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THE PROPHET'S HEART:
THE IMPACT OF EMOTIONS ON LEON TROTSKY'S POLITICAL ANALYSIS

A Thesis

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The Faculty of the Department of History

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In Partial Fulfillment

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by

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ABSTRACT

THE PROPHET'S HEART:

THE IMPACT OF EMOTIONS ON LEON TROTSKY'S POLITICAL ANALYSIS

by John Anthony Sidlow

This thesis argues that there was a significant drop in the quality of the specifically strategic political analysis, but not the tactical analysis, that Leon Trotsky engaged in beginning in 1933 and continuing until his death in 1940. The most serious manifestation of this phenomenon was Trotsky's poorly considered advocacy of the Fourth International.

The evidence shows that the most likely cause of this reduction in Trotsky's reasoning powers was a dramatic increase in the negative feelings that he had towards Joseph Stalin as a result of the various brutalities that the General Secretary of the Soviet Union had meted out against him. Most of the strategic political questions that Trotsky faced at this time in some way involved Stalin. Apparently, in fighting for the Fourth International, Trotsky wanted a clean break with the Third International that Stalin controlled.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank my parents and family for supporting me throughout my education both personally and financially. I would like to thank my friends for being there in times of need.

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I. Introduction

> I am close to death from the blow of a political assassin...[which] struck me down in my room. I struggled with him...we...entered...talk about French statistics...he struck me...please say to our friends... I am sure ...of victory...of Fourth International...go forward.[1]

These were the last words of a passionate fighter and thinker. His murder was one of many in the world in August of 1940. Thousands were dying violently that month. However, this was no ordinary killing, because the victim was no ordinary person. He had played a part in shaping the twentieth century. Twenty-three years before his death, he helped to capture the largest country on earth for his political organization. Although he served as a soldier in the fight that followed, his life's struggle was more about politics than warfare. Yet, much of his political activity resembled combat. In spite of this, he succeeded in engaging in some of the most remarkable, lucid, sound, and, at times, prophetic political reasoning of his age. However, in 1933, his remarkable mind faltered. It had been a brutal year for him. His daughter committed suicide, Germany lapsed into Nazism, and he had been forced to wander through Europe looking for a place to live. It was in this year that his emotions began to intrude into his keen mind. Also in 1933, he began his work for the political organization that he

[1] Natalya Sedova, Vie et Mort de Leon Trotsky: 319, quoted in Isaac Deutscher, The Prophet Outcast (London: Oxford University Press, 1963), 507.

mentioned in his dying words, the Fourth International. Yet, his political thinking in 1933 and beyond was less about a new International and more about a single man. The man and the International were connected. It seems that the political thinker who died in August 1940 had started to advocate the Fourth International simply because his enemy, the one whom he blamed for the suicide of his daughter and the rise of German Nazism, was in charge of the Third International. He wanted a clean break with his nemesis. This was the most profound example of his emotionally flawed political reasoning. Therefore, the last words of Leon Davidovich Trotsky (his given name was Leon Davidovich Bronstein) were not so much about a new International; the words were more about Joseph Stalin (also known as Joseph Dzhugashvili), the man who had sent the assassin.

The quality of Trotsky's specifically strategic political analysis, including that analysis that lead to his advocacy of the Fourth International, dropped sharply in 1933, while the quality of his tactical political analysis remained strong until his death. This phenomenon seems to have been caused by an emotional condition that was brought about by a series of traumatic events that Trotsky directly attributed to Joseph Stalin, who was, more often than not, immediately connected to the topics of his strategic analysis.

Between the year 1929, when Trotsky was sent into exile in Turkey, and 1933, his powers of analysis, both tactical

and strategic, were as logical and prophetic as ever. In this period, Trotsky spent most of his time commenting on the situation in Germany. Tactically, he was able to assess accurately the political nature of the Leninbund, among other small political organizations, and argue that it was vacillating with the "sensations of the day."[2] Strategically, Trotsky was able to evaluate critically the Comintern's policies and predict doom for the Communist Party of Germany (KPD) and the entire workers' movement in this key nation.

With Germany under the sway of Adolf Hitler, Trotsky left Turkey in 1933 and began looking throughout Europe for a place to live. He finally settled in France. While in France, German Nazism was not the only thing troubling Trotsky. He had been dealing with the suicide of his daughter and, in the next few years, would be forced to cope with, among other things, the arrest of his son and the political capitulation of an old friend. Trotsky blamed Joseph Stalin directly for all of these events. In 1933, the way Bronstein felt about what had happened to him began to significantly impact the quality of his strategic political analysis. While his tactical thinking remained strong, he had an increasingly weaker understanding of those political questions that were closely connected to Joseph Stalin. Perhaps the most important strategic political question that

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[2] Writings of Leon Trotsky [1929], ed. George Breitman and Sarah Lovell, vol. 1 (New York: Pathfinder Press, Inc., 1975), 249.

involved Joseph Stalin was the Fourth International. At this time, Stalin was in charge of the Third International (also called the Comintern). The Comintern was the political organization that came out of the Russian Revolution to challenge the supremacy of the Second International among the world's workers and radicals. With his resentment against Stalin growing, Trotsky seemed to have advocated a clean break with his nemesis. Thus, Trotsky's fight for the Fourth International began. However, the thousands of other radicals in Europe and America who opposed Stalin apparently felt that a new International was not such a good idea. The actual founding conference of the Fourth International was sparsely attended and did not take place until 1938. In spite of his less than stellar strategic analysis, Trotsky's tactical reasoning remained sound. He boldly advocated the highly prudent tactic of moving his International Communist League (ICL) into the larger French Socialist Party (SFIO). This secured the continued existence of the ICL.

After moving to Norway in June of 1935 and then to Mexico eighteen months later, Trotsky's primary political emphasis shifted geographically from Europe to North America. In spite of being a long way from Moscow, Trotsky's life could still be negatively impacted by Stalin. He had to suffer through the death of his son Leon Sedov and was forced to defend himself against a plethora of ridiculous charges from Moscow. Trotsky felt, and had some evidence to prove, that Stalin was behind both incidents. Therefore, his hatred

of Stalin reached new heights. It seems that this hatred led Trotsky to fight for, and realize, the creation of the political organization that he had been working for since 1933. On September 3rd, 1938, the founding conference for the Fourth International met just outside of Paris. Only a handful of delegates were present, many of whom were convinced that a new International would have little effect on the world workers' movement. The delegate representing the opposition within the Soviet Union was secretly an agent of Stalin. In spite of the poor prospects for success, Trotsky wrote tirelessly in support of the conference. Although his work for the new International showed his continuing difficulty with strategic political reasoning, a political conflict among American Trotskyists revealed that his powers of tactical analysis remained intact. He argued convincingly against a national referendum within the American section of the ICL (called the Socialist Workers' Party or SWP). Yet, this conflict also indicated his decreasing skills of strategic reasoning as Trotsky exacerbated the conflict through his peculiar argument that the USSR was both counter-revolutionary, at the level of the bureaucracy, and revolutionary, at the level of the workers. He also lapsed into periods of intense anger, brutally insulting members of the SWP who disagreed with him. Much of the emotional bile that Trotsky hurled at American Trotskyists at this time can be traced to the increasingly prominent place that his resentment against Stalin played in

his life in Mexico.

In spite of the raw anger that he felt for Stalin in the later part of his life, Trotsky's emotions regarding Dzhugashvili were not always so negative. Trotsky's assessment of Stalin evolved over time. Just after Lenin's death in 1924, Trotsky called Stalin a "brave and sincere revolutionary."[3] As time went on, however, the conflict between the two men would begin a process of deterioration of Bronstein's feelings in respect to Dzhugashvili. Between the death of Lenin and the start of Trotsky's exile in 1929, Stalin had removed the founder of the Red Army from every post and position of importance within the first workers' state. Finally exiled and isolated in Turkey, Trotsky's assessment of Stalin had diminished, but he still retained a rather objective mind with regard to the General Secretary. In his book The Third International after Lenin, written in 1929, Trotsky blames the "political line of the leadership"[4] as the primary cause of the rise of the bureaucracy in the Soviet Union. Stalin is rarely mentioned as being individually responsible for the ills plaguing the USSR. However, by 1936, when Trotsky wrote The Revolution Betrayed, Stalin was held personally responsible for the bureaucratization of the Soviet Union.

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[3] Max Eastman, Since Lenin Died (London: The Labour Publishing Company, Limited, 1925), 55.

[4] Leon Trotsky, The Third International after Lenin (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1996), 252-253.

The year 1933 stands out as a turning point in Trotsky's negative assessment of Stalin, It seems that during this year, Bronstein's feelings regarding Dzhugashvili degraded dramatically. Comparing and contrasting two pieces, written in 1932 and late 1933 respectively, reveals a shift in attitude. In the piece written in 1932, the bureaucracy is more often referred to using the terms "party," "Communist" or "uncontrolled."[5] In the article written in late 1933, Trotsky is more likely to call the bureaucracy "Stalinist."[6] Bronstein's final years represent the high point of his hatred towards Dzhugashvili. Trotsky's last, but unfinished, work, Stalin: An Appraisal of the Man and His Influence maligns Stalin ruthlessly and gives credence to any rumor that makes the General Secretary look bad.

Leon Davidovich Trotsky died on August 21st, 1940, after an assassin embedded an ice axe into his brain. This was the last act in a conflict of hate and pain that had spanned twenty years and three continents. Yet, it might be argued that Stalin succeeded in damaging Trotsky's brain before the axe fell. The increasing hatred that Trotsky felt for Stalin impacted his intellectual capabilities for the last seven years of his life. Thus, the mind of one of the most interesting figures of the Twentieth Century slowly passed

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5 Writings of Leon Trotsky [1932], ed. George Breitman and Sarah Lovell, vol. 4 (New York: Pathfinder Press, Inc., 1972), 258-269.

6 Writings of Leon Trotsky [1933-34], ed. George Breitman and Sarah Lovell, vol. 6 (New York: Pathfinder Press, Inc., 1972), 17-24.

into oblivion.

II. The Prophet Debunked, and Not: Trotsky and the Historians

> The demand that history, whatever the subject may be, should state the facts without prejudice and without any particular object or end to be gained by its means, must be regarded as a fair one.- G.W.F. Hegel, Hegel's Lectures on the History of Philosophy

Leon Trotsky has been a subject of debate among historians for decades. This is a natural consequence of the roles that he has played in the events of the early twentieth century. Trotsky had a significant influence on the development of the era in which he lived. Beyond just his monumental impact as the leader of the St. Petersburg Soviet during the 1905 revolution, as the controller of the Military Revolutionary Committee during the October Revolution, and as founder and supreme commander of the Red Army during the Civil War, Trotsky wrote about many of the most tumultuous events of the 1920's and 1930's. He commented on the Chinese revolution of the 1920's; he wrote numerous pieces about the failed German revolution of 1923; Trotsky expressed his ideas on the Comintern failures with regard to the British Trade Union controversy; he wrote about and accurately predicted the rise of Nazism in Germany; Trotsky commented on the attempted coup in France in 1935; he wrote extensively about first the united front and then the Popular Front in France.

As he was doing all of these things, Trotsky presented a continuous barrage of criticism against the policies of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, the Comintern, and Joseph Stalin. The broad scope of Trotsky's impact has made him a prominent topic of discussion and controversy among historians.

Inevitably, those historians who have written about Trotsky have confronted the issue of the quality of his discourse. Many scholars are inclined to take an extremist view of the founder of the Red Army. They are either arguing that his analytical abilities were flawed across the board or that Trotsky was some sort of prophet whose powers of intellectual discourse were never, or rarely, compromised. Some historians, however, take a more balanced approach and argue that certain individual pieces of analysis are good, while others are flawed. None of these scholars have really focused on what the flawed pieces of reasoning have in common, what the good pieces of reasoning have in common, whether the flawed reasoning, or good reasoning, was always that way, and if it wasn't, then when the reasoning may have faltered, if it did, and why it did so. Finally, they fail to discuss the impact that his reasoning powers, good or bad, had on Trotsky's decision-making abilities and, by extension, on the course of those political movements that he guided.

One of the most brutal attacks against Trotsky comes from the a book entitled <u>On Trotskyism: Problems of Theory and History</u> by historian Kostas Mavrakis. This work is a

brutal broadside directed at the ideas of Trotsky and his followers. The author is a Greek born, French educated Maoist.[1]

Mavrakis characterizes Trotsky as an out of date Marxist from a failed and defunct school. He presents a major contradiction in Trotsky's thought. According to the author, Trotsky supported the ideas of permanent revolution of a Russian Jew living in Germany who had written many books on economics and Marxism named A.L. Helphand (otherwise known as Parvus), yet did not follow those ideas to logical conclusions regarding an alliance between the workers and peasantry. The author also questions Trotsky's authorship of the theory of permanent revolution, claiming that Trotsky took more from Parvus than many historians are willing to admit. Mavrakis rejects the notion (from the historian Joel Carmichael and others) that Lenin converted to Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution in April 1917. The author rejects the theory of permanent revolution and supports Stalin's theory of socialism in one country.[2]

He also argues that Trotsky could not engage in proper concrete dialectical materialist analysis. According to Mavrakis, Trotsky was an abstract dogmatist who was unable to reason from real events, but forced reality into a theoretical mold of his own making. Mavrakis claims that

[1] Kostas Mavrakis, On Trotskyism: Problems of Theory and History (London and Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1976), 1-5.

[2] Ibid., 15-40.

these failings in Trotsky's thought existed throughout his intellectual life and across the broad spectrum of his political analysis.[3]

Mavrakis also claims that Trotsky was inconsistent in his ideas about bureaucracy and democratic centralism. To the author, Trotsky would oscillate between party authoritarianism and democracy. He claimed that Trotsky either felt that factions should be expelled from the party (in the 20's) or that factions should be accepted and should even be given certain rights (in the 30s'). Mavrakis argues that Lenin consistently wanted to do neither. Lenin would give the factions no special rights to deviance, but would try to reabsorb the group, not expel it. Also, the author criticizes both Trotsky and Trotskyism for believing that democratic centralism was a part of party organization, where in actual fact it should follow the "mass line" the will of the worker and peasant masses. Factions that do not follow the mass line (that is presumably followed by the party majority) should be reabsorbed into the party as a whole. To Mavrakis, neither expulsion nor acceptance was to be the fate of a faction. They should be reabsorbed and brought back to the mass line.[4]

Mavrakis notes a change in Trotsky's analytical skills; however, he concludes that Trotsky's reasoning before the

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[3] Ibid., 41-53.

[4] Ibid., 54-97.

change was just as flawed as after. Therefore, Mavrakis did not notice an alteration in the quality of Trotsky's analysis. However, he did notice that sometime in the early 30's, Trotsky changed his attitude regarding the handling of factions within the party. Mavrakis surmises that the change came about as a result of Trotsky's experiences as a member of a faction within the Communist Party of the Soviet Union.

Mavrakis is unable to give credit for those areas of political analysis where Trotsky clearly excelled. He could not allow himself to see Trotsky's remarkably accurate conclusions regarding the rise of Nazism in Germany, as well as those areas of tactical reasoning where Bronstein succeeded throughout his life. The entire German situation from 1930 to 1933 is an excellent example of Trotsky's reasoning from concrete real-life situations and Bronstein's ability to predict the outcome of actual events clearly. Thus, Mavrakis' contention that Trotsky was an abstract dogmatist is hard to reconcile with the evidence. The author simply lambastes all that Trotsky wrote across the board.

Another book that tends to debunk Trotsky's ideas is Baruch Knei-Paz's The Social and Political Thought of Leon Trotsky. In Part III, "The Permanent Revolution 'Betrayed'", of the book, several themes dominate. The broad sweep of the section, however, is related to the dynamic between Trotsky's permanent revolution and Stalin's revolution in one

country.[5]

One related theme has to do with Trotsky's thoughts regarding the causes for revolutionary failure in China, France, and, particularly, Germany. According to the author, in this matter, Trotsky contradicted himself, saying at once that both objective conditions and tactical / strategic errors on the part of Stalin and the Comintern caused the failure of the German revolution in 1923.[6]

The author also illuminates the Trotsky / Stalin conflict of the 20's, arguing that Stalin took the political upper hand by positioning his theory of socialism in one country opposite to Trotsky's permanent revolution.[7]

Knei-Paz also argues that Trotsky contradicted himself in his arguments regarding the bureaucracy in Russia. At times, the author claims, Trotsky argues that the bureaucracy arose as a result of Russian backwardness; at other times he says it was the creation of Stalin.[8]

The author also writes about the "bureaucratic collectivism" of the author Bruno Rizzi. Rizzi argued that the phenomenon was the wave of the future for Europe. This was neither socialism nor capitalism; it was the domination

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[5] Baruch Knei-Paz, The Social and Political Thought of Leon Trotsky (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), 337-410.

[6] Ibid., 348-366.

[7] Ibid., 367-410.

[8] Ibid., 427-441.

of the government bureaucracy over the people. Neither bourgeoisie nor the workers ruled. The author talks about Trotsky's rejection of this notion because it was inconsistent with classical Marxism.[9]

Knei-Paz also speaks about the contribution that Rizzi's book made to the conflict within the American Trotskyist movement of the late 30's. American Trotskyists (James Burnham, Max Shachtman) believed that the "bureaucratic collectivism" of Soviet Russia was a result of the Bolshevik coup of 1917, that Stalinism was a natural outgrowth of the policies of both Lenin and Trotsky in those early months.[10]

Generally, Knei-Paz finds little to praise in Trotsky's ideas and criticizes Bronstein's analytical skills across the board. Consequently, he is not in a position to notice any change in the quality of Trotsky's discourse.

In contrast to those authors who are unable to see anything valuable in the political conclusions of Leon Trotsky, there are those who do not seem to be able to see any fault at all with Bronstein's reasoning skills. Ernest Mandel, who was a Trotskyist, in his book Trotsky: A Study in the Dynamic of his Thought, notices nothing to criticize in the whole of what Trotsky was able to write. Mandel can only laud Bronstein for his contribution to Marxism.

> Trotsky made an absolutely essential contribution to...Marxist thought and practice....While many of

[9] Ibid., 425-426.

[10] Ibid., 418-427.

> its elements were already present in Trotsky's early writings-...they became more and more complex and organically linked to one another with each important stage in Trotsky's intellectual development. The major landmarks in the process were: his decision to join the Bolshevik Party in 1917; his role in the October Revolution, the peace negotiations at Brest-Litovsk, and the building of the Red Army and the Communist International; his struggle against the rise of the bureaucracy in the Soviet Union and the degeneration of the Comintern; his struggle against the rise of fascism and war; and the fight for the Fourth International. In each of these successive stages, important aspects were re-examined, enriched and developed far beyond previously existing theory while at the same time they were integrated into Marxist theory in such a way as to strengthen its inner cohesion and overall unity.[11]

Whereas many other historians have found much to praise in Trotsky's ideas, most are unable to present the sort of unequivocal praise that Mandel presents. Even in areas where there is frequent criticism from some scholars, such as Trotsky's work for the Fourth International, Mandel can find no fault.

> The weakness of this type of explanation [from those historians who are critical of Trotsky's support of the Fourth International] becomes apparent when one considers the political analyses that he produced while struggling for the Fourth International. It was at this time that he analyzed the nature of the Soviet Union and the Spanish Civil War, made a devastating critique of the Moscow trials, and predicted both the signing and the inevitable breakdowns of the Hitler-Stalin Pact-achievements equal to anything he had done before, and clear proof that his intellectual and

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[11] Ernest Mandel, Trotsky: A Study in the Dynamic of his Thought (Thetford, Norfolk: Lowe & Brydone Printers Ltd, 1979), 9-10.

analytical powers were at their zenith.[12]

There are several problems with Mandel's argument. Assuming that the other analyses that Trotsky engaged in, mentioned by Mandel above, were valid, just because an individual's reasoning is sound in certain areas does not mean that that can be said of all of the conclusions that that person made at the time. In addition, Mandel claims that Trotsky's assessment of the nature of the USSR was valid in the late 30's. He can only be referring to Bronstein's claim, as presented in The Revolution Betrayed, that the Soviet Union remained a workers' state, while the Soviet government was counter-revolutionary. This is a seriously problematic piece of reasoning. The Soviet state was such an ingrained part of the Soviet nation that to separate neatly the two seems to be a poorly thought out way for Trotsky to be able to express his hatred for Stalin while showing his support for the workers' state that he had fought to create (see the chapter, "Cain and Abel: Trotsky and Stalin"). Although Trotsky did predict the Nazi-Soviet pact, this was a situation whereby Trotsky's need to express his loathing for Stalin happened to coincide with what the events of the day would bring. Mandel adheres to a simplistic view of Trotsky's powers of analysis. To support everything that Trotsky produced is to disregard conveniently all that was problematic in Trotsky's strategic political reasoning powers in the later part of his life.

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12 Ibid., 110.

In The Life and Death of Leon Trotsky, Victor Serge (with the assistance of Trotsky's widow Natalia Sedova) expresses the sort of complete support of Trotsky's reasoning abilities that can be seen in Mandel's book. Serge finds no fault or failure in Bronstein's abilities at any time in his subject's life. In a long winded dedication of the book, to Trotsky himself, Serge writes:

> Like Lenin's and many of those whom circumstances had made less prominent or left in total obscurity, his [Trotsky's] traits were those of several generations, developed to a very high degree of individual perfection. These generations had borne and formed him; they lived in him and in his own age, which-being the product of the same historical circumstances-was indistinguishable from him, though everyone around him and behind him seemed to be somewhat inferior.[13]

This is high praise indeed. It seems that Serge was so beside himself with admiration for Bronstein, that he did not notice the linguistic contradiction he was engaging in when he wrote this passage. Exactly how can there be degrees of perfection? That error notwithstanding, this passage is indicative of the tone of the entire book. The work is simply a forum of fanatically pro-Trotsky words that, at times, disregards the evidence. Although the above passage does not explicitly mention Bronstein's analytical powers, clearly there is an insinuation in Serge's words that nothing Trotsky did was much less than perfect. In evaluating Bronstein's reasoning abilities later in life, Serge writes:

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[13] Victor Serge and Natalia Sedova Trotsky, The Life and Death of Leon Trotsky (New York: Basic Books, Inc. Publishers, 1973), 3-4.

> Some of Trotsky's most polemical work was written during this period [after 1938]. Despite the bitterness of the struggle-he felt it keenly-his powers of concentration and his capacity for work were as great as they had been when he wrote in his armored train, traveling behind the firing lines.[14]

Serge totally disregards all of the problems in analysis that Trotsky had after 1933. He claims that Trotsky's reasoning powers were just as good after 1938 as they had been when Trotsky was, arguably, at the pinnacle of a very tumultuous career, when the founder of the Red Army was leading that army to victory in one of the most brutal civil wars of all time. Serge conveniently forgets Bronstein's obvious logical problems with the Fourth International. Indeed, the author rarely mentions the new International; there are just three references in the index to this political entity that occupied Trotsky's mind more than anything else after 1933. Serge also fails to recognize any problems with Trotsky's analysis of the nature of the USSR (see the chapters "Whither the Fourth International?: Trotsky and France" and "The Dionysian Revolutionary: Trotsky and America"). In The Life and Death of Leon Trotsky, Victor Serge presents a picture of Trotsky that is unrealistically laudatory. He does not realize that Trotsky's strategic analytical skills did begin to falter in 1933, leading Bronstein to, among others things, advocate a rather poorly thought out political move, the Fourth International.

In spite of those historians who see Trotsky's analysis

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[14] Ibid., 245.

as either generally flawed or generally flawless, many prominent historians of early twentieth century European history have adopted a more balanced view of Trotsky's reasoning skills. These historians are more likely to view some of Bronstein's intellectual conclusions as valid and some as invalid. Often it seems that those historians who are more likely to adopt the more balanced approach towards Trotsky are biographers (with the exception of Serge). Three of the most noteworthy biographers of Bronstein are Joel Carmichael, Dmitri Volkogonov, and, of course, Isaac Deutscher. Their respective treatments of Trotsky represent some of the most noteworthy works on the life of the founder of the Red Army that are available. However, these books are not perfect. The works are flawed in different ways, but they do have some shortcomings in common. Although they all recognize errors in Trotsky's intellectual conclusions, they generally do not notice a dramatic downward trend in the quality of Bronstein's strategic political analysis after 1933. Although both Volkogonov and Deutscher do recognize the influence of Trotsky's emotional state on his reasoning abilities, they do not notice a broad general trend in this influence over a period of time. Finally, although all three authors criticize Trotsky's work for the Fourth International, none of them recognize a possible emotional motivation behind that work.

Joel Carmichael's biography of Trotsky, entitled Trotsky: An Appreciation of his Life, is a well thought out

work. The book attempts to portray Trotsky as fairly as possible. Carmichael neither lauds Trotsky's political analysis nor lambastes it. Indeed, there is a remarkable lack of analysis of Trotsky's works in the later part of the book. Consequently, the author fails to notice a significant downward trend in Trotsky's strategic analytical skills after 1933. Carmichael analyzes Trotsky's work for the Fourth International very little. He does argue that a new political entity to challenge the Third International was not a good idea; however, he never speculates as to why a man who had had some fine political analysis would fail so dramatically in such an important area as the founding of a new International.

As Carmichael covers Trotsky's life after 1933, he rarely analyzes Trotsky's written output in depth. Some of what he does write depicts Trotsky's work in a negative light. However, the lack of significant concrete analysis makes it impossible for Carmichael to notice or explore any trend in the quality of Trotsky's reasoning skills. While commenting on the book Whither France?, Trotsky's analysis of the future prospects for revolution in France, Carmichael criticizes Trotsky for adhering too closely to the German model while analyzing France. "The pamphlet (*Whither France?*) was closely modeled, unfortunately, on his view of Germany; since things turned out quite differently in France this pamphlet must be thought of as a failure even of

analysis, despite its characteristic sparkle."[15] Carmichael writes little more than this about Trotsky's political conclusions after 1933. Indeed, some of Bronstein's most significant pieces, such as The Revolution Betrayed and Stalin, are hardly mentioned at all. Both works are cited only twice each in the index.[16] Interestingly, in one of the only two places in the book where The Revolution Betrayed is mentioned, Carmichael refers to it as "his [Trotsky's] last, complete major work...."[17] If the book was so major, why didn't Carmichael devote more space to an analysis of the piece?

Carmichael's examination of Trotsky's role in the Fourth International is only slightly better. In commenting on the founding conference of the Fourth International, Carmichael writes:

> In the case of Trotsky the impression is hard to avoid that History is not likely to grant his brain-child [the Fourth International] the opportunity of duplicating Lenin's victory. If the regime that destroyed the democratic successor to Tsarism is to be replaced it is hard to envisage the role of Trotsky's Marxism.[18]

Thus, Carmichael has no kind words to say about the prospects

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15 Joel Carmichael, Trotsky: An Appreciation of His Life (New York: St. Martin's Press, Inc., 1975), 411.

16 Ibid., 510-511.

17 Ibid., 419.

18 Ibid., 461.

for the Fourth International. At no time does he speculate as to why Trotsky ventured into the realm of a new International in the first place. Carmichael does not even mention the classic explanation, that Trotsky felt that the rise of Nazism had made the Comintern obsolete, let alone notice the involvement of possible emotional factors.

Carmichael's Trotsky is nothing more than a good basic biography with little text analysis. Two of Trotsky's most significant works, The Revolution Betrayed and Stalin, are rarely mentioned. Trotsky's "brain-child," the Fourth International, is afforded only cursory analysis. With such minor coverage of Trotsky's intellectual output after 1933, Carmichael is not in a position to make any significant conclusions regarding either the quality of Trotsky's analysis or the motivation behind that analysis.

Dmitri Volkogonov's biography of Trotsky, entitled Trotsky: The Eternal Revolutionary, is a fine achievement. This work is unique in that it is the first presentation of Trotsky that utilizes documents from Soviet archives that were released after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. Through these documents, Volkogonov attempts to prove, and to some degree succeeds in proving, that Trotsky played a significant part in creating an early atmosphere for the later ruthlessness and brutality of the Stalin years. The new evidence, however, sheds no new light on Trotsky's career in exile. Perhaps as a direct result of the lack of new information from the recently released archives, Volkogonov

fails to make any novel conclusions about Trotsky's intellectual life after 1933. He criticizes much of Trotsky's work in this period, but he fails to note a pattern of decline that began after a dramatic drop in strategic skills after 1933. He notices the effect of Trotsky's emotions on the analysis in Stalin, but he fails to note any emotional influences on earlier works. Volkogonov argues that Trotsky's work for the Fourth International was based on flawed reasoning, but he fails to speculate about the influence of Trotsky's resentment towards Stalin on that reasoning.

In his analysis of the book Stalin, Volkogonov notes both a decline in Trotsky's reasoning ability and a possible emotional influence in that decline.

> In many respects Trotsky's incomplete biography of Stalin was one of his least successful books, and in places Trotsky's talent as a political journalist, historian and thinker seems to have deserted him, subverted by the bile and hatred that motivated him.[19]

In spite of this section, Volkogonov fails to notice that the decline in "Trotsky's talent" actually began way back in 1933. He also fails to recognize that "the bile and hatred" that had such a clear influence on Stalin actually began to impact Trotsky's reasoning skills as early as 1933.

The extent of Volkogonov's barely adequate analysis regarding the Fourth International expresses the historian's

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[19] Dmitri Volkogonov, Trotsky: The Eternal Revolutionary (New York: The Free Press, 1996), 421.

negative assessment of the venture. Volkogonov also speculates as to why Trotsky put so much effort into a new International in the first place.

> The creation of the Fourth International was the last expression of Trotsky's vast egoism, of his inability to accept that the time of his meteoric rise had passed and that his brainchild was stillborn. It was the most unrealistic venture of this Gulliver among a mass of Lilliputians, the squabbling Trotskyists. Whatever trace the Fourth International might have left is due only to the name of its founder.[20]

Thus, Volkogonov attributes the Revolutionary's work for the Fourth International as a manifestation of "Trotsky's vast egoism." However, he fails to elaborate on this idea. When did this egoism first begin to impact Trotsky's intellectual skills? Was the Fourth International the only matter that was impacted by this egoism? What influence did a resentment against Stalin, or any other emotions, have on this egoism? The "egoism as a motivation for Trotsky's work for the Fourth International" thesis might have worked if Volkogonov had spent a little more time and effort into elaboration. Perhaps if he had he would have discovered that lying behind the ego was a seething cauldron of hate directed against Stalin.

All things considered, Volkogonov's work stands out only because of the new evidence, taken from the recently released archives, that it utilizes. The analysis is not striking in its uniqueness or intellectual vigor. He notes a decline in

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[20] Ibid., 406-407.

his subject's intellectual powers and speculates as to an emotional cause; however, he fails to extend this analysis back to the origin of the emotional decline in Trotsky's reasoning skills, 1933. He criticizes the Fourth International and makes a cursory attempt at an explanation for Trotsky's involvement; however, he fails to continue this line of reasoning to include an underlying emotional condition. However, Volkogonov's work is remarkable simply because of the new information it presents.

By far the most respected biography of Trotsky is Isaac Deutscher's three volume set, The Prophet Armed, The Prophet Unarmed and The Prophet Outcast. The last book in the series, The Prophet Outcast, deals with Trotsky's life in exile, from 1929 to 1940. Like Volkogonov, Deutscher also had access to a unique source of evidence. In the late forties, Trotsky's widow allowed Deutscher exclusive rights to examine documents in what was then the closed section of Trotsky's archives at Harvard University. With an unprecedented glimpse into Trotsky's writings, Deutscher was able to fashion a powerful, provocative, and classical piece of scholarship. In spite of its monumental significance, The Prophet Outcast misses some opportunities for in depth analysis regarding the long term effects of Trotsky's emotions on his reasoning skills. Although Deutscher writes about some of Trotsky's less than stellar bits of political analysis, he does not connect these shortcomings and speculate about a possible downward trend in the quality of

Trotsky's strategic political conclusions after 1933. Deutscher does notice the impact of Trotsky's emotions on such works as Stalin; however, he does not write about the effect of Trotsky's emotions on the decline in Bronstein's strategic analytical skills since 1933. Finally, although the author does speculate as to why Trotsky put so much effort into the Fourth International, he fails to mention the possibility of an emotional motivation behind Trotsky's efforts.

In spite of being critical in evaluating Trotsky's works in The Prophet Outcast, Deutscher does not speculate about a possible downward trend in Bronstein's strategic analytical skills after 1933. Part of the reason for this is that Deutscher often exaggerates some of the minor strengths in Trotsky's works and, therefore, allows some of the larger weaknesses to diminish in comparison. Also, he sometimes presents Trotsky's arguments as more logical than they actually were. In commenting about The Revolution Betrayed, Deutscher writes:

> *The Revolution Betrayed* occupies a special place in Trotsky's literary work....In it he gave his final analysis of Soviet society and a survey of its history up to the middle of the Stalin era. His most complex book, it combines all the weakness and strength of his thought....Trotsky appears here in all his capacities: as detached and rigorously objective thinker; as leader of a defeated opposition; and as passionate pamphleteer and polemicist. The polemicist's contribution forms the more esoteric part of the work and tends to overshadow the objective and analytical argument.[21]

[21] Deutscher, The Prophet Outcast, 298.

