

## 2. The “Building Socialism” in the early 1920s

### The War Communism and the NEP

The implementation of Soviet economic policy began with a wave of expropriations of private businesses and other measures, necessitated by the post-revolutionary turmoil and the emerging needs of the Red Army. The latter safeguarded Bolshevik power during the civil war, which continued to be fought until 1920, the year in which the plan to construct a socialist society took on better defined contours. The set of economic relationships that came into being during this era later received the label ‘war communism’. At the Tenth Congress of the Russian Communist Party/ Bolshevik in 1921, Lenin described these as measures that had been forced by the civil war.

But their true nature had come out at the All-Russian Congress of Soviets six months earlier, in December 1920, when a plan that had been proposed by Lenin’s government to develop the nonmarket economy was approved. It anticipated that the monetary system would be abolished, along with the circulation of currency and monetary institutions, including banks. Peasants were to be relieved of their rights to manage their own assets and their farm produce. Industry, particularly heavy industry, was emphasized. It was to be funded by increased contributions of grain from the peasants, by borrowing and loans from abroad, and by granting economic concessions to foreign entrepreneurs. The energy to feed this construction was to come from increased oil and coal mining in Baku and Donbas and, in the future, from the extensive electrification of the country.

When in subsequent weeks a wave of uprisings swept the country as peasants reacted to newly announced changes in the government, Lenin revised the plan. Moscow and St. Petersburg were convulsed by strikes, setting the stage for the well-known Kronstadt sailors’ rebellion. His hand thus forced, Lenin backed away from the basis of his own recently declared policy and announced the New Economic Policy (NEP). Its original impact was restricted to permitting a market economy on a limited, regional basis in response to peasant demands. But before half a year had passed, the government was forced to expand the scope of market relationships up to the level of the national economy, leading to the renewal of circulating currency and affecting industrial relationships. Prior to the 1923/1924 currency reform, the exchange of substantial part of commodities had continued in its natural form.

This pre-history of Soviet economic policy itself is worth exploring. But it is also important because it was etched into the memory of the population and members of the governing party, where it stayed for the next twenty years.

The 1921 peasant riot, brutally suppressed by the Bolsheviks, and widespread famine resulted from Lenin's economic policy after 1917. The famine assailed more than 30 million people in the Volga Basin and an extensive area in Ukraine. Contemporaneous sources show that it killed 5.2 million people<sup>18</sup>, even with substantial aid from abroad, particularly the USA. But the consequences of the civil war and Lenin's economic policy were not limited to these material losses and casualties. They also greatly magnified the depth of Soviet Russia's World War I losses. The general post-war reconstruction of the economy therefore had to wait until 1923, and the national economy returned to its pre-war levels of performance only in the late 1920s.

1921 is significant for one other reason. The outcome of the war between the Soviet Union and Poland in 1920 put to rest the Bolshevik plan to abandon the Versailles Treaty, but the hope that the war's end would lessen internal political repression remained alive. The educated were among those on the receiving end of that repression, but so were a number of Bolshevik leaders. Life indeed improved for them in 1920, with intraparty discipline significantly relaxed as the result of efforts made in this atmosphere of hope, and concessions were also made to the intraparty opposition: a group of democratic centrists called the 'Decists' and the so-called 'worker opposition'. Representatives of moderate socialist parties were even invited to the Congress of Soviets in December of that year, where they were allowed to speak freely. By 1921, the controlling circle of the party proposed to reform and place limits upon the Cheka<sup>19</sup>—the secret service—and to modify the Criminal Procedure Code by revising judicial procedures and toning down criminal prosecutions. This sense of relaxation was also reflected in civic life. The intelligentsia became more active and so did the organizations to which its members belonged. The press also benefited and unfettered discussions were

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18 See *Naseleniye Rossii v XX. veke: istoricheskyye ocherki*. Vol. 1, Moscow, ROSPEN 2000, pp. 129–133. An estimate of the total number of casualties is missing. Data on population movement suggest a figure of around 3 million. The figure 5.2 million is indicated in the final report of Pomgol (*Pravda*, 13.10.1922).

19 Cheka was to be replaced by GPU (later OGPU), the All-Union State Political Administration, which was to lose its special power of attorney to hand down rulings. Cf. Plechanov A., *Dzerzhinsky: Pervyy chekist Rossii*. Moscow, Olma Media Grupp, 2007, pp. 516–532.

allowed at the universities. Emigrants tried to convince the regime to let them come home and take up their activities.<sup>20</sup>

But there was a countertrend to this liberalization in evidence from the outset. Lenin treated the events of spring 1921 as a serious challenge to Bolshevik power and, supported by Cheka, systematically sought to maintain a repressive regime in the country. To the participants in the Kronstadt Uprising and the strikes and riots of spring 1921, Cheka meted out severe punishment. The intelligentsia's turn came in the summer and autumn of 1921. The key actions taken against them surrounded the 'revelation of the Tagancev Conspiracy',<sup>21</sup> and measures targeting liberals who had begun a movement to help the starving. Lenin insisted on 'completing the liquidation' of SRs and Mensheviks resulting, in mid-1922, in show trials of the SR leadership and the attempt to force Mensheviks to abandon their own party. In parallel, he strived to suppress the independent activities of social organizations and the press, sought to place them under the control of security agencies, and acted heavy handedly against religious authority, in which he recognized a staunch enemy of Bolshevik power. This sweeping crusade against the educated led, in the summer and autumn of 1922, to an effort to completely suppress the activity of socialist parties and to chase politically active members of the liberal intelligentsia abroad. Their forced exodus was euphemistically referred to as the 'philosophers' steamboat', and with it, the regime was in effect permanently closed off from any effort at political 'liberalization'.<sup>22</sup>

In 1920, a sharp escalation of the internal tensions and conflicting forces in leading party committees took place—in the Central Committee, the Politburo and the Secretariat. The source of this strain was originally personal disputes over the actions of Trotsky who, on the one hand, conscientiously skirted conflicts with Lenin, but whose independence and political actions, on the other, and the influence he held in the party, chafed against some in the leadership.<sup>23</sup> When he

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20 This primarily refers to the so called *Smenovekhovtsy*, a Russian emigre group, which counted on the gradual evolution of Soviet power.

21 Tagancev was a high functionary in the Academy of Sciences, which at that time was based in Saint Peterburg. Many leading figures in scientific and cultural life were impacted by this case.

22 *Kommunisticheskaya partiya Sovetskogo Soyuz a v rezolyutsyakh i resheniyakh s'ezdov, konferentsii i plenumov TsK*, Vol. 1. 1898–1925, Moscow, Gospolitizdat, 1953, pp. 669–674.

23 Disputes between Lenin and Trotsky are described in a plethora of legends cultivated by Stalinist historiography. Trotsky was aware of the Lenin's irreplaceable role in the party and avoided conflict with him. The fact that he was an assimilated Jew and therefore

proposed in spring of 1920 to jettison the mandatory purchase of grain in favour of a fixed agricultural tax and a bonus system, Lenin rejected him outright, fearing these changes would liberalize the market.

