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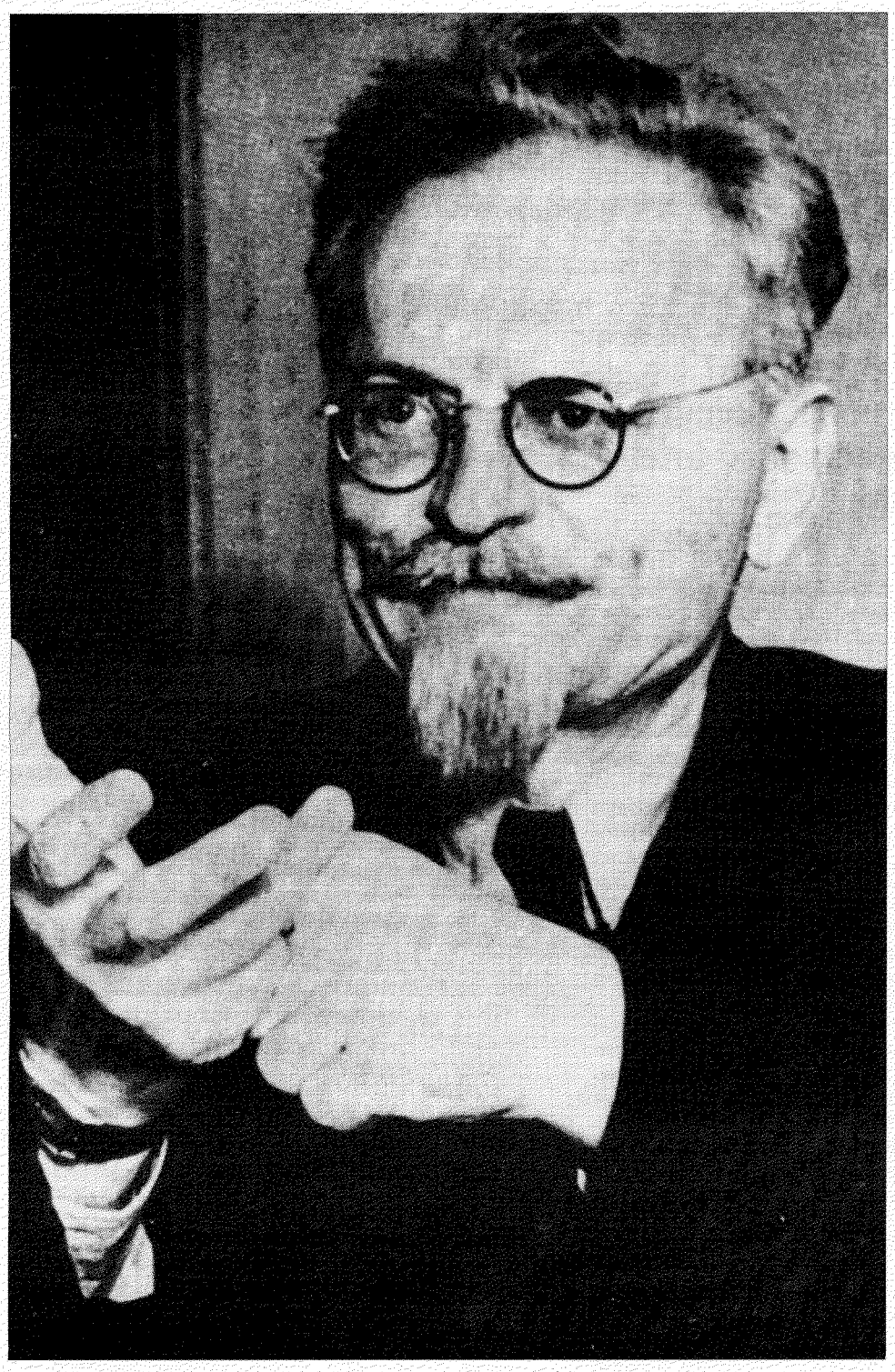
workers' liberty
reason in revolt

Leon Trotsky October 1879 — August 1940



The Spartacus of the 20th century

The fact that the Bolsheviks staked their whole policy on the world revolution of the proletariat is precisely the most striking testimony to the range of their far-sightedness, to their fidelity to principles, and to the daring impetus of their policy...

Whatever a party can, at a historic hour, provide in the way of courage, drive in action, revolutionary farsightedness, and logic, Lenin, Trotsky, and their comrades gave in full measure. All the revolutionary honour and the capacity for action that were lacking in the Social-Democracy in the West, were to be found among the Bolsheviks. Their October insurrection not only in fact saved the Russian Revolution, but also saved the honour of international socialism...

In this last period, where we are on the eve of decisive battles in the entire world, the most important question for socialism has been and still is just the burning question of the day: not this or that detail of tactics, but the proletariat's capacity for action, the masses' drawing power, the will to take power in socialism generally. In this regard, Lenin and Trotsky, with their friends, were the first who went on ahead of the proletariat with their example, they are so far the only ones who can cry out, with Ulrich von Hutten — "I dared that!"

It is that which is the essential thing and it is what remains of the policy of the Bolsheviks. In this sense they retain the imperishable merit in history of having taken the lead of the international proletariat in winning political power and in raising in practice the problem of the attainment of socialism, as well as having mightily advanced the struggle between Capital and Labor in the world. In Russia the problem could only be raised; it could not be settled in Russia. And it is in that sense that the future belongs to "Bolshevism".

Rosa Luxemburg

Trotsky's Testament

— 27 February 1940

"For forty-three years of my conscious life I have remained a revolutionist; for forty-two of them I have fought under the banner of Marxism. If I had to begin all over again I would of course try to avoid this or that mistake, but the main course of my life would remain unchanged. I shall die a proletarian revolutionist, a Marxist, a dialectical materialist, and, consequently, an irreconcilable atheist. My faith in the communist future of mankind is not less ardent, indeed it is firmer today, than it was in the days of my youth.

"Natasha has just come up to the window from the courtyard and opened it wider so that the air may enter more freely into my room. I can see the bright green strip of grass beneath the wall, and the clear blue sky above the wall, and sunlight everywhere. Life is beautiful. Let the future generations cleanse it of all evil, oppression and violence, and enjoy it to the full."

Introduction

THE Russian revolution led by Leon Trotsky and his comrades ninety years ago was the greatest event in the history of the international working class. Ultimately that revolution and the working class power it established was crushed and defeated. The Bolsheviks knew and said that if the Russian Revolution did not spread to the advanced countries of Europe, then workers' power could not survive in Russia. They expected a bourgeois counter-revolution.

What happened, however, was a counter-revolution by a collectivist bureaucratic exploiting class, led and personified by Josef Stalin. That regime would last until 1991.

It wreacked havoc with socialism throughout most of the 20th century because, throughout the world, revolutionary workers believed the Stalinists when they claimed to be the living embodiment of the October revolution — which they had murdered.

The resistance to the Stalinist counter-revolution was led by Leon Trotsky, who fought to re-create an authentic communist movement. He failed in that because the tide of world politics flowed entirely against him.

By his death — 67 years ago, on 21 August 1940 — Trotsky had come to personify revolutionary Marxist politics. He fought to rebuild a movement able to lead the working class to power in the middle of the 20th century. What he achieved was to create a literature which embodies the politics of the October revolution and makes it accessible to those who came after him.

It is our work now to defend and extend those politics and that Bolshevik-Leninist political tradition. If we and others succeed in doing that it will be in great measure thanks to what Trotsky achieved in the October revolution together with Lenin and after Lenin's death in the 17 years of his battle against the Stalinist tide.

Samuel Ferguson wrote on the death of Thomas Davis, a mid 19th century Irish republican leader, that if his followers succeeded, "If God grant this, then under God, to Tomas Davis/Let the greater praise belong.

The god that does not exist can grant us nothing. We do it for ourselves. But when we have rebuilt a mass revolutionary working-class socialist movement then it is to Trotsky and his comrades that the greater praise will belong.

A life for socialism

Max Shachtman

THE disclosure [in Trotsky's diary of 1935] that Trotsky contemplated taking his own life, or, as he put it himself, reserved the right to determine the time of his death, will startle, perhaps even dismay, many who followed his rich and robust career.

Traditional opinion among revolutionists, especially among Marxists, has always run counter to such an extreme measure — the revolutionist does not have the right to deprive his cause of his services. There have been, it is true, numerous instances, especially in the course of the development of the Bolshevik revolution, where suicide occurred. The eminent poets, Yessenin, Mayakovsky, and Vladimir Piast, killed themselves. But not only poets. There were other Communist leaders who took the same course during the nightmare years of Stalin's rise to power and the destruction of the entire generation of the Revolution.

In virtually all these instances, however, despair — the feeling of hopelessness or disillusionment — was the fatal impulse. But every person who worked with Trotsky, or lived with him for some time, or knew him well, was impressed by his endurance and tenacity ("tenacity" was a word he favoured), above all by a profound optimism rooted both in his personality and in his doggedly held intellectual convictions. He never abandoned these

Every person who worked with Trotsky... was impressed... by a profound optimism rooted both in his personality and in his doggedly held intellectual convictions

convictions, indeed they are reiterated in his *Testament*. Despair was not in the nature of his spirit or his mind. Why then this unexpected statement in the *Testament*? A brief suggestion of his motivation, of the tumultuous and terrible events which led him to consider such a step, should illuminate. For it forces us to see his writings in the context of a tragically rich life.

All of Trotsky's conscious and adult existence was devoted to the cause of socialism. These forty-three years, beginning when he was eighteen in the revolutionary movement in the Ukraine and ending only a few weeks before his sixty-first birthday with the fatal blow of the assassin, can be roughly divided into three periods.

For twenty years he was engaged in combat against Tsarist absolutism; for six years he enjoyed in the new revolutionary state an authority and power second only to Lenin's; and for seventeen years he led an increasingly bitter opposition to the Stalinist regime, which succeeded to the power which he had so outstandingly helped to establish.

All these years were difficult ones, many of them harsh ones, some cruelly harsh. Trotsky possessed most extraordinary physical and intellectual capacities which can be measured by comparison with others of his revolutionary generation who were not known for frailty. But each new year made more urgent claims on his "reserves of moral strength" and in no one are they illimitable.

The period of struggle against Tsarism was difficult enough in itself, and wearing. But it was surely the easiest period of Trotsky's life. At nineteen he was arrested, and spent the next four years of his life in prison and as a deportee in Siberia. After flight, he spent two and a half years in Europe, where he met the exiled Lenin for the first time. Then in February, 1905, hearing the first whispers of the revolutionary stirrings in Russia, he returned secretly to his homeland, first to Kiev and then to St Petersburg. At that point, the young writer and agitator was elected, at the age of twenty-six, to the presidency of the first Soviet of Workers' Deputies. But with the dispersal of the Soviet, the fatal chain was fashioned anew: arrest, conviction, deportation to Obdorsk, just on the Polar Circle, nearly 1000 miles from any railway. But he never reached his destination, for he escaped and fled once more to Europe.

Trotsky was able to live for seven years in Vienna, and to publish a revolutionary newspaper in Russian. But then war came, and on August 3, 1914, he was forced to flee once again, this time under threat of internment. In this period, Trotsky carried on an unceasing struggle of opposition to the war, first from Zurich, then from France. Finally, after his expulsion from France and arrest and expulsion in Spain, he made his way to the United States. On March 27, 1917, a few months after he arrived in New York, he was on his way back to Russia and the Revolution. Fittingly enough, he was arrested by the British during his homeward voyage and imprisoned in a German war prisoners' camp at Amherst, Nova Scotia. It took a month of pressure from the Russian Provisional Government to secure his release.

Trotsky arrived in Petrograd on May 4, 1917. Seven months later he was to lead the Bolshevik insurrection to its victory, and to embark on a new period of his life. As a leader of the revolutionary state, by Lenin's side, he found infinitely more freedom of thought and action than in the days of struggle against Tsarism. But superior social forces began inexorably to reduce the possibilities of solving the new problems posed by a revolutionary victory limited to one land, and to a land of painful backwardness. Slowly at first, and then with increasing speed, the revolution which Trotsky led was crushed by the rise to power of Stalin. And after six brief years in the top leadership of the new state, he faced seventeen long years of unrelenting struggle, of exile, persecution of himself, his family, his political associates, seventeen years that were to be ended by an assassin in Mexico.

Beginning in 1923, Trotsky led a fight within the Russian Communist Party. It lasted for four years. On November 7, 1927, the tenth anniversary of the Revolution which he led and defended, he was obliged to leave the Kremlin and find shelter for his family in a tiny room belonging to Opposition friends. A week later, he and Gregory Zinoviev, first Chairman of the Communist International, were expelled from the Party. The next day, Trotsky's close personal friend, Adolph Yoffe, sick and near despair, killed himself as a protest against the regime and the expulsions which it had ordered. He was one of the first of a host of Trotsky's friends, comrades, and associates who were to be driven to their death or directly murdered by a regime whose calculated and merciless persecution of political adversaries and critics is unequalled in modern times.

In January, 1928, the restless, hunted life of exile began for Trotsky once again. First he was sent to Alma-Ata, a Russian city near the Chinese border, and from there he was deported to Turkey. Toward the end of his Turkish exile, there came a cruel blow. His first-born, Zinaida, sick and broken in spirit, took her life in Berlin. Her husband, Platon Volkov, a young Opposition militant, was arrested and deported and disappeared for ever. Trotsky's first wife, Alexandra Lvonva Sokolovsky-Bronstein, the woman who first introduced Trotsky to socialist ideas, was deported to a concentration camp where she was hounded to death. Trotsky's son Sergey, who had academic but no political interests or associations, was arrested on the charge of "poisoning the workers".

The grisly toll of the GPU continued to mount: it struck not only at Trotsky's family and friends, but at his secretaries, his political associates, at any one who was in any way close to him. And he moved from one country to another, to France, to Norway where Russian Government pressure succeeded in securing his expulsion, and finally to Mexico. But more, these were the years of the Moscow Trials, and one can only imagine the deep personal suffering which this terrible spectacle must have caused Trotsky. In Mexico, he learned that his son, companion, and political associate, Lyova, had died under suspicious circumstances during an operation in France. A few months later, the mutilated and decapitated body of his secretary, a young German revolutionist named Klement, was discovered floating in the Seine. Erwin Wolf, a young Czech who had been Trotsky's secretary in Norway, was kidnapped in the streets of Barcelona, where he had gone to enlist in the Spanish Loyalist cause. Perhaps the stiffest blow of all came in March 1938 when Kristian Georgevich Rakovsky was forced to stand up before a Moscow court during the Trials and to attack Trotsky with the accusation that he had had criminal relations with the German intelligence in 1921. Rakovsky was Trotsky's oldest and closest personal friend.

There is a limit to the endurance of the body and the nerves, said Trotsky in explaining why so many of the old revolutionists who had stood so staunchly for years could finally capitulate and even grovel before Stalin. The limit applied to this exceptional man as well, even if in exceptional dimensions. In the second French exile, there were the trip-hammer blows which have been only briefly described here.

The grisly toll of the GPU continued to mount: it struck not only at Trotsky's family and friends, but at his secretaries, his political associates

In Mexico, he was constantly guarded by his political comrades, and subject to such rigorous restrictions on his freedom that he could not even fully enjoy a holiday trip to the countryside, to say nothing of a ride to the centre of the city. He would never complain, least of all about his personal problems.

Thus, the arithmetic of Trotsky's life: at liberty, more or less, in Russia, under Tsarism and later under the Soviet regime, no more than twelve years of his life; in prison, in places of deportation in Russia, and in exile abroad in over a dozen different countries, thirty-one years of his life. In this context, what he wrote in his Testament is perhaps exceeded in remarkableness by the endurance he displayed, by the amazing power of will he was able to summon out of himself to overcome, if he could not vanquish, the ills and vicissitudes that beset him.

