

### Chapter Eleven: The Right Opposition

While the political conflict was developing at the front of the stage, the party continued its slow transformation. The census of January 1927 revealed that 30% of its members were workers, 10% were peasants, 8% were members of the armed forces and 38.5% were functionaries. A report to the Central Committee on January 28, 1927, revealed that, of the 638,000 party members returned as "workers" in 1927, 184,000 were in reality functionaries. In this way, the phenomenon developed which the report called "the exodus of the working class into the state apparatus". The real apparatus had doubled since 1924. We may estimate the number of apparatchiki, the permanent officials of the party, at around 30,000, born from the reflux of the masses more than from any initiative by Stalin, as has too often been suggested, but who, by their methods and attitude of mind created only cadres in their own image, very different from the Bolsheviks of the heroic period.

In this sense, the defeat of the Opposition was effectively the defeat of the spirit of Bolshevism in the persons of the last people to retain revolutionary enthusiasm. None the less, the hasty efforts to eliminate them show by themselves how complex the new social and political relations were. The apparatus derived its omnipotence from its role as arbiter. This role the conflict of contradictory social forces within the party forced upon it. But the coalition which supported the apparatus against the revolutionary proletarian wing was far from being homogeneous. In reality it brought together elements with divergent aims in a provisional coalition against a common danger, but determined to settle accounts with each other after their shared victory. Trotsky analysed three groupings in the leadership in 1926: that of the trade union bureaucrats represented by Tomsky; that of the pure right, which expressed the pressure of the peasant mass, and, finally, that of the apparatus, the centre, expressed by Stalin and Kirov (1). The defeat of the Unified Opposition made the outbreak of the conflict inevitable, because the centre could not tolerate a situation which made it the hostage of the right. The pressure of events and, especially, the economic difficulties, led the apparatus immediately after the Fifteenth Congress to open the struggle against the right. It must be admitted, about this right, that between the pressure of the peasantry and the fear of adventures which every fraction of the bureaucracy shared, it also expressed, in a deformed way, and in a way more remote than the Unified Opposition, the echoes of the time when the Bolshevik party drew its strength from its discussions and the discipline which it voluntarily accepted.

### The Crisis of the Food Supply: the Turn to the Left

The leadership had maintained at the Fifteenth Congress the line which Bukharin had recommended ever since 1924, as against the Opposition which forecast the worst of catastrophes and warned of the danger of capitalist restoration emerging from the progress of the rich peasant and the slow pace of industrial development. Stalin had made

clumsy jokes there about the "panic-mongers", who knew all the time that the Nep meant strengthening the kulaks, and cried out "Help! Murder!" and blanched with fear as soon as the kulaks stuck their noses into a corner. For all that, the situation was no better; at the end of 1927 official sources admitted that there were 1,700,000 unemployed, while half a million people were employed simply to keep the accounts of state industry. Above all, shortages re-appeared in the cities. The area sown was greater than in any year since the war, the harvests of 1925, 1926 and 1927 were among the best that Russia had ever had, but the grain deliveries were lower by half than they had been in 1926.

With the coming of winter, the first incidents broke out between grain collectors and peasants who demanded in vain a rise in grain prices. The difficulties increased at the end of the year, when the rich peasants, who could wait, tired of selling their crop without being able to buy industrial products in exchange and held back their surplus to wait for a better price. At the beginning of January the evidence could not be ignored. The quantity of grain delivered to the market was down by a quarter. The cities were threatened with famine in the months to come, all the more so because the local party and Soviet leaderships were educated in denouncing "Trotskyist under-estimation of the peasantry" and were afraid to resort to measures of coercion, which could earn them the serious charge of having contributed to "breaking the alliance between the workers and the peasants".

On January 6, 1928, the Politburo decided on "emergency measures", in the face of the grave problem of the food supply. These measures were communicated to the party, but were not published. The most radical was the order to apply Article 107 of the criminal code summarily to kulaks who held back stocks. This order envisaged that stocks would be confiscated and, in order to facilitate detection, it undertook that a quarter of the grain so collected would be distributed to the poor peasants of the village. Even so, the results were disappointing. On February 15 the decision had to be taken to mount a real mobilisation. Pravda published a speech by Stalin, editorially revealing the existence of the crisis and the "turn": "The kulak is raising his head!". A whole series of emergency measures was adopted, this time officially and publicly. Stocks were to be confiscated under Article 107; there were to be forced loans labelled "laws of self-imposition", the control and enforcement of bread prices was stiffened and direct trade with the village was forbidden. The Pravda article denounced the appearance in the party and in the state of:

"... certain elements, alien to the party, who do not perceive the classes in the village, who seek to carry out their work without offending anyone in the village and to live in peace with the kulak and in general to retain their popularity with every social layer in the village". This was a call to battle, in the party, against the "kulak ideology", which the Unified Opposition had been denouncing for years, but the existence of which had always been denied. The grain war

began again in earnest; this time it was waged without weakness. Over ten thousand city dwellers were mobilised and sent into the countryside to put an end to the "campaign of hoarding". The apparatus of the co-operatives and of the party was thoroughly purged in the regions where the hoarding was taking place.

There were many sharp incidents in the countryside. Bukharin was to tell Kamenev of over five hundred peasant rising having to be suppressed in six months. The use of force to collect grain in the countryside, the fear of famine in the cities and the cries of alarm from the leadership seemed to point to a return to war communism in town and country alike. The young Communist workers who were mobilised went off to the battle to feed their brethren and to beat down the class-enemy. The middle peasants feared their attack no less than did the kulaks. The whole village was aroused.

The results of the collections permitted the forecast that the worst had been averted, and the Central Committee in April 1928 condemned "the distortions and excesses which the party and Soviet organs at the base have committed". It cancelled the prohibition of private trading, forbade any confiscation except under Article 107 and abolished the compulsory loans and the patrols which monitored the trading in grain. The Central Committee recognised that its fiscal policy had failed to check the growth of the economic power of the kulaks, who "today exert a considerable influence on the market as a whole". It denied that it had wished to revive the "compulsory levies" of war Communism. Stalin declared:

"Nep is the basis of our economic policy and will continue to be so for a long period of history."