Grave conflicts between Lenin and Trotsky soon followed during the war between Soviet Russia and Poland. Lenin euphorically anticipated Poland's defeat would come quickly and the 'Versailles peace system' would collapse. His enthusiasm was dampened by Trotsky and any other leaders, who counselled a quick end to the war. This stoked the discord between Lenin and Trotsky, culminating in the so-called trade union debate of autumn 1920. With the transport system under his command, Trotsky wished to remedy its catastrophic condition by militarizing the workplace with a command system of strict discipline and control under a single political centre. He was blocked by the unions. Believing that, in a non-market economy, they had lost their original purpose of looking out for workers' social interests now cared for by state owned companies and economic bodies in the 'proletarian state', he launched an attack against them.

Lenin was originally of the same mind as Trotsky, but he relied upon his own circle in the party leadership to prevent conflicts with unions. Its members included Stalin, Zinoviev, Kamenev, and Tomsky. Lenin proposed that Trotsky summarize his opinions in the form of a special 'platform', and when he had refused, Lenin labelled him a 'faction creator'. Lenin then proposed that votes for delegates to the upcoming Tenth Party Congress be made on the basis of faction affiliation, even though the intense debate generated within the party led him to neglect a dangerous situation in villages caused by the reinforcement of the 'war communism' policy proclaimed at the prior Congress of Soviets, which policy had, as noted, provoked widespread peasant uprisings. He freed himself up enough to juggle cadres in the party leadership and in so doing, to secure the exclusive standing of his own faction. He employed repression and used the military as a hammer to deal with the urgent situation in the villages, at the same time as he updated Trotsky's 1920 proposal to free the market, initiating the transition to the NEP, the New Economic Policy.<sup>24</sup>

This was a crucial development. Trotsky was banished to the fringes of the party leadership. Soon after suppressing the Kronstadt sailors' uprising and the mass

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unacceptable as head of the country to the Russian establishment also played a substantial role in his attitude.

24 See Pavlyuchenkov, S. A., *Krestyanskiy Brest*, Moscow, Russkoe knigoizd. tov. 1996, pp. 158–159. Trotsky, *Sochineniya*, Tom 17, Part. 2, Moscow-Leningrad, Gosizdat 1924, pp. 543–544. The relation between Lenin's and Trotsky's text is demonstrated by simple comparison of their content and a number of formulations.

revolt of peasants, in which the part he played was purely formal, he took a 'holiday'. Only in autumn of 1921 did he reappear on the political horizon to criticize the protracted, improvisational manner in which the NEP was being introduced, and the feckless interventions of party bodies in the economy. Later, to restore the broken ties of collaboration in industry and to weaken the influence of inflation on industrial plants, he strived to employ planning. In this he was at odds with Lenin, who argued that the nature of relationships among peasants was such that no plan could be enforced. Lenin ended up accepting his proposals when Trotsky excluded rural areas from the plans. From an ideological standpoint, the support Trotsky provided for Bukharin's concept of state owned companies as socialist enterprises was more consequential. It erected a barrier between agriculture and industry that stood in the way of efforts to expand the NEP.

These disputes between Lenin and Trotsky soon lost their significance. More critical was Lenin's new turn further to the left and his repressive actions within the party. This leftward turning was heralded by the slogan 'An End to the Retreat' in the spring of 1922. Private business, particularly private commerce, was restricted. Lenin, then seriously ill, argued fiercely at the Eleventh Party Congress against any expansion of the NEP. The stance he took on developing international economic relationships had profound consequences, with his statements at conferences in Genoa and the Hague helping to thwart the chance to get loans and credits from the European Allies to consolidate Soviet Russia's economy. He likely believed that Europe had a viable interest in the Soviet market, and Soviet Russia had time to await more favourable offers. In autumn of that same year, Lenin's demurrals cost the country a substantial concession from Lesley Urquhart, blocking chances a broader concession policy would be launched. At the same time, Lenin's agreement with Trotsky frustrated the proposals of his own central committee to weaken the foreign trade monopoly, both men afraid of corruption and the Soviet economy 'being robbed' from abroad. Trotsky later justified this by saying the USA was capable of buying the entirety of Soviet industry at bargain rates. Taken together, these decisions curtailed the growth of the Soviet international economic relations. No recovery ever took place, and the Soviet economy was condemned to autarcic development.

Near the end of Lenin's time in government, Trotsky issued a report on industry that took into account the significance of the marketplace and the role it played, and it became the leading proposal for development of the Soviet economy. Presented at the Twelfth Congress of the RKP/b, when Lenin due to his illness failed to participate in politics, the report highlighted industry's key role in the economy and the large investment that would be necessary for its start-up, particularly in the case of heavy industry. Once underway, Trotsky reasoned,

industrial operations would increasingly accumulate the assets needed for their own development, making a proper start-up especially critical. He stressed the use of economic indicators: work productivity, profit and loss, production calculations, and accurate accounting as well as the effective organization of production. He recommended that industry be developed using plans comparable to those made by large capitalist firms and monopolies. These would contribute to restoring ties between companies, providing them with the raw materials and energy they needed, and would encourage collaboration between firms and mutual sales of production. He was vociferously opposed to political bodies interfering in the running of the economy.

Despite the claims of later Soviet historians, Trotsky also focused closely on the relationship between the cities and rural areas, and was the first to analyse the well-known 'scissors' problem of the disharmony between industrial and agricultural prices. The remedy, he thought, lay not in setting their levels administratively, but rather in rationalizing production, spending effectively, increasing worker productivity, and eliminating inefficient costs. Another target was the issuance of currency as a cause of inflation and the significant role of barter in the economy. Trotsky was against excessive agricultural taxes because they blocked the reproduction of peasant farms; he saw in food exports a chance to benefit from higher prices in the international marketplace; and he warned that low levels of activity by state businesses would promote the accumulation of assets in the private sector.

Trotsky's report, presented on behalf of the party leadership, would seem to have allowed for a new tack to be taken in dealing with economic issues. But this only partially came to pass, due to the relationships among party leaders at the time of Lenin's exit from political life. Because of this, we may definitively state that no comprehensive plan for the economic development of the USSR emerged from the Lenin era, only certain prerequisites for economic and social stabilization.

## **The Events of 1923 in Germany and the Origin of the "Left Opposition" in the USSR**

At the time of Lenin's departure, the country remained mired in unfavourable economic and social circumstances. Agriculture was only slowly recovering from the 1921 famine. In the succeeding year, crops were still at three-quarters of their pre-war average, industrial production at one-quarter, and foreign trade at just fourteen percent. Heavy industry and machine production were using ten percent to forty percent of their actual capacity, wages were half their pre-war levels, and work productivity was sixty percent of what it had been. Raw iron was in

short supply; some factories had to be closed. Coal production was dropping, as were shipments of oil from Baku and Grozny, and only one quarter of the engine stock in the railroad system was operable.<sup>25</sup> And a crisis situation in the governing party loomed.