But Trotsky did not take his own life. On August 20 1940, an assassin of the GPU who had tricked his way into Trotsky's presence smashed Trotsky's skull with an Alpine pickaxe. For so much did Stalin fear this man that he could not rest in peace until the harrowed and hounded revolutionist, the bitter foe of the regime which had destroyed the Revolution, was murdered.

Trotsky's critics

Jean van Heijenoort

EVERYTHING that the liberals have written on Lenin is barren, revealing the limitations of their thinking rather than Lenin's genius. An even more difficult object study for them is Trotsky.

One of those who has attempted to explain Trotsky is Max Eastman. [The translator of many of Trotsky's works who knew Trotsky well].

Trotsky ended the introduction to his autobiography with these words: "To understand the causal sequence of events and to find somewhere in the sequence one's own place that is the first duty of a revolutionary." This duty Trotsky fulfiled to the utmost. For him (or for Lenin) the task of the biographer, just as that of its hero, is to "understand the sequence of events." Only then can the man's real place in history be found and his true role established.

Historical materialism does not deny the role of the individual in history nor the influence of the different aspects of his character. On the contrary, it reveals for the first time the mechanism of this process by recognising the individual as the representative of a class or a layer of a class. It thus provides a rational explanation of his historical role and at the same time establishes the limits of his activity. All the idealistic jargon about "heroes" loses its mystical and mystifying character. The trajectory described by each historical personality is the result of the interaction of the different social groups, each of which demands different qualifications from its representatives. Of these delicate relationships between a social group and its leaders, liberal thought grasps nothing; history becomes a mere backdrop for the hero, the liberal observer delves more and more deeply into the individual in order to discover his "secret" and that of the events.

The liberals insistently explain Stalinism as the product of some original sin of Bolshevism, Lenin's quasidiabolic invention. As for the defeat of the Left Opposition, from where could it spring if not from some "defect or weakness," as Eastman puts it, in Trotsky's character? He remained isolated, hence "he could not handle men." He was beaten, hence a "poorer politician never lived."

Hegel once observed that common sense, when unable to give an explanation, often takes refuge in the type of metaphysics which "explains" that opium causes sleep because of its "dormitive quality." Having separated the party or the individual from the historical development of the class struggle, the doctors of liberalism then observe them through the metaphysical spectacles of common sense. Thus to give rise to Stalinism, Bolshevism must contain a "dictatorial quality" and the fall of Trotsky can be explained only — obviously — by his lack of "political quality." How simple!

We are waiting to be told what this "political quality" is. Max Eastman merely points out to us two possible manifestations of this quality. The first would have been for Trotsky to "have gone into the factories with a few forthright speeches and raised every fighting revolutionist in Moscow and Leningrad against the Stalinist clique." In short, Trotsky should have made an insurrection. The second would have been to invite Kamenev, "who was his brother-in-law," to come take a cup of tea and "talk it over man to man." We leave it to Max Eastman's common sense to reconcile the armed insurrection against the Stalin-Zinoviev-Kamenev troika and the cup of tea with the same Kamenev.

An insurrection does not fall from the sky, even when there is someone to lead it. What are the indications that, in 1923 or later, the Soviet working masses were ready to revolt against the rising bureaucracy? An appeal to the masses against the party could have led only to an immense Kronstadt and prepared the entrance of the counter-revolutionary bourgeoisie. As for arousing the party against the bureaucratic tops, precisely this was the task undertaken by the opposition, but it had to begin with the work of educating and of gathering together cadres for this task. How can one speak of an armed insurrection when the opposition was in the minority even in the ranks of the party? How call on a party member to take gun in hand and fight in the street when in his party cell, under pressure of his superiors in the factory or office, through fatigue, through lack of confidence in the forces of the revolution, he voted for the apparatus?

But after all, didn't Trotsky have unequalled popularity in the army? This is true and there is little doubt that in 1923 it would have been very easy, with the help of the military apparatus, to disperse the troika — a matter of only a few hours and very little blood, if any. Here common sense seems to triumph. With such a simple operation all the degradation of Stalinism would have been avoided — and it was not even tried! But history makes a fool of common sense.

One cannot use the army like a sword which one puts back in its sheath once the operation is done. Any army which enters the political arena and assures the victory of one of the fighting factions proceeds to pay itself well. The prices would have been, for the officers corps, more security and more privileges. Instead of spreading chiefly through the party apparatus, then, the Thermidorian reaction would have spread through the military apparatus. Undoubtedly the regime would have had a different coloration than that of Stalin, but the fundamental political reality would have been the same and the process of degeneration probably more rapid. Citing the revolutionary integrity of Trotsky changes none of this. He would have found himself, the day after the Bonapartist coup d'etat, faced with the demands of an officers corps become conscious of its power in the country. He would then have had to capitulate to the officers, or, in resisting them, fall victim to one of their plots.

Kamenev (left) and Zinoviev

Indeed, the army is always a stronghold of bureaucratism. The Red Army was no exception. The military apparatus was not separated from the state apparatus by an air-tight partition, but was part of it, following the same process of degeneration. In 1921 the war was over, and the heroic epoch of the revolution was succeeded by the humdrum of daily existence. The difference between the two periods was even greater for the army than for the rest of the population, and could not fail to be reflected in its state of mind. Moreover, the army had been reduced from 5,300,000 men to 600,000 thus greatly increasing the specific weight of the remaining cadres. We must not forget that a not negligible fraction of these remaining cadres came from the Tsarist army.

The demobilised part of the army was also a strong factor in the bureaucratisation of the country. Many of the commanders, returning to their villages and provincial towns, found themselves placed, by their prestige and their experience, at the head of the local administration. There they often employed methods differing very little from the military command to which they were accustomed, and they integrated themselves very easily into the Stalinist apparatus. In face of these social realities the prestige of their former leader carried little weight.

IN July 1933 Trotsky was living near Royan; nearby lived a Communist worker, an old influential party member, dissatisfied with the Stalinist line. Lev Davidovitch desired to meet him. The enterprise was risky. His sojourn in France might have been compromised, but the desire to speak with a worker won out. So, one evening, with all possible precautions, this worker was brought into the workroom of Lev Davidovitch. The conversation soon turned to the defeat of the Russian Opposition. "How did you lose the power, comrade Trotsky ?" "Ah, you know, one does not lose power like one loses his pocket book." Then came an explanation which lasted long into the night.

Power is not a trophy presented to the most clever, but it is above all, through individuals, a relationship between the classes and their social layers. The leader, as a representative of a social group, defends the interests of that group more or less well. But if the position of the group changes, he loses his footing, is suspended in the air, powerless. Thus, on the 9th Thermidor, Robespierre, head of the government, appears before the Convention. The session is so tumultuous that he cannot speak and it is ended by a decree of arrest against him. The following day he is guillotined. Clearly, the forces which supported him were exhausted. Any explanation that would reduce the dynamics of the revolution to a comparison of the personal qualities of Robespierre and Barms would not get very far.

Never weary of accusing Trotsky of being a poor politician, the philistines rarely take the trouble to expound their own conception of politics. But their accusations show clearly that their lack of understanding of the relationship of the individual to the party, of the parties to the classes, reduces their conception to the most degraded form of politics, the art of personal combinations. Of course, this art is far from being unnecessary. But the first condition for its use is to know its limits. One can deceive men; one cannot deceive history. Stalin thought he could. In 1924 he was merely looking for a "surer" way for the revolution, thought he was avoiding danger by confining the revolution within the frontiers of the USSR and by building socialism in one country. This "ruse" led him to the terrible catastrophe of World War Two. The "impractical" theory of the permanent revolution was, on the other hand, full of profound realism. Likewise, one could not, in 1923, skip over the wave of Thermidorian reaction by such a "ruse" as an insurrection, a military coup d'etat or a cup of tea with "brother-in-law" Kamenev.

In July 1935 Lev Davidovitch was speaking of the France he was leaving: "There is truth in what the French say: politics is the science of proportion. Oh, for them it is the science of small proportions." Thus he described in a single word a striking characteristic of the French bourgeoisie. Then he continued: "To be exact one must say that politics is the science of perspectives." If one accepts this definition of politics — and this is the only valid one for Marxists — Trotsky was a great, a very great politician.

The defeat of the Left Opposition was too complete to allow us to attribute it to some tactical error of its leader. Naturally, this does not mean that events necessarily had to happen as they did. Numerous variants were possible, the general trend leaves little doubt. Trotsky's personal qualities have their importance in determining his place: it is not, by chance that he led the opposition and that Stalin was the agent of the reaction.

In 1926, when she still felt fairly close to Lenin's last ideas, Krupskaia declared: "If Ilyitch were alive, he would be in prison today." By these words she wished above all to denounce the lie of Stalin's so-called "Leninism" and to show the reality of the struggle, that of the bureaucratic reaction against the revolutionary wing. However, Krupskaia's words also seem to contain, in their own way, a reproach directed to the Left Opposition: if Lenin were alive, he would have led the struggle against the bureaucratisation of the Soviet state with such vigour that he would already have been in prison, while the opposition was still in the party. Surely we have the right to discern this criticism in Krupskaia's words, but in this case we must not forget the conclusion: Lenin himself could not have overcome the bureaucracy, "he would be in prison today."

To place the problem on the level of personal qualities alone leads, willy nilly, to a great exaggeration of the stature of Trotsky's adversaries. Thus, it is characteristic of liberal thought to confer some demoniacal power on Stalin when in reality Stalin's motivations were very simple and very narrow: the fear of revolutionary risk, the absence of perspectives, envy of a more brilliant rival, mediocrity and provincial grossness. But it was precisely these qualities that the apparatus required of its leader.

Does this mean that the struggle of the Left Opposition was futile? This mechanical and abstract way of posing the question betrays a fatalism foreign to Marxism. History does not give its verdict like an oracle. The relationship of forces can be determined only by the struggle itself. No one can measure in advance the depth and the duration of the reaction. A proletarian victory outside the USSR could have reopened the question. Above all there was the duty of assuring the revolutionary future. Where would we be without the struggle of the Left Opposition?

The great gift of Trotsky in dealing with men was that he knew how to mobilise them. He knew how to paint the grandeur of an aim, to inspire enthusiasm, to fortify the will. Lenin marvelled at Trotsky's ability to rally many technicians to the Soviet power, to inspire them with confidence and to win them over to work in defence of the country. In his last exile, in problems small or big, he knew how to gain the cooperation and the devotion of people who were not directly tied to him by ideas and who could expect no recompense of any kind. His secret, if one wishes to use the word, was always to demand of an individual the best in him. Trotsky addressed himself to the best in men, for on the rest, he knew, one can build nothing durable.

From *Fourth International*, August 1942

Trotsky's habits of work

Charles Cornell*

ONE must understand Trotsky's passionate devotion to the cause of the oppressed to appreciate the full import of his work. He hated the injustices and indignities forced on man with his whole being. His polemics against political opponents are not at all the brilliant stylistic exercises which his petty-bourgeois critics make them out to be. Nor did he dash them off with the literary glibness which they attribute to him. Trotsky's powerful and incisive writing merely reflects his ardent convictions in the struggle for the liberation of mankind. The barbs of his sharp pen were completely at one with his hatred of all that degraded humanity. The style was truly the man. He did not write with facility at all; his polished writing was the result of strenuous and lengthy application.

Although the Old Man considered himself a slow writer, his literary output was prodigious. A shelf five feet long could be filled with his published works prior to 1918 alone. The secretary who was with him in Prinkipo relates that he finished the three volumes of the History of the Russian Revolution in thirteen months. His writings testify not only to the extraordinary fertility of his brain, but to his remarkable self-discipline.

Knowing that his time was limited, that Stalin's order for his death would be executed before he had contributed all he could in the task of preparing the Fourth International, Trotsky worked indefatigably. It was a race against time in which he spared nothing of his tremendous energy.

As was characteristic of him in all things, he sought for preciseness of expression and scientific exactitude in his writing. After the Russian stenographer had transcribed his first draft LD would make corrections and revisions, cutting and pasting the manuscript until it was a long and continuous sheet. Part or all of the work was often revised and retyped several times, before he was satisfied with the final draft.

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LD, a master of self-discipline, bent every minute of his time to his will. Not a moment was wasted. He arose early, at about six in the morning, performed the chores in the yard, returned to his study and worked until breakfast. After breakfast he dictated letters and went on with his writing. Shortly before the noon meal he again took care of the animals. Unless some particularly urgent piece of work pressed for attention, he rested for an hour after lunch in accordance with the doctor's instructions. Sometimes at three in the afternoon a visitor would come and L.D. would spend an hour or so with him. Longer visits were infrequent, for his time was too limited.

Dinner was usually a lively meal during which L.D. engaged everyone in conversation and joked with members of the household.

Most of his time was spent within the structure L.D. often referred to as "the jail"; the routine of the day being repeated monotonously. On occasion, but less frequently as reports of a GPU concentration in Mexico reached us, he went on "picnics." These were actually expeditions to gather cactus for LD's collection. He especially admired this odd Mexican plant and as was typical of him, aspired to make his collection as nearly complete in its many varieties as possible.

He never undertook anything half-heartedly and his cactus collecting was no exception. On one occasion we accompanied some friends to Tamazunchale, a distance of about 360 kilometres from Coyoacan, in hopes of finding a special variety of cactus.

This wholeheartedness permeated his entire activity. It was visible in his soldierly bearing, in his lively stride, in his punctuality. Whether it was a meal, a trip or a meeting, he insisted that it begin on time. I recall a conference held in his study with some friends from New York at which some of the guards came in late. After the first one arrived, L.D. got up and locked the door, putting the key in his pocket. Each time one of the latecomers knocked at the door L.D. arose from his chair, walked to the door and let the guard in. It was a most effective demonstration.

* Cornell was a guard in Trotsky's household in Mexico. Taken from *Fourth International*, August 1944

How Trotsky saw himself

Anatoly V. Lunacharsky

I FIRST met Trotsky in 1905, after the event of January [when the Tsar's soldiers opened fire on a peaceful demonstration in St Petersburg]. He came to Geneva, I have forgotten whence, and was to speak with me at a big meeting called to discuss that tragedy.

I met him very little in the revolution of 1905. He held himself apart not only from us, but from the Mensheviks. His work was mainly in the Soviet of Workers' Deputies. . . .

I remember how somebody said in the presence of Lenin:

"Khristalev's [first President of the St Petersburg soviet] star has fallen, and the strong man in the Soviet now is Trotsky." Lenin sort of darkened for a minute, and then said: "Well, Trotsky won that with his tireless and fine work..."

Trotsky's popularity among the Petersburg proletariat up to the time of his arrest [December 1905] was very great, and it increased as a result of his extraordinarily picturesque and heroic conduct in court. I ought to say that Trotsky, of all the Social Democratic leaders of 1905 and 1906, undoubtedly showed himself, in spite of his youth, the most thoroughly prepared; least of all he wore the imprint of a certain emigrant narrowness, which, as I have said, impeded even Lenin at that time; he more than any other realised what a broad struggle for sovereignty really is. And he came out of the revolution with the greatest gain in popularity. Neither Lenin nor Martov made any essential gain. Plekhanov lost much in consequence of his half-cadet tendencies. Trotsky from that time stood in the front rank...

At the Stuttgart Congress of the International, Trotsky carried himself modestly, and advised us to, considering us all knocked out of the saddle by the reaction of 1906, and therefore unable to impose ourselves on the Congress.

Afterward Trotsky was allured by the conciliatory line, and the idea of the unity of the party. He occupied himself with this at various plenary sessions, and he dedicated his Vienna journal, Pravda, three-fourths to that perfectly hopeless idea...

I will say here immediately that Trotsky succeeded very badly in organising, not only a party, but even a little group...

For work in political groups Trotsky seemed little fitted, but in the ocean of historic events, where such personal features lose their importance, only his favourable side came to the front...

The chief external endowments of Trotsky are his oratorical gift and his talent as a writer. I consider Trotsky probably the greatest orator of our times. I have heard in my day all the great parliamentary and popular orators of socialism, and very many of the famous orators of the bourgeois world, and I should have difficulty in naming any of them, except Jaures, whom I might place beside Trotsky.

