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Trotsky Dossier

# Analyzing the society of the disconcerting lie

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**Trotsky was not the first critic of the bureaucratic deformations of the Soviet Union. Well before him anarchists who had supported the Russian revolution (for example Emma Goldman) and Bolsheviks (for example the "Democratic Centralism" group in 1919, the Workers' Opposition in 1920, the Workers' Group of the Russian CP led by G.I. Miasnikov in 1923, the Workers' Truth group in 1922) had opposed the authoritarianism of the new state apparatus and the suppression of the formal guarantees of democracy.**

Lenin himself, shortly before his death, had seen better than Trotsky the danger represented by both the bureaucratic deformations of the soviet state and the concentration of administrative powers extended in the secretariat of the party and in the hands of the first secretary, Stalin. But the remedy he proposed then - the setting up of a higher body of control by the merger of the central control commission with the Workers and Peasants Inspection - smacked of administrative, "bureaucratic" even, methods of struggle against bureaucracy. [1]

As late as the end of 1924, after the death of Lenin, when he was himself victim of the manoeuvres of the bureaucratic troika (Zinoviev-Kamenev-Stalin, - the first two would revolt against Stalin a year later), Trotsky did not hesitate to justify repression in the name of an erroneous conception of the party: "If it proved, even after the elimination of misunderstandings, of partial errors, of tendentious interpretations and so on, that nonetheless two different lines exist, there would be obviously no question of passing over such an important circumstance in silence. The party is obliged, whatever the efforts and the strict measures that this demands, to assure the unity of its revolutionary method, its political line, its traditions - the unity of Leninism. In this case it would be wrong to disavow the use of "repression", as some comrades have (while at the same time accusing me of pursuing a special, non-Bolshevik line)...

If it is proved in fact that a line of Trotskyism was being implemented against the line of Leninism, that would mean that we had moved to a commencement of struggle between different class tendencies. In this case, explanations would be pointless. The proletarian party protects itself by purging itself". [2]

## Unforeseen

The years of civil war against the White armies, supported by the imperialist interventions, created an unforeseen situation: an isolated revolutionary regime, an industry destroyed in a country menaced by famine, whereas the Russian working class had been decimated on the battlefield, fleeing from the starving towns to the countryside, absorbed in the state apparatus (there were 2,552,000 industrial workers in 1913, in 1921-22 there were only 1,243,000 [3] and, moreover, to a significant extent, these were not the same people). The political parties present in the soviets in 1917 - the Mensheviks, the Left Socialist-Revolutionaries, the anarchists - had, in the course of the civil war, opposed the Bolshevik regime and been banned. From March 1919, Lenin notes lucidly and bitterly that "the soviets, which were by nature organs of government by the workers, are indeed only organs of government for the workers by the most advanced layer of the proletariat, but not by the toiling masses". [4] And the most advanced layer at this stage was the Bolshevik party, itself on the path to bureaucratization.

## Undeniable

It is undeniable that the exceptional measures taken by the Bolshevik leadership in the course of the civil war facilitated the bureaucratic degeneration of the revolution. Trotsky explicitly recognised it, writing: "The dictatorship of the Bolshevik party proved one of the most powerful instruments of progress in history. But here too, in the words of the poet, "Reason becomes unreason, kindness a pest." [5] The prohibition of oppositional parties brought after it the prohibition of factions. The prohibition of factions ended in a prohibition to think otherwise than the infallible leaders. The police-manufactured monolithism of the party resulted in a bureaucratic impunity which has become the sources of all kinds of wantonness and corruption." [6]

But it is undeniable also that the Bolshevik party, even enjoying an immense legitimacy from the role it had played in the revolutionary process, would not have been able, supposing it had wished to (an easy supposition for the opponents of Bolshevism), to empty a blooming soviet democracy of its content if this latter had not been shaken first by the conditions of civil war, destruction, famine, blockade - in short by the isolation of a revolution in a particularly backward country.