Lenin's impending exit from politics had probably been taken into account by the time he fell ill in 1921/1922. Posts were handed out to members of his faction at the time of the Eleventh Party Congress in spring 1922, likely with his agreement. Zinoviev remained chairman of Comintern and managed intraparty affairs in St. Petersburg and environs, but additionally, he tried to claim the role of ideological leader of the party. Kamenev was in charge of Moscow. He presided over the Politburo in Lenin's absence and the government, as a potential successor to Lenin, although Lenin also considered Trotsky for the position of Prime Minister. Control of the party Secretariat and thereby the party apparatus was given to Stalin, whose territorial fiefdom in the Caucasus was managed by Grigory Ordzhonikidze. The significance of the party secretary's role was underestimated at that time, but was made clear when Zinoviev and Kamenev granted Stalin a monopoly on visiting the ailing Lenin, whose wishes and proposals Stalin then passed to the party leadership. By the summer of 1922, he was already a key figure in the party leadership, significantly strengthening his position by systematically building and reinforcing the party apparatus, assigning posts to people who were utterly dependent upon him.

Lenin's resistance to placing Stalin in this position, and to the way he operated, is well known. It became apparent as early as autumn of 1922, when Lenin briefly resumed his functions. Three issues lay at the centre of their failure to see eye-to-eye: the national question; the way by which the Soviet republics should be united into a country, which Stalin planned to do through the bureaucracy, as an act of the apparatus; and Stalin's gradual usurpation of power within the party. Other points of disagreement had to do with economics, with the future of the NEP, and with economic contacts abroad. Evidence of their bitter dispute may be seen in Lenin's recommendation to oust Stalin from his position as General Secretary, and to appoint Trotsky as Deputy Prime Minister. Trotsky turned Lenin down. He thought his Jewish origin would make him permanently unpalatable to the Russian establishment in this position. In any event, Lenin's wish to oust Stalin was not respected by his political friends Zinoviev and Kamenev, who were more

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25 *Dvenadcatyi syezd RKP/b*, 17–25. *Aprilya 1923g.*, Moskva, *GIPL* 1968, pp. 29–33; *Ekonomicheskiy vestnik* No 1/1923, pp. 154–159; Vladimirov M., *Tezisy k byudjetnomu planu 1922–23*, in: *Vestnik finansov*, No 6, 9.2.1923.

afraid of reinforcing Trotsky's influence. The sole concession made to the ailing Lenin by the Politburo was to accept his proposal for making the USSR into a federation of Soviet republics, but it was Stalin who was authorized to report on the issue at the Twelfth Congress of RKS/b, and this dulled its critical edge. Stalin was also given a free hand to deal with his opponents, including making changes to the party leadership in Georgia and Ukraine.<sup>26</sup>

As early as the summer of 1923, the party was staring into the face of an internal conflict. But a head-on confrontation was avoided by Trotsky, whose political independence and influence within the party placed him in a leadership role. He did not have enough support to win and was likely waiting instead for Lenin to get better, or for the party's configuration of power to change. Only with reluctance were Zinoviev and Kamenev willing to get involved, and anyway they remained closer to Stalin than Trotsky, in spite of the danger the former posed to them.

But the growing schism was neither the case of personal and political relationships, nor was it about factual or ideological conflicts. The major source of strain in 1923 was the rapid consolidation and reinforcement of the bureaucratic power vertical, which left no room for pluralistic elements in the political and social system in the USSR. The urban middle stratum, weak in power, had already been dispersed during the revolution and the civil war. Its remaining members were condemned to the role of 'expert', providing scientific knowledge and experience the regime needed, but they had no leverage to influence power decisions. Nor did the peasant stratum provide a base from which an opposition might arise. They, too, were scattered across the countryside, unconnected with each other, and lacking the needed culture and education. They thus had no chance to independently organize to protect their own interests. Independent peasant organizations were barred; their 'alliance with the proletariat', code for the governing party, remained an empty phrase without real meaning.

The only space left for the opposition to express itself was within the governing party and it was minimal, a space that could be used by party officials and, to some extent, by functionaries and members of party organizations who for any reason did not agree with party policies. Stalin's new bureaucratic party apparatus lacked the strength and consolidation to fully control the party life. But the party

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26 Immediately after the Twelfth Congress of RKS in early June 1923, Stalin's political allies allowed him to call a meeting with representatives of the national republics and regions, an opportunity for Stalin to justify nationality-based repression against his opponents. See *Tayny natsionalnoy politiki CK RKP: Stenograficheskiy otchet IV. sovshchaniya CK RKP, 1923 g.* Moscow, Insan, 1992.



saw itself as surrounded by a hostile foreign environment and therefore clung to its overall sense of unity.

That sense of unity was challenged soon after the Twelfth Congress of the RKS/b when Stalin started making substantial changes to personnel in Moscow and around the country. Among the casualties were the leadership of the Georgian party, which was in revolt, and the Ukrainian party leadership, headed by the influential and politically independent Christian Rakovsky. But that was not the end of it. In following Karl Radek's advice to change Soviet policy on Germany, he rewrote the job descriptions of Zinoviev and Bukharin. Against the latter's will and in his absence, Stalin also replaced representatives in the Moscow editorial offices of Pravda. The leading party trio of Stalin, Zinoviev and Kame-nev thus diverged. Zinoviev backed away from his trenchant anti-Trotskyism. In a closed-door meeting of party leaders in the South of Russia, he recommended creating a new leadership trio comprising Stalin, Trotsky and one of Kameney, Zinoviev himself, or Bukharin, but Stalin resisted and Trotsky had no interest.

At that same meeting, the disparities over the Soviet German policy became apparent. In early 1923, French and Belgian units had marched into Germany's Rhine and Ruhr regions hoping to force the country to meet the financial obligations that followed its defeat in World War I. The German government of Wilhelm Cuno responded by cutting contact with both countries, suspending reparation payments, and insisting German citizens, companies, and institutions engage in passive resistance. But this brought serious consequences for the country. Inflation skyrocketed, the monetary system collapsed, and both wages and savings lost their value. The government resigned. The population was radicalized. In addition to the left-wing social democrats, the beneficiaries were the radical left and the nationalist radical right—Communists and Nazis alike.

While the German crisis of 1923 itself has been treated extensively in the literature, its impact on the situation within the USSR has not. Germany's troubles came at a time when Stalin's hunger for power was causing increasing conflict inside RKS/b. The expectation that Germany was veering towards revolution led Zinoviev and Trotsky, each in his own way, to anticipate that the USSR's power structure might turn in a direction favourable to them. A successful revolution in Germany would place it centre stage, undermining Stalin's position. Trotsky and Zinoviev felt emboldened to put forth radical propositions that Stalin felt he had no choice but to accommodate.<sup>27</sup> In reality, though, Germany was not at

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27 See the documents and studies in: *Deutscher Oktober 1923: Ein Revolutionsplan und sein Scheitern*. Hrsg. Bayerlein B. H., Babičenko L. G., Firsov F. I., Vatlin A. JU: Berlin,

the combustion point. The new Stressemann government, which included social democrats, utilized help from the army leadership and navigated the situation carefully, isolating both the radical right and the radical left, with damaging consequences for the German-Russian relationship when the German government turned towards closer collaboration with the Allies and the League of Nations.

