closest collaborators. The intellectual and political superiority of the representatives of the Opposition over the majority of the Political Bureau stands out clearly in every line of the Oppositionist documents. Stalin had nothing to say in reply, and he did not even attempt to do so. He resorted to the same method that had been a part of him since his early youth, which was not to argue with an opponent by offering his own views in reply before an audience, but to compromise his opponent personally, and if possible, exterminate him physically. Intellectual impotence in the face of arguments and criticism, gave rise to fury, and fury in its turn drove him to hasty measures for the liquidation of the Opposition. In this way 1926-27 proved to be merely a dress rehearsal for the perfidy and degeneration that startled the world ten years later.

On one side of this grand polemic stood the Left Opposition, intellectually aflame, tireless in its analysis and explorations, earnestly striving to find the right solution for the problems of the changing international and internal

situations without violating, however, the traditions of the Party. On the other side, the cold, calculating efforts of the bureaucratic clique striving to make short shrift of its critics, of all opponents, of the troublemakers who would not leave them in peace, who would not give them a chance to enjoy the victory they had won. While members of the Opposition were busy analysing the basic errors of the official policy in China or criticising the bloc with the General Council of the British Trade Unions, Stalin put into circulation the rumour that the Opposition was supporting Austen Chamberlain against the Soviet Union, that it did not want to defend the Soviet Union, that such-and-such an Oppositionist was improperly using state-owned automobiles, that Kamenev had signed a telegram to Michael Romanov, that Trotsky wrote a frantic letter against Lenin. And always the dates, the circumstances, all such details, remained in a fog.

It is sufficient for our purposes merely to indicate the few salient new ideas which gradually crystallised in the course of the polemics between the Stalinist machine and the Opposition, and acquired decisive significance insofar as they provided ideological leverage for the initiators of the struggle against Trotskyism. It was around these ideas that the political forces rallied. They were three in number. In time they partly supplemented and partly replaced each other.

The first [attack on the Opposition] had to do with industrialisation. The triumvirate began by coming out against the programme of industrialisation proposed by me; in the interest of polemics they branded it super-industrialisation. This position was even further deepened after the triumvirate fell apart and Stalin established his bloc with Bukharin and the right wing. The general trend of the official argument against so-called super-industrialisation was that rapid industrialisation is possible only at the expense of the peasantry. Consequently, we must advance at a snail's pace. The question of the tempo of industrialisation was really of no significance. As a matter of fact, the bureaucracy did not want to disturb the strata of the population, which had begun to grow rich, i.e., the top layers of the NEPist petty-bourgeoisie. This was its first serious error in its struggle against Trotskyism. But it never acknowledged its own error. It merely turned a complete somersault on the subject and blithely proceeded to break all previous records of super-industrialisation – largely on paper and in speeches, alas!

In the second stage, in the course of 1924, a struggle was launched against the theory of 'permanent revolution'. The political content of this struggle was reduced to the thesis that we are not interested in international revolution

but in our own safety, in order to develop our economy. The bureaucracy was increasingly fearful that it was jeopardising its position through the risk of involvement implicit in an international revolutionary policy.

The third idea of the bureaucracy in its campaign against 'Trotskyism' had to do with the struggle against levelling, against equality. The theoretical side of this struggle was in the nature of a curiosity. In Marx's letter concerning the Gotha Programme of the German Social-Democracy Stalin found a phrase to the effect that during the first period of socialism inequality will still be preserved, or, as he expressed it, bourgeois prerogatives in the sphere of distribution. Marx did not mean by this the creation of a new inequality but merely a gradual rather than a sudden elimination of the old inequality in the sphere of wages. This quotation was incorrectly interpreted as a declaration of the rights and privileges of the bureaucrats and their satellites. The future of the Soviet Union was thus divorced from the future of the international proletariat, and the bureaucracy was provided with a theoretical justification for special privileges and powers over the masses of the toilers inside the Soviet Union.

The struggle against super-industrialisation was carried on very cautiously in 1922, openly and stormily in 1923. The struggle against super-industrialisation was conducted forthrightly and directly in the interests of the *kulak*. The snail's pace in the development of industry was needed in order to give the *kulak* a painless antidote against socialism. The struggle against the "permanent revolution" began openly in 1924, and continued after that in a different form and with varying interpretations in the course of all the subsequent years. The struggle against Trotsky's charges of inequality began toward the end of 1925 and became in essence the axis of the social programme of the bureaucracy.

Thus it would appear as if the Revolution had been fought and won expressly in the interests of the bureaucracy! It waged a furious and rabid struggle against equality, which jeopardised its privileges, and against permanent revolution, which jeopardised its very existence. It is not surprising that in this struggle Stalin found supporters in droves. Among them were former Liberals, S-Rs, and Mensheviks. They flocked into the State and even the Party machine, singing hosannas to Stalin's practical common sense.

THERMIDOR AND THE PEASANTRY

The struggle against Trotskyism was originally carried out in the name of the defence of the peasantry as independent traders. In the name of protecting the interests of the peasantry, the state power was used, first to neutralise and

then eliminate the consistently revolutionary proletarian wing of the Party. The first measures taken after the political victory over Trotskyism were the laws legalising the leasing of land and the increased introduction of wage labour into agriculture. These measures were accompanied by a shift of power from left to right. They went far beyond the original intentions of the NEP, adopted in 1921, which made concessions to the peasantry for the sake of preserving the victory of the proletariat. At that time, there was no question of Thermidor, despite the government's change in policy towards a greater adaptation to the peasantry.

A considerable extension in the freedom of trade after 1925 became the clearest expression of the Thermidor, just as the lifting of the Maximum³ was in the French Thermidor. But despite this resemblance one must not lose sight of the basic difference between these analogies: in the Soviet Union, the nationalised industry and the socialised land was in the hands of the state. Without these conditions, the NEP, especially its expansion in 1925, would naturally have led immediately to bourgeois relations and counter-revolution. The preservation of nationalisation and the broadening of the NEP of course meant a conflict between two [antagonistic] economic systems. During its first steps this conflict reinforced the position of the bureaucracy, which was asserting its independence and raising itself above the proletariat. But it was clear from the very beginning that any further broadening of commodity production and reinforcement of the positions of the petty-bourgeoisie must sharply pose the question formulated by Lenin: "Who will conquer whom?"

According to the note in Lenin's *Collected Works* it is stated:

In 1922 Lenin was hammering Bukharin for his attempt to disrupt the monopoly of foreign trade. Lenin bluntly exposed Bukharin as a profiteer, a petty-bourgeois, as a defender of the interests of the *kulak* upper stratum of the peasantry, opposing the industrial proletariat.

But exactly the same was true of Stalin, who attempted to justify himself:

3 The Jacobins of the French Revolution stood for private property but represented a petty-bourgeois trend that was prepared to lean on the plebeian and semi-proletarian masses in Paris and even strike blows against the big capitalists. This was reflected in their economic policies, especially the General Maximum, established in order to control prices and help improve the conditions of the workers and poor people who were the real base and motor force of the Revolution. The Maximum set price limits, banned food hoarding and sought to prevent price fluctuations and speculation in foodstuffs. One of the first acts of the Thermidorians was to abolish the Maximum.

For example, Comrade Trotsky says that at one time I made a mistake with reference to the monopoly [of] foreign trade. I actually did propose in the period when our organs of supply had been destroyed to temporarily open one of the ports for the export of grain, but I did not insist on my error, and after negotiations with Lenin, corrected it without hesitation.

We shall not pause on how costly was Stalin's attempt to minimise his error. The fact is that he acknowledges it as his own error; whereas, if we take the indictment, or the prosecutor's speech against Sokolnikov, it will appear that Vyshinsky accused him of this very crime.

[Bukharin's political instability was shown by his sharp zig-zags from the ultra-left position of revolutionary war during the Brest-Litovsk negotiations to his right-wing deviation of conciliating the wealthy peasants (*kulaks*). The right tendency was also supported by Rykov and Tomsky who claimed to stand for the continuation of the New Economic Policy and the bloc with the peasantry. In reality, it encouraged the development of capitalist tendencies, especially in the countryside, and represented a grave danger of capitalist restoration.] In 1923-24, Bukharin formed a bloc with Kamenev and Zinoviev against Stalin. On the eve of the Party discussion Bukharin published an article in which he propagated in a veiled form the theory of the *kulaks* growing over into socialism. In 1925, Bukharin launched the slogan: 'enrich yourselves!', which was directed at the *kulaks*. Bukharin would shift his ground politically from left to right, which would produce within him a state of panic resulting from his lack of theoretical clarity.

Stalin and his machine became bolder as time went on, especially after they had got rid of the restraining influence of Zinoviev and Kamenev. Indeed, the bureaucracy went so far in satisfying the interests and demands of its bourgeois allies that by 1927 it became clear to all, as it had been all along to every literate economist, that the claims of their allies were unlimited. The *kulaks* wanted nothing less than outright ownership of the land. They wanted the right to dispose freely of their entire crop. The *kulaks* were striving with might and main to create their own agents in the cities in the person of the [NEPmen] free trader and the free industrialist. They did not want to put up with forced deliveries at fixed prices.

In his role of super-arbiter, Stalin was able to place the responsibility for the severe measures on certain popular Party members, on different wings of the Party at different times. But classes cannot be fooled. As a manoeuvre, the pro-*kulak* policy of 1924-28 was worse than criminal; it was absurd. The *kulak* is nobody's fool. He judges things by taxes, prices and profits, not by

phrasemongering and declamations: he judges things by deeds, not by words. Manoeuvrings can never replace the action and reaction of class forces; their usefulness is limited at best; and there is nothing so calculated to disintegrate the revolutionary morale of a mass party as clandestine unprincipled manoeuvring. Nor is anything deadlier for the morale and the character of the individual revolutionists. Military trickery can never replace major strategy.

The *kulak* joined forces with the small industrialist to work for the complete restoration of capitalism. In this way an irreconcilable struggle opened up the over division of the surplus product of labour. Who would dispose of it in the near future – the new bourgeoisie or the Soviet bureaucracy? That became the next issue. He who disposes of the surplus product has the power of the state at his disposal. It was this that opened up the struggle between the petty-bourgeoisie, which had helped the bureaucracy crush the resistance of the labouring masses and of their spokesman the Left Opposition, and the Thermidorian bureaucracy itself, which had helped the petty-bourgeoisie to lord it over the agrarian masses. It was a direct struggle for power and income.

It was at this point that the Russian Thermidor displayed its most obvious similarity to its French prototype. During that period, the *kulak* was allowed to rent his land to the poor peasant and to hire the poor peasant as his labourer. Stalin was getting ready to lease the land to private owners for a period of forty years. Shortly after Lenin's death, he made a covert attempt to transfer the nationalised land as private property to the peasants of his native Georgia under the guise of "possession" of "personal parcels" for "many years". Here again he showed just how strong his old agrarian roots and his dominant and deep-seated Georgian nationalism were. On Stalin's secret instructions, the Georgian People's Commissar of Agriculture prepared a project for the transfer of land to the peasants as private property. Only the protest of Zinoviev, who got wind of the conspiracy, and the alarm raised in Party circles, compelled Stalin, who did not yet feel sure enough of himself, to repudiate his own project. Naturally, the scapegoat in this case proved to be the unfortunate Georgian People's Commissar.

'SOCIALISM IN ONE COUNTRY'

In 1925, the question of equality acquired an exceptional significance in the struggle of the bureaucracy. In literature the issue was raised in articles by Zinoviev, particularly 'The Philosophy of the Epoch'. In this work Zinoviev suggested that at that time the broad masses were striving for one thing: greater equality. The article served as a bone of contention within the ruling

bureaucratic group. Stalin's closest fraternity declared that Zinoviev's position fundamentally contradicted Marxism, since under a socialist order, according to the teachings of Marx and Lenin, there can be no complete equality. At this point it was still the dominant principle that each received from society according to the labour each performed.

It is quite correct that Marx saw that this bourgeois principle would inevitably be emphasised in the first period of socialist society, before society had the opportunity of developing the productive forces to sufficient heights to allow the possibility of satisfying all the needs of its citizens. It had never even occurred to Zinoviev to challenge this thesis. The necessity of wage differentials for various categories of labour was clear to him. However, he believed that the extreme poles of this differential table must be brought closer together. In the first place, his cautious criticism was directed against the privilege and extravagance of the bureaucracy. Neither Marx nor Lenin could have foreseen that the bureaucracy would hide its privileges behind an argument supposedly in the interests of the hard working peasant and the skilled worker!

Amazingly, the bureaucracy presented the Left Opposition itself as attempting to deprive the skilled workers of their higher wages. It was similar to the sly arguments of the capitalists and landlords who try to hide their high incomes by expressing concern for the incomes of small artisans, traders and peasants. It must be admitted that this was a masterful stroke. Stalin based himself on the appetites of a very broad and increasingly privileged layer of officials, who saw in him their chosen leader. Again equality, monstrous though it may seem, was proclaimed by the bureaucracy as a petty-bourgeois prejudice. Marxism was supposed to sanction for the bureaucracy the same lifestyle enjoyed by the bourgeoisie in the West. The Opposition had sinned against Marxism, they said, against the Gospel of Lenin, in criticising the modest earnings of the hard-working skilled worker and peasant...

The campaign against the theory of 'permanent revolution', in itself devoid of any theoretical value whatsoever, served as the expression of a conservative nationalistic deviation from Bolshevism. Barmine correctly states, "the struggle between the theory of the 'permanent revolution' and the theory of building 'socialism in one country' reflected two states of consciousness: one of active revolutionism, the other a retreat to domestic positions after defeat." Stalin justified the theory of 'socialism in one country' [in 1924]:

It is the possibility to solve the contradiction between the proletariat and the peasantry with the internal forces of our country, the possibility for the proletariat to take power and to use that power for the building of a complete socialist society in our country with the sympathy and support of the proletariat of other countries, but without the preliminary victory of the proletarian revolution in other countries.

Without such a possibility the building of socialism is building without perspective, building without assurance that socialism, will be built. It is impossible to build socialism without being certain that the technical backwardness of our country is not an insurmountable obstacle to the construction of a complete socialist society. Denial of this possibility is lack of confidence in the cause of building socialism, is a repudiation of Leninism.

Only at this point did Zinoviev and Kamenev come to understand the implications of the struggle they themselves had initiated.

The bloc of Zinoviev, Kamenev and Stalin certainly acted as a restraint on Stalin. Having undergone a long period of schooling under Lenin, Zinoviev and Kamenev appreciated the value of programme and ideas. Although from time to time they indulged in monstrous deviations from the platform of Bolshevism, violating its ideological integrity under the guise of military subterfuge, they never went beyond certain limits. But once the triumvirate had split, Stalin found himself released from all ideological restraints.

This philosophy was simultaneously the philosophy of the right wing and the Stalinist centre. The theory of 'socialism in one country' was championed in that period by a bloc of the bureaucracy with the agrarian and urban petty-bourgeoisie. The struggle against equality welded the bureaucracy more strongly than ever, not only to the agrarian and urban petty-bourgeoisie, but to the labour aristocracy as well. Inequality became the common social basis, the source and the *raison d'être* of these allies. Thus economic and political bonds united the bureaucracy and the petty-bourgeoisie from 1923 to 1928.

MENZHINSKY AND YAGODA

[For much of this time the Party leaders could not openly move against Trotsky and were forced to treat him at least formally with some degree of respect, while all the time manoeuvring against him.]

{Two years later a direct attempt at bloodshed was made. Although Trotsky and Muralov were already in disgrace, their situation had not yet crystallised. It was the year 1926. In July, Zinoviev, who had in the meantime broken with Stalin and formed an Oppositionist bloc with Trotsky and Kamenev,

was expelled from the Politburo. The expulsion of the two other leaders of the Opposition from the same body was to occur three months later, at the very next joint Plenum of the Central Committee and the Central Control Commission. [The following text, based on a note by Trotsky, was written by Natalia Sedova at the request of Charles Malamuth:]

{[Meantime, Trotsky and his wife] accompanied by Muralov and other comrades of Civil War days personally devoted to him, set out for a holiday in the Caucasus.

{Yenukidze placed [at their disposal] the same villa in Kislovodsk that they had had before. Trotsky was accorded the same deference as ever. The local authorities showed sincere respect and at times even enthusiasm, which they could not hide. At accidental as well as at non-accidental meetings they greeted Lev Davidovich with genuine warmth. Every sanatorium in Kislovodsk, one after another invited Lev Davidovich to speak. Every time he was welcomed and seen off demonstratively.

{Nevertheless, the pressure from the Centre could already be felt. Officially the provinces had not yet received orders about a change of "front." Stalin did not yet dare to give such orders openly. But surreptitiously he had made his desires clear to his satraps. Consequently, now and then we would run into manifestations of demonstrative coolness by one or another group that had recently come from Moscow. We were told that certain sanatoria debated the question of inviting Lev Davidovich. But those opposed to extending the invitation were as yet so inconsiderable in number and influence that he was invited by unanimous decision on the insistence of an enthusiastic majority. Such frank expressions of approval of Lev Davidovich were no longer possible in Moscow.

{Muralov was well informed about everything that took place. He was very sensitive and understanding about such matters. We were apprehensive and constantly on guard. As usual the hunting trips were organised by the local GPU, because it knew local conditions best. We continued to be under its guard and protection as formerly. But under the altered circumstances, this GPU guard acquired a double meaning, and one not devoid of danger. We placed our trust not so much in the GPU as in Lev Davidovich's personal guard, who had come with us from Moscow and were tied to Lev Davidovich by the close and firm ties of the Civil War front.

{Once we were returning from a hunt somewhat later than usual. The late return was due to no fault of ours; indeed, we suspected that it had been premeditated. At midnight, just as we were approaching Kislovodsk, the trolley on which we were riding was suddenly derailed, careered in a roundabout circle and suddenly jolted to a halt. We all fell over, without realising at first just what had happened. The officials who tried to explain to us the cause of this mishap were highly embarrassed. Their explanations did not make sense. It looked very much like a premeditated "accident" that had failed – no doubt, revenge for Lev Davidovich's

success at Kislovodsk. The “backward” Caucasus and all of the provinces along with it had to be taught a lesson at one fell stroke.] [Natalia’s text ends here.]

[The GPU officer Menzhinsky⁴ accompanied Trotsky on these hunting expeditions, in theory for his protection but in practice to keep an eye on him and report to his superiors.] Menzhinsky, [who was Dzerzhinsky’s successor as] head of the GPU, had been in all the opposition movements in Lenin’s day. He was with the Boycotters, was carried away by anarcho-syndicalism, and what not. That was in his younger days. But toward the end of his career he was carried away by the machine of police repression. He was not interested in anything except the GPU. He devoted all his intellectual faculties to the task of keeping his machine going without interruption. For that, it was first of all necessary to support the government firmly.

According to the testimony of Yagoda, in the last years of his life Menzhinsky was ill most of the time and the work was directed by Yagoda. Yagoda had joined the Bolshevik Party in the era of tsarism but he remained an inconspicuous figure in the Party. In 1919 he was secretary of a military group. In this capacity he delivered personal reports to me on two occasions. He was very precise, extremely respectful and completely impersonal. He was very thin with a sallow complexion (he suffered from tuberculosis), with a cropped moustache, dressed in military fatigues and gave an impression of diligent insignificance.

Later on, he went to work for the GPU when Dzerzhinsky was still in charge. The latter, as a result of his personal connections, naturally gathered Poles around him. In the GPU Yagoda was also secretary of some kind of board, if I’m not mistaken, but in any case, he was a figure of the third rank and during the first years of the regime I had never heard of him.

Several times Menzhinsky accompanied me on hunting trips under the pretext of looking after my personal security, although in fact, I think it was because he himself was an avid hunter. One day while hunting on boggy ground Yagoda [who also accompanied us] got separated from me and wandered into a place where he could not get out without risking his life. First, he let out a long and desperate yell, and then began to fire his gun repeatedly. Only then did we figure out that something was wrong and went back to go to his aid. I remember that the one who did most to rescue Yagoda

4 A GPU officer, Dzerzhinsky’s successor as head of the GPU, nominally responsible for Trotsky’s security during his recuperative visit to Kislovodsk in 1926. He was replaced by Yagoda.

was Uralov, the former commander of the Moscow Military District, and subsequently one of Yagoda's victims.

Once during the Civil War Menzhinsky had unexpectedly warned me about Stalin's intrigues against me. I mentioned it in my autobiography. When the triumvirate came to power he was faithful to it. He transferred his loyalty to Stalin when the Troika fell apart. In the autumn of 1927, when the GPU began to intervene in the internal disagreements of the Party, a whole group of us – Zinoviev, Kamenev, Smilga and I, and I think someone else – called on Menzhinsky. We asked him to show us the testimonies of witnesses which he made public at the last session of the Central Committee. He did not deny that essentially those documents were forgeries, but flatly refused to show them to us. "Do you remember, Menzhinsky," I asked him, "how once you told me on my train at the Southern Front that Stalin was conducting an intrigue against me?" Menzhinsky became embarrassed. At this point Yagoda, who at the time was Stalin's inspector over the head of the GPU, intervened. "But Comrade Menzhinsky," he said, thrusting forward his foxy head, "never even went to the Southern Front." Yagoda had been a pharmacist in his youth. In a peaceful age, he might have died the owner of a small town drug store.

I interrupted Yagoda. I told him I was not speaking to him but to Menzhinsky and repeated my question. Then Menzhinsky replied: "Yes, I was on your train at the Southern Front and warned you about something or other, but I don't think I mentioned any names." The perplexed smile of a sleepwalker crept over his face. It was no use. Stalin dropped in to speak with him after we left empty-handed. Then Kamenev went to see him alone; after all, it was not so long ago that he had been at the disposal of the entire triumvirate against the Opposition. "Do you really think," Kamenev finally asked him, "that Stalin alone will be able to cope with the tasks of the October Revolution?" Menzhinsky dodged the issue. "Why then did you let him grow into such a formidable force?" he answered question for question. "Now it is too late."

STALIN AND THE CHINESE REVOLUTION

[The rightward turn of the Stalinists in Russia found its reflection in a rightward turn in the Communist International. This led to a series of defeats in Bulgaria and Estonia and in the British General Strike of 1926. But its most

serious effects were felt in China where the Stalin-Bukharin faction sacrificed the Revolution for the sake of an unprincipled bloc with Chiang Kai-shek⁵.]

The breaking-down of the old traditions in China was even more catastrophic than Russia. Hence, the revolutionary daring and self-sacrifice of the Chinese proletariat, which was also equal to the Russian in every respect. On the other hand, the big bourgeoisie is connected with foreign capital and is dependent upon it. At the time of each serious attack by the proletariat the Chinese bourgeoisie feels behind it the support of foreign generals who offer money and weapons to exterminate the masses in the name of order. Lenin taught that in a war between China and imperialism we should recognise the interests of the national revolution and not oppose it with general pacifist or pseudo-communist phrases. However, in the national revolution Lenin taught us not to follow the national bourgeoisie, which exploits the national liberation struggle to bring about the double and triple enslavement of the working masses.

Lenin explained from the very beginning the need for the proletarian vanguard to counterpoise itself to the vile and corrupt deception of the national revolution on the lips of the bourgeoisie. It is shameful that we have to find it necessary to explain that the revolutionary party is not a registrar of bourgeois betrayals, but the teacher of the revolutionary minority, which foresees the future betrayals of the bourgeoisie, prepares the masses for them, builds and rests upon a revolutionary proletarian base, and maintains its independent party. Lenin taught that the union of workers and peasants should never under any circumstances lead to the merging of parties.

Let us not forget that only Lenin's arrival in 1917 deterred Stalin from carrying out his policy to the end, i.e. to the defeat of the proletariat and the revolution. Later Stalin paid lip service to Lenin's policies and in his very usual equivocal fashion admitted the error of his ways in 1917. But did he learn anything from this great experience? When events developed in China he was already the supreme authority of the Bolshevik movement on a world

5 Chiang Kai-shek (1887-1975) was the principal leader of the Chinese Nationalists after his Canton coup in 1926. With Stalin's support he became Commander-in-Chief of the National Revolutionary Army and was elected an honorary member of the Executive Committee of the Communist International. In 1927 he drowned the Chinese Revolution in a sea of blood. He was head of a regime so corrupt and so venal that after WWII its ministers were selling American-supplied arms to the Red Army it was fighting. His administration proved a house of straw and collapsed under a mighty peasant rebellion led by the Chinese Communists.

scale. Yet he did not regard the Kuomintang regime⁶ as the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie. He saw it as an inter-class machine that should be penetrated and manoeuvred so as to radicalise the government. The proof of Stalin's reformist and democratic understanding of the nature of the state is his entire policy towards the Kuomintang.

From innumerable speeches, articles and resolutions, each more shameful than the last, we cite here only one quotation which epitomises the Stalinist conception of the nature of the state. At the time of Chiang Kai-shek's Northern Expedition⁷ Stalin wrote:

No doubt that in the newly liberated provinces a new government will be created on the lines of the Canton government ... and so the tasks of the Chinese Communists and revolutionaries generally is to enter the apparatus of the new government, bring this apparatus closer to the peasant masses and help the peasant masses through this apparatus to satisfy their daily needs.

Stalin gave a speech at the 10th session of the Executive Committee of the Communist International on 24th May 1927, entitled 'The Revolution in China and the Tasks of the Comintern'. In this he attacked Trotsky:

Comrade Trotsky's line denies the preponderant significance of feudal militaristic oppression... Only the blind can deny that the left Kuomintang is playing the role of an organ of revolutionary struggle, the role of an organ of insurrection against the feudal remnants and the imperialism in China. But what follows from that? What follows from that is this: that the left Kuomintang in China is playing for the present bourgeois-democratic revolution in China approximately the same role that the Soviets in 1905 had played for the bourgeois-democratic revolution in Russia.

In *Problems of Leninism*, Stalin explains:

The Communist Party can and should enter into an open bloc with the revolutionary wing of the bourgeoisie... [which means] the creation of a national revolutionary bloc of worker, peasants and the revolutionary intelligentsia... From the policy of the single national front, Communists should pass... to the policy of the revolutionary bloc of workers and petty-bourgeoisie. This bloc can assume in such countries the form of a single party, a worker-peasant party like the Kuomintang.

6 The nationalist party of China led by Chiang Kai-shek.

7 Military campaign between 1926 and 1928 to reunify China under the rule of the Kuomintang.

Stalin makes only one single concession to Lenin: although the bloc of classes should assume according to Stalin, “the form of a single party, a worker-peasant party like the Kuomintang, but that is not necessarily always the case.” Thank you for that at least. Subsequent “little reservations” about the independence of the Communist Party – obviously resembling the “independence” of Jonah in the belly of the whale – only serve to mask the reality. Already in 1924 *Pravda* was reporting: “There is an indication of the gradual organisation of a national liberation movement in Korea, which is rapidly creating a Workers’ and Peasants’ Party.” (*Pravda*, 2nd March 1924, No. 51). Meanwhile, Stalin issued the following instruction to the Communists of the East:

The Communists must transform the policy of the united national front into the policy of the revolutionary bloc of the workers and the petty-bourgeoisie. In these countries this bloc can take [the] form of a single party, a workers’ and peasants party like the Kuomintang.

It is clear that whoever calls now for the immediate creation of soviets or workers’ deputies in that region is attempting to jump over the Kuomintang phase of the Chinese Revolution, and is placing the Revolution in China in a difficult situation.

As far as Stalin was concerned, the Communists should not leave the Kuomintang but hang on to the last to its left wing and the Wuhan government⁸. [Stalin’s policy of class collaboration in China met with the wholehearted approval of the Mensheviks.] In my speech at the Executive Committee on the question of the international situation I referred to the indubitable fact that the Mensheviks fully endorsed the line of Stalin-Martynov-Bukharin on the Chinese question. Here in Russia this fact, like many others, remains unknown even to the upper layers of the Party only because even the printed accounts of the White press, not to mention articles in *Pravda* are biased and dishonest to the highest degree. In regard to my having pointed out that Dan and Abramovich regarded the Stalin-Bukharin line as the correct, i.e. Menshevik, one, as against the line of the Opposition, an attempt was made at the Plenum at rebuttal, the coarseness of which did not disguise its baselessness. I felt myself under the obligation at the time

8 The left wing of the Kuomintang, led by Wang Jingwei in the party capital Wuhan, Southern China, opposed the initial blanket purge and massacre of thousands of communist members in April 1927. After the purge, Chiang Kai-shek established a new capital in Nanjing. The two wings of the Kuomintang agreed upon terms after negotiations in August, one of which was the purging of all communists in Wuhan, ordered by Wang Jingwei.

to quote the exact passages. Here I offer two of them [from the Menshevik press:]

All the wonder-working attributes which Stalin ascribes to national oppression, Martynov had ascribed in their entirety to tsarism. The whole course of the reasoning is the same, letter for letter. The Leninist theory of national revolution by the oppressed people has been turned into a theory which covers up the doubly exploitative and doubly counter-revolutionary role of the national bourgeoisie of the oppressed country. 'In principle', the Bolsheviks were also in favour of preserving the 'United Front' in the Chinese Revolution until the completion of the task of national liberation. As far back as the 10th April, Martynov in *Pravda* quite perspicaciously and notwithstanding the obligatory scolding of the Social-Democrats proved to the 'Left' oppositionist Radek, quite "in the Menshevik way", the correctness of the official position, which insisted on the necessity of preserving "the bloc of the four classes" not to hasten the destruction of the coalition government in which the workers sit together with the big bourgeoisie, not to impose upon it prematurely "socialist tasks". (*Socialist Messenger*, No. 8, 1927, page 4).

Leaving aside the verbal fireworks obligatory for a super-Communist, it will be hardly possible to object to the essence of the 'line' indicated in the theses. As far as possible not to leave the Kuomintang and to hang on to the last extreme to its left wing and to the Hunan government; "to avoid a decisive battle in unfavourable conditions"; not to advance the slogan 'All Power to the Soviets' so as not to "hand the enemy of the Chinese people a new weapon for fighting against the Revolution, for the sake of creating a new legend to the effect that what is happening in China is not a national revolution but an artificial transplantation of Muscovite Sovietisation" what as a matter of fact can be more sensible for the Bolsheviks now after the 'United Front' is apparently irrevocably broken when generally so many dishes have been smashed in the most "unfavourable conditions"? (*Social Messenger*, No. 9, 1927, page 1)

These, and even more startling quotations, can be presented from the entire Social-Democratic press from Warsaw to New York. Did this incorrect tactic come out of the theory of 'permanent revolution'? Or did it come out of the Stalin-Bukharin theory? Barmine, who was a Stalinist in those days, recalls:

The Opposition accused Stalin of being in league with Chiang Kai-shek and the Chinese bourgeoisie organised in the movement known as Kuomintang. It certainly is a fact that Stalin compelled the Chinese Communist Party to subordinate itself to the Kuomintang and to check the budding movement among the peasants and workers, and that he remained deaf to all warnings that a military coup was being prepared in Shanghai against the Trade Unions and the Communist Party. Radek,

who as Rector of the Chinese University in Moscow was well placed to follow the details of the struggle, made no bones about joining with Trotsky and Zinoviev in denouncing these tactics, the disastrous effects of which were seen only too quickly... As a result, Stalin's reputation was fatally compromised...

[The bloody defeat of the Chinese Revolution in 1927 completely confirmed all of Trotsky's warnings. But far from strengthening the Opposition, it led Stalin to speed up his campaign against 'Trotskyism', preparing the ground for the expulsion of the Opposition at the Fifteenth Party Congress. The Chinese defeat further demoralised the Russian workers who began to lose faith in the possibility of the success of world revolution. All this prepared the ground psychologically for the victory of Stalin and the bureaucracy.]

REPRESSION AGAINST THE OPPOSITION

When it came to the destruction of his enemies and opponents of the new ruling caste Stalin combined business with personal revenge. Consumed by overpowering ambition, but talentless and with very limited intellectual resources, Stalin often had to suffer the company of people who were less ambitious and not as strong in character as he, but who were much more intelligent, talented and generous. The thing that Stalin, that outstanding mediocrity, never forgave in anyone was spiritual superiority. He kept a mental note of all those who had slighted him in the smallest degree, or at least had not paid him sufficient attention. And since the entire Soviet oligarchy, like all other bureaucracies in general, consists of organised and centralised mediocrity, Stalin's personal instincts could not be more in tune with the fundamental traits of the bureaucracy: its fear of the masses, out of which it arose, and whom it betrayed, and its hatred for anybody with outstanding ability.

Adolf Joffe, who had forsaken the privileges of wealth for the Revolution and was an underground revolutionist of many years standing, before he became one of the ablest of Soviet diplomats, remarked to me in 1925:

You simply can't realise what degeneration has overtaken the Party. Its great majority – at any rate the decisive majority – is made up of officials. They are far more interested in appointments, promotions, privileges [and other] advantages, than in questions of socialist theory or in what happens to the international revolution. They regard our politics as quixotic. By political realism, which in their parade speeches they identify with Leninism, they really mean taking care of their own personal interests.

Joffe stood bravely by the Opposition until, broken by ill health, he committed suicide four days after my expulsion from the Party. He chose to die by his own hand rather than capitulate to the Thermidorian reaction.

The pressure brought to bear on members and sympathisers of the Left Opposition was gradually stepped up. The treatment accorded to the hundreds who added their signatures to the Declaration of the eighty-three of 26th May 1927 was only exceeded in brutality and cynicism by the treatment of the thousands who supported them verbally. They were dragged before Party courts, only because at Party meetings they expressed views that were not in accord with those of the Stalinist Central Committee, which was thus flagrantly depriving them as Party members of their most elementary Party rights. Public opinion in the Party was being prepared for the outright expulsion of the Opposition.

This was reinforced by certain extraneous measures taken against members and sympathisers of the Opposition. "You'll be laughing all the way to the labour exchange," a member of the Political Bureau and of the Central Committee of the Ukrainian Communist Party threatened the Opposition at one of the Party meetings in Kharkov. "We'll throw you out of your jobs," the Secretary of the Moscow Party Committee threatened in Moscow. [These were no idle boasts. When] the threat of hunger failed to silence the Opposition, the Central Committee openly resorted to the GPU. One had to be blind not to see that the struggle against the Opposition by such methods was a struggle against the Party. What was the sense of talking about unity, while wielding such weapons? What did the Stalinists mean by unity? Was it the unity of the wolf with the lamb that it was gobbling up?

Barmine had to take part in a session of the Organisational Bureau where, in the absence of Stalin, Kaganovich took all the decisions and stitched everything up:

When I left the meeting I saw clearly what the situation was. There was no longer any discussion of matters of importance, merely pretence for the sake of appearances. Power was entirely in the hands of the men who were in Stalin's confidence.

No question was discussed on its merits. Everything was decided behind the scenes at a private session with Stalin, who would then strike a political bargain with the Right faction – Rykov, Bukharin and Tomsky. Each time the Central Committee met, there were in reality at least two sessions, the official and the unofficial. The line of attack against the Opposition was prearranged

and the roles and speeches assigned in advance. The Opposition answered Stalin's regime with defiance.

[In his speech to the joint plenary session of the CC and the Central Control Commission in July 1926 Trotsky defended the Opposition against the Stalinist slanders:]

We shall continue to criticise until you until you force our mouths shut. But until the time you finally gag us, we will continue to criticise this Stalinist regime, which otherwise will undermine all the conquests of the October Revolution. Even at the time of the tsars we had the kind of patriots who identified the fatherland with their superiors. We are not one of those.

At meetings, especially at Workers' and Peasant Cells, they are saying: the devil knows what the Opposition is up to. They are asking where the "money" or means comes from for the Opposition to carry on its "work". Maybe these workers are in the dark, or maybe they lack class consciousness, but maybe they have been sent by you to ask such questions, to hand in such Black Hundred notes, and there are rascally reporters who dare to print evasive replies to these notes. If you were really the Central Control Commission, you would be under an obligation to put an end to this dirty, nasty, disgusting, purely Stalinist campaign against the Opposition.

Ordzhonikidze: You are in too much of a hurry.

Trotsky: This is aptly put. I am saying 48 hours in advance what you will do a little later. Just as in July of last year, we provided you with the whole itinerary of your struggle against us ahead of time. Now it is time for a new stage of development."

Soon after this Muralov, who was one of those most prominent leaders of the Red Army, was removed from the Workers' and Peasants' Inspectorate, expelled from the Party and exiled to Siberia where he remains.⁹

Each time the comedy was staged, it more closely resembled an obscene and rowdy bar-room parody. The tone of the baiting became more unbridled. The more impudent members, the climbers most recently admitted to the Central Committee exclusively in recognition of their capacity for rudeness toward the Opposition, continuously interrupted the speeches of veteran revolutionists with senseless repetitions of baseless accusations, and shouts of unheard of vulgarity and abuse.

At the sessions of the Central Committee when I rose to read a declaration of the Left Opposition, I was constantly interrupted by whistling, shouts, threats and swearing, very much the way I was received ten years earlier,

9 Until 1937, when he was executed after the Moscow Show Trials.

when I rose to read the declaration of the Bolsheviks on the opening day of Kerensky's Pre-Parliament. I remember Voroshilov shouting, "He is bearing himself as he did in the Pre-Parliament!" This was far more apt than the author of the exclamation then realised. By 1927 the official sessions of the Central Committee became truly disgusting spectacles.

Let us excerpt a few characteristic passages from the official minutes:

Trotsky: Through the present apparatus, through the present regime, the proletarian vanguard undergoes the pressure... [The noise increases more and more. The orator can hardly be heard.] Of the upstart bureaucrats including the worker-bureaucrats [Tumult, whistling], of the administrators, the privileged intellectuals of the city and country...

Voroshilov: Zinoviev, it's outrageous!

Skrypnik: The platform of the Central Committee wasn't made for such infamy.

Skvortsov-Stepanov: He's Dan, the Menshevik, in disguise.

Trotsky: The pressure of all those elements who are beginning to show the proletariat their fists, saying: "This is no longer 1918." It is not the leftward zig-zags which are decisive but our policy as a whole. It is the choice of cadres, the support of the masses. It is impossible to resist the enriched peasants while stifling the proletarian units. These things are incompatible... [Increasing noise, whistling.]

Voices: Gravedigger of the revolution! For shame! Down with him! Down with the rascal! The renegade!

Trotsky: Leftward zig-zags will encounter the resistance of the majority. Today, 'enrich yourselves', but tomorrow [Noise, cat-calls.] ... we shall obtain nothing from the rich peasants ... Behind the bureaucrats the bourgeoisie is coming back to life... [Noise, cat-calls, crises of "Down with him."]

Voroshilov: That's enough. For shame! [Whistling, hoots, increasing tumult. Nothing can be heard. The chairman rings his bell; whistling. Voices cry: "Down from the platform." The chairman adjourns the meeting. Comrade Trotsky continues to read, but not a word can be distinguished. The members of the Central Committee leave their places and begin to disperse.]

(From *Pravda*, 2nd November, 1927)

The stage director of this show was Stalin. He walked up and down at the back of the presidium, glancing occasionally at those to whom certain speeches were assigned, and made no attempt to hide his approval when the swearing addressed to some Oppositionists assumed an utterly shameless character. It was hard to imagine that we were at a session of the Central Committee of

the Bolshevik Party, so low was the tone, so vulgar the participants, and so disgusting was Stalin, the real demoraliser of these foolish people. The habits of the Tiflis streets were transferred to the Central Committee of the Bolshevik Party. Some of us recalled the characterisation of Stalin made by one of his old collaborators, Philip Makharadze: "He is simply a – *kinto!*"

At about the same time another of his old comrades from the Caucasus, Budu Mdivani, told me about a conversation he had with Stalin in the Kremlin. Mdivani was trying to persuade Stalin that it was necessary to reach some sort of agreement with the Opposition; otherwise, the Party would go from one convulsion to another. Stalin listened in silence with obvious disapproval, walking up and down the room. Then after impressively stalking away to a far corner, he turned, walked in silence toward Mdivani. His muscles tense, rising on tip toes and raising one arm, he stopped short and exclaimed in a dreadful voice, "They must be crushed." Mdivani said he was simply frightful...

In Moscow, the secretary of the Krasnaya Presnya Party District Committee, a man named Ryutin, had the idea of enlisting hardened gangs armed with cudgels and equipped with whistles whose duty it was to prevent Opposition speakers from getting a hearing at the regular Party meetings. Other gangs of a similar kind, taking orders from Party members such as Moroz, a former officer of the Cheka, (but declared an 'enemy of the people' in 1937) and Yaroslavsky – carried on the "good work" at extracting confessions from the accused at the private discussions.

Nor were these the only methods of Stalinist rebuttal. Stalin and his henchmen even stooped so low as to fish in the muddy waters of anti-Semitism. I recall particularly a cartoon in the *Rabochaya Gazeta* ['Workers' Gazette'] entitled 'Comrades Trotsky and Zinoviev'. There were any number of such caricatures and doggerel verses of an anti-Semitic character in the Party press. They were received with sniggers. Stalin's attitude toward this growing anti-Semitism was one of friendly neutrality. But matters went so far that he was forced to come out with a published statement which declared: "We are fighting Trotsky, Zinoviev and Kamenev not because they are Jews, but because they are Oppositionists," and the like. It was absolutely clear to everyone who thought politically that his deliberately equivocal declaration was aimed merely at the 'excesses' of anti-Semitism, while at the same time broadcasting throughout the entire Soviet press the powerful reminder, 'Don't forget that the leaders of the Opposition are Jews.' Such a statement gave a green light to the anti-Semites.

[The Fifteenth Congress of the Party, which was held in December 1927, took place in an atmosphere of Black Hundred witch-hunting hysteria. The Oppositionists were barracked to prevent them from defending their ideas. Rakovsky's speech was interrupted fifty-seven times, while Kamenev was interrupted twenty-four times by noisy and obscene abuse. The Congress, which was packed by the apparatus, ratified the expulsion of the Opposition. Three years were to elapse before Stalin called another Party Congress.]

Barmine, who was a delegate at the Congress and at that time a member of the majority Stalinist faction, recalls:

Stalin dared not risk the Opposition getting a hearing at the Fifteenth Party Congress. A few days before it opened, in November 1927, Trotsky, Zinoviev and Kamenev were expelled on a charge of insubordination. Stalin, with his supporters, Rykov, Bukharin and Tomsky, appeared on the platform – an inglorious conqueror. I belonged to the Stalin majority, and I knew his views, but there was a touch of consternation in our applause and our votes of confidence. The expulsion of the Opposition could be justified in our eyes only as a measure necessary to ensure the safety of the state and prevent an act of schism within the Party.

STALIN TURNS AGAINST THE RIGHT

[Stalin and his 'centre' faction had leaned on Bukharin and the Right in order to defeat Trotsky and the Left Opposition. But having expelled Trotsky and liquidated the Left Opposition, Stalin became alarmed by the *kulak* danger and turned against his former allies, striking blows against the Right. Bukharin and the other leaders of the Right Opposition were removed from key positions in the Communist Party and the Soviet government. But unlike Trotsky, who even in exile continued to build the International Left Opposition, Bukharin was unable to maintain a principled struggle against Stalin. Bukharin and his followers capitulated to Stalin and admitted their "ideological errors". They were temporarily rehabilitated, only to be murdered during the Purge trials.]

Stalin had used the Right as a battering ram against the Left Opposition, as the Right had a definite platform, interests, and principles that were being threatened by the possible victory of the Left. But when Stalin saw that the expulsion of the Left Opposition provoked grave misgivings and dissatisfaction in the Party, and irritation with the triumphant Right, he then utilised this dissatisfaction to strike a blow against the Rightists. The conflict of class forces in this struggle between Right and Left was of less concern to him than his deceptive role as a conciliator or peacemaker, which would

presumably reduce the inevitable number of victims to a minimum and save the Party from a split.

{The struggle against Trotskyism was waged in the name of the peasant, behind whose back was the NEPman with his tongue hanging out, and the greedy bureaucrat. As soon as 'Trotskyism' was defeated, the leasing of land was legalised, and all along the line the general shift of power from Left to Right was unmistakable, notwithstanding occasional shifts to the Left, for these were followed again by shifts even further to the Right. Insofar as the bureaucracy used its retreats to the Left for gaining greater momentum for each subsequent jump to the Right, the zigzag course being made consistently at the expense of the toiling masses and in the interests of a privileged minority, its Thermidorian nature is unmistakable.}

Barmine points out that the Bolshevik-Leninists were expelled from the Party and imprisoned or exiled because they had argued that the lag in the growth of industry would strengthen the bourgeois elements in relation to the proletariat. The Opposition had warned in advance against the growth of the *kulak* danger. They insisted on a more planned increase of wages on a basis of increased industrialisation. They demanded a more resolute campaign against bureaucracy. They protested against the subordination of the Chinese Communist Party to Chiang Kai-shek's Kuomintang and demanded that the soviets in China be created in time. They rebelled against the friendship with Purcell and other strike-breakers and traitors of the TUC General Council.

They protested against the petty-bourgeois reactionary and nationalistic theory of 'socialism in one country', which broke with all the teachings of Marx and Lenin. In accordance with Lenin's Testament, they struggled, against rudeness and disloyalty in the Party-apparatus and against the monstrous misuse of power. They demanded that all documents hidden from the Party should be published for all to see. On the 7th November [1927] on the tenth anniversary of October they raised a placard that read: "Fire to the Right against the *Kulak*, NEPman and the Speculator."

Barmine comments:

The Right continued to hope. Trotsky, with a few thousand other exiles, managed to maintain political contact which kept the older members in a constant state of feverish excitement. On the eve of the 7th November celebrations of 1927, a rumour gained currency that the Opposition would attempt to organise some kind of street demonstration. Until this day the GPU agents and the police had taken no part in such disturbances, because Stalin did not dare call on them for

intra-Party conflicts. The gangs referred to above had been sufficient to suppress any probable outbreak. [...]

A member of the Central Committee supporting the Opposition had a balcony near the entrance to the Red Square, where three columns of the marching demonstrators would converge. He decorated his balcony with portraits of Lenin, Trotsky, and Zinoviev. Oppositionists gathered here and shouted: "Long Live Trotsky! Long Live the Opposition!" The balcony was raided by GPU agents and the police, the portraits were torn down, and the Oppositionists arrested and taken to the police station.

Barmine explained:

But within a few months, in 1928, the difficulties foreseen by the [Left] Opposition began to materialise. It became necessary to take exceptional measures in order to compel the peasants to hand over to the State the corn and the raw materials for which they considered the price offered them too low. Stalin lost his head and used force. Bukharin, Rykov, Tomsky, and Uglanov, who at that time was secretary of the Moscow Committee, insisted that there should be a return to normal conditions in the country districts. The Right backed them up, and then, all of a sudden, Stalin turned against them. He was astute enough to draw a psychological advantage from the resentment caused by the recent expulsions and arrests.

[Barmine was present at a meeting where Uglanov, a former supporter of Bukharin, made a cowardly submission:]

The Right had not even the courage to go openly into opposition. I was present at a meeting of the active Party members in Moscow, in the course of which Uglanov, who had shown no mercy toward the Trotskyists, made a pitiful recantation of his errors, promised with tears in his eyes to follow the Party line in future, praised Stalin's clear-sightedness, and all the rest.

[And he drew the obvious conclusion:]

I realised then that he and his companions were beaten. Not that they did not command widespread sympathy among the rank and file. Kalinin, Voroshilov and Yagoda were more or less on their side, and the country as a whole preferred them to Stalin because they demanded for the peasants' freedom of production and exchange and the right to make money out of their farms. But the active elements of the Party were against them and supported Stalin only too gladly. Bukharin was in charge of the *Pravda*, and Stalin was extending his protection to a very talented young man, named Kostrov, who was producing the *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, the organ of the Youth Movement, an extremely important daily which was more than once used as the mouth-piece of the Stalinist faction. Kostrov has since died.

Most of the young men who helped Stalin in his struggle against the Right have perished because in later years they showed Oppositionist tendencies.

It is obvious that the bureaucracy did not rout the proletarian vanguard, extricate itself from the complications of world revolution and legitimise the philosophy of inequality in order to surrender to the bourgeoisie and become its servant, eventually to be torn away from the state feed-bag. The bureaucracy became mortally frightened by the consequences of its six-year policy [of concessions to the rich peasants]. It therefore turned sharply against the *kulak* and the NEPmen. In 1928, with agriculture in a complete state of disorganisation as a result firstly of encouraging the *kulaks* to “get rich” and then suddenly subjecting them to draconian repression, the future was looking anything but favourable.

Under conditions of Soviet democracy, that is, self-rule of the toilers, the struggle against the *kulaks* might not have assumed such a convulsive, panicky and bestial form and might have led to a general rise of the economic and cultural level of the masses on the basis of industrialisation. But the bureaucracy's fight against the *kulak* was single combat [fought] on the backs of the toilers; and since neither of the embattled gladiators trusted the masses, since both feared the masses, the struggle assumed an extremely convulsive and sanguinary character. Thanks to the support of the proletariat, it ended with victory for the bureaucracy. But it did not lead to a gain in the specific weight of the proletariat in the country's political life.

INDUSTRIAL POLICY

Private enterprises undoubtedly played a big role in the degeneration of the Soviet state through the use of bribery and all kinds of corrupt practices. Yet this was not the main cause of the irritation of the bureaucracy against private entrepreneurs, in particular the concessionaires. Some of them worked better, having a greater incentive to achieve higher quality products, albeit at a high price. Even government agencies preferred to buy products from private producers.

The goal that Lenin had set himself when he introduced concession was precisely in order to prevent public monopolies from clouding their judgment through a sense of inviolability. But it is precisely this that the indolent bureaucrats did not want. Under the guise of a relentless struggle for socialist industry they were really fighting to preserve their monopoly, to be left in peace to dispose of the state economy without any interference or

competition. In this way, the concessions, mixed enterprises and other private businesses were gradually killed off. Stalin was the leader of this movement, as always protecting the interests of the bureaucracy.

The main idea of Stalin in April 1927 was that the question of the pace of our economic development need not be related to the international factor. [He based himself] on this and the theory of 'socialism in one country'. Now Stalin proves to the Right, that leaving aside the external environment, it was possible "to do the business at a slower pace", but the point is that one cannot "leave aside the external environment". This is a simple plagiarism of what Preobrazhensky had said on this very topic: you can ignore it, but it will not allow itself to be ignored.

Stalin argued that the only external force that threatened us was intervention. We explained to him that, besides military intervention, there was also the intervention of cheap goods. This was branded as a lack of faith or pessimism. Now Stalin spoke of rapid industrialisation: "Either we achieve this, or they will crush us without mercy." Thus, with a delay of about four years he was groping towards an awareness of the question of the relative ratios of development of the capitalist countries and ourselves. We had already posed theoretically the need to study these comparative ratios in 1924 and again in 1925 in a special meeting of the NTO [People's Trade Organisation] on the quality of products. What has been done since then?

From the philosophy of the tortoise tempo Stalin swung over to maximalism: "We must catch up and overtake the advanced technology of the developed capitalist countries." Posed in such a general way this maximalist statement is devoid of any content. But we are not going to "catch up and surpass" any time soon. During this time, the Western proletariat will have time to catch up with us politically, and hence economically. Then they will take our economy in tow. "One must not jump over stages so boldly"...in words! For the immediate future the practical task is to ensure that our prices and our per capita rate of production and personal consumption are brought close to the level of prices in the advanced capitalist countries, and do not deviate from them.

Stalin believes the current rate of industrial development to be the correct tempo. It is generally the case that under an infallible leadership everything occurs precisely to order. However, in 1925 a twenty percent increase in output was considered to be a harmful Trotskyist fantasy. In fact, at that time the Opposition could not be accused of being 'super-industrialisers' but rather of showing excessive pedagogical indulgence towards the tail-ending positions of

the Politburo and of underestimating the real possibilities of industrialisation, provided the correct approach had been adopted. In all essentials this position remains completely valid even now.

In my book *Towards Capitalism or Socialism?*, I suggested with the greatest caution a growth rate of this kind for the years following the period of economic recovery. The official institutions foresaw a much slower pace. But the Politburo accused those responsible for the national economy of being 'super-industrialisers'. Our current rate of industrial growth was not the result of correct foresight and an understanding of the dynamics of our economic development, but came about empirically, under the whip of the market, Opposition criticism and crises, a good half of which was the product of the limited vision and tail-endism of the leadership.

Concurrently, the bureaucracy launched the so-called 'Third Period' [a sharp turn to the left], and undertook the struggle against the Rightists. In the eyes of simpletons, the theory and politics of the 'Third Period' seemed to be a return to the basic tenets of Bolshevism. But it was nothing of the kind. It was merely a means to an end, a way of wiping out the Right Opposition and its satellites. The stupid antics of the notorious 'Third Period' at home and abroad are too recent to warrant description now. They would be laughable if their effects on the masses had not been so tragic. For several years Barmine had played an important role although not of the first rank in various economic institutions. In 1930 he visited Moscow. Here is his testimony: "After the upsurge of 1922-28, came a sad period. The stamp of poverty, fatigue, and exhaustion were clearly evident on everyone's faces."

[The adventurist nature of Stalin's Leftward zig-zag manifested itself in an exaggerated pace of industrial development, unrealisable targets and the slogan 'carry out the Five-Year Plan in four years!' This led to a series of blunders, numerous accidents, breakdowns of machines and colossal wastage. All this would be blamed on a non-existent 'Industrial Opposition' that was alleged to have plotted to disrupt and sabotage Soviet industry. Prominent engineers were put on trial and confessed to these crimes, although they were completely innocent. This was a dress rehearsal for the later and even more monstrous Purge Trials of 1936-38.]

In the sphere of economy the same was repeated, explains Barmine:

Communist engineers acknowledged their mistakes when in fact they were definitely right. They hoped to serve the country by continuing to work, to save industry in spite of the ignorant and adventurous policies. But that did not serve anything. I have information that both Serebrykovsky and Shakh-Muratov, the

most capable and qualified engineers, leaders in the field of metallurgy well known to the industrial worlds of both continents, are now in prison as enemies of the people.

CAPITULATION

The fight against the *kulak*, the fight against the right wing, the fight against opportunism, all the official slogans of that period seemed to the workers and to many representatives of the Left Opposition like a renaissance of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat and the Socialist Revolution. We warned them at the time: it is not only a question of what is being done, but also of who does it. Among the capitulators, the leading position was occupied by Old Bolsheviks, members of the Central Committee and people who had been Stalin's collaborators for many years. It is no secret to anyone that in the struggle against the right-wingers Stalin accepted the 'help' of the Left Opposition. He did not contribute a single new idea. His intellectual work consisted of nothing more than threats and the repetition of the slogans and arguments of the Opposition, naturally with demagogic distortions.

Not only did Stalin pick up the old rags of the Opposition, but in order to avoid recognition, he tore pieces out of them and without taking the trouble to sew them together into some new garment (such niceties never bothered him), he covered his nakedness as the need arose. However, it cannot be said that these tatters, made up of a left sleeve, a right pocket, a trouser leg – all cut to somebody else's measurement – could be regarded as a very satisfactory covering for the Leader's nakedness. And his followers could not help him, because they had to march perfectly in step with every movement of the Father of Nations.

1929-30 and the following years were a period of rampant capitulation. The new social basis of the Soviet Union became paramount. To guard the nationalisation of the means of production and of the land, is the bureaucracy's law of life and death, for these are the social sources of its dominant position. That was the reason for its struggle against the *kulak*. The bureaucracy could wage this struggle, and wage it to the end, only with the support of the proletariat. The best proof of the fact that the bureaucracy had mustered this support was the avalanche of capitulations by representatives of the new Opposition.

[Among the first to capitulate were Zinoviev and Kamenev who tried to ingratiate themselves by making grovelling speeches adulating Stalin.] Barmine writes:

Zinoviev and Kamenev had recanted publicly at the Congress, severing all connection with the Opposition, and making an unconditional submission to the majority. That was the beginning of the double game they were about to play consisting of simultaneously denying their own convictions and plotting secretly against the authorities, which was to bring them to their deaths.

Pestkovsky relates:

I worked side-by-side with Stalin for 20 months and all the time I participated in various Oppositions...nevertheless Stalin treated me with the utmost patience... Because of my incorrect line he did not let me direct the work among the Eastern nationalities (he reserved that direction for himself) while I worked among the nationalities of the West.

The words about Stalin's utmost patience or rather about Stalin's tolerance sound somewhat startling in the light of latter-day developments. It should be noted that at that time it was inadmissible to remove or transfer Party members because they were in an Opposition. Yet Pestkovsky thinks that he is obliged to undertake his departure from the Opposition to his new situation by stressing the patient treatment he received from Stalin.

I recall the message that Krestinsky had sent from Berlin after the defeat of the Opposition: "We must give up the Opposition," he said. "Isn't it about time to begin living?" Krestinsky had been a member of the revolutionary movement since 1901 and a Bolshevik since 1905. He did not hesitate to sacrifice his career as a lawyer in the service of the Revolution during the days of the underground. His tenth arrest, followed by exile, took place shortly after the outbreak of the imperialist war in 1914. However, Krestinsky, who was completely disorientated by his removal from the centre of politics and relegated to the career of a professional diplomat, was permitted to "begin living", but only until the creatures of the Thermidorian reaction chose to make a disgraceful spectacle of him and crush him like a worm. But there is more than one way to die. Krestinsky for example, was a political corpse long before he stood before Stalin's firing squad.

"The last time that Krestinsky spoke in public was at a meeting of the Communists of the Department," recalled Barmine.

Speaking very slowly, and obviously very much moved, he said that although he was wholly committed to the general line of the Party which he had served conscientiously for many years, he realised that his record as a member of the Opposition from 1923-27 made it advisable that, in the present circumstances, he should be retired... He knew that, nine years before, he had committed the grave

fault of joining the Opposition elements which had set themselves up against the Leninist wisdom of our chief, Stalin. He approved, without reservation, the decision of the Central Committee, which, for that reason, had given him a new position in the Department of Justice. The loyal Communist must learn to serve his country where the Party thinks best to send him. Krestinsky thanked his former colleagues, old and young, assured them that he would never forget them, and asked them to devote all their energies to the service of the Party... He must have known that this change of employment was but a halting-place on his way to prison, and that prison meant ultimate death.

Nor was I the only one who foresaw such eventualities. The bravest and the wisest of all the Bolsheviks, the thousands of Oppositionists who spurned compromise and capitulation to the end, shared my views. Rakovsky held out longer than most. Explaining Rakovsky's action in capitulating, Leon Sedov wrote:

Capitulation is a slippery slope... Once you've stood on it, you can't help yourself but slide further to the very end... Stalinist absolutism doesn't recognise half-hearted capitulation: all or nothing, there is no middle ground.

COULD THE OPPOSITION HAVE WON?

Numerous critics, publicists, correspondents, historians, biographers, and sundry amateur sociologists, have lectured the Left Opposition from time to time on the error of its ways, saying that the strategy of the Left Opposition was not feasible from the point of view of the struggle for power. However, this very approach to the question is incorrect. The Left Opposition could not achieve power, and did not hope even to do so – certainly not its most thoughtful leaders. A struggle for power by the Left Opposition, by a revolutionary Marxist organisation, was conceivable only under the conditions of a revolutionary upsurge. Under such conditions the strategy is based on forcefulness, on direct appeal to the masses, on a frontal attack against the government. Quite a few members of the Left Opposition had played a not insignificant part in such a struggle in the past and had first-hand knowledge of how to wage it. But during the early twenties and later, there was no revolutionary upsurge in Russia, quite the contrary. Under such circumstances it was out of the question to launch a struggle for power.

Bear in mind that in the years of reaction, in 1908-11 and later, the Bolshevik Party refused to launch a direct attack upon the monarchy and limited itself to the task of preparing for the eventual offensive by fighting

for the survival of the revolutionary traditions and for the preservation of certain cadres, subjecting the developing events to untiring analysis, and utilising all legal and semi-legal possibilities for training the advanced stratum of workers. The Left Opposition could not proceed otherwise under similar conditions. Indeed, the conditions of Soviet reaction were immeasurably more difficult for the Opposition than the conditions of the tsarist reaction had been for the Bolsheviks. But basically the task remained the same – the preservation of revolutionary traditions, the maintenance of contact among the advanced elements within the Party, the analysis of the developing events of the Thermidor, the preparation for the future revolutionary upsurge on the world arena as well as in the USSR.

One danger was that the Opposition might overestimate its forces and prematurely abandon the prosecution of this task after a few tentative sallies, in which the advance guard would necessarily crash not only against the resistance of the bureaucracy but against the indifference of the masses as well. The other danger was that, having become convinced of the impossibility of leading the masses, even their vanguard, the Opposition would give up the struggle and lie low until better times. [But] this would have posed the threat of losing...[the cadres of the Opposition that had been educated during the past period.]

Revolution destroys and demolishes the machinery of the old state. Therein lies its essence. The masses fill the arena. They decide, they act, they legislate in their own unprecedented manner; they judge, and they issue orders. The essence of the revolution is that the mass itself becomes its own executive organ. But when the masses leave the social arena, retire to their various neighbourhoods, retreat into their sundry dwellings, perplexed, disillusioned, tired, the place becomes desolate. And its bleakness only deepens as it is filled with the new bureaucratic machinery. Naturally, the men in charge, unsure of themselves and of the masses, are apprehensive. That is why, in an epoch of victorious reaction, the military-police machine plays a far greater role than under the old regime. In this swing from revolution to Thermidor, the specific nature of the Russian Thermidor was determined by the role the Party played in it.

The French Revolution had nothing of the kind at its disposal. The dictatorship of the Jacobins, as personified by the Committee of Public Safety¹⁰, lasted only one year. This dictatorship had real support in the

¹⁰ The Committee of Public Safety (*Comité de salut public*) formed the executive government of France during the period of the French Revolution between April 1793

Convention, which was much stronger than the revolutionary Clubs and sections. Here is the classic contradiction between the dynamics of revolution and its parliamentary reflection. The most active elements of the classes participate in the revolutionary struggle. The remainder – the neutral ones, those who lay low, the politically backward ones – seem to disappear from the scene. At election time participation broadens; it is extended to include also a considerable portion of the semi-passive and the semi-indifferent [mass]. In times of revolution, parliamentary representatives are immeasurably more moderate and temperate than the revolutionary groups they represent. In order to dominate the Convention, the Montagnards let the Convention rule the people, rather than the revolutionary elements outside.

Notwithstanding the incomparably deeper character of the October Revolution, the army of the Soviet Thermidor was recruited essentially from the remnants of the former ruling parties and their representatives. The former landed gentry, capitalists, lawyers, and their offspring – that is, those of them that had not run abroad – were taken into the state machine, and quite a few even into the Party. A far greater number of those admitted into the state and Party machinery were former members of the petty-bourgeois parties – Mensheviks and S-Rs. To these must be added a tremendous number of simple Philistines who had cowered on the side-lines during the stormy epoch of the Revolution and the Civil War, and who, convinced at last of the stability of the Soviet Government, dedicated themselves with singular passion to the noble task of securing soft and permanent berths, if not in the Centre, then at least in the provinces. This enormous and motley mob was the natural support of the Thermidor.

Its sentiments ran from pale pink to snowy white. The S-Rs were, of course, ready at all times and in every way to support the interests of the peasants against the threats of the wicked industrialisers, while the Mensheviks, by and large, considered that more freedom and territory should be given to the [*kulak*] peasant bourgeoisie of which they had also become the political spokesmen. The surviving representatives of the bourgeoisie and the landed gentry, who had wormed their way into government jobs, naturally seized upon the peasants as their lifeline. They could not hope for any sort of success as champions of their own class interests for the time being, and clearly understood that they had to pass through a period of defending the peasantry.

and July 1794. For twelve months it was under the control of the Jacobins, before the execution of Jacobin leader Maximilien Robespierre led to the period known as the Thermidorian Reaction.

None of these groups could openly raise its head. All of them needed the protective colouration of the ruling party and the traditions of Bolshevism. The struggle against the 'permanent revolution' meant to them the struggle against the permanent existence of the deprivations they had suffered. It is natural that they gladly accepted as their leaders those Bolsheviks who turned against the 'permanent revolution'.

The economy revived. A small surplus appeared. Naturally it was concentrated in the cities and at the disposal of the ruling strata. With it came a revival of theatres, restaurants and entertainment establishments. Hundreds of thousands of people of the various professions who spent the strenuous years of the Civil War in a kind of coma, now revived, stretched their limbs and began to dedicate themselves to the re-establishment of normal life. All of them were on the side of the opponents of 'permanent revolution'. All of them wanted peace, [economic] growth and the strengthening of the peasantry, as well as the continued prosperity of the entertainment establishments in the cities. And they sought permanence for this trend rather than for the revolution.

TROTSKY'S DEPORTATION

[While many former supporters of the Opposition capitulated, Trotsky remained firm. In an effort to silence him, Trotsky was told to refrain from his activities under threat of imprisonment, but he refused. Stalin did not dare to carry out his threat and the rumour went around that Trotsky was to be sent abroad. On 18th January 1929, the decision was made to exile Trotsky, covered by Article 58/10 of the Criminal Code regarding the accusation of counter-revolutionary activity, expressing itself through "the organisation of an illegal anti-Soviet, anti-Party, activity which during the last period was directed toward the provocation of anti-Soviet demonstrations and toward the preparation of armed struggle against Soviet power."]

The Rykovites spread a rumour that Rykov wept when Trotsky was being expelled from the Party. Rykov was a talented individual, educated in the spirit of Western Social-Democracy, a good revolutionist in the past, but had nothing in common with us. [But Barmine recalls the impact that this made even on those Party members who did not support the Left Opposition:]

Although we were accustomed to bad news, we were profoundly disturbed by this. Up till then, we had always regarded the differences of opinion between Communists, no matter how grave, as nothing compared with those that separated us from the world of capitalism. And now there was talk of banishing Trotsky, that

is to say, of handing him over to the capitalists. I regarded such a possibility as the last word in infamy.

For the first time I found myself driven secretly to condemn an act of the Central Committee. But I could do nothing. No one could have done anything... I felt a second psychological shock of the same kind on the occasion of Stalin's fiftieth birthday when the papers devoted columns to him and gave him the official title of Head of the Party. I had not forgotten what he had said in 1924, when the reference of his words was obviously referring to Trotsky: "The Party needs no Heads. It has but one collective Head – the Central Committee."

One year later when he addressed the Fourteenth Congress, Stalin, the master of the small doses gradually administered, was more explicit:

What was the beginning of our disagreement? It began with the problem of what to do about Comrade Trotsky. It was at the end of 1924 that a group of Leningrad delegates at first proposed to expel Comrade Trotsky from the Party. We did not agree with Comrade Zinoviev and Kamenev, because we realised that the policy of expulsion, the method of blood-letting (and they were demanding blood!) was dangerous and contagious; today you condemn one, tomorrow another, the day after tomorrow a third – and then what then will be left of our Party? (Applause)... We are opposed to the policy of chopping comrades off. That does not mean that the leaders will be allowed to give themselves airs and graces to impose their will on others with impunity. No, there will be no special bending of the knee to any of the leaders.

The question of my exile was first decided at a secret session of the Stalin faction and then agreed by the Political Bureau where the official reasons were announced. During the discussion Stalin said:

Trotsky must be sent abroad because he is the leader of the Opposition and its numbers are increasing; this will expose him in the eyes of the masses as soon as he is in a bourgeois country and regarded an assistant of the bourgeoisie; the social-democracy will undoubtedly use his exile against the USSR and will come to the defence of 'the victim of the Bolshevik terror'; if Trotsky should come out publicly against the Soviet leadership, then we will portray him as a traitor. All of this speaks of the necessity of his exile. (Quoted from stenographic transcript in the *Bulletin of the Opposition* No. 1-2. July, 1929)

I wrote at the time that Stalin came to the conclusion that my exile was a mistake. He hoped, as is known from his statements to the Political Bureau, that isolated and without a secretariat Trotsky would become the helpless victim of the slander organised on a worldwide scale by the Stalinists. It was

truly remarkable that Stalin regards my secretariat with horror and with inexpressible hatred. It seems to him that my writings, which expose his crimes, were all thanks to the co-operation of my devoted secretariat. He believed that if this small apparatus were taken away from me, I would find myself isolated abroad, and utterly helpless.

Tragically, that is why he struck at all of my secretaries. Glazman was driven to suicide as far back as 1924. In 1928, when I was in central Asia, the GPU arrested my closest collaborator, the office manager of the military and navel commissariats, G.V. Butov, and demanded that he testify concerning my "counter-revolutionary preparations". Butov replied to this with a hunger strike in the prison of the GPU. The hunger strike lasted for fifty days and ended with his death. My co-workers from the time of the Civil War, Syermuks and Poznansky, tried to accompany me during my expulsion. They were however arrested, ended up in one of Stalin's harsh prisons, exiled to the north of Russia and then disappeared. The next was Blumkin. The *Bulletin of the Opposition* (No. 42, February, 1935) explained: "Provocations were demanded of Blumkin under the threat of the muzzle of a revolver; he refused; then they released the safety catch."

In regard to my exile to Turkey, Bazhanov wrote the following in February 1929:

This is only a half measure in which I do not recognise Stalin... We have made progress since the days of Caesar Borgia. Then they quietly dropped some poison into a glass of Falernian wine or the enemy would die after biting into a poisoned apple. Present day methods have been inspired by the very latest achievements of modern science. A culture of Koch bacilli mixed into food and administered will gradually lead to severe consumption and sudden death... It is unclear why Stalin did not follow this method, which is so much a part of his habits and character.

In 1930, when Bazhanov's book appeared it seemed to me merely a literary exercise. After the Moscow Trials I took the book more seriously. Who had inspired this young man with such speculations and what were his sources? Bazhanov had received his apprenticeship in Stalin's ante-room, where the Borgia methods of poisoning were evidently under discussion. This was prior to 1926, the year Bazhanov left Stalin's secretariat. Two years later he fled abroad and subsequently became a reactionary *émigré*.

Already in 1924, Stalin weighed the arguments for and against to the question of physical liquidation, explained Kamenev. I received this information from both Zinoviev and Kamenev with such details that there

can be no doubt concerning the truthfulness of these facts. If Stalin should compel them to repudiate their own former declarations no one will believe them. At this time in Moscow, the system of false admissions and repudiations blossomed.

[However, Stalin did not yet feel sufficiently secure to order the murder of Trotsky. A creature of the apparatus, he believed that once Trotsky was deprived of material means and isolated on a distant island in Turkey, he would be powerless.] The bureaucrat Stalin was mistaken. Contrary to his expectations, ideas have their own force... Stalin therefore thinks the error must be corrected. It stands to reason not by ideological measures. Stalin carries on the struggle on a different plane. He wants to reach not his opponent's ideas but his opponent's skull.

THERMIDOR

Skobelev¹¹, who was the Socialist Minister of Labour in the cabinets of Prince Lvov and Kerensky, had promised to slash the profits of the capitalists by no less than one hundred percent. Within two weeks of assuming the ministry, he abandoned his promised attack on profits in favour of an unpromised crusade against strikes. Skobelev, who had been a patriot during the imperialist war and a Compromiser during 1917, had a flair for philosophising about history. On the 16th September 1917, addressing the Democratic Conference, Skobelev moaned:

Not only the honeymoon of the Revolution is over... but it seems that even the second phase of the young democracy's creative passion is drawing to an end... We are entering the period of philistinism – the hardest, the saddest period of the Revolution.

Nearly ten years later, this same Skobelev said to me, "Of course, this is the Thermidor. But I prefer that Thermidor should be Stalin's handiwork." A few months later in 1927, I was expelled from the Bolshevik Party, but Skobelev was admitted into the Bolshevik Party and accommodated himself to Stalin's handiwork – like Maisky and many others who were opponents of Bolshevism when it was a revolutionary Party.

Smilga pointed out in conversation with me in 1927, ten years after the October Insurrection, that during the first five years there was an underlying tendency to patch up differences – old cracks were plugged, old wounds

¹¹ Matvey Ivanovich Skobelev (1885-1938), with Trotsky in Vienna 1908-12, Duma deputy and Menshevik 1912-17, executed 1938.

healed, opponents became reconciled, and the like, while, during the following five years, beginning with 1923, the process was reversed; every crack was widened, every difference was magnified and sharpened, every wound festered. The Bolshevik Party, in its old form, with its old traditions and its old membership, became more and more incompatible with the new ruling stratum. This contradiction is the essence of Thermidor.

In the French Thermidor, we saw in similar circumstances, the purging of the petty-bourgeois and workers' districts by the wealthier petty and middle bourgeoisie, represented by the Thermidorians, and aided by bands of the gilded youth. In the period of upsurge, as well as in the period of ebb [of the French Revolution], the Jacobin clubs were at one time or other subjected to purges. Various stages of the revolution characterised the direction of the purge [either to the left or to the right].

The Thermidorian bourgeoisie [in France] was characterised by profound hatred towards the Montagnards because its own leaders were drawn from those who had formerly stood at the head of the *sans-culottes*. The bourgeoisie, and together with it the Thermidorians, were above all afraid of a new outbreak of the popular movement. It was precisely during that period that the class consciousness of the French bourgeoisie became fully formed. It detested the Jacobins and the semi-Jacobins with an intense hatred – as betrayers of its most sacred interests, as deserters to the enemy, as renegades. The source of hatred of the Soviet bureaucracy for the Trotskyists has the same social character.

The Jacobins came from the same stratum, the same ruling group, the same privileged elite, who abandoned their [class] position to tie their fate to that of the *sans-culottes*, the disinherited, the proletarians, the village poor. However, the French bourgeoisie was already formed before the Great Revolution. It first broke out of its political shell in the Constituent Assembly, but it had to pass through the period of the Convention and the Jacobin Dictatorship in order to settle scores with its enemies. During the period of the Thermidor, it succeeded in restoring its real historical tradition and domination over the rest of society. The Soviet ruling caste consisted entirely of Thermidorian bureaucrats, recruited not only from the ranks of the Bolsheviks but also from the petty-bourgeois and bourgeois parties. And the latter elements had old scores to settle with the 'fanatics' of Bolshevism.