## Contribution

The historic contribution of Trotsky - and those who fought alongside him in the Left Opposition - is to have presented an overall analysis of the degeneration of the Russian revolution, to have deciphered "the disconcerting lie", [7] preserving thus the possibility of a historic understanding of the struggle for emancipation. If Trotsky was not the first to engage in the struggle against the rising bureaucratisation, if his first combats were above all directed against the political line of the "troika" and if he then continued to consider the bureaucracy as an epiphenomenon, the fruit of political errors by the party, he was the first (with Christian Rakovsky) [8] to elaborate an overall analysis of the degeneration, to present both its monstrosity - he did not hesitate to qualify the domination of the Stalinist bureaucracy from the mid-1930s as "totalitarian" - and its historic weakness and parasitic character, which meant its domination could only be temporary.

And the collapse of the states originating (directly or not) from the degeneration of the Russian revolution, if it took place later than Trotsky envisaged in his last writings (marked by the perspective - the hope - of a war-revolution), has essentially confirmed his predictions. [9]

As a militant and a talented revolutionary propagandist, Trotsky naturally emphasised the perspective of the anti-bureaucratic revolution and feared above all else a bourgeois counter-revolution. It is then to these two hypotheses that he devoted a great part of his writings. He had however - more than his detractors have wished to admit - envisaged a temporary stabilisation of the Soviet bureaucracy. His main work of analysis of Soviet society, *The Revolution Betrayed*, is filled with indications of this. Thus, analysing the Stakhanovite movement (a competition among workers to surpass individual norms which Trotsky characterised rightly as boiling down to "the intensification of work and even the prolongation of the working day" which the Stalinists had the cheek to characterise as a "new" attitude towards work), he wrote: ""All economy," said Marx, -and that means all human struggle with nature at all stages of civilisation - "comes down in the last analysis to an economy of time." Reduced to its primary basis, history is nothing but a struggle for an economy of working time. Socialism could not be justified by the abolition of exploitation alone; it must guarantee to society a higher economy of time than is guaranteed by capitalism. Without the realisation of this condition, the mere removal of exploitation would be but a dramatic episode without a future. The first historical experiment in the application of socialist methods has revealed the great possibilities contained in them. But the Soviet economy is still far from learning to make use of time, that most precious raw material of culture. The imported technique, the chief implement for the economy of time, still fails to produce on the Soviet soil those results which are normal in its capitalist fatherlands". [10] Nearly 40 years later, during the installation of the production lines under Fiat license at Togliattigrad, two times as many workers were needed than in Turin to produce a Lada, the Soviet version of the Fiat 124 (and Fiat's lines in Turin at the beginning of the 1970s were not

characterised by the highest productivity in the car industry).

When he wrote these lines, in 1936, Trotsky was broadly cut off for more than three years from the militants of the Left Opposition in the USSR: Hitler's seizure of power, which put an end to the activity of the centre of the Russian Opposition organised in Berlin by Trotsky's son, Leon Sedov, the strengthening of repression against the militants of the deported and imprisoned Russian Opposition and the rise in the terror in Russia from 1930, brutally interrupted the very rich debate on the degeneration of the USSR. [11] The Revolution Betrayed constitutes in some way a conclusion of this debate and Trotsky tried to integrate here the contributions of all the opposition currents - very numerous in the deportee circles, to the point that Boris M. Yeltsin had said that it was "the GPU which makes our unity". [12]

## Schemas

From the end of the 1920s the Russian revolutionaries (and it should be said that the very great majority of the surviving militants of October 1917 found themselves, sooner or later, in opposition to Stalin), confronted with the monstrous degeneration of their work, envisaged several possible schemas of analysis of this "social formation which had no precedent and no analogy". [13] Thus Christian Rakovsky, one of the main leaders of the Opposition, who Trotsky had enormous respect for, wrote in August 1928 in a letter to G.N. Valentinov, former editor of the trade union daily Trud and a deportee like him: "When a class takes power, it is a part of itself which becomes the agent of this power. It is thus that the bureaucracy emerges. In a socialist state where capitalist accumulation is forbidden to the members of the ruling party, differentiation is initially functional and then becomes social. I think here of the social situation of a Communist who disposes of an automobile, a good apartment, a regular holiday, who is close to the maximum salary authorised by the party, a situation very different from that of the Communist who works in the coal mines... The function has modified the organ itself, that is the psychology of those who are charged with the various tasks of leadership in the administration and the state economy, has changed to the point that, not only objectively, but subjectively, not only materially but morally, they have ceased to be part of this very working class... The bureaucracy of the soviets and the party is a new fact. We are not talking about isolated cases, problems in the conduct of individual comrades, but of a new social category to which it will be necessary to devote a whole treatise." [14]