Effective presence, beautiful broad gesture, mighty rhythm of speech, loud, absolutely tireless voice, wonderful compactness, literariness of phrase, wealth of imagery, scorching irony, flowing pathos, and an absolutely extraordinary logic, really steel-like in its clarity— those are the qualities of Trotsky's speech. He can speak epigrammatically, shoot a few remarkably well-aimed arrows, and he can pronounce such majestic political discourses as I have heard elsewhere only from Jaures.

I have seen Trotsky talk for two and a half to three hours to an absolutely silent audience, standing on their feet, and listening as though bewitched to an enormous political treatise...

Trotsky is prickly, imperative. Only in his relations with Lenin after their union, he showed always a touching and tender yieldness. With the modesty characteristic of truly great men, he recognised Lenin's priority.

As a political man of wisdom, Trotsky stands on the same height that he does as an orator. And how could it be otherwise? The most skillful orator whose speech is not illuminated with thought is nothing but an idle virtuoso, and all his oratory is a tinkling cymbal... thought is absolutely necessary...

It is often said of Trotsky that he is personally ambitious. That is of course pure nonsense. I remember one very significant phrase spoken by Trotsky at the time when Chernov accepted a place in the Government: ""What contemptible ambitiousness — to abandon his historic position for a portfolio!" In that you have the whole of Trotsky. There is not a drop of vanity in him...

Lenin also is not the least bit ambitious. I believe that Lenin never looks at himself, never glances in the mirror of history, never even thinks of what posterity will say of him, simply does his work. He does his work imperiously, not because power is sweet to him, but because he is sure that he is right, and cannot endure to have anybody spoil his work. His love of power grows out of his tremendous sureness and the correctness of his principles, and, if you please, out of an inability (very useful in a political leader) to see from the point of view of his opponent...

In distinction from him, Trotsky often looks at himself. Trotsky treasures his historic role, and would undoubtedly be ready to make any personal sacrifice, not by any means excluding the sacrifice of his life, in order to remain in the memory of mankind with the halo of a genuine revolutionary leader. His love of power has the same character as Lenin's, with the difference that he is often capable of making mistakes, not possessing the almost infallible instinct of Lenin, and that, being a man of choleric temperament, he is capable, although only temporarily, of being blinded by passion, while Lenin. equable and always master of himself, hardly ever even gets into a fit of irritation.

You must not think, however, that the second great leader of the Russian revolution yields in all respects to his colleague; there are points in which Trotsky indubitably excels him: he is more brilliant, he is more clear, he is more motile. Lenin is perfectly fitted for sitting in the president's chair of the Soviet of People's Commissars, and guiding with genius the world revolution, but obviously he could not handle the titanic task which Trotsky took upon his shoulders, those lightning trips from place to place, those magnificent speeches, fanfares of instantaneous commands, that role of continual electrifier now at one point and now another of the weakening army. There is not a man on the earth who could replace Trotsky there.

When a really great revolution comes, a great people always find for every part a suitable actor, and one of the signs of the greatness of our revolution is that the Communist Party advanced from its midst, or adopted from other parties and strongly implanted in its body, so many able people suited to this and that governmental function.

Most of all suited to their parts are the two strongest of the strong — Lenin and Trotsky.

Since Lenin Died 1925

Lenin, Trotsky and Kamenev, 1919

The break with the Communist International

Jean van Heijenoort was for seven years (1932-9) Trotsky's secretary. Here he outlines the story of Trotsky's break with the Communist International and turn towards building a new international. His account of Trotsky's reasoning on the class nature of the USSR is an important element in the history of post-Lenin revolutionary Marxism.

Our movement has the right to consider itself the representative and the historical standard-bearer of revolutionary socialism. It is at the end of a chain whose links were the Communist League of Marx and Engels, the International Workingmen's Association (First International), the Second International, the Bolshevik party of Lenin, and the Communist International. But in order to establish the specific beginnings of our movement it is necessary to begin with the year 1923 in the USSR

The Left Opposition

THE October Revolution established the first workers' state, but remained isolated. "Without revolution in Europe," said Lenin repeatedly, "we shall perish." History verified the truth of his words, but in its own manner. Degeneration appeared in the apparatus itself of the new regime — the party that led the revolution to victory.

The resistance to corruption of the party came from Trotsky. The struggle began in the fall of 1923. On 8 October he sent a letter to the Central Committee and the Central Control Commission denouncing the stifling of the right of criticism on the part of party members. This is the first document of our movement.

Beginning with the question of the internal regime of the party, the struggle grew progressively to include all problems of revolutionary tactics and strategy. Outside of the USSR, opposition groups apeared in most of the sections of the Communist International. The connections of these groups among themselves, and with the Russian Opposition, remained precarious. Many of the groups arose in opposition to one of the aspects of Stalinist policy. Their political solidarity was far from complete. One group that proved of great importance for the future of our movement, the Left Opposition in the American communist party, appeared belatedly on the scene, in 1928.

The organisational cohesion of the International Left Opposition was not seriously undertaken until the time of Trotsky's expulsion from the USSR and his arrival in Turkey, in February 1929. The first international conference of the Left Opposition took place in Paris in 1930.

The policy of the Opposition in relation to the Communist International, both in its entirety as well as its various sections, had remained the same since 1923. In one word it was, reform. Although expelled by the faction in power, the Trotskyist groups considered themselves part of the International, its left faction, exactly as in each country each group considered itself a faction of the national Communist Party. Their objective was to convince the party membership of the correctness of their views, to win over the majority, and to set the organisation on the correct course. Toward the Bolshevik Party in the USSR the policy was essentially the same as toward any other section of the International. The name of the movement, Opposition, expressed and symbolised this policy.

A political document of a programmtic character, entitled The International Lelt Opposition — Its Tasks and Methods, was written by Trotsky in December 1932, immediately after his return to Prinkipo from Copenhagen, where he had had the opportunity of meeting about thirty of the most important leaders of the International Opposition. One chapter of this document was entitled "Faction — Not a Party." The perspective outlined there was the same as in the preceding year namely, the reform of the Communist International and of each of its sections. Nevertheless, a warning was sounded:

"Such an historical catastrophe as the fall of the Soviet State would surely drag along the Third International. Similarly, a victory of fascism in Germany and the crushing of the German proletariat would hardly allow the Comintern to survive the consequences of its ruinous policy."

One of these two warnings was soon to become a terrible reality. On January 30, 1933, Hindenburg, the constitutional head of the Weimar Republic, elected with the votes of the Social Democracy, called on Hitler to form a new cabinet.

For three years the Left Opposition had sounded the alarm at the rise of German fascism. In a series of articles and pamphlets, which in their clarity and revolutionary passion rank among the best products of his pen, Trotsky revealed the nature of fascism and showed the consequences of a fascist victory to the German workers, to the international labour movement, to the USSR, to Europe, and to the whole world. He also pointed to the means of combating this danger: the united front of the workers' parties, Communist and Social Democratic, for the active defense of workers' organisations against the Nazi vermin, a defensive struggle which, when successful, would become an offensive.

The Collapse of the German Communist Party

The leaders of the two official workers' parties vied with each other in their impotence in the face of the fascist menace. The Social Democratic leadership desperately grasped at a democracy which, in the midst of economic chaos and the sharpened social and political conflicts, was disowning itself. The Stalinists acted in line with the "genial" theory of their leader, that it was first necessary to crush the Social Democrats before fighting fascism. They had made common cause with the Nazis in the famous plebiscite in Prussia in August 1931. When the fascist menace became imminent, they clamored with braggadocio "After them will be our turn!"

When Hitler formed his government on January 30, 1933, not all was lost. The workers' organisations were still intact. In the following weeks the Nazis acted very cautiously. In February, Trotsky stated in a conversation: "The situation in Germany is similar to that of a man at the bottom of an abyss facing a stone wall. To get out it is necessary to clutch at the rocks with bare and bloody hands. It is necessary to have courage and will, but it is possible. Not all is lost."

The official leadership of the workers' parties allowed the last chance to slip by. In the face of their passivity, Hitler became more brazen. He had never hoped to win such an easy victory. At the beginning of March, the crude provocation of the Reichstag fire allowed him to definitely entrench his regime. The workers' organisations were swept away.

Trotsky's reaction was not long in coming. He wrote an article entitled *The Tragedy of the German Proletariat*. It was dated March 14, 1933 and had as a subtitle, "The German Workers Will Rise, Stalinism — Never!" The gist of the article ,as that, in Germany, the Communist Party failed in its historic mission, that it was doomed as a revolutionary organisation. Thus, there was no choice but to give up the policy of its reform and to proceed to build a new German Communist Party. When Trotsky wrote that Stalinism would not rise again, he meant Stalinism in Germany. As to the Communist parties in other lands, especially the Russian Bolshevik Party, and the Communist International viewed in its entirety, the line remained as before, that of reform.

In the weeks that followed other articles elaborated this position and answered the objections raised against it. In the ranks of the left

The problem was: how to discard the policy of reform of the Bolshevik Party and at the same time retain the perspective of reforming the workers' state.

Opposition, these objections were minimal. They came mostly from certain comrades in the German section, the one most directly concerned. These objections remained secondary or sentimental in character: maybe it would be better to wait before speaking about a new party while the official one is under the blows of bloody repressions, etc. But the lesson of the events was so clear that the need of a change in the old policy was not questioned seriously.

Yet when ones memory turns to that month of March 1933, it cannot be denied that the new policy was a surprise to the members of the Left Opposition. The daily activity of each of the sections was centered exclusively around the Communist Party; and to develop a new line, even if it were for only one of our sections, was to break with a tradition of ten years standing. The great authority of Trotsky made it possible to bring about the change in line rapidly and with cohesion. Without him, the lessons of the events in Germany would have surely been learned in our ranks, but after how many months of discussion?

The problem of the Third International in its totality could not fail to be posed. After the collapse of the German Communist Party, the executive committee of the International passed in April a resolution which declared that the policy followed by the German Communist Party "up to and at the time of Hitler's coup d'etat was fully correct."

This is not astonishing: the executive committee under the orders of Stalin merely covered Stalin, who imposed his fatal political line on the German Communist Party. But the decisive fact was that all the sections of the International accepted the Moscow resolution and thus became equally responsible for the historical catastrophe in Germany. The members who denounced the line that had been followed, or merely questioned it, were expelled. The policy of reform was losing all reality.

On July 15, 1933, Trotsky addressed to the sections of the Opposition an article entitled *It is necessary to build new Communist parties and an International*. Here the perspective of reform was definitely abandoned. After the lessons of the events, the turn was decisive: "talk of 'reform' and the demand of readmission of the oppositionists into the official parties must be definitely given up, as utopian and reactionary," he wrote. And he took this opportunity to give general and valuable advice: "The most dangerous thing in politics is to become a prisoner of your own formula, which was appropriate yesterday, but is deprived of any content today."

On July 20th a second article entitled, "It is no longer possible to stay in the same 'International' with Stalin, Manuilsky, Lozovsky and Co", answered possible arguments against the new position.

The change in policy coincided with the change in Trotsky's residence. On July 17th, he left Istanbul, and on the 24th he landed in Marseilles. Next day he settled himself near Saint. Palais, on the Atlantic seaboard. It was a big change in his personal life. While on the island of Prinkipo, the arrival of a visitor was a little event every four or six months; in France Trotsky was able in the following few weeks to meet with practically all leading members of the European opposition groups, and with quite a few from overseas.

When Trotsky landed in Marseilles, the translation of his first article on the need of a new International had hardly reached the leadership of the various sections. The leading Trotskyists of France, Belgium, Germany, Italy, etc., soon took the road to Saint-Palais, and there in Trotsky's study, or under the trees of the garden, participated in lengthy discussions. Opposition to the new orientation was practically non-existent. The turn to a new party in Germany three months before, had broken with a long tradition and opened new perspectives. The discussions did not deal so much with the need of a new International, but rather with the ways and means of bringing it about: how to build it, how to build new parties?

The New International

A few voices raised the question: havn't we waited too long? Shouldn't we have recognised the need of a new International much sooner? To this Trotsky answered: "This is a question we may well leave to the historians." He was undoubtedly profoundly convinced that the change in the policy would have been incorrect several years sooner, but he refused to discuss this question because it was no longer of practical and immediate interest.

One question that took up a large share of the discussion was that of the USSR. It is worth while examining how it was posed then. The document of December 1932 that we have already mentioned, and which still followed the line of reform, had stated:

"Sharper and brighter is this question [of reform]. In the USSR The policy of the second party there would imply the policy of armed insurrection and a now revolution. The policy of the faction implies the line of inner reform of the party and the workers' state."

In the article of April 1933 which pointed out the need of a new party in Germany, but at the same time retained the policy of reform of the Communist International, Trotsky wrote:

"If the Stalinist bureaucracy will bring the USSR to collapse, then... It will be necessary to build a Fourth International."

The problem was: how to discard the policy of reform of the Bolshevik Party and at the same time retain the perspective of reforming the workers' state? How to proclaim the Fourth International before the Stalinist bureaucracy has led the USSR to its collapse?

The problem of the USSR was the greatest obstacle in Trotsky's mind before reaching the conclusion that there remained no other alternative than to form a Fourth International. Shortly before his article of July 15, he said in a conversation at Prinkipo: "Since April, we have been for reform in all countries except Germany, where we are for a new party. Now we can take a symmetrical position, i.e., in favor of a new party in every country except the USSR, where we will be for reform of the Bolshevik Party." (This position, as far as I know, was never put into writing.) But it was clear to his listeners that his ideas on this matter were only in the process of formation and that they had not yet reached their conclusion.

The solution of this problem is, as is well known now, the distinction between a social revolution and a political revolution. This solution was already outlined in the first documents, in July, which speak about the need of a new International.

ON the other hand, in the summer of 1933, the discussions around the nature of the USSR were numerous: not only was Stalinism bankrupt in Germany, but the first economic experiences of Hitler, Roosevelt, as well as the Italian corporate state, gave rise on all aides to theories of "State capitalism."

Trotsky then clarified his position toward the USSR in a long article entitled, *The Class Nature of the Soviet State*, dated October 1, 1933. This article definitely eliminates the perspective of a peaceful removal of the bureaucracy, and clarifies the formulas used in the July documents on the new International. In the main this is the position we have maintained to the present. (On the question of an historical analogy with Thermidor, a correction was made in February 1935.)

Another question required a good deal of attention in the discussions at Saint-Palais: that of our relation toward other organizations. The Left Opposition had its attention focused exclusively on the various Communist parties. Our organisation was made up, with a few rare exceptions, only of expelled members of Communist parties or Young Communist leagues. All our activity was subordinated to the perspective of reform.

All the perspectives [of regroupment with non-Comintern organisation] gradually revealed themselves to be empty, unrealistic, with the exception of one: to create a new International. The formal founding of the Fourth International took place five years later, in 1938.

The Fourth International's progress has been slow, always too slow for our hopes. It was born amidst the defeats provoked by the old official organizations of the working class. While a defeat will stir the best elements of the van. guard to examine its causes and to build a better organization, its effect on the clan as a whole is one of disorientation, discouragement and passivity. It takes years and years to eradicate its marks; a new generation which has not known cynicism must raise its head.

We have found in our path the putrid corpse of the Comintern, an organisation which has utilized the immense prestige of the victorious Russian Revolution precisely to disorientate, disorganize and crush, where necessary, the revolutionary emancipation of the working class.

Tomorrow tens and hundreds of millions will rise to demand an accounting from the old order, which generated oppression, misery and wars. Gaining consciousness of their strength, they will cast aside their false leaders, the perfidious agents of the enemy. They will need a stainless banner. There is only one: ours, the banner of the Fourth International, of the World Party of the Socialist Revolution.