Here Deutscher tends to exaggerate the "objective and analytical argument" in Trotsky's work. Consequently, the "polemicist's contribution" is downplayed. In fact The Revolution Betrayed has precious little that can be called objective (see the chapter "Cain and Abel: Trotsky and Stalin"). The piece is little more than a personal indictment against Stalin. The General Secretary is portrayed as the primary motive force behind the creation of the bureaucracy, when in fact a bureaucracy, almost by definition, is the product of complex political and social forces that no one man is primarily responsible for.[22] In a further attack against Stalin, Trotsky analyzes the Soviet Union as dualist in nature. In a strange leap of illogic, Trotsky attempts to argue that the Soviet bureaucracy was counter-revolutionary while the Soviet nation remained revolutionary. Trotsky cannot seem to see that it is impossible to separate completely the ruling party of a society, such as the USSR, from the nation as a whole. In spite of this, Deutscher writes that according to Trotsky, "Soviet society was still halfway between capitalism and socialism."[23] This might be considered an accurate assessment of the USSR at the time, but it is not what Trotsky expresses in The Revolution Betrayed. According to Trotsky, "The Soviet bureaucracy

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22 Leon Trotsky, The Revolution Betrayed (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1991), 92-93.

23 Deutscher, The Prophet Outcast, 300-301.

takes on bourgeois customs without having beside it a national bourgeoisie."[24] Thus the bureaucracy was counter-revolutionary without being a new exploiting class. Yet, Trotsky also writes, "The nature of the Soviet Union as a proletarian state is for us basically defined."[25] Therefore, Trotsky completely separates the ruling party from the nation. He attempts this in his analysis of a one-party state, where the Bolshevik party controlled all political and economic life in the nation. To claim that Trotsky was looking at the USSR as in-between capitalism and socialism is incorrect. Trotsky saw no new exploiting class, so what characteristics of capitalism did the society have? To Trotsky the society was fully a workers' state, the bureaucracy was counter-revolutionary. Duetscher's assessment of what Trotsky argued in The Revolution Betrayed is probably closer to the actual situation in Russia at that time; however, it is not what Trotsky himself would have said. It seems that Deutscher completely overlooked a flaw in one of Trotsky's major works. Deutscher argues that Trotsky's position was much more reasonable than it actually was. With this sort of analysis, Deutscher was in no position to notice a general downward trend in the quality of Trotsky's strategic political reasoning after 1933.

Deutscher's analysis of Stalin is generally more

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24 Trotsky, The Revolution Betrayed, 249.

25 Ibid., 248.

negative. He calls this book "[Trotsky's] weakest work." One of the criticisms that Deutscher presents is that Trotsky lets his emotions intrude too much into his analysis.

> He picks up any piece of gossip or rumor if only it shows a trait of cruelty or suggests treachery in the young Djugashvili....What guides Trotsky's pen in passages like these is, of course, his holy anger and disgust with the monstrosities of the Stalin cult.[26]

Thus, Deutscher does argue that Bronstein's feelings did intrude into, and negatively affect, Trotsky's intellectual output. However, he does not realize that this phenomenon began as early as 1933.

Deutscher is highly critical of Trotsky's work for the Fourth International; however, he never speculates about the possibility of an emotional cause for Trotsky's support for a new International. He mentions the argument, that Trotsky himself presented to justify a clean break with the Comintern, that the Third International had become useless to the world workers' movement. He also presents a novel idea, that Trotsky was looking far ahead toward a possible success in the future. Deutscher felt that there was a possibility that Trotsky knew that the short-term prospects for success of the Fourth International were nil, but to found the Fourth International in 1938 allowed Trotsky's small political movement to succeed in the long term. He bases this conclusion on those times when Trotsky compares the small size of those who supported a Fourth International with the

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[26] Deutscher, The Prophet Outcast, 453-456.

small early Bolshevik party.[27] This seems more effective as a possible way that Trotsky justified his work for the new International rather then as an effective way to speculate as to why Trotsky went in this direction in the first place. Considering the whole of The Prophet Outcast, Deutscher does very little analysis attempting to explain why Trotsky undertook a project, the Fourth International, with so few prospects for success.

Two recently published articles fail to shed new light on either the effect of Trotsky's emotions on his intellectual output or possible emotional motivations for the his work for the Fourth International. However, a piece by Paresh Chattopadhyay entitled "Capitalism as Socialism in the early Soviet Doctrine: Lenin, Trotsky, Bukharin, Preobrazhensky" criticizes Trotsky's intellectual role in establishing a social system where the means of production are officially owned by the workers but actually owned by the state, which took over the role that the capitalists filled in liberal, bourgeois societies.[28] The other article is entitled "Trotsky, Lenin and the Bolsheviks, August 1914-February 1917" and talks about possible emotional resentments between the Bolsheviks and Trotsky in 1917. In the piece, Ian D. Thatcher claims that older members of the Bolshevik party, remembering the conflict at the 1903 Second Congress

[27] Ibid., 422-425.

[28] Paresh Chattopadhyay, "Capitalism as Socialism in the Early Soviet Doctrine: Lenin, Trotsky, Bukharin, Preobrazhensky," Review of Radical Political Economics v.28, n.3 (Sept. 1996): 74.

(see the chapter "Young Hegelians Triumphant?: Trotsky and Russia"), accused Trotsky of being anti-Leninist. This article, however, does not extend an analysis of the impact of these bad feelings beyond 1917.[29]

None of the historians who have explored the life of Bronstein has noticed an initial dramatic decline, in 1933, followed by a more gradual decline in Trotsky's skills of strategic political analysis. Consequently none has been in a position to speculate as to why such a decline might occur. Many historians have lambasted Trotsky's work from his first writings as a young man until his death; others have been just as laudatory of everything that Trotsky wrote. Those historians that took a more balanced approach, however, did not see a sharp decline in the quality of Bronstein's analysis after 1933. Although many historians have speculated as to why Trotsky fought so hard for so long for the Fourth International, none have speculated about a possible emotional motivation for all of that hard work. All scholars considered, clearly Trotsky's ideas and life can still solicit controversy.

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[29] Ian D. Thatcher, "Trotsky, Lenin and the Bolsheviks, August 1914-February 1917," Slavonic and East European Review v.72, n.1 (Jan. 1994): 72.

III. Young Hegelians Triumphant?: Trotsky and Russia

> Not only have we here an increase in the productive power of the individual, by means of cooperation, but the creation of a new power, namely, the collective power of masses. - Karl Marx, Das Kapital

In order to understand fully the power, evolution and decline of Trotsky's political skills, the foundation of his skills must be examined. The man that would later be known as Trotsky was born Leon Davidovich Bronstein on October 26th, 1879 to a Jewish farmer living in the town of Yanovka in Kherson province in the Ukraine. His early education came from a cousin who tutored him. He got his higher education from a German-language school called St. Paul's Realschule in Odessa. The last year of his education, however, occurred in the the city of Nikolaev. Here Trotsky was first exposed to revolutionary ideas.[1]

He originally encountered non-Marxist radicals in Nikolaev. Most of the exiles there were members of the terrorist group Narodnaia Volia. His first exposure to Marxism came from his future wife, Alexandra Lvovna Sokolovskaya. Originally he was very much opposed to a doctrine that "precisely because of its claims to method and

[1] Carmichael, Trotsky: An Appreciation of His Life, 15-36.

science, seemed peculiarly arid."[2] He was imprisoned for attempting to incite local workers to strike in 1898. While in prison he began to better understand historical materialism and Marxism. However, his final and complete conversion to Marxist doctrine didn't come until he was exiled to the Siberian village of Ust-Kut. Trotsky and his family lived in exile until Trotsky escaped for the west, leaving his family behind, in 1902.[3]

While in Zurich, Trotsky met Lenin. He had heard of Mr. Ulyanov (Lenin's real name), but had never come face to face with the balding revolutionary. They quickly became intellectual colleagues and Lenin asked Trotsky to make contributions to the newspaper of the Russian Socialist Democratic Labor Party (RSDLP), Iskra.[4] The two men, however, did not agree for long. During the Second Party Congress of the RSDLP in Brussels, a conflict arose, which cut the party in two; Trotsky was not in support of Lenin. The conflict was over how party membership was to be defined. Lenin led the Bolsheviks (or majority group) and Trotsky was sympathetic towards the Mensheviks (or minority group).

The Bolsheviks wanted party membership to be defined narrowly. Lenin felt that only a tight, well disciplined,

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[2] Ibid., 38-42.

[3] Ibid., 55-69.

[4] Robert D. Warth, Leon Trotsky (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1977), 11-26.

and completely dedicated party could lead the workers to revolution.[5] In his book What is to be Done?, Lenin outlined his theories about the need for a group of elite revolutionaries to spur the proletarians toward revolution. Lenin felt that without the motivation from the revolutionaries, the workers would not revolt on their own. Lenin supported the notion of a smaller party of only the most dedicated for this reason.[6]

The Mensheviks, on the other hand, were willing to accept a much larger group. They were willing to allow less dedicated persons into the party. The Mensheviks wanted both strict party members and groups of less dedicated helpers in the party. They adhered to this notion partly because they did not believe that an elite group of revolutionaries was necessary to bring on the revolution. The Mensheviks felt that it was inevitable. The party, to the Mensheviks, would help the proletariat along before and during the revolution; however, the revolution would happen no matter what, and the workers would bring it about. Only a mass party could be successful in helping the worker once the inevitable uprising occurred. At first Trotsky and the Mensheviks triumphed, but another conflict turned everything around. A Jewish organization, the Bund, had previously insisted on a certain

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[5] Ibid., 28-31.

[6] Essential Works of Lenin, ed. Henry M. Christman, What Is To Be Done? (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1987), 54-57.

degree of autonomy within the party. The party (this was before the split) refused. The Bund left the party during the conflict. Without the support of the Bund the Mensheviks had a minority, and Lenin won. Nevertheless, the conflict wasn't over yet. With Lenin in control, his ideas about the makeup of the editorial board of Iskra could be implemented. He proposed that the board be reduced from seven to three. This would mean kicking some Mensheviks out. This was accepted by the Bolshevik controlled Party Congress and Lenin. Georgi Plekhanov (one of the founders of the Russian Social Democratic Party and a Bolshevik) and Jules Martov (a Menshevik) were elected as two of the three members of the editorial board. Excluded were several Mensheviks that had worked for the cause of Social Democracy in Russia for years. The exclusion of these persons from the board angered Trotsky and other Mensheviks. Indeed, Martov refused to take his seat on the board in protest. This conflict further split the party. Trotsky, Martov and Plekanov were worried about how the split would effect the movement. This lead Plekanov to use his enormous influence to insist that the ousted Mensheviks be returned to the board of Iskra. Lenin rejected this move and resigned from his post on the board.[7] After Lenin's resignation, Trotsky began to criticize Lenin brutally in the pages of the magazine. Trotsky wrote,

> Lenin's methods lead to this: the party organization at first substitutes itself for the party as a whole; then the central committee

[7] Warth, Leon Trotsky, 31-33.

> substitutes itself for the organization; and finally a single dictator substitutes himself for the central committee....[8]

These words would prove to be prophetic. This entire conflict would end up haunting Trotsky many years later.

During the next few years, Trotsky was influenced by A.L. Helphand. During his discussions with Helphand, Trotsky began to develop his theories of permanent revolution.[9] According to the theory, because Russia hadn't reached the proper historical stage, capitalism, for a proletarian revolution to occur, the Russian revolution would have to be a bourgeois revolution followed immediately by a proletarian one. Trotsky outlined his ideas in two books entitled The Permanent Revolution (published in 1928)[10] and Results and Prospects (first published in 1906 as a part of the book Our Revolution).[11] In the latter, Trotsky explained Russia's unique position in world economic development. According to Trotsky, a rich Russian bourgeois class was not able to develop because the unusually large and powerful state in Russia took up all of the excess capital produced. The state was forced to do this because it had to protect its unusually

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[8]Leon Trotsky, Nashi Poloiticheskiye Zadachi: 54, quoted in Robert D. Warth, Leon Trotsky, 33.

[9] Carmichael, Trotsky: An Appreciation of His Life 95-96.

[10] Louis Sinclair, Leon Trotsky: A Bibliography (Stanford, California: Hoover Institution Press, 1972), 415.

[11] Ibid., 21.

large borders and vast territories with massive armies. The bourgeoisie couldn't acquire the excess wealth that would enable it to take a leadership role in a bourgeois revolution or bourgeois state. Also, Trotsky pointed out that whatever capitalist development did occur (he mentions telegraphs and railroads) was brought about by the state. In order to facilitate protection from both internal and external enemies, the state needed to force the nation to industrialize before the proper Marxist stage of bourgeois rule occurred. The state would become increasingly centralized in order to make the job of protection easier and also because the technology of the telegraph and railroad made it possible. As the government became more centralized, it would drift further and further away from the people. The state, however, would continue to gain momentum as it accumulated more and more excess wealth from the tiny bourgeoisie. According to Trotsky, this phenomenon would render the state unable to notice when the needs of the people were not being met. The government's enormous accumulated wealth would allow it to rely less and less on bourgeois surplus money and this would further alienate the state from the people. The people's disaffection would grow, but the government would not notice. Finally matters would come to a head in a revolution as the people rose up in pent up frustration against the exploitative Russian state. The bourgeoisie, however, could not lead this fight; this class was too weak from being sucked economically dry by the

state; this class did not have the enormous wealth acquired through hording excess capital that the bourgeoisie in other countries enjoyed during their bourgeois revolutions. The bourgeoisie would have to get help from the proletariat. Once a bourgeois revolution led by the proletariat occurred, the proletariat would be faced with certain basic problems (such as agrarian reform) that it would be unable to solve using the methods of the present bourgeois, liberal, capitalist historical stage. Therefore, the proletariat revolution would have to occur as a result of the use of proletarian solutions to problems such as land reform. Thus the bourgeois and the proletariat revolutions would occur one after the other.[12]

Trotsky's theories were further explained in The Permanent Revolution. Published 22 years after Results and Prospects, this book was essentially a long winded response to an article written by Karl Radek (who had originally supported the Left Opposition, but had capitulated to Stalin only a few months before the appearance of the article) criticizing Trotsky's theories of Permanent Revolution. Radek argued that Trotsky's permanent revolution presented the proletariat as "leaping" over the bourgeois historical stage altogether. Trotsky pointed out that his theory fully accepted the proletariat passing through the bourgeois phase, but that the phase was just very short because the

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[12] Leon Trotsky, The Permanent Revolution and Results and Prospects (New York: Merit Publishers, 1969), 37-51.

unique conditions of Russia forced the proletariat to lead the bourgeois revolution.[13] Radek also wrote that Lenin was opposed to Trotsky's theory. Trotsky used Lenin's works to shatter that notion.[14] The book ended with a complete presentation of the major tenets of the theory of permanent revolution, including the international nature of the socialist revolution. "The socialist revolution begins on the national arena, it unfolds on the international arena, and is completed on the world arena."[15]

Between the publication of Results and Prospects and The Permanent Revolution, Trotsky faced the most dramatic period in his life. Not long after the publication of Results and Prospects, Trotsky was again arrested for revolutionary activity and sent into exile in Siberia. After escaping a year later, he went to London where he attended the Fifth Party Congress of the Russian Socialist Democratic Labor Party (RSDLP), and ended up in Vienna in 1908, where he published the Russian language newspaper Pravda. In 1910, he attended the seventh Party Congress, where a short reconciliation occurred between the Mensheviks and Bolsheviks. One year after the start of World War One, he attended an antiwar conference in Zimmerwald, Switzerland which served to severely criticize the Second International

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[13] Ibid., 178-188.

[14] Ibid., 225-238.

[15] Ibid., 276-281.

for its pro-war stance. From there, he went through France and Spain to the United States.[16]

In February 1917 (Julian calender), a bread riot in Petrograd led to the abdication of Tsar Nicholas II and the creation of a provisional government. These events sent Trotsky back to Russia with a stopover in a British prison camp. A few months after his arrival in Petrograd, Trotsky joined the Bolshevik party and was elected chairman of the Soviet in the capitol. As a result of his position in the Petrograd Soviet, he played a most significant role in the Bolshevik coup that took place on October, 1917 (Julian calender). Trotsky created the Military Revolutionary Committee (MRC) of the Petrograd Soviet ostensibly to prepare the capital for defense against the Germans; however, the MRC was actually used to facilitate the Bolshevik takeover by insisting that all orders to military units, communication centers, and railway junctions in the Petrograd area had to be approved by the MRC first. After the October revolution, Trotsky negotiated the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk that ended the infantile Soviet state's involvement in WWI but conceded large tracks of Russian land to the Germans. Trotsky then served as the Commissar of war and formed the Red Army. From 1918 to 1921, he led the Soviet military forces in a civil war against Allied soldiers, former Czechoslovakian prisoners of war, small numbers of supporters of the provisional government, and the White monarchist armies. The

[16] Warth, Leon Trotsky, 9.

victory of the Red Army secured the military position of the Soviet State.[17]

In March 1919, the Bolsheviks claimed that the Second International was useless and officially declared the creation of the Third or Communist International (Comintern). This action did not, of course, mean the disappearance of the older socialist organization. The Second International had had a long history of struggle for the working classes of Europe and would not fall apart as a result of a few words from the Bolsheviks. Eight years before the Second International was declared at an International Worker's Congress in Paris in 1889, factional infighting had forced the collapse of the International Working Men's Association (First International) which had been led by both Karl Marx and Frederich Engels. Over the next thirty years, the Second International exploded with growth. By 1904, it had secured 6.6 million votes in European elections. Lenin's declaration in 1914 that "The Second International is dead,...Long live the Third International" was made when the parties of the Second International still had four million members.[18]

As the Comintern was being created in Moscow and as the Revolution and Civil War raged, the economy was dominated by what was called "war Communism." The needs of the military

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[17] John M. Thompson, Russia and the Soviet Union (San Francisco: Westview Press, 1986), 204-214.

[18] Tom Bottomore, ed., A Dictionary of Marxist Thought (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1991), 262-265.

became the number one priority in the country. Grain was confiscated from peasant farms, and free market capitalism was severely curtailed. By 1921, the economy had been bled white by the internal struggles. Lenin felt that "war Communism" had to be totally discarded and replaced by a milder, freer economic system. The "New Economic Policy" (NEP) was announced. Peasants had to pay taxes in kind instead of having their grain taken; excess grain could be sold on the open market, and wealthy peasants could hire labor. Trotsky saw the NEP as an error. To him, such concessions to capitalism would inevitably lead to problems in industrialization.[19]

Two years after the introduction of the NEP, Trotsky began to form the Left Opposition to counter the leadership of the ruling group. In late 1922, Stalin, Grigory Zioniev, and Lev Kamenev had formed a "triumvirate" in order to counter Trotsky's increasing power and to ensure that Trotsky did not replace the ailing Lenin.[20] One of the seminal documents of Trotsky's group was called the "Declaration of the Forty-Six" that included the signatures of many old Bolsheviks. The most significant criticism against the ruling group in the declaration was the charge of a growing

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[19] Ibid., 214-217.

[20] Isaac Deutscher, The Prophet Unarmed (London: Oxford University Press, 1959), 76.

bureaucratization of the party.[21] This charge combined with a related attack against the loss of inter party democracy also characterized a series of articles that was originally printed in Pravda in December, 1923 and later published as a book entitled The New Course.[22] Before the release of the articles in Pravda, the Politburo meeting of December 5th, 1923 had made some concessions to the "Declaration of the Forty-Six." However, the significance of the Politburo decision was somewhat muted by an absolute rule against splinter groupings that echoed Lenin's position against party factionalism as presented to the Party Congress in 1921. Therefore, Pravda's release of The New Course articles angered the "triumvirate." The Thirteenth Party Conference in January 1924 accused the Left Opposition of factional deviation.[23]

Outside the USSR, the Third Communist International (Comintern) began to encounter problems. In Germany, 1923 was a year of sociopolitical flux. Germany's inability to make good on its debts caused the French to occupy the Ruhr region; brutal inflation assaulted the German working man. The nation was in crisis. The right oriented Central Committee of the German Communist Party (KPD) under Heinrich Brandler was unable to form a coherent strategy to take

[21] Ibid., 113-115.

[22] Ibid., 119.

[23] Ibid., 120-126.

advantage of the situation.[24] Moscow provided little help. In spite of Trotsky's arguments to the contrary, Zinoviev, chairman of the Comintern, mildly prodded the KPD but failed to see a truly revolutionary situation in Germany. Stalin, Radek and Zinoviev felt that the Germans should be held back from the brink of revolution. The Politburo engaged in only cursory discussions of the matter. Trotsky saw the situation differently. He felt that Germany was ripe for revolution; the Comintern should help the KPD form a clear plan of revolutionary activity, including a specific date for insurrection. As the situation ripened, Zinoviev's Comintern and the Politburo shifted, halfheartedly, in favor of insurrection. Brandler was summoned to Moscow, ordered to facilitate a revolution in Germany and to generally adhere to the revolutionary confidence of the left branch of the KPD, led by Ruth Fischer and Arkadi Maslov.[25] Events in Germany were building momentum like an avalanche; the Zeigner government in Saxony, a communist stronghold, had refused to follow the orders of the national government to disband the workers' militias. Brandler became a part of the Zeigner government on October 10th, 1923 and created a "'government of proletarian defense.'" The national army then moved in and deposed both the Zeigner government in Saxony and the Communist government in Thuringia. A general strike was

[24] Rosa Levine-Meyer, Inside German Communism (London: Pluto Press Limited, 1977), 7.

[25] Deutscher, The Prophet Unarmed,142.

called, but it was too late. The ambiguous initial attitude of the Comintern and Brandler followed by late support for revolution had confused the KPD and the workers. By October 21st, all proletariat support had dried up.[26]

The events in Germany altered the Comintern's and the Politburo's attitude towards the international situation. The grand possibilities for Western European revolution that existed three years before seemed irrevocably distant. The Soviet Union was isolated for the indefinite future. A disheartening pall loomed over the Kremlin. The Comintern decided that western capitalism had reached a stage of "temporary stabilization," and that it would no longer press the Communist parties of the world into revolution.[27] Therefore, Stalin felt that a proletarian world would not soon come to the aid of the USSR. If the world was to see a socialist state, it would have to be built "in one country." It would have to be built in a secluded Soviet Union.[28]

Through 1924, Trotsky continued to rebuke the leadership for the creeping bureaucratization plaguing the party and added to that accusation the blame for the German debacle. To Trotsky, the vacillating of both Stalin and Zinoviev during the initial months of the German crisis caused an opportunity to be missed. Trotsky would brood

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[26] Levine-Meyer, Inside German Communism 7.

[27] Ibid., p.8.

[28] Deutscher, The Prophet Unarmed, 144.

about this failure, and blame Stalin, for many years to come.[29]

In 1925, Zinoviev and Kamenev fell from Stalin's brutal grace. Initially Trotsky lashed out at both Stalin and the ousted triumvirs; however, in 1926 Trotsky formed a United Opposition bloc with Zinoviev and Kamenev.[30] The United Opposition engaged in wholesale combat with Stalin for political survival. In addition to soliciting support from party members who participated in the Revolution, Trotsky was able to glean assistance from friends in Party cells throughout the country. With a sizable base of support (numbering from 4000 to 8000 members), the United Opposition presented their platform to the Central Committee in July, 1926.[31]

The cornerstone of the platform was an attack on the pace of industrialization in the Soviet Union. The Oppositionists felt that a worker's state had to be strengthened with a larger industrial base. This was a direct assault on the NEP. They also insisted on a slow, phased in collectivization of the peasants. Trotsky's platform was tied to the conflict between the theories of permanent revolution and socialism in one country. He felt

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[29] Ibid., p.154.

[30] Robert V. Daniels, Trotsky, Stalin, and Socialism (Oxford: Westview Press, 1991), 101-102.

[31] Deutscher, The Prophet Unarmed, 271-275.

that because of the underdeveloped nature of Soviet industrialization, assistance would have to come from more developed Western industrial socialist societies, such as Germany and Britain, once proletarian revolution had occurred there. Therefore, the pace of industrialization was tied to the international situation. Thus, the United Opposition's platform also criticized the Comintern's refusal to endorse revolutionary activity in other countries.[32]

Upon the failure of the platform at the level of the Central Committee, the United Opposition took it to the individual Party cells. This tactic came to naught; the cells were thick with Stalinist supporters. Trotsky saw no other course of action but to call a truce. Stalin, however, could not let things lie. During the Politburo meeting of October 25th, Stalin insisted that the United Oppositionists confess to adhering to views that were a "social-democratic deviation." Trotsky refused and called Stalin "the grave-digger of the revolution!"[33] Seething with raw anger, Stalin stormed out of the meeting. One month later, all three of the leading United Oppositionists were kicked out of the Politburo. By 1927, Trotsky's Opposition had started to connect bureaucratism within the CPSU to a shift in the party

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[32] Ibid., 276-282.

[33] Natalya Sedova, Vie et Mort de Leon Trotsky: 180-181, quoted in Deutscher, The Prophet Unarmed, 283-296.

towards "bourgeois and petty-bourgeois... influences."[34] But it was far too late to make a difference. Trotsky was expelled from the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in 1927 and exiled to Soviet Central Asia one year later.[35]

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[34] Daniels, Trotsky, Stalin, and Socialism, 101-102.

[35] Deutscher, The Prophet Unarmed, 379-391.

IV. The Prophet's Oyster: Trotsky and Germany

> If Social Democracy should be opposed by a more truthful teaching, then even, though the struggle be of the bitterest kind, this truthful teaching will finally prevail provided it be enforced with equal ruthlessness. - Adolf Hitler, Mein Kampf

In 1928, Trotsky was banished from the Soviet Union. He eventually took up residence on the island of Prinkipo off the coast of Turkey.[1] By now, the Left Opposition had become International in scope. The International Left Opposition (ILO) was primarily active in Germany, France, and the United States. Trotsky now had time to assist the ILO in its struggles with Comintern-led Communist parties around the globe. The purpose of the ILO was to attempt to reform the policies of the Comintern and Politburo from within. He took great pains to emphasize that the Opposition was not striving to form a separate (or "Fourth") International or a rival to either the CPSU or any other Communist party.[2] In spite of his continued opposition, Trotsky was no longer embedded in the brutal, complex political machinations that had defined his life for more than five years. He still engaged in

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[1] Jean van Heijenoort, With Trotsky in Exile (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1978), 6-7.

[2] Leon Trotsky, The Struggle Against Fascism in Germany, ed. George Breitman and Merry Maisel (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1971), 53.

exceedingly sharp criticisms of Stalin's regime, but he was no longer a part of the political milieu of the Soviet Union. This position placed his tactical and strategic analytical skills into sharp focus. Separate from the party conflicts of any nation, the effect of Trotsky's somewhat aloof personality can be distilled from his powers of political analysis. With regard to no other country were these skills more evident than Germany from 1929-1933. The political realm was truly his oyster in this period. By examining the published letters, articles and books that Trotsky wrote about Germany in this period, it is possible to glean the depth of his political understanding and, therefore, fully comprehend the consistent power of both his tactical and strategic analytical abilities.

In order to determine the effectiveness of Trotsky's political analysis, the nature of political analysis must be understood and related to Germany from 1929 to 1933. Specifically, effective political analysis involves three primary techniques of peaceful conflict resolution through the expansion of knowledge using available evidence and intellectual interpretation. To begin, the ideological nature of the primary players, parties and individuals, must be understood and placed on a model political spectrum. The motivation, both ideological and otherwise, of the players must be gleaned. Finally, possible outcomes must be determined and tested against the available evidence. In order to gauge how Trotsky fared in these three areas, the

period in question will be split three ways. The first will be from March 1929 through October 1929. This period will be called the "developing crisis period." The next period starts in November of 1929 and goes until January 1933, called the "crisis period." The final segment will cover the remaining few months from February 1933 until May and will be characterized as the "collapse period."

Between the setback for German Communism in 1923 and the start of the developing crisis period in 1929, the KPD suffered through various political twists. The right oriented group under Heinrich Brandler bore the brunt of the blame for the failure of 1923. Brandler was ousted and a period of extreme left oriented leadership, under Ruth Fischer and Arkadi Maslov, predominated.[3] However, by 1925 the Comintern began to see the international situation differently. The isolationist attitude in the USSR led to a new analytical construct in the Comintern. With the possibilities for world revolution remote, Stalin felt that worldwide capitalism had reached a state of "capitalist stabilization." This was called the "second period" which followed the "first period" of revolutionary upsurge and preceded the "third period" of capitalist collapse.[4] This change led to a shift to the right in the KPD. The politically left oriented group under Ruth Fischer and

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[3] Levine-Meyer, Inside German Communism, 8.

[4] Bottomore, ed., A Dictionary of Marxist Thought, 265.

Arkadi Maslov was out, and a moderate leadership, under Ernst Thaelmann, assumed power. Thaelmann had been a member of the leftist group, but was a pliable functionary who followed the Comintern's line to the letter. A "united front" was called for between the KPD and the German Social Democratic Party (SPD).[5]

True to their new sociopolitical construct, the Comintern announced the start of the "third period" in early 1928. Since capitalism was doomed in this period, a new left oriented policy was demanded. Thaelmann dutifully shifted with the political wind and truncated all connections and associations with the SPD. The Social Democrats were now seen as "social fascists" and nearly the same as the extreme right wing fascist National Socialist Party (Nazi). This turn came at a time when the SPD was forced to rule in a Reichstag coalition with centrist and rightist parties including the People's Party (DVP). Social Democrat Hermann Mueller was Chancellor. Mueller's ruling coalition was called "The Great Coalition."[6]

Three months before, in the USSR, the Central Committee shifted to the extreme left too. All of the criticisms that Trotsky had fielded against the NEP in his platform of the United Opposition in 1926 were used by Stalin to justify the shift left. The wealthy peasants (called "kulaks") were seen

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[5] Levine-Meyer, Inside German Communism, 87-93.

[6] Trotsky, The Struggle Against Fascism in Germany, 50.

as the new enemy. A quicker pace of industrialization and the collectivization of the peasants became the new order of the day for economic planning in the Soviet Union.[7] The shift left of both the Central Committee and the Comintern had a significant effect on Trotsky's analysis of German Communism from 1929-1933.

From the outset of the developing crisis period, Trotsky's understanding of the tactical political situation in Germany was profound. He was able to delineate effectively the ideology of the many players of German Communism in early 1929 and place them on a political spectrum. On April 26th, 1929, one of Trotsky's letters was published in the German Communist newspaper Fahne des Kommunismus entitled "Groupings in the Communist Opposition."[8] In this piece, Trotsky made clear his understanding of both Heinrich Brandler and August Thalheimer[9] as originally rightists who fully supported the Stalin line before the shift left in early 1928.[10] However, what is more important was Trotsky's ability to present a thorough ideological

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[7] Deutscher, The Prophet Unarmed, 404-405.

[8] Sinclair, Leon Trotsky: A Bibliography, 422.

[9] August Thalheimer and Heinrich Brandler were original founders of the German Communist Party. They were among those blamed when the party failed to take advantage of the revolutionary situation in 1923. For this, Brandler was denied a position in the leadership of the party in 1924. Writings of Leon Trotsky [1929], 426-427.

[10] Ibid., 83.

definition of Brandler and Thalheimer. In a letter that Trotsky wrote to respond to another comrade's criticisms of Trotsky's assessment of both Brandler and Thalheimer[11], he argued that these two Germans were opportunists who used ideology as a political tool. Trotsky wrote that "Brandler and Thalheimer tried to worm their way into the party leadership by assuming a protective Stalinist coloration."[12] This was a reference to Brandler's and Thalheimer's attempt to re-enter the party leadership of the KPD in March of 1928.[13] By then, of course, Stalin had shifted left. Trotsky was able to assess their political vacillations as a ploy for positions within the KPD. Not long after this article was written, both Brandler and Thalheimer were expelled from the KPD for sympathizing with the right.[14] Thus, Trotsky's highly critical assessment of the two seemed to have had some validity.

Five months later, on August 24, 1929, Trotsky wrote an article accurately judging the ideology and motivations of the Leninbund portion of the Left Opposition of the KPD. In "Questions for the Leninbund," Trotsky rebuked this group for

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[11] Boris Souvarine wrote a letter to Trotsky questioning Trotsky's assessment of both Brandler and Thalheimer in "Groupings in the Communist Opposition." Boris Souvarine was the founder of the French Communist Party. Writings of Leon Trotsky [1929], 426-427.

[12] Writings of Leon Trotsky [1929], 112.

[13] Levine-Meyer, Inside German Communism, 131-132.

[14] Writings of Leon Trotsky [1929], 427.

political zigzags that were even more dramatic than Brandler's and Thalheimer's. "Both on Germany's domestic problems and on international problems, Volkswille [the newspaper of the Leninbund] vacillates between Brandler and Korsch."[15] With Karl Korsch's small ultraleft segment of the KPD on one side and Brandler's rightist centrism on the other, Trotsky was accusing the Leninbund of the most extreme political shifts possible.[16] However, he does justify this conclusion with evidence. Trotsky lambasted the Leninbund for its apparent assessment that the "Thermidor[17] " (a term taken from the French Revolution meaning a period of reaction that is characterized by a partial return to old ways, but not a wholesale disintegration of the revolution) had already come to the Soviet Union. To Trotsky this was nothing but extreme leftist thinking.