Rykov acknowledged that the grain crisis has caught the party leaders unawares. At the same time, the accent on strengthening discipline and mobilising the forces in the economy indicates that some were wishing to follow a policy which turned its back on Nep.

At the end of April 1928 the grain crisis seemed to recur. Pravda called, on April 26, for no relaxation of the "class-pressure" on the kulaks. The emergency measures were re-imposed. Soon the press was to head-line a case of "sabotage" in the Donetz coal mines, in order to sound the alarm unceasingly and to warn the workers against "the new forms and methods of the struggle of the bourgeoisie against the workers' state and the socialist industrialisation".

In fact the turn to the left during the grain crisis was the beginning of a turn in general policy. At the end of May, in a public speech, Stalin traced the outlines of a policy which was no longer that of the Fifteenth Congress, particularly in his statement that, in the realm of agriculture, "the solution lies in the change-over from individual peasant farms to collective farms" and that in no circumstances must "the development of heavy industry be slowed down and light industry, which serves

particularly the peasant market, be made the basis for industry in general" (2). The Central Committee was to witness in July 1928 the first collision outside the Politburo between Stalin and his opponents on the right, Bukharin, Rykov and Tomsky, the opening of the last great nearly-public conflict within the party.

### The Positions of Bukharin

The positions of the Right found an eloquent spokesman in Bukharin. The experience of the years which had passed since his first great debate with Preobrazhensky had not been lost on him. His right-ist positions, which he defended in the leading bodies (an in various articles, notably in "Notes of an Economist", which appeared in Pravda, September 1), 1928) had been corrected and refined. The incorrigible polemicist began by underlining the growing contrast between the need of the masses "to get to the heart of things" and the raw, stale, hardly warmed-up spiritual nourishment that was being offered to them" (3). The party was riddled with empiricism and always lagging behind events, in this respect like the peasant who only crosses himself when he hears thunder. Bukharin's aim was to investigate the general laws of development of society in transition in countries possessing a reactionary petty bourgeois population with a hostile periphery, in order to be able to act upon them" (4). He observed that the advance of production was accompanied by repeated "crises of a special kind; these reproduced capitalist crises only in appearance, because they presented some opposite characteristics and, in particular, "the shortage of goods" instead of over-production. He drew the conclusion that one can:

"... determine for a society in a period of transition the schema<sup>s</sup> of reproduction, that is, the conditions of an exact, mutual co-ordination of the different spheres of production, or, in other words, establish the conditions for dynamic economic equilibrium. Essentially the task of working out a national economic plan, more and more resembling a balance-sheet of the whole economy, lies there, a consciously outlined plan, which will at one and the same time be a forecast and a directive" (5).

This analysis led Bukharin to think that crises were, not inevitable in the transition period. Indeed, they could reflect, on the one hand, the socialist tendency of the new economy, the main-spring of which would be the growth of needs, and which contain no fundamental antagonism. On the other hand, the sharp crises could result only from the relative anarchy, the relative absence (that is) of a plan, which is inevitable only to the extent that the economy of the Nep rests on the existence of "small economies", and in which the production of grain on an individual basis would constitute an "anarchic" factor. He deduced that:

"... to obtain as favourable a course of social reproduction and of the systematic growth of socialism as possible, and, consequently, a relation of class-forces as favourable to the proletariat as possible, it is necessary to make

the effort to find a combination as correct as possible of the basic elements of the national economy, to put them into balance, to allocate them in the most rational possible way; it is necessary to influence actively the process of economic life and the class-struggle" (6).

Within this perspective, the current problem of the conflict between town and country could be studied, in the light of their relations within the framework of capitalism. History showed that the strength and the scale of industrial development had reached their maximum in USA, where neither feudal relations nor landlords existed, and where the market for industry was provided by the better-off farmers. Accordingly, Bukharin argued that Russia should be placed in the same category as America, in opposition to the Trotskyists, who wanted to put Russian agriculture into the category of pre-revolutionary Russia:

It is not by snatching every year the maximum of resources from the peasants, in order to put them into industry, that we shall ensure the highest rate of industrial development. The highest long-term rate of growth will be obtained by a combination, in which industry would grow on the basis of an economy which itself is rapidly growing" (7).

To put it another way, Bukharin always thought that: "the development of industry depends on capitalist development", but he heavily stressed that, at the same time, "the development of agriculture depends on that of industry, i.e., agriculture without tractors or chemical fertilisers, or without electrification, is doomed to stagnate. It is industry which is the lever for the great transformation of agriculture" (8). He considered the grain crisis from this viewpoint. The stability of the grain production had prepared for it, and its main signs had been the growing disproportion between grain prices and the prices of other, technical crops, the rise in the incomes of peasants from non-agricultural sources, the insufficient deliveries of industrial products to the village and the growing economic influence of the kulak. The authoritarian maintenance of low grain prices led automatically to stagnation and then to a decline in grain production. The policy of "pressurising" was directly responsible for the grain crisis, and, consequently, for slowing-up industrialisation. One could not, therefore, counter-pose the development of industry to that of agriculture or of grain production; "Here the truth lies correctly in the middle" (9).

Bukharin replied to the perspectives outlined by Stalin by emphasising that the concept of increasing production co-incided effectively with that of "class-replacement" which meant progressively replacing the capitalist elements in agriculture by collectivising the individual holdings of small and middle peasants, and passing on to large-scale enterprises. But he emphasised:

"We have here a formidable problem, which must be resolved on the basis of the

progress of the individual holdings... which requires great investment and new technique, in addition to new management" (10).

He rejected the perspective of accelerating the rate of industrialisation, and proposed simply to hold it unchanged during the period of restoration.