Fourth International, August 1944

Trotsky and the Red Army in the Civil War

By Larissa Reissner

Trotsky with troops at the Polish border

ON August 6 (1918) numerous hastily organised Red regiments fled from Kazan; and the best among them, the class-conscious section, clung to Svyazhsk, halted there and decided to make a stand and fight. By the time the mobs of deserters fleeing from Kazan had almost reached Nizhny Novgorod, the dam erected at Svyazhsk had already halted the Czechoslovaks; and their general who tried to take the railroad bridge across the Volga by storm was killed during the night attack. Thus in the very first clash between the Whites who had just taken Kazan and consequently were stronger in morale and equipment, and the core of the Red Army seeking to defend the bridgehead across the Volga, the head of the Czechoslovak offensive was lopped off. They lost their most popular and gifted leader in General Blagodch. Neither the Whites, flushed by their recent victory, nor the Reds rallying round Svyaszhsk had any inkling of the historical importance that their initial trial skirmishes would have.

It is extremely difficult to convey the military importance of Svyazhsk. Much has already been forgotten by me; faces and names flit by as in a fog. But there is something that no one will ever forget and that is: the feeling of supreme responsibility for holding Svyazhsk. This was the bond between all its defenders from a member of the Revolutionary Military Council to the last Red rank and filer in desperate search for his somewhere extant, retreating regiment, who suddenly turned back and faced Kazan in order to fight to the last, with worn-out rifle in hand and fanatic determination in his heart. The situation was understood by everyone as follows: Another step backward would open the Volga to the enemy down to Nizhny (Novgorod) and thus the road to Moscow.

Further retreat meant the beginning of the end; the death sentence on the Republic of the Soviets.

How correct this is from a strategic point of view, I know not. Perhaps the Army if rolled back even further might have gathered into a similar fist on one of the innumerable black dots which speckle the map and thenceforth carried its banners to victory. But indubitably it was correct from the standpoint of morale. And insofar as a retreat from the Volga meant a complete collapse at that time, to that extent the possibility of holding out, with one's back against the bridge, imbued us with a real hope.

The ethics of the revolution formulated the complex situation succinctly as follows: To retreat is to have the Czechs in Nizhny and in Moscow. No surrender of Svyazhak and the bridge means the reconquest of Kazan by the Red Army.

The Arrival of Trotsky's Train

It was, I believe, either on the third or fourth day after the fall of Kazan that Trotsky arrived at Svyazhsk. His train came to a determined stop at the little station; his locomotive panted a little, was uncoupled, and departed to drink water, but did not return. The cars remained standing in a row as immobile as the dirty straw-thatched peasant huts and the barracks occupied by the Fifth Army's staff. This immobility silently underscored that there was no place to go from here, and that it was impermissible to leave.

Little by little the fanatical faith that this little station would become the starting point for a counter-offensive against Kazan began to take on the shape of reality.

Every new day that this God-forsaken, poor railway siding held out against the far stronger enemy, added to its strength and raised its mood of confidence. From somewhere in the rear, from far-off villages in the hinterland, came at first soldiers one by one, then tiny detachments, and finally military formations in a far better state of preservation.

I see it now before me, this Svyazhsk where not a single soldier fought "under compulsion." Everything that was alive there and fighting in self-defense — all of it was bound together by the strongest ties of voluntary discipline, voluntary participation in a struggle which seemed so hopeless at the outset.

Human beings sleeping on the floors of the station house, in dirty huts filled with straw and broken glass — they hardly hoped for success and consequently feared nothing. The speculation on when and how all this "would end" interested none. "Tomorrow" simply did not exist; there was only a brief, hot, smoky piece of time: Today. Amd one lived on that as one lives in harvest time.

Morning, noon, evening, night — each single hour was prolonged to the utmost count; every single hour had to be lived through and used up to the last second. It was necessary to reap each hour carefully, finely like ripe wheat in the field is cut to the very root. Each hour seemed so rich, so utterly unlike all of previous life. No sooner did it vanish than in recollection it seemed a miracle. And it was a miracle.

Planes came and went, dropping their bombs on the station and the railway cars; machine guns with their repulsive barking and the calm syllables of artillery, drew nigh and then withdrew again, whilst a human being in a torn military coat, civilian hat, and boots with toes protruding — in short, one of the defenders of Svyazhsk —would smilingly produce a watch from his pocket and bethink himself:

"So that's what it is now — 1:30 or 4:30 o'clock. Or, it is 6:20. Therefore I am still alive. Svyazhsk holds. Trotsky's train stands on the rails. A lamp now flickers through the window of the Political Department. Good. The day is ended."

Medical supplies were almost completely absent at Svyazbsk. God knows what the doctors used for bandages. Poverty shamed no one; nor did anyone stand in fear of it. Soldiers on their way with soup kettles to the field kitchen passed by stretchers with the wounded and the dying. Death held no terrors. It was expected daily, always. To lie prone in a wet army coat, with a red splotch on a shirt, with an expressionless face, a muteness that was no longer human — this was something taken for granted.

Brotherhood! Few words have been so abused and rendered pitiful. But brotherhood does come sometimes, in moments of direst need and peril, so selfless, so sacred, so unrepeatable in a single lifetime. And they have not lived and know nothing of life who have never lain at night on a floor in tattered and lice-ridden clothes, thinking all the while how wonderful is the world, infinitely wonderful! That here the old has been overthrown and that life is fighting with bare hands for her irrefutable truth, for the white swans of her resurrection, for something far bigger and better than this patch of star-lit sky showing through the velvet blackness of a window with shattered panes — for the future of all mankind.

Once in a century contact is made and new blood is transfused. These beautiful words, these words, almost inhuman in their beauty, and the smell of living sweat, the living breath of others sleeping beside you on the floor. No nightmares, no sentimentalities but tomorrow the dawn will come and Comrade G., a Czech Bolshevik, will prepare an omelet for the whole "gang"; and the Chief of Staff will pull on a shaggy stiffly frozen shirt washed out last night. A day will dawn in which someone will die, knowing in his last second that death is only something among many other things, and not the main thing at all; that once again Svyazhsk has not been taken and that the dirty wall is still inscribed with a piece of chalk: "Workers of the World Unite!"

Against the Stream

The rainy August days thus passed one by one. The thin, poorly equipped lines did not fall back; the bridge remained in our hands and from the rear, from somewhere far away, reinforcements began to arrive.

Real telephone and telegraph wires began to attach themselves to autumn spider-webs flying in the winds and some kind of enormous, cumbersome, lame apparatus began to operate on the God-forsaken railway station — Svyazhsk, this tiny, hardly discernible black dot on the map of Russia, at which in a moment of flight and despair, the revolution had clutched. Here all of Trotsky's organizational genius was revealed. He managed to restore the supply lines, got new artillery and a few regiments through to Svyazhsk on railways that were being openly sabotaged; everything needed for the coming offensive was obtained. In addition, it ought to be borne in mind that this work had to be done in the year 1918, when demobilization was still raging, when the appearance on the Moscow streets of a single well dressed detachment of the Red Army would create a real sensation. After all, it meant to swim against the stream, against the exhaustion of four years of war, against the spring floods of the revolution which swept through the whole country the debris of Czarist discipline and wild batred of anything resembling the bark of old officers' commands, the barracks, or old army life.

Despite all this, supplies appeared before our very eyes. Newspapers arrived, boots and overcoats came. And wherever they actually hand out boots, and for keeps, there you will find a really solid army staff; there things are stable; there the army stands firmly intrenched and has no thought of fleeing. That's no joking matter, boots!

The Order of the Red Flag was not yet in existence in the era of Svyazhsk, else it would have been issued to hundreds. Everybody, including the cowardly and the nervous and the simply mediocre workers and Red Army men — everybody, without a single exception, performed unbelievable, heroic deeds; they outdid themselves, like spring streams overflowing their banks they joyfully flooded their own normal levels.

The men who did it

In Svyazhsk Trotsky, who was able to give the newborn Army a backbone of steel, who himself sank roots into the soil refusing to yield an inch of ground no matter what happened, who was able to show this handful of defenders a calmness icier than theirs — in Svyazhsk, Trotsky was not alone. Gathered there were old party workers, future members of the Revolutionary Military Council of the Republic, and of the Military Councils of the several Armies to whom the future historian of the Civil War will refer as the Marshals of the Great Revolution. Rosengoitz and Gussev, Ivan Nikitich Smirnov, Kobozev, Mezhiauk, the other Smirnov, and many other comrades whose names I no longer recall. From among the sailors, I remember Raskoinikov and the late Markin.

Rosengoitz in his railway car almost from the very first day sprouted the office of the Revolutionary Military Council; extruded maps and rattled typewriters — obtained God knows where — in short, he began building up a strong, geometrically perfect organisational apparatus, with precise connections, indefatigable working capacity and simple in scheme.

In the days to come, whatever the Army or the front, wherever the work began to sputter, Rosengoltz was immediately brought in like a queen-bee in a sack, placed into the disturbed bee hive and would immediately proceed to build, organize, forming cells, buzzing over the telegraph wires. Despite the military overcoat and enormous pistol in his belt, nothing martial could be discerned in his figure, nor in his pale, slightly soft face. His tremendous force did not lie in this field at all, but rather in his natural ability to renew, establish connections, raise the tempo of a halting, infected bloodstream to an explosive speed. At the side of Trotsky he was like a dynamo, regular, well-oiled, noiseless, with powerful levers moving day after day, spinning the untearable web of organisation.

I do not recall just what kind of work I. N. Smirnov officially performed in the staff of the Fifth Army. Whether he was a member of the Revolutionary Military Council or at the same time also head of the Political Department; but apart from all titles and frameworks he embodied the ethics of the revolution. He was the highest moral criterion; the communist conscience of Svyazhsk.

No one commanded so much respect as Ivan Nikitich. Everyone felt that in the worst moment he would be the strongest and most fearless.

With Trotsky — it was to die in battle after the last bullet had been fired; to die enthusiastically, oblivious of wounds. With Trotsky — it was the sacred pathos of struggle; words and recalling the best pages of the Great French Revolution with Comrade Smirnov (so it seemed to us at the time we spoke in whispers to each other as we huddled close on the floor during those already cold autumnal nights) -- Comrade Smirnov: this was pure calm when "up against the wall"; or when being grilled by the Whites; or a filthy prison hole. Yes, that is how one talked about him at Svyazhsk.

It is a fascinating spectacle to observe the profound inner process taking place in people who arrive at a revolutionary front. They catch fire like a straw roof lit on all four sides and then on cooling off become transformed into a fire-proof perfectly clear and uniform piece of cast iron.

Youngest of all was Mezhlauk Valerian Ivanovich. He had particularly hard time. His younger brother and wife had remained behind in Kazan and, according to rumor, had been shot. Later it turned out that his brother actually had died there, while his wife suffered indescribably. It was not customary to complain or talk about one's misfortunes at Svyazbsk. And Mezhlauk kept an honest silence, did his work, and walked through the sticky autumn mud in his long cavalry coat, all of him concentrated on one burning point: Kazan.

Meanwhile the Whites began to sense that with its strengthened resistance, Svyazhsk was growing into something great and dangerous.

Intermittent skirmishes and attacks came to an end; a regular siege, with large organized forces on all sides was started. But they had already let slip the propitious moment.

The Whites advance

But precisely at a time when the entire Fifth Army was tensely poised for the attack, when its main forces at last began pushing forward under constant counter-attacks and many heavy day-long battles, three "luminaries" of White Guard Russia got together in order to put an end to the protracted epic of Svyazhsk. Savinkov, Kappel and Fortunatov at the head of a considerable force undertook a desperate raid against a railroad station adjoining Svyazhsk, in order in this way to capture Svyazhsk itself and the Volga bridge. The raid was brilliantly executed; after making a long detour, the Whites suddenly swooped down on the station Shikhrana, shot it to pieces, seized the station buildings, cut the connections with the rest of the railway line and burned a munition train stationed there. The small defending force at Shikhrana was slaughtered to the last man.

Nor is this all; they literally hunted down and extirpated every living thing in this little station. I had the opportunity to see Shikhrana a few hours after the raid. It bore the stigma of the completely irrational pogrom violence that stamped all the victories of these gentlemen who never felt themselves the masters and future inhabitants of the soil accidentally and temporarily conquered.

In a courtyard, a cow lay bestially murdered (I say murdered advisedly, not slaughtered) ; the chicken coop was filled senselessly with chickens riddled in all too human a fashion. The well, the little vegetable garden, the water tower and the houses were treated as if they had been captured human beings and, moreover, Bolsheviks and "sheenies". The intestines had been ripped out of everything. Animals and inanimate objects sprawled everywhere, decimated, violated, ugly-dead. Alongside this horrible shambles of everything that once had been a human habitation, the indescribable, unutterable death of a few railway employees and Red Army men caught by surprise appeared quite in the nature of things.

Only in Goya's illustrations of the Spanish campaign and guerrilla war can a similar harmony be found of wind-swept trees bending low beneath the weight of hanged men, of dust on roadways, of blood and stones.

From the station Shikhrana, the Savinkov detachment turned toward Svyazhsk, moving along the railroad. We sent our armored train, "Free Russia", to meet them. So far as I am able to recall, it was armed with long range naval guns. Its commander, however, did not rise to the level of his task. Being surrounded on two sides (so it appeared to him), he left his train and rushed back to the Revolutionary Military Council in order "to report."

In his absence "Free Russia" was shot to pieces and burned. Its black, burning hulk lay derailed for a long time beside the roadbed very close to Svyazhsk.

After the destruction of the armoured train the road to the Volga seemed completely open. The Whites stood directly beneath Svyazhsk, some 11/2 to 2 versts away from the Fifth Army's headquarters. Panic ensued. Part of the Political Department, if not all of it, rushed to the piers and aboard the steam boats.

The regiment, fighting virtually on Volga's banks but higher upstream, wavered and then fled with its commanders and commissars. Toward morning, its maddened detachments ,vere found aboard the staff ships of the Volga war fleet.

In Svyazhsk only the Fifth Army staff with its officer, and the train of Trotsky remained.

How Svyazhsk was saved

Lev Davidovich mobilized the entire personnel of the train, all the clerks, wireless operators, hospital workers, and the guard commanded by the Chief of Staff of the fleet, Comrade Lepetenko, in a word, everyone able to bear a rifle.

The staff offices stood deserted; there was no "rear" any longer. Everything was thrown against the Whites who had rolled almost flush to the station. From Shikhrana to the first houses of Svyazhsk the entire road was churned up by shells, covered with dead horses, abandoned weapons and empty cartridge shells. The closer to Svyazhsk, all the greater the havoc. The advance of the Whites was halted only after they had leaped over the gigantic charred skeleton of the armored train, still smoking and smelling of molten metal. The advance surges to the very threshold, then rolls back boiling like a receding wave only to fling itself once more against the hastily mobilized reserves of Svyazhsk. Here both sides stand facing each other for several hours, here are many dead.

The Whites then decided that they had before them a fresh and well organised division of whose existence even their intelligence service had remained unaware. Exhausted from their 48-hour raid, the soldiers tended to overestimate the strength of the enemy and did not even suspect that opposing them was only a hardly thrown together handful of fighters with no one behind them except Trotsky and Slavin sitting beside a map in a smoke-filled sleepless room of the deserted headquarters in the center of depopulated Svyazhsk where bullets were whisking through the streets.

Throughout this night, like all the previous ones, Lev Davidovich's train remained standing there as always without its engine. Not a single section of the Fifth Army advancing on Kazan and about to storm it was bothered that night or diverted from the front to cover a virtually defenseless Svyazhsk. The army and the fleet learned about the night attack only after it was all over, after the Whites were already in retreat firmly convinced that almost a whole division was confronting them.

The next day 27 deserters who had fled to the ships in the most critical moment were tried and shot. Among them were several communists. Much was later said about the shooting of these 27, especially in the hinterland, of course, where they did not know by how thin a thread hung the road to Moscow and our entire offensive against Kazan, undertaken with our last means and forces.

To begin with, the whole army was agog with talk about communists having turned cowards; and that laws were not written for them; that they could desert with impunity, while an ordinary rank and filer was shot down like a dog.