> If Thermidor "has been completed," this means that development in Russia has definitely taken the capitalist road. Your thesis can have no other meaning. What, then, do you think of the planned economy and the legislation restricting capitalist expansion and curtailing private accumulation? What is your attitude toward the monopoly of foreign trade? *From the standpoint of capitalist development all these institutions, decrees, and measures are utopian and reactionary hindrances to the development of the productive forces.* What is

15 Ibid., 247.

16 Ibid., 445.

17 The term "Thermidor" refers to the date of "9 Thermidor" (July 27, 1794) during the French Revolution when Robespierre was deposed by moderates. A period of reaction followed that culminated in the rise of Napoleon. Writings of Leon Trotsky [1929], 418.

your point of view?[18]

In the next paragraph, Trotsky accused the group of reactionary views. According to the article, the Leninbund had called for the right of political parties to organize within the USSR. Trotsky correctly pointed out that this desire could not be fulfilled in a political vacuum, that the right to organize must be connected to other liberal, bourgeois, democratic freedoms. "Freedom to organize is inconceivable without freedom of assembly, press, etc.-in other words, without parliamentary institutions and party struggle."[19] The Leninbund was unable to form a coherent program because it adhered to such divergent political positions. Trotsky characterized the Leninbund as being motivated by political fads. "The Leninbund needs a platform. Your publications, instead of devoting their columns to *Jimmie Higgins*[20] and sensations of the day, should become the instrument for working out a Marxist platform for the German Communist Left."[21]

In 1929 Trotsky wrote three other pieces analyzing the political positions and motivations of the Leninbund. By far

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[18] Writings of Leon Trotsky [1929], 248.

[19] Ibid.

[20] Jimmie Higgins was a socialist in the novel Babbitt by Upton Sinclair. Writings of Leon Trotsky [1929], 432.

[21] Writings of Leon Trotsky [1929], 249.

the most comprehensive of the three was entitled "The Defense of the Soviet Republic and the Opposition" and was published in Trotsky's Oppositionist newspaper Bulletin Oppozitsii in October, 1929.[22] This piece severely rebuked two specific persons who were associated with the Leninbund, Hugo Urbahns and Robert Louzon. Some of Trotsky's critiques were centered around the conflict with the Chiang Kai-shek[23] government over the Chinese Eastern Railroad (CERR) in Manchuria. Trotsky felt that Stalin's policy of retaining the railroad was correct. Urbahns and Louzon saw the railroad as the national possession of the new Chinese government and thought that the Soviet Union could no longer justify retaining the line because the Chinese warlords were no longer in power.[24] To Trotsky, this issue politically characterized Urbahns and Louzon. He specifically attacked Louzon for using nationality as a criterion for determining who should possess the CERR. Trotsky felt that the character of the state

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[22] Sinclair, Leon Trotsky: A Bibliography, 428.

[23] Chiang Kai-shek led the liberal bourgeois oriented Kuomintang party combined with the Chinese Communists to victory over the Chinese warlords in the revolution of 1925-27. He ruled China through World War II and up until the Chinese Communist Revolution in 1949. Writings of Leon Trotsky [1929], 440-441.

[24] After the Russian Revolution, the CERR came under the control of the USSR. The Soviet government decided to prevent the Chinese warlords from getting the line and to turn it over to a more representative Chinese government once one came to power. In 1929, Chiang Kai-shek demanded the railroad, but Stalin refused; violence between the Chinese and Soviet armies led to Chiang Kai-shek conceding the issue. Writings of Leon Trotsky [1929], 440.

(dictatorship of the bourgeoisie or the proletariat) that controlled a territory was more important than the actual nationality of the inhabitants and that only someone who was nationally minded and not internationally minded would consider the railroad to be a national possession of the Chinese. Trotsky cited a piece that Louzon wrote in the magazine Revolution Proletarienne.

> In order to determine whether a policy bears an imperialist character in a given territory, it is enough according to Louzon to determine what nationality inhabits the given territory: 'If Northern Manchuria were populated by Russians, the policy of the czar and of the Soviet Union would be legitimate; but if it is populated by the Chinese, then it is nothing else but the policy of robbery and oppression' (Revolution Proletarienne, August 1, 1929)....The policy of the czar and the policy of the worker's state are analyzed exclusively from the nationalist standpoint and are therewith completely identified.[25]

Later in the article, Trotsky turned his ire at Urbahns and returned to the issue of the Soviet "Thermidor." Trotsky wrote, "The source of a whole number of Comrade Urbahns' false conclusions lies in the fact that he believes Thermidor to be already accomplished."[26] Urbahns argued that the Soviet state had already lapsed into a state of counter revolutionary reaction. He thought that the Stalinist bureaucracy had become a non-bourgeois dominating class. Trotsky points out that from a Marxist standpoint, the Soviet state under Stalin still possessed the means of production in

[25] Writings of Leon Trotsky [1929], 264.

[26] Ibid., 282.

the name of the proletariat.[27] Although Stalin's Central Committee was centrist politically, it still had all the characteristics of a dictatorship of the proletariat. To Trotsky, both Louzon's opinions about the CERR and Urbahns' opinions about "Thermidor" revealed a basic problem. Both represented assaults against the Soviet state. However, the assaults were coming from different directions. Supporting the bourgeois-oriented Chiang Kai-shek government's right to the CERR was extreme rightist. However, believing that "Thermidor" had already arrived in the USSR was extreme leftist, because to do this would be to argue that the still left oriented Soviet Bureaucracy had adopted at least some counter-revolutionary measures, from Urbahns' perspective, and to argue that the government of the USSR had some small elements of reaction was to take a position to the extreme left of all those who felt that the Communist Party of the Soviet Union was not counter-revolutionary in the least, which is how Trotsky felt at this time. This was strange coming from two members of the same political organization, the Leninbund. To Trotsky this phenomenon was consistent with what he had noticed before in "Questions for the Leninbund." In another article that he wrote that year, Trotsky named this unclear policy as the reason for the weakening of the organization.[28] There was no indication

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[27] Ibid., 284.

[28] Ibid., 337-339.

that the Leninbund changed their attitudes. All references to the organization in Trotsky's works disappeared after February, 1930. Other important works, such as Rosa Levine-Meyer's Inside German Communism, also fail to mention the Leninbund. Trotsky saw the writing on the wall for the Leninbund and issued a warning. The organization did not heed and collapse seemed to be the inevitable result.

A few days after the publication of "The Defense of the Soviet Republic and the Opposition," events half a world away changed everything; the American Stock Market crashed and induced a worldwide depression. Germany's economic situation had been precarious to begin with; the crash made matters much worse. This economic catastrophe marked the start of the crisis period. The political climate was characterized by extremism. Both the German Communist Party and the National Socialists (Nazis) gained members.[29]

Conflicts over how to deal with the economy sounded the death knell for "The Great Coalition." Mueller stepped down in March of 1930. The rightist parties in the coalition felt that a powerful presidential government was necessary to guide Germany through the agonizing economic upheaval.[30] In order to facilitate this, President Hindenburg appointed Dr. Heinrich Bruening of the Center Party to form a right oriented government. Bruening failed to get the support he

[29] A.J. Nicholls, Weimar and the Rise of Hitler (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1991), 123.

[30] Ibid., 117.

needed in the Reichstag; he decided to use Paragraph 48 of the Weimar Constitution (giving him powers to rule by "emergency decree") to lead the nation out of crisis without the support of any democratic institution.[31]

Conflicts within the Reichstag over Bruening's economic decrees led Hindenburg to call new elections in September, 1930.[32] The election proved fruitful for the KPD; however, the Nazis posted massive gains. From receiving just 12 seats in the May 1928 election, the National Socialists jumped to 107 seats in the Reichstag elections of September 1930. The Communists went from 54 seats in the 1928 election to 77 in 1930.[33] In spite of the dramatic increases by the Nazis, the Comintern predicted the fall of National Socialism. Blinded by the significant gains of the far left, the Comintern could not see the danger approaching from the far right. The election was called "'the beginning of the end' for the Nazis."[34]

The dramatic events of 1930 tested Trotsky's powers of analysis. This period provides excellent evidence to establish the notion that Trotsky was able to clearly understand strategic political matters. He produced many

[31] Trotsky, The Struggle Against Fascism in Germany, 52.

[32] Ibid.

[33] Hermann Kinder and Werner Hilgemann, The Anchor Atlas of World History, vol.II (New York: Anchor Books, 1978), 150.

[34] Trotsky, The Struggle Against Fascism in Germany, 52.

remarkable articles. One such piece was entitled "What is Centrism?" and appeared in June and July of 1930 in Trotsky's official peridoical of the ILO, the Bulletin Oppozitsii.[35] In this article, Trotsky effectively defined political centrism from a Marxist standpoint and places it on a spectrum in the context of other political tendencies. More importantly, he provided an analytical, political, social construct that explains how the social classes fit into the political tendencies and how the tendencies served to define the manner in which the classes interact with one another. This construct, further developed, was used by Trotsky in later articles and books to explain effectively the rise of National Socialism and to point out how the Comintern's support of a left coalition, between the KPD and the SPD, could stop it. According to the piece, "Political concepts [including centrism] are defined not by characteristics of form but by their class content considered from an ideological and methodological standpoint."[36] He then placed centrism on a model political spectrum, between reformism (on the right) and Communism (on the left). German Social Democrat and ex-Chancellor Hermann Mueller was placed into the reformist camp.

> In the person of a... Herman Mueller,...we have a conservative big bourgeois who still preserves in

[35] Sinclair, Leon Trotsky: A Bibliography, 443.

[36] Writings of Leon Trotsky [1930], ed. George Breitman and Sarah Lovell, vol. 2 (New York: Pathfinder Press, Inc., 1975), 234.

> part a petty-bourgeois mentality, more often a petty-bourgeois hypocritical outlook toward the proletarian base. In other words, we have here, in a single social type, the product of the sediments of the three classes. The relation between them is as follows: the big bourgeois gives orders to the petty bourgeois and the latter abuses the workers.[37]

The reformers were big bourgeois with underlying petty bourgeois characteristics who were used by the big bourgeoisie to placate the masses through reformist concessions in order to secure the possession of the means of production for the big bourgeoisie. These reformists, however, were protecting not only the property of the larger capitalists, but their own property. This tendency was contrasted with "*revolutionary and proletarian policy* (Marxist communist)." To Trotsky, the aim of this group was to destroy the bourgeois state by uniting the proletariat and "then reorganizing society in a socialist way." Centrism was then defined as shifting between reformism and communism.

> Between these two poles come a number of transitional currents and groupings that are constantly changing their appearance and are always in a state of transformation and displacement: going sometimes from reformism to communism, sometimes from communism to reformism. These *centrist* currents do not have, and by their very nature cannot have, a well-defined social base.[38]

Trotsky then explained the inability of centrist politicians to attract a consistent base of proletariat support, but that there would frequently be a number of centrists among the

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[37] Ibid., 235.

[38] Ibid., 236.

working class parties. These centrists were unable to adopt true revolutionary characters and were unwilling to shift fully over to reformism. To Trotsky centrism was a movement of political transition that resides between reformism and communism; centrists were motivated by a desire to adhere to revolutionary principles, but an inability to deny their basic petty bourgeois character. Trotsky cited the old German Social Democrat and founder of the USPD Georg Ledebour[39] as an example of a centrist within a working class party. According to the article, the workers rarely remained for long with the centrists; they shifted from reformism back to communism and stayed in the center for only brief periods. Trotsky used the centrist oriented USPD as an example of a party that broke apart because of the natural instability of centrism, with half of it going left, to the KPD, and half going right, to the SPD.[40] The analytical model that Trotsky first developed in this article became an important part of his future work regarding the rise of National Socialism and the need for a united front of the KPD and the SPD. This piece also underlines Trotsky skills of political analysis.

Three months after the appearance of "What is Centrism?", the milieu in Germany changed again. The

[39] Georg Ledebour (1850-1937) formed the Independent Social Democratic Party (USPD) to counter the SPD's support of WWI. He associated with the SAP (Socialist Worker's Party) in 1931 and fought against that organization joining the Left Opposition. Writings of Leon Trotsky [1930], 424.

[40] Writings of Leon Trotsky [1930], 236-237.

political assent of the Nazis pressed the SPD into halfheartedly supporting the Bruening government. In an effort to consolidate their power against Bruening, the Nazis turned against the SPD coalition government in Prussia. A referendum was called to depose the coalition. Initially, the KPD was not willing to vote against the SPD led government; however on July 21, 1931 the KPD insisted that if the SPD did not form a united front with them immediately, the Communists would unite with the Nazis and support the referendum against the Prussian coalition government. The SPD balked at being threatened and refused. The German Communists then campaigned wholeheartedly in favor of the removal of the SPD-led Prussian coalition government. This peculiar extreme right and extreme left coalition confused and fragmented the workers. The referendum failed. In 1931, several Social Democrats who opposed the SPD's toleration of Bruening were ousted from the party and formed their own party, the Socialist Workers Party (SAP).[41]

Trotsky used the political theoretical construct that he developed in "What is Centrism?" to analyze the need for a united front in the article "What is the Error in Today's Policy of the German Communist Party?" published in the Bulletin Oppozitsii in March 1932.[42] In this article, Trotsky made one of his first real appeals to the Comintern for a

[41] Trotsky, The Struggle Against Fascism in Germany, 89-90.

[42] Sinclair, Leon Trotsky: A Bibliography, 470.

united front between the German Communists and Social Democrats. However, this coalition was not seen as just a short term tactical maneuver to attack the Nazis with the largest possible force available, but also a long-term strategic move to attract as many workers as possible away from the reformist Social Democratic camp.

> The front must now be directed against fascism. And this common front of direct struggle against fascism, embracing the entire proletariat, must be utilized in the struggle against the Social Democracy, directed as a flank attack, but no less effective for all that.[43]

To Trotsky, many Social Democratic workers would be willing to unite with the KPD only to fight the fascists. This, however, was a stage that must be passed through in order to facilitate any attempts to encourage the workers to shift to the KPD. Strategically the united front would, according to Trotsky, test the capabilities of the SPD organizations in open combat with the fascists and enable workers to compare Social Democratic organizations with Communist ones. The workers could see the two left parties, one communist and one reformist, working side by side and only then would the shortcomings of the SPD in relation to the KPD be revealed. Then, as Trotsky pointed out in "What is Centrism?", the workers would be drawn away from reformism (the SPD), temporarily through centrism and securely to communism (the

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[43] Trotsky, The Struggle Against Fascism in Germany, 137.

KPD).[44] Without the necessary skills of political analysis, Trotsky would never have been able to place the phenomena of reformism, centrism, and Communism on a political spectrum with the political parties and social classes that adhere to these phenomena. Also, he would have been unable to use this model combined with knowledge of what motivated both the parties and the classes to effectively argue for both a strategic and a tactical united front between the KPD and SPD.

Perhaps the most important work that Trotsky wrote in this period was the book What Next? Vital Questions for the German Proletariat originally published in 1932.[45] Here Trotsky further elucidated his arguments in favor of a united front. He also presented an effective theory for the rise and development of the fascist National Socialist Party. In attempting to determine the function that fascism served in the German sociopolitical context, Trotsky traced the deterioration of capitalism in Europe. He claimed that the petty bourgeois-oriented reformist Social Democracy was being forced to abrogate many of the gains that it had achieved for the proletariat. "There is no historical spectacle more tragic and at the same time more repulsive than the fetid disintegration of reformation amid the wreckage of all its

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44 Ibid., 138.

45 Sinclair, Leon Trotsky: A Bibliography 483.

conquests and hopes."[46] To Trotsky the Social Democrats, in typical reformist fashion, had obtained these gains for the workers solely in an effort to quell the passion of the proletariat that had naturally arisen as a result of the conflicts and contradictions of capitalism. However, the depression had eliminated many of these gains and, consequently, aggravated the alienation of the working class. Trotsky cited the emergency decrees of Bruening as attempts to control the proletariat during the crisis. These decrees were not measures that could work over the long term, though. Bruening's government, after all, depended on the support of Social Democracy which in turn depended upon the support of its worker's groups. This system Trotsky called "unstable, unreliable, temporary." The ruling class needed to "absolutely rid itself of the pressure exerted by the worker's organizations; these must be eliminated, destroyed, utterly crushed" if the crisis could be weathered with the bourgeoisie retaining the command of the means of production. In Trotsky's theoretical model, fascist National Socialism now makes its entrance.

> At this juncture, the historic role of fascism begins. It raises to their feet those classes that are immediately above the proletariat and that are ever in dread of being forced down into its ranks; it organizes and militarizes them at the expense of finance capital, under the cover of the official government, and it directs them to the extirpation of proletarian organizations, from the most revolutionary to the most conservative.... Fascism is a particular governmental system based on the

[46] Trotsky, The Struggle Against Fascism in Germany, 143.

> uprooting of all elements of proletarian democracy within bourgeois society.[47]

This analysis is another part of Trotsky's argument for a united front of the German Communist Party and Social Democratic Party. He accepted the role of the Social Democrats in the rise of fascism, but he also pointed out that the National Socialists were as much a danger to the worker groups of the SPD as the KPD. In this way, he shattered the myth that the SPD represented "social fascism." This basic contradiction was the most important tool that the KPD had in a fight against both the Social Democratic Party and the National Socialist Party. As Trotsky pointed out in "What is the Error in Today's Policy of the German Communist Party?", because fascism threatened the SPD, the workers in the Social Democratic organizations would enthusiastically wish to fight the National Socialists and perhaps unite with the KPD to that end. However, because the SPD had contributed to the rise of fascism, a unification of the Communists and the Social Democrats might lead to a proletarian flight from the SPD once the German Communists were able to convince the workers of the degree to which the Social Democrats were responsible for fascism.[48] With a stronger KPD, the fascists were doomed.

Trotsky also criticized the zigzag political shifts of

[47] Ibid., 144.

[48] Ibid., 145.

Stalin's Comintern with regard to the situation in Germany. He argued that it was peculiar to adopt a policy that supported a united front when such a organization was unneeded, when the German masses were not so attracted to Nazism, and then to refuse to adopt a united front policy when one was needed most, when economic events drove many Germans to support Hitler. As an argument in favor of temporary tactical affiliations with reformists in order to fight right-wing extremists, Trotsky used the events of the Russian Revolution when Lenin supported a united front with the Kerensky government in an effort to defeat Kornilov's coup attempt of late August, 1917.[49] This book was perhaps Trotsky's most significant piece of political analysis of this period. He was able to effectively explain the sociopolitical dynamic that existed between the big bourgeoisie rightists, the petty bourgeois Social Democrats, the National Socialists as agents of the big bourgeoisie, and the proletarian German Communist Party. Trotsky used both the ideological political positions and the motivations of these groups to analyze how they interacted.

With Hindenburg's term ending in March 1932, the political parties in Germany had to field candidates for the Presidency. Hindenburg faced Hitler, Thaelmann and Duesterberg in the first election. The old president's support came from a unique quarter. Whereas in 1925, the rightist parties supported Hindenburg, in 1932 the largest

[49] Ibid., 170-189.

block of support came from the Social Democrats. Hitler, of course, obtained support from his own National Socialists, but also from non-Nazi right oriented members of the middle class.[50] Thaelmann got his support solely from the KPD. Theodor Dusterberg was a Nationalist candidate who drew votes away from Hitler. The first round gave Hindenburg 49.6 percent, Hitler 30.1 percent, Thaelmann 13.2 percent, and Duesterberg 6.8 percent. The lack of a clear majority necessitated a runoff; Hindenburg won.[51] Because Hindenburg obtained most of his support from the SPD, the rightists felt that he had sold out to the left parties. This drove more nationalist oriented voters away from Hindenburg. However, much of the worst criticism from the right fell upon Hindenburg's Chancellor, Bruening. Various complex intrigues within the government convinced the President that the mild land reform that Bruening was proposing was tantamount to "agrarian bolshevism." Bruening's case was not assisted by his attempt to quell the violence propagated by the Nazis by banning the SS and SA. Hindenburg dismissed Bruening and named Franz von Papen the new chancellor of Germany.[52]

Seven months after Von Papen became Chancellor, Trotsky published his preface to the Polish edition of Lenin's Left-Wing Communism, an Infantile Disorder in the December, 1932

[50] Nicholls, Weimar and the Rise of Hitler, 131.

[51] Trotsky, The Struggle Against Fascism in Germany, 259.

[52] Nicholls, Weimar and the Rise of Hitler, 133.

issue of Bulletin Oppozitsii.[53] The publication of Lenin's book in Poland afforded Trotsky an opportunity to elucidate his ideas about leftist political extremism using Lenin for support. He delineated between the sort of "united fronts" that Lenin believed in (tactical affiliations), and didn't support (full scale, strategic associations). He said that Stalin engaged in strategic associations (such as supporting the Amsterdam peace conference) and was against tactical affiliations (such as a "united front" of German Communists and Social Democrats). Clearly, Trotsky was arguing that the KPD and the Comintern were engaging in extreme left-wing Communism by refusing to form a united front with the SPD. However, he took this reasoning one step further and argued that the vacillating behavior of the Comintern and the German Communists showed a definite centrist character. The present ultra left stance combined with the shifts to opportunism (another word that Trotsky uses in place of "reformism") that the KPD and the Comintern engaged in since 1923 made an accusation of centrism viable. Trotsky called this constant rocking back and forth between opportunism and ultra leftism "bureaucratic centrism." He argued that "bureaucratic centrism" did not arise out of nowhere, that is, that it was not just a series of accidents propagated by the Comintern. The motivation, to Trotsky, was *control*. The Comintern used centrism to control the Communist parties of Europe (including the KPD), and the KPD used centrism to control the

[53] Sinclair, Leon Trotsky: A Bibliography, 486.

frequent political infighting within the party itself.[54] With Stalin constantly shifting his political stance, it was impossible for any one faction within the KPD to acquire power for long enough to threaten the Comintern with a break. The right oriented Brandlerites lost out because of the Comintern vacillations during the revolution of 1923. The leftists Ruth Fischer and Arkadi Maslov were ousted by Zinoviev in 1925 in the shift back right that put the political functionary Ernst Thaelmann in power. He was not interested in theory, so dramatic political shifts did not bother him.[55] Thaelmann remained in that position simply because he was willing to vacillate along with the Comintern and use centrism himself to control the right and left factions within the KPD that still vied for power.[56] However, according to Trotsky, this tactical maneuvering sacrificed the revolution in order to preserve the power of certain high level functionaries (Stalin and Thaelmann). Any tactical or strategic act must serve the revolution and the proletariat in a Marxist context. This was especially true of the united front in Germany in 1932.

> The tactic of a united front is not a universal panacea. It is subjected to a higher test: does it effect the unification of the proletarian vanguard

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54 Writings of Leon Trotsky [1932], 222-223.

55 Levine-Meyer, Inside German Communism, 173.

56 Ernst Thaelmann was leader of the German Communist Party from 1925 until the complete destruction by Hitler of the KPD in 1933. Writings of Leon Trotsky [1932], 393.

> *on the basis of an intransigent Marxist policy?* The art of leadership consists in defining, in each case, on the basis of a concrete class relationship, with whom, to what end, and to what limits the united front is acceptable, and at what moment it must be broken. If one were to seek the perfect model of the way in which the united front should not and cannot be formed, one could not find a better- or rather, a worse- example than the Amsterdam congress of 'all classes and all parties' against war....At Amsterdam, parties, as such, were ignored! As though the struggle against war were not a political task, and consequently a task of political parties![57]

Thus, Trotsky presented a very well thought-out analysis of the use of centrism as a instrument of control by the leadership of the KPD and the Comintern. The fight that Trotsky was engaging in for a united front was motivated, at least partly, by a desire to break the cycle of control within the Comintern that the past vacillations had created. Therefore, Trotsky saw the united front as not just an instrument of assistance of the KPD or a way to draw workers away from Social Democracy, but as a method to break the back of Stalin's "bureaucratic centrism."

The refusal of the KPD and the Comintern to engage in a united front in order to retain control through "bureaucratic centrism" would prove to be partially responsible for the fall of the KPD and the rise of National Socialism in Germany. Under the new von Papen government, events moved in that direction with alarming speed. In an effort to placate the National Socialists, von Papen repealed the ban on the SS

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[57] Writings of Leon Trotsky [1932], 223-224.

and the SA and dissolved the Reichstag. Nevertheless, Hitler showed no gratitude and continued to assault the government. In the Reichstag elections of July 31, 1932, National Socialists received 37.4 percent of the vote, more than any other party, but not a majority. Negotiations took place in an effort to form a coalition government. Hitler refused to enter into any coalition unless he held the office of Chancellor. With little support in the Reichstag, von Papen dissolved the body again. Elections were held on November 6th, 1932. Although the Nazis lost about four percent of the vote, they still had the largest party in the Reichstag. However, the SPD was able to pull in 20.4 percent and the KPD 16.9 percent of the vote. If a united front coalition between the Communists and Social Democrats had been formed, the united front would have held more seats than the National Socialist party.[58] With the Nazis and the Communists engaging in acts of brutal violence and with no possible support from the Reichstag, Von Papen's government was doomed. Von Papen resigned and his minister of defense, Kurt von Schleicher, became Chancellor on December 5th. Schleicher was no more successful in the post; he could neither convince Hitler into a coalition nor establish Reichstag support by other means. Hindenburg had to find a Chancellor who could obtain support from the Reichstag; the only alternative was someone from the largest party in the Reichstag, the National Socialist Party. Adolf Hitler became

[58] Trotsky, The Struggle Against Fascism in Germany, 335.

Chancellor of Germany on January 30th, 1933. Von Papen was made Vice-Chancellor; he assured Hindenburg that he could control Hitler within the coalition.[59] The collapse period had begun.

Von Papen misrepresented his political skills; Hitler was not about to be controlled by anyone. On February 27th, 1933 a fire gutted the Reichstag. Hitler insisted on being given emergency powers under article 48 of the Weimar constitution to eliminate personal liberties and rights. The leaders of both the SPD and the KPD were arrested. In the midst of political chaos, Reichstag elections were held. With the KPD and SPD leaders imprisoned and unable to campaign, the Nazis got 43.9 percent of the vote. Hitler asked for dictatorial powers. In spite of the lack of a Nazi majority in the Reichstag, he got his wish. Those who opposed Hitler as dictator could not get to the Reichstag; they were locked up. The anti-united front policy of Stalin had lead to disaster. However, the Comintern still desperately clung to the notion that the Nazis were doomed and still spoke of the Social Democrats as "social fascists."[60]

The complete failure and near annihilation of the German Communist Party led Trotsky to insist that the KPD should be completely abandoned and replaced by a new Communist Party

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59 Nicholls, Weimar and the Rise of Hitler , 134-138.

60 Trotsky, The Struggle Against Fascism in Germany, 371-373.

for Germany. With the confirmed accuracy of his analysis about the complex political placement, activity, and motivations within the KPD and between the Communists and other parties and classes, Trotsky could write with confidence about the only possible future for Communism in Germany, a new party. Two of the most significant articles on this subject were "The Tragedy of the German Proletariat: The German Workers Will Rise Again- Stalinism, Never!" and "KPD or New Party?"

"The Tragedy of the German Proletariat: The German Workers Will Rise Again- Stalinism, Never!" was published in Bulletin Oppozitsii in May, 1933.[61] In the article, Trotsky indicted both Stalin and Ernst Thaelmann for their instrumental role in the failure of the KPD to stem the tide of National Socialism. The primary accusation, of course, was the lack of a united front policy. As Trotsky had been saying for years, a united front would have helped the KPD with the larger SPD party apparatus and membership, would have served to draw Social Democratic workers towards the KPD, and would have broken the vicious cycle of control through "bureaucratic centrism." Trotsky lambasted the Comintern for adopting the united front policy too late. Although the Comintern's policy immediately following the collapse of February was one of continued support for the "social fascism" line, by mid-March Stalin had zigzagged again; the united front began to be official policy.

61 Sinclair, Leon Trotsky: A Bibliography, 500.

However, a worker's "front" of any sort, united or otherwise, did not exist in Germany. Stalin, in an effort to retain control and prestige, had once again served as "'the grave-digger of the revolution!'" The shift was seen as just another vacillation in support of "bureaucratic centrism." "And now, already standing just short of ruin, the leadership of the Comintern fears light criticism more than anything else. Let the world revolution perish, but long live vain prestige!" Trotsky stated that the Comintern and the KPD gave the German "proletariat nothing save confusion, zigzags, defeats, and calamities." Therefore, he concluded that the KPD had abrogated its right to continue to fill the Marxist role of vanguard of the proletariat in Germany and that a new party was called for. "The official German Communist Party is doomed. From now on it will only decompose, crumble, and melt into the void. German Communism can be reborn only on a new basis and with a new leadership."[62] Trotsky extended the logic of his analysis in previous articles about the united front and the political vacillations of the Comintern to argue for a completely new Communist party in Germany. His powers of political analysis remained keen even in tragedy and defeat.

These opinions continued into another article in the May, 1933 issue of Bulletin Oppozitsii entitled "KPD or New

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62 Trotsky, The Struggle Against Fascism in Germany, 375-384.

Party?"[63] Trotsky did not allow himself to be misunderstood regarding his opinions about the KPD. The article began with this paragraph.

> German Stalinism is collapsing now, less from the blows of the fascists than from its internal rottenness. Just as a doctor does not leave a patient who still has a breath of life, we had for our task the reform of the party as long as there was the least hope. But it would be criminal to tie oneself to a corpse. The KPD today represents a corpse.[64]

With the blame for the rise of Fascism in Germany squarely on the shoulders of Stalin and Thaelmann, Trotsky called the KPD dead and demands a new German Communist Party. This piece was one of the last articles that Trotsky wrote about the fall of the KPD and the need for a new party; it finally confirms his remarkable ability to clearly see complex political interactions and motivations. The KPD was indeed gone forever. Trotsky's call for a new German Communist Party fell on deaf ears.

In June, 1933, the most prolific period of Trotsky's political analysis of Germany came to an end. From 1929 to 1933, he had published dozens of articles and a few books on the situation in Germany. The remarkable skills of political analysis that his work in this period represents completely shatters the notion that Trotsky was politically inept. In the developing crisis period, Trotsky used his powers of

[63] Sinclair, Leon Trotsky: A Bibliography , 501.

[64] Writings of Leon Trotsky [1932-33], ed. George Breitman and Sarah Lovell, vol. 5 (New York: Pathfinder Press, Inc., 1972), 137.

tactical analysis to see the ideological shifts of Brandler and Thalheimer as motivated by opportunism and predict their downfall. He was able to determine that the Leninbund was vacillating with the "sensations of the day," which proved to spell doom for the organization. In his best pieces of strategic political analysis, written in the crisis period, Trotsky was able to use an examination of the political placement and motivations of the major classes and political parties in Germany to argue that the Comintern should establish a united front. Finally, in the collapse period, his skills of strategic analysis argued that the failures of the Comintern necessitated a new German Communist Party to replace the KPD. This period was truly the period of Trotsky's finest thinking. The world was his oyster. Across the board of political discourse, Trotsky held an intellectual sway that he would never be able to regain. Although his tactical skills would never lapse, the future would reveal his decreasing abilities in strategic matters. The years ahead were rough. He would face personal and professional challenges that would impact his emotional being enormously. Almost the sole source of these challenges was Joseph Stalin. Almost the sole focus, therefore, of Trotsky's resentment was Stalin. In the end, he faltered in that reasoning that most involved Stalin, strategic analysis, because of that resentment.

V.Whither the Fourth International?: Trotsky and France

> The aim of all political association is the preservation of the natural and imprescriptible rights of man. These rights are liberty, property, security, and resistance to oppression.- Article 2 of The Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen, Approved by the National Assembly of France, August 26, 1789.

In 1933, experiences converged in the life of Lev Davidovich Trotsky. Events precipitated a period when Bronstein's emotions began to increasingly intrude into, and mar, his uncommonly keen analytical powers. The primary emotion involved was resentment, and the focus of this emotion was Joseph Stalin. In most strategic matters that in some way involved Stalin, such as the errors of the Comintern and the founding of the Fourth International, Trotsky's skills of reason were negatively impacted. Often, his analysis of these broad, international issues was marred by an attempt to fit the situation into a mold of past events that were not analogous to what he was facing at hand. For Trotsky, it seems that he frequently used, either consciously or unconsciously, these false analogies for specific emotional reasons. Inevitably these emotional reasons were entangled in his feelings for Stalin. He seemed to attempt to undermine Stalin's reputation by emphasizing past errors through the use of analogies from times gone by. In spite of this, his tactical analytical skills in this period

were unaffected. From July 1933 to December 1936, Trotsky most often used both his tactical and strategic reasoning to understand France.