In the USSR, Stalin's opponents were far from united. Trotsky's attitude was sharply different from Zinoviev's. Trotsky supported radical progress in Germany, but he did not buy into Zinoviev's ambition to 'manage the German revolution', believing such a notion was a waste of time and of the opportunities that might be seized. He waded into the 'German revolution' dispute just after Stalin had adopted certain parts of Zinoviev's proposal, initiating active preparations for the German revolution. Stalin and Zinoviev jointly tried to suppress Trotsky's influence.

In dealing with the events in Germany, Trotsky was hampered by the fact that the party apparatus had taken over the awarding of army posts, which had formerly been part of his competence as People's Commissioner and Chairman of the Military Revolutionary Committee. He was also challenged to 'expand' the Military Revolutionary Committee, including among its new members Stalin. The point of these changes was clear: not just to remove the army from his control, but also to goad him into rebelling.<sup>28</sup>

In response, Trotsky walked out of the RKS/b Central Committee meeting, following this on 8/10/1923 with a letter to its members and those of the Central Control Commission sharply criticizing the work of the 'trio', whom he accused of suppressing intraparty democracy and escalating intraparty tensions, as well as of giving rise to 'a mindset specific to the secretary characterized by the secretary's conviction that he can resolve issues... without knowing their substance.'

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Aufbau-Verlag 2003. These attitudes were also manifested in a dramatic request presented by Trotsky to be sent to Germany, where he had significant influence over the KPD leadership. Many Soviet politicians, soldiers and security agents tried to influence the situation, but Trotsky was too well known and him working directly in Germany could not be considered. Vatlin A. Ju., *Komintern: Idei, resheniya, sudby. Moskva, ROSSPEN, 2009*, p. 115; Deutscher I., *Trotsky, Volume II, Unbewaffnete Prophet 1921–1929*, Stuttgart, Kohlhammer, 1962–1963, p. 160.

28 See *RKP/b. Vnutripartijnaya bor'ba v dvadcatyje gody, Dokumenty I materialy 1923 g.*, ed. Vil'kova V. P., Moscow, ROSSPEN, 2004; p. 20; Pavlyuchenkov S. A., "Orden mechenostcev": *Partiya i vlast' posle revolyucii 1917–1929.*, Moscow, Sobraniye, 2008, pp. 296–297; Erickson, *The Soviet High Command, a Military-Political History 1918–1941*, London-Portland, Franc. Cass, 2001, pp. 141–142 RVR – Military Revolutionary Committee.

Trotsky went on to claim the trio ignored the resolutions adopted at the Twelfth Congress, and adopted a price policy that meant a return to the period of war communism, since two boxes of matches cost as much as a 'pud' of bread.<sup>29</sup>

In speech, Trotsky didn't hold back, and his letter was the harshest, most critical that had been seen in the post-revolution history of the party. Forty-six influential party figures signed the letter, albeit with some reservations. Trotsky had much chance to win the conflict, but his efforts were not without effect. The changes made in the party were so rapid and so pronounced that, as noted above, even Zinoviev and Bukharin initially protested. By late autumn of 1923, the discussion expanded to involve even basic party organizations, and influence the attitude of the intelligentsia and 'experts,' as well as the European communist parties. When the German revolution failed, the discussion intensified, with the party leadership and Zinoviev, as chairman of Comintern, held responsible.

The situation in the party was grave; the party leadership was forced to compromise. In late November 1923, the leadership charged a committee consisting of Stalin, Trotsky and Kamenev with preparing a compromise proposal for resolution. It suggested a change in the way the party was run and that it be based upon the principles of 'worker democracy'. The principle of electing party functionaries was to be 'strictly respected,' as was the 'need' for free discussions on key party policy, without party discipline being used as a pretext for squelching discussion. But the compromise fell apart within three days. Trotsky published an article entitled 'The New Direction' in Pravda, offering his interpretation of the resolution. He said democracy could not be granted to the party by simple decree but was something that had to be fought for, something by which the party apparatus must be governed. And it was to be judged by the mood of the youth. Although the older generation was rightfully entitled to a leading position in the party, it was more susceptible to stress and bureaucracy. And bureaucracy, Trotsky opined, was what had given rise to bureaucratic factions that blocked discussion and stifled criticism.<sup>30</sup>

Trotsky's article made clear that the party leadership and the opposition sharply differed on democracy and party reconciliation. The leadership distanced itself from Trotsky's article, declaring it a malicious attack against the party apparatus and the older generation in the party. Under Zinoviev's influence, extraordinary measures were put in force, censoring the press, distorting the history of the discussion within the party, and falsifying intraparty voting. The discussion thus

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29 Sb. RKP/b, *Vnutripartiynaya bor'ba*, pp. 156, 159. Pud – 16 kg.

30 See RKP/b, *Vnutripartiynaya bor'ba*, pp. 296–302.

came to an end without his input, and the impact of this was considerable. Trotsky was released from performing his duties on 'doctor's orders' by the Politburo and sent to the Caucasus for treatment.<sup>31</sup> As a result, he missed Lenin's funeral and the party conference that took place in January 1924 in Moscow, which labelled the opposition a 'social-democratic perversion' within the party. It was not excluded from the party altogether; but its members were systematically ousted from leading positions, providing new manoeuvring room for Stalin to usurp power and for the bureaucracy to grow.

## The Party and the Opposition after Lenin

1924 was a breakthrough year in stabilizing the regime. It started with Lenin's death in January, which brought to an end a two-year period during which no reorganization of power had been possible. Then there was the defeat of the opposition: Trotsky's exit from key party functions and from the government was just a question of time. After a long stay in the South, he took part only in the Thirteenth Congress of the RKS/b, declaring his fidelity to the "party", but accompanying this declaration with a reiteration of the basic themes of his 'New Direction' essay.<sup>32</sup> At the end of the Congress, Trotsky remained a nominal member of the Politburo and of the Comintern executive committee, but key decisions were often made behind his back or in his absence.

Stalin's position, meanwhile, was significantly strengthened. At Lenin's funeral, he presented himself to the public as the new leader of the party. In spite of the fact that Kamenev had been Lenin's deputy for two years, Stalin was able to prevent him from taking the Prime Minister's post. Stalin insisted instead upon Alexei I. Rykov as the head of government. Rykov was considered an experienced politician and overseer of the economy, but he lacked the charisma to aspire to a position comparable to Lenin's.<sup>33</sup> The party's top leadership also changed after the Thirteenth Congress, with the former trio of Stalin, Zinoviev and Kamenev giving way to a 'Group of Seven' consisting of Stalin, Zinoviev, Kamenev, Rykov, Tomsky, Bukharin, and Kuibyshev. But in addition to trying to rid himself of Trotsky, Stalin was trying to push Zinoviev and Kamenev from their leading positions,

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31 *Izvestija*, 8.1.1924. He had allegedly fallen ill as early as 5/11/1923 and thus did not take part in the discussion during the key last two-and-a-half months.

32 At the congress, members of the opposition (Preobrazhensky, Radek, Pyatakov and Trotsky) were present but with only a consultancy vote.