Bukharin then launched a ferocious criticism of the methods which the party had used: "We cannot build a factory today with the bricks of tomorrow". He stressed that the unproductive expenditure was enormous, that productivity was low (one-twelfth of that in US industry), that raw materials were wasted, one-and-a-half times as much being used as in USA for the same output. He argued that these were the factors on which to act, in order to reduce costs and, consequently, to maintain the pace of industrialisation, without weighing heavily on the conditions of the workers. For this purpose, first of all, there had to be education; the cultural level had to be raised; engineers and statisticians had to be trained. His conclusion rings like a prophecy:

"In the pores of our gigantic apparatus, elements of bureaucratic degeneration have found themselves places. They are completely indifferent to the interests of the masses, to their life and to their material and cultural interests... The functionaries are prepared to elaborate any plan, no matter what" (11).

This was one of Bukharin's last public statements. In this way he condemned the authoritarian conceptions of planning, in the name of Marx's economic science itself. Any attempt to create economic resources by voluntary effort or by compulsion could, in his opinion, result only in constructing a state which would be alien to the spirit of socialism. In this he saw the principal factor in the degeneration which he had forecast in 1918. In 1928, he recalled what he had said back in 1922 to combat the idea that the proletariat could lead the entire economy:

"If the proletariat takes on this task, it will be obliged to construct a colossal administrative apparatus. If it is to fulfill the economic functions fulfilled by small producers, small peasants, etc. it will need too many clerks and administrators. The attempt to replace all these small people by bureaucrats (chinovniki) produces an apparatus so colossal that the cost of maintaining it will be incomparably greater than the unproductive expenses which result from the anarchic conditions of small-scale production. The whole of this kind of administration, the whole of the economic apparatus of the proletarian state, not only does not encourage, but only acts as a brake upon the development of the productive forces. It leads directly to the opposite of what it was supposed to do. That is why an imperious necessity obliges the proletariat to destroy it... If the proletariat does not do so, then other forces will overthrow its domination" (12).

Bukharin's criticism was diametrically opposed in its premises and its immediate ana-

lysis to those of the Left Opposition, but none the less it led him towards an analysis of the state and of workers' democracy. He had already closed his "Notes of an Economist" with a confession and an appeal: "We are far too centralised. Could we not take some steps towards the Commune-State of Lenin?". On the occasion of the fifth anniversary of Lenin's death he wrote an analysis of his last writings, entitled "Lenin's Political Testament". He said that the workers' state:

"... constitutes a certain stage in the transition towards the Commune-State, from which, unfortunately, we are very far."

When Lenin faced this problem, he sought for levers: he said:

"We must now turn back to the deep historic source of the dictatorship; the deepest source is the advanced workers" (13).

Bukharin also was to write, a few days earlier:

"The participation of the masses should be the fundamental guarantee against a bureaucratisation of the group of leaders" (14).

#### The Oppositions at the Cross-Roads

It is in no way surprising, therefore, that a rapprochement between the right and the left could have been considered in various quarters, not least by the interested parties themselves. This was made easier by the fact that Trotsky and Bukharin had kept up friendly personal relations throughout the sharpest of the fractional struggles. None the less, the first reaction to the "turn" by the Left Opposition was an ironic one:

"We learn - as we have already known for some time - that there exists in the party... a strong right wing, which works towards a new Nep, that is, towards capitalism, by stages" (15).

Preobrazhensky stressed that the "turn" confirmed the analysis of the Opposition and demonstrated that the leadership of the party was bankrupt.

The emergency measures were, in his opinion, necessary but none the less were not sufficient. Economic measures were needed to reduce consumption and to satisfy the demand of the peasants for industrial products. However, Stalin soon appeared to have decided to apply also this part of the programme of the Opposition.

When the first feelings of self-satisfaction passed, the Opposition faced the question that, <sup>if</sup> the "turn to the Left" by the apparatus was serious, had they not gone too far in denouncing Stalin as "the protector of the kulak"? Trotsky thought that they must now give "critical support" to Stalin's new policy; the appeal to the workers and to the class struggle made easier the struggle for internal democracy, while it liberated the energies of the proletariat when it weakened the kulak. But the new perspectives were already dividing the Opposition. Piatakov capitulated. He was soon imitated by the Zinovievist Safarov, who told those who

remained: "Everything is being done without us" (16).

The wing which could not be made to yield, the Dec - ists, who thought that the state was in the hands of the Nepmen and kulaks, refused to believe that the left-ward course would last. They had some influence on Trotsky's young supporters, who were more concerned about the extinction of all freedom of expression than about political economy. The Oppositionists of longer standing, however, were more and more hesitant. Preobrazhensky saw Stalin engage himself in the new policies under the pressure of the ineluctable necessity of the "objective laws". All his hypotheses were confirmed. A new turn to the right seemed to him to be impossible, to the extent that it would touch off such an explosion of pro-capitalist elements that Stalin and Bukharin would be obliged to return to the policies which they had followed since January 1928, in order to deal with it.

Preobrazhensky accordingly proposed to the Opposition that it should demand authorisation to hold a legal conference in order to discuss the situation and work out a new line. Personally he favoured an alliance with the centre, "which reflects the correct proletarian policy like a distorting mirror" (17). His proposal was rejected, but his ideas continued to get support and now received that of Radek. The latter was crushed by the defeat and by his deportation. At first he had been greatly discouraged, and told Sosnovsky: "I cannot believe there finally remain in all Russia only five thousand Communists, after all the work of Lenin and all the work of the revolution." (18). The turn to the left revived Radek's morale; after all, the Stalinists were the rear-guard of the proletarian clan, of which the Opposition was the vanguard. He too argued for a reconciliation. It was with great difficulty that Trotsky succeeded in preserving the unity of the Opposition, and only because the July meeting of the Central Committee seemed to mark a new turn of the helm to the right and to close the turn to the left.

At this moment Sokolnikov arranged for Bukharin to meet Kamenev and, through him, the Leningrad Oppositionists a little later. He thought that the policy of Stalin was leading to disaster:

"He is an unprincipled intriguer, who subordinates everything to his thirst for power... He has made concessions to us, so that he can cut our throats... All he knows is revenge and a stab in the back."