Since entering Turkey in 1929, Trotsky had wanted nothing more than to leave. His home on a small island just north of one of the least developed nations in the Northern Hemisphere tended to separate him from the arenas of action of the world worker's movement.[1] He had attempted to secure visas from a variety of nations early in his exile. At that time, Berlin initially offered him the right to enter Germany and then refused.[2] France simply invoked the law that expelled Trotsky in 1916 from France "forever." The nations of Europe did not want "Lenin's cudgel," the chairman of the Military Revolutionary Committee, the founder of the Red Army, and the adherent to the philosophy of international permanent revolution within their borders. It didn't help that Winston Churchill had called Trotsky "the ogre of Europe."[3] However, by July 1933 the situation had changed on the continent; the fear of fascism gripped the worker's parties of many nations. In France, this fear helped to crack the obstacles that had kept Bronstein out of the country of 1789. Nevertheless, the French were scared, but not stupid. They allowed Trotsky to enter only on the

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[1] Deutscher, The Prophet Outcast, 259.

[2] Carmichael, Trotsky, 376.

[3] Deutscher, The Prophet Outcast, 18-19.

condition that he remain secretly in the south of France and never travel to the capital.[4]

During his journey through the Mediterranean, Trotsky became very ill with lumbago. He entered France fully prone, laid out on a stretcher, and barely able to move.[5] His condition made the old revolutionary seem exceedingly benign. In spite of this, he still could solicit both controversy and admiration. Prudence became an important part of his way of life. In order to confuse the Soviet secret police and intelligence service (known as the GPU), Trotsky's paraphernalia was sent to Paris. When a fire erupted in the small villa where his entourage was staying, Trotsky leapt into a friend's car across the street to avoid the developing crowd watching the inferno. In the next few months, Trotsky was inundated with visitors. Fifty friends, both political and personal, arrived at the villa to see and speak with the "ogre of Europe."[6]

At this time, there was a rankling in the ogre's heart. He began to brood about his condition, his situation, and the direction his life had taken him in the last few months. His failing health, his recent travels, the problems that his family was facing, and the endless persecution of his friends

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[4] Ibid., 215-216.

[5] Ibid., 261-262.

[6] Carmichael, Trotsky, 406.

in Stalin's USSR all began to coalesce in his conscious mind. Besides being generally troubled and, at times, fearful, Trotsky was living with a growing anger about his situation.[7] That brutal, consuming emotion always needs a focus. For Trotsky that focus was the one man who had forced him to plead for a visa throughout Europe (and, as a result, caused him to become ill), revoked his citizenship in the socialist state that he had helped to create, ceaselessly persecuted his friends and family still living within the boundaries of that state, and threatened the proletarian integrity of that state. That man was Joseph Stalin.

Beginning in 1933, Trotsky's raw hatred for Stalin began to significantly impact his life. The most obvious and historically significant way in which his feelings affected his life in France was in the area of political analysis. In his analysis of Germany just a few months before, his conclusions were powerful and positively prophetic. By the time he reached France, however, he had begun to miss the mark. This phenomenon was not evident in all of his pieces of political thought. He retained most of his abilities when focusing on smaller, narrower, more tactical problems. When conclusions needed to be made about conflicts within the International Left Opposition (later called the International Communist League), or the program of some small organization or publication, he had the mental strength to rise to the situation. In spite of this, Trotsky had begun to slowly lose

[7] Deutscher, The Prophet Outcast, 264-265.

his level headed, lucid, and prophetic analytical skills with regard to the broader, more strategic problems- questions that were international in scope. These were the sort of issues that were more intimately connected to Trotsky's nemesis, Stalin. The General Secretary gave the Comintern its orders, and, therefore, any issue involving the policies, structure, or nature of international Communism inevitably involved Stalin. One issue, in particular, was very much connected to Trotsky's adversary. That issue was whether to found a new International to replace the Comintern. In this decision, Trotsky failed to see the full implications of his choice to advocate the Fourth International.

When Trotsky began to propose a new International in July of 1933, he made his motivations clear. In a piece that was written that month and published in an internal bulletin of the Communist League of America, Trotsky wrote:

> Everything that has taken place since March 5: the resolution of the presidium of the ECCI [Executive Committee of the Communist International] on the situation in Germany; the silent submission of all the sections to this shameful resolution; the antifascist congress in Paris; the official line of the emigre Central Committee of the KPD [Communist Party of Germany]; the fate of the Austrian Communist Party; the fate of the Bulgarian Communist Party, etc.- all this testifies conclusively that the fate of not only the KPD but also the entire Comintern was decided in Germany.[8]

Thus Trotsky presented a litany of the crimes that the Third International (Comintern) had committed since the rise of National Socialism in Germany. He admitted that the

[8] Writings of Leon Trotsky [1932-33], 305.

Comintern had had a chance to redeem itself between Hitler's rise to the Chancellery in January and the publication of the article in July. "...The collapse of the KPD still left two courses open to the Stalinist bureaucracy: either a complete review of the politics and the regime; or, on the contrary, a complete strangulation of all signs of life in the sections of the Comintern."[9] Since the Comintern had failed to take the former route, the Third International itself, according to Trotsky, was doomed and should be replaced by a Fourth International. At the end of the article, Trotsky, using his theory of permanent revolution, connected the new International with renewed hope for international revolution and the existence of the USSR. "Only the creation of the Marxist [or Fourth] International, completely independent of the Stalinist bureaucracy and counterposed politically to it, can save the USSR from collapse by binding its destiny with the destiny of the world proletarian revolution."[10]

There seems to be little doubt that events in Germany and the Comintern's role in and reaction to those events influenced Trotsky's decision to begin to talk about the Fourth International. However, was Trotsky's response intellectual or emotional? Was it the result of an accurate assessment of the facts combined with lucid extrapolations from those facts from a Marxist perspective? Or was Trotsky

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[9] Ibid.

[10] Ibid., 310.

so consumed with hate and resentment towards Stalin and the Third International that a complete break with the both seemed reasonable? He undoubtedly engaged in intellectual justifications for a new International. It is likely, therefore, that he would have argued that only purely logical considerations motivated his advocacy of the break. Nevertheless, when an in-depth examination of his writings in this period and in later periods is made, his reasoning, when connected with Stalin or the Comintern or the Fourth International, was seriously flawed. In addition, there exists both overt and covert emotional indicators in his pieces that lead one to believe that Trotsky's motivations were less than intellectual and more emotional.

The German debacle was only one event that struck Trotsky's heart in this period. On January 5th, 1933, Trotsky's daughter from his first marriage, Zinaida Volkova, committed suicide in Berlin.[11] As with the rise of Nazism, Trotsky fixed the blame on one man, Stalin.

Zinaida was part of the family that Trotsky had left in Siberia when he escaped in 1902.[12] Her mother, Alexandra, was the fire brand revolutionary who had been one of the first people to introduce Trotsky to Marxism in 1896.[13] Trotsky and Alexandra's other daughter had died of

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[11] Deutscher, The Prophet Outcast, 195.

[12] Carmichael, Trotsky, 67.

[13] Ibid., 42.

consumption before Trotsky went into exile; Zinaida was his only child from his first marriage left alive. Besides this, she was the mother of one of Trotsky's grandchildren, little Seva Volkov.[14]

In addition to having to deal with the suicide of a daughter, Trotsky had to suffer through the traumatic events leading up to her death. While he was still on Prinkipo, Zinaida had expressed a desire to visit her father in exile. Towards that end, she negotiated with the Soviet government to allow her to leave the USSR and arrived, with her son, on Prinkipo in January 1931.[15] With her father at last, she became completely caught up in Trotsky's world and life. Her devotion to her father bordered on the obsessive. This phenomenon combined with a nervous disorder and consumption made for a disturbing combination in Zinaida Volkova. However, Trotsky deeply loved his daughter and was happy to have her with him. His ability to express that devotion was hampered by the burdensome political problems that he faced as well as his tendency to present an aloof and stoic exterior. In addition, she had other reasons to resent her father. Although from a revolutionary standpoint, it would be difficult to blame Trotsky for leaving his young family at the turn of the century, from a personal standpoint that act was brutal. Trotsky abandoned two small daughters and his

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[14] Deutscher, The Prophet Outcast, 146-147.

[15] Ibid.

loving wife in a desperately cold corner of Siberia in order to pursue a revolution. Zinaida never completely forgave her father for that. At times, when her nervous condition and tuberculosis had struck her down, she would express her feelings freely. Trotsky could not help but be emotionally affected by these outbursts.[16]

In spite of what he had been able to achieve after his escape in 1902, he felt guilty for having left his family behind. This guilt, in part, manifested itself in an attempt to help his daughter through psychotherapy. He sent her to Berlin for treatment. During this period the Soviet government revoked the citizenship of Trotsky, Zinaida, and Seva. The thought that she could never return home sent Zinaida into a deep chasm of despair. The doctors in Berlin could do little to help. She refused to be psychoanalyzed. Her doctors recommended that her son be brought to her, but his lack of citizenship complicated matters. As 1932 went by, Zinaida's condition worsened; she contemplated suicide. Finally, at the beginning of 1933, the one thing that the doctors thought would boost her spirits seemed to have the opposite effect; she gassed herself in a Berlin apartment right after the arrival of her son.[17]

On January 11th, 1933, just six days after Zinaida's suicide, Trotsky sent an open letter to all members of the

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[16] Carmichael, Trotsky, 401-402.

[17] Ibid., 402-404.

Central Committee of the Communist Party of the USSR, which was published in the American labor periodical The Militant on February 11th.[18] The beginning of the letter makes clear where Trotsky placed the blame for his daughter's death. While commenting on Stalin's approval of the decree that allowed Zinaida to leave the USSR, Trotsky wrote, "I did not suspect that behind this liberalism of Stalin lurked an ulterior motive."[19] In the same letter, Bronstein accosted Stalin for not allowing a final letter to his other daughter to get through before her death from consumption and for blocking treatment for his wife's health problems. At the end of the letter Stalin is directly blamed for Zinaida'a suicide. "No, it was not voluntary. Stalin imposed this death upon her. I limit myself to this information without drawing conclusions. The time will come for this. The regenerated party will do it."[20] What does Trotsky mean by "regenerated party?" Was he referring to a alteration of the Third International as he had many times before, or had the suicide of his daughter brought the notion of a Fourth International to his mind? A careful reading of the text seems to indicate the latter possibility. Up until this time he always referred to the main task of the International Left

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[18] Sinclair, Leon Trotsky: A Bibliography, 496.

[19] Writings of Leon Trotsky [1932-33], 69.

[20] Ibid., 72.

Opposition (ILO) as the "internal reform of the party."[21] Indeed, even in later articles when he is advocating a new International, while referring back to the policy of the ILO, he still spoke of reform.[22] To use the term "regenerate," however, was to advocate a much more thorough change as compared to the use of the term "internal reform." Why was Trotsky suddenly beginning to use the much stronger word? And when Trotsky spoke of what the ILO's policy had been in pieces written after the letter to the Central Committee, why did he use the old word, "reform?" If he had been using "regenerate" as a new synonym for "reform," then he would have tended to use it in later articles when speaking of the policy of the ILO. Clearly, a change had occurred. It seems that just six days after his daughter's death, for which he blamed Stalin, Trotsky's mind had changed about the degree to which the Third International needed to be altered. Although Trotsky was still contemplating a change in the Comintern in the letter, he indicates, for the first time, that something more dramatic than just reform was needed. This indication is evident in an emotionally charged letter about his only living daughter's suicide.

In a later piece, written three months after the above letter, about the influence of the German situation on the tasks of the ILO, Trotsky used mild terminology regarding an

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[21] Ibid., 55.

[22] Ibid., 304.

alteration in the Third International. The article contained Trotsky's comments on an ILO pre-conference that took place in Paris earlier that year. It shows that when Trotsky was analyzing a situation with both political and emotional elements, the rise of Nazism, he used language that advocated a less than dramatic change for the Third International as compared to a purely emotional situation, the suicide of his daughter. He specifically stated the area that needed to be dealt with and mentioned the Comintern by name. He, therefore, fully intended to continue to support the Third International with some changes, while analyzing the situation in Germany.

> The Paris conference carried out its work on the eve of a decisive turn in Germany, which was reflected inevitably in the entire world working class and in the first place in the fate of the Comintern....The maneuvers of the centrist bureaucracy were all too clumsy. The consequences of its crimes were all too tragic not only in the eyes of the whole world but in the very heart of Europe! No, it will not go unpunished. The death agony of bureaucratic centrism has already begun. The sooner it can be replaced by revolutionary Marxism the better the chances for securing the Comintern's survival....[23]

The above contrasts markedly with the previous letter to the Central Committee, which never mentions the Comintern or Trotsky's desire to maintain the Comintern. Above, he talked about the Comintern's continued survival. Before, he spoke of "regeneration" which insinuates a complete and total overhaul. In the above piece, Trotsky zeroed in on the

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[23] Ibid., 131-132.

specific problem, "bureaucratic centrism," and proposed just the removal of this one factor. Also, much can be made of Trotsky's intended audiences. Why would he tend to use language that was more divisive when writing to the Central Committee? If he wanted to continue a relationship with the Third International, it seems that it would be more logical to have used a more conciliatory tone when writing to the heart and soul of the Comintern, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. Yet, he attempted to strengthen the relationship with the Third International, while writing a piece to other members of the ILO. If Trotsky was advocating a Fourth International, then he would certainly have no qualms about using language that was most divisive towards the Comintern, while writing to the organization that he would use as a core for the new International. The evidence seems to indicate that when Trotsky was consumed with heart wrenching emotion over the suicide of his daughter, he was more inclined to consider drastic and less rational solutions to the political problems of the day. When he was concerned with a problem that was both political and mildly emotional, the German turn, he was more reasonable and less inclined to offer dramatic and irrational solutions.

Of course, Trotsky eventually supported an extremely dramatic step away from the Third International, namely, a Fourth International. However, how irrational can such a proposal be considered? Was the notion of a new

International such a poorly thought out idea that it can only be considered the result of a mind clouded by emotion? There are really two questions here. Was the Fourth International a bad idea? And if it was, then can an individual who advocated such an idea be considered consumed by feelings of resentment? As far as Trotsky is concerned, it is important to see the contrast, in this period, between his tactical analytical prowess and his strategic abilities. If an individual shows an uncanny skill in analyzing political matters across the board, as Trotsky did up until 1933, and then begins to lose those abilities, as Trotsky did in 1933, as far as broader, larger strategic matters are concerned, then this person's advocacy of a less than wholly rational concept can be neither general political ineptness nor simple insanity. It seems likely to be the result of some specific mental malady intruding upon his intellectual powers. Considering the pain and anguish that Trotsky was experiencing through 1933, and the emotionally charged prose that he spewed out from time to time, the conclusion can be made that the cause of Trotsky's less the lucid analysis was the state of his feelings. And because the failed reasoning seems to be focused in just one area, broad strategic questions that are inevitably connected to Stalin because of his commanding position in the Comintern, then the focus of these feelings seems to be Joseph Stalin and the manifestation of the mental malady occurs when Trotsky looks at some of the larger, international questions of the day,

such as the Fourth International.

One important question arises when the validity of the reasoning that led to the Fourth International is examined. Why were the groups of the ILO and the other left oriented organizations that were critical of the Comintern so reluctant to advocate the Fourth International? This condition existed to such a degree that in spite of the fact that Trotsky strongly supported a new International as early as 1933, the Fourth International did not officially come into existence until 1938.[24] One of the most important initial documents of the movement was "The Declaration of the Four."

Among the many visitors that Trotsky saw after he reached France were party delegates to a general conference of center/left organizations that were upset by the events that had taken place in Germany months before. During these meetings, Trotsky was able to convince only four organizations, one of which was the ILO, to sign a document that he wrote in support of a Fourth International. The reasons given were nothing new. Events in Germany had fouled the revolutionary nest; the Comintern (of which the Communist Party of Germany was a part) had caused the rise of fascism in Germany.

> The German events revealed with no less force the collapse of the Third International....the Communist Party of Germany revealed under conditions of a grave economic, social and political crisis, conditions exceptionally

[24] Deutscher, The Prophet Outcast, 419.

> favorable for a revolutionary party, an absolute revolutionary incapacity. It thereby showed conclusively that despite the heroism of many of its members it had become totally incapable of fulfilling its historic role.[25]

Thus Trotsky argues for a new direction. The words of the document are unequivocal; the Comintern (Third International) failed; it should be discarded. In spite of this language, or because of it, the vast majority of the delegates refused to sign. Trotsky was able to convince only three groups outside his own ILO. The signatories were: J. Schwab from the Socialist Workers Party of Germany, P.J. Schmidt from the Independent Socialist Party of Holland, H. Sneevliet from the revolutionary Socialist Party of Holland and E. Bauer from the ILO.[26] This was not exactly a broad base of support, two small Dutch parties, a nearly defunct German party and Trotsky's own group.

Also, these groups didn't seem enthusiastic about the Fourth International in the long run. Even the ILO, during its conference on August 19, 1933, declared its support for the new International but refused to create a Fourth International with themselves as the core. They were only willing to change their name from the International Left Opposition to the International Communist League (ICL).[27]

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[25] Writings of Leon Trotsky [1933-34], 50.

[26] Ibid., 52.

[27] Ibid., 342-343.

Trotsky himself even cited a lack of support as the main reason for the refusal of the ILO to create the FI. In a declaration of the Bolshevik Leninists (the French branch of the ICL called themselves the Bolshevik-Leninist Group or GBL) to the Paris conference, Trotsky wrote:

> We would have introduced such a proposal [the Fourth International] without hesitation had the organizations represented here already been in actual, that is, tested by experience, agreement with regard to the basic principles and methods of revolutionary struggle. But we do not have it.[28]

The groups had more in common than Trotsky claimed. They all felt troubled by what the Comintern had done in the German situation. Many of these groups were Communist and even adhered to Trotsky's own notions of "permanent revolution." Many of the groups were closer in ideals and methods than Trotsky was willing to admit. Many of the groups disagreed with Trotsky in only one area; they thought a new International was the wrong way to go.[29] Less than one year after the "Declaration" document was signed, the bloc of four collapsed completely. On July 21, 1934, Trotsky wrote, "...following the demise of the block of Four, the ICL is at the moment the only organization that openly and consistently raises the question of the new, communist, Fourth International."[30] Trotsky blames the breakup on the pull of

[28] Ibid., p.44.

[29] Isaac Deutscher, The Prophet Outcast, 264.

[30] Writings of Leon Trotsky [1934-35], ed. George Breitman and Sarah Lovell, vol. 7 (New York: Pathfinder Press, Inc., 1972), 375.

"centrist 'mass currents'" that did not understand the teachings of Marx and Lenin. He did not even entertain the notion that the Fourth International was simply a bad idea and, therefore, could not solicit much support.

In spite of arguments justifying the need for a Fourth International, Trotsky felt troubled about the weak initial interest in the endeavor. He could intellectually and theoretically justify to himself the need for a new International very well. His arguments were weak, but he convinced himself. Getting others to see his position was the problem. His inability to bring others over to his way of thinking would sometimes get him to see the futility of such a venture. It is as if the sheer force of both empirical evidence and political reasoning would temporarily break through the real emotional impetus for the Fourth International and send Trotsky into despair about the fate and value of his new political experiment.[31]

This sense arose soon after the Paris conference. The despair that he felt is clear in letters that he wrote to his wife while she was in Paris. With the Fourth International nearly stillborn and Natalya away, he lapsed into a period of profound loneliness. In one letter he wrote, "'How painfully I long to see your old picture, our common picture, showing us when we were so young.... You are in Paris...the day you left...I was unwell...I went into your room and touched your things....'" Days later, Trotsky awoke from a troubled sleep

[31] Deutscher, The Prophet Outcast, 264.

and called out for Natalya "'like an abandoned child.'"[32] As Isaac Deutscher pointed out regarding this period in his biography of Trotsky, "Their letters [from Lev to Natalya], sad and tender, show him forlorn and morally dependent on her in a way he could hardly have been in any of the earlier, more active periods of his life."[33] Why did Trotsky feel so dependent on his wife in this period? He had faced problems during his other adventures through life and did not show this degree of need for Natalya. In the past he had been separated from his wife for longer periods and over a much greater distance than in France in late 1933. Perhaps he was unusually troubled by what had happened to him in this period. Within one year, he had faced the suicide of his daughter, the rise of Hitler, and the initial problems with the Fourth International. Significantly, all of these events were intimately connected to his nemesis, Stalin.

In addition to his political problems and personal loneliness, at this time, Trotsky was struck by another personal blow. This personal blow might have affected his reasoning. His closest friend from the old Bolshevik guard, Christian Rakovsky, capitulated to Stalin after spending years in the harshest Soviet concentration camps. This event was, for Trotsky, the truncation of the last connection to a

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[32] Leon Trotsky to Natalya Sedova, Transcript at the The Trotsky Archives, Houghton Library, Harvard University, quoted in Deutscher, The Prophet Outcast, 264-265.

[33] Ibid., 264.

real friend from the old days left in the Soviet Union. Trotsky's sorrow was profound. In a diary entry that was written one year after the capitulation, March 1935, Trotsky wrote:

> Rakovsky was virtually my last contact with the old revolutionary generation. After his capitulation there is nobody left. Even though my correspondence with Rakovsky stopped, for reasons of censorship, at the time of my deportation, nevertheless the image of Rakovsky has remained a symbolic link with my old comrades-in-arms. Now nobody remains. For a long time now I have not been able to satisfy my need to exchange ideas and discuss problems with someone else. I am reduced to carrying on a dialogue with the newspapers, or rather through the newspapers with facts and opinions.[34]

The depth of the loneliness that Trotsky felt over this incident is evident above. He didn't just lose a true, old friend, but a link to happier more fulfilling times. In addition, the surrender of Rakovsky to Stalin seemed to force the difficulties of Trotsky's situation onto his consciousness. He hadn't been able to converse with someone else from the old Bolshevik guard about important political matters for quite some time before the capitulation. The actual fall, however, brought to his heart and soul the undeniable fact that all the great minds that had forged a revolution in 1917 were either dead or broken by Stalin, except for, perhaps, Stalin himself.

In a statement to the International Secretariat made on February 21st, 1934, he expressed himself less emotionally

[34] Leon Trotsky, Trotsky's Diary in Exile, 1935 (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1958), 45-46.

than in his diary, but, still very poignantly on the issue. Trotsky also made clear how Rakovsky's capitulation had affected his support for a Fourth International. The statement began with an attempt to explain why the old Bolshevik finally gave in. "Rakovsky states that he will give up his struggle and submit to discipline....In order to understand this declaration...it is necessary to understand the situation in which Rakovsky was placed."[35] To Trotsky, his old friend had failed to hold the forces of Stalinism at bay because isolation had cut Rakovsky off from knowledge of international events, friends and "literature of the Left Opposition." Trotsky wrote, "In his complete isolation he remained without any perspective whatsoever."[36] Trotsky then extended this argument to include all Bolshevik-Leninists in the Soviet Union. "The Bolshevik-Leninists in the USSR do not learn from *Pravda* of the burning facts of international life: Hitler's victory, the danger of war, nor the crushing of the Austrian proletariat."[37] Then, in a specious argument, Trotsky attempted to convince his readers that both the conditions of Trotskyists in the USSR and the Rakovsky case provided a sure justification for his continued work towards a Fourth International. It seems, however, that his real justification comes from an emotional response to

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35 Writings of Leon Trotsky [1933-34], 245.

36 Ibid.

37 Ibid.

Rakovsky's capitulation rather then an intellectual one. To Trotsky, one factor that could have broken the isolation of Rakovsky and other sympathizers, preventing their capitulation, would have been a Fourth International.

> In order to re-create a powerful International Communist movement in the USSR, the struggle of the Fourth International must take form and become so powerful a factor that the Stalinist bureaucracy will no longer be able to hide it from the Soviet workers, the Bolshevik-Leninists included.[38]

To begin with, Trotsky failed to realize that the likely cause of the capitulation of any of his sympathizers in the USSR, including Rakovsky, was not lack of information. Although they did not hear of many significant events within the walls of Stalin's prisons, they must have obtained information, which was smuggled in by new prisoners, about the significant events, such as the rise of Hitler. In addition, once they gave in and were released, they likely heard of important international events. The Soviet Union was a closed society, but things seeped into the country. The fact is that Rakovsky and others probably capitulated to Stalin knowing what Stalin's policies had done in Germany. In the end, Rakovsky was tortured into submission. As months became years in the gulag, Rakovsky probably thought that life was too important, and short, to squabble over political matters. This might seem inconsistent with Rakovsky's fiercely political character, but an icy Siberian prison can change a man. Also, Trotsky seemed to be so consumed by the

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[38] Ibid.

emotional desire to break completely with the brutal Georgian who had dealt his life blow after blow for years, that he failed to see that the best way to contact sympathetic elements within a closed society with a one-party state was through that one political party, not through a separate, new political organization such as the Fourth International. Why did Trotsky advocate his new International as an instrument to penetrate the Soviet Union? Given his analytical skills, he surely must have known that to break the grip that the Third International (which was largely controlled by the Communist Party of the Soviet Union) had on political life in the Soviet Union was impossible. He surely must have known that such a venture was better done from within. The last paragraph of the statement sheds some light on these questions.

> We register the purely formal declaration of the old warrior, who by his whole life has demonstrated his unshakeable devotion to the revolutionary cause; we register it with sadness and pass on to the order of the day, that is, to the doubly vigorous struggle for new parties of the new International.[39]

Here Trotsky seemed to reveal the actual reason why his good friend's capitulation to his bitter enemy strengthened his enthusiasm for a Fourth International. Trotsky was sad, and he was more determined than ever to politically separate himself from the source of that sadness, Joe Stalin.

About eight months after the Paris conference and one

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[39] Ibid.

month after Rakovsky's fall, Trotsky's troubles extended beyond the political realm and the fate of old friends into the state of his living conditions. Between Trotsky's recovery from lumbago in October 1933 and April 1934, he and his entourage had led an ideal existence; they were, after all, revolutionary refugees in a bourgeois nation. The French government had permitted him to stay in the small village of Barbizon, a few miles from Paris.[40] The area was next to the serene forest of Fontainebleau. Considering his affection for nature, this area must have pleased Trotsky greatly. While there, he planned to begin work on his book about Lenin. However, about 6 months after settling into his new conditions, the group was, once again, relegated to a nomadic existence. Up until this time, Trotsky's presence in France had been kept a close secret from the public. Even local authorities in Barbizon did not know that the founder of the Red Army loomed in their midst. They soon found out. One of Trotsky's assistants, a communist escapee from Hitler's Germany, was delivering a message for Trotsky when the local police pulled him over. Apparently, his headlight was out. This minor electrical malfunction shattered Trotsky's ideal existence.[41]

The locals lapsed into a frenzy. Trotsky's enemies on the right, fascists and royalists, thought that he was in

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[40] Deutscher, The Prophet Outcast, 266.

[41] Ibid., 273.

France to spark a revolution; his enemies from the left, Stalinists, thought that he was an agent of counter-revolution. The uproar became a burden upon the government. The public outcry combined with pressure from Moscow forced Paris to expel Trotsky and his group. However, a minor difficulty arose. To which country could a man accused of being both a red menace and an agent of counter-revolution be expelled? With no place to send him, the French government's order had to be temporarily shelved, and the group was forced to take measures to ensure their safety in France.[42]

In spite of the government restrictions on travel to Paris, Trotsky stole away, without his wife, to the attic of a friend of Sedov in the city of lights. After this, Trotsky and two assistants went south and then east. At Chamonix he was reunited with Natalya. They finally stopped and temporarily settled in a boarding house near the Swiss border, where they pretended to be French citizens of foreign-born parents in deep mourning, so as to ensure complete privacy. They soon found out that secrecy was paramount in this particular boarding house. They happened to be staying in a the main meeting place for local fascists and monarchists. The French law enforcement personnel who had been sent to track Trotsky, and who were strong republicans, would occasionally engage in brutal verbal confrontations with the locals. The police, however, never discovered that their objective was the elderly couple in

[42] Ibid., 273-275.

mourning in the boarding house. Eventually, they were able to settle in the isolated home of a sympathetic school teacher near Grenoble. There they stayed for nearly a year.

Part of the atmosphere of excitement and worry in France at this time had nothing to do with Trotsky. On February 6th, 1934, Fascist groups combined with nationalist Leagues attempted a *coup* against the Radical government of Edouard Daladier. "The cry *'Daladier au poteau'* assailed the Chamber of Deputies."[43] In his book entitled Communism and the French Intellectuals, David Caute argues that the "riots" of February 6th were not a *coup* at all, not an attempt to bring down the Third Republic. The nationalist leagues, after all, had a fifty-year tradition and wanted nothing more than to bring down the Daladier government.[44] In spite of this, the events of early February shook all quarters of the French left. All parties from the Radicals to the Stalinists immediately called the action a *coup* and dubbed all participants fascists. To them, the Third Republic was in dire peril. As a result of the events of February 6th, divergent leftist political parties and groups united in thought and deed as they never had before. And they seemed to unite on the extreme left of the political spectrum. According to Caute:

February 6th tended to snap the idealist' fine line

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[43] Deutscher, The Prophet Outcast, 271.

[44] David Caute, Communism and the French Intellectuals, 1914-1960, (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1964), 112.

> of reasoning which put the Five Year Plans, Hitlerism and the French tradition of liberty into separate, if not watertight, compartments. The universalism of the Marxist argument appeared even more formidable.[45]

The workers, too, were troubled by what had happened and expressed their feelings in the form of a general strike. The strike saw workers from both socialist and communist parties form a spontaneous united front against fascism. The leadership of the two parties established an official united front policy in July. This occurred after, and was partially caused by, Stalin's complete elimination, from the Comintern's official line, of the policy against agreements with so called "social-facsists." Communists and socialists came together "to 'defend jointly the Republic against every fascist attack.'"[46] Events caused the Daladier government to rely on political forces to the left. Although Daladier's party, the Radicals, did not join the united front to form the Popular Front until 1935, the left ward political shift brought the Radicals closer to the Communists and Socialists.[47]

For Trotsky, who was in Grenoble at this time, events had pressed him into thinking about entering into another organization too. Permanently apart from the Third International, Trotsky encouraged his ICL groups to enter

[45] Ibid., 113.

[46] Deutscher, The Prophet Outcast, 271.

[47] Ibid.

into the French bastion of the Second International, the SFIO. To Trotsky, this maneuver would help to attract French socialists towards the Fourth International and move the ICL closer to genuine working-class organizations. Of course, just staying in the Third International would have achieved those same ends, with an even greater chance of success, since the French CP was closer ideologically to the ICL than the SFIO. According to Deutscher, Trotsky "implicitly acknowledged" the unrealistic nature of the Fourth International through his efforts to enter the SFIO. He must have known that the Second International's reform-minded philosophy ran so deep and contradicted the ICL's ideas so dramatically, that any chance of a real mass exodus away from the SFIO towards the ICL was slight.[48] Perhaps he was just trying to keep both the ICL and the hope for a Fourth International alive. At this time, all the Trotskyist organizations in France combined had a total of less than one hundred members.[49] In the back of his mind, Trotsky may have felt that moving the ICL into the SFIO may not have done anything for the Fourth International, but it may have allowed for the continued existence of the tiny ICL.

By examining Trotsky's implicit acknowledgment of the futility of the Fourth International through his advocacy of a movement by the ICL into SFIO, the definite demarcation

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[48] Ibid., 272.

[49] Ibid., 270.

between his unclouded tactical skills and his marred strategic abilities can be seen. His faltering strategic skills allowed him to recommend a move away from the Third International; his intact tactical skills, then, allowed him to see that the only alternative was entrance into the Second International. From a tactical standpoint, he knew that the insignificant numbers and influence of the Trotskyists in France could be boosted via entrance into the SFIO. Yet, his strategic analytical abilities should have also told him that to enter into a reformist party of the Second International in order to gain significant support for a Fourth International was an impossible endeavor. By doing so, he was showing the ICL's desperate need for any chance, however slim, to gain supporters for the unpopular Fourth International. Clearly, Trotsky's strategic abilities had failed him almost completely. It never seemed to occur to him, except perhaps unconsciously, that the problem lay with the Fourth International as a concept.

How can this peculiar dichotomy in reasoning power be explained? The thesis that Trotsky's pure hatred and resentment towards Stalin was the factor that negatively impacted his strategic skills (those that involved Stalin most significantly) yet hardly impacted his tactical skills (those that involved Stalin least significantly) is borne out by a careful examination of Trotsky's writings regarding the ICL's entrance into the SFIO. Because these articles involve sound logic regarding a smaller scale issue (the entrance

into the SFIO), which was made necessary by flawed logic regarding a larger issue (the Fourth International), the pieces provide a clear insight into the split in Trotsky's reasoning skills.

One of the first articles that Trotsky wrote on the issue was entitled "The League Faced with a Turn" and was published in an internal bulletin of the French League in July, 1934.[50] In the piece, his justifications for entering the SFIO were reasonable. The most compelling argument was that the ICL needed to engage in political activity that was closer to actual mass working class organizations.