If not for the exceptional courage of Trotsky, the army commander and other members of the Revolutionary Military Council, the prestige of the communists working in the army would have been impaired and lost for a long time to come.

No fine speeches can make it sound plausible to an army suffering every possible privation in the course of six weeks, fighting practically with bare hands, without even bandages, that cowardice is not cowardice and that for guilt there may be "extenuating circumstances."

It is said that among those shot were many good comrades, some even whose guilt was redeemed by their previous services, by years in prison and exile. Perfectly true. No one contends that they perished in order to prop up those precepts of the old military code of "setting an example" when amidst the beating of drums "an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth" were exacted. Of course, Svyazhsk is a tragedy.

But everyone who has lived the life of the Red Army life, who was born and grew strong with it in the battles of Kazan, will testify that the iron spirit of this army would have never crystallized, that the fusion between the party and the soldier masses, between the rank and file and the summits of the commanding staff would have never been realized if, on the eve of storming Kazan where hundreds of soldiers were to lose their lives, the party had failed to show clearly before the eyes of the whole army that it was prepared to offer the Revolution this great and bloody sacrifice, that for the party, too, the severe laws of comradely discipline are binding; that the party, too, has the courage to apply ruthlessly the laws of the Soviet Republic to its own members as well.

Twenty-seven were shot and this filled in the breach which the famous raiders had succeeded in making in the self-confidence and unity of the Fifth Army. This salvo which exacted punishment from communists as well as commanders and simple soldiers for cowardice and dishonor in battle forced the least class-conscious section of the soldier mass and the one most inclined toward desertion (and of course there was such a action, too) to pull themselves together, and to align themselves with those who went consciously and without any compunction into battle.

Precisely in these days was decided the fate of Kazan, and not that alone but the fate of the entire White intervention. The Red Army found its self-confidence and became regenerated and strong during the long weeks of defense and offense.

In conditions of constant danger and with the greatest moral exertions it worked out its laws, its discipline, its new heroic statutes. For the first time, panic in the face of the enemy's more modern technique became dissolved. Here one learned to make headway against any artillery; and involuntarily, from the elemental instinct of self-preservation, new methods of warfare were born, those specific battle methods which are already being studied in the highest military academies as the methods of the Civil War. Of extreme importance is the fact that in those days in Svyazhsk there was precisely such a man as Trotsky.

Trotsky's Role

No matter what his calling or his name, it is clear that the creator of the Red Army, the future Chairman of the Revolutionary Military Council of the Republic, would have had to be in Svyazhsk; had to live through the entire practical experience of these weeks of battle; had to call upon all the resources of his will and organizational genius for the defense of Svyazhsk, for the defense of the army organism smashed under the fire of the Whites.

Moreover, in revolutionary war there is still another force, another factor without which victory cannot be gained, and that is: the mighty romanticism of the Revolution which enables people straight from the barricades to cast themselves immediately in the harsh forms of the military machine, without losing the quick, light step gained in political demonstrations or the independent spirit and flexibility gained perhaps in long years of party work under illegality.

To have conquered in 1918 one had to take all the fire of the revolution, all of its incandescent heat, and harness them to the vulgar, repellent age-old pattern of the army.

Up till now history has always solved this problem with imposing but moth-eaten theatrical tricks. She would summon to the stage some individual in a "three-cornered hat and a gray field uniform" and he or some other general on a white horse would cut the revolutionary blood and marrow into republics, banners, slogans.

In military construction, as in so many other things, the Russian Revolution went its own way. Insurrection and war fused into one, the Army and the Party grew together, insep. arably interwoven, and on the regimental banners were inscribed the unity of their mutual aims, all the sharpest formulas of the class struggle. In the days of Svyazhsk all this remained as yet unformed, only hanging in the air, seeking for expression.

The Workers' and Peasants' Army had to find expression somehow; it had to take on its outward shape, produce its own formulas, but how? This no one clearly knew yet. At that time, of course, no precepts, no dogmatic program were available in accordance with which this titanic organism could grow and develop.

Trotsky's great merit lies in this, that he caught up in flight the least gesture of the masses which already bore upon it the stamp of this sought-for and unique organizational formula.

He sifted out and then set going all the little practices whereby besieged Svyazhsk simplifed, hastened or organized its work of battle. And this, not simply in the narrow technical sense. No. Every

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Trotsky addresses the Red Army

The Trotsky I knew

Max Shachtman produced these memoirs in the early 1960s

THE first time that I saw Trotsky was in Moscow, in 1927, and then only by accident. I had been delegated to Moscow by the American party and by the International Labor Defense Organization for which I was working at the time to attend the meeting of MOPR, which were the Russian initials for International Red Aid of which the ILD was the American section, and to attend for the party the plenary meeting of the executive committee of the Communist International. Actually it was Cannon who was to be the delegate to both these meetings, but at the last minute for reasons that were connected with the factional struggle that was going on in the American party, he was unable to go, and I went in his place.

I recall this rather vividly, although it was an absolutely trivial episode. I had been walking from the building of the Comintern near the Red Square to the Hotel Lux on Tverskaya, the hotel where the foreign delegates were in those days principally housed, and my walking companion was the secretary of the Young Communists International, whom I had already met before in 1925, and who was in the youth movement the right-hand man of Zinoviev and of the Zinoviev group. By that time the Zinovievists and the Trotskyists had come together in the so-called united opposition bloc, and during the walk Vuyovitch was trying to enlist my sympathies and support for the opposition bloc. I cannot honestly say that I was listening too intently to his arguments, although my attitude towards him was personally very friendly. I admired him very much; he was already a revolutionist of considerable experience and high standing, although, like Zinoviev, he was already removed from official positions in the international Communist movement.

What is important in connection with Trotsky is that as we were standing in front of the hotel, Trotsky was being driven down the street in his automobile, and he was pointed out to me by Vuyovitch. I noticed also that there was a murmur among the passers-by, all of whom noticed Trotsky or pointed to him seated in the automobile. That was my first and only sight of Trotsky in Russia.

Like practically all the American Communists, I was preoccupied with the factional situation in the American party, and my interest in the Russian faction fight was subordinated to that consideration. And again, like all American Communists, we had simply taken a formal position for the so-called "old guard" and against the Trotskyist opposition, and we were ready to let it go at that. We didn't begin to realize the significance for the Communist movement as a whole all over the world of the struggle that was going on inside the Russian Communist party. That was the first time that I saw Trotsky.

The first time that I met him was in Turkey in 1929, 1930. We had of course by that time already been expelled for Trotskyism from the American Communist movement, and we had finally managed to organise at the Chicago convention of the expelled Communists the formal national Trotskyist organisation which we called the Communist Party of America (Opposition).

TROTSKY always seemed to give the impression of being very tall although actually he was not. He was a very solid figure of a man, large-framed, large-chested. And that together with that leonine head that everybody commented upon made him look much bigger than he actually was. It didn't take me very long to see that all of the malicious legends about him were absolutely groundless. There was no vanity at all in his bearing. He didn't act or strut or try to impress you with the fact that he was the great revolutionary leader and great military commander that he'd been in the days of the revolution. Life in the household was exceedingly simple. It was altogether modest. The appointments in the house could not have been more spare. The food in the house could not have been more simple, more ordinary.

One of the first things I observed, since I myself tend to be somewhat sloppy in my work habits, was that Trotsky was exceptionally economical about his time. You might almost say that every minute of the day was rigidly allocated to the work that he was involved in. He was a very hard and systematic and efficient worker, and he liked to see others work in the same way. There was no time at all for idle gossip or even simply relaxing and talking in a general, loose and pointless sort of way. He was an exceedingly well-organised worker, a highly efficient administrator, so to speak. He was an early riser, and after breakfast he would immediately start his work in his study until lunchtime, after which he would relax on the sofa for an hour or two, and there he would take a nap or he would simply read for relaxation some German or Russian or French literature, sometimes Schiller, sometimes the latest of the French novels that were sent to him by friends in France, some new edition of Sigmund Freud, whom he read very extensively and whom he admired enormously. I noticed that he would mark off and annotate page after page of Freud during this siesta period, and after an hour or two he would resume work at his desk, either writing or dictating letters to comrades and groups throughout the world to Frank or to myself.

I don't want to convey the impression that life was monastic there. Trotsky had a very great passion for hunting and fighting. There was no possibility to go hunting in Turkey, but he did like to go fishing in the Sea of Marmara. During these fishing expeditions we would have some hilarious times. I had never seen fishing of that sort in my life. The four of us would get into the fishing barque, which was under the management of Kharalambos. There would be Kharalambos, the Turkish detective, Trotsky and myself starting out at the ungodly hour of five in the morning, which in those days was just about the time I was falling asleep in my room; and we would row out to an opposite shore of some little, deserted islet and load the barque with the largest stones that we could possibly find on the shore there. I didn't know what they were for, and I watched with a good deal of interest: why all these stones for a fishing expedition?

And then we would go to some spot that Karalambos had selected and a vast net would be spread in a semi-circle, the top of which was held to the surface by cork floats with a net sinking down as a sort of barrier in the water. Then we would row to a point which would serve as a sort of apex to this rough triangle, and all of them would start hurling these rocks into the water accompanied by absolutely fierce, loud yells, I learned to do the same thing, still marveling at this kind of fishing.

What was being done, of course, was that the fish were being scared to death and driven into the net by this storm of rocks that was hailed down upon them in the water. Then we would row to one end of the net and Trotsky would begin to pull it in, and it would usually be loaded, especially with a very tasty fish native to those waters which he called Rouget. And when he would get a good catch, his eyes would absolutely sparkle. He would be almost indescribably enthusiastic and delighted. He would chuckle and turn to me "Your President Hoover — he is a fisherman too. Can he catch fish like this?"

I said, "No, he's a fisherman. He's not a fish factory. He throws in a line and catches a fish at a time. That's fishing. This is a factory."

And Trotsky simply didn't understand what I was getting at at all. "Here you get fish by the score, by the hundreds, at one stroke. What is this business of catching one fish at a time? Your President Hoover — he takes one fish at a time, eh? Here we get hundreds of fish." This really was the only recreation that Trotsky had.

THE house was not very well protected. Any passerby could look through the iron rail fence that was around the house. And although visitors had to show their credentials, I felt from the very beginning that there would be no problem in making an attack on the household or on Trotsky personally. It didn't take too much perception to see that. As a guard I was armed, wearing a pretty big German automatic strapped to my leg. Everybody else was armed. Trotsky had a small pistol. Even Natalia had a pistol. But that obviously was no serious assurance of security. And when we went out on these little fishing expeditions, it occurred to me that it was the easiest thing it the world for some enemy to come

Trotsky and the Red Army in the Civil War

new successful combination of "specialist and commissar," of him who commands and the one executing the command and bearing the responsibility for it — every successful combination, after it had met the test of experience and had been lucidly formulated, was

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immediately transformed into an order, a circular, a regulation. In this way the living revolutionary experience was not lost, nor forgotten, nor deformed.

The norm obligatory for all was not mediocrity but on the contrary, the best, the things of genius conceived by the masses themselves in the most fiery, most creative moments of the struggle. In little things as well as big, whether in such complex matters as the division of labor among the members of the Revolutionary Military Council or the quick, snappy, friendly gesture exchanged in greeting between a Red Commander and a soldier each busy and hurrying somewhere it all had to be drawn from life, assimilated and returned as a norm to the masses for universal use. And wherever things weren't moving, or there was creaking, or bungling, one had to sense what was wrong, one had to help, one had to pull, as the midwife pulls out the newborn babe during a difficult birth.

One can be the most adept at articulating, one can give to a new army a rationally impeccable plastic form, and nonetbeless render its spirit frigid, permit it to evaporate and remain incapable of keeping this spirit alive within the chickenwire of juridical formulas. To prevent this, one must be a great revolutionist; one must possess the intuition of a creator and an internal radio transmitter of vast power without which there is no approaching the masses.

In the last analysis it is precisely this revolutionary instinct which is the court of highest sanction; which exactly purges its new creative justice of all deeply hidden counter-revolutionary backslidings. It places its hand of violence upon the deceitful formal justice in the name of the highest, proletarian justice which doe s not permit its elastic laws to ossify, to become divorced from life and burden the shoulders of Red Army soldiers with petty, aggravating, superfluous loads. Trotsky possessed this intuitive sense.

In him the revolutionist was never elbowed aside by the soldier, the military leader, the commander. And when with his inhuman, terrible voice he confronted a deserter, we stood in fear of him as one of us, a great rebel who could crush and slay anyone for base cowardice, for treason not to the military but the world-proletarian revolutionary cause.

It was impossible for Trotsky to have been a coward, for otherwise the contempt of this extraordinary army would have crushed him; and it could never have forgiven a weakling for the fraternal blood of the 27 which sprayed its first victory.

A few days before the occupation of Kazan by our troops, Lev Davidovich had to leave Svyazhsk; the news of the attempt on Lenin's life called him to Moscow. But neither Savinkov's raid on Svyazhsk, organized with great mastery by the Social Revolutionists, nor the attempt to assassinate Lenin, undertaken by the same party almost simultaneously with Savinkov's raid, could now halt the Red Army. The final wave of the offensive engulfed Kazan.

On September 9, late at night the troops were embarked on ships and by morning, around 5:30, the clumsy many-decked transports, convoyed by torpedo boats, moved toward the piers of Kazan. It was strange to sail in moonlit twilight past the half-demolished mill with a green roof, behind which a White battery had been located; past the half-burned "Delphin" gutted and beached on the deserted shore; past all the familiar river bends, tongues of land, sandbars and inlets over which from dawn to evening death had walked for so many weeks, clouds of smoke had rolled, and golden sheaves of artillery fire had flared.

We sailed with lights out in absolute silence over the black, cold, smoothly flowing Volga.

Aft of the stern, light foam on the dull humming wake washed away by waves that remember nothing and flow unconcernedly to the Caspian Sea. And yet the place through which the giant ship was at this moment silently gliding had only yesterday been a maelstrom ripped and plowed by wildly exploding shells. And here, where a moment ago a nightbird tipped noiselessly with its wing the water from which a slight mist curled upward into the cold air, yesterday so many white spumy fountains were rising; yesterday, words of command were restlessly sounding and slim torpedo boats were threading their way through smoke and flames and a rain of steel splinters, their hulls trembling from the compressed impatience of engines and from the recoil of their two-gun batteries which fired once a minute with a sound resembling iron hiccups.

People were firing, scattering away under the hail of downclattering shells, mopping up the blood on the decks... And now everything is silent; the Volga flows as it has flowed a thousand years ago, as it will flow centuries from now.

We reached the piers without firing a shot. The first flickers of dawn lit up the sky. In the grayish-pink twilight, humped, black, charred phantoms began to appear. Cranes, beams of burned buildings, shattered telegraph poles — all this seemed to have endured endless sorrow and seemed to have lost all capacity for feeling like a tree with twisted withered branches. Death's kingdom washed by the icy roses of the northern davm.

And the deserted guns with their muzzles uplifted resemble in the twilight cast down figures, frozen in mute despair, with heads propped up by hands cold and wet with dew.

Fog. People begin shivering from cold and nervous tension; the air is permeated with the odor of machine oil and tarred rope. The gunner's blue collar turns with the movement of the body viewing in amazement the unpopulated, soundless shore reposing in dead silence.

This is victory.

Fourth International, June 1943

Trotsky inspecting troops in Petrograd

along in a fast boat and simply wipe out our barque and anyone who was on it. I would call this to Trotsky's attention: "Isn't this a very dangerous place to live? Isn't this a very dangerous recreation, fishing in this unprotected barque?"