## Declaration

Two years later, in April 1930, in a declaration of the Opposition whose draft he had edited, Rakovsky completed his analysis thus: "From a proletarian state with bureaucratic deformations - as Lenin defined the political form of our state - we are in the process of passing to a bureaucratic state with proletarian Communist remnants. Under our eyes a big governing class is being formed with its own internal divisions, which grows through a prudent co-optation, direct or indirect (bureaucratic promotion, fictitious elections). What unites this original class is a form, also original, of private property, namely the possession of state power. "The bureaucracy owns the state as its private property" wrote Marx." [15]

Trotsky did not take up in his theses the idea of an "original class" advanced by Rakovsky - an idea which met with some reticence among the deported oppositionists - but he drew very widely from it in his analyses.

The debate among the deported oppositionists, their declarations and proclamations, involves the concrete analysis of what was happening in the USSR. The debates concerned in the first place the analysis of the 5 year plan, the accelerated industrialisation, the forced collectivisation in the countryside, and so on, in short the Stalinist "zigzags".

The oppositionists tried (with very much clairvoyance!) to analyse the consequences of these and to propose an alternative to a policy which they saw as suicidal from the point of view of the potential of soviet development. Thus this debate, anchored in reality, is very different from the disputes over the "nature of the USSR", which marked the history of the communist anti-stalinist movement from the rupture of James Burnham with Trotsky in 1940, disputes marked by a poor knowledge of Soviet reality - because of the liquidation of the Russian Opposition by Stalin and the Stalinist closure of the USSR - and hence much more academic or reflecting the incredible ideological pressure exerted on the weak ranks of the revolutionaries.

## Autonomy

"In our analysis, we have above all avoided doing violence to dynamic social formations which have had no precedent and have no analogies" [16] wrote Trotsky. And, without taking up Rakovsky's analysis entirely, he did insist on the particular character of this leading layer, with a greater social autonomy than all the state bureaucracies which had preceded it in other social formations: "In no other regime has a bureaucracy ever achieved such a degree of independence... The Soviet bureaucracy has risen above a class which is hardly emerging from destitution and darkness, and has no tradition of dominion or command... In this sense we cannot deny that it is something more than a bureaucracy. It is in the full sense of the word the sole privileged and commanding stratum in the Soviet society. Insisting on the fact that having politically expropriated the proletariat, the Stalinist bureaucracy has not created the social base for its domination under the form of particular conditions of ownership and that "the principal means of production are in the hands of the state", he writes also "the state, so to speak, "belongs" to the bureaucracy. If these as yet wholly new relations should solidify, become the norm and be legalized, whether with or without resistance from the workers, they would, in the long run, lead to a complete liquidation of the social conquests of the proletarian revolution". [17]

Envisaging the possibilities by which history might at some undetermined point in the future settle the social character of the USSR - and privileging in this framework the two hypotheses of overthrow of the Soviet ruling caste: that of a victory of a "a revolutionary party having all the attributes of the old Bolshevism, enriched moreover by the world experience of the recent period" and that of a bourgeois party (which "would find no small number of ready servants among the present bureaucrats", he added) - he described a third hypothesis: " Let us assume to take a third variant - that neither a revolutionary nor a counterrevolutionary party seizes power. The bureaucracy continues at the head of the state. Even under these conditions social relations will not jell. We cannot count upon the bureaucracy's peacefully and voluntarily renouncing itself in behalf of socialist equality. If at the present time, notwithstanding the too obvious inconveniences of such an operation, it has considered it possible to introduce ranks and decorations, it must inevitably in future stages seek supports for itself in property relations. One may argue that the big bureaucrat cares little what are the prevailing forms of property, provided only they guarantee him the necessary income. This argument ignores not only the instability of the bureaucrat's own rights, but also the question of his descendants. The new cult of the family has not fallen out of the clouds. Privileges have only half their worth, if they cannot be transmitted to one's children. But the right of testament is inseparable from the right of property. It is not enough to be the director of a trust; it is necessary to be a stockholder. The victory of the bureaucracy in this decisive sphere would mean its conversion into a new possessing class." [18] And concludes from this that one can return to the preceding hypothesis, that of a victory of the counter-revolution.