> It is necessary to go to the masses. It is necessary to find a place for oneself within the framework of the united front, i.e., within the framework of one of the two parties of which it is composed. In actual practice, that means within the framework of the SFIO.[51]

Trotsky felt that contact with the masses was imperative. Any real progress in the development of revolutionary ideas must come from contact with workers. "The revolutionary ideas must be transformed into life itself every day through the experience of the masses themselves. But how can the League explain this to them when it is itself cut off from the experience of the masses?"[52]

According to Trotsky, the proletariat of France was at

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[50] Writings of Leon Trotsky [1934-35], 325.

[51] Ibid., 35-36.

[52] Ibid., 34.

a decisive stage in history. In mid-1934, Trotsky predicted that within six months the masses would either seize power in a revolution or succumb to the forces of fascism.[53] This prediction itself is a piece of poor strategic political reasoning; however, it did lead Trotsky to a sound tactical move: to enter the SFIO. In spite of this fact, it was based on a false strategic assumption: enter to be able to influence those masses within that six-month window. Also, it was based on the flawed strategic assumption that the Fourth International had any chance of attracting a significant number of workers and party members from the reformist SFIO. Yet, as a tactical move, it did allow the ICL to attach itself to a large party and secure the tiny league's existence for a while. At one point, early in the article, Trotsky even admits to a basic fact: remaining in the Comintern would have given the ICL what was so desperately needed, contact with the masses. "Although the living conditions inside the Comintern are hardly normal, the Left Opposition as a faction would have developed in constant contact with the mass movement."[54] Indeed, as Trotsky would later discover, the ICL was not afforded very many opportunities for contact with worker's groups in the SFIO. How, then, did he explain the move out of the Comintern? Trotsky said that the Stalinist bureaucracy stifled the ILO

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[53] Ibid., 35.

[54] Ibid., 33.

and did not allow Trotsky's groups to have contact with the mass organizations. Although this is true to some degree, the Third International was not able to block the ILO's involvement in all worker groups. In fact, as an unrecognized faction, they still had significant contact with the masses. What Trotsky failed to see was that his organizations were better off as an unrecognized faction in a group that was rather close ideologically, such as the Comintern, rather than as a recognized faction in a party that had significant ideological differences compared to the ICL.

In a later article, entitled "The League Faced With a Decisive Turn", Trotsky reiterated much of what he said in the above piece. Yet, he also answered the questions and challenges of critics of the French-Turn. After repeating the need of the ICL for a place in a larger organization and that the organization must be the SFIO , Trotsky wrote, "What? At once we hear a hail of objections, the League should go into Leon Blum's party? It should capitulate before reformism? But we are for a new party? We are for the Fourth International? How can we join the Second?"[55] Then, in a extremely telling paragraph, he presented his answer to those critics that might ask the above questions.

> Of course, we are against reformism- in the present situation more adamantly than ever. But one must know how to come nearer the goal in the given, concrete situation. To renounce the principles or to 'provisionally' relinquish the struggle for them

[55] Ibid., 42.

> would be open treason. But to bring the methods of struggle in congruence with the situation and our own forces is an elementary demand of realism.[56]

This part was a masterful tactical stroke. Every political theorist knows that the long term goals must, at times, be pushed aside for short term survival. Trotsky explained and elucidates this fact perfectly. We must retain long term principles, but remain tied to the real world situation. These words seem completely out of place when one considers that the same man also advocated breaking away from a different mass organization, the Comintern, but a few months before. Why didn't Trotsky consider this line of reasoning when he was contemplating a break with the Third International? Surely the achievement of the long term goal of international socialist revolution would have been better served by staying in an organization that adhered to those ideals more closely rather than entering into an organization that completely rejected those goals. Because in the long term the goals of the Trotskyists, as compared to those of the Comintern, were closer, the de-emphasis of certain ideals, such as permanent revolution, for the short term gain of remaining in a mass organization of some size would have been much easier to take. Staying in the Third International would have made the job of bringing "the methods of struggle in congruence with the situation" much easier, since the Third International was closer ideologically to the Trotskyists as compared to the Second International.

[56] Ibid.

Later in the same piece, Trotsky attempted to answer those who would argue that reentry into the Comintern, as an unrecognized faction, was the better idea. He wrote, "One can make still another objection: Why begin with the Socialist Party? Would it not be more correct to address oneself first to the Communist Party."[57] Trotsky's answer is intriguing. To begin with, he said that such a question cannot cause reasonable men to differ significantly. According to Trotsky, such a move would be nothing more than a demonstration to a segment of Communist workers. Trotsky wrote that the demonstration would say to the workers:

> We [the ICL] have fought against the theory of social fascism, for the united front, etc. The latest steps of the party are evidence of a certain turn in this direction. For this reason we are ready to make a loyal attempt to work within the party, naturally under condition that it be possible for us to fight for our ideas on the basis of party democracy.[58]

He then went on to say that once the Communist Party had inevitably rejected such an idea, entreaties could then be made towards the socialists. This is an effective notion from a tactical standpoint. However, Trotsky never addressed the more obvious question. Why was it necessary to leave the Third International in the first place? Although the ILO had always been an unrecognized faction within the Comintern, it had always been considered within the Third International to

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[57] Ibid., 44.

[58] Ibid.

everyone except diehard Stalinists. Most of the members of the European Communist Parties accepted the Trotskyists as an unrecognized faction within the Party. An attempt to reenter the Comintern would have served only as a demonstration and the above statement as a manifestation of that demonstration would have been a masterful stroke. Nevertheless, being a demonstration only, it would have been rejected by the Communist Party. However, remaining in the Third International to begin with would have allowed the ILO to live in the best of the two worlds. They would have had some access to mass communist workers groups; they would have had some influence on the party members themselves. Yet, both the workers and the party members would not have been so completely different ideologically from the ILO. Among the socialists, both access to workers and to members was possible, but both were so ideologically different compared to the ICL, by definition, that such access would have been meaningless.

Indeed, in spite of the fact that greater access to potential recruits would result from work within the SFIO, as compared to the CP, because of greater party democracy, such additional impact would have been more than outweighed by the broad ideological gulf between the ICL and the SFIO. In addition, Trotsky was to find out later that the French Socialists did not have the degree of contact with the working masses that the French Communist had. What good is party democracy when the party in question has a small base

of mass support and is completely opposed to one's ideas? A much smaller scale influence in a party without democracy, but in a party that is closer ideologically, is the better route to take. According to Deutscher, "...the 'French turn' removed the Trotskyists even further from the mass of communists and provided grist to Stalinist propaganda."[59] Trotsky's move into the SFIO shifted the attitude of the majority of French Communists from mildly disliking the ICL to wholesale hatred. The French CP saw the Trotskyists as real traitors.[60] This is the best evidence to establish the fact that the ILO was tolerated and accepted as an unofficial faction of the Comintern. Why would the members of the Comintern consider the members of the ICL to be turncoats for leaving the Third International and entering into the Second if the ILO hadn't been at least somewhat connected to the Third in the first place? Yet, how could the French Communists consider the ICL to be traitorous when they were engaging in a united front that would soon become a Popular Front? The answer comes from how differently the united front and the French turn were structured. The Third International never became a part of the SFIO; they simply affiliated and associated together temporarily against a common enemy, fascism. The Trotskyists, on the other hand, actually entered into the SFIO, became a integral part of it.

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[59] Deutscher, The Prophet Outcast, 272.

[60] Ibid.

Although they opposed many of its policies, they remained a faction within the Second International. Therefore, it was not inconsistent for members of the French CP to criticize the ICL for turning away from the Third International and towards the Second.

At the end of 1934, events in the Soviet Union shook Trotsky's world more significantly than the ICL's entrance into the SFIO. The man who took Zinoviev's place leading the Leningrad party apparatus and sitting in the Politbureau, Sergei Kirov, was brutally shot by a man named Nikolaev. This act precipitated a full scale assault on the usual targets at the time. Both Kamenev and Zinoviev were arrested and accused of being a part of the conspiracy that produced Kirov's corpse. Past events had undeniably linked these two men with Trotsky, so he was implicated as well. Indeed, Trotsky was thought to be "the real instigator."[61]

Within the Soviet Union thousands of real and imagined Zinovievists, Trotskyists, and just plain political dissidents were sent to Siberian Gulags. Kirov's assassination became Stalin's latest excuse to eliminate his enemies. The only problem was that his number one nemesis, Trotsky, was not so easily eliminated. Trotsky concluded almost from the start that the assassination was the fault of the ruling bureaucracy in the Soviet Union rather than the Opposition. It was completely out of character for any of

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[61] Ibid., 279.

the members of the Opposition to engage in an assassination.[62] Since the assassination of Alexander II, which changed nothing except to bring about the reign of Alexander III, Russian Marxists had known that assassination was useless as a political tool.

What, then, had happened? Deutscher wrote, "Trotsky asserted, on the internal evidence of the official announcements, that the G.P.U. had known about the preparations of the attempt and had, for their own reasons, condoned them."[63] According to Deutscher, one of the conspirators was Stalin himself. In an effort to connect clearly Trotsky to an assassination attempt, Stalin ordered the NKVD (the Soviet secret police organization that replaced the GPU) to find a suitable dissident, convince him to eliminate Kirov, connect him to Trotsky, and then "uncover" the conspiracy against Kirov's life before the dissident could take any action. Thus, Trotsky would be implicated in a heinous crime against the USSR. The NKVD chose Nikolaev, who was a troubled and alienated former member of the Komsomoltsy, to be their patsy. However, things got out of hand. While the NKVD was trying to engineer a connection between Trotsky and Nikolaev, they left their patsy to roam free. At liberty, Nikolaev did what he was supposed to do, but not on the NKVD's timetable. They never had the time to

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[62] Ibid.

[63] Ibid., 280.

create a connection to Trotsky; therefore, they could not unveil the conspiracy before it was too late and Kirov lay dead.[64]

The Kirov assassination had a significant impact on Trotsky's political life; however, the emotional impact was devastating. Stalin used Kirov's murder as an excuse to harass, imprison, or send into exile any and all of what remained of Trotsky's close family in the USSR. Alexandra, Trotsky's first wife, was exiled to Siberia.[65] Three children of Trotsky's two deceased daughters, whom Alexandra was taking care of, were left with a distant relative. Trotsky was most affected by the persecution of his other son, Sergei, who had been living in the Soviet Union as a scientist and had rejected his father's politics completely. Sergei was very careful about his political separation from his father. For years, he never tried to contact or even send his father a single letter; he corresponded only with his mother. These letters contained only general information about his life, never even the most insignificant hint of political discourse.[66] This did not save him, though.

In two letters to his mother, Sergei indicated that he had sensed trouble. Both were written days after the assassination. In the first letter Sergei wrote,

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[64] Ibid., 280.

[65] Trotsky, Trotsky's Diary in Exile, 1935, 58.

[66] Deutscher, The Prophet Outcast, 281.

"'...something unpleasant is brewing, so far it has taken the form of rumors, but how all this is going to end I do not know'", and in the second letter he wrote, "'My general situation is very grave, graver than one could imagine.'"[67]

The diary that Trotsky kept in 1935 bears witness to how Trotsky felt about the fate of his son. Trotsky and his wife received no news or contact from their son after the second letter. Without any information, they imagined the worst. In a diary enter for April Third, he wrote:

> With what immediacy and perspicacity N. [Natalya] imagined Seryozha [Sergei] in prison: he must suffer doubly, since his interests are quite outside of politics, and indeed he is completely an innocent bystander suffering for deeds not his own.[68]

Whose deeds was Trotsky referring to? Since he had already concluded that one man was at the heart of the conspiracy that, inadvertently, caused the death of Kirov and that the conspiracy was meant to implicate Trotsky, he could only have been referring to the deeds of Stalin. The next day he wrote, "All the current *'miseres'* of our personal lives have receded into the background in the face of our anxiety for Seryozha, [Sergei]...."[69] Trotsky was often worried about his wife's brooding about their son. On April 5th, he wrote, "N.

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67 Sergei Sedov to Natalya Sedova, Transcript at the The Trotsky Archives, Houghton Library, Harvard University, quoted in Deutscher, The Prophet Outcast, 282.

68 Trotsky, Trotsky's Diary in Exile, 1935, 62.

69 Ibid., 63.

[Natalya] is haunted by the thought of what a heavy heart Seryozha [Sergei] must have prison (if he is in prison)."[70] Through the rest of April, on four separate occasions, the diary mentions a lack of information about Sergei's fate. Two months later, they finally received a letter from Sergei.

> The days drag on in burdensome succession. Three days ago we received a letter from our son: Seryozha [Sergei] has been arrested; he is in prison; now it is no longer guesswork, something almost certain but not quite; we have a direct communication from Moscow... He was arrested, evidently, about the time our correspondence stopped, i.e. at the end of December or the beginning of January. Almost half a year has elapsed since that time...Poor boy...And my poor, poor Natasha [Natalya].[71]

In the same entry Trotsky reprinted an open letter, which was published in the Bulletin, that Natalya wrote in an attempt to solicit public opinion to help her son. The appeal did nothing to change Sergei's fate. Later that month, Trotsky wrote, "Every time I recall Seryozha [Sergei], it is with sharp pain."[72] Clearly, Trotsky was emotionally devastated over the problems his son had been facing in the Soviet Union.

However, sorrow over the fate of his son was not the only emotion involved. Trotsky felt somewhat guilty about what Sergei had had to face and resentful towards the man who

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[70] Ibid., 70.

[71] Ibid., 129.

[72] Ibid., 134-135.

had precipitated these miserable events. According to Deutscher:

> The feeling that Stalin had laid hands on the son because he could not reach the father gave Trotsky a sense of guilt. In his Diary, between entries about Sergei, he tells, seemingly out of context, the story of the execution of the Tsar and the Tsar's family. In his anxiety over Sergei falling a victim to his conflict with Stalin, he evidently thought also about those other innocent children, the Tsar's, on whom the sins of the father had been visited.[73]

This sense of guilt must have aggravated Trotsky's resentment towards Stalin.

At about the time that Kirov was killed and Sergei disappeared, Trotsky wrote a long diatribe in his diary about Stalin's penchant for vengeance. These words seem to speak about Trotsky's own desire for vengeance too, and he even hints at the instrument of that vengeance. Trotsky explained how "personal revenge" always played an important role in Stalin's brutal policies. He then related something that Kamenev had told him. Kamenev quoted Stalin as saying, "The greatest delight is to mark one's enemy, prepare everything, avenge oneself thoroughly, and then go to sleep."[74] Then, through Trotsky's explanation of Stalin's inability to exact vengeance on him, we can view Trotsky's own desire for revenge.

> His craving for revenge on me is completely unsatisfied: there have been, so to speak, physical

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[73] Deutscher, The Prophet Outcast, 283.

[74] Trotsky, Trotsky's Diary in Exile, 1935, p.64.

> blows, but morally nothing has been achieved. There is no refusal to work, no 'repentance,' no isolation; on the contrary, a new historical momentum has been acquired which it is already impossible to halt.[75]

Why, after he had suffered so much over the past seven years in exile, would Trotsky claim that Stalin's need for vengeance was "completely unsatisfied?" Why did Trotsky claim that what he had suffered were "physical blows?" If anything, he had been exposed to emotional brutality of the highest caliber as a result of Stalin. To Trotsky, Stalin had caused one daughter's suicide and had incarcerated his son for no reason. Indeed, this part of the diary comes right after his musings about Sergei. Anyone who knew could see that Stalin had wreaked some significant revenge on his nemesis. Trotsky could and did still work, but by claiming that that was some indication of vengeance "completely unsatisfied" was ridiculous. If Kamenev's quote was accurate, Stalin primarily sought revenge for its own sake, not in order to achieve some other end. Stalin undoubtedly felt somewhat satisfied by what he had already achieved against Trotsky, even if Trotsky refused to stop writing as a result. If he had stopped work altogether, Stalin would likely still pursue him. Perhaps Trotsky knew that Stalin might view his diary someday soon. To claim no injury when the injury was actually great can be considered a kind of vengeance in itself. If Stalin was so consumed with the

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[75] Ibid.

desire for revenge, then to read that Trotsky considered himself unscathed would have infuriated him. This anger could not have made Trotsky's life easier, but it would, at least partially, satisfy Trotsky's need for vengeance. It is unreasonable to imagine that Trotsky actually felt that Stalin was "completely unsatisfied," but it seems logical to view this part of the diary as a method of hitting Stalin back in a small way. This section also hints at another route of vengeance that Trotsky was taking against Stalin. What is the "new historical momentum...which it is already impossible to halt?" The only thing that Trotsky would use these words to describe is the Fourth International. It seems that Trotsky's analysis of Stalin's vengeance reveals his own desire for revenge and a hint into the manifestation of that desire.

Trotsky's diary of 1935 also reveals two other related areas where his thinking was significantly marred. The entry in question is for March 25th. To begin with, Trotsky fully rejected Marxist theory about the lesser significance of the individual, as compared to the masses, with regard to the movement of history. Karl Marx, in The Communist Manifesto, wrote, "The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles."[76] This idea was so important to Marx that he began the book with it. Although Lenin altered the interpretation of this ideology (or perhaps brought the

[76] Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, The Communist Manifesto,(New York: International Publishers, 1989), 9.

interpretation closer to true Marxism) in his book What is to Be Done?, still the party was to be a vanguard of the masses, to provide assistance. To Lenin the masses still made history, individuals and parties just became the focused instruments of the will of the people. Even Trotsky, just five years before he began his diary, wrote in The History of the Russian Revolution,

> The most indubitable feature of a revolution is the direct interference of the masses in historic events....At those crucial moments when the old order becomes no longer endurable to the masses, they break over the barriers excluding them from the political arena, sweep aside their traditional representatives, and create by their own interference the initial groundwork for a new regime.[77]

In spite of all of this, Trotsky, in his dairy, seems to have discarded Marx, Lenin, and even his old opinions on the role of the individual in history. After expressing his opinion that his present work on the Fourth International was the most important of his life, he clarified that statement by returning to another significant part of his life, the revolution. "Had I not been present in 1917 in Petersburg, the October Revolution would still have taken place-*on the condition that Lenin was present and in command.*"[78] This statement by itself contradicts what he had written in The History of the Russian Revolution five years before. In

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[77] Leon Trotsky, The History of the Russian Revolution, (Ann Arbor, Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 1961), xvii.

[78] Trotsky, Trotsky's Diary in Exile, 1935, 46.

addition, later in that same entry, he wrote:

> Thus I cannot speak of the 'indispensability of my work, even about the period from 1917 to 1921. But now my work is 'indispensable' in the full sense of the word. There is no arrogance in this claim at all. The collapse of the two Internationals has posed a problem which none of the leaders of these Internationals is at all equipped to solve.[79]

Apparently, Trotsky felt that his individual presence would make or break the Fourth International. While this could not necessarily be considered arrogant coming from an average person, coming from a Marxist, this is the height of arrogance. To Marxists, and to Trotsky five years before, individuals don't make revolutions, masses do. Yet another question arises with regard to this part of his diary. Putting aside his belief in his "indispensability" for the moment, did Trotsky really believe that his work in 1935 with the Fourth International was more important than what he had achieved from 1917 to 1921? This in itself is faulty thinking. In 1917 he had been instrumental (although perhaps not indispensable) in seizing for his party the largest nation on the globe with the third highest population. He had then taken a tired, rag-tag army of poor peasants combined with a large number of officers from the defeated regime's military and defeated a myriad of dedicated opponents! In 1935, he was working for a Fourth International with fewer than 1000 adherents worldwide, and most of those people were so unsure about a new International

[79] Ibid., 46-47.

that they were only willing to call themselves the International Communist League. In 1917, he helped to change the world; by 1935, the world had changed him. In 1917, his analytical abilities were lucid in nearly all areas; by 1935, he had allowed emotions to intrude into his strategic ideological conclusions. In 1917, he mildly respected Stalin; by 1935, the raw hate that he felt for Stalin was unprecedented in his own life.

The question remains, however, how could a resentment against Stalin cause Trotsky to reevaluate radically the importance of both his role, as compared to the masses, in 1917 and exaggerate the importance of his work in 1935? Perhaps Trotsky was simply trying to contrast what he had been able to achieve in 1917, not with what the masses contributed, but with what Stalin gave to the revolution. By saying that either he or Lenin could have facilitated events, he leaves out one revolutionary figure- a figure whose role had been greatly exaggerated, Stalin. Trotsky had often asserted that Stalin's role in the revolution was minor.[80] However, the diary entry was the first time he was so intent on emphasizing his role, perhaps as compared to Stalin's, that he was willing to reduce the role of the masses. It is likely that Trotsky was not consciously reducing the role of the masses. After all, the contradiction is only apparent when compared to something he wrote five years before. However; a careful examination of both texts reveals a

[80] Trotsky, The Revolution Betrayed, 93.

definite change. Trotsky seemed to be emphasizing his role in 1917 as compared to Stalin. After all, Trotsky was writing about the impact of individuals on the revolution, not the impact of the masses. He seemed to leave one individual out, Stalin. To establish the emotional state that he was probably in as he wrote, it is important to note that the paragraphs before the ones in question are about Rakovsky's capitulation. It seems likely that Trotsky's emotional brooding about his old friend reminded him about his role in the revolution as compared to the man who Rakovsky had capitulated to, Joseph Stalin. Perhaps, it also got him to thinking about the glory of that period of his life, and he began to exaggerate the importance of his work for the Fourth International in order to comfort himself about glories to come. These glories inevitably involved Stalin's fall from grace in his homeland, the USSR.

In his biography of Trotsky, Isaac Deutscher wrote about Bronstein's emotional situation in this period. Deutscher concluded that Trotsky was depressed about his advancing age and even thought of suicide. "He was depressed. He brooded again over his advancing age and death....He began to think of suicide, and reflected that he should commit it if and when his physical strength gave out and he could no longer continue the struggle."[81] Trotsky comforted himself with thoughts of the Fourth International; however, Deutscher thought that his subject somehow felt that the new

[81] Deutscher, The Prophet Outcast, 284.

International was doomed from the start.

> He was now at his nadir. The ambitious plans and sanguine hopes with which he had left Turkey were in the doldrums. His great campaign against the Stalinist surrender to Hitler had brought him no political rewards. Stalinism was even exploiting this surrender to make fresh political capital: playing on the fear of Nazism, it ingratiated itself with the European left. Trotsky sensed, although he could not admit it even to himself, that the Fourth International was stillborn. He could neither escape his circumstances nor make peace with them. And so he found some solace in exalted reflections on his 'historic mission' in founding the Fourth International.[82]

Clearly, Trotsky's thinking was seriously troubled. To Deutscher, he was deluding himself regarding the Fourth International. In other words, his reasoning powers were so flawed, in strategic matters, that in spite of sensing that the Fourth International was a poorly thought out political move, he continued to dream of the possibilities that such a political maneuver might bring. Trotsky engaged in this flawed thinking purely for emotional reasons. He was contemplating the brutal pain of his life in 1935 and, for comfort, imagining a magnificent, yet unrealistic, new International. He did so as a result of the intrigues, brutality, and thirst for vengeance of one man, Joseph Stalin.

At the beginning of May, 1935 Stalin succeeded in making Trotsky's life in France more difficult. An alliance was signed by the Daladier government with the Soviet Union. The agreement was officially nothing more than a nonaggression

[82] Ibid., 284-285.

pact.[83] However, by mid-May Stalin had announced "that he 'understands and fully approves' the French government's rearmament policy."[84] Trotsky began to believe that the French government's strict enforcement of the expulsion order would soon occur. His greatest fear was that Daladier would send him to a distant French colony. Also, Stalin's increasingly brutal verbal assaults against Trotsky as a result of the Kirov affair forced the founder of the Red Army to fear a possible attack from a local Stalinist. The feeling of security that he had experienced living isolated in Domesne in the Alps was starting to wane.[85]

This was the context in which Trotsky pleaded for asylum in Norway. His request was granted because the Norwegian Labor Party had recently won the national elections, and this particular party was unique. It had been a part of the Third International, but had severed those ties in 1923. However, the party had never made advances towards the Second International. It seemed as if the Norwegian Labor Party and Leon Trotsky were made for each other. Although events would prove otherwise, a Social Democratic Party without an international and an individual, for intents and purposes, without an international looked like a perfect fit. For this reason, Trotsky was hopeful that his

83 Ibid., 289.

84 Writings of Leon Trotsky [1934-35], 16.

85 Deutscher, The Prophet Outcast, 289-290.

entreaties would bear fruit. His conduit in Norway was a German named Walter Held. After Held approached Olav Schoffle, who had some pull in these matters in Oslo, the deal was done. After some delay, Leon Trotsky was granted asylum by the Norwegian government. However, certain Norwegian officials did not like the idea of having the "ogre of Europe" looming within their borders. The process was held up in red tape. Since the French government did not receive confirmation of Norway's acceptance, they could not give Trotsky a visa. The French authorities felt that they were being fooled with, so they immediately insisted that Trotsky leave without delay. With no place to go, he was stuck, again. Upon sending a message to Oslo pleading for what he had been promised, the Norwegians insisted that Trotsky obtain a French reentry permit before they could then issue a legal visa. This was not possible. Trotsky waited in the house of a local doctor and brooded about his new predicament. After several more requests sent to Oslo, and with the help of Schoffle, the deadlock broke, and Trotsky was off to Norway within the week.[86]

As if the Soviet/ French nonaggression pact was not troubling enough for Trotsky, another event occurred in May, 1935 that disturbed him. The foundation was laid for an expansion of the united front of the SFIO and the French CP to include the Radical Party, which eventually became the Popular Front (also called the People's Front). Local

[86] Ibid., 290.

elections had been held and both the SFIO and the French CP had achieved significant increases in votes. Many leaders of the Radical Party were impressed and proposed a broad political amalgamation that would allow the Second International, the Third International and the Radicals to combine and face the fascists together.[87] The French Radical Party (also called the Radical Socialist Party) was often accused of being neither radical nor socialist. It served as the most powerful centrist, bourgeois, capitalist party in France between World War One and World War Two.[88] Although the formal creation of the Popular Front was months away, a preliminary meeting occurred in a stadium in Paris on July 4th, 1935. There, thousands of members of the SFIO, the Radical Party, and the French CP, including their leadership (Blum, Daladier, and Thorez), took an oath:

> We pledge to remain united to defend democracy, to disarm and dissolve seditious leagues, to place our freedoms out of the reach of fascism. We swear, on this day which reincarnates the first victory of the Republic, to defend the democratic freedoms conquered by the people of France, to give bread to the workers, work to the young, and to the world a great and human peace.[89]

In spite of the oath, a program had to be agreed upon. In order to pacify the leader of the centrist Radicals, Daladier, the leader of the French Communists, Thorez,

87 Writings of Leon Trotsky [1934-35], 16.

88 Ibid., 331.

89 Jean Lacouture, Leon Blum, (New York: Holmes & Meier Publishers, Inc., 1982), 222-223.

removed specific references to nationalizations. In the common program "...there remained only one nationalization-the arms industry-the reform of the credit system, and particularly the Banque de France,and the creation of a Grain Office."[90] In the first round of elections, each party would have their own candidates and program. The common program would only surface in the second round, when the individual who had done the best in the first round would arise as the candidate of the Popular Front as a whole.[91] By August, the Comintern had agreed to accept the program during its Seventh World Congress.[92] By October, at the Nantes congress, the Popular Front officially came into being.[93]

By the time the Popular Front had formed, Trotsky was well settled in Norway. Initially, the Norwegians were quick to restrict his movements and actions. They were determined to place him in a residence a good distance from Oslo, and they insisted that he agree not to engage in political activity.[94] In spite of the restrictions, the government seemed positively beside itself with joy regarding the arrival of the "ogre of Europe." The editors of the ruling

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90 Ibid., p.224.

91 Ibid.

92 Writings of Leon Trotsky [1934-35], 16.

93 Lacouture, Leon Blum, 224.

94 Deutscher, The Prophet Outcast, 292.

Labor Party's newspaper, Arbeiderbladet, wrote:

> The working class of this country and all right thinking and unprejudiced people will be delighted with the government's decision [to grant Trotsky asylum in Norway]. The right of asylum must not be a dead letter but a reality. The Norwegian people feel... honored by Trotsky's presence in their country.[95]

The government would learn to regret those words, but, for the moment, Trotsky was at ease and comfortable living in the home of a Socialist editor, Konrad Knudsen.[96]

Two months after his arrival in Norway and two months before the official forming of the Popular Front, Trotsky wrote a piece in which he expressed his opinions about the then just developing new political amalgamation in France. The article, first published in the Biulleten Oppozitsii in December of 1935, was entitled "The Comintern's Liquidation Congress" and was also about the Seventh World Congress of the Comintern which was held from July 25th to August 20th in Moscow.[97] The piece is an excellent example of Trotsky's emotionally affected strategic skills. Since the Seventh Congress of the Comintern was a strategic organ, in that it was international, Trotsky's conclusions about the changes in broader issues before the Comintern were strategic. Since his discussion of the Popular Front was in relation to Comintern policy, that too becomes a strategic issue in this

95 Ibid., 293.

96 Ibid.

97 Writings of Leon Trotsky [1934-35], 16, 84, 519.

context. Essentially, when Trotsky argued that the nature of the Popular Front will lead to the total eradication of the Comintern's independence, he invoked Lenin without justification; he failed to discuss an example of Lenin's actions that contradicted his thesis; he contradicted himself, and he engaged in the logical fallacy of slippery slope.

The first paragraph presents his thesis.

> The Seventh Congress of the Comintern, which at the writing of these lines still had not finished its work, will sooner or later go down in history as the liquidation congress. Even if all its participants do not today recognize the fact, they are all-with that obligatory unanimity which in general has characterized the Third International over recent years-busy in practice with the liquidation of the program, principles, and tactical methods established by Lenin, and are preparing the complete abolition of the Comintern as an independent organization.[98]

Trotsky went on to argue that by allowing themselves to be associated with the bourgeois Radical Party in a Popular Front, by generally nudging closer to the center/left and center political forces in France, and by abandoning the ultimate goal of revolution in order to form a bloc against fascism, the Comintern was sowing the seeds for its inevitable crippling and eventual destruction. He also related how the delegates to the congress had proclaimed the primary threat to be fascism and had, therefore, discarded the notion that international capitalism was the real enemy.

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[98] Writings of Leon Trotsky [1935-36], ed. George Breitman and Sarah Lovell, vol. 8 (New York: Pathfinder Press, Inc., 1972), 84.

He argued that to support temporarily a bourgeois party necessarily means a complete support for liberal democracy and a complete repudiation of revolution. Trotsky mostly used the teachings of Lenin as a foundation for his arguments. According to Trotsky, Lenin never discarded the importance of the petty bourgeoisie, but demanded that the lower middle classes be led by the revolutionary proletariat. Since the Popular Front placed the three parties on equal footing, this allowed the bourgeois party, the Radicals, a degree of power that was inconsistent with Leninism.[99]

The first problem with this is that Trotsky assumed that Lenin's teachings apply to the situation. Lenin had died more than ten years before the creation of the Popular Front. How could the teachings of a man long dead necessarily apply to a situation at hand? The problem is that Trotsky assumed that the Lenin model will work. He automatically attempted to apply to a strategic situation, as he had done many times since 1933, the experiences of a more significant time for him, the revolution, to a period of frustration and despair, France in 1935. The teachings of Lenin might very well have shed some light on the world revolutionary situation in 1935, but Trotsky needed to prove that the analogy was effective, that what Lenin said had some validity to France and the Comintern in 1935. He just assumed that Lenin's teachings are applicable and went on from there. Even pretending, for the moment, that Lenin's

[99] Ibid., 84-94.

ideas could apply, Trotsky himself pointed out, in his History of the Russian Revolution, at least one major instance when Lenin advocated the union, on equal footing, of the Bolsheviks and the Socialist Revolutionaries in 1917 against the Kornilov crisis.[100] The one party, in France in 1935, that was analogous, petty bourgeois- center left, to the Socialist Revolutionaries in Russia in 1917 was the Radicals. Therefore, Lenin himself advocated an amalgamation between far left, left and center left parties on equal grounds back in 1917.

In addition, when contemplating this argument, the question arises: How is this policy different from the united front that Trotsky supported for Germany two years earlier? He seemed to contradict himself. Although the German situation was somewhat different, the basic need for a larger and more powerful political bloc against the rising tide of fascism was the same. The French middle classes of 1935 were not nearly as prone to extreme political moves as the German middle classes of 1933, so the fascist danger was not as immediate. However, it was sufficient to justify short term political amalgamations that in no way necessarily meant the wholesale discarding of the long term revolutionary program. The danger of Fascism justified the adoption of a temporary conciliatory attitude between extreme left, far left, and center left parties. This did not mean that if the amalgamation was not eventually severed, the revolutionary

[100] Trotsky, The History of the Russian Revolution, 237-240.

program might not eventually be discarded. Simply associating in the Popular Front was not enough to bring about that outcome. From the perspective of 1935, the front could have been seen as a short term maneuver for the defense against fascism. If, once the danger had passed, the Comintern had returned to a less conciliatory policy, then there would be no danger to the revolutionary movement. Trotsky was unable to see this. He was locked into the notion that a short slip towards liberal bourgeois politics meant that the leaders at the Seventh Congress were "preparing the complete abolition of the Comintern as an independent organization." This is the informal logical fallacy of slippery slope. A small move in a certain direction does not mean that future events will lead to the ultimate, extreme end that that slight move might suggest. Clearly, this piece stands out as an example of Trotsky's flawed strategic thinking.