There was no bravado in Trotsky — none whatsoever. If anything there was perhaps a sort of fatalism in regard to the possibilities of an assassination. In those days there were literally thousands of Russian white guards living in Istanbul, and of course there was always the possibility of an action organised by the GPU. But Trotsky would simply shrug his shoulders when this problem was called to his attention, and he would even wave aside all comment on it. He once said to me jokingly, for example, "Do you think that even if there were ten of you American cowboys here

There was no bravado in Trotsky — none whatsoever. If anything there was perhaps a sort of fatalism in regard to the possibilities of an assassination

you could protect the household if the GPU was determined to attack us? The GPU has at its disposal all the great resources of a state, and if they decide to attack, what can stop them? Nothing. Not you American cowboys (or as he said, "co-boys") and not the Turkish police and not anything else that I can do. And it is impossible to work and live in a state of constant terror. We take certain elementary precautions, and that is all we can do."

And, as it finally worked out, that is pretty near all that he could do. He could protect himself to the maximum available to an individual or to an individual surrounded by the assistance of people in a very small organisation, but that couldn't even begin to be a match for a well-organised assault by an institution with all the power and resources of the Stalinist GPU. Once that institution made its final decision, it was just a matter of time.

I DISCUSSED the problems and prospects of the opposition internationally and the opposition in the United States many times with Trotsky, and I must say that there was nothing particular that he told me that was not at the time and later put down by him in print in public writings or writings disseminated by the opposition throughout the world. His main theme always was, and this goes back, mind you, to 1929, 1930,

The victory of Stalinism in Russia and in the Communist parties outside of Russia could not be traced to this or that mistake the opposition had made, or this or that clever tactic or manoeuvre that Stalin had employed; that Stalin himself was a product of profound social forces and factors over which he had infinitely less control that he imagined, and over which we ourselves (and by that in particular he meant the Russian opposition) had very little control; that Stalin was the product of the great social, economic and political reaction that had set in after the first few years of the triumph of Bolshevik revolution and the receding of the international revolutionary wave in the West. And while Trotsky never in any conversation I had with him at that time or in my subsequent visits showed the least doubt about his always reiterated belief that the revolutionary wave would flow strongly again, he always discouraged those people who thought that it was coming in the next twenty-four hours, so to speak. He insisted that we had to orient ourselves towards a long and hard period of holding out, of being patient. His more or less favorite phrase was "Impatience is the hallmark of opportunism."

He maintained that in the internal life of the opposition — and this he said with special reference I suppose to our American group — all the responsible elements have to make sure that personal frictions, which are inevitable in small isolated groups and minor, episodic differences are not allowed to grow or to be stimulated artificially to the point where they disrupt the organisation or distract it from its main task, its main principles. That was with regard to the opposition in general.

For the American opposition he envisaged what might be called more optimistic prospects. Like all the old Russian leaders, he did not attach too much weight to the American Communist party. I say "weight" deliberately and not importance. He attached enormous importance to the growth of the Communist movement in the United States, but to the Communist party itself as it was, he did not attach too much weight. He knew that it was not a significant factor in American working class or political life, and in that he was absolutely right, even if several years later it appeared that it might become such a factor. And for a time at least he even held the view that it was possible for our tiny, little opposition to become the authentic Communist movement. You should bear in mind that at that time the Trotskyist movement considered itself an opposition movement in the Communist party seeking to return to the Communist party and not demanding as a condition for this return that its principles be adopted first by the party, demanding only that the opposition have elementary democratic rights of discussion inside the Communist party.

In this he was wrong in the sense that the Trotskyist opposition in this country really never had such a prospective as a real possibility, but I cite it only because it indicates that for the United States, he inclined toward a different outlook for the revolutionary movement than for the older countries of Europe where the Communist movement was much more deeply and seriously rooted in the political life of their respective lands.

I think it's important here also to mention another aspect of Trotsky's thinking or behaviour or outlook. While I myself and most of our other comrades never had up to that time or subsequently the slightest feeling that the struggle between Stalin and Trotsky was a personal struggle or a struggle for personal power, I was nevertheless surprised — very favorably surprised, as it were — to hear Trotsky speak in our conversations or in his comments on this, that or the other thing with such complete and utter objectivity — impersonality would be more accurate — about Stalin.

The way he spoke about him in personal or intimate or confidential conversation was in no sense different from the way in which he wrote about Stalin in his public writings. I couldn't find a trace of personal animosity or personal bitterness or personal hatred of Stalin in anything that Trotsky said or did, and especially in later years when Trotsky personally and Trotsky's family really suffered tragically at the hands of Stalin or the Stalinist machine, found this increasingly gratifying and remarkable. And, by the way, I found exactly the same attitude on the part of Natalia Trotsky.

If I can interrupt myself at this point, I remember during one of our visits to Natalia after Trotsky had died — the visit of my wife and myself to Natalia in Mexico — we decided to take a little holiday and go out of town. She always very much liked to leave the house and go out for as long a period of time as she could. We went to Cuernavaca to a modest little hotel there, and while we were resting up there, the wireless brought the news that Stalin was seriously ill and a couple of days later that he had died. I watched Natalia very carefully and listened very carefully to what she would say. And there wasn't even a sign of what would be the perfectly natural reaction of a woman in her position, a woman who had gone through what she had gone through at the hands of Stalin. There was not the slightest sign on her part of satisfaction that this monster had died or of glee or vindictiveness or of a feeling that he had finally, thank God, met his fate. Our conversation turned almost exclusively on the question of what would happen now in Russia, what would be the consequences of the struggle for the succession or the struggle that we took for granted.

And that was a political discussion, and the personal element was not simply subordinated; it just wasn't there. And this was on the part of a woman whose two children and whose two foster children had been murdered by the GPU. And I considered that a tremendous tribute to the character of Natalia, to a revolutionary nature, to her ability to see political problems as political problems and not as problems coloured by personal considerations. And I know absolutely that my impressions or recollections on this score are in no way colored by considerations of piety towards Trotsky or Natalia Trotsky, but that's exactly how it was.

I SAW Trotsky for the second time in Turkey a few years later. After I was there for a short time came the very exciting news that he had been granted permission to live in France. One of the deputies of the radical party had interceded on his behalf with the French government, and he was given permission to move to France. Trotsky was enormously pleased with the prospect of going to France and so was Natalia, and so were all of us who were there at the time. Turkey was completely off the highways of international politics, geographically completely removed from the mainstream, or what there was of a stream of the Trotskyist movement in Europe. And while Trotsky had absolutely not the slightest complaint to make of the Turkish government or of the treatment of the Trotsky household — the government was absolutely correct and proper in all of its dealings with Trotsky — he looked forward very eagerly to getting back to France. There was feverish activity in the household — packing all the household goods, which consisted primarily of his books, his manuscripts, his documents; Trotsky never had any personal property to speak of. And I was appointed what Trotsky called, "my commissar for foreign affairs."

That wasn't due to any skill or experience on my part in world diplomacy, you can understand. But I was, so to speak, the most legal of the foreign comrades who were there. There was a young German comrade there at the time, Rudolph Klement, who was assassinated in Paris some time later by the GPU while he was acting as international secretary of the Trotskyist movement. There was a French comrade there, Von Heijenoort, who, being a French citizen, was not the indicated person to act as Trotsky's representative during the trip from Turkey to France. There was an American comrade there who acted as his secretary and stenographer. She knew Russian perfectly. She, for other reasons, was not in a position to act as Trotsky's representative. Whereas, I was a good, one hundred percent American with a good, one hundred percent American passport, and there was no reason to be apprehensive about my acting publicly as Trotsky's representative. After all, I was known in the United States as being a leading Trotskyist, and I had never made any secrets about my visits to Trotsky, and so on.

Nevertheless, we had to exercise a good deal of caution in arranging the trip. We had to guard against the possibility of all sorts of enemies who might use the trip as an occasion for an attack on Trotsky. I booked the passage on the steamer Bulgaria of the Lloyd line in Istanbul under my own name, Max Shachtman and party. I remember the agent was very curious as to who the party was made up of, and when I explained to him with a wink that the man and woman were involved were foreigners in a very delicate situation, the French manager of the steamship office — I remember this with real hilarity — returned my wink very significantly and said, "Ah, monsieur, je comprends parfaitment". He "understood" that there was some illict affair involved and that he himself was the soul of discretion and would not press his inquiries further.

The Turkish government cooperated perfectly and set up a barrier around the quay so that there would be no access to the ship until we were boarded. We boarded from a lighter. And we were off. We didn't know who else was on the ship and we had to be very careful. Trotsky and Natalian remained in seclusion in their cabin all the time, and Trotsky insisted that I not only be posted as guard in front of the cabin, but that I should very ostentatiously wear a couple of pistols. What I would have done if there had been a real attack, I don't pretend to know. He insisted on it, so that it would be known throughout the ship that he was well guarded by an armed man.

The Commendatore of the ship was naturally in on the secret, and he supplemented my dubious guardsmanship by a couple of crew members, who would undoubtedly have been much handier in any incident that might have occurred than I would be.

By the time we got to Naples where the ship docked briefly the secret was out. All the newspapers of Europe carried the stories, most of them garbled. The fascist police came aboard, and I must say they, too, were the height of correctness and propriety. Their commander was a young fascist dressed in the standard black fascist uniform, and he assured me, as commissar of foreign affairs for Trotsky, that there would be no incidents whatsoever, that Signor Trotsky and his lady would be perfectly guarded and accorded all the honors of a statesman. I remember he told me "we in Italy honor Signor Trotsky as a great military commander."

And there were no incidents in Naples, you may be sure. But as we neared Marseilles — this we learned a couple of days later — the entire French press was filled with stories about the impending visit of Trotsky. The Stalinist press on the one side and the reactionary press on the other side, including reactionary white Russian papers that were published in France, carried on a complementary drum fire of attack on Trotsky. One spoke of Trotsky as a butcher; the other spoke of Trotsky as a counter-revolutionist. But both said France will not tolerate this monster on its soil.

We had a pretty clear inkling of this by that time, and our French comrades were disturbed about the possibility of a Stalinist or Russian monarchist demonstrations on the docks of Marseilles when we would come in, and God knows what might possibly happen. Trotsky himself, by the way, during the trip was very ill. He was suffering at the time from what appeared to be lumbago and it was exceedingly painful. I remember that with the aid of the gracious Commendatore the sea was dredged for sand, which was then heated up to make it as hot as possible and these hot compresses were applied this back by Natalia to relieve the pain.

But by the time we approached Marseilles it seemed that the whole trouble had cleared up.

OUR French comrades, who were in touch with the ministry of the interior of the French government, got them to agree to remove Trotsky from the ship just before it got into Marseilles. And sure enough the Commendatore, the ship's captain, received wireless intelligence about this, and the ship was stopped just before it reached Marseilles in a little French fishing village named Cassis, as I recall it. We didn't know anything about this until the Commendatore told me that Signor Trotsky would be removed from the ship before it docked. We were all very suspicious of this and wondered what was up, and I can only justify our conspiracy-consciousness at the time by what happened, not so many years later, in Mexico. As the ship slowed down, we saw a large motorboat coming from land. I was at the rail and soon recognised a couple of the comrades who were there aboard this motorboat with French police and authorities. One was the leader of the French organisation, Raymond Molinier, and the other was Lyova, Trotsky's son. When we saw them we knew that it was all right. And holding back all the other passengers, we made a passage of armed sailors and myself and Trotsky was taken off and disappeared.

I proceeded, of course, to Marseilles with the other comrades, and I didn't see Trotsky in France again. After I got to Paris, I had to return immediately to the United States for one reason or another that I don't recall now, and so I couldn't backtrack to see Trotsky where he had been allowed to settle down.

It was obvious to him that Stalin was now determined not just to expel the opposition or exile them or imprison them, but that he was determined to wipe them out physically man by man wholesale

I visited him again after he had been expelled from France and had taken up residence in Norway. This was 1936. The period of his exile in Norway was the most peaceful of all his exiles in a sense — at least until the very end when the Norwegian government succumbed to the pressure of the Russian government and secluded Trotsky under armed guard and virtually imprisoned him. He lived in the home of a Norwegian Labor party deputy, Konrad Knudsen, in the village of Honefoss some miles out of the capital, Oslo. Knudsen was a splendid comrade, not a Trotskyist, but very friendly to Trotsky personally and had a very high regard for hm. The whole Knudsen family — Konrad and his wife and his wonderfully lovely daughter, Hjordid, were exceedingly kind and gracious and considerate and attentive toward Trotsky and Natalia. And Trotsky was able to worke there more or less undisturbed.

Nevertheless, it was an exceedingly difficult period. Just about at the time I arived to visit him in Honefoss, the Moscow trials broke loose, the first demonstration trials against Zinoviev, Kamenev and their friends. Trotsky had a pretty good idea of what was involved. It was obvious to him that Stalin was now determined not just to expel the opposition or exile them or imprison them, but that he was determined to wipe them out physically man by man wholesale. And these included not only all of Trotsky's personal friends — his oldest personal friends like Christian Rakovsky, friends who went back to the days before the First World War — but all of his political friends and associates. And almost single-handedly he

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launched an international counter-campaign against the campaign of denigration of the oppositionists and ex-oppositionists, who constituted on the whole the core of the Bolshevik party that had organised and led the revolution of 1917, and the campaign to wipe them out, to kill them. It was a protean task that he had.

By that time throughout Europe and the United States most liberals and even radicals were exceedingly conciliatory toward the Stalin regime. All the big political factors in the world, and what might be called the psychological factors in the world, the ones that I referred to on an earlier occasion, were working for Stalin and against Trotsky — even specifically with regard to these monstrous frame-ups. The Comintern was then in the full-flush of its popular front policy. It was cooperating so nicely, it appeared, with all liberal and radical and labor and Socialist movements. It was the great champion of the Loyalist struggle against Franco in Spain. It was the strongest source of resistance, it appeared, to the growing threat of Hitlerism in Germany, the threat to democracy, to Socialism, to the labor movement, to peace.

And the liberal-labour-radical world was not very receptive to attacks upon the Russian regime, such as were being made and had to be made by Trotsky in connection with the Moscow trials. The whole atmosphere was such that there were on the contrary receptive to Stalinist propaganda that these men were guilty of counter-revolutionary activity; and, as the charges were finally expanded against them, of being in alliance with Hitlerism, which was just about the worst thing that you could say about anybody in those days, and understandably so. Comparatively few people could be found to take up the defense of the victims of the Moscow trials. The head of the Socialist International at that time, Friedrich Adler, was one of those. He wrote a famous pamphlet against what he called "The witchcraft trials in Moscow," and there were many other Socialists and a number of liberals and others, but they were, alas, the exception to the rule. Even those who were not completely persuaded of the justice of the trials, who had doubts about them, or who shared to one extent or another the convictions of Trotsky in his attacks upon the trials, nevertheless felt: this is no time to attack Russia or the Russian regime. The most important thing is a solid front against fascism.

Stalin could not but have realised this enormous advantage that he had on his side in the field of international public opinion, and that is undoubtedly one of the main reasons he drove through so ruthlessly, cynically and unrelentingly until he had wiped out every last possible oppositionist in Russia in the course of the various Moscow trials and the trials which did not receive so much notoriety — the big purges, in a word.

What there was of an organised campaign against the Moscow trials was animated primarily by Trotsky. He was the great motive force behind the activity that was developed — primarily in France and in the United States. In most other countries there was little or no movement of protest against the Moscow trials. It was one of the most shameless periods in modern history: how whole labor, radical, liberal and even Socialist circles, numbering hundreds of thousands and even millions of people, could reconcile themselves to accepting, and in many cases even endorsing, this wholesale assassination of a revolutionary generation in Russia.

And at the same time that he was organising and conducting and being the spokesman for this campaign, an almost endless stream of articles, statements, interviews with the press, material emanating from him that you could not believe could come from one single individual, no matter how qualified, how experienced, how knowledgeable — he had to concern himself with the affairs of the international Trotskyist movement.