It would be more than 30 years before this third hypothesis of Trotsky began to realise itself in the USSR and in the countries of the Soviet bloc. There is no doubt that Trotsky in 1936 would have ruled out such a lengthy period. In very numerous positions taken in the course of the last years of his life he had predicted that the war which began in 1939 - and which he had predicted, in the midst of the Hitler-Stalin pact, that there would be a war between soviet Russia and Nazi Germany - would conclude with the triumph of the revolution proletarian in the west, which would be a formidable encouragement to the anti-bureaucratic revolution in the USSR, or by the defeat of the proletariat and the liquidation of the surviving conquests of October in Russia.

## Unforeseen

The course of history has taken an unforeseen road: despite an intensity of social conflict never before witnessed (millions of deaths and unprecedented destruction!), the relationship of forces between the classes on a world scale was stabilised at Yalta by the efforts of Stalin, head of the Soviet bureaucracy, Roosevelt and Churchill, spokespersons for Allied imperialism. As counterpart to its aid in muzzling the working class movements in Europe (Greece, Italy, France and Germany in the first place) and its tolerance towards the Francoist dictatorship in Spain, the Soviet bureaucracy was benefited from imperialist tolerance towards its territorial gains in central and eastern Europe - an enlarged version of the secret accords signed with Hitler which accorded to Stalin the western part of Belarus and Ukraine (then Polish) as well as the Baltic states in 1939.

It is legitimate to pose the question of whether the analyses that Trotsky has left contain elements which can help us to interpret such phenomena and also why - putting aside the "revolutionary impatience" which would have characterized him - he waited until his last writings to predict that which the Second World War would conclude, like the first, with revolutionary upsurges in the main belligerent countries, above all Germany and the USSR.

We have said, without in any way downplaying Trotsky's contribution, that his analysis in *The Revolution Betrayed* was largely the fruit of a long debate which had involved some hundreds of Russian Marxists who had been deported by Stalin at the end of the 1920s or had passed into clandestinity. In the mid-1930s Trotsky's relation with the intellectual elite of the Bolshevik party had been definitively broken: the Soviet Left Opposition had been massacred and its last analyses, confiscated by the Stalinists, have not been passed down to us (maybe they are still stored in some coffers of Putin's political police).

## Correspondence

Indeed Trotsky's correspondence with the clandestine or deported Russian oppositionists not only contributed to the richness of his thought, but also provided him with information on the state of mind of the masses, the crises in the apparatus, the economic situation, in short all that which was indispensable to the concrete analysis of a concrete situation and that the Soviet press, muzzled by Stalin from the beginning of the 1930s, could no longer provide. [\[19\]](#)

However, the definition of the USSR presented by Trotsky in the conclusion of the chapter entitled "Social Relations in the USSR" in *The Revolution Betrayed* contains a series of concepts which explain both the author's error in prediction and the outcome of the war. Trotsky wrote: The Soviet Union is a contradictory society halfway between capitalism and socialism, in which: (a) the productive forces are still far from adequate to give the state property a socialist character; (b) the tendency toward primitive accumulation created by want breaks out through innumerable pores of the planned economy; (c) norms of distribution preserving a bourgeois character lie at the basis of a new differentiation of society; (d) the economic growth, while slowly bettering the situation of the toilers, promotes a swift formation of privileged strata; (e) exploiting the social antagonisms, a bureaucracy has converted itself into an uncontrolled caste alien to socialism; (f) the social revolution, betrayed by the ruling party, still exists in property relations and in the consciousness of the toiling masses; (g) a further development of the accumulating contradictions can as well lead to socialism as back to capitalism; (h) on the road to capitalism the counterrevolution would have to break the resistance of the workers; (i) on the road to socialism the workers would have to overthrow the bureaucracy. In the last analysis, the question will be decided by a struggle of living social forces, both on the national and the world arena. [\[20\]](#)

This conceptual definition - which Trotsky, anticipating the criticisms of those who preferred the categorical formulae, presents as "vague" - is very precise and each concept employed is used scientifically, after discussions and

lengthy reflection.

a) In introducing a differentiation between "statisation" and "socialisation" Trotsky wrote: "In order to become social, private property must as inevitably pass through the state stage as the caterpillar in order to become a butterfly must pass through the pupal stage. But the pupa is not a butterfly. Myriads of pupae perish without ever becoming butterflies." [21] And to explain that state property only becomes social with the withering of the former, that is to the extent that the state withdraws from production, making way for the free association of producers. As long as it is state authority - constraint - which governs production and interferes in the free choice of the producers, that is as long as the insufficiency of the productive forces imposes economic choices other than those decided by the producers themselves, the "old crap" of which Marx spoke returns unceasingly under the form of bureaucratic and alienated labour. And the Stalinist slogan "the cadres decide all" was nothing other than a demonstration of the phenomenon.