Pale, trembling and haunted by fear of the GPU, Bukharin kept on saying:

"He will kill us all. He is another Genghis Khan and will strangle us."

Bukharin went to see Kamenev in order to try to prevent what he saw as a fatal mistake; he did not want the friends of Zinoviev and of Trotsky to make an alliance with Stalin at any price:

"The differences between us and Stalin are infinitely more serious than our former



differences with you."

Moreover, it was not a question of ideas, because Stalin did not have any:

"He changes his theories to meet his need to get rid of someone at this or that moment."

The question was to save the party, to save socialism, and to save the lives of all Stalin's opponents. Stalin had adopted, in his own way, the conclusions of Preobrazhensky about primitive socialist accumulation. He drew the conclusion that the more socialism advanced, the more it would run into popular resistance. Bukharin said:

"This means a police state. But nothing will stop Stalin... He will drown revolts in blood and denounce us as defenders of the kulaks... The root of the whole evil is the fusion of the party and the state" (19).

To convince Kamenev, he drew up a diagram of the forces which Stalin could command: There were Voroshilov and Kalinin, whom Stalin "held"; there was Ordjonikidze, who detested Stalin and would not move, but Tomsy had told him one drunken evening that the workers would bring him down; Andreev, the leaders in Leningrad and Yagoda, the head of the GPU, were ready to fight against him.

Kamenev listened to Bukharin, and then wrote to Zinoviev, advising him not to reply with too much enthusiasm to the proposals which Stalin would be sure to make to him. At the same time, he implored Trotsky to take a step towards reconciliation with Stalin. Trotsky refused, on the ground that Stalin's policy must be judged not only by what he was doing but also by how he was doing it. He would support no bureaucratic combination and would accept re-integration into the party only on the condition that internal democracy was fully restored and the leadership elected by secret ballot. He answered Bukharin in a circular letter dated September 12: the differences were no less than ever, but he could agree to co-operation on one precise point, the restoration of internal democracy, and he declared himself ready, if Bukharin and Rykov agreed, to struggle along with them for a democratically prepared and elected Congress.

The majority of Oppositionists protested against this attitude, refusing to accept an alliance with the Right against the Centre at the moment when the latter was turning to the left. Would that not be, precisely, Thermidor? Since Bukharin's friends, for their part, showed no sign of even beginning to bring about what could have been a joint struggle, by appealing to the public opinion of the party as Zinoviev, Kamenev and Trotsky had done in 1926, Stalin could take advantage of the hostility of the two Oppositions to each other to strike at both of them. The Left Opposition was in crisis. Smilga, Serebriakov and Ivan Smirnov soon joined the "conciliators", Preobrazhensky and Radek. They all did their best to persuade Trotsky to abandon historic attitudes and give up his splendid isolation. Trotsky,

however was convinced that time was working for his ideas. After a year of repression, 8,000 "Oppositionists" had been deported - twice as many as supported the Opposition at the end of 1927. In his refusal, Trotsky had the support of Ravovsky, Sosnovsky and the younger Oppositionists. Then the "conciliators" made their peace, one after another, and abandoned him. The exchanges of letters between the exiles enables the reader to trace the accelerated decomposition of what had been the kernel of the Opposition. After Safarov capitulated in 1928, Sosnovsky wrote to Ilya Vardin, who had just done the same:

"I have asked Vaganian to tell you about a detail of the ritual at Jewish funerals. At the moment when they are making ready to carry the corpse out of the synagogue to the cemetery, a verger bends over it, addresses the dead man by his name and says to him: 'Know for sure that you are dead!' This is an excellent custom" (20).

Solntsev wrote some months later, in a letter which the GPU intercepted and which Yaroslavsky was to publish: "Panic and confusion reign. Everyone is looking for his individual way out". He accused Preobrazhensky, Radek and Smilga of having committed "unheard-of treachery"; he hinted that "I. N. (Smirnov) is on the way to liquidation" (21). Trotsky had more resilience; he turned the page at the end of July when he wrote:

"The capitulation of Radek, Preobrazhensky and Smilga is, in its way, a political fact of importance. It reveals how far the great, heroic generation of revolutionaries, whose lot it was to go through the war and the revolution, is now worn out. Three distinguished old revolutionaries have crossed themselves out of the world of the living" (22).

### The Preliminary Battle

The battle against the Right began inside the party in the month of June 1928. The food shortage provoked an agitation among workers. The <sup>growing</sup> Opposition supported it in the countryside, with which the workers maintained personal contacts. In two factories in Moscow the workers protested against the emergency measures. Uglanov, the Moscow party secretary, publicly criticised the new line. In Leningrad the new party secretary, Kirov, ran into difficulties on the party committee at the hands of Steplov, a pupil of Bukharin. Frumkin, the People's Commissar for Finance, protested against the coercive measures employed in the grain collections; he recommended a maximum financial effort to encourage poor peasants who joined collective farms. Stalin accused him of buckling under kulak pressure and made him a scapegoat.

The Central Committee met in Moscow on June 4. Kalinin, Mikoyan and Molotov stressed the necessity of preserving the alliance with the middle peasant and of admitting that the emergency measures were temporary and that grain prices must rise. The

Right seemed to be dominating the discussion. Stetsky and Sokolnikov were in favour of concessions to the peasants and higher prices, and Uglanov described the popular discontent. Rykov protested against the distinction being drawn between "excesses" and "emergency measures". Stalin presented the current policy as a new stage of Nep, an offensive. He accused those who opposed collectivisation of being "neither Marxists nor Leninists, but peasant philosophers with their eyes fixed on the past". He accused those who claimed that the Central Committee was turning its back on Nep with having "a kulak deviation". Bukharin's speech was serious and grave: he feared a general peasant uprising under kulak leadership and stressed, in opposition to Stalin, that prices were one of the decisive levers by which the government could influence individual peasants. The offensive against the kulaks should be pursued through taxation policy. The essential thing was to do nothing that could upset the middle peasants, because that would strengthen the kulaks.