The Jacobins held on chiefly through the pressure of the street upon the Convention. The Thermidorians, that is, the deserters from the Jacobins, used the same method, but for the opposite ends. They began to organise the well-

dressed sons of the bourgeoisie, including even some drawn from the ranks of the *sans-culottes*. These gilded youths, or simply 'young men', as they were indulgently called by the conservative press, became such an important factor in national politics that as the Jacobins were expelled from all administrative posts the 'young men' took their places. An identical process is still going on in the Soviet Union. Indeed, it is considerably more far-reaching under Stalin.

In the Soviet Union these bands of the 'gilded youth' are nowadays part of the Party and the Young Communist League. These are the shock troops, recruited from the sons of the bourgeoisie, privileged young men resolutely ready to defend their own privileged position or the position of their parents. It is sufficient to point to the fact that at the head of the Young Communist League for a number of years stood Kosarev, generally known to be a moral degenerate, who abused his leading position to personally advance himself. His entire machine was made up of youth of the same type. Such was the gilded youth of the Russian Thermidor. Its direct incorporation into the Party served to mask its social function as the shock troops of the privileged against the toilers and the oppressed.

The Thermidor rested on a [material] social foundation. It was a matter of bread, meat, living quarters, the surplus, and, if possible, luxury. Bourgeois Jacobin equality, which assumed the form of the reglementation of the Maximum, imposed a restriction on the development of bourgeois economy and the growth of bourgeois prosperity. The Thermidorians were perfectly well aware of this and understood what they wanted. In the Declaration of Rights that they worked out, they excluded the essential paragraph, "People are born and remain free and equal in their rights." In response to those who proposed the restoration of this important Jacobin paragraph, the Thermidorians answered that it was equivocal and therefore dangerous. People were, of course, equal in their rights, but not in their abilities and not in their possessions. The Thermidor was a direct response against the Spartan temper of the revolution and was opposed to the striving for equality.

The same social motivation is to be found in the Soviet Thermidor. It was first of all a matter of throwing off the Spartan limitations and equalities of the first period of the Revolution. But it was also a question of achieving increased privileges for the bureaucracy. It was not a question of restoring a bourgeois economic regime. Concessions towards capitalism were temporary in character and lasted a considerably shorter time than had been originally intended. The restoration of such a regime based upon private property would have meant a concentration of wealth in the hands of the bourgeoisie,

especially its wealthiest layers. The privileges of the Soviet bureaucracy had a different source of origin. The bureaucracy acquires for itself part of the national income either by force or its management and direct control over economic relations. In regard to the [struggle over the] national surplus product, the bureaucracy and the petty-bourgeoisie quickly changed from an alliance to direct enemies. The control of the surplus product opened the bureaucracy's road to power.

13. 'KINTO' IN POWER

Before becoming King in Israel, David herded sheep and played a flute. His extraordinary career becomes comprehensible when we consider that almost all the sons of the semi-nomadic Israelites herded sheep, and that in those days the art of governing people was not much more complicated than the art of herding flocks. Since then, however, society as well as the art of government has greatly increased in complexity. When a modern monarch has to vacate the throne, it is no longer necessary to seek his successor among the shepherds. The delicate question is settled on the basis of dynastic automatism.

Human history has known not a few meteoric careers. Julius Caesar was a natural candidate for power, a member of a not numerous oligarchy by right of birth. Not so Napoleon I. Yet even he was not so much of an upstart as the principal dictator of the time. He was, say what you will, a brilliant soldier. At least in that respect he was true to the same ancient tradition as Julius Caesar – namely, that a warrior, having demonstrated his ability to command armed men in battle, is all the more entitled to lord it over an unarmed and defenceless populace.

This hoary tradition was not strictly observed [in the case of that imitation Napoleon, generally referred to as the Little or] the Third, who was utterly devoid of military gifts. But even he was no mere upstart. He was, or was considered to be, the nephew of his great uncle. He held in his hands the hook of tradition, upon which he could hang his claims and right. He was not an initiator. He domesticated the imperial eagle which should have been flying over his head. In that operation, the eagle was more important than the head. It would be unkind to conclude that without this symbolic bird the head of

Prince Louis Napoleon would have had as little on the outside as there was on the inside.

On the eve of the World War even the career of Napoleon the Third already seemed a fantastic echo of the past. Democracy was firmly established – at least, in Europe, North America and Australia. Its progress in the Latin American countries was more instructive; it made conquests in Asia; it awakened the people of Africa. The mechanics of constitutionalism seemed to be the only system of government, the only acceptable method for civilised humanity. And since civilisation continued to develop and to broaden, the future of democracy seemed assured.

The events of 1917 in Russia delivered the first blow to this historical conception. After eight months of democratic stalemate and chaos came the dictatorship of the Soviets. But the events in Russia seemed to be a mere “episode”, merely a product of the backwardness of Russia. At best it was only a reproduction in the twentieth century of those bourgeois revolutions which England had suffered in the middle of the seventeenth century and France at the end of the eighteenth century. Lenin appeared to be a Muscovite Cromwell or Robespierre. The new phenomena could at least be classified and there was a certain consolation in that.

Then Fascism arrived, the “neurosis of common sense”, as Schmalhausen defines it, which was a challenge to historians. It was not so easy to find a historical analogy for Mussolini or eleven years later for Hitler. There were indistinct mutterings about Caesar and Siegfried – and even Al Capone, but admittedly such comparisons made no sense. In civilised, democratic countries which had lived through a prolonged school of representative democracy, there suddenly rose to power mysterious strangers who in their youth were engaged in work almost as modest as the work of a David or a Joshua. They had no feats of military heroism to their credit. They did not proclaim any new ideas to the world. Behind them did not stand the shadow of a great forebear in a three-cornered hat. The Roman She-Wolf was not the grandmother of Mussolini. The swastika is not the family coat-of-arms of Hitler but only a symbol stolen from the Egyptians and the Indians. Liberal democratic thought continued to stand helpless before the mystery of Fascism. After all, neither Mussolini nor Hitler looked like geniuses. What then explains their dizzying success?

Hitler and Mussolini, the two leaders of Fascism are representatives of the petty-bourgeoisie, a class which in the present epoch is incapable of contributing either original ideas or independent leadership of its own.

However one looks at it, the petty-bourgeoisie invariably assumes a subsidiary role in the class struggle. Thus the leaders of the petty-bourgeoisie, dependent on the magnates of capitalism, are typical second-rate figures. Both Hitler and Mussolini have plagiarised and imitated practically everything and everyone. Mussolini stole both from the Bolsheviks and from Gabriele D'Annunzio, but found inspiration in the camp of big business. Hitler imitated the Bolsheviks and Mussolini.

Within the framework of the historical possibilities available to him, Mussolini has exhibited great initiative, ability to manoeuvre, tenacity and understanding. He is in the tradition of the long line of Italian improvisers: the gift of improvisation is in the very temperament of the nation. Agile and inordinately ambitious, he threw away his socialist career in his greedy quest for success. His anger at the Socialist Party became a driving force. He created and destroyed theory as he went along.

Hitler exhibits traits of monomania and messianic tendencies. Mussolini displays nothing but cynical egotism and of cowardice hiding behind the camouflage of empty bragging. Personal hurt played a tremendous role in Hitler's development. He was a declassed petty-bourgeois who refused to be a worker. Ordinary workers accept their position as normal. But Hitler was a pretentious misfit with a diseased psyche. He achieved a delegated social elevation by cursing Jews and Social-Democrats. He was desperately determined to rise higher. Along his way he created for himself a "theory" full of countless contradictions and mental reservations – a hodgepodge of German imperial ambitions and the resentful day-dreams of a declassed petty-bourgeois.

The dictatorship of the petty-bourgeoisie was still possible at the end of the eighteenth century, but even then it could not maintain itself for very long. Robespierre was finally pushed into the abyss from the Right. The pathetic flounderings of Kerensky were not entirely due to his personal impotence; even such a very able and enterprising man as Palchinsky proved utterly helpless. Kerensky was merely a more fitting representative for this social impotence. Had the Bolsheviks not seized power, the world would have had a Russian name for Fascism five years before the March on Rome.

The reason why Russia could not isolate itself from the profound reaction that swept over post-war Europe in the early twenties is a subject the author has discussed elsewhere. Suffice it to say that the coincidence of such dates as the organisation of the first Fascist ministry under Mussolini on 30th October, 1922 in Italy, the coup in Spain of 13th September, 1923, which placed Primo

de Rivera in power, and the condemnation of the Declaration of the Forty-Six Bolsheviks by the joint plenum of the Central Committee and the Central Control Commission of 15th October 1923 are not fortuitous. Such signs of the times demand serious consideration.

Hitler was formed in Austria – in Vienna [which was deeply affected by] the national problem. Stalin was formed in the Caucasus, where the national problem smothered the social problem. Hitler always speaks of his own genius, while Stalin compels others to speak of his genius. Stalin, like Hitler, like Mussolini, is by his moral nature a cynic. They see the worst side of people. In this lies their realism. Hitler always and everywhere fights against ‘objectivism’. Stalin likewise calls objectivism ‘rotten liberalism’.

Hitler is right when he says that it is impossible to win the masses only with the pen. It is necessary to have direct association with the living word. All the great leaders of history were orators and made their way to leadership by means of words. The most characteristic attribute of oratorical speech is not the ‘pathetic part’ separated from logical argument, but the spirit of improvisation, creativeness at the moment of delivery, excitement conditioned by this improvisation, an enthusiasm directly due to contact with a mass of listeners, and the possibility to push them to an unpostponable decision.

Stalin was not an orator and never addressed the broad masses. The art of improvisation is quite out of keeping with Stalin’s nature. In Stalin’s style, as in Hitler’s, there is something in common, in that both are incapable of precise formulations or a strict choice of words and frequently fall into errors. And yet Hitler created his own programme. As to the place Hitler’s ‘idea’ occupies in the history of humanity, that is another question. Stalin’s role is different. In attempting to find a historical parallel for Stalin, we have to reject not only Cromwell, Robespierre, Napoleon and Lenin, but even Mussolini and Hitler. Mussolini and Hitler began their struggle under conditions of bourgeois democracy. They were the initiators of movements, exceptional agitators and tribunes. Their rise to political pre-eminence, as fantastic as it may seem in itself, was achieved in front of everyone, in close connection with the growth of the movement that they headed from its earliest beginnings. The elevation of Stalin was something else altogether – something completely different to anything that has occurred in the past.

According to Besedovsky, “Stalin has a mania for intrigue. He loves to initiate clandestine shady intrigues and combinations – and the best moments of his life are connected with the titanic struggle against Lenin and Trotsky.” Stalin’s skilfulness in playing on human strings – like Mussolini’s – is

undeniable, but only in relation to secondary persons. Mussolini reconciled to himself and then subjected to himself the 'Left Opposition' of Fascism (Grandi, Balbo and others). For this kind of thing Stalin has no abilities. He did not win people over, but exterminated the entire flower of the Party. An opposition that attaches value to ideas is to him a deadly enemy. The extremes and horrors of the machine are explained by a false sense of impunity. The very highest ideology is used to cover the very basest of purposes. How then did he become the leader of the masses? The Communist Party was created by the ideas of Lenin. That party conquered power. The apparatus of that party concentrated power in its own hands.

[Hitler and Mussolini] clashed with the world and came face to face with their opponents. Nothing of the kind took place in the history of Stalin's rise. We come closer to an understanding of Stalin when we think in terms of Mustapha Kemal Pasha or perhaps Porfirio Diaz. Who speaks about Rudolf Hess, the Secretary of the National-Socialist Workers' Party? Who was interested yesterday in the personal opinion of Achilles Staraci, and who is interested today in the opinion of his successor, Ettore Mutti, in the post of General Secretary of the Fascist Party? They are purely administrative figures. Such was approximately Stalin's role in his capacity as General Secretary of the Bolshevik Party.

HOW DID STALIN RISE TO POWER?

Great men are always greater than their achievements. But this cannot be said about Stalin under any circumstances. If we strip away his actions, then there will be nothing left of him. Whatever issue he was confronted with, in order for him to be able to draw all the conclusions it was necessary that it should affect him personally. Then he appeared to be sophisticated, insightful and even possessed of courageous thought according to his own lights. However, whenever it was a question of great historical tasks, reflecting the movement of classes, Stalin remained remarkably unenthusiastic and indifferent, taking refuge in extremely abstract formulae. All empiricists tend towards that kind of abstract approach.

Stalin's thought is devoid of originality, daring, or aptness. He was stronger than others in will-power and ambition, but he was not smarter than others, or more educated or eloquent. He did not possess the qualities that attract sympathy. But nature has generously endowed him with cold persistence and a practical mind. He never obeyed his feelings and always knew how to bend them to his own interests. Mistrust of the masses, as well

as of individuals, is basic to Stalin's very nature. In the big questions of the Revolution, where everything depends on the Party's intervention, he always takes an opportunist position. But in that narrow sphere of petty practical actions where the apparatus decides, he was always inclined to the most decisive action. One might say that he was an opportunist in strategy but an extremist in the field of tactics.

Stalin's mind is not only devoid of brilliance and dash, but even the ability to think logically. Every turn of phrase in his speeches pursues some practical aim: but as a rule they never rise to the level of a logical construction. It is precisely in this weakness that the power of Stalin resides. The talent of generalisation is not characteristic of him, his thought is sluggish and empirical, his intellect clumsy and meagre, and his memorised expressions and phrases to this day reek of the Tiflis seminary. His mind is clumsy and formalistic. His images, learned by rote, carry to this day the odour of the seminary. Even in the lines dictated by downright hatred, our author does not venture beyond vulgarity. This is the impression acquired by the ordinary person who listens to a speech of Stalin. This is exactly the impression that Stalin requires. He uses his coarseness and subordinates it to his slyness. His passion is to be found, not in his bad language, but in his carefully prepared scripts.

"With him it was not a matter of finding and establishing the truth," wrote Iremashvili about Stalin's years in the seminary. "He argued against or defended the very things he had previously affirmed or condemned. Victory and triumph had far more value to him." Theological argumentation always bears the stamp of formalism, and the further it develops, the less it is confident in itself. It takes its arguments from authoritative sources of the Church; it classifies and numbers them. Seminarists had to learn and memorise the proof of God's existence in the form of scholastic arguments. Stalin learned this manner of expression together with theology and Russian. However, Joseph Stalin's grasp of Russian is as poor as Adolf Hitler's grasp of German. In Stalin's defence, it must be said that it was only at eleven years of age that he acquainted himself with Russian. But his thought lacks originality, courage or precision.

Stalin is neither an orator nor a journalist. In the first four years of Soviet rule, he writes editorials for *The Life of the Nationalities*, although the number of these articles is not great – Stalin's literary productivity is low from the beginning and decreases year by year. In 1920-21 we find some 2-3 articles. In

1922 there is not a single article. Already in this period Stalin has completely switched to work in the apparatus.

Why has a collection of Stalin's speeches and articles, his collected works not been published?¹ There can be no doubt that the idea had occurred to many an eager young careerist on more than one occasion. But Stalin could not but strangle such plans in the womb. One cannot imagine anything more dangerous for him. His nine years at the seminary had left an indelible imprint on his personality and his successes. He learned Russian in classes on religious scholasticism. Russian remains for him a semi-foreign language, always forced and with the smell of the seminary hanging on it. For him, theology was not a science for the study of which he used Russian, as well as other sciences. He studied the Russian language together with theology. As a result, theological forms and expressions have forever entered his consciousness, superimposed upon the forms and expressions of Russian.

Stalin himself provides us with the following examples of this: "I have always not minded" – Stalin writes instead of "I never minded". "What is the Provisional Government?" – Stalin asks, and answers: "It is a puppet, it's a shabby screen behind which are the Kadets, the military clique and the Allied Capital – the three pillars of the counter-revolution." Stalin's literary abilities remain the same as in Tiflis. The Provisional Government turns out to be a "puppet" and a "screen" at the same time. As a general statement it is not incorrect. [And yet] all these texts usually sound like a mediocre translation from a foreign language.

An analysis of his style discloses an extreme lack of confidence in himself. Resoluteness in the field of action is peculiar to Stalin only when it is thrust upon him by a totality of circumstances or when it may be realised through the medium of the apparatus or the political machine. In the realm of ideas, he feels he is skating on thin ice; he is afraid of slipping, and chooses evasive and indefinite expressions.

In 1929 Stalin writes: "To all organisations and comrades who have sent their greetings to the party of the working class, which created and raised me after its own image and likeness..." (How vulgar!) "...I am ready to give... all my blood, drop by drop..." (But he gave other peoples' blood instead!) It is said, not without reason, that the style is the man. No one demands that Stalin has writer's talent, but his style betrays the nature of his thought. As soon as Stalin takes on the sphere of general ideas, his language becomes

1 Foreign Languages Publishing House, Moscow, the official state publishing house of the Soviet Union, published Stalin's *Collected Works* in 1954, one year after his death.

ambiguous, confused, his terms only approximately correspond to concepts, and one sentence is artificially connected to the next.

“Russia is a loaded gun with the hammer cocked ready to go off at the slightest shock. Yes, comrades, the time is not far distant when the Russian Revolution will hoist its sail and ‘sweep from the face of the earth’ the vile throne of the despicable Tsar!...” etc. A cocked gun sweeping the Tsar off the face of the earth with the wind in its sail – this senseless heap of images is sufficient to characterise Koba’s abilities as a theoretician and a writer. Unfortunately, the passing of the years does not bring any significant improvements in this sphere.

In the face of the masses he felt powerless. He lacked the power of oratory. He was a reluctant journalist. He needed an instrument, a machine, and an apparatus, through which to act upon the masses. He only felt confident in his dealings with the Party apparatus. Courageous thought was alien to him. Yet he was endowed with courage in the face of danger. Physical hardship did not frighten him. In this respect he was a true representative of the order of professional revolutionaries and was superior to many of them. He would look around for long time and sceptically before joining somebody else’s initiative.

The period of the first Revolution was simply completely missing from the biography of Stalin. The basic qualities of this former professional revolutionist were such that the insurrection throws him each time off his balance and casts him aside. The Revolution at once pushed the Party apparatus into the background because it made special demands, which made it impossible to prevaricate, to bide time, and to intrigue. It was necessary to give answers to the questions of the masses, and to make bold decisions on the spot.

There was always somebody who appeared and publicly corrected him, pushed him into the shadows, or pushed him aside altogether. This was not only Lenin’s role, but also that of much younger and less experienced members of the Party, among them many newcomers. He could not advance himself with the attributes of others, and for that reason his thoughts and character were directed toward back-stage intrigue.

His hesitation and evasiveness in 1905 and 1917 resulted from his conservative tendencies, which came into conflict with the proletarian vanguard, especially the Vyborg district. It is enough to recall that on the day of the October Revolution Stalin disappeared entirely from the stage. Countless reminiscences, published in the first ten years [after October] do not mention Stalin’s name at all. In his memoirs of revolutionary leaders *Revolutionary Silhouettes*, published in Moscow in 1923, Lunacharsky does

not mention Stalin. Those mentioned in order are: Lenin, Trotsky, Zinoviev, Plekhanov, Sverdlov, Volodarsky, Uritsky and Martov.

He did not appear at the headquarters of the insurrection and took no part whatsoever in the events of that great day, a fact which is clear from the official protocols of the Central Committee. This was not because he feared personal risk, but because he did not believe in the success of the insurrection. He preferred to move to the sidelines to give himself a free hand to blame others for any eventual failure. Such was his approach before all great events. He takes part only when there is no alternative and when success is assured.

This is the method of an extremely devious person, who combines a weak mental capacity with a great will-power. The bureaucrat Speransky wrote in a letter in 1918: "Whoever heard of anybody sweeping the stairway from below?" Stalinist self-criticism consists in this: that the dirt is swept from below and it accumulates on top. His opponents will say that Stalin has made a mistake. But instead of realising this mistake, Stalin will castigate his opponents for nothing but mistakes. Stalin therefore directs his attention to those of a primitive outlook, low cultural level, love of foul language, and narrow intellect. In prison he was drawn toward the criminal types. It is no accident that Lenin said that Stalin knew how best to talk to the *bashibazouks*.

Among the peoples of the Southern Caucasians tempers can flame up quickly, but they also tend to cool down rapidly, often giving way to soft and sentimental feelings. Stalin learned to be aware of the advantages of his own traits – caution, cunning and icy self-control. Stalin excelled most of all in his will, a cold domineering will, but at every step he sensed like a curse the slowness of his intellect, the absence of talent, the general feeling of physical and intellectual limitations; his attitude toward people was, therefore, indelibly tinged with hatred and envy. Stalin could not endure anyone who had a higher intellectual level than himself. In the theological seminaries, in the struggle with the priests, in his rivalry with other the students, Stalin had learned to notice the weak sides of people in order to strike his opponents in their most vulnerable spot. From that time on, he had already begun to notice those who either intentionally or heedlessly stepped on his feet.

In order to control those who excelled him, Stalin deliberately selected an apparatus from those who submitted to him. At the Central Committee, where all sorts of responsible appointments were made, it was necessary to choose specific people for those tasks. The more complex and exacting tasks were given to key comrades, beginning with Lenin. Some comrades were disgruntled because they were given lesser responsibilities. Stalin used

these frictions to draw people into his confidence. He was skilled in arousing animosity between comrades and drew towards him those who felt slightly aggrieved. These skills gradually developed into a fully worked-out system. Such a system became universal from the time that Stalin began to dominate the Organisational Bureau, which was the organisational powerhouse of the Party.

In past memoirs of the Revolution we almost never run across Stalin's name even with reference to work on the local Caucasian scale. The same holds good for Party Congresses. The same is repeated with regard to the Petersburg period of his work. In memoirs and official anthologies devoted to the work of *Pravda* and *Zarya* there is not a single word about Stalin's influence on such work. What does all this mean? Why is Stalin's person not mentioned in indisputable, non-dictated, reminiscences or mentioned only in passing as a second or third-rate figure? Does it mean that Stalin is an ordinary, insignificant entity, or that others lacked an appreciation of him? The question is worthy of consideration.

The answer lies in the contradiction between Stalin's intense or strong will-power and his limited spiritual capacity. Whoever came into contact with Stalin's will-power during those periods (and Lenin was one of the first to see it) did notice him, but whoever formed a judgment on the basis of his daily activity could not help but regard him as a second or third-rate figure. Finally, those who came in contact with Stalin in prison or exile, that is, in a close intimate environment, where he openly displayed the various aspects of his character, recognised his attributes but not any intellectual authority. Hence, the ambivalent attitude of all those who came into close contact with him.

[In order for the Stalin myth to emerge,] special historical conditions were necessary in which he was not required to display any creativeness. His intellect served merely to summarise the work of the collective intellect of the bureaucratic caste as a whole. The bureaucracy's fight for its self-preservation, the entrenchment of its privileged position, called for the personification of an intense will to power. Such an exceptional configuration of historical conditions was necessary before his intellectual attributes, notwithstanding their mediocrity, received extensive general recognition multiplied by the coefficient of his will.

PERSONALITY AND THE HISTORICAL PROCESS

Helvétius once said that every epoch in society requires its own great persons, but when it does not find any, it invents them. Regarding the now forgotten

French general Changarnier, Marx wrote: "With the complete absence of great personalities, the Party of Order naturally found itself compelled to endow a single individual with the strength lacking in its class as a whole and so puff up this individual to a prodigy." To give a final quote, we can apply to Stalin the words of Engels on Wellington: "He is great in his own way, as great as one can be without ceasing to be a mediocrity." In the last analysis, individual 'greatness' is a social function.

Voroshilov wrote a book about Stalin and the Red Army in 1929 [in which we read:] "The Civil War required from Comrade Stalin a tremendous concentration of force, energy, memory, will-power and intellect." This is a very interesting order of adjectives. Memory is the mirror of the intellect and even of character as a whole. There is no such thing as a good and bad memory. Memory may be good in one respect and bad in another. It reflects the spiritual substances, the general trend, the ability, the make-up of the mind. Memory has a volitional character. Stalin's memory is empirical. He is very bad at conveying the contents of ideas, logical synthesis, and theoretical discussions. But he remembers everything that is either advantageous or disadvantageous to him. His memory is first of all an expression of his vindictiveness.

Stalin always needs to exert himself to the utmost if he is to rise to the height of someone else's generalisations, to grasp the long-term revolutionary perspective. As all empiricists, he is essentially a sceptic, and that of a cynical kind. He has no faith in great historical opportunities, in man's ability for self-perfection, in the possibility of the radical transformation of society. Deep enmity towards the existing order of things makes him capable of bold actions. Empiricism or that ingrained conservatism of thought characteristic of a peasant makes him unable to remain on the heights for long.

Any goal that he sets for himself he will seek to accomplish with greater effort and insistence than the vast majority of other people. But on his own, he is unable to set himself a great objective and stick with it. Left to himself he adopted fatally opportunistic positions on every issue. Under the influence of Lenin and the pressure of events, he would rise to the height of revolutionary generalisations. But he was able stay at this level only briefly and at the end of the day kept sliding downhill. The revolutionary movement gives people wings; it demands courage of thought and far-sighted perspective. It is exactly in such periods that we find Stalin in a state of perplexity.

There are certain historical periods when generalisation and foresight preclude immediate success: such eras are periods of backsliding, of the triumph of the lowest common denominator – periods of reaction.

Reactionary periods are periods of the decline of thought. In such periods courageous revolutionary thought can serve to pave the way for what is to come, preparing future perspectives in the consciousness of a small vanguard, but it cannot find any immediate, practical application. On the other hand, strong will and character retain their advantages in periods of reaction. Stalin's initial advance in the Party occurred during the years of reaction after 1907. In the years of the nascent upturn, his role remains insignificant, or at any rate no more significant than that of the vast majority of Bolsheviks of the first rank. For one reason or another, during the war, which heralds and prepares grandiose changes, Stalin completely withdraws into himself. In the Revolution of 1917 he plays the most imperceptible role.

I remember that during the debates of the Central Committee, Stalin once used the word "rigorous" not at all appropriately, which was something he did quite often. Kamenev looked back at me and said quietly: "Can't be helped. We have to take him as he is." Bukharin believed that 'Koba' (Stalin's old underground name) was a man of character (Lenin publicly said that Bukharin himself was "as soft as wax"), that "such men are needed, and if he [Stalin] is ignorant and uncultured", we "should help him". Out of this idea the bloc of Stalin and Bukharin was born after the collapse of the Troika.

Bukharin's opinion of Stalin was that he cannot abide somebody else having something he does not have. Without any doubt, ingrained in Stalin's character is something in the nature of a superstitious fear of talent and education. He was afraid of people who were able to speak freely with the masses or who could easily and attentively expound their thoughts on paper. He was even more afraid of people who had their own thoughts, those capable of generalisation, or those operating with factual material and who felt at home with ideas in general. Conditions in Russia at least until the 1920s were such that they called for people with literary and oratorical talents. That was precisely why Stalin remained in the shadows.

When trying to explain the obscurity in which Stalin remained until 1924 and even afterwards, official historians repeat: "He never sought popularity." That is wrong – he intensely and passionately sought it, but did not know how to achieve it. This inability always greatly played on his mind and pushed him into devious and twisted ways. It is hard to take this claim seriously in the light of the current situation, now that the entire party and state apparatus has been turned into a leader-glorifying machine. No, in reality he was consumed by passion for fame and influence. But in the period when popularity could be achieved only directly through the will of the masses themselves, when it could

be won by pen, spoken word and theoretical work – this popularity remained completely unattainable for him. He adapts himself to the worse aspects of people: ignorance, narrowness of outlook and primitiveness of thought. At the same time, such coarseness and crudity serves as a cover for the defects in his own character. This striving for fame and popularity inevitably led to the creation of an apparatus for the purpose of manufacturing popularity.

Bazhanov, a former secretary of Stalin, tells us just how little Stalin was interested in the most important problems of state. He [Bazhanov] had been warned that Stalin never read anything, and that if in the course of a year he had read ten or twelve documents, that was a lot. Bazhanov refused to believe this. However, after attending a dozen sessions of the Political Bureau, he became convinced that Stalin was unfamiliar with everyday questions. He was even more amazed, according to his own words, when he discovered that Stalin was only “a Caucasian of little culture, unversed in literature and foreign languages, with very little knowledge of economic problems.” He was moreover astonished by the crudeness of the man, even when he was in a good mood and trying to be friendly. One day two of his secretaries, Bazhanov and Tovstukha, were speaking in the corridor of the Central Committee building. Stalin appeared. The secretaries stopped talking. “Tovstukha,” Stalin said after a pause, “my mother had a goat that looked so much like you that you couldn't tell the difference, only he didn't wear glasses.” Then, feeling pleased with himself, Stalin went into his office.

Stalin is not intelligent in the true sense of the word. His empiricism, his lack of a disposition towards broad generalisations and inability to make them has made psychological zig-zags easier for him. He himself has never seen his orbit as a whole. He solved problems as they appeared along the path of his struggle for power. His ideas and methods changed without him noticing, just as the circumstances and conditions in which he found himself changed. In 1925, in 1926, and especially in course of the subsequent decade, the relationship of forces and his psychology changed radically. Stalin's conservative tendencies were now in complete accord with those of the bureaucratic apparatus. His conservatism no longer risked provoking the opposition, because the entire proletarian vanguard was dominated by the bureaucracy. In the autumn of 1925, Stalin dispensed with the unofficial sessions of the Troika, having acquired a personal majority in the Political Bureau.

In order to defeat the people superior to him, he hand-picked for the apparatus people subordinate to him. There were no means that he would

not stoop to using. When important appointments were being made in the Central Committee, one had to outline the record of the potential appointee. Stalin used to communicate some of the things said in such cases by particular members of the Central Committee to the candidates themselves, in order to incite them against their rivals and tie them to himself. Such tricks gradually developed into a whole system. This system became powerful ever since Stalin became dominant in the organisational bureau of the CC. All others, starting with Lenin, had other tasks, all more important, difficult and at any rate more appealing. The Orgburo was the organisational back-kitchen of the Party.

To create such an apparatus he had to possess the knowledge of people and how to tug at their innermost heartstrings, a knowledge that is not universal but special, a deep knowledge of the worst sides of human beings and the ability to exploit these worst sides. He also had to have a desire to exploit them, an insistence, an indefatigability of desire, dictated by a strong will and an irrepressible, overwhelming ambition. All the lowest sides of intellect (cunning, endurance, caution, the ability to exploit the worst qualities of the human soul) are colossally developed in him.

Here we have the kind of overcompensation which so often in the world of nature is used to make up for organic weakness. Out of this contradiction, which characterised his entire life, also stems an inner unhealing wound of jealousy and its foster-sister – vengefulness. We see a small man, threadbare of soul, magnified to monstrous proportions by the reflected glory of his position as ruler of one-sixth of the earth and usurper to the leadership of a world-wide movement for the liberation of the working class. Those characteristics which passed through the entire life of Stalin at first permitted half consciously and then consciously to become the tool of the new Soviet aristocracy and they induced this aristocracy to see and to recognise in Stalin their leader.

Foreigners now find it hard to believe the methods used to create Stalin's biography. Old Bolsheviks' widows, who used to play minor roles in the party's history, are being forced to publish these 'memories'. The chief 'witness' is Schweitzer, the life-long partner of Spandaryan who was the actual leader of the Turukhan exile on matters of internationalism. Schweitzer was forced – there is no other way to put it – to slander the memory of her former husband for the sake of Stalin's place in the history books. The same sort of pressure was exerted repeatedly upon Krupskaya. Schweitzer went very far down the road of concessions, but Krupskaya proved to be a little firmer. She decided that it was not so easy to slander the memory of Lenin.

Ordzhonikidze's widow was compelled to write her reminiscences, where she talks of things which she did not and could not know, and, what's more, belittles her deceased husband in the interest of glorifying Stalin. In her memoirs, *On the Bolshevik Road*, Zinaida Ordzhonikidze writes:

For eight days after that, I received no news from Sergo [Ordzhonikidze]. This worried me greatly. From Petrograd came rumours about certain events, it was said that the power had passed into the hands of the Bolsheviks, and that Lenin and Stalin were at the head of the insurrection ...

This witness had emerged from the narrow limits of her Siberian homeland for the first time in 1917, and the first train which she saw in her life caused a far greater impression on her than the Revolution. Having passed the days of the uprising in Petrograd in the Caucasus, she now swears that the uprising was led by Lenin and Stalin. At that time in the entire Caucasian press it was scarcely possible to find even a single mention of the name of Stalin.

But Zinaida Ordzhonikidze is not the only widow of a prominent Bolshevik once associated with Stalin who was compelled to remember 'facts' that would fit into the jigsaw puzzle of Stalin's career as designed by the official biographers. The widow of Marshal Yakir, who had shared twenty years of struggle with him, was forced to publish an open letter in the newspapers in which she cursed her life-long companion as "a dastardly traitor".

The same adulatory formula [is] used by Schweitzer and many others. Such is the degree of exploitation of the revolutionary widows. The campaign carried out by the historians against these widows, with the aim of defiling their dead husbands in order to fill in the gaps in Stalin's biography, is utterly outrageous. In terms of sheer malice, systematic ruthlessness and cynicism, nothing like it has ever been seen in the history of the world. In time even Zinoviev came to speak of "Comrade Lenin's great heir, Comrade Stalin."

INTRIGUES IN THE ARMY (II)

In 1925 a Commission was still at work on formulating the regulations for Army service, which appointed myself as Chairman, with Tukhachevsky, Yakir, Uborevich, Primakov, and Feldman as members. This was the flower of the staff of commanders. All of them were subsequently shot.

During his stay in Moscow, the Afghan Padishah, Amanulla Khan, was taken to visit, among other places, the new buildings that housed the Red Army and Navy. He was met, we understand, by Postnikov, who gave the Padishah an explanation of the portraits of the leaders of the Red Army

hanging in the hall. This one, he said, was our “Saviour” in the Civil War; the other one was “the most important leader of the Civil War”, and so on. Having heard these explanations and examined all the portraits the Padishah craftily asked the question: “And why is there no portrait of Trotsky? Didn’t he take part in the Civil War?” Postnikov was a bit taken aback and muttered that “that” would be found in “hallways further along”. He sent the Commandant of the building to telephone Voroshilov for instructions. The latter ordered a portrait of Trotsky to be hung and the Padishah was satisfied. Eye-witnesses say that the portrait hung there for an “entire” half hour.

In April, 1925, I was removed from the post of Commissar of War. My successor, Frunze, was an old revolutionist who had spent many years at hard labour in Siberia. He was not fated to remain long in that post – a mere seven months. In November, 1925, he died under the surgeon’s knife. During the intervening months Frunze displayed too much independence in protecting the Army from the supervision of the GPU; that was the very crime for which twelve years later Marshal Tukhachevsky lost his life. Bazhanov has suggested that Frunze was the centre of a military conspiracy. But this is mere guess work and moreover quite fantastic. However, there is no doubt that Frunze tried to free the general staff from the hold of the GPU as well as abolish the corps of commissars within a short space of time.

Zinoviev and Kamenev assured me subsequently that Frunze favoured them as against Stalin. The fact remains at any rate that Frunze was opposed to Stalin. The opposition of the new Commissar of War was full of potential risks for him. The mentally limited and submissive Voroshilov seemed a much more reliable tool. After all, Frunze was unwell. It was no accident that the Central Committee, an agent of Stalin, arranged for a group of doctors to take care of him. They decided that he needed an operation, to which Frunze submitted. The operation in itself was routine but Frunze’s heart could not withstand the anaesthetic. Bazhanov assured us that the doctors not only realised the dangers but even selected the anaesthetic that was most unsuitable for him. As a result, Frunze died during the operation. Even in those days there were rumours about Stalin’s part in his death. Frunze’s removal was clearly necessary to Stalin.

On the basis of available facts, the course of events can be reconstructed. Frunze suffered from stomach ulcers, but his personal doctor was against an operation due to the dangers of a weak heart. Frunze therefore resisted any idea of an operation. Stalin commissioned a Central Committee doctor, that is, a trusted Stalinist agent, whose hand-picked team recommended surgical

treatment. The Political Bureau confirmed the decision, to which Frunze had to submit. In effect, it was a death sentence. I.K. Gamburg wrote:

Not long before the operation, I went to see him. He was very upset and said he did not want to lie down on the operating table... The premonition of some trouble, of something irreversible, oppressed him... I tried to persuade Mikhail Vasilyevich to refuse the operation, since the thought of it depressed him. But he shook his head: "Stalin insists on the operation," he said, "to get rid of my ulcers for good. So I decided to go under the knife."

The circumstances of Frunze's death found a reflection in literature in Boris Pilnyak's² *Story of the Unextinguished Moon*, in which he accuses Stalin of the death of Frunze. Stalin immediately confiscated the journal and officially banned the author. Later Pilnyak had to repent his "error" in public – and humbly apologise. Stalin found it necessary to follow this up with the publication of documents which were supposed to exonerate him. It is difficult to establish all the facts, but the very nature of the suspicion is significant. It shows that by the end of 1925 Stalin's power was already so great that he could use submissive physicians, armed with chloroform and a surgeon's knife, to carry out his wishes. And yet, at that time, his name was hardly known to one percent of the population.

As soon as Stalin concentrated in his hands the strings to the Army, he hastened to transfer Voroshilov from the North Caucasian Military Region to Moscow in place of Muralov. He thus secured the military commander most devoted to him. Frunze's death then opened the door to Voroshilov becoming the People's Commissar for Military Affairs. Voroshilov had four deputies or assistants: General Gamarnik, Marshal Tukhachevsky, head of the Air Force, Andreyev, and Admiral Orlovsky. Within a couple of years Stalin had executed all of Voroshilov's deputies and associates, his closest collaborators, his most trusted people. All four of these assistants proved to be agents of a hostile general staff, so what is Voroshilov worth?

How is this to be understood? Is it possible that Voroshilov began to display signs of independence in his attitude toward Stalin? It is more likely

2 Boris Pilnyak (1894-1938) was a talented Russian writer who earned Stalin's displeasure with the publication of *Story of the Unextinguished Moon*. In his book *Artists in Uniform*, Max Eastman dedicated a chapter to him called "The Humiliation of Boris Pilnyak". But far worse was to follow. He was arrested in 1937 on charges of counter-revolutionary activities, (Trotskyism), spying for Japan and terrorism. Pilnyak was tried on 21st April, 1938 and after a proceeding that lasted just fifteen minutes, was condemned to death. He was silenced by a bullet to the back of the head.

that Voroshilov was being pushed by people who were very close to him. The military machine is very exacting and voracious and does not easily endure the limitations imposed upon it by civilian politicians. Foreseeing the possibility of conflict with that powerful machine in the future, Stalin decided to put Voroshilov in his place before he began to get out of hand. Through the GPU, that is, through Yezhov, Stalin had prepared the extermination of Voroshilov's closest collaborators behind his back and without his knowledge, and at the last moment confronted him with a choice.

Thus trapped by Stalin's apprehensiveness and disloyalty, Voroshilov collaborated tacitly in the extermination of the flower of the commanding staff and ever after was doomed to cut a sorry and impotent figure incapable of ever opposing Stalin. After shooting his four deputies or assistants, who were really the leaders and inspirers of the Red Army, Air Force and Navy, Voroshilov found himself hopelessly compromised among all the elements of the military, who are in the least capable of thinking. Stalin is a past master of the art of binding persons to him, not by winning their admiration, but by forcing them into complicity in heinous and unforgivable crimes. Such are the stones of the pyramid of which Stalin is the summit.

'THE GRAVEDIGGER OF THE REVOLUTION'

Stalin's methods of struggle are such that as early as 1926 I felt obliged to say to him, during a meeting of the Political Bureau, that he was making himself a candidate for the role of gravedigger of the Revolution and of the Party. If Stalin could have foreseen at the very beginning where his fight against Trotskyism would lead, he undoubtedly would have stopped short, in spite of the prospect of victory over all his opponents. But he did not foresee anything.

The predictions of his opponents that he would become the leader of Thermidor, the grave digger of the Party and the Revolution, seemed to him empty fantasies [and phrasemongering]. He believed in the self-sufficiency of the Party machine, in its ability to perform all tasks. He did not have the slightest understanding of the historical function he was fulfilling. The absence of a creative imagination, the inability to generalise and to foresee, killed the revolutionist in Stalin when he took over the helm on his own. But the very same traits, backed by his authority as a former revolutionist, enabled him to camouflage the rise of the Thermidorian bureaucracy.

"You imagine," Kamenev said to me, "that Stalin is preoccupied with how to reply to your arguments. Nothing of the kind. He is figuring how to liquidate you without being punished."

“Do you remember the arrest of Sultan-Galiyev, the former chairman of the Tatar Council of People’s Commissars, in 1923?” Kamenev continued.

This was the first arrest of a prominent Party member made upon the initiative of Stalin. Unfortunately Zinoviev and I gave our consent to it. That was Stalin’s first taste of blood. As soon as we broke with him, we made up something in the nature of a testament, in which we warned that in the event of our ‘accidental’ death Stalin was to be held responsible. This document is kept in a reliable place. I advise you to do the same thing. You can expect anything from that Asiatic.

Zinoviev added:

He could have put an end to you as far back as 1924 if he had not been so afraid of retaliation, of terrorist acts on the part of the youth. That is why Stalin decided to begin by demolishing the Opposition cadres and postponed your death until he is certain that he can act with impunity. His hatred of us, especially of Kamenev, is motivated chiefly by the fact that we know too much about him. But he is not yet ready to murder us either.

These were not guesses; during the honeymoon months of the Triumvirate its members talked quite freely with each other.

In the spring of 1924, after one of the Plenums of the Central Committee at which I was not present because of illness, I said to I.N. Smirnov: “Stalin will become the dictator of the USSR.” Smirnov knew Stalin well. They had shared revolutionary work and exile together for years, and under such conditions people get to know each other best of all. Smirnov, who defeated and routed the armies of Admiral Kolchak and then executed him, was subsequently shot by Stalin. “Stalin?” he asked me with amazement. “But he is a mediocrity, a colourless non-entity.” I answered him:

Mediocrity, yes; non-entity, no. The dialectics of history have already snared him and will raise him up. He is needed by all of them – by the tired radicals, by the bureaucrats, by the NEPmen, the *Kulaks*, the upstarts, the sneaks, by all the worms that are crawling out of the upturned soil of the manured revolution. He knows how to meet them on their own ground, he speaks their language and he knows how to lead them. He has the deserved reputation of an old revolutionist, which makes him invaluable to them as a blindfold on the eyes of the country. He has will and daring. He will not hesitate to utilise them and to move them against the Party. He has already started doing this. Right now he is organising around himself the sneaks of the Party, the artful dodgers. Of course, great developments in Europe, in Asia and in our country may intervene and upset all these speculations. But if everything continues to go automatically as it is going now, then Stalin will just as automatically become dictator.

A little over two years later, on the same theme, I had an argument with Kamenev, who insisted that Stalin was “just a small town politician”. There was of course a particle of truth in that sarcastic characterisation, but only a particle. Such attributes of character as cunning, disloyalty, the ability to exploit the basest instincts of human nature are developed to an extraordinary degree in Stalin and, considering his strong character, represent powerful weapons in the struggle. Not, of course, any struggle. The struggle to liberate the masses requires different qualities. But in selecting men for privileged positions, in welding them together in the spirit of a caste, in weakening and disciplining the masses, Stalin’s attributes were truly invaluable and rightfully make him leader of the bureaucratic reaction.

On 19th November, 1924, in his speech at the Plenum of the Bolshevik Fraction of the Trade Unions, Stalin said:

After hearing Comrade Trotsky one might think that the Party of the Bolsheviks did nothing else throughout the entire period of preparation from March to October except mark time, corroded by internal contradictions, and hamper Lenin in every way. And if it were not for Comrade Trotsky, the October Revolution might have taken quite another course. It is rather amusing to hear such peculiar speeches about the Party from Comrade Trotsky, who declared in the same foreword to the third volume: “The basic instrument of the proletarian revolution is the party.”

Of course, I had said nothing about the unfitness or worthlessness of the Party and particularly of its Central Committee. I had merely characterised the internal frictions. But what really remains a mystery is how a Party, with supposedly two-thirds of its Central Committee made up of ‘enemies of the people’ and ‘agents of imperialism’, could have been victorious. We have not yet heard the explanation of this mystery. Beginning with 1918, the ‘traitors’ had supposedly the overwhelming majority in the Political Bureau and in the Central Committee. In other words, the policy of the Bolshevik Party in the critical years of the Revolution was completely determined by ‘traitors’. Needless to say, Stalin could not have foreseen in 1924 where the logic of his methods would lead – to such a tragic and monstrous absurdity within [little more than a decade]. What is typical of Stalin is his capacity for blotting out all memory of the past – all except personal grudges and the insatiable lust for revenge.

THE SUICIDE OF ALLILUYEVA

[In 1919, Stalin married Nadezhda Alliluyeva, the youngest child of Sergei Alliluyev, a revolutionary railway worker. After a public row with Stalin at a party dinner, Nadezhda was found dead in her bedroom, a revolver by her side. The official announcement was that she had died from appendicitis. The mysterious death of Nadezhda Alliluyeva occurred in the middle of the campaign for complete collectivisation, which was accompanied by famine in the countryside and mass execution. At a time when Stalin found himself in almost complete political isolation, Nadezhda, apparently under the influence of her father, insisted on the need to change policy in the villages. In addition, her mother, who was closely associated with the peasantry, was constantly telling Nadezhda about the horrors that were unfolding in the countryside. She told Stalin about this, who reacted by forbidding her to meet with her mother or to admit her into the Kremlin. Nadezhda used to meet her mother in the city, and all her apprehensions were strengthened.]

Pravda of 10th November, 1932 contained the biography of Nadezhda Alliluyeva, who was born on 22nd September, 1901. She entered the party in 1918 and from 1919 onwards worked in Lenin's secretariat. She was at the Tsaritsyn front during the civil war, later worked on the staff of the magazine *Revolution and Culture*, and was later assigned to the industrial academy by the party. She was due to graduate from that academy and from the Mendeleyev Institute of Artificial Threads and Synthetic Fibres on the 1st December, 1932.

Princess Katherine Radziwill, writing in the *London Sunday Express* gives Nadezhda's year of birth as 1902 and her sister Anna's as 1904. She describes Nadezhda as exceptionally modest. Hardly anyone of the 'courtiers' was aware of her existence and only one single photograph of her remained after her death in 1932. The Moscow *Izvestiya* (No. 312, 1932) contains a photograph of Nadya's funeral, with a tribute in verse to her by Damyan Bedny. It does not reveal the cause of her death any more than the previous issue but states that the funeral took place yesterday, lists members of the guard of honour which included professors of the industrial academy, the communist academy, the institute of the Red Professors, the Sverdlov University and others.

At 2.35, to the strains of the funeral march, "Comrades Molotov, Kaganovich, Yenukidze and others carried out the coffin and placed it on the catafalque." The procession stretched out over several streets. Thousands of workers and her schoolmates came to pay tribute to her.

At the Novodyevichye cemetery the coffin with the body of the deceased was lowered into the earth. Over the grave Comrades Kaganovich and Kalashnikov (industrial academy) in brief speeches of farewell, gave a clear characterisation of N.S. Alliluyeva – the daughter of a worker-revolutionary, a most devoted party member, and a splendid responsive comrade.

In addition to this TASS dispatch there are other reports from Berlin and Paris containing messages of condolence to “dear Comrade Stalin” by D. Sulimov, A. Bubnov, G. Krzhizhanovsky, and D. Lebed. “To Comrade Stalin, beloved leader and teacher”, signed by K. Bukharin on behalf of the Red Presnya Party District Committee and two others “to dear Comrade Stalin”.

Stalin’s wife Nadezhda Alliluyeva shot herself. Everybody knows that. But very few know the circumstances of her death. Stalin and his wife came to Voroshilov’s house one evening when nearly all the grandees and courtiers of the USSR were there. A serious conversation on the Party’s policy in the village and the attitude to the peasantry developed. It was a question on which she frequently argued with Stalin and being a frank person frequently told him some very cruel truths. On this occasion she was particularly outspoken. Under different circumstances he might have overlooked this but since her diatribe was made in public he lost his temper and responded with crude oaths. She rose and without bidding anyone farewell, departed.

Instead of going to their country home at Gorky, she went to her city apartment where she arrived at three o’clock in the morning. She had been so deeply disturbed by her public quarrel with Stalin that the servants of the Kremlin remarked upon her extremely agitated condition. As soon as she entered her rooms the commandant of the Kremlin telephoned Yenukidze and reported, “Comrade Alliluyeva arrived in an extremely excited state and I fear that something may happen.” Yenukidze, who had been aroused from sleep, replied in a sleepy voice that all this was nonsense and hung up the receiver.

Two hours passed, and then a shot rang out from her apartment. When the servants tried to break in they found the door locked and there was no response to their outcry. Again Yenukidze was called. He came but could not decide whether the door should be broken down or whether Stalin who was at Gorky should first be informed of the matter. Finally, he telephoned Kalinin, Voroshilov, Kaganovich, and several others for an extraordinary consultation. It was decided to break down the door. On the floor in a pool of blood Alliluyeva was found with a gunshot wound through her temple. A letter addressed to Stalin was found on the table.

It was six o'clock in the morning before Stalin in Gorky was informed by telephone. He came immediately. His wife's death made an overwhelming impression on him. 'The iron Bolshevik' asked everybody to go out of the room and leave him alone with his wife. He was even in a more broken condition after he had read her letter, the contents of which are unknown. In memory of his wife Stalin continues to maintain good relations with certain writers whom she had patronised, among them Alexis Tolstoy. He carried out her request to be buried with her father and not to be cremated.

ZINOVIEV AND KAMENEV

Many drew attention to the fact that Stalin did not have a long reconciliation with any of his former opponents. 1929 and the subsequent years were the greatest years of general capitulation. There is no doubt that during the first period there were many hypocritical capitulations. Not a few Oppositionists attempted to play hide and seek with history and pretended to be in agreement with Stalin. They wanted to bide their time by adopting a protective colouration, while waiting a more favourable time when they would again come out into the open.

These actions were false to the core from the point of view of revolutionary policy, because capitulation is not a method of secret diplomacy and military deceit but an open political act which involves immediate political consequences. It immediately served to strengthen Stalin's position and weaken that of the Opposition. However, by no means were all the capitulations of a diplomatic character. Barmine tells us of many of the doubters and waverers or even direct opponents of Stalin, who, after the successes, real or imaginary, of the first Five-Year Plan, after the crushing of the Opposition, would come to the conclusion that there is no other leadership than Stalin. No matter how badly Stalin was conducting his policy, the country was nevertheless moving ahead, and that it was necessary to throw aside differences and work under Stalin's leadership.

There were not a few who, after the first wave of capitulations, were convinced that the political situation had profoundly worsened for the Opposition's work. Such Oppositionists felt themselves isolated. After a certain time under ever wakeful eyes of the GPU, they were again expelled from the Party. They experienced a genuine internal crisis and feared for the future of the Party, including their own future. They repented sincerely for their 'crimes', returned to second-rate Party work and, terrified to death, they became completely obedient and utterly devoted to the official regime.

There were not a few selfless and sincere people among those who capitulated and promised faithful service to Stalin. Of course, they could not swallow the line that Stalin was the Father of the Nation and all the rest. But they saw that he held the power in his hands and that in one way or another, he defended the heritage of the October Revolution. They promised him their blind loyalty. With a feeling of bitterness, they sacrificed their personality, their dignity, in the name of a political aim, which they placed higher than anything else. Nevertheless, they did not save themselves. Stalin did not believe them. Generally, he is incapable of believing in selfless motives and self-sacrifice, which placed political purposes higher than personal ambitions, even higher than personal dignity. He figured that they wanted to deceive him. Since he knew that they did not regard him as a great man, but only as a man occupying a great position, he detested them even more.

Nevertheless, despite this abject loyalty to Stalin, all of them were arrested and either imprisoned, exiled, or in the case of many of them, shot. Why was it necessary for Stalin to exterminate these people who in a certain sense were now deeply loyal to him? This process like the other processes of Stalinist politics developed slowly, automatically, and had its own imperial logic. At first Stalin did not trust these capitulations for fear that the Opposition was attempting to play the role of a Trojan horse. In the course of time, by means of control, selection, searches, interception of correspondence, this danger fell away. Within the Party, capitulators who had sincerely repented were restored – it is true – only to secondary positions.

But when the time came for the theatrical Moscow Trials, all these former members of the Opposition, or who were well acquainted with the Opposition, or knew the leaders of the Opposition, and the actual content of their work, became the greatest danger. They became prime candidates for that hellish extermination of the old generation of revolutionists. Throughout the country were scattered many tens of thousands of the Opposition activists, supporters of Trotsky, Zinoviev and Kamenev and others. They could laugh with their closest friends about the accusations of Stalin being total forgeries. From friend to friend, by word of mouth, the exposures of the frame-ups could have spread throughout the entire country. It became necessary to remove the danger of such witnesses. In an interview with the German writer, Emil Ludwig, Stalin states:

In our leading organ in the Central Committee of our Party, which guides all of our Soviet and Party organisations, there are about seventy members. Among these seventy members of our Central Committee are our best industrialists, our best

co-operators, our best suppliers, our best military men, our best propagandists, our best agitators, our best experts on Soviet farms, on our best experts of collective farms, our best experts of individual peasant economy, our best experts of the nationalities of the Soviet Union and of national politics. In this arsenal is concentrated the wisdom of our party. (13th December 1931)

All of these “best” people Stalin has either arrested or executed. All that Stalin needed was an excuse or a suitable political aim in order to exterminate them and revenge himself upon them for his mediocrity.

THE MURDER OF KIROV

[The Moscow Trials were a series of three show trials that Stalin organised between 1936 and 1938 in order to destroy every trace of Opposition, real or potential, to his rule. They began with the Trial of the Sixteen in 1936, followed by the Trial of the Anti-Soviet Trotskyist Centre, and the Trial of the Twenty-One. The defendants included most of the leading Old Bolsheviks, beginning with Kamenev and Zinoviev. The excuse for their victimisation was the murder of Sergei Mironovich Kirov, which was organised by Stalin himself.]

In the first two months of 1923, the sick Lenin was getting ready to open a resolute struggle against Stalin. He was afraid that I might yield and make concessions and on the 5th March, he warned me: “Stalin will conclude a rotten compromise, and then he would fool us.” This formula encompassed better than anything the political methodology of Stalin including his attitude toward the Sixteen accused in the first Moscow Trial of August 1936.

In general, Stalin, devoid of creative imagination, ingenuity, and surrounded by grey people, was clearly imitating Hitler, who impressed him with his ingenuity and courage. Undoubtedly the thought of purging the Bolshevik Party occurred to Stalin after the purge perpetrated by Hitler in 1934, the infamous ‘Night of the Long Knives’.³ In June 1934 the first step of the reaction against the Nazi coup [in Germany] occurred. A significant number of the leaders, reflecting the mood of the masses, took Hitler’s social demagoguery seriously, if not entirely, then to a certain extent. They considered that a second revolution was necessary. On 30th June, 1934, under the pressure

3 After Hitler’s victory, a section of the Nazi leadership led by Ernst Roehm, a prominent Nazi veteran, basing itself on the lumpen-proletarians in the SA militia, argued that a ‘second revolution’ was necessary. On 30th June, 1934, under the pressure of his capitalist patrons, Hitler ordered the murder of Roehm and the other leaders of his faction. This episode became known as the ‘Night of the Long Knives’.

of his capitalist allies and patrons, Hitler despatched a large number of these 'authentic' Nazis to the next world. It might therefore be said that even the National Socialist revolution had its own kind of reaction.

On 1st December, 1934 Stalin's viceroy in Leningrad, Kirov, was murdered. It was acknowledged in later trials that the assassination was committed under the auspice of the agents of the GPU by direct order of Yagoda. In the tops of the bureaucracy there were whisperings to the effect that the 'boss' had begun to play with the heads of his closest collaborators. At first I did not suppose that the GPU had actually killed Kirov, believing that its aim was to prepare a conspiracy indirectly involving Oppositionists. Whether Stalin sacrificed Kirov's head in order to provide a cause for a campaign against the Opposition, or whether he had intended to halt the conspiracy organised by himself before Kirov was shot, is hard to say. Now perhaps Stalin alone knows how it actually happened, since he has physically eliminated all of his accomplices.

At the session of the [Third Moscow Trial on] 9th March 1938, Yagoda confessed that he gave his subordinates in Leningrad an order [supposedly] on Trotsky's instruction: "Not to interfere with the terrorist acts against Kirov." Coming from Yagoda, the head of the GPU, such a directive was equivalent to an order for the assassination of Kirov. The fact that the chief of the GPU, Yagoda, ordered them not to interfere with the attempt on Kirov's life can only be explained by the fact that Stalin found it necessary at any price to establish his alibi.

[Fifteen people were found guilty of direct, or indirect, involvement in the murder and were hastily executed. Soon after, Zinoviev and Kamenev were accused of being "morally complicit" in Kirov's murder. They were interrogated, tried in secret in 1935 and sentenced to prison terms of ten and five years, respectively. But Stalin was not satisfied with this. He decided to have Kamenev and Zinoviev appear as actors in a show trial, to force them to make confessions that could then be used to implicate others. The trial of the Sixteen was held from 19th August to 24th August, 1936 in the small October Hall of the House of the Trade Unions. The main charge was forming a terror organisation with the purpose of killing Joseph Stalin and other members of the Soviet government. They were tried by the Military Collegium of the Supreme Court of the USSR.]

Stalin, this blind worshipper of the machine, decided to engage even more violent methods against his opponents. This was not a previously thought out plan. Over time, elements of human degradation and self-repudiation were

gathered together. Gradually pressure was increased on the victims. Thus, the unnatural mechanics of voluntary confessions grew almost naturally out of the increasing pressure of the totalitarian regime. He had not planned it, had not thought it out. The elements of human degradation and self-abasement, of self-immolation, were gathered little by little. Pressure was increased – little by little. The unnatural mechanics of voluntary confessions grew quite naturally out of the pressures (in small inoffensive doses) of the totalitarian machine.

Stalin had concluded a compromise with Zinoviev and Kamenev with the aid of the GPU interrogator [to spare their lives], and then he deceived them with the aid of the executioner⁴. Stalin's methods were no secret for the accused. As far back as the beginning of 1926, when Zinoviev and Kamenev had openly broken with Stalin, we had a discussion in the ranks of the Left Opposition about with whom we could conclude a bloc. Marchvovsky, one of the heroes of the Civil War, said: "With neither: Zinoviev will run away and Stalin will deceive or betray." This phrase soon became a winged phrase. Zinoviev soon concluded a bloc with us and then actually did run away. Following him were many others, including Rakovsky, who also ran away. Those who "ran away" attempted to conclude a bloc with Stalin, but the latter concluded a "rotten compromise" and they deceived themselves. The accused drank the cup of degradation to the dregs. After that they were put against the wall.

According to Barmine, at the time of the trials of Zinoviev, Kamenev and others, no one in the Soviet embassies abroad believed in the official accusations:

It was no longer a question even of pretending to believe the 'confessions' so obviously dictated by the Political Bureau to serve as a basis for anti-Trotsky agitation, but rather of finding some intelligent reason for this monstrous business, the only effect of which must be utterly to demoralise the Soviet system and the Communist cause throughout the world.

4 Stalin ordered the sadistic Nikolai Yezhov to interrogate Kamenev and Zinoviev and extract from them a confession of Trotsky's involvement in the Kirov affair, which Yagoda had failed to obtain. In July 1936, Zinoviev and Kamenev were interrogated but denied any connection with Trotsky. Yezhov used a combination of moral and physical pressure to break them, threatening their families with repressive measures. Kamenev and Zinoviev were already broken men, demoralised by their previous capitulations. In the end they agreed to confess on condition that they receive a guarantee from the Politburo that their lives and those of their families and followers would be spared. Stalin agreed to their conditions but, having obtained their confessions, had them shot.

Stanislav Pestkovsky even declared that he owed his timely abandonment of the Opposition “to the circumstance that he had received his Bolshevik training under the direct leadership of Stalin.” The weight of this testimony was weakened by the fact that Pestkovsky worked under Stalin’s leadership in 1918-19 and left the Opposition only in 1927, under a hailstorm of repressions. [When asked to confess to their crimes in return for their lives,] Kamenev, the most calculating and thoughtful of the accused, had apparently the most doubts about a bargain with Stalin. Even he had to repeat to himself one hundred times over: “Will Stalin really dare?” But Stalin did dare!

In connection with the same trial, Barmine again writes:

One piece of news brought me momentary comfort. The right of appealing for mercy to the Executive Chief of the Soviets, which had been abolished after the Kirov affair, had been restored on the eve of the present trial, evidently in the interests of Zinoviev and his fellow prisoners. What reason had we for thinking that it was only a trap? I should have considered any man who had told me that Stalin was preparing in cold blood to do away with those at whose side he had faced the battle and steered the State, guilty of insulting the Party.

A well-placed person explained to Barmine that the GPU had formally promised to save the lives of the sixteen accused as long as they would make the confessions demanded of them. They were thus being asked to sacrifice their honour in order to prove their loyalty to the Party and assist in the fight against Trotskyism. In order to convince them to comply they were informed of the decree giving them the legal right to petition for a pardon against the death penalty. The decree was proclaimed five days before the trial. [It was of no use. Both Zinoviev and Kamenev were shot within twenty-four hours of the verdict being delivered.]

“SOMETHING FRIGHTFUL IS BEING HATCHED”

Stalin took possession of the apparatus, because he was invariably loyal to it. He was disloyal to the Party, to the Soviet state, to the programme, but never to the bureaucratic apparatus. Exceptional historical circumstance were necessary so that this second-rate individual – together with his very dubious scheming nature, slyness, craftiness, cold persistence, and ruthlessness toward others – should acquire first-rate significance. Stalin systematically corrupted the apparatus. In response the apparatus unbridled its leader. Those traits which permitted Stalin to organise the greatest forgeries and legalised murders in human history were of course already in his nature. But years of totalitarian

omnipotence were necessary in order to invest his criminal traits with truly apoplectic dimensions.

Stalin could not dominate people of a higher intellect. He could not dominate those who were at least his equal and in many respects superior to him. Generally devoid of creative imagination, or inventiveness, he surrounds himself with extremely mediocre people. He tries to imitate Hitler, who impresses him with his inventiveness and standing. To the extent that there arose a wave of disgusting Byzantinism, Stalin could not tolerate in responsible administrative positions people who knew the truth, and who were forced to tell lies in order to prove their loyalty to the Leader. To these loyalists who knew Stalin's past, his attitude was if anything more hostile, more irreconcilable, than towards his outright enemies. He needed people without a past, youth who did not know yesterday, or deserters from the other side, who from the very first days looked up to Stalin. To this end, he required a complete renewal of the entire Party.

Stalin's baseness towards others is also vengeance for the evil rumours about himself. It may be argued retrospectively that the Moscow Trials were grounded in a forgery of gigantic proportions. It is no accident, of course, that Stalin's imagination showed itself precisely in this sphere, but even here one should not exaggerate his personal creative initiative. The Trials were composed gradually and almost automatically, as the role of the GPU, with its arbitrariness, pressures and powers increased. Before the trial against the Trotskyists there were a number of other trials – at first *in camera*, later of an open character – which served as preparation for the other trials. The trials were a kind of epic poem of the GPU and not simply the personal invention of Stalin.

It is remarkable that at the time of the Purges all the oppressed nationalities proved to be guilty of chauvinism, yet only in Moscow, where the national oppression is concentrated, did Stalin fail to detect any chauvinism. As far back as 1923, not long before his second stroke, Lenin warned the Party against the Great-Russian bureaucratic tendencies of Stalin. That a Georgian could become the representative of Great-Russian chauvinism appears a paradox, but such paradoxes have occurred more than once in history. The Georgian Djughashvili became the instigator of Great-Russian nationalism, the standard bearer of Great-Russian bureaucratic oppression, in accordance with the same historical laws which the Austrian Hitler gave extreme expression to the spirit of Prussian militarism.

Stalin's uninterrupted success began in 1923, when little by little he was convinced that he could determine his own destiny. The Moscow Trials represent the climax of this policy of deceit and violence. At the same time Stalin began to be gripped by the apprehension that the ground was crumbling under his feet. Every new deception called for an even greater deception to bolster it; every act of violence resulted in further violence. There began a definite period when the world was amazed not so much by his brutality, his will-power and his implacability, as by the low intellectual level and political methods.

[Trotsky here compares the Moscow Trials to the Month of the Great Slander in 1917, when Lenin and the Bolsheviks were persecuted and slandered as "German agents".]

The slander of those years of war and revolution was striking, we remarked, in its monotony. However, it does contain a variation. From the piling up of quantity we get a new quality. The struggle of the other parties among themselves was almost like a family spat in comparison with their common baiting of the Bolsheviks. In conflict with one another they were, so to speak, only getting in training for a further conflict, a decisive one. [...]

An inept invention of two contemptible creatures was elevated to the height of a factor in history. The slanders poured down like Niagara. If you take into consideration the setting – the war and the revolution – and the character of the accused – revolutionary leaders of millions who were conducting their party to the sovereign power – you can say without exaggeration that July 1917 was the month of the most gigantic slander in world history. (Trotsky, *The History of the Russian Revolution*).

This was correct in 1931, but the Thermidorian monstrosity was to immeasurably surpass that of the February 'democracy'. "But why after all is political slander as such so poor and monotonous?" asks the author of this book in 1931, long before the Moscow Trials.

Because the social mind is economical and conservative. It does not expend more efforts than is demanded by its goal.

When it comes to a threat to their material interests, the educated classes set in motion all the prejudices and confusion which humanity is dragging in its wagon-train behind it. Can we too much blame the lords of old Russia, if they built the mythology of their fall out of indiscriminate borrowings from those classes which were overthrown before them?

These words have to be repeated without any change with reference to the [rapacious] oligarchy now in power.

On the 26th July 1917, I wrote from prison to the Minister of Justice: "The case of Dreyfus⁵, the case of Beilis⁶, nothing can be compared with this deliberate attempt to commit moral murder of a number of political leaders, which is now being perpetrated under the banner of Republican justice." I had not foreseen at that time Stalin's Moscow Trials.

Stalin's whole approach is essentially very crude and designed for primitive minds. If, for example, we examine the Moscow Trials as a whole, we shall see that they are amazing for the crudity of their execution. Yet he still does not understand that it is impossible for him to flout the historical process, that even impunity has its optimum. Stalin has never heard of the law of diminishing returns. He did not foresee the consequences of the first trial of August 1936. He hoped that the matter would be limited to the elimination of several of his most detested enemies – above all, Zinoviev and Kamenev, whose destruction he had been plotting for ten years. But he miscalculated: the bureaucracy had become fearful.

For the first time, Stalin was seen not as the first among equals but as an Asiatic despot, a tyrant, or Genghis Khan, as Bukharin called him once. Stalin began to fear that he himself would lose his status as the authority of final appeal for the old timers of the Soviet bureaucracy. He could not blot out their memories of him, nor could he hypnotise them into believing his self-appointed status as their supreme arbiter. Fear and horror grew apace with the number of lives touched by the purge, as well as the number of interests threatened by it. Not one of the old Bolsheviks believed in the accusations. The effect was not what Stalin had expected. He was forced to go far beyond his original intentions.

Examining the Bolshevik conception of democracy in 1906 Stalin wrote:

Democracy does not consist merely of democratic elections. The Democracy of elections cannot yet be called real democracy; Napoleon the third was elected

5 Alfred Dreyfus (1859-1935) was an officer in the French Army twice found guilty of treason in the 1890s despite clear evidence to the contrary, whose conviction sparked suggestions of institutional anti-Semitism in the French Republic.

6 Menahem Mendel Beilis (1874-1934) was a Russian Jew arrested and charged with the murder of a young boy in 1911 on highly spurious and anti-Semitic grounds by the tsarist state. The Russian media launched a vicious blood libel campaign against Russian Jews as a result.

by universal suffrage, but who does not know that this elected emperor was the greatest enslaver of his people.

In those distant years, Stalin did not yet offer his own Constitution, “the most democratic in the world”.

It was during the preparation of the mass purge of 1936 that Stalin proposed the drafting of a new Constitution [for the USSR]. All the Walter Duranties and Louis Fischers sang loud praises to the new era of soviet democracy. The purpose of all this shameless noise around the Stalin Constitution was to win favour amongst democratic public opinion worldwide, and then, use this new-found authority to crush all opposition as agents of Fascism. It is typical of Stalin’s intellectual short-sightedness that he was more concerned with personal vengeance than with defending the Soviet Union and warding off the menace of Fascism.

While preparing “the most democratic Constitution in the world” the bureaucracy was also busy organising a series of celebrations about “the new and happy Soviet life.” At each occasion Stalin was photographed surrounded by workers, men and women, with laughing children on his lap, and such like. His sick ego needed such soothing balm. “It’s clear,” I wrote, “that something frightful is being hatched.” Those initiated into the mechanics of the Kremlin were just as apprehensive about Stalin’s sudden expressions of kindness and decency.

Nevertheless, notwithstanding the extraordinary power of cunning, armed with all the resources of government, state and the latest techniques, the Moscow Trials taken as a whole are astounding in their grandiose absurdity, as the delirium of a weak person armed with the full panoply of power. It would be no exaggeration to say that the Trials are permeated with the spirit of totalitarian idiocy. Stalin found it absolutely necessary to break from Yagoda, and to dig a trench into which he pushed Yagoda’s corpse. Thus, emerged Stalin’s need to sacrifice his number one collaborator and ally.

The Party is allowed scraps from the Master’s table – to lick the bones from which the Leader has chewed off the meat and the sinews – to join in the baying against some Uglanov and vote monolithically against the beaten and cowering victim. What have they in common with Bolsheviks, with Russian revolutionists, of whom Marx wrote on 11th April, 1881, to Jenny Longuet: “*Es sind durch und durch tüchtige Leute, sans pose melodramatique, einfach, sachlich, heroisch*” [“they are thoroughly capable people, free of melodramatic pose, simple, matter of fact, heroic.”]

The organisers of the present Purges were the most bureaucratic and mediocre elements of the Party. The victims of the purges were the most loyal elements, devoted to its revolutionary traditions, and above all, its oldest revolutionary generation, the genuine revolutionary proletarian elements. The social significance of the Purges has altered fundamentally, yet this change is concealed by the fact that the Purges were carried out formally in name by the same Party. Outwardly, it would appear that the party that was created together with the birth of Soviet power, the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, was the same party twenty years later in 1937. Seen superficially, it was defending the same methods and aims. In reality, however, the whole situation had fundamentally changed.

Vyshinsky, the former Menshevik, in his prosecutor's speech compared Yagoda with the American gangster, Al Capone, and added: "But thank God we are not in the United States!" A risky comparison! Al Capone was never the chief of the political police in the United States, while Yagoda was for ten years the head of the GPU, and according to Vyshinsky, "the organiser and inspirer of monstrous crimes."

THE TRIAL OF THE TWENTY-ONE⁷

The burning of Rome was ascribed by Nero to the evil work of the Christians, who were the sacrificial scape-goats for all the suffering of his reign. The role of the scape-goat, which for Nero was taken by the Christians, and for Hitler by the Jews, is played for Stalin by the so-called Trotskyists. [Stalin summed up the accused in March 1937 with the words: "From the political tendency of six or seven years earlier, Trotskyism has developed into a mad and unprincipled gang of saboteurs, of agents of diversion, of assassins acting on the orders of the espionage services of foreign States."]

7 The second trial, which was held between 23rd January and 30th January 1937, involved seventeen Bolsheviks such as Karl Radek, Yuri Pyatakov and Grigory Sokolnikov. Thirteen of the defendants were shot. The rest received sentences in labour camps. None survived. Radek saved his life – though only temporarily – by implicating others, including Nikolai Bukharin, Alexey Rykov, and Marshal Mikhail Tukhachevsky, thus preparing the ground for the Trial of the Military and Trial of the Twenty-One. That show trial, held in March 1938, included twenty-one defendants alleged to belong to a non-existent 'Bloc of Rightists and Trotskyites'. Among the defendants were Bukharin, Rykov, Krestinsky and Rakovsky. Also charged was Yagoda, the former head of the GPU. In the course of the trial there were startling revelations concerning the death of Maxim Gorky.

With his monstrous trials Stalin proved much more than he had wanted; rather, he failed to prove what he set out to prove. He merely disclosed his secret laboratory, where he forced people to confess to crimes they never committed. But the totality of these confessions turned into Stalin's own confession. The cream of Bolshevism has been removed, liquidated, exiled, as possible hostile witnesses to the crimes of Stalin. Evidently the organisation of this whole enterprise had aimed to fill all the holes and cracks, to create a hermetically sealed totalitarian environment.

From a certain moment in his rise, there appears a mysterious and alarming automatism. Undoubtedly, ever since he found himself at the heights of power, he has been possessed by superstition, which is generally not native to him, but which is growing ever stronger. He himself knows too well his past. The incongruity between his ambition and his personal resources, the third-rate role he played in all critical periods, and his own elevation cannot help but seem to him the result not so much of his own persistent efforts, but as of some strange accident, almost a historical chance.