## Synthesis

b) c) and d) Trotsky synthesises here something he had analysed already in 1932 in his famous article "The Soviet economy in danger" [22] and which was moreover at the centre of the debates of the Russian Left Opposition from Bukharin's break with Stalin and the Stalinist turn towards accelerated industrialisation and forced collectivisation. [23]

He then criticised, following Rakovsky, the unrestrained accumulation which did not take into account the necessities of providing for the depreciation of fixed capital, condemning productivity to stagnation and holding back innovation in industry. And he summed up the bureaucratic aspiration to a deformed form of economic development.

e) For Trotsky the bureaucracy, a layer of working class origin, without becoming a class, autonomises itself in relation to its class origin, becoming uncontrolled (and uncontrollable) and should be overthrown, as he reaffirms in i). In short, without being a dominant class, the soviet bureaucracy has several characteristics of such a class, but without the legitimacy of its domination. Thus it was not capable of forging for itself a dominant ideology and had to rely on the ersatz falsified Marxism that became "Marxism-Leninism" in its Stalinist version. This absence of legitimacy of domination - which Stalinist or post-Stalinist ideology is still unable to provide - is only the manifestation of its parasitic role inside the society that it dominates.

f) The CPSU is no longer a proletarian party. The "governing party" has betrayed its class and should be overthrown. Already in September 1935, in an article, Trotsky had said: "it would be pure folly to believe that the Communist Party of the Soviet Union can be reformed and regenerated today. It is impossible to force a bureaucratic machine which is essentially there to maintain the proletariat in a vice to serve the interests of this proletariat." [24] In a 1939 article Trotsky, summing up with some tables of statistics the discontinuity between the Bolshevik party and that of Stalin, concluded: "Stalinism is a not an organic development from Bolshevism, but it is a bloody negation of it." [25] Already in 1930 the declaration of the Left Opposition on the 16th Congress of the CPSU left no illusions on the links between the party and the workers: "The leadership of the party has discredited the party and the trade unions in the eyes of the working masses. Neither the first, nor the second, have been able to assure to the proletariat a defence against the bureaucrats. On the contrary, the party and the unions seem to support the bureaucrats against the workers." [26]

There is then no doubt that in 1936 Trotsky knew perfectly well that the Soviet proletariat was deprived of any form of self-organisation.

## Surprising

The affirmation that the "social revolution, betrayed by the ruling party, still exists in property relations and in the consciousness of the toiling masses" - which is reaffirmed from another angle in h), where it is a question of workers' resistance having to be broken by an eventual capitalist restoration - appears then surprising.

Socialist consciousness is indeed in no way a spontaneous consciousness emerging through the experience of struggle alone. To survive in the course of periods of downturn - and the 1930s were such a period of downturn in the USSR in terms of the working class and its consciousness - it must be materialised inside a revolutionary organisation. In 1936 such an organisation no longer existed in the USSR. The several thousand organised left oppositionists were in the camps and Stalin was not slow to liquidate them.

What is more, the massive liquidation of any trace of the former proletariat had begun. The real scale of the Stalinist repression of the 1930-1956 period is still unknown. David Rousset estimates that between seven and 8 million people, of whom 1 million were members of the party and young Communists, were executed between 1935 and 1941. [27] It is necessary to add to this some tens of millions who were deported to the camps. The result of the repression and the extensive Stalinist industrialisation (largely reliant on the use of deportee labour) was to constitute a new working class, which did not have the experience of its predecessors, a class of peasant extraction, subject to inhuman conditions of life and of work, to an omnipresent repression, hence totally atomised.

Let us add again that the deportations continued during the war. How then can we imagine that "the social revolution" could survive "in the consciousness of the toiling masses"? There is here, undeniably, an error by Trotsky, which he would undoubtedly have corrected if he had been able to revise his forecast on the outcome of the war.