Also, the errors were probably emotionally motivated. He assumed that Lenin's teachings would apply to the situation at hand without ever pointing out precisely how the two situations were analogous. Invoking Lenin was often an emotional exercise for Trotsky, considering the degree to which, especially after 1933, Stalin had attempted to prove that Lenin had some contempt for Trotsky. Trotsky then proceeded to leave out a period that was analogous, the Kornilov situation, from his analysis because it did not fit his conclusions. In reference to what Lenin did or said,

Trotsky often misquoted and left out facts in order, once again, to firmly establish a completely positive relationship between Lenin and Trotsky, or their respective ideas, that did not necessarily always exist. His point in the piece was to lambaste the Comintern for preparing its own demise, but that conclusion was based on fallacious reasoning. Trotsky frequently exaggerated the crimes of the Comintern in order indirectly to attack Stalin. All of these emotional reasoning errors had one thing in common; the object of the negative emotions was Joseph Stalin.

The strange gulf between Trotsky's tactical and strategic skills is revealed when one contrasts "The Comintern's Liquidation Congress" with a letter that he wrote to the editors of Action Socialiste Revolutionaire, published in the Biulleten Oppozitsii in September of 1935.[101] In spite of the fact that the two pieces were written on the same day, August 3rd, the letter shows a remarkable ability to analyze the complex tactical program of the paper just as the above article shows a remarkable lack of effective strategic analysis.[102]

The letter was Trotsky's attempt to criticize the recently published program of Action Socialiste Revolutionaire. The main point of Trotsky's critique was in the first paragraph. "But despite the absolutely correct

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[101] Writings of Leon Trotsky [1935-36], 520.

[102] Ibid., 84, 95.

general thrust of your program, the text also contains some imprecise formulations, which make you vulnerable to your enemies,... and which can even lead to deviations within your own tendency."[103] The letter went on to clearly point out each of the problem areas in their program. To begin with, in a fine piece of Marxist analysis, Trotsky pointed out the problems associated with the newspaper's creation of an artificial distinction between economic power and political power on the national level.

> 'Economic power,' as such, does not exist. There is *property*, different forms of property. State power provides the opportunity to retain or, on the contrary, to abolish capitalist property, depending on whether state power belongs to the bourgeoisie or to the proletariat.[104]

From a Marxist standpoint, this was an accurate piece of reasoning. According to Marx, whoever owns the means of production, or the property, has the power of the state behind them. In a capitalist system, the state serves the role of protector of the property owners from the non-property owners. The power of the state and the ownership of property go hand in hand. Trotsky rebuked the program of the Action Socialiste Revolutionaire when it suggested that the occupation of the Charleroi mines by the miners in Italy "'thus show the way which will result in the expropriation of

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[103] Ibid., 95.

[104] Ibid., 95-96.

the capitalist bourgeoisie."[105] He wrote, "This is not correct. The occupation of factories and mines is in no way sufficient. If state power remains in the hands of the bourgeois class, the occupiers will inevitably be evicted and crushed."[106] Clearly, Trotsky's analysis of this situation was correct. While the miners did occupy the mines, the capitalists still owned the mines, the means of production as far as the state was concerned, so the state was bound to carry out its primary duty and evict the miners. The state was duty bound to protect the owners of the means of production from the non-owners.

Trotsky went on to quote the program, "'By the conquest of power, we mean... the seizure of the banks, the factories , the land,...'"[107] According to Trotsky this segment of their program indicated a lack of understanding of the nature of state power from a Marxist standpoint. Trotsky wrote, "By the conquest of power is meant...the total takeover of the state. But the conquered state must act as an instrument for the transformation of property, beginning with the expropriation of the capitalists."[108] With the state still at the disposal of the capitalists, the means of production, banks and factories, will quickly return to those that the

[105] Ibid., 96.

[106] Ibid.

[107] Ibid.

[108] Ibid.

state recognizes as the rightful owners, the capitalists. Trotsky was correct to argue that the state must be possessed by the workers and, therefore, must recognize the proletarians as the rightful owners before the conquest of power could be achieved. This small piece is a powerful example of Trotsky's tactical analytical skills. Nowhere did he attempt to force a poorly thought out analogy onto the case to argue his point. Nowhere did he engage in wishful thinking or attempt to alter the facts to fit his argument. He took the program of the Action Socialiste Revolutionaire as it stood and engages in effective Marxist analysis to show where the tactical program of the paper was wanting. His tactical skills here were remarkably lucid when compared to the strategic failures in reasoning in "The Comintern's Liquidation Congress."

While Trotsky was writing the above pieces, problems that had been brewing for some time for the ICL in the SFIO came to a head. Within the SFIO the ICL was called the Bolshevik-Leninist Group (GBL). In August of 1935, the SFIO leadership excommunicated the GBL paper, La Verite, and expelled the adult Trotskyists from the French Socialist Party. However, troubles for the GBL had begun months before. Trotsky wrote many articles and letters about these difficulties which were later published in a book entitled The Crisis of the French Section [1935-36].[109]

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[109] Leon Trotsky, The Crisis of the French Section [1935-36], (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1977), 9.

On June 10th, 1935, Trotsky wrote a letter to the International Secretariat of the ICL outlining what had been accomplished within the SFIO and arguing that nothing more positive could come about from the ICL's continued existence in the SFIO.[110] He, therefore, recommended that the ICL leave the SFIO. In this piece, Trotsky indicated that the ICL had been strengthened as an organization as a result of its activity within the SFIO. "The correctness of our entry into the SFIO is now proved by objective facts. Our section, thanks to the entry, has changed from a propaganda group into a revolutionary factor of the first order."[111] By characterizing the ICL as just a propaganda group before the entry and as a significant force after, Trotsky emphasized how close the organization had come to non-existence and how instrumental the tactical move of entering the SFIO was to ensuring the continued political life of the ICL. Indeed, the entry had helped the ICL significantly. In early 1934, the ICL numbered just about one hundred members.[112] In June of 1935, membership had jumped to three hundred.[113] It is questionable whether that figure made the ICL "a revolutionary factor of the first order." However, there is no doubt that the continuation of the ICL was ensured after

[110] Writings of Leon Trotsky [1934-35], 315.

[111] Ibid.

[112] Carmichael, Trotsky, 408.

[113] Trotsky, The Crisis of the French Section [1935-36], 23.

it had been in the SFIO for a while.

The arguments that Trotsky utilized to urge for a break between the SFIO and ICL were centered around the nature, objectives, and program of the French Socialists. According to Trotsky, "Not only is the SFIO not a revolutionary party but it is not even a proletarian party. It is petty bourgeois, not only in its policies but also in its social composition."[114] Trotsky went on to say how restricted the possibilities are within the SFIO. In this section, he expressed an interesting opinion regarding the existence of genuine workers within the French CP as compared to the French Socialist Party.

> This party [SFIO] opened to us certain possibilities, and it was correct to have formulated and utilized them. But these possibilities are limited. The Mulhouse Congress, together with the repercussions that will follow it, should more or less materially limit these possibilities. The prestige gained by the Bolshevik-Leninist Group must transform itself by flooding light upon the workers. But the workers are primarily outside of the SP: in the CP, in the trade-union organizations and among the unorganized. The Bolshevik-Leninist Group *must know how to effect a new turn,* which is the logical development of the previous stage.[115]

Clearly, Trotsky admitted that the SFIO is limited because it lacks access to the workers, and he went on to point out that the workers can be accessed through the French Communist Party. This section is very indicative of the dichotomy

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[114] Writings of Leon Trotsky [1934-35], 317.

[115] Ibid.

between Trotsky's strategic and tactical abilities. Since the SFIO was not an effective means to access the workers, then it could only have effectively served as a temporary respite where the ICL could increase its membership and ensure its continued viability in the short term. In other words, the turn into the SFIO was a tactical maneuver of the first order. However, after reading the above passage, the question arises: Why did Trotsky leave the Communist Party in the first place if he knew that the workers could be effectively accessed through that association? The presence of workers in CP organizations hadn't really changed since 1933, when he had advocated a break with the Comintern. He knew that the French CP contained many workers in 1933 as well as in 1935. Perhaps the failure of his Fourth International policy was beginning to dawn on him. Certainly, with this evidence in mind, he must have realized that much trouble could have been prevented if he had simply stayed in the Third International.

This piece emphasizes the fact that the original entry was an excellent tactical tactical move made necessary by a poorly thought out strategic maneuver, leaving the Third International. Since entering the SFIO allowed for an increase in ICL membership and ensured the continued existence of the Trotskyist group but failed to allow the ICL to access any genuine workers groups, it was sound short term tactical advice. Yet, simply staying in the Comintern would have given the Trotskyists direct access to workers and would

have drawn recruits from a party that was closer ideologically to the ICL.

Additionally, Trotsky's advice to move out of the SFIO was a valid tactical move made necessary by poor strategy. The entry had served its purpose well. An increase in membership meant that the ICL's existence was no longer in danger, and since any further time in the SFIO might hamper the ICL's program, a more independent course was the best move. The shift into the SFIO had succeeding in doing all that it could do. However, if the Trotskyists had never left the Comintern in the first place, then, of course, the shift first into and then out of the SFIO would not have been needed. The ILO would have had contact with the masses in an ideologically similar party with numerous opportunities for recruitment. Once again, Trotsky's emotionally marred strategic abilities had to be made up for by his intact tactical skills.

Trotsky's advice was not the only thing that tended to push the ICL out of the SFIO at this time. A few days after the above piece was written, the SFIO indicated its readiness to expel the Bolshevik-Leninists. Leon Blum, the leader of the French Socialists, announced at the party's national congress in Mulhouse that his party would not hesitate to expel the GBL if the Trotskyists hampered the SFIO's desire to move closer to the Communists in the Popular Front. Because the Stalinists continued to lambaste the ICL both because of its original move away from the Third

International and the false implication of Trotsky in the Kirov affair, the SFIO felt that the GBL was an obstacle to positive relations within the Popular Front. The inevitable expulsions began by the end of July 1935.[116]

The convergence of both Trotsky's advice and the actions of the Mulhouse Congress brought about the crisis in the French section. Not everyone in the ICL wanted to leave the SFIO. Many members felt that certain political advantages could come about if they made concessions to Leon Blum in an effort to stay with the Socialists for the long term. Others thought that eventual expulsion was bound to occur, but that staying in the SFIO for as long as possible might allow for even more left-leaning Socialists to move to the ICL. Also, there were those who shifted from Trotsky's position to the other two tendencies and back again.[117] To Trotsky the word of the expulsions, occurring just a few weeks after his article advising the shift out of the SFIO, came as an opportunity. The ICL could move out of the SFIO and use the circumstances of the expulsions as material for a propaganda campaign to gain new recruits that could depict the ICL as a group of martyrs brutally maligned and expelled by the ruthless SFIO.[118] Those who opposed the shift out were prepared to appeal the expulsions. Pierre Frank, an influential member

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[116] Trotsky, The Crisis of the French Section [1935-36], 10.

[117] Ibid.

[118] Ibid., 28.

of the ICL, felt that any thought of moving out of the SFIO was "criminal."[119] The issue was complicated by the existence of a group led by Pierre Naville, which had been a part of the ICL, but entered the SFIO without becoming an official part of the GBL until later. Another group, led by Raymond Molinier, became a part of the GBL within the SFIO immediately, but wanted the GBL to have nothing to do with the Naville group. Molinier and Trotsky had clashed over this issue; Trotsky wanted to continue to cooperate with Naville. Molinier's faction wanted a long term relationship with the Socialists. Naville's faction, after officially entering the GBL, felt that remaining in the SFIO for as long as possible would allow for an even greater increase in membership before the inevitable expulsions occurred.[120] Those on Trotsky's side within the French section included Erin Wolf.[121]

Eventually, discussion brought about some level of agreement. The various developing factions all decided, for different reasons, that to appeal the expulsions was a sound move. Trotsky "favored [an appeal] as a tactic supplementing, but subordinate to, the orientation to a new party." Molinier felt that a genuine attempt to remain in the SFIO might secure the GBL's position among the Socialists

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[119] Ibid., 29.

[120] Ibid., 21-23.

[121] Ibid., 11.

for the indefinite future. Naville saw an appeal as an opportunity to forestall the expulsions of the GBL to help draw new recruits from the SFIO. There was some indication among the Socialists that an appeal would bear fruit. Also, the issue of to what degree to, or whether to, advocate the Fourth International intruded into the controversy. Those within the SFIO that were against the expulsions suggested to the GBL that they drop the idea of the Fourth International. To respond to this, Trotsky wrote the "Open Letter for the Fourth International" on August 7th. The Molinier and the Naville factions were both reluctant to advocate strongly the Fourth International during the conflict. In spite of this, the GBL Central Committee approved Trotsky's article for publication. In an attempt to placate the SFIO leadership, Molinier's faction was willing to abandon the official organ of the ICL, La Verite, and create a new paper with a broader perspective that would appeal to some Socialists. A few days later, on August 28th, the leadership of the SFIO prevented La Verite from being distributed to its members. Events were happening quickly; the GBL needed to take action. Naville wrote a resolution, that was adopted by the Central Committee, calling for extreme measures to prevent the expulsions, while preparing for a move out of the SFIO. All entreaties towards the Socialists seemed to fall on deaf ears. Several members of the GBL were confirmed for expulsion on September 19th. Then the national conference of the ICL took place in Paris. The Central Committee's

resolution to fight the expulsion and prepare a new course was approved. However, this agreement hid simmering conflicts. Molinier still felt that the GBL should remain in the SFIO for the long term. Naville was determined to draw out the expulsion process for as long as possible, while preparing for a new party. Trotsky was only willing to appeal to the SFIO, while making immediate preparations to leave. The crisis showed no signs of lifting. The ICL seemed to be unreconcilably split.[122]

Attempts were made to repair the split through the publication of a new mass paper. On November 3rd, Molineir announced to the Central Committee that he would begin to publish an organ for the GBL called La Commune that would appeal to a broad mass of workers and intellectuals. The Central Committee rejected the idea. In an attempt to heal the growing gap between factions, Naville argued that La Verite should become a mass paper for the GBL under Molnier's control. The Central Committee voted that idea down too. Finally, other members proposed a mass paper called Revolution that could be started by Molinier. The Central Committee, once again, said no. With all attempts to fix the split having made the problem worse, the Committee appointed a commission to find a compromise. The agreement was for a mass paper called Revolution with the last page entitled "La Commune." Things seemed to get better until Molinier openly defied the agreement. He plastered Paris with posters

[122] Ibid., 29-31.

announcing the publication of La Commune without mentioning Revolution. The Central Committee responded by saying that a paper with the name La Commune, and run by Molinier, would harm the GBL. They also removed some Molinierists from the editorial board of Revolution. Angered by this action, Molinier published La Commune anyway; the first issue came out on December 6th. With Molinier in open defiance of the party, the GBL leadership began to regret not having taken Trotsky's advice of a few months earlier not to make any more concessions to Molinier.[123]

In spite of the differences, events would heal the split, but new conflicts arose that would create factions that could not be reconciled. By January, the GBL leadership had finally made moves in the direction of a new party separate from the SFIO. In response, Molinier completely switched his attitude and tactics. He began to support the break and published a newspaper toward that end entitled La Quantrieme Internationale. On January 21st, his new paper announced its support for the "Open Letter for the Fourth International."[124] Reunification was also encouraged by events in the Spring of 1936. In the elections, the Popular Front had done very well. The first government of the amalgamation was led by, surprisingly, Leon Blum. Although the SFIO was a powerful force in the Popular Front, everyone

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123 Ibid., 87-91.

124 Ibid., 92.

was sure that the left's victory would produce a government led by the Radicals.[125] Before Blum could take office, the workers showed their strength. The largest series of strikes in the history of France occurred in May and June. Capitalists were consumed with fear over the events. Unfortunately for the ICL, their factional disputes did not allow them to have any influence on the dramatic occurrences of the day. With these facts in mind, the Central Committee of the ICL held a reunification conference on May 31st. They agreed to come together under the name the International Workers Party (POI). Eventually they agreed to drop both La Verite and La Commune and publish La Lutte ouvriere instead. The union, however, did not last long. Basic underlying disputes remained unresolved. The Central Committee had a fatalistic attitude about the reunification and personal conflicts constantly flared up. Within a few months, the split was back, forever. The brutality of the constant battle of factions within the ICL had almost completely negated the membership gains that had been the result of the shift into the SFIO in the first place. The French section never recovered from the tumultuous events of the middle 1930's.[126]

In the end, it was the conflict over the split itself that caused the reduction in membership for the ICL in 1936.

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[125] Lacouture, Leon Blum, 236.

[126] Trotsky, The Crisis of the French Section [1935-36], 135-139.

"The crisis led to a split in the French section and the split led to the loss of many new members and the estrangement of potential recruits."[127] Trotsky's advice to leave the SFIO was based on basically sound tactical reasoning. If the leadership of the GBL, both Molinier and Naville, had taken that advice from the start, most of the new recruits that had been drawn from the SFIO as a result of the union with the Socialists would never have left the GBL. The loss of membership, that effectively threatened the existence of the French section once again, came about because the leadership was not willing to unify behind Trotsky's well thought out tactical course and leave the SFIO when that relationship had afforded the ICL all that it was going to. If Trotsky hadn't recommended independence then, imagine how much more attached the Molinierists would have been to the SFIO and how much more difficult and divisive the exit would have been later. Also, Molinier might have had the opportunity to attract more members sympathetic to his ideas. The former left members of the SFIO who had shifted to the GBL section were confused by the conflicts and splits and felt that the factional disputes did not bode well for the future of the ICL, inside or outside of the SFIO. Many left the GBL because there was some discussion about leaving the SFIO and they wanted to remain as a faction in the SFIO. However, it seems likely that most of those who had been drawn from the SFIO to the GBL after the entry were willing

[127] Ibid., p.11.

to leave the SFIO for an independent ICL if the leadership had been unified behind such a decision.

In addition to doing what he could to deal with the crisis in the French section, in 1936 Trotsky was trying to finish a new book that seriously criticized Stalin and his policies entitled The Revolution Betrayed (see the chapter "Cain and Abel: Trotsky and Stalin" for analysis). Before he sent the book to its publisher on August 4th, his life in Norway had been comfortable and nearly problem free, but that would change. After finishing the The Revolution Betrayed, he took a vacation on a small island with his host in Norway, Konrad Knudsen. While isolated in the wilderness, a bombshell dropped from Moscow. Knudsen and Trotsky heard, over a primitive wireless set, that the Soviet government had accused Zinoviev, Kamenev, and fourteen others of terrorism, treason, collusion with the Gestapo and the attempted assassination of Joseph Stalin himself. The founder of the Red Army was implicated as the kingpin of the operations, who allegedly directed his counter revolutionary minions from Norway. Of all the accusations, Trotsky was most surprised by the attempt to connect him with the Nazi secret police. "'Terrorism? Terrorism?,' he kept on repeating. 'Well, I can still understand this charge. But Gestapo? Did they say Gestapo? Are you sure of this?'"[128]

After returning to civilization, Trotsky began the long campaign of refuting the charges against him. In his first

[128] Deutscher, The Prophet Outcast, 331.

statement to the press, he said, "'I emphatically assert that since I have been in Norway I have had no connection with the Soviet Union. I have not received here even a single letter from there, nor have I written to anyone either directly or through persons.'"[129] To Trotsky, the allegations were "'the greatest forgery in the world's political history.'"[130] In the process of attempting to characterize the charges as ridiculous, Trotsky was able to determine the real reason for this new chapter of Stalin's assaults against him. He knew that Stalin was simply trying to threaten Trotsky's life in Norway.[131]

As time passed, the accuracy of Trotsky's ideas about Stalin's motivations became clear. Apparently, Stalin had heard that The Revolution Betrayed, a brutal indictment against him, would soon be published. It is likely that Stalin's reaction to this news, and simply his hatred for Trotsky, precipitated the arrests and accusations of August 1936. By the end of August, the Soviet Ambassador insisted on Trotsky's immediate expulsion from Norway. The Ambassador's communique said, "'The Soviet Government wishes to state that the continued granting of asylum to Trotsky...will...impair friendly relations between the U.S.S.R. and Norway and will violate...rules governing

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[129] Ibid., 332.

[130] Ibid.

[131] Ibid.

international intercourse.'" The last part of the message sparked rumors throughout Oslo; merchants were afraid that by "international intercourse" the Soviets meant trade between the USSR and Norway. Capitalists all over Norway put enormous pressure on the Labor government, and the government buckled.[132]

Trotsky's fairly good existence in Norway ceased. In an effort to hide its real reasons for action against Trotsky, Oslo insisted that he had violated the terms of his entrance agreement, that he had failed to refrain from any political activity. Trotsky was confused; he assumed that he had been restrained only from intruding into Norwegian political activity. He had been very careful never to comment on politics in Norway. The government had clearly changed its tune in order to fit the circumstances. Two policemen arrived at the Knudsen household and ordered Trotsky to sign a document saying that he would not say or write anything regarding political questions in foreign countries. Trotsky could not sign. He had just been brutally and unjustifiably maligned before the world; he would have to answer the charges. The officers placed him under house arrest.[133]

The next few months were like a boxing match between Trotsky and the Labor Government. For each blow from Oslo that attempted to justify Trotsky's arrest for violating the

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[132] Ibid., 337-338.

[133] Ibid., 338-339.

terms of his asylum, "Lenin's cudgel" hit back with claims that he had never, and could never, agree to such conditions. Norway was in the same position France had been in; it could not expel a man to a world that refused to take him. Not all nations of the world, however, were unwilling to have the "ogre of Europe" in their borders. In December 1936, the Mexican government announced that it would accept Trotsky's entreaties for asylum. He left Europe, forever, On December 19, 1936.[134]

One of the ironic facts about Trotsky's stay in Norway was how obsessively he adhered to his asylum agreement, and how adamantly Oslo claimed that he hadn't. He wrote and said nothing about Norwegian politics. Indeed, most of what came from his pen and mouth had to do with that politically troubled nation to the south, France. Trotsky's prediction about France in "The League Faced With A Turn," of course, did not come true. France neither had its revolution nor lapsed into fascism (France was forced into fascism in 1940 as a result of Nazi invasion, but that was largely as a result of an outside force bringing fascism in, not fascism arising from within France). Trotsky was stuck on the German model and attempted to force that model onto the French situation. According to Deutscher, "He viewed the French scene through the same prism which he had viewed the German scene; yet the prism through which he had seen Hitler's advent so clearly blurred his view of the French

[134] Ibid., 339-354.

prospects."[135] In 1933, Germany was in a situation whereby it had to either go towards fascism or towards communist revolution. Trotsky realized this and masterly analyzed and predicted the phenomenon (see the chapter "The Prophet's Oyster: Trotsky and Germany"). However, France was different, and Trotsky could not see that the German model did not apply. He was able to see the German strategic situation so clearly, yet the French strategic situation seemed to baffle him. Trotsky saw that the German middle classes were in a condition of extreme distress and that the Fascists, with the approval of the big bourgeoisie, exploited that distress and created a mass movement with the petit bourgeoisie as a base. In France, the middle classes were not nearly so distressed and, therefore, were not inclined towards extreme measures from either the right or the left. Most peculiarly, however, is the fact that he was unable to see the possibility that the united front, and later the Popular Front, had done what he had hoped it could have achieved in Germany; it prevented the rise of fascism in France. Trotsky only predicted the possibility of the united front leading to full scale communist revolution; he failed to imagine that an amalgamation of left and center left parties could lead to a political stabilization, a movement towards neither extreme. How could his analytical skills in this realm have lapsed so quickly? The German and the French situations were different, but not so much so that just the

[135] Deutscher, The Prophet Outcast, 275-276.

context would explain Trotsky missing the mark so dramatically. In his previous analysis of China in the mid to late twenties, he had revealed an ability to recognize a powerful middle class, assisted by a united front between left and center parties, that tended to move in neither the far left nor the far right directions.[136] Therefore, it was not as if he simply did not recognize the possibility of the petit bourgeoisie moving in neither direction if the conditions were right. Also, it is not as if he tended to use a previous revolutionary situation as a model for any situation that might come after. The German situation was very different form the Russian situation in 1917, and he did not attempt to fit Germany in 1933 into the old Russian mold. Something else was affecting his logical skills.

Perhaps Trotsky was simply trying to emphasize Stalin's errors in Germany by trying to force the German model onto the French situation. As Trotsky contemplated the French strategic context the failures of the Comintern in Germany possibly arose in his mind. Then, maybe, he would begin to think about Stalin and all of the hardships that he was forced to suffer through because of the General Secretary. This emotional context, perhaps, impacted Trotsky's ability to analyze properly the French problem. Therefore, in an attempt to make Stalin's Comintern look bad, Trotsky tried to make the French situation look as much like the scene of a past failure for the Third International, Germany in 1933.

136 Writings of Leon Trotsky [1929], 274-275.

Thus, he ideologically shaped the conditions in France in 1934 to match the conditions in Germany a year earlier.

So much had changed in Trotsky's general attitude and mood between 1933 and 1936. By the time he left for Mexico, he had suffered innumerable agonies at the hands of Joseph Stalin. He had buried one daughter, and seen a good friend, Rakovsky, give in to his enemy. He had been shuttled from Turkey to France to Norway and suffered numerous bouts of poor health. He had brooded over the tiny and troubled International Communist League that he hoped could blossom into a Fourth International to save the world and his personal honor. He had been falsely accused of numerous and horrendous crimes against the state that he had helped to create. He had suffered over the arrest of his young son. All of this pain coalesced in his heart and was focused out back towards one man, Joseph Stalin. That emotional cauldron seriously affected how he saw the world. When analyzing situations that involved the General Secretary, he often would try to undermine Stalin either directly or indirectly by attempting to apply to the situations an analogy from the past that did not fit. Although his tactical analytical skills were untouched, he would never regain his ability for sound strategic political reasoning in any matter pertaining to Stalin.

VI. The Dionysian Revolutionary: Trotsky and America

> We know now that whenever a group has been deeply touched by Dionysiac emotions,...[this] results in indifference, or even hostility, towards political instinct.- Friedrich Nietzsche, The Birth of Tragedy

As Trotsky and his wife shifted their residence from Norway to Mexico, the center of the primary motive force for the Fourth International and, consequently, the most significant concern of Trotsky's mind moved across the Atlantic too. With sympathizers filling graves and gulags in the Soviet Union, with Germany enmeshed in fascism and the French section consumed with factional conflicts, the only significant Trotskyist movement left was in the United States.[1] Also, to a movement that relied upon the guidance of one man, Trotsky's physical presence so far from Europe and so close to America helped to make the Western Hemisphere the new center of the International Communist League.

There also occurred in this period both the high point and the low point of the peculiar and checkered birthing process for the Fourth International. The high point was when the delegates from various national sections of the ICL met in Paris and finally founded the new Communist organization.[2] The low point was when the American section

[1] Deutscher, The Prophet Outcast, 420.

[2] Ibid.

(the Socialist Workers Party or SWP), by far the largest, lapsed into a frenzy of conflict. Some members accosted the SWP leadership, the Soviet Union, Trotsky, Trotskyism, the Fourth International and dialectical materialism. The feud ended with a few repudiating Marxism itself.[3] Intertwined with this was Trotsky's increasingly affected powers of strategic analysis. In Mexico, events brought the full force of his emotional problems to the fore. Consequently, Trotsky's strategic powers were completely bogged down in his growing resentment against Stalin. Trotsky had become less dialectically minded and more Dionysiacally minded. In spite of this, his ability to understand tactical situations and struggles remained unaffected.

Events in Norway had spoiled the Trotskys' trust in governments that welcomed with open arms. Upon approaching Tampico harbor, both revolutionary and wife were reluctant to set foot on Mexican soil unless they were met by friends. They did not realize that in Mexico at this time they were surrounded by friends. Two American Trotskyists quickly showed themselves and allayed the pair's fears. The wife of Trotsky's host, revolutionary artist Diego Rivera, was on the dock as well. Trotsky had been admitted as a result of "a sense of revolutionary solidarity" on the part of the Mexican President Lazaro Cardenas. The "ogre of Europe" was to be the guest of the government. However, all quarters were not fond of what the president had done. Among Mexican citizens,

[3] Ibid., 471-477.

the typical political dichotomy formed. Those on the right feared Trotsky for being the foreman of the Russia Revolution; those on the left feared Trotsky for being the demolisher of the Russian Revolution.[4]

After a short trip in the Presidential train, Trotsky and his wife settled into one of Rivera's houses in a suburb of Mexico city called Coyoacan. The painter and the revolutionary had a positive relationship for the first few years. They admired and needed each other. Trotsky enjoyed Rivera's painting, and Rivera was enthusiastic about Trotsky's political activities, both past and present. The painter needed a strong political presence to strengthen his less than clear theoretical understanding, and the revolutionary needed a place to live.[5]

As man and wife were accustoming themselves to their new surroundings, a new and even more brutal trial was just starting in the Soviet Union. This time, Trotsky was accused of crimes that were beyond heinous; they were positively inhuman. According to the record, the founder of the Red Army had been conspiring with both Hitler and the Emperor of Japan to break up the USSR, to poison masses of Russian workers, to sabotage Soviet industry and infrastructure, to assassinate Stalin, and to generally destroy the first workers' state. As before, Trotsky worked feverishly to

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[4] Ibid., 356-357.

[5] Ibid., 358-360.

reveal the charges for what they really were, ridiculous. He pointed out inconsistencies in the testimony of the defendants and attempted to solicit an answer from the prosecution as to how the incongruities could be explained. One defendant, Pyatakov, claimed to have traveled by plane to meet Trotsky in Norway in December, 1935. The Oslo Airport confirmed that no such landing occurred. When Trotsky pointed out this fact to the prosecution, there was no response. Of course, since the trials themselves were mammoth lies, Stalin's legal system could not explain all of the inevitable problems in detail that would arise. The only evidence was the forced confessions of the defendants. They lied in order to sustain their lives in an exceedingly hostile milieu.[6]

Of course, Trotsky could not help being consumed with anger over this new mass of slander spewing from the his homeland. However, that anger was intensified by the involvement of his son, Leon Sedov (He took his mother's last name for security reasons. This practice was legal in the Soviet Union.). The NKVD (the Soviet secret police, the organization that replaced the GPU) had always considered the son to be a part of the father, but, this time, they seemed to pursue Sedov with unprecedented tenacity. In this, Stalin's gangsters had help close to their target. For years, Trotsky's son had been assisted in his work for his father by a man who went by the name of Etienne. This man

[6] Ibid., 360-361.

played the part of mole for the NKVD masterfully. He was sure to be indispensable yet not too eager to please. The evidence seems to indicate that in order to secure the trust of both father and son, Etienne had organized a break-in of Trotsky's archives that had been released to the Dutch Institute for Social History in Paris in November of 1936 (the same archives that would end up at the Hoover institution at Stanford University, California). The NKVD was to steal only minor items, while Etienne dutifully guarded the most important papers at his own home.[7] By early 1937, the NKVD seemed to be preparing to use their mole to facilitate the young Sedov's untimely demise.[8]

Trotsky insisted upon being extradited to the Soviet Union; he felt that such an action on the part of the Soviet government would allow him to present his case before a Mexican court of extradition. Stalin, of course, realized from the start that such a public forum would allow Trotsky to destroy thoroughly the prosecution's case. With no extradition forthcoming, Bronstein tried other means to present his side of events. He made a public request for a Commission of Inquiry that would allow him to prove his innocence to the world.[9]

Trotsky's desperate drive to prepare for the Commission

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[7] Ibid., 347-359.

[8] Ibid., 395-397.

[9] Ibid., 361-363.

of Inquiry reveals his emotional context at the time. He drove all those involved, particularly Sedov, mercilessly in order to present his case before the basically powerless, unofficial court. Trotsky alienated his only progeny, that remained alive and well, in order to pursue what many believed to be a useless endeavor. To those reasonable people in the west who were not somehow allied with Stalin, the charges were so clearly ridiculous that refutation before a commission might be giving Stalin too much credit. To the world's Stalinists, no quantity of evidence to the contrary could prove Trotsky innocent. Nevertheless, in an effort to release his seething anger in the proper direction, Trotsky immersed himself in his alibis for those accusations coming from Moscow, and insisted that his son do more than he was capable of doing towards that end. Young Sedov became exceedingly distressed as a result of his father's relentless drive and brutal criticisms.[10] He wrote to his father saying, "'I have had to carry out, part of the work which would otherwise have burdened yourself;...I thought that I could count on your support. Instead you are making me the butt and are telling all... about my "criminal carelessness"...'"[11] Referring to Sedov's acts as "criminal carelessness" was light compared to some of the other attacks

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[10] Ibid., 361-364.