33 He argued it was necessary for the government to be led by a native Russian and Kamenev came from a mixed Russian/Jewish family.

and perhaps other members of Lenin's government. At the Thirteenth Congress of RKS/b, he easily sidestepped the blow he might have suffered from the recommendation in Lenin's 'Testament' that he be removed from the position of General Secretary.<sup>34</sup> The Testament had not been presented to the plenary session of the Congress, only 'discussed' by leading functionaries, and it was strictly forbidden to talk about it, whether in public or just within the party.

Lenin's role in the state had been determined by his position as Prime Minister, but Stalin did not aspire to this position. With his standing and that of the party apparatus reinforced by the changes, the centre of power had shifted to the party and the new power role played by the apparatus. The USSR was becoming a party state, in which the party bureaucracy overshadowed the state bureaucracy. The government of the country thus took on a new form. With the centre of power now outside the government proper, there could be a single, transparent, centre controlling not only the security services, the military, the courts, and the economy—as was traditional—but also interest groups and social organizations not connected to the government, particularly unions. The same centre could also be used to combine control of foreign policy with 'nongovernmental' actions taken by Comintern and by 'nongovernmental' international organizations.

In the end, these changes also led to alterations in the composition and function of party organizations. They came in with the mass recruitment effort begun in 1924 as part of the 'Lenin Enrolment', which brought 200,000 new members to the party. By mid-1927, the party was half again as big as it had been in 1922, and those who had entered in 1924 or later accounted for sixty percent of those in its ranks. The composition of party organizations in Moscow, St. Petersburg, Kharkov, Kiev, and other cities that had formerly had a strong opposition presence changed as well. The education level of the new members was poor: only 63% had completed primary school, 26% were self-taught, and only 0.8% had attended or were attending university or were university graduates.<sup>35</sup> The changes wrought made the party organization completely dependent on the instructions of the party apparatus and members were introduced to a new 'party education' program featuring Stalin's take on party ideology and history. Thus a new state-political organization came into being in society, tending toward what was to become a totalitarian or single-party state.

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34 "Testament" – a set of Lenin's final, sharply critical notes. They were designated for the party congress and presented to the party leadership by his widow, Nadezhda Krupskaya.

35 *Nashe otechestvo: opyt politicheskoy istorii*, ed. Kuleshov S. V. Volume 2, Moscow, Terra 1991, pp. 226–227.

At the time of their institution, however, these changes were primarily directed at suppressing the 'Trotsky opposition.' There were rumours within the party that Trotsky might be preparing a military coup, even though Trotsky's most serious problem as administrator of the military was his isolation in the party's controlling bodies. His exit from the military had in fact become inevitable; all that was left to decide was when and under what circumstances it was to take place. His own preference was to switch to a leadership function in the economic sector. But the party leadership instead placed him in the peculiar position of a 'minister without portfolio', deprived of any real share in power.

The incentive to remove him completely came soon when, in 1924, a collection of work that had been written in 1917 was published with a preface by the author. It was titled 'The Lessons of October.' By the very fact that it reminded public and party of the role Trotsky played in the Bolshevik seizure of power, it provoked the party leadership. That the book's preface spoke of fresh experience gained in the failed 'German revolution' of 1923, with Trotsky comparing control of the revolution to the approach taken by Zinoviev and Kamenev in October 1917, grated even more. His diagnosis was: a failure of nerve and an inability to fight for power.

Today, there is no point in trying to guess why Trotsky's polemic targeted Zinoviev and Kamenev, whose roles during Lenin's illness and after his death were less than admirable, but there was nothing in *The Lessons of October* outside the bounds of a political polemic. The party leadership responded with feigned outrage nevertheless. It tried to permanently discredit Trotsky by claiming the existence of "Trotskyism" as a distinct ideological stream from 'Leninism'.

The entire matter was presented to the Plenum of the Central Committee of RKS/b in mid-January 1925. Trotsky did not attend the meeting. Excusing himself on the basis of illness, he tendered his resignation to the Plenum for his functions in the armed forces, in line with Stalin's intent, thereby freeing Stalin to focus on the conflict with Zinoviev and Kamenev. This conflict was not without its twists. Stalin had been against Zinoviev's proposal, supported by Kamenev, to oust Trotsky from the Politburo and the Central Committee, proposing to leave the decision up to the party congress. Zinoviev argued the step was necessary because Trotsky was 'changing into an anti-Bolshevik,... a tool in the battle against communism.'<sup>36</sup>

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36 G.Zinoviev, *O nieobchodnosti trech perestrakhovok*. A report on actions taken by the Central Committee at the Leningrad party conference. Pravda, 26.1.1925.

This resulted in a kind of schizophrenia within the party. The campaign against ‘Trotskyism’ was not really about the critical analysis of the man’s work but rather about dismantling his standing as a leader. The party leadership thereby shucked off the need to evaluate his work positively and, if anyone else offered a positive evaluation, it was portrayed as a manifestation of ‘Trotskyism’. Both the party and the people were told to forget about Trotsky’s role in 1917 and during the civil war, even though every citizen of the country recalled it well. In reality, even more serious issues were at stake. Although Stalin had distanced himself from Zinoviev’s proposal, the anti-Trotsky campaign opened the door to changes in the balance of power in the country. The intraparty opposition was being portrayed as an ‘enemy force’, and sanctions against its members came with a new ferocity. Large groups of party functionaries were excluded from political life, as were critically inclined members of the party’s intelligentsia.

## The Opposition and the NEP

The detail with which we have delved into the political aspect of the turn against Trotsky and the opposition in 1923–24 has also been partly motivated by the lack of any significant push to resolve the social and economic development issues the country was facing, or to decide the fate of the NEP so favoured by Soviet historians of the era.

At the Twelfth Congress of the RKS/b, Kamenev let fly an accusation that Trotsky had underestimated the peasantry and hence the role of the Communist Party. He likely did so to reinforce Stalin’s position, which had been threatened by Lenin’s criticism.<sup>37</sup> But Trotsky’s report at the Congress contained nothing that would justify Kamenev’s claims or those of the trio as a whole. Setting aside Trotsky’s objections that the trio had paid no real attention to equalizing agricultural versus industrial prices<sup>38</sup>, one can see that the remaining conflicts between the opposition and the party focused almost exclusively on intraparty issues. Party leadership blamed Georgy L. Pyatakov for the disproportionately high industrial prices. As Vice President of the Supreme Soviet of the National Economy, the VSNCh, he had recommended that industrial facilities set high prices for their products to counter their acutely limited turnover.<sup>39</sup> But the real cause of

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37 The initiative was probably left to Kamenev because he was preparing a report on party policy in rural areas to be presented at the Congress.