## Totalitarian

Trotsky had not hesitated to qualify the Stalinist dictatorship as totalitarian. He had denounced the historic falsifications of Stalin. He had devoted a good part of his last years to denouncing the fraudulent trials and the breadth of the repression. But in his lifetime it was difficult to imagine the monstrous scale of the deportations and assassinations, the inhuman reality of the Stalinist gulag, the deportation of entire peoples, the tens and tens of millions of victims.

The effect of the Stalinist terror was to deprive the Soviet workers of the capacity to imagine another socialism than that qualified officially as "actually existing", or to renew the tradition of collective action and mass self-organisation. In this sense Stalinist totalitarianism like Nazi totalitarianism succeeded in breaking the working class.

"It [the October Revolution] has a great power of resistance, coinciding with the established property relations, with the living force of the proletariat, the consciousness of its best elements, the impasse of world capitalism, and the inevitability of world revolution", Trotsky wrote in the *Revolution Betrayed*. Some years later the bureaucracy had succeeded in extinguishing the living force of the proletariat, liquidating its conscious elements, giving world capitalism a second breath and allowing it to drive back the assaults of the world revolution.

The perspective of political revolution - an objective for action and not a prediction - formulated by Trotsky, was not realised. Moreover, if there were some revolutionary situations in the countries of the eastern bloc (Poland and Hungary in 1956, Czechoslovakia in 1968, again Poland in 1980-1981), in the USSR none of these crises attained a comparable level of workers' self-organisation. Stalinist terror in the USSR has lasted a very much longer time,

extirpating from the society not only all forms of working class organisation but all memory of such an organisation. From 1930 to 1954-55 a joke, a question, a thought expressed in too loud a voice could send a Soviet worker to deportation. Fifteen years is the time of maturation of a generation. An experience that marks the future of a society. In none of the countries of the Soviet bloc did the bureaucratic societies experience such terror during so many years. That is why some oral workers' traditions, even if imperfect, could emerge when the bureaucratic domination went through crises, and fed the experiences of self-organisation.

## Defeats

Nonetheless, the revolutionary crises in the east - Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia - all ended in defeats of the mass movement. The minority revolutionary Marxist tradition, which survived and even grew in the capitalist countries, did not regain its footing in any significant manner, despite the efforts in this direction, in the USSR and its satellites. In the absence of a "a revolutionary party having all the attributes of the old Bolshevism, enriched moreover by the world experience of the recent period" mass mobilisations have not succeeded in overthrowing the bureaucracy.

They have however weakened it, indicating to it that it was time to attempt to recycle itself before a self-organised movement on the scale of Solidarnosc ripened in Russia, benefiting from Gorbachev's liberalisation. This latter had opened the road to some experiences of self-organization of which the miners' strike of 1990 was the summit, for the first time on such a scale since the beginning of the Stalinist terror.

The "democratic" counter-revolution of Boris Yeltsin, which was the culmination of a process launched by Stalinism, did not come up against the resistance of the Russian proletariat. Identifying the socialist perspective with the Stalinist and then Brezhnevite years, idealising capitalist consumer society, seeing "their" factories as above all places of alienated labour, Soviet workers observed passively the establishment of a capitalist restorationist state and the manoeuvres of the oligarchs to carve themselves out pieces of state property.

The oligarchic mafias confirmed once more the old adage "property is theft". But as capitalist profit needs rules, thus a state capable of imposing them on all including on the capitalists, the new strong man in the Kremlin, Vladimir Putin, meeting with oligarchs in July 2000, proposed to wipe the slate clean over past thefts of state property - qualified precisely as primitive accumulation of capital by one of the participants at the meeting - so as finally be able to protect private property. The third hypothesis of Trotsky, that of a historic defeat of the Russian revolution, is in the process of being realised before our eyes. It could once again give a new breath to world capitalism.

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[1] On this topic see Moshe Lewin's book, *Lenin's Last Struggle*, Pluto Press, London.

[2] The quote is from a draft response by Trotsky to those who, after the appearance of his book 1917, launched a campaign seeking to oppose so-called "Trotskyism" to "Leninism" (Trotsky mentions lucidly that it required the death of Lenin for this term to appear!). Trotsky is then in the position of the accused, which did not stop him from calling for "repression" and "purges" where the accusations had a real basis, in the name of the unity of the ruling party. This text was published for the first time by Pierre Broué in *Cahiers Leon Trotsky*, n° 34, June 1988.