[11] Lyova Sedov to Leon Trotsky, 8 March 1937, Transcript at the The Trotsky Archives, Houghton Library, Harvard University, quoted in Deutscher, The Prophet Outcast, 366.

that Trotsky meted out against his son at the time. At one point he said that "Lyova's [a diminutive of Leon] 'slovenliness bordered on treachery.'"[12] Trotsky was so consumed by his anger towards Stalin that he lashed out at a convenient target. He was so blinded by rage that he could not see how much damage he was doing to his son. This was all the more tragic since something, perhaps the NKVD, would soon strike Sedov down.

The Commission of Inquiry began preliminary hearings in Trotsky's study at Coyoacan on April 10th, 1937. The American philosopher J. Dewey presided over the hearings. In his opening statement he said, "'Our function, is to hear whatever testimony Mr. Trotsky may present to us, to cross-examine him, and to give the results of our investigation to the full Commission of which we are part...'" The questioning was intense and thorough. Political overtones intruded into the inquiry as some members of the commission implicated Trotsky for creating, in 1917, the atmosphere in the Soviet Union that led to Stalin's crimes.[13] In the end, however, reason triumphed, and on December of 1937 the Commission of Inquiry declared the founder of the Red Army

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[12] Leon Trotsky to Lyova Sedov, 1 and 15 February 1937, Transcripts at the The Trotsky Archives, Houghton Library, Harvard University, quoted in Deutscher, The Prophet Outcast, 364.

[13] The Case of Leon Trotsky: 411-417, quoted in Deutscher, The Prophet Outcast, 373-374.

not guilty of all crimes as presented in the Moscow trial.[14]

Two months after the Dewey commission released its findings, Trotsky had reason to seriously regret the way in which he had treated Sedov for the past few months. On February 16th, 1938 Lyova Sedov died in a hospital operated by Russian emigre doctors near Paris. He had entered the small clinic for appendicitis. The reasons that Sedov had for entering this particular place are difficult to understand. Why would someone who fears Russian agents go to a hospital run by Russian emigres? Probably, the NKVD's mole, Etienne, had some influence on the decision. They both discussed where Sedov should go, and Trotsky's son was in agony at the time. Perhaps, in his pain, Sedov took Etienne's bad advice out of trust for his friend. They agreed that he should check in under an assumed name as a French engineer. This too was puzzling. What if, in some delirium, Sedov lapsed into his native tongue? Surely the doctors would suspect something. Also, would not Russian doctors be able to tell when a fellow countryman was speaking French? At first all of these possible avenues of danger seemed to be benign. The operation went well, and Sedov was talking politics in heated arguments in a few days. However, a brutal complication of unknown origin befell Sedov. He was found wandering the halls confused, in agony and speaking in Russian. The next day, his surgeon was shocked at the condition of his patient. The doctor wondered if Sedov had

[14] Deutscher, The Prophet Outcast, 393.

not made a suicide attempt. His wife, Jeanne, told the doctor that she thought that the NKVD had poisoned him. Another operation was performed, but to no avail. Lyova Sedov died at the age of thirty-two.[15]

Trotsky's reaction to the death of his son was profound. For days after hearing the news, father and mother shut themselves up in their room at Coyoacan. They spoke to no one in in this period. Trotsky brought himself to rejoin the world after eight days of intense mourning. He had wept so frequently that his eyes were swollen, and he could not talk.[16]

Speculations as to how the young revolutionary died abounded. The inquest found nothing. The authorities claimed that he could not have been murdered. Doctors surmised that heart failure or intestinal occlusion was the cause.[17] However, to Sedov's friends and relatives the truth seemed obvious. The NKVD had found another victim.[18] In a letter to the Examining Magistrate of the Lower Court of the Department of the Seine, M. Pagenel, Trotsky lambasted the French police and medical authorities for failing in their investigations. Although Trotsky had no direct evidence to implicate Stalin, he blamed the General Secretary

[15] Ibid., 395-397.

[16] Ibid., 398.

[17] Ibid., 397.

[18] Ibid., 396-397.

nevertheless.

> The criminals will be exposed, Your Honor; the radius of the crime is far too great a number of people and interests often contradictory to each other have been drawn into it; the revelations have already begun, and they will disclose that the threads of a series of crimes lead to the GPU [NKVD] and, through the GPU [NKVD], directly to Stalin.[19]

Trotsky's indictment was not completely unfounded. After all, the NKVD and Stalin certainly had both the motive and opportunity to kill Sedov, and he did die suddenly after showing a profound recovery form his illness. However, Trotsky could not justifiably and without qualification state that it was Stalin who killed his son. The unequivocal nature of the above accusation seems to stem from the anger that had been growing and festering in Trotsky's heart for years. The death of Sedov brought this anger against Stalin to a climax.

How were Trotsky's analytical skills affected by this pinnacle of hate directed towards his nemesis? Trotsky was able to engage in tactical analysis that was just as lucid and valid as always. Nevertheless, when any strategic concern that involved Joseph Stalin arose and demanded Trotsky's understanding, he fell short of the standard that he had set for this type of analysis earlier in his career. Although there is no direct, irrefutable evidence that any resentment that the founder of the Red Army had towards the

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[19] Writings of Leon Trotsky [1937-38], ed. George Breitman and Sarah Lovell, vol. 10 (New York: Pathfinder Press, Inc., 1972), 390-391.

General Secretary was the cause of Trotsky's loss of strategic analytical skills, this seems to be the most plausible explanation for the quick decline, since 1933, in his political understanding of broader questions. The problems of analysis appear almost exclusively when an issue involved Stalin in some way. The loss of skills occurred during a time, early 1933, when Trotsky was suffering through great emotional pain caused by events for which he often blamed Stalin. His analysis of issues involving both Stalin and Comintern policy before 1933, such as the failings of Stalin's "third period" policy, are both valid and sound. It seems that the most likely explanation for the loss of strategic skills from 1933 through his exile in Mexico is that his increasing resentment towards Stalin marred those abilities. Trotsky's stay in Mexico was to show the full scale collapse of his understanding of broader issues that involved the General Secretary.

One of the areas of poor strategic political analysis that Trotsky continued to cling to tenaciously was his advocacy of the Fourth International. In September of 1938, he finally witnessed the creation of what he had been fighting for since 1933, the foundation conference of the new International. However, there really was not much to see. Perhaps the final proof of the failure of the Fourth International came about at its official birth. The conference was held in the home of Trotsky's French Lawyer, Alfred Rosmer, in a village outside Paris. Only twenty-one

delegates arrived to see the birth of the new political entity. These men represented the Trotskyists of eleven nations. Even a delegate for Russia was present; however, this man was none other than Etienne, who was later to prove to be an agent of Stalin and the possible murderer of Sedov. According to Trotsky himself, the Trotskyists in the Soviet Union were "'the strongest section of the Fourth International.'" They were, in fact, very small in number, brutally persecuted and represented at the conference by an agent of Stalin. The American Trotskyist Max Shachtman presided over the conference. His section stood for the largest group, but they numbered no more then eight-hundred in the United States. Most of the delegates were there for Trotskyist organizations that contained less than one-hundred members, some less than ten, in their home countries. The various Executives and the International Bureaus of the International Communist League had been unable to function for years, as a result of both lack of interest and Stalin's agents.[20]

Pierre Naville gave the group a progress report to argue that the time was ripe for the new International; nevertheless, many present could not help but see that the truth did not point in the direction that they were about to take. The representatives from Poland proclaimed that, "'The Polish section as a whole was opposed to the proclamation of the Fourth International.'" The Poles felt that to proclaim

[20] Deutscher, The Prophet Outcast, 420-422.

a new International at a time of decline for the world workers' movement was sheer madness. The Polish group represented the only significant, fully intact, Trotskyist organization that had a reasonably long history, as far back as Rosa Luxemburg, of subversive activities and Marxist thought. This very important group spoke out again and again for a rejection of the Fourth International at the conference. Of this conference Isaac Deutscher wrote, "Trotsky decided to 'found' the new International at a time when, as the Poles warned him, the act could make no impact." All things considered, the founding conference for the Fourth International made a very poor showing, yet this matter was the primary item of strategic concern occupying Trotsky's mind since 1933.[21]

Often when Trotsky contemplated the small number of persons throughout the globe who openly advocated the Fourth International, he inevitably engaged in false analogies to argue that the small size of the new International was of little significance. Perhaps the most common analogy that Trotsky used involved referring back to the old Bolshevik party before the Russian Revolution. Before 1917, the Bolsheviks were a small and not very influential part of the Second International. However, after the tumultuous events of October, what once had been a tiny party became the core of the Comintern, which would eventually challenge the Second

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21 Ibid., 421-423.

International in power and influence.[22] In 1933, when Trotsky was just starting to argue for a new International, he wrote a piece entitled "Success or Failure," in which he presented arguments in favor of a break with the Comintern. Trotsky wrote, "The Bolshevik Party was no stronger during the war [World War One] than the present Russian Left Opposition.... Nevertheless, the Bolsheviks...took a course towards the Third International from the very beginning of the war."[23] Here Trotsky attempted to apply the events of a situation from the past that ended positively for the movement to a situation that he was facing at the time. The only problem was that what happened to the Bolsheviks in 1917 did not have that much significance to the period between when Trotsky was just beginning to argue for the Fourth International up until that International came into being in 1938. Although he was right in saying that Lenin and the Bolsheviks "took a course towards the Third International" in 1914, he failed to mention that the Comintern was not founded until 1919, when the Bolsheviks had already seized power and were larger and more influential than the International Communist League ever was. When the actual break from the Second International occurred, the Bolsheviks were a force to be reckoned with.[24] It is interesting to note that the

[22] Warren B. Walsh, Russia and the Soviet Union (Ann Arbor, Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 1958), 351-409.

[23] Writings of Leon Trotsky [1933-34], 82.

[24] Walsh, Russia and the Soviet Union, 409.

period that he refers back to, 1914-1919, was one of great significance, power, and glory in his life. During the Russian Revolution, Trotsky's impact on events was much greater than Stalin's. Perhaps Trotsky was simply trying to underline the relative lack of influence of his nemesis by referring to a time when, as compared to 1933-1938, the tables were turned. Trotsky was a significant power behind the world workers' movement, and Stalin was the minor player.

In a letter that Trotsky wrote at the time of the founding of the Fourth International, in 1938, Trotsky used a different, but no more valid, analogy. The letter was to a comrade in Belgium, who apparently felt that instead of proclaiming the Fourth International they should simply call themselves the "movement for the Fourth International." Although we have no text of the letter that the Belgian wrote to Trotsky, we must conclude that he argued that the movement was too weak to start a new International. To this, Trotsky argued:

> I least of all am inclined to close my eyes to the fact that our International is still young and weak. But this is no reason for renouncing our name. In civilized societies a person carries one and the same name in childhood, in adulthood, and in old age, and this name merges with his individuality.[25]

Exactly how was this analogy supposed to work? An individual's name has almost nothing in common with the name of a social movement. A political organization can succeed

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[25] Writings of Leon Trotsky [1937-38], 345.

or fail depending on what it calls itself as it evolves with the events of the time, and its name must reflect what the group is for or about. A person's name usually does not reflect what they are for or about, and their personal success has very little to do with what they call themselves. This was the only argument that Trotsky presented in this letter to counter those who said that the following was too small and weak. It is interesting to note here that the Bolsheviks, before the founding of the Comintern in 1919, might have called themselves the movement for the Third International; that is exactly where they were politically from 1914 to 1919. If Trotsky was really inclined to follow in Lenin's steps, he would have embraced the name "the movement for the Fourth International." Yet his mind seemed to be too clouded with an emotional reaction to the pain that Stalin had brought him over the years for him to argue clearly for the new International.

If Trotsky's arguments for the Fourth International were marred by what he was feeling, then what evidence exists that insinuates an emotional motivation on Trotsky's part for advocating the final founding of the new International? On October 18, 1938, Trotsky wrote an article entitled "The Founding of the Fourth International," which was later published in the Socialist Appeal on November 5.[26] This piece contained several passages that suggest a possible

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[26] Writings of Leon Trotsky [1938-39], ed. George Breitman and Sarah Lovell, vol. 11 (New York: Pathfinder Press, Inc., 1972), 85, 384.

emotional influence for Trotsky's desire to see the birth of the political organization that he had been fighting for since 1933. Generally, Trotsky's purpose was to congratulate the American section on its ten-year anniversary, to celebrate the founding of the new International, to sketch a short history of the Bolshevik-Leninists in the United States, and to speak of the needs, duties, and significance of the new party. In the last few paragraphs of the article his writing was charged with emotional prose.[27] Trotsky referred to those who had fallen victim to Stalin's intrigues. "Our young International already knows many victims....With gratitude and love we remember them all in these moments. Their spirits continue to fight in our ranks."[28] He went on to speculate about the motives of their enemies and the reaction of the Trotskyists to Stalin's attacks.

> The hangmen think in their obtuseness and cynicism that it is possible to frighten us. They err! Under blows we become stronger. The bestial politics of Stalin are only politics of despair. It is possible to kill individual soldiers of our army, but not to frighten them. Friends, we will repeat again in this day of celebration...*it is not possible to frighten us.*[29]

The piece ends with an assessment of what Stalin had done with both the original Bolshevik party and the Soviet Union.

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27 Ibid., 85-86.

28 Ibid., 87.

29 Ibid.

In the last sentence, there is a prediction about the future of the Fourth International.

> Ten years were necessary for the Kremlin clique in order to strangle the Bolshevik Party and to transform the first workers' state into a sinister caricature. Ten years were necessary for the Third International in order to stamp into the mire their own program and to transform themselves into a stinking cadaver....Permit me to finish with a prediction: During the next ten years the program of the Fourth International will become the guide of millions and these revolutionary millions will know how to storm earth and heaven.[30]

Clearly, Trotsky's writing in this article shows an emotional context that cannot be denied. Is it a level headed, unemotional and objective assessment to call Stalin's politics "bestial" and "only the politics of despair?" Stalin may have been selfish, ruthless, and power hungry, but bestial? Many millions of workers and intellectuals inside and outside the Soviet Union still looked to Stalin and his politics with hope, not despair. Undoubtedly, from Trotsky's perspective, Stalin was like a beast and engaged in depressing political activities. Bronstein had suffered horribly as result of Stalin's political intrigues. However, this was an emotional response, not an objective, intelligent conclusion. Had the "Kremlin clique" strangled the Bolshevik party? One might argue that the Kremlin had led the party astray, made some decisions that where inconsistent with Leninism, and even killed many old Bolsheviks; however, the Bolshevik party remained intact. Was the USSR a "sinister

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30 Ibid.

caricature?" Earlier in The Revolution Betrayed (see the chapter "Cain and Abel: Trotsky and Stalin") and later during the conflict within the SWP, he defended the Soviet Union while assaulting Stalin. Calling the first workers' state a "sinister caricature" is inconsistent with his other remarks about the USSR. Finally, his prediction about the future was absolutely inaccurate. The Fourth International had little success let alone allow the Bolshevik-Leninists "to storm earth and heaven."

The cause of Trotsky's emotional state can be gleaned from his words about the "many victims" of the "young International." He might have been thinking about his recently departed son when he wrote those lines, and these thoughts may have triggered an emotional outburst. Trotsky was making no attempt at a realistic assessment in this article; his intent was simply to engage in an emotional diatribe against Stalin to release some of the tension of resentment that had built up over the years. Although there is no direct evidence that Trotsky's emotional milieu was the cause of his less than rational advocacy of the Fourth International, this article shows that he was in an agitated state of mind when he contemplated the new International- a state of mind brought about by what Stalin had done to the Bolshevik party, the USSR, the world workers' movement and, perhaps, his own son. This piece, combined with other previously mentioned articles, suggests that the state of Trotsky's feelings provides a possible explanation for the

failure of his strategic skills, particularly those involving Stalin, and that his marred understanding led to his support for a new International.

About one year before Trotsky wrote "The Founding of the Fourth International," a new assault from a different quarter began to emerge. In an effort to understand the foundations of Stalin's brutality, some American and European Trotskyists began to zero in on the destruction of the Kronstadt rebellion of 1921. Max Eastman, Trotsky's American translator, and Victor Serge, an old Bolshevik, began to criticize Trotsky's role in the events at Kronstadt. These two men, among others, questioned whether that was or was not the start of the violent suppression of dissent and democracy in the Soviet Union. These questions had a sort of cascade effect and led to a broader reexamination, by mostly American Trotskyists, of the validity of everything from the organization of the SWP to the strength of Trotsky's ideas and the basic principles of Marxism.[31]

Two months after the Kronstadt controversy arose, more problems surfaced for Trotsky at the founding conference of the Socialist Workers Party of America. Inklings of the controversy had been heard at about the time of the attacks against Trotsky for his part in Kronstadt. The conference provided two men, James Burnham and Joe Carter, the opportunity to voice their opinions to the entire mass of

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[31] Deutscher, The Prophet Outcast, 436-437.

American Trotskyists.[32] Previously, Burnham and Carter had questioned Trotsky's assessment, in The Revolution Betrayed and later writings, of the Soviet Union as a degenerated workers' state that must be defended unconditionally by the various members of the ICL. In a peculiar stretch of logic, Trotsky had separated Stalin's regime from the USSR itself. He felt that in spite of the brutal corruption of the occupiers of the Kremlin, the bureaucracy could not be considered a new ruling class, since it did not have any of the characteristics of such a class, such as ownership of the means of production. With the means of production still owned collectively by the workers, Trotsky claimed that the Soviet Union remained a workers' state. As such, the USSR must be defended against imperialist attack.[33] Burnham and Carter felt that to separate the Soviet Union from the bureaucracy was ridiculous. They argued that it was possible to have an exploiting class that, perhaps, did not officially own the means of production, but that controlled the means of production to such a degree that it was tantamount to ownership.[34]

At the founding conference of the SWP (December 31st, 1937 to January 1st, 1938), an important controversy was the

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32 Constance Ashton Myers, The Prophet's Army (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1977), 143-145.

33 Trotsky, The Revolution Betrayed, 248-254.

34 Myers, The Prophet's Army, 144-145.

question of the nature of the Soviet Union and, therefore, whether the USSR should be defended in case of attack. The influence of both Burnham and Carter led to the adoption of a compromise that was called the "Resolution on the Soviet Union." Having understood and accepted the validity of the argument that said that the USSR had lapsed into a period where a new exploiting class had arisen, the majority of members allowed that the bureaucracy "'...contain[ed] elements of a new,i.e., a capitalist class.'" Yet, they insisted that the Soviet Union should be unconditionally defended by the SWP if attacked by outside imperialist or fascists forces.[35]

These ideas were not new. The Workers' Opposition had expressed similar notions in Moscow in 1921.[36] Later, in the mid to late 30's, an ex-Trotskyist named Bruno Rizzi claimed that the de facto control, if not the actual ownership, of the means of production by the ruling party made the bureaucracy a new ruling class. In 1939, he presented his arguments in a book entitled La Bureaucratisation du Monde. Rizzi even argued that such a development was a historical stage through which economies naturally passed. The capitalist de jure ownership of property would slowly evolve into the de facto control of property by the "new exploiting class." To Rizzi this was progressive since the bureaucracy

[35] Declaration of Principles and Constitution of Socialist Workers Party: 25, quoted in Myers, The Prophet's Army, 146.

[36] Deutscher, The Prophet Outcast, 462.

did not have ownership of the means of production and had to pretend that they were ruling in the name of the masses. At least the means of production were by law controlled by the masses, if not in fact. Also, what Rizzi called "bureaucratic collectivism" was potentially more efficient than capitalism.[37]

The controversy about the nature of the Soviet Union, and the position of the SWP on the defense of the USSR, led to a organizational conflict that threatened the existence of the fledging American party. Trotsky's advice about the conflict reveals the dichotomy between his valid tactical political skills and his flawed strategic abilities at this time. The conflict was about the ability of persons adhering to minority positions to openly advocate and fight for their ideas even when the majority had spoken. Burnham and Carter also fought for a broader base of democratic control for the party that involved the taking of referendums on large issues. This kind of inner party direct democracy was opposed by the organizational system of the SWP at the time. The party was ruled by democratic centralism, which meant that when the majority had spoken, any minority must tow the line and cease all activity involving their minority ideas. Also, it can be argued that democratic centralism was more central and less democratic. Often the will of the "majority" was determined by the ruling circle. With little direct input from the party rank and file between

[37] Ibid., 463-464.

conferences, Burnham and Carter felt that decisions were made that the majority would have disagreed with.[38]

The crisis continued and deepened even after the conference for the founding of the Fourth International. In July 1939, Max Shachtman, the man who presided over the founding conference just nine months before, used a pre-convention party plenum to express some of his ideas on the organizational issue. Shachtman made two proposals; he expressed a general desire to see the influence of the centralized ruling circle of the party brought under some control. Towards that end, he proposed that younger members be allowed into positions of influence. At this time the national committee rallied around the chairman of the party, James P. Cannon, and rejected any proposals to check the power of the inner circle. In spite of the ruling, Shachtman read his ideas before the entire convention. Cannon was consumed with rage. He drummed up support from his part of the convention hall, and the proposal was shot down by the convention as a whole. The controversy was not put to rest, though.[39]

When Stalin signed a pact with Hitler in August of 1939, a new urgency was introduced into the debate on the defense of the USSR. By the time the Second World War broke out on September 1, Burnham had claimed that the new events meant

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[38] Myers, The Prophet's Army, 148-149.

[39] Ibid., 149-153.

that unconditional defense of the Soviet Union was counterrevolutionary. How could their party defend a nation that was in league with the fascists in the imperialist invasion and partitioning of Poland? Party members took sides on the issue. Many agreed that to defend what the USSR had become was treasonous to the world workers' movement. Others agreed with Cannon and Trotsky; the Soviet Union should be defended for what it was, a workers' state, not for the actions of the leaders of that state.[40]

Trotsky's separation of Stalin from the Soviet nation is an excellent example of his poorly thought out strategic conclusions. He first introduced this peculiar idea in The Revolution Betrayed (see the chapter "Cain and Abel: Trotsky and Stalin"). How was it possible to divorce completely the actions and nature of a country from those that had complete control of the state? Both the Nazi-Soviet pact and the outbreak of World War II made Trotsky's ideas increasingly troublesome. It seems that the founder of the Red Army was so consumed with hate for Stalin, yet so emotionally attached to the workers' state that he had helped to create, that he put himself into a quandary- a dilemma, however, that he did not perceive. His flawed reasoning on this issue helped to aggravate the split in the SWP. Undoubtedly, Trotsky's support of those who would defend the USSR unconditionally in the American section gave credence to an idea that had little logical validity. This caused members who normally would

[40] Ibid., 152-153.

have seen the inconsistencies in Trotsky's arguments to follow blindly his ideas because of the history behind him. Thus, the peculiar notion that the USSR should be defended without question in spite of its association with fascists seemed valid. If the founder of the Red Army had not supported the side of defense of the Soviet Union, then this idea might have quickly died, and the split in the SWP could have quickly healed.

Nevertheless, Trotsky's tactical advice regarding the issue of the defense of the USSR was surprisingly unemotional, valid and sound. In late 1939, a tactical controversy arose within the SWP about the use of referendums to settle the defense conflict. Although it involved a strategic issue, Trotsky's conclusions were tactical because the advice that he gave was about a matter of local concern and internal control of the American section. On October 21st, 1939, Trotsky wrote am article expressing his tactical advice regarding this issue. The piece was entitled "The Referendum and Democratic Centralism" and shows that Trotsky seemed to want to find some reasonable, logical, and prudent middle ground between the Burnham and Cannon.[41]

In an effort to provide some support to Cannon, he clearly rejected the referendum idea. Trotsky argued that a referendum would replace the significance of party conventions in making decisions. "Whoever recognizes

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[41] Leon Trotsky, In Defense of Marxism (New York: Pioneer Publishers, 1942), 33.

imperative mandates...denies the significance of conventions as the highest organ of the party. Instead of a convention it is sufficient to introduce a counting of local votes. The party as a centralized whole disappears."[42] In this Trotsky was correct. If the referendum idea were to take hold, then conventions would lose their significance and might even disappear. Conventions that draw many members from many locals were invaluable tools to maintaining unity in a small yet ideologically extreme and radical party. Without conventions, and conventions with real power, the unity of the party might have suffered. Trotsky also argued that the referendum would allow the less experienced locals to have more influence than they ought to. "By accepting a referendum the influence of the most advanced locals and most experienced and far-sighted comrades of the capital or industrial centers is substituted by the influence of the least experienced, backward sections, etc."[43] In a radical political organization that adhered to a complex philosophical system, Marxism, it was imperative that the notion of any kind a direct democracy be rejected. The less experienced elements would, in that case, have had too much influence based on their lack of time in the struggle and less than full understanding of the main philosophical tenets of the party. This, combined with weak conventions, might

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42 Ibid.

43 Ibid.

have caused some locals to drift philosophically from the party line; therefore, ideological unity would suffer. The SWP was small to begin with. The referendum might have sacrificed unity for direct democracy, which might have sounded the death knell for a party the size of the SWP.

In the last paragraph, Trotsky argued for democratic centralism and seemed to provide some support to the Burnham and Shachtman group.

> Naturally we are in favor of an all-sided examination and of voting upon every question by each party local, by each party cell. But at the same time every delegate chosen by a local must have the right to weigh all the arguments relating to the question in the convention and to vote as his political judgment demands of him. If he votes in the convention against the majority which delegated him, and if he is not able to convince his organization of his correctness after the convention, then the organization can subsequently deprive him of its political confidence.[44]

Trotsky seemed to be arguing for some method of alleviating the problem of too much power in the ruling circle. He wanted to maintain party unity, yet ensure party democratic centralism. He wanted the locals to have influence, but influence at the convention level, where party unity is maintained. Generally this was not an emotional or irrational series of arguments. Trotsky took into account all sides and created a level-headed, lucid and sound piece of tactical political reasoning.

What makes Trotsky's tactical advice on the referendum issue most interesting is the fact that it was a tactical

[44] Ibid., 33.

question that was so close to the major strategic controversy of the day. It seems that in Trotsky's mind, the question of using a referendum to clear up the conflict over the defense of the USSR was not really connected to Stalin directly, and, therefore, did not solicit the normal emotional response with its accompanying poor reasoning.

Eventually, the party rejected the referendum idea altogether, and, consequently, the split became worse. Burnham proposed that two party publications, Socialist Appeal and New International, present open discussions on both the defense of the USSR issue and the organizational issue. The national committee refused.[45] Burnham began to question the dialectic, saying that Hegel was "'the century-dead arch-muddler of human thought' whose dialectics had 'nothing to do with science' and whose 'vision of a block universe' was totalitarian."[46]

With assaults attacking Marxism, Trotsky began to write articles defending his long held political philosophy. These articles were later published in a book called In Defense of Marxism. Most of what he wrote provided little real defense of Marxism itself, but gave the reader a rehash of Trotsky's arguments, as presented in the Revolution Betrayed, about the need to defend the USSR while condemning Stalinism. He also lashed out emotionally and presents many ad hominem assaults

[45] Myers, The Prophet's Army, 154-155.

[46] James Burnham, "Science and Style," in In Defence of Marxism: 187-206, quoted in Myers, The Prophet's Army, 160.

against those who attacked the dialectic. "Burnham was 'an intellectual snob,' a 'strutting pedant,' one of the 'common swindlers in the field of politics.'"[47] This reaction contrasts interestingly with his unemotional remarks in "The Referendum and Democratic Centralism," which was also published in In Defense of Marxism. It seems that when the organizational issue got too close to Trotsky's cherished ideas, he lashed out brutally.

The split never healed. Trotsky continued to urge concessions and gave sound advice to the organizational question, but lapsed into an emotional frenzy on the broader political problems. By April 1940, both Burnham and Shachtman, with many members of their faction, were expelled from the SWP. Eventually, the party would split just about right in half. What had been a small political organization, about 800 members, shrunk to almost insignificance. The largest section of the Fourth International seemed mortally wounded.[48]

The conflict in the Socialist Workers' Party of America was the last great political conflict, in a life of many great conflicts, for Leon Trotsky. He handled the controversies and split as he had many other issues since 1933. Trotsky analyzed the tactical issues accurately and unemotionally, but he missed the mark on the broader

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47 Ibid., 161.

48 Ibid., 161-165.

strategic questions. His bungling led to confusion within the SWP and may have aggravated a split. With only a few months left in his life, the only thing that remained for Trotsky was to play out the last act in the play of the great conflict with his enemy, Stalin. Finally, Trotsky's war of hatred with the General Secretary would end.

VII. Cain and Abel: Trotsky and Stalin

> And Cain talked with Abel his brother: and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him.- King James Bible

On December 31st of 1936, Trotsky wrote in his diary, "'This was Cain's year.'"[1] He often used this metaphoric moniker, which was perhaps peculiar for an atheist revolutionary, to refer to Joseph Dzhugashvili (Stalin's given name). As Cain, Stalin took on the role of murderer, destroyer and vile miscreant. For Trotsky at this time, the General Secretary truly represented and symbolized pure evil, just as Cain of the Old Testament. Undoubtedly, this was an emotionally charged assessment. No human can be realistically and rationally ascribed the one name that represents all earthly evil in western society. The name Cain and, in Trotsky's mind, the man Joseph Stalin were both the embodiment of distilled evil. Perhaps by extension, Trotsky thought of himself as Abel, the embodiment of pure good.

However, this was not always the case. Trotsky's opinions of Stalin evolved over time. As he suffered under the brutal treatment of the General Secretary through the

[1] Leon Trotsky, "Trotsky's Diary," Transcript at the The Trotsky Archives, Houghton Library, Harvard University, quoted in Deutscher, The Prophet Outcast, 354.

20's and 30's, Trotsky's assessment of Stalin degenerated from mild respect, just after the revolution, to complete loathing. By comparing what Trotsky wrote about Stalin just before and just after the rise of Hitler, it can be seen that the year 1933 was the point of the most dramatic change in Trotsky's feelings towards Stalin. At this time, he seemed to begin to hate the General Secretary, while before 1933 his feelings could not be characterized as stronger than dislike. The evidence reveals this developing hatred and establishes a record of increasing resentment that may have led to the deterioration of Trotsky's strategic analytical skills that were closely connected to Stalin.

The two men first met in Vienna in 1913. In his book Stalin: An Appraisal of the Man and His Influence, Trotsky wrote that at their first meeting he noticed a "glint of animosity" in Stalin's "yellow eyes."[2] The details of this first meeting were written down by Trotsky in 1939 and later published in a collection of short character sketches that Trotsky wrote entitled Portraits Political and Personal. While discussing the downfall of tsarism at the home of an old Menshevik friend in Vienna in 1913, a man entered the room. Trotsky wrote, "Suddenly, without a preceding knock, the door opened and in it appeared a person unknown to me-of average height and rather thin, with a sallow face on which

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[2] Leon Trotsky, Stalin: An Appraisal of the Man and His Influence (New York: Harper & Brother's Publishers, 1941), 244.

could be seen pockmarks."[3] The piece went on to disparage Stalin for uttering a "guttural sound which could...have been taken for a greeting."[4] Thus two men who would shape the world met for the first time. Generally both the book Stalin and the above character sketch characterize the future General Secretary negatively. However, both were written after Trotsky had suffered innumerable agonies as a result of Stalin's intrigues. Therefore, they are not indicative of Trotsky's early opinion of Stalin.

What did Bronstein think of Dzhugashvili in those early years? Stalin was not a towering and broadly significant figure before the Revolution and Civil War; consequently, Trotsky had little reason to spend too much time writing or commenting about Dzhugashvili. However, Stalin did serve under Trotsky on the Southern Front in the Civil War; this gave the founder of the Red Army more reasons to take note of the future General Secretary. Nevertheless, whatever he may have written at the time either is difficult to obtain or simply did not survive. In Stalin, Trotsky wrote about his opinions of Dzhugashvili during the Civil War. He called Stalin an unnecessary burden to his fellow officers. At one point Trotsky insinuated that Stalin was a disobedient coward who failed to lead properly his forces and ignored orders

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[3] Leon Trotsky, Portraits Political and Personal (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1977), 208.

[4] Ibid.

from Chief Command.[5] Of course these opinions, written almost 20 years after the fact, are probably not indicative of what Trotsky felt during the Civil War. In a book written by Max Eastman entitled Since Lenin Died, Eastman claimed that Trotsky characterized Stalin as a "brave and sincere revolutionary" just after Lenin's death in 1924.[6] In spite of the creation of the triumvirate against Trotsky in 1922 and the triumvirate's accusations of factional deviation on the part of the Left Opposition in early 1924, Trotsky had not begun to experience significantly negative feelings towards Stalin. Interestingly enough, in Stalin, Trotsky accuses Dzhugashvili of poisoning Lenin. Isaac Deutscher surmises that this change in opinion did not occur as a result of new evidence. He says that Trotsky was trying to impose the murderous events since Lenin's death on the events leading up to Lenin's demise. According to Deutscher, Trotsky may have felt that since Stalin killed so many old Bolsheviks, why not Lenin too?[7] Whatever the case, clearly Trotsky's feelings regarding Stalin changed radically from 1924 to 1940. Bronstein went from respecting Stalin, and expressing these feelings right after Lenin's death, to actually accusing Dzhugashvili of killing Vladimir Ulyanov (Lenin's given name).

By the time that Trotsky had been exiled to Turkey in

[5] Trotsky, Stalin: An Appraisal of the Man and His Influence, 270.