38 This refers to the Trotsky’s document dated 8.10.1923.

39 In his “Testament”, Lenin appointed Georgy L. Pyatakov one of the six leaders of the governing party.

the country's economic difficulties in that time was more complex. The spring of 1924 had brought the party leadership great economic success when it managed to transition the USSR to a stable currency, with a significant impact on the country's financial policy. Before it arrived, the transition to the new currency was no secret, and this was visible in the attitudes of the peasantry, who paid taxes in the old currency but postponed grain sales so that they might enjoy the yield in the new currency<sup>40</sup>. Trotsky, however, stressed not just price equality, but also the need to jumpstart industry, which was still languishing deep below its pre-war levels. He maintained proper pricing required greater industrial production and more industrial goods on the market, responding to Kamenev's recommendation for a slower pace by saying, 'The world market isn't waiting, and the man on the street won't want to wait either.'

But in addition to existing economic difficulties, the party leadership was also confronted by the fact that Trotsky continued to be the author of its economic policy. Top party leaders wanted to claim their own economic development concept, but the fact was that if they did not wish to refer to Trotsky's ideas— notions they had called 'social democratic perversion'—they had no concept to talk about.

Starting up industry, the chief economic concern of the time, however, needed massive investment, but the current state of the Soviet economy left little room for accumulating capital. Everything available to the governing party had been mentioned in Trotsky's report to the Twelfth Congress. The only thing that could make a significant dent in the situation was investment and loans from abroad. But the government was anxious about becoming dependent on foreign partners for a long period of time. At the international level, it also faced the condition that Russia's pre-revolution debt be settled and that foreign businesses whose assets had been nationalized be provided restitution. The Soviet leadership was only willing to go so far, and then only provided it would acquire advantageous long-term loans and credits.<sup>41</sup>

1924 was a turning point, not only in terms of the party's internal workings, but also with regard to foreign policy. A number of Allied powers had recognized the Soviet government *de jure* and expressed willingness to discuss controversial issues. The change in position taken by Britain and France seemed significant. In

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40 Taxes to force peasants to sell grain or pay the tax in kind did not have the desired effect, because peasants had the opportunity to pay the tax in devaluated currency.

41 They were to provide for the startup of industry, whose profit would then be used to pay not only for the interest rate but also for Russia's pre-revolution debts with the exception of war debts. In terms of the restitution of nationalized property, an opportunity to seek agreement with original owners was sought.



the December 1923 elections, a coalition of Labour and Liberals came to power led by James Ramsey MacDonald that tried to normalize contacts with the USSR. The negotiations were difficult. The British government could not back down from its demands of the USSR—it had to take into consideration the dismissive attitude of business and the political sphere to concluding Anglo-Soviet agreements. In France, where the new government of Edouard Herriot wished to improve French-Soviet relationships, negotiations took a similar course.

In Britain, where the Soviet government was represented by Christian Rakovsky, lately Prime Minister of the Soviet Ukraine, negotiations seemed promising. In early August 1924, two British-Soviet agreements were signed: a General Agreement, and an Agreement on Trade and Maritime Shipping. These made it possible to negotiate debt and compensation for the British owners of the nationalized assets. The British government was to guarantee the USSR a loan of about 400 million rubles to fund Soviet reconstruction and cover British receivables. Rakovsky returned victorious to Moscow, and what had transpired in Britain was used as an example to aid negotiations with France.

But it soon became apparent that the degree to which relationships between the USSR and foreign countries had changed had been overestimated. British Conservatives launched a campaign against ‘interference by the USSR’ in the internal affairs of Britain’ and it split the coalition.<sup>42</sup> New elections were called and the Conservatives won, suspending ratification of the agreements, which had already been signed, and British-Soviet negotiations. This then had a significant effect on the Soviets’ negotiations with the French, where no rapid success resulted.

These developments abroad had serious implications for the internal political situation within the USSR. Stalin and his companions strove above all to avoid anything which might give impetus to resuming intraparty discussions. He made up his mind to split with Zinoviev and Kamenev, but this required playing down his disputes with Trotsky and his followers to make any potential agreement they might reach with Zinoviev and Kamenev more difficult. Thus the internal political discussion moved away from the party’s life to the resolution of economic issues whose progress depended upon what the ‘trio’ and ‘group of seven’, with joint responsibility for economic issues, decided.

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42 The pretext consisted of Zinoviev’s ‘letter’ which was to contain instructions for British communists. It was a forgery and its author has never been uncovered. The USSR reacted with a statement from Rykov’s government dated 27.10.1924 and a record of a discussion with Zinoviev. *Izvestija*, 28. and 29.10.1924.

The original impetus to change the subject of the discussion came neither from Stalin nor from Zinoviev and Kamenev<sup>43</sup>. Legend among Soviet historians ascribed it to Bukharin, who was perceived by party leaders to be a promising representative of the ‘younger generation of leaders, someone who enjoyed the sympathy of the younger party intelligentsia. But his political attitudes were volatile and he failed to understand the consequences his attitudes entailed.<sup>44</sup> He gained particular renown in internal party discussion for his gross attack on his former political ‘friend’ Yevgeni A. Preobrazhensky. In autumn of 1924, Preobrazhensky had discussed how best to ensure the needed capital accumulation in the USSR while the country was under international isolation. His thoughts appeared in the pages of *Kommunisticheskaya Akademiya*, a magazine targeting a narrow circle of the Communist intelligentsia.<sup>45</sup> To his merit, he based his thinking on the Marxist concept of ‘initial capital accumulation’, concluding that the industrialization of the USSR would be accompanied by phenomena identical to those which had accompanied the development of capitalism in Europe.

Bukharin’s response, however, was untrue in the way that it did not target a narrow circle of readers, but rather was published in Moscow Pravda in the form of an extensive article that Pravda’s readers were not qualified to assess, especially because they mostly had not seen Preobrazhensky’s article. Bukharin’s reasons for writing the article were also not entirely laudatory. He drew connections between Preobrazhensky’s thesis and Trotsky’s ‘Lessons of October’, suggesting to Pravda readers that it was part of a broad new attack against the party by the ‘opposition’. But Bukharin approached the essence of the matter only superficially. He relied upon the outrage that would be generated among Pravda’s readers by Preobrazhensky’s comparison of the development of the Soviet economy to that of the capitalist economy. Preobrazhensky had concluded that, given Russia’s prerevolutionary development and its losses during World War I and the USSR

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43 The report was presented to the Central Committee at the Thirteenth Congress of RKS/b by Zinoviev. (Stenograficheskiy otchet, Moscow, GIPL, 1963).

44 Bukharin contributed to the 1923 discussion by “revealing” the plans made by the “left communists”, to whose leadership he had belonged. These plans consisted of an alleged agreement with the “left SRs” made in spring 1918 to apprehend Lenin and thwart the signing of the Brest-Litovsk peace treaty. After 1917, Bukharin’s sympathies shifted from Trotsky (1921–22) to Lenin (1923) and later to Zinoviev and Kamenev (also 1923), thence to Stalin (1924–25) and finally to Rykov and Tomsky with whom he tried to prevent the extremes imposed under Stalin’s 1926–29 policies.