[3] See Salomon Schwartz, *Les Ouvriers en Union soviétique*, Marcel Rivière 1956, pp. 20-21.

[4] Lenin, *Sotchinienia* (collected works, Russian edition) volume 38, p. 170.

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[5] "Reason becomes folly, kindness torment".

[6] L. Trotsky, *The Revolution Betrayed*, tr. Max Eastman, 1937. All quotes from the version on the Leon Trotsky Archive website.

[7] The expression comes from Anton Ciliga, Yugoslav left oppositionist, freed in 1935 and expelled from the USSR.

[8] Christian Rakovsky, who was, after the deportation of Trotsky to Turkey, the principal spokesperson of the Opposition in the USSR, had written a letter to G.N. Valentino in 1928, a first attempt to analyse this unexpected phenomenon.

According to Pierre Broué (*Cahiers Leon Trotsky* n° 6, 1980, p. 39), Rakovsky pursued his work in prison and the titles of his works are known - "The laws of socialist accumulation during the "centrist" period of the dictatorship of the proletariat" and "The laws of development of the socialist dictatorship" - and mentioned in the correspondence of the oppositionists. These manuscripts have disappeared with their author. Might they exist still in the archives of the NKVD-KGB-FSB ?

[9] David Rousset, in his very remarkable account *La société éclatée* (Grasset, 1973), which contains in particular an innovatory analysis of the role of Gulag slave labour in the stabilisation of Stalinism and a pertinent analysis of Khrushchev's 'de-Stalinisation' and its limits, concludes that the USSR became "a bureaucratic society of state capitalism".

Commenting on Trotsky's analysis, he writes: "The value of a theoretical concept in social sciences is established, as in all the other sciences, by its power of elucidation verified by experience. Experience has confirmed neither of Trotsky's two predictions". (p. 191)

In 1973 the argument could seem strong. However, in social science the time factor can depend on a very great number of parameters and the life-span of a doomed social formation can largely exceed that of the human beings who seek to understand it and overthrow it.

[10] L. Trotsky, *The Revolution Betrayed*, op cit.

[11] The *Cahiers Leon Trotsky* published a taste of this very rich debate in 1980 in numbers 6 and 7.

[12] According to a letter written to Trotsky by Victor Serge a little after his liberation, in May 1936. Quoted by Pierre Broué, *Les trotskistes en Union soviétique*, *Cahiers Leon Trotsky* n° 6; p. 55.

Note that Boris M Yeltsin, leader of the Trotskyist clandestine centre in Moscow, is no relative to his quasi homonym who finished off Stalin's counter-revolutionary work.

[13] L. Trotsky, *The Revolution Betrayed*; op. cit.

[14] This letter was published a number of times by the Fourth International under the title "The professional dangers of power". I quote here from the *Cahiers Leon Trotsky*; n° 18, 1984, pp. 83-89.

[15] Declaration on the 16th congress of the CPSU, signed by Kh. Rakovsky, V.Kossior, N. Mouralov and V. Kasparova, dated April 1930. This text has been reproduced in the *Cahiers Leon Trotsky*, n° 6, pp. 97-98.

[16] L. Trotsky, *The Revolution Betrayed*, op. cit.

[17] op. cit.

[18] op. cit.

[19] Note in this respect that an event of huge scale - the death from hunger of six million people in the Ukraine in 1932-1933 - could be camouflaged by this press!

[20] L. Trotsky, *The Revolution Betrayed*, op. cit.

[21] Op. cit.

[22] See L. Trotsky, Writings 1932 (Pathfinder, New York).

[23] See note 8. The British review Critique (number 13) has published an excellent dossier under the title "Economics of the Left Opposition".

[24] L. Trotsky, The police apparatus of Stalinism.

[25] L. Trotsky, The anti-bureaucratic struggle in the USSR.

[26] Signed by K. Rakovsky, V.V. Kossior, N.I. Mouralov and V.S. Kasparova (all then deported), published in French in the Cahiers Leon Trotsky n°6, 1980.

[27] D. Rousset, La société éclatée, op. cit. p. 352.