The very need for lavish hyperbolic praises, with the constant piling up of flattery, is a faultless indication of the lack of confidence in himself. In daily life, in the course of years, he measured himself through contact with other people. He could not help feeling their superiority to himself in many if not in all respects. The ease with which he managed to get rid of his old opponents could, in the course of a certain short period, create in him an exaggerated conception of his own power which in the end, upon confrontation with new difficulties, must seem to him inexplicable and mysterious. On the faces of all the representatives of the old generation of Bolsheviks he saw or sensed an ironic smile. Here is one of the causes of his hatred of the Old Bolshevik guard. He lives in constant fear that perhaps some new unexpected negative combination of circumstances will suddenly appear and fling him down.

The *Short Course*, the official history [of the Soviet Communist Party] states that at the Second All-Russian Congress of Soviets was formed the first Soviet Government where Lenin was elected the Chairman of the Soviet of People's Commissars. This is correct. But it ignores the fact that at the following session of the Central Committee, Lenin proposed to place Trotsky as head of the Council of People's Commissars. Only the energetic protest of the latter induced Lenin to withdraw his proposal.

Let us stop for a moment and read these facts. The picture is quite clear. The staff of the Bolshevik Party which had led the October insurrection, at the centre and locally, has been subjected to almost total extermination. The

only persons who managed to save themselves were those who had managed just in time to die a natural death. Stalin's new staff consisted of people who had taken no part whatever in the armed uprising or had occupied only secondary positions. The new 'history' transforms all the leaders of the Bolshevik Party, the victors in the revolution and Civil War, into traitors and in their place Stalin appoints his yes-men. Such is the basic schema of this historic scholarship.

As a consequence of the Moscow Trials, it emerged that out of nine men who, during the lifetime of Lenin, were in the Political Bureau, that is, in the supreme body of the Party in government, Trotsky, Zinoviev, Kamenev, Tomsky, Rykov, Bukharin [and Krestinsky], with the sole exception of Stalin, and of Lenin who had died, all the others had become 'agents of foreign governments' while the Soviet Government was in their hands! Apparently, according to Stalin, nothing but traitors were at the head of the Red Army: Trotsky, Tukhachevsky, Gamarnik, Ubovich, Yegorov, Yakir, Kork, Muralov, etc.

The official indictment ascribes to Bukharin a plan to kill Lenin, Stalin, and Sverdlov in 1918, when Bukharin and his group objected to signing the Brest-Litovsk peace. It appears that Bukharin, Trotsky and the accomplices to their conspiracy had set as their goal to disrupt the Brest peace treaty, to arrest Lenin, Stalin and Sverdlov, to kill them and form a new government of Bukharinites, Trotskyists and 'Left' Socialists. [In fact,] in 1918, Stalin was such a secondary figure that the most rabid terrorists would never have thought of selecting him as a victim. His part in the trial has its task of projecting the present bureaucratic greatness of Stalin into the future.

In essence, one cannot fail ask on what basis did Lenin issue the directive to put me – a barefaced criminal who does nothing except commit mistakes and crimes – at the head of the War Department, or to place at the head of the national economy Rykov, the restorer of capitalism, fascism and future agent provocateur, or to nominate as the head of the Communist International the future fascist and traitor Zinoviev, or to make the future fascist thug Bukharin one of the leaders of the Communist International, etc., etc. Why was Lenin so fatally wrong in his assessment of his immediate collaborators, whom he had known for decades?

On the night of 25th October, 1917, the revolutionary workers, soldiers and sailors, took by storm the Winter Palace and arrested the Provisional Government. These facts are undoubtedly correct. But what is left unsaid is that this attack was led by Antonov-Ovseyenko and Podvolsky who were

also in charge of the capture of the Peter and Paul Fortress. They have since disappeared. The person in charge of the mutiny of the troops in Finland, who played a vital role, was Central Committee member Smilga. He has now been shot. The person in charge of the mutiny of the Kronstadt Fortress was Lieutenant Raskolnikov. He also has disappeared without a trace (apparently he committed suicide abroad after leaving the Soviet Service).

At the trial of February, 1938⁸, Yagoda's secretary, Bulanov, was charged among other things with being a poisoner, for which he was shot. The fact that Bulanov enjoyed at one point Stalin's confidence is evidenced by the fact that he was the man commissioned to escort my wife and me out of our exile in Central Asia to our new exile in Turkey. In an effort to save my two former secretaries, Sermuks and Poznansky, I demanded that they be sent out with me. Bulanov, fearing unpleasant publicity at the Turkish border and wishing to arrange everything peacefully, communicated the request by direct wire with Moscow. A half hour later he brought me the tape of the direct wire where the Kremlin had promised to send Poznansky and Sermuks directly after me. I did not believe it. "You will fool me anyway," I said to Bulanov.

"Then you can call me a scoundrel."

"That is small comfort," I retorted.

[According to the indictments] those in charge of the life and health of the leaders and of the government were also poisoners. Finally, the head of the political police, Yagoda. For almost ten years he was the head of the GPU and Stalin's most trusted person. He was assigned the highest responsibility in protection of the state, but proved to be the organiser of all the crimes. He was also removed in September, 1936 and shot.

"Stalin's methods of procedure, not realised in the civilised countries, consists in staging a progressive series of measures, the effect of which is to separate the victim, first of all, from his normal surroundings, from the men, that is, who know him and could vouch for his innocence," explained Barmine. "Yagoda went from the Commissariat of Internal Affairs to the Commissariat of Postal Telegraph, the very waiting room of death. Four people's Commissars of Postal Telegraph had been shot."

All of these combinations cannot be described other than devilish. Under this picture must be placed the name of the Master organiser of the conspiracy: Joseph Stalin.

[A bloody mountain of corpses] was converted into a solid phalanx of "traitors and enemies of the people". The enthusiastic eulogies of Stalin were

8 2nd-13th March 1938.

made by the victims at the very time when above them a sword hung on over their heads, ready to fall. The very breadth of these crimes is astounding. They far exceed the personality of Yagoda, who according to his admission and that of his secretary Bulanov, also intended to kill Yezhov, his future successor, with the aid of specially prepared poison. But he was too late. Yezhov, instead of being a victim of poison, replaced at Stalin's request the 'traitor' Yagoda as head of the GPU. When Yezhov became chief of the GPU he changed the toxicological methods of Yagoda, but he achieved the same results.

A person unfamiliar with the internal relations [in the Stalinist regime] can hardly form any real conception about the extent of [Stalin's] power. Stalin can literally crush a human being to dust. A single remark by him suffices to settle the fate of a person. A man in disfavour more often than not knows nothing before he begins to feel that something is wrong around him. Suddenly he finds himself in the situation of a leper. His friends of yesterday on accidentally meeting him cross to the other side of the street so that they will not have to greet him. His relatives forget his address. His telephone stops working. His wife runs to the marriage registry to get her divorce. Even his son looks upon him with disfavour and apparently has already prepared a draft of a letter to the editor condemning his "former father".

In all justice it must be said that if a negative remark by Stalin is capable of killing a man at a distance, an approving remark by him can almost bring the dead man to life. We know of one such example when an important writer was almost baited to death. No one printed his writings. He was condemned as a counter-revolutionist and was being evicted from his home. In utter despair, close to suicide, he wrote a personal letter to Stalin and asked to be either exiled, or given the possibility to live. Two days later the writer was called to the telephone: "Comrade Stalin wishes to speak to you." The conversation was brief. Stalin acknowledged receipt of the letter and promised to satisfy his plea. The entire city found out about this telephone conversation and immediately he was offered all sorts of favours. At once all sorts of devoted admirers of the author's talents sprang up everywhere.

Gorky was an unshakable supporter of Stalin's leadership. Bukharin in his testimony called Gorky a Stalinist, a supporter of the Stalinist policy in the Party. Social gatherings in the evening at Gorky's house were the only place where Stalin would come off his pedestal to some extent. In all other intercourse he speaks and acts as the complete and only master of the country. His power is actually unlimited. To be sure he doesn't have to waste an evening to find out whatever he wishes to know about any one of them – it is simply

habit. Irritated, Stalin tries to enliven the conversation by pouring wine into a writer's glass: "Why aren't you drinking? Are you afraid you might say too much?" Of course the poor fellow has to drink and if he does so willingly Stalin even becomes attached to him. In this way, over a glass of cognac, the 'friendship' between Stalin and Alexey Tolstoy began.

The testimony of Dr. Levin, a sixty-eight year old man, produced the most disturbing impression. According to what he said, he deliberately aided in hastening the death of Menzhinsky, Kuibyshev and Maxim Gorky.⁹ He had acted upon the insistence of Yagoda because he was afraid of "the extermination of his own family". According to his words, Levin had no personal motive. On the contrary, "he loved Gorky and his family". He killed the son and the father because he feared for his own family. In order somehow to explain his agreement to commit criminal acts, Levin replied:

It was an act of madness on my part, an act of idiotism – suddenly, for no reason on my part to kill Maxim Peshkov, I love that family very much. I was a friend of the family. I loved Alexey Maximovich I regarded him as one of the great men of our country and of the whole world. Mistakenly, perhaps, but I was blinded by the authority of the OGPU. It seemed to me that he (Yagoda) was an omnipotent man, in whose hands was concentrated immeasurable power; the moment this man told me that I had to do this, I agreed. What horrified me particularly was his threat to exterminate my family. Mine is a good family...

In 1934 Barmine was in the section of the Kremlin hospital which was under the direction of Dr. Levin, who "enjoyed the absolute confidence of all members of the government and reassured his patients by the attention he paid to them."

He was recently shot for having, by his own confession, shortened the hours of Maxim Gorky as the result of instructions received from Yagoda, the chief of police. Yagoda, I know wielded unlimited power, but he was only Stalin's

9 The celebrated writer Maxim Gorky had returned to the Soviet Union in 1932 and tried to have the kind of relationship with Stalin that he had previously enjoyed with Lenin. During the Civil War he would frequently intercede with Lenin to save this or that writer from arrest or imprisonment. More often than not Lenin would give in to his pleadings. But Stalin was another matter. Gorky's complaints about the Purges were intolerable to Stalin, who ordered Yagoda to quietly get rid of the old man. The sudden death of Gorky's son Maxim Peshkov in May 1934 was followed by the death of Maxim Gorky himself in June 1936. The fact that they were both poisoned emerged when Yagoda himself was purged and put on trial, when the Kremlin doctor admitted to poisoning the writer and his son, following the orders of the GPU.

instrument, and old Dr. Levin whom I knew personally, who had spent all his life in untiring efforts to save life and mitigate suffering, was the last man in the world capable of such a murder.

Gorky's secretary was a certain Kryuchkov who according to testimony and his own confession proved to be an accomplice to his murder. Kryuchkov was Yagoda's agent – that is Stalin's agent. Kryuchkov, testified that Yagoda had told him, "It is necessary to reduce Gorky's activity, which is embarrassing to certain 'big chiefs'." This formula about 'big chiefs' is repeated several times. Professor Pletnev testified during the investigation:

Yagoda told me that I shall have to help to remove certain leaders of the country. He openly proposed that I take advantage of my position as a doctor of Kuibyshev and Gorky and hasten their death with the aid of certain methods of healing (the very opposite of the methods of healing).

In the hands of Yagoda was concentrated the protection of the Kremlin and particularly the protection of Stalin. Had he been a conspirator instead of Stalin's agent, he could have found a favourable circumstance any day for doing away with the dictator. Dr. Kosakov testified:

Subsequent to my conversation with Yagoda, I worked out together with Levin a method for treating Menzhinsky which actually destroyed his last powers and hastened his death. Thus, Levin and I practically killed Menzhinsky. I gave Levin a mixture of lyzates which in combinations with alkaloids brought about the desired results, i.e. the death of Menzhinsky.

Kazakov was especially useful in that respect because, according to Dr. Levin's words, he operated with the aid of medicines which he himself prepared without any control in his own laboratory, so that he alone knew the secret of his injection...Menzhinsky died suddenly in his sleep of paralysis of the heart. "I had no doubt at all that this was done by Kazakov," said Levin. According to the admissions of Yagoda and Bulanov, Yagoda's secretary, they intended also to kill Yezhov, Yagoda's successor, with the aid of poison specially prepared for that purpose. The accused Bulanov "declared that he himself prepared the mixtures of poisons intended for Yezhov."

Dr. Levin told Dr. Pletnev that in the event that he should not obey, "Yagoda will undoubtedly destroy you and you cannot save yourself from Yagoda. He stops at nothing. He forgets nothing." These words refer not to Yagoda but to his boss who stops before nothing and forgets nothing. Pletnev, Kazakov, Kryuchkov, all the participants of the actual or alleged crimes

explained their behaviour by fear of Yagoda, and this explanation is accepted as quite natural. The very sweep of his crimes is astounding. They far exceed the personality of Yagoda.

The reference to 'big chiefs' in court was interpreted as meaning Rykov, Bukharin, Kamenev and Zinoviev. But that is a patent absurdity, for at the time these men were pariahs and victims of GPU persecution. 'Big chiefs' was clearly the pseudonym for the masters of the Kremlin, and above all, Stalin. Let us recall that Gorky died conveniently on the eve of the Zinoviev trial. The Soviet diplomat Raskolnikov, who died recently, expressed in the letter written shortly before his death that he was assured that Gorky had died a natural death. In that case, the judges at his trial followed somebody's orders to put to death the doctors who were not guilty of anything. In the final reckoning what is better for the super Borgia – the poisoning of Gorky or the killing of those falsely accused of poisoning? It is not easy to answer.

FROM POPULAR FRONTISM TO THE HITLER-STALIN PACT

The October Revolution put such a fright into the bourgeoisie that it is still trembling before the spectre of revolution – even a revolution with Stalin at its head! From time to time the press renews the fairy tale that Stalin is striving for an international revolution. There is no more erroneous thought. Stalin is more afraid of revolution than Herbert Hoover. Stalin will commit any cruelty, any bestiality, any act of treachery or even self-abasement – to prevent revolution. His international policy, far from being concerned with world revolution, is merely a reflection of his internal policy, which in turn is far less concerned with political problems than with the supreme problem of his personal self-preservation. That is the only sphere in which Stalin's mind works indefatigably.

At a certain stage of historical development, the political hegemony of the bourgeoisie over the nation was of great progressive significance insofar as it pulled the oppressed masses out of the rut of 'pre-historic' hibernation and thus laid the groundwork for their future self-reliance. Such was the role of the bourgeoisie in the revolutions of the seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries. But in the twentieth century, even as early as the Russian Revolution of 1905, belated liberalism was already playing a counter-revolutionary role. The unity of labour with the liberals no longer signified the awakening of the masses to political activity but rather the limitation and degradation of the political independence which the masses had won under socialist leadership.

Back then, the name of the Popular Front was not yet invented. But later combinations under this name in Spain, France and other countries essentially did not differ from the Russian coalition of 1917. The aim of coalitions of this kind has always been fundamentally the same: to submit the petty-bourgeois socialists and, through their medium, the toiling masses, to the liberal bourgeoisie. With liberalism or against liberalism, for the coalition or against the coalition, for the popular front or against the popular front – the final split between Bolshevism and Menshevism occurred exactly over this fundamental question.

But if the policy of the bloc with the left bourgeoisie was categorically rejected by the Bolsheviks in backward Russia, which had not yet achieved its bourgeois revolution, all the more criminal was the policy in old bourgeois nations like France and Spain, where the progressive tendencies of the bourgeoisie had been exhausted long ago. The refusal of the Bolsheviks to bear even a shadow of responsibility for the coalition of 1917 in Russia, and the participation of the sections of the Comintern in the Popular Fronts of Spain and France twenty years later, represent the clearest expression of the contradictions between the policies of Lenin and the policies of Stalin.

Stalin's policy in the Chinese Revolution can only be explained by the fact that he slept through three Russian Revolutions. Stalin's role in relation to the German, Chinese and Spanish Revolutions was unambiguous. In 1905 Stalin allowed the masses to act only by permission of the [Party] committee. Fortunately, the masses did not request Stalin's permission to act. In 1917 he began to surrender to the liberal bourgeoisie and its conciliator agents.

In connection with the latest failures in China, which were to a considerable degree conditioned by the incorrect leadership of the Chinese Revolution, the international situation became sharp and acute. The increasing danger of war and intervention could not be excluded. War against the USSR, as a proletarian regime, could not be the usual war of one state against another. It could only be considered as a struggle of the bourgeoisie against the international proletariat. The struggle with world imperialism, insofar as it assumes a military character, will inevitably lead to an extreme sharpening of the class struggle in the rear of each of the fighting sides, creating an internal front alongside an external one. The decisive role in such a clash will be played by the revolutionary movements of the world proletariat, needless to say in such a struggle [the Bolshevik-Leninists will be to the fore].

[After the defeat of the Chinese Revolution, Trotsky saw Germany as the key to the international situation. In 1933, the German Communist Party had

about six million supporters, while the Social-Democrats numbered about eight million. Their combined militias had about one million members – a far bigger number than the Red Guard in Petrograd and Moscow in 1917. Yet Hitler could boast, “I have come to power without breaking a window pane”.

[In the ultra-left Third Period, the Stalinists denounced the Social-Democrats as “Social Fascists” and split the German labour movement in the face of the Nazi menace, causing a terrible defeat. Overnight, the mighty organisations of the German proletariat were reduced to rubble. The workers of the entire world – and above all the Soviet Union – paid a terrible price for that betrayal. This was a betrayal of the working class comparable to that of August 1914.

[The German debacle led to an increase in the danger of war on the Soviet Union. On 25th November, 1936, Nazi Germany concluded an agreement with Japanese imperialism known as the Anti-Comintern Pact. It was later joined by Mussolini’s Italy. Ostensibly directed against the Communist International, it was in reality directed against the Soviet Union, while also supporting Japan’s aggression against China.¹⁰ It stated: “...the aim of the Communist International, known as the Comintern, is to disintegrate and subdue existing States by all the means at its command; ...toleration of interference by the Communist International in the internal affairs of the nations, not only endangers their internal peace and social well-being, but is also a menace to the peace of the world.”]

The Kremlin has always maintained that the so-called Tripartite Pact against the Comintern was, in fact, directed against England and France. This interpretation was necessary in order to emphasise the idea that the Western democracies needed an alliance with the Soviet Union more than the latter needed the support of the Western democracies. Undoubtedly, up till now Germany and Italy have used their Anti-Comintern block against the West much more than against the East. This does not mean, of course, that tomorrow the aggression will not be directed towards the East.

Shortages of essential goods are like in Germany, worse than in Germany. The prices are unbearably high. Germany, of course, still has enormous technical and industrial advantages over the Soviet Union. But the Soviet

10 After the signing of the Hitler-Stalin Pact in 1939, Japan renounced the Anti-Comintern Pact but later joined the Tripartite Pact (27th Sept. 1940), which pledged Germany, Italy, and Japan “to assist one another with all political, economic and military means” when any one of them was attacked by “a Power at present not involved in the European War or in the Sino-Japanese Conflict”, i.e., the Soviet Union or the United States.

Union's advantages in raw materials will cancel out the advantages of German technique. Germany is incapable of a lengthy war. Vast Soviet spaces exclude the possibility of a decisive success in a short period. Such are the main strategic considerations in Moscow.

On 7th March 1933, at a time when France was eagerly seeking a rapprochement with Moscow, the French *Le Temps* complained that the world had got accustomed to seeing Stalin from a 'Trotskyist' perspective, i.e. incomparably worse than he really is. Now, after the series of the Moscow Trials and the string of denunciations, after Stalin's alliance with Hitler and the destruction of Poland, it seems that many are ready to admit that the 'Trotskyist' perspective was very close to reality.

In front of me is a photograph of Stalin shaking hands with von Ribbentrop. Behind Stalin's face, the Nazi diplomat is confident and sure of himself. Stalin's smile is sickly, uncertain, and confused. Is it because he is embarrassed to be shaking hands with one of the leaders of German Fascism? If so, then that embarrassment is mutual. Far stronger in Stalin is the embarrassment of a provincial who can't speak a main foreign language and doesn't know what to do when confronted with people to whom he cannot bark orders, that is, people who are not afraid of him.

However, what guarantees can the Berlin government give to Moscow? There are no such guarantees nor can there ever be; formal secret obligations to Japan are valued at very low prices nowadays. Herein lie the reasons for the duplicity of the Kremlin's policy. It acts as if it is not facing any threat from Germany and Japan. Or rather, it pretends that its restless and mighty neighbours do not pose any threat to it. At the same time, it carries on a complex and capricious flirtation with the Western democracies. The main policy line: agreement with Hitler and Mikado. Additional policy line: insure itself by an agreement with the democracies. And since this agreement can be terminated, since the unwritten and unreliable treaty with Hitler and Mikado can be broken, Moscow is dragging its feet, not seeing it to its end, not signing the agreement while at the same time not breaking the negotiations. In one word, Moscow is trying to demonstrate that, contrary to the French proverb, the door can be both open and closed.

THE WRECKING OF THE RED ARMY

In anticipation of a new great war Stalin launched a campaign against the command structure of the Soviet army¹¹ – an act unprecedented in human history. His alliance with Hitler was dictated by fear – fear of both Hitler and the people.¹² We have a precedent in the autocratic regime under tsarism, which arrested Minister of War Sukhomilnov during the [First World] War on the charge of treason. The allied diplomats remarked to Sazonov: “Yours is a strong government, if it dares to arrest its own Minister of War in time of war.” As a matter of fact, that “strong” government was on the verge of collapse.

Stalin unites the cause of his personal revenge with the cause of exterminating the opponents and enemies of the new ruling bureaucratic caste. With his consuming ambition and poor intellect, he was forced to suffer the more brilliant and gifted in society. Stalin never forgave anyone for this superiority. Since the entire Soviet oligarchy is an organised and centralised mediocrity, Stalin’s personal instincts coincided in the best possible manner with the basic features of the bureaucracy: its fear of the masses, from which it emerged and whom it betrayed, and its hatred for any form of superiority.

“I had seen Stalin applaud Tukhachevsky’s speech at the last Congress of Soviets, held in the great palace of the Kremlin,” Barmine recalls. “On that occasion, when Tukhachevsky appeared on the platform, the entire hall rose to its feet and greeted him with a storm of applause. This ovation was distinguished from the others by its force and sincerity.” Stalin undoubtedly

11 Stalin was suspicious of the Red Army, which had been founded by Trotsky. Many of its leaders, heroes of the Civil War, had fought with Trotsky and had been under his influence. Many of them were extremely talented and one, at least, M.N. Tukhachevsky, was a military genius. Stalin hated and feared Tukhachevsky, whose brilliance always reminded him of his own incompetence in military matters. He lived in fear of a military coup. He therefore organised a gigantic new frame-up involving the whole of the Soviet general staff, accusing Tukhachevsky and other key leaders of the Red Army of being in league with Hitler.

12 Hitler took note of the defeats suffered by the Red Army in Finland, which convinced him that the Soviet Union could not withstand a German attack. When his generals tried to convince him that Germany should not invade the USSR on military grounds, Hitler replied: “They have no good generals...” All one had to do, he insisted, was to “kick in the door and the whole rotten structure will come tumbling down.” In the end the Soviet Union defeated the German army, but only after suffering terrible losses in human life and the destruction of the productive forces.

recognised very well the power of this ovation, and having made a note of it, planned to take revenge on Tukhachevsky several years later.

Amazingly, there was no trial of the best known leaders of the Red Army, even behind closed doors. This was quite in Stalin's power. It was in the same fashion that Hitler in June of 1934 settled scores with Roehm and the others. Budyonny, Blucher, Alksnis and other generals were presented with the ready-made text of the verdict, under which they were ordered to sign their names. The purpose was to eliminate some and to compromise the others.

The verdict of the so-called Supreme Court was announced in *Pravda* 12th June, 1937, and accused the generals of "systematically providing espionage information" to a hostile state and "preparing in the event of an attack on the USSR the defeat of the Red Army". They were tried *in camera*, condemned to death without witnesses, and executed within forty-eight hours. In Moscow, generals of the Red Army became foreign spies by the order of Trotsky, despite being separated from them by thousands of kilometres. Meanwhile, *Izvestiya* announced that Marie Nicolaevna Tukhachevsky, the marshal's sister, was seeking permission to change her name.

Victor Serge recounted to me an incident which may have played a considerable part in determining Dimitri Schmidt's fate ten years later¹³. On the eve of the Party Congress of 1927 – at which the expulsion of the Trotskyist Opposition was announced – Schmidt had just arrived in Moscow and was wearing as usual the uniform of his Division – the great black riding-cloak, the belt with its pendent metal ornaments, the curved sabre and the fur cap cocked over one ear. He came out of the Kremlin with Radek and ran into Stalin, who was going the opposite way. Political feeling was pretty violent just then. Stalin, in full career as a conspirator, had not yet brought the Party to heel. Schmidt went up to him, and, half-joking, half serious, began to blackguard him as only old fellow campaigners know how – that is, in terms which have to be heard to be believed. As he finished speaking, he made a gesture as though to draw his sabre, and told the General Secretary of the Central Committee that one day he'd cut his ears off. Stalin listened to the diatribe saying nothing, but his face was dead white and his lips drawn into a tight line. At the time he chose to treat his interlocutor as beneath his notice, but there can be little doubt that ten years later he remembered the violent threat of which he had been the victim. Dimitri Schmidt has

13 Dimitri Schmidt, a Red Army general, had clashed with Stalin in 1927 at a time of the expulsion of the Left Opposition. This sealed his fate.

disappeared, accused of terrorism. No confession was forced from him. He was killed without that.

[Into the boots of the murdered Red heroes stepped the cronies of Stalin, second-rate careerists, yes-men and bootlickers like Shaposhnikov.] At the time of the Polish War in 1920, there appeared in the military journal a crude chauvinist article about “the natural Jesuitism of the Lyakhs” (derogatory for Poles). This appeared alongside an article about the “honest and open spirit of the Great Russians”. By a special order the journal was closed down and the author of the article, an officer of the general staff, Shaposhnikov, was removed from his work. Today Shaposhnikov is chief of staff and is the only survivor of the old officers of the epoch of the Civil War. Such people have only managed to survive and keep themselves alive by adapting themselves to the new regime.

At the Trial in February 1938, that is, ten months after the shooting of the generals, they were further tried by another court which maintained the fantastic charge of espionage but added a new charge of preparing a military conspiracy. The generals had spoken out in defence of the Red Army and against the demoralising machinations of the GPU. They were defending the interests of national defence against the interests of the bureaucratic caste. In view of this, the stenographic report of the Moscow Trials of 1936, 1937, 1938 is coloured by a tragic irony. All the accused were charged and found guilty of “plotting in favour of Fascist Germany”.

Was there actually a military conspiracy? It all depends on what is called conspiracy. Each dissatisfaction, each coming together of the dissatisfied, criticism and discussion of what to do, how to stop the destructive policy of the government is, from the point of view of Stalin, a conspiracy. Under a totalitarian regime, every opposition undoubtedly becomes the embryo of a conspiracy. How far did the talks, agreements, plans of the military leaders of the Red Army go? All of them or a majority of them were sympathetic to the Right Opposition insofar as the dissatisfaction of the peasants found a direct expression in the Army.

Differences between the military leaders in the Kremlin and Stalin seem to have especially sharpened in the 1932-33 period when the aftermath of the forced collectivisation assumed a particularly threatening character. As dissatisfaction with forced collectivisation found a direct echo in the Army, it stands to reason that the contacts between the leaders of the Army and the peasantry represented for Stalin an outright opposition and direct danger.

Only in the writings of [Erich] Wollenburg, a former officer of the Red Army, are there any direct assertions that Tukhachevsky, Gamarnik and others had actually participated in a conspiracy, seeing in the overthrow of Stalin's power the only possibility of saving the country. However, Wollenburg's proofs are extremely shaky. They are based rather on psychological guesses than on any objective facts.

With reference to the executed generals of the Red Army, Barmine wrote:

Let me insist with all the earnestness I can command that these men, profoundly devoted as they were to their Soviet Fatherland, and employed, as they had been, over long years in preparing the Red Army for a decisive trial of strength, first with Poland and then with Germany, were psychologically incapable of committing the crimes imputed to them, and could not have done so even had they wished. All the stories of sympathy with Germany, of plots, of Nazi conspiracies and the handing-over of military secrets are elements in a shameful campaign of denigration which merely reflects upon the moral sense of those who invented it.

Naturally, after having won their victories under Trotsky's aegis and as his collaborators, these officers could not but feel for him as a sympathy born of shared memories.

But I knew too well their professional honesty and their undoubted patriotism to admit for a moment any hint of opposition on their part. It was sheer madness to accuse them of treachery in the interests of Germany, even if the charges brought against them by the alleged court of their peers had been less vague than in fact they were.

Other particulars given to me included this – that in the single military area of Kiev, six to seven hundred senior officers who had been associated with Yakir, either because of a common revolutionary past, or as a natural consequence of the chances of military service, had been arrested.

The Soviet Government not only arrested and executed its actual Minister of War, Tukhachevsky, but over and above that it exterminated the entire senior commanding staff of the Army, Navy and the Air Corps. With the assistance of accommodating foreign correspondents in Moscow, the Stalin propaganda machine has been systematically deceiving world public opinion about the actual state of affairs in the Soviet Union. The monolithic Stalinist government is a myth.

Certain Moscow correspondents repeat the fairy story that the Soviet Union has emerged from the Purges more strengthened than ever.¹⁴ It was precisely these gentlemen that had sung the praises of Stalinism even before the Purges. Yet it is hard to understand how any sound-thinking person can fail to understand that if the most important representatives of the government and the Party, the diplomatic corps and the army, can all be accused of being foreign agents, then this must surely reflect the weather-vanes of profound internal dissatisfaction with a regime. Stalin is constantly catering to the Army, but he is frightened to death of it. The Purges were a manifestation of a serious illness within the Soviet Union. The removal of the symptoms is hardly a cure.

Vengefulness along with the greatest ambition constitutes the mainspring of Stalin's actions. Even in the Soviet-German pact, and the way he prepared it, clearly reveals a desire for revenge. The alliance with Hitler gave Stalin the satisfaction of feeling that he dominates all others. He took great personal delight in negotiating secretly with the Nazis while appearing to negotiate openly with the friendly military missions of England and France, in deceiving London and Paris, in springing his pact with Hitler as a sudden surprise.¹⁵

All of this clearly indicates his desire to humiliate the British government, to take revenge on England for the humiliations that the Kremlin had to suffer during the period when Chamberlain was flirting unsuccessfully with Hitler. Even the fact that the Soviet troops entered Lemberg (Lvov), on 20th September, 1939, was doubtless mixed up in the mind of Stalin with the [memory of] the failure that Stalin suffered there nineteen years ago.

14 The Purge destroyed the entire leading cadre of the Red Army and badly damaged the defence capabilities of the USSR. Tukhachevsky, Yakir and others were shot in secret, which indicates that they refused to confess. The military Purge that continued throughout 1938 led to the elimination of ninety percent of all generals, eighty percent of all colonels, and 30,000 of the lower ranking officers. This left the Red Army seriously weakened on the eve of the Second World War. Among the many victims of Stalin's gigantic frame-ups were the leaders of the Red Army and heroes of the Civil War, such as Mikhail Tukhachevsky and the cream of the Soviet general staff. Men like Iona Yakir, Ieronim Uborevich, Robert Eideman, August Kork, Vitovt Putna, Boris Feldman, and Vitaly Primakov were arrested and shot in secret in the cellars of the GPU. This was the signal for a massive and highly destructive purge of the Red Army.

15 Moscow hosted an Anglo-French military mission 12th August 1939. But the fact that the British and French sent only second-rate negotiators with limited authority cast serious doubt about their intentions. In the middle of the negotiations, Stalin decided on a non-aggression pact with Hitler.

The official legends created around the role of Stalin as the organiser of the Army, the strategist and hero of the Civil War, as well as those created during his position as unchallenged dictator, were very clearly put to the test in the events of the Soviet-Finnish War of 1939.¹⁶ The preparations for the offensive on the part of the USSR were truly shambolic. The Kremlin underestimated the forces of Finland's resistance, failed to prepare the necessary material equipment and proved unable to explain either to the Army or to the people the reasons for its policy. The entire operation was prepared behind the backs of the people, in a purely bureaucratic way and therefore during the first stage, in the course of ten or eleven weeks, did not yield anything but shame to its initiators in the Kremlin.

Unlike Hitler, it did not even occur to Stalin to appear before his troops, to go to the front, to talk with the soldiers or to inspire them. It may be frankly said that such a trip would have been utterly impossible for Stalin. Anyone who knows him intimately finds it impossible to imagine this dictator of the apparatus standing in the frosty air before the mass of soldiers. With his expressionless face, with the yellow glint of his eyes, his monotone voice straining to enunciate his words, Stalin had nothing to say to them. During the Finnish episode, he did not even attempt to address the soldiers in writing. At any rate, not even one such article, order or appeal, has ever seen the light of day.

In February 1940, the newspapers reported that Stalin was going to Leningrad to celebrate the 22nd anniversary of the [founding of] the Red Army. This report is highly instructive. He was hoping to use the capture of Vyborg¹⁷ by this date to invest the celebration, held in the presence of

16 The Hitler-Stalin Pact included a secret protocol in which the Eastern European countries were carved up between Germany and the USSR. On 1st September 1939, Germany began its invasion of Poland and two days later Great Britain and France declared war against Germany. Shortly afterwards, the USSR occupied eastern Poland and the Baltic states. Under the terms of the pact Finland fell into the Soviet sphere of influence and on 30th November, Soviet forces invaded Finland with twenty-one divisions, totalling some 450,000 men. The USSR had more than three times as many soldiers as the Finns, thirty times as many aircraft, and a hundred times as many tanks. But the Red Army had been decimated by the 1937 Purge when more than 30,000 of its officers were executed or imprisoned, including most of the high command. As a result, the Red Army initially suffered a series of defeats that seriously undermined the military prestige of the USSR.

17 In the war with Finland in 1939 the Red Army was sent to capture the city of Viipuri (Vyborg in the Russian language) in Karelia. Red Army forces crossed the Finnish border on 30th November 1939, but three months later they had still not reached Vyborg.

Stalin, with an especially festive character. However, Stalin's purely symbolic participation in the events of Finnish war gave no cause for celebration. The Red Army failed to capture Vyborg in a timely manner, i.e., in time for the intended anniversary date.

MURDER OF COMMUNISTS

In order to perpetrate the most gigantic forgery in world history it was necessary to carry out the extermination of all possible witnesses. This has constituted the principal portion of Stalin's governmental activities for a number of years. Soviet diplomacy represented an exceptional selection of men. At times they were lacking in diplomatic routine, but they made up for that with a broad knowledge, an international education, familiarity with the capitals of the most important countries, together with their press and the political parties. Such people as Joffe, Rakovsky, Krassin, Chicherin, Karakhan, and Litvinov, do not fall from the sky and are not born every day.

Even to a greater extent this was true of the military department, where the selection was made in the fire of the Civil War, the practical side of which was supplemented by years of serious theoretical work. People like Tukhachevsky, Yegorov, Gamarnik, Yakir, Uborevich, Kork, Dybenko, Putna, Alksnis and many others, represented in the full sense of the word, the brains and the heart of the Red Army.

"Almost all of the men who worked with Chicherin have now disappeared, either shot or imprisoned. As I call their names to mind I feel almost as though I were moving in a world of ghosts. [...] Perhaps personally I was not threatened," Barmine reasoned. "Although I belonged to the doomed generation, the generation of the Civil War...but along with a considerable number of other victims of reaction, it made of me an eye-witness, who was able to tell sometime or another, and therefore am able to accuse."

All the Soviet ambassadors, Rakovsky, Seklinikov, Krestinsky, Karakhan, Yurenev, etc., also proved to be "enemies of the people". At the head of industry, railways and finance were "organisers of sabotage": Pyatakov, Serebryakov, Smirnov, Grinko, etc. At the head of the Comintern were "agents of fascism": Zinoviev, Bukharin and Radek. The heads of all the thirty national Soviet Republics proved to be "agents of imperialism", as were the heads of the government: the People's Commissars Rykov, Kamenev, Rudzutak, Smirnov, Yakovlev, Rosengoltz, Chernov, Grinko, Ivanov, Osinsky and others. The list of "traitors" continues...

Ivan, Nikitich, Smirnov, Glebov – Aveloi, Alexis Rykov, and Krestinsky, who were appointed to the collegiums of the Department of Justice were suddenly arrested. Antonov-Ovseyenko was made general consul of the USSR in Barcelona. There he was ordered to incite murders that served to demoralise the Spanish Republic in the face of the enemy. He was officially appointed to a People's Commissariat in Russia and invited to return to take up his duties. He boarded a ship that landed in Odessa but he never reached his final destination, and never assumed office. He was arrested somewhere en route and that was the end of the line for him.

Christian Rakovsky, the former head of the government in the Ukraine and later ambassador to London and Paris was arrested in the autumn of 1937. The first interrogation by GPU of the sixty-four years old Rakovsky in his apartment went on for eighteen hours without interruption, without food or drink. Rakovsky's wife wanted to give him a glass of tea, but she was forbidden to do so under the pretext that she might poison her husband. [After eight months of torture, he "confessed" to being a spy. Sentenced to twenty years' imprisonment, he is believed to have been shot on Stalin's orders on 22nd June 1941.]

[The diplomatic corps was being exterminated by Stalin.] "From that moment my private judgment was formed, but many years were yet to be necessary, years of experience and observation, before it was to bear fruit. My case is not unique. For thousands and thousands of Communists the bloody years of 1936-38 were crucial," writes Barmine.

Witnesses from the diplomatic corps, who were liquidated in great numbers and with exceptional cruelty, were evidently murdered for the same reason. But this did not entirely succeed in its aim. A number of witnesses of exceptional significance emerged from the ranks of foreign agencies, diplomatic as well as the security services: Ignace Reiss, Krivitsky, Barmine, Raskolnikov and several others. Their testimony has completely negated the work of exterminating the diplomatic corps. The entire edifice of the forgery, distinguished by its extreme crudity, was constructed for immediate effect and did it not endure the slightest attentive contact [with reality.]

Barmine recalls:

A wave of hatred and suspicion of all foreigners had already begun its destructive work in Moscow. The extermination of the whole foreign colony, of enthusiasts or loyal citizens who had come to Russia to put their knowledge at the service of the Socialist government, was proceeding with deliberate thoroughness.

Stalin holds below in his prisons hundreds – and thousands of foreign revolutionists and even entire central committees of the fraternal Communist Parties – the Polish, the German, the Latvian, the Estonians and Hungarians.

Barmine continues:

With the great unhappiness of the country, the same situation or even worse spread throughout the entire Soviet industry from the time of the Purges purported by Stalin and his assistant Yezhov. [...] My friend, a sincere Stalinist, just like myself, with whom I discussed this new situation made me agree without difficulty that since the beginning of the expulsions, exiles, and disfavours, the Party had lost its authoritative figures. Was it not necessary that it should group itself around the man, worthy of confidence, because of his firmness and knowledge of Lenin's people? The cult of the Leader gradually spread with the aid of the reasoning at that time. Sad. No one was more sincerely devoted to Stalin or firmer in the defence of the general line.

The murder of Ignace Reiss, the former GPU agent on the 4th September, 1937, in Switzerland, was perpetrated by Stalin's secret police. During the court investigation of this case, it was incidentally disclosed that the same murderers had systematically stalked my son, Leon Sedov, and attempted to assassinate him at Mulhouse in January 1937. [He was eventually murdered by the GPU in a Parisian clinic in February 1938.] Terrorist acts were perpetrated against me during my stay in Europe and Mexico. In Spain my former collaborator Erwin Wolf was found murdered.

In preparation for future trials, the Kremlin attempted to create a tribunal against terrorism under the auspices of the League of Nations. The purpose of this was to convince [the world], that I am the organiser of terrorist acts in the USSR and to secure my extradition into the hands of the GPU. On the 31st March 1938, I addressed a letter to the Secretary of the League of Nations, in which I argued that a series of assassinations in the various European countries had been perpetrated by the GPU which is directly under the control of Stalin.

With the help of documents, testimony of witnesses, and irrefutable political considerations, I take it upon myself to prove what public opinion has been in no doubt for some time: that is, that the head of this criminal band is Joseph Stalin, general secretary of the Communist Party of the USSR.

Inasmuch as the people's commissar of foreign affairs of the USSR, Mr. Litvinov has very eloquently insisted upon the necessity for governments to mutually obligate themselves to extradite terrorists, he, we can hope, will not refuse to employ his influence to place the above-mentioned Joseph Stalin, as head of the

international terrorist band, at the disposal of the tribunal under the League of Nations.

For my part, I am ready to place all my energy, information, documents, and personal connections at the disposal of the tribunal in order that the truth may be fully disclosed.

I do not hide from the readers the fact that the initiative of mine did not meet with success. And all other hopes placed upon the League of Nations have met with no happier results.

14. THE THERMIDORIAN REACTION

REVOLUTION AND COUNTER-REVOLUTION

What are the pre-conditions of reaction and counter-revolution? For obvious reasons we have tended to ignore this question. We were completely preoccupied with the conditions for victorious revolution. We had even less reason to investigate the conditions of the political counter-revolution and of Thermidorian reaction as the prelude to counter-revolution. [However], it is perfectly self-evident that both of these problems are closely connected with one another.

It is obvious that the basis of revolution is to be found in the state of the economy, in crises and in the contradiction and conflict between the productive forces and property relations. Out of this arises the contradiction between that class that is the bearer of economic progress and the growth of productive forces and the class that defends the old, reactionary forms of ownership that have outlived themselves.

The struggle between classes reaches a point where intolerable tensions arise. That is the economic premise of revolution. On the basis of this objective reality a definite regroupment must arise, expressed in definite political relations and definite states of consciousness in the relationship between classes. These processes have a psychological character. In the final analysis, they are, of course, governed by the objective social crisis. But they have their own internal logic and dynamic: will-power, the willingness to fight and, conversely, perplexity, decadence and cowardice – it is precisely this

dynamic of consciousness that directly determines the direction and outcome of the revolution.

What characterises the epoch of the revolutionary flood tide is, on the one hand, growing contradictions, antagonisms and perplexity among the old ruling classes, while on the other there is the growing solidarity of the main revolutionary class, around which all the oppressed classes gather in the hope of bettering themselves. Finally, the intermediate classes and strata that either remain neutral or are sucked into the maelstrom of events on the side of one or other of the main classes.

The revolution can be victorious when the revolutionary class manages to win over the majority of the intermediate layers, and so becomes the spokesperson of the majority of the nation. In a revolutionary epoch, one can distinguish the slogans under which the struggle takes place: the revolutionary class that strives for power. Revolution becomes possible when the vanguard of the proletariat, organised in the Party, draws the vast majority of the class behind it, isolating the crushed and demoralised elements and reducing them to insignificance.

The highest attainment of solidarity of the revolutionary class corresponds in equal measure to the dissolution and internal divisions within the old classes. However, classes are not homogeneous, either socially or ideologically. Within the proletariat it is always possible to distinguish its vanguard, the intermediate and middle layers, and finally the backward and even reactionary rear-guard. Once the proletariat in its majority is united around the revolutionary vanguard, it sweeps along a significant portion of the intermediate, discontented and oppressed classes and the lower classes of the petty-bourgeoisie, neutralising the other layers, and the thrust of its onslaught throws into crisis the ruling class that has outlived itself. It breaks the resistance of the army, winning over a significant part of it to its side and neutralising the rest, isolating the most reactionary elements. This, in general outline, is the formula of the proletarian revolution.

What is stated above provides a stimulus to our thoughts in determining the conditions and prerequisites for reaction and the victory of the counter-revolution. Reaction or counter-revolution is a response to the new contradictions created by the Revolution, which undertook to provide a radical solution to the old contradictions.

THE EBB AND FLOW OF REVOLUTION

The epoch of reaction following a revolution is characterised by contradictory phenomena. Among those classes that have conquered power there now appear new conflicts and struggles over self-interest, while the classes that had ruled previously, the old ruling classes, draw together, seeking to avenge their humiliations and losses. During the counter-revolution the film of revolution begins to unwind in the opposite direction. However, it never fully reaches the end. A portion of the conquests of the revolution is always preserved.

Counter-revolution arises in response to the failure of the revolution to resolve the contradictions faced by society. What is the new contradiction? First and foremost, it arises from the lack of correspondence between the political strength of the new ruling class and its inability to satisfy the aspirations of the masses. It is the chronic contradiction between the political power of the new ruling class and its real economic possibilities.

The restructuring of society itself represents a deep crisis, accompanied by a slow increase, or even a temporary decline in the economy, and hence in the standard of living of the masses. But when reconstruction is accompanied by a destructive civil war, under the hammer blows of the enemy, this leads to an even sharper reduction in the level of the economy activity, investing the crisis with the character of a social catastrophe. All of this means that the positive results of the revolution are relegated to the far distant future.

Even if the revolutionary class had taken over the old means of production of the old society in a planned and peaceful manner, commencing the reconstruction of society in an environment of tranquillity, even in that case, it would find that the elements of the old society are inadequate and unsuitable for the construction of a new society. There is no ready-made material to rely upon. The revolution then finds itself in the role of a bankrupt debtor. Out of this, great political consequences follow.

The middle peasants, those inert elements who were temporarily swept along by the revolutionary flood-tide, now begin to falter and turn their backs on the vanguard. By contrast, the most reactionary elements that had completely vanished from the scene during the flood-tide of the revolution now raise their heads and give voice to the very same words which the representatives of the defeated classes address to the petty-bourgeoisie: We told you so – the revolution has deceived you.

All those groups, layers and elements that were fragmented, scattered, isolated and demoralised by the revolution, now feel a surge of energy. In turn, the petty-bourgeois masses, whose hopes were aroused by the

passionate onslaught of the revolution, succumb all the faster to moods of disappointment and begin to move away from the revolutionary class to the side of its opponents and enemies. Within the revolutionary class itself centrifugal forces begin to assert themselves. In some parts of the ruling class one can observe the same trends that exist in society at large, albeit in an attenuated form.

However, this is only one side of the process. We have yet to analyse the process of the formation of new privileged layers. But let us retrace our steps. The basic premise of the counter-revolution was the extreme contrast between the political power, conquered by a new class, and the economic opportunities available to it. Having taken power into its hands, the proletariat was able to nationalise all means of production. But these means of production, as a result of backwardness of the country, as well as the imperialist war and Civil War, were marked by their extremely chaotic character. The nationalisation of the means of production opened up the possibilities of the growth of the productive forces. But in itself, neither today nor tomorrow, not in one year, not in five years, not in ten, will [the nationalisation of the productive forces] be able to satisfy even the most basic needs of the masses.

The fact that the old social order has exhausted itself does not yet mean that we possess all the elements for the creation of a new society. History does not unfold in such a rational and harmonious fashion. The new ruling class cannot fully achieve what it intended to achieve when it was fighting for power. To put it in more subjective terms: the leading revolutionary party is not able to accomplish what it intended to do and deliver what it promised the masses. What we have already said is enough to provide the basis for an understanding of the conditions and prerequisites for the victory of reaction and counter-revolution.

REACTION AGAINST OCTOBER

Those so-called theoreticians who attempt to prove that the present totalitarian regime of the USSR is due not to these historical conditions, but to the very nature of Bolshevism, forget that the Civil War did not proceed from the nature of Bolshevism but rather from the efforts of the Russian and the international bourgeoisie to overthrow the Soviet regime. A political reaction set in after the prodigious strain of the Revolution and the Civil War. The reaction was against the World War and against those who had led it. In England it was primarily directed against Lloyd George and served to isolate

him politically to the end of his life. Clemenceau in France suffered similarly. Wilson in the United States has lost popularity.

The tremendous change in the feeling of the masses after the imperialist war and the Civil War was natural. In Russia the consciousness of the workers and peasants was thoroughly impregnated with the idea that their own interests were really at stake and that the Civil War was in a very direct sense their own. Their satisfaction with the victory was very great, and the popularity of those who had helped to achieve it was correspondingly high.

The three years of Civil War left an indelible stamp on the Soviet regime by virtue of the fact that a very considerable layer of the administrators had become accustomed to command and to demand unconditional submission to their orders. There is no doubt that Stalin, like many others, was moulded by the environment and circumstances of the Civil War, along with the entire group that later helped him to establish his personal dictatorship – Ordzhonikidze, Voroshilov, Kaganovich – and a whole layer of workers and peasants [who had become absorbed into the state apparatus].

It was then that Stalin began to emerge with increasing prominence as the organiser, the assigner of tasks, the dispenser of jobs, the trainer and master of the bureaucracy. He chose his men by their hostility or indifference toward his various opponents and particularly toward the one he regarded as his chief opponent, the chief obstacle in the path of his progress upward. Stalin generalised and classified his own administrative experience, chiefly the experience of systematic conniving behind the scenes, and made it available to those most closely associated with him. He taught them to organise their local political machines on the model of his own machine: how to recruit collaborators, how to utilise their weaknesses, how to set comrades at odds with each other, how to run the machine.

Voroshilov wrote (or rather, others wrote for him) that the Red Army is the “bulwark of peace”. The chief task of the government was to protect the people “from the possible repetition of those sufferings that the worker and peasant masses had experienced during the years of the Civil War, and imperialist intervention.” The government’s love of peace is expressed in that the armed forces of the soviets “are relatively the least numerous in the whole world.” All of this was calculated [to appeal to] the fatigue of the nation and its thirst for peace. If Voroshilov’s statement is taken at its face value, the army now has in its ranks (including all auxiliary forces) around 3 million people, half of them members of the Communist Party and Youth.

The day after the Revolution, the people became the owner of the means of production, yet they were immeasurably poorer than before the war, poorer even than on the eve of the Revolution. Revolution is political violence, but the application of political violence in the field of economy could not achieve anything. What was needed here was long, hard, dedicated and systematic work to build on the new social foundations established by the Revolution. The party was over, and a period of grey, cold and hungry everyday life began. In such conditions disappointment was inevitable.

Even the most class-conscious, hardened and firm workers, who understood clearly enough the objective logic of things – i.e. that the want of the masses is not the result of the revolution, but an inevitable stage on the way to a better future – even these workers could not help grow cold. Even if the shortages had been the same for everybody, the feeling that this situation would be unavoidable for the next few years could not fail to produce a certain discouragement and political indifference. And the realisation that purely political measures cannot immediately raise the productive forces certainly did generate a mood of political indifference.

But as a matter of fact, not everyone suffered from the same shortages. Out of the Revolution a new privileged stratum was beginning to emerge. It was the emanation of the revolution, its defender. The source of its influence and well-being was its tendency to grow together with the bourgeoisie. That the crystallisation of a new stratum of professional bureaucrats, placed in a privileged situation and camouflaged from the masses by the idea of ‘socialism’ – the formation of a new highly-privileged and all-powerful ruling caste – changes the social structure of the state and, to a considerable and ever-growing extent, the social composition of the new society is a consideration that Stalin refuses to contemplate. Whenever it is suggested, he brushes it aside with a wave of his arms – or with his revolver. Thus Stalin, the empiricist, without formally breaking with the revolutionary tradition, or without repudiating ‘Bolshevism’, became the most effective betrayer and destroyer of both.

A PRIVILEGED CASTE

Rousseau had taught that political democracy was incompatible with excessive inequality. The Jacobins, as representatives of the petty-bourgeois rank and file were permeated with this teaching. The legislation of the Jacobin dictatorship, especially the rule of the Maximum, was along those lines. So was Soviet legislation, which banished inequality even from the Army. Under Stalin all this has been changed, and today there is not only social but

economic inequality. It has been fostered by the bureaucracy with cynicism and brazenness in the name of the revolutionary doctrine of Bolshevism.

In its campaign against the Trotskyist charges of inequality, in its agitation for a differential scale of wages, the bureaucracy invoked the shades of Marx and Lenin and sought justification for its privileges behind the back of the hard-working 'middle' peasant and the skilled worker. It charged that the Left Opposition was trying to deprive qualified labour of the higher wage to which it was rightfully entitled. It was a masterful manoeuvre on the part of Stalin, and it naturally found instant support among the privileged officials, who for the first time saw in him their chosen leader. With unbridled cynicism, equality was denounced as a petty-bourgeois prejudice; the Opposition was denounced as the chief enemy of Marxism and the principal sinner against the Gospels of Lenin.

"After having conquered the peasants in the struggle over collectivisation and inflicted upon them losses which could be reckoned in millions of lives, Stalin, faced with famine, had to find some way of winning them over to his side," states Barmine.

The search for a solution to this particular problem started in 1931 and has been going on ever since. Concession after concession has been made to the farmers. Finally, in the course of the recent trials, excuses were found to shoot some of those responsible for collectivisation: Cheboldaev, for instance, who ruthlessly carried out Stalin's orders in the northern Caucasus where he superintended the deportation of thousands of Cossack peasants, and Charangovitch who played a similar part in White Russia.

Again according to Barmine, life in Moscow in 1932 became harder, ruthless, without a gleam of hope for anyone, with the simplest tasks of life having to be solved with monstrous efforts. The (first Five-Year Plan of 1928-32) was carried out in a boorish and bureaucratic manner that violated all the elementary conditions of life and all individual plans for living seem to have been crushed by it. In order to maintain the processes of normal life colossal effort was required which, in the final reckoning, had to be deducted from the fulfilment of the basic government Plan.

Toward the end of the first Five-Year Plan, the situation of the workers was extremely difficult. "I couldn't help reflecting that we were past the worst, and yet, under the new 'normal' conditions, the comfort of a few was only possible because the majority had been condemned to poverty and misery," stated Barmine. "The worker had to go almost entirely without butter and

eggs (to say nothing of fruit), and could only very rarely indulge in meat. Black bread, potatoes, cabbage and buckwheat were the main components of his diet.”

Stalin’s ambition was that of an untutored Asiatic, intensified by European technique. He needed the press to extol him extravagantly every day, to publish his portrait, to refer to him on the slightest pretext, to print his name in large type. Today, even telegraph clerks know that they must not accept a telegram addressed to Stalin in which he is not called the Father of the People, or the Great Teacher, or the Genius. Novels, operas, the cinema, paintings, sculpture, even agricultural exhibitions – everything has to revolve around Stalin as around its axis.

In an article in *Pravda* (7th November, 1935) entitled “We talked with Comrade Stalin” is the story of a collectivised peasant woman, Yevdokia Fedotova:

He came up to me and began asking: How are we managing in the Kilkhoz? What are our difficulties? [He] asked a lot about children: what they are studying? Whether they have books and copy books, and about the club, the reading room, the co-operative...he listens, squinting slightly as if he were seeing everything I was telling him. He was especially interested in our income. I said to him: it’s very good Comrade Stalin. Yes, he said, we are trying to make things better... [This was written at a time when millions of peasants had starved to death as a result of Stalin’s policy of forced collectivisation.]

It was in 1932, during this period of hunger and want, that the formation of the aristocracy acquired an accelerated tempo. In the stores and hotels only the highest specialists, bureaucrats and foreigners had privileged access to the food products. In hotels orchestras played and bars were opened. Barmine writes: “Supper for one person at the Metropole cost two months’ salary of a junior clerk.”

The bureaucracy had respected Lenin, but it had always found his puritanical hand rather irksome. When the trio of Zinoviev, Kamenev and I formed the United Opposition the witticism was current: They tolerate Kamenev, but do not respect him... They do not tolerate Trotsky but respect him. But they neither tolerate nor respect Zinoviev. This was quite an apt characterisation of the attitude of the bureaucracy towards the leaders of the Opposition.

As the bureaucracy grew in power and influence, it developed an increasing need for greater comforts. Lolling in automobiles technically owned by the proletariat, on their way to proletarian-owned summer resorts to which only

the chosen few were admitted, the bureaucrats guffawed, "What have we been fighting for?" That ironic phrase was very popular at the time. Stalin satisfied this yearning for the good life by harnessing it to his own designs. He rewarded those most loyal to him with the most attractive and advantageous positions, but at the same time imposed limits on the benefits derived from these positions.

He hand-picked the members of the Control Commission and instilled in them the need to ruthlessly persecute those who stepped out of line. At the same time, he instructed them to ignore those officials loyal to the General Secretary who enjoyed an exceptionally extravagant life style. Stalin measured every situation, political circumstance and combination of people by its usefulness to his struggle for power, and his relentless desire for domination over others. Everything else was intellectually beyond his reach.

Duplicity is inseparable from all of Stalin's politics. One phase of this duplicity consists of empirical uncomplicated thinking which never draws final conclusions and reserves the right to agree with one side or the other. Stalin converts this organic opportunism of his thinking into a deliberate weapon in the struggle. He transforms his incapacity for consistent and systematic thinking into a weapon of political intrigue. He does not think and does not express his thoughts through to the end. He is not driven to weigh up a situation systematically. He is in no hurry. He waits. He half-agrees with one side and half with the other, until the situation ripens for a final decision or until he is forced to assume a position.

We see the same Stalin in the question of building the Red Army. He repeats his manoeuvre of October as well as all his previous manoeuvres. Formally he is with Lenin and to that extent with Trotsky. In deeds, however, he is completely with the Military Opposition. He directs it, chooses people with grievances, spreads the most poisonous rumours around through his agents, and finally, relying on experiences at the Front, systematically attempts to exert pressure on Lenin. He does not dare to come out openly against the military policy as long as Lenin is defending it.

These attributes: formless empiricism supplemented by political duplicity – were often directed against Stalin in periods when events rapidly succeeded one another, when an immediate orientation was required and when the manoeuvre of simply waiting doomed him to tardiness. At such a time Stalin could not help but be relegated to a subsidiary plane, to the shadows. So it was in the period preceding the war, during the war, in 1917, and during the Civil War years. History had to change its rhythm, when the flood-tide yielded

to the ebb-tide. Historic events that were pushing all the contradictions to extremes, to the utmost logical conclusions and invested all conflicts with extreme sharpness, had to be succeeded by the ebb-tide, which rounded the sharp angles, blunted the contradictions in ideas and rendered political formulae vague and formless. Only under these new conditions could evasive waiting, supplemented by manoeuvring and faithlessness, be transformed into a positive force.

He [Stalin] constantly pushed his closest adversaries into conflicts with one another. He developed his talent for using personal and social antagonisms to a fine art and developed an almost faultless instinct for it. In every new situation Stalin's prime consideration was how he would personally benefit. Whenever the interests of the group came into conflict with those of the General Secretary, he always sacrificed the interests of the group. On all occasions, under any pretext, no matter what the result might be, he did everything to create difficulties for his adversaries. With the same degree of persistence he tried to reward every act of personal loyalty. Quietly at first and then more boldly, 'equality' was proclaimed a petty-bourgeois prejudice. In practice, Stalin came out in defence of inequality, in defence of special privileges for the higher echelons of the bureaucracy. The mightiest weapon in Stalin's hands was the accusation of the Opposition that it had wanted to introduce immediate equality.

In this calculated struggle, Stalin was never interested in long-term perspectives. Nor did he think through the social significance of what he was doing, or where it would eventually lead. He acted then, as now, like the empiricist he is. He is busy selecting those loyal to him and rewarding them; he helps them to secure privileged positions; in return, they must repudiate any political ambition that displeases him. At the same time, he teaches them how to create for themselves the necessary machinery for holding the masses in submission. It never enters his head that this policy runs directly contrary to Leninism. But it was Lenin, especially during the last years of his life, who increasingly struggled against Stalin – and against the bureaucracy standing behind him.

STALIN AND THE BUREAUCRACY

The apparatus is already in Stalin's hands, but the masses are not yet completely in the hands of the apparatus. Stalin approaches the matter only from the point of view of selecting cadres, improving the apparatus, securing his control and strengthening his personal power. Insofar as Stalin is concerned with

general questions, he doubtless reasons as follows: the bureaucratic machine will invest the state with greater strength and thus assure the development of 'socialism in one country'. Beyond that he does not venture to generalise.

Stalin himself occasionally dares to speak of the problems of bureaucracy, but always in the most abstract and lifeless terms. The 'bureaucracy' he has in mind is red tape, the lack of attention to detail, untidiness, and the like. He is completely blind to the formation of a whole bureaucratic caste, welded together by the bonds of honour among thieves, their common interest and by their ever-growing remoteness from the people. Without suspecting it, Stalin is organising not only a new political machine but a new privileged parasitic caste.

The bureaucracy creates around itself support in the form of a labour aristocracy, since the heroes of labour, the order-bearer and others, all enjoy privileges themselves, in recognition of their loyalty to the bureaucracy, central or local. All of them enjoy the deserved hatred of the people. The Marxist doctrine of internationalism has been completely abandoned, as such ideas no longer correspond to the outlook of new social stratum. The interests of this mighty petty-bourgeois layer, which gradually concentrated into its hands the power and the privileges of all of the previous ruling classes, have become dominant.

Although by the nature of its new mode of life, its conservatism, its political sympathies, the overwhelming majority of the bureaucracy was drawn towards the new petty-bourgeoisie, its economic roots were largely in the new conditions of ownership. The growth of bourgeois relations threatened not only the socialist basis of property, but the social foundation of the bureaucracy itself. It may have been willing to repudiate the socialist perspective of development in favour of the petty-bourgeoisie. But under no circumstances was it ready to repudiate its own rights and privileges in favour of the petty-bourgeoisie. It was this contradiction that led to the very sharp conflict between the bureaucracy and the *kulak*.

When Bukharin spoke about the *kulaks* growing into socialism through the 'apparatus' of the Soviet state, he was merely approaching the very same Stalinist formula but from the other end. Stalin may not be the originator of this conception but it permeates his policy through and through. True, in his booklet *Caesarism behind the Mask of Revolution* and again in the Fourteenth Party Congress, Bukharin admitted the erroneousness of this slogan, but in his trial Bukharin admitted that this "repentance" was nothing but a "tactical manoeuvre, a fraud".

Stalin's theories [on the state] represent a repetition and development of his views of 1917, and give the most finished expression of the petty-bourgeois democratic conception of the state. For him, the government is an 'apparatus' into which it is necessary to penetrate, with which one has to get closer together and co-operate, towards which [end] one must act. The only thing he does not say is to which class is given government of an apparatus. Yet it is only with this question that Marxism begins. Every real Marxist knows that it is senseless for the proletariat to try to penetrate into the apparatus of the bourgeois dictatorship and that the peasantry decidedly cannot satisfy its basic needs through such an apparatus.

He [Stalin] pays lip service to the traditional Marxist definition of the state as a machine of class oppression. However, he does not believe it, does not understand it, and on all crucial occasions he replaces it with the democratic conception of the state as an instrument of class collaboration. Stalin's religious devotion to the apparatus as such – his cult of the political machine – is grounded in this opportunistic conception of the state.

In the Soviet playwright Afinogenov's play *Fear* (1931), one of the characters says: "The stimulus of behaviour shared by 80 percent of those surveyed is fear, and the remaining 20 percent surveyed are the careerists who have nothing to fear, for they are the owners of the country." Afinogenov himself has fallen out of favour. The careerist twenty percent has heard their Master's voice in that accusation, and the frightened eighty percent did not dare raise their voice.

THE CREATION OF STALIN THE GENIUS

There was another consideration of a personal character which undoubtedly played no small role in the political psychology of Stalin. Parallel with the extermination of the Opposition went Stalin's personal deification. The reconstruction of his biography went on, ascribing him with attributes that he did not possess, qualities that were not his, and heroic deeds that he had never accomplished. But this was no secret. Among the Oppositionists, including those who had sincerely repented, there were hundreds of people who had been in close contact with him, who knew his past, or who had shared prison with him, and who could not be deceived no matter what was said.

As late as 1925, Stalin still referred to the [Party] leaders respectfully, while he was busy mobilising the Party against them. He received the plaudits of the middle layer of the bureaucracy for refusing to bow down to these leaders. By this time he was already a dictator. And yet he did not feel himself

to be a leader, and no one recognised him as such. He was a dictator not by the power of his personality, but by the strength of the apparatus, which was in the process of breaking with the old leaders.

Only after the political liquidation of Bukharin, Rykov and Tomsky and the last fellow champions of Lenin's Political Bureau, only after the renewal of the entire leading personnel of the historical commission, and after Stalin's threatening article, 'About Certain Questions of Party History', do we see the beginnings of a radical revision of the past and a regrouping of all its elements around the new axis. The very same authors who several years ago did not even mention the name of Stalin, although he was already then the General Secretary, now under the impact of the highest dispensation discovered in the very deepest recesses of their memories new episodes, or more often a general retrospective, that behind all the most important acts of the revolutionary movement stood Stalin.

Generally, in the camp of Stalinism you will not find a single gifted writer, historian or critic. It is a kingdom of arrogant mediocrities. Hence, the ease with which highly qualified Marxists began to be replaced by accidental and second-rate people who have mastered the art of bureaucratic manoeuvring. Stalin is the most outstanding mediocrity of the Soviet bureaucracy. I cannot find any other definition than this. The bureaucracy was striving to throw off the severe control [of the Party]. It was looking for a leader in its own image and likeness, one who would be only a first among equals.

According to Nikolayevsky, Bukharin described Stalin as a "personnel manager of genius". An apt expression, but only when "genius" is left out. I heard it for the first time from Kamenev. He had in mind Stalin's ability to carry out his schemes in dribs and drabs, on the basis of an instalment plan. Stalin was raised to the status of the genius only after the bureaucracy, led by its very own General Secretary, had utterly wrecked Lenin's entire staff. It is hardly necessary to prove that a man who uttered not a single word on any subject, and who was automatically raised to the top by this bureaucracy after he had long passed the age of forty, cannot be regarded as a genius.

Life in the Kremlin was crowded. Most of us worked outside the Kremlin walls. Meetings ended at very different times of the day. The canteen is shaped like an oval. There they served food from the restaurant or what was cooked by a woman working here. The workers in the Kremlin do not treat Stalin with affection. "He walks through the Kremlin sulking, like Ivan the Terrible", was the view of our kitchen lady, an Estonian woman. Stalin is not loved even by his immediate entourage.

That does not mean, however, that he does not have people loyal to him. On the contrary, there are many, but this is a peculiar kind of loyalty. It was not the admiration of pupils for their teacher who enriched their thoughts, but the loyalty of nonentities whom the Leader has rescued and for whom he has secured a privileged position.

Molva quotes the Moscow correspondent of the *Socialist Messenger* to the effect that Stalin has practically no personal friends with the exception of a small group of Georgians who had been his comrades since early revolutionary days and which includes Yenukidze, Ordzhonikidze, and a few others. But even these Stalin keeps at a distance. "We are not afraid of Stalin," said Yenukidze to Serebryakov. "As soon as he begins to give himself airs, we'll remove him." But in the end it was Stalin who got rid of them. Some years later Ordzhonikidze, who had known Stalin since the beginning of his revolutionary career in Georgia, complained to Serebryakov: "He wants me to consider him a 'genius'!"

About the same time, the distraught and unhappy Bukharin, who had aided Stalin with the promotion of his prestige and his many hidden talents, cried: "He's gone crazy! He thinks he can do anything; that he alone will hold on to everything; that all the others are mere non-entities!" Almost no one ever visits him at his home. As a matter of fact he spends very little time at home. Even when his wife was living he avoided meeting her friends and relatives and people generally. He has as little regard for his own kin. Although he has visited Tiflis numerous times, he never went to see his own mother. Now Stalin's mother lives in a palace of the former viceroy.

Stalin's firmness of character and narrowness of outlook inspired confidence. His past biography, skimpy though it is proved to be, is highly suitable for the demands of the new role which he has to play. He was undoubtedly an Old Bolshevik and consequently connected with the history of the Party and its traditions. His politics could therefore very easily be represented as a continuation and development of the old politics of the Bolshevik Party. He was the very best possible cover or camouflage for the Thermidorian reaction because he was an old Bolshevik, [albeit one whose] past activity remained unknown not only to the mass of people but to the Party as well.

Innumerable memories, published in the first ten years of Soviet power, did not mention the name of Stalin. The notes to the first edition of Lenin's *Works* state that Stalin was co-opted onto the Central Committee in early 1912. However, a later biographical note states that Stalin was elected to the Central Committee at the Prague conference. But in this case, as in all others,

we trust the first version, which was written at a time when the history of the Party was not yet routinely doctored.

Subsequently Stalin's complete anonymity would be presented to the whole world as a result of his 'modesty'. Given the current situation, where the entire apparatus of the state and the Party has been converted into a machine for praising the leader, it is hard to take this explanation seriously. No, it was the thirst for fame and influence that was constantly driving him on. Precisely in the period of the Revolution when fame could be acquired by directing the will of the masses through speeches and theoretical creativity – that kind of fame was completely beyond his grasp. [For Stalin] fame and popularity had first to be brought about by the organisation of the apparatus, and that apparatus had first to become a machine for the fabrication of popularity... but more of that later.

We are already acquainted with Piatnitsky, who joined the Bolsheviks before Stalin, and had a more intimate knowledge of its personal composition and its established values than anyone else. Yet it did not occur to this man, who wrote his reminiscences after the October Revolution, to say that Stalin was one of the Party's leaders. No one knew what Stalin said or did before 1917, or even before 1923 or 1924. At the Eleventh Conference of the Russian Communist Party, held in December 1921, Yaroslavsky, in the name of the organisational committee, proposed the following list of names for the presidium: Lenin, Zinoviev, Trotsky, Kamenev, Petrovsky, Ordzhonikidze, Voroshilov, Yaroslavsky, Sulimov, Komarov, Rudzutak, I.N. Smirnov and Rukhimovich.

The list is interesting both because of the composition and order of names. The authors of the list, Old Bolsheviks on the order of Yaroslavsky, placed Zinoviev in the second place, so as to remind them that he was an Old Bolshevik. Outside of the first four figures, the remaining members, likewise Old Bolsheviks, were all regional leaders. There was no room for Stalin in this list, yet the calendar indicates the end of the year 1921. The Civil War was past history. It had not made Stalin a leader. Since no one knew about his past, outside of a small circle of persons, no one could juxtapose the present with the past. The broad masses, on the contrary, were inclined to deduce the past from the present. That gave Stalin a possibility, with the aid of the apparatus, to compose for himself a biography which corresponded to the needs of his new historical role.

I would like to relate one brief episode. In 1927, after I was already removed from the Central Committee, the revision of Party history was in

full swing. In the institution where I was then working, a celebration of the October Anniversary was held. I was sitting in my office beside my wife. The report of the October insurrection was made by an official of the Chief of the Concession Committee, Ksandrov, who, like Troyanovsky the Ambassador to the United States, Maisky the Ambassador to Britain and many, many others, only entered the Party several years after the insurrection, when its victory was completely assured.

Ksandrov retold the history, not in as monstrous fashion as today (it was, after all, the tenth anniversary) but still he omitted the names of the most prominent leaders of the October insurrection. He himself had the reputation of being a businessman, a practical person, who had nothing whatsoever to do with the Revolution. I listened behind a door, smiling at this astonishing report. Eleven years have passed since then. During those years I have had more than one occasion to laugh at the radio, upon hearing reports about the October Revolution, made by persons who, like the aforementioned Ksandrov, were irreconcilable opponents of the Bolsheviki and then several years later, made their peace with new aristocracy which grew out of the victorious revolution.

THIRST FOR REVENGE

In 1882, M. Dragomanov wrote on Liberals and revolutionists:

How many examples could be cited of intolerance and petty squabbles among revolutionary circles, of intrigues, mutual deception, character assassinations, the destruction and deliberate concealment of writings published by the others and so on. What would we have seen if any one of the present revolutionary factions would actually have come close to power?...

This article provoked an explosion of indignation among the revolutionary *émigrés*. After its appearance Paul Axelrod sent a declaration to the editorial board of *Volnoe Slovo* with his refusal to contribute any further to that journal. (From the archives of P.B. Axelrod.) [Yet Stalin carried into practice on a far vaster scale things that were infinitely worse than this.]

Madame de Stael thought that slow but uninterrupted perfection may be observed in the course of historical development. But there are no born leaders, just as there are no born criminals. It may be said that in history all the men of genius, all the creators, all the initiators conveyed the essence of anything they had to say during the first twenty-five or thirty years of their life. The development, deepening and the application came only later. During

the first period of Stalin's life we hear nothing but a vulgarised reiteration of ready-made formulae. [On the other hand] all the lowest sides of the intellect – grit, cautiousness, ability to play on the worst sides of the human weakness – were developed to monstrous levels. To this should be added personal vengefulness.

Unable to appeal to the best instincts of the masses, Stalin appeals to their basest instincts – to ignorance, intolerance, narrow-mindedness, primitiveness. He seeks contact with them through coarse expressions. But this coarseness also serves as a camouflage for his cunning. He puts all his passion into carefully-nurtured plans, to which all else is subordinate. How he detests authority! And how he loves to impose it! At Solvychegodsk the report on him reads: “rude, impudent and disrespectful to those in authority!” No other revolutionist was ever described like this. Stalin cannot be firm without being rude. Manuilsky's comment on Stalin's intrigues was quite accurate: “So many threads that he himself gets tangled in them.” At Kureika [prison], unable to dominate his equals, let alone his superiors, Stalin mixed far less with political than with criminals.

Stalin's ambition has become especially cruel due to a series of personal failings and because he has been forced to wait so long for recognition. He put forward his quest for leader of the Party and then government openly in 1929, when for the first time, at the Congress, he delivered the main political report. He was forty-seven years old. During this report he was like a newcomer taking his examinations. He made crude errors which created whispers in the hall, but by this time the machine was irrevocably in his hands. He was the dictator, although the country did not know it. The machine was commissioned to make the country aware of it.

An undoubted characteristic of Stalin is personal, physical cruelty, which is usually called sadism. During his confinement in Baku prison Stalin's cell mate was at one point dreaming of revolution. Stalin, who at that time was still called Koba, asked him unexpectedly, “Have you a craving for blood?” Stalin took out a knife that he had hidden in the leg of his boot, raised high one of the trouser legs and inflicted a deep gash on himself. “There's blood for you!”