45 This was a treatise entitled “*Osnovnoj zakon socialisticheskogo nakopleniya*”, published in “*Vestnik Kommunisticheskoy Akademii*”, No. 8.

civil war, there would be nothing to fall back on but 'initial capital accumulation' and funding drawn from rural areas. Preobrazhensky's focus was on economics, the marketplace and the politics of state; Bukharin's was on party ideology and prejudice. Preobrazhensky believed the growth of industry would saturate the market, and would encourage peasants to bring their produce to market, thereby paying their 'tax' for the benefit of industry. Industrial growth would also enable poor people in rural areas to leave for the cities, reducing their overpopulation and their consumption of agricultural production in their own rural areas immediately.

At the time, Bukharin's noisy entry into the internal party discussion was probably not in accord with Stalin's intentions. The latter was satisfied with Trotsky's resignation from his positions in the armed forces. The real impetus for the party leadership to initiate a new phase in its economic policy came not from Bukharin's article but rather from Rykov's visit to the Volga basin in September of 1924. He was shattered by the poverty he saw in Russian villages, prompting him to call for investment and improvements in the peasant economy. The industrial market had to expand and the conditions for its growth had to be created.<sup>46</sup> He expanded this to include a need for 'civil peace' and 'maintaining Soviet law' and, with the support of Mikhail Ivanovich Kalinin, the Chairman of VCIK Soviets, wished to find out who among villagers was a 'kulak'—a wealthy peasant. By spring of 1925, this discussion had given rise to a number of measures enabling economic growth for the upper strata of rural residents by means of soil rental, the employment of a hired workforce, improved lung conditions, and so on.

In early 1925, the party leadership decided upon accepting the general outlines of Rykov's economic policy. It expressed this with the slogan 'Facing the Village'. But the ideological turn this represented for the Soviet leadership was not without its contradictions. At the end of 1924, indicators show the gross volume of agricultural and industrial production had visibly risen, but this growth was attained by relaunching old, temporarily mothballed facilities into operation. The resulting industrial production covered only a quarter of the villages' needs. In its nature and its structure, it therefore simply documented the need for key changes to be made and for investment that would target sectors that could ensure rapid industrial growth. Securing the development of energy, machinery, transportation and agricultural equipment was fore grounded, but the substantial increase in the scope of industrial investment this required also prolong the waiting time

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46 Rykov, *Ocherednye zadachi sovietskogo stroitel'stva*, Izvestija, 16.1.1925.

for returns to appear.<sup>47</sup> And after his experience negotiating with England and France, Rykov was forced to acknowledge that the USSR was the only country in Europe reviewing its economy almost entirely from its own resources. He had no answer as to how the requisite accumulation could be ensured; nor did other Soviet leaders. The effort to bolster the villages in combination with rapidly boosting industry was just a matter of words, nothing more.

From the end of 1924 at the latest, the economic institutions began to see the country's industrial lag, particularly with heavy industry, as doing more than just putting the brakes on the Soviet economy—they saw it as a frank danger. The party leadership, which had refused to consider Trotsky for head of the Soviet economy, instead appointed Felix E. Dzerzhinsky, a tough, efficient administrator, as head of the Supreme Soviet of the National Economy (VSNKh). Soon after assuming his post, Dzerzhinsky began to insist that the existing pace of industrial growth would not protect the country from the danger of agrarization. The original figures for 1924–25 counted on 40% growth. Dzerzhinsky pushed that to 50% and later to 60–65%.<sup>48</sup> Since the resources to support such growth were not at hand, Bolsheviks headed by Zinoviev and Kamenev made more determined efforts to tax the 'kulaks', something which inevitably meant revising Rykov's policy. But in the spring of 1925, the villages could still bring to bear strong lobbying pressure, and the proposed change in policy would have the effect of rehabilitating Trotsky's economic proposals. For these reasons, a compromise had to be introduced, a kind of rationalization. Piecework was introduced into industry, and redundant staff was laid off, acts possible because 1925 turned out to be the banner year for the NEP, which allowed those in power to mobilize reserves without drastic impact on the standard of living. On a practical level, Soviet politicians began to wonder if the USSR could get by permanently with no help from abroad and how well the country might do in acquiring its own investment resources. Since no real-world answer was forthcoming, one had to be found on the ideological level. It came in the form of a new 'Marxist guideline', issued by Stalin with support from Bukharin, that stated it was possible to 'build socialism' in a 'single internationally isolated country'.

One may reasonably doubt whether Stalin and Bukharin's opinion was truly Marxist. Marx said socialism would only be able to claim victory after capitalism

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47 Rykov, *Doklad na III. Vserossijskom s'yezde sovietov*, *Izvestija*, 13.5., 15.4. and 16.4.1925. Dzerzhinsky spoke of 180% industrial growth in 1927–28 versus 1924–25; it was to have been provided for by domestic resources.

48 Felix E. Dzerzhinsky, *Nashe chozjajstvennoye polozenije*, in: *Izvestija*, 4.12.1924; also *Izvestija*, 29.1.1925 (Kamenev).

had exhausted its developmental opportunities, and could do so only in a common effort by developed countries. On this point, Stalin deviated from Marx. To justify the move, he cited Marx's note in the 'Critique of the Gotha Program' of German Social Democracy, which speaks of two levels of socialism. On the first level, socialism falls short of full attainment because it retains the vestiges of prior epochs. This allowed Stalin to separate out the idea of 'socialism' from the level of maturity of society. The main yardstick for socialism was converted into the establishment of a 'dictatorship of the proletariat', in other words, the assumption of power by the Communist Party, abolishing private ownership of the 'means of production' and replacing it with a 'socialized' economic system controlled by a central power. Under this definition, socialism could be considered constructed even with poverty present in society, famine raging, and the governing party using mass terror as a tool for 'socialist construction'. This scholastic exercise, though, did not in fact provide Stalin with a way to ensure a turnaround in industrial development.

This being the case, it is also worthwhile looking at Trotsky's ideas from the same period, in particular his 'Towards Capitalism or Towards Socialism?', put out originally by Pravda and since published in book form in a number of languages.<sup>49</sup> Trotsky provided a sober estimate of the pace at which USSR industry should grow. He considered the starting point of 6–7% attained in pre-war Russia to be adequate and presumed this figure could be increased to or three times based upon actual results. He strongly rejected economic autarky, calling for the development of production sectors capable of high levels of production that would be competitive abroad. He thought domestic production could provide from 40% to 50% of the machinery and equipment the country needed, adequate in cost terms and permitting an independent national economy to be maintained. Unlike Stalin and Bukharin, Trotsky thought it key that the Soviet economy was included in the global economic system. He spoke of 'connecting the commodity-based socialist economy to the capitalist economy'. This connection, he opined, could only be established in the context of the global marketplace and must be of a 'commodity nature'.<sup>50</sup> Autarky, he claimed, scatters assets, leading to a loss of momentum and compromised product quality. Trotsky

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49 Trotsky L. D., *K socializmu ili k kapitalizmu*: Moscow, Planovoye chozyaystvo, 1925. Stalin attacked it for the first time at the XV conference of VKS/b in October–November 1926 (*XV konferencija VKP/b: Stenograficheskiy otchet* Moscow–Leningrad, Gosudarstvennoye izdatelstvo, 1927, pp. 512–516).