The Central Committee carried unanimously a compromise resolution, which noted that the emergency measures had had their effect and did away with them; it prohibited searches and seizures and, above all, it authorised an increase in the price of bread of 20%. The general impression was that the Right had won. Trotsky spoke of "the last phase of Thermidor".

#### The Sixth Congress of the Communist International

It was clear that Bukharin, however, had lost a great deal of ground, when the Sixth Congress of the Comintern met in Moscow during the summer of 1928. He was still President, but he became less and less the master of the organisation. The International was, of course, a convenient testing-ground for groups that were in conflict with the Russian party. The right-ist policy of the years 1925 - 27 had been a crying failure, as the business of the Anglo-Russian Joint Trade Union Committee and the defeat in China had proved beyond question. Stalin did at first try to deny this, but he could not hold this pose for long. From mid-1927 a turn being outlined; like Brandler in 1924, Chen Du-siu in China was held responsible for the policy which the Executive (i.e. the Politburo of the CPSU) had obliged him to operate. We have already seen how Lominadze and Neumann - in the midst of a retreat of the movement - launched the political offensive, which Stalin and Bukharin had opposed when the worker and peasant masses were in the full flood of attack.

The "turn" reflected no doubt Stalin's empiricism, his short views on international matters, the improvisation characterising what Trotsky called his "bureaucratic zig-zags". However, we should not ignore another tendency in this new policy. It lies in taking over, for his own purposes, the principal points of the Opposition, if only to deny that it exists. After the Canton insurrection, at the end of 1927, the leadership of the International could shamelessly proclaim that it was leading the Chinese Communist party on the road of Soviet revolution. Here the short-term political interests of the apparatus co-incided with its fundamental tendencies.

Up to the end of 1927 the right-ist policy of perspectiveless alliances with the Social-Democratic parties had corresponded to the right-ist policy in the USSR. The turn to the left and the abandonment of the united front tactic corresponded to the turn to the left at the beginning of 1928. The leaders of the Soviet Communist Party feared the development of oppositional currents in the foreign parties and wanted to use a manoeuvre, which became classical from that time on, and to take advantage of the real resentment of numerous advanced workers, to turn them against leaders who chafed at its authority, to frighten the right-ists with left-wing arguments and at the same time to deprive the left of the emotive appeal of denunciations of compromises with "treacherous Social-Democracy".

The Ninth Plenum of the Executive Committee of the International had met in February completely under the aegis of the struggle against the Opposition. The Opposition was defeated everywhere, but sometimes held out, as in Belgium, where the general secretary, Van Overstraeten, and the majority of the Central Committee disapproved of the decisions of the Fifteenth Congress. The Opposition still existed and lived everywhere.

The principal report at the Sixth Congress was presented by Bukharin. He relied on an analysis of the relation of world forces; this presented three distinct periods since 1917. There was the period of acute, revolutionary crisis, up to 1923. To this followed a second period, that of capitalist reconstruction and relative stabilisation. Since 1927 the "third period" had opened, characterised by a new period of capitalist construction, by the beginning of socialist construction and by a rise in the danger of war. According to Bukharin, this "objective change" obliged the Communists to make a "sharp turn", the political axis of which was the new attitude towards the social-democratic parties. Henceforth the "united front" could be considered only "from below". Bukharin was very uneasy about this turn to sectarianism. He sincerely opposed it, and tried clumsily to soften its impact, by directing the political effort of the International exclusively against Trotskyism, which he qualified as "one of the most ignoble instruments of international social-democracy against the Communists in the struggle for influence over the broad masses of workers". He declared that the issue was "a general turn" - a "left wheel", in the sense of a general strengthening of the struggle against right wing social-democracy, and, in particular, against left social-democracy"! He admitted that the "third period" would stimulate a radicalisation of the working-class in reaction against the bourgeois offensive, but did his best to present Trotskyism as the only danger while at the same time warning of a right-wing danger. This led him into more acrobatics:

"It is not correct to pose the question in such a way that we have, on the one hand, to fight against Trotskyism and, on the other hand, against the dangers of the right... This would mean that Trotskyism represents some kind of ...

those German leaders who had regarded Thaelmann's conduct as un-acceptable.

The International could not possibly be the means to voice any criticism of the attitude of the Soviet Communist Party to the Opposition in these conditions. None the less, delegates at the Sixth Congress were to get some idea of Trotsky's political positions - some for the first time - by means of his Letter to the Congress and of his Critique of the Draft Programme. Trotsky criticised Bukharin's scholastic conception of stabilisation:

"The fundamental cause of the crisis of the October Revolution is the retardation of the world revolution, caused by a whole series of cruel defeats of the proletariat. Up to 1923, these were the defeats of the post-war movements and insurrection<sup>tion</sup> confronted with the non-existence of the communist parties at the beginning, and with their youth and weakness subsequently. From 1923 on, the situation changed sharply. We no longer have before us simply defeats of the proletariat, but routs of the policy of the Comintern..." (28).

Trotsky underlined that the policy of the International had been empiricist, and defined it as "centrist". He analysed the zig-zags of the line which, since 1923, had ended in disasters, because it was based on an incorrect appreciation of class forces. The leadership had failed to accept that capitalism was being "stabilised" until eighteen months after the defeat in Germany, - when the first signs of a resurgence of the working class were appearing, and when their right-ist policy was holding the class back. The disaster of the Chinese Revolution provoked a new turn to the left, at the precise moment when the offensive was no longer on the agenda. Trotsky criticised Bukharin's piecemeal analysis, and declared that the dominating factor was the growing hegemony of USA, the source not only of the initial stabilisation, but also of crises to come. "A great crisis in USA would once again sound the alarm for new wars and revolutions to come." The theory of "Socialism in a Single Country" and the pseudo-Bolshevisation, which converted the Communist Parties into docile instruments in the hands of their apparatus of functionaries, carried with them the risk that, in the end, these parties would be incapable of exploiting new revolutionary situations. The letters from Trotsky's correspondents - which Deutscher quotes - are evidence of the echo of Trotsky's ideas in the Congress. Ercoli complains that the delegates were generally servile. Thorez admits that he did not feel quite in agreement with this theory of "Socialism in a Single Country" (29). James P. Cannon, a delegate of the minority in the Communist Party of USA, was to found the Left Opposition in his country (30). But in any case the delegates, whether "left" or "right", were no better able to deal with the official theses than was Bukharin himself; he was defending positions which he believed to be catastrophic, but which he accepted and defended against his own ideas.