His attitude to people was always tinged with hostility and envy. His ambition was intertwined with vindictiveness. From his earliest days he began to make a note of all those who deliberately or inadvertently stepped on his toes. Already in the seminary in his fights with the monks and in-fights with rivals among pupils, he learned to notice the weaknesses of people and how

to strike his opponent in his weak spots. All of his hurt feelings, resentments, bitterness, envy, and attachments he transferred from the small provincial scale to the grand scale of the entire country.

His memory is above all spiteful and he forgets nothing. He created his own five-year and even ten-year plan for revenge. Political revenge went hand-in-hand with his personal revenge. Weak in logic, Stalin is relentless in his brazenness. Let someone point to an error or deficiency and Stalin will counter with a sweeping indictment of the person. Souvarine wrote a carefully documented biography of Stalin based on incontestable facts in which he revealed some unfavourable aspects of Stalin's character and activities. Stalin answered by calling Souvarine a Nazi agent. This is Stalin's basic method – his only method.

After he had become a Soviet dignitary, Stalin would amuse himself in his country home by cutting the throats of sheep or pouring kerosene on ant hills and setting fire to them. Kamenev told me that, on his Saturday leisure visits to Zubalovka, Stalin would walk through the forest and constantly amuse himself by shooting wildlife and frightening the local population. Such stories about him, coming from independent observers, are many in number. And yet there are not a few people with such sadistic tendencies in the world. Special historical conditions were necessary before these dark instincts would find such monstrous developments.

[Here Trotsky apparently intended to explain the combined and uneven development of Russia “in connection with description of Stalin as a combined type: the grafting of civilisation onto a barbarian stem.”] The future historian may conclude: In the beginning of the nineteenth century the Tsar of Georgia submitted to the power of Moscow, realising that he had no alternative. For half a century thereafter the freedom-loving Georgians fought a bitter guerrilla war in defiance of the Russian Tsar's troops and in resentment to persistent efforts to Russify them. At the beginning of the twentieth century, little Georgia imposed its own Tsar on Moscow – not of royal lineage, not even a member of one of the numerous princelings in which Georgia abounds, but Koba, an autocrat more powerful and absolute and far more ruthless and terrible than any of his predecessors at the head of the Russian state.

The killing of an opponent with a dagger in a quarrel or a paroxysm of anger was the reason why the silver dagger dangled from a Caucasian's belt. The blood feud is cruel but open. The avenger can himself “kill the killer”. Such permission was granted to the barbarian Moses by the barbarian Jehovah. Murder and vengeance in the Caucasus during Joseph Djughashvili's

youth was not infrequent. But such direct and honest vengefulness was never Stalin's way... *Reservatio mentalis* is the favourite method of Stalin as writer and orator.

The Ossetians are noted for their vengefulness. Among them the custom of blood feud has been preserved from generation to generation, at least among the youth. The blood feud is a custom among the Khevsur. If a Khevsur wanted to revenge himself on someone he would throw a dead cat on the grave of his enemy. According to Zinaida Ordzhonikidze, he [Stalin] would say: "On the grave of the dead lay a dead cat." Stalin carried this custom into the sphere of high politics.

Is it possible to draw any conclusions about 1924 on the basis of the years 1936-38, when Stalin had already developed into a complete tyrant? In 1924 he was still only struggling for power. Was Stalin then already capable of heinous actions? All the data of his biography compels us to answer that question in the affirmative. From the time of his days in the Tiflis seminary he left behind a trail of malicious suspicions and accusations. For him, polemics in newsprint were not sufficient in a political struggle. Only the dead do not awaken.

'FATHER OF THE NATION'

In summarising this epoch of ours, a historian of the future may conceivably record that the revision of the past was brought about at such feverish pace that the authorities of yesterday were demolished. The highest official historian, Pokrovsky, was proclaimed after his death 'an enemy of the people' because he was not respectful enough toward the past history of Russia. There began a rehabilitation not only of the old national patriotism but of the military tradition as well. There began researches into Russian military doctrines and the rehabilitation of all the Russian military strategists up to and including 1914.

In order to rewrite history, Stalin oversaw the wholesale destruction of books by authors who, during Lenin's lifetime, had been considered as standard Marxist work. In an open letter to Stalin, Raskolnikov reminds us how circulars had arrived from Moscow demanding the burning of books that contradicted the official biography of Stalin. Among them were the books of Raskolnikov whose memoirs were the first recorded events of the Revolution.

In his memoirs Barmine writes:

Each mail from Moscow brought us lists, drawn up for the guidance of the librarians and secretaries of the Party cells, of books which must be immediately burned. In all cases they were those which contained references to the theorists, the Marxist writers, or the men of letters who were held to be compromised by the recent trials. Since every man who had been involved in the first or second of the Plans that had been put into operation over the past fifteen years was already compromised, I asked myself with amazement what there would be left for USSR libraries to put on their shelves! It was quite enough for a classical work to have a preface by Bukharin or Radek or Kamenev – to the flames with it!...“At this rate,” I thought, “we shall burn more books than the Nazis – and more by Marxist authors!”

Barmine adds:

A large number of Marx's own books were condemned, because they had been edited by Ryazanov who was deported some while ago. The first edition of Lenin's work was withdrawn from circulation [...] By such means Stalin showed his full meaning. I learned that Moscow librarians were more closely watched and more constantly threatened than any other class of citizens... Libraries were being constantly subjected to purges. The files of official newspapers – there are no others – covering the past year, had become forbidden reading matter.

[Recalling the creative spirit inspired by the October Revolution] Barmine writes:

Moscow at that time enjoyed an extraordinarily rich, and endlessly experimental, intellectual life [...] Most of the great thinkers of the immediate past had either emigrated, or spent their time grumbling at the new regime. One great poet of pre-revolutionary days, Valery Bryusov, surprised everyone by becoming a Communist. All his old friends broke with him. On every side the young were swarming, filled with a fiery enthusiasm which was unlike anything that had ever been known till then. Revolutionary Marxism, with its spokesmen, Lenin, Trotsky, Bukharin, Preobrazhensky, Ryazanov, Kamenev, Lunacharsky and Karl Radek, that magnificent pleiad of men of action, theoreticians, thinkers, politicians and moralists, was questioning every human value and laying the foundations of a new world. There was an answer to everything and if, sometimes, maybe, the answer was too categorical, it was at least splendidly vital, stimulating the mind and setting the imagination on fire. A new life was injected into everything – international politics, law, military tactics, ethics, sex problems, literature, painting...

What a contrast to the grey sterility of the USSR today, where no one dares do more than paraphrase the mediocre speeches of the General Secretary, where even the poets may do no more than praise him in verse, as do the writers of prose in their own medium!

The literature and art of the Stalinist epoch will go down in history as examples of the most absurd and servile Byzantinism. The great writer, Alexis Tolstoy, who bears the name of one of the mightiest and most independent of Russian writers, wrote of Stalin:

Thou, bright sun of the nations,
The unsinking sun of our times,
Art greater than the sun, for the sun has no wisdom...

We receive our sun from Stalin,
We receive our prosperous life from Stalin.
Even the good life in the tundras filled with snow-storms
We made together with him,
With the Son of Lenin,
With Stalin the Wise.

To call things by their right name, this poetry is more reminiscent of the grunting of a pig.

Stalin decided the architecture of the House of Soviets, a monstrous building that, with its imposing uselessness and crude grandiosity, provides the concrete expression of a brutal regime devoid of any ideas or perspective. He takes a keen interest in films, regaling directors and actors not only with political advice but also technical instructions. The purpose of these films is to make a legend out of the Leader. In this way Soviet cinematography, which made such a promising start, has been killed stone dead.

Studying in detail, step by step, the formation of bureaucratic mythology, one gets the impression of a natural historical process. The lie acquires an almost automatic character. It enters almost all the cracks, fills in the empty spaces, utilises every opportunity for using old documents, and then closes together into one mighty stream and washes out of the way all the impediments, facts, dates, documents, as if yielding to the law of gravity. This massive, organic, unconquerable character of the lie is the undeniable evidence that it is not merely a matter of personal ambitions of an individual, but something immeasurably greater: the new caste of privileged upstarts had to have its own mythology.

Stalin's ambitious pretensions find recognition and assume the form of generally recognised 'facts', only because they coincide with the pretensions of the ruling caste which has broken with the people and which has need of a Bonapartist superman and infallible demigod as its crowning representative. The article on the "felicitously reigning" Tsar-Emperor Alexander III, written

for an old Russian encyclopaedia by an obsequious courtier, is a model of truthfulness, moderation and good taste by comparison with the article on Stalin in the latest *Soviet Encyclopaedia*.

In *Pravda* of the 18th November, 1935, is an article entitled 'Listening to Stalin': "...when Comrade Stalin rose on the tribune and as if sensing what would immediately happen in the hall, and obviously desiring to escape it, raised his hand in a statesman-like manner and quelled the cries of adoration." This is the way in which religious legends, mythological genealogy, official histories of the dynasties were created, but with this difference: those legends were formulated in the course of centuries. Here, however, the caste of upstarts was compelled to create its own mythology in the epoch of aviation and radio-transmission. That is why the myth of Stalin is devoid of any artistic qualities. It is only capable of astonishing the imagination through the grandiose sweep of shamelessness that corresponds completely with the character of the greedy caste of upstarts, which wishes to hasten the day when it has become master of the house.

Caligula made his favourite horse a Senator. Stalin has no favourite horse and so far there is no equine deputy sitting in the Supreme Soviet. However, the members of the Supreme Soviet have as little influence on the course of affairs in the Soviet Union as did Caligula's horse, or for that matter even the influence his Senators had on the affairs of Rome. The Praetorian Guard stood above the people and in a certain sense even above the State. It had to have an Emperor as final arbiter. The Stalinist bureaucracy is a modern counterpart of the Praetorian Guard with Stalin as its Supreme Leader. Stalin's power is a modern form of Caesarism. It is a monarchy without a crown, and so far, without an heir apparent.

[In the realm of philosophy] every kind of [subjective idealism] tends towards Solipsism: the idea that I am the world. The bureaucrat tends towards [the belief that] I am the State. Inside every bureaucrat there resides not an idealist but an autocrat – one who aspires to power. "*L'Etat, c'est moi* [I am the State]," said Louis XIV. But he only identified himself with the State. His formula is almost liberal by comparison with the realities of Stalin's totalitarian regime. The Popes of Rome (though only during the epoch of temporal power) identified themselves with both the State and the Church, which in its turn identified itself with all aspects of spiritual life. The totalitarian state goes far beyond the power of Caesars and Popes, for it has embraced the entire economy of the country as well. Stalin can go much further than the *Roi Soleil* [Sun-King] when he exclaims: "*La Société, c'est moi.*" ['I am Society'].

The religion of the bureaucracy tends not to polytheism, but to monotheism. In the religion of Stalinism, Stalin occupies the place of God with all its attributes. But this is no Christian God who is dissolved into the Trinity. Stalin has left his 'Trinity' – the stage of the Troika – far behind. This is rather a case of 'Allah' – there is no God but God – who dares to do everything himself and who fills the universe with his endlessness. He is the focal point in which everything is united. He is the Lord of the terrestrial and the spiritual world; the creator and ruler. He is omnipotent, omniscient, all-virtuous, all-forgiving, his decisions are irrevocable, and he has ninety-nine names.

STALINISM VERSUS LENINISM

[Trotsky compares the relation of Stalinism to Leninism to that between early Christianity and the present day Roman Catholic Church. Its immense riches and bloated bureaucracy stand in glaring contrast to the poverty and simplicity of the early Christians and their doctrine of equality], yet Catholicism has historically grown out of the teachings of Christ. True, for this, centuries were necessary. As for Bolshevism the transformation or degeneration took place in a matter of decades. But for Christianity at that time there were no railroads, no aeroplanes, no telegraph, no radio. Now everything occurs quickly, even degenerations.

In the recently published book by Boris Souvarine entitled *Stalin*, Stalin's moral standing is deduced from his "belonging to the order of professional revolutionists". Souvarine's generalisation in this case as in others is superficial and arbitrary. As a matter of fact, the vast majority of professional revolutionists were distinguished by their idealism, self-sacrifice, and profound honesty. At any rate, morally they stood on a considerably higher level than the professional bureaucrats of the labour movements of Europe and America.

Souvarine's book is without doubt the most conscientiously researched work in its selection of facts, documents and quotations. Souvarine has the tremendous advantage over other biographers of Stalin and related literature in that he knows the Russian language. But the author's mind is formalistic and utterly devoid of historical penetration and intuition. He does not see the phenomena in three dimensions. All he seeks is literary precedents and not the inherent laws of development. With his purely formal and lifeless way of thinking, he completely fails to see or understand the processes. He attempts to deduce the whole evolution of the Soviet Republic from certain original sins he attributes to the nature of Bolshevism – as if Bolshevism operated in

an empty space or with an amorphous mass; as if Bolshevism were a demi-god of history which sculpts human material in its own image and likeness; and as if there were no interaction with the social environment.

Can such phenomena be explained by some inherent weakness in Bolshevism? We are far closer to an understanding when we take into consideration the very natural frailties of an ageing human being subject to powerful pressures. The environment is a social force which we need to take fully into consideration. One must not overlook the general course of this process. [Not only the Bolshevik Party but also] the democratic parties [including] the Social-Democrats have experienced the most complete degeneration and decomposition. The democratic regime is collapsing everywhere. Of the old pessimistic reformist parties not even ideas and perspectives are left.

Only those who have attempted to deduce the entire evolution of the Soviet State from certain so-called original sins of Bolshevism; only the hopelessly formalistic mind which was utterly devoid of historical insight or intuition; only a Souverine, whose deficiencies prevented him using his splendid knowledge of Russian and his conscientious research, can imply or assert such an absurdity. Not even Hitler or Stalin is such a demigod. We who understand dialectics are certain of that, and as a result, we can firmly predict the revenge of history. We are not dismayed by setbacks. Despair is alien to us. We have no illusions either about the past, the present or the future.

In the pamphlet *Our Political Tasks* written by the author of this book in 1904, which contained a sharp criticism of Lenin's organisational plans, there is among other things, the following prognosis:

In the internal politics of the Party these methods lead to the Party organisation 'substituting' itself for the Party, the Central Committee substituting itself for the Party organisation, and finally the dictator substituting himself for the Central Committee. (Trotsky, *Our Political Tasks*, p. 77)

It is not hard to see that these lines give quite an exact expression of the process of degeneration, which the Bolshevik Party suffered during the last fifteen years. No wonder that certain historians are trying to take advantage of this formula in order to prove that Stalinism was fully embedded in the methods of Lenin. As a matter of fact that is not the case.

The above prognosis in my youthful pamphlet was by no means distinguished by the historical profundity which several authors have wrongly attributed to it. Like the laws of mathematics, democracy and centralism reduced to abstract principles can find their application in the most varied

circumstances. It is not difficult to "foretell" in a purely logical manner that unrestrained democracy leads to anarchy or atomisation, or that unrestrained centralism leads to personal dictatorship. Such generalisation can be found not only in my pamphlet of 1904, but also somewhat earlier, for example, in Plutarch and, if you prefer it, in Euclid.

Insofar as the Lenin's centralism seemed excessive to me, I naturally resorted to a logical reduction to absurdity. Nevertheless, it was not a matter of abstract mathematical principles, but of concrete organisational elements, and the mutual relation between these elements were not at all fixed and immovable for all time. After the period in which confusion and isolation characterised the life of local Party organisations in 1898-1903, the drive towards centralisation [in Party organisation] inevitably assumed exaggerated and even caricatured forms. Lenin himself said that when a stick is bent in one direction, you have to bend it back in the other direction.

Of particular importance to his development was the graphic lesson of a relatively small but unanimous party being able to shape the thought of the masses and lead them using everyday agitation. The importance of the 'apparatus' appeared before him in grand scale and much more clearly than the political ideas that connected this apparatus with the masses.

It is not hard to imagine what kind of political and ideological changes would come about in the Bolshevik bureaucracy when it assumed power. Out of a thin layer, which was always under the control of the Party, and under direct pressure of the revolutionary vanguard, the machine expanded and absorbed all the remnants of other tendencies, including the petty-bourgeois and the intelligentsia, and became transformed into a powerful conservative social layer that concentrates into its hands the entire state power, including the country's wealth. The influence of the Marxist doctrine of internationalism would decline, as ideas of this type do not correspond with the social status and the interests of the powerful petty-bourgeois stratum, which has gradually concentrated in its hands the power and privilege of all former ruling classes.

In subsequent years, Lenin's organisational policies did not represent a straight line. More than once he had to speak out against excessive centralism and appeal to the lower ranks of the Party against its leaders. In the heroic period of the Russian Revolution, thanks to the flexibility of its organisational policies, the Bolshevik Party managed to combine in its inner life the broadest democracy, giving expression to the feelings and thoughts of the masses, and centralism, which is the guarantee of firm leadership. It preserved the necessary balance between the elements of democracy and centralism. The

best test of this balance was the historical fact that the Party absorbed within itself the proletarian vanguard, and that this vanguard, through democratic mass organisations such as the trade unions and later the Soviets, was able to rally behind it the entire class, and even more: the entire toiling masses of the nation.

The violation of this balance was not a logical result of Lenin's organisational principles, but the political consequence of the changed balance of forces between the Party and the class. The Party degenerated socially, becoming the organisation of the bureaucracy. Exaggerated centralism became a necessary means of self-defence. Revolutionary centralism was transformed into bureaucratic centralism. The apparatus, which cannot and dare not appeal to the masses in order to restore internal conflicts, is compelled to seek a higher power, standing above itself. That is why bureaucratic centralism inevitably leads to personal dictatorship.

Lenin became leader of a powerful and influential party before he was able to address the living word to the masses. His public speeches in 1905 were few and far between and passed unnoticed. Lenin enters the stage as a mass-oriented orator only in 1917, and that was still only for a short period, throughout April, May and July. He takes power not as an orator, but primarily as a writer, instructor and agitator who raised up cadres, including orators.

In this respect Stalin presents a completely exceptional phenomenon. He is neither a thinker, nor a writer, nor an orator. He assumed power before the masses had learned to discern his figure from others at the celebratory marches on the Red Square. Stalin rose to power not thanks to personal qualities, but to an impersonal apparatus. And it was not he who created the apparatus, but the apparatus that created him. This apparatus, with its might and authority, was the result of a long and heroic period of work by the Bolshevik Party, which, in turn, grew out of ideas. The apparatus was only a carrier of the idea, before it became an end in itself.

Stalin's intransigence has nothing in common with Lenin. Lenin's persistence and intransigence were the consequence of his great historical perspective. These attributes were directed toward great historical problems. Personal conflicts were merely the consequence of these great issues. As soon as Lenin was successful in securing a majority for his political ideas he displayed the greatest flexibility in the sphere of personal relations. In total contrast, for Stalin general ideas have always been merely the seasoning, the trimmings, or supplement to certain direct empirical goals. In the course of achieving these practical aims, always permeated with personal motives, Stalin manifested

the greatest intransigence, which subsequently evolved into utter bestiality. On the other hand, he very easily threw overboard the most basic ideas and principles of Bolshevism, if that proved to be convenient to him in attaining one or another of his immediate aims.

His entire transition from revolutionary Marxist (Bolshevik) to the most extreme bureaucratic opportunist became possible only through a bold repudiation or revision of principles in the interests of the immediate practical task. It was not a question of a forthright repudiation of the programme, but a gradual backsliding from one position to its direct opposite.

Stalin assumed leadership of the apparatus when he cut the umbilical cord of the idea and [the apparatus] became a thing-in-itself. Lenin created the apparatus through constant exchange with the masses, if not with spoken then with printed word, if not directly then indirectly, through his followers. Stalin did not create the apparatus but took control over it. Obviously not just anyone can assume control of an apparatus. Exceptional and special qualities were required for this, which, however, have nothing in common with the qualities of a historical initiator, thinker, writer or orator. In the beginning the apparatus grew out of ideas. [In order to take it over and transform it] Stalin required contempt for ideas.

BUREAUCRATIC VERSUS DEMOCRATIC CENTRALISM

The counter-revolution takes the form of a highly centralised bureaucratic police state. It is easier, of course, to secure discipline by the threat of violence, and plausible distortions of the truth than persuasion based upon free discussion. But there is discipline and discipline! An arbitrarily imposed discipline leads at best to [the obedience of the] barracks. The discipline of Bolshevism is a form of self-discipline, the discipline of self-respect and the responsibility of continual discussion. Such creative discipline is voluntary, freely concurred in, imperfect in outward form, and as ragged-edged as the waves or anything else in nature. But it has the [fluidity] and all-embracing rhythm of all natural things – from the beating of the human heart to the heat of the foundry. It is as different from [bureaucratic] discipline, as a real man from a waxwork imitation or a mummified corpse.

Ever since the appearance of *What Is to Be Done?* Lenin had been preaching the necessity of a highly disciplined party of professional revolutionists for the conquest of power. Never before in history had such a party existed. The October Revolution provided the most devastating confirmation of the importance of the Party in history. Lenin's arguments were proved correct.

What killed the Bolshevik Revolution was not discipline, but when too much discipline was imposed arbitrarily. The Party was a living organism. Its fighting ability in the defence of the Revolution was proved crucially by the Civil War. This continued as long as the bureaucracy was kept in check and democratic debate was guaranteed in the Party and in the country. When that perished the revolution perished. What survived [was arbitrary rule].

This naturally raises the part played by authority in the revolutionary party and, even beyond that, in the revolution. Numerous puny sects and splinter groups, peddling their own cheap little offerings, often deliver sweeping repudiations of authority in principle. In its place we hear them praising abstract principles of democracy. It is of course an axiom that a revolutionary party is not revolutionary unless it is democratic – i.e. grounded in majority rule concretely, and not abstractly. But that does not eliminate the problem of authority and what it represents. For us, it is the distillation of experience, that is, the accumulated lessons learned from past battles and defeats. In the Bolshevik Party, not only the personal prestige of Lenin, but the prestige of its leaders collectively made up the authority of the Central Committee.

The principle of individual leadership was utterly alien to the Party. The Party singled out the more popular figures for leadership, gave them its confidence and admiration, whilst always adhering to the view that the leadership actually came from the Central Committee as a whole. Ironically, this tradition was used to great advantage by the triumvirate of Stalin, Zinoviev and Kamenev [in their struggle with Trotsky], when they insisted on the supremacy of the Central Committee as a collective over any individual.

Tempered and tested by experience, authoritative leaders represented a tremendous accumulation of capital for the Party. In moments of doubt, hesitation or lack of clarity, the words of experienced leaders focus the attention of the Party on the essential issues, eliminating misunderstandings and errors without much friction and waste of time. Moreover, on occasions where immediate action is required, when there is little time to debate the matter before the Party and take a decision, the leader with the necessary authority is able to take the responsibility even when the fate of the Party is at stake. Having carefully weighed all the circumstances, the Party's confidence in him and his confidence in the Party will normally [ensure] approval for his actions.

It is likewise true that such authority not only streamlines deliberations within the Party, but there is a danger that this may also weaken critical thought within the Party and lead to an over-confidence towards the Party's

leading bodies. As Barmine puts it: "Whatever our hesitations and our doubts the sentiment of loyalty to the Party was always the determining influence in our decisions. I was one of those who invariably backed up the findings of the Central Committee."

Needless to say, the solution to this problem is not the complete denial of all authority. All the processes that we are analysing are rooted by their very nature in the contradictions of real life. The problem should be solved in such a way as to allow the replacement of one leader by another more qualified. This may seem obvious. In fact, the problem is in no way peculiar to the revolutionary movement; we find it to one degree or another in all spheres of human activity, including even science. Darwin raised natural science to new heights. But his authority proved to have certain negative consequences, for example, in the attempt to transfer the laws governing the struggle for existence mechanically into the field of social phenomena, that is, Social Darwinism.

The question of the authority of the leadership leads us to the question of Party unity. Indeed, the two are closely interrelated. A serious breach of Party unity, we are told, can lead to a crisis of the regime and create circumstances favourable to the counter-revolution. This argument was used again and again against all oppositionists and finally played a decisive role in the downfall of the very men who were Lenin's collaborators.

Souvarine discovers the chief weakness of the Bolshevik Party in the fact that it was only capable of single-minded action under the guidance of a leader of genius. Being completely dependent on him, including his mistakes. Consequently without him, left to its own devices, it invariably proved to be worthless or bankrupt. Notwithstanding its apparent truthfulness, this reasoning is just as abstract and lifeless in character as most of that author's judgments. Men of genius certainly exert exceptional influence on their party and on their contemporaries generally. Such was the fate of Lenin.

The genius of Lenin was expressed in the fact that he pioneered new historical methods. But not every Bolshevik was capable of recreating those ideas or discovering those perspectives upon which Lenin unified his Party. The persons around him were not capable either intellectually and morally of seeing any further: they marked time and became stuck in a rut. All the same the average level of the Bolshevik Party was certainly not lower than the average level of the Mensheviks.

However, men like Lenin are not born in a vacuum. His authority was not imbibed with his mother's milk, nor was it inspired by school textbooks

and church prayers. Every Bolshevik, from Lenin's closest collaborators to the provincial comrades, had to convince themselves of the superiority of Lenin's ideas and methods through the experience of countless discussions, political events, and concrete actions.

It is hardly appropriate to speak of intellectual passivity in the Bolshevik ranks. There can be no question that without Lenin the Party at once found itself immeasurably weaker than with him. But that does not at all mean that parties created or led by mediocrities have any advantage in that respect. Let us hope that in the future, humanity will learn to raise the intellectual level of all its members to the level of genius. But that gives us no cause for regarding the individual genius as a historical misfortune.

All of this merely shows that it is necessary to approach the question of the role of authority in revolutionary politics dialectically, not rationally or mechanically. There are conditions under which the authoritative leader plays a tremendously progressive role and is able to secure victory or at least considerably accelerate and enhance it. It is true that under unfavourable conditions excessive confidence may be placed in a leadership which can become a brake on further development. That is a danger. However, when pious moralists demand absolute 'guarantees', that is utterly absurd. Such people want roses without thorns, revolutions without excesses, progress without the danger of reaction, and a leadership without any threat of degeneration. Unfortunately, there are no preventative means and no insurance against the inconsistencies of development.

In this contradiction is the essence of the Thermidor. The Sisyphean labours of those who try to reduce all subsequent developments to a few allegedly fundamental original sins of the Bolshevik Party are both sterile and absurd, as if a political party were a homogeneous entity and an omnipotent factor of history. A political party is only a temporary historical instrument, one of very many instruments and schools of history. The Bolshevik Party set itself the goal of the conquest of power by the working class. Insofar as that party accomplished this task for the first time in history and enriched human experience with this conquest, it fulfilled a tremendous historical role.

Only people as far from severe reactionary situations as Souvarine can depict revolution in a simple, one might say artistic way. In 1907-11 there was a wave of reaction composed of an infinite number of phenomena and processes that in their totality constituted an irresistible force. The revolutionary wave of 1917-23 was immeasurably greater than the Revolution of 1905-07 in its sweep and depth. Accordingly, under the pressure of world

events, the reaction in the USSR acquired a deep and irresistible character. The difference is that the reaction of 1907-11 was absolutely clear and open, since the revolution was strangled by external [counter-revolutionary] forces. But the Thermidorian reaction had a disguised character: the proletarian revolution was strangled from within.

Only the most confused people with a liking for abstruse discussion can demand of a political party that it should subjugate and eliminate the far weightier factors of the masses and the classes hostile to it. The limitation of the party as a historical instrument is expressed in the fact that at a certain point, at a given moment, it begins to disintegrate. Under the tension of external and internal pressures, cracks appear, fissures develop and organs begin to atrophy. This process of decomposition set in, slowly at first, in 1923, and rapidly increased in tempo. The old Bolshevik Party and its old heroic cadres went the way of all flesh; shaken by fevers and spasms and excruciatingly painful attacks, it finally died. In order to establish the regime that is justly called Stalinist, what was necessary was not a Bolshevik Party, but the extermination of the Bolshevik Party.

Depending on the masses, it [the Revolution] weakened to the extent that the masses themselves lost their way and the perspective of world revolution and fell into apathy, to the same degree that the bureaucracy ceased being a thin layer and acquired social stability. In one sense, of course, it is possible to say that Stalinism grew out of the old Bolshevik Party, since new formations do not fall from Heaven, but are fed by the formations of the preceding period. But in the old Bolshevik Party there were three elements: the revolutionary dynamics of the proletarian vanguard, centralised organisation and Marxist doctrine.

Out of these three elements Stalinism inherited only the centralised organisation, switching it from the class struggle of the proletariat to the social interests of the new ruling layer. The forms, the rituals, the phraseology, the banners remained to a certain degree the old ones, and this outward shell misleads those who hold superficial views of them. The essence has been radically altered. The abyss that separates Stalinism from Bolshevism is far greater than the gulf between Bolshevism and Menshevism ever was. This fact is both empirically verifiable and incontestable. It is proved by the fact that in the Spanish Revolution and French politics Stalinism goes hand-in-hand with the right-wing Mensheviks, Social-Democrats and bourgeois democrats, while at the same time within the USSR it was obliged to eradicate the entire Bolshevik Party root and branch.

Only utter fools with empty heads can think that this is a mere incidental historical process and not the complete and definitive social transformation and destruction of the original Bolshevik Party.

A HISTORICAL PARALLEL

In this period of capitalist decline Europe's regression produces many of the traits of capitalism's infancy. Present-day Europe strongly resembles 15th century Italy. Of course the dimensions are infinitely greater. The Renaissance is full of rare characteristics. It is the period of the awakening of the new individuality among the layer of the young bourgeois intellectuals. Since then a lot of water has gone under the bridge. Bourgeois society has grown old.

At that time, Italy was the foremost land of capitalism. The small Italian states represented the baby steps of an infantile capitalism. These city states, with their squabbling princes, dukes and kings rubbed up against one another like pebbles in a sack. They were constantly intriguing and busy attempting to change the borders of their tiny dominions – a miniature and foretaste of present-day Europe. It was an epoch of transition from old to new norms – an amoral, and *per se*, immoral period.

Corruption was the keynote in Italian politics. The art of governing was practised in cliques and consisted in the gentle arts of lying, betrayal and crime. To fulfil a contract, to keep a promise, was considered the height of stupidity. Slyness walked hand-in-hand with violence. Superstition and lack of confidence poisoned all relations between the heads of the states. It was the period of the Sforzas, the Medici, the Borgias. But it was not only the period of treachery and forgery, of poison and craftiness. It was also the period of the Renaissance.

The good was intertwined with the bad. It was the period of extraordinary development of individualism, albeit the number of individuals who could afford to indulge in the benefits of this individualism was highly limited – and often reduced to one in each state. The official medieval morality of humility and submissiveness was superseded by love of fame and ambition. In addition, apostasy and superstition, gambling and extravagance, licentiousness and vice, lies and murder, and thirst for vengeance was typical of Sigismondo Malatesta and Caesar Borgia.

But there is a profound historical significance in these purely personal analogies. The customs of the declining Roman Empire were formed during the transition from slavery to feudalism, from paganism to Christianity. The epoch of the Renaissance marked the transition from feudal to bourgeois

society, from Catholicism to Protestantism and Liberalism. In both instances the old morality had managed to spend itself before the new morality was formed.

The previous norms of morality had outlived themselves and the new norms had not yet established themselves. "In all spheres the good and the bad were intertwined in the Italian states of the 14th and 15th century," says the historian Pastor. The chronicles of the 15th century reveal that [these] times "were full of extraordinary appearances and atmospheric indignations, bad crops, earthquakes and epidemics."

This produced a long line of Italian improvisers, which represented the temperament of the nation. Most Italian Emperors were natives of Tuscany or Venice, especially Siena and Verona where the gift of improvisation still prospers. "Unlimited individualism for which the false Renaissance was so famous gave birth, in addition to the love of fame, to many other disastrous vices such as extravagance, luxury, gambling, thirst for vengeance, lies and forgeries, immorality, crimes, murders, religious indifference, apostasy and superstition," states Pastor.

This was in Rome, when the cardinals wrote pornographic comedies and the Popes produced them in their courts. "Shameless also was the method of murder used by the state, which was a special favourite in Venice for getting rid of enemies, internal as well as external. The decision concerning a murder was discussed and decreed in sessions of the government council," Fatano wrote. "Nothing is worth less in Italy than human life!"

"It was during the second half of the 15th century that observant students discovered horrible corruption in Italy's political relations ... and where suspicion poisoned relations between the heads of state." This destructive state of affairs was used by the great families of that time: Francisco and Louis Sforza, Lorenzo Medici, Alexander the Sixth, Caesar Borgia and others. In the military sphere, it was a time of adventurous military leaders, known as the *condottieri*.

Among the most repulsive characters are named Sigismondo Malatesta and to a certain extent Caesar Borgia. "The horrible immoralities of the Borgia family were in no sense an isolated phenomenon; almost all of the noblemen of Italy lived in a similar way". (Pastor) "There were two or three famous dinners when Borgia poisoned some of his best friends, but this cannot become the reason for not taking dinners anymore," says Maffio.

According to Victor Hugo, Lucrezia Borgia administered poison to her opponents during the Eucharist in the Sacrament. "There are poisons which

serve Borgia much better than and without the fanfare of the axe and the dagger." When she poisoned her enemies she explained at the moment of their death: "You did not expect this? I am only avenging myself. What do you say gentlemen? Which one of you understands vengeful people? I do not think it so bad, and what do you think of that for a woman!"

The dissenting son of a Roman Pope, Caesar Borgia was an adventurer, military leader, statesman, infidel, cardinal. In the struggle with other adventurers, Caesar Borgia was victorious in most cases. The *Encyclopaedia Britannica* states, however:

He was undoubtedly not a man of genius, as had been imagined for a long time, and his successes were due mainly to the support of the Papal Throne; as soon as his father died his career came to an end, and he could no longer play a prominent role in the affairs of Italy. His fall shows an unhealthy foundation, upon which his system had been reared.

Much of what has been ascribed to Caesar Borgia and his sister Lucrezia is most likely false. To a certain extent their names have become entwined with legend. It was through myths and the stories of chroniclers and historians that certain crimes have been ascribed to these people. The whole epoch was characterised by an exceptional development of individualism. "From these conditions emerged evil figures that combined the most refined culture, criminal effrontery, vicious slyness and contempt for all moral laws. The character of these people was represented by Nicholas Machiavelli." (Pastor)

It is precisely during the transition epochs, when it is necessary to break the old and build the new, that the state power discloses all its force. The view that the state is a massive judge or referee, who intervenes when he is requested to, seems at such epochs ludicrous and pathetic. The state attains its highest degree of concentration and becomes tyrannical, destroys and builds. It was this view of the state that was Machiavelli's. To Machiavelli the state is a pure governmental institution, which served to train in patriotism. "The Christian religion," says Machiavelli, "teaches only suffering. That manner of living has obviously weakened the world..."

Nicholas Machiavelli was the most gifted representative of the Renaissance. "Experience shows," wrote Machiavelli, "that great deeds are performed by those who are able to subject others to themselves by means of cunning or force". Machiavelli also wrote:

When the fate of the fatherland is at stake, it is impossible to pay attention to any difficulties, obstacles, or to ask whether it is just or unjust, or to whether a

measure is humane or cruel, laudable or deserving of reproof. Casting aside all other criteria, it is necessary to resort exclusively to the means which can save life and preserve the freedom of the fatherland.

In any resemblance to the giants of the Renaissance, Stalin is devoid of any colour, personality, sweep, comprehension, capricious generosity. He is boorish but not resolute. He is impudent but cowardly. In his early youth after he had had to abandon the seminary he served for a time as a bookkeeper in Tiflis observatory. We still do not know how well he kept his debit and credit books, but he introduced the bookkeeping calculation into politics and into his personal relations. His vanity just as his hatreds is subjected to strict calculation. While the people of the Renaissance were daring, Stalin is cautious. He carries his hate for a long time until it becomes otiose. His revenge has a gigantic sweep only because he does not stand on the ground but at the top of the most grandiose of all the apparatuses.

Stalin had been brought up in the school of revolutionary fighters who never hesitated to resort to the most resolute measures of action or even to sacrifice their own lives. This ruthlessness Stalin placed at the service of the new privileged caste. Under the guise of continuing the old revolutionary struggle, Stalin exterminated the entire older generation of Bolsheviks and all of the ablest and most idealistic representatives of the new generation. Whenever the gun proved inconvenient for one reason or another, Stalin resorted to poison.

At the Moscow Trials it was revealed beyond a shadow of doubt that Stalin had at his disposal a rich laboratory [of poison] that even Borgia might have envied, together with a staff of doctors who, under the pretext of healing the sick, removed any undesirable persons. Frunze died mysteriously. So did Dzerzhinsky and Krassin. So did Stalin's wife. There was poisoning in connection with the death of Maxim Gorky and of Ordzhonikidze. Finally, Lenin's death was abetted and hastened by poison. If Stalin is not a super-Napoleon then he is undoubtedly a super-Borgia.

THE VENGEANCE OF HISTORY

For many people, the role and fate of Stalin – this great dictator of a massive country – is a complete mystery. It is not possible to understand how Stalin was somehow 'raised' to power by the revolutionary wave, because during this time he was in the shadows. It would be a total abomination to even grant him a revolutionary honour in the manner of the first Bonaparte. In

Napoleon only his campaign coat was grey; the rest of his figure impresses us even today with its wealth of colours. Whereas Stalin's entire figure is painted a grey colour. What is striking from his writings and speeches is the drabness of their content and banality of their form. It is clear that history has nothing to clutch at in this figure in order to raise him up.

{Every stage of development, even such catastrophic stages as revolution and counter-revolution, grows out of the preceding stage, is rooted in it and bears some resemblance to it. After the victory of October, there were writers who argued that the dictatorship of Bolshevism was merely a new version of tsarism. Burying their heads in the sand, they refused to recognise the facts: the abolition of the monarchy and the nobility, the uprooting of capitalism with the introduction of planned economy, the abolition of the State Church and the education of the masses in the principles of atheism, as well as the abolition of landlordism and the distribution of the land to the actual tillers of the soil.

{In the same way, after Stalin's triumph over Bolshevism many of the same writers – people like the Webbs, the Wellses and the Laskis¹, who had previously been critical of Bolshevism and had now become fellow travellers of Stalinism – closed their eyes to the cardinal and stubborn fact that, notwithstanding the measures of repression resorted to under the pressure of extraordinary circumstances, the October Revolution brought about a radical transformation of social relations in the interests of the toiling masses; whereas, the social upheavals initiated by the Stalinist counter-revolution are steadily transforming the Soviet social order in the interests of a privileged minority of Thermidorian bureaucrats.

{Equally immune to elementary facts are certain renegades of Communism, many of them erstwhile henchmen of Stalin's, who, with their heads buried deep in the sands of their bitter disillusionment, fail to see that, notwithstanding the superficial similarities, the counter-revolution headed by Stalin differs in certain definitive fundamental essentials from the counter-revolutions carried out by the Fascist leaders; they fail to see that the difference is rooted in the dissimilarity between the social base of Stalin's counter-revolution and the social base of the reactionary movements headed by Mussolini and Hitler, that it runs parallel to the difference between the dictatorship of the proletariat,

1 Prominent representatives of the right wing of British Labour reformism. Sidney (Later Baron Passfield) and his wife Beatrice Webb were early members of the Fabian Society, as was the writer H.G. Wells and Harold Laski. They rejected Bolshevism from the standpoint of right-wing Social-Democracy but later became adulators of Stalin.

however distorted by Thermidorian bureaucratism, and the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie: i.e. the difference between a workers' state and a capitalist state.

{Moreover, this fundamental dissimilarity is illustrated – and in a certain sense even epitomised – by the uniqueness of Stalin's career when compared with the careers of the other two dictators, Mussolini and Hitler, each of whom was the initiator of a movement, an exceptional agitator, and a popular tribune. Their political rise, fantastic though it seems, developed on its own momentum in full view of all, inseparably linked to the growth of the movements that they led from their very inception. The rise of Stalin was of an entirely different character. It is not comparable with anything in the past. He seems to have no prehistory. The process of his rise took place somewhere behind an impenetrable political curtain. At a certain moment his figure suddenly stepped forth from behind the walls of the Kremlin, armed and equipped with the full glory of power, and for the first time the world became aware of Stalin as a ready-made dictator. All the keener is the interest with which thinking humanity examines the nature of Stalin, personally as well as politically. In the peculiarities of his personality it seeks to discover the key to his political destiny.

{It is impossible to understand Stalin and his later success without understanding the mainspring of his personality: love of power, ambition, envy – his indefatigable, ever-active envy of all who are more gifted, more powerful people who rank higher than he. With that characteristic braggadocio which is his most essential trait, Mussolini told one of his friends: "I have never met my equal." Stalin could never have uttered this phrase even to his most intimate friends, because it would have sounded too crude, too absurd, too ridiculous. There were any number of men in the Bolshevik leadership alone who excelled Stalin in all respects but one – his concentrated ambition. Lenin valued power highly as a tool of action. But pure love of power was utterly alien to him. Not so with Stalin. Psychologically, power to him was always something separate and apart from the aims which it was supposed to serve.

{The desire to exert his will as the athlete exerts his muscles, to lord it over others – that was the mainspring of his personality. His will have thus acquired an ever-increasing concentration of force, growing in aggressiveness, thrust, range of expression, stopping at nothing. The more often Stalin had occasion to convince himself that he was lacking in very many attributes for the acquisition of power, the more intensely did he compensate for each

deficiency of character, the more subtly did he transform each lack into an advantage under definite conditions.

{The current official efforts to equate Stalin with Lenin are simply an obscenity. If we leave aside the size of the individual, Stalin cannot even be put on a par with Mussolini or Hitler. No matter how meagre the 'idea' of fascism is, both the victorious Italian and German leaders of the reaction first began to take the initiative, bringing the masses to their feet and paving the way for a new course. None of this can be said of Stalin. Lenin created the Bolshevik Party. Stalin grew out of the Party apparatus and is inseparable from it. To the masses and the great historical events, he had no other approach but through the machine.}

It is true that for fifteen years prior to the October Revolution Lenin had campaigned for a highly disciplined party of professional revolutionaries as the condition *sine qua non* for the conquest and maintenance of power. Nevertheless, throughout his career, including the five years of his active life after the victory of October, Lenin never created a 'monolithic' Party, as they now claim. Born out of polemics and factionalism, Bolshevism flourished throughout the twenty years of its Leninist period on the basis of argument and dissension. It was only after Lenin's death, after Stalin's ruthless police measures had strangled the Bolshevik Party, and after the red blood of pulsing life had been drained from its veins, that it assumed the rigidity of a mummified corpse. It is not excluded that this corpse may yet turn upon its maker in the manner of Frankenstein's monster.

While Lenin was alive, he was able to prevent Stalin from assuming too much power. The Party apparatus, which had a certain conservative tendency like every apparatus, was still a tool of the Party and not its master. The conservative traits of the apparatus received extraordinary impetus in subsequent years, mainly in response to the interests of the apparatus itself. When Vladimir Ilyich said on the eve of the October insurrection that we wanted that "every cook should be able to govern a state", that was really a new utterance in the history of humanity. Now only one 'chief' is governing and he is a specialist only in peppery dishes.

Of Christ's twelve apostles, Judas alone proved to be a traitor. But if he had acquired power, he would have represented the other eleven apostles as traitors, and also all the lesser apostles, whom Luke numbers as seventy. The idea of degeneration set in another age (the 15th century) is contained in Dostoyevsky's novel *The Brothers Karamazov*, in which the poem of the Great Inquisitor ends with Christ silently kissing the inquisitor on his lips. If it

were possible to cast out the all-powerful mysticism, the shrill detestation of socialism and of revolution – if, in a manner of speaking, the poem of the Great Inquisitor could be secularised – [it would become] the poem of the tragedy of [Stalinist] epigonism... [Here we have] the farewell of one of the bureaucratic epigones of Christianity. Lenin, notwithstanding all of his reserve, would have spat in his face.

The point which I now occupy is unique. I therefore feel that I have the right to say that I have never entertained a feeling of hatred towards Stalin. There is a lot said and written about my so-called hatred for Stalin which apparently fills me with gloomy and troubled judgments. I can only shrug my shoulders in response to all this. Our ways have parted so long ago that whatever personal relationship there was between us has long ago been utterly extinguished. For my part, and to the extent that I am the tool of historical forces, which are alien and hostile to me, my personal feelings towards Stalin are indistinguishable from my feelings towards Hitler or the Japanese Mikado.

Our period, our epoch resembles the epoch of the Renaissance in the sense that we live on the border of two worlds – the bourgeois-capitalist, which is suffering agony and that new world which is destined to replace it. Now, once again, we are living through the transition from one social system to another, in the epoch of the greatest social crisis which, as always, is accompanied by a crisis in morality. The old has been shaken to its foundation. The new has scarcely begun to emerge. Social contradictions have once more achieved exceptional sharpness.

When the roof has collapsed and the doors and windows have fallen off their hinges, the house is bleak and hard to live in. Today, stormy winds are blowing across our entire planet. All the traditional principles of morality are being discarded and not only those by Stalin. But a historical explanation is not a justification. Nero, too, was a product of his epoch, but after he perished his statues were smashed and his name was scraped off every monument. The vengeance of history is far more terrible than the vengeance of the most powerful General Secretary.

In the Soviet Union there exists a ruling hierarchy, which is strictly centralised and completely independent from the so-called soviets and the people. The selection of this hierarchy is carried on from the top down, and where Stalin holds in his hands the power of an absolute autocrat. He selects for himself the members of the Central Committee, which he is then able to eliminate in the interval between one Congress of the Party and the next. These Congresses are convoked whenever Stalin and his clique find it

necessary to rubber-stamp an accomplished fact. The bureaucracy has at its disposal tremendous incomes, not only in money terms, but also in the form of splendid buildings, automobiles, summer dachas, and the best consumer goods from all parts of the country. The upper layer of the bureaucracy lives like the big bourgeoisie of the capitalist countries, while the provincial bureaucracy and the lower layers of the capital live like the petty-bourgeoisie of the West.

The counter-revolution sets in when the spool of progressive social conquests begins to unwind. There seems no end to this unwinding. Yet some portion of the conquests of the revolution is always preserved. At any rate, the struggle against equality and the establishment of very deep social differentiations has, so far, neither been unable to eliminate the socialist consciousness of the masses nor the nationalisation of the means of production and the land, which are the basic socialist conquests of the revolution.

At the end of the eighteenth century, private ownership of the means of production was a factor of powerful progressive significance. It still had Europe and the whole world to conquer. But in our times private ownership is the greatest single barrier to the adequate development of the productive forces. The Russian Thermidor would have undoubtedly opened a new era of bourgeois rule, if that rule had not proved obsolete throughout the world. Thus, in spite of monstrous bureaucratic distortions, the class basis of the USSR remains proletarian. Although it undermines these achievements, the bureaucracy has not yet ventured to resort to the restoration of the private ownership of the means of production. But let us bear in mind that the unwinding process has not yet been completed, and the future of Europe and the world during the next few decades has not yet been decided.

EDITOR'S AFTERWORD: TROTSKY'S *STALIN* – A MARXIST MASTERPIECE

The relationship between individual psychology and historical processes provides a fascinating theme for students of history and forms the basis of the present work. How did it come about that Stalin, who began his political life as a revolutionary and a Bolshevik, ended up a tyrant and a monster? Was this something pre-ordained, whether by genetic factors or childhood upbringing?

There are some circumstances in Stalin's early life, painstakingly analysed by Trotsky, that suggest certain tendencies towards revengefulness, envy and a cruel, even sadistic streak. Taken in isolation, however, these tendencies cannot have a decisive significance. Not every child who is abused by a drunken father becomes a sadistic dictator, just as not every unsuccessful artist, resentful at his rejection by Viennese society, becomes Adolf Hitler.

For such transformations to occur, great historic events and social convulsions are necessary. In the case of Hitler it was Germany's economic collapse following the Wall Street Crash that provided him with an opportunity to lead a mass movement of the ruined petty-bourgeois and de-classed lumpen-proletariat. In the case of Stalin it was the ebb of the movement that followed the Russian Revolution, the exhaustion of the masses following the great exertions of the war, Revolution and Civil War and the isolation of the Revolution in conditions of frightful backwardness and poverty that led to the rise of a privileged bureaucracy.

The millions of officials that elbowed the workers aside hardened into a privileged caste. These upstarts needed a leader who would defend their

interests. But this leader had to be a man with revolutionary credentials – a Bolshevik with a solid pedigree: “Cometh the moment, cometh the man.” The Soviet bureaucracy found its representative in Joseph Djughashvili, known to us as Stalin.

At first sight, Stalin would not seem an obvious choice to step into Lenin’s shoes. Stalin had no ideology, other than to gain power and hold onto it. He had a tendency towards suspicion and violence. He was a typical *apparatchik* – narrow-minded and ignorant, like the people whose interests he represented. The other Bolshevik leaders spent years in Western Europe and spoke foreign languages fluently, and participated personally in the international workers’ movement. Stalin spoke no foreign languages and even spoke Russian poorly with a thick Georgian accent.

This paradox is explained by Trotsky. A revolutionary epoch demands heroic leaders, great writers and orators, bold thinkers who are able to put into words the unconscious or semi-conscious aspirations of the masses to change society, translating them into timely slogans. It is an age of giants. But a counter-revolutionary period is one of ebb, retreat and demoralization. Such a period does not require giants but people of a far smaller stature. It is the age of the opportunist, the conformist and the apostate.

In such circumstances, bold visionaries and heroic individuals are no longer required. The mediocrity rules supreme, and Stalin was the supreme mediocrity. Of course, this definition does not exhaust his qualities, or he would never have succeeded in elevating himself above the heads of people who were in every respect his superiors. He also possessed an iron will and determination, a stubborn, indomitable thirst for power and personal advancement and an innate skilfulness in manipulating people, exploiting their weak side, manoeuvring and intriguing.

Such qualities in the context of an advancing revolution are of only third-rate importance. But in the ebb-tide of the revolution, they can be utilised to great effect. The way in which this applied in Stalin’s case is explained by Trotsky with a mass of carefully assembled material drawn both from his personal archives and many other sources, including the memoirs of Bolsheviks, Stalinists, Mensheviks and particularly Georgian revolutionaries who knew the man intimately.

THE ROLE OF THE INDIVIDUAL

The attempt to reduce great historic events to individual personalities is superficial and usually reflects an inability to approach history from a scientific

point of view. Historical materialism finds the mainspring of history in the development of the productive forces. But this by no means denies the role of the individual in history. On the contrary, the historical process can only be expressed through the agency of men and women.

To discover the complex interplay between the particular and the general, between personalities and social processes is a difficult task, but it can be done. Marx dealt with this aspect brilliantly in *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, where he shows how, under certain historical circumstances, a mediocrity, like the man Victor Hugo called *Napoléon le Petit* ('Napoleon the Little'), can come to power. The precise way in which the individual interacts with objective processes has never been so painstakingly examined as in Trotsky's *Stalin*. It is probably unique in Marxist literature in that it attempts to explain some of the most decisive events of the 20th century, not just in terms of epoch-making economic and social transformations, but in the individual psychology of those who appear as protagonists in a great historical drama.

Did the personality of Stalin determine the fate of the USSR? It is sufficient to pose the question to expose its complete hollowness. The defeat of the European Revolution meant that the regime of workers' democracy established by the October Revolution could not survive. Once the Revolution was isolated in conditions of frightful economic and cultural backwardness, the rise of the bureaucracy was inevitable, with or without the presence of Stalin. But one can say that the particularly horrific nature of the regime, its sadistic methods and the monstrous scale of the Terror were determined to a very great extent by Stalin's character, his paranoia and his unquenchable thirst for revenge.

Stalin is a fascinating study of the way in which the peculiar character of an individual, his personal traits and psychology, interacted with great events. For that very reason, it has had its detractors. There have been many attempts to present *Stalin* as a work motivated by Trotsky's desire to discredit his enemy in the Kremlin, or at the very least as an account in which factors of a personal or psychological nature rendered an objective study impossible. Such a superficial judgement does a serious injustice to the author. Trotsky already anticipated these criticisms when he wrote:

The point which I now occupy is unique. I therefore feel that I have the right to say that I have never entertained a feeling of hatred towards Stalin. In certain circles there is a lot said and written about my so-called hatred for Stalin which apparently fills me with gloomy and troubled judgements. I can only shrug my

shoulders in response to all this. Our ways have parted so long ago that whatever personal relationship there was between us has long ago been utterly extinguished. For my part, and to the extent that I am the tool of historical forces, which are alien and hostile to me, my personal feelings towards Stalin are indistinguishable from my feelings towards Hitler or the Japanese Mikado. (*Stalin*, present edition, Chapter 14: 'The Thermidorian Reaction'; section: 'The revenge of history')

It is characteristic of academic historians to hide behind a façade of what is supposed to be impartiality. But, in fact, every historian writes from a particular viewpoint. This is particularly evident in histories of the Russian Revolution – or even the French Revolution, if it comes to that. As proof of this we can point to the flood of 'learned' books on the Russian Revolution that is churned out every year, especially since the fall of the Soviet Union, that claim to furnish incontrovertible proof that Lenin and Trotsky were bloodthirsty monsters and the Soviet Union never accomplished anything except the KGB and the Gulag.

One only has to scratch the surface for the mask of academic objectivity to slip, revealing the ugly contorted features of an anti-Communist fanatic. In contrast to the hypocritical pseudo-objectivity of academic historians, Trotsky approaches the question of the Stalinist counter-revolution as a Marxist and a revolutionist. Is there a contradiction between having a passionate interest in changing society and at the same time being capable of an objective appraisal of historical events and the role of individuals in the historical process? Let Trotsky answer for himself:

In the eyes of a philistine a revolutionary point of view is virtually equivalent to an absence of scientific objectivity. We think just the opposite: only a revolutionist – provided, of course, that he is equipped with the scientific method – is capable of laying bare the objective dynamics of the revolution. Apprehending thought in general is not contemplative, but active. The element of will is indispensable for penetrating the secrets of nature and society. Just as a surgeon, on whose scalpel a human life depends, distinguishes with extreme care between the various tissues of an organism, so a revolutionist, if he has a serious attitude toward his task, is obliged with strict conscientiousness to analyse the structure of society, its functions and reflexes. (Trotsky, *The Chinese Revolution*, 1938)

THE 'GREAT WAR LEADER'

On 20th August 1940 Trotsky's life was brutally ended when a Stalinist agent brought an ice pick crashing down on his defenceless head. Among the works left unfinished was the second part of *Stalin*. A few words are therefore needed

to explain what occurred in the years from the assassination of Trotsky to the death of the man who ordered and planned it behind the walls of the Kremlin.

Trotsky's murder occurred at a time when the world was struggling in the throes of the Second World War. Strenuous attempts have been made to spread the myth of Stalin as a 'great war leader'. In reality, Stalin's policies left the Soviet Union at the mercy of Hitler. His disastrous purge of the armed forces decimated the Red Army's commanding staff – a fact that was not lost on Hitler. Many German generals were strongly opposed to fighting a war on two fronts. But Hitler answered by pointing to the poor quality of the leadership of the Red Army. This was demonstrated by the disastrous Finnish campaign of 1939-40, which Trotsky mentions in the final chapter of *Stalin*.

Stalin imagined that by signing the Stalin-Hitler Pact, he would avoid war with Germany. When the German army invaded it met with little or no resistance because Stalin did not believe the news and ordered the army not to respond to 'provocations'. As a result, millions of Red Army soldiers were taken prisoner and sent to be starved to death in German concentration camps. The Soviet air force was destroyed on the ground. When he finally realised what was happening, Stalin panicked and went into hiding, saying, "Everything Lenin built will be destroyed." These were the actions of the man who later gave himself the title of 'Generalissimo' and was presented to the world as the Leader of the Great Patriotic War.

Only the colossal vitality of the nationalized planned economy and the heroism of the Soviet workers and soldiers saved the Soviet Union from complete annihilation. By 1942 the economy was recovering fast. By 1943 the Soviets were out-producing and out-gunning the enemy. The equipment and weapons produced by the USSR were of first-class quality, and were superior to that being used by the Germans or the British and Americans. This is the secret of their success. It gives the lie to the oft-repeated allegation that a nationalised planned economy is not capable of producing goods of a high quality.

Even when the Soviet forces were able to go onto the offensive, Stalin played a negative and disruptive role, interfering with the military command and issuing orders that seriously increased the number of Soviet casualties. The notorious Order 270 stated that no Soviet soldier could surrender and all who did so were to be regarded as traitors. Large numbers of Soviet soldiers who had been surrounded and captured in 1941 as a direct result of Stalin's bungling, found themselves under suspicion and sent to Siberia after the war.

The war in Europe was finally reduced to a titanic conflict between Hitler's Germany, with all the resources of Europe behind it, and the USSR. In the end the USSR won the war against Hitler single-handedly. The Red Army staged the most spectacular advance in military history. Up to that point the British and Americans had been mere onlookers. They only invaded France in 1944 because if they had not done so they would have met the Red Army on the shores of the English Channel.

The victory of the Red Army was a triumphant vindication of the colossal superiority of a nationalized planned economy which enabled the USSR to survive the first disasters and re-organise the productive forces beyond the Urals. The heroism of the Soviet workers, who remained loyal to the October Revolution, saved the USSR and Europe from the Nazi barbarians. But this great feat was accomplished not because of Stalin but in spite of him.

PARANOIA AND THE TOTALITARIAN REGIME

The people of the Soviet Union paid a terrible price for their victory, with 27 million dead and the wholesale destruction of the productive forces. Moreover, the victory of the Soviet Union in the war strengthened the Stalinist regime for a whole period. The USSR rapidly recovered from the terrible destruction caused by the war. However, the growth of the economy was not reflected in increasing living standards for the masses. Instead there was a sharp increase in repression and in the cult of Stalin.

For reasons that will be clear to the reader of this book, with Stalin political questions were often mixed up with personal and psychological considerations. He could never tolerate anyone too big alongside him. Since Stalin was of short stature he made sure that he was not photographed next to anyone taller than himself. He was the Great Leader and Teacher, the greatest theoretician, writer and speaker. His views were absolute on every question: from genetics to linguistics.

Stalin now lived like a recluse in his *dacha*. He saw enemies everywhere. But the diseased state of Stalin's mind was merely a reflection of a sick regime. Millions of state and Party officials shared in the crimes of Stalin. They accepted the unacceptable in order to preserve their privileged situation, their big houses and cars, their bloated salaries and even greater legal and illegal perks and privileges. Servility and corruption were endemic to the bureaucratic totalitarian system. They fawned on their superiors who in turn fawned upon the Big Chief. Fear of the masses drove the bureaucracy to close ranks still more fervently around the leader who guaranteed their privileges.

By the final years of his life Stalin was almost certainly insane. What is insanity but an inability to distinguish reality from fantasy? A regime of absolute power in which all criticism is prohibited serves eventually to unbalance the mind. This almost certainly happened with Hitler. The history of mad Russian tsars and Roman emperors tells the same story. In the absence of any check or control he believed himself to be all-seeing, all-knowing and all-powerful.

In his paranoid state, he no longer trusted anyone. Lifelong Stalinists like Voroshilov, Mikoyan and Molotov were accused of being British spies. Stalin had begun to promote new Party leaders in preparation for the elimination of the Party Inner Circle. Then, in January 1953, *Pravda* announced the arrest of a “group of saboteur-doctors” accused of murder and attempting to “wipe out the leading cadres of the USSR”.

This was the prelude of another mass Purge like 1937. These moves sent a shudder through the ruling circle. A new Purge would not only mean their liquidation; it would endanger the whole position of the bureaucracy and undermine all the gains of the planned economy and the Soviet Union itself. Therefore the ruling circle decided to put an end to the old man before he put an end to them.

After one of the usual late night drinking bouts in his *dacha* on 1st March 1953, Stalin is said to have suffered a stroke. Four days later Stalin was dead. In his memoirs published in 1993, Molotov claimed that Beria had boasted to him that he had poisoned the Boss. More recent investigations state that Beria, with the complicity of Khrushchev, slipped warfarin into Stalin's wine on the night of his death. What is certain is that the ruling circle breathed a sigh of relief.

STALINISM WITHOUT STALIN

The reign of the tyrant was over. But the regime he had created outlived him, albeit in a modified form. Despite the crimes of Stalin and the bureaucracy, the superiority of a nationalised plan of production was demonstrated, not just by the victory over Hitler but by the astonishing pace of post-war reconstruction, when the USSR had an annual growth rate of ten percent – a rate which was the norm in the USSR until the mid-sixties. If this rate of growth had been maintained, the USSR could have overtaken the West not just in absolute but even in relative terms.

The main reason the growth rate was not maintained was the colossal waste caused by the mismanagement, bungling and corruption of the bureaucracy

itself. Without the democratic control and management of the working class, the bureaucracy was undermining the planned economy, clogging up all the pores and suffocating all the creative powers of the Soviet people, both the workers and intellectuals. This was an enormous drain, which was wasting between one third and one half of the wealth produced by the Soviet working class every year. It led to a steadily falling growth rate, stagnation and, finally, collapse.

In retrospect, it is possible to see that Stalinism was a temporary historical aberration. It lasted for such a long time because for a whole period the Soviet Union developed the means of production, albeit at enormous cost to society and the working class. In *The Revolution Betrayed* Trotsky predicted that either the Soviet working class would overthrow the bureaucracy and restore Lenin's regime of workers' democracy (soviet power) or else the bureaucracy would inevitably move in the direction of the restoration of capitalism.

In the end, it was the latter variant that occurred. Trotsky forecast that the bureaucrats would not be satisfied until their children could inherit the wealth they had derived from the state-owned means of production. The Stalinist bureaucratic regime lasted far longer than Trotsky had anticipated. But in the end it collapsed like a house of cards. Just as Trotsky had foreseen, the bureaucracy that betrayed the October Revolution went over to capitalism with the same careless ease as someone walking from the second-class to the first-class compartment of a train.

The apologists of capitalism try to comfort themselves with the thought that the collapse of the USSR signified the demise of socialism. Not so! What failed in Russia was not socialism, but a false model, a caricature of socialism. The Stalinist regime was the antithesis of the democratic regime established by the Bolsheviks in 1917. Trotsky's *Stalin* explains this point and its analysis retains all of its relevance and vitality today.

Alan Woods

TROTSKY'S APPENDICES TO
STALIN

APPENDIX 1. THE FRENCH THERMIDOR¹

The history of the French Revolution enters into a crisis which sharply divides it into two halves. The epoch of striving for freedom having passed into anarchy, the epoch of the centralisation of power now passed into the Terror. The era of the Terror commenced in 31st May, 1793, when the Montagnards² utilised an uprising that they had launched in Paris to expel the Party of the Girondins³ from the Convention. It lasted until Ninth Thermidor (27th July 1794)⁴, that is, until the fall of Robespierre.

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- 1 In this appendix Trotsky deals with the parallels between the Thermidorian reaction of the French Revolution at the end of the eighteenth century and the Stalinist political counter-revolution in Russia. Under Robespierre, the victory of the Revolution was assured over its internal and external enemies. The Jacobin Terror was essentially a war measure, a defensive action to combat internal counter-revolution and foreign aggression. It should be borne in mind that the reaction in France and Russia was based on different property relations that had been established by the revolutions.
 - 2 This term is derived from the French word for 'mountain' (*la montagne*). The Montagnards were a radical political group, so called because they sat on the highest benches in the Assembly. They based themselves on the revolutionary *sans-culottes* in Paris engaged in a violent struggle with the more moderate Girondists. Maximilien Robespierre was their most prominent leader.
 - 3 Girondins, also called Brissotins, after Jacques-Pierre Brissot, a grouping of republican deputies, with key members from the Gironde *département*, who led the Legislative Assembly (October 1791 to September 1792). They represented the big bourgeoisie and the more backward provinces.
 - 4 The French revolutionary government abolished the old calendar and replaced it by a new one with different months and names of months. 'Ninth Thermidor' was 27th July (1794), when the dictatorship of Robespierre was overthrown by a group of

The rise of Robespierre coincided with the revolutionary flood-tide. In this sense Robespierre was not a usurper but the saviour of the People. He became its legitimate master and infallible high priest, something which is expressed in the arrogant tones and the colourful language of the Jacobins. He embodied not only Truth, but also Virtue. To act against him was viewed not only as sheer madness, but even a crime. His whole aim in life was to fight against scoundrels, to secure the triumph of Virtue through the destruction of all dishonourable rogues. On this basis, cruelty was, in his eyes, seen as a new virtue.

*Taine*⁵ seeks to discover the roots of “Jacobin spirit” in general attributes of human nature, and finds them in two traits – an inclination for abstract discussion, and pride. Under normal conditions, these ‘growing pains’ pass off; but under favourable circumstances, in times of revolution, they develop to the extreme.

There is no doubt that Robespierre sincerely wished to have executioners with “clean” hands. That desire, which was one of the illusions he had inherited from his mentor, the “virtuous Jean-Jacques Rousseau”, was one of the reasons for his downfall. Robespierre’s moral code was based on ‘Cynicism’⁶ or ‘patriotism’, that is to say, “the suppression of everything that leads to the concentration of human passions on vile Egotism.”

Dating from the establishment of the second Committee of Public Safety, power begins to pass, on the one hand, to the Hébertistes⁷ and to Robespierre on the other. Throughout the entire period of the Terror and

conservative Jacobins who then formed a government called the Directory, and rested on the middle bourgeoisie. This overturn did not liquidate the basic conquests of the bourgeois revolution, but did transfer the power into the hands of the more moderate and conservative Jacobins, the better-to-do elements of bourgeois society.

- 5 *Taine* refers to Hippolyte Taine (1828-93), the conservative bourgeois historian of the French Revolution.
- 6 Here Trotsky does not mean cynicism in the modern sense but rather the philosophy of the ancient Greek Cynics, for whom the purpose of life was to live virtuously. They advocated a simple existence, in agreement with nature, free from all possessions and renouncing wealth, power, sex, and fame. Robespierre himself was utterly incorruptible and lived an austere life of poverty even at the height of his power. The same was true of Lenin and the other Bolshevik leaders after 1917.
- 7 The Hébertistes were an extreme revolutionary political group led by the popular journalist Jacques Hébert. They grew in influence during the Reign of Terror but were eventually crushed by Robespierre, which tilted the political balance to the Right and prepared the way for the downfall of Robespierre and the victory of the Thermidorian reaction.

Jacobin dictatorship, the Jacobin Club was more and more transformed into a government institution. With their growing influence the Clubs, themselves, now became the chief weapon of state Terror. In the provinces the commissars of the Convention (the revolutionary parliament) delegated to the local Jacobin Clubs powers of supervision over officials and the elective organs with the right to replace them. Thus was formed a tremendous political mechanism resembling that of a thousand weavers acting in unison under a general pressure. The lever that propelled them into activity was in the hands of a group of determined men of action in the Rue Saint-Honoré.

Louis Blanc, a warm admirer of Robespierre, considered the outstanding traits of the Jacobins to be their hatred of all inequality, unbending convictions, fanaticism and a willingness to introduce daring innovations, a love of dictatorship, and a passion for regulations.

The gravity of his [Robespierre's] bearing, the authority of his ever-unctuous but severe speech, his visage nobly altered by the habit of meditation and a long practice of life, his vast forehead, his gaze full of thoughts, the proud outline of his lips, accustomed to prudence, all of this made him resemble the sages of ancient Greece. He had their virtue, their penetration, their goodness. Even his austerity was of an infinite gentleness.

But Robespierre could not advance any further against the reality of internal economic conditions, international pressures and the resultant new currents among the masses. Under these conditions each step produced results contrary to what he hoped for. His role was exhausted. The stages of the revolution and counter-revolution succeeded one another at an accelerated pace; the contradiction between the protagonists of a particular programme and the changed situation assumed an unexpected and extremely acute character.

Robespierre was a man of words, not of deeds. He was tireless and bold in his accusations, denunciations and calumny, carefully selected in speeches prepared in advance. But he was indecisive to the point of cowardice. The need for abstract discussions degenerated into narrow dogmatism, which was not balanced by the observation of realities and knowledge of the facts. His mind was stuffed full of political axioms and his speeches meandered aimlessly, never emerging from the realm of generalities. This intellectual myopia did not interfere with, but on the contrary added to and stimulated the development of ambition and the striving to centralise everything in his hands.

Whenever action was called for he made himself scarce, disappearing from the scene. For example, on the tenth of August⁸ and during the September Days⁹ he practically stopped attending the sessions of the Committee. Now when the catastrophe was being prepared against him he displayed the same helplessness. He went to his Jacobin Club, did not miss a single session, preparing a new sortie against “the conspirators”, the “traitors”, and “scoundrels”. However, the affair ended with the fall of Robespierre himself in the Thermidorian reaction.

EXHAUSTION OF THE MASSES

Thermidor had a social basis to lean upon. It was a question of bread, meat, housing, prosperity, and, to the degree that it was possible, luxury. The Thermidorians were perfectly clear on this point: they knew what they wanted. In reworking the *Declaration of the Rights of Man* they deleted a significant paragraph: “Men are born and remain free and equal in rights.” To those who proposed leaving in this crucial Jacobin paragraph the Thermidorians replied that it was ambiguous and therefore dangerous: people are, of course, equal in their rights, but not in their abilities and not in their property.

Thermidor was a direct protest against Spartan morals and against the desire for equality that lies behind them. Under the Jacobin bourgeois, equality took the form of regulation and the Maximum, which hindered the development of bourgeois economy and the rise of bourgeois prosperity. But as Lefebvre explains:

For want of time and money, the Montagnards had been unable to obtain any great advantages for the poor, especially the poor in the towns, by their social policy [...] The treasury being empty, the laws on education and public assistance remained more or less a dead letter. Disillusionment was profound, and at the approach of winter, the scarcity and rising cost of food constituted the sole preoccupation of most people.

In other words, a new stage had begun in France when the masses, tired and exhausted, did not expect any serious changes to their fate. Under these conditions the only way the masses could have risen up was if there had existed

8 10th August 1792 was the day the French monarchy fell from power as an insurrection of National Guard troops stormed the Tuileries Palace of Louis XVI.

9 The September Days in 1792 saw the new power take pre-emptive action against a counter-revolution by calling on the National Guards and volunteers to execute thousands of prisoners across the country, and to root out and execute suspected traitors to the Revolution.

a revolutionary party or an organisation capable of arousing them. But there was nothing of the kind in the epoch of the French Thermidor. The Jacobins had dissolved themselves into the state apparatus. Similarly, there was nothing of the sort during the Soviet Thermidor. The Communist Party, the only existing party, had banned internal factions, and granted considerable power to the bureaucracy. It controlled all the means of communication for reaching the masses: printing machines, radio, halls for meetings, buildings, squares, and finally [the Party itself.]

At the time of Thermidor, the disillusionment was profound and compounded by the onset of winter and the ever-increasing rise in prices. The decrees of Ventôse¹⁰ were not applied and the proposals of Duquesnoy¹¹ and de Lafayette¹² were of interest only to the peasants. The treasury was empty. The masses resigned themselves to the reaction due to their own helplessness, but not all at once. The *sans-culottes* attempted to halt the reaction and to continue the Revolution.

Thus arose the days of Germinal¹³ and the Prairial¹⁴. But each such new attempt merely served to demonstrate their weakness more convincingly than ever to the masses. How to continue the Revolution, in which direction? What

10 Decrees proposed by Jacobin leader Louis de Saint-Just on 26th February and 3rd March 1794 that the property of exiles and opponents of the Revolution should be confiscated and redistributed to the needy.

11 Adrien Duquesnoy (1759-1808) took part in the storming of the Bastille in 1789 and was subsequently elected to the National Convention of deputies, where he distinguished himself as a moderate, enacting "the most sacred of all the legislator's duties, the protection of property" whilst also strongly opposing the church.

12 Gilbert du Motier, Marquis de Lafayette (1757-1834) was a French aristocrat who, having served as a general in the American Revolution, favoured a constitutional system of government, although he also supported retention of the monarchy. On 11th July 1789 he presented the *Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen* (*Déclaration des droits de l'homme et du citoyen*), drafted under the influence of Thomas Jefferson. This enshrined the tenets of bourgeois democracy for the centuries to come, ultimately defending the rights of property-owners: '*Property being an inviolable and sacred right*'.

13 A popular uprising in Paris against the Thermidorian Convention broke out on Twelfth Germinal (1st April 1795). The main slogan of the craftsmen and workers from the poor Parisian suburbs demanded "Bread and the Constitution of '93". They demanded the release of arrested democrats, and strong measures against food speculators. The uprising was suppressed.

14 Like Germinal, the insurrection of First Prairial (20th May 1795) took place in Paris against the policies of the Thermidorian Convention. It was the last heroic attempt of the plebeians of Paris to halt the rightward drift of the French Revolution. The defeat of the *sans-culottes* in Prairial marked a decisive turn towards counter-revolution.

to do now? How to replace the Masters of the present situation? Around the active layer of *sans-culottes* an ever-widening gulf of indifference opens up. The districts once again swing towards the centre. The depth of the reaction is determined by the extent of this indifference.

The Jacobin leaders had no more orators and journalists capable of inspiring the crowd. Their most gifted men had either been arrested or executed, persecuted as Terrorists, or else had gone over to the camp of the conservatives. Danton was not sufficiently active in counteracting these developments. He was often away from Paris, relying too much on his personal popularity.

WHAT IS THERMIDOR?