50 *Kommunisticheskaya oppozitsiya*, ed. Yuri Felshtinsky, Volume 2, Benson Ver., Chalidze Publ. 1988, p. 136.

thought a reduced pace much more dangerous than the import of machinery and the needed facilities. 'The more varied our economic contacts with countries abroad, the more difficult it becomes for any potential enemy to disrupt it... We can only speed our development on the universal level if we make expert use of the resources ... provided us by the global distribution of work.'<sup>51</sup> Trotsky did what Stalin and Bukharin would not do by publicly considering the possibility that the Soviet 'experiment' might fail. He claimed that if the developed capitalist countries were able to overcome their lengthy crisis and renew their dynamic growth, the USSR would not stand a chance.<sup>52</sup>

Stalin allowed Trotsky to publish his ideas, and did not immediately distance himself from them. He probably did not wish to take sides in the developing conflict that set Trotsky against Zinoviev and Kamenev by attacking Trotsky anew.<sup>53</sup> Stalin and Trotsky did continue to talk, but the intensity of their discussion was likely toned down because of hopes that the government's policy would see a successful breakthrough development in agriculture, allowing the Soviet economy to leap forward into the modern era. Starting in June 1925, statisticians began to contend in a united voice that crop yields would be above average to the extent they should approach their pre-war levels, with an excess of approximately 600 million puds—9.6 million tons – available for export, prompting sharply increased expectations for foreign trade revenues. The government wanted Soviet grain in the foreign marketplace rapidly, to ensure a good price. But it did not allow for the fact that these estimates are just preliminary, and that Soviet institutions were neither qualified nor flexible enough to manage such exacting demands.

In the end, the crop yields came in far below the estimates. The statistics showed the villages had adequate stocks of grain, but the market did not confirm this. Grain purchases fell behind schedule and Russian grain reached the foreign markets only after a delay. This strongly impacted industrial imports, which fell by up to two-thirds. The government had to rapidly reduce planned industrial construction and put existing work on hold. Light industry also came up short on imported raw materials, with many textile factories restricting or even ceasing operation. This dealt the authority of Rykov's policies and that of the Prime Minister a heavy blow.

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51 Ibid, Volume 2, p. 203.

52 Ibid, Volume 2, pp. 141–147.

53 He remembered the recent propositions made by Zinoviev and Kamenev to exclude him from the Central Committee of RKS/b and from the party.

As far as internal politics, this debacle did not rekindle the conflict between the 'left opposition' and the party leadership, as might have been expected, but rather intensified the discord between Stalin and the duo of Kamenev and Zinoviev. The tension in their relationship persisted through the greater part of 1925 and grew more aggravated in the autumn, when Zinoviev and Kamenev attacked the policy, said to be tolerated by Stalin, of discriminating in favour of kulaks. Someone was also needed to pin the blame on for the recent failure of the purchase and foreign trade policies, and Stalin thereby got the opportunity to distance himself from the party's 'right-wing', grouped around Rykov. The Fourteenth Party Congress was drawing near, opening a window for changes to the party leadership.

This time, Stalin was ready to join battle with Zinoviev and Kamenev, who had been compromised by their relentless push to 'finish with Trotsky'. Stalin held Kamenev responsible for the economic collapse in autumn 1925 because, as Rykov's deputy, he had great influence over economic matters. Stalin did not leave the conflict with Zinoviev and Kamenev to chance. At one of the party conferences that took place in Leningrad and Moscow on the eve of the Fourteenth Congress of RKS/b, Rykov, in attempting to justify the course of government policy, spoke of the causes of the recent economic failure. Speaking in Moscow, he pointed to deficiencies and mistakes made in economic practice, not attempting to conceal the extraordinary damage suffered. To right what had gone wrong, he proposed cutting back on exorbitant plans, with an emphasis on the slogan 'Civic Peace', thinking that this would prevent dissension from breaking out among large groups of inhabitants. As a follow-up measure, he proposed rectifying relationships with the intelligentsia.

Far from being a matter of chance, the internal conflict within the party was provoked by Stalin's apparatchiks, surely not simply from their own motivations. At the Moscow conference, they attacked the resolutions of the Leningrad conference, with Bukharin, who supported Rykov's justification of the government's policy at the same time he vociferously attacked the 'leaders of the Leningrad organization', playing a special role.<sup>54</sup> There were, he said, two variant interpretations of Lenin's policy, and he concluded with a threat: the congress would determine which interpretation was correct. The Moscow conference issued a resolution based upon this 'criticism', reproaching Leningrad members for serious offenses against Bolshevik policy, provoking the Leningrad leadership to

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54 Bukharin also had personal motivation to attack. Zinoviev and Kamenev had publicly attacked his call to peasants encouraging them "not to fear" and to "enrich themselves".

defend its opinions—likely the main reason for the attack in the first place. Zinoviev, who had reported on the activities of the Central Committee at the previous congress, was chosen to carry out the task at the upcoming party congress. But his report was an act of desperation. The congress was being organized by Stalin's party apparatus, and there was no doubt the Leningrad members would suffer a crushing defeat. But the only alternative would have been silent capitulation with an identical outcome.

Stalin later called the Fourteenth Congress of the VKS/b, at which this took place, the "Congress of Industrialization". But in fact it was the Fourteenth Conference of RKS/b in April of 1925 that decided on industrialization as the basis for party politics. The main purpose of the VKS/b congress in late December 1925 was to settle accounts with Zinoviev and Kamenev who, with Stalin, originally represented the 'Lenin core' of the party leadership. A 'party delegation' set out for Leningrad with the aim of 'purify' the local party organization of Zinoviev supporters. The 'purification' took several weeks and affected seven thousand party functionaries. Sergei M. Kirov, in Stalin's circle of friends, was appointed governor of Leningrad.<sup>55</sup> but the purification also extended to Moscow, where representatives of the 'new opposition' were ousted from party bodies and from Comintern. In July 1926, Zinoviev and Kamenev were stripped of their Politburo membership and Comintern chairmanship for 'factional activity', leaving Bukharin to lead Comintern.<sup>56</sup>

The literature frequently states that a new duo of leaders, Stalin and Bukharin, emerged from the Fourteenth Congress. But this congress was in fact also aimed at anchoring Stalin's exclusive role as party leader. Bukharin did not acquire additional power in real terms after the congress. Molotov, as Stalin's representative, possess much greater power than did Bukharin, whose influence was tied to the weakened authority of Rykov and from replacing Zinoviev in Comintern, which only increased his influence indirectly.

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55 Zinoviev's declaration at the meeting of politburo dated 18.3.1926, Stenogrammy CK RKP/b – CK VKP/b, Volume 1, p. 685.

56 Reimanovi T. a M., *Přehled o složení nejvyšších orgánů KSSS*, in: *Revue dějin socialismu* 3/1968, pp. 386–388; also Adibekov, G. M. / Shaknazarova, E. N. / Shiriniia, *Organizatsionnaia struktura Kominternu. 1919–1943*. Moscow, ROSSPEN 1997. pp. 100–109. Bukharin took Zinoviev's place in the Comintern but was not elected its chairman.