#### The Attack on the Positions of the Right-ists

Meanwhile, the struggle was being prepared on its decisive level, that of the apparatus of the Russian party. Slépkov was removed from <sup>Lenin's</sup> ~~Pravda~~ by the secretariat and transferred to Siberia. This left Kirov a free hand. In Moscow Uglanov tried to make use of his own apparatus fraction against the policy of the secretariat; employing the same tactic as Bukharin, he secured the adoption by the Moscow Committee of a motion which strongly condemned the policy of the party against the kulaks, attributing it exclusively to the Trotskyists. Pravda replied on September 15 with a call for the "struggle on two fronts", and denounced the existence in the party of a "right deviation", which was opportunist and "conciliatory" to the kulaks. The pressure of the central apparatus stirred up reactions in the Moscow regional committee and, in particular, accused Uglanov's right-hand man, Riutin, of adopting "right-ist" positions. The General Secretary caught the ball on the bounce and relieved Riutin of his functions, over Uglanov's head, for "a serious mistake". He stressed the "discontent of active militants" with "the inconsistency and hesitations of certain members of the Moscow Committee in the struggle against the right deviation... and their conciliatory attitude" (31). Uglanov's defeat was already complete; on September 18 at the Moscow Committee no one applauded his report, and Riutin made his self-criticism. On September 19 Stalin delivered the coup de grace in person; he denounced "the right deviation and the tendencies to conciliation with it" (32). The Moscow Committee decided to "re-organise"; one after another the secretaries in the region criticised Uglanov and demanded a full self-criticism from him.

The tension was rising at the very top of the party by November. The battle over the Moscow Committee led Bukharin, Rykov and Tomsky to call for the apparatus to be re-organised. They could not obtain a meeting of the commission which should deal with the question. They could see that Stalin was continually gaining time in this way and decided to strike a great blow; they simultaneously resigned from their positions as President of the International and chief editor of Pravda, as President of the Council of People's Commissars and as President of the trade unions. This was a serious slap in the face for Stalin, who had just denied in Moscow that there were any differences in the Politburo. So he negotiated, and the three agreed to withdraw their resignations, in exchange for a unanimous vote giving agriculture priority <sup>heavy</sup> over industry. In this way the Politburo presented itself in unanimity to the Central Committee, and the Central Committee could still unanimously condemn "the right deviation", which Stalin showed in his speech to be linked to the Left Opposition. In this way the leaders of the right gave their approval to the campaign of the apparatus against their ideas and their supporters. Rykov was even to threaten them with measures going beyond the ideological campaign, if the right opposition dared "to take form". The bastion of the right in Moscow was officially taken from them. Uglanov lost the position of secretary, and was replaced by Molotov, with Baumann as his deputy.

The campaign of the "centre" was indeed going forward. In the middle of the battle against the Moscow right-wingers, on October 19, the Central Committee agreed a statement laying down a new industrial policy:

"Because of our technical backwardness, we cannot develop industry to such a level that it not only is not behind the capitalist countries, but catches up and surpasses them, without our setting to work all the forces of our land, without great <sup>perseverance</sup> and iron discipline in the proletarian ranks" (33).

It defined the hesitations of certain layers of the working class and of certain sections of the party as "running away from the difficulties". The Economic Council opposed the proposal of a Five-Year Plan for industry, and a collision became inevitable with the second of the great bastions of the right, the trade unions, over which Tomsky presided.

Tomsky was a heavy-fisted bureaucrat. Trotsky called him "the Gompers of the Soviet State". He had thoroughly made up his mind to preserve for the unions their general function of defending the workers' interests, which was the basis of his personal power and, in his opinion, an indispensable element of Soviet organisation. The new policy would reduce the role of the trade unions simply to the struggle to raise profits and production. In June 1928 the Central Committee criticised numerous "bureaucratic abuses" in the activity of the trade union apparatus, and called on the party "fractions" to work to correct them. In this way the party could intervene directly over Tomsky's head.

At the time when Uglanov was being displaced, Pravda turned its guns on the rightists in the trade unions and attacked them for refusing to criticise themselves and failing to mobilise the masses for socialist construction. At the All-Russian Congress of the trade unions (at the end of December 1928) Tomsky admitted some deficiencies, but proposed new efforts to raise workers' pay generally. None the less, the Communist fraction presented a motion condemning the right-ists; it called for accelerated industrialisation and rejected the "purely working-class" conception of the trade unions - the tasks of which were "to mobilise the masses" to "overcome the difficulties of the reconstruction period" (34). This was carried by an overwhelming majority. After having rejected Tomsky in this way, the Conference elected to the new leadership five important members of the party apparatus, Kaganovich, Kuibyshev, Ordjonikidze, Rudzutak and Zhdanov. Tomsky was re-elected President, but refused to resume his functions after he had lost control of the organisation.

The right was well and truly beaten, and almost at once had to battle against a measure which raised a serious threat over its head. Trotsky had been summoned to give up all political activity. On December 16 he had refused, since that would mean "recanting" and giving up the struggle which he had waged for thirty-three years. Despite the opposition of the three, and the desperate efforts of Bukharin, as well as

the opposition of another member of the Politburo (probably Kuibyshev), Stalin obtained a decision to expel Trotsky from the territory of the USSR. According to the minutes of this meeting, as Trotsky published them, this decision stated:

"Trotsky must be exiled abroad:

- 1) because as long as he remains in the country he is capable of ideologically leading the Opposition, the numerical strength of which continues to grow;
- 2) in order that he may be discredited in the eyes of the masses as an accomplice of the bourgeoisie, as soon as he arrives in a bourgeois country;
- 3) in order to discredit him in the eyes of the world proletariat; the Social-Democracy will no doubt utilise his exile to attack the USSR and will fly to Trotsky's help as 'a victim of Bolshevik terror';
- 4) If Trotsky attacks the leadership by making revelations, we can present him as a traitor. All this speaks in favour of exiling him"(35).