[6] Eastman, Since Lenin Died, 55.

[7] Deutscher, The Prophet Outcast, 454.

1929, his opinion of Stalin had declined. However, considering what Dzhugashvili had put Bronstein through, it is surprising that Trotsky did not have stronger negative feelings towards Stalin. The General Secretary, with a majority vote from the Central Committee, had kicked the founder of the Red Army from the Politburo, the Central Committee, and the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. He had exiled Trotsky to Siberia and then deported him out of the first workers' state to live among white exiles in Turkey. In spite of all of this, Trotsky had not reached the sort of emotional frenzy that would later grip him and that seemed to be responsible for a decline in his strategic political reasoning skills.

An effective examination of Bronstein's attitude towards Stalin in 1929 can be gleaned from Trotsky's book about the state of the Comintern since Lenin's death entitled The Third International after Lenin. In this book, Trotsky zeroed in on general political conditions and the errors in the Party Line to explain the problems of rising bureaucratization of the 3rd International in 1929. Never was Stalin depicted as a monster destroying the USSR, as he would be later. In order to determine how these feelings changed over time, the above book will be compared and contrasted with Trotsky's The Revolution Betrayed. This work outlined Trotsky's views on the state of the Soviet Union and the Bolshevik party in 1936. Trotsky clearly indicted Stalin personally for creating the Soviet bureaucracy and allowing

it to threaten the first worker's state. It is interesting to note that in 1929 Trotsky felt that Bolshevik Party politics were to blame for what the USSR had become; in 1936, however, according to Trotsky, Stalin was individually responsible for the degeneration of the worker's state.

In The Third International after Lenin, Trotsky's entire discussion of the primary causes of the bureaucratization of the Bolshevik Party and the Comintern did not even mention Stalin.

> The principle source of the bureaucratization of the whole regime of the CPSU and the Comintern, lies in the ever increasing gap between the political line of the leadership and the historical line of the proletariat. The less these two lines have coincided, the more the line of the leadership has revealed itself refuted by events, the harder it has been to apply the line by resorting to party measures, by exposing it to criticism, and the more it has had to be imposed on the party from above, by measures of the apparatus and even of the state.[8]

He went on to argue that the influence of "nonproletarian classes" had provided pressure that allowed the gap between "the political line of the leadership and the historical line of the proletariat" to grow. According to Trotsky, these classes were allowed to influence the ruling group of the Party because of decreasing criticism from within the Party itself. The nonproletarian pressure was then able to impact the Bolshevik Party ruling bureaucracy "through the medium of the apparatus."[9] All through this argument Stalin is not

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[8] Trotsky, The Third International after Lenin, 252-253.

[9] Ibid., 253.

mentioned once. Although Trotsky referred to the General Secretary indirectly when he wrote of the "political line of the leadership," Stalin was never referred to by name. If, while writing this book, Trotsky was experiencing the sort of animosity towards Stalin that would later arise, then he could not avoid at least one reference to the one man who controlled the leadership of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. This analysis of the causes of the rising bureaucracy in the USSR was clearly not an attack against Stalin himself, but simply a general indictment of the party leadership.

When Trotsky's attitude towards Stalin in The Third International after Lenin is compared and contrasted with the state of his feelings as expressed in The Revolution Betrayed, the difference is remarkable. On the issue of the rising bureaucracy, Trotsky specifically mentioned Stalin as the one man who gave the bureaucracy the power that it needed to grow.

> It would be naive to imagine that Stalin, previously unknown to the masses, suddenly issued from the wings full armed with a complete strategical plan. No indeed. Before he felt out his own course, the bureaucracy felt out Stalin himself. He brought it all the necessary guarantees: the prestige of an old Bolshevik, a strong character , narrow vision, and close bonds with the political machine as the sole source of his influence. The success which fell upon him was a surprise at first to Stalin himself. It was the friendly welcome of the new ruling group, trying to free itself from the old principles and from the control of the masses, and having need of a reliable arbiter in its inner affairs. A secondary figure before the masses and in the events of he

> revolution, Stalin revealed himself as the indubitable leader of the Thermidorian bureaucracy, as first in its midst.[10]

Thus, according to Trotsky, Stalin was the primary initial motive force behind the bureaucratization of the Bolshevik Party and the Comintern. Clearly, Bronstein's attitude towards Dzhugashvili had changed significantly from 1929 to 1936. Apparently, in The Revolution Betrayed, Trotsky began to focus his attention on Stalin as personally responsible for the failures of the Comintern (such as the rise of Fascism in Germany), the errors of the 3rd International (such as the anti-united front policy in Germany), and the degeneration of the Soviet Union. These events occurred after 1929 and, according to Trotsky, resulted from the early rise of the bureaucracy. Whereas in the section on the growing bureaucracy in The Third International after Lenin, Stalin was not individually mentioned and, therefore, probably not held quite as personally culpable for the mistakes coming from Moscow. Without a doubt, Trotsky's assessment of Stalin changed significantly from 1929 to 1936.

When comparing and contrasting these two books, however, several questions arise. Did Trotsky reassess Stalin because of a change in feelings or because of a change in Stalin's actions, or the introduction of new evidence? Perhaps the General Secretary engaged in some activity between 1929 and 1936 that forced Trotsky to rationally alter his previous conclusions and unemotionally declare that Stalin played a

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[10] Trotsky, The Revolution Betrayed, 92-93.

larger role in the rise of the bureaucracy than he previously thought. The first problem with this argument is that Trotsky made conclusions in both books about events that occurred before either book was written. The initial creation of the bureaucracy that Trotsky analyzed in both works occurred in the early to mid 1920's. This early rise was seen as a precursor to many other mistakes and errors that occurred later (such as the German debacle), but the first inklings of a bureaucracy arose before Bronstein began writing The Third International after Lenin. He could not have been making a logical change in his opinion as a result of any new actions by Stalin unless these new actions were to shed new light on those events in the 20's that led to the bureaucratization process. However, did Trotsky have any such new evidence? He cites nothing new in The Revolution Betrayed. Both books were based on his memory and his collected archives. His archives regarding the birthing stages of the bureaucracy did not change between 1929 and 1936. Trotsky may have remembered something different, but that is unlikely considering his remarkable memory. With no new evidence and no logical reason to alter his opinions, the most likely explanation for Trotsky's change in attitude towards Stalin from 1929 to 1936 was the General Secretary's actions against Bronstein in this period. This change in Trotsky's feelings toward Dzhugashvili led to a change in his assessment of Stalin's role in the bureaucratization of the Bolshevik Party and the Comintern.

In The Revolution Betrayed, Trotsky also made a significant change in his conclusions about the nature of the Soviet Union and its relationship to the bureaucracy. In this work, he first introduced the notion that the workers' state could be separated from the bureaucratized ruling party that presided over that state. He argued that while the Soviet Union was still progressive and revolutionary, the ruling circle was corrupt and counter-revolutionary. However, for this reasoning to work, if it could work at all, Trotsky had to counter those who had argued, since the early 20's, that the bureaucracy had become a new exploiting class. Thus, he had to walk a fine line between presenting the ruling circle as counter-revolutionary, yet maintaining that a new class had not arisen. At the same time, Trotsky had to establish firmly that the corrupting influence of the bureaucracy did not diminish the value of the USSR as a workers' state. To begin with, he presented the Soviet Union as a place where the proletariat still owned the means of production. "The nationalization of the land, the means of industrial production, transport and exchange, together with the monopoly of foreign trade, constitute the basis of the Soviet social structure."[11] Then, he established the bureaucracy as non-capitalist because it did not own any of the means of production. "The bureaucracy has neither stocks nor bonds. It is recruited, supplemented and renewed in the manner of an administrative hierarchy, independently of any

[11] Ibid., 248.

special property relations of its own."[12] Finally, he tried to establish that the bureaucracy was a counter-revolutionary force that has not been able to infect the Soviet Union as a whole.

> As a conscious political force the bureaucracy has betrayed the revolution. But a victorious revolution is fortunately not only a program and a banner, not only political institutions, but also a system of social relations. To betray it is not enough. You have to overthrow it. The October revolution has been betrayed by the ruling stratum, but not yet overthrown.[13]

Trotsky's logic here is seriously flawed. It all hinges on his conclusions regarding the nature of the ruling bureaucracy as a corrupt betrayer of the revolution that has not yet evolved into a new exploiting class. However, in attempting to evaluate the bureaucracy in the Soviet Union, Trotsky ignored the possibility of an exploiting class that may not officially own the means of production but effectively controlled the entire economy and, therefore, can exhibit many of the characteristics of an exploiting class without being capitalist from a Marxist standpoint. These ideas were best expressed by the Italian Ex-Trotskyist Bruno Rizzi in his book La Bureaucratisation du Monde (see the chapter "The Dionysian Revolutionary: Trotsky and America"). Trotsky simply defined the bureaucracy as non-capitalistic simply because it does not own the means of production in the traditional Marxist fashion. Clearly, therefore, his

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[12] Ibid., 249.

[13] Ibid., 251-252.

conclusions about the nature of the bureaucracy were flawed, and since his whole argument depended on these conclusions, Trotsky entire position regarding the relationship between the USSR and the bureaucracy was invalid.

Besides being another example of Trotsky's unsound strategic political reasoning after 1933, his conclusions regarding the bureaucratized and corrupt Soviet government dominating an intact workers' state are also indicative of his feelings regarding Stalin at this time. Once again, when these opinions are compared and contrasted to those expressed in The Third International After Lenin, a change is evident. In The Revolution Betrayed, it seems that Trotsky had both an emotional resentment towards Stalin and a nostalgic affection for the revolution and the state that he had helped to create. These two conflicting emotions led him to conclude that the Soviet Union was both counter-revolutionary (at the level of the bureaucracy) and revolutionary (at the level of the common workers). He seemed to be unable to conclude that the revolution had completely collapsed, that the USSR was wholly consistent with the ideals of October 1917, or that the Soviet Union existed somewhere in between these two extremes. Any of these possibilities would have been more logical than to separate the revolutionary development of a state and nation from that of the bureaucratic group that dominated that state and nation. However, in The Third International after Lenin, there is no mention of this peculiar separation. Although the book is more about the

international arena rather than the domestic situation in the USSR, Trotsky did express his opinion on the revolutionary status of the Comintern and the ruling circle that dominated the Third International. Clearly, in this book, the unqualified negative assessment of the ruling bureaucracy that would later develop simply did not exist. Trotsky argued that the bureaucracy was unprincipled and that it tended to "zigzag" politically. This characterization was radically different from The Revolution Betrayed where he depicted the bureaucracy as the "betrayer of the Revolution." In The Third International after Lenin, Trotsky wrote:

> The attempts by Fredrich Adler and Co. to create an intermediary International-the Two-and-a-Half-seemed to promise much at the beginning, but very rapidly it became bankrupt. Stalin's policy, while starting from other bases and other historical traditions, is a variety of the same centrism.... Stalinist policy is a series of empirical zigzags between Marx and Vollmar, between Lenin and Chiang Kaishek, between Bolshevism and national socialism. But if we sum up the total of those zigzags in their fundamental expressions, we finish with the same arithmetical total: two and a half.[14]

Here, Stalin's methods were not given a ringing endorsement, but they were not completely lambasted either. By saying that the bureaucracy shifted between extremes, Trotsky indicated that he believed that Stalin's policies allowed the Comintern to reside in legitimate revolutionary periods. If the bureaucracy was shifting from Marx to Vollmar, then it must have been in a period when it was, according to Trotsky,

[14] Trotsky, The Third International after Lenin, 18.

following Marx. Also, Bronstein argued that the end result of these shifts was a two and half international. Earlier, he claimed that Adler's Two-and-a-Half "seemed to promise much at the beginning." Thus he indirectly insinuated at least some degree of promise in Stalin's ideas. All things considered Trotsky's ideas about both Stalin and the bureaucracy were not nearly as negative in The Third International after Lenin as compared to The Revolution Betrayed. It seems that the intense resentment that would soon plague Trotsky's heart had not as yet materialized- a resentment that seemed to lead him to conclude that the ruling bureaucracy was counter-revolutionary while the Soviet Union remained revolutionary. The German debacle, combined with other brutal events of the year 1933, would bring about the sort of hate that would mar Trotsky's thought into making such conclusions.

When examining these two works on this issue, it must be remembered that in The Revolution Betrayed Trotsky traced the development of the separation between counter-revolutionary bureaucracy and workers' state to as far back as 1921.

> During the last fifteen years, the government has changed its social composition even more deeply than its ideas. Since of all the strata of Soviet society the bureaucracy has best solved its own social problem, and is fully content with the existing situation, it has ceased to offer any subjective guarantee whatever of the socialist direction of its policy. It continues to preserve state property only to the extent that it fears the proletariat.[15]

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15 Trotsky, The Revolution Betrayed, 251.

Trotsky was making conclusions about the situation fifteen years before the publication of the book in 1936. For this reason, the argument cannot be presented that Bronstein was simply making conclusions solely based on events that occurred after the publication of The Third International after Lenin. Much of his opinion was based on analysis on what happened in the early to mid 1920's. Therefore, the only concrete evidence that could have logically altered his conclusions between 1929 and 1936, regarding the whole period from 1921 to 1936, was that new evidence that arose that shed light on the past events. He did not site any new evidence. It is likely, then, that his change of opinion, once again, stemmed from an emotional response to the trials that Stalin had put Trotsky through from 1929 to 1936. Of these seven years, the evidence points to 1933 as the year when the most significant change occurred in Trotsky's feelings towards Stalin.

What evidence exists to suggest that 1933 saw a major change in how Bronstein viewed Dzhugashvili? To begin with, in many of his writings just before 1933, the bureaucracy was more often referred to by the terms "party," "Communist" or "uncontrolled." In late 1933, after the rise of Nazism and the death of Trotsky's daughter, Bronstein was more likely to call the bureaucracy "Stalinist." Suddenly in 1933, the increasingly troublesome bureaucracy becomes personally attributable to Stalin himself.

In an article that Trotsky wrote on October 22, 1932,

about the troubles in the economy of the USSR entitled The Soviet Economy in Danger, the bureaucracy was never described using the word "Stalinist." Indeed, in this rather lengthy piece that sharply criticizes the running of the Soviet economy, Stalin was mentioned by name only three times. At the beginning of the article, Trotsky wrote of the "Communist bureaucracy." "'The friends of the USSR,' together with the international Communist bureaucracy, require a picture of successes in the USSR as simple, as harmonious, and as comforting as possible."[16] By calling the Comintern the "international Communist bureaucracy," Trotsky was using terminology that is remarkably devoid of reference to Stalin as compared to what came in 1933. Later in the piece, he referred to the "uncontrolled bureaucracy." "A 'contemptuous attitude' to the needs of the workers in the workers' state is possible only on the part of *an arrogant and uncontrolled bureaucracy.*"[17] In articles written after the German debacle, Trotsky would have taken the opportunity, in a sentence as highly critical of the bureaucracy as this one was, to have mentioned Stalin or to have used the term "Stalinist." The fact that he did not here shows that his emotions had not yet evolved to a state where nearly every negative assessment of the Comintern, the Communist Party, the bureaucracy, or the Soviet Union must have made some

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[16] Writings of Leon Trotsky [1932], 258.

[17] Ibid., 268.

reference to Stalin. A few paragraphs further on, Trotsky used the term "party bureaucracy." "However, how and why is it that in a workers' state the factory committees...function unsatisfactorily? Is it not, perhaps, because they are strangled by the party bureaucracy?"[18] Once again, this sort of highly critical assessment of the bureaucracy would become, in articles written in 1933, the perfect opportunity for Trotsky to make some reference to the General Secretary.

When the above piece is compared to a dialogue written just nine months later, on July 20th of 1933, Trotsky's change of mood is obvious. The article is in the form of a conversation between two persons arguing about whether or not to break with Moscow. In this rather short piece, Trotsky referred to the "Stalinist bureaucracy" no less than six times.[19] How could he have rationally altered his assessment of the nature of the bureaucracy so radically in so short a time? In October of 1932, Stalin was not mentioned as the embodiment of the bureaucratized Soviet State. At that time, Trotsky seemed to understand that the bureaucracy was a complex and multi- faceted entity that was dominated by Stalin, but not necessarily the pure essence of Dzhugashvili in bureaucratic form. By July 1933, however, Bronstein was prepared to attach all of the errors, ills, and crimes of the ruling circle to Stalin himself. Did sufficient new evidence arise to justify this change? He does not cite anything new.

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[18] Ibid., 269.

[19] Writings of Leon Trotsky [1933-34], 17-24.

Also, in the nine months from October 1932 to July 1933, the actual bureaucratic structure of the Soviet Union changed little. What did change, however, was what Trotsky had suffered at the hands of the man at the head of that structure.

The piece also unjustifiably and ruthlessly maligns the ruling circle and Stalin. In one particularly brutal sentence his use of imagery was irrationally insulting. "We have seen how the Stalinist bureaucracy crawled before the Kuomintang[20] , before the British trade unions. We see how it is crawling now, even before the petty-bourgeois pacifists."[21] Trotsky insinuated a truly negative character on the part of the "Stalinist bureaucracy" through the "crawling" image. This was not rational. Stalin's policy towards the Kuomintang in the 20's may have been poorly thought out or simply a power play gone wrong, but it could not be reasonably interpreted as crawling "before the Kuomintang." Stalin's errors were sufficiently profound in themselves without the addition of Trotsky's dramatic and emotional exaggerations. It seems that Bronstein's emotions, once again, were intruding into his reasoning skills. It is also seems clear that the most dramatic change in Trotsky's

[20] The Koumintang was a Chinese bourgeois political party that spearheaded the Chinese revolution of 1925-27 under the leadership of Chiang Kaishek. When the Koumintang turned against the Chinese Communist Party, their former allies, and slaughtered thousands of CP members, Stalin took Chiang Kaishek's side and ordered the CP to follow the left oriented group within the Koumintang. Writings of Leon Trotsky [1929], 428.

[21] Ibid., 21.

emotional context regarding Stalin occurred in the same year that Trotsky had been forced to venture across Europe while ill in an effort to find a place to live, the same year that Nazism arose in Germany, and the same year that his daughter committed suicide in Berlin.

By the time that Trotsky began his last major project, Stalin had succeeded in forcing Bronstein through many more indignities and agonies. Between the death of his daughter in 1933 and his own death in 1940, Trotsky had been forced by the General Secretary to answer numerous, and often ridiculous, accusations, to go begging through Europe and North America for a place to live, to suffer through the capitulation of an old Bolshevik friend, to mourn over the imprisonment of one son and the death of another. In spite of his often stoic, intellectual exterior, he could not help but feel and express the pain that Stalin had caused him. The most significant manifestation of those feelings is in the form of his last major project, Stalin: An Appraisal of the Man and His Influence. Begun in 1939, Trotsky never finished this work; the subject succeeded in killing the author before the project could be completed. In his biography of Trotsky, Isaac Deutscher mentioned the common conclusion among historians that Bronstein was not particularly interested in the project but did it in order to appease his publishers and generate much needed cash.[22] Deutscher then went on to note that the evidence points in a

[22] Deutscher, The Prophet Outcast, 451.

different direction. "The publishers were at least as keen, if not more so, on the Life of Lenin he had promised to complete. If the money played its part in causing him to give priority to Stalin, he was nevertheless mainly actuated by a literary-artistic motive."[23] Here, Deutscher failed to entertain another possible motive on Trotsky's part. The work is simply too brutal for Bronstein to have been motivated by literary-artistic concerns alone. Stalin can be justifiably severely criticized for his actions during the purges and the collectivization of agriculture (among other events) in the 20's and 30's; however, in Stalin, Trotsky engaged in unjustifiable assaults against Stalin. As if there was not enough fault to find in the character of the General Secretary, Bronstein had to add some for his own sake. Taking into account both the miserable suffering that Stalin had put Trotsky through and the ruthless written assaults that Bronstein meted out against the General Secretary in the book, a consideration must be given to the possibility that Trotsky was simply trying to exact some vengeance and release some of the built up pain and anger that had been accumulating over the years. Stalin: An Appraisal of the Man and His Influence truly does represent the high pinnacle of emotional literary output by Trotsky against Stalin. The "ogre of Europe" let his resentment against the General Secretary reign free across the page.

Perhaps the single area where Trotsky unjustifiably

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[23] Ibid., p.452.

maligned Stalin most severely was when he accused the General Secretary of murdering Lenin with poison in early 1924. Although speculation on this issue has been occupying historians practically since Lenin's death, the real hard evidence simply does not exist. In his biography of Lenin, Robert Payne went as far as entitling his chapter on Ulyanov's demise "The Murder of Lenin." Payne claimed that a series of small clues add up to the rather grandiose conclusion that Lenin was poisoned. When he presented these clues, however, the substance was simply not there. Payne wrote about Lenin speaking of poison in his quinine, concluding that Lenin was aware of the possibility of being poisoned and was afraid of it. Considering Lenin's state of mind at the time he might have been referring to nearly anything. Lenin had previously spoken of using poison to kill himself if his illness became too bad; perhaps his mention of poison was in some way connected to this fact. Besides this, Lenin being afraid of poison does not mean he was poisoned. Payne's other evidence was equally shallow.[24] In a more recent biography of Lenin, Dmitri Volkogonov took a more reasonable approach. He mentioned the possibility of poisoning, but conceded that there is no real evidence to prove that Lenin was murdered.[25] The point is that Volkogonov is correct. There is no evidence to point to the

[24] Robert Payne, The Life and Death of Lenin (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1964), 606-607.

[25] Volkogonov, Lenin: A New Biography, 427.

notion that Lenin was poisoned, and certainly no evidence to implicate Stalin in the act.

In spite of the lack of evidence, Trotsky left no room for doubt. He accused Stalin of murdering one of the most revered men of the time.

> Whether Stalin sent the poison to Lenin with the hint that the physicians had left no hope for his recovery or whether he resorted to more direct means I do not know. But I am firmly convinced that Stalin could not have waited passively when his fate hung by thread and the decision depended on a small, very small motion of his hand.[26]

The fact is that Trotsky did not know that Lenin was poisoned and certainly could not have proven Stalin's complicity in that act. His reasoning was based on pure speculation. Trotsky concluded that Stalin could not have risked the possibility of Lenin's recovery and the possibility of being relegated to some inferior status by Lenin. Bronstein points out that Lenin was recovering significantly. This, however, was simply not the case. Although Lenin had made some progress in the later half of 1923, his mind was nearly gone; he could barely speak or write. Lenin, therefore, remained an invalid and was unable to take care of himself. He certainly was no political threat to Stalin. Volkogonov clearly presented the state of Lenin's health as seriously dilapidated. According to Volkogonov, in spite of improvements, late in 1923, in his ability to move and speak, Lenin was in no way capable of any kind of political

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[26] Trotsky, Stalin: An Appraisal of the Man and His Influence, 381.

activity. Volkogonov noted that after Lenin's death the doctors that examined his brain were amazed that he could function on any level. "'The sclerosis of the blood vessels were calcified. When struck with a tweezer they sounded like a stone....whole sections of the brain were deprived of fresh blood.'"[27] How could Stalin have considered such a man to be threat? Lenin was seriously impaired. In this condition, it is more likely that, in spite of small improvements, Lenin's imminent death was clear to all. Why would Stalin risk poisoning a man who was on death's door and who was no threat to him anyway?

In spite of no hard evidence and a good logical reason why Stalin did not have to kill the ailing leader, because Lenin was a nearly dead invalid, Trotsky argued that Dzhugashvili poisoned Ulyanov. What could be Trotsky's motive? Based on all that Stalin had forced Bronstein to suffer through since Lenin's death and the brutal diatribes against Stalin in Stalin: An Appraisal of the Man and His Influence, it is reasonable to conclude that Trotsky's accusation was a simple emotional release. He was trying to return to Stalin some of the pain that Stalin had meted out against him. Perhaps, Trotsky knew that to the people of the Soviet Union, and part of the world workers' movement, to accuse someone of killing a leader who had been practically made a god, as Lenin had been, was a significant blow. At least it was the best that Trotsky could do against Stalin in

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[27] Volkogonov, Lenin: A New Biography, 432.

his circumstances.

The book is also filled with other less powerful, yet no less unjustifiable, jabs at the General Secretary. In discussing Stalin's childhood, Trotsky painted a dismal picture. In spite of having reports from those who knew him as a youth that are both positive and negative, Bronstein chooses the negative recollections as the truth. Based on a negative reminiscence, Trotsky wrote, "Compassion for people or for animals was foreign to him."[28] This seems like an unrealistic assessment. Whatever the case, Trotsky also noted those that claimed that Stalin was a compassionate child.[29] He simply discarded the later reports as lies. Once again, Trotsky had no real evidence one way or the other, but he claimed that the words that make Stalin look the worst were the truth. Later, Trotsky called Stalin a sadist.

> Undoubtedly characteristic of Stalin is personal, physical cruelty, what is usually called sadism. During confinement in the Baku prison...he took out a knife that he had hidden in the leg of his boot, raised high one of the trouser's leg and inflicted a deep gash on himself....After he had become a Soviet dignitary, he would amuse himself in his country home, by cutting the throats of sheep or pouring kerosene on ant heaps and setting fire to them. Such stories about him, coming from independent observers, are many.[30]

Knowing what brutal things Stalin did to numerous people, it

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[28] Trotsky, Stalin: An Appraisal of the Man and His Influence, 11.

[29] Ibid.

[30] Ibid., 414-415.

is not beyond the realm of the possible that he did all of the things that Trotsky attributed to him above. However, Trotsky only had the testimony of "independent observers." He did not cite these persons to any extent. If these observers did exist, why did Trotsky fail at least to mention what position they were in to have been able to witness the above acts? Trotsky may have avoided mentioning them by name in order to protect them, but he might have informed the reader how they came to see such things or where they were in order to be observers. It is likely that Trotsky simply heard these things as rumors and wrote them down as facts. Also, even if the above events did take place, does that mean that Stalin was a sadist? Surely Stalin did horrible things to people, but just the act of brutality is not enough to establish sadism. It must be shown that the subject enjoyed brutalizing others. Stalin probably did enjoy causing harm to man and beast; however, we cannot say this as a fact without some sort of evidence. Trotsky does not have such evidence.

In his biography, Deutscher also noticed Trotsky's tendency to malign unjustifiably his subject.

> Trotsky's Stalin is implausible to the extent to which he presents the character as being essentially the same in 1936-8 as in 1924, and even 1904. The monster does not form, grow, and emerge- he is there almost fully-fledged from the outset. And better qualities and emotions, such as intellectual ambition and a degree sympathy with the oppressed, without which no young man would ever join a persecuted revolutionary party, are

almost totally absent.[31]

Deutscher went on to conclude that anger towards "the monstrosities of the Stalin cult" drove Trotsky to depict Stalin as a monster. It seems evident that those monstrosities that The General Secretary directed against Trotsky himself provided the most intense motivation for Bronstein to paint such a horrible picture of Dzhugashvili.

As Trotsky attacked Stalin with his pen, Stalin attacked Trotsky with the NKVD. Here, the Cain and Abel analogy ends. Abel was not inclined towards vengeance against his brother; Bronstein was determined to see Dzhugashvili suffer as much as was possible for the pain that the founder of the Red Army had endured as a result of the General Secretary's intrigues. Both the desire for vengeance and feelings of raw hate reached a pinnacle with Stalin: An Appraisal of the Man and His Influence. However, these intense emotions had been building and festering since 1924. Only after a dramatic rise in Trotsky's negative emotions towards Stalin in 1933 did Bronstein's feelings begin to intrude into his strategic analytical abilities. Although Trotsky and Stalin had little in common with Cain and Abel, both conflicts ended the same way.

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[31] Deutscher, The Prophet Outcast, 455.

VIII. Conclusion

Leon Davidovich Trotsky was a complex, emotional, idealistic man. He possessed a powerful brain, and a passionate heart . In spite of the stoic, aloof, intellectual exterior that he presented to the world, he felt the pain of life, and he led a life of deep emotional pain. These feelings affected his mind. If historians disregard or downplay the importance of emotions in the individual and in the masses, they ignore an important dimension of the human condition. For Trotsky, it seems that the difficulties that he had with strategic political reasoning after 1933 can be attributed directly to resentment. Before that year, his powers of strategic and tactical analysis were, perhaps, unparalleled in the world of Marxist politics. Trotsky's reasoning with regard to the German situation was both logical and prophetic. However, in 1933, Trotsky was struck with several emotional blows; his daughter committed suicide; Germany embraced Adolf Hitler; he was forced to become a nomad. Trotsky's problems began to deeply affect every aspect of his life. He partially dealt with these problems by expressing himself emotionally through hatred and resentment. He felt that Joseph Stalin had been responsible for all of his ills, so the natural place for Trotsky to direct his anger was towards the General Secretary. Thus, those powers of intellectual reasoning that were in some way

connected to Stalin, broad and international problems of the world workers' movement or strategic political issues, were most seriously impacted by Trotsky's resentment. Those tactical political issues that had little directly to do with the General Secretary remained unaffected. It is no coincidence, therefore, that Trotsky sought to found the Fourth International in 1933, to challenge the Third International that Stalin himself controlled. However, others who found much to criticize about Stalin refused to follow Trotsky's lead in 1933. The new International did not come into being until 1938, and, even then, the birth of the organization was troubled. Few delegates appeared at the founding conference and one delegation, the Polish, argued that a new International "could make no impact."[1] Therefore, it seems that one of Trotsky's most profound pieces of poor strategic political reasoning was his advocacy of the Fourth International. His dedication to this idea was so intense that he mentioned the organization in his dying words.

Leon Davidovich Bronstein died as he had lived, in struggle. The assassin gained the confidence of Trotsky by seducing a secretary working at the fortress at Coyoacan. Slowly, Trotsky's murderer, who went by the name of Jacson, became a familiar face among the friends, sympathizers, and guards that were often seen at the Bronstein household. Jacson feigned interest in the political activities of Trotsky and even wrote some pieces evaluating the conflict in

[1] Deutscher, The Prophet Outcast, 422.

the Socialist Worker's Party of America. On August 20th, 1940, Jacson arrived at Coyoacan dressed in a raincoat, in spite of the hot weather; he held an article in his hand that he wished to have evaluated by his victim; he also had an ice-axe concealed on his person.[2] Killer and to be killed then went into the study. As Trotsky sat in his chair and read Jacson's work, the assassin, in his own words, "'...put my raincoat ...on a piece of furniture...took out the ice-axe, and, closing my eyes, brought it down on his head with all my strength.'"[3] Then, to the murderer's surprise, Trotsky screamed in agony, rose from his chair and attacked his attacker. In spite of massive brain injuries, the founder of the Red Army had the strength to bite Jacson's hand and was able to gain possession of the murder weapon. However, before Trotsky could use the ice-axe, his wounds overcame his powerful determination, and he collapsed. Natalya and several guards rushed into the room; the killer was arrested; Trotsky was taken to the hospital. At 7:25p.m. on August 21st, 1940, Leon Davidovich Bronstein died of his injuries. According to Deutscher, "The autopsy showed a brain of 'extraordinary dimensions', weighing two pounds and thirteen ounces; and 'the heart too was very large.'"[4]

Trotsky's death did not sound the death knell for his

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[2] Ibid., 500-503.

[3] L.A.S. Salazar, Murder in Mexico: 160, quoted in Deutscher, The Prophet Outcast, 504.

[4] Ibid., 110, 504-508.

ideas. The logical flaws in Bronstein's reasoning for the Fourth International did not stop political organizations from working for the new International for decades after the murder in Mexico. The Socialist Worker's Party of America never did completely recover from the split of the late thirties, but the party did continue to fight for a new International until the late forties, when the leader of the International Secretariat of the Fourth International, Michel Pablo, began to argue that Stalinism was a legitimate phase on the road to full scale Communism. Many in the SWP agreed. In 1953, James Cannon founded The International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI) in order to counter what was called Pabloism. Thus the SWP split once again. As time went on, the SWP drifted away from the Fourth International, and the ICFI embraced Trotsky's ideas with the enthusiasm of a new political organization. In 1988 the ICFI adopted its major programmatic theses. Among other things, the theses proclaimed:

> In the founding document of the Fourth International, Trotsky advanced two interrelated propositions. He defined the epoch as that of imperialism's death agony. At the same time he insisted that the crisis of mankind was, in essence, the crisis of revolutionary leadership in the working class. The content of the first proposition was an objective historical assessment of the desperate and insoluble character of the contradictions of world capitalism. Contained in the second proposition was the warning that the resolution of this historical crisis on a socially-progressive basis depended, in the final analysis, upon the building of the Fourth International.

The International Committee of the Fourth International still

exists today. On a World Wide Web page of the organization, its purpose in the late 1990's is explained: "Today, it is precisely the International Committee of the Fourth International and the members and supporters of the Fourth International organized under its leadership who carry through and preserve Marxist continuity."[5] Thus, Trotsky's ideas, however flawed, live, almost sixty years after his death.

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[5] The information in this paragraph came from the World Wide Web page entitled The History of Trotskyism. The WWW address is: http://www.mit.edu:8001/afs/athena.mit.edu/user/f/j/fjk/Public/heritage.html.

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