The dominant mood of those times was expressively characterised by Mallet du Pan in the following words: "The most burning question and most general fear is to achieve some sort of end to the revolution and to be rid of the war." From the very moment of victory by the Thermidorians, there opened up a campaign for the abolition of the 'Maximum', and the restoration of freedom of trade and untrammelled bourgeois development. The law of the 4 Nivose, Year 111 (24th December 1794) revoked the Maximum and all [other price] controls. The repeal of the Maximum in the name of freedom of trade meant the establishment of the rights of bourgeois property.

In the first period, the Thermidorian attack was not against the Jacobins as a whole but only against its most radical elements, the Terrorists. In the period of the Thermidorians all the unpleasant things that occurred were invariably ascribed to the Jacobins and the Terrorists. They were held responsible for every disturbance among the workers, for every act of resistance on the part of the peasants, for fires and explosions and everything else under the sun. "The attacks made on the Terrorists were not directed simply against the 'drinkers of blood'... but the men who had undertaken to curb social individualism and to bar the way to a nascent capitalism," explained Lefebvre.

As for the *nouveau riche* men of Thermidor, they represented a narrow limited utilitarianism. Lefebvre states that they were considerably inferior to the rich men of the 18th century in regard to intellectual culture and morals. They had no respect whatsoever for scientific and historical research and were quite alien to revolutionary [accomplishments]. For a long time they cultivated a remorseless greed. Blatantly and without conscience, they tried to seize hold of the advantages that were provided by those turbulent times.

In the first stages, the Thermidorians were fearful of the masses. In an effort to appease them, they tried to show that they did not want to turn France

into 'an order of Monks', as Boissy d'Anglas put it. The counter-revolution was enacted one step at a time economically and politically, in order to avoid creating internal [problems] for the regime. "Nothing could have been better calculated to upset the majority, for, not believing as yet in the Royalist peril, it was obsessed by the fear of an insurrection and a new 31st May"¹⁵. Several incidents confirmed its fear, and the Right did everything to exploit them..." explained Georges Lefebvre.

Lefebvre [makes the point that] the task of the Thermidorians was to present the Ninth Thermidor, that is to say the overthrow of Robespierre, as a minor episode – a mere sacrifice of incidental elements for the sake of preserving the basic core of the Jacobins and the continuation of their revolutionary programme. He writes that the very next day after the Ninth Thermidor, speaking in the name of the members of the Committee of Public Safety, Bertrand Barere reassures the Convention that nothing momentous had happened. He declared that the previous day had been merely "a slight commotion which left the government untouched..."

"In favour of the Thermidorians," writes our author, "we may, however, bring forth the fact that the best and preponderant majority of them were honest men and that there was a lack of people of the first plane for their leadership." [Lefebvre] "They defended themselves in the midst of tremendous difficulties, while the Guillotine and the proscription destroyed their leaders."

In order to destroy the very memory of the Jacobin Clubs, the Convention decreed the break-up of the Jacobin brotherhood and to establish in its place "a market place of the Ninth Thermidor." At first, the attack was carried on only against Terrorists, but later it spread to the Jacobins as a whole. The Terrorists played the same role in the political dictionary of the Thermidor as the Trotskyists played in the Stalinists' dictionary. Incidentally, it is worth remembering that by the logic of things, the Soviet Thermidorian campaign culminated in the accusation of the Trotskyists being responsible for terrorist acts.

"In reality," writes Lefebvre, "the Terror did not really cease on the ninth Thermidor any more than did the dictatorship; it was too much in the interests of the new rulers to turn it against their enemies." All the organs of the government experienced fundamental changes in personnel. This process quickly spread from Paris to the provinces. The local administrations everywhere purged themselves of Terrorists, who were replaced by more

15 31st May 1793 saw the third popular insurrection of the French Revolution which led to the fall of Girondin party from power and the taking of power by the Jacobins.

moderate elements. The movement went from Left to Right. However, thanks to the relative slowness of the purge, the Jacobins for a long time continued to be influential in the administrative organs.

The days of the Prairial (20th May-18th June) also had a decisive significance. The Government had suppressed the armed revolt and seemed to have broken the back of the Revolution. For the first time since 1789 the army responded to the appeal of the Government in settling scores with the people. This final separation of the army from the people in reality undermined the Revolution and led eventually to the victory of reaction and Bonaparte.

Three weeks later, on the Second Fructidor (19th August), Louchet, the very same man who brought an indictment against Robespierre, outlined in the Convention the successes of the reaction and demanded once again the arrest of suspects as it was necessary "to prevent the terror from being placed on the order of the day". The blows against the Left immediately unleashed the forces of the Right, i.e. the supporters of capitalist development. "Down with the Terrorists!" immediately became the rallying cry of the Thermidorians," states Lefebvre in his book *The Thermidorians*.

Lefebvre went on to describe the situation:

Serre and Auguis were besieged in their house and roughly man-handled by the rioters, who demanded the release of the imprisoned patriots; that very evening the moderate representatives appointed a military commission which ordered five executions. A considerable number of terrorists were arrested and sent to Aix and to Paris; the club was purged and Carles, its president, committed suicide. The line adopted by the turncoat Montagnards who had appointed themselves the spokesmen of the Right, were to depict these disturbances as the consequence of a single plot laid in Paris by the Jacobins whose provincial societies were mere tools in their hands.

Leading Jacobins were arrested and placed on trial throughout the cities of France. "But these trials alone provided an utterly inadequate conception of the tribulations to which the Jacobin 'terrorists' were subjected. They were everywhere persecuted in a host of ways, reduced to pauperism or their life made unendurable; those who could escape by changing their address did so," explained Lefebvre. The more rebellious Jacobins were murdered in the prisons. The gilded youth, many with masked faces, raided the prisons and beat the prisoners to death.

In the era of Thermidor, not only the bourgeois republicans and constitutional monarchists of the first period of the Revolution, but supporters of the old regime backed the Jacobin defectors who stood at the head of

the Thermidorian coup. The Royalists did not yet dare to show their heads openly; the constitutional monarchists could only dream. Even the bourgeois republicans, eager for the complete mastery of competition and freedom of trade, could only act with caution. All of them needed the authoritative cover of the Jacobins, [the aura of the] ruling revolutionary party. And they found such a cover.

In the end, on the Eighteenth Fructidor, the Thermidorians were obliged to carry through a *coup d'état* in open violation of their own Constitution so as to restore the Dictatorship instead of a constitutional regime. Since they could no longer appeal to the people, they carried through the coup with the aid of the army and, in this fashion, finally transformed the Revolutionary Dictatorship into a Military Dictatorship.

In many respects the Thermidorians proved to be the direct continuators of the Jacobins. They continued to resist the restoration of feudal property and of the King's power. They remained opponents of the dogmatic Church and above all the privileges of Catholicism. They patronised all sorts of scientific inventions, discoveries, established technical institutions, continued the preparation of the metric system, developed popular education, and so forth. In other words, they re-established and organised all the conquests of the Revolution that were beneficial to the capitalist economy or to the bourgeoisie.

On the other hand, they waged an irreconcilable social struggle against those tendencies of the Jacobin Revolution which tended toward social equality and thereby undermine the efforts of the bourgeoisie to become what it eventually became. In spite of the fact that in a number of respects the Thermidorians were the successors and continuators of the cause of the Jacobins, in a more fundamental class characterisation of their social tendency they represented their direct opposite.

THE CLASS BASIS OF THERMIDOR

What was the historical justification of the Thermidor in France? Without the Jacobin dictatorship, feudal society could not have been swept away. But only the bourgeoisie could replace the feudal social order. After the Jacobins, namely the rank-and-file, the plebeians, had demolished the stability of feudal society, the Thermidor had to clear the way for the predominance of the bourgeoisie – after having removed the *sans-culottes*, that is, the urban rank and file, from power. Without the Thermidor, the bourgeoisie would not have assumed possession of the heritage of the revolution. The Thermidorians

identified themselves with the bourgeoisie. They did not conceive of any other regime but a bourgeois one.

The Thermidorian Republicans shared the *sans-culottes'* hatred of for dogmatic religions generally and the Catholic Church, in particular. Insofar as the French Thermidorian reaction opened the doors to *émigrés*, Royalists, former feudal lords and to the Church, they more than once made a turn to the left and even sought support with the Jacobins in order to defend their social and political position. But all of this was in the sphere of episodic manoeuvres. The essence of the Thermidor was to open the door to the bourgeoisie and provide them the means with which to take hold of the heritage of the revolution. The French Thermidor was, therefore, a historical necessity in the broadest sense of the word. It opened the gates to the new epoch of the bourgeois rule in the nineteenth century in the course of which the bourgeoisie transformed Europe and the world.

“But they belonged to the middle class,” explained Lefebvre; “they wanted to give the businessman his freedom back and reduce the poor man once more to a subordinate position. They were deputies and, jealous of their authority, they feared the dictatorship of the mob more than anything else.” The main programme of the French Thermidor consisted of the need to establish freedom of trade. Private property, which the bourgeois revolution had reinforced, demanded freedom of trade, which naturally signified the domination of the bourgeoisie. But this only deepened the social contradictions within the revolution.

If the Jacobin dictatorship of Robespierre was necessary to radically put an end to feudal society and defend the rights of the new bourgeois society against its external enemies, then the regime of Thermidor had as its fundamental task the creation of more stable conditions of development for the new society. According to all the plans and promises, the overthrow of Robespierre's dictatorship was supposed to have been followed by a liberal bourgeois regime, an end to the nationalisation of a great part of the economy that deprived the capitalist bourgeoisie of its usual profits.

Such a regime is possible where products are freely exchanged on the market and the state does not need to intervene. But when there is a scarcity of products, then the state is obliged to intervene and its regimentation compels everyone to submit to the limitations of the situation. The Thermidorians made every effort to meet the interests of the producers, above all of the peasants, but under the whip of government orders, the opposition and resistance of the peasants only grew.

It is remarkable that a similar phenomenon was observed in the Soviet Union. The period between 1924 and 1927 were years of a broadening of the 'liberal' regime in relation to the village and the peasantry.¹⁶ However, the concessions made by the Russian Thermidorians not only did not incline the peasants towards the voluntary handing over of their surplus, but rather aroused in them the belief that the state was vacillating, and what was needed was to move on to achieve complete freedom to dispose of their products.

Seeking to reaffirm their faith in their Republican ideals, the Convention resolved to celebrate the anniversary of the execution of "the last King of France". In response, the conservative Jacobins secured the passage of a resolution to celebrate the Ninth Thermidor, the overthrow of Robespierre. The Thermidorian reaction rested upon a new regime of [where the Jacobin tradition was reduced to] mere reminiscences.

THE GILDED YOUTH

The French Thermidorians, who ushered in the new stage in the degeneration of the Revolution, were, above all, afraid of their own actions. The Right elements in town and country, especially the gilded youth, attempted to take advantage of the ideas of the Thermidorians. There soon began a purge of the Clubs, with the arrest and murder of Jacobins. From then on, the Rightists, together with the Thermidorians, sought to represent every manifestation of dissatisfaction, criticism or indignation, in Paris and the provinces, as a product of the Terrorists' conspiracy.

The pressure on the Convention carried on by the Jacobins came mainly from the streets. The Thermidorian defectors from Jacobinism aspired to the same method, but from the opposite end. They began to organise the well-dressed spoilt brats of the bourgeoisie. "The Clubs were still active and in a state of ferment," states Lefebvre. "The specialists had not yet lost their activities. And the Convention would in all likelihood have been very badly off if it had not found unexpected support for the Thermidorians in the so-called gilded youth."

The Thermidorian Convention did not even have its own forces, except for a few armed detachments; the real forces in the country were the Jacobins

¹⁶ In the French Revolution, the Thermidorians were later supplanted by the military dictatorship of Napoleon Bonaparte, who seized power on 'Eighteenth Brumaire', (9th November 1799), and rested on the bankers. The stages of revolution and counter-revolution succeeded one another at an accelerated pace. In the Soviet Union, Trotsky pinpoints the year 1924 as the beginning of the Soviet Thermidor.

and the open bourgeois reaction. An open struggle which on occasions reached the level of civil war was waged between the *sans-culottes* and the gilded youths. The gilded youth fell upon the Jacobin Clubs armed with sticks and clubs. They even made unsuccessful attempts to smash the *sans-culottes* in the outlying suburbs. They organised hunting expeditions to destroy the busts of Marat.

This gilded youth became an important factor in national politics. As the Jacobins were purged from all administrative posts, so the 'young people' took their places. "The 'young men' could be recognised by the square collars of their coats and by their long lovelocks; they were armed with bludgeons and shouted: 'Down with the Jacobins! Long live the Convention!'"

Despite everything, not only the day labourers and workers, but even the artisans and small storekeepers still remained loyal to the Jacobins. They therefore had to be crushed. The rising bourgeois elements of the new society, and especially their offspring, namely the gilded youth, were mobilised for this purpose. The Thermidorians could only remain dominant by mobilising those who tried to exploit the revolution against those who had made it.

Although the resistance of the majority of the Convention was affected by the pressure of the gilded youth, it was further undermined by the 'social life' which had blossomed in the salons and drinking establishments. They took pleasure in reviving the social traditions of the eighteenth century. That 'social life' acquired great political significance. Similarly, in the Soviet Union, all sorts of secret and semi-secret social gatherings and parties were held by the higher bureaucrats and functionaries, who were in the forefront of the fight against Trotskyism.

The high society crowd not only amused themselves in their own homes, but also in the public dance halls, which had opened everywhere: at the Carmelites¹⁷, for example, where the priests had been massacred in September, or in the former Saint-Sulpice¹⁸ cemetery. The Terror had clearly unhinged a

17 A religious Order of nuns. During the French Revolution, they refused to obey the Civil Constitution of the Clergy of the revolutionary government, which ordered the suppression of their monastery. They were guillotined on 17th July 1794, during the Terror and buried in a mass grave at Picpus Cemetery.

18 Saint-Sulpice is a Roman Catholic church in Paris, slightly smaller than Notre-Dame and thus the second largest church in the city. On 2nd and 3rd September 1792, 191 priests, bishops, deacons, monks, laymen and assorted members of the clergy were executed in what were known as the September Massacres after refusing to pledge their allegiance to the constitution. The martyrs of St. Sulpice were collectively called 'The Martyrs of September'.

great many minds, and no eccentricity was found too shocking. The relatives of people who had been guillotined held ‘victim’ balls among themselves, to which the guests came with Titus haircuts, the nape of the necks shaven as if by the executioner, and a red silk thread round their throats. The men did not bare their bodies like the women, but the *incroyables* were already vying with each other in luxury and eccentricity of dress, and in weird distortions of speech.

According to Lefebvre:

Soon Madame de Stael would hold receptions which, from the political point of view, would eclipse all the others. It was in these salons that the new rich, who had been created by the Revolution and whose numbers would be multiplied by speculation on the *assignat*, began to mix with the old bourgeoisie and the nobles, to form the new bourgeoisie which reigned in the nineteenth century.

It was often a very mixed society, which forgathered with equal pleasure at the great lady’s mansion and at the houses of the actresses in vogue ... As after all great ordeals, while some people returned to religion, others plunged into a frenzied life of pleasure. Dancing, in particular, became all the rage...

On politics the influence of the salons was considerable. Every effort was made to attract the deputies to them, by the bankers in order to buy them, and by the reactionaries in order to win them over to the good cause.

“Finally the Thermidorians became frightened of this weakening of the husbands’ and fathers’ authority or of the damage inflicted upon ‘the prestige’ of the bourgeois family, and the looseness of the women; in any event on the Fifteenth Thermidor (2nd August) the laws of the Eighth Fructidor were abolished as were the Four Floréal of the second year, [both of] which made divorce easier,” states Lefebvre. Step by step the Stalinist bureaucracy strove to repeat this effort, to rectify moral standards by means of restoring the family and the despotism of the husband.

The epoch of the Thermidor is usually characterised as an epoch of loose unbridled morals. This is equally the case in regard to the Soviet Union, especially by bourgeois moralists. As a matter of fact, in both instances we are confronted with crudely exaggerated presumptions. Undoubtedly, the Thermidorian parvenus, former Jacobins who had grown rich quickly, had radically broken with their former ideals, married into rich families, or had adapted to bourgeois morality, particularly with the morality of the women, and were quite remote from ‘culture’. This [was in contrast] to the lower layers of society, the broad French masses, not to mention the peasantry, and

even including the masses of the petty and the middle bourgeoisie, who lived generally by the moral standards inherited from the past.

The same must be said about the Soviet Union. The "loose morals" described by bourgeois moralists were chiefly characteristic of the bureaucracy. But it was here that was to be found the strictest and most ruthless censors of morality concerning the lower layers of the bureaucracy, and especially the youth, which compromised their fathers in the eyes of the popular masses. Such was the source of this wave of Puritanism, strict morals, and the cult of the family, which characterised the Stalinist bureaucracy during the last five years.

Reports on the mood of the masses bear witness to the fact that the 10th August holiday, that is, the anniversary of the Republican revolution, was one of indifference. The masses were saying: "The deputies are celebrating today because the Revolution is beneficial to them alone." The deputies of the Convention became the object of general hatred. They were spoken of as embezzlers of national wealth, and their extravagant life style was particularly conspicuous against the background of general want. In the poor quarters of Paris, it was said, "it had been better to live in the period of Robespierre, when the Convention was concerned about the needy; now they drink, eat and grow rich at the expense of the people."

When the Terrorists and Jacobins were crushed, a conflict broke out between the Thermidorian Republicans and the Constitutional Royalists, who played an important role in the constituent and law-making assemblies. The Thermidorians could not hope to play any role under the Monarchy. The policy of the Thermidorian group consisted of manipulating the Royalists and *émigrés*, on the one hand, and Terrorists and their sympathisers, on the other. The law-making and administrative measures leaned now to the right and now to the left. However, in the provinces, the support for the Thermidorians and their supporters tended to be far more reactionary and leaned toward the Royalists.

The Terrorists, feeling that the ground was sliding away from under their feet, looked in the direction of the ruling Thermidorian clique, seizing upon every turn to the left and seeking to increase support for it. The Thermidorians, who had opened the door to reaction, now tried with all their might to close these gates and make use of the support of the crushed and weakened Jacobins. The Convention ceased its existence on the Fourth Brumaire of the fourth year (26th of October 1795).

What characterises the Thermidor is not simply the betrayal of many former Jacobins, but the rapid decline of revolutionary spirit among those who remained loyal. In particular, those who were isolated felt the mighty sweep of the reaction and lost confidence in the old ideals. They tried to avoid expressing their opinions openly when the Convention passed reactionary legislation. They assumed a protective colouration, bit their tongue, and at a critical moment in the Convention, to use a Russian expression, voted with their feet.

THE SOVIET THERMIDOR

What was the historical mission of the Soviet Thermidor? It is much harder to answer that question because the processes have a different social foundation. The evolution of the Soviet Thermidor was even more complex. The dissatisfaction of the masses made its way into the Communist Party. The revolutionary wing did not want to surrender. The struggles of the Opposition followed one upon another, especially in the years 1923, 1924, 1926 and 1927. However significant were these struggles, in practise, these Opposition flare-ups were essentially the convulsions of a dying revolution.

The broadest and most significant of these were the Oppositional actions on the eve of the anniversary of the October Revolution in 1927. Tens of thousands of workers paraded in Moscow and in Leningrad. In the Provinces, there were many secret and semi-secret meetings addressed by Opposition speakers. At these meetings the ideas of October were still alive and flourishing. However, the broad masses, who felt the weight of the bureaucracy on their back, did not respond. These meetings were merely the prologue of the crushing of the Opposition.

The Thermidorian bourgeoisie [in France] was characterised by its hatred of the Montagnards, precisely because their leaders were drawn from that same milieu and had been leaders of the *sans-culottes*. What the bourgeoisie and the Thermidorians feared most was a new explosion of the popular movement. It was precisely during this period that the class consciousness of the French bourgeoisie attained its full development. It hates the Jacobins and semi-Jacobins with a furious hatred, as traitors to its most sacred interests, as deserters and renegades from the ruling caste.

The source of the hatred of the Soviet bureaucracy towards Trotskyism has the same social character. These are people from the same stratum, the same ruling layer, the same privileged bureaucracy that broke ranks in order to link their fate with that of the *sans-culottes*, the dispossessed proletarians, the

rural poor. However, the difference is that the French bourgeoisie had already formed before the Great Revolution, and first broke through its political constraints imposed by the *ancien régime* in the Constituent Assembly. But then it had to pass through the period of the Convention and the Jacobin Dictatorship, in order to settle accounts with its enemies. While, during the period of the Thermidor it restored its historical tradition, the Soviet ruling caste consisted entirely of parasitic upstarts.

The new social basis of the Soviet Union became paramount. To guard the nationalisation of the means of production and of the land is the bureaucracy's law of life and death, for these are the social sources of its dominant position. That was the reason for its struggle against the *kulak*. The bureaucracy could wage this struggle, and wage it to the end, only with the support of the proletariat. The best proof of the fact that it had mustered this support was the avalanche of capitulations by representatives of the new Opposition. The fight against the *kulak*, the fight against the right wing, the fight against opportunism, all the official slogans of that period seemed to the workers and as well as to many representatives of the Left Opposition, like a renaissance of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat and the Socialist Revolution. We warned them at the time: it is not only a question of what is being done, but also of who does it.

Under conditions of Soviet democracy, that is, self-rule of the toilers, the struggle against the *kulaks* would not have assumed such a convulsive, panicky and bestial form and would have led to a general rise of the economic and cultural level of the masses on the basis of industrialisation. But the bureaucracy's fight against the *kulak* was single combat [fought] on the backs of the toilers; and since neither of the embattled gladiators trusted the masses, since both feared the masses, the struggle assumed an extremely convulsive and sanguinary character. Thanks to the support of the proletariat, it ended with victory for the bureaucracy. But it did not lead to a gain in the specific weight of the proletariat in the country's political life.

Although there are very clear similarities with the Soviet Thermidor, in this respect, the latter profoundly differs in its social content from its French bourgeois prototype. 'Freedom of trade' in Russia, or the so-called New Economic Policy, was re-established in 1921 by the Soviet government, well before the victory of the Soviet Thermidor. At the time, the re-introduction of free trade by the NEP was accepted and understood by everyone, including the ruling party, as a necessary retreat before bourgeois and petty-bourgeois pressures. In that sense, an element of the Thermidor is contained in the NEP.

But state power remained in the same hands of the Party that had led the October Revolution.

The freedom of trade was strictly limited by the state, within such confines as not to violate or undermine the very basis of the new regime, namely the nationalisation of the means of production. The NEP with its concessions to capitalism undoubtedly prepared dangerous elements for the future Thermidor. It resurrected and revived the petty-bourgeois of the town and country, the *kulak* and NEPmen, increasing its appetite and its demands. Nevertheless, it would be incorrect to place the beginning of the Soviet Thermidor with the introduction of the NEP in 1921.

A considerable broadening in the freedom of trade in 1925 was the clearest expression of the Thermidor as a revocation of the 'Maximum' so many years back. However, because of this resemblance, one must not lose sight of the basic difference: namely the nationalisation of industry and the socialisation of land in the hands of the state. Without these conditions the NEP, especially its extension in 1925, would naturally have led to the development of bourgeois relations. The preservation of the nationalisation and the broadening of the NEP meant conflict between two systems of economy; during its first steps this conflict reinforced the position of the bureaucracy, raising its independence above all from the proletariat. But it was clear from the very beginning that the further development and broadening of the commodity turnover and of the reinforcement of the positions of the petty-bourgeois must sharply pose the question formulated by them: who shall conquer whom?

The substance of Thermidor was, is and could not fail to be, social in character. It stood for the crystallisation of a new privileged stratum, the creation of a new bureaucracy of the economically dominant class. There were two pretenders to this role: the petty-bourgeoisie and the bureaucracy itself. They fought shoulder to shoulder to break the resistance of the proletarian vanguard. When that task had been accomplished a savage struggle broke out between them. The bureaucracy became frightened of its isolation from the proletariat. Alone it could not crush the *kulak* or the petty-bourgeoisie that had grown and continued to grow on the basis of the NEP; it had to have the aid of the proletariat. Hence its concerted effort to present its struggle against the petty-bourgeoisie for the surplus products and for power as the struggle of the proletariat against attempts at capitalist restoration.

We see the same social motive in the Soviet Thermidor as in the French. It is a matter of, firstly, getting rid of Spartan self-constraints of the first period of the revolution and secondly, of justifying the growing privileges of the

bureaucracy. However, the introduction of a liberal economic regime was out of the question. Concessions in this direction were temporary and lasted much less than what was assumed by its initiators and especially Stalin. A liberal regime based on private property means the concentration of wealth in the hands of the bourgeoisie and its upper layers. But the privileges of the bureaucracy did not flow from the automatic development of the existing economic relations.

The bureaucracy appropriates that part of national wealth which it can seize either through the use of force or its authority, or by direct interference in the field of economic relations. The bureaucracy and the petty-bourgeoisie find themselves in direct competition for the surplus produce of the nation. But possession of the surplus produce opens the road to power, and the bureaucracy grew especially envious as it watched the process of enrichment of the upper layers of the petty-bourgeoisie of town and village. This struggle between the bureaucracy and the petty-bourgeoisie over the surplus produce of the people's labour was the basis of the political struggle between the Stalinists and the so-called Right Oppositionists.

It is in this respect that the Soviet Thermidor differs most radically from its French counterpart. Here the analogy with the French Thermidor breaks down. The Jacobin dictatorship had been necessary in order to uproot feudal society and defend the survival of the new order from the attacks of external enemies. That done, the task of the Thermidorian regime was to create the necessary conditions for the development of this new society, which was bourgeois, that is, a society based on private ownership of property and unrestricted (or largely unrestricted) trade.

{The restoration of limited free trading by the NEP in 1921 was a retreat back to bourgeois expropriation. But in practice the freedom of trade was so limited that it did not undermine the foundations of the regime (the nationalisation of the means of production), and the reins of government remained in the hands of the Russian Bolsheviks or Jacobins who had led the October Revolution. Even the further extension of this freedom of trade in 1925 did not alter the basis of the regime, although the threat became far greater then.}

Following this development, however, we saw a revival in the class struggle between the upper layers of the petty-bourgeoisie and the workers. The Soviet state acted as the regulator of this class struggle, and thereby gained greater independence for itself from the working class. This provided the basis of the

Thermidorian transformation of the state apparatus, or rather not the basis, but the point of departure in the first chapter of this degeneration.

THE ROLE OF THE PARTY

To understand the Russian Thermidor it is extremely important to understand the role of the Party as a political factor in the Revolution. There was nothing remotely resembling the Bolshevik Party in the French Revolution. However, during the Thermidor there were in France various social groups that used political labels which came out against each other in the name of definite social interests. The Thermidorians attacked the Jacobins under the name of Terrorists. On the side of the Thermidorians were the gilded youth, which also threatened them. In Russia, all these processes, conflicts and disagreements, all unfolded under the cover of a single party, the Bolshevik Party.

The French Thermidor, started by right-wing Jacobins, turned in the end into reaction against all Jacobins: 'Terrorist', 'Montagnard', 'Jacobin', all became terms of abuse. In the provinces, the trees of liberty were chopped down and the tricolour cockade was trampled underfoot. This kind of thing was unthinkable in the Soviet Republic. The totalitarian party contained within itself all the indispensable elements of reaction, which it mobilised under the official banner of the October Revolution. The Party did not tolerate any competition, even in the struggle against its enemies. The struggle against the Trotskyists did not turn into the struggle against 'Bolshevism' because the Party leaders, consumed by this struggle, set certain limits to it and waged it in the name of 'Bolshevism'. In the eyes of simpletons, the theory and practice of the ultra-left 'Third Period' seemed to refute the theory of the Thermidorian degeneration of the Revolution. As a matter of fact, it merely confirmed it.

Whoever studies the subject of the degeneration of the Revolution may say that the Bolsheviks were themselves guilty by their past policy of preparing their own defeat at the hands of the Thermidorians. This is both true and untrue. The centralisation of power was a necessary condition for the salvation of the Revolution. The struggle against petty-bourgeois sloppiness and all form of parochialism was a necessary condition for building the new state. No doubt a layer of the Bolsheviks, like the Jacobins in their time, had adapted themselves to the situation. On the other hand, there was undoubtedly a preponderance of centralised leadership over local initiative.

Added to this was the special attributes of the leadership of the Bolshevik Party. In none of the preceding revolutions was there a leadership, even in the remotest degree, as prepared, as far seeing, or able and resilient as the Bolshevik

Party. On all important questions, events confirmed the correctness of the Bolshevik leadership, and considerably raised its authority in the eyes of the masses. At the time of Lenin's illness and at the time of his death, this authority was extremely high. It is certainly possible to make not a few criticisms of the Bolshevik leaders, but their strength and good fortune consisted in the far-sighted ability of this leadership. In the context of such worldwide turmoil, this tested leadership possessed an enormous accumulated capital, and with it the possibility of completely transforming the situation. After all, this is what happened under this leadership in the most desperate situations.

[And yet such hopes could not last indefinitely, especially as conditions dramatically worsened.] The transformation of honoured revolutionaries into persecuted outcasts, took place so swiftly that the Convention decreed that the honours of the Pantheon could not be accorded earlier than ten years after the death of a possible candidate! In Moscow, they had no such decree and so the purges spread, affecting the dead as well as the living. The counter-revolutionary terror of these privileged youth simply finished off the scarecrow that remained of the Revolution, a Jacobin figure bespattered with blood.

In the Soviet Union, the campaign against 'Trotskyism' began as defence of the 'Old Guard' and the continuation of 'Bolshevik' policy. It was conducted in the name of Party unity, but culminated in the physical extermination of the Bolshevik Party. During both Thermidors, the French and Russian, this destruction of the revolutionary wing was carried out in the name of the Revolution and allegedly in its best interests. The Jacobins were not destroyed as Jacobins but as Terrorists, as Robespierrists, and the like; similarly, in Russia, the Bolsheviks were destroyed as Trotskyists, Zinovievists and Bukharinists. There is a remarkable affinity between the Russian term, *Trotskistskoye o khvostiye* ['Trotskyist tail-enders'], which has acquired full civic status in recent Soviet publications, and the title of a pamphlet by Méhée de la Touche published on the Ninth Fructidor [with the title] *La Queue de Robespierre* ['the tail-end of Robespierre']. But perhaps what is even more historically striking is the similarity between the basic methods of the Thermidorians.

At first glance, unlike the Thermidorians of France, it seemed that the Kremlin lacked the shock troops of the 'gilded youth'. But that was merely an external appearance. Inside the Russian Communist Party arose special shock-troops, whose nuclei was made up of crooked careerists, the spoiled debauched brats of the bureaucracy, and shameless and cynical elements seeking personal vengeance. This was the Soviet 'gilded youth' masquerading under the official name of the Komsomol [Young Communist League]. At Party meetings

these shock-troops shouted down Opposition speakers; physically broke up meetings of the Opposition, and specialised in denunciations and accusations. This gilded youth had the automobiles of the bureaucracy at their disposal, which carried them from one meeting to another. Personal grudges and unrealised careerist dreams floated to the top, and all of them were seeking revenge under the banner of the struggle against the Opposition.

The Soviet gilded youth shouted: Down with Trotskyism! Long live the Leninist Central Committee! in exactly the same way as the gilded youth of Thermidor shouted: Down with the Jacobins! Long live the Convention! The Thermidorian Convention had almost no forces of its own and therefore alternately leaned on one side, then the other, giving, however, a clear preponderance to the side of reaction.

It is possible to demolish a regime with the aid of terror. But with the aid of terror it is impossible to create a harmonious society. In the autumn of 1927 the armed forces of the GPU were mobilised, although as yet without any bloodshed, to arrest Oppositionists, disperse revolutionary meetings, search the homes of dissident Communists, and the like. We must not forget that the GPU (formerly known as the Cheka) was originally allied to the Party, fought the counter-revolution, and included in its ranks people who had gone through the underground and the Civil War. Only in this later period was this body transformed into a bureaucratic weapon against the working class and against the Party.

The Stalinist bureaucracy would not have found it impossible to mobilise backward sections of the population, but they had no need of this; on the contrary, they regarded such 'spontaneous' activities as dangerous, even when directed from above. Beatings and murders in prisons could be perpetrated by the Thermidorians in a strictly organised manner through the agency of the GPU without any wider involvement. The violence was simply carried out using the Party and the State, reflecting the totalitarian character of the Stalinist regime, which had at its disposal of all the material means and forces of the nation.

APPENDIX 2. STALIN AS THEORETICIAN

In his *Foundations of Leninism* Stalin wrote in 1924:

Some think that Leninism is the precedence of practice over theory in the sense that its main point is the translation of the Marxian theses into deeds, their 'execution'; as for theory, it is alleged that Leninism is rather unconcerned about it.

This phrase alone contains the microcosm of Stalinism. It reflects at one and the same time Stalin's lack of theoretical profundity, polemical acidity disguised as wittiness, and dishonesty towards opponents.

He continues: "Others think that Leninism is only a transformation of Marxist propositions into life; only a 'performance' of them." This is Stalin's translation of my words: "Leninism is Marxism in action." [According to Stalin], that means that Leninism somehow has a contemptuous attitude towards Marxism. But how is it possible to recreate theory in action while being contemptuous towards theory?

Marxism is itself a historical product and should be accepted as such. This historical Marxism includes within itself three basic elements: materialist dialectics, historical materialism, and a theoretical critique of capitalist economy. It is these three elements that we have in mind when we speak of Marxism – at any rate, when we have the right to speak of it.

But perhaps the system of historical materialism has changed. Where has this change found its expression? Perhaps in the eclectic mishmash that Bukharin served up to us under the title of Historical Materialism? But while revising Marx in practice, Bukharin does not dare openly to acknowledge his attempt to create a new historical and philosophical theory adequate for

the epoch of imperialism. In the final reckoning, Bukharin's scholasticism is adequate only for its creator.

Lukacs made a more principled attempt to vanquish historical materialism. He tried to claim that beginning with the October Revolution – which Engels regarded as the leap from the realm of necessity into the realm of freedom – historical materialism had outlived its usefulness since it had ceased to be adequate for the epoch of proletarian revolutions. This discovery was made somewhat prematurely, during Lenin's lifetime, which allowed him the chance to have a good laugh over it and all of us laughed with him.

If Stalin, Zinoviev and Bukharin were not thinking of Lukacs' theory, which the author had already himself repudiated, what is it that they have in mind? When he writes "some think" the reference is clearly aimed at me. In that period Stalin did not yet dare mention me by name. Editors, journalists, reviewers, had not yet been sufficiently prepared for it. In many cases, Stalin had not yet completely subordinated them to himself, in words at least. He therefore still had to ascribe to me some nonsense about theory that contradicts Leninism. How did Stalin do it?

HAS MARXISM CHANGED?

Stalin's own attitude toward theory cannot be called contemptuous only because it is so narrow that it is essentially indifferent to it. For that reason, it did not occur to anyone to accuse Stalin of transforming theory into action. In practice, Stalin transforms into action the aspirations of the Party bureaucracy, which seeks to break through [the barrier of Marxism in order to] express disguised class prejudices.

In reality, Leninism is Marxism in action, that is, theory made flesh and blood. Therefore, to speak about a contemptuous attitude towards theory can only be done by someone who is choking on his own feelings of spite. This is what we usually find in Stalin's case. The self-evident bureaucratic lifelessness of his speeches and articles thinly disguise his smouldering hatred toward everything that stands above his own level. Stalin's thinking is like a scorpion which frequently stabs itself in the head with its own poisoned tail...

What other meaning can be attached to the phrase, "Leninism is the precedence of practice over theory"? The sentence itself is grammatically incorrect. He should have said: "The primacy of practice over theory", or "with reference to theory". But the point is not the grammar, which generally speaking ekes out a very miserable existence on the pages of *Foundations of Leninism*. We are interested in the philosophical content of the sentence.

The author presumably challenges the idea that Leninism is derived from the primacy of practice over theory. But this is the very essence of materialist philosophy. If we have to resort to that antiquated philosophical word 'primacy', we shall have to say that practice has the same indisputable 'primacy' over theory as being has over consciousness, or as matter stands above spirit, just as the whole stands above the part. For theory necessarily grows out of practice and is a more or less incomplete generalisation of it.

So from that point of view maybe the empiricists who are guided 'directly' by practice as the highest attribute are right after all? Are they not the most consistent materialists? No! They are only a caricature of materialism. To be guided by theory means to be guided by the generalisation of all the preceding practice of humanity, which allows us to cope with this or that present-day practical task with the greatest success. Thus, it is through theory that the 'primacy' of practice as a whole is revealed over its separate parts. Proceeding from the 'primacy' of economics, Bakunin rejected political struggle. He did not understand that politics is the generalisation of economics and therefore it is impossible to carry out the most important or the most general economic tasks by avoiding their political expression.

Now we can form an idea of the meaning of the philosophical thesis 'about the meaning of theory as a whole'. Here Stalin stands the genuine interrelation between theory and practice on its head. He attempts to identify the translation of theory into real life by ignoring theory, and ascribes to his opponent the very worst intentions so as to arouse hostility in the mind of a poorly informed reader. Furthermore, grammatical weakness notwithstanding, this thoroughly self-contradictory thesis of Stalin is presented as the high point [of his theoretical work]. It is in this sense that we called it a microcosm. The 'primacy' of practice over theory finds in Stalin its most perfect expression. The juxtaposition of Leninism to Marxism is one area where [Stalinist] revisionism is most carefully applied. The other prevailing form is the juxtaposition of Trotskyism to Leninism.

THE THREE COMPONENT PARTS OF MARXISM

What is this definition of Leninism that is counterposed to mine? The very definition which unites Stalin with Zinoviev and Bukharin, and which has been written into all the textbooks:

Leninism is Marxism of the epoch of imperialism and the proletarian revolution. To be more exact, Leninism is the theory and tactics of proletarian revolution in

general, the theory and tactics of the dictatorship of the proletariat in particular. (J. Stalin. *Foundations of Leninism*, page 10, International Publishers, 1939)

The insipid and contradictory nature of this definition stands exposed when we ask ourselves what is Marxism? We shall list here the following basic components. In the first place is the dialectical method. Marx was not its originator and, it stands to reason, never pretended to be. As Engels explained:

It is the merit of Marx that, in contrast to the “peevisish, arrogant, mediocre epigones who now talk big in cultured Germany”, he was the first to have brought to the fore again the forgotten dialectical method, its connection with Hegelian dialectics and its distinction from the latter. (Frederick Engels, *On Dialectics*: ‘The Old Preface to *Anti-Dühring*’, p. 131, Gosi, 1925)

This is how Engels saw Marx’s contribution at the time of philosophical epigonism and narrow empiricism in a sphere of positive science. Marx resurrected the dialectical method and defended its rights to exist. Marx could only have achieved this after freeing dialectics from its idealistic straitjacket. The mystery as to how he could ‘mechanistically’ separate dialectics from idealism is resolved in turn by the dialectics of the process of cognition.

When primitive religion or even magic came across some new force of nature, it immediately incorporated this force into the sphere of its alleged power. Similarly, by a dialectical process human thought [gradually developed] an understanding of the processes in the material world, and then invested them with absolute power in the form of religion. The shaman noted that rain falls from a cloud. But he mistakenly hoped to produce rain by imitating the clouds in one or another respect. Hegel was mistaken when he transformed dialectics into an immanent attribute of the Absolute Idea. But Hegel was nevertheless correct in thinking that dialectics played a dominant role in all the processes of the universe, including human society.

Hegel was an idealist. To him the thoughts within his brain were not more or less abstract pictures of actual things and processes, but, on the contrary, things and their evolution were only the realised pictures of the ‘Idea’, existing somewhere for all eternity before the world was. This way of thinking turned everything upside down, and completely reversed the real connection of things in the world. (Frederick Engels, *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific*: II. ‘Dialectics’, p. 5)

Basing himself on all the preceding materialistic philosophy and on the conscious materialism of the natural sciences, Marx led dialectics out of the sterile desert of idealism and turned its face towards its mother, matter. In

that sense dialectics, which Marx placed on a material basis and restored to its rightful place, is the basis of the Marxist conception of the world and the basic method of Marxist investigation.

Second in importance is that part of Marxism known as historical materialism, that is to say, the application of materialistic dialectics to the structure and historical development of human society. It would be wrong to dissolve historical materialism into dialectical materialism of which it is one application. It required a very big creative leap of cognitive thought to apply dialectical materialism to history, and this act opened a new epoch in the history of humanity, one in which the dynamics of the class struggle [first found a scientific reflection in thought].

It may be said with full justification that Darwinism is an application of materialist dialectics to the extremely complex development of the organic world. That was a stroke of genius, although in a philosophical sense it was not thought out to the end. Historical materialism moves along the same line as Darwinism, being the application of materialist dialectics to the structure of world history.

The direct practical meaning of historical materialism is now immeasurably higher insofar as for the first time it offers to the progressive class the possibility of approaching the fate of humanity consciously. Only the complete practical victory of historical materialism, i.e. the establishment of a technical and scientifically advanced socialist society, will open up to the full the possibility of the practical application of Darwinian laws to humankind itself for the purpose of modifying and overcoming the biological contradictions existing within our species.

The third component part of Marxism is the system of laws governing the economic life of capitalist society. Marx's *Capital* is the application of historical materialism to the sphere of human economy at a certain level of development, just as historical materialism as a whole is the application of materialist dialectics to the sphere of human history.

The Russian subjectivists, the empiricists of idealism and its epigones, fully recognised the competence and correctness of Marxism in the sphere of capitalist economy, yet denied its correctness or application for other spheres of social life. Such a division is based on a crude fetishism, the notion of the complete independence of different historical factors. Thus, economics, politics, law, science, art, and religion, all combine with each other to weave the fabric of history, just as chemical bodies are created by the combination of independent and similar elements. We will leave aside the fact that in the

field of chemistry also materialist dialectics triumphed over the empirical conservatism of Mendeleev¹ by proving the incontrovertibility of chemical elements, and that historical factors have nothing in common with the elements in the sense of [mutual] similarity and stability.

Present day capitalist economy is based on technology that has assimilated the products of preceding scientific thought. Capitalist commodity exchange is conceivable only within definite legal norms, which in Europe have been established through the application of Roman law and its subsequent adaptation to the needs of bourgeois economy. Marx's historical theory of economics shows how the development of the productive forces at a definite stage destroys other economic forms. At the same time it brings about a radical break with the laws, customs, views and beliefs [of the past]. Through the application of new and higher productive forces, it creates for itself – always through the medium of people – new socially legal, political, and all other norms within the framework of which it secures for itself the dynamic balance it requires.

Thus, pure economics is a fiction. Marxist investigation lays bare all the transmission belts, cogs, couplings and other transmission mechanisms which spring from economic relations, reaching downwards to the productive forces and to nature itself – to the core of the earth of which man is the product – and upwards in the direction of the so-called superstructure, to those ideological forms which feed on economics, since everybody eats bread, although they prefer it with butter. At the same time that men and women are assimilated by [the given socio-economic conditions and] create [the necessary environment] for their formation, they regulate their functions and expedite or restrain their growth.

Only stupid eclectics can segregate Marxist economics from historical materialism. At the same time, it would be completely wrong simply to dissolve Marx's economic system into its sociological or – to use the old terminology – its historical and philosophical theory. Through the medium of historical materialism, Marx and Engels established the basic elements for the method of social investigation and contributed highly scientific examples

1 This refers to the great Russian chemist and inventor Dmitri Ivanovich Mendeleev (1834-1907) who developed the periodic table which presents the chemical elements in such a way as to show common features. But this was based on empirical observation. It took theoretical developments to show how and why the table worked and to fill the gaps in the table with the so-called 'missing elements'. This is presumably what Trotsky meant when he says that materialist dialectics had triumphed over empirical conservatism.

of their new method and its application. Although inconsiderable in volume, appearing only occasionally in the form of pamphlets, examples such as *The Peasant War in Germany, 1848-1851 in France, The Paris Commune*, and so on, serve to distinguish [the characteristics of] critical revolutionary periods of history.

All of these works are illustrations of the genius of the doctrine [of historical materialism], but not its finished application. Only in the sphere of economic relations did Marx provide the most complete theoretical (although technically unfinished) application of his sociological method; his *Capital* is one of the highest products of cognitive thought. That is why it is impossible to omit Marxist economics as the third element of Marxism.

One may often read about Marxist psychology, Marxist natural science and the like. But all of this is an expression of wish-fulfilment rather than its actual realisation. In this it resembles, for example, speeches about proletarian culture and proletarian literature. More often than not such formulations are merely a cover for pretensions that are so far founded on nothing very serious. It would be nonsensical to include Darwinism or the Mendeleev periodical table of the elements in the sphere of Marxism, notwithstanding their inherent interconnection.

We do not doubt that the conscious application of materialist dialectics to the sphere of natural science, and the investigative methods of natural science, would considerably enrich natural science. It would reshape it in many respects, opening up new connections and establishing for dialectics a new place in our conception of the world. When such works of investigation appear, opening a new epoch in science, it may perhaps be possible to speak of Marxist biology or psychology, although it is far more likely that that new system will bear a new name.

Marxism does not pretend to be an absolute system. It realises its own historically transitory significance. But only the conscious application of materialist dialectics to all scientific spheres can prepare, and will continue to prepare, the elements for overcoming Marxism, which, dialectically, will at the same time be its highest triumph. Out of the grain the stalk arises, and on it will develop the ear, but only at the price of death of the seed grain.

The third element of Marxism – its economic system – is the only sphere into which historical development, subsequent to Marx and Engels, has introduced not only new factual material but also certain forms that were qualitatively new. We have in mind the new stage of the concentration and centralisation of production, the conversion of credit, new relations between

banks and industry, and the new role of finance capital and of its monopolistic organisations. But it is not possible to speak on this basis of a special Marxism in the epoch of imperialism. All that can be said about this, and quite rightly so, is that Marx's *Capital* required a supplementary chapter or perhaps a supplementary volume which would provide us with an introduction to the new forms of the imperialist epoch as a general system.

Let us not forget that a considerable portion of this work was done by Hilferding in his book *Finance Capital*, written, I might add, under the influence of the Russian Revolution of 1905, which provided a fruitful stimulus to Marxist thought in the West. However, even if one were to erase from Hilferding's work those flagrant elements of pseudo-Marxism, which, out of politeness are called Austro-Marxism, it did not occur to anyone to include *Finance Capital* in the system of Leninism. It stands to reason that it had never entered Lenin's head that his excellent pamphlet on imperialism was in itself a theoretical expression of Leninism as a special kind of Marxism of the imperialist epoch. One can just imagine the juicy epithet with which Lenin would have rewarded the authors of such a definition.

If therefore we do not find either a new materialist dialectic, or a new historical materialism or even a new theory of value "of the epoch of the imperialism and the proletarian revolution", then what content remains of the Stalinist definition of Leninism as canonised in the official definition? The canonisation in itself does not enlighten us, since the canonisation of theoretical definitions is most frequently necessary when, to quote the words of Saint Thomas Aquinas, "we must believe it because it is an absurdity."²

IS LENINISM A NEW KIND OF MARXISM?

The establishment of a special "Marxism of the imperialist epoch" under the name of Leninism was necessary for the revision of Marxism – something against which Lenin waged a consistent struggle all of his life. Lenin's attitude towards Marx was like Robespierre's towards Rousseau. Lenin came neither to violate the law nor to change it, but to expound it. Leninism is Marxism in action. Insofar as the central idea of this latest revision is the reactionary idea of national socialism, the theory of building 'socialism in one country', it was necessary to prove or at least to proclaim that Leninism, presumably as opposed to 'Marxism of the pre-imperialist epoch', has taken up a new position in this central question of Marxist theory and politics.

2 "I believe because it is absurd" ("*Creo quia absurdum*") is in fact a paraphrase of a statement in Tertullian's work *De Carne Christi*.

We have already heard that Lenin was supposed to have discovered the law of combined and uneven development, which allegedly could not have been even mentioned at the time of Marx and Engels. This is the very purest kind of absurdity, which the Thomas Aquinases of our own times demand that we believe. What is the inexplicable – at least it has never explained anywhere – is the fact that Marx and Engels had referred to this very same law without ever being acquainted with “Marxism of the imperialist epoch” as opposed to ‘simple Marxism’. Instead of teaching Marx about the law of uneven and combined development, it would be better for Stalin to learn from Marx concerning the international character of capitalist development.

First let us ask ourselves what is the meaning of the phrase “Leninism is Marxism in the epoch of imperialism and proletarian revolution”. If Marxism is to be understood in the above-mentioned manner, then this sentence is perfect nonsense insofar as nonsense can be perfect. Is the intention to tell us that in the epoch of imperialism the methodology of materialist dialectics has changed or has acquired a new theoretical expression? [Such an idea may perhaps be found] in the works of Bukharin. But as far as Lenin was concerned, in his basic philosophical works, he was a million miles away from any thought of inventing a new dialectic for the epoch of imperialism.

There then follows a mysterious phrase to the effect that: “Lenin’s method is not only a restoration but a concretisation and further development ... of the materialist dialectic.” (*Marxism and Leninism*, p. 88)

The enticing obscurity of this utterance, as is often the case with oracles, is not a cover behind which lies profundity of thought but rather its absence. What is the meaning of ‘concretisation’ of the dialectical method? It would be very interesting to hear something more on that theme. The fact that Lenin defended dialectics with great profundity and above all applied it in a masterly manner – that does not require any confirmation from Stalin. But the assertion that Lenin invested the very method of materialist dialectics with ‘further development’ can be made only by someone who does not understand what [dialectics] is ...

Lenin knew Marx rather better than his epigones. Lenin could not endure any vagueness and lack of clarity in questions of theory. One of his most characteristic features was theoretical honesty and conscientiousness carried to the highest degree, which on occasions may seem somewhat pedantic to an insufficiently thoughtful person. Lenin paid his debts to Marx with the same thoroughness that characterised the power of his own thought, and with the grateful acknowledgement of a pupil.

Yet now, all of a sudden, it would appear that in the central question about the international character of the socialist revolution, Lenin failed to notice his break with 'pre-imperialistic Marxism'. Worse still, not only did he not notice it but he kept it a secret, evidently hoping that in due time Stalin would reveal this mystery to a grateful humanity. And this is precisely what Stalin has done by creating in the space of a few lines "Marxism of the epoch of imperialism", which has become the screen for that thoroughgoing revision of Marx and Lenin that we have witnessed during the last six years.

However, as we have seen from the above-mentioned quotation, our theoretician has yet another definition of Leninism, which he considers even more "precise", to wit: "Leninism is the theory and tactics of proletarian revolution in general, the theory and tactics of the dictatorship of the proletariat in particular."

Unfortunately, this more precise definition compromises the already hopeless definition even more. If Leninism is "the theory of the proletarian revolution in general", then what is Marxism? Turning round and round in every direction, Stalin resembles a cook stirring a pot of porridge which he himself had started cooking but which has gotten too hot for him. Truly this theoretical concoction is best of all defined by Lenin's favourite word *kasha* – meaning porridge or a mess. Zig-zagging and meandering all over the place, he is trying to work up to the idea that Leninism is 'more revolutionary' than Marxism.

In analysing the second 'more precise' definition of Leninism we have so far refrained from using the word tactics. The complete formula, the reader will remember, proclaims:

Leninism is Marxism of the epoch of imperialism and the proletarian revolution. To be more exact, Leninism is the theory and tactics of proletarian revolution in general, the theory and tactics of the dictatorship of the proletariat in particular.

Tactics are the actual application of theory to the concrete conditions of the class struggle. Tactics provide the connection of theory with current practice. Theory, notwithstanding Stalin, is not formed in uninterrupted contact with present-day practice but rises above it. Only thanks to that, does it acquire the ability to direct tactics, as well as orientation and perspectives for the future. The line of tactics – Marxist, not tail-endist tactics – is determined not by one but by many different points. If Marxism, which arose in the pre-revolutionary epoch, was not a 'pre-revolutionary theory' but on the contrary, was the theory of proletarian revolution, then the tactics i.e. the militant

application of Marxism to concrete conditions, could not naturally rise above the maturity of objective conditions.

By the conception of tactics is understood the system of measures that serves a single current task or a single branch of the class struggle. Revolutionary strategy on the contrary, embraces a combined system of actions which by their association, consistency, and growth must lead the proletariat to the conquest of power. (See *The Critique of the Draft Programme of the Communist International*.)

LENIN AND MARX

Lenin's work differs enormously from the work of Marx and his old comrades just as much as Lenin's epoch differs from that of Marx's. Marx, the revolutionist, lived and died as the theoretical teacher of the young parties of the proletariat and as a precursor of its future decisive struggles. Lenin led the proletariat to the conquest of power, secured victory by means of his leadership, led the first workers' state in the history of humanity, and called internationally for the realisation of the world dictatorship of the proletariat. The titanic work of the greatest revolutionary strategist can be fully placed on the same level as the work of the greatest genius of proletarian theory.

The attempt to mechanically balance the theoretical and practical elements in the works of Marx and Lenin is unworthy, unwise and empty. Marx created not only a theory but also the [First] International. Lenin not only led a great revolution but developed theory as well. Consequently, the only difference between Marx and Lenin is in the fact that they "pursued their activities" in different epochs. It is therefore nonsense to say that Marxism is simply revolutionary, while Leninism is "exceptionally revolutionary".

Stalin's assertion to the effect that each one of them successfully "pursued their activities" in the theory and the practice of their respective epochs, one in a revolutionary way, and the other in an "exceptionally" revolutionary way, will forever remain a tasteless joke of the epigones. Neither Marx nor Lenin was in need of Stalin's stamp of approval in order to achieve immortality. Marx accomplished no mean feat in his capacity as leader of the First International. However, that was not the main concern of his life. Marx remains Marx even without the First International. His theoretical achievements are not in any sense identical with his revolutionary practice, and rise immeasurably above it, creating the theoretical foundation for the future practice of Lenin and many other generations yet to come.

Lenin's theoretical work tended to serve his own revolutionary practice. The sweep of his theoretical work corresponded to the universally historical significance of his practice. Even the most "abstract" and remote themes, divorced from everyday experience, such as Lenin's work on *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism*, were directly provoked by the needs of the inner Party struggle. That book may be placed side-by-side with Engels' *Anti-Dühring* as an application of the same method to the new material and discoveries of natural science and against its new opponents. It represents nothing more or nothing less than that. Lenin's work contains no new system nor is there a new method. It contains fully and completely the system and the method of Marxism.

It was not Lenin who created the theory of Leninism. He simply applied the theory of Marxism to the revolutionary tasks of the new epoch. As far back as the Third Congress of the Party, where the foundation stones of the Bolshevik Party were laid, Lenin deemed it more correct to describe himself as a publicist journalist rather than a theoretician of the Social-Democracy. This was a little 'modest' of a young leader, who had already written very valuable scholarly works. We know that there are publicists and journalists, but Lenin invested these words with their true historical significance. By journalism he understood the need to use existing theory that would allow him to forge his way into the living revolutionary movement.

Comparing Lenin and Marx, [I wrote]: if Marx went into history as the author of *Capital*, Lenin did so as the author of the October revolution. This most incontestable of all thoughts was not only contested but was suspected of denigrating Lenin's role in the October insurrection. How, asked our critics in a state of indignation, was Lenin only 'the author'? Does that mean that someone else carried out the revolution? At first it was impossible to understand the source of the indignation. But later all became clear. Too many of the present deciders of the fate [of the Soviet Union] appear in the capacity of 'authors' of articles and speeches, which as a matter of fact are written by others. (the Secretariat)

The bureaucrats of pseudo-Leninism, the sycophants and the character assassins, will no doubt again raise a howl that we are 'belittling' Lenin's achievements. That fraternity roars all the louder about the teacher's legacy the more impudently does it disfigure this legacy on the lines of eclecticism and opportunism. Let the quibblers quibble. We will defend Leninism, interpret it, and continue the cause of Lenin. We explained that Lenin's theory was used

to serve his own practice. But that practice was of such a scale that for the first time it applied the Marxist theory to its fullest extent.

THEORY IN AN EPOCH OF REACTION

“It is usual to point to the exceptionally militant and exceptionally revolutionary character of Leninism,” he [Stalin] writes, continuing to oppose Leninism to Marxism. “It is usual to point.” Who pointed? Nobody knows. “Usually” it is pointed – and that’s all. All of this is the expression of a cautiousness, which verges on cowardice.

What is the meaning of “exceptionally revolutionary”? Nobody knows. But what does Stalin himself “notice” with reference to this? He says:

This is quite correct. But (?) this specific feature (a “small peculiarity” in comparison with Marxism)³ of Leninism is due to two causes: firstly, to the fact that Leninism emerged from the proletarian revolution, the imprint of which it cannot but bear; secondly, to the fact that it grew and became strong in clashes with the opportunism of the Second International, the fight against which was and remains an essential preliminary condition for a successful fight against capitalism. (*ibid*, p. 11)

In this way, although very sketchily, Stalin has arrived at the conclusion that the “peculiarity” of Leninism is its “exceptional” revolutionism in comparison to Marxism. If this had been true, then it would have been necessary to openly repudiate Marxism as a theory which had outlived its usefulness, in the same fashion as science in its day repudiated phlogiston, vitalism and the like, rendering it as material to the historians of human thought. But the very thought that Leninism is more “revolutionary” than Marxism is nothing less than an outrage against Leninism, Marxism and revolutionism.

In 1848 Marx and Engels loudly proclaimed to the world the *Manifesto of the Communist Party*. What does this immortal document represent if not a ‘Manifesto of the proletarian revolution in general’? It may be said with full justification that all the future theoretical activities of these great friends were a commentary on the Manifesto. Under the banner of objectivism the Katheder-Marxists⁴ attempted to separate Marx’s theoretical contribution to science from his revolutionary contribution. The epigones of the Second

3 LT.

4 This is a reference to a revisionist tendency that arose in German academic circles during the 1860s and 1870s and was known as *Kathedersozialismus*; from Katheder – an academic chair or university department. This kind of bourgeois socialism was sharply criticised by Marx and Engels.

International attempted to transform Marx into a formidable evolutionist. All his life Lenin fought for genuine Marxism, i.e. for the “theory of the proletarian revolution in general; the theory of the dictatorship of the proletariat in particular”. What then is the meaning of this contrasting and counterpoising of the theory of Leninism to Marxism?

Juxtaposition is the basis of every classification. Clearly without this counterpoising it is impossible to separate out an independent theory of Leninism. We have already said that this counter position is essentially based on a fatal combination, that is: the national socialist revision of the Marxist “theory of the proletarian revolution in general, and the theory of the dictatorship of the proletariat in particular.” It was Stalin who expressed himself more brazenly than others about this revision of Marxism. During the first ‘honeymoon period’ of the new theory [Socialism in One Country] the Opposition had not yet worked out its critical [approach to the question]. In his search for grounds to counterpose Leninism to Marxism (naturally hedged around with all sorts of reservations, as empty in content as they are ‘respectful’ in form) Stalin tried, with scant respect for the facts, to resort to historical examples:

Marx and Engels pursued their activities in the pre-revolutionary period (we have the proletarian revolution in mind), when developed imperialism did not yet exist, in the period of proletarians’ preparation for revolution, in the period when the proletarian revolution was not yet an immediate, practical inevitability. However, Lenin, a disciple of Marx and Engels, pursued his activities in the period of developed imperialism, in the period of the unfolding proletarian revolution...

Even if we are to set aside the blindingly bad style of these lines (Marx and Engels “pursued their activities”, Stalin writes, just as if they were provincial actors) it would still be necessary to reject this excursion into history as utterly unintelligible. That Marx worked in the 19th century and not in the 20th is true, but the whole essence of Marx and Engels’ activity was the fact that they theoretically anticipated and prepared the epoch of proletarian revolution. If that is thrown aside, we would be left with an academic Marxism, Katheder Marxism, that is to say, a most revolting caricature. The whole meaning of the work of Marx and Engels is revealed in the fact that the epoch of proletarian revolution, which came later than they expected, did not require any revision of Marxism but, on the contrary, the purging of their ideas from the distortions of the epigones.

With Stalin, however, it appears that Marxism, in distinction from Leninism, was merely the theoretical reflection of a non-revolutionary epoch. In Stalin's case, such a conception is not accidental. It is the consequence of the mind-set of an empiricist who lives on bits and pieces of undigested information. For him theory merely "reflects" the epoch and serves up the news of the day. In a chapter especially devoted to theory – and what a chapter! – Stalin "pursued his activities" in the following manner: "Theory can become a tremendous force in the working class movement *if it is built up* in indissoluble connection with revolutionary practice." (Stalin, *op. cit.* The emphasis is added)

It is self-evident that Marxist theory which was formed "in indissoluble connection" with the practice of the pre-revolutionary epoch must prove obsolete for Stalin's "revolutionary practice". He utterly fails to understand that theory – real or great theory – is not formed in direct connection with the practice of today, but represents in itself the unification and generalisation of the entire practical activity of humanity, including different epochs in their materially conditioned succession. It is only because theory is not connected inseparably with contemporary practice, but rises above it, that it is capable of acquiring the gift of foresight, i.e. of preparing its link with future practice, of preparing people for the tasks that lie ahead.

What characterised Lenin, and also his teacher Marx, was intellectual honesty; they never believed in face-saving lies. It is a basic requirement of revolutionary politics that one must base oneself on the facts and their development. They were hostile to any kind of ideological carelessness and slipshod analysis. The British semi-Marxist Hyndman once had occasion to experience this trait, when he had an argument with Marx over the American economist Henry George. Hyndman defended George to Marx with such arguments as:

George teaches one more with his mistakes than other people do with a complete exposition of the truth. Marx would not even consider the permissibility of such arguments. The propagation of mistaken ideas can never be useful for the people – such was his opinion. To leave a mistake uncorrected means to encourage intellectual dishonesty. For every ten people who will see through George, there may be hundreds who will be taken in by his views, and that danger is too great to risk.

In 1911 Lenin, cited this episode in *Zvezda* (No. 31 26th November/ 9th December 1911): "As Marx said," he wrote with two exclamation marks. In

this respect, Stalin represents the direct opposite not only of the founder of Marxism, but of the Marxist way of thinking in general.

The theory of Marx towered like a gigantic peak above Lassallean revolutionary practice, which was contemporaneous to Marx, as well as over the practice of all the organisations of the First International. The Second International adopted for its practical needs only certain elements of Marxism, and by no means always the most fundamental ones. Only the epoch of historic catastrophes of the entire capitalist system, which opened the possibility of transforming the basic conclusions of Marxism into life, has made people – though not all by any means – more receptive to the understanding of Marxism as a whole.

The Stalinist history of Marxism and Leninism belongs to that ‘historical school’ about which Marx said, in the words of the Old Testament, that it always sees only the rear end of everything that takes place. As a matter of fact, Stalin’s reference to the pre-revolutionary theory of Marxism and the revolutionary theory of Leninism is the philosophy of the history of theoretical tail-endism, which underlies all the practices of the present day. Stalin has in mind those ‘theories’ which are concocted by order of the Secretariat in ‘uninterrupted connection’ with the practice of the leadership of the centrist apparatus in the period of political retreat and reaction.

THE PHILOSOPHY OF BUREAUCRATISM

Theory is the generalisation of all preceding practice, placing it at the service of all subsequent practice. For the Stalinists, however, the practice of unprincipled zig-zags, and the eclectic mixture of badly digested scraps of Marxism, Menshevism and Populism, is ‘necessary and sufficient’. It is sufficient that the shoe fits the foot. In contrast, Leninist practice for the first time in history placed at its service the entirety of all Marxist theory. This is the road on which the greatness of these two figures, Marx and Lenin, ‘is balanced’.

We now find ourselves in a more favourable position to examine the question of the philosophical outlook of bureaucratism. It stands to reason that the bureaucracy was never an independent class. In the final analysis, a bureaucracy always serves the basic classes of society, but only in the final analysis and only in its own way: that is, taking advantage of its position in every way possible. Different segments and layers within classes often wage a fierce struggle for their own share of the national income and government. This applies all the more to the bureaucracy, which is the most organised and

centralised part of civil society, and, at the same time, towers over the latter and even over the class which it serves.

The labour bureaucracy is no exception to this general rule. It constitutes a leading, managing and, by virtue of that very position, privileged social grouping. All the various administrative methods and tricks that constitute the very social function of the bureaucracy and are the source of its advantages, inevitably leave a very deep impression on its way of thinking. No wonder that such concepts as bureaucratism and formalism characterise not only a system of administration but likewise a certain type of human thinking.

The attributes of that type go far beyond the limits of the office. They may be traced even in philosophy. It would indeed be profitable in the highest degree to trace this bureaucratic strain in philosophy, beginning, say, from the origins of the absolute monarchy, which grouped around itself the intellectual forces of the country. But that is a separate subject. For the present, we are interested in the partial, but none the less, profoundly important question: the tendencies of bureaucratic degeneration not only of parties, trade unions and the state, but also of theoretical thinking. It may be said a priori that insofar as being determines consciousness, bureaucratism should make devastating conquests in the field of theory.

The most fitting system for bureaucracy is the theory of administrative practicality. It stands to reason that this has its origins in a far broader question: the social division of labour and particularly of the separation of intellectual from physical labour. Only along this path does humankind drag itself out of the primeval, chaotic monism. But the finished system of administrative practicality transforms human society and after it the whole world into the product of mutual action, so to speak, inter-departmental relations of the various factors or administrative forces, each one is assigned to a special sphere of management. Such a system could be raised to the heights of creation only by a bureaucratic hierarchy with its ministries and departments towering above society.

The bureaucratic system, as experience testifies, is always in need of being crowned by a personality. Originally bureaucracy developed under a monarchy, having its historically evolved point of support from the top down. But even in republican countries, bureaucratism has more than once emerged from Caesarism, Bonapartism, or a fascist dictatorship, as soon as the balance between the basic classes has opened up for the bureaucracy the possibility of [constituting itself as] a higher and dominant power.

In the final analysis in society, as in nature, the theory of self-sufficient administration likewise needs a personality to stand at its head, just as it needs an oligarchy of powerful ministers. This is for a practical reason: if there were no Super-Bureaucrat, who would direct and reconcile the activity and conflicting interests of irresponsible bureaucrats? In theory, the very same question arises with reference to the theory of factors in society as in nature. Who then has put those factors in their places and provided them with the necessary stability? In a word, if bureaucratism has need of a Tsar, a King or a Dictator, even a bad one, then the theoretical pluralism of [bureaucratic] factors needs a God, even if only a very indulgent one.

The French royalists rather wittily accused the bureaucratic system of the Third Republic of having a gaping 'hole at the top'. Circumstances have turned out in such a way that bourgeois France, ruled by a bureaucracy under the cover of parliamentarism, has been forced for more than half a century to put up with a 'hole at the top'. The same thing may be observed in philosophy, especially from the social-historical point of view. Rarely does it find sufficient courage to plug the 'hole at the top' with the super-figure of the Deity, allowing the world to rule itself with the methods of an enlightened oligarchy.

Essentially this theory cannot do without a Deity. It merely distributes the Deity's omnipotence among a number of more or less equal rulers: economics, politics, law, morals, science, religions, aesthetics and the like. Each one of these rulers has its sub-agents whose number is increased or decreased depending on the convenience of the administrative management or, if you like, on theoretical cognition. The power of the government at any rate proceeds from the top down. Therein lies the idealism of the entire system. The Deity is essentially an arbitrary name for groups of officials who are invested with a special power for the management of the individuals within their jurisdiction. Any bureaucrat, even a republican one, possesses the necessary aura of sanctity (although secularised) for the purpose of managing the affairs of his department. The theory of bureaucratism, if it is carried to its logical conclusion, is a special and very widely disseminated variety of immanent idealism.

The division of nature into particles and elements was a necessary step by which human consciousness rose out of the primeval chaos. But the question of the interaction of these elements, of their nature and origin, merely poses the basic theoretical problems in a concrete fashion. At this point it is necessary either to resort to an Act of Creation (and thus also to a Creator)

or else come down to earth, to nature, to matter, of which humankind is a product. Materialism does not reject the elements, just as dialectics does not reject formal logic. Materialism uses these elements as a system for classifying phenomena which, no matter how their spiritual nature is refined, always proceed historically from the productive foundations of society and in the sphere of natural history are rooted in the material foundations of nature.

ADDENDUM: COMPARING THE STYLE OF MARX AND LENIN⁵

The difference in historical roles and individual psychology is expressed most clearly in two different styles. It is well known what a gigantic stamp Marx's truly Olympian style has placed on all of Marxist literature to the present time. Correcting Bernstein's flabby style, Engels instructed him that even if not everyone can write in the style of Marx, all of us should strive to attain it.

The admirable style of Engels, clear, crisp, human, joyous, was undoubtedly influenced by the style of Marx although it was more laconic and economical. Needless to say, Marx's style exerted its influence directly through Engels on Plekhanov who grafted these stylistic borrowings onto the national Russian literary tradition of Belinsky, Dobrolyubov, and Chernyshevsky⁶ with its loose narrative manner.

Of the younger Marxists whose style was formed under Marx's influence, one might mention Parvus and Rosa Luxemburg. Kautsky's style is rather the absence of style, and to reverse the theorem of Buffon, that means the absence of personality. Hilferding's *Finance Capital* strives by all means to approach the style of Marx's *Capital*, but this is not style but only an imitation, although a very skilful one.

The remarkable thing is that the style of Lenin did not betray the slightest influence of Marx's Olympian hand. Along with his method and system, Lenin borrowed Marx's terminology and made it his own forever. From the first to the very last days of his life Lenin defended every particle of Marx's terminology, not out of pedantry but because of his profound understanding of the fact that eclecticism and all sorts of confusion in general can be hidden behind a motley terminology.

But terminology apart, Lenin's literary development approached Marx's style along a tangent. Lenin loved and valued Marx's rich language just as, for example, he valued the language of Shakespeare or of Goethe as a beautiful

5 Material probably written for his intended work on Lenin.

6 Belinsky, Dobrolyubov, and Chernyshevsky were democratic writers of the 19th century. Chernyshevsky wrote a novel, *What Is to Be Done*, which Lenin named his work after.

but alien tongue. Lenin's language was simple, business-like and purposeful. Lenin was concerned with only one thing – to bring to the reader – and moreover a specific kind of reader, a definite sum of thoughts and their foundation.

The form must impress upon the reader's mind the utmost concreteness and the highest level of clarity. For Lenin there was no such thing as an independent problem of form. Even the question of the logical development of thought – the most difficult of the questions of literary structure – concerned Lenin comparatively little. He very easily violates the unity of exposition. Even if Plekhanov's tendency towards digressions is alien to him, Lenin is not afraid of repetition if he considers it necessary in order to reinforce his conclusions.

Marx arrived at the conclusions for a new scientific system, for a new world outlook. Here every page of the book had to speak for itself. Marx was striving to achieve not only the most perfect construction of the whole but also the best interconnection of the parts – even of the smallest parts – the most perfect sentence construction, the most precise definitions, the clearest epithets. Marx makes great excursions into the sphere of artistic productions, into historical literature and memoirs. Everywhere he found something to strengthen or embellish the edifice he was erecting upon foundations, the walls of which had been built up long before.

The methods of Lenin's writing are radically different. As soon as his thought is formed, its form always grows out of it in the shortest possible time. By form we should understand not only the polishing of sentences (there is almost none of that in Lenin) but also the structure of the whole and the selection of arguments. If Marx introduced to the world a new system by which people could conquer for themselves a place in the sun, Lenin introduced to the world the way in which the revolutionary proletariat could conquer power.

The difference of their styles therefore expressed the difference of their personalities as well as the difference of their historic roles. The theoretical and even a majority of the journalistic works of Marx live by themselves. Not only the journalistic but also the theoretical works of Lenin are direct commentaries on his revolutionary practice. Marx's works require preparation but not commentaries. Lenin's works, even for a person politically prepared, require historical commentaries. Marx's biography at best explains in what ways he came to his conclusions but adds nothing to his theories, or to his method, or to his system.

Lenin's works would have lost nine-tenths of their meaning unless they were connected with his historical work. It is no exaggeration to say that the scientific and journalistic work of Marx merely documents his biography, while Lenin's biography is the history of the Party, of the October Revolution, and of the first few years of the Communist International. In this each of them is expressed, his epoch and his historic mission, which goes far beyond the confines of the biographies of both.

Of course, one may attempt to separate a psychological figure from its epoch. It is possible to compare the intellectual peculiarities and attributes of Aristotle and Darwin. Such an approach also has its justification but on quite a different plane. Preceding from this individual psychological estimation it is possible to ask this question: Would Marx have been able at another period such as our time to undertake the direct leadership of the proletarian revolution? On the other hand, could Lenin have created the theory of Marxism if his thinking had been transferred to the corresponding period?

The reply to these questions can be given only in the form of a very unstable individual psychological hypothesis which would have little value from the point of view of concrete history. Marx did not have the possibility to develop fully as a revolutionary leader in the direct sense of the word. It is no accident that all of his energy had gone into the task of conquering for the proletariat the necessary ground in the realm of thought. Having first of all secured for himself a solid philosophical foundation, Marx carried out the greatest revolution in historical science and in political economy. It may be said that Marx carried out the October Revolution in the realm of thought.

Lenin found the materialistic dialectic as a method tested and tried in all aspects by the creator of the method himself, Marx. Almost from his very first political steps Lenin emerged fully armed with Marx's method. His thought was entirely directed to the solution of the revolutionary problems of his epoch. The circle of these problems constantly broadened, taking in our entire planet during the last years of his life. The central achievement of Lenin's life was the October Revolution – not in the realm of thought but in the former realm of the Russian Tsars.