The GPU arrested him with his whole family on January 22, 1929, and expelled him to Turkey. The last journey began for him on "the planet without a visa". Pravda announced on January 23 that another one hundred and fifty people had been arrested for "illegal Trotskyist activity", including Budu Mdivani, Drobin, Pankratov and Voronsky.

#### The Political Liquidation of the Right-ists

R. V. Daniels remarks (36): "The history of the right opposition offers the singular spectacle of a political group which was defeated first and attacked afterwards". In fact, the fiction of unanimity in the Politburo was maintained up to January 1929 even to the Central Committee. Then, in February 1929, Stalin demanded that the Control Commission enquire into conversations which Bukharin had had with Kamenev; these had been revealed in Trotskyist leaflets in Moscow. Bukharin accepted the challenge to battle, admitted that the contacts had taken place, and counter-attacked in the Politburo. He denied that he had resorted to fractional activity and attacked the bureaucratisation of an apparatus on which the General Secretary was absolute master and not a single regional secretary was elected. He denounced the new political economy as "a military-feudal exploitation of the peasantry", by the levy of tribute; he called for a reduction in the speed at which industry was to be developed and for the maintenance of the free market. The three once more resigned. They were accused of breaking up the unity of the leadership and of threatening that of the party. For all that, in the end they again withdrew their resignations (Rykov was the first), but refused to recant their errors. On February 27, 1929, Molotov, writing in Pravda without naming any names at all, threatened that:

"The theory of the peaceful integration of the kulak into socialism means in practice abandoning the offensive against the kulak. It leads to emancipating capitalist elements and ultimately to re-establishing the power of the bourgeoisie".

At the April session of the Central Committee and the Central Control Commission the attacks of Stalin, Molotov and Kaganovich were directed against the three, this time by name. They were evidently in a minority. In order to avoid being publicly con-



condemned, they agreed to vote for resolutions in favour of a Five-Year Plan for industry, contenting themselves with counselling caution and warning against "abolishing Nep". The Central Committee, accordingly, condemned them for having "hidden their real attitude". Stalin launched a veritable indictment against Bukharin, accusing him of defending "the integration of the capitalists into socialism" and conceptions which "lull the working class to sleep, hold up the mobilisation of the revolutionary forces and facilitate the offensive of capitalist elements". "Bukharin's plan", he announced, "aims at slowing down the development of industry and undermining the new forms of alliance between workers and peasants". Bukharin complained that the party had subjected him to "civic degradation" by criticising him in public when he was obliged to remain silent. Stalin asked him - with a straight face - why he had not taken his part in the struggle against the right deviation: "Does the Bukharin group understand that to fail to struggle against the right deviation is to betray the working class and to betray the revolution?". He concluded: "The party demands that you wage a resolute struggle against the right deviation and against the spirit of conciliation, at the side of every member of the Central Committee of our party... Either you will do what the party demands of you - and the party will congratulate you - or you will not, in which case you have no one to blame but yourselves (37).

The quarrel was still not out in public. At the Sixteenth Conference of the party (April 23, 1929 onwards) Rykov defended the Five-Year plan, while Kuibyshev threatened the "petty bourgeois elements", "defeatists" and "those who lacked confidence". Baumann took Uglanov's place in the Politburo. In June Tomsky was eliminated from the trade union leadership and replaced by Chvernik. On July 3, Bukharin was relieved of the Presidency of the International and excluded from the Executive, an operation which Ercoli facilitated by going over to the Stalinist fraction at the last minute. This decision was not made public until August 21. That date marked the opening of the systematic, public denunciation of the "mistakes" of Bukharin. At the Central Committee meeting in November, Uglanov recanted his errors. The three tried to get it conceded that they had presented a different method of approach for a policy with which they were perfectly in agreement. For this "fractional manoeuvre" they were denounced and Bukharin was excluded from the Politburo. Finally, on November 26, 1929, they capitulated completely: "In the course of the last eighteen months, there have been differences between us and the majority of the Central Committee of the party on a number of political and tactical questions. We have presented our views in a series of documents and declarations to the plenary session and other sessions of the Central Committee and the Central Control Commission of the party. We believe that it is our duty to declare that, in this discussion, the party and the Committee have been correct. Our views, presented in documents which are well-known, have been shown to be erroneous. In recognising our mistakes, we shall for

our part make every effort to carry on in common with the whole party a resolute struggle against all deviations from the general line and, in particular, against all the deviations of the right and the tendency to conciliation, in order to overcome every difficulty and to ensure the fastest possible victory of socialist construction" (38).

In this way the most brilliant of the Bolshevik theoreticians rejoined the band of "dead souls" which several months before, the group of conciliators from the Left Opposition, Preobrazhensky, Radek and Smilga had swollen. The long death-agony of the Bolshevik Party was well and truly ended. Trotsky was abroad and a handful of irreconcilables, Rakovsky, Sosnovsky and Solntsev still defended in Siberia the ideas which form part of the heritage of Bolshevism but which were no longer current in the party which claimed to be Bolshevik. A historic period was ended. Another period opened when Stalin announced on December 27, 1929, in an article entitled, "To the Devil with the NEP", what was to be the "great turn". For the men who had been the leaders of the first victorious proletarian revolution, this turn was to be the first stage on the road which would take them to their ignominious or obscure deaths.