I was in Europe at the time not only to visit him but to attend an international Trotskyist conference that was being held in the environs of Paris. And as he was getting deeper and deeper into the fight against the Moscow trials, he had to busy himself with the preparations for this conference. He wrote the principal resolutions for the conference. And together with him, I wrote several of the minor resolutions for the conference. And I simply do not understand how he was able to do all of this — not to this day. He had an utterly incredible capacity for work. And when you consider the high intellectual and political level of what he turned out, regardless of whether one agreed with what he said and wrote or not, this capacity became even more incredible. And when you know that in addition to all this, he was at the same time carrying on a world-wide correspondence with dosens upon dozens of his partisans — because actually he was the Fourth International, he and no one else was the center of the international Trotskyist movement — and at the same time he was working on books, it becomes utterly staggering.

All of this had to be paid for. I remember Natalia whispering to me there, "LD is very tired. He is extremely tired." I remember those phrases in particular because years later when she would recall those days she would repeat exactly those phrases: "He is very tired. He is extremely tired." At one time she told me in Norway he simply flung himself onto the ground and said, "Je ne peux plus; je ne peux plus." He probably said it to her in Russian, but she told it to me in French: "I cannot do anymore; I cannot go on anymore."

Nobody could produce what he produced and under such difficult circumstances without taxing to the limit and even beyond the limit his moral and physical and intellectual capabilities. There are probably very few individuals who could tax them to that extent and still more to survive and continue. And while you can say in a manner of speaking he was a man of iron.

The assassination of Leon Trotsky

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any doubt, this was for us. And touching Leon the shoulder I said, "They have come."

He jumped up and began to dress himself swiftly. The bell rang. Comrade Larin, whom I had warned, did not open the door immediately. They rang again. They asked for Lunacharsky, this was a subterfuge. Then they presented an order for Trotsky's arrest. Larin did not give in. He forced them to wait. He tried to get the responsible Lieberdans on the the phone. But there was no answer anywhere. We said goodbye. Lev Davidovich did everything to keep up my spirits. They led him away. The general political situation was very grave at the time. The struggle was out in the open, direct actions were already being employed. It was a life and death struggle. But the last look LD gave me before he was taken away was full of confidence and challenge. That glance said to me: "We shall see who will vanquish whom."

There were visits to jail to arrange, the sending of packages to attend to, and so forth. I had the assistance of Leon and Sergei who undertook the delivery of packages (food and so on) and transformed it into a game: "Who'll get there first." The overfilled street cars presented them with a great difficulty, but they hitched on and always arrived in jail exactly at the appointed hour.

They were greatly aroused by their father's second arrest. But the entire situation bore the promise of swift liberation and victory. It was quite different from the time when we were taken off the ship enroute to Russia by the English and separated, in 1917 in Halifax. The boys then remained with me in the status of prisoners not in jail but in a filthy room of a Russian spy in whose house a room was assigned to us. But LD was taken away with the others without a word of explanation. Complete uncertainty and isolation oppressed us extremely at the time.

WE are lying on the floor, beside the wall in a corner and away from the cross-fire which proceeded without interruption for several minutes.

Afterwards we took count of the holes in the walls and the doors of our bedroom: they numbered sixty. Pressing our bodies to the wall, we waited... I raised myself a little in order to shield LD because it seemed to me that the shots were being directed at him, but he stopped me. "Grandfather!" We both heard the cry of our grandson who slept in the neighboring room into which the criminals had entered. His voice rang out as if part in warning of the danger threatening us and part in a plea for help. Our grandson forgot about it, forgot his outcry, and no matter how I tried to remind him of his experiences and memories, he could not recall it. But this cry chilled us to the marrow. Everything became silent... "They have kidnapped him," said his grandfather to me quietly. On the threshold which separated our bedroom from that of our grandson, illuminated by the flare of an incendiary bomb, a silhouette flashed: the curve of a helmet, shining buttons, an elongated face flashed by me as in a dream, and then I lost sight of the intruder. The shooting in the room stopped. We heard the sound of gunfire at a distance in the patio.

Quietly, slowly I crossed our bedroom and walked into the bathroom where a window gave to the patio. The little house could be seen where our friends, our guard lived. There also stood an enormous eucalyptus tree, and it was from there that they were firing! Beside this eucalyptus tree, as we later learned, the enemies had placed a machine gun. By a steady stream of fire they thus strategically cut off the guards from us. Investigating magistrates later found on the premises a bomb containing one and a half kilos of dynamite. A record of this is to be found in the minutes of the court in the case of the assault by Siqueiros, who was subsequently released on March 28, 1941: for lack of material and incriminating evidence! How monstrous! "The Master of the Soviet Land," "The Father of the Peoples," etc., etc., paid out lavishly from the proletarian treasury. According to the records, there was some sort of technical defect in the bomb and it could not be used by the criminals. But the investigation brought out the fact that it had sufficient power to blast the entire house to its foundation.

The shooting in the patio also ceased. Then, all was silence. Silent ... intolerably silent. "Where can I hide you safely?" I was losing my strength from the tension and the hopelessness of the situation. Any moment now, they will come to finish him. My head spun around ... And suddenly there came again the same voice, the voice of our grandson, but this time it came from the patio and sounded completely different, ringing out like a staccato passage of music bravely, joyously: "Al-fred! Mar-gue-rite!" It returned us to the living. A moment before we had felt the stillness of the night after firing ceased as in a grave, as with death itself... "They are all killed."

"Alfred! Marguerite!" No, they are alive ... alive! But why then does no one come? Why does no one call us? After all, the others had left. Perhaps they are afraid, afraid of coming face to face with the irreparable. I seized the handle in the door which leads from our bedroom into LD's workroom. It was closed, although we never locked it as a rule. The door was riddled by bullets like a sieve. They had fired through it into the bedroom. Through the interstices I could see the room suffused with a soft golden light from the shaded lamp on the ceiling; I could see the table covered with manuscripts in complete order; the books on the shelves were not touched; everything was tranquil there; the very background of the reign of thought, of creativeness was there. It was exactly as it had been left on the eve... How strange that was: order, tranquillity, light, everything on the table intact... Only the door with its black yawning holes bespoke the crime just committed.

I began pounding on the door. Otto came running. "The door is jammed for some reason." With our joint forces we opened the door. We walked into this wonderful, and at that time undisturbed room.

Seva, Alfred, Marguerite, Otto, Charlie, Jack, Harold, they were all there. Only Bob Sheldon was not with us. He, poor boy, had been on night duty and they had kidnapped him. A few of his belongings, some clothes and parts of his equipment remained in the empty garage... These made one's heart constrict in pain; one wanted to ask them what had happened to our friend, our guard? where was he? what had they done to him? Bob's things shrouded in mystery spoke to us of his doom. Sheldon had behind him altogether 23 years. How many hopes, how much idealism, faith in the future, readiness to struggle for it had perished with this young life! Exotic Mexico enthralled him. He was fascinated by the brightly colored little birds, acquired a few of them, kept them in our garden, and tended them so touchingly. Twenty three years: they lacked in the experience of life: they had not yet been moulded to an awareness of danger, the urgency of keeping on guard, but they were so sensitive as to have acquired all this presently, in a very short time. Sheldon loved to take walks. In his free hours he took walks around the environs of Coyoacan and brought back bouquets of field flowers.

Shortly after his arrival, he received a lesson from Lev

Natalia Sedova with Trotsky

Davidovich. Our place was being rebuilt, and it was necessary to open the gates every 15-20 minutes in order to let a worker with a wheelbarrow out into the street and then let him in back again. Bob was so carried away by building a bird cage that in order not to tear himself away from his work he handed the gate-key to the worker. This did not escape the notice of LD. The latter explained to Bob that this was very careless on his part and added, "You might prove to be the first victim of your own carelessness." This was said about a month or six weeks before Bob's tragic death.

The day of May 24 began for us early and was full of excitement. The more we probed into an analysis of the bullet-riddled walls and mattresses all the more did we become imbued with the realisation of the danger that had threatened us, and all the more did we feel ourselves saved. The nervous tension of the night discharged itself into a state of high excitement kept in check by efforts to remain calm. This absence of dejection later served as one of the arguments in support of the senseless and shameless "theory of self-assault." As I recounted the events of the GPU's night assault to friends who visited us during that day, I felt that I was relating this almost with joy. But those who listened heard me with alarm, they cast frightened glances towards the heads of the two beds, where the wall was dotted with bullet holes, and I would say to myself as if in justification: "But after all the enemies did suffer failure."

The following days strengthened more and more in us the conviction that the failure suffered by our enemies on this occasion must be remedied by them; that the inspirer of this crime would not be deterred. And our joyous feeling of salvation was dampened by the prospect of a new visitation and the need to prepare for it.

At the same time, Lev Davidovich was taking part in the conduct of the investigation of the case of May 24. Its slothful pace worried LD exceedingly. He followed the developments patiently and tirelessly, explaining the circumstances of the case to the court and to the press, making superhuman efforts to force himself to refute the self-evident and hopeless lies or malicious equivocations, doing all this with the intense perspicacity peculiar to him, and not allowing a single detail to escape his notice. He attached the proper significance to every single thing, and wove them all into a single whole.

And he grew tired. He slept poorly, dozing off and awakening with the self-same thoughts. Sometimes I heard Lev Davidovich, when alone, say from his innermost depths, "I am tired... tired." A feeling of greatest alarm would seize me: I knew what this meant. But I also knew something else: I knew of the influx of vitality, inspiration and energy he would feel if he only could return quietly to his real work. He had outlined an analytical work on the Red Army for which he had been collecting material, another on the international situation; still others on world economy, and the latest period of the war. The day-to-day occurrences and the successive crimes of Stalin made it necessary to relegate these tasks to the second plane.

His book on Stalin had been forced on him by extraneous circumstances: financial necessity and by his publishers. Lev Davidovich more than once expressed a desire to write a "popular" book, as he called it, in order to earn some money thereby and then rest up by working on subjects of interest to him. But he could not bring this about, he was incapable of writing "popular" books. For a long time he hesitated to accept the publisher's offer, but our friends insisted on it. LD finally agreed. He planned to finish this work in a short while. But once he undertook it, he began to surround it with a conscientiousness peculiar to him and with a spirit of meticulousness and pedantism of which he often used to complain to me. Nevertheless he proposed to have it finished completely by March-April 1940. He was not able to. First the controversy in our party — its American section — distracted him, and then the events of May 24.

One of LD's secret and most cherished desires was to depict the friendship between Marx and Engels, their "romance" which, as he told me, had never been investigated in his opinion as he wanted to do it. Lev Davidovich was very much in love with Engels, his whole profoundly human personality. He was greatly enthralled by the coupling of the two great and utterly different personalities of the two friends bound together by their striving for a single goal.

It was not without sorrow that he had to renounce for the time being the continuation of his book on Lenin. His deep and burning desire was to show Lenin as he was in reality as against all those who had written about Lenin self-obstrusively and measuring him by their own yardstick. No figment of the imagination of the epigones, however brilliant, could compare with the original. Lenin must appear before history, he had every right to it, in all his genius and with all his human weaknesses. The epigones, on the other hand, had endowed Lenin with good nature, modesty, simplicity, etc — but what did all this mean with reference to Lenin? They depicted him "in their own image." And Vladimir Ilyich was not one to be squeezed into a common mould. Lev Davidovich would demand also of me the most minute and insignificant recollections, but those which corresponded with reality, and he was very happy when I would recount to him or jot down for him various details he had not known and in which he was able to discern the real Lenin.

In 1917, in Petrograd, in the Smolny, our apartment was in the same corridor with the apartment of Lenin and his family. They used the bathroom located on our living area. We used to meet each other often in passing. Lenin was always brimful of energy, cheerful, polite. Once he walked in and seeing the boys, placed them side by side, stepped back a little, and putting both hands in his pockets, astonished me by saying cheerily: "Say, I like this!" The costume of the children had suddenly caught his eye. In those days, textiles were unobtainable and it never entered my mind to get a special order to obtain material for some shirts. We had a velvet tablecloth, with a flowery pattern, which I had cleaned and then cut up and sewed into blouses for the children. The boys were not much pleased. "Why go and make us shirts out of a rug?" I justified myself... but it did not do any good. To be sure, they wore them, but not without grumbling. After Vladimir Ilyich's praise, the boys quieted down.

DURING our ten years in the USSR, there were no great variations in LD's health. In exile, or rather in emigration, his physical condition began to ebb and flow. In exile (Alma-Ata) Lev Davidovich's life was swallowed up by correspondence — in its way this was a continuation of our life during the last period in Moscow; current political and tactical questions were ever under discussion. We received such a quantity of mail as to make it impossible sometimes to read all the letters during the day. Our son Leon Sedov used to reply to a part of them, his father answered the greater portion. During the last months (of our stay in AlmaAta) all correspondence, as is well known, was prohibited. It passed into illegal channels and its volume was greatly reduced.

At Prinkipo (Turkey) LD found it very hard at first. Inactivity and isolation oppressed him. The questions arose of the means of livelihood, funds for defense, funds for the foreign oppositional groups. All this compelled him to accept a publisher's offer to write his autobiography. It was very difficult for LD psychologically to enter into this work. It was so sharply out of harmony with the general bent of his being. He had to force himself to "recollect." This reacted on his nerves and his health on the whole became impaired.

A revival of his moral and physical condition occurred with the establishment of ties with European co-thinkers. Visitors from abroad, discussions with them, correspondence, writing political articles for oppositional organs in Europea — this restored LD to his native element. And this in turn eased for him the compulsory labour over the autobiography.

At the dinner table or during fishing trips in the Sea of Mannora, no one suspected "low tide." Conversations on political topics, jokes, perking up this or that somewhat crestfallen comrade, all these invariably testified to the equanimity of LD's moods. Only our son, when he lived with us, was able to guess that this was not so. How I loved the periods of "floodtide," how happy I was during them! Freshness, youthfulness, joyfulness returned in these periods to LD. He would then passionately dictate political letters, and suggestions to friends, he would dictate his autobiography and various articles, and go fishing in the blue waters of the sea... He seethed in a frenzy. And all this in complete isolation. Behind four walls.

Our life near Royan (France) on the shore of the Atlantic Ocean in the isolated villa "Sea-Spray" which our friends had rented for us, had a turbulent beginning. Friends and co-thinkers from different countries would arrive daily to visit LD. We had from 15 to 20 visitors a day. LD would hold two or three discussions daily. Full of inspiration, vitality and seemingly inexhaustible energy, he astonished and gladdened our friends by his tirelessness and vigor.

And here in France the financial aspect of our life again arose very sharply. There was a lull. I had to go to Paris for medical care. Lev Davidovich insisted on it. In his own physical condition there came the alterations of ebb and flow. From Royan, LD once wrote me that despite his poor health he had carried through a discussion, and did it very successfully, with some friends who had arrived and in the presence of our son. "I watched Lyovik," he wrote. "His eyes were shining. He was radiant." After the discussion LD went to bed early, because of fatigue and he heard the stormy ocean flinging its spray to the windows of his room, dashing drops against the window panes. Leon came in to bid his father goodbye. He had to return that night to Paris. They exchanged a few warm remarks about the discussion that had just concluded. Our son was very excited and aroused. He approached his father's bed, and dropping his head, "like a child," as his father wrote, on his father's breast, he pressed closely and said, "Papa, I love you very much." They embraced each other and parted with tears.

The ocean continues to live with its stormy ebbs and flows. It seethes in a frenzy. The great fighter might have also lived on... Violence. The dealers of violence will meet with vengeance. Violence will wither away. Free mankind of the future will bow its head in memory of its innumerable victims.

On the assassination

By Charles Cornell, one of Trotsky's guards at the time of his death

In 1936 the Stalinists succeeded in persuading the Norwegian government to deny LD Trotsky the right to remain in that country, he appealed to every nation in the world for admission. Mexico was the only country that answered his plea favorably.

Upon Trotsky's arrival in Mexico the Stalinist and Stalinist-controlled press immediately began a campaign of vilification directed toward the demand for his expulsion. Their lying accusations linked Trotsky with whatever reactionary group or foreign power happened for the time to be in disfavor with the Kremlin..