Bakunin felt, or at any rate said, that as a practical revolutionist Marx was weaker than Lassalle⁷. That of course is nonsense. The young leaders of the German working class, Bebel, Victor Adler, Bernstein, Kautsky, Lafargue

7 Ferdinand Johann Gottlieb Lassalle (1825-64), outstanding pioneer of the German labour movement. Marx paid tribute to his energy and organisational ability but sharply criticised his political opportunism and theoretical confusion.

and many others received from Marx and Engels "practical" advice which preserves all of its force to this day. Lenin was formed politically on the basis of that advice. With what diligence he sought in Marx and Engels each and every sentence that could throw light on a new practical question! And with what penetration would he discover the hidden thought processes that had led the master to make some remark or other, sometimes only made in passing!

On the other hand, Lenin was preoccupied with theory, with the diligence of a genius. It was none other than Goethe who said that genius is diligence and this is true in a certain sense. But Lenin was never concerned with theory for its own sake. This is true even of the social sciences, not to mention the fact that in his works we do not find countless notebooks devoted to chemistry, philology and higher mathematics. In the sphere of 'pure' theory Lenin merely showed what he could have done, but he gave to it only a small particle of what he could have given.

Real genius in one sphere presupposes the foundation of a certain equilibrium of spiritual powers. Otherwise we would be in the presence of a gifted person, of talent, but not genius. But spiritual powers are distinguished by their plasticity, resilience, and agility. The 'genius' shown by master chess players is very narrow in its scope and goes hand-in-hand with narrowness or limitations in other spheres. A mathematician of genius, like a musician of genius, can no longer be a person of narrow dimensions in other spheres. It stands to reason that this refers no less to poets of genius. It is necessary to recall that Goethe had sufficient powers to become a great experimentalist in the field of natural sciences. One force may transform itself into another just as all the forces of nature.

At the same time, even the powers of a genius are not unlimited. And spiritual economy tends more towards concentration of powers than any other. That is why it is so difficult to give a categorical reply to the random psychological question as to what Marx would have amounted to under Lenin's conditions and what Lenin would have achieved in Marx's conditions. Each one of them is the emanation of the utmost power of man. In this respect they are 'of equal value', and also because both of them served one and the same cause. But they are different human types. The concentration of their spiritual forces proceeded along different tangents. There could not have been two Marxes or two Lenins. But instead of that we have one Marx and one Lenin. Humanity has only gained from that.

APPENDIX 3. STALIN'S OFFICIAL HISTORIOGRAPHY

We have examined Stalin's activity throughout [the entire period of] his political life, with the requisite rigour, in certain respects pausing even over details. He began his evolutionary period by adapting himself to bourgeois public opinion. He passively retreated before Lenin, who expressed the irresistible historical pressure of the masses. He adapted himself to Lenin's policy without any personal initiative and without inherent certainty. During the most critical periods he performed work that could have been done with equal success by any other member of the Bolshevik staff. During the most critical days and hours it is impossible to find a trace of Stalin. Had he disappeared the day after the victory of the Bolsheviks, history would not have even remembered his name.

The reader will agree with us that there is no prejudice in this conclusion, which is based on the most thorough and objective analysis of facts. Of course, there were exceptional traits in Stalin's character. But because of the absence of other indispensable attributes, they found no expression for themselves. He seemed to be, and in a certain sense was, a grey mediocrity. New exceptional conditions were required before the exceptional traits of his character could find exceptional expression. These exceptional conditions were created by the state apparatus in the period of political reaction.

More than others Stalin was gifted with will-power and ambition, but he was not cleverer than others, or better educated, or more eloquent. He did not possess those qualities that attracted sympathy, but instead nature generously gifted him with cold persistence and practical sense. He never yielded to feelings or emotions and always knew how to subjugate them to

his calculations. Those characteristics, which persisted through the entire life of Stalin, consisted of firmness of character, slyness, narrowness of outlook, and ruthlessness towards opponents. At first, half-consciously and then consciously, such qualities of Stalin became the tool of the new Soviet aristocracy. This soon induced this aristocracy to recognise Stalin, and then regard him as their leader.

PARTY HISTORY

Researching and evaluating the history of the Party in the Revolution is the task of a cumbersome system of institutions in Moscow, and different Republics and cities. A whole series of journals have published extraordinary masses of material, part of which will prove invaluable and irreplaceable for future historians and biographers. However, the work of the history of the Party has its very own unique political history. Roughly it may be divided into three periods.

Before 1923, reminiscences, individual research work, and the selection of materials are marked by great conscientiousness and reliability. The author had neither the means nor the motivation for inventing anything or deceiving anyone. From the text of the reminiscences of those first years, it is evident that there is complete freedom from prejudice or assumption and the absence of any personal embellishment or glorification. At the same time, the works of that period are distinguished by the greatest concreteness and a wealth of factual material. It was a question of actual genuine documentation.

The second period opens at the time of Lenin's illness and death. The 'Troika' did not yet have full control of the press in its hands, but it was already capable of exerting pressure on editors and authors. The new memoirs and the corrections to the old memoirs acquire an ever more tendentious character. The political aim at this time is the glorification of the 'Bolshevik Old Guard', that is, those of the old Bolsheviks who supported the Troika. After Stalin's break with Zinoviev and Kamenev, a new more radical change in the Party has occurred: after several succeeding phases, we have entered upon the stage of deifying Stalin. The further removed we are from the real events the more premeditated is the character of [this revisionism].

In the latter day reminiscences, the content is less factual. They are transformed into more verbose dispositions upon an assigned theme, and with their conscious vagueness and vapidty they remind one of the confessions of the accused at the theatrical Moscow Trials. Taken altogether, it invests the official Soviet Historiography with the character of very complicated

palimpsests. In order to get down to the true text it is necessary to wash away or to chip away at least two or three layers of latter day Byzantine scribblings.

STALIN'S EARLY DAYS

Around 'heroes' popular legends arise. Around Stalin a bureaucratic myth is manufactured. Myth building invests heroes with divine traits and scatters into early childhood traits displayed in maturity. A man who becomes famous only after the age of forty obviously is not of the breed of precocious children. Why all this insistence that Stalin's father Vissarion Djughashvili was a proletarian rather than a self-employed artisan? What possible effect can that have on the historical reputation of his son? Marx came from a bourgeois milieu; Engels was a manufacturer, while Lenin came from a family of officials. Alexander [Ulyanov], together with his brother Vladimir, was the flower of the Russian intelligentsia. In the person of Alexander the intelligentsia put an end to its tragic past; in the person of Vladimir it laid a bridge to the future.

Social origin may be of considerable interest, but it neither adds to nor detracts from the significance of a historical person. However, this is true only in those instances when that significance is in itself powerless, i.e., when it issues from the exceptional and indisputable attributes of the person himself. Napoleon I had no need of ancestors; Napoleon III was vitally interested in supposed family resemblances with his alleged uncle. Stalin's biography is cut to the same bureaucratic pattern as his political career. It is not correct to explain all such attempts simply by the Byzantine servility of his biographers. In biographies of an obviously hostile character (and there is no lack of them) Stalin's role prior to 1923 is subjected to practically the same monstrous exaggeration, although in a negative sense. We observe here the interesting psychological phenomenon when a man begins to cast his shadow into his own past. People devoid of a historically trained imagination find it hard to conceive that a person with so grey and ordinary a past could suddenly rise to such [heights today].

Even in his character, he is not at all typical of his people, who are distinguished by their gaiety, sociability and even irresponsibility. But Djughashvili was after all a Georgian only on his mother's side. His father, who was an Ossetian, passed on to his son a certain percentage of Mongolian blood.

In any event, to look for an explanation of a son's course of life by viewing his father as a factory worker is misleading. His proletarian heritage might have been of interest if [his father had worked] in a great industry and

had been schooled in the experience of the class struggle, but there was no reference to anything of the kind. The Djughashvili family was brought up in a backward provincial trade on the brink of pauperism. Firmly rooted in the soil of peasant medievalism, they lived out their lives in the traditional manner in an atmosphere impregnated by poverty and superstition.

In Baku, the policeman Damelov Danilov described Stalin's appearance thus: "Body build medium, low voice, red spot on left ear – the form of the head ordinary; produces the impression of an ordinary man." Certain biographers see in this result the alcoholic heredity on the part of the father. His shrivelled arm made itself known throughout his life. Perhaps because of this very cause Stalin did not become a hunter and generally did not go in for any forms of sport.

These are the ordinary sides of his character, which under certain historical conditions secured for him his present position. [But they were combined with] exceptional ambition and a truly exceptional mediocrity of intellectual qualities. Out of this basic composition of a phlegmatic nature grew cautiousness and slyness, which in their turn, achieved an extraordinary development. We are confronted here with those traits over-compensation for which in the biological world often fills a vacuum of organic weakness. From this same contradiction, which remained with him through his entire life, there also emerges an eternal never-to-be-healed envy and its sister, revenge.

The seminary that Stalin/Koba attended was located between the Metekhi Castle and the holy mountain of Mtatsminda, which was closely connected with the history of Georgia. He studied in a Tiflis seminary from 1st September 1894 to 29th July 1899, hence five years. The story that Joseph intentionally denounced all of the members of the seminary circle is undoubtedly slanderous. According to Iremashvili, Koba had been visiting the former seminary circle members and delivering illegal literature to them. This would have been completely impossible if they had been expelled because of his turning them in.

The entrance in the revolutionary movement meant for the son not a continuation of his family tradition but a break with it. However, even after the break, this position continued to live in the nerves and consciousness in the form of primitive cultural habits, crude emotions, and narrowness of the horizon. In part a contemptuous attitude toward women, and a despotic one towards children, made a mark upon Joseph for the rest of his life.

An article entitled 'Mother', written on the occasion of Stalin's visit to his Mother:

He came unexpectedly but he had warned her. The door opened – this one – he came in and I saw – it is him. He kissed me a long time and kissed him too. How do you like our new Tiflis? I asked him. He said that he liked it well. He recalled the past, how we lived then. I worked by the day and brought up my son. It was hard. In the small dark house through the roof of which the rain came, and it was damp. We fed badly. But I never remember that my son should have treated me badly. Always there was his care and love. An exemplary son. We passed the whole day gaily. Josef Vissarionovich joked a lot and laughed and the meeting passed happily. (*Pravda*, 23rd October, 1935, No. 293, p. 2)

Concerning his conversion to socialism, Stalin once said:

I became a Marxist thanks to my so-called social position – my father was a worker in a shoe factory – my mother was also a working-woman – but also because I heard the murmurs of revolt among the people who lived at the social level of my parents, finally on account of the religious intolerance and jesuitical discipline so cruelly crushing me in the orthodox seminary where I had spent so many years.

And he added: “The atmosphere in which I lived was permeated by hatred against tsarist oppression and with all my heart I plunged into revolutionary activity.”

Extremely interesting are those authorities on which Barbusse relies in order to present a portrait of the young Stalin. It is first at all “Yenukidze one of the first leaders of the revolutionary movement in the Caucasus and at the present time an important leader...informs us how well he knew how to speak with the workers.”

The next source is M.D. Orakhelashveli, who praises the persuasiveness of Stalin's propaganda style. “He knew how to speak the language of his audience”. How? In images or with living examples? Orakhelashveli will also be shot soon after Yenukidze. Concerning Stalin's work in Baku, Barbusse heard from Lacoba of “a new page in a great biography” (p. 30). Lacoba will face the firing squad before Yenukidze. Almost all the authorities on whom Barbusse relies – Budnov, Shumyatsky, Bela Kun and many others – were subsequently arrested or shot or are awaiting execution, and no wonder! Only old Bolsheviks could speak of Stalin's young years, and it is precisely they who have to take the consequences for it.

[Following his arrest in February 1902], the two notes thrown out of a window of the Batumi prison by Koba with the expectation that one of the visitors would pick them up and deliver them to the addressee are an undeniable fact. All the circumstances indicated that there was a greater chance that the notes would fall into the hands of the prison wardens. The

risk was too great. Yet Joseph did not hesitate to brave one risk at the expense of another. Iremashvili and Elisabedashvili were subjected to a search, without so much as suspecting at the time the cause of it. The purpose of the notes was to reduce the danger to himself. But the notes meant danger for Iremashvili and for Elisabedashvili.

Again, according to Iremashvili several days after 1st May 1902, following the Batumi demonstration, two Batumi workers came to Iremashvili's place at night with a note from Koba, which contained the same request to testify as a witness that on the days of the Batumi demonstration Koba had been at Gori. From this we must conclude that in addition to the intercepted notes Koba had written another one which had reached its destination.

From Solvychevodsk Koba writes a flagrantly compromising letter to Moscow, without any practical need for it, yielding solely to the urges of vanity. Here, too, he jeopardised the safety of others. The letter, as might have been expected, fell into the hands of the police. In neither of these two cases, of course, was there a deliberate desire to place his comrades in jeopardy. But neither was it merely an accident. It cannot be explained by the thoughtlessness of youth. Koba was not thoughtless. Cautiousness was the most important trait of his character, and by the time the second instance occurred he was already an experienced revolutionist. In both instances what strikes you is egoism, indifference to the fate of others. What arouses one's attention is that in both instances Joseph risked his reputation as a revolutionist to a certain extent. One can very well ask oneself now: of what desperate acts is this young man capable when he is free from risk?

EARLY REVOLUTIONARY ACTIVITY

In biographical literature, we see a determined effort to push Stalin's revolutionary activity back to a far earlier date. We saw this with reference to his first period, when he was being transformed into the leader of the [revolutionary] organisations in the Caucasus when in fact he was merely an apprentice. Stalin was certainly modest in knowledge and influence, though not in ambition. We see the systematic attempts to proclaim Stalin as a member of the Central Committee several years before he actually became one. He is represented as an influential figure during the years of the first Russian Revolution, while an almost decisive role is ascribed to him during the period of the second (October) Revolution.

There is no lack of sketches and reminiscences about the revolutionary work in the Caucasus at the beginning of the twentieth century, whether in

the camp of the Mensheviks or among the Bolsheviks (Makharadze, Arkomed, Yenukidze, Allevule and others). In none of these memoirs or investigative works written before 1924, or perhaps even before 1926, will we find any traces or echoes of Stalin's leading role. His name is either not mentioned at all or is mentioned among a number of other names; among committee members or among those arrested. Official historical sketches including sizable text books on the history of the Party, say absolutely nothing about Stalin's role in the Caucasus. Even after the concentration of power in the hands of the General Secretary, his figure fails to reflect even a shadow of the past traditions of the Party, which were still too much alive in the older generation. The old Bolsheviks still preserved considerable independence of thought, and even downright charlatans did not dare to openly peddle lies for fear of becoming objects of ridicule and contempt.

A whole book has been published containing reminiscences of workers about the young Stalin. The book, which was written by Sulavashevili Beria¹, seems to have been published with the aim of showing that workers of the Caucasus had absolutely nothing to say about Stalin. According to Beria, between the end of 1904 and at the beginning of 1905, the following were members of the Tiflis Bolshevik organisations: Comrades J. Stalin, A Tsulukidze, M. Tskhakaya, M.A. Japaridze, S. Shaumyan, and M. Davitashvili, S. Irtskirevili, S. Spandaryan, F. Makharadze, and advanced workers like M. Vochoridze, V. Sturua, G. Teliya, Z. Chodrishvili, Ya Kachetkovg. G. Asmaura-shivili and others.

The history of the origin of Beria's research was approximately as follows. There were no public sources about Stalin's role during the years of his youth, notwithstanding the fact that it would not have been too difficult to find this out using the evidence of Party and police archives. The question was complicated by the fact that in all the researches and reminiscences around the beginning of the century, Stalin's name was missing. This fact evoked embarrassed discussion and perplexity. After Beria's book, 'the memoirs' of old workers appeared, which differ in everything except what has been suggested to them by Beria's book.

Sulavashevili Beria, who was a member of the Leipzig group of the Bolsheviks tells us:

1 Sulavashevili Beria is not to be confused with Lavrenty Beria, the infamous chief of Stalin's NKVD.

Stalin had received an inspiring letter from a comrade about Lenin. The letter was received by Comrade N. Daivitashevili. In these letters, Comrade Stalin was enchanted with Lenin. Comrade Stalin called Lenin “the mountain eagle” and was very enthusiastic about his irreconcilable struggle against the Mensheviks. We sent these letters to Lenin and soon received from him a reply in which he called Stalin “a flaming Kolkhidite”.

The purpose of this story is to confirm at least indirectly the already familiar version about the correspondence between Lenin and Stalin in 1903. Unfortunately, in citing the testimony of Beria, it does not name any date with the reference to the “mountain eagle” or the “flaming Kolkhidite”. Lenin took his reference to Stalin a “flaming Kolkhidite” from [the celebrated Russian poet Alexander] Pushkin, who called the Caucasus “the flaming Kolkhida”². In this sense, the flaming Kolkhidite is simply a descriptive name for a Caucasian.

In Beria’s work this episode is included in a chapter about 1905. At any rate the mention in Stalin’s letter of “the irreconcilable struggle against Menshevism” could not have been made in 1903. In 1904 Stalin hesitated. At any rate he did not come out openly as Bolshevik until the middle of 1905, with his pamphlet *In Passing About Party Differences*. Subsequent historiography does what it can to fill in this vacant space. It is officially stated that the pamphlet was written at the beginning of 1905.

Boris Souvarine emphasises the fact that in the monograph of the old Bolshevik Philip Makharadze about revolutionary work in the Caucasus, Stalin’s name is mentioned only once in a simple listing without any further elaboration. Yet Makharadze’s work appeared as late as 1927. The publication of Souvarine’s book made further silence impossible. Beria was therefore assigned the task of building up what he could, and he began his investigation by declaring Makharadze’s historical work “unscrupulous”. At the same time Souvarine was included in the list of ‘enemies of the people’ and his name as an agent of the Gestapo was, I believe, mentioned in the trial of Bukharin and Rykov.

[It is alleged that] by order of the Caucasian United Committee of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party, Stalin arrived at Baku in June 1904. Yet at the height of the 1905 Revolution Koba was living in Tiflis where the

2 In ancient times the region on the Black Sea south of the Caucasus Mountains was known as Colchis. It was the site of Jason’s legendary quest for the Golden Fleece. The word Kolkhida is derived from this and refers to the Caucasus, so that a Kolkhidite simply means a Caucasian, as Trotsky points out.

leadership of the movement was entirely in the hands of the Mensheviks. Incidentally, several trips which Koba made to Georgia are mentioned, but their connection with the events of the revolution is so remote that the official literature is unable to state anything definite in this case. There is thus no longer any room for doubt that Koba passed the revolutionary years in Tiflis. There is only one mention [of the fact that] in the summer time he went to Baku where the tsarist authorities managed to achieve temporary lull with the aid of a Turkish massacre of Armenians.

In 1905 the censorship gradually crumbled. The left wing publishing houses eagerly devoured revolutionary literature; the books of Marx, Engels, and Kautsky appeared in numerous translations, mostly bad ones. Although Stalin had studied German during his first spell in prison, he never managed to make any progress. Literature in foreign language remained inaccessible to him. At any rate, after the first Revolution, the most important Marxist texts appeared in the Russian language and Stalin had the possibility to fill in the most gaping gaps in his education.

During the Third Congress in May, 1905, the organisation of the Bolsheviks had an obvious and significant majority over the Mensheviks. However, the growth of the movement very soon secured an obvious majority for the Mensheviks, whose political formlessness and wishy-washiness corresponded much more closely to that of the politically untested masses. In addition to this, was the widespread participation in the movement of the city intellectuals and other petty-bourgeois layers. As a result, all over the country the soviets were under the leadership of the Mensheviks.

The manifesto of the 17th October 1905 did not bring pacification. The people wanted to realise their demands; the monarchy did not want to yield anything; agrarian disturbances, political demonstrations, the December armed uprising in Moscow, the Civil War in the Trans-Baltic region, uninterruptedly followed each. All called forth bloody repressions on the borderland as well as the Centre, especially in the Trans-Baltic provinces and in Georgia. Under these conditions, elections took place to the Duma.

In the years of the first revolution 1905-07, Stalin came out as the practical fighter. He called himself in that period the "apprentice" of the revolution. And this definition may be accepted in the sense that he still remained a figure of provisional proportions. Only in 1917, side-by-side with Lenin, and under the leadership of Lenin, did Stalin for the first time, according to his own words, understand what it meant to be one of the leaders of the working class, on a national scale. In his Tiflis speech, there is not even a trace of the

rapidly ripening genius, a description two obliging biographers used a few years later to portray Stalin, with the approval of Stalin himself who by then had completely forgotten his Tiflis speech.

At this time, this speech was not a disinterested excursion into the past. It had as its task the preparation of the teacher. Stalin had to counterpose himself to theoreticians, orators, former *émigrés*, like Zinoviev and Kamenev who played a national role while Stalin was yet a 'practico' worker on a local level. Out of this tardiness of his development, he tried to make an advantage; namely that he was going through the practical schooling under the leadership of the workers, rising together with them, step by step; the workers must see in him a practical worker who is one of them.

In the speech delivered in 1926 before the Tiflis workers, Stalin said:

As you see, my first teachers were Tiflis workers. Permit me to tender them my sincere comradely thanks. (Applause.)

I recall, further, the years 1907-09, when, by the will of the Party, I was transferred to work in Baku. Three years of revolutionary activity among the workers in the oil industry steeled me as a practical fighter and as one of the local practical leaders. Association with such advanced workers in Baku as Vatssek, Saratovets, Fioletov and others, on the one hand, and the storm of acute conflicts between the workers and the oil owners, on the other, first taught me what it means to lead large masses of workers. It was there, in Baku, that I thus received my second baptism in the revolutionary struggle. There I became a journeyman in the art of revolution. Permit me to tender my sincere comradely thanks to my Baku teachers. (Applause.)

Lastly, I recall the year 1917, when by the decision of the Party, after prison and deportation, I was thrown into Leningrad. There, among the Russian workers, and in direct contact with the great educator of the proletariat throughout the world, Comrade Lenin, in the storm of mighty clashes between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie during the First imperialist war, I first learnt what it means to be one of the leaders of the great Party of the working class.

There, in the society of Russian workers, the liberators of oppressed peoples and the pioneers of the proletarian struggle of all countries and all peoples, I received my third baptism of fire in the revolutionary struggle. There, in Russia, under Lenin's guidance, I became a master workman in the art of revolutionary warfare. There, in Russia, under Lenin's guidance, I became a master-worker in revolution. Permit me to tender my sincere comradely thanks to my Russian teachers and to bow my head in homage to the memory of my great teacher – Lenin. (Applause.)

This speech, thoroughly elaborated in the style of seminarist eloquence, in general correctly conveys the stages of Stalin's political development. His point of departure was in Tiflis, where his contact with the first workers' circles took place. This was a period of simple elementary instruction. The later discoveries of Beria about Stalin's leading role in Tiflis must be relegated to those flattering and unnecessary exaggerations, which Stalin himself deemed necessary to repudiate in 1928.

Stalin leaves the Baku period of his work without any special reference, devoid in his own eyes of any special significance. If he had retained in his mind any memory of leading a street demonstration, which in those days stirred all of Russia, he would not have failed to have mentioned the Batumi stage of his revolutionary career.

I must, in all conscience, tell you, comrades, that I do not deserve a good half of the flattering things that have been said here about me. It appears from them that I am one of the heroes of the October Revolution, the leader of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, the head of the Communist International, a legendary warrior-knight and all the rest of it. That is absurd, comrades, and quite unnecessary exaggeration. That is the way one speaks at the grave of a revolutionary. But I am not prepared to die. Therefore I must give you a true picture of what I once was and say whom I owe my present position in the Party. Comrade Arakl (Okuashvili) has said here that in the old days he regarded himself as one of my teachers, and myself as his pupil. That is perfectly true, comrades. I really was, and still am, one of the pupils of the advanced workers of the Tiflis railway workshops.

Let me turn back to the past. I recall the year 1898, when I was first put in charge of a study circle of workers from the railway workshops. That was some twenty years ago. I recall the days when in the rooms of Comrade Sturua, and in the presence of Sylvester Djibladze (he was also one of my teachers at that time), of Zakro Chodrishvili, of George Chkheidze, of Mikha Bochorishvili, of Ninua and other advanced workers of Tiflis, I received my first lessons in practical work. Compared with these comrades, I was then quite a young man.

Perhaps I may have been a little better-read than many of them were, but as a practical worker of revolution I was unquestionably a novice in those days. It was here, among these comrades, that I received my first baptism in the revolutionary struggle. It was here, among these comrades, that I became an apprentice in the art of revolution. As you can see, my first teachers were the workers of Tiflis. Allow me to express to them now the sincere gratitude of a comrade.

This was published in the Protocols of the Central Committee and was available to all. Of special significance of Stalin's development was the object

lesson of how a comparatively small, single-minded and disciplined Party is able through its day-to-day education to formulate the thoughts of the masses and lead them. The meaning of the 'apparatus' appeared to him in grandiose proportions, more direct than those political ideas which connect this apparatus with the masses.

THE PERIOD OF REACTION

It is remarkable that when in December, 1905 a decisive reaction set in and the police arrested, exiled and executed an entire layer of revolutionists, Stalin was not only not arrested but remained legally in the capital. The revolution did not know him and was not interested in him. We can remember Stalin in the period of reaction, during the years of Lenin's sharp struggle against the liquidators. Rightly or wrongly, he manoeuvred between Lenin and the conciliators.

Which of the social pressures exerts a greatest influence on people on different occasions depend on the individual, on their moral as well as their intellectual attributes. Stalin certainly had a sufficiently strong will to resist outside influences whenever he understood their nature. But often he lacked this theoretical ability. The chief characteristic of Stalin is his contempt for theory. Theory embraces reality on a large scale. Common sense embraces reality on a small scale. That is why Stalin is sensitive in the extreme to any direct danger but is incapable of foreseeing a danger rooted in great historical tendencies. In these peculiarities of his personality lies the key to his further fate.

Referring to the upsurge of the labour movement in the West, under the influence of the first successes of the revolution in Russia, Lenin wrote in 1906:

The complete victory of the bourgeois revolution in Russia will almost inescapably (or at any rate or in all likelihood) provoke a number of similar upheavals in Europe which will be the most powerful impetus toward the socialist revolution.

To the question what to do in the event that the revolution in the west does nevertheless not come about, Lenin did not reply with soothing hopes concerning the firmness of the unity of workers and peasants. On the contrary, he openly declared: "In that case restoration is inescapable for 'there is no other guarantee and there cannot be'."

In the summer of 1912 Lenin, Krupskaya and Zinoviev left Paris for Krakow in order to be closer to *Pravda* and to the Petersburg work in general.

“From that moment on,” wrote a very close collaborator of the *Pravda*, Danilov (who is now among the missing), “began his most energetic work in *Pravda*. Not satisfied with the role of the most active contributor and theoretician of the newspaper he concerned himself with all the important questions of the newspaper business, constantly giving his advice and direction... Rarely did an issue of *Pravda* appear without his articles written under different pseudonyms.”

The first edition of the memoirs of the former deputy Badayev gives Stalin a much lesser role in the life of the Party than in the life of the Duma faction and of *Pravda*, than its subsequent edition which appeared in 1932. Referring in part to the Krakow conference in 1912, Badayev forgets even to mention Stalin among its participants. “In a number of factories,” writes Badayev, “at flying meetings, appeared Comrade Stalin who had recently escaped from Narym.” According to Barbusse Stalin escaped from exile six times. Barbusse explains that it is not known how Koba in Siberia was cured from tuberculosis, after falling into a blinding Siberian snow storm (*purga*).

This quote is from the second edition – there is no mention of Stalin speaking at the factories in the first edition. The editorial note in the first edition of Badayev’s memoirs in 1929 stated: “The instruction was composed by the Central Committee of our Party.” However, in the second edition it is stated: “The instruction was written by Stalin.” There is no reason for doubting that the instruction was the product of collective work [i.e., the Central Committee] but according to the general tendencies of the new historiography it is ascribed personally to Stalin, not only those actions in which he was a participant, but even those with which he had absolutely nothing to do are also ascribed to him.

The founding conference of the Bolsheviks opened in Prague on 18th January 1912. Sergo Ordzhonikidze was a delegate to the Prague conference from the Tiflis Party organisation. The entire work of the conference was guided by Lenin. Stalin who was in exile at that time was elected *in absentia* a member of the Central Committee of the Party. (Zinaida Ordzhonikidze, *The Path of a Bolshevik*)

In the beginning of 1912, Stalin was included in the Central Committee by co-option. This is clear from the appendices of the first edition of Lenin’s *Collected Works*. In two later biographical references, it was said Stalin was elected to the Central Committee at a conference. But in these instances, as in all others, we place more trust in the first biographical statement written at the time when the history of the Party was not yet changed. It is beyond doubt

that in 1912 Lenin tried to bring Stalin into the Central Committee. If he did not succeed to do this at the Prague conference, it was evidently because many of the delegates did not know Stalin at all, and others were possibly against him. Only the Central Committee, consisting of a narrow circle of persons closely connected with Lenin, apparently relented to his arguments: only thus may be explained Stalin's co-option on to the Central Committee immediately after the Prague conference 18th-30th January, 1912.

At the time of the war, Stalin speaks up for the first time on the questions of social patriotism only as late as the 27th February, 1915. The significance of this date the historians and memoirs attempt to blur, transferring without the slightest proofs, Stalin's internationalist position to the very beginning of the war. We recall two of his letters from Soleychedodsk which mark the extreme points of his vacillations, or rather of his manoeuvres. This was the same position that he also held at the time of the [First World] War. He agreed with Lenin to the same extent as even Menshevik internationalists of the Martov type did, which always left him the possibility of retreat. This became fully evident in the first period of the Revolution, and finally even during the months of the preparation of the October revolution. Stalin agreed with Lenin exactly to the same extent as was permitted to him by [circumstances].

Only in 1928 does the character and tone of the biographical statement begin to change. First of all, it is emphasised that Stalin became a Bolshevik from the very first moment, which is certainly not confirmed by the documentary evidence. In the same place, we find the assertion that Stalin was elected to the Central Committee in 1912. From then on the references to the Caucasus disappear altogether. This detail is not devoid of interest. It shows that Stalin rose up the steps of the Party hierarchy behind the back of the Party without its knowledge and participation. Already in these young years Stalin was a man of the apparatus, of the Party cadres, and he rises up on the levers of the apparatus. He was not elected by the masses, but co-opted by officials.

Only in April, 1917, at the Party's conference was Stalin for the first time formally elected to the Central Committee. But he was still being held back. It was only in July, after Lenin and Zinoviev had to go into hiding, and Kamenev and I were arrested, that Stalin's figure alongside that of Bukharin presided at the Party Congress. 1917 even more than 1905 became for him a year of sharp indisposition. Behind the scenes he carried out the administrative and technical assignments of the Central Committee. He was neither a tribune nor a publicist, neither the strategist of the insurrection, nor a leader of the

masses. He was a bureaucrat of the revolutionary party. Therefore, in order to disclose his attributes he had to wait for the moment when the masses would be pushed back, and the apparatus would assert its rights.

Very many quotations from the speeches of Stalin, his articles, letters to Lenin, and all sorts of communications are cited, but very little is said about his 'genius'. For example, we have "thanks to the direct leadership by Comrade Stalin, the Petrograd Party organisation was able to carry out a number of undertakings to strengthen the rear and the front in the shortest period of time." And again: "On all questions local workers turned to Comrade Stalin and received from him leading directions." By comparison with later editions this eulogising is more than modest...

The official 1926 edition of *Revolution and the Russian Communist Party in Materials and Documents* says: "The Russian collegium of the Central Committee had appointed an Executive bureau from among its own ranks, consisting of four persons: Timofei, Sergo, Koba and Filipp." Stalin's name is third in order. We note that out of Stalin's three closest associates in illegal work, Timofei Spandaryan died during the war, Sergo died in 1937 under circumstances which are considered to be very mysterious, and finally, Filipp Goloshchekin, is considered to be missing.

In his *Marginal Notes: The Proletarian Revolution* (1930), S. Pistkovsky writes:

In the days of the Kornilov uprising, I went over to work in the Secretariat of the Party; I was in charge of the department in the Smolny and simultaneously carried out the duties of the actual secretary of our grouping in the All-Russian Central Executive Committee. Here, I met Stalin more often, because occasionally the sessions of the Central Committee took place in the Smolny.

During that time I made one observation: the main work in the preparation of the October uprising was carried on by three comrades in the Central Committee: Stalin, Sverdlov and Dzerzhinsky.

Under their leadership worked the Petersburg Committee of the Party in the military organisation. Supervision of the correctness of the political Leninist line lies entirely with Stalin. He was also the leader of the central organ of the Party.

Unfortunately, this belated testimony in 1930 is devoid of any value. The sessions of the Central Committee held in Smolny "occurred occasionally", maybe once or twice, but no more. It stands to reason that Pistkovsky was not present at those sessions and therefore his evidence is obviously retrospective in character.

[In contrast to the other Bolshevik leaders, who were cultured, educated people who had lived in Western Europe for years, were well versed in European politics and culture, Stalin was poorly acquainted with foreign countries and spoke no foreign languages. His outlook was always narrow and provincial.] On March 3, 1929 *Pravda* dedicated an article to the tenth anniversary of the Comintern. Stalin is not mentioned in this article. At that time, it was still completely unthinkable to attribute to him the role of “leader of the world proletariat.”

[Serebryakov] has told us about discussions in the political prison in which he and Stalin were held. We also know about his participations in the discussion of the Stockholm Congress. But generally speaking, the occasions in which he appeared in debates on an equal footing with other participants in the Party are rare. In exile, where he met no one of his mean stature, he refrained from any participation in comradely debate, but satisfied himself with single remarks. Feeling uncomfortable in sharp polemics, devoid of inventiveness, he avoided exposing himself. No one heard him debate with the Mensheviks or S-Rs throughout 1917. Stalin did not speak in public because he was afraid of exposing his weakness. At Party conferences, he would deliver a report when he was assured he would be the last to reply, and when he felt behind him the support of the entire Central Committee. In such circumstances, he did not need to fear his opponents. Much later, when he was able to express himself in public without fear of being contradicted, he showed pleasure in listening to himself.

BARBUSSE

Following his sentimental biography of Jesus Christ, Henri Barbusse wrote an official biography of Stalin. It is hard to say which of them is more reliable. The author made no effort to study even the most readily available sources. He limited himself to a cursory literary working over of facts and quotations that were given to him in the Kremlin and in certain other places during his sojourn in the USSR. From a scientific point of view the book has absolutely no value. Nevertheless, even if it is unable to show us Stalin as he was and as he became, it quite frequently shows us Stalin as he wants to appear:

His portrait – sculpture, drawing, photograph – is displayed everywhere in the Soviet Union, together with the portrait of Lenin. There is not a corner in an enterprise, a barrack, an office or a shop window, where he would not stand out against the red background... We cannot find many workshops, any rooms of workers or intellectuals, where there would not be some representation of Stalin.

Obediently following the script and instructions he has received, Barbusse attempts to establish a physical and moral comparison between Stalin and Lenin: "It is astonishing how this young man hated phrasemongering. Ever since his youth, Stalin's style was already the same as Lenin's." It would really be impossible to make a statement that is falsier or cruder in its falsity. Lenin's simplicity is a result of a simple thought process which achieved complete clarity. Stalin's simplicity is of a vulgar kind, based on the elimination of the most important aspects of a given question, not to mention the fact that in this simplicity one senses the timidity of a man who has not fully mastered the instrument of language.

Barbusse continues: "He earns several hundred roubles a month, which represent the modest maximum of a Communist Party official (it amounts to one and a half or two thousand francs in our money)." At this point Barbusse's testimony is a downright lie. As in the case of all the highest dignitaries, Stalin's standard of living is not dependent on the few roubles he receives but on the material privileges provided for him by the state apparatus: automobiles, summer homes, secretaries and gifts from all over the Soviet Union. The gifts enumerated by *Pravda* alone exceed many times over the sum mentioned by the too assiduous Barbusse.

"I know that to write intimately about Stalin is to indulge in self-sacrifice. Later Stalin will bark at you like a beast," remarked Demyan Bedny in *Stalin Sketches* (1929).

According to M. Salyeev in *Stalin as the Continuator of Lenin's Cause*, "Soso's natural simplicity, his absolute indifference to the conditions of his personal life, his inherent firmness, his knowledge, remarkable already even in those days, invested him with great authority." But he then adds, "Barbusse goes so far that he even invests Lenin with pock marks in order to make him look more like Stalin." Similar evidence is provided by Yenukidze, whom Stalin shot two or three years after the latter's conversation with Barbusse:

"This gift of being approachable by all was also a characteristic attribute of Lenin," he said. "Joseph Vissarionovich was a man of the same kind and therefore these two silhouettes come closer together on seeing one another among a pile of others."

N. Kornatovsky's book entitled *The Heroic Defence* (Leningrad, 1934) was written in comparatively 'modest' tones. Stalin is, of course, the sole organiser of the defence of Petrograd against White General Yudenich:

Is it because of the exultant, slightly Asiatic eyes of the man smoking a pipe that the rather sharply-lined mask of the worker acquire an ironic appearance? Something in his features and his glance makes him seem constantly smiling. Or rather, one might say that he is on the verge of laughing. So it seemed to me at one time or other. It is not so much a matter of his glance being somewhat wild but rather that his eyes are constantly blinking.

Barbusse further mentions the expression on Stalin's face: "With the sly subtlety of a peasant... He laughs, and even resoundingly, much more willingly than he speaks."

"The mainspring for moving social progress is faith in the masses," states Barbusse. Even here Barbusse merely repeats what he had been told to repeat. Invincible loyalty to principle and faith in the masses is what Lenin had actually believed in throughout his entire life, notwithstanding the flexible resilience of his policy. In both these respects, Stalin is the direct opposite of Lenin, his negation, and if one may say so, his caricature. Principles were for him never anything more than a cover. Never in the course of his life did he have contact with the actual masses, that is, not with tens but with hundreds, thousands, millions. He did not have the organs or the resources for such contact. And because of his inability to speak to the masses, an inability that directly grew out of his fear of them, followed by his hostility to them, the entire future totalitarian regime grew out of the bureaucracy's fear of the masses. Ironically, Stalin describes the fear of the masses or lack of faith in their creativeness as an illness.

No centrist or eclectic could even get a hearing in a Party reared in the Leninist tradition unless he knew at least the vocabulary of Marxism. But revolutions are not made with words devoid of meaning. It is not enough to repeat revolutionary formulae. One must know what they mean. Stalin does not understand them. Even if we grant for the sake of argument, that his revolutionary intentions are as pure as the driven snow, Stalin is hopelessly handicapped by his crudity of mind and soul. Nor can he make up for it by his over-emphatic hawking of the most marketable formulae of Marxism. A considerable portion of the latter-day programmes of the Comintern are replete with such formulae, yet the Comintern remains national-socialist in character. It is generally known that the eclectics are in charge of public works in and around hell, and that all the roads leading there are paved with good intentions.

APPENDIX 4. THREE CONCEPTS OF THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

The Revolution of 1905 came to be not only the 'general rehearsal' of 1917 but also the laboratory in which all the fundamental groupings of Russian political life were worked out and all the tendencies and shadings inside Russian Marxism were projected. At the core of the arguments and divergences was, needless to say, the question concerning the historical nature of the Russian Revolution and its future course of development. That conflict of concepts and prognoses has no direct bearing on the biography of Stalin, who did not participate in it in his own right. The few propagandist articles he wrote on that subject are utterly devoid of theoretical interest. Scores of Bolsheviks who plied the pen popularised the same thoughts, and did it considerably better. Any critical exposition of Bolshevism's revolutionary concepts naturally belongs in a biography of Lenin. But theories have their own fate. Although during the period of the First Revolution and subsequently, as late as 1923, at the time when the revolutionary doctrines were elaborated and applied, Stalin had no independent position whatever, a sudden change occurred in 1924, which opened an epoch of bureaucratic reaction and radical transvaluation of the past. The film of the revolution was unwound in reverse order. Old doctrines were subjected either to a new evaluation or a new interpretation. Thus, rather unexpectedly at first glance, attention was focused on the concept of 'permanent revolution' as the prime source of all the fallacies of 'Trotskyism'. For many years to come criticism of that concept formed the main content of all the theoretical – *sit venio verbo* – writings of Stalin and his collaborators.

Since on the theoretical plane every bit of 'Stalinism' has issued from the criticism of the theory of permanent revolution as it was formulated in 1905, an exposition of that theory as distinct from the theories of the Mensheviks and the Bolsheviks, clearly belongs in this book, if only as an appendix.

Russia's development is first of all notable for its backwardness. But historical backwardness does not mean a mere retracing of the course of the advanced countries a hundred or two hundred years late. Rather, it gives rise to an utterly different 'combined' social formation, in which the most highly developed achievements of capitalist technique and structure are integrated into the social relations of feudal and pre-feudal barbarism, transforming and dominating them, fashioning a unique relationship of classes. The same is true of ideas. Precisely because of its historical tardiness, Russia proved to be the only European country in which Marxism, as a doctrine, and the Social-Democracy, as a party, enjoyed a powerful development even prior to the bourgeois revolution – and naturally so, because the problem of the relation between the struggle for democracy and the struggle for socialism were subjected to the most profound theoretical examination in Russia.

The idealistic democrats – for the most part, the Populists – superstitiously refused to recognise the advancing revolution as a bourgeois revolution. They called it 'democratic', attempting to hide under that neutral political label – not only from others, but from themselves as well – its social content. But Plekhanov, the founder of Russian Marxism, in his fight against Populism, showed as far back as the eighties of the past century that Russia had no reason whatsoever to rely on preferential ways of development; that, like the 'profane' nations, it would have to go through the purgatory of capitalism; and that on this very path it would wrest political freedom, which was indispensable to the proletariat in its continuing fight for socialism. Plekhanov not only segregated the bourgeois revolution, as the immediate task, from the socialist revolution, which he in turn relegated to the vague future, but he foresaw distinct combinations of forces for each of them. The proletariat would secure political freedom jointly with the liberal bourgeoisie; then, after many decades, on a high level of capitalist development, the proletariat would proceed with the socialist revolution in direct conflict against the bourgeoisie.

Lenin wrote toward the end of 1904:

To the Russian intellectual...it always seems that to recognise our revolution as bourgeois means to make it colourless, to humiliate it, to vulgarise it... The struggle for political freedom and the democratic republic in bourgeois society is

to the proletariat merely one of the necessary stages in the struggle for the social revolution.

He wrote in 1905:

The Marxists are thoroughly convinced of the bourgeois character of the Russian Revolution. What does that mean? It means that those democratic transformations...which became indispensable for Russia, not only do not signify in themselves the undermining of capitalism, the undermining of the domination of the bourgeoisie, but, on the contrary, they will be the first to really clear the ground for a widespread and rapid, a European rather than an Asiatic, development of capitalism; they will be the first to make possible the rule of the bourgeoisie as a class.

“We cannot jump out of the bourgeois-democratic framework of the Russian Revolution,” he insisted, “but we can considerably broaden that framework” – that is, create within the bourgeois society more favourable conditions for the further struggle of the proletariat. To that extent Lenin followed in the footsteps of Plekhanov. The bourgeois character of the revolution, was the meeting of the crossroads for the two factions of the Russian Social-Democracy.

Under these circumstances it was quite natural that in his propaganda Koba should not have ventured beyond those popular formulae which formed the common heritage of Bolsheviks and Mensheviks. “The Constituent Assembly, elected on the basis of universal, equal, direct and secret suffrage,” wrote he in January, 1905, “is what we should now fight for! Only such an assembly will give us a democratic republic, extremely necessary to us in our struggle for socialism.” The bourgeois republic as the arena of a prolonged class struggle for the socialist objective – such was the perspective. In 1907 that is, after countless discussions in the foreign and the Petersburg press, and after the earnest verification of theoretical prognoses by the experience of the First Revolution, Stalin wrote : “That our Revolution is bourgeois, that it must end with the demolition of serfdom and not of the capitalist order, that it can be crowned only by a democratic republic – on that, it seems, everybody in our Party is agreed.” Stalin was not speaking of what the Revolution was to begin with, but of what it would end with, limiting it beforehand, and rather categorically, to “only a democratic republic”. In vain would we seek in his writings of those days for as much as a hint about the perspective of the socialist revolution in connection with the democratic insurrection. Such was

to remain his position as late as the beginning of the February Revolution of 1917, until Lenin's very arrival in Petrograd.

For Plekhanov, Axelrod, and the leaders of Menshevism generally the characterisation of the revolution as bourgeois had, above all, the political value of avoiding the premature taunting of the bourgeoisie with the red spectre of socialism and thus 'frightening it away' into the camp of reaction. "The social relations of Russia have ripened only for a bourgeois revolution," said Axelrod, the chief tactician of Menshevism at the Unification Congress.

While this general political lawlessness persists, we must not even so much as mention the direct fight of the proletariat against other classes for political power... It is fighting for the conditions of bourgeois development. Objective historical conditions doom our proletariat to an inevitable collaboration with the bourgeoisie in the struggle against our common enemy.

The content of the Russian Revolution was thus confined beforehand to changes that were compatible with the interests and the views of the liberal bourgeoisie.

This was the starting point for the fundamental divergence between the two factions. Bolshevism resolutely refused to acknowledge that the Russian bourgeoisie was capable of consummating its own revolution. With immeasurably greater force and consistency than Plekhanov, Lenin advanced the agrarian question as the central problem of the democratic revolution in Russia: "The crux of the Russian Revolution is the agrarian (the land) question. We must make up our minds about the defeat or victory of the revolution... on the basis of accounting for the condition of the masses in their struggle for land." At one with Plekhanov, Lenin regarded the peasantry as a petty-bourgeois class and the peasant land program as the program of bourgeois progressivism. "Nationalisation is a bourgeois measure," he insisted at the Unification Congress. "It will give impetus to the development of capitalism by intensifying the class struggle, by strengthening the mobilisation of land and the investment of capital in agriculture, by lowering the prices on grain." Notwithstanding the admitted bourgeois character of the agrarian revolution, the Russian bourgeoisie was nevertheless hostile to the expropriation of the land owned by the landed gentry, and precisely for that reason strove for a compromise with the monarchy on the basis of a constitution after the Prussian model. To the Plekhanovite idea of union between the proletariat and the liberal bourgeoisie Lenin counterpoised the idea of union between the proletariat and the peasantry. He proclaimed the task of the revolutionary

collaboration of these two classes to be the establishment of a 'democratic dictatorship', as the only means for radically purging Russia of its feudal refuse, creating a free class of farmers and opening the way for the development of capitalism after the American rather than the Prussian model.

The victory of the revolution, he wrote, can be attained "only through dictatorship, because the realisation of the transformations immediately and unconditionally necessary for the proletariat and the peasantry will call forth the desperate resistance of the landlords, of the big bourgeoisie and of tsarism."

Without dictatorship it would be impossible to break that resistance, it would be impossible to defeat counter-revolutionary efforts. That would be, needless to say, not a socialist, but a democratic dictatorship. It would not be able to dispose of (without a whole series of intermediary stages in revolutionary development) the foundations of capitalism. At best, it would be able to introduce a radical redistribution of land ownership for the benefit of the peasantry, carry out a consistent and complete democratisation, including a republic; uproot all the oppressive Asiatic characteristics in the life of the factory as well as the village; lay down the beginnings of important improvements in the condition of the workers; raise their standard of living; and finally, last but not least, carry the revolutionary conflagration into Europe.

Lenin's conception represented a tremendous step forward, proceeding, as it did, from the agrarian revolution rather than from constitutional reforms as the central task of the revolution, and indicating the only realistic combination of social forces that could fulfil that task. The weak point of Lenin's concept was its inherently contradictory notion, 'the democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry'. Lenin himself emphasised the basic limitations of that 'dictatorship' when he openly called it bourgeois. He was thus implying that, for the sake of maintaining unity with the peasantry, the proletariat would be obliged to forego posing the socialist task (directly during the impending revolution. But that would have meant the repudiation by the proletariat of its own dictatorship. The dictatorship was consequently, in essence, of the peasantry, although with the workers participating. On certain occasions that was precisely how Lenin spoke; for example, at the Stockholm Congress, when he replied to Plekhanov, who had rebelled against the 'utopia' of seizing power: "What program are we talking about? About an agrarian program. Who in that program is supposed to seize the government? The revolutionary peasantry. Is Lenin confounding the government of the proletariat with that of the peasantry?" No, he said with reference to himself: Lenin sharply differentiated between the socialist government of the proletariat and the

bourgeois-democratic government of the peasantry. "And how is a victorious peasant revolution possible," he exclaimed again, "without seizure of power by the revolutionary peasantry?" In that polemical formulation Lenin very clearly exposed the vulnerability of his position.

The peasantry was dispersed over the surface of an immense country, with cities as points of contact. By itself the peasantry was incapable even of formulating its own interests, for in each region they were differently conceived. Economic contact between provinces was established by the market and the railroads; but both the market and the railroad were in the city's hands. In trying to break through the confines of the village and pool their interests, the peasantry necessarily succumbed to political dependence on the city. Neither was the peasantry homogeneous in its social relations: its *kulak* stratum naturally strove to entice it to unite with the city bourgeoisie, while the lower strata of the village pulled in the direction of the city workers. Under these circumstances, the peasantry as a whole was utterly incapable of assuming the reins of government.

True, in ancient China revolutions brought the peasantry to power, or rather, the military leaders of peasant insurrections. That led each time to a re-division of the land and the establishment of a new "peasant" dynasty, after which history began all over again: new concentration of lands, a new aristocracy, new usury, new uprisings. So long as the revolution maintained its purely peasant character, society did not emerge from these hopeless rotations. Such was the basis of ancient Asiatic, including ancient Russian, history. In Europe, beginning with the emergence of the Middle Ages, each victorious peasant uprising did not place a peasant government in power but a Leftist burgher party. More precisely, a peasant uprising proved victorious only to the extent that it managed to establish the position of the city population's revolutionary sector. Seizure of power by a revolutionary peasantry was out of the question in twentieth-century bourgeois Russia.

The attitude toward the liberal bourgeoisie thus became the touchstone in the divergence between revolutionists and opportunists among Social-Democrats. How far the Russian Revolution could venture, what character would be assumed by the future provisional revolutionary government, what tasks would confront it, and in what order it would dispose of them – these questions could be correctly posed in all their importance only in reference to the basic character of the proletariat's politics, and that character was determined, above all by its relation to the liberal bourgeoisie. Plekhanov demonstratively and stubbornly shut his eyes to the fundamental object-lesson

of nineteenth-century political history: wherever the proletariat appeared as an independent force, the bourgeoisie shifted to the camp of the counter-revolution. The bolder the struggle of the masses, the quicker the reactionary transformation of liberalism. No one has yet invented a way to paralyse the workings of the law of the class struggle.

“We must prize the support of the non-proletarian parties,” Plekhanov was wont to repeat during the years of the First Revolution, “and not drive them away from us by tactless behaviour.” With such monotonous moralisings the sage of Marxism demonstrated that he was unable to grasp the living dynamics of society. “Tactlessness” might drive away an occasional over-sensitive intellectual. But classes and parties are drawn or repelled by their social interests. “It may be safely said,” Lenin retorted to Plekhanov, “that the liberals among the landed gentry will forgive you millions of ‘tactless’ acts, but they will never forgive incitements to take away their land.” And not only the landed gentry: the upper crust of the bourgeoisie, bound to the landowners by identity of property interests and even more closely by the banking system, as well as the upper crust of the petty-bourgeoisie and of the intellectuals, materially and morally dependent on the large and middling property owners, dreaded the independent movement of the masses. Yet in order to overthrow tsarism, it was necessary to arouse scores upon scores of millions of the oppressed for a heroic, self-sacrificing, reckless, supreme revolutionary onslaught. The masses could be aroused to this uprising only under the banner of their own interests; hence, in the spirit of irreconcilable hostility toward the exploiting classes, and first of all, the landlords. The ‘frightening away’ of the oppositional bourgeoisie from the revolutionary peasants and workers was therefore the immanent law of the revolution itself and could not be forestalled by ‘tactfulness’ or diplomacy.

Each new month confirmed Lenin’s estimate of liberalism. Notwithstanding the fondest hopes of the Mensheviks, the Kadets not only made no move to lead the ‘bourgeois’ revolution but, on the contrary, more and more found their historic mission in fighting it. After the crushing defeat of the December insurrection, the liberals, who, thanks to the ephemeral Duma, stepped out before the political footlights, strove with all their might to explain to the monarchy their insufficiently active counter-revolutionary behaviour in the autumn of 1905, when the holiest pillars of ‘culture’ were in danger. The leader of the Liberals, Milyukov, who carried on *sub rosa* negotiations with the Winter Palace, argued quite properly in the press that by the end of 1905 the Kadets were unable even to appear before the masses. “Those who now blame

the [Kadet] party," he wrote, "for not protesting then, by convoking meetings, against the revolutionary illusions of Trotskyism... simply do not understand or do not remember the moods then prevalent among the democratic public that attended these meetings." By the "illusions of Trotskyism" the liberal leader meant the independent policy of the proletariat, which attracted to the Soviets the sympathies of the cities' lower classes, soldiers, peasants and of all the oppressed, thus alienating 'cultivated' society. The evolution of the Mensheviks developed along parallel lines. Time and again they had to alibi themselves to the liberals for having found themselves in a bloc with Trotsky after October, 1905. The explanations of that talented publicist of the Mensheviks, Martov, came to this – that it was necessary to make concessions to the 'revolutionary illusions' of the masses.

In Tiflis political groupings were formed on the same basis of principles as in Petersburg. The leader of the Caucasian Mensheviks, Jordania, wrote:

The smashing of reaction, the winning and attainment of the constitution – will come from the conscious unification and single-minded direction of all the forces of the proletariat and the bourgeoisie. True, the peasantry will be drawn into this movement and will invest it with the character of a natural force; nevertheless, it is these two classes that will play the decisive role, while the peasant movement will pour water on their mill.

Lenin made sport of Jordania's misgivings that an irreconcilable policy toward the bourgeoisie might doom the workers to helplessness. Jordania "discusses the question of a possible isolation of the proletariat in the democratic insurrection and forgets the peasantry. Of the possible allies of the proletariat, he recognises and takes delight in the landed gentry of the county councils, but he does not recognise the peasants. And that in the Caucasus!" Lenin's retort, essentially correct, oversimplified the question on one point. Jordania did not "forget" the peasantry, and, as is evident from Lenin's own hint, could not have possibly forgotten it in the Caucasus, where it was then stormily rising under the banner of the Mensheviks. But Jordania saw the peasantry not so much as a political ally as a political battering ram which the bourgeoisie could and should utilise in union with the proletariat. He did not believe that the peasantry could become a leading or even an independent force of the revolution, and in that he was not wrong; but neither did he believe that the proletariat could secure the victory of the peasant uprising in the role of leader – and in that was his fatal error. The Menshevik idea of union between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie actually meant submission of the workers

as well as the peasants to the liberals. The reactionary utopianism of that program proceeded from the fact that the far-gone dismemberment of the classes paralysed the bourgeoisie from the start as a revolutionary factor. In that fundamental question Bolshevism was right: the quest of union with the liberal bourgeoisie was perforce driving the Social-Democracy into the camp opposed to the revolutionary movement of the workers and peasants. In 1905 the Mensheviks merely lacked the courage to draw all the necessary inferences from their theory of 'bourgeois' revolution. In 1917, pursuing their ideas to the bitter end, they broke their neck.

On the question of attitude toward the liberals Stalin sided with Lenin during the years of the First Revolution. It must be said that in that period, when it was a question of the oppositionist bourgeoisie, even a majority of the rank-and-file Mensheviks found themselves closer to Lenin than to Plekhanov. A disdainful attitude toward liberals was a literary tradition of intellectual radicalism. But it would be utterly useless to look for an independent contribution of Koba's on that question, be it an analysis of social relations in the Caucasus or new arguments, or even so much as a new formulation of old arguments. Jordania, leader of the Caucasian Mensheviks, was incomparably more independent of Plekhanov than Stalin was of Lenin. "In vain do the Messieurs Liberals try," wrote Koba after Bloody Sunday, "to save the tottering throne of the Tsar. In vain do they proffer the hand of succour to the Tsar!... The agitated masses of people are getting ready for revolution, not for conciliation with the Tsar... Yes, gentlemen, vain are your efforts! The Russian Revolution is unavoidable, as unavoidable as the sunrise! Can you stop the rising sun? – that is the question!" and so forth. Koba could not fly higher than that. Two and a half years later, repeating Lenin's words almost literally, he wrote: "The Russian liberal bourgeoisie is anti-revolutionary. It cannot be the propeller, much less the leader, of the revolution; it is the sworn enemy of the revolution; and against it a persistent struggle must be waged." It was on that fundamental issue that Stalin passed through a complete metamorphosis during the ensuing ten years, so that he greeted the February Revolution of 1917 as a supporter of the bloc with the liberal bourgeoisie, and, in consonance with that, as the herald of fusion with the Mensheviks into one party. Only Lenin, upon arrival from abroad, sharply terminated Stalin's independent policy, which he called a mockery of Marxism.

Populists regarded all workers and peasants as simply "toilers" and "exploited ones", who were equally interested in socialism, while to Marxists

a peasant was a petty-bourgeois, capable of becoming a socialist only to the extent that he either materially or spiritually ceased being a peasant. With a sentimentality characteristic of them, Populists saw in that sociological characterisation a dire insult to the peasantry. Along that line was fought for two generations the principal battle between the revolutionary tendencies of Russia. In order to understand the subsequent conflict between Stalinism and Trotskyism, it is necessary to emphasise that, in consonance with all Marxist tradition, Lenin never regarded the peasant as a socialist ally of the proletariat; on the contrary, it was the overwhelming preponderance of the peasantry which had led Lenin to conclude that a socialist revolution was impossible in Russia. That idea recurs time and again in all his articles that directly or indirectly touch upon the agrarian question.

“We support the peasant movement,” wrote Lenin in September, 1905, “insofar as it is revolutionary and democratic. We are preparing (at once, immediately preparing) to fight against it insofar as it asserts itself as a reactionary anti-proletarian movement. The whole essence of Marxism is in that twofold task.” Lenin saw the Western proletariat and to some extent the semi-proletarians of the Russian village as socialist allies, but never the whole of the peasantry. “At first, we support to the very end, with all means, including confiscation,” he repeated with persistence typical of him, “the peasant in general against the landed proprietor, but later (and not even later, but at the very same time) we support the proletariat against the peasant in general.”

“The peasantry will win in a bourgeois democratic revolution,” he wrote in March, 1906, “and thereby will completely exhaust its revolutionism as a peasantry. The proletariat will win in a bourgeois democratic revolution, and thereby will only begin really to unfold its true socialist revolutionism.” “The movement of the peasantry,” he repeated in May of the same year, “is the movement of another class; it is a struggle not against the foundations of capitalism but for their purging of all the remnants of serfdom.” That view may be traced in Lenin from article to article, from year to year, from volume to volume. Expressions and illustrations vary, but the basic thought is unalterable. Nor could it have been otherwise. Had Lenin seen a socialist ally in the peasantry, he would not have had the slightest basis for insisting upon the bourgeois character of the revolution and limiting it to “the dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry”, to purely democratic tasks. On the occasions when Lenin accused me of “underestimating” the peasantry, he did not have in mind my failure to recognise the socialist tendencies of the

peasantry but rather my failure to realise sufficiently, from Lenin's point of view, the bourgeois-democratic independence of the peasantry, its capacity to create its own power and through it impede the establishment of the socialist dictatorship of the proletariat.

The revaluation of that question commenced only during the years of the Thermidorian reaction, the beginning of which coincided by and large with Lenin's illness and death. From then on the union of Russian workers and peasants was declared to be in itself sufficient guarantee against the dangers of restoration and a firm pledge that socialism would be achieved within the borders of the Soviet Union. Having substituted the theory of socialism in a separate country for the theory of international revolution, Stalin began to call the Marxist evaluation of the peasantry 'Trotskyism', and moreover not only with reference to the present but retroactively to the entire past.

It is, of course, possible to ask whether the classical Marxist view of the peasantry had not proved erroneous. That theme would lead us far beyond the limits of this appendix. Suffice it to say for the nonce that Marxism never ascribed an absolute and immutable character to its estimation of the peasantry as a non-socialist class. Marx said long ago that the peasant is capable of judgment as well as prejudice. The very nature of the peasantry is altered under altered conditions. The regime of the dictatorship of the proletariat discovered very great possibilities for influencing the peasantry and for re-educating it. History has not yet plumbed to the bottom the limits of these possibilities. But it is already clear that the growing role of state compulsion in the USSR, far from refuting, has basically confirmed the very view of the peasantry that distinguished Russian Marxists from Populists. Yet, whatever the situation on that score today after twenty-odd years of the new regime, the fact remains that prior to the October Revolution, or rather prior to the year 1924, no one in the Marxist camp, and least of all Lenin, had regarded the peasantry as a factor of socialist development. Without the aid of a proletarian revolution in the West, he reiterated time and again, restoration is unavoidable in Russia. He was not mistaken: the Stalinist bureaucracy is nothing else than the first stage of bourgeois restoration.

Such were the divergent positions of the two main factions of the Russian Social-Democracy. But alongside them, as early as the dawn of the First Revolution, a third position was formulated, which met with practically no recognition in those days, but which we must explain – not only because it was confirmed by the events of 1917, but particularly because seven years after the Revolution, after being turned upside down, it began to play an

utterly unforeseen role in the political evolution of Stalin and of the entire Soviet bureaucracy.

Early in 1905 I published in Geneva a pamphlet which analysed the political situation as it existed around the winter of 1904. I came to the conclusion that the independent campaign of liberal petitions and banquets had exhausted its possibilities; that the radical intellectuals, who had shifted their hopes to the liberals, had found themselves in a blind alley together with the latter; that the peasant movement was creating conditions favourable for victory yet incapable of assuring it; that the showdown could be brought about only through an armed insurrection of the proletariat; that the very next stage along that way must be the general strike. This pamphlet called, *Until the Ninth of January*, had been written prior to the Bloody Sunday in Petersburg. The powerful wave of strikes which began that day, together with the first armed clashes that supplemented it, was an unequivocal confirmation of the pamphlet's strategic prognosis.

The preface to my work was written by Parvus, a Russian *émigré*, who had already become by then a prominent German writer. Parvus' was an extraordinarily creative personality, capable of becoming infected with the ideas of others as well as enriching others with his ideas. He lacked the inward balance and application necessary to contribute anything worthy of his talents as a thinker and writer to the labour movement. There is no doubt that he exerted considerable influence on my personal development, especially with respect to the social-revolutionary understanding of our epoch. A few years before our first meeting Parvus passionately defended the idea of a general strike in Germany, but the country was passing through prolonged industrial prosperity, the Social-Democracy was adjusting itself to the Hohenzollern regime, and foreigner's revolutionary propaganda met nothing but ironical indifference. Having read my pamphlet in manuscript, the very next day after the bloody events in Petersburg, Parvus was overwhelmed with the thought of the exceptional role which the proletariat of backward Russia was called upon to play. Several days spent jointly in Munich were filled with conversations that clarified much to both of us and brought us personally close together. The preface Parvus then wrote to the pamphlet entered permanently into the history of the Russian Revolution. In a few pages he shed light on those social peculiarities of backward Russia which, true enough, were already well known, but from which no one before him had drawn all the necessary inferences. Parvus wrote:

Political radicalism throughout Western Europe, as everybody knows, depended primarily on the petty-bourgeoisie. These were artisans and generally all of that part of the bourgeoisie which was caught up by the industrial development but which at the same time was superseded by the class of capitalists. In Russia of the pre-capitalist period cities developed on the Chinese rather than on the European model. These were administrative centres, purely official and bureaucratic in character devoid of any political significance, while in the economic sense they were trade bazaars for the landlord and peasant milieu of its environs. Their development was still rather inconsiderable, when it was terminated by the capitalist process, which began to establish large cities in its own image, that is, factory towns and centres of world trade... That which had hindered the development of petty-bourgeois democracy came to benefit the class consciousness of the proletariat in Russia – the weak development of the artisan form of production. The proletariat was immediately concentrated in the factories...

Greater and greater masses of peasants will be drawn into the movement. But all they can do is to aggravate the political anarchy already rampant in the country and thus weaken the government; they cannot become a compact revolutionary army. Hence, as the revolution develops, an ever greater portion of political work will fall to the lot of the proletariat. At the same time its political awareness will be enhanced and its political energy will grow apace...

The Social-Democracy will be confronted with this dilemma: to assume responsibility for the provisional government or to stand aloof from the labour movement. The workers will regard that government as their own, no matter what the attitude of the Social-Democracy. In Russia only workers can accomplish a revolutionary insurrection. In Russia the revolutionary provisional government will be a government of the workers' democracy. That government will be Social-Democratic, should the Social-Democracy be at the head of the revolutionary movement of the Russian proletariat...

The Social-Democratic provisional government cannot accomplish a socialist insurrection in Russia, but the very process of liquidating the autocracy and establishing a democratic republic will provide it with fertile ground for political activity.

In the heyday of revolutionary events, in the autumn of 1905, I met Parvus again, this time in Petersburg. Remaining organisationally independent of both factions, we jointly edited *Russkoye Slovo*, ('The Russian Word'), a newspaper for the working class masses, and, in coalition with the Mensheviks, the important political newspaper, *Nachalo* ('The Beginning'). The theory of permanent revolution was usually associated with the names of 'Parvus and Trotsky'. That was only partially correct. Parvus attained revolutionary

maturity at the end of the preceding century, when he marched at the head of the forces that fought so-called 'Revisionism', i.e., the opportunistic distortions of Marx's theory. But his optimism was undermined by the failure of all his efforts to push the German Social-Democracy in the direction of a more resolute policy. Parvus grew increasingly more reserved about the perspectives of a socialist revolution in the West. At the same time, he felt that "the Social-Democratic provisional government cannot accomplish a socialist insurrection in Russia." Hence, his prognosis indicated, instead of the transformation of the democratic into the socialist revolution, merely the establishment in Russia of a regime of workers' democracy, more or less as in Australia, where the first labour government, resting on a farmerist foundation, did not venture beyond the limits of the bourgeois regime.

I did not share that conclusion. Australian democracy, maturing organically on the virgin soil of a new continent, immediately assumed a conservative character and dominated the youthful yet rather privileged proletariat. Russian democracy, on the contrary, could come about only in consequence of a large-scale revolutionary insurrection, the dynamics of which would never permit the labour government to maintain itself within the framework of bourgeois democracy. Our differences of opinion, which began soon after the Revolution of 1905, led to a complete break at the beginning of the war, when Parvus, in whom the sceptic had completely killed the revolutionist, proved to be on the side of German imperialism and subsequently became the counsellor and inspirer of the First President of the German Republic, Ebert.

After writing my pamphlet, *Until the Ninth of January*, I repeatedly returned to the development and the grounding of the theory of permanent revolution. In view of the significance it subsequently acquired in the intellectual evolution of the hero of this biography, it is necessary to present it here in the form of exact quotations from my works of the years 1905 and 1906.

The nucleus of population in a contemporary city – at least, in a city of economic and political significance – is the sharply differentiated class of hired labour. It is this class, essentially unknown to the Great French Revolution, which is fated to play the decisive role in our revolution... In an economically more backward country the proletariat may come to power sooner than in a country more advanced capitalistically. The conception of a kind of automatic dependence of the proletarian dictatorship on a country's technical forces and means is a prejudice of extremely simplified 'economic' materialism. Such a view has nothing in common with Marxism... Notwithstanding the fact that the productive forces of United

States industry are ten times greater than ours, the political role of the Russian proletariat, its influence on the politics of its own country and the possibility that it may soon influence world politics are incomparably greater than the role and significance of the American proletariat...

It seems to me that the Russian Revolution will create such conditions that the power may (in the event of victory, must) pass into the hands of the proletariat before the politicians of bourgeois liberalism will find it possible fully to unfold their genius for statecraft. The Russian bourgeoisie will surrender all the revolutionary positions to the proletariat. It will also have to surrender revolutionary hegemony over the peasantry. The proletariat in power will come to the peasantry as the class liberator. The proletariat, leaning on the peasantry, will bring into motion all the forces for raising the cultural level of the village and for developing political consciousness in the peasantry...

But will not perhaps the peasantry itself drive the proletariat away and supersede it? That is impossible. All historic experience repudiates that supposition. It shows that the peasantry is utterly incapable of an independent political role ... From the aforesaid it is clear how I look upon the idea of the 'dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry'. The point is not whether I deem it admissible in principle, whether I 'want' or 'do not want' such a form of political co-operation. I deem it unrealisable – at least, in the direct and immediate sense...

The foregoing already shows how incorrect is the assertion that the conception here expounded "jumped over the bourgeois revolution", as has been subsequently reiterated without end. "The struggle for the democratic renovation of Russia..." I wrote at the same time, "is in its entirety derived from capitalism, is being conducted by forces formed on the basis of capitalism, and immediately, in the first place, is directed against the feudal and vassal obstacles that stand in the way of developing a capitalist society." But the substance of the question was with what forces and by which methods could these obstacles be overcome.

The framework of all the questions of the revolution may be limited by the assertion that our revolution is bourgeois in its objective goals and consequently, in all its inevitable results, and it is possible at the same time to close one's eyes to the fact that the principal active force of that bourgeois revolution is the proletariat, which is pushing itself toward power with all the impact of the revolution... One may comfort himself with the thought that Russia's social conditions have not yet ripened for a socialist economy – and at the same time overlook the thought that, upon coming to power, the proletariat would inevitably, with all the logic of its situation, push itself toward the management of the economy at the expense of the state... Coming into the government not as helpless hostages but as the leading

force, the representatives of the proletariat will by virtue of that alone smash the demarcation between the minimal and maximal program i.e., place collectivism on the order of the day. At what point in that tendency the proletariat would be stopped will depend on the inter-relation of forces, but certainly not on the initial intentions of the proletariat's party...

But we may already ask ourselves: must the dictatorship of the proletariat inevitably smash itself against the framework of the bourgeois revolution or can it, on the basis of the existing historical situation of the world look forward to the perspective of victory, after smashing this limiting framework?... One thing may be said with certainty: without the direct governmental support of the European proletariat, the working class of Russia will not be able to maintain itself in power and transform its temporary reign into an enduring socialist dictatorship.

But this does not necessarily lead to a pessimistic prognosis:

The political liberation, led by the working class of Russia, will raise the leader to a height unprecedented in history, transmit to him colossal forces and means, and make him the initiator of the world-wide liquidation of capitalism, for which history has created all the objective prerequisites...

As to the extent to which international Social-Democracy will prove capable of fulfilling its revolutionary task, I wrote in 1906:

The European Socialist parties – and in the first place, the mightiest of them, the German party – have developed their conservatism, which grows stronger in proportion to the size of the masses embraced by socialism and the effectiveness of the organisation and the discipline of these masses. Because of that, the Social-Democracy, as the organisation that embodies the political experience of the proletariat, may at a given moment become the immediate obstacle on the path of an open clash between the workers and the bourgeois reaction...

Yet I concluded my analysis by expressing the assurance that “the Eastern revolution will infect the Western proletariat with revolutionary idealism and arouse in it the desire to start talking ‘Russian’ with its enemy...”

To sum up. Populism, like Slavophilism, proceeded from illusions that Russia's course development would be utterly unique, escaping capitalism and the bourgeois republic. Plekhanov's Marxism concentrated on proving the identity in principle of Russia's historical course with that of the West. The program that grew out of that ignored the very real and far from mystical peculiarities of Russia's social structure and revolutionary development. The Menshevik view of the revolution, purged of its episodic stratifications and individual deviations, was tantamount to the following: the victory of the

Russian bourgeois revolution was possible only under the leadership of the liberal bourgeoisie and must put the latter in power. Later the democratic regime would let the Russian proletariat, with incomparably greater success than heretofore, catch up with its elder Western brothers on the road of the struggle for Socialism.

Lenin's perspective may be briefly expressed in the following words: the backward Russian bourgeoisie is incapable of completing its own revolution! The complete victory of the revolution, through the intermediacy of the "democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry", would purge the land of medievalism, invest the development of Russian capitalism with American tempo, strengthen the proletariat in city and village and make really possible the struggle for socialism. On the other hand, the victory of the Russian revolution would give tremendous impetus to the socialist revolution in the West while the latter would not only protect Russia from the dangers of restoration but would also enable the Russian proletariat to come to the conquest of power in a comparatively brief historical period.

The perspective of permanent revolution may be summarised in the following way: the complete victory of the democratic revolution in Russia is conceivable only in the form of the dictatorship of the proletariat, leaning on the peasantry. The dictatorship of the proletariat, which would inevitably place on the order of the day not only democratic but socialistic tasks as well, would at the same time give a powerful impetus to the international socialist revolution. Only the victory of the proletariat in the West could protect Russia from bourgeois restoration and assure it the possibility of rounding out the establishment of socialism.

That compact formula discloses with equal distinctness the similarity of the latter two concepts in their irreconcilable differentiation from the liberal Menshevik perspective as well as their extremely essential distinction from each other on the question of the social character and the tasks of the 'dictatorship' which must grow out of the revolution. The not infrequent complaint in the writings of the present Moscow theoreticians that the program of the dictatorship of the proletariat was 'premature' in 1905, is beside the point. In an empirical sense the program of the democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry proved equally 'premature'. The unfavourable combination of forces at the time of the First Revolution did not so much preclude the dictatorship of the proletariat as the victory of the revolution in general. Yet all the revolutionary groups were based on the hope of complete victory; the supreme revolutionary struggle would have been impossible without such a

hope. The differences of opinion dealt with the general perspective of the revolution and the strategy arising from that. The perspective of Menshevism was false to the core: it pointed out the wrong road to the proletariat. The perspective of Bolshevism was not complete: it correctly pointed out the general direction of the struggle, but characterised its stages incorrectly. The insufficiency in the perspective of Bolshevism did not become apparent in 1905 only because the revolution itself did not undergo further development. But then at the beginning of 1917 Lenin was obliged to alter his perspective, in direct conflict with the old cadres of his party.

No political prognosis can pretend to be mathematically exact; suffice it, if it correctly indicates the general line of development and helps to orient the actual course of events, which inevitably bends the main line right and left. In that sense it is impossible not to see that the concept of permanent revolution has completely passed the test of history. During the initial years of the Soviet regime no one denied that; on the contrary, that fact found acknowledgment in a number of official publications. But when the bureaucratic reaction against October opened up in the calmed and cooled upper crust of Soviet society, it was at once directed against the theory which reflected the first proletarian revolution more completely than anything else while at the same time openly exposing its unfinished, limited, and partial character. Thus, by way of repulsion, originated the theory of socialism in a separate country, the basic dogma of Stalinism.

August 1939

APPENDIX 5. UNPUBLISHED FRAGMENTS

[Editor's note: The following extracts were found among Trotsky's preparatory notes for Stalin but we have not found a suitable place for their inclusion in the text. We publish them separately for completeness.]

NECHAYEV¹ AND BOLSHEVISM

- "Cold, hunger, hatred, ridicule, contempt, insult, prison, illness, death itself"
- "I know. I'm ready. I shall bear all the suffering, all the blows."
- "...No one will even know whose memory to honour."
- "I need neither gratitude nor pity. I need no name."
- "Are you ready to commit crime?"

The girl dropped her head.

- "I'm ready for crime too..."
- "Enter!"

The girl crossed the threshold and a heavy curtain fell after her.

- "Fool!" someone snarled through gritted teeth.
- "Saint!" came the answer from somewhere.

(Turgenev: *On the Eve*)

1 Sergei Nechayev (1847-82) was a Russian anarchist most famous for his work, co-authored by Mikhail Bakunin (1814-76), *The Catechism of a Revolutionist*, in which he calls for the "merciless destruction" of the present society and state. The future society he advocated was mocked by Marx and Engels as "barracks communism" for its crudity.

The Catechism of a Revolutionist written by Bakunin² represents in itself the quintessence of Blanquism under the guise of an anarchist revolution. "The revolutionist is a doomed man." This thought, which permeates the catechism, could only have received so concentrated a form in a country without genuine revolutionary traditions, without political culture, without a mass movement, where revolutionists were faced with a task beyond their powers to achieve, bracing themselves to overcome impossible difficulties with the aid of super-heroism, super-demoniac conspiracies, and extremes of self-abnegation.

Following in the footsteps of many other moralists, Souvarine, seized the gloomy, almost infernal, paragraphs of the Catechism with typical cynicism. As a matter of fact, what we find here is romanticism and fantasy which wants to convince itself of its realism. Indeed, the young Nechayev made an attempt to turn Bakunin's romanticism into flesh and blood. But the methods of terrorist materialism applied by this young man were rejected by the revolutionary writers, and the very word 'Nechayevism' entered the revolutionary lexicon as an expression of irreconcilable condemnation of so-called 'terrorist materialism'.

Souvarine is merely repeating old attempts to derive Bolshevik amorality from Bakunin's Catechism and the practical methods of Nechayev. We can only describe these theoretical efforts as a historical calumny. Only in the Soviet period did certain young historians of the Revolution attempt to establish an affinity between the Revolutionary Catechism and the methods of Bolshevism. In this juxtaposition one might discover something more than a mere historical aberration. To the extent that the new bureaucracy separated itself from the masses, it found itself increasingly compelled for its own self-preservation to resort to those methods of materialist terrorism, which Bakunin had recommended in the sacred cause of Anarchy, but which he himself renounced in horror when he saw them being carried out by Nechayev.

That incorruptible revolutionary would not have accepted the proffered hand of the Stalinists. Nechayev tried to fight for the liberation of the masses, although with methods which are unacceptable to the mass movement, whereas the bureaucracy fights for their enslavement. According to Bakunin's catechism, every revolutionary is doomed. According to the catechism of the Soviet bureaucracy, everyone is doomed who fights against its domination.

2 Nechayev is generally credited with the work but Bakunin certainly had some input; how much is up for debate. Here Trotsky appears to assume that Bakunin was the principal author.

If certain careless theoreticians of the Stalinist school attempt, over the heads of Bolshevism, to offer their hand to Nechayev, even then we are ready to defend the ghost of Nechayev. The entire subsequent revolutionary movement with its countless victories would have been impossible without the highest levels of solidarity and mutual trust, without solidarity in struggle, i.e. qualities which presupposed a high level of revolutionary morality. The Russian Marxists were always ready to defend even Nechayev against reactionary philistines. As for his methods, which have already been condemned in the past, they were in such contradiction with the needs of the labour movement that they were never even considered.

The Revolutionary Catechism prescribes denial of all personal interests, personal feelings, personal life, and a break with the civilised world, its laws and conditions. It recognised only one science: the science of destruction. It looked with contempt upon public opinion. It detested established habits and customs. It taught one to be ruthless and to expect no pity for oneself: to be ready to die; to train oneself to endure torture; to stifle within oneself all feeling of kinship, friendship, love, appreciation, honour; to have no other satisfaction, except the success of the revolution, to destroy all that stands in the way of this purpose; to value comrades only depending on their usefulness to the cause; to penetrate all circles of society, including the police, the church, and the courts; to exploit highly placed persons, the rich and the influential; subjugating them to oneself, through securing possession of their secrets; to intensify by all means the suffering and the unhappiness that people endure in order to exhaust their patience and push them to rebellion; finally, to unite with the bandits, the only true revolutionists in Russia.

Following Don Levine, Souvarine considers Nechayev's *Revolutionary Catechism* to be the basic morality of the Bolsheviks. The historical method is substituted by a purely literary approach. Bakunin was the inspirer of populist anarchism. Marxism grew up in the struggle against that tendency. To this may still be added that Nechayev's methods evoked a sharp reaction in Populism itself. Souvarine seeks to discover in the Bakuninist Catechism and the methods of Nechayev the seeds of Bolshevik principles, investing a tremendous significance to the concept of the 'professional revolutionary'. It is here that he attempts to understand the amorality of the Bolsheviks and their subsequent degeneration.

However, the Russian professional revolutionary should be compared not with an ideal person, isolated in time and space, but rather with the European official, the parliamentarian, the secretary of the trade union, or the editor

of a workers' paper. The Russian professional revolutionary is only a full-time worker under conditions of the underground, illegal work, and constant persecution. He had to adapt himself to the conditions of tsarism, just as the French socialist adapted himself to the chambers of Parliament. As for their morality, the professional revolutionist in any case must have been much more deeply imbued with the idea of socialism in order to meet the deprivations and sacrifices, than the parliamentary socialist for whom the idea opened up the path to a seductive career.

Of course, even the professional revolutionist might be guided by, or to be more precise could not but be guided by personal motives, i.e., concern for his comrades' good opinion, ambition and thoughts about future victories. But that type of historical ambition, which almost completely dissolves the personality in itself, stands in any case on a higher plane than parliamentary careerism or stale trade union egotism. This is inseparably connected with the question of the party, which is the highest political expression of the class. The entire history of Bolshevism renders an open revision in this field extremely difficult. Nevertheless, under the guise of old traditional formulas, the Leninist conception of the Party as a conscious vanguard has in practice been completely overthrown and trampled underfoot.

Already in the days of *Iskra*, Plekhanov wrote that in the world socialist movement two different tendencies were developing, and it was an open question whether the revolutionary struggles of the twentieth century might lead to a break between the Social-Democratic 'Mountain' and the Social-Democratic Gironde. At the Second Congress of the RSDLP, Plekhanov advanced a number of Jacobin propositions which challenged the concept of pure democracy. "The salvation of the revolution is the highest law," he said, recognising the possibility of a situation in which the proletariat would find itself obliged to limit the rights of suffrage of the former possessing class. He foresaw the possibility that in a revolutionary epoch, the proletariat might find it necessary to dissolve a representative assembly elected on the basis of universal suffrage. Finally, he did not reject capital punishment in principal, feeling that it might be needed against the Tsar and his satraps. It is quite extraordinary that this man, who produced such a finished Jacobin prognosis, when these events actually occurred, found himself on the right wing of the Gironde. The solution of this mystery was that his revolutionary will was not equal to his revolutionary theoretical thinking.

In 1898, when the Party was formally proclaimed, it contained, according to extremely approximate calculations, no more than five hundred members.

However, the very conception of membership during that period was not distinguished by any great definiteness. In 1900 *Iskra* was founded in Munich. Its programmatic declaration and the first articles were written by Lenin. In that period, he treated Plekhanov with the greatest respect, as he did all the other members of the Emancipation of Labour Group. Nevertheless, it would never have entered Lenin's head to ask Plekhanov to write the leading article. He was supremely confident, that he himself could write a more concrete article, which was more to the point and more in tune with the needs of the movement.

STALIN AND THE DEATH OF THE ROMANOV'S

[It is not generally known that Stalin also played a key role in the death of the Tsar's family. Lenin was not in favour of their execution and Trotsky's plan was to put the Tsar and his family on trial on the lines of Charles I and Louis XVI, with himself as chief prosecutor, which would be broadcast to the world. But Stalin had other ideas.]

Krasnaya Gazeta 28th December 1925 reported:

The Romanovs spent their last days in Yekaterinburg... It was intended to hold... a public trial of the Romanovs at Yekaterinburg... the chief Prosecutor was to be Trotsky... The Provincial Soviet decided that a trial such as had been indicated by Moscow could not be organised... there was a danger the town might be occupied by the Whites... The Provincial Soviet decided to shoot the Romanovs without waiting for a trial.

According to Besedovsky, who was responsible for guarding the Tsar's family, the murder of the Tsar was Stalin's work. Lenin and Trotsky were in favour of keeping the royal family in Yekaterinburg, while Stalin was afraid that as long as Nicholas II was alive, he would attract the White Guards and the like. On the 12th July, 1918, Stalin had come to an agreement with Sverdlov. On the 14th July he initiated Goloshchekin into his plan, and on the 15th July the latter sent a coded telegram... about the intentions of Stalin and Sverdlov to Commissar Beloborodov, who was in charge of guarding the Tsar's family. On the 16th July Beloborodov telegraphed Moscow stating that Yekaterinburg would fall in three days. Goloshchekin saw Sverdlov, who in turn saw Stalin. Putting Beloborodov's report in his pocket, Stalin said, "Under no circumstances must the Tsar be surrendered to the White Guards." These words were tantamount to a sentence of death.

THE POLISH WAR

As a result of a new offensive (March 1920) Haller was able to occupy Rechitza and cross the river. Gomel was just about to fall into the enemy's hands when Trotsky arrived. Already the convoys of refugees, lines of miserable carts piled high with boxes, papers, and odds and ends of possessions, were dragging their weary way along the roads leading to Novozykov. Already the presidents of the local executive and the local Cheka were on the move with their cars, and there was nothing left at the station but the last armoured train, a sort of forlorn hope, commanded by a fanatical ex-sailor, when everything suddenly changed and we realised that the tide had begun to turn. Trotsky brought with him his team of disciplined organisers, agitators, technicians, all animated by a dauntless spirit of determination. (Barmine, A., *One Who Survived*, Putnams, 1945, p. 70)

F. Samoilov in his book *On the Trail of the Past* (p. 300) writes:

The Menshevik Secretary (S.M. Zaretskaya) deliberately ignored us and we, in turn, having no trust in her, tried to have as few dealings with her as possible, preferring to collaborate with our own comrades in Petrograd, outstanding Party workers who consulted us on all the issues that interested us. These comrades at that time were: M.N. Krestinsky, N.D. Sokolov, M. Olminsky, M.A. Savelyev, K.N. Samoilova, Yakov Sverdlov, Stalin, A.S. Bubnov, Kamenev and a few others. They participated with us in various meetings which arose from time to time on various issues and in the general meetings of the fractions they gave us all kinds of advice and composed speeches.

Once again the order of names is significant: nobody ever put Stalin in the first place, or even in one of the first places. Moreover, these memoirs of a completely trustworthy author were published in 1934. Nowadays the censor would under no circumstances have allowed such a list to be published. It should further be noted that four of these persons died of natural causes, two were shot (Krestinsky and Kamenev), one mysteriously "disappeared" (Bubnov); only Savelyev, Stalin's crony, who became one of the main falsifiers of history, remains.

Leon Mikhailovich Karakhan was shot 16th December 1937.

No one knows why he was shot. The execution took place in conditions of the utmost secrecy, and his memory was brutally blackened during the trial of the Twenty-One, which followed. His success with women was considerable, and I

have an idea that, in this field, he got on the wrong side of the General-Secretary, who forgets nothing and never forgives anything. [Uncredited]

WHO WILL SUCCEED STALIN?

The question of Stalin's successor undoubtedly strongly preoccupies the Kremlin clique. The first candidate by official position is Molotov. He has stubbornness, a limited intelligence, and application. In this last quality he differs from Stalin, who is lazy. Molotov's ambition is the product of his origins. It began to develop when quite unexpectedly when he was taken in tow by Stalin. He therefore rose to great heights. Molotov writes like a senior clerk and he talks the same way; moreover, he stutters considerably. But he has managed to work out a great administrative routine, and knows how to play on the piano keys of the apparatus. At one time Molotov attempted to resist and his fate hung by a hair. Stalin has notebooks of documents about each one of these closest collaborators which characterise their personal mistakes and failures and other sins.

Stalin's present Leningrad Viceroy is [Andrei] Zhdanov, but yet for ten years absolutely no one knew the name of this man. Now Zhdanov has also been named as a candidate for Stalin's overseas viceroy. He is a new man without the tradition of the Stalinist school, i.e., from the category of shrewd administrators; his speeches just as his articles bear the traits of banality and slyness. If Stalin has been created by the apparatus, Zhdanov has been created by Stalin. Now Shadrinsky writes: "In the Urals among the military the work was led by Zhdanov." Similarly, we are informed, "In Belorussia, the soldier mass was prepared for the uprising by Yezhov". Yet when Yezhov first appeared on the arena of politics in 1935, his name was known to nobody at all.

Hardly anyone considers seriously Voroshilov as a successor of Stalin. An old Bolshevik, member of the Political Bureau, and head of the Army, Voroshilov is nevertheless a decorative figure just like Kalinin. Both of them have acquired turns of speech and gestures which are in accord more or less with their position. Voroshilov is more resolute and harder; Kalinin more resilient and more cunning. Both of them are devoid of any political complexity and in the top layer of the apparatus they do not enjoy any authority.

Neither can one see a successor in Lazar Kaganovich who has all the main traits of the Stalinist school: resoluteness, limited intelligence, slyness. In his person the banality of the present Politburo finds perhaps its most finished and most vulgar expression.

Stalin married the sister of Kaganovich, thereby presenting the latter with hopes for a promising future. That marriage apparently did not last long. At any rate, nothing more was heard about it afterwards. Kaganovich in recent years has slipped down the ladder of the hierarchy by a few rungs. Moreover, he is a Jew, which is inconsistent with the current course of the Kremlin. But no matter how interesting the question of the succession, we can leave it to one side. Nowhere is it written who will be the successor to Stalin, and nowhere is it written that Stalin will live out his life as a dictator. History itself may well remove the question of a successor from the order of the day.

Lenin seeks any pretext for approving and noticing a success and to boast about it. Thus he welcomes the editorial, 'Who Won?' written by Stalin and published in No.146 of *Pravda*, 18th October 1912. In his letter to Stalin on 6th December Lenin writes: "Dear friend, regarding the 9th January, it is very important to consider and prepare the matter in advance. Beforehand should be prepared the leaflet calling for meetings, a one-day strike and demonstrations..." Similarly, Lenin also addressed himself to Kamenev [in the same manner] when the latter lived in Petersburg.

"In the Urals," states Shadrinsky, "the military work was led by Zhdanov." Zhdanov is the present Leningrad Viceroy of Stalin, but for another ten years absolutely no one knew his name. In Belorussia, the soldier mass were we are told prepared for the uprising by Yezhov. But when Yezhov first appeared on the political scene in 1935, his name was known to absolutely no one.

The press of the Party did not exaggerate the achievements, did not restore the relation of forces, and did not try to take things with an exclamation. Lenin's school was a school of revolutionary realism. The data of the Bolshevik press for 1917 have proven to be in the light of current documents and of historical criticism immeasurably more truthful than the data of all other newspapers. Truthfulness issued from the revolutionary strength of the Bolsheviks and at the same time it re-enforced that strength. The repudiation of this tradition became subsequently one of the most vicious traits of the epigones.

COPY SECRET

TELEGRAM IN CODE FROM TSARITSYN. Astrakhan, Revolutionary Military Council to Anisimov

COPY Moscow Chairman of Council of People's Commissar Lenin

COPY Chairman of the Central Executive Committee Sverdlov

COPY People's Commissariat of Army Sklyansky.

Today at four o'clock, departing from Tsaritsyn for Astrakhan.

(4th November 1918) 4/XI 18 #970,

Chairman of the revolutionary Military Council

Trotsky

On 7th November, Lenin dispatched the following telegram in code:

TO TROTSKY at Balashov or wherever he may be found:

I am extremely disturbed about Nossovitch's desertion and consider Vatsetis's answer unsubstantial and optimistic. Communicate your opinion and your measure, also state of affairs at Astrakhan. Can we lick the English on the Caspian and how soon?

Lenin

“TROTSKY WILL NOT BE PRESENT. He is in bed.”

To Comrade Sklyansky

Trotsky's illness is a downright misfortune at the present moment. It is necessary:

1. To make a supreme effort to expedite the sending of the second division from the vicinity of Perm, and
2. You watch the south, speaking twice a day with Gusev

Greetings – Lenin

(1919)

(Written in the hand of Comrade Lenin)

(From the archives of Comrade Sklyansky.)

FRAGMENTS:

“If I could have done what I could. I would have rewritten what I know,” remarked Ferdinand Lassalle.

Sixty is the age when according to Aristotle men become most cautious.

CHRONOLOGICAL GUIDE¹

1773-75

The Pugachev Rebellion in Russia – against serfdom, colonial exploitation, general oppression

1789-94

The French Revolution

1794

27 JULY: The 9th of Thermidor: reaction against the Revolution in France

1825

26 DECEMBER: The Decembrist Revolt against tsarism, led by army officers and young noblemen

1847

1 JUNE: The League of the Just re-organised as the Communist League under the influence of Dr Karl Marx, and its motto 'All men are brothers' changed to 'Proletarians of all countries, unite!' 'Utopian socialism' becomes 'scientific'

1848

JANUARY: The *Communist Manifesto*, programme of the Communist Party, and to this day the basic program of the Marxist movement, written jointly

1 All dates are in new style.

by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, completed on the eve of the European revolution of 1848

1852

17 NOVEMBER: The Communist League dissolved at Marx's proposal after being smashed by police persecution

1864

28 SEPTEMBER: The International Working Men's Association, known as the First International, founded in London by Marx and others

1870

24 MARCH: Marx writes, in a proclamation to the Russian Section of the First International: "Your country is also beginning to participate in the general movement of our age."

22 APRIL: Birth of Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov (Lenin)

1 SEPTEMBER: In letter to Friedrich Sorge, Marx forecasts Russian Revolution of 1917: "What the Prussian donkeys don't see is that the present (Franco-Prussian) war leads just as necessarily to war between Germany and Russia as the war of 1866 led to war between Prussia and France... And this War #2 will act as the wet-nurse of the inevitable revolution in Russia."

1871

18 MARCH-28 MAY: The Paris Commune: the first proletarian government

1872

Actual end of the First International, effected by removal of headquarters to New York City – Last 'Congress' held in 1876.

Publication of Russian translation of first volume of Marx's *Capital* (published in German, 1867)

1873

20 JANUARY: Sergei Nechayev (born 1847) condemned by Moscow court to twenty years' hard labour in Siberia but incarcerated in Peter and Paul Fortress where he died of scurvy Nov. 21, 1882. Nechayevism was the *reductio ad absurdum* in deeds of the theories advocated orally and in writing by Michael

Bakunin, particularly in his *Catechism of the Revolutionist* – such as “the end justifies the means”; “the worse, the better” – which led Marx to dissolve the First International rather than let the movement succumb to ‘revolutionary’ Machiavellianism. Nechayev, who resorted to murder, blackmail, betrayal of comrades to the police in his fanatical devotion to revolutionary objectives, was subsequently repudiated even by his teacher, Bakunin

1874

SPRING: The Khozhdeniye v Narod (going to the people) movement, chiefly of upper and middle-class intellectuals, finds no response among the peasants and workers for whose benefit it was launched and is savagely suppressed by the tsarist government

AUTUMN: Karl Marx’s application for British citizenship refused because he “was not loyal to his king”

1875

Peter Tkachov, in his journal *Nabat* (‘The Tocsin’) advocates seizure of the government by revolutionary action, which puts political teeth into Narodnichestvo (the Populist movement)

1876

Populists organise as the Zemlya i Volya (‘Land and Freedom’) party, adding the fillip of individual terrorism against tsarist bureaucrats to political agitation

1877

FEBRUARY-MARCH: Trial of the Fifty, all Populists, at which the workman Peter Alexeyev delivers the first political speech by a Russian proletarian

1878

24 JANUARY: General Trepov, Governor of Petersburg, shot by the Populist Vera Zasulich, subsequently one of the founders of the Russian Social-Democracy, in protest against his order to whip political prisoners

3 MARCH: Under pressure of public opinion, jury finds Vera Zasulich not guilty; she goes abroad

16 AUGUST: General Mezentsov, Chief of Gendarmes, stabbed by Prince Sergei Mikhailovich Kravchinsky, a Populist, and dies the same day.

Kravchinsky immediately writes his pamphlet *Death for Death* in explanation of his act, and refuses to leave Russia until lured abroad by his friends three months later

18 DECEMBER: Birth of Joseph Vissarionovich Djughashvili (Stalin) in Gori, Georgia, the Caucasus; the fourth child of his 21-year-old mother, Yekaterina Georgievna Geladze, wife of Vissarion Ivanovich Djughashvili, shoemaker

1879

The Lipetsk and Voronezh Congresses of the Zemlya i Volya (Land and Freedom) party. Party splits into a terrorist group – the Executive Committee of the Narodnaya Volya ('People's Will') party – and a group of agitators led by George Plekhanov, the 'father of Russian Marxism'

14 APRIL: The Populist Solovyov tries and fails to kill Tsar Alexander II

7 NOVEMBER: Birth of Lev Davidovich Bronstein (Trotsky)

1880

16 FEBRUARY: The Populist Stepan Khalturin succeeds in organising an explosion in the Tsar's Winter Palace

1881

13 MARCH: Tsar Alexander II assassinated by order of the Executive Committee of the People's Will Party. Its leader, Zhelyabov, having been arrested two days before, the order for the assassination is carried out under the leadership of Sophia Perovskaya, the daughter of a general

1882

The Fate of Capitalism in Russia published by the Populist author, V.V. Its thesis is that capitalism was impossible in Russia and therefore a Marxist movement in that country nonsensical

1883

Plekhanov, Zasluch, Paul Axelrod, Leo Deutsch and V Ignatov organise the Liberation of Labour group and begin publication of the *Library of Contemporary Socialism* in Switzerland for distribution in Russia. Plekhanov criticised the Populists and outlined the principles for the organisation of

a Social-Democratic Labour Party in Russia in his book *Socialism and the Political Struggle*

1884

The Bulgarian Blagoyev organises in Petersburg a Social-Democratic circle of college students and a few workingmen

1886

Lenin's older brother, Alexander Ulyanov, helps to organise the Terrorist Group of the People's Will Party, a revival of the organisation smashed by the government after the assassination of Tsar Alexander II

1887

13 MARCH: Failure of the attempt of Alexander Ulyanov's Terrorist Group to assassinate Tsar Alexander III on the sixth anniversary of the assassination of Tsar Alexander II

20 MAY: Lenin's brother and hero, Alexander, and his accomplices executed in the Schluesselburg Fortress

5 DECEMBER: Lenin expelled from Kazan University as a student rebel

1889

Founding congress of the Second International in Paris, at which Plekhanov represents the Russian Social-Democracy

1890

Young Stalin matriculates at the Gori Theological School (variant date: 1888); his father dies

1891-92

Famine in Russia; end of the political passivity of the eighties; revival of the Populist movement; industrial crisis; strikes in Uzovka and Lodz, with mass butchery of strikers

1893

People's Rights Party founded by the veteran Populist Bobrov (Mark Natanson) and the young Populist Victor Chernov (subsequently leading theoretician of

the S-R movement, Minister of Agriculture in the Provisional Government under Kerensky, and President of the dispersed Constituent Assembly in 1918)

Lenin argues against the Populists; helps to organise a Social-Democratic circle in Samara; joins the Central Group for Guiding the Labour Movement, in Petersburg

1894

Peter Struve publishes *Critical Notes on the Question of Russia's Economic Development*, thus founding the school of Legal Marxism (social-reform capitalism)

Emergence of the Mesamedasi, a Marxist group, among the intellectuals of the Caucasus, led by Noah Jordania

Stalin is graduated from the Gori school and matriculates at the Tiflis Theological Seminary (variant dates: 1892, 1893)

Lenin publishes his first pamphlet *Who Are the Friends of the People and How They Fight against the Social-Democrats*, an attack on the Populists; delivers his first 'public' lecture, *The Reflection of Marxism in Bourgeois Publications*, a criticism of Struve; is active as propagandist in the Petersburg harbour, and business manager of the Central Labour Circle

2 NOVEMBER: Death of Tsar Alexander III

1895

29 JANUARY: Tsar Nicholas II reiterates his predecessor's policy of relentless autocratic rule

APRIL: Butchery of strikers in Yaroslavl and public approval of it by Nicholas II

MAY: Lenin goes abroad to establish contact with Plekhanov's group

SEPTEMBER: Lenin returns to Russia after establishing an organisation for efficient smuggling of proscribed publications from abroad; organises, with several other intellectuals and workingmen, the Petersburg Union of Struggle for the Liberation of the Working Class; lays the organisational groundwork for a new magazine, *Rabocheye Dyelo* ('The Cause of Labour')

21 DECEMBER: Lenin, and practically the entire membership of the union, arrested by police in simultaneous night raids

1896

Young Trotsky and another middle-class schoolboy in the Ukraine set out to 'find workers' and organise them

Under preliminary arrest in Petersburg, Lenin writes numerous leaflets and pamphlets, including the well-known *On Strikes*, which are smuggled out of prison, a draft program for Russian Social-Democrats, and begins his book *The Development of Capitalism in Russia*

MAY-JUNE: Strike of 30,000 Petersburg textile workers, involving 19 factories; their principal demand is a 10½-hour working day

1897

Lenin, sentenced to three years' exile, travels to his place of banishment, the village Shushinskoye, Yenissei Province, Siberia; there resumes his writing and translates into Russian the Webbs' book, *The Theory and Practice of Trade Unionism*. (Some forty years later the Webbs try to return the compliment by writing two huge volumes, *Soviet Communism: A New Civilisation*).

29-30 MARCH: Conference in Kiev of the Kiev, Petersburg and Moscow Social-Democratic organisations, which try, and fail, to organise a nationwide party

SUMMER: Trotsky helps to organise the South Russian Workers' Union at Nikolayev. Jewish Social-Democrats federate into the Bund

Conference in Zurich, Switzerland, of delegates from Petersburg, Kiev and Vilno organisations with representatives of the Union of Russian Social-Democrats (*émigré* organisation founded in 1895 upon Plekhanov's initiative) discusses plans for a united party

1898

The Marxists in Tiflis, led by Noah Jordania, take over Kvali (The Furrow), the periodical of the Georgian intellectuals, and recruit a new member, the theology student Joseph Djughashvili (Stalin)

Trotsky arrested after two years' activity as a revolutionary Social-Democrat; shunted from prison to prison, exiled to Siberia

13-15 MARCH: Organisation of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party at its First Congress in Minsk; Lenin elected *in absentia* to editorial board of its official organ, *Rabochaya Gazeta* (The Workers' Gazette). Congress raided

by police who, arresting nearly everyone even remotely connected with it, are satisfied they have nipped the new party in the bud

1899

APRIL: Lenin publishes his first book, *The Development of Capitalism in Russia*; with other orthodox Marxists, under the leadership of Plekhanov, fights Economism (pure and simple Trade-unionism) and Populism; in exile, drafts the Protest of seventeen Social-Democrats against the Economist Credo of Eugenia Kuskova

21 JULY: Young Stalin expelled from Tiflis Theological Seminary shortly before graduation (variant date: 27th May)

28 DECEMBER: Stalin finds peaceful employment and a home in the Tiflis Geophysical Observatory

1900

16 FEBRUARY: Lenin's Siberian exile ends. He is allowed to return to European Russia but not allowed to reside in Petersburg and several other of the larger cities

FEBRUARY-MARCH: Victor Kurnatovsky, a friend of Lenin, proceeds to Tiflis at the end of his Siberian exile; organises the first Tiflis Social-Democratic Committee which is soon broken up by the police

FEBRUARY-MAY: His residence officially Pskov, Lenin travels illegally to Petersburg, Moscow, and other important centres, collecting money and mobilising support for a revival of the *Workers' Gazette* with himself, Martov and Potresov as editors. At a conference in Pskov, Lenin and Potresov are delegated by the Petersburg Social-Democrats to go abroad to re-establish the newspaper in co-operation with Plekhanov's group

MAY DAY: Stalin delivers his first public speech and continues, unmolested by the police, at his job in the Observatory

MAY: Lenin arrested by the police during one of his illegal trips to Petersburg; released after three weeks

JULY-NOVEMBER: Lenin and Potresov go abroad; negotiate with the Plekhanov group, and by autumn reach an agreement for joint publication of a newspaper, each group maintaining its organisational independence. Editorial board to consist of the 'oldsters' Plekhanov, Axelrod, Zasulich, and the 'youngsters' Lenin, Potresov, Martov, with Lenin's wife, Nadezhda Krupskaya,

as secretary of the board. Its name: *Iskra* (The Spark); its epigraph: 'From the spark the flame will flare', borrowed from a poem on the Decembrists by Alexander Pushkin; its place of publication, Munich, Bavaria, where twenty-odd years later Nazism would be born. This was to prove the actual beginning of Russian Marxism as an organised political force of national and international significance

DECEMBER: The first issue of *Iskra* appears, with Lenin, assisted by his wife, as the actual manager; a network of Iskrist agents is established throughout Russia; batches of the paper are smuggled into the tsarist empire

1901

22 MARCH: Victor Kurnatovsky and other leading Iskrist of Tiflis arrested during simultaneous raids; Stalin's room at the Observatory searched by the police; Stalin loses his job as a consequence and is forced to 'go underground' hiding out in Tiflis

5 MAY: Stalin takes part in a Tiflis street demonstration of 2000, which he helped to organise; demonstration suppressed with bloodshed and many arrests; Stalin flees to Gori

JUNE: Social-Democratic conference in Geneva, Switzerland, works out tentative basis for reunification into a single party and decides to call a congress

17-19 OCTOBER: The congress of Social-Democrats, meeting in Zurich, Switzerland, breaks up with intensified hostilities between the Iskrist and Economists; the Iskrist, outvoted, establish the rival League of the Russian Revolutionary Social-Democracy Abroad, continuing simultaneously their polemics with the S-Rs and Economists, who had captured The Cause of Labour

24 NOVEMBER: Stalin one of 25 delegates to Tiflis conference of Social-Democratic groups, held at Avlabar; conference organises a new Tiflis Social-Democratic Committee, headed by Dzhibladze, to which Stalin is elected

DECEMBER: Stalin leaves for Batumi

1902

12 JANUARY: Stalin and Kandelyaki, at a (Russian) New Year's Eve party, organise the Batumi Social-Democratic Committee as a branch of the Tiflis organisation; an illegal print shop is established in Stalin's lodgings

APRIL: Underground conference in Bialystok elects an Organisational Committee to prepare the convocation of the Party's Second Congress; police break up both conference and committee

18 APRIL: Stalin arrested for the first time; kept alternately in Batumi and Kutais prisons until end of 1903

MAY: Lenin, and the *Iskra* editorial office, move to London

14 JUNE: The editors of *Iskra* and *Zarya* (theoretical journal of the Iskrists, first published in 1901) publish their draft program for the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party; program officially adopted at the Second Congress the following year

OCTOBER: The Second Bialystok Conference elects a new Organisational Committee, composed entirely of Iskrists

Trotsky arrives in London after his first escape from Siberian exile (having previously joined the *Iskra* organisation at Samara, en route to London); calls on Lenin who examines him on his views and experiences; begins to write for *Iskra*; debates in Whitechapel against the veteran Populist Chaikovsky and the veteran Anarchist Cherkezov in his maiden speech abroad

1903

JANUARY: Rostov the centre of a wave of strikes in South Russia

FEBRUARY: Stalin elected member of the Caucasian Federal Committee, *in absentia*, at First Congress of Caucasian Social-Democrats

MARCH: Strikes in Baku and Batumi

SPRING: *Iskra* offices moved to Geneva. Intense activity in Russia and abroad in preparation for the coming congress

JULY: Strikes in Kiev, Odessa, Yelisavetgrad

25 JULY: Stalin sentenced to three years' exile in Siberia

30 JULY-23 AUGUST: Second Congress of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party (in Brussels and London) ends in split along new lines into Bolshevik and Menshevik factions; elects Central Committee of three Bolsheviks, an editorial board of three instead of six, and establishes a Party Council. Trotsky, beginning as 'Lenin's Big Stick', becomes a leading Menshevik.

AUTUMN-WINTER: Strife between Bolsheviks and Mensheviks continues. Lenin resigns from *Iskra* with issue No.51. The new *Iskra* (issue No.52 on), the *émigré* League and the Party Council all Menshevik; Central Committee alone remains under Bolshevik control. Trotsky becomes a leading contributor to the Menshevik *Iskra*

NOVEMBER: Stalin begins his journey to Siberia

1904

Mensheviks in full control of Party institutions. Lenin resigns from Central Committee (to which he had been co-opted); wages up-hill fight for a new congress and a new Party regime. Bureau of the Committees of the Majority formed to prepare Third Congress. First issue of Lenin's new periodical *Vperyod* (Forward) published; Lenin, Lunacharsky, Vorovsky, editors; Kamenev, Zinoviev among contributors. Leading Bolshevik organisers in Russia at this time include Bogdanov, Litvinov, Gusev, Lyadov, Rykov, Zemlyachka, Kamenev

JANUARY: Stalin arrives at Novaya Uda, Irkutsk Province, to begin three-year term of exile

9 FEBRUARY: Beginning of Russo-Japanese War

FEBRUARY: Stalin makes his first escape, from Siberia to the Caucasus (Baum, Tiflis), Probable time of his marriage to Yekaterina Svanidze, his first wife

SPRING: Stalin in Batumi, allegedly 'arguing with Mensheviks'

JUNE: Stalin in Baku, his first appearance there

28 JULY: tsarist Minister Plehve assassinated by the S-R Sazonov

SEPTEMBER: United Front conference in Paris of all Russian anti-tsarist political parties (with exception of Social-Democrats who refuse to participate) works out common platform

NOVEMBER: Conference of Caucasian Committee in Tiflis favours convocation of Third Congress; joins the All-Russia Bolshevik organisation; sends Kamenev on agitational tour. Probable date Stalin joined Bolsheviks in Tiflis

2 NOVEMBER: Second Congress of Union of Liberation (liberals) works out plans to force a Constitution, and a campaign of banquets as a cover for political conferences

NOVEMBER-DECEMBER: Mensheviks urge support of the liberals and their banquets; Trotsky breaks with the Mensheviks and until 1917 belongs to neither faction

DECEMBER: Baku oil strikers supported by Social-Democratic workers' organisations of Balakhana and Bibi-Eibat. Stalin spends ten days in Baku, his second appearance there

1905

The year of the First Russian Revolution

2 JANUARY: The fall of Port Arthur; Japanese winning the war

Conflict between the members of Capon's workers' organisation and the management of the Putilov plant in Petersburg

4 JANUARY: First issue of *Vperyod* (Forward) appears in Geneva with Lenin's article, 'Concerning Good Demonstrations by the Proletariat and Bad Arguments by Certain Intellectuals'

16 JANUARY: Strike of Putilov workers

19 JANUARY: Capon writes a petition to the Tsar on behalf of Putilov strikers

22 JANUARY: Bloody Sunday. Gapon leads thousands of Petersburg workers to the gates of Tsar's Winter Palace to petition the Little Father in person; they are met with rifle-fire by the Tsar's guards

FEBRUARY: United Front conference of all anti-tsarist parties with exception of Social-Democrats

Social-Democratic Central Committee arrested at home of the writer Leonid Andreyev.

Bolshevik Bureau of the Committees of the Majority issue call for Third Party Congress; Menshevik Party Council protests; the new Central Committee (now pro-Bolshevik) endorses the Bolshevik call for Third Congress

Strike movement spreads throughout Russia

11 FEBRUARY: Shidlovsky Commission appointed by the government to investigate the causes for the dissatisfaction of Petersburg workers

17 FEBRUARY: Grand Duke Sergei, Governor-General of Moscow and a leader of reactionaries at the Court, assassinated by the S-R Kaiyayev

19-22 FEBRUARY: Pogrom of Armenians in Baku

MARCH: Peasant disturbances spread throughout Russia in spite of ruthless suppression

Bolshevik activities intensified; Bolshevik faction now supported by most of the Social-Democratic Committee

25 APRIL-10 MAY: Third Congress of the Social-Democratic Labour Party – the first constituent congress of the Bolsheviks. Congress abolishes *Iskra* as the central organ; directs establishment of new central organ, *Proletarii* ('The Proletarian'), published from 27th May to 25th November; abolishes Party Council; vests all executive authority in Central Committee; changes Paragraph 1 of Party statutes (chief cause of split at Second Congress) to suit Lenin; outlines policy on preparation for insurrection, on provisional government and conditions of Social-Democratic participation, and on dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry

Mensheviks denounce Third Congress as illegitimate and convoke a Party Conference; Conference elects Organisational Committee to negotiate party unity with Bolsheviks

MAY: Stalin's first pamphlet, *In Passing about Party Differences*, appears 27th May; Destruction of Russian Fleet at Tsushima

JUNE: The First Soviet is organised at Ivanovo-Voznesensk in the course of a wide-spread strike. Workers' demonstrations in Lodz, which began immediately after Bloody Sunday, culminate in armed uprising; barricades raised (22nd-24th June); 2,000 killed

12 JUNE: Stalin makes his first funeral oration at the grave of his friend and mentor, Tsulukidze, who died of tuberculosis

26 JUNE: Barricades raised in Warsaw; general strike in Odessa

27 JUNE: Mutiny on the cruiser Potemkin; barricades raised in Odessa

JULY: Soviet organised in Kostroma.

Potemkin mutineers surrender to Romanians at Constanza.

Lenin's article, 'The Paris Commune and the Tasks of the Democratic Dictatorship' is published in *Proletarii* No. 8; *Two Tactics of the Social-Democracy in the Democratic Revolution*, a pamphlet criticising Menshevik tactics and insisting on the hegemony of the proletariat in the present revolution, also published; 'The Proletariat Fight: The Bourgeois Is Sneaking Its Way to Power', in *Proletarii* No. 10, etc.

19-21 JULY: Congress of *zemstvo* and urban liberal leaders in Moscow

13-14 AUGUST: First (constituent) congress of the All-Russian Peasant Union

19 AUGUST: Tsar's edict in regard to establishment of a purely consultative Duma – the Bulygin Duma – promulgated; no representation for workers and inadequate representation for peasants; edict arouses a storm of protest

5 SEPTEMBER: Peace concluded between Russia and Japan at Portsmouth, New Hampshire, through intervention of President Theodore Roosevelt. Cost of war: 400,000 Russians killed and wounded; one and a half billion gold roubles; destruction of practically entire Russian Navy; loss of best part of Sakhalin, etc.

AUGUST-SEPTEMBER: Lenin, from exile in Switzerland, advocates boycott of Bulygin Duma, arming of workers, insurrection. Protests against too conciliatory policy of Krassin and Bogdanov, members of the Central Committee elected at the Third Congress, in their negotiations for Party unity with Menshevik Organisation Committee, and insists on full recognition by Mensheviks of legitimacy of Third Congress, fusion without preliminary factional congresses, etc.

3-10 OCTOBER: Lenin agrees to fusion with Mensheviks either on basis outlined by Third Congress or on basis to be worked out by a Unifying Fourth Congress, to be convoked jointly. As a result, United Central Committee established by co-opting several Mensheviks; Committee takes charge of preparations for the Fourth Congress

19-20 OCTOBER: On the initiative of the Menshevik-led All-Russian Railways Union, All-Russian Political Strike begun

20 OCTOBER: Moscow-Kazan Railway strike

21 OCTOBER: Strike of all Moscow railways: general strike in Moscow initiated by Bolshevik-led Printers' Union (on strike since Oct. 1)

25 OCTOBER: All railways throughout empire (except Finland) on strike: general strikes in Petersburg, Poltava, Kursk, Saratov, Moscow, and many other places

25-31 OCTOBER: First and constituent congress of the Constitutional Democratic Party (the Kadets) which, although composed of conservative landowners, business and professional men, is regarded as subversive by tsarist

reactionaries. Right wing favours a constitutional monarchy; left wing, a republic

26 OCTOBER: Morning: elections to the Petersburg Soviet of Workers' Deputies held throughout the city's factories, shops, etc. Evening: first meeting of the Petersburg Soviet, which takes charge of the General Strike throughout Russia; the Menshevik S. Zborovsky its first president

30 OCTOBER: Tsar publishes his Manifesto of the Seventeenth of October; appoints Count Sergei Witte Prime Minister

The *Favestiya* ('News') of the Soviet of Workers' Deputies, under management of Executive Committee member A.A. Simanovsky, assisted by members of the Printers' Union, begins publication

President Zborovsky arrested – The non-partisan but Menshevik sympathiser Khrustalyov (alias of George Nosar, a Petersburg lawyer) elected to succeed him. Trotsky, alias Yanovsky, a leading member of Executive Committee

The Petersburg Soviet assumes functions of the national government: its decrees obeyed, the Tsar's often ignored

NOVEMBER: Legal Social-Democratic newspapers: *Novaya Zhizn* ('New Life'), managed by Krassin and Litvinov, with Lenin as actual editor-in-chief, in Petersburg; *Nachalo* ('The Beginning'), Trotsky and Parvus principal editors, in Petersburg; *Borba* ('The Struggle'), Bolshevik, in Moscow; The Moscow Gazette, Menshevik; and others in various cities

Stalin still a member of the Tiflis Social-Democratic Committee, which is preponderantly Menshevik although he is a Bolshevik; editor until end of December, of *The Caucasian Workers' Newsheet*

Trotsky regarded as the actual leader of the Soviet; his contributions welcomed by the Bolshevik *Novaya Zhizn'* as well as by the largely Menshevik *Nachalo*

Wave of pogroms: anti-Semitic, anti-Socialist, anti-labour, anti-intellectual – sweeps over Russia, instigated by the Black Hundreds, a professedly super-patriotic organisation actually managed by tsarist Minister General Trepov

The Bolshevik Nicholas Muralov, *zemstvo* agronomist and statistician, caught in anti-Semitic pogrom at Podolsk, blazes his way through a Black Hundreds mob, gun in hand, flees to Moscow where he helps prepare December Insurrection

The Soviet decrees the 8-hour day

Lenin, returning from abroad in middle of November, takes charge of the Bolshevik Fighting Committee (for preparation of armed insurrection), changes Bolshevik opposition to Soviet into support of Soviet, campaigns against 'party neutrality' of labour organisations, appeals for boycott of Witte Duma, writes daily articles for Moscow as well as Petersburg Bolshevik newspapers

Coalition Council of Fighting Detachments, uniting Bolshevik, Menshevik, S-R, students' and other armed units, organised in Moscow to repel Black Hundreds assaults; by December becomes nucleus of insurrectionary forces

2 NOVEMBER: The Soviet proclaims freedom of the press

15-17 NOVEMBER: The Petersburg Soviet conducts strike of protest against trial of Kronstadt mutineers and rule of martial law in Poland

9 DECEMBER: Arrest of Khrustalyov-Nosar; Trotsky elected President of the Petersburg Soviet

tsarist government assumes openly counter-revolutionary policy; liberal bourgeoisie, shocked by developments, conducts negotiations with Prime Minister Witte

14 DECEMBER: Petersburg Soviet issues its Financial Manifesto urging all Russians to refrain from paying taxes, demanding all payments by government institutions be made in gold, warning foreign governments that revolutionists, when in power, will not repay any loans made to tsarist government

16 DECEMBER: tsarist government arrests entire Petersburg Soviet

Trotsky awaits trial on charges of treason, sedition, incitement to insurrection, etc. in Petersburg Prison of Preliminary Detention (16th December 1905-17th January 1907)

19 DECEMBER: The Moscow Soviet, jointly with Social-Democratic and S-R Moscow Committees, announces beginning of General Political Strike as prelude to insurrection. Strike endorsed by conference of railway union delegates then in session in Moscow, and by congress of postal and telegraph workers' unions

20 DECEMBER: 100,000 out on strike in Moscow. Krasnoyarsk Soviet begins insurrection with aid of troops of Railway Battalion; proclaims the Krasnoyarsk Republic which lasts twenty-three days. Insurrection also in Chita, Kansk, Rostov, Nikolayev, etc.

20-21 DECEMBER: General strike of 90,000 workers in Petersburg, unsupported by railway unions, led by new Executive Committee of Soviet which is now headed by Parvus. Insurrection quickly crushed

21 DECEMBER: 150,000 out on strike in Moscow

22 DECEMBER: Armed insurrection in Moscow; insurgents resort to guerrilla tactics

24 DECEMBER: Publication of Law on elections to the First Duma

24-30 DECEMBER: Stalin attends Bolshevik Conference in Tammerfors, Finland, as delegate from the Caucasus; meets Lenin for the first time

28 DECEMBER: Government troops begin to gain upper hand in Moscow insurrection

30 DECEMBER: Moscow insurrection ends

1906

JANUARY: Publication of new call for the Fourth Congress by the United Central Committee of Bolsheviks and Mensheviks; publication of Stalin's pamphlet *Two Skirmishes*

10-17 JANUARY: First Congress of S-R Party adopts program, splits into Right (National Socialist) and Left (Maximalist) Wings, decides to boycott Duma elections

24-29 JANUARY: Second Congress of Kadet Party defines its attitude toward monarchy, adopts agrarian program

MARCH: Kadets emerge from Duma elections as strongest party

15 APRIL: Stalin arrested and released in raid on Avlabar printing plant

23 APRIL-10 MAY: Fourth Congress of Social-Democratic Party in Stockholm, Sweden, withdraws boycott of Duma elections. Stalin a delegate to Stockholm Congress, his first trip abroad

10 MAY: Opening session of First Duma

MAY-JUNE: Lenin returns to Petersburg after Stockholm Congress, writes for newly established legal Bolshevik papers *Forward*, *The Wave*, *Echo*; resumes polemics with Mensheviks

Stalin, in his pamphlet, *The Current Moment and the Unifying Congress*, and in articles for the Georgian newspaper, *Elva*, writing under the pseudonym J. Besoshvili, restates in Georgian what Lenin writes currently in Russian

Conflict between Government and Duma, particularly over Kadet bill to break up large estates in favour of landless peasants with compensation to landowners

29 JUNE: Social-Democratic Fraction in the Duma (Menshevik) proposes support of Kadet demand for a cabinet responsible to the Duma. Lenin opposes this policy and agitates against support of Duma and Kadet ministry

JULY: Mutinies in Sveaborg and Kronstadt. Lenin, in contact with organisers of both mutinies, attempts to extend movement to Petersburg garrison

21 JULY: Tsar dissolves the First Duma, whereupon Duma deputies, under leadership of Kadets, meet in Vyborg and issue appeal to population of Russia to refuse to pay taxes and serve in army. Central Committee of S-R Party issues a *Manifesto to All Russian Peasants*, calling for insurrection. Prime Minister Stolypin begins his dictatorship

2 SEPTEMBER: Prime Minister Stolypin introduces summary court-martial to cope with revolutionists

3 SEPTEMBER: First issue of Bolshevik underground newspaper *Proletarii* ('The Proletarian') appears, with article by Lenin, 'About the Boycott'

NOVEMBER: Bolsheviks convoke conference of defence and military organisations of various parties in Helsinki

16-20 NOVEMBER: First All-Russian Party Conference in Tammerfors decides to convoke Fifth Congress "not later than 15th March, 1907"; decides to participate in elections to Second Duma, etc.

22 NOVEMBER: Stolypin introduces his agrarian law, designed to develop a small but influential stratum of prosperous peasants as bulwark of the autocracy

1907

Death of Stalin's wife; Stalin left with two-year old son, Yasha

JANUARY-FEBRUARY: Second Duma election campaign

17-23 JANUARY: Trotsky and fourteen other leaders of the Petersburg Soviet in Petersburg Transfer Prison, on way to life-long exile in Siberia

23 FEBRUARY: Trotsky arrives at Berezov, Siberia, on way to his place of exile at Obdorsk; escapes eight days later

5 MARCH: Opening session of Second Duma

13 MAY-1 JUNE: The Fifth Congress of the Social-Democratic Labour Party (the London Congress) – the last until the Revolution of 1917. Stalin, attending but not active, sees and hears Trotsky for the first time

JUNE: Probable time of possible conference between Lenin and Stalin in Berlin with reference to expropriations

Lenin settles in Kuokkala, Finland; Stalin returns to Tiflis

14-16 JUNE: Prime Minister Stolypin requests Duma to surrender for arrest and trial by the government fifty-five of its members – all the Social-Democratic deputies; Duma refuses; deputies arrested by Stolypin, who also dissolves Duma and promulgates new election law for the Third Duma, in violation of the Constitution; this coup begins the so-called Third of June Regime

25 JUNE: The Tiflis expropriation at Erivan Square, led by Kamo

JULY: Stalin settles in Baku

3-5 AUGUST: The July Party Conference, in Helsinki, Finland

14 NOVEMBER: Third Duma opens

DECEMBER: Lenin goes abroad; does not return to Russia until 1917

1908

JANUARY-FEBRUARY: Wide-spread strikes in Baku

7 APRIL: Stalin arrested, lodged in Bailov Prison at Baku

AUGUST: Central Committee Plenum: Mensheviks propose reorganisation of Central Committee into Information Bureau; Bolsheviks object; Foreign Bureau of the Central Committee established. Period of party splits and polemics

AUTUMN-WINTER: Bolsheviks publish the *Proletarii*, with Lenin, Kamenev, Zinoviev, Dubrovinsky as editors; Mensheviks publish *Goiias* (Voice) *Sotsial-Demokrat* with Plekhanov, Axelrod, Martov, Dan, Martynov as editors

SEPTEMBER: Stalin exiled to Solvychevodsk, Vologda, Siberia

Lenin argues against the empirio-criticism of Bogdanov, Bazarov, Lunacharsky; writes *Marxism and Revisionism*

16 OCTOBER: *Pravda: A Workers' Gazette*, founded in Lvov by Ukrainian Socialists; moves to Vienna in November and Trotsky becomes chief editor; henceforth known as *Vienna Pravda*

AUTUMN-WINTER: Crisis in the S-R Party: Yevno Azev, head of the Fighting Organisation, exposed as police spy

Crisis in the Bolshevik faction: Recallists led by Volsky, demand recall of Social-Democratic deputies from Duma for not carrying out Party directions; Ultimacists, led by Alexinsky, advocate ultimatum to deputies demanding either that they carry out Party directives or resign from Duma

Rise of Liquidationism, policy advocated by Mensheviks (Martov, Dan, Cherevanin, Martynov, Axelrod) of shifting from underground and conspirative to legal activities – trade union, educational, social, etc. – without regard for party framework

1909

3-9 JANUARY: December Conference of the Social-Democratic Party in Paris rebukes Liquidators, Recallists, Ultimacists

SPRING-SUMMER: Bolsheviks split into two main camps: the Lenin-Zinoviev-Kamenev Group, and the *Vperyod* (Forward) Group (a coalition of the Recallists and Ultimacists) led by Bogdanov, Lunacharsky, Alexinsky, Maxim Gorky. Mensheviks split into two main camps: Partyites, led by Plekhanov, and the Liquidators. Trotsky leads principal non-faction group; Plekhanov and Lenin groups co-operate in fighting Liquidators; consider fusion

JUNE-JULY: Stalin escapes from Siberian exile; returns to Baku as Oganess Vartanovich Totomyants

OCTOBER: Stalin journeys to Tiflis-Petersburg-Tiflis-Baku

1910

15 JANUARY-FEBRUARY: The January Plenum of the Central Committee, called to re-establish unity in the Social-Democratic Party. Attended by Lenin, Bogdanov, Martov, Trotsky, Kamenev and fourteen other prominent comrades. Stalin not present

5 APRIL: Stalin arrested in Baku; lodged once more in Bailov Prison

6 OCTOBER: Stalin exiled for third time, again to Solvychevodsk

1911

6 FEBRUARY: Stalin writes letter to Lenin, referring to the factional disputes as “a tempest in a teapot”. (Russian date: 24th January)

SPRING-SUMMER: Liquidationism among S-Rs: they renounce the terror, turn to work in trade unions, co-operatives, the Duma

JUNE: Lenin proposes abolishing Foreign Bureau of Central Committee by withdrawing Bolshevik members. During consultation of Central Committee members in Paris, it is decided to reorganise Foreign Bureau and convoke general Party conference to elect a new Central Committee. The Party torn by strife, scattered, leaderless

Stalin elected *in absentia* to the Organisation Committee in Russia of the All-Russian Conference of the Social-Democratic Party

19 JULY: Stalin, his term ended, appropriates passport of fellow-exile in Vologda and returns from Solvychevodsk to Petersburg under alias of Chizhikov

19 SEPTEMBER: Prime Minister Stolypin assassinated by Dmitri Bogrov, Okhrana agent

22 SEPTEMBER: Stalin arrested in Petersburg

DECEMBER: Stalin exiled to Vologda, capital of the Vologda Oblast province

1912

9 JANUARY: Conference of Bolshevik groups abroad

19-30 JANUARY: Prague Conference of Party Activists (All-Bolshevik) proclaims itself legitimate All-Russian Conference of the entire Party, expels Liquidators, decides to take part in Fourth Duma election campaign, elects a Central Committee headed by Lenin, elects Lenin Party Representative at the International Socialist Bureau, elects Lenin, Zinoviev, Kamenev editors of official Party newspaper

FEBRUARY: Stalin co-opted onto Central Committee after his candidacy, proposed by Lenin, was rejected at the Prague Conference

MARCH: Conference of Social-Democratic Oppositionists in Paris (Plekhanov Partyites, Vperyodists, Trotskyists, Bundists, delegates of the Social-Democrat group) repudiates the Prague Conference as illegitimate, its decisions as not valid, its Central Committee members as usurpers; elects Organisation Committee to convoke all-inclusive conference

6 MARCH: Ordzhonikidze, elected to Central Committee at Prague Conference, informs Stalin at Vologda of his co-optation. Stalin decides to escape

12 MARCH: Stalin escapes from Vologda, proceeds first to Baku, then to Petersburg where he reports to Russian Bureau of the Central Committee

March - April: Stalin helps Poletayev and others in Petersburg to organise new legal newspaper, *Pravda*

18 APRIL: Workers of Lena Gold Mines shot by soldiers in cold blood; action initiates wave of political strikes in protest

5 MAY: Stalin arrested day first issue of *Pravda* appears (Russian date: 22nd April), betrayed by stool pigeon in Bolshevik Petersburg organisation

22 JUNE: Third Duma ends

JULY: Lenin moves Bolshevik Headquarters from Paris to Krakow

14 JULY: Stalin begins his fifth exile, in Naryni Territory

JULY-OCTOBER: Fourth Duma election campaign

AUGUST: Conference of what was subsequently termed the August Bloc, in Vienna (Trotskyists, Vperyodists, various Menshevik factions) attempts to unite Party. Bolsheviks repudiate its efforts

14 SEPTEMBER: Stalin escapes from Siberian exile (his fourth escape) and arrives in Petersburg under the pseudonym Vassilyev

NOVEMBER-DECEMBER: Stalin goes to Krakow for special instructions in regard to policy of Bolshevik deputies elected to the Duma, conduct of *Pravda*, etc., and returns to Petersburg

28 NOVEMBER: Opening of Fourth Duma. Social-Democratic deputation consists of seven Mensheviks, led by Chkheidze and Skobelev, and six Bolsheviks, led by Malinovsky, a secret police agent

DECEMBER: Trotsky's Vienna *Pravda* ceases publication

1913

10-14 JANUARY: Stalin attends February Conference in Krakow at Lenin's request – Other conferees: Lenin, Zinoviev, Kamenev, Krupskaya, Malinovsky, Badayev, Lobov, Troyanovsky, Rozmirovich, Medvedev, Petrovsky

JANUARY-FEBRUARY: Stalin, in Krakow and Vienna, writes his dissertation on the problem of minor nationalities under Lenin's supervision, aided in his research by Bukharin and Troyanovsky. Meets Trotsky briefly

7 MARCH: Stalin arrested (for the last time) shortly after his return to Petersburg

JULY: Stalin exiled for the sixth time, to the Arctic Circle: Turukhan Territory-Kostino, Kureika, with occasional visits to Monastyrskoye

8-9 AUGUST: Poronino Conference in Galicia, attended by Lenin, Zinoviev, Kamenev, Malinovsky, Krupskaya

SEPTEMBER: Bolshevik Duma deputies (Malinovsky, Muranov, Badayev, Shagov, Samoilo, Petrovsky) report to Lenin at Poronino for instructions

7 SEPTEMBER: First issue of Bolshevik Moscow newspaper, *Nash Put* ('Our Road') appears; last issue, 25th September

SEPTEMBER-OCTOBER: The 'Ritual Murder' trial of Meyer Beilis in Kiev, most famous anti-Semitic case since Dreyfuss Affair, stirs liberals and socialists

8-14 OCTOBER: The August Conference, also known as the Summer Conference, held in Bialy Dunajec, a village near Poronino, to discuss Duma policy, self-determination of nations, growth of current strike movement, underground organisations, tasks of current agitation, policy toward S-Rs, coming International congress. Conferees: Lenin, Zinoviev, Kamenev, Krupskaya, Troyanovsky, the six Duma deputies, representatives of the Polish Social-Democrats

1914

JANUARY: Increasing discontent throughout Russia evidenced by political strikes, demonstrations, clashes with police, etc.

International Socialist Bureau weighs problem of reuniting Bolsheviks and Mensheviks

FEBRUARY: Kamenev sent to Russia to manage Bolshevik deputies in the Duma and supervise *Pravda*

SUMMER: Strikes in Moscow, Ivanovo-Voznesensk, Baku, Petersburg, elsewhere

1 JULY: Unification Conference of Bolsheviks and Mensheviks held in Brussels under aegis of International Socialist Bureau

21 JULY: *Pravda* suppressed by the government

AUGUST: Advent of the World War wipes out all previous factional differences and divides Russian Social-Democrats into two new groups: Defencists, led by Plekhanov, Alexinsky, Chkheidze; and Defeatists, led by Lenin, Zinoviev, Trotsky, Martov. Menshevik deputies in the Duma, led by Chkheidze, become 'social-patriots', but Martov and other leading Mensheviks become internationalists. Alexinsky, Bolshevik deputy in the Second Duma and leader of Ultimatists, becomes a rabid chauvinist, and after 1917 a monarchist

14 SEPTEMBER: First appearance of *Golos* ('The Voice'), internationalist newspaper published in Paris

13-14 OCTOBER: First Finnish Conference of Bolshevik Duma Deputies and Party workers: Kamenev and five Duma deputies (Malinovsky having resigned)

16-17 NOVEMBER: Second Conference of Bolshevik Defeatists in Finland

18 NOVEMBER: Conferees arrested, the government ignoring parliamentary immunity of Bolshevik deputies and arresting them along with Kamenev

DECEMBER: Vera Schweitzer (wife of Suren Spandaryan) in exile in Turukhan Territory, receives at Krasnoyarsk copy of Lenin's *Theses on War* which she takes to her husband in Monastyrskoye. Finds Stalin there, visiting Spandaryan. Lenin's main theses: (1) war on war; (2) turning imperialist war into civil war; (3) defeat of tsarist government as least evil under any conditions. Same theses transmitted by Lenin to Conference of Italian and Swiss Socialists at Lugano, 10th October

1915

4 FEBRUARY: *Nashe Slovo* ('Our Word'), internationalist newspaper edited in Paris by Trotsky and others, replaces *Golos*, suppressed by French government

26 FEBRUARY: Trial of Kamenev and Bolshevik deputies: sentence: exile to eastern Siberia

27 FEBRUARY: London Conference of Socialists of Allied Countries; Litvinov, in the name of the Central Committee of the Russian Social-Democratic Party and on instructions from Lenin, urges break with own bourgeois imperialist governments and fraternal co-operation with Social-Democrats of Germany and Austria-Hungary

MARCH: *Zhizn* ('Life'), periodical of S-R Internationalists, begins publication in Geneva

15 MARCH: Berne Conference of Bolshevik Sections Abroad, attended by Lenin, Zinoviev, Krupskaya, Troyanovsky, Rozmirovich, Bukharin, and seven representatives of Swiss sections, discusses anti-war agitation

2-4 APRIL: Second Berne Conference discusses anti-war agitation, necessity of creating Third International (Second International having turned chauvinist and failed), etc.

SUMMER: Kamenev and Duma deputies arrive in Turukhansk. Discussion of their behaviour at trial, sharply condemned by Spandaryan, leads to resolution of qualified approval by fellow-exiles, including Stalin. Lenin, like Spandaryan, considered Kamenev's behaviour unworthy of a Bolshevik and Internationalist

24 JULY: Berne Preliminary Conference of representatives of various European Socialist parties

18-21 SEPTEMBER: Zimmerwald Conference of various European Socialist parties; Angelica Balabanoff, Robert Grimm and others elected to Internationalist Socialist Committee; anti-war Zimmerwald Manifesto issued, signed by Lenin (Bolshevik), Axelrod (Menshevik), Bobrov (S-R) for the Russians

1916

Fight between Defencists and Defeatists

18-21 FEBRUARY: Berne Conference; reports by Socialists of various countries on their efforts to stop the war

6-12 MAY: Kienthal Conference; International Left Opposition, headed by Lenin, Luxemburg, Radek, propose extreme measures to stop the war: general strike, sabotage, insurrection. Bureau of the Zimmerwald Left (Lenin & Co.) advocates turning imperialist war into civil war in all countries

DECEMBER: Stalin called to Krasnoyarsk to report for military service; rejected as physically unfit; settles in Achinsk

15 DECEMBER: Assassination of Rasputin. Country in turmoil; its economy disorganised; strikes; repressive measures

1917

Year of the February and October Revolutions

JANUARY-FEBRUARY: Complete disorganisation of governmental machinery; negotiations between Bloc of Progressives in the Duma and Allied diplomats in regard to removal of Nicholas II and institution of a constitutional monarchy; schemes for a Court revolution at the Imperial Court. Strikes and riots in workers' districts of Petrograd. Government's arrest of labour representatives on Central War Industries Board adds fuel to the fire

8 MARCH: The February Revolution begins; housewives riot in the food queues; Bolshevik workers, veterans of 1905, take charge, organise the mobs into demonstrations; International Women's Day celebrated, Petrograd workers, led by Bolshevik rank-and-filers and other Socialist militants, go out on mass strikes

10 MARCH: General strike in Petrograd; mass arrests; street battles

11 MARCH: Fourth Duma dissolved by the Tsar; deputies remain in Petrograd to organise a provisional government

12 MARCH: Petrograd Soviet of Workers' Deputies organised; Provisional Committee of the Duma organised

13 MARCH: *Izvestiya* (News) of the Petrograd Soviet revived; Tsar's ministers arrested; Schluesselburg Fortress stormed and captured

14 MARCH: Moscow Soviet organised. Petrograd Soviet expands into Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, swelled by deputations from mutinous regiments (mutinies begun two days before when soldiers refused to fire on workers and other demonstrators); the Petrograd Soviet issues Order No. 1 to the Army

15 MARCH: Provisional Committee of the Duma announces formation of Provisional Government: Prince Lvov, Prime Minister; Professor Paul Milyukov (leader of Cadet Party), Minister of Foreign Affairs; Alexander Kerensky (lawyer, obstreperous Labourite deputy in the Duma), Minister of Justice

Nicholas II abdicates in favour of his brother Michael

16 MARCH: Grand Duke Michael abdicates, pending final determination of the nature of the Russian Government by the Constituent Assembly, to be convoked in the indefinite future

18 MARCH: Publication of *Pravda* returned in Petrograd under management of Bolshevik Centre members Zalutsky, Shlyapnikov, Molotov

Authority in Russia now divided between the Provisional Government, whose authority is largely nominal, and the Petrograd Soviet. Actually, only the qualified support of the Soviet, run by Mensheviks and S-Rs, enables the government to function at all

The Bolshevik Centre (also known as the Russian Bureau of the Central Committee of the Social-Democratic Party) adopts resolution characterising the Provisional Government as counter-revolutionary and advocating policy of steering toward a democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry

19 MARCH: The Provisional Government declares amnesty for all political prisoners, thus recognising an accomplished fact, for criminals as well as politicals are already streaming out of the prisons

25 MARCH: Stalin arrives in Petrograd with Kamenev and Duma deputy Muranov. The three take over conduct of *Pravda* and introduce a more conciliatory tone toward the Provisional Government

27 MARCH: Stalin's first article since his return from exile appears in *Pravda* (No. 8), About the Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies

The Soviet Executive Committee issues a manifesto *To the Peoples of the World*

28 MARCH: Stalin publishes article in *Pravda* in support of the Manifesto; Kamenev publishes article in *Pravda* in support of the Provisional Government

29 MARCH: Stalin's article, 'On the War', appears in *Pravda* (No. 10)

31 MARCH: Stalin's article, 'Conditions for the Victory' of the Russian Revolution, appears in *Pravda* (No. 12)

5 APRIL: Funeral of the 'Martyrs of the Revolution'

10 APRIL: At the All-Russian Conference of Bolsheviks, Stalin reads the key political report, on the official Bolshevik policy in regard to the Provisional Government; a policy of conditional support

11 APRIL: All-Russian Conference of Soviets

16 APRIL: Lenin, Zinoviev, Sokolnikov, Krupskaya and others arrive at Byelo-Ostrov after crossing Germany in a 'sealed' train; Lenin immediately chides Kamenev, leader of the welcoming delegation, for the wrong policy of *Pravda*; at Bolshevik headquarters in Petrograd Lenin releases his 'thunderbolts' against the non-Bolshevism of the Bolshevik leaders, including Stalin and Kamenev

17 APRIL: Lenin delivers his *April Theses*; at the same conference, Stalin delivers report advocating friendly division of functions between the Provisional Government and the Soviets, a policy directly opposed in spirit to Lenin's

1 MAY: The first free May Day in Russia

Milyukov's Note to the Allies promises prosecution of war to a victorious end on the old terms

3 MAY: Beginning of the April Days, with armed demonstration of protest against Milyukov's Note

7-12 MAY: All-Russian Conference of the Bolsheviks (the April Conference) elects a Central Committee, declares for peace without annexations or indemnities, supports fraternisation at the front, advocates organised seizure of land by peasants, etc. Stalin elected a member of Central Committee for the first time (had previously been co-opted)

14 MAY: Petrograd Soviet votes for a coalition government

15 MAY: Milyukov resigns from Provisional Government

17 MAY: Trotsky arrives in Petrograd from a Canadian concentration camp; is met by cheering crowds at railway station; delivers sensational speech before Soviet in line with Lenin's policies

Lenin, in *Open Letter to First All-Russian Congress of Peasant Deputies*, advocates ruthless war with the "imperialist bourgeoisie" and the "Social-compromisers" (Mensheviks, S-Rs)

18 MAY: Coalition government organised with Kerensky as Minister of War

7 JUNE: All-Russian Congress of S-R Party, the most popular party among all classes of Russians between April and September

16 JUNE: First All-Russian Congress of Soviets, S-R-Menshevik majority; Sverdlov and Stalin direct caucus of Bolshevik Faction.

29 JUNE: Kerensky orders offensive at the front; Russia torn between patriotic fervour and determined opposition to war

1 JULY: S-R-Menshevik organised demonstration turns into Bolshevik demonstration; beginning of Bolshevik preponderance in Petrograd

2 JULY: Portraits of Kerensky displayed in patriotic demonstration

17-19 JULY: The 'July Days'; abortive mass insurrection in Petrograd. Stalin delegated by Bolshevik Central Committee to prevent sailors in Peter and

Paul Fortress from participating in insurrection. Lenin, Trotsky, other leading Bolsheviks, accused of being “German agents” by Provisional Government; Stalin, not so charged, most insistent Lenin and Zinoviev, the principal accused, should not face charge in open court and undertakes to hide them from authorities. Prince Lvov’s government collapses

19 JULY: Offensive ordered by Kerensky collapses; German Army smashes through Russian lines at Tarnopol, Kalush (Galicia)

20 JULY: Salvation of Revolution Government formed with Kerensky as Prime Minister

24 JULY: Stalin and Alliluyev transfer Lenin and Zinoviev to more secure hiding place, Sestroretsk; Stalin becomes important link between Lenin and Central Committee

29 JULY: Stalin succeeds Zinoviev as reporter at conference of Petrograd Bolsheviks

Kornilov replaces Brusilov as Commander-in-Chief of Russian Army

5 AUGUST: Trotsky, Kamenev, Lunacharsky, other leading Bolsheviks arrested; order for Lenin’s arrest issued; *Pravda* offices raided, wrecked

8-16 AUGUST: Sixth Congress of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party (first since the London Congress of 1907), all-Bolshevik in complexion, the Inter-Districters (Mezhrayontsy) and other groups relinquishing their factional status and merging unconditionally; Stalin, Bukharin, Sverdlov and other Bolsheviks not yet wanted by police the leading figures. Congress elects what is later known as ‘October Central Committee’ – many members necessarily *in absentia* – and endorses policy of the April Conference, Bolsheviks steering toward new revolution

17 AUGUST: Kamenev liberated from prison

25-27 AUGUST: State Conference in Moscow hails Kornilov provokes general strike in Moscow

31 AUGUST: Germans break through northern front; Riga falls

1 SEPTEMBER: Stalin moves into home of the Alliluyevs at Rozhdestvenskaya 17, Petrograd, ‘post office’ for Lenin’s communications with Bolshevik leaders; occupies ‘best room’ where Lenin and Zinoviev hid during July Days, and becomes acquainted with Nadya Alliluyeva, aged sixteen, his future wife

9 SEPTEMBER: Kerensky attempts to remove Kornilov after secretly plotting with him through intermediacy of Savinkov; Kornilov defies Kerensky; marches on Petrograd. United Front of all parties, including Bolsheviks, against Kornilov

14 SEPTEMBER: Kornilov arrested at General Headquarters in Moghilev; Bolshevik influence increases, especially in Petrograd; Bolshevik resolution passed for first time by Petrograd Soviet; Bolsheviks generally credited with crushing Kornilov coup

17 SEPTEMBER: Trotsky and other arrested Bolshevik leaders set free on bail

18 SEPTEMBER: Bolshevik resolution carries Moscow Soviet

22 SEPTEMBER: Compromise (S-R-Menshevik) presidium of Petrograd Soviet resigns; Bolshevik majority dominant

24 SEPTEMBER: Trotsky elected President of Petrograd Soviet, as in 1905, succeeding the Menshevik Chkheidze

27 SEPTEMBER-4 OCTOBER: Democratic Conference in Petrograd; compromise-bourgeois coalition defied by Trotsky as spokesman of Bolsheviks; Conference elects Council of Republic (Pre-Parliament)

4 OCTOBER: Petrograd Soviet issues call for Second All-Russian Congress of Soviets, to meet 2nd November

15 OCTOBER: Temporary Council of the Russian Republic begins to function

20 OCTOBER: Trotsky leads Bolshevik Faction out of Council of the Republic; Bolsheviks form bloc with Left S-Rs

22 OCTOBER: Petrograd Soviet votes to form Military Revolutionary Committee with Trotsky as chairman

23 OCTOBER: Session of Bolshevik Central Committee elects Bureau (which never meets) to lead insurrection; Stalin a member; Central Committee (except Kamenev, Zinoviev) adopts Lenin's resolution citing armed insurrection as immediate task

26 OCTOBER: Soldiers' Section of the Petrograd Soviet votes to transfer all military authority from Headquarters to Military Revolutionary Committee

29 OCTOBER: Session of Bolshevik Central Committee repudiates anti-insurrection stand of Kamenev and Zinoviev; re-endorses Lenin's policy

30 OCTOBER: Rumoured Bolshevik insurrection; Zinoviev and Kamenev attack Bolshevik policy of insurrection in public press

All-Russian Central Executive Committee (still under Menshevik-S-R influence) postpones meeting of All-Russian Congress of Soviets from 2nd-7th November

2 NOVEMBER: Military Revolutionary Committee begins actual preparations for insurrection

4 NOVEMBER: Review of Soviet forces in Petrograd under guise of huge meetings

5 NOVEMBER: Peter and Paul Fortress, last important obstacle to success of insurrection, declares for Petrograd Soviet

6 NOVEMBER: Provisional Government issues orders for arrest of Military Revolutionary Committee, suppression of Bolshevik papers, replacement of Bolshevik propagandised troops in Petrograd with loyal troops; Kerensky delivers last speech to Council of the Republic; Lenin comes to Smolny, Bolshevik Headquarters, at night

7 NOVEMBER: October Revolution begins (2am). Troops of the Military Revolutionary Committee close Council of the Republic (12 noon). Lenin comes out of hiding; appears at session of Petrograd Soviet (3pm); is introduced by Trotsky. Operations against Winter Palace (seat of Provisional Government) begin (9pm). Second All-Russian Congress of Soviets opens (11pm)

7-9 NOVEMBER: Second All-Russian Congress of Soviets, under presidency of Kamenev, adopts Lenin's motions for immediate peace negotiations (Peace Decree), immediate distribution of all lands to tillers of the soil (Land Decree); sets up new government (Council of People's Commissars) "provisionally"; elects Central Executive Committee which holds first session after close of Congress (5am) with Kamenev, first President of Soviet Republic, presiding

8 NOVEMBER: Winter Palace falls; Provisional Government arrested by Antonov-Ovseyenko of the Military Revolutionary Committee (2am)

9 NOVEMBER: The first Council of People's Commissars organised: Lenin, Chairman of the Council (prime minister); Trotsky, Foreign Affairs; "J.V. Djughashvili (Stalin) ... Affairs of the Nationalities", etc.

14 NOVEMBER: Central Committee session considers S-R-Menshevik suggestion for coalition excluding Lenin and Trotsky from the government; rejects S-R-Menshevik condition; forms coalition with Left S-Rs

15 NOVEMBER: *Declaration of the Rights of the Toiling and Exploited People*, signed by Lenin and Stalin

21 NOVEMBER: Sverdlov succeeds Kamenev as Chairman of Soviet Central Executive Committee, thus becoming second President of the Soviet Republic; carries on simultaneously as Secretary of Bolshevik Central Committee

22-23 NOVEMBER: Lenin, Stalin at his side, negotiates by direct wire with General Dukhonin, dismisses him, appoints Krylenko Commander-in-Chief in his place

23 NOVEMBER: Decree abolishing ranks, civil service and social gradations

27 NOVEMBER: Decree on Workers' Control

30 NOVEMBER: Trotsky invites Allied missions in Petrograd to participate in forthcoming peace negotiations with Central Powers; receives no reply. Stalin begins direct wire negotiations with Ukrainian Rada

2 DECEMBER: Brest-Litovsk negotiations begin. The Joffe delegation

7 DECEMBER: *Proclamation of the Council of Peoples Commissars to the Toiling Muslims of Russia and the East*, signed by Lenin and Stalin

12 DECEMBER: Central Committee elects Lenin, Trotsky, Stalin, Sverdlov to bureau of four for problems requiring immediate solution: foreshadow of Politburo

20 DECEMBER: Decree for organisation of the Cheka

21 DECEMBER: First meeting of the Cheka collegium – Dzerzhinsky, Peters, Sergo (Ordzhonikidze), Averin, Ksenoiontov, Peterson, Yevseyev, Trifonov limits its duties to “preliminary investigation”

22-28 DECEMBER: Brest-Litovsk Peace Conference. Joffe Delegation

1918

10 JANUARY: Second Brest-Litovsk Peace Conference parleys open. The Trotsky delegation

18-19 JANUARY: The Constituent Assembly meets

21-22 JANUARY: Extraordinary sessions of the Central Committee concerning the Brest-Litovsk parleys; both Lenin's proposal (sign annexationist peace)

and Trotsky's (no peace, no war) outvoted in favour of Bukharin's proposal (wage a revolutionary war against the Germans)

23-31 JANUARY: Third Congress of Soviets meets in Petrograd; approves dispersal of Constituent Assembly and constitutes itself the government of Russia by instituting the Congress of Soviets as the highest authority, the Central Executive Committee as its 'parliament', and the Council of People's Commissars as its executive organ; acknowledges itself at war with the Ukrainian Rada and the counter-revolutionary forces of Generals Alexeyev, Kaledin, Kornilov (South-East, Don, Kuban)

25 JANUARY: Joint session of Bolshevik and Left S-R Central Committees decides to submit "no war, no peace" policy to Congress of Soviets

1 FEBRUARY: Central Committee approves Trotsky's "no war, no peace" formula

8 FEBRUARY: New style (Gregorian) calendar adopted.²

9 FEBRUARY: Central Powers sign separate peace with the Ukrainian Rada

10 FEBRUARY: Trotsky brings Brest-Litovsk Peace Conference to a close: "We are out of the war but we refuse to sign the peace treaty."

13 FEBRUARY: The Homburg Conference-Kaiser Wilhelm II and war lords

15 FEBRUARY: Berlin announces termination of armistice on 18th February but German Army begins to advance at once, and occupies territory relinquished by fleeing Russian Army

17 FEBRUARY: German aeroplanes over Dvinsk, close to Petrograd

18 FEBRUARY: Extraordinary session of Central Committee; at morning session Lenin outvoted by Trotsky and Bukharin supporters; at evening session Lenin's motion for immediate peace adopted after Trotsky swings his support to Lenin

19 FEBRUARY: Petrograd radio broadcast to Berlin announces Soviet readiness to sign a dictated peace under constraint, protests against suspension of armistice; receipt of broadcast acknowledged by General Hoffman but German Army continues its advance

Council of People's Commissars elects executive committee consisting of Lenin, Trotsky, Stalin (Bolsheviks); Proshyan, Karelin (Left S-Rs)

2 Trotsky follows old style calendar to this date.

21 FEBRUARY: Bolshevik government issues orders for holy revolutionary war against “the bourgeoisie and imperialists of Germany”, devastating destruction in case of retreat, etc.

22 FEBRUARY: At session of Central Committee, Trotsky proposes asking Allies for aid against Germans and tenders his resignation as Commissar of Foreign Affairs; Lenin, absent, sends note approving “receipt of support and arms from Anglo-French imperialist brigands”; Trotsky’s recommendation adopted by a 6 to 5 vote

23 FEBRUARY: New German peace terms, sent by courier from Berlin 21st February, received in Petrograd; discussed at session of Central Committee; for immediate acceptance of German terms: Lenin, Zinoviev, Sverdlov, Sokolnikov, Stasova, Smilga. Stalin; against: Bukharin, Uritsky, Bubnov, Lomov; not voting: Trotsky, Dzerzhinsky, Krestinsky, Joffe. Bukharin, Bubnov, Lomov, Yakovleva, Pyatakov, V.M. Smirnov resign in protest from Central Committee; beginning of faction of Left Communists, led by Bukharin

28 FEBRUARY: Arrival of Sokolnikov delegation at Brest-Litovsk

3 MARCH: Signing of Brest-Litovsk Treaty

6-8 MARCH: Seventh Congress of Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party (Bolsheviks) approves Brest-Litovsk Treaty notwithstanding vigorous opposition of Left Communists; renames party Russian Communist Party

13-14 MARCH: Soviet Government and Communist Party Headquarters move to Moscow

15-17 MARCH: Fourth Congress of Soviets in Moscow debates Brest-Litovsk Treaty: vigorous opposition by Left S-Rs as well as Left Communists – Left S-Rs resign from coalition with Bolsheviks in Council of People’s Commissars; Trotsky becomes Commissar of War; Chicherin, Commissar of Foreign Affairs

5 APRIL: Japanese Army detachments land in Vladivostok, Siberia

15 APRIL: Turks take Batumi

27 APRIL: Stalin appointed plenipotentiary for negotiations with Ukrainian Rada

APRIL-MAY: Germans occupy Kharkov, Taganrog, Rostov-on-Don, all of Ukraine, Crimea; dissolve Ukrainian Rada, set up Skoropadsky (29th April)

10 MAY: Stalin begins preparations for Constituent Conference of Tatar-Bashkir Republic

12 MAY: Whites under Mannerheim overthrow Reds in Finland

25 MAY: Czechoslovaks revolt, occupy Central Volga; revolt backed by the French, spreads, cuts off the Trans-Volga, the Urals, Siberia, the Far East, as they capture Novonikolayevsk (26th May), Chelyabinsk (27th May), Penza (29th May), Omsk (7th June), Samara (8th June), Ufa (5th July), Simbirsk (22nd July), Yekaterinburg (25th July), Kazan (7th August), in concert with Whites

Government of the Constituent Assembly establishes its rule in the Urals and Western Siberia

Germans occupy Poti, Georgia, with permission of the Menshevik Government of Georgia

29 MAY: Stalin put in charge of provisioning South Russia, his job to supply Moscow and Petrograd with food

JUNE: Committees of the Poor organised in the villages, campaign to secure peasant support of Soviet government, food supplies, peasant resistance to Whites

3 JUNE: Stalin leaves Moscow for Tsaritsyn with armed guard

6 JUNE: Stalin arrives at Tsaritsyn with detachment of 450 riflemen

13 JUNE: Whites cut off railroad communications from Tsaritsyn to Moscow

16 JUNE: Stalin sends first shipment of provisions to Moscow by water

29 JUNE: Stalin begins active interference in military matters

1 JULY: British and French forces land in Murmansk

4-10 JULY: Fifth Congress of Soviets formally ratifies Brest-Litovsk Treaty, sanctions plan for organising Red Army (actual organisation began 23rd February). Bitter debates between Left S-Rs and Bolsheviks over Brest-Litovsk, army, peasantry, etc., lead to complete break

5 JULY: Fifth Congress adopts Constitution of RSFSR.

6 JULY: German Ambassador Count von Mirbach assassinated by Left S-R Jacob Blumkin in attempt to provoke revolutionary war against imperialist Germany

6-7 JULY: Left S-R insurrection breaks out in Moscow

6-21 JULY: Savinkovist insurrection in Yaroslavl; other insurrections in Murom, Rybinsk, Arzamas

17 JULY: Royal Family executed at Yekaterinburg

19 JULY: Stalin made member of the Council of War of the Tsaritsyn Front, his first official appointment to a military post

25 JULY: Baku Soviet votes (259 ayes to 226 Bolshevik nays) to ask for British troops

1 AUGUST: Allied troops occupy Archangel

13 AUGUST: British, under General Dunsterville, cross from Persia to Baku

14 AUGUST: General Krasnov's Cossacks within 15 kilometres of Tsaritsyn

15 AUGUST: American troops land in Siberia

20 AUGUST: Red troops in Tsaritsyn, under command of Voroshilov, launch counter-offensive against Krasnov's Whites

30 AUGUST: Uritsky assassinated in Petrograd; Lenin wounded during attempted assassination by Fanny Kaplan

31 AUGUST: Beginning of Red Terror: system of hostages, mass executions of individually innocent 'class enemies' in reprisal, etc.

2 SEPTEMBER: Soviet Republic proclaimed a single military camp; effort to stamp out local self-rule and centralise military command

10 SEPTEMBER: Kazan retaken by Red Army; Red troops begin to clear Czechoslovaks from Volga territory

11 SEPTEMBER: Southern Front organised by order of Revolutionary Council of War of the Republic with General Sytin in command

12 SEPTEMBER: Stalin leaves Tsaritsyn for trip to Moscow

13 SEPTEMBER: General Dunsterville retires from Baku to Persia, after shooting twenty-six commissars, including Shaumyan, President of the Baku Soviet

17 SEPTEMBER: Stalin reports to Revolutionary Council of War of the Republic in Moscow on situation around Tsaritsyn

22 SEPTEMBER: Stalin arrives in Tsaritsyn

OCTOBER: The Volga cleared by Red troops; Czechs retreat to Urals

3 OCTOBER: Trotsky orders Tsaritsyn commanders to obey orders of their superior, Sytin

5 OCTOBER: Trotsky orders unification of all armies and groups of the Southern Front under command of Sytin, appoints new Council of War for Southern Front, confirms Voroshilov as commander of Tenth Army defending Tsaritsyn with 50,000 troops

Stalin, removed from Council of War of Southern Front, leaves Tsaritsyn for Moscow to talk with Lenin and Sverdlov

11 OCTOBER: Stalin returns to Tsaritsyn

15 OCTOBER: Tsaritsyn again surrounded by Whites; Steel Division reaches Tsaritsyn from North Caucasian Front; saves Tsaritsyn within next couple of days

18 OCTOBER: Stalin recalled from Tsaritsyn by Lenin upon Trotsky's insistence; Stalin stalls and claims credit for victory

20 OCTOBER: Stalin leaves Tsaritsyn in Sverdlov's train

21 OCTOBER: Stalin reports to Trotsky, en route to Tsaritsyn, and asks leniency for Tsaritsyn "boys"

22 OCTOBER: Stalin arrives in Moscow; Trotsky arrives in Tsaritsyn

29 OCTOBER: Stalin speaks before Moscow Soviet on situation at Southern Front; article on same subject in *Pravda*, 30th October

29 OCTOBER-4 NOVEMBER: Founding of the Komsomol at its first congress, the Russian Communist Youth Congress

5 NOVEMBER: Trotsky issues special order on Tsaritsyn army

6 NOVEMBER: Stalin publishes anniversary article in *Pravda*, stating Trotsky was directly in charge of October Insurrection and chiefly responsible for its success

6-9 NOVEMBER: Sixth Congress of the Soviets

11 NOVEMBER: Armistice ends hostilities in World War I; end of Hohenzollern rule in Germany

13 NOVEMBER: Soviet Government annuls Brest-Litovsk Treaty

22 NOVEMBER: Allied squadrons enter Black Sea; Winston Churchill promotes intervention and becomes man most hated by Soviet Russia

24 NOVEMBER: The Whites, having secured British support through Winston Churchill, hold Anti-Bolshevik Conference in Jassy, Romania; proclaim General Denikin dictator of Russia

30 NOVEMBER: Council of Defence organised; includes Lenin, Trotsky, Krassin, Sverdlov, Stalin and others

DECEMBER: German Army begins evacuation of Ukraine; Hetman Skoropadsky's government falls

Coup d'état in Omsk; Kolchak seizes reins of government from Government of the Constituent Assembly (S-R-Menshevik-Liberal) established by Czechoslovaks; Kolchak moves west, threatens Perm

1 DECEMBER: First meeting of Council of Defence

13 DECEMBER: Clemenceau calls for "*le cordon sanitaire*" around Soviets

17 DECEMBER: French troops land in Odessa

24 DECEMBER: Litvinov appeals to Woodrow Wilson to restore real peace

26 DECEMBER: General Denikin proclaims himself commander-in-chief of all White land and sea forces in South Russia

31 DECEMBER: Lenin considers sending Stalin to Perm

1919

1 JANUARY: Trotsky agrees to sending Stalin to Perm

White Russia becomes a Soviet Republic

2 JANUARY: Soviet troops on Ural Front surrender Perm, retreat to Vyatka

3 JANUARY: Central Committee delegates Stalin and Dzerzhinsky to investigate situation on Ural Front

5 JANUARY: Stalin and Dzerzhinsky arrive in Vyatka; begin purge

10 JANUARY: Lenin conveys to Trotsky Stalin's desire to be transferred to Southern Front and pleads for compromise

11 JANUARY: Trotsky concedes necessity for compromise but points to disruptive tactics of Tsaritsyn "boys" still persisting on Southern Front

15 JANUARY: Stalin and Dzerzhinsky report to Central Committee on situation on Ural Front

20 JANUARY: Probable date of Stalin's appointment to Council of War of Southern Front; he is summarily removed after interfering anew with orders of Commander-in-Chief

4 FEBRUARY: Stalin declines offer of appointment to Council of War of South-Western Front: remains in Moscow

18 FEBRUARY: Winston Churchill supports Foch's plan for intervention and support of Whites

FEBRUARY-MARCH: Organisation of Soviet Ukrainian Government; Stalin in Ukraine at this time

MARCH: Bullitt Mission to Russia

2 MARCH-6: First and founding Congress of Third International, organised and presided over by Lenin; Russian delegates: Lenin, Trotsky, Zinoviev, Bukharin, Stalin; alternates: Osinsky, Vorovsky

6 MARCH: Kolchak advances across the Urals

15 MARCH: Kolchak at gates of Ufa

16 MARCH: Death of Sverdlov. Trotsky leaves for Ufa

18-23 MARCH: Eighth Congress of Communist Party; Sokolnikov reports on military situation; Stalin secret leader of military opposition; Politburo, Orgburo, Secretariat created

21 MARCH: French troops advance on Kherson

22 MARCH: French troops driven back to Odessa

2 APRIL: French ordered to evacuate Odessa in forty-eight hours

16 APRIL: Lloyd George agrees in House of Commons that Kolchak should be supported in operations against Red Army

28 APRIL: Red Army checks Kolchak's advance and begins counter-offensive

MAY: Denikin's Volunteer Army begins offensive in South

13 MAY: Yudenich makes first attempt to capture Petrograd

15 MAY: Stalin sent to Petrograd to aid Zinoviev

25 MAY: Yudenich captures Pskov, North-West Front

26 MAY: Joint note from Supreme Council of Allies in Paris to Kolchak outlines conditions of support and recognition

27 MAY: Red Army drives Kolchak eastward: captures Sterlitamak

4 JUNE: Kolchak accepts terms of Supreme Council

Stalin in telegram to Lenin makes charges of treason against staff of Revolutionary Council of War of the Republic; charges ignored

12 JUNE: Yudenich driven back from Petrograd

13 JUNE: Winston Churchill undertakes to persuade Finns to join Yudenich, Estonian and British aid having proved fruitless

15 JUNE: Denikin captures Kupyansk, Southern Front

16 JUNE: Red sailors occupy Krasnaya Gorka in Petrograd

25 JUNE: Denikin takes Kharkov

3 JULY: Revolutionary Council of War of the Republic reconstituted; S.S. Kamenev succeeds Vatzetis as Commander-in-Chief

4 JULY: Trotsky disagrees with Kamenev's strategy against Denikin; tenders his resignation as Commissar of War and Navy and as Chairman of Revolutionary Council of War of the Republic

5 JULY: Central Committee resolution (signed by Stalin and others) declines to accept Trotsky's resignation

8 JULY: Trotsky at Southern Front headquarters in Kozlov receives telegram implicating former Commander-in-Chief Vatzetis in anti-Soviet conspiracy; later investigation proves charges false

27 JULY: Trotsky recommends change of commanders at Southern Front since present commander disagrees with Kamenev's strategy; Stalin, a member of Council of War of the Southern Front, approves of Kamenev's plan

10-20 AUGUST: Kamenev's plan, put into operation, begins to show its weaknesses; Mamontov's cavalry breaks through Red lines

4 SEPTEMBER: Denikin enters Kiev, further evidence of failure of Kamenev's plan

6 SEPTEMBER: Trotsky proposes modification of Kamenev's plan; Politburo, including Stalin, disagrees with Trotsky and re-endorses the plan

22 SEPTEMBER: Denikin, marching steadily northward, takes Kursk

25 SEPTEMBER: Moscow Party Headquarters blown up by diversionists in preparation for expected capture of Moscow by Denikin

1-20 OCTOBER: Kamenev's plan modified; strategy on Southern Front altered by Trotsky; Denikin on outskirts of Oryol; Yudenich advancing simultaneously on Petrograd with formidable force. Most critical period of Civil War. Having reorganised Red Army Forces on the Southern Front and set new Soviet offensive for 10th October Trotsky leaves for Petrograd and reorganises defence against Yudenich

13 OCTOBER: Denikin takes Oryol and opens road to Moscow

15 OCTOBER: Central Committee issues thirteen decrees regarding Southern Front, proposed and written by Trotsky

16 OCTOBER: Yudenich takes Gatchina

20-21 OCTOBER: Battle of Pulkovo Heights on outskirts of Petrograd; Red Army under Trotsky's personal command drives Yudenich back

21 OCTOBER: Red Army beats back Denikin in battle on outskirts of Oryol, Southern Front

14 NOVEMBER: Red Army captures Yamburg and Omsk on the Eastern Front; Politburo delegates both Lenin and Trotsky to impress Commander-in-Chief Kamenev with political and economic importance of recapturing Kursk

17 NOVEMBER: Red Army recaptures Kursk

27 NOVEMBER: Order of the Red Banner awarded to Stalin, after similar award was made to Trotsky (variant date: 20th Novmeber)

NOVEMBER-DECEMBER: Growing disintegration of White Armies of Yudenich, Kolchak, and Denikin under pressure of Red Army offensives

DECEMBER: Final mopping up operations against Yudenich

2-4 DECEMBER: All-Russian Party Conference

4 DECEMBER: Ivan Smirnov reports from Eastern Front: "Kolchak has lost his army."

5-9 DECEMBER: Seventh Congress of Soviets in Moscow elects new Central Executive Committee; amends constitution

1920

JANUARY: Mopping-up operations against Kolchak in Siberia

JANUARY-FEBRUARY: Trade negotiations with England and France

JANUARY-MARCH: Polish Army, supported by Latvian Army, seizes Dvinsk, Latgalia, Mozyr

FEBRUARY: Mopping-up operations against remnants of Denikin's forces on South-Western Front

2 FEBRUARY: Peace treaty signed with Estonia

3 FEBRUARY: Lenin and Trotsky ask Stalin, already a member of Council of War of South-Western Front, also to become a member of Council of War of Caucasian Front; Stalin declines

7 FEBRUARY: French surrender Kolchak to Red Army; Kolchak summarily executed

20 FEBRUARY: Stalin resents request for dispatch of reinforcements from South-Western Front to Caucasian Front and is reproved by Lenin

FEBRUARY-MARCH: Denikin reforms White Armies in North Caucasus

MARCH-APRIL: Defeat and final mopping-up of Denikin's forces in Caucasia; Red Army captures Rostov

27 MARCH: Red Army captures Novorossiysk, last stronghold of Denikin

29 MARCH-4 APRIL: Ninth Congress of the Communist Party

26 APRIL: Polish Army invades Russia, supported by troops of the defunct Petliura Government

28 APRIL: Azerbaijan proclaimed a Soviet Republic

APRIL-MAY: Baron Wrangel advances from Crimea at head of new White Army

5 MAY: Central Committee orders Ordzhonikidze and entire Council of War of the Caucasian Front to "refrain from aggression into Georgia" in view of pending peace negotiations with Georgian Republic

7 MAY: Soviet Russia signs treaty of friendship with Soviet Georgia

8 MAY: Polish Army captures Kiev

13 JUNE: Polish Army retreats from Kiev; Stalin, on Council of War of South-Western Front under the command of Yegorov, takes part in offensive operations in southern sector of the front

JUNE-JULY: Main forces of Red Army, under Tukhachevsky, wage rapid offensive on northern sector of Polish Front

9 JULY: Poles retreat to the Bug River

11 JULY: Polish Field Headquarters abandon Minsk

14 JULY: Red Army captures Vilno

21 JULY-6 AUGUST: Second Congress of the Comintern

1 AUGUST: Tukhachevsky's forces take the Brest-Litovsk fortress

- 11 AUGUST: Tukhachevsky reaches the approaches to Warsaw
- 12 AUGUST: Commander-in-Chief Kamenev orders South-Western Front to advance in direction of Zamostye-Tomashev and attack flank of Polish forces defending Warsaw; order is ignored and South-Western forces continue westward instead of northward, advancing upon Lvov
- 15 AUGUST: Under threats from Moscow, South-Western forces change direction of advance as ordered, but are unable to execute the necessary manoeuvre in time
- 16 AUGUST: Polish Army, under General Haller, advised by General Weygand, repulses Tukhachevsky's forces near Warsaw; launches a counter-offensive
- 17 AUGUST: Red Army begins retreat from Poland
- AUGUST-SEPTEMBER: Wrangel carries out offensive operations against Red Army in direction of the Don Basin
- 2 SEPTEMBER: Bokhara proclaimed a Soviet Republic
- 21 SEPTEMBER: Beginning of peace talks with Poland
- 22-25 SEPTEMBER: All-Russian Party Conference; Control Commission established
- 12 OCTOBER: Armistice signed with Poland
- 15 OCTOBER: Beginning of Red Army offensive against Wrangel
- 9 NOVEMBER: Red Army inflicts decisive defeat on Wrangel at Perekop
- 10 NOVEMBER: Red Army recaptures all of Crimea; Wrangel flees
- 13 NOVEMBER: Stalin proclaims autonomy of Dagestan
- 11 NOVEMBER: End of mopping-up operations against Wrangel forces
- 17 NOVEMBER: Congress of the Peoples of Terek Territory at Vladikavkaz during which Stalin proclaims autonomy of the Gurian Republic
- DECEMBER: Stalin in hospital for operation
- 2 DECEMBER: Armenia proclaimed a Soviet Republic
- 18-21 DECEMBER: First All-Russian conference of representatives of the autonomous republics, territories and regions; Lenin, Zinoviev, Trotsky, elected honorary chairmen; Stalin elected honorary member of presidium

22-29 DECEMBER: Eighth Congress of Soviets adopts electrification program; beginning of planned industrialisation

1921

11 FEBRUARY: Red Army invades Georgia on Stalin's orders and confronts Politburo with accomplished fact

14 FEBRUARY: While Trotsky is in Urals, Politburo sanctions invasion of Georgia, advocated by Ordzhonikidze and Stalin; decision revealed only to Council of War of Second Army; even Commander-in-Chief not told of it

17 FEBRUARY: Commander-in-Chief of Red Army reports the invasion of Georgia to Vice-Chairman Sklyansky of the Revolutionary Council of War

21 FEBRUARY: Trotsky, from Yekaterinburg (Sverdlovsk, in Urals) asks Sklyansky for memorandum on invasion of Georgia: "When these operations began, by whose order," etc.

8-16 MARCH: Tenth Party Congress; culmination of Trade Union discussion (begun in fall of 1920); Workers' Opposition and Democratic Centralists wage strong fight for internal democracy in Party; Stalin delivers his regular report on minor nationalities; New Economic Policy (NEP) adopted; all factions inside the Party proscribed; Molotov, Mikhailov, Yaroslavsky (Stalin's friends) succeed Krestinsky, Serebryakov, Preobrazhensky in Secretariat. Kronstadt Rebellion

18 MARCH: Kronstadt mutiny suppressed on fiftieth anniversary of Paris Commune

26 MAY-1 JUNE: All-Russian Party Conference

22 JUNE-12 JULY: Third Congress of the Comintern

6 JULY: Stalin speaks in Tiflis on Communist tasks in Georgia

25 JULY: Stalin falls ill in Tiflis

11 AUGUST: Decree concerning introduction of New Economic Policy (NEP)

AUTUMN: Stalin enlists Lenin's support in his effort to secure a better apartment in the Kremlin

19 OCTOBER: Crimean Republic established

DECEMBER: Stalin, in ill-health, is treated by Dr. Obukh

1922

6 FEBRUARY: Cheka reorganised as GPU

MARCH: Lenin in failing health

12 MARCH: Transcaucasian SFSR proclaimed

27 MARCH-2 APRIL: Eleventh Party Congress; concerted opposition, both open and secret, against the Lenin ruling group; Leninist Central Committee elects Stalin to office of General Secretary, with Molotov and Kuibyshev as his assistants

10 APRIL: Opening of Genoa Conference (Treaty of Rapallo)

26 MAY: Lenin's first attack of arteriosclerosis impairs his speech, paralyses right arm and leg

4 JUNE: News of Lenin's grave illness published for first time

8 JUNE: Trial of S-R Party leaders opens

4-7 AUGUST Twelfth Party Conference adopts new Party constitution

OCTOBER: Lenin's health improves

25 OCTOBER: Vladivostok evacuated by last of Japanese and White Armies

30 OCTOBER: First Fascist ministry under Mussolini

4 NOVEMBER-5 DECEMBER: Fourth Congress of the Comintern; address by Lenin

14 NOVEMBER: Buffer Far-Eastern Republic becomes part of Soviet Russia

16 DECEMBER: Lenin's second stroke; end of his public career – His place taken by the Triumvirate, Zinoviev, Kamenev, Stalin

23-27 DECEMBER: Tenth Congress of Soviets (the first without Lenin) 25

DECEMBER: Lenin dictates his Testament

30 DECEMBER: The First and founding Congress of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

1923

4 JANUARY: Lenin writes postscript to his Testament

FEBRUARY: Stalin tells Trotsky, Zinoviev, Kamenev, that Lenin has asked him for poison

5-6 MARCH: Lenin dictates letter breaking off all comradely relations with Stalin

6-7 MARCH: Lenin appeals to Trotsky for help against Stalin

9 MARCH: Lenin has third and most devastating stroke

SPRING-SUMMER: Revolutionary situation in Germany ripens

17-25 APRIL: Twelfth Party Congress (the first without Lenin): Stalin becomes senior triumvir and Lenin's successor in all but name; Party machine drastically overhauled; Central Control Commission transformed into a secret police for use against oppositionist Party members

AUGUST-DECEMBER: Organised oppositionist groups agitate against Party leadership; fight for restoration of Party democracy

13 SEPTEMBER: Fascist coup in Spain under Primo de Rivera

SEPTEMBER-OCTOBER: Zinoviev attempts to make a new deal with Stalin; Kislovodsk Cave Conference

15 OCTOBER: *Declaration of the Forty-Six* Communist leaders against the Party regime condemned by Central Committee

21-23 OCTOBER: Collapse of Communist insurrection in Germany

23 OCTOBER: Trotsky's letter to Central Committee on Party democracy

AUTUMN: Stalin orders the first shooting of a Communist: Sultan Galiyev

7 NOVEMBER: Zinoviev legalizes Party discussion by announcing existence of Party democracy in *Pravda* article, Trotsky, ill, does not take part

5 DECEMBER: Central Committee adopts resolution drafted in Politburo condemning bureaucracy, special privileges; affirming right of Party members to criticise, etc.

8 DECEMBER: Trotsky's *New Course* letter; Zinoviev charges Trotsky with "treason"; calls for his arrest

1924

16-18 JANUARY: Thirteenth Party Conference condemns the pro-democracy discussion in general and Trotsky in particular

18 JANUARY: Trotsky leaves Moscow for Sukhum

21 JANUARY: Death of Lenin, whose health had been improving since October; Trotsky receives telegram from Stalin at Tiflis, informing him of Lenin's death; continues on to Sukhum

26 JANUARY: Second Congress of Soviets, USSR; Stalin reads his oath of fealty to Lenin; Petrograd renamed Leningrad

27 JANUARY: Lenin's funeral, postponed from the 26th

28 JANUARY: Stalin delivers speech to the military cadets of the Kremlin

OCTOBER: Trotsky's book *Lessons of October* condemns behaviour of Zinoviev and Kamenev in October, 1917

1925

17 JANUARY: Plenum of Central Committee and Central Control Commission reproves Trotsky

APRIL: Trotsky removed from Commissariat of War; succeeded by Frunze

27-29 APRIL: Fourteenth Party Conference; break between Stalin and Zinoviev-Kamenev faction; Stalin unites with Bukharin-Rykov-Tomsky faction

13-20 MAY: Third Congress of Soviets, USSR

NOVEMBER: Death of Frunze; Voroshilov becomes Commissar of War

18-31 DECEMBER: Fourteenth Party Congress; Zinoviev's Leningrad Opposition completely routed; new opposition emerges: Trotsky-Zinoviev-Kamenev

1926

JANUARY: Sergei Mironovich Kirov takes charge of Stalinist forces in Leningrad, seat of Zinoviev's power

12 FEBRUARY: Extraordinary Leningrad Party Conference; Zinoviev removed from leadership of Leningrad; his factional organisation smashed

14-23 JULY: Plenary sessions of Central Committee and Central Control Commission; Zinoviev expelled from Politburo and removed from leadership of Communist International

20 JULY: Dzerzhinsky dies suddenly, several hours after speech at one of plenary sessions

23 OCTOBER: Plenary sessions of Central Committee and Central Control Commission; Trotsky and Kamenev expelled from Politburo; Executive Committee of Communist International ordered officially to remove its chairman, Zinoviev

26 OCTOBER: Fifteenth Party Conference

1927

26 MAY: *Declaration of the Eighty-Three* Opposition leaders

29 JULY-9 AUGUST: Joint Plenum of Central Committee and Central Control Commission; Trotsky-Zinoviev-Kamenev oppositionists reproved and warned

21-23 OCTOBER: Joint Plenum of Central Committee and Central Control Commission; Zinoviev and Trotsky expelled from Central Committee

7 NOVEMBER: Oppositionists march with slogans during tenth anniversary of October Revolution in Moscow and Leningrad; repression of Trotsky-Zinoviev faction intensified

12 NOVEMBER: Extraordinary Plenum of Central Committee and Central Control Commission; Trotsky and Zinoviev expelled from Communist Party; Kamenev, Rakovsky, Smilga, Yevdokimov expelled from Central Committee; Muralov, Bakayev, others expelled from Central Control Commission, etc.

16 NOVEMBER: Adolf Joffe commits suicide; leaves letter for Trotsky

2-19 DECEMBER: Fifteenth Party Congress; Opposition completely routed; Zinoviev and Kamenev capitulate, petition for readmission into Party as rank-and-file members

1928

16 JANUARY: Trotsky exiled to Alma Ata

11 JULY: Bukharin calls on Kamenev secretly; pours out his grievances against Stalin whom he regards as dangerous to Communist cause and revolutionary movement

30 SEPTEMBER: Bukharin attempts to criticise Stalin's policies by innuendo in *Pravda* article, 'Notes of an Economist'

19 OCTOBER: Publication of Central Committee statement directed against the 'Right deviation' (Bukharin-Rykov-Tomsky)

26 NOVEMBER: Plenum of Central Committee; anti-Right Opposition

27 NOVEMBER: Plenum of Moscow Party Committee; expulsion of Rightists

1929

18 JANUARY: Decision taken to expel Trotsky from USSR

21 JANUARY: Bukharin criticises Stalin's peasant policy on fifth anniversary of Lenin's death in article, 'Lenin's Political Testament'

12 FEBRUARY: Trotsky arrives in Turkey as exile from USSR

18 MAY: Syrtsov succeeds Rykov as Chairman of Council of People's Commissars of RSFSR.

2 JUNE: Tomsky removed as head of the Trade Unions' Federation

3 JULY: Bukharin removed as head of Communist International

17 OCTOBER: Bubnov succeeds Lunacharsky as Commissar of Education

10-17 NOVEMBER: Plenum of Central Committee; Bukharin expelled from Politburo; Rykov and Tomsky warned; Gamarnik elected to Orgburo

25 NOVEMBER: Bukharin, Rykov, Tomsky capitulate in letter to Central Committee

21 DECEMBER: Celebration of Stalin's fiftieth birthday a national event

27 DECEMBER: Stalin delivers speech to First Conference of Marxist Agronomists

1930

26 JUNE-13 JULY: Sixteenth Party Congress: taunting of Right Opposition leaders, whose repentance is deemed unsatisfactory

2 DECEMBER: Syrtsov and Lominadze expelled from Central Committee

17-21 DECEMBER: Plenum of Central Committee and Central Control Commission; Rykov expelled, Ordzhonikidze elected to succeed him in Politburo

20 DECEMBER: Molotov succeeds Rykov as Chairman of Council of Peoples Commissars of USSR

1931

4 FEBRUARY: Stalin, in speech on difficulties of industrialisation, says: "There are no fortresses Bolsheviks cannot take."

1932-33

The Stalin Famine, deliberately brought about as an act of agrarian policy; number of victims estimated variously at from four to ten million dead; many more millions in chronic ill-health

1933

JULY: Suicide of Nikolai Alexeyevich Skrypnik, aged 61, Old Bolshevik, member of the October Central Committee and of the Military Revolutionary Committee in 1917, one of the founders of the Ukrainian Soviet Republic and one of its leaders at time of the Stalin Famine

1934

JANUARY-FEBRUARY: Seventeenth Party Congress, 'The Congress of Victors', marked by complete unanimity on all matters, devotion to Stalin, enthusiasm for his genius

1 DECEMBER: Stalin's friend Kirov, his viceroy in Leningrad, assassinated by Nikolayev

5-18 DECEMBER: 'White Guard Terrorists' executed for assassination of Kirov

28-29 DECEMBER: Trial of the Fourteen – Nikolayev-Rumyantsev case; all fourteen condemned to be executed

1935

15-16 JANUARY: Trial of the Nineteen: Zinoviev, Kamenev, *et al*) on charges of seeking to "restore capitalism", general "counter-revolutionary activity", "political and moral responsibility" for assassination of Kirov; sentences: imprisonment

23 JANUARY: Trial of the Twelve Leningrad OGPU officials (F.D. Medved and others) for failure to prevent Kirov's assassination: sentences very light

SPRING: Second Kamenev trial (secret) with about thirty defendants; Kamenev's sentence increased by five years

4 MAY: Stalin, in speech to graduating classes of Red Army military academies assembled in the Kremlin, says in part: "We chose our plan of advance and moved forward along the Leninist road, pushing aside...those who could not see...what was under their noses...(those who) threatened to raise a rebellion

in the Party against the Central Committee. More: they threatened some of us with bullets.”

17 NOVEMBER: First All-Union Conference of Stakhanovists

1936

19 MARCH: Fifteenth anniversary of founding of Georgian Republic celebrated elaborately throughout Soviet Union

18 JUNE: Death of Maxim Gorky in Moscow; Yagoda subsequently held responsible for it and confesses

19-24 AUGUST: Trial of the Sixteen (Zinoviev, Kamenev and others) – the case of the anti-Soviet Trotskyite Centre; all defendants executed

27 SEPTEMBER: Nikolai Yezhov succeeds Henry Yagoda as head of OGPU

1937

23-30 JANUARY: Trial of the Seventeen – the case of the anti-Soviet Trotskyite Centre; thirteen executed; Sokolnikov, Radek, two others imprisoned

18 FEBRUARY: Sudden and mysterious death of Sergo Ordzhonikidze

12 JUNE: Announcement of execution of Tukhachevsky and seven other of the most famous generals of the Red Army, allegedly after secret trial

DECEMBER: The Yenukidze-Karakhan executions; exact number and exact nature of trial, if any, unknown

1938

2-13 MARCH: Trial of the Twenty-one – the case of the anti-Soviet Bloc of Rights and Trotskyites; eighteen executed, including Bukharin, Rykov, Krestinsky; three imprisoned, including Rakovsky

18 DECEMBER: Stalin's sixtieth birthday

1939

10-21 MARCH: Eighteenth Congress of the Communist Party

4 MAY: Molotov, Chairman of Council of Peoples Commissars, takes over portfolio of Foreign Affairs from Litvinov

23 AUGUST: Stalin-Hitler Pact signed in Moscow

29 AUGUST: The Supreme Soviet ratifies Stalin-Hitler Pact

1 SEPTEMBER: World War II begins with German invasion of Poland

29 NOVEMBER: Outbreak of Soviet-Finnish War

1940

22 MARCH: End of Soviet-Finnish War

24 MAY: OGPU attempt to assassinate Trotsky fails

20 AUGUST: Trotsky assassinated by OGPU agent

STALIN'S ALIASES AND PSEUDONYMS

NAME: Joseph Vissarionovich Djughashvili

Also KNOWN As:

J. Besoshvili

Chizhikov

David

Ivanov Ivanovich

K. Kato

Ko.

Koba (after a hero of Georgian legend)

K. St.

Nizheradze

Ryaboi (police nickname meaning pockmarked)

Soselo (affectionate diminutive of Joseph)

Soso (diminutive of Joseph in Georgian)

Stalin (meaning steel man)

Oganess Vartanovich Totomyants

Vasily

Vassilyev

COMMUNIST PARTY CONGRESSES

I.	13 th -15 th March, 1898	Minsk
II.	30 th July-23 rd August, 1903	Brussels and London
III.	25 th April-10 th May, 1905	London
IV.	23 rd April-8 th May, 1906	Stockholm
V.	13 th May-1 st June, 1907	London
VI.	8 th -16 th August, 1917	Petrograd
VII.	6 th -8 th March, 1918	Moscow
VIII.	18 th -23 rd March, 1919	Moscow
IX.	29 th March-4 th April, 1920	Moscow
X.	8 th -16 th March 1921	Moscow
XI.	27 th March-2 nd April, 1922	Moscow
XII.	17 th -25 th April, 1923	Moscow
XIII.	23 rd -31 st May, 1924	Moscow
XIV.	18 th -31 st December, 1925	Moscow
XV.	2 nd -19 th December, 1927	Moscow
XVI.	26 th June-13 th July, 1930	Moscow
XVII.	26 th January-10 th February, 1934	Moscow
XVIII.	10 th -21 st March, 1939	Moscow
	(Eighteenth All-Union Conference: 15 th -20 th February, 1941)	

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Thawra hatta'l nasr! - Revolution until Victory! Alan Woods, Jorge Martin and others



1. Stalin's mother Yekaterina Djughashvili.



2. Vissarion 'Bezo' Djughashvili, Stalin's father.



3. The house where Stalin was born, Gori, Georgia.



4. Ten-year-old Joseph Djughashvili, back row, middle.



5. Djughashvili in 1893.



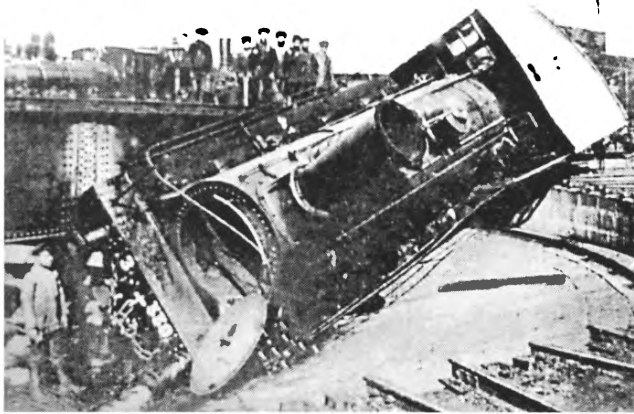
6. Picture of Stalin during what would be his final year at the Seminary.



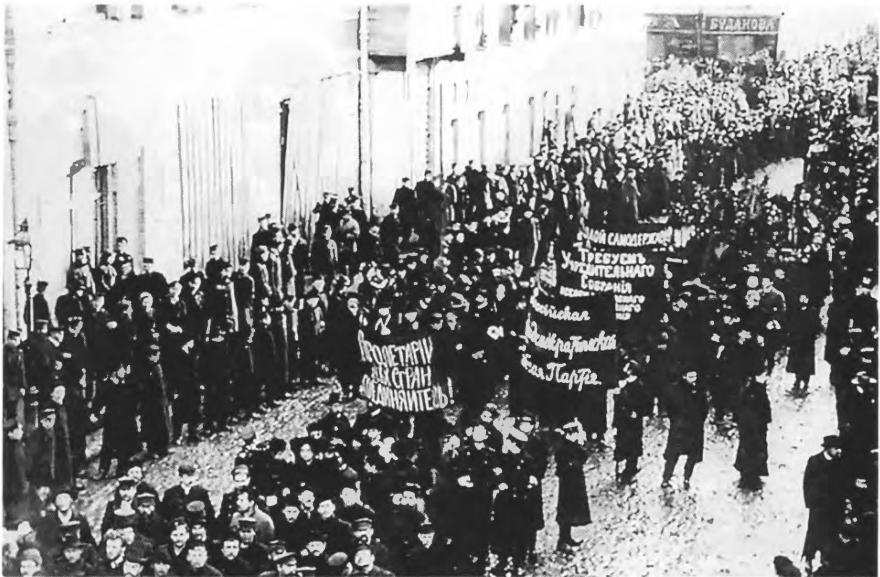
7. Stalin's seminary class in 1898. Stalin is in the back row, second from the left.



8. 1919 photograph of the Tiflis Orthodox Seminary, where Stalin studied between 1894 and 1899.



11. Tiflis workers overturn a locomotive during the Transcaucasian rail strike, one of the great events of the 1905 Revolution. Stalin was not among them: 'No one noticed his absence and no one noticed his return.'



12. A demonstration in Moscow, 1905. The first banner reads: 'Proletarians of all countries, unite!'



13. The trial of the St Petersburg Soviet, September 1906. Trotsky is turning away from the camera in the second row.



14. Stalin in Baku in 1908.



15. Mugshots of Stalin prior to his first imprisonment in 1908.



16. Stalin mourning the death of his first wife Yekaterina 'Kato' Svanidze. According to childhood friend Iremashvili, he said at her funeral, "this creature softened my heart of stone; she died, and with her died – my last warm feelings for all human beings."



17. 1911 Mugshot of Stalin.



19. Kureika, where Stalin spent the last years of his exile before 1917.



20. Stalin and his friend, the 'untameable' Suren Spandaryan, in Siberia in 1915.



21. A meeting of Bolshevik exiles in Monastyrskoye, Siberia in the summer of 1915. Among them: Spandaryan (second from the left), Stalin (fourth from the left), Kamenev (back centre), Petrovsky (front centre in hat) and Sverdlov (front right in white shirt).



22. In February 1917, the workers and soldiers of Russia rose up and overthrew tsarism to begin a year of unprecedented revolutionary upheaval. This picture shows children playing next to the fallen head of Tsar Alexander III's statue in Moscow, 1918. The iconic image of workers tearing down the statue was later used by Sergei Eisenstein in his film *October* as a visual metaphor for the February Revolution.



23. May Day celebrations in Petrograd 1917. The banners read 'Long live the Democratic Republic!' and 'Long Live Socialism!'



24. Delegates to the Petrograd Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, 1917. Trotsky is seated second row from the front. The Soviet was composed mostly of factory delegates.



25. Provisional Government troops open fire on a peaceful demonstration on the Nevsky Prospekt during the July Days.





26. Red Guards from the Putilov Steel Works, who would play a key role in the storming of the Winter Palace forty-eight hours after this photograph was taken.



ПЕНАРТ. ШМИДТ



27. A composite print entitled 'Leaders of the Proletarian Revolution' published by Nappelbaum in November 1918. From the top, left to right: Lenin, Zinoviev, Lunacharsky, Trotsky, Kamenev and Sverdlov.



28. Bolshevik Sailors from the cruiser 'Aurora' during the October insurrection. During the storming of the Winter Palace blank shells were fired from the ship to scare any remaining supporters of the provisional government into submission.



29. Baltic sailors checking documentation at a roadblock during the October Revolution.

Lenin's General Staff of 1917

STALIN, THE EXECUTIONER, ALONE REMAINS



30. A gallery of leading Old Bolsheviks published in the American *Socialist Worker* in March 1938 in response to Stalin's purging of the Communist Party.

Included are the twenty-one full members and three candidate members of the Bolshevik Central Committee elected by the Sixth Party Congress in August 1917, (left-to-right by row): Rykov (shot), Bukharin (shot), Sverdlov (dead), Stalin (survivor), Zinoviev (shot), Kamenev (shot), Trotsky (in exile, later assassinated), Lenin (dead), Kollontai (said to be 'missing?', in fact survived), Uritsky (dead), Krestinsky (shot), Smilga (shot), Nogin (dead), Dzerzhinsky (dead), Bubnov (disappeared, later shot), Sokolnikov (in prison, later murdered), Lomov ('?', later shot), Shaumyan (dead), Berzin ('?', later shot), Muranov (said to have 'disappeared', in fact survived), Artem (dead), Stasova ('disappeared', in fact survived), Milyutin (said to be 'missing', had in fact been shot), Joffe (suicide).

Of those in the gallery, along with the additional seven candidate and prospective CC members who are not included, only four survived the Great Purges. Apart from Stalin, Kollontai was a Soviet ambassador between 1923 and 1945 and played no part in the internal struggles taking place within the Soviet Union; Muranov, Stalin's long-term ally, survived the Purges but was forced to retire in 1939; Stasova was moved away from a political role to the editorial staff of *International Literature* magazine in 1938.



31. A meeting in Petrograd of Sovnarkom, the Council of People's Commissars, early 1918.



32. Stalin at Tsaritsyn in the summer of 1918.



33. Lenin addressing the Sverdlov Square rally on 5th May 1920, with Trotsky standing to the right and Kamenev behind him. The last time this photograph was published was in 1927, a few months before Trotsky's expulsion from the Communist Party.



34. In this photograph from a different point in the speech, Trotsky and Kamenev have vanished from their positions. They have been painted out of the picture, with five wooden steps appearing in their place.



35. Trotsky, from a different angle, addressing the same rally, following on from Lenin and Kamenev who are listening to him.



36. Trotsky, Lenin and Kamenev chatting after the rally had taken place.



37. Lenin's opening speech at the Second Congress of the Third International, 19th July 1920.

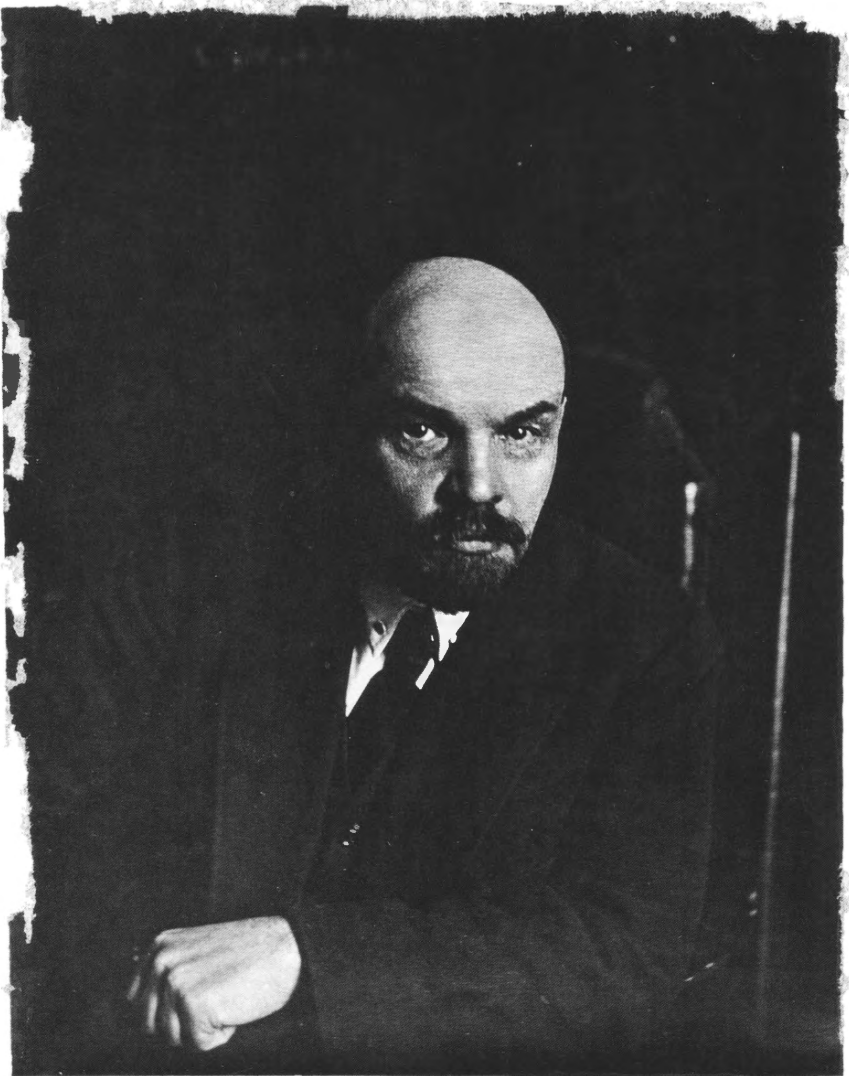




38. The October Revolution propaganda train arrives at Sorotskinsoe station near Samara in 1919.



39. Trotsky addresses the latest recruits to the newly formed Red Cavalry, 1918.



40. March 1919 portrait of Lenin taken in the Kremlin.



41. Early Civil War poster: 'Women workers, take up your rifles!'



42. Photomontage of Trotsky's travels by train and ship to the far-flung regions of Russia from the album *Oktyabr*, Petrograd, 1921.



43. Trotsky in intense discussion with officers and soldiers during the Civil War.





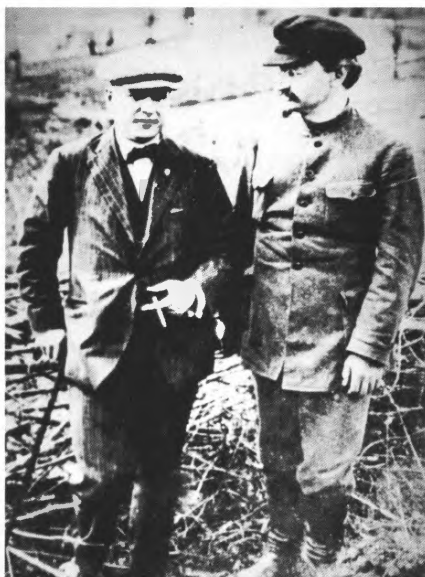
44. A young Nikolai Bukharin.



45. Trotsky, Rykov (behind) and Secretary of the Executive Committee of the Third International Jules Humbert-Droz celebrating the victory of the Red Army in the Civil War at a demonstration in Red Square, Moscow, 1920.



46. Trotsky discussing with his Deputy Commissar E.M. Sklyansky and General S.S. Kamenev at a demonstration in 1920.



47. Trotsky and Christian Rakovsky, who later came to be a prominent member of the Left Opposition.



48. The Workers' and Peasants' Red Army celebrating victory over Baron Wrangel in the Crimea in 1920.





49. Photomontage of leading figures in the Communist International published in a 1920 issue of *Oktyabr* commemorating its Second Congress. Lenin and Trotsky, as leaders of the October Revolution, are given prime position in the centre. Stalin is notable by his absence not only from this montage but from the entire publication, which surveys in detail the three years of revolution up to that point.



50. A composite of high-ranking Bolsheviks published in the Central Asian newspaper *Trud* ("Work") in 1924. By this point Stalin is recognised among them (left-to-right by row): Bukharin, Zinoviev, Lenin, Trotsky, Tomsy, Rakovsky, Chicherin, Rykov, Stalin, Dzerzhinsky, Yenukidze, Kamenev, Kalinin, Lunacharsky, Frunze, Budyonny, Semashko.



51. Lenin and his wife Nadezhda Krupskaya at Gorky in August 1922. Lenin's sister Maria Ulyanova, who shot the photograph, didn't appear to notice the end of the telescope in the picture, which looks like a gun pointed at Krupskaya's head. Later versions of the picture were retouched to remove this sinister element.



52. Grigory Zinoviev in 1926.



53. Kirov and Ordzhonikidze, 1924.



54. Lenin presides over a meeting of the Soviet of People's Commissars during a remission from his illness, October 1922. Trotsky is sat at the table, fourth from the right.



55. This photograph of Lenin and Stalin at Gorky in 1922 is one of the most famous examples of the Stalinist propaganda churned out in the 1930s to exaggerate the closeness between the two men. It is clearly fake (crudely montaged, rough-edged outlines, etc.). In fact, Lenin was becoming increasingly alarmed at the “unlimited authority” Stalin had “concentrated in his hands” as General Secretary, as he states in his Testament. By 1923 he had determined to have Stalin removed from the position and moved to break off all personal relations with him after Stalin had abused his wife.



56. Stalin, Kamenev, Sapronov, Rudzutak, Molotov, Kalinin and Bukharin carrying Lenin's coffin. Trotsky was away in the Caucasus recovering from illness and deliberately kept there, away from the funeral, by Stalin, who lied to him about the date.



57. Trotsky with the young leaders of recently-founded Communist Parties around the world at the Fifth Congress of the Comintern in Moscow 1924. Among them are Joseph Gothon-Lunion from Guadeloupe (front centre) and Nguyen Ai Quoc from Vietnam (front second from the right), later known to the world as Ho Chi Minh.

Руководящие органы РКП (б.). Политбюро ЦК РКП (б.).



58. Politburo in 1924 (clockwise from top left): Kamenev, Stalin, Trotsky, Tomsky, Zinoviev, Bukharin, Rykov.



59. Lenin's Mausoleum in Red Square, Moscow constructed in the spring of 1924. Both Trotsky and Lenin's widow Krupskaya, among other Old Bolsheviks, protested against this 'deification of Lenin', but 'were no longer free to make these objections public'.



60. Cover *On Lenin and Leninism* by Stalin published in Moscow in 1924. The book contains Stalin's pamphlet *Foundations of Leninism*, which Trotsky skewers in Appendix 2 of the present work: 'It reflects at one and the same time Stalin's lack of theoretical profundity, polemical acidity disguised as wittiness, and dishonesty towards opponents.'



61. A Conté drawing of Trotsky made in 1923 by Sergei Pichugin. Following Trotsky's exile the artist glued a sheet of white card over it and it was only rediscovered seventy-five years later.



62. Trotsky, Kamenev and Zinoviev with United Oppositionists.



63. The principal leaders of the Left Opposition in 1927 (left-to-right by row): Rakovsky, Drobniis, Beloborodov, Sosnovsky, Serebryakov, Radek, Trotsky, Boguslavsky, Preobrazhensky.

КРОКОДИЛ

Цена 15 коп.

№ 44

ГОД ШЕСТОЙ
МОСКВА НОЯБРЬ 1927

№ 25. 1927

НАДОЕЛА ЭТА МУЗЫКА!



Играем, играем, а ни кто к нам не идет!..

64. A caricature of Opposition leaders in 1927. Trotsky is the organ-grinder, Kamenev the parrot and Zinoviev the chanteuse: 'We play and play but nobody listens!'



66. Lenin and Trotsky celebrating the second anniversary of the October Revolution in Red Square, Moscow, 1919. Kamenev is left of Lenin with cap and beard.



67. In this heavily retouched version of the photograph published in 1967, Trotsky has vanished from his position next to Lenin, so has Kamenev, along with several other prominent Bolsheviks in the original who also fell victim to the Great Purges.



68. Lenin and Trotsky in the Kremlin, surrounded by a delegation of Red troops who had taken part in the suppression of the Kronstadt rebellion.



69. Trotsky has been crudely airbrushed from this version of the follow-up photograph, so that his outline still remains.

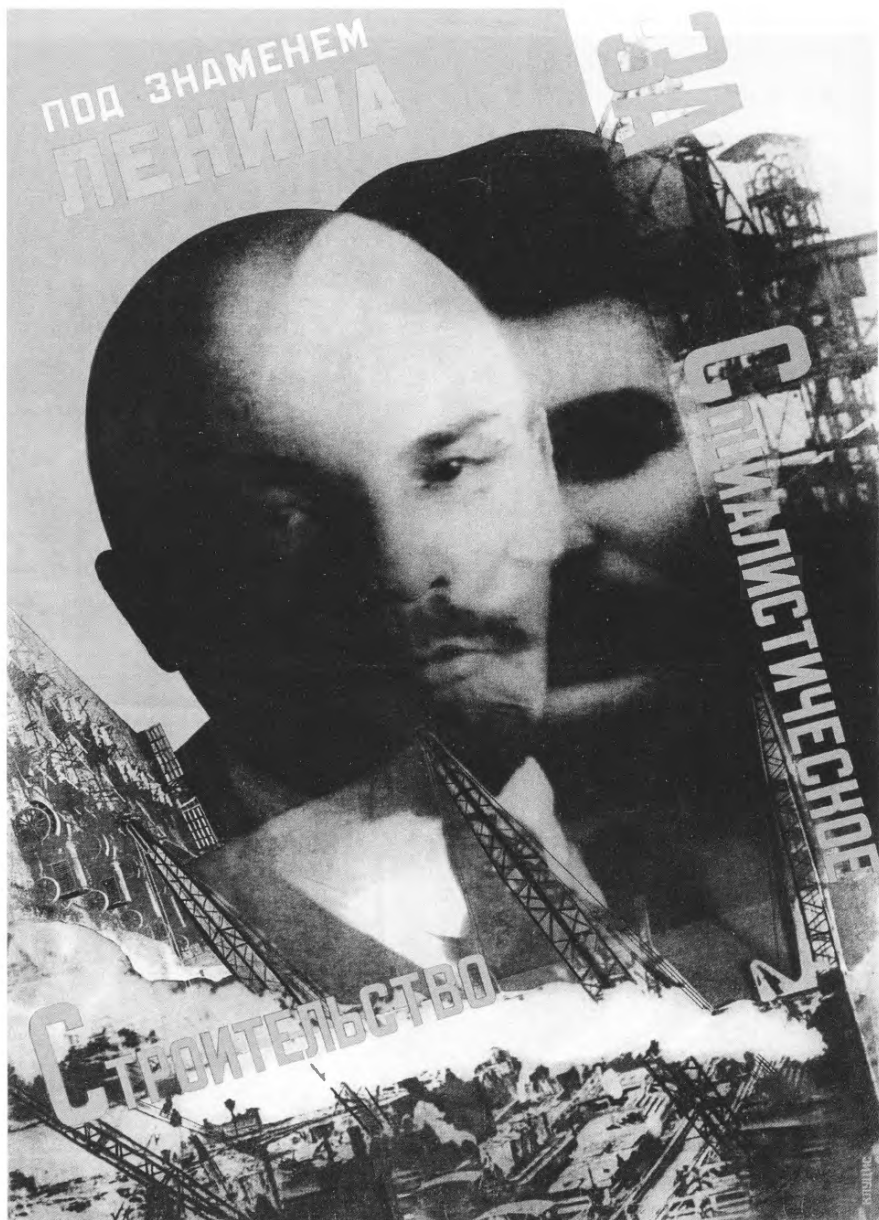


70. Trotsky, Stalin and other leading Bolsheviks carrying Dzerzhinsky's coffin, July 1926. This was Trotsky's last public appearance in the Soviet Union.



ДЛЯ РАБОТНИКОВ СТАЛИНСКОЕ ПЛЕМЯ ГЕРОЕВ СТАХАНОВИЦ!

71. 'Long live Stalin's breed of Stakhanovite heroes!': Stalin cult poster from 1935 with bizarrely mounted heads in the audience and Stalin's pose emulating the bust of Lenin in the background.



72. 'Under the banner of Lenin for Socialist Construction': 1930 photomontage, in which the sinister spectre of Stalin's shadowy face looms menacingly behind an unsuspecting Lenin, that surprisingly went unnoticed by the censors.



73. Photograph of Stalin showing him reading with his index finger, which, ironically, was taken in 1930 during the campaign for greater literacy in the USSR.



74. 'Under the Banner of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin!': Cult of personality poster designed for the fiftieth anniversary of Marx's death to equate Stalin with the greatest proponents of Marxism.



75. Stalin pictured alongside Ordzhonikidze among the smiling delegates to the 1930 Party Congress, which voted to 'carry out the Five-Year Plan in four years'. Having purged the Party leadership of its outstanding leaders, who Stalin labelled 'aristocrats' at this congress, he was now the sole master of the Soviet Union. Still, few of the loyal Stalinists pictured would survive the decade.



76. Stalin's wife-to-be Nadezhda Alliluyeva in 1917, on the verge of joining the Bolshevik Party.



77. Stalin with Dzerzhinsky.



78. Stalin and his wife put on a show for the camera with the Voroshilovs and a guard on a summer's day in Georgia, 1930.



79. The last photograph ever taken of Nadezhda Alliluyeva, leaving the Industrial Academy in Moscow where she had enrolled to escape her marriage. She shot herself not much later after a public argument with Stalin when at the Voroshilovs for dinner.



80. As her father catches up with paperwork, Stalin's daughter sits looking uncomfortable on the lap of Lavrenty Beria, the murderous secret police boss.



81. Five: Nikolai Antipov, Stalin, Sergei Kirov, Nikolai Shvernik and Nikolai Komarov celebrate the destruction of Zinoviev's opposition, Leningrad, 1926.

82. Four: In 1936 the photograph appeared without Komarov, who was under arrest and about to be shot.

83. Three: Antipov is missing in this version published in *History of the USSR* in 1940. Having been Deputy Prime Minister in the 1930s, Antipov was incarcerated and later executed in 1941.

84. Two: It is unclear why Shvernik, who held senior positions in the Soviet Union until Stalin's death, has been airbrushed out of this version used for a Stalin biography in 1949.

85. One: 'Stalin the executioner alone remains'.





86. Kirov's body in state after his assassination, which was most likely orchestrated by Stalin who saw him as a rival. It also presented an excuse for the Great Purge which followed.



87. Stalin conspiring with his secret police chief Nikolai Yezhov in 1937.



88. Top left: Grigory Zinoviev's mugshot from August 1936, the month he was shot after false confessions were forced out of him.

89. Top right: Lev Kamenev, whose sons were executed with him, five years before his wife Olga, Trotsky's sister.

90. Bottom right: I.N. Smirnov, a leading Left Oppositionist and long-time enemy of Stalin, was arrested in 1933 despite his earlier recantation and later shot with the other Old Bolsheviks.



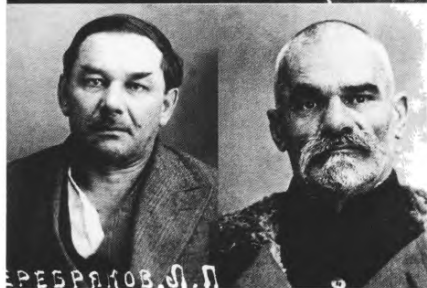
91. Bottom left: Grigory Sokolnikov, whose life Stalin had promised to spare after defendants at the first Show Trial had implicated him, was later killed either by the NKVD or another inmate.



92. Top left: Christian Rakovsky, one of Trotsky's closest supporters, 'held out longer than most' and in 1934 was among the last to recant. He was shot on Stalin's orders in 1941.

93. Top right: Grigory Pyatakov, Left Oppositionist, was arrested and shot in February 1937.

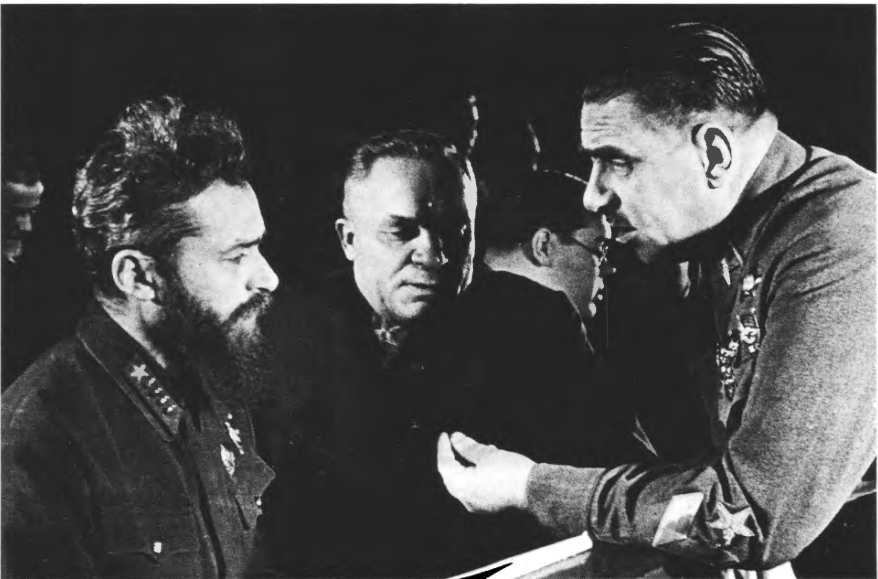
94. Bottom right: Nikolai Muralov, one of the 'comrades of Civil War days personally devoted to' Trotsky. Expelled from the Party in 1927, arrested and tortured for many weeks, sentenced to death at the second Show Trial and shot in 1937.



95. Leonid Serebryakov, another of Trotsky's Civil War comrades, refused to sign false 'confessions' for many weeks before finally agreeing when his daughter's life was threatened. Shot in February 1937.



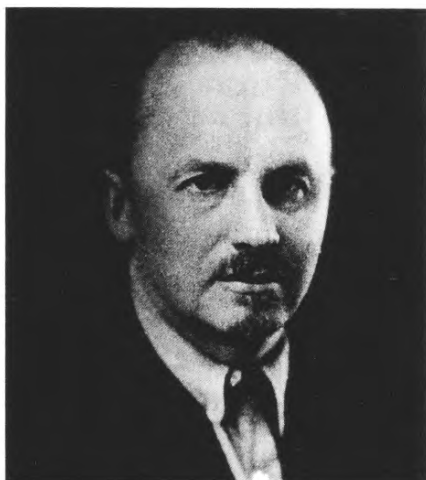
96. Mikhail Tukhachevsky, the genius military commander who played a pivotal role in the Red Army winning the Civil War and was seen as the Soviet Union's most outstanding general thereafter, with his wife Nina and daughter Svetlana. "When Tukhachevsky appeared on the platform, the entire hall rose to its feet and greeted him with a storm of applause. This ovation was distinguished from the others by its force and sincerity." Stalin undoubtedly recognised very well the power of this ovation, and having made a note of it, planned to take revenge on Tukhachevsky several years later.' Tukhachevsky was tortured and shot in 1937, after which his daughter was sent to a labour camp and the rest of his family annihilated.



97. From 1937, Stalin began purging the Red Army of thousands of talented high-ranking officers, which served as the worst possible preparation for war with Nazi Germany. Two were Marshal Vasili Blyukher (right) and Yan Gamarnik, Commissar of the Red Army (left). Gamarnik pre-empted his own trial by committing suicide in May 1937, whilst endorsing the treatment of Tukhachevsky was not enough to save Blyukher.



98. Karl Radek, a former Left Oppositionist, was readmitted to the Party after being expelled in 1927. He handed a personal archive on the Opposition to the OGPU, and helped Yezhov prepare the second Show Trial in 1937, but was still imprisoned and later killed.



99. Nikolai Bukharin was arrested in 1937 and one of the three main defendants of the third Show Trial. Defendants were physically and mentally tortured into signing false allegations. Bukharin was sentenced to death and shot in March 1938.



100. Genrikh Yagoda was Stalin's head of secret police until he failed to obtain confessions from Zinoviev and Kamenev for the first Show Trial in 1936. By the third Show Trial he was a defendant, sentenced and shot in 1938.



101. Nikolai Yezhov took over from Yagoda, and his short reign over the NKVD was drenched in the blood of thousands. In 1940 he was charged and executed by his own apparatus.



102. Lavrenty Beria was appointed deputy of the NKVD by Stalin in 1938 and was soon its leader. He oversaw the purging of the Red Army and remained a senior figure in the USSR until Stalin's death in 1953, which began his downfall.



103. The courtroom during one of the Moscow Show Trials.



104. Abhorrent caricature of Trotsky, Bukharin, Rykov and others shown wallowing in a trough entitled 'Vaterland' to place them in league with Nazism, around the time of the third Show Trial.



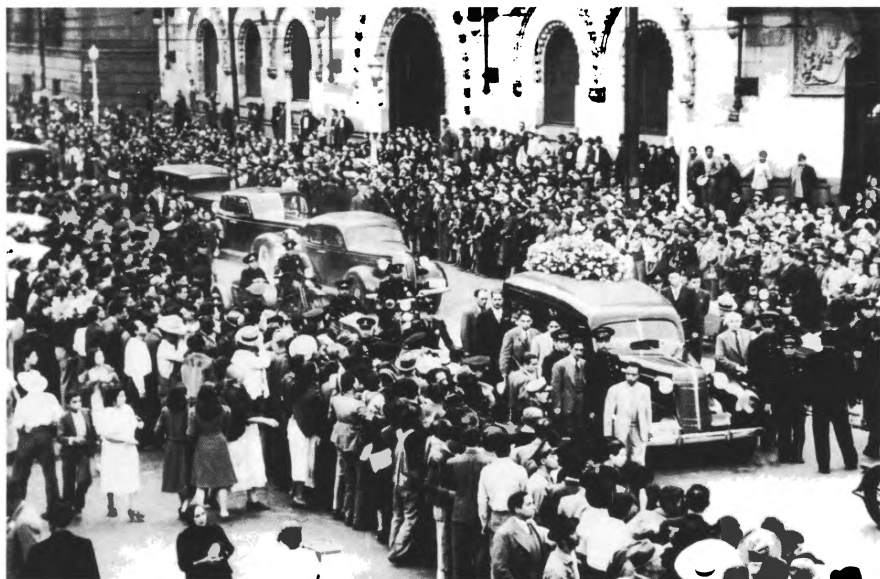
105. Vyacheslav Molotov, Soviet foreign minister, signs the Nazi-Soviet Non-Aggression Treaty in the Kremlin, Moscow on 23rd August 1939. Stalin, Nazi foreign minister von Ribbentrop and others look on contentedly.



106. A cocktail party in Berlin, 1940, with Molotov and Adolf Hitler sat adjacent, epitomising the degeneration of the Soviet Union's leadership.



107. Trotsky in his study examining proofs of his unfinished biography of Stalin.



108. Thousands turn out in Mexico City for Trotsky's funeral procession, 22nd August 1940.

"The new edition of *Stalin* has added to and enriched the vast arsenal of Marxist theory left behind by Leon Trotsky." - Esteban Volkov, Trotsky's Grandson

On 20th August 1940 Leon Trotsky's life was brutally ended when a Stalinist agent brought an ice axe crashing down on his head. Among the works that he left unfinished was the second part of his biography of Stalin.

Trotsky's *Stalin* is unique in Marxist literature in that it attempts to explain some of the most decisive events of the 20th century, not just in terms of epoch-making economic and social transformations, but in the individual psychology of one of the protagonists in a great historical drama. It is a fascinating study of the way in which the peculiar character of an individual, his personal traits and psychology, interacts with great events.

How did it come about that Joseph Stalin, who began his political life as a revolutionary and a Bolshevik, ended up a tyrant and a monster? Was this something pre-ordained by genetic factors or childhood upbringing? Drawing on a mass of carefully assembled material from his personal archives and many other sources, Trotsky provides the answer to these questions.

In the present edition we have brought together all of the material that was available in English from the Trotsky archives at Harvard University, and supplemented it with additional material translated from Russian. It is the most complete version of the book that has ever been published. On the eve of the centenary of the October Revolution, we believe that Trotsky's *Stalin* is relevant and inspiring as never before.