The self-criticism of Bukharin, Rykov and Tomsky closed a chapter in the history of the party. There would never again be a public debate. The Congresses would never be anything again but great displays, where the published minutes suggested what had been discussed only in a very distorted way, or at any rate what had been the internal differences. The Central Committee became a purely decorative organism. More and more a dead weight, its membership rose from 40 in 1923 to 52 in 1914 and 71 in 1927. The divergences which the Right expressed in the Politburo were the last of which any echo reached the outside world for nearly thirty years. Political divergences - which always existed - were thereafter to be resolved at the heart of the apparatus, in the leading coteries. To be sure, there were no more tendencies or factions, but there were clans and cliques and personal alliances of interests, replacing political associations, no more political debates, but settlements of accounts.

We may ask whether Old Bolsheviks like Rykov, Tomsky and Bukharin, in the middle of "confessing" their errors, took the measure of the last political act of their career and appreciated the depth of the change in the nature of the party which demanded this renunciation, this veritable moral suicide. Arthur Rosenberg suggests that they were aware of having become, independently of their will, the virtual leaders of an organised opposition of neo-bourgeois elements: an open resistance on their part would have represented an encouragement in the struggle to all the pro-capitalist layers which were already numerous and powerful in Russian society, and that they would themselves have precipitated the counter-revolutionary wave for which Stalin's policy had created the conditions (39). Trotsky was not far from advancing the same interpretation of their attitude when he wrote in October 1928:

"The Right-wingers, whether they like it or not, are obliged to get into the cold water. That means trying to end their quarrel with Stalin by apparatus means... If they were to oppose the centre seriously, they ought to have bawled and shouted at the top of their voices, which means in an ultra-reactionary tone, a Thermidorian tone. But Bukharin still had no stomach for that. He put his foot into the cold water, but he was frightened to get down into it. He remains immobile and trembling - with courage. Behind him, Rykov and Tomsky watch what is going on and are ready to run off and hide in the bushes at any moment" (40).

The following month, Bukharin, Rykov and Tomsky finally refused to plunge into the cold water, in the same way as a year earlier they had given up the chance to join the devil Trotsky in the hell of a "bloc" to defend democracy. We must accept that we cannot answer the question whether they did or did not understand that, in doing so, they sealed at one and the same time their own fate and that of the Bolshevik party which was giving way under its contradictions.

#### FOOTNOTES

- (1) Among other sources, see "The Platform of the Left Opposition", in "Leon Trotsky: The Challenge of the Left Opposition (1926 - 27)", Pathfinder Press, NY 1980, p. 301ff.
- (2) Correspondance Internationale, No. 54, June 9, 1928, pp. 642 - 644.
- (3) "Notes of an Economist", in Correspondance Internationale, No. 126, October 20, 1928, p. 1369.
- (4) Ibid., p. 1370.
- (5) Ibid., p. 1371.
- (6) Ibid.
- (7) Ibid., p. 1372.
- (8) Ibid.
- (9) Correspondance Internationale, No. 127, October 24, 1928, p. 1388.
- (10) Ibid., No. 128, October 27, 1928, p. 1407.
- (11) Ibid., No. 131, October 31, 1928, passim.
- (12) Pravda, September<sup>12</sup>, 1928, quoted in Daniels, "The Conscience of the Revolution" p. 355.
- (13) Pravda, January 24, 1928, quoted in Daniels, op. cit., p. 355.
- (14) Quoted in Daniels, op. cit., p. 356.
- (15) Trotsky, "What Now?", in "The Third International After Lenin", Pioneer ed. 1936, pp. 285 - 6.
- (16) Quoted in Deutscher, "Prophet Unarmed", p. 417.

- (17) Quoted in Deutscher, "Prophet Unarmed", from an article "On the Left Course", in the Trotsky Archives.
- (18) Quoted in Deutscher, "Prophet Unarmed", p. 421.
- (19) V. Serge, "La Vie et la Mort de Trotsky", pp. 213 - 4.
- (20) Sosnovsky, "Lettres d'exil", in "La Lutte des Classes", No. 17, January 30, 1929, p. 71.
- (21) Correspondance Internationale, No. 102, October 9, 1929, p. 1415.
- (22) Reproduced by Trotsky in "Les Crimes de Staline", Paris, Grasset, 1938, p. 265
- (23) Report by Bukharin to the 9th Plenum of the Executive Committee of the Communist International is in Correspondance Internationale, No. 18, February 27, 1928, pp. 231 - 239. His closing speech is in Correspondance Internationale, No. 27, March 1928, p. 357. The report of the Sixth Congress is in the special issue of August 1, 1928, No. 72, pp. 833 - 847, and particularly pp. 840, 841, 843.
- (24) Correspondance Internationale, No. 84, August 16, 1928, p. 887.
- (25) Correspondance Internationale, No. 89, August 22, p. 949.
- (26) Ibid.
- (27) Correspondance Internationale, No. 89, August 22, p. 950.
- (28) Trotsky in "What Now?", in "The Third International After Lenin", Pioneer ed. NY 1936, p. 246.
- (29) Deutscher, "Prophet Unarmed", p. 444.
- (30) Cannon, "History of American Trotskyism", pp. 49 - 50.
- (31) Quoted in Daniels, "The Conscience of the Revolution", p. 352.
- (32) Correspondance Internationale, No. 312, November 3, 1928, pp. 1454 - 1457.
- (33) Quoted in Daniels, op. cit., p. 352.
- (34) Correspondance Internationale, No. 1, January 5, 1929, pp. 4 - 5.
- (35) Bulletin of the Opposition, July 1929, reproduced by N. Sedova in "Fourth International", No. 1, 1942, p. 11.
- (36) Daniels, op. cit., p. 362.
- (37) J. Stalin, "Speech delivered at the Plenum of the Central Committee of the CPSU in April 1929", in "Leninism", George Allen and Unwin, London, 1933, Vol 2, p. 240.
- (38) Correspondance Internationale, No. 118, November 30, 1929, p. 1578.
- (39) Arthur Rosenberg, "History of Bolehsivism".
- (40) Trotsky: "Letter on the Political Situation in the USSR", in "Lutte des Classes", No. 8, February 1929, pp. 220 - 1.