While the press campaign attempted to create a hostile atmosphere, the GPU organized the physical assault. GPU executioners of the Spanish revolution, among them the notorious Sormenti, were sent to Mexico. From January 1940 on, as the war spread over Europe and the Mexican elections approached, we more and more frequently received reports of GPU agents arriving. Stalin hoped that in the maelstrom of world events and the disturbances accompanying a Mexican presidential election, tiie murder of Trotsky would pass with slight notice.

The tempo of the slander campaign in the Stalinist press was accelerated. Not an issue of an organ controlled by them was printed without some slanderous article or vicious cartoon about the Old Man. However, this campaign had no effect outside their own ranks. The other papers retained an objective tone and continued to print everything Trotsky released for publication.

The May 24th Assault

On the morning of May 24, 1940, around four o'clock in the morning, David Alfaro Siqueiros led a group of about fifteen GPU gunmen in a machine-gun assault directed at Trotsky's bedroom. They gained entrance to the courtyard through some ruse, and after establishing machine-gunners to cover the doors to the guards' rooms, they fired hundreds of rounds of bullets through a shuttered window and a closed door, covering Trotsky's bed with deadly cross-fire. It was done with mathematical precision. No one could have remained alive on the beds. Somehow L.D. and Natalia got on the floor in a corner of the room at the first sound of firing and stayed there until it was over. Trotsky's amazingly quick action and the murderers' reliance on a mechanical solution to their assignment saved his life.

Our comrade, Bob Sheldon Harte, the guard on duty at the time of the assault, was taken away by the assailants. They murdered Bob — in true GPU style, a bullet through the base of his brain and one in the temple.

Immediately after the machine-gun attack the Stalinist press accused Trotsky of organizing the assault himself! They asserted that a crime against the country had been committed and that it must not go unpunished. They demanded that Trotsky be driven out of the country. This campaign met with as little success as those they had carried on previously. A short time later the Stalinist agents, discovered and arrested by the police, admitted in court their complicity in the attempt.

Although the attackers were Mexicans and some of them well-known artists, they were severely condemned by the Mexican people. The Mexican press expressed its sympathy for Trotsky and decried the difficulties from which he suffered. Magazines carried many articles and stories defending Trotsky and castigating the GPU. Gunsmoke from the attack had barely lifted from the patio, empty machine-gun shells were still on the floor of his study, when L.D. began uncovering the identity of the attackers. In characteristic manner he put all of his energy into the task. He reviewed and analysed the Stalinist publications for the preceding period. This review of Stalinist literary activity, supplemented by information from friends, enabled him to establish almost immediately that Siqueiros was one of the Stalinists implicated. As investigations proceeded, he proved to the satisfaction of every honest person, the GPUs guilt.

Jacson Appears

In the period immediately following the May attack the sinister figure of Jacson, known only as Sylvia Ageloff's husband, was first seen at the house. She was in Mexico City at the time and on occasion visited the house. On a trip to Europe, while she was a member of the Socialist Workers Party, she had met Trotsky. During a visit to France in 1937 she became acquainted with Jacson and subsequently married him.

Hearing that Trotsky's friends, the Rosmers, were leaving, Jacson volunteered through Sylvia to take them to Vera Cruz in his car. The morning that he came to get them was the first time he was ever seen at the house. He never became intimate with members of the household. He always remained at a distance.

Following this initial appearance he and Sylvia had tea with Trotsky and Natalia a few times. On one occasion he stated that he was writing an article and would like Trotsky's comments on it. L.D. was always anxious to aid in the development of a person who appeared to be approaching the movement. Natu. rally, he granted the request.

On August 17, Jacson came to the house in the afternoon, for the first time unaccompanied by Sylvia. He asked Trotsky to read the draft of his article. L.D. took him into his study, looked over the article and made some suggestions for its improvement.

Jacson left. His rehearsal was over. He knew the location of the tables and chairs in the Old Man's study. His plan could now be perfected to the last detail.

The Assassination

Jacson returned on August 20, 1940 at 5:30 in the afternoon. Trotsky was in the patio. After a few remarks, he led Jacson into his study. Trotsky sat down at his work table and began to read the article Jacson had brought. Jacson laid his raincoat on a small table in back of Trotsky's chair and took a seat to the rear of Trotsky. He was within easy reach of his concealed weapon. While the Old Man was looking at the article, Jacson reached into his raincoat, took hold of the pick-axe with both hands and struck with all his might at Trotsky's head.

He expected the blow to first stun and then kill the Old Man. But Trotsky struggled, shielding his head from further blows. Jacson, fearing failure, struck blindly at L.D.'s head. Trotsky's cry brought Natalia and the guard.

Trotsky's resistance prevented Jacson from escaping and made certain that the crime would be traced without question to the GPU. Even while the mortal wound began to paralyze his body he thought the problem out carefully. "Don't let them kill Jacson. He must talk," he admonished us.

Trotsky was taken to the Cruz Verde hospital where the most prominent surgeons in Mexico did everything possible to save his life. For over twenty-four hours after the blow was struck, fearful despair alternated with desperate hope.

On August 21, at 7:45 P.M. he breathed his last. Stalin's pick-axe had found its mark. The greatest revolutionist of our day lay dead.

The assassination of Leon Trotsky

Natalia Sedova Trotsky

"I can therefore say that I live on this earth not in accordance with the rule but as an exception to the rule."
June 8, 1940, Trotsky

NIGHT. Darkness. I awaken. Pale patches of light flicker and then disappear. I raise myself ... The sound of shots breaks upon my ears. They are shooting here, in our room. I have always been a light sleeper, and on awakening can quickly orient myself as to what is happening.

Lev Davidovich was a sound sleeper in his younger years. Insomnia beset him for the first time when attacks against the Opposition began in the USSR, when the pages of *Pravda* began to overflow with black slander, unimaginable, fantastic slander which overwhelmed and dumbfounded the readers. To defend and justify themselves the slanderers used lies: they had no other weapon at their disposal.

Did the reading public believe them? Yes and no. The colossal tide of raging malice swept over them, engulfed them and they became disoriented... Tired, worn-out by the heroic years of the revolution, filled with fears about the future of its conquests, they began to believe the calumny, just as people begin to place faith in miracles during periods of decline and prostration. I used to see how the hands of readers would tremble as they held up the huge pages of *Pravda*; their hands would drop and then would be upraised again.

Our boys also lost sleep. The younger one, in bitter perplexity, would ask me: "What is it? Why do they say these things about papa? How dare they?" The older one, Leon, became frantic and was in a constant state of excitement. With a pale face he would tell me of his impressions in the circles of the youth and of his struggle against the buffets of the torrent of filth. "Brave little tailor," (a hero of one of Andersen's fairy tales), his father would say observing him with approbation.

"The brave little tailor" took pride in his health, and was not a little upset during that period by the unexpected insomnia, but he did not give in. He remained proud of his health until the last two years of his life, when suddenly it worsened quickly. The black years of the cynical Moscow trials mowed him down. For our son Leon was, though in absentia, one of the chief defendants. The venom of criminal slander entered like poison into his young body. His entire nervous system was affected by the murders of Zinoviev, Piatakov, Muralov, Smirnov, Kamenev, Bukharin and many others; Kamenev and Bukharin he knew from his childhood, with the others he became acquainted later on, and he knew them all as honest revolutionists, he learned from them, loved them, respected them and connected them with the revolution, with its heroism, with its Lenin and Trotsky.

Nights of sleeplessness returned and he did not have the strength to fight them off. Sleeping drugs worked poorly on him. He would doze off only towards morning. And he had to get up between seven and eight in order to begin work, which was rendered still more difficult by the surveillance of the ever-wakeful GPU whose agents, as was later revealed, occupied quarters next to his. He lived at No. 26; they at No. 28.

OUR arrest in Norway aroused our son to the very core of his being: he was fully aware of what it meant. Our departure for Mexico, the three weeks' journey on board the oil tanker surrounded only by enemies introduced mortal alarm into his life. When we were at Gourum — the place of our incarceration in Norway — he sent us directions written in invisible ink and in code how to organise our trip. It was not discovered by our enemies and we received it. He sent friends to us from France. But no one was permitted to see us, And none of our friends was allowed to accompany us. Those three weeks of complete uncertainty were a great trial for Leon.

His father raged like a caged tiger. Delayed newspaper accounts of the then famous and first staging of the Moscow trials, his inability to answer it and expose the liars, were the greatest torture for Lev Davidovich. To defend himself against slander, to fight it-after all, this was his native element, the organic passion of his being; he found refuge in furious labour and in the struggle against all his contemptible enemies. But here in Gourum where he was doomed to silence, he fell ill.

Our son Leon understood this: his despair knew no bounds. He applied himself to the task which his father could not fulfill. In order to ease the latter's burden he came out himself with the exposure of the vile masters of the "Moscow Trials" whom he branded for what they were and who have written into the annals of history its most shameful and most revolting pages. Leon fulfilled this task brilliantly. In our jail we read his "Red Book" with great excitement. "All very true, all very true, good boy," said his father with a friend's tenderness. We wanted so much to see him and to embrace him!

In addition to his revolutionary activity and his literary work, our son occupied himself with higher mathematics which greatly interested him. In Paris he managed to pass examinations and dreamed of some time devoting himself to systematic work. On the very eve of his death he was accepted as a collaborator by the Scientific Institute of Holland and was to begin work on the subject of the Russian Opposition. He was the only one among the youth who had had an enormous experience in this field and who was exhaustively acquainted with the entire history of the Opposition from its very inception.

Our economic instability used to worry him a great deal. How he yearned for economic independence! He once wrote me about his prospective earnings. The possibilities were good but he did not yet have definite assurance. "it would be a renmarkable thing" (i.e., work in the Scientific Institute), he said and then added facetiously, "I would be in a position to assist my aging parents." "Why not dream?" he asked. His father and I often recalled these words of our son with love and tenderness. Mr Spalding — assistant supervisor of the Russian Department in Stanford University — conducted some negotiations with our son in Paris concerning a prospective work, and here is what he later wrote about Leon:

"The news of Sedov's death came to me as a shock. He impressed me as an extremely able and attractive personality, his future would undoubtedly have been brilliant. We are quite unclear about the circumstances of his death: some sources of our information indicate that it was due to medical negligence, or even something more terrible. Could you find it possible to write a brief note summarising the conversation I had with Sedov last October (1937), including the tentative agreement which I had concluded with him. I could use such a note in case it is possible to obtain certain information from Trotsky concerning the Russian civil war and war communism."

The colossal tide of raging malice swept over them, engulfed them and they became disoriented... Tired, worn-out by the heroic years of the revolution, filled with fears about the future of its conquests, they began to believe the calumny

Leon entered the revolution as a child and never left it to the end of his days. The semi-conscious loyalty of his childhood toward the revolution later matured into a conscious and firmly intrenched devotion. Once in the summer of 1917, he came from school with a bloody hand into the office of the Woodworkers Trade Union (Bolshevik) where I was then working as editor and proof-reader of its organ, *Woodworkers Echo*. It was the time of hot debates which took place not only in the Tauride Palace, the Smoiny, or the Circus but also in the streets, the streetcars, schools and at work. Early in the morning, as a rule, a multitude of workers milled in the offices of our union, discussing current questions, i.e., the questions involving the impending seizure of power by the proletariat. For the mass of workers these questions were indissolubly bound up with the personality of L.D. They discussed his speeches, and in these discussions could be felt the unity and inflexibility of will: a burning desire to march forward, summoning for a decisive struggle with unconquerable faith in victory.

The children were permitted to have their meals together with me in the union's dining room. Lev Davidovich was at the time sitting in the jail of the Provisional Democratic Government. To the queries of comrades concerning his hand Leon replied that he had been bitten by Kerensky (the Premier's son). How come? "I gave him one in his teeth." We all understood what had happened. The same school was also attended by the children of Skobelev, the then Minister of Labor. Fights were a daily occurrence.

By a blow from ambush the GPU cut short the young and talented life of our son and friend. This price was exacted for the *upward flight* unprecedented in history of the October revolution. Those responsible for its decline are now bringing their despicable work to its conclusion. The Second October will come; it will conquer the whole world and it will mete out their deserts both to the heroes of its predecessor as well as to its grave-diggers.

Lev Davidovich did not pore over the filthy pages of the Communist Party's paper *Pravda*. He would quickly glance over it, and toss it aside with aversion.

THEY are shooting... Lev Davidovich is now also awake. I whisper in his ear: "They are shooting here, in our room." And pressing close to him, I push him very, very gently, and drop down together with him from the low bed on to the floor.

"They are shooting." I uttered this with the self-same feeling as in the July days of 1917 I had said, "they have come." This was in Petrograd — it was later named Leningrad — when the police of Kerensky's government came to arrest L.D. We had expected arrest at the time — it was inevitable. The attack of Stalin was likewise expected by us. It was also inevitable. Nevertheless the expected came more unexpectedly on the night of May 24, 1940 than did the arrest in 1917.

Kerensky's government had at that time scored a victory, not for long, but it did nonetheless succeed in arresting the Bolshevik leaders. I recall the manner in which the crisis of the Provisional Democratic Government was resolved. A stormy session was going on in the beautiful Hall of Columns in the Tauride Palace, I was sitting in a box, very close to the speakers' platform which was filled to overflowing with all the Lieberdans (this was how Demyan Bedny had labelled the Mensheviks in one of his poems which gained wide popularity). Suddenly there came the blare of triumphant music. A military band marched into the palace to the accompaniment of deafening applause and ecstatic greetings. The Government had secretly transferred from the front, regiments loyal to it and, as the future proved, these regiments were the last loyal ones. But at the time, they were sufficient. Those in power began to feel firm ground under their feet. I saw how those who filled the platform, the conquerors, were covertly shaking each other by the hand, how they with great difficulty tried to restrain their transports of joy — their faces glowed, they were unable to preserve even an outward appearance of calm as was dictated by the circumstances.

In a few days the arrests began. LD and I occupied at the time a small room in the apartment of Comrade Y Larin. Our boys were in Terioki with some friends. LD had spent that entire day as, incidentally, he spent all previous ones, at meetings until late into the white Petersburg night.

At five o'clock in the morning I heard a cautious tramping of feet on the asphalt in the courtyard and when I ran to the window and opened a chink in the shutters, I saw in the early white light uniforms in gray and guns slung across the arms. It was a military detachment of the Provisional Democratic Government. Beyond

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Lev Davidovich

by Victor Serge

IT was to the cause of the workers that Leon Davidovitch devoted his long life of toil, combat, thought, and inflexible resitance to inhumanity. All those who approached him know that he was disintrested and conceived of his whole existence only as part of a great historic task, which was not his alone, but that of the movement of the socialist masses conscious of the perils and possibilities of our period. "These are bitter times," he wrote, "but we have no other country." His character was integral in the full sense of the word: seeing no gap between behaviour and conviction, idea and action; not admitting that higher interest, which give meaning to life, can be sacrificed to what is passing and personal, to banal petty egotism. His moral uprightness was allied to an intelligence that was simultanesouly objective and passionate, and always tended toward depth, breadth, creative effort, the fight for the right... And he was a simple man. He happened to note in the margin of a book whose author alluded to his "will to power": [It was another man who] wanted power for power's sake. I have never felt this sentiment... I sought power over intelligences and wills..." He felt himself to be not so much an authoritarian — though failing to recognise the practical utlity of authority — as one who spurred men on, drew them after him, not be flattering their base instincts but by summoning them to idealism, to clear reason, to the greatness of being fully men of a new type called upon to transform society.

Those who hunted him down and killed him, as they killed the Russian Revolution and martyrized the peoples of the USSR will meet their punishment. Already they have calle d down on a Soviet Union weakend by the massacres called the "Stalinist purges", the most disastrous invasion. They continue on their road to the abyss... A few days after his death, I wrote — and I wish to change nothing in these lines: "Throughout his whole heroic life, Leon Davidovitch believed in the future, in the liberation of men. Far from weakening during the last sombre years, his faith matured still further and was rendered firmer by ordeal. Humanity of the future, freed from all oppression, will eliminate from its life, all violence. As he did to many others, he taught